

CHAPTER II.

OF MR. WESLEY'S RESIDENCE AT OXFORD FROM NOVEMBER, 1729, TO OCTOBER, 1735; WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST METHODIST SOCIETY, DURING THIS PERIOD.

HITHERTO we have viewed Mr. Wesley, as the polite collegian, rising into notice and esteem for his literary talents; and in the humble station of curate to his father. The reader will observe, that he did not quit this station from discontent, or restless ambition, but at the call of the heads of his college. It is manifest, that he had not the least conception of what afterwards followed. In consequence of the order he had received, he now entered upon a new situation: he obtained pupils, and became a tutor in the college: he presided in the hall as moderator in the disputations, held six times a week, and had the chief direction of a religious society. As a tutor he was singularly diligent and careful of his pupils, considering himself responsible for them, not only to their parents and the community, but to God; and therefore labored to make them both scholars and Christians. Some of them disapproved of his religious severities, and refused to join with him in them, but still continued under his care as pupils, and warmly acknowledged their obligations to him. As moderator in the disputations, he acquired a facility and expertness in arguing; especially, as he himself observes, "in discerning and pointing out well covered and plausible fallacies," which afterwards gave him a great superiority over most of his numerous adversaries. But his endeavors to become religious, will form the chief subject of this chapter. I call all that he did mere endeavors, because he did not attain the end which he aimed at, peace of mind, comfort in God, and a command over all his passions. He was a long time before he was fully convinced that his own endeavors were insufficient to give him the mind that was in Christ. He clearly saw, in 1725, what the gospel was intended to do for him, and for all mankind; to be the means of reconciling him to God, and giving him a title to the heavenly inheritance; of cleansing him from sin, and preparing him for the enjoyment of heaven: and he retained this view of the general design of the gospel, from that period to the end of his life, without the least variation. But he did not yet understand the *method* proposed in the gospel, of putting a sinner in possession of these blessings, nor the order in which the mind is capable of acquiring them. It is true, he read the Scriptures daily, at this time, and in his religious researches was *homo unius libri*, a man of one book. But his preconceived opinions were as a blind before his mind, and completely hid from his view, the gospel method of attaining present salvation. This is no reproach to Mr. Wesley, nor any objection against

the doctrines he afterwards embraced. It is the common lot of all men to imbibe in their youth, notions which afterwards hinder them from perceiving the most obvious truths. It is well known that the systems of natural philosophy, which ingenious men have formed and taught to young students, have been the chief hinderances to the progress of knowledge.* What kept his mind in a state of perplexity, was a confused notion of justification; which he either confounded with sanctification, or thought a man must be sanctified before he can be justified. This notion hindered him from perceiving, that to justify in the language of Paul, is to pardon a repenting believing sinner, as an act of grace; not for the sake of any previous holiness in him, but through Jesus Christ alone. As soon as he was convinced of this, he was no longer embarrassed and perplexed; he saw immediately the plan which the gospel proposes of reconciling sinners to God, of making them holy in heart and life, and of giving them a sure hope, full of immortality.—But let us attend him through the period appropriated to this chapter, and we shall see the efforts of a great mind to do the will of God; and every step we take, will convince us of the uprightness of his intention.

It appears from the account I have given of Mr. Charles Wesley, that for more than two years before this time he had studied very hard, and through his brother's advice and influence was become deeply serious; that during the last summer he had received the sacrament weekly, and had prevailed on two or three young men to do the same; and that these gentlemen had occasionally met together for the purpose of assisting and encouraging each other in their duty, and of regulating their employments by certain rules. The regular method of arranging their studies and other employments procured

* The two following instances are remarkable proofs of this. Galen, was well acquainted with the difference between arteries and veins; he knew the effects of ligatures in the operation of bleeding, and had all the principal *data* familiar to his mind, from which Harvey concluded, that the blood circulates through the body. Yet Galen, though accustomed to the process of reasoning, drew no such conclusion from them; the notion that the blood moved to and fro, in the vessels, like the flux and reflux of the sea, so possessed and blinded his mind, that he could not perceive a consequence which naturally and obviously followed from the things which he knew. This veil remained on the minds of philosophers and physicians for about fourteen hundred years, so that Harvey deserves as much praise for breaking through the shackles of ancient error, and impartially following the light of truth, as for the discovery itself.

When Dr. Priestley's experiments on air, were first published in France, they roused the French chymists from a kind of lethargy (*de l'engourdissement*, as one of them expresses it,) yet Macquer, one of the first chymists, not only in France, but perhaps in Europe, speaking of the discovery of the nitrous gas, or air, has frankly acknowledged, that he hardly thought it possible an experienced chymