

THE

LIFE OF THE REV. JOHN WESLEY.

B O O K S E C O N D .

C H A P T E R I .

GIVING SOME ACCOUNT OF MR. JOHN WESLEY, FROM HIS BIRTH TO THE
YEAR 1729.

WHEN we view Mr. Wesley rising into public notice, from the bosom of a family which had long been venerable for christian knowledge and piety, the mind feels a degree of prepossession in his favor, and our expectation is raised of something great and good from him. As we proceed to examine his education, and the principles instilled into his mind, at an early period of life, we shall see a solid foundation laid of sound knowledge and genuine piety. But that every one may judge for himself in this matter, I shall endeavor to trace, step by step, the circumstances of his early life, during the period mentioned in this chapter.

He was the second son of Samuel and Susannah Wesley, and born at Epworth in Lincolnshire, on the 17th of June, 1703, O. S. There has indeed been some variation in the accounts given of his age by different persons of the family; but the certificate of it, sent him by his father a little before he was ordained priest, to satisfy the bishop of his age, puts the matter beyond a doubt. The original lies before me, and the following is a faithful copy.

“ Epworth, August 23, 1728.

“ John Wesley, M. A. Fellow of Lincoln College, was twenty-five years old the 17th of June last, having been baptized a few hours after his birth, by me,

“ SAMUEL WESLEY, Rector of Epworth.”

When he was nearly six years old, a calamity happened which threatened the whole family with destruction, and him in particular; his parents for a short time believing, that he was actually consuming in the flames of their house. But his mother's letter to the Rev. Mr.

Hoole, will be the best account of this matter. It is dated August 24, 1709, and is as follows.

“REV. SIR,—My master is much concerned that he was so unhappy as to miss of seeing you at Epworth; and he is not a little troubled that the great hurry of business about building his house will not afford him leisure to write. He has therefore ordered me to satisfy your desire as well as I can, which I shall do by a simple relation of matters of fact, though I cannot at this distance of time recollect every calamitous circumstance that attended our strange reverse of fortune. On Wednesday night, February the 9th, between the hours of eleven and twelve, our house took fire, by what accident God only knows. It was discovered by some sparks falling from the roof upon a bed where one of the children (Hetty) lay, and burnt her feet. She immediately ran to our chamber and called us; but I believe no one heard her, for Mr. Wesley was alarmed by a cry of fire in the street, upon which he rose, little imagining that his own house was on fire; but on opening his door, he found it was full of smoke, and that the roof was already burnt through. He immediately came to my room (as I was very ill he lay in a separate room from me) and bid me and my two eldest daughters rise quickly and shift for our lives, the house being all on fire. Then he ran and burst open the nursery door, and called to the maid to bring out the children. The two little ones lay in the bed with her; the three others in another bed. She snatched up the youngest, and bid the rest follow, which they did, except Jackey. When we were got into the hall, and saw ourselves surrounded with flames, and that the roof was on the point of falling, we considered ourselves inevitably lost, as Mr. Wesley in his fright had forgot the keys of the doors above stairs. But he ventured up stairs once more, and recovered them, a minute before the stair-case took fire. When we opened the street door, the strong north-east wind drove the flames in with such violence, that none could stand against them: Mr. Wesley, only, had such presence of mind as to think of the garden-door, out of which he helped some of the children; the rest got through the windows. I was not in a condition to climb up to the windows: nor could I get to the garden door. I endeavored three times to force my passage through the street door, but was as often beat back by the fury of the flames. In this distress I besought our blessed Saviour to preserve me, if it were his will, from that death, and then waded through the fire, naked as I was, which did me no farther harm than a little scorching my hands and face.

“While Mr. Wesley was carrying the children into the garden, he heard the child in the nursery cry out miserably for help, which extremely affected him; but his affliction was much increased, when he had several times attempted the stairs then on fire, and found they would not bear his weight. Finding it was impossible to get near

him, he gave him up for lost, and kneeling down, he commended his soul to God, and left him, as he thought, perishing in the flames. But the boy seeing none come to his help, and being frightened, the chamber and bed being on fire, he climbed up to the casement, where he was soon perceived by the men in the yard, who immediately got up and pulled him out, just in the article of time that the roof fell in, and beat the chamber to the ground. Thus, by the infinite mercy of Almighty God, our lives were all preserved by little less than a miracle, for there passed but a few minutes between the first alarm of fire, and the falling of the house."

Mr. John Wesley's account of what happened to himself, varies a little from this relation given by his mother. "I believe," says he, "it was just at that time (when they thought they heard him cry) I waked: for I did not cry, as they imagined, unless it was afterwards. I remember all the circumstances as distinctly as though it were but yesterday. Seeing the room was very light, I called to the maid to take me up. But none answering, I put my head out of the curtains, and saw streaks of fire on the top of the room. I got up and ran to the door, but could get no further, all the floor beyond it being in a blaze. I then climbed upon a chest which stood near the window: one in the yard saw me, and proposed running to fetch a ladder. Another answered, 'there will not be time: but I have thought of another expedient. Here I will fix myself against the wall: lift a light man, and set him on my shoulders.' They did so, and he took me out of the window. Just then the roof fell; but it fell inward, or we had all been crushed at once. When they brought me into the house where my father was, he cried out, 'Come, neighbors! let us kneel down! let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children: let the house go, I am rich enough!'"

"The next day, as he was walking in the garden, and surveying the ruins of the house, he picked up part of a leaf of his Polyglot Bible, on which just those words were legible. '*Vade; vende omnia quæ habes, et attolle crucem, et sequere me.* Go; sell all that thou hast; and take up thy cross and follow me.'"*

The peculiar danger and wonderful escape of this child, excited a good deal of attention and inquiry at the time, especially among the friends and relations of the family. His brother Samuel, being then at Westminster, writes to his mother on this occasion in the following words, complaining that they did not inform him of the particulars. "I have not heard a word from the country, since the first letter you sent me after the fire. I am quite ashamed to go to any of my relations. They ask me whether my father means to leave Epworth? whether he is building his house? whether he has lost all his books and papers? if nothing was saved? what was the lost child, a boy or a girl? what was its name? &c. To all which I am forced

* See Arminian Magazine, vol. i. page 32.

to answer, I cannot tell; I do not know; I have not heard—I have asked my father some of these questions, but am still an ignoramus.”

All the children received the first rudiments of learning from their mother, who, as we have seen, was admirably qualified for this office in her own family. I can find no evidence that the boys were ever put to any school in the country, their mother having a very bad opinion of the common methods of instructing and governing children. But she was not only attentive to their progress in learning, she likewise endeavored to give them, as early as possible, just and useful notions of religion. Her mind seems to have been led to a more than ordinary attention to Mr. Wesley in this respect. In one of her private meditations, when he was near eight years old, she mentions him, in a manner that shows how much her heart was engaged in forming his mind for religion. I shall transcribe the whole meditation for the benefit of the reader.

“*Evening, May 17, 1711. Son John.*

“What shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies? The little unworthy praise that I can offer, is so mean and contemptible an offering, that I am even ashamed to tender it. But, Lord, accept it for the sake of Christ, and pardon the deficiency of the sacrifice.

