

## CHAPTER IV.

STATING THE PRINCIPAL CIRCUMSTANCES OF MR. WESLEY'S LIFE AND LABORS, TILL AFTER THE CONFERENCE IN 1784; WITH A CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF METHODISM TO THAT PERIOD.

SOME of the preachers being now in America, and several societies having been formed, they earnestly solicited Mr. Wesley, once more to cross the Atlantic and give them a visit. In the beginning of this year, he wrote to Mr. Whitefield on this subject, as follows: "Mr. Keen informed me some time since, of your safe arrival in Carolina; of which indeed I could not doubt for a moment, notwithstanding the idle report of your being cast away, which was so current in London. I trust our Lord has more work for you to do in Europe, as well as in America. And who knows, but before your return to England, I may pay another visit to the New World? I have been strongly solicited by several of our friends in New York and Philadelphia. They urge many reasons; some of which seem to be of considerable weight. And my age is no objection at all: for I bless God, my health is not barely good, but abundantly better, in several respects, than when I was five and twenty. But there are so many reasons on the other side, that as yet, I can determine nothing; so I must wait till I have further light. Here I am; let the Lord do with me as seemeth him good. For the present, I must beg of you to supply my lack of service: by encouraging the preachers as you judge best, who are as yet comparatively young and unexperienced: by giving them such advices as you think proper: and above all, by exhorting them not only to love one another, but if it be possible, as much as lieth in them, live peaceably with all men."—It is evident from what is here said, that he had a strong inclination once more to visit America. This inclination operated on his mind for many years. And when the people were sometimes tardy in complying with his directions and desires, he would often mention it, as a means of keeping them in order. Being one day asked in company, if he did intend to go to America? He answered, "If I go to America, I must do a thing which I hate as bad as I hate the devil." What is that, sir, said one present? "I must keep a secret," he replied: meaning, that if his inclination rose to a fixed purpose, he must conceal it from the societies here; otherwise, such an opposition would be raised, as might, in the event, effectually prevent him from undertaking the voyage.

Mr. Wesley, and those associated with him, were called Arminians, because they maintained that Jesus Christ died for the salvation of all men: Mr. Whitefield, and those in connexion with him, and most of the clergy in the Church of England, who preached justification by

faith alone, were denominated Calvinists, because they maintained that Christ died only for a determinate number, who must finally be saved. Such party distinctions are always mischievous in their consequences; they awaken suspicions which destroy the charity that hopeth all things, and they weaken brotherly love and christian fellowship. Each party draws consequences from the opinions of the other, which the other denies, and in reality does not hold. Hence jealousy is constantly kept awake in each party, disposing the mind to take advantage of every circumstance that may occur, to injure each other. This was precisely the case in the present year, between the Arminians and the Calvinists. The propositions at the conclusion of the Minutes,\* were sufficient to kindle, what before was only jealousy and suspicion, into a flame of contention and strife. The Calvinists took the alarm, and the late honorable and Reverend W. Shirley, wrote a circular letter to all the serious clergy and others through the land. In June, 1771, Mr. Fletcher sent a copy of this letter to Mr. Wesley, and at the same time wrote as follows: "When I left Wales, where I had stood in the gap for peace, I thought my poor endeavors were not altogether in vain. L— H— said, she would write civilly to you, and desire you to explain yourself about your Minutes. I suppose you have not heard from her; for she wrote me word since, that she believed she must not meddle in the affair.—Upon my receiving yours from Chester, I cut off that part of it, where you expressed your belief of, what is eminently called by us, the doctrine of free grace, and sent it to the college, desiring it might be sent to Lady Huntingdon. She hath returned it, with a letter wherein she expresses the greatest disapprobation of it: the purport of it is to charge you with tergiversation, and me with being the dupe of your impositions. She hath wrote in stronger terms to her college.

"Things I hoped would have remained here; but how am I surprised, and grieved to see, zeal borrowing the horn of discord and sounding an alarm through the religious world against you! Mr. H— called upon me last night, and showed me a printed circular letter, which I suppose is, or will be, sent to the serious clergy and laity through the land. I have received none, as I have lost, I suppose, my reputation of being a real Protestant, by what I wrote on your Minutes, in Wales.

"The following is an exact copy of the printed letter.

"SIR,

"Whereas Mr. Wesley's Conference is to be held at Bristol, on Tuesday, the 6th of August next, it is proposed by Lady Huntingdon, and many other christian friends (real Protestants) to have a meeting at Bristol, at the same time, of such principal persons, both clergy and laity, who disapprove of the under-written Minutes; and as the

\* After these words, "We said in 1774," &c. &c. to the end.

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same are thought injurious to the very fundamental principles of Christianity, it is further proposed, that they go in a body to the said Conference, and insist upon a formal *recantation* of the said Minutes; and in case of a refusal, that they sign and publish their *protest* against them. Your presence, sir, on this occasion is particularly requested: but if it should not suit your convenience to be there, it is desired that you will transmit your sentiments on the subject, to such person as you think proper to produce them. It is submitted to you, whether it would not be right, in the opposition to be made to such a dreadful *heresy*, to recommend it to as many of your christian friends, as well of the Dissenters, as of the established church, as you can prevail on to be there; the cause being of so public a nature.

I am, sir,

Your obedient servant,

WALTER SHIRLEY."

Then followed a postscript, containing the objectionable propositions, &c. &c. After stating this, Mr. Fletcher proceeds, "I think it my duty, dear sir, to give you the earliest intelligence of this bold onset; and assure you, that upon the evangelical principles, mentioned in your last letter to me, I, for one, shall be glad to stand by you, and your doctrine to the last: hoping that you will gladly remove stumbling blocks out of the way of the weak, and alter such expressions as may create prejudice in the hearts of those who are inclined to admit it.—If you come this way, sir, I will show you the minutes of what I wrote in Wales, in defence of what is called your *dreadful heresy*: for as to the writing itself, I have it not, Lady H— would never return it to me. Dear sir, we can never make too much of Jesus Christ: some may preach and exalt him out of contention, but let us do it willingly and scripturally, and the Lord will stand by us. I beg, I entreat him, to stand by you; particularly at this time to give you the simplicity of the dove, and the wisdom of the serpent; the condescension of a child, and the firmness of a father.

"I write to Mr. Shirley, to expostulate with him to call in his circular letter. He is the last man who should attack you. His sermons contain propositions much more heretical and anticalvinistic, than your minutes. If my letter have not the desired effect, I shall probably, if you approve of them and will correct them, publish them for your justification. I find Mr. Ir—d, is to write, to make you *tamely recant*, without measuring swords, or breaking a pike with our real Protestants. I write to him also."

Tuesday, August 6, the Conference began at Bristol. On Thursday morning Mr. Shirley and his friends were admitted; when a conversation took place for about two hours, on the subject which occasioned their visit. Though the party had shown much violence in writing, yet the interview with the Conference was managed with

great temper and moderation; but with little or no effect. Mr. Fletcher's letters were immediately printed, and on the 14th, Mr. Wesley wrote the following letter to Lady Huntingdon:

“MY DEAR LADY,

“When I received the former letter from your ladyship, I did not know how to answer: and I judged, not only that silence would be the best answer, but also, that, with which your ladyship would be best pleased. When I received your ladyship's of the second instant, I immediately saw that it required an answer; only I waited till the hurry of the Conference was over, that I might do nothing rashly. I know your ladyship would not ‘servilely deny the truth.’ I think neither would I: especially that great truth JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH; which Mr. Law indeed flatly denies (and yet Mr. Law was a child of God) but for which I have given up all my worldly hopes, my friends, my reputation; yea for which I have so often hazarded my life, and by the grace of God will do again. The principles established in the minutes, I apprehend to be no way contrary to this; or to that faith, that consistent plan of doctrine, which was once delivered to the saints. I believe whoever calmly considers Mr. Fletcher's letters, will be convinced of this. I fear therefore, ‘zeal against those principles,’ is no less than zeal against the truth, and against the *honor* of our Lord. The preservation of *his* honor appears so sacred to *me*, and has done for above these forty years, that I have counted, and do count, all things loss in comparison of it. But till Mr. Fletcher's printed letters are answered, I must think every thing spoken against those minutes, is totally destructive of *his honor*, and a palpable affront to him; both as our prophet and priest, but more especially as the King of his people. Those letters, which therefore could not be suppressed without betraying the honor of our Lord, largely prove, that the minutes lay no other foundation, than that which is laid in Scripture, and which I have been laying, and teaching others to lay, for between thirty and forty years. Indeed it would be amazing that God should at this day prosper my labors, as much if not more than ever, by convincing as well as converting sinners, if I was ‘establishing another foundation, repugnant to the whole plan of man's salvation under the covenant of grace, as well as the clear meaning of our *established* church and all other Protestant churches.’ This is a charge indeed! But I plead not guilty: and till it is proved upon me, I must subscribe myself,

My dear Lady,

Your Ladyship's

Affectionate but much injured servant,

JOHN WESLEY.”

The controversy was now continued for some time, but very prudently committed, almost wholly, to Mr. Fletcher; who managed it

with astonishing temper and success. Indeed, the temper of this gentleman, did not lead him to polemic divinity. He was devout and pious, to a degree seldom equalled since the days of the apostles. But being urged into this controversy by the love of truth and reverence for Mr. Wesley, he displayed great knowledge of his subject, and a most happy manner of treating it. His letters were published under the title of, "Checks to Antinomianism." They exhibit a fine model for controversy on religious subjects, and will ever bear ample testimony to the goodness of Mr. Fletcher's head and heart.

It appears to me, however, that the propositions as they stand in the minutes, in short sentences without explanation, have a very suspicious appearance. The expressions are too ambiguous, and might easily have been exchanged for others more clear, and less liable to give offence. I cannot therefore commend, either the wisdom or prudence that dictated them; notwithstanding the abilities of a Fletcher could make them speak, clearly and explicitly, the language of *free grace*.

Mr. Fletcher died in 1785, greatly lamented by thousands who had been benefited by his animating and instructive ministry, and by his pious conversation. The Rev. Mr. Gilpin has given us the finest and most interesting traits of this excellent man's character.

In February, 1772, Mr. Wesley says, "I casually took a volume of what is called, 'A *Sentimental* Journey through France and Italy.' *Sentimental!* What is that? It is not English. He might as well say *continental*. It is not sense: it conveys no determinate idea. Yet one fool makes many; and this nonsensical word (who would believe it?) is become a fashionable one! However, the book agrees full well with the title: for the one is as queer as the other. For oddity, uncouthness, and unlikeness to all the world beside, I suppose the writer is without a rival!"

The preachers met with no riotous mobs to oppose their progress in Scotland. Here, all ranks and orders of the people, from the highest to the lowest, had long been remarkable for a decent regard to religion and the ministerial character: and this religious *decorum*, had not yet been destroyed by that degree of profaneness which stimulates the mind to treat the ministers of the gospel with contempt and outrage. But the preachers soon found, that they had prejudices to contend with more difficult to be overcome than the violence of a mob. They found the Scots strongly intrenched within the lines of religious opinions and modes of worship, which almost bade defiance to any mode of attack. Their success was therefore trifling, compared with what they had experienced in England and Ireland, where their lives had often been in danger from the mob. Mr. Wesley, however, in his stated journeys through Scotland, every where met with the most flattering marks of respect; both from the nobility (who often invited him to take their houses in his way) from many

of the established ministers, and from the magistrates of the cities. In April this year, being on his *biennial* visit to Scotland, he came to Perth, where the magistrates as a token of their respectful regard for him, presented him with the freedom of the city. The diploma ran thus :

“PERTHI vigesimo octavo die mensis Aprilis, Anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo septuagesimo secundo.

“Quo die, Magistratum Illustris ordo, et Honorandus Senatorum cætus inclytæ civitatis Perthensis, in debiti amoris et affectus Tesseram erga Johannem Wesley Artium Magistrum, nuper Collegiæ Lincolnienſis Oxoniæ Socium, Immunitatibus præfatæ Civitatis, Societatis etiam ac Fraternalitatis Ædilitiæ privilegiis—de omnibus a cive necessario exigendis ac præstandis Donarunt,” &c.

This diploma was struck off from a copper plate upon parchment : the arms of the city and some of the words were illuminated, and flowers painted round the borders, which gave it a splendid appearance. And for purity of the Latin, it is not perhaps exceeded by any diploma, either from London or any other city in Europe.

Mr. Wesley now saw the religious societies he had been the happy instrument of forming, spread rapidly on every side ; and the preachers increasing in an almost equal proportion. He became, therefore, every day more solicitous to provide for their unity and permanency after his decease, wishing to preserve at the same time, the original doctrines and *economy* of the Methodists. He knew the views, the opinions, and the jealousies of the preachers concerning each other, better than any other individual could possibly know them, as he had persons in all places who constantly informed him of every thing of importance that was said or done. From the beginning he had stood at the head of the connexion, and by the general suffrage had acted as dictator, in matters relating to the government of the societies. He had often found that all his authority was barely sufficient to preserve peace, and the mere external appearance of unanimity, and therefore concluded, that if his authority were to cease, or not to be transferred to another at his death, the preachers and people would fall into confusion. In January, 1773, being at Shoreham, where no doubt he had consulted Mr. Perronet on the subject, he wrote the following letter to Mr. Fletcher :

“DEAR SIR,

“What an amazing work has God wrought in these kingdoms, in less than forty years! And it not only continues, but increases throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland : nay, it has lately spread into New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, and Carolina. But the wise men of the world say, ‘When Mr. Wesley drops, then all this is at an end!’ And so it surely will, unless before God calls him hence, one is found to stand in his place. For ‘*Οὐκ αγαθον*

πολυκοιρανιη· Εἰς κοιρανὸς ἕνα.\* I see more and more, unless there be one Προεστώς,† the work can never be carried on. The body of the preachers are not united: nor will any part of them submit to the rest: so that either there must be one to preside over all, or the work will indeed come to an end.

“But who is sufficient for these things? Qualified to preside both over the preachers and people? He must be a man of faith and love, and one that has a single eye to the advancement of the kingdom of God. He must have a clear understanding; a knowledge of men and things, particularly of the Methodist doctrine and discipline; a ready utterance; diligence and activity, with a tolerable share of health. There must be added to these, favor with the people, with the Methodists in general. For unless God turn their eyes and their hearts towards him, he will be quite incapable of the work. He must likewise have some degree of learning: because there are many adversaries learned as well as unlearned, whose mouths must be stopped. But this cannot be done, unless he be able to meet them on their own ground.

“But has God provided one so qualified? Who is he? Thou art the man! God has given you a measure of loving faith; and a single eye to his glory. He has given you some knowledge of men and things; particularly of the whole plan of Methodism. You are blessed with some health, activity, and diligence; together with a degree of learning. And to all these, he has lately added, by a way none could have foreseen, favor both with the preachers and the whole people—Come out in the name of God! Come to the help of the Lord against the mighty! Come while I am alive and capable of labor—

*‘Dum superest Lachesi quod torqueat, et pedibus me  
Porto meis, nullo dextram subeunte bacillo.’ ‡*

Come while I am able, God assisting, to build you up in faith, to ripen your gifts, and to introduce you to the people. *Nil tanti.* What possible employment can you have, which is of so great importance?

“But you will naturally say, ‘I am not equal to the task: I have neither grace nor gifts for such an employment?’ You say true: it is certain you have not: and who has? But do you not know him who is able to give them? Perhaps not at once, but rather day by day: as each is, so shall your strength be—‘But this implies,’ you may say, ‘a

\* ‘It is not good, that the supreme power should be lodged in many hands: let there be one chief governor.’ The truth of the first part of this sentence has been remarkably verified among the Methodists, since the death of Mr. Wesley; to the no small injury of many societies.

† ‘Who presides over the rest.’

‡ ‘While Lachesis has some thread of life to spin, and I walk on my own feet without the help of a staff.’ *Juven. Sat. 3d.*



thousand crosses, such as I feel I am not able to bear? You are not able to bear them now; and they are not now come. Whenever they do come, will He not send them in due number, weight and measure? And will they not all be for your profit, that you may be a partaker of his holiness.

“Without conferring, therefore, with flesh and blood, come and strengthen the hands, comfort the heart, and share the labor of, your affectionate friend and brother,

JOHN WESLEY.”

This warm and sincere invitation, to a situation not only respected but even revered by so large a body of people, must have been highly flattering to Mr. Fletcher; especially as it came from a person he most sincerely loved; whose superior abilities, learning, and labors, he admired; and to whose success in the ministry he wished to give every assistance in his power. But he well knew the embarrassments Mr. Wesley met with in the government of the preachers, though he alone, under the providence of God, had given existence to their present character, influence, and usefulness: he was also well acquainted with the mutual jealousies the preachers had of each other, and with their jarring interests; but above all, with the general determination which prevailed among them, not to be under the control of any one man after the death of Mr. Wesley. Under these circumstances, he saw nothing before him but darkness, storms, and tempests, with the most threatening dangers, especially if he should live to be alone in the office. He therefore determined, not to launch his little bark on so tempestuous an ocean.

Mr. Fletcher certainly acted according to the rules of prudence, with respect to himself. But as he died before Mr. Wesley, the difficulties and dangers which he foresaw, were much greater in appearance, than they would have been in reality, had he accepted the invitation. I cannot, therefore, but lament that he did not accept it, as he would have done much good while he lived, and have prevented many of the evils which have since taken place. He would, at least, have prevented the influence which a person, some years afterwards, acquired through the connexion, with talents very inferior to most of the preachers; who has been the chief means of introducing innovations into the original plan of Methodism, which have already produced much mischief, and threaten much more in the issue: and whose rash and inconsistent conduct, on several occasions, has brought the whole body of preachers into disgrace, and embarrassed them with many difficulties.

Mr. Wesley was now advancing in the seventy-first year of his age, and found his health and strength almost undiminished: he therefore continued his labors and travels, with the same assiduity and punctuality as at the beginning. In June, 1774, when he entered on his seventy-second year, he speaks thus of himself, “This being my

birth-day, the first day of my seventy-second year, I was considering how is this, that I find just the same strength as I did thirty years ago? That my sight is considerably better now, and my nerves firmer, than they were then? That I have none of the infirmities of old age, and have lost several I had in my youth? The grand cause is, the good pleasure of God, who doth whatsoever pleaseth him. The chief means are, 1. My constantly rising at four, for about fifty years: 2. My generally preaching at five in the morning, one of the most healthy exercises in the world: 3. My never travelling less, by sea or land, than four thousand five hundred miles in a year."

About this time died Mr. John Downs; who had been many years a preacher among the Methodists. He was a man of sincere unaffected piety; of great affliction, and of uncommon genius. Mr. Charles Wesley gives the following account of his death. "John Downs has lived and died the death of the righteous. For several months past, he has been greatly alive to God, walked closely with him, and visibly grown in grace. Ever since the time that he resolved to preach again, he has preached as often as he really could, and with great success. On Friday morning he rose full of faith, and love, and joy. He declared it was the happiest day of his life, and that he had not been so well in body for years. He expressed his joy in showers of tears.—He was led to pray for the people, so as never before. Going out to the chapel at West-street, he said, 'I used to go to preach trembling, and with reluctance, but now I go in triumph.' His text was, 'Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden,' &c. His words were unusually weighty and with power, but few. He perceived, that he could not finish his discourse, and gave out this verse of the hymn, 'Father I lift my heart to thee, No other help I know'—His voice failing he fell on his knees, as meaning to pray; but he could not be heard. The preacher ran and lifted him from his knees, for he could not raise himself. They carried him to bed, where he lay quiet and speechless till eight on Saturday morning, and then fell asleep. O for an end like his! It is the most enviable, the most desirable I ever heard of. His widow I visited yesterday afternoon. She surprised me, and all who saw her: so supported, so calm, so resigned. A faithful friend received her into her house. She had one sixpence in the world, and no more. But her Maker is her husband.—We all agreed, it is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our sight."\*

In 1775, Mr. Wesley visited Ireland in his usual course; and in June, being then in the north on his return from Londonderry, he had the most severe illness he had ever before experienced. It was however, in part brought on, and afterwards increased, by such acts of imprudence as we should not expect to meet with in the conduct of a cautious, sensible, thinking man. I shall give the circum,

\* Taken from the short-hand.

stances in his own words—"Tuesday 13 (of June,) I was not very well in the morning, but supposed it would soon go off. In the afternoon, the weather being extremely hot, I lay down on the grass in Mr. Lark's orchard at Cock-hill. This I had been accustomed to do for forty years, and never remember to have been hurt by it. Only I never before lay on my face, in which posture I fell asleep. I waked a little, and but a little out of order, and preached with ease to a multitude of people. Afterwards I was a good deal worse: however, the next day I went on a few miles to the Grange. The table was placed there in such a manner, that all the time I was preaching, a strong and sharp wind blew full on the left side of my head. And it was not without a good deal of difficulty that I made an end of my sermon. I now found a deep obstruction in my breast: my pulse was exceeding weak and low. I shivered with cold, though the air was sultry hot, only now and then burning for a few minutes. I went early to bed, drank a draught of treacle and water, and applied treacle to the soles of my feet. I lay till seven on Thursday the 15th, and felt considerably better. But I found near the same obstruction in my breast: I had a low, weak pulse: I burned and shivered by turns, and if I ventured to cough it jarred my head exceedingly. In going on to Derry Anvil, I wondered what was the matter, that I could not attend to what I was reading; no, not for three minutes together, but my thoughts were perpetually shifting. Yet all the time I was preaching in the evening (though I stood in the open air, with the wind whistling round my head) my mind was as composed as ever. Friday 16, in going to Lurgan, I wondered again that I could not fix my attention to what I read: yet while I was preaching in the evening on the Parade, I found my mind perfectly composed; although it rained a great part of the time, which did not well agree with my head. Saturday 17, I was persuaded to send for Dr. Laws, a sensible and skillful physician. He told me, 'I was in a high fever, and advised me to lie by.' I told him, that could not be done; as I had appointed to preach in several places, and must preach as long as I could speak. He then prescribed a cooling draught, with a grain or two of camphor, as my nerves were universally agitated. This I took with me to Tandragee: but when I came there, I was not able to preach: my understanding being quite confused, and my strength entirely gone. Yet I breathed freely, and had not the least thirst, nor any pain from head to foot.

"I was now at a full stand: whether to aim at Lisburn, or to push forward for Dublin? But my friends doubting whether I could bear so long a journey, I went straight to Derry Agby, a gentleman's seat on the side of a hill, three miles beyond Lisburn. Here nature sunk, and I took to my bed: but I could no more turn myself therein, than a new-born child. My memory failed as well as my strength, and well nigh my understanding. Only those words ran in my mind,

when I saw Miss Gayer on one side of the bed, looking at her mother on the other,

‘She sat, like patience on a monument  
Smiling at grief.’

“I can give no account of what followed for two or three days, being more dead than alive. Only I remember it was difficult for me to speak, my throat being exceedingly dry. But Joseph Bradford tells me, I said on Wednesday, ‘It will be determined before this time to-morrow;’ that my tongue was much swollen, and as black as a coal; that I was convulsed all over, and for some time my heart did not beat perceptibly, neither was any pulse discernible.

“In the night of Thursday, the 22d, Joseph Bradford came to me with a cup, and said, ‘Sir, you must take this.’ I thought I will, if I can, to please him; for it will do me neither harm nor good. Immediately it set me vomiting; my heart began to beat, and my pulse to play again. And from that hour, the extremity of the symptoms abated. The next day I sat up several hours, and walked four or five times across the room. On Saturday I sat up all day, and walked across the room many times, without any weariness. On Sunday I came down stairs, and sat several hours in the parlor. On Monday I walked before the house: on Tuesday I took an airing in the chaise: and on Wednesday, trusting in God, to the astonishment of my friends, I set out for Dublin.”

About this time, Mr. Wesley published his “Calm Address to the American Colonies,” then at war with England, the mother country. This tract made a great noise, and raised him many adversaries. Being frequently asked, why he published it? He answered, in Lloyd’s Evening Post, “Not to get money. Had that been my motive, I should have swelled it into a shilling pamphlet, and have entered it at Stationer’s Hall.—Not to get preferment for myself, or my brother’s children—not to please any man living, high or low. I know mankind too well. I know they that love you for political service, love you less than their dinner; and they who hate you, hate you worse than the devil.—Least of all did I write, with a view to inflame any: just the contrary. I contributed my mite toward putting out the flame which rages all over the land,” &c.—Many of his friends, however, were of opinion that he would have acted a more wise and better part, had he never meddled with political disputes. Observation had convinced them, that ministers of the gospel, by interfering with politics, have seldom done any good, and often much harm: having frequently hindered their own usefulness, and made a whip for their own backs.

In the beginning of the year 1776, Mr. Fletcher was recovering from a severe illness. Mr. Wesley, having a high opinion of the salutary effects of easy journies through the country, in such cases, invited Mr. Fletcher to come out, and accompany him through some

of the societies in the spring. Part of Mr. Fletcher's answer is as follows; "I received last night the favor of yours, from Bristol. My grand desire is, to be just what the Lord would have me to be. I could, if you wanted a travelling assistant, accompany you, as my little strength would admit, in some of your excursions. But your recommending me to the societies as one who might succeed you, should the Lord take you hence before me, is a step to which I could by no means consent. It would make me take my horse and gallop away. Beside, such a step would at this juncture, be, I think, peculiarly improper.—We ought to give as little hold to the evil surmisings, and rash judgments of our opponents as may be.—What has made me glut our friends with my books, is not any love to such publications, but a desire to make an end of the controversy. It is probable that my design has miscarried; and that I have disgusted rather than convinced the people.—I agree with you, sir, that now is the time to pray both for ourselves and our king: for the Church of England, and that part of it which is called the Methodists. I cast my mite of supplication into the general treasure. The Lord guide, support, and strengthen you more and more unto the end!"

An order had been made by the House of Lords in May this year, "That the Commissioners of His Majesty's Excise do write circular letters to all such persons whom they have reason to suspect to have plate, as also to those who have not paid regularly the duty on the same," &c. In consequence of this order, the Accomptant-General for Household Plate, sent Mr. Wesley, in September, a copy of the order, with the following letter:

"REVEREND SIR,

"As the commissioners cannot doubt but you have plate for which you have hitherto neglected to make an entry, they have directed me to send you the above copy of the lords' order, and to inform you, they expect that you forthwith make due entry of all your plate, such entry to bear date from the commencement of the plate duty, or from such time as you have owned, used, had, or kept any quantity of silver-plate, chargeable by the Act of Parliament, as in default hereof, the Board will be obliged to signify your refusal to their lordships.—N. B. An immediate answer is desired."

Mr. Wesley answered as follows:

"SIR,

"I have *two* silver tea-spoons at London, and *two* at Bristol. This is all the plate which I have at present: and I shall not buy any more, while so many around me want bread.

I am, Sir,

Your most humble servant,

JOHN WESLEY."

The Methodists had now got a footing in the Isle of Man.\* The

\* "The Isle of Man, is situated in the Irish sea, lying about seven leagues north from Anglesey; about the same distance from Lancashire; nearly the like distance south-east from Galloway, and nine leagues east from Ireland. Its form is long and narrow, stretching from the north-east of Ayre Point to the Calf of Man, which lies south-west, at least thirty English miles. Its breadth in some places is more than nine miles, some say twelve, in most places eight, and in some not above five; and contains about one hundred and sixty square miles."

This island is mentioned by several ancient authors. Cæsar calls it *Mona*: but the *Mona* of Tacitus, can only be applied to Anglesey. Pliny calls it *Monabia*: and in Ptolemy we find *Monaida*, that is, the farther or more remote *Môn*. Orosius styles it *Menavia*; and tells us that it was extremely fertile. Bede, who distinguishes clearly two *Menavian* Islands, names this the Northern *Menavia*, bestowing the epithet of Southern upon Anglesey. Alured of Beverly, also speaks of it as one of the *Menavian* Islands. The Britons in their own language, called it *Manaw*, more properly *Main au*, i. e. "a little Island," which seems to be latinized in the word *Menavia*. All which proves, that this small isle was early inhabited, and as well known to the rest of the world as either Britain or Ireland.

The Isle of Man was, for a long time, an independent state, governed by its own princes. At length, however, they became feudatories to the kings of England, resorted to their court, were kindly received, and had pensions bestowed upon them. Upon the demise of Magnus, the last king of this isle, without heirs male. Alexander III. king of Scots. who had conquered the other isles, seized likewise upon this; which, as part of that kingdom, came into the hands of Edward I., who directed William Huntercumbe, Warden of that isle for him, to restore it to John Baliol, who had done homage to him for the kingdom of Scotland.

But it seems there was still remaining, a lady named *Austrica*, who claimed this sovereignty, as nearest of kin to the deceased Magnus. This claimant being able to obtain nothing from John Baliol, applied herself to King Edward, as the superior lord. He, upon this application, by his writ, which is yet extant, commanded both parties, in order to determine their right, to appear in the King's Bench. The progress of this suit does not appear; but we know that this lady, by a deed of gift conveyed her claim to Sir Simon de Montacute; and after many disputes, invasions by the Scots, and other accidents, the title was examined in Parliament, in the Seventh of Edward III. and solemnly adjudged to William de Montacute; to whom, by letters patent dated the same year, that monarch released all claim whatsoever.

In the succeeding reign, William de Montacute, earl of Salisbury, sold it to Sir William Scroop, afterward earl of Wiltshire; and upon losing his head, it was granted by Henry IV. to Henry Percy, earl of Northumberland; who being attainted, had all his lands restored, except the Isle of Man, which the same monarch granted to Sir John Stanley, to be held by him of the kings his heirs and successors, by homage, and a cast of falcons to be presented at every coronation: and from this family, afterwards earls of Derby, it descended to the duke of Athol.

This island, from its situation directly in the mouth of the Channel, is very beneficial to Britain, by lessening the force of the tides, which would otherwise break with far greater violence than they do at present. The inhabitants are at this day a brisk, lively, hardy, industrious, and well-meaning people. There are few who have over-grown fortunes, and as few who are in distress. The late Lord Derby farming out his customs to foreigners, the insolence of those farmers drew on them the resentment of the English government; and the inhabitants, by an Act of Parliament, were deprived of an open trade with this country. This naturally produced smuggling, which was carried on with astonishing success; till the government in 1765, thought proper to put an entire stop to it, by purchasing the island of the duke of Athol, except his landed property in it: and the manorial rights and emoluments, the patronage of the bishopric, and other ecclesiastical benefices, are unalienably vested in the Crown, and the island subjected to the regulations of the British excise and customs. The inhabitants of the isle are of the Parish of England, and the bishop is styled, Bishop of Sodor and Man. By an Act of Parliament, the 33d of Henry VIII. this bishopric is declared to be in the province of York. See Encyclop. Brit.

last year, a local preacher from Liverpool had paid them a visit, and spent some time with them. He repeated his visit this year, and societies were already formed in seven different places, and they reckoned one hundred and fifty-seven members in the island. It happened here, as in most places of Great Britain and Ireland, that the first preaching of the Methodists, produced no commotions or riots among the common people. I am, indeed, fully convinced that the lower orders of the people, would never become riotous on any occasion, had they food sufficient to eat, were they not excited to those acts of outrage, under false pretences, by persons who have some influence over them, and who endeavor to keep behind the scene. The preachers, however, did not long enjoy peace. Two or three ill-minded persons, of some influence in the island, formed a plan of opposition, which in such cases, is but too often successful. It is perhaps universally true, that they who are destitute of the necessary qualifications to do good, have still the power of doing much harm: so much easier is it, to do the one than the other. These persons, to give greater weight to their opposition, so far prejudiced the mind of the bishop against these new comers, that he wrote a pastoral letter, directed to all the rectors, vicars, chaplains, and curates, within the Isle and diocese of Man. In this letter he states the ground of his opposition thus: "Whereas we have been informed, that several unordained, unauthorized, and unqualified persons from other countries, have for some time past, presumed to preach and teach publicly, and hold and maintain conventicles; and have caused several weak persons to combine themselves together in a new society, and have private meetings, assemblies, and congregations, contrary to the doctrines, government, rites, and ceremonies of the established church, and the civil and ecclesiastical laws of this Isle: We do therefore, for the prevention of schism and the reestablishment of that uniformity in religious worship which so long hath subsisted among us, hereby desire and require each and every of you, to be vigilant and use your utmost endeavors to dissuade your respective flocks from following, or being led and misguided by such incompetent teachers," &c., &c. After expatiating a little on this part of his charge, he tells his clergy that if they could not prevail with the people by persuasion, that they must get a knowledge of the names of such persons as attended at these *unlawful* meetings, as he calls them, and especially of such as enjoyed any office or privilege by episcopal license, and present them to his Rev. Vicars-General, or to some of them. He then requires every one of his clergy, to repel any Methodist preacher from the sacrament, if he should offer himself at the table to receive it. He further directs, that this pastoral letter should be read, *plena Ecclesia*, in full church, the next Sunday after the receipt thereof.

The storm now became violent, and Methodism was threatened with a total shipwreck on the island. The preachers and people,

however, weathered it out; and in the end of May, 1777, Mr. Wesley, who always wished to stand foremost in danger and diligence, paid them a visit, and was received in a very friendly manner by a few persons of respectability and influence. At Peele-Town, Mr. Corbet said, he would gladly have asked him to preach in his church, but the bishop had forbid it; who had also forbidden all his clergy to admit any Methodist preacher to the Lord's Supper. On this occasion Mr. Wesley observes, "Is any clergyman obliged, either in law or conscience to obey such a prohibition? By no means. The *will* even of the king does not bind any English subject, unless it be seconded by an express law. How much less the will of a bishop? But did not you take an oath to obey him?" "No; nor any clergyman in the three kingdoms. This is a mere *vulgar error*. Shame that it should prevail almost universally."

About the time of the Conference this year, a travelling preacher who had been well received by the people, and who had enjoyed a large share of Mr. Wesley's confidence for several years, withdrew from the connexion, and went among the Friends. There had been a misunderstanding between them, for some time before he took this step; and soon afterwards he wrote to Mr. Wesley on the subject. Mr. Charles, I suppose, was in the habit of corresponding with this preacher, and happening to see the letter, requested his brother to let him answer it. The request was granted; and as the answer is written with candor, contains some good observations on young converts, and points out one striking trait in Mr. John Wesley's character, I shall insert it. The date is October this year.\*

"I thank you," says he, "for your affectionate letter.† It confirms and increases my love towards you. Your phrase and dress, make no difference to us—let us abide in the love of Jesus, and we must continue to love one another—out of true impartial love to you both, I long for peace between you and my brother. But alas! you do not love each other so well as I do: mutual confidence is lost, and then what union can there be? I submit to the permissive will of Providence.

"If I know my own heart, I have nothing there but tender disinterested love for him and for you: and it is, and must be, a serious grief to me that you are not cordially affected to each other. But we might part friends, who can never part.—I wished to see you; I should not have said one word against your religion; but I should have taken the liberty of giving you a friendly caution or two, lest satan get an advantage over you, or us.

"You know, when a man leaves one religious party or society, it is a theme both to him and them. Those of his old friends who

\* This letter is taken from Mr. Charles Wesley's papers in short-hand, put into my hands since the first volume of this work was published.

† I suppose, one that Mr. Charles had received from him.



loved him merely as a member of their society, will cease to love him on that account: those who have little or no grace, will partly treat him as a deserter, and express their anger or ill-will by speaking against him. This stabbing a man in the back, as soon as he turns it upon us, I abhor and protest against; and discourage to the utmost of my power.—One, who forsakes his former friends, will be tempted to speak evil of them, and mention their faults, real or supposed, to justify himself for leaving them, or to recommend himself to his new friends. I always stood in doubt of such converts; whether from the Calvinists, Moravians, Dissenters, or any other. Beside, a young convert is always most zealous in making proselytes; which awakens suspicion in the deserted party, and arms them against deprecations.

“My brother showed me your last: I desired him to let me answer it. Hope of a free conversation with you, hindered me from writing. You know, I have talked with you concerning him, without reserve: I could not have used such confidence towards another. Still I am as incapable of mistrusting you, as you are of trusting him. In many things I have more fellowship with you, than I have with him: my love for both is the same.

“But, ‘You expect he will keep his own secrets!’ Let me whisper it into your ear; He never could do it since he was born. It is a gift which God has not given him. But I shall speak to him, and put a stop to what you justly complain of, and let all be buried in oblivion. I wish you may never have any uneasy thought on our account. Speak not therefore of my brother; think no evil of him; forget him if you can entirely, till you meet above.

“You are now entering on a new scene of things. You have no doubt of God’s calling you among the Friends. I judge nothing before the time: time will show. I heartily pray God you may do, and receive much more good among them, than you did among us. If God give you discernment and favor, and you are the approved instrument of reviving his work, and their first love, I shall rejoice and be thankful that you ever left us. But if, which God forbid, you should bury your talent, do no good, and only change one form for another; alas! alas! my brother, you will prove yourself mistaken, and lose many jewels which might have been added to your crown.

“I should think worse of our society than you do, if they felt no sorrow at parting with you. Some whom I know, will seldom think of you without a sorrowful tear. The days of my mourning are just ended. My hope of you is steady, that if you hold out a little longer, I shall find you again among the blessed in that day.”

This letter, and the account he has given of Mr. John Downs, are very clear proofs that Mr. Charles Wesley was not an enemy to all lay-preachers; of which indeed, many other proofs might be given.—The fact however, here stated, that Mr. John Wesley never could keep a secret, I believe is strictly true. Though his connexions and

correspondence were uncommonly large, yet no person, perhaps, in the world, had so few secrets as Mr. J. Wesley. He never travelled alone, and the person who attended him, had the charge of his letters and papers, which of course lay open to his inspection. The preachers likewise, who were occasionally with him, had access to his letters and papers, especially if he had confidence in their sincerity and zeal in religion, which it was not very difficult to obtain. It was easy for these persons to see the motive that influenced him, and the end he had in view in every action of his life, however remote from public observation : and he took no pains to conceal them, but seemed rather to court the discovery.

Hitherto the society in London had occupied the old Foundery near Upper-Moorfields, as a place of worship; but were now making preparations to quit it. They had obtained the promise of a lease from the city, of a piece of ground in the City-Road, and everything being prepared, the day was fixed for laying the foundation of a chapel. "The rain," says Mr. Wesley, "befriended us much, by keeping away thousands who purposed to be there. But there were still such multitudes, that it was with great difficulty I got through them to lay the first stone. Upon this was a plate of brass, covered with another stone, on which was engraved, 'This was laid by John Wesley, on April 1, 1777.' Probably this will be seen no more, by any human eye; but will remain there, till the earth and the works thereof are burnt up."

By the end of October, 1778, the chapel was built, and ready to be opened. "November 1," says Mr. Wesley, "was the day appointed for opening the New Chapel in the City-Road. It is perfectly neat, but not fine; and contains far more than the Foundery: I believe, together with the morning chapel, as many as the Tabernacle. Many were afraid, that the multitudes crowding from all parts, would have occasioned much disturbance. But they were happily disappointed; there was none at all: all was quietness, decency, and order. I preached on part of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple; and both in the morning and afternoon, God was eminently present in the midst of the congregation."

Upon the opening of the New Chapel, it seems Mr. John and Charles Wesley agreed, that one of them should fill the pulpit as often as possible, till the congregation became fixed and settled. This gave offence to the lay-preachers, who thought themselves slighted, and perhaps justly. They therefore obtained a promise from Mr. John Wesley, that during his absence, one of their body should preach in it when his brother could not; which subjected the other clergymen to their authority. Mr. Charles, who always wished the clergymen to enjoy a pre-eminence over the lay-preachers, was hurt at his brother's concession; and on Good-Friday, 1779, wrote to him as follows. "I have served the chapel morning and evening, and met the

society every other week since you left us. I think myself bound so to do, as long as I can; both by my duty as a clergyman, and by our agreement when the chapel was first opened. We agreed to fill the pulpit there as often as we could, especially at the beginning, till the congregation was settled. Many of the subscribers you know, were not of our society, yet of the church: out of good-will to them and to the church, not out of ill-will to the preachers, I wished the church service continued there.

"I am sorry you yielded to the preachers. They do not love the Church of England. What must be the consequence when we are gone? A separation is inevitable. Do you not wish to keep as many good people in the church as you can? By what means? What can be done now? Something might be done to save the remainder, if you had resolution, and would stand by me as firmly as I will by you. Consider what you are bound to as a clergyman; and what you do, do quickly.—You did not expect complaints of me for preaching too often! I cannot long stand in the way of any."\*

It is easy to perceive, that Mr. Charles Wesley's mind was constantly awake to everything that tended, in any degree, to introduce innovations into the original plan of Methodism; to every measure which had any tendency to alter the relative situation of the societies to the established church, and to other bodies of religious professors in the nation, and to form them into a separate party. His whole soul revolted from this, and he used all his influence to prevent it.

In February this year, Mr. John Wesley observes, "Finding many serious persons were much discouraged by prophets of evil, confidently foretelling very heavy calamities, which were coming upon our nation; I endeavored to lift up their hands, by opening and applying those comfortable words, Psalm xlii. 5, 6. 'Why art thou so heavy, O my soul? Why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God; for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God.'"—The next day was the National Fast. And he observes, "So, solemn a one I never saw before. From one end of the city to the other, there was scarce any one seen in the streets. All places of public worship were crowded in an uncommon degree; and an unusual awe sat on most faces. I preached on the words of God to Abraham, interceding for Sodom, 'I will not destroy it (the city) for ten's sake.'"

When we find a man constantly travelling through all parts of the nation; holding intercourse with immense multitudes of people, by means of the pulpit and private correspondence; and exerting all his influence on every occasion of public distress or alarm, to soften and quiet the minds of the people, we must call him a national blessing. And such was the constant practice of Mr. Wesley for more than half

\* Taken from the short-hand.

a century ! Let us hope, that the men who have succeeded him, will follow his example.

In November, Mr. Wesley observes, " My brother and I set out for Bath, on a very extraordinary occasion. Some time since, Mr. Smyth, a clergyman whose labors God had greatly blessed in the North of Ireland, brought his wife over to Bath, who had been for some time in a declining state of health. I desired him to preach every Sunday evening in our chapel, while he remained there. But as soon as I was gone, Mr. M—, one of our preachers, vehemently opposed that; affirming it was the common cause of all the lay preachers: that they were appointed by the Conference, not by me, and he would not suffer the clergy to ride over their heads; Mr. Smyth in particular, of whom he said all manner of evil. Hence the society was torn in pieces, and thrown into the utmost confusion."—I am sorry to confess on this occasion, that there are men among the preachers, of a most violent ungovernable spirit. These, if they find it necessary for any particular purpose, to oppose an individual, or any number of individuals, of character and influence in the society, use every method in their power, both in the pulpit and out, to make him appear to the people as bad as the devil. Invention is on the rack to put the worst construction possible on everything he may say or do. Nay they attribute many things to him, the very thought of which never entered his heart, till he found himself accused of them. This line of conduct seems to have been taken from the practice of the Romish priests, who represent those whom they choose to call heretics, as guilty of every species of crime imagination can invent: and the Jesuits generally accused their most powerful opponents of heresy.—The Romish clergy call their heretics, enemies of the church: these preachers, call those who stand in the way of their own schemes of ambition and power, enemies of the work of God, "incarnate devils," &c. and from an affectation of charity pray for them in a way that only tends to inflame the minds of the people against them, by making them appear more guilty; and to give a greater display of their own goodness, by pretending a concern for them, and for the interests of the people. Thus we see, these men imitate their great exemplars in these kinds of contests, with wonderful exactness. Their language indeed differs, but the governing spirit in both is the same; and in the same circumstances would produce the same effects! It is natural for the unsuspecting people at first, to believe that none of the preachers would bring accusations against an individual (or any number of individuals associated together) merely for the purpose of ruining his reputation with the society, that their own schemes may the better succeed: and yet this was undoubtedly the fact in the case before us; and I wish it were the only fact of the kind that might be recorded. It is easy for these men to bear down any individual for a long time, as he has generally no immediate access to the people, to prove his own innocence; and they have the pulpit, which they make use of to

keep up an influence against him. In this case innocence is no protection against universal prejudice and reproach; and the best friends to the connexion, may be sacrificed to the secret machinations of a combination of a few preachers. And what is still worse, they have no redress, since the death of Mr. Wesley, but through the medium of their enemies; and every one will easily conjecture how this must terminate. The reader will observe, that I speak only of a few of the preachers whose conduct is so very reprehensible; yet I cannot help blaming the rest for continuing these violent men in the connexion, and more especially for continuing them in any office of government in the societies, as it brings the whole body of the preachers, however innocent, under a suspicion of favoring such unchristian proceedings; which, if not vigorously opposed, must ruin the whole system, and bring religion itself into disgrace. He, therefore, acts the part of a true friend to Methodism, who resists practices so destructive in their tendency, and who endeavors by every lawful method in his power, to prevent a repetition of them: who shows in a strong light, that men capable of adopting such iniquitous means of carrying their schemes into effect, are not fit to be Methodist preachers; and that, it becomes the indispensable duty of the rest to cut off a hand, a foot, and even to pluck out a right eye, and to cast them away, rather than the whole body should perish.—I shall only observe further on this disagreeable subject, that the intelligent reader, who is acquainted with the internal affairs of the Methodists, will easily recollect instances, wherein the truth of what is here stated has been fully proved, and amply illustrated.

It seems Mr. M—— considered himself as asserting the rights of Conference, and acting for the benefit of the whole body of the preachers, who ought therefore to make it a common cause. Mr. Charles Wesley was firmly persuaded, that a combination of preachers against his brother's authority, did actually exist; and that Mr. M—— on this occasion, was no more than their agent, through whom they meant to try their strength. How this might be, is uncertain; but Mr. Wesley, at first, resisted this encroachment on his power with great firmness. "I read to the society," says he, "a paper which I wrote near twenty years ago, on a like occasion. Herein I observed, that the rules of our preachers were fixed by me, before any conference existed. particularly the twelfth: 'Above all, you are to preach *when* and *where* I appoint.' By obstinately opposing this rule, Mr. M—— has made all this uproar. In the morning, at a meeting of the preachers, I informed Mr. M——, that as he did not agree to our fundamental rule, I could not receive him as one of our preachers, till he was of another mind. I read the same paper to the society at Bristol, as I found the flame had spread thither also. A few at Bath separated from us on this account: but the rest were thoroughly satisfied."

Mr. M——, however, did not fail to use his utmost endeavors to interest the other preachers in his cause: and Mr. Wesley perceiving

that some of the old itinerants greatly favored him, wrote the following letter to one of them, which I suppose is a copy of that which was sent to the rest. The date is January, 1780.

“MY DEAR BROTHER,

“You seem to me not to have well considered the rules of an helper, or the rise of Methodism. It pleased God by me, to awaken first my brother, and then a few others; who severally desired of me, as a favor, that I would direct them in all things. After my return from Georgia, many were both awakened and converted to God. One, and another and another of these, desired to join with me as sons in the gospel, to be directed by me. I drew up a few plain rules (observe, there was no conference in being!) and permitted them to join me on these conditions. Whoever therefore violates these conditions, particularly that of being directed by me in the work, does *ipso facto* disjoin himself from me. This brother M—— has done (but he cannot see that he has done amiss) and he would have it a common cause; that is, he would have all the preachers do the same. He thinks ‘they have a right so to do.’ So they have. They have a right to disjoin themselves from me, whenever they please. But they cannot, in the nature of the thing join with me, any longer than they are directed by me. And what if the present preachers disjoined themselves? What should I lose thereby? Only a great deal of labor and care, which I do not seek, but endure; because no one else either can or will.

“You seem likewise to have quite a wrong idea of a conference. For above six years after my return to England, there was no such thing. I then desired some of our preachers to meet me; in order to advise, not to control me. And you may observe, they had no power at all, but what I exercised through them. I chose to exercise the power which God had given me, in this manner, both to avoid ostentation, and gently to habituate the people to obey them, when I should be taken from their head. But as long as I remain with them, the fundamental plan of Methodism remains inviolate: as long as any preacher joins with me, he is to be directed by me in his work. Do not you see then, that brother M——, whatever his intentions might be, acted as wrong as wrong could be? And that the representing of this, as the common cause of the preachers, was the way to common destruction? The way to turn all their heads, and to set them in arms? It was a blow at the very root of Methodism. I could not therefore do less than I did. It was the very least that could be done, for fear that the evil should spread.

“I do not willingly speak of these things at all: but I do it now out of necessity, because I perceive the mind of you, and some others, is a little hurt by not seeing them in a true light.

I am,

Your affectionate brother,  
J. WESLEY.”

This letter had not all the effect Mr. Wesley desired. He tells us, that he had written the paper which he read to the society at Bath and Bristol, twenty years before, on a like occasion. But he soon found, that there was a vast difference between his situation at that time, and the present. In the course of twenty years, the preachers had greatly increased in number and influence; and the vigor of his mind, to resist an opposition like this, was greatly diminished. He seemed sensible of this; for as the Conference drew near he was evidently intimidated, and wrote to his brother Charles to accompany him to Bristol, where it was to be held. Mr. Charles had carefully watched all the proceedings in this affair, and was highly displeas'd both at them, and at his brother's timidity. He answered as follows; "My reasons against accepting your invitation to the Conference, are, 1. I can do no good: 2. I can prevent no evil: 3. I am afraid of being a partaker of other men's sins, or of countenancing them by my presence. 4. I am afraid of myself; you know I cannot command my temper, and you have not courage to stand by me. 5. I cannot trust your resolution: unless you act with a vigor that is not in you, *conclamatum est*, our affairs are past hope.

"I am not sure they will not prevail upon you to ordain them.—You claim the power, and only say, 'It is not probable you shall ever exercise it.' Probability on one side, implies probability on the other; and I want better security. So I am to stand by, and see the ruin of our cause! You know how far you may depend on me; let me know how far I may depend on you, and on our preachers. In the Bath affair you acted with vigor for the first time; but you could not hold out. Unmindful of your power and your infirmity, you yielded to the rebel, instead of his yielding to you. You should not have employed him again, till he had owned his fault. This quite overturned my confidence in you, which I should never have told you had I not been compelled.—If you think my advice can be of any use to you, I will attend you to Bristol, and be always within call," &c.

Mr. Charles accordingly attended his brother to Bristol, and was present at the Conference: but exceedingly dissatisfied with his brother's total want of courage on the occasion. About a fortnight after, he sent him the following letter. "I did not hope by my presence at the Conference, to do any good, or prevent any evil. So I told you in London. Yet I accepted your invitation, only because you desired it. And as I came merely to please you, I resolv'd not to contradict your will in any thing. Your will, I perceiv'd, was to receive Mr. M——, unhumbled, unconvinced, into your confidence, and into your bosom. He came uninvited, and openly accus'd your curate for obeying your orders: you suffer'd it; and did not give Mr. M—— the gentlest reproof for disobeying them, and drawing others into his rebellion; and endeavoring to engage all the preachers in it; making an actual separation at Bath, and still keeping up his sepa-

rate society. My judgment was, never to receive Mr. M—— as a preacher, till he acknowledged his fault. But I submitted and attended in silence. I was much easier for me to say nothing, than to speak neither more nor less than you would approve. I was sometimes strongly tempted to speak; but if I had opened my mouth I should have spoiled all.—Your design, I believed, was to keep all quiet—I allow you your merit—*Tu Maximus ille es,*

*Unus qui nobis cedendo restituis rem.\**

“By a very few words I could have provoked your preachers to lay beside the mask; but that was the very thing you guarded against; and, I suppose, the reason for which you desired my presence, that I might be some sort of check to the independents. Still I think it better for the people, that they (the preachers) should show themselves before your death, than after it. You think otherwise; and I submit. *Satis, jam satis spectata in te amicitia est mea* :† and I am perfectly satisfied with my own insignificancy. I have but one thing to do; the Lord make me ready for it.”

Here we see the preachers prevailed, and Mr. Wesley gave way: and from this Conference to the time of his death, I believe his authority was gradually on the decline. Mr. Wesley knew how to yield, and preserve an appearance of authority, in cases where he saw resistance would be useless, or productive of confusion. He observes in his letter to the preachers, that Mr. M——’s proposition, which tended to deprive him of a portion of his power, was, “a blow at the root of Methodism.” He must mean, at the root of discipline, or the economy established by his authority among the preachers and people. —This was true. The discipline, and his power, grew up together; they mutually supported each other, and the one was the natural guardian of the other. What wonder then, that, a breach being now made in his power, the discipline should soon after be overrun with innovations? When the fence is broken down, the garden is trodden under foot, and soon overspread with weeds.

In the beginning of this year, a great clamor was raised against the bill passed in favor of the Roman Catholics. A Protestant Association was formed to obtain a repeal of it, and in the end much mischief was done: not without suspicion, however, that the outrages which followed, were greatly promoted and increased by Papists, and by others in disguise. The one party wished to disgrace the

\* This line is a parody on a line of old Ennius, quoted by Cicero in his *Cato Major*, *Unus qui nobis cunctando restituit rem*. The words allude to Q. Fabius Maximus, who, when Hannibal invaded Italy, was made Dictator, and by marches and counter-marches delaying a battle, saved Rome; and hence was called, the Cunctator, or Delayer. Mr. Charles has changed *cunctando* for *cedendo*, ‘by yielding or giving up,’ and put the verb in the second person singular, to apply the words in a satirical manner to his brother—“You are that Maximus, who alone restores our affairs by giving them up.”

† “My friendship for you, has now been very sufficiently proved.”



Association, the other, the ministry. But before these things happened, a pamphlet was written in defence of the object the Association had in view; and an answer to it soon appeared. These pamphlets were put into Mr. Wesley's hands; and having read them, he wrote a letter on the subject, dated January 21, which he sent to the printer of the Public Advertiser. In this letter, after premising that persecution had nothing to do with the matter, and that he wished no man to be persecuted for his religious principles; he lays down this general proposition, "That no Roman Catholic does or can give security to a Protestant Government, for his allegiance and peaceable behavior." He rested the proof of this proposition on the following arguments, any one of which, if good, is proof sufficient, if the others should not apply.

"1. It is a Roman Catholic maxim, established not by private men, but by a public council, that, 'No faith is to be kept with heretics.' This has been openly avowed by the Council of Constance; but it never was openly disclaimed. Whether private persons avow or disavow it, it is a fixed maxim of the Church of Rome.

"2. One branch of the *spiritual power* of the pope, is, and has been for ages, the power of granting *pardons* for all sins past, present, and to come! But those who acknowledge him to have this spiritual power, can give no security for their allegiance, &c.

"3. The power of *dispensing* with any promise, oath, or vow, is another branch of the spiritual power of the pope. And all who acknowledge his spiritual power, must acknowledge this: but whoever acknowledges this dispensing power of the pope, cannot give security for his allegiance to any government—Nay, not only the pope, but even a priest has *power to pardon sins!* This is an essential doctrine of the Church of Rome. But they who acknowledge this cannot possibly give any security for their allegiance to any government.

"Setting then religion aside, it is plain, that upon principles of reason, no government ought to tolerate men, who cannot give any security to that government for their allegiance and peaceable behavior. But this no Romanist can do, not only while he holds that 'No faith is to be kept with heretics,' but so long as he acknowledges either priestly-absolution, or the spiritual power of the pope."

The letter, from which the above is only an abstract, raised several adversaries. But Mr. O'Leary, a Capuchin friar, in Dublin, having seen the letter in the Freeman's Journal, soon became the most conspicuous of Mr. Wesley's opponents. He published Remarks upon the letter, in the same Journal; to which Mr. Wesley replied. Mr. O'Leary continued his Remarks in five succeeding Journals; and Mr. Wesley published a second reply. The Remarks were afterwards reprinted together in London, with the following title, "Mr. O'Leary's Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Letters in defence of the Protes-

tant Associations in England, to which are prefixed Mr. Wesley's Letters."

We have here a most striking sample of Mr. O'Leary's disingenuity and artifice; if *he* gave this title to the pamphlet. For, 1. Mr. Wesley had not written one line in defence of the Protestant Associations: and, 2. Mr. Wesley's two replies published in the Freeman's Journal, were suppressed, and a spurious letter palmed on the public, as genuine, which Mr. Wesley declared he had never seen, before he saw it in Mr. O'Leary's pamphlet.

Mr. Wesley's second reply to Mr. O'Leary, contains the strength of his cause; and with what has before been said, will give the reader a full view of the subject: I shall therefore insert the substance of it.

"To the Editors of the Freeman's Journal.

"GENTLEMEN,

"Some time ago, in a letter published at London, I observed, 'Roman Catholics cannot give those whom they account heretics, any sufficient security for their peaceable behavior! 1. Because it has been publicly avowed in one of their General Councils, and never publicly disclaimed, that faith is not to be kept with heretics. 2. Because they hold the doctrine of priestly absolution: and 3. The doctrine of papal pardons and dispensations.'

"Mr. O'Leary has published Remarks on this letter: nine parts in ten of which are quite wide of the mark. Not that they are wide of *his* mark, which is to introduce a plausible *panegyric* upon the Roman Catholics, mixt with keen invectives against the Protestants; whether true or false it matters not. All this is admirably well calculated to inspire the reader with aversion to these heretics, and to bring them back to the holy, harmless, much injured Church of Rome! And I should not wonder, if these six papers should make six thousand converts to her. Close arguing he does not attempt, but he vapors, and skips to and fro, and rambles to all points of the compass in a very lively and entertaining manner.

"My argument was, the Council of Constance has openly avowed violation of faith with heretics. But it has never been openly disclaimed. Therefore those who receive this Council, cannot be trusted, by those whom they account heretics—This is my immediate conclusion. And if the premises be admitted, it will infallibly follow.

"On this Mr. O'Leary says, 'A Council so often quoted challenges peculiar attention. We shall examine it with all possible precision and impartially. At a time when the broachers of a new doctrine'—as new as the Bible—'were kindling the fire of sedition, and shaking the foundation of thrones and kingdoms'—big words, but entirely void of truth—'was held the Council of Constance. To this was cited John Huss, famous for propagating errors tending to wrest the sceptre from the hand of kings.'—Equally true—'He was obnoxious

to the Church and State.'—To the Church of Rome: not to the State in any degree.—'Huss strikes at the root of all temporal power and civil authority. He boldly asserts, that all princes, magistrates, &c. in the state of mortal sin, are deprived, *ipso facto*, of all power and jurisdiction. And by broaching these doctrines, he makes Bohemia a theatre of intestine war. See the Acts of the Council of Constance in L'Abbe's collection of Councils—I have seen them, and can find nothing of this therein. But more of this by and by.

"'He gave notice that he would stand his trial. But he attempted to escape'—No, never, this is pure invention. 'He was arrested at Constance, and confined. His friends plead his safe-conduct. The Council then declared, *No safe-conduct granted by the Emperor, or any other Princes, to HERETICS, ought to hinder them from being punished as justice shall require.* And the person who has promised them security, SHALL NOT BE OBLIGED TO KEEP HIS PROMISE, BY WHATEVER TIE HE MAY BE ENGAGED.'

"And did the Council of Constance declare this? Yes, says Mr. O'Leary. I desire no more. But before I argue upon the point, permit me to give a little fuller account of the whole affair.

"The Council of Constance was called by the Emperor Sigismund and Pope John the 23d, in the year 1414. Before it began, the Emperor sent some Bohemian gentlemen, to conduct John Huss to Constance, solemnly promising, that he 'should come and *return* freely, without fraud or corruption.'

"But before he left Prague, he waited on the Bishop of Nazareth, Papal Inquisitor for that city and diocese, who, in the presence of many witnesses, gave him the following testimonial—'We, Nicholas—do by these presents, make known to all men, that we have often talked with that honorable man, Master John Huss, and in all his sayings, doings, and behavior, have proved him to be a faithful man; finding no manner of evil, sinister, or erroneous doings in him, unto the present. Prague, August 30, 1414.'

"This was attested by the hand and seal of the public notary, named Michael Pruthatietz—After this, Conrade, Archbishop of Prague, declared before all the Barons of Bohemia, that 'He knew not that John Huss was culpable or faulty, in any crime or offence whatever'—So neither the Inquisitor, nor the Archbishop, knew any thing of 'his making Bohemia a theatre of intestine war.'

"In the seventeenth session, the sentence and condemnation of John Huss, was read and published. The Emperor then commanded the Duke of Bavaria to deliver him to the executioner; for which glorious exploit, he was thus addressed by the Bishop of Landy, in the name of the Council: 'This most *holy*, and *goodly* labor, was reserved only for thee, O most noble Prince! Upon thee only doth it lie, to whom the whole rule and ministration of justice is given. Wherefore thou hast established thy praise and renown: even by the

mouths of babes and sucklings thy praise shall be celebrated for evermore !’

“From the whole of this transaction we may observe, 1. That John Huss was guilty of no crime, either in word or action; even his enemies, the Archbishop of Prague, and the Papal Inquisitor being judges. 2. That his real fault, and his only one, was opposing the Papal usurpations. 3. That this *most noble* prince, was a bigoted, cruel, perfidious murderer; and that the fathers of the Council deserve the same praise, seeing they urged him to embrue his hands in innocent blood, in violation of the public faith, and extolled him to the skies for so doing: and seeing they have laid it down as a maxim that the most solemn promise made to a heretic may be broken.

“‘But,’ says Mr. O’Leary, ‘this regards the peculiar case of safe-conducts granted by princes to heretics’—But what then? If the public faith with heretics may be violated in one instance, it may be in a thousand—‘But can the rule be extended further?’—It may; it must; we cannot tell where to stop. Away then with your witticisms on so awful a subject. What! do you sport with human blood? I take burning men alive to be a very serious thing. I pray spare your jests on the occasion.—Again, ‘What more absurd than to insist on a general council’s disclaiming a doctrine they never taught’—They did teach it: and that not by the bye, not incidentally; but they laid it down as a stated rule of action, dictated by the Holy Ghost—and demonstrated their sincerity therein by burning a man alive. And this Mr. O’Leary humorously compares to roasting a piece of beef! With equal tenderness, I suppose, he would compare the ‘singeing the beards of heretics!’ that is thrusting a burning furze-brush in their face, to the singeing a fowl before it is roasted.—Now, what security can any Romanist give a Protestant till this doctrine is publicly abjured? If Mr. O’Leary has any thing more to plead for this council, I shall follow him step by step. But let him keep his word, and ‘give a serious answer to a serious charge.’—Drollery may come in, when we are talking of roasting fowls, but not when we talk of ‘roasting men.’

“Would I then wish the Roman Catholics to be persecuted? I never said or hinted any such thing. I abhor the thought: it is foreign to all I have preached and written for these fifty years. But I would wish the Romanists in England (I had no others in view) to be treated still with the same lenity that they have been these sixty years: to be allowed both civil and religious liberty, but not permitted to undermine ours. I wish them to stand just as they did, before the late Act was passed: not to be persecuted, or hurt themselves; but gently restrained from hurting their neighbors.

I am, gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

*Chester, March 31, 1780.*

Notwithstanding the high praises bestowed by some persons on Mr. O'Leary, at the time of this controversy, the impartial reader will easily observe, that Mr. Wesley had greatly the advantage in point of argument. Mr. O'Leary, to all intents and purposes, allows the charge Mr. Wesley brought against the Council of Constance; and yet afterwards affects to deny it. Mr. Berrington wrote to Mr. Wesley in defence of the same Council; and in a private letter\* observes, "There never was a decision made at Constance tending to show, that, no faith is to be kept with heretics. The words of the canon are not susceptible of such a comment, unless tortured to it. At all events no council, pope, bishop, priest, or layman of our church, ever understood them in the sense of your interpretation—But every Catholic divine has at all times, in writing on the subject, utterly reprobated the idea of breaking faith with heretics, as contrary to every dictate of reason and religion."—These, undoubtedly, are very extraordinary assertions, but there is no proof. With regard to the Council of Constance, if the words of the canon are indeed ambiguous, which some persons do not think, yet, the burning a man alive, in open violation of the public faith, was certainly a very plain comment upon them, which can hardly leave a doubt behind. But what shall we say to the words that follow, "Every Catholic divine has at all times utterly reprobated the idea of breaking faith with heretics." I do not know that Mr. Wesley answered this letter, for there would be no end of answering groundless assertions. The modern rulers of the Church of Rome in Catholic countries, speak on this subject in a strain very different from that of Mr. Berrington. In 1768, an oath of allegiance was in contemplation for Roman Catholics of Ireland, which, for the better security of government, contained a declaration of *abhorrence* and *detestation* of the doctrines, "That faith is not to be kept with heretics, and that princes deprived by the pope, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects." The pope's legate at Brussels, Ghilini, Archbishop of Rhodes, had then the superintendance of the Romish Church in Ireland. He wrote on this subject, to the *titular* Archbishop of Dublin, and in his letter, treats the above clauses proposed in the oath, as absolutely *intolerable*. "Because," says he, "those doctrines are *defended*, and *contended* for, by most Catholic nations, and the Holy See has frequently followed them in practice." On the whole he decides, "That, as the oath is in its whole extent unlawful, so in its nature it is invalid, null, and of no effect, so that it can by no means bind and oblige consciences." This letter was published by Thomas de Burgo (Burke,) titular Bishop of Ossory, and public historiographer to the Dominican order in Ireland, in his appendix to his *Hibernia Dominicana*, printed in 1772; together with three similar ones to the other three titular metropolitans, and styled by the Bishop, *Literæ verè aureæ cedroque dignæ*.†

\* I believe it was never published.