“I would offer thee myself, and all that thou hast given me; and I would resolve, O give me grace to do it, that the residue of my life shall be all devoted to thy service. And I do intend to be more *particularly* careful of the soul of this child, that thou hast so mercifully provided for, than ever I have been; that I may do my endeavor to instil into his mind the principles of thy true religion, and virtue. Lord give me grace to do it sincerely and prudently, and bless my attempts with good success.”

Her good endeavors were not without the desired effect; for I believe it was about this time, being eight years old, that he began to receive the sacrament.

In the month of April, 1712, he had the smallpox, together with four others of the children. His father was then in London, to whom his mother writes thus: “Jack has bore his disease bravely, like a man, and indeed like a Christian, without any complaint; though he seemed angry at the smallpox when they were sore, as we guessed by his looking sourly at them, for he never said any thing.” In 1714, he was placed at the Charter-house, and became distinguished for his diligence and progress in learning; so that, in 1719, when his father was hesitating in what situation he should place Charles, his brother Samuel writes thus of him: “My brother Jack, I can faithfully assure you, gives you no manner of discouragement from breeding your third son a scholar.” Two or three months afterwards he mentions him again, in a letter to his father: “Jack is with me, and a brave boy, learning Hebrew as fast as he can.”

He was now sixteen, and the next year was elected to Christ Church, Oxford. Here he pursued his studies with great advantage, I believe under the direction of Dr. Wigan, a gentleman eminent for his classical knowledge. Mr. Wesley's natural temper in his youth was gay and sprightly, with a turn for wit and humor. When he was about twenty-one years of age, "he appeared, as Mr. Badcock has observed, the very sensible and acute collegian—a young fellow of the finest classical taste, of the most liberal and manly sentiments."* His perfect knowledge of the *classics* gave a smooth polish to his wit, and an air of superior elegance to all his compositions. He had already begun to amuse himself occasionally with writing verses, though most of his poetical pieces at this period, were, I believe, either imitations or translations of the Latin. Some time in this year, however, he wrote an imitation of the 65th Psalm, which he sent to his father, who says, "I like your verses on the 65th Psalm, and would not have you bury your talent."

In the summer of this year, his brother, Mr. Samuel Wesley, broke his leg, and when he was recovering, wrote to Mr. John Wesley at Oxford, informing him of his misfortune, and requesting some verses from him. Mr. Wesley's answer is dated the 17th of June, when he was just twenty-one years of age. The letter shows his lively and pleasant manner of writing when young; and the verses afford a specimen of his poetical abilities to give a beautiful and elegant dress, to verses intended as ridicule.

"I believe," says he, "I need not use many arguments to show I am sorry for your misfortune, though at the same time I am glad, you are in a fair way of recovery. If I had heard of it from any one else, I might probably have pleased you with some impertinent consolations; but the way of your relating it is a sufficient proof, that they are what you don't stand in need of. And indeed, if I understand you rightly, you have more reason to thank God that you did not break both, than to repine because you have broke one leg. You have undoubtedly heard the story of the Dutch seaman, who having broke one of his legs by a fall from the main-mast, instead of condoling himself, thanked God that he had not broke his neck. I scarce know whether your first news vexed me, or your last news pleased me more: but I can assure you, that though I did not cry for grief at the former, I did for joy at the latter part of your letter. The two things which I most wished for of almost any thing in the world, were to see my mother, and Westminster once again, and to see them both together was so far above my expectations, that I almost looked upon it as next to an impossibility. I have been so very frequently disappointed when I had set my heart on any pleasure, that I will never again depend on any before it comes. However, I shall be obliged to

*Westminster Magazine.

you if you will tell me, as near as you can, how soon my uncle is expected in England,* and my mother in London.”

“Since you have a mind to see some of my verses, I have sent you some, which employed me above an hour yesterday in the afternoon. There is one, and I am afraid but one good thing in them, that is, they are short.

From the Latin.

“ As o'er fair Cloe's rosy cheek,
Careless a little vagrant pass'd,
With artful hand around his neck
A slender chain the virgin cast.

As Juno near her throne above,
Her spangled bird delights to see ;
As Venus has her fav'rite dove,
Cloe shall have her fav'rite flea.

Pleas'd at his chains, with nimble steps
He o'er her snowy bosom stray'd :
Now on her panting breast he leaps,
Now hides between his little head.

Leaving at length his old abode,
He found, by thirst or fortune led,
Her swelling lips that brighter glow'd
Than roses in their native bed.

Cloe, your artful bands undo,
Nor for your captive's safety fear ;
No artful bands are needful now
To keep the willing vagrant here.

Whil'st on that heav'n 't is giv'n to stay,
(Who would not wish to be so blest,)
No force can draw him once away,
Till death shall seize his desin'd breast.”

Towards the close of this year, Mr. Wesley began to think of entering into deacon's orders; and this led him to reflect on the importance of the ministerial office, the motives of entering into it, and the necessary qualifications for it. On examining the step he intended to take, through all its consequences to himself and others, it appeared of the greatest magnitude, and made so deep an impression on his mind, that he became more serious than usual, and applied himself with more attention to subjects of divinity. Some doubts arising in his mind on the motives which ought to influence a man in taking holy orders, he proposed them to his father, with a frankness that does great credit to the integrity of his heart. His father's answer is dated

* The uncle here mentioned was his mother's only brother. He was in the service of the East-India Company, and the public prints having stated that he was returning home in one of the Company's ships, Mrs. Wesley came to London when the ship arrived, to meet him. But the information was false, and she disappointed. *Private Papers.*

the 26th of January, 1725. "As to what you mention of entering into holy orders, it is indeed a great work, and I am pleased to find you think it so. As to the motives you take notice of, my thoughts are; if it is no harm to desire getting into that office, even as Eli's sons, *to eat a piece of bread*; yet certainly a desire and intention to lead a stricter life, and a belief that one should do so, is a better reason; though this should, by all means, be begun before, or ten to one it will deceive us afterwards. But if a man be unwilling and undesirous to enter into orders, it is easy to guess whether he can say so much as, with common honesty, that he trusts he is 'moved to it by the Holy Ghost.' But the principal spring and motive, to which all the former should be only secondary, must certainly be the glory of God, and the service of his Church in the edification of our neighbor. And woe to him who, with any meaner leading view, attempts so sacred a work." He then mentions the qualifications necessary for holy orders, and answers a question which his son asked. "You ask me which is the best commentary on the Bible? I answer, the Bible itself. For the several paraphrases and translations of it in the Polyglot, compared with the original, and with one another, are, in my opinion, to an honest, devout, industrious, and humble man, infinitely preferable to any comment I ever saw. But Grotius is the best, for the most part, especially on the Old Testament." He then hints to his son, that he thought it too soon for him to take orders; and encourages him to work and write while he could. "You see," says he, "time has shaken me by the hand; and death is but a little behind him. My eyes and heart are now almost all I have left; and I bless God for them."

His mother wrote to him in February on the same subject, and seemed desirous that he should enter into orders as soon as possible. "I think," says she, "the sooner you are a deacon the better, because it may be an inducement to greater application in the study of practical divinity, which of all other studies I humbly conceive to be the best for candidates for orders." His mother was remarkable for taking every opportunity to impress a serious sense of religion on the minds of her children; and she was too watchful to let the present occasion slip without improvement. "The alteration of your temper," says she, in the same letter, "has occasioned me much speculation. I, who am apt to be sanguine, hope it may proceed from the operations of God's Holy Spirit, that, by taking off your relish for earthly enjoyments, he may prepare and dispose your mind for a more serious and close application to things of a more sublime and spiritual nature. If it be so, happy are you if you cherish those dispositions; and now, in good earnest, resolve to make religion the business of your life; for, after all, that is the one thing that, strictly speaking, is necessary: all things beside are comparatively little to the purposes of life. I

heartily wish you would now enter upon a strict examination of yourself, that you may know whether you have a reasonable hope of salvation by Jesus Christ. If you have, the satisfaction of knowing it will abundantly reward your pains: if you have not, you will find a more reasonable occasion for tears than can be met with in a tragedy. This matter deserves great consideration by all, but especially by those designed for the ministry; who ought above all things to make their own calling and election sure, lest after they have preached to others, they themselves should be cast away."

These advices and exhortations of his parents had a proper influence on his mind. He began to apply himself with diligence to the study of divinity in his leisure hours, and became more desirous of entering into orders. He wrote twice to his father on this subject. His father answered him in March, and informed him that he had changed his mind, and was then inclined that he should take orders that summer: "But in the first place," says he, "if you love yourself or me, pray heartily."

The books which, in the course of his reading this summer, before his ordination, had the greatest influence both on his judgment and affections, were Thomas a Kempis and Bishop Taylor's Rules of Holy Living and Dying. Not that he implicitly received every thing they taught; but they roused his attention to the spirit and tendency of the Christian religion, and thoroughly convinced him that its influence over the heart and life is much more extensive than he had before imagined. "He began to see that true religion is seated in the heart, and that God's law extends to all our thoughts as well as words and actions."* He was however, very angry at Kempis for being too *strict*, though he then read him only in Dean Stanhope's translation.† We cannot but remark here a singular feature in Mr. Wesley's character; that contrary to the disposition of most young men of twenty-two, who have been educated in the habits of study, he was diffident of his own judgment till he had heard the opinion of others; and this disposition is more or less visible through the whole of his life. On this occasion he consulted his parents, stated his objections to some things in Kempis, and asked their opinion. His letter is dated May 29. "I was lately advised," says he, "to read Thomas a Kempis over, which I had frequently seen, but never much looked into before. I think he must have been a person of great piety and devotion; but it is my misfortune to differ from him in some of his main points. I cannot think that when God sent us into the world, he had irreversibly decreed that we should be perpetually miserable in it. If our taking up the cross imply our bidding adieu to all joy and satisfaction, how is it reconcilable with what Solomon expressly affirms of religion, 'That her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace'? Another of his tenets is, that all mirth or pleasure is useless, if not

* Wesley's Works, vol. xxvi. p. 274.

† Ibid.

sinful—and that nothing is an affliction to a good man; that he ought to thank God even for sending him misery. This, in my opinion, is contrary to God's design in afflicting us: for though he chasteneth those whom he loveth, yet it is in order to humble them. I hope when you have time, you will give me your thoughts on these subjects, and set me right if I am mistaken."

His mother's letter in answer to this is dated June the 8th, in which she makes many judicious observations on the points he had mentioned. Among other things, she says, "I take Kempis to have been an honest weak man, that had more zeal than knowledge, by his condemning all mirth or pleasure, as sinful or useless, in opposition to so many direct and plain texts of Scripture. Would you judge of the lawfulness or unlawfulness of pleasure? of the innocence or malignity of actions? take this rule:—Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the relish of spiritual things; in short, whatever increases the strength and authority of your body over your mind; that thing is sin to you, however innocent it may be in itself."

His father's letter is dated July 14. "As for Thomas a Kempis," says he, "all the world are apt to strain either on one side or the other: but, for all that, mortification is still an indispensable christian duty. The world is a Syren, and we must have a care of her: and if the *young man* will *rejoice in his youth*, yet let him take care that his joys be innocent; and, in order to this, remember, that *for all these things* God will bring him into judgment. I have only this to add of my friend and old companion, that, making some grains of allowance, he may be read to great advantage; nay, that it is almost impossible to peruse him seriously without admiring, and I think in some measure imitating his heroic strains of humility, piety, and devotion. But I reckon you have, before this, received your mother's letter, who has leisure to bolt the matter to the bran."*

Perceiving the good effects of consulting his parents, and that his mother in particular took a pleasure in discussing at large the subjects he proposed to her, he consulted her in a letter dated June the 18th, on some things he had met with in Bishop Taylor. "You have so well satisfied me," says he, "as to the tenets of Thomas a Kempis, that I have ventured to trouble you once more on a more dubious subject. I have heard one I take to be a person of good judgment say, that she would advise no one very young, to read Dr. Taylor on Living and Dying. She added, that he almost put her out of her senses when she was fifteen or sixteen years old; because he seemed to exclude all from being in a way of salvation who did not come up to his rules, some of which are altogether impracticable. A fear of being tedious will make me confine myself to one or two instances,

* Extracts of both these letters are inserted in the Armin. Magaz. vol. i. p. 30, 33: but the original of his father's, and a copy of his mother's, are before me.

in which I am doubtful; though several others might be produced of almost equal consequence." He then states several particulars which Bishop Taylor makes necessary parts of humility and repentance; one of which, in reference to humility, is, that, "We must be sure, in some sense or other, to think ourselves the worst in every company where we come." And in treating of repentance he says, "Whether God has forgiven us or no, we know not, therefore be sorrowful for ever having sinned."—"I take the more notice of this last sentence," says Mr. Wesley, "because it seems to contradict his own words in the next section, where he says, that by the Lord's Supper all the members are united to one another, and to Christ the Head. The Holy Ghost confers on us the graces necessary for, and our souls receive the seeds of, an immortal nature. Now surely these graces are not of so little force as that we cannot perceive whether we have them or not; if we dwell in Christ and Christ in us, which he will not do unless we are regenerate, certainly we must be sensible of it. If we can never have any certainty of our being in a state of salvation, good reason it is, that every moment should be spent, not in joy, but in fear and trembling; and then undoubtedly, in this life, we are of all men most miserable. God deliver us from such a fearful expectation as this. Humility is undoubtedly necessary to salvation; and if all these things are essential to humility, who can be humble? who can be saved?"

His mother's answer is dated July 21. She observes, that though she had a great deal of business, was infirm, and but slow of understanding, yet it was a great pleasure to correspond with him on religious subjects, and if it might be of the least advantage to him, she should greatly rejoice. She then tells him, that what Dr. Taylor calls humility is not the virtue itself, but the accidental effects of it, which may in some instances, and must in others, be separated from it. She then proceeds to state her own idea of humility.

"Humility is the mean between pride, or an overvaluing ourselves on one side, and a base abject temper on the other. It consists in an *habitual disposition* to think meanly of ourselves; which disposition is wrought in us by a true knowledge of God; his supreme essential glory, his absolute immense perfection of being; and a just sense of our dependence upon him, and past offences against him; together with a consciousness of our present infirmities and frailties," &c., &c.