† See Erskine's Sketches and Hints of Church History, p. 131.

That similar decisions on the validity of oaths detrimental to the interests of the Holy See, were uniformly made by successive popes, whenever the affairs of the church required them, is well known. I intended to have brought forward a few of them, but it is unnecessary. What has been said fully proves the charge Mr. Wesley brought—"It is a maxim of the Church of Rome that faith is not to be kept with heretics." It has been taught again and again, by the first authority in this church, that the Roman Catholics are not bound to any engagements made with heretics, though confirmed by the most solemn oath that can possibly be framed, when the good of the church requires they should break it. This was not only an ancient doctrine of the church in the times of great ignorance; but we have already seen that the modern rulers of it maintain the same doctrine and contend for it. And what wonder? when we consider, 1. That the old spirit of Popery is still kept up, by the practice of the pope, to the present time: once every year, on Maundy-Thursdlay, he excommunicates all heretics in the most awful and terrific manner; and thus keeps up a constant spirit of hatred in the minds of Catholics against the Protestants. And, 2. That the Romish bishops take an oath at their consecration, totally inimical to every Protestant government, and which binds them to use every method in their power to subvert it; the following is a part of the oath: "The Roman Papacy, and the royalties of St. Peter, I will, saving my own order, assist them (the pope and his successors) to retain and defend against every man. The rights, honors, privileges, and authority of the holy Roman Church, and of our lord the pope, and his successors aforesaid, I will be careful to preserve, defend, enlarge, and promote. All heretics, schismatics, and rebels against our said lord, I will, to the utmost of my power, persecute (*persequar*) and oppose, and never lay down my weapons till they are utterly brought under and rooted out"—the word *persequar*, is ambiguous, but Dr. William Hales, of Trinity College, Dublin, in his Survey of the modern state of the Church of Rome, has proved, that the clause, *hereticos pro posse persequar, et expugnabo*, is an obligation to persecute heretics, and oppose them with temporal weapons; and that this appears the sense of the Church of Rome, both from her decrees and practice, and even from late instances of persecuting zeal in the Spanish and Portuguese inquisition.\*

In the course of this year, some persons in America, attached to the doctrines, and to the ritual of the Church of England, wrote to Mr. Wesley, requesting that he would get a young man ordained for them, by one of the bishops in this country. They did not apply to the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge in Foreign Parts, because they did not want pecuniary assistance from that fund. Mr. Wesley wrote to Dr. Lowth, Bishop of London, begging the favor

\* Erskine's Sketches, pages 133 and 228.

that he would ordain a pious young man for them. The bishop refused; and August 10, Mr. Wesley sent him the following letter.

“MY LORD,

“Some time since I received your lordship’s favor, for which I return your lordship my sincere thanks. Those persons did not apply to the society: because they had nothing to ask of them. They wanted no salary for their minister: they were themselves able and willing to maintain him. They therefore applied, by me, to your lordship, as members of the Church of England, and desirous so to continue, begging the favor of your lordship, after your lordship had examined him, to ordain a pious man who might officiate as their minister.

“But your lordship observes, ‘There are three ministers in that country already?’ True, my lord: but what are three, to watch over all the souls in that extensive country?—Will your lordship permit me to speak freely? I dare not do otherwise. I am on the verge of the grave, and know not the hour when I shall drop into it. Suppose there were threescore of those missionaries in the country, could I in conscience recommend these souls to their care? Do they take any care of their own souls? If they do (I speak it with concern) I fear they are almost the only missionaries in America that do. My lord, I do not speak rashly: I have been in America; and so have several with whom I have lately conversed. And both I and they know, what manner of men the far greater part of these are. They are men who have neither the power of religion nor the form; men that lay no claim to piety, nor even decency.

“Give me leave, my lord, to speak more freely still: perhaps it is the last time I shall trouble your lordship. I know your lordship’s abilities and extensive learning: I believe, what is far more, that your lordship fears God. I have heard that your lordship is unfashionably diligent in examining the candidates for holy orders: yea, that your lordship is generally at the pains of examining them yourself. Examining them! in what respects? Why whether they understand a little Latin and Greek; and can answer a few trite questions in the science of Divinity! Alas, how little does this avail! Does your lordship examine, whether they serve Christ or Belial? Whether they love God or the world? Whether they ever had any serious thoughts about heaven or hell? Whether they have any real desire to save their own souls, or the souls of others? If not, what have they to do with holy orders? and what will become of the souls committed to their care?

“My lord, I do by no means despise learning: I know the value of it too well. But what is this, particularly in a christian minister; compared to piety? What is it in a man that has no religion? ‘As a jewel in a swine’s snout.’

“Some time since I recommended to your lordship a plain man.

whom I had known above twenty years; as a person of deep, genuine piety, and of unblamable conversation. But he neither understood Greek, nor Latin: and he affirmed, in so many words, that, 'He believed it was his duty to preach, whether he was ordained or no.' I believe so too. What became of him since, I know not. But I suppose he received Presbyterian ordination: and I cannot blame him if he did. He might think any ordination better than none.

"I do not know, that Mr. Hoskins had any favor to ask of the society. He asked the favor of your lordship to ordain him, that he might minister to a little flock in America. But your lordship did not see good to ordain him: but your lordship did see good to ordain and send into America, other persons, who knew something of Greek and Latin; but knew no more of saving souls, than of catching whales.

"In this respect also, I mourn for poor America: for the sheep scattered up and down therein. Part of them have no shepherds at all: particularly in the northern colonies; and the case of the rest is little better, for their own shepherds pity them not. They cannot, for they have no pity on themselves. They take no thought or care about their own souls.

"Wishing your lordship every blessing from the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls,

I remain, my lord,  
Your lordship's dutiful son and servant,  
JOHN WESLEY."

In the midst of the multiplicity of affairs in which Mr. Wesley was concerned, he constantly paid attention to the spiritual welfare, not only of the members of his own society, but of those persons with whom he occasionally corresponded. The following is an instance of this kind attention and brotherly care. Sir Harry Trelawney had been a Calvinist, and during this period, had, I suppose been shy of Mr. Wesley's acquaintance. At length being convinced, that, the narrow, limited views of John Calvin, concerning the atonement of Christ, were not agreeable to the general tenor of the invitations, promises, and threatenings of the New Testament, he quitted them, and the party of the Calvinists. On this occasion, Mr. Wesley wrote to him, congratulating him on his escape, but at the same time warning him of the danger of running into the opposite extreme. This is so natural to the human mind, that it is difficult to be avoided: and by yielding to this impulse in some doctrines of importance, it is to be feared that many have been destroyed. Experience, I think, will warrant the following observation: A speculative Calvinist, who, convinced of the errors of his system, becomes an Arminian so called, is in much greater danger of falling into low, mean, unscriptural notions of Christ and of the christian salvation, than a speculative Arminian, who becomes a Calvinist. Mr. Wesley



seems to have been of this opinion, when he kindly cautioned his friend, against the danger which lay before him. "For a long time," says he, "I have had a desire to see you, but could not find an opportunity; and indeed, I had reason to believe my company would not be agreeable: as you were intimate with those who think they do God service by painting me in the most frightful colors. It gives me much satisfaction to find, that you have escaped out of the hands of those warm men—it is not at all surprising that they should speak a little unkindly of you too, in their turn. It gave me no small satisfaction to learn from your own lips, the falsehood of their allegation. I believed it false before, but could not affirm it, so positively as I can now.

"Indeed it would not have been without precedent, if from one extreme, you had run into another. This was the case with that great man Dr. Taylor. For some years he was an earnest Calvinist; but afterwards, judging he could not get far enough from that melancholy system, he ran, not only into Arianism, but into the very dregs of Socinianism. I have reason indeed to believe he was convinced of his mistake, some years before he died. But to acknowledge this publicly, was too hard a task for one who had lived above eighty years.

"You have need to be thankful on another account likewise; that is, that your prejudices against the Church of England are removing. Having had an opportunity of seeing several of the churches abroad, and having deeply considered the several sorts of Dissenters at home, I am fully convinced, that our own church, with all her blemishes, is nearer the scriptural plan, than any other in Europe.

"I sincerely wish you may retain your former zeal for God; only, that it may be a zeal according to knowledge. But there certainly will be a danger of your sinking into a careless, lukewarm state, without any zeal or spirit at all. As you were surfeited with an irrational, unscriptural religion, you may easily slide into no religion at all: or, into a dead form, that will never make you happy either in this world, or in that which is to come. Wishing every scriptural blessing, both to Lady Trelawney and you,

I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate servant,

J. W."

Notwithstanding Mr. Wesley's itinerancy, his daily labor of preaching, visiting the societies, and extensive correspondence; yet he still found time to read many books. And, what is rather singular, he often met with books that are very scarce, which many men of literature, with good libraries, have never seen; an instance of which will be given in speaking of the enlarged edition of his *Philosophy*—he read, not only books of divinity, of natural history, and moral philosophy, which came more immediately within the province of his profession, but

books which treated of the most remote antiquity. Here investigation is difficult, the highest degree of evidence to be attained, a bare probability, and the subjects discussed are rather curious than useful in the conduct of life. Yet even these books Mr. Wesley read, with uncommon diligence and care, often collecting the substance of them into a small compass. The following is an instance of this kind—Sept. 1, 1781, he says, “I made an end of reading that curious book, Dr. Parsons’ Remains of Japhet. The very ingenious author has struck much light into some of the darkest parts of ancient history. And although I cannot subscribe to every proposition which he advances, yet I apprehend, he has sufficiently proved the main of his hypothesis: namely,

“1. That after the flood, Shem and his descendants peopled the greatest parts of Asia: 2. That Ham and his children peopled Africa: 3. That Europe was peopled by the two sons of Japhet, Gomer and Magog: the southern and south-western by Gomer, and his children: and the north and north-western, by the children of Magog: 4. That the former were called Gomerians, Cimmerians, and Cimbrians; and afterwards, Celtæ, Galatæ, and Gauls: the latter were called by the general name of Scythians, Scuti, and Scots: 5. That the Gomerians, spread swiftly through the north of Europe, as far as the Cimbrian Chersonesus, including Sweden, Denmark, Norway, and divers other countries, and then into Ireland, where they multiplied very early into a considerable nation: 6. That some ages after, another part of them, who had first settled in Spain, sailed to Ireland under Milea, or Milesius, and conquering the first inhabitants, took possession of the land: 7. That about the same time the Gomerians came to Ireland, the Magogians, or Scythians, came to Britain; so early, that both spake the same language, and well understood each other: 8. That the Irish spoken by the Gomerians, and the Welsh, spoken by the Magogians, are one and the same language, expressed by the same seventeen letters which were long after brought, by a Gomerian prince, into Greece: 9. That all the languages of Europe, Greek and Latin in particular, are derived from this: 10. That the Antediluvian language, spoken by all till after the flood, and then continued in the family of Shem, was Hebrew; and from this (the Hebrew) tongue, many of the eastern languages are derived. The foregoing particulars, this fine writer has made highly probable. And these may be admitted, though we do not agree to his vehement panegyric on the Irish language; much less receive all the stories told by the Irish poets, or chroniclers, as genuine authentic history.”—Candor will readily acknowledge, and envy itself must confess, that a man in the seventy-ninth year of his age, who, in the midst of daily avocations which he deemed of the highest importance to himself and others, could go through a work of this kind with so much attention, and collect the substance of it into a few general heads, must have possessed great strength of mind, and no common degree of the spirit of inquiry.

In February, 1782, a person unknown proposed a few questions to Mr. Wesley in writing, and begged the favor of unequivocal answers. The questions and answers were as follows :

“Is it your wish that the people called Methodists should be, or become, a body entirely separate from the church?”

*Answer.* No.

“If not, where, that is, how often and where, I mean, upon what description of teachers of the establishment, are they to attend?”

*Answer.* I advise them to go to church.

“More particularly, if the fall, the corruption, and natural impotence of man, his free and full redemption in Christ Jesus, through faith working by love, should be taught and inculcated, and offered to the attention of all, at the church of the parish where they reside, are they then in your opinion, bound in conscience to hear, or may they at their own option, forbear?”

*Answer.* I do not think they are bound in conscience, to attend any *particular* church.

“Or if they are at liberty to absent themselves, are they at liberty, that is, have they a christian privilege, to censure this doctrine in the gross, to condemn such teachers, and boldly to pronounce them, ‘blind leaders of the blind?’”

*Answer.* No: by no means.

“Whenever this happens, is it through prejudice, or rational piety? Is it through bigotry, or a catholic spirit? Is it consistent with christian charity? Is it compatible with a state of justification? Or, is it even allowable in the high habit of evangelical perfection?”

*Answer.* I think it is a sin.”

About the latter end of this year, a report prevailed, and gained credit, that Administration had an intention to bring a Bill into the House for embodying the militia, and for exercising them on a Sunday. On this occasion, Mr. Wesley wrote the following letter to a nobleman, then high in office :

“MY LORD,

“If I wrong your lordship I am sorry for it; but I really believe, your lordship fears God: and I hope your lordship has no unfavorable opinion of the christian revelation. This encourages me to trouble your lordship with a few lines, which otherwise I should not take upon me to do.

“Above thirty years ago, a motion was made in Parliament, for raising and embodying the militia, and for exercising them, to save time, on Sunday. When the motion was like to pass, an old gentleman stood up and said, ‘Mr. Speaker, I have one objection to this: I believe an old book, called the Bible.’ The members looked at one another, and the motion was dropped.

“Must not all others, who believe the Bible, have the very same objection? And from what I have seen, I cannot but think, these

are still three-fourths of the nation. Now, setting religion out of the question, is it expedient to give such a shock to so many millions of people at once? And certainly it would shock them extremely: it would wound them in a very tender part. For would not they, would not all England, would not all Europe, consider this as a virtual repeal of the Bible? And would not all serious persons say, 'We have little religion in the land now; but by this step we shall have less still.' For wherever this pretty show is to be seen, the people will flock together; and will lounge away so much time before and after it, that the churches will be emptier than they are already!

"My lord, I am concerned for this on a double account. First, because I have personal obligations to your lordship, and would fain, even for this reason, recommend your lordship to the love and esteem of all over whom I have any influence. Secondly, because, I now reverence your lordship for your office' sake, and believe it to be my bounden duty, to do all that is in my little power, to advance your lordship's influence and reputation.

"Will your lordship permit me, to add a word in my old-fashioned way? I pray Him that has all power in heaven and earth, to prosper all your endeavors for the public good, and am,

My lord,  
Your lordship's willing servant,  
JOHN WESLEY."

The Methodists had now subsisted under this appellation, about half a century. Yet the public at large had very imperfect notions of their principles, and scarcely knew anything of their internal economy. The most candid writers in opposition to them, were grossly ignorant in these respects; and others did not scruple a little misrepresentation. If this was the case at home, we cannot suppose that the representations of them, would be more accurate abroad. The foreign journalists would naturally copy from our own, and from those who had expressly written against them. This has been the situation of most denominations of Christians, who have been obnoxious to the rulers, either of an establishment, or, of any very popular or powerful party. And from what has happened in our own time, we may well conjecture what has taken place in times past, when ignorance and prejudice were much more predominant, and the means of accurate knowledge much less general. Thus, the accounts we now have of the ancient heretics, are almost wholly taken from the representations of their avowed enemies, or from those who only retailed common reports. And such was the case at present, with respect to the character of the Methodists in foreign countries. In November, Mr. Wesley received a letter from Dr. Burekhardt, pastor of the German Church at the Savoy. The doctor informs him—that he had lately read in a German periodical publication, a most ill-natured account of the Methodists in England: that he thought it his

duty to oppose these prejudices in his own country, which he deemed injurious to the interests of Christianity: that he intended to write a true history of Methodism, describing its origin, nature, progress, and present state, for the benefit of his countrymen: and, that he requested Mr. Wesley, to direct him to authentic materials for such a work, and help him to procure them.\*—The design was candid and liberal; but whether it was executed, or not, I cannot say.

It has already been observed, that a party existed among the preachers, who wished the Methodists to be erected into an independent body, and a total separation to be made from the established church. One of this party was frequently about Mr. Wesley's person; and under various pretences sometimes led him into measures, that offended the people and embarrassed his affairs, while the true author lay concealed, as much as possible, behind the scene. In December, Mr. Wesley received a letter from a friend, of which only a part has been preserved; but this part throws some light on the present state of things. "And first," says the writer, "I would advise you to speak comfortably to the people, who are irritated to a high degree against you. The die is not yet cast: you are not yet in as bad a situation as England is with regard to America. A few comfortable words, might yet make them your own forever. Let not your sun go down under a cloud. Stain not with disgrace,† every action of your whole life. Leave the event to Providence: you cannot prevent a separation of your preachers‡ after you are gone to rest; why should you see it in your life-time? A door is open for you at Bristol, and a comfortable door too: why should you leave the word of God to serve tables? at the instigation of those, who would be glad to see your head laid in the dust, if they might sit in

\* The original letter is as follows :

" Viro summe Reverendo J. WESLEY,  
S. P. D.

Johannes Theophilus Burekhardt, Pastor Germ. ad ædem St. Mariæ (Savoy.)

"Legi nuperrime, in libro quodam germanico periodico, judicia perversissima de Methodistis in Anglia. Mei itaque esse puto, istiusmodi præconceptis opinionibus, quæ sunt rei christianæ valde noxiæ, in patria mea obviam ire, veramque Methodismi historiam, originem, naturam, fata ac statum præsentem popularibus meis enarrare ac describere. Peto igitur a TE, VIR VENERANDE, ut mihi, talem historiam scripturo, genuinos fontes indicare, atque scripta suppeditare velis, quibus ista historia jam pertractata est, et quæ ad illustrandam illam faciunt. Pittius, unus ex prædecessoribus meis, sine dubio Tibi non ignotus fuit. Cæterum, ex animo precor Deum, Patrem Domini nostri JESU CHRISTI, ut in commodum ecclesiæ suæ, senectutem Tuam juvenili robore induere atque ornare, Teque diu inter nos in posterum conservare velit. Vale, mihi que fave!

Londini, in Savoy-Square, d. 28 Novbr. 1782.

† The writer of the letter had expressed himself thus, "Stain not, as it were with blood, every action," &c. This was very improper, having no analogy to the subject in hand. I have therefore, left out the words, "As it were," and changed the word blood for disgrace, which seems to convey the writer's idea. Through an eagerness to express himself in the strongest manner possible, he fell into an impropriety of expression.

‡ I suppose he means, from the Church.

your chair! One would think you might, with almost half an eye, see what some of them are aiming at. May the God of peace open your eyes; and direct you to act in such a manner as will disappoint our grand adversary of his unlawful prey.

I am, Reverend Sir,  
Your well wisher, and humble servant,

J. M."

In June, 1783, Mr. Wesley went over to Holland, and spent his birthday, completing the eightieth year of his age, in this country. He seemed pleased with his visit, though the motives for making it are not very obvious. It is not probable, that the design originated with himself; and any conjectures concerning the reasons why others put him upon it, might be false, and appear ill-natured or invidious.

The year 1784, brings us to the grand climacterical year of Methodism. Not indeed, if we number the years of its existence, but if we regard the changes which now took place in the form of its *original* Constitution. Not that these changes destroyed at once the *original* Constitution of Methodism: this would have been too great a shock; but the seeds of its corruption and final dissolution, were this year solemnly planted, and have since been carefully watered and nursed by a powerful party among the preachers. The changes to which I allude, were, 1. The Deed of Declaration; and, 2. Ordination. These undoubtedly laid the foundation of a New Order of things among the Methodists, hitherto unknown; and we may easily suppose, that those who favored it, would make themselves certain of success, by a little patience and good management.

The Deed of Declaration, is dated the 28th of February. It is entitled, "The Rev. John Wesley's Declaration and Establishment of the Conference of the people called Methodists." And in the attested copy is said to be, "Enrolled in his Majesty's High Court of Chancery."—I shall endeavor to state the substance of the *Preamble* to this famous Deed, as concisely as possible, to retain the sense complete.—It says, that, *Whereas* divers buildings commonly called Chapels with a Messuage and Dwelling-House—situate in various parts of Great-Britain, have been given and conveyed from time to time by the said John Wesley, to certain persons and their heirs in each of the said gifts and conveyances named—Upon Trust, that the trustees in the several deeds respectively named, and the survivors of them—and the Trustees for the time being to be elected as in the said deeds is appointed, should permit the said John Wesley, and such other persons as he should for that purpose nominate and appoint, at all times during his life—to have and enjoy the free use and benefit of the said premises—therein to preach and expound God's Holy Word: And upon further trust, that the said respective Trustees, &c. should permit Charles Wesley, brother of the said John Wesley, and such other persons as the said Charles Wesley should for that purpose

—nominate and appoint, in like manner during his life. And after the decease of the survivor of them, the said John and Charles Wesley, Then upon further Trust, That the said respective Trustees, &c. should permit such persons, and for such time and times as should be appointed at the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists in London, Bristol, or Leeds, and no others, to have and enjoy the said premises for the purposes aforesaid: And whereas divers persons have in like manner given or conveyed many Chapels, &c. situate in various parts of Great Britain, and also in Ireland, to certain trustees, in each of the said gifts and conveyances respectively named, upon the like trusts, and for the same uses and purposes as aforesaid (except only that in some of the said gifts and conveyances, no life estate or other Interest is thereby given and reserved to the said Charles Wesley.) And whereas, for rendering effectual the trusts created by the said several gifts or conveyances, and that no doubt or litigation may arise with respect to the interpretation and true meaning thereof, it has been thought expedient by the said John Wesley, on behalf of himself as donor of the several Chapels, &c. as of the donors of the said other Chapels, &c.—to explain the words ‘yearly Conference of the people called Methodists,’ contained in all the said trust deeds, and to declare what persons are members of the said Conference, and how the succession and identity thereof is to be continued: Now therefore these presents witness, that for accomplishing the aforesaid purposes, the said John Wesley doth hereby declare, that the Conference of the people called Methodists, in London, Bristol, or Leeds, ever since there hath been any yearly Conference of the people called Methodists—hath always heretofore consisted of the preachers, commonly called Methodist preachers, in connexion with, and under the care of the said John Wesley, whom he hath thought expedient year after year to summon to meet him—to advise with them for the promotion of the gospel of Christ to appoint the said persons so summoned, and the other preachers also in connexion with and under the care of the said John Wesley not summoned to yearly Conference, to the use and enjoyment of the said Chapels—the names of all which persons so summoned and appointed, with the Chapels to which they were so appointed, together with the duration of such appointments—with all other matters transacted at the said yearly Conference, have year by year been printed and published under the title of minutes of Conference. The deed then goes on to state the declaration and establishment of the Conference in the following words, “And these presents further witness, and the said John Wesley doth hereby avouch and further declare that the several persons herein after named, to wit”—After mentioning by name one hundred of the preachers, it further states that these—“Being preachers and expounders of God’s Holy Word, under the care and in connexion with the said John Wesley, have been, now are, and do, on the day of the date hereof, constitute

The members of the said Conference, according to the true intent and meaning of the said several gifts and conveyances wherein the words, 'Conference of the people called Methodists' are mentioned and contained. And that the said several persons before-named, and their successors forever, to be chosen as herein-after mentioned, are, and shall forever be construed, taken, and be, the Conference of the people called Methodists. Nevertheless upon the terms and subject to the Regulations herein-after prescribed; that is to say,

"First. That the members of the said Conference and their successors for the time being forever, shall assemble once in every year, at London, Bristol, or Leeds (except as after mentioned) for the purposes aforesaid; and the time and place of holding every subsequent Conference shall be appointed at the preceding one, save that the next Conference after the date hereof, shall be holden at Leeds in Yorkshire, the last Tuesday in July next.

"Second. The act of the majority in number of the Conference assembled as aforesaid, shall be had, taken, and be the act of the whole Conference to all intents, purposes, and constructions whatsoever.

"Third. That after the Conference shall be assembled as aforesaid, they shall first proceed to fill up all the Vacancies occasioned by death or absence, as after mentioned.

"Fourth. No act of the Conference assembled, as aforesaid, shall be had, taken, or be the act of the Conference, until forty of the members thereof are assembled, unless reduced under that number by death, since the prior Conference or absence as after mentioned; nor until all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence shall be filled up by the election of new members of the Conference, so as to make up the number one hundred, unless there be not a sufficient number of persons objects of such election: and during the assembly of the Conference there shall always be forty members present at the doing of any act, save as aforesaid, or otherwise such acts shall be void.

"Fifth. The duration of the yearly assembly of the Conference, shall not be less than five days, nor more than three weeks, and be concluded by the appointment of the Conference, if under twenty-one days; or otherwise the conclusion thereof shall follow of course at the end of the said twenty-one days; the whole of all which said time of the assembly of the Conference shall be had, taken, considered, and be the yearly Conference of the people called Methodists, and all acts of the Conference during such yearly assembly thereof, shall be the acts of the Conference and none others.

"Sixth. Immediately after all the vacancies occasioned by death or absence are filled up by the election of new members as aforesaid, the Conference shall choose a President and Secretary of their assembly out of themselves, who shall continue such until the election of another President or Secretary in the next, or other subsequent Confer-



ence; and the said President shall have the privilege and power of two members in all acts of the Conference during his presidency, and such other powers, privileges, and authorities, as the Conference shall from time to time see fit to intrust into his hands.

“Seventh. Any member of the Conference absenting himself from the yearly assembly thereof for two years successively, without the consent or dispensation of the Conference, and be not present on the first day of the third yearly assembly thereof at the time and place appointed for the holding of the same, shall cease to be a member of the Conference from and after the said first day of the said third yearly assembly thereof, to all intents and purposes, as though he was naturally dead. But the Conference shall and may dispense with or consent to the absence of any member from any of the said yearly assemblies, for any cause which the Conference may see fit or necessary, and such member whose absence shall be so dispensed with, or consented to by the Conference, shall not by such absence cease to be a member thereof.