This correspondence would undoubtedly tend very much to improve so young a man as Mr. Wesley then was. It engaged him in a close and critical examination of the authors he was reading, and fixed the subjects on his mind. It is indeed evident, that Dr. Taylor's work not only affected his heart, but engaged him in the pursuit of further knowledge of subjects so interesting to his happiness. He therefore answered his mother's letter on the 29th of July; and both this letter and the answer to it are worthy of being pre-

served; the one, as a specimen of his manner of reasoning at this early period of life; and the other, as it affords some excellent practical observations. But as they are too long to be inserted here, I shall only present the reader with an extract from each, which I hope he will not think tedious.

“You have much obliged me,” says Mr. Wesley, “by your thoughts on Dr. Taylor, especially with respect to humility, which is a point he does not seem to me sufficiently to clear. As to absolute humility, consisting in a mean opinion of ourselves, considered with respect to God alone, I can readily join with his opinion. But I am more uncertain as to comparative, if I may so term it; and think some plausible reasons may be alleged to show, it is not in our power, and consequently not a virtue, to think ourselves the worst in every company.

“We have so invincible an attachment to truth already perceived, that it is impossible for us to disbelieve it. A distinct perception commands our assent, and the will is under a moral necessity of yielding to it. It is not therefore in every case a matter of choice, whether we will believe ourselves worse than our neighbor, or no; since we may distinctly perceive the truth of this proposition, He is worse than I; and then the judgment is not free. One, for instance, who is in company with a free-thinker, or other person signally debauched in faith and practice, cannot avoid knowing himself to be the better of the two: these propositions extorting our assent; an atheist is worse than a believer; a man who endeavors to please God is better than he who defies him.

“If a true knowledge of God be necessary to absolute humility, a true knowledge of our neighbor should be necessary to comparative. But to judge one’s self the worst of all men, implies a want of such knowledge. No knowledge can be, where there is not certain evidence; which we have not, whether we compare ourselves with our acquaintance, or strangers. In the one case we have only imperfect evidence, unless we can see through the heart; in the other, we have none at all.

“Again, this kind of humility can never be well-pleasing to God, since it does not flow from faith, without which it is impossible to please him. Faith is a species of belief, and belief is defined an assent to a proposition upon reasonable grounds. Without rational grounds there is therefore no belief, and consequently no faith.

“That we can never be so certain of the pardon of our sins, as to be assured they will never rise up against us, I firmly believe. We know that they will infallibly do so if ever we apostatize; and I am not satisfied what evidence there can be of our final perseverance, till we have finished our course. But I am persuaded we may know if we are now in a state of salvation, since that is expressly promised

in the Holy Scriptures to our sincere endeavors, and we are surely able to judge of our own sincerity.

“As I understand faith to be an assent to any truth upon rational grounds, I do not think it possible, without perjury, to swear I believe anything, unless I have rational grounds for my persuasion. Now that which contradicts reason cannot be said to stand on rational grounds; and such undoubtedly is every proposition which is incompatible with the Divine justice or mercy. I can therefore never say I believe such a proposition; since it is impossible to assent upon reasonable evidence where it is not in being.

“What then shall I say of predestination? An everlasting purpose of God to deliver some from damnation, does, I suppose, exclude all from that deliverance who are not chosen. And if it was inevitably decreed from eternity, that such a determinate part of mankind should be saved, and none beside them, a vast majority of the world were only born to eternal death, without so much as a possibility of avoiding it. How is this consistent with either the Divine justice or mercy? Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish man for crimes which he could not but commit? That God should be the author of sin and injustice, which must, I think, be the consequence of maintaining this opinion, is a contradiction to the clearest ideas we have of the Divine nature and perfections.

“I call faith an assent upon rational grounds; because I hold Divine testimony to be the most reasonable of all evidence whatever. Faith must necessarily, at length, be resolved into reason. God is true, therefore what he says is true: he hath said this, therefore this is true. When any one can bring me more reasonable propositions than these, I am ready to assent to them: till then, it will be highly unreasonable to change my opinion.”

This letter is sufficient evidence how deeply Mr. Wesley was engaged, at this time, in the study of Dr. Taylor's Rules of Holy Living and Dying, to which he chiefly ascribes his first religious impressions; and it is pleasing to observe how early he adopted his opinion of universal redemption, which he so uniformly held, and so ably defended in the subsequent part of his life.

His mother's letter is dated August the 18th. “You say that I have obliged you by sending my thoughts of humility, and yet you do not seem to regard them in the least; but still dwell on that single point in Dr. Taylor, of thinking ourselves the worst in every company; though the necessity of thinking so is not inferred from my definition. I shall answer your arguments, after I have observed, that we differ in our notions of the virtue itself. You will have it consist in thinking meanly of ourselves; I, in an habitual disposition to think meanly of ourselves; which I take to be more comprehensive, because it extends to all the cases wherein that virtue can be

exercised; either in relation to God, ourselves, or our neighbor; and renders your distinction of absolute and comparative humility perfectly needless.

“We may in many instances think very meanly of ourselves without being humble; nay sometimes our very pride will lead us to condemn ourselves; as when we have said or done anything which lessens that esteem of men we earnestly covet. As to what you call absolute humility, with respect to God, what great matter is there in it? Had we only a mere speculative knowledge of that awful Being, and only considered him as the Creator and Sovereign Lord of the universe; yet since that first notion of him implies that he is a God of absolute and infinite perfection and glory, we cannot contemplate that glory, or conceive him present, without the most exquisite diminution of ourselves before him.

“The other part of your definition I cannot approve, because I think all those comparisons are rather the effects of pride than of humility.

“Though truth is the object of the understanding; and all truths as such, agree in one common excellence, yet there are some truths which are comparatively of so small value, because of little use, that it is no matter whether we know them or not. Among these I rank the right answer to your question, whether our neighbor or we be worse. Of what importance can this inquiry be to us? Comparisons in these cases are very odious, and do most certainly proceed from some bad principle in those who make them. So far should we be from reasoning upon the case, that we ought not to permit ourselves to entertain such thoughts, but if they ever intrude, to reject them with abhorrence.

“Supposing that in some cases the truth of that proposition, my neighbor is worse than I, be ever so evident, yet what does it avail? Since two persons in different respects may be better and worse than each other. There is nothing plainer than that a free-thinker as a free-thinker; and an atheist as an atheist, is worse in that respect than a believer as a believer. But if that believer’s practice does not correspond to his faith—he is worse than an infidel.

“If we are not obliged to think ourselves the worst in every company, I am perfectly sure that a man sincerely humble, will be afraid to think himself the best in any. And though it should be his lot (for it can never be his choice) to fall into the company of notorious sinners; who makes thee to differ? Or, what hast thou that thou hast not received? is sufficient, if well considered, to humble us, and silence all aspiring thoughts and self-applause; and may instruct us to ascribe our preservation from enormous offences to the sovereign grace of God, and not to our own natural purity or strength.