“Eighth. The Conference shall and may expel and put out from being a member thereof, or from being in connexion therewith, or from being on trial, any person member of the Conference admitted unto connexion, or upon trial, for any cause which to the Conference may seem fit or necessary; and every member of the Conference so expelled and put out, shall cease to be a member thereof to all intents and purposes, as though he was naturally dead. And the Conference immediately after the expulsion of any member thereof as aforesaid, shall elect another person to be a member of the Conference in the stead of such member so expelled.

“Ninth. The Conference shall and may admit into connexion with them, or upon trial, any person or persons whom they shall approve, to be preachers and expounders of God’s holy word, under the care and direction of the Conference, the name of every such person or persons so admitted into connexion, or upon trial, as aforesaid, with the time and degrees of the admission, being entered in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference.

“Tenth. No person shall be elected a member of the Conference who hath not been admitted in connexion with the Conference as a preacher and expounder of God’s holy word, as aforesaid, for twelve months.

“Eleventh. The Conference shall not nor may nominate or appoint any person to the use and enjoyment of, or to preach and expound God’s holy word in, any of the Chapels and premises so given or conveyed, or which may be given or conveyed on the trusts aforesaid, who is not either a member of the Conference, or admitted into connexion with the same, or upon trial as aforesaid; nor appoint any person for more than three years successively to the use and enjoyment of any Chapels and premises already given, or to be given or

conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, except ordained ministers of the Church of England.

“Twelfth. That the Conference shall and may appoint the place of holding the yearly assembly thereof at any other city, town, or place than London, Bristol, or Leeds, when it shall seem expedient so to do.

“Thirteenth. And for the convenience of Chapels and premises already or which may hereafter be given or conveyed upon the trusts aforesaid, situate in Ireland or other parts out of the kingdom of Great Britain, the Conference shall and may when and as often as it shall seem expedient, but not otherwise, appoint and delegate any member or members of the Conference with all or any of the powers, privileges, and advantages herein before contained or vested in the Conference; and all and every the acts, admissions, expulsions, and appointments whatsoever of such member or members of the Conference so appointed and delegated as aforesaid, the same being put into writing, and signed by such delegate or delegates, and entered in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference and subscribed as after mentioned, shall be deemed, taken, and be, the acts, admissions, expulsions, and appointments of the Conference, to all intents, constructions, and purposes whatsoever, from the respective times when the same shall be done by such delegate or delegates, notwithstanding anything herein contained to the contrary.

“Fourteenth. All resolutions and orders touching elections, admissions, expulsions, consents, dispensations, delegations or appointments and acts whatsoever of the Conference, shall be entered and written in the Journals or Minutes of the Conference which shall be kept for that purpose, publicly read, and then subscribed by the President and Secretary thereof for the time being, during the time such Conference shall be assembled; and when so entered and subscribed, shall be had, taken, received, and be the acts of the Conference, and such entry and subscription as aforesaid shall be had, taken, received, and be evidence of all and every such acts of the said Conference and of their said delegates without the aid of any other proof; and whatever shall not be so entered and subscribed as aforesaid, shall not be had, taken, received, or be the act of the Conference: and the said President and Secretary are hereby required and obliged to enter and subscribe as aforesaid every act whatever of the Conference.

“Lastly. Whenever the said Conference shall be reduced under the number of forty members, and continue so reduced for three yearly assemblies thereof successively, or whenever the members thereof shall decline or neglect to meet together annually for the purposes aforesaid, during the space of three years, that then, and in either of the said events, the Conference of the people called Methodists shall be extinguished, and all the aforesaid powers, privileges, and advantages shall cease, and the said Chapels and premises, and all other

Chapels and premises which now are, or hereafter may be settled, given or conveyed, upon the trusts aforesaid, shall vest in the Trustees for the time being of the said Chapels and premises respectively, and their successors forever: Upon Trust that they, and the survivors of them, and the Trustees for the time being, do, shall, and may appoint such person and persons to preach and expound God's holy word therein, and to have the use and enjoyment thereof, for such time and in such manner as to them shall seem proper."

Before I make any observations on this Deed, the reader should be apprized, that, neither the design of it, nor the words of the several clauses are to be imputed to Mr. Wesley. So far was he from forming any design of a deed of this kind, that I have good evidence to assert, it was some time before he could be prevailed upon to comply with the proposal: and, as in most other cases where he followed the same guide, he soon found reason to repent. That Mr. Wesley did actually repent of signing this deed, is pretty evident from the following letter which he wrote about a year afterwards, and committed to a friend to deliver to the Conference, at their first meeting after his decease.

"MY DEAR BRETHREN,

"Some of our travelling preachers have expressed a fear, that after my decease you would exclude them, either from preaching in connexion with you, or from some other privileges which they now enjoy. I know no other way to prevent any such inconvenience, than to leave these my last words with you.

"I beseech you by the mercies of God, that you never avail yourselves of the Deed of Declaration, to assume any superiority over your brethren: but let all things go on, among those itinerants who choose to remain together, exactly in the same manner as when I was with you, so far as circumstances will permit.

"In particular I beseech you, if you ever loved me, and if you now love God and your brethren, to have no respect of persons in stationing the preachers, in choosing children for Kingswood School, in disposing of the yearly contribution and the preachers' fund, or any other public money: but do all things with a single eye, as I have done from the beginning. Go on thus, doing all things without prejudice or partiality, and God will be with you even to the end."

But it would be improper in a work of this kind, to pass over this Deed without making an observation or two upon it. Now the first thing that strikes me, is the title itself. "A Declaration and Establishment of the Conference of the People called Methodists." This surely is a most incongruous title. It is well known that the people called Methodists, never held a Conference since Methodism existed. The Conference is an assembly of itinerant preachers only;\*

\* Except two or three clergymen.

and its members are not assembled by any authority derived from the people. When sitting, it exercises powers which are neither derived from the people, nor under any control by them. It elects members into its own body, or excludes them at pleasure : it makes regulations, or laws, not only for the itinerant preachers, but for all ranks and orders of persons in the societies : and while these things are transacted, neither local preachers, trustees of chapels, stewards, leaders, or any of the people, have a single voice, or a single representative in the assembly. The people have no check, no balance of power, against any regulation or law the Conference may choose to decree. It is difficult therefore to conceive, why this assembly of a few preachers, was called, "The Conference of the people called Methodists ;" unless it was to give the people a hint, that they *ought* to have some representatives in an assembly where laws are made, by which they, as Methodists, are to be governed.

The second observation shall be upon the words of the Deed in which it states that the one hundred preachers therein named, "Have been, now are, and do on the day of the date hereof, continue the members of the said Conference, according to the true intent and meaning of the said gifts and conveyances wherein the words Conference, &c. are mentioned and contained." That is, these preachers had been the Conference before the Deed of Declaration existed ; and did actually continue it, on the day this Deed was executed : that the word Conference, in the old Trust Deeds of all the Chapels, meant neither more nor less, than the hundred preachers mentioned by name in this Deed of Declaration ! Now, every one of these assertions is a notorious falsehood : there is not even the shadow of truth in any one of them. But it seems there was a necessity for stating the matter thus, however false, in order to give some color of justice and validity to this new deed. For had it appeared on the face of it, that Deeds of Trust already existed, in which the words Conference, &c. meant either more or less than the hundred preachers in this Deed named ; it would have been evident at first sight, that the Deed itself was nugatory and void to all intents and purposes ; as it could not possibly annul, or do away the legality of deeds already existing and duly executed, without the consent of the several parties concerned, first had and obtained under their respective signatures. Thus we see, that this famous Deed of Declaration and Establishment of the Conference, is founded on as gross a misrepresentation of facts, as ever disgraced any public instrument.

This Deed affords ample scope for many other observations : but having shown that it is altogether built on a mis-statement of facts, I shall stop ; as nothing more seems necessary to be said upon it at present : except perhaps, that Mr. Wesley, in all probability did not understand the import of the several clauses of it, as he never had patience to attend to any paper drawn up in the common forms of

the law. In these cases he trusted to those about him who had examined it.

The Deed of Declaration affected only the itinerant preachers: but when Mr. Wesley ordained some of the itinerants, a foundation was laid for a change in the ancient constitution of Methodism, of much more extensive influence; and which in the end is likely to affect every member of the society. It has already appeared in this history, that Mr. Wesley claimed the power or right of ordaining to the ministry, but said, it was not probable that he should ever exercise it. We have likewise seen, how steadily for a long course of years, he resisted every measure which tended to alter the relative situation of the societies to the established church, and to the various denominations of Dissenters to which any of the members might belong. It is not easy to assign a sufficient reason why Mr. Wesley, in the eighty-second year of his age, should depart from a line of conduct he had hitherto so strictly observed; especially if he acted according to his own judgment, and of his own free choice. However this may be, a plan was proposed in private, to a few clergymen who attended the Conference this year at Leeds, that Mr. Wesley should ordain one or two preachers for the societies in America. But the clergymen opposed it. Mr. Fletcher was consulted by letter; who advised, that a bishop should be prevailed upon, if possible, to ordain them, and then Mr. Wesley might appoint them to such offices in the societies as he thought proper, and give them letters testimonial of the appointments he had given them. Mr. Wesley well knew, that no bishop would ordain them at his recommendation, and therefore seemed inclined to do it himself. In this purpose however, he appeared so languid, if not wavering, that Dr. Coke thought it necessary to use some further means to urge him to the performance of it. Accordingly, August 9, Mr. Wesley being then in Wales on his way to Bristol, the doctor sent him the following letter:

“HONORED AND DEAR SIR,

“The more maturely I consider the subject, the more expedient it appears to me, that the power of ordaining others, should be received by me from you, by the imposition of your hands; and that you should lay hands on brother Whatcoat, and brother Vasey, for the following reasons: 1. It seems to me the most scriptural way, and most agreeable to the practice of the primitive churches: 2. I may want all the influence in America, which you can throw into my scale. Mr. Brackenbury informed me at Leeds, that he saw a letter in London from Mr. Asbury, in which he observed, that he would not receive any person deputed by you with any part of the superintendency of the work invested in him: or words which evidently implied so much. I do not find any, the least degree of prejudice in my mind against Mr. Asbury, on the contrary, a very great love and esteem; and am determined not to stir a finger without his consent,

unless mere sheer necessity obliges me; but rather to lie at his feet in all things. But as the journey is long, and you cannot spare me often, and it is well to provide against all events, and an authority formally received from you will (I am conscious of it) be fully admitted by the people, and my exercising the office of Ordination without that formal authority may be disputed, if there be any opposition on any other account: I could therefore earnestly wish you would exercise that power, in this instance, which I have not the shadow of a doubt but God hath invested you with for the good of our connexion. I think you have tried me too often to doubt, whether I will in any degree use the power you are pleased to invest me with, farther than I believe absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the work. 3. In respect of my brethren (brother Whatcoat and Vasey) it is very uncertain indeed, whether any of the clergy mentioned by brother Rankin, will stir a step with me in the work, except Mr. Jarrit; and it is by no means certain that even he will choose to join me in ordaining: and propriety and universal practice make it expedient, that I should have two presbyters with me in this work. In short, it appears to me that everything should be prepared, and everything proper be done, that can possibly be done this side the water. You can do all this in Mr. C——n's house, in your chamber; and afterwards (according to Mr. Fletcher's advice) give us letters testimonial of the different offices with which you have been pleased to invest us. For the purpose of laying hands on brothers Whatcoat and Vasey, I can bring Mr. C—— down with me, by which you will have two presbyters with you. In respect to brother Rankin's argument, that you will escape a great deal of odium by omitting this, it is nothing. Either it will be known, or not known; if not known, then no odium will arise: but if known, you will be obliged to acknowledge that I acted under your direction, or suffer me to sink under the weight of my enemies, with perhaps your brother at the head of them. I shall entreat you to ponder these things.

Your most dutiful,

T. COKE."\*

This letter affords matter for several observations, both of the serious and comic kind: but I shall not indulge myself on the occasion it so fairly offers. The attentive reader who examines every part of it, will be at no loss to conjecture, to whose influence we must impute Mr. Wesley's conduct in the present business. That Mr. Wesley should suffer himself to be so far influenced, in a matter of the utmost importance both to his own character and to the societies, by a man, of whose judgment in advising, and talents in conducting any affair he had no very high opinion, is truly astonishing: but so it was!—Mr. Wesley came to Bristol, and September 1, everything

\* This letter is taken from an attested copy of the doctor's letter, in Mr. Charles Wesley's handwriting.

being prepared as proposed above, he complied with the doctor's earnest wish, by consecrating him one of the bishops, and Mr. Whatcoat and Vasey presbyters of the new Methodist Episcopal Church in America. No doubt the three gentlemen were highly gratified with their new titles; as we often see, both young and *old children* gratified with gilded toys, though clumsily made, and of no real worth or valuable use, except to quiet the cries of those for whom they are prepared.

The difficulties on the first entrance into this new path being now overcome, and the opening prospects being highly flattering to the human mind tutored under certain circumstances, some further progress became natural and easy. Accordingly, it was not long before three more preachers were ordained for Scotland; and afterwards at different periods, several others were ordained: but all of them at first, were laid under a restriction not to exercise their ministerial functions in England. Since the death of Mr. Wesley, still further progress has been made, not only in the practice of ordaining, but in the exercise of their new functions, in various societies in this kingdom. But hitherto this new order of things has produced the most lamentable effects, having caused contention, and kindled the flames of party zeal.