“You are somewhat mistaken in your notions of faith. All faith is an assent, but all assent is not faith. Some truths are self-evident,

and we assent to them because they are so. Others, after a regular and formal process of reason by way of deduction from some self-evident principle, gain our assent. This is not properly faith but science. Some again we assent to, not because they are self-evident, or because we have attained the knowledge of them in a regular method by a train of arguments; but because they have been revealed to us, either by God or man, and these are the proper objects of faith. The true measure of faith is the authority of the revealer, the weight of which always holds proportion to our conviction of his ability and integrity. Divine faith is an assent to whatever God has revealed to us, because he has revealed it."*

It was impossible for Mr. Wesley to correspond with such a parent, and on such subjects, without being improved. And it is certain that he never forgot some of the rules and maxims which he had learned from her. The effect of his present inquiries was deep and lasting. In reading Kempis, he tells us that he had frequently much sensible comfort, such as he was an utter stranger to before. And the chapter in Dr. Taylor on purity of intention, convinced him of the necessity of being holy in heart, as well as regular in his outward deportment. Meeting likewise with a religious friend about this time, which he never had before, he began to alter the whole form of his conversation, and to set in earnest upon a *new life*. He communicated every week. He watched against all sin, whether in word or deed; and began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness.†

Having now determined to devote himself wholly to God, his letters to his parents carried a savor of religion, which before they had wanted: this made his father say to him in a letter of August the 2d, "If you be what you write, you and I shall be happy, and you will much alleviate my misfortune." He soon found that his son was not double minded. The time of his ordination now drew near. His father wrote to him on this subject, in a letter dated September the 7th, in which he says, "God fit you for your great work. Fast, watch, and pray; believe, love, endure, and be happy; towards which you shall never want the most ardent prayers of your affectionate father." In preparing for his ordination he found some scruples on his mind respecting the damnatory clause in the Athanasian creed; which he proposed to his father, who afterwards gave him his opinion upon it. Having prepared himself with the most conscientious care for the ministerial office, he was ordained Deacon on Sunday, the nineteenth of this month, by Dr. Potter, then Bishop of Oxford.

Mr. Wesley's ordination supplied him with an additional motive to prosecute the study of Divinity; which he did, by directing his

* The remaining part of this letter on predestination is inserted in the *Arminian Magazine*, vol. i. page 36, though with an error in the date.

† Wesley's Works, vol. xxvi. page 274.

inquiries into the evidences and reasonableness of the christian religion. He wrote to his mother on this subject November the 3d, who in her answer dated the 10th, encourages him to persevere in such investigations without any fear of being injured by them. "I highly approve," says she, "of your care to search into the grounds and reasons of your most holy religion; which you may do, if your intention be pure, and yet retain the integrity of your faith. Nay, the more you study on that subject, the more reason you will find to depend on the veracity of God; inasmuch as your perception of him will be clearer, and you will more plainly discover the congruity there is between the ordinances and precepts of the gospel, and right reason. Nor is it an hard matter to prove that the whole system of Christianity is founded thereon."

It was however, but a small portion of his time that Mr. Wesley employed in these studies. His private diary shows how diligent he was in the study of the classics, and other books in different branches of science, and in the performance of his academical exercises. The time also drew near when it was expected that the election of a Fellow of Lincoln College would take place; with a view to which his friends had been exerting themselves in his favor all the summer.* When Dr. Morley, the Rector, was spoken to on the subject, he said, "I will inquire into Mr. Wesley's character." He did so, and gave him leave to stand a candidate. He afterwards became his friend in that business, and used all the influence he had in his favor. His father in a letter of July says, "I waited on Dr. Morley, and found him more civil than ever. I will write to the Bishop of Lincoln again, and to your brother Samuel the next post. Study hard lest your opponents beat you." In another letter, speaking of Dr. Morley, he says, "You are infinitely obliged to that generous man."

In election business, the passions of men generally run high, and every circumstance is laid hold of, which can by any means be so managed as to influence the public opinion against an opponent. And Mr. Wesley's late seriousness did not escape the banter and ridicule of his adversaries at Lincoln, on this occasion. In reference to this his father observes in a letter of August; "As for the gentlemen candidates you write of—Does any body think that the devil has no agents left? It is a very callow virtue, sure, that cannot bear being laughed at. I think our Captain and Master endured something more for us, before he entered into glory: and unless we follow his steps, in vain do we hope to share that glory with him. Nor shall any who sincerely endeavor to serve him, either by turning others to righteousness, or keeping them steadfast in it, lose their reward." And in his letter of October the 19th, he exhorts him to bear patiently what was said of him at Lincoln: "but be sure," says he, "never to return the like treatment to your enemy. You and I have hitherto done the

* His father mentions it in his letter of the 26th of January of this year.

best we could in that affair; do you continue to do the same, and rest the whole with Providence."

His mother writes to him on this occasion more in the way of encouragement and caution. "If it be," says she, "a weak virtue, that cannot bear being laughed at, I am sure it is a strong and well confirmed virtue that can stand the test of a brisk buffoonery. I doubt too many people, though well inclined, have yet made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience merely because they could not bear raillery. Some young persons have a natural excess of bashfulness; others are so tender of what they call honor, that they cannot endure to be made a jest of. I would therefore advise those who are in the beginning of a christian course, to shun the company of profane wits, as they would the plague or poverty: and never to contract an intimacy with any, but such as have a good sense of religion."

But notwithstanding the warm opposition which his opponents made against him, Mr. Wesley's general good character for learning and diligence, gave such firmness and zeal to his friends, that on Thursday, March the 17th, 1726, he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College.* His father emphatically expresses his satisfaction on this occasion, in a letter of the first of April. "I have both of yours since your election: in both, you express yourself as becometh you. What will be my own fate before the summer be over, God knows; *sed passim graviora*.—Wherever I am, my Jack is Fellow of Lincoln." His mother, in a letter of March 30, tells him, in her usual strain of piety, "I think myself obliged to return great thanks to Almighty God, for giving you good success at Lincoln. Let whoever he pleased be the instrument, to him and to him alone the glory appertains."

The Monday following his election, being March 21, he wrote to his brother Samuel,† expressing his gratitude for the assistance he had given him in that affair. With this letter he sent two or three copies of verses, which seem, by what he says of them, to have been written at an early period. "I have not yet," says he, "been able to meet with one or two gentlemen, from whom I am in hopes of getting two or three copies of verses. The most tolerable of my own, if any such there were, you probably received from Leyburn. Some of those I had besides, I have sent here; and shall be very glad if they are capable of being so corrected, as to be of any service to you." He sent three specimens of his poetry with this letter: the two following I shall insert; which, considered as hasty productions, the mere amusement of an hour or two, and sent in their rough state, I am confident every good judge will pronounce excellent, notwithstanding the modesty with which he speaks of them.

* Private Diary.

† This letter, and the verses which accompanied it, were inserted some years ago, by Mr. Badcock, in the Westminster Magazine. The letter is there without a date, which I have taken from Mr. John Wesley's Diary. Mr. Badcock tells the public, that he had a variety of curious papers by him, which show Mr. Wesley in a light which perhaps he had forgot, &c.—I shall have occasion to mention this circumstance in another place.

HORACE, Lib. I. Ode XXII.

Integrity needs no defence ;
The man who trusts to innocence,
Nor wants the darts Numidians throw,
Nor arrows of the Parthian bow.

Secure o'er Libya's sandy seas,
Or hoary Caucasus he strays,
O'er regions scarcely known to fame,
Wash'd by Hydaspes' fabled stream.

While void of cares, of nought afraid,
Late in the Sabine woods I stray'd ;
On Sylvia's lips, while pleas'd I sung,
How love and soft persuasion hung !

A rav'nous wolf intent on food,
Rush'd from the covert of the wood ;
Yet dar'd not violate the grove
Secur'd by innocence and love.

Nor Mauritania's sultry plain,
So large a savage does contain ;
Nor e'er so huge a monster treads
Warlike Apulia's beechen shades.

Place me where no revolving sun
Does o'er his radiant circle run ;
Where clouds and damps alone appear,
And poison the unwholesome year :

Place me in that effulgent day
Beneath the sun's directer ray ;
No change from its fix'd place shall move
The basis of my lasting love.

In imitation of, *Quis desiderio sit Pudor, &c.* Sent to a gentleman on the death of his
Father.

What shame shall stop our flowing tears ?
What end shall our just sorrows know ?
Since fate, relentless to our prayers,
Has giv'n the long destructive blow !

Ye Muses, strike the sounding string,
In plaintive strains his loss deplore ;
And teach an artless voice to sing
The great, the bounteous, now no more !

For him the wise and good shall mourn,
While late records his fame declare :
And oft as rolling years return,
Shall pay his tomb a grateful tear.

Ah ! what avail their plaints to thee ?
Ah ! what avails his fame declar'd ?
Thou blam'st, alas ! the just decree
Whence virtue meets its just reward.

Though sweeter sounds adorn'd thy tongue
 Than Thracian Orpheus whilom play'd ;
 When list'ning to the morning song
 Each tree bow'd down its leafy head :

Never! ah, never from the gloom
 Of unrelenting Pluto's sway,
 Could the thin shade again resume
 Its ancient tenement of clay.

Indulgent patience, heav'n-born guest!
 Thy healing wings around display ;
 Thou gently calm'st the stormy breast
 And driv'st the tyrant grief away.

Corroding care and eating pain,
 By just degrees thy influence own ;
 And lovely lasting peace again
 Resumes her long deserted throne.

His parents now invited him to spend some time with them in the country. Accordingly he left Oxford in April, and staid the whole summer at Epworth and Wroote. During this time he usually read prayers and preached twice on the Lord's-day, and otherways assisted his father as occasion required. His time here was by no means wasted ; he still pursued his studies, had frequent opportunities of conversing with his parents on subjects highly interesting and instructive, and kept a regular diary of what passed. He often takes notice of the particular subjects discussed in their various conversations, and mentions the practical observations his parents made, and sometimes adds his own. Among others, were the following ; how to increase our faith, our hope, and our love of God : prudence, simplicity, sincerity, pride, vanity ; wit, humor, fancy, courtesy, and general usefulness. His parents made such observations as reflection and long experience had suggested to them, and he carefully minuted down such rules and maxims as appeared to him important.

Mr. Wesley returned to Oxford on the 21st of September, and resumed his usual course of studies. His literary character was now established in the University : he was acknowledged by all parties to be a man of talents, and an excellent critic in the learned languages. His compositions were distinguished by an elegant simplicity of style, and justness of thought, that strongly marked the excellence of his classical taste. His skill in logic, or the art of reasoning, was universally known and admired. The high opinion that was entertained of him, in these respects, was soon publicly expressed by choosing him Greek lecturer and moderator of the classes, on the 7th of November ; though he had only been elected Fellow of the college in March, was little more than twenty-three years of age, and had not yet proceeded Master of Arts.

I have been the more exact in bringing forward all the particulars concerning him, from the latter end of the year 1724, to the present

time, because they have been very imperfectly known, and some of them very erroneously stated by all his biographers, who have hitherto attempted to give any account of him. It is also evident, that an accurate knowledge of these particulars, does him credit: the correspondence relative to his ordination gives the reader a view of the simplicity and integrity of his heart, in the most artless and undisguised manner, and does infinite honor to the rational affection and pious care of his parents: it likewise points out to us the kind of advice which had the chief influence in forming his religious character; and the circumstances of his preferment at Lincoln College, give the most unequivocal proof of his merit, and of the high reputation he had acquired in the university for learning, diligence, and attention to discipline, at this early period of life.

It appears from what has already been said, that Mr. Wesley did not devote all his time to the severer studies, but occasionally paid his court to the muses with good success. His paraphrase on the first eighteen verses of the 104th Psalm, is a more finished piece than any thing he had written before. He began to write it on the 19th of August this year, when at Epworth; and for its beauty and excellence, it deserves to be printed with more accuracy than has yet been done. I shall therefore transcribe it from the original manuscript.

- VERSE 1. Upborne aloft on vent'rous wing,
 While, spurning earthly themes, I soar,
 Through paths untrod before,
 What God, what scrapp shall I sing?
 Whom but thee should I proclaim,
 Author of this wond'rous frame?
 Eternal uncreated Lord,
 Enshrin'd in glory's radiant blaze!
 At whose prolific voice, whose potent word,
 Commanded, nothing swift retir'd, and worlds began their race.
2. Thou, brooding o'er the realms of night,
 Th' unbottom'd infinite abyss,
 Bad'st the deep her rage surcease,
 And said'st let there be light!
 Æthereal light thy call obey'd,
 Glad she left her native shade,
 Through the wide void her living waters past;
 Darkness turn'd his murmuring head,
 Resign'd the reins, and trembling fled;
 The crystal waves roll'd on, and filled the ambient waste.
2. In light, effulgent robe, array'd,
 Thou left'st the beauteous realms of day!
 The golden towers inclin'd their head,
 As their Sov'reign took his way.
- 3, 4. The all-encircling bounds (a shining train,
 Minist'ring flames around him flew)
 Through the vast profound he drew,
 When lo! sequacious to his fruitful hand,
 Heaven o'er the uncolor'd void, her azure curtain threw.

- Lo! marching o'er the empty space,
 The fluid stores in order rise
 With adamant chains of liquid glass,
 To bind the new-born fabric of the skies.
- VERSE 3. Downward the Almighty Builder rode,
 Old Chaos groan'd beneath the God,
 Sable clouds his pompous car,
 Harnest winds before him ran,
 Proud to wear their Maker's chain,
 And told, with hoarse-resounding voice, his coming from afar.
5. Embryon earth the signal knew,
 And rear'd from night's dark womb her infant head,
 6. Though yet prevailing waves her hills o'erspread
 And stain'd their sickly face with pallid hue.
7. But when loud thunders the pursuit began,
 Back the affrighted spoilers ran ;
 8. In vain aspiring hills opposed their race,
 O'er hills and vales with equal haste,
 The flying squadrons past,
 Till safe within the walls of their appointed place :
9. There firmly fix'd, their sure enclosures stand,
 Unconquerable bounds of ever-during sand !
10. He spake! From the tall mountain's wounded side,
 Fresh springs roll'd down their silver tide :
 O'er the glad vales the shining wanderers stray,
 Soft murmuring as they flow,
11. While in their cooling wave inclining low,
 The untaught natives of the field their parching thirst allay.
12. High seated on the dancing sprays,
 Chequering with varied light their parent streams,
 The feather'd quires attune their artless lays
 Safe from the dreaded heat of solar beams.
13. Genial show'rs at his command,
 Pour plenty o'er the barren land :
14. See! the teeming hills disclose
 A new birth : see cheerful green,
 Transitory, pleasing scene,
 O'er the smiling landskip glow,
 And gladden all the vale below.
15. Along the mountain's craggy brow,
 Amiably dreadful now !
 See the clasping vine dispread
 Her gently-rising verdant head :
 See the purple grape appear,
 Kind relief of human care !
16. Instinct with circling life, thy skill
 Uprear'd the olive's loaded bough ;
 What time on Lebanon's proud hill
 Slow rose the stately cedar's brow.
 Nor less rejoice the lowly plains,
 Of useful corn the fertile bed,
 Than when the lordly cedar reigns,
 A beauteous, but a barren shade.

- VERSE 17. While in his arms the painted train,
 Warbling to the vocal grove,
 Sweetly tell their pleasing pain,
 Willing slaves to genial love.
18. While the wild-goats, an active throng,
 From rock to rock light-bounding fly,
 Jehovah's praise in solemn song,
 Shall echo through the vaulted sky.

The reader who carefully examines these specimens of his poetical talents, and at the same time considers that he was designed for a more noble employment than making verses, however excellent they might be, will highly approve of the judicious advice his mother gave him about this time. "I would not have you leave off making verses," says she; "rather make poetry sometimes your diversion, though never your business."

Mr. Wesley was now more desirous than ever, of improving his time to the best advantage. But as he had not yet taken his degree of Master of Arts, the whole of his time was not at his own disposal. But such portions of it as were, he carefully spent in pursuit of such knowledge as promised to be beneficial to himself, and would enable him to benefit others; never indulging himself in an idle useless curiosity, which is the common fault of most young men in the conduct of their studies. He expresses his sentiments on this head in a letter to his mother of January, 1727. "I am shortly to take my master's degree. As I shall from that time be less interrupted by business not of my own choosing, I have drawn up for myself a scheme of studies from which I do not intend, for some years at least, to vary. I am perfectly come over to your opinion, that there are many truths it is not worth while to know. Curiosity indeed might be a sufficient plea for our laying out some time upon them, if we had half a dozen centuries of life to come; but methinks it is great ill-husbandry to spend a considerable part of the small pittance now allowed us, in what makes us neither a quick nor a sure return.

"Two days ago I was reading a dispute between those celebrated masters of controversy, Bishop Atterbury and Bishop Hoadly; but must own I was so injudicious as to break off in the middle. I could not conceive, that the dignity of the end was at all proportioned to the difficulty of attaining it. And I thought the labor of twenty or thirty hours, if I was sure of succeeding, which I was not, would be but ill rewarded by that important piece of knowledge, whether Bishop Hoadly had misunderstood Bishop Atterbury or no?"

The following paragraph, in the same letter, will show the reader how diligent he had long been in improving the occasions which occurred, of impressing a sense of religion on the minds of his companions, and of his soft and obliging manner of doing it. "About a year and a half ago," says he, "I stole out of company at eight in the evening, with a young gentleman with whom I was intimate. As we took a

turn in an isle of St. Mary's Church, in expectation of a young lady's funeral, with whom we were both acquainted, I asked him if he really thought himself my friend? and if he did, why he would not do me all the good he could? He began to protest,—in which I cut him short, by desiring him to oblige me in an instance, which he could not deny to be in his own power: to let me have the pleasure of making him a whole Christian, to which I knew he was at least half persuaded already. That he could not do me a greater kindness, as both of us would be fully convinced when we came to follow that young woman."

"He turned exceedingly serious, and kept something of that disposition ever since. Yesterday was a fortnight he died of a consumption. I saw him three days before he died; and on the Sunday following did him the last good office I could here, by preaching his funeral sermon; which was his desire when living."

Mr. Wesley proceeded Master of Arts on the 14th of February,* and acquired considerable reputation in his disputation for his degree; on which account his mother congratulates him in a letter of the fourteenth of March. On the 19th he writes thus to her. "One advantage at least, my degree has given me; I am now at liberty, and shall be in a great measure for some time, to choose my own employment. And as I believe I know my own deficiencies best, and which of them are most necessary to be supplied; I hope my time will turn to somewhat better account, than when it was not so much in my own disposal." He had already fixed the plan of his studies; but how to attain a more practical knowledge of God, and a more entire conformity to his will, in the temper of his mind and in all his actions, was a point not so easily determined. He saw what the law of God required him to be, and was deeply sensible of his deficiencies; but he did not yet see the way of faith, which the gospel points out as the way of victory, of holiness, and of peace. There is nothing more natural in this state of mind, than for a person to imagine, that some other situation in life would be more advantageous to him than that in which he is placed. He feels his present difficulties and hinderances in the way of religion; but he does not see, that every situation of life has its difficulties and hinderances, which a Christian is called upon to conquer, not to shun. Mr. Wesley however, thought, that the company he was necessarily exposed to at Oxford, was a hinderance to his progress in religion, and that a seclusion from the world would be highly advantageous to him in this respect. Though we must disapprove of the opinion, which his riper judgment likewise condemned, we cannot but acknowledge that it gives the clearest evidence of his sincerity; and that he was not religious, to be seen of men. He expresses the thoughts he then had of this matter, in the same letter

* Private Diary.

of the 19th of March. "The *conversation* of one or two persons, whom you may have heard me speak of, I hope never without gratitude, first took off my relish for most other pleasures, so far that I despised them in comparison of *that*. I have since proceeded a step further; to slight them absolutely. And I am so little at present in love with even company, the most elegant entertainment next to books; that, unless the persons have a religious turn of thought, I am much better pleased without them. I think it is the settled temper of my soul, that I should prefer, at least for some time, such a retirement, as would seclude me from all the world, to the station I am now in. Not that this is by any means unpleasant to me; but I imagine it would be more improving to be in a place where I might confirm or implant in my mind what habits I would, without interruption, before the flexibility of youth be over.

"A school in Yorkshire was proposed to me lately, on which I shall think more, when it appears whether I may have it or not. A good salary is annexed to it. But what has made me wish for it most, is the frightful description, as they call it, which some gentlemen who know the place, gave me of it yesterday. It lies in a little vale, so pent up between two hills, that it is scarce accessible on any side; so that you can expect little company from without, and within there is none at all. I should therefore be entirely at liberty to converse with company of my own choosing, whom for that reason I would bring with me; and company equally agreeable, wherever I fixed, could not put me to less expense.

"The sun that walks his airy way
To cheer the world, and bring the day;
The moon that shines with borrow'd light,
The stars that gild the gloomy night,
All of these, and all I see,
Should be sung, and sung by me:
These praise their Maker as they can,
But want, and ask the tongue of man."

"I am full of business: but have found a way to write, without taking any time from that. It is but rising an hour sooner in the morning, and going into company an hour later in the evening; both which may be done without any inconvenience." The school however was otherways disposed of; at which his mother was well pleased. "I am not sorry," says she, "that you have missed the school; that way of life would not agree with your constitution; and I hope God has better work for you to do."

Mr. Wesley saw, that a loose and desultory way of reading and studying, was not the way to accurate knowledge; and to avoid falling into this error, he had, some time before he took his master's degree, laid down a plan of study which he now closely pursued. Certain hours, in the morning and afternoon, of each day in the week,

were appropriated to the study of certain branches of knowledge : and he never suffered himself to deviate from the rule he had laid down. Thus, his hours of study on Mondays and Tuesdays, were devoted to the Greek and Roman classics, historians and poets.—Wednesdays, to logic and ethics.—Thursdays, to Hebrew and Arabic.—Fridays, to metaphysics and natural philosophy.—Saturdays, to oratory and poetry, chiefly composing.—Sundays, to divinity. In the intermediate hours, between these more fixed studies, he perfected himself in the French language, which he had begun to learn two or three years before : he also read a great variety of modern authors in almost every department of science. His method was this : he first read an author regularly through ; then, in the second reading, transcribed into his collections, such passages as he thought important, either for the information they contained, or the beauty of expression. This method not only inured him to industry and accuracy, but it considerably increased his stock of knowledge, and gave him a familiar acquaintance with the authors he had read.

It has been doubted by some persons, whether the mathematics entered into Mr. Wesley's plan of studies at the university. But among the authors mentioned in his Diary, I find, Euclid, Keil, S'Gravesande, Sir Isaac Nowton, &c. and he seems to have studied them with great attention. He sometimes amused himself with experiments in optics.

It has been before observed, that his father had two livings. He now became less able to attend to the duties of his station, than formerly ; especially as it was difficult, and sometimes dangerous in the winter, to pass between Epworth and Wroote : and it was not easy to procure an assistant to his mind, in this remote corner of the kingdom. He was therefore desirous, that his son, Mr. John Wesley, should come into the country, and reside chiefly at Wroote, as his curate. Mr. Wesley complied with his father's request, who thus expresses himself in a letter of June,—“I do not think that I have thanked you enough for your kind and dutiful letter of the 14th instant. When you come hither, your head-quarters will, I believe, for the most part be at Wroote, and mine at Epworth ; though sometimes making a change.” Accordingly, he left Oxford on the 4th of August ; and coming to London, spent some days with his brother Samuel, and then proceeded on his journey to take upon him his appointed charge. In this part of Lincolnshire, the ague is endemic, and in October he was seized with it ; at the same time he was called to Oxford, probably to oblige Dr. Morley, the Rector of Lincoln College, on some election business. This gentleman had rendered such services to Mr. Wesley, in his election to Lincoln, that he used to say, “I can refuse Dr. Morley nothing.” In the present instance, his gratitude overcame all objections against travelling on horseback, through wet and cold, with an ague upon him. He reached Oxford

on the 16th, and left it again on the 25th, travelling in the same manner back to Wroote, though often very ill on the road. He now continued in the country for some time, still pursuing the same plan of study, as far as the nature of his situation would permit.

Mr. Wesley's general knowledge, and agreeable conversation had endeared him to all his acquaintance at Oxford. He was a most engaging and instructive companion; open and communicative to his friends, and civil and obliging to all. The following letter will set this part of his character in a clear light. It was written by one of the Fellows of his own college, who, it seems, had been a good deal absent, and knew little of him, except what he had learned from the report of those who had been acquainted with him.

“*Coll. Linc. Dec. 28, 1727.*”

“SIR,—Yesterday I had the satisfaction of receiving your kind and obliging letter, whereby you have given me a singular instance of that goodness and civility which is essential to your character; and strongly confirmed to me, the many encomiums which are given you in this respect, by all who have the happiness to know you. This makes me infinitely desirous of your acquaintance. And when I consider those shining qualities which I hear daily mentioned in your praise, I cannot but lament the great misfortune we all suffer, in the absence of so agreeable a person from the college. But I please myself with the thoughts of seeing you here on chapter-day, and of the happiness we shall have in your company in the summer. In the mean time, I return you my most sincere thanks for this favor, and assure you, that if it should ever lie in my power to serve you, no one will be more ready to do it, than, sir,

“Your most obliged and most humble servant,

“LEW. FENTON.”

Mr. Wesley continued in the country till July, 1728, when he returned by way of London to Oxford, where he arrived on the 27th of this month, with a view to obtain priests' orders. No reason is assigned, why he was not ordained priest sooner: it is evident, however, that he had never applied for it, probably on account of his age. On Sunday, the 22d of September, he was ordained priest, by Dr. Potter, Bishop of Oxford, who had ordained him deacon in 1725. Mr. Wesley himself has made a mistake in the date of his ordination. In the first part of his *Farther Appeal*, he says, “I was ordained deacon in 1725, and priest in the year following.” This only proves, that in giving the dates of things which had taken place, he did not always consult his diary, but trusted to his memory, which sometimes failed him. To convince the reader, that I have given the true date, I will insert below a part of his letter of Priests' Orders.*

* Tenor præsentium nos Johannes permissione divinâ Oxon. Episcopus, Notum facimus universis quod nos Episcopus antedictus die Dominico (viz.) Vicesimo secundo

October 1. He set out for Lincolnshire, and did not again visit Oxford till the 16th of June, 1729. At this time his brother Charles, Mr. Morgan, and one or two more, had just formed a little society, chiefly to assist each other in their studies, and to consult on the best method of employing their time to advantage. During his stay here, he was almost constantly with them in the evenings; but about the middle of August, he returned to his charge at Wroote, where he continued till he received the following letter from Dr. Morley, the Rector of his college, dated the 21st of October.—“At a meeting of the society, just before I left college, to consider of the proper method to preserve discipline and good government; among several things agreed on, it was in the opinion of all that were present, judged necessary that the junior Fellows who should be chosen Moderators, shall in person attend the duties of their office, if they do not prevail with some of the Fellows to officiate for them. We all thought it would be a great hardship on Mr. Fenton, to call him from a perpetual Curacy or Donative; yet this we must have done, had not Mr. Hutchins been so kind to him and us, as to free us from the uneasiness of doing a hard thing, by engaging to supply his place in the hall for the present year. Mr. Robinson would as willingly supply yours, but the serving of two cures about fourteen miles from Oxford, and ten at least as bad as the worst of your roads in the isle, makes it, he says, impossible for him to discharge the duty constantly. We hope it may be as much for your advantage to reside at college as where you are, if you take pupils, or can get a curacy in the neighborhood of Oxon. Your father may certainly have another curate, though not so much to his satisfaction: yet we are persuaded that this will not move him to hinder your return to college, since the interest of college, and obligation to statute requires it.”—In consequence of this letter, he quitted his father’s curacy at Wroote, and November 22, came to reside at Oxford.

die mensis Septembris, Anno Domini Millesimo Septingentesimo Vicesimo octavo in Ecclesia Cathedrali Christi Oxon. Sacros Ordines Dei Omnipotentis presidio celebrantes: Dilectum nobis in Christo Johannem Wesley, Artis Magistrum, e Coll. Lincoln. Oxon. Socium.—ad Sacrum Presbyteratus Ordinem juxta morem et ritus Ecclesiæ Anglicanæ admissimus et promovimus ipsumque in Presbyterum tunc et ibidem rite et Canonice Ordinavimus. Datum sub Sigillo nostro Episcopali in præmissorum fidem ac testimonium die mensis Annoque Domini supra expressis et nostræ Consecrationis Anno decimo quarto. Jo. Oxon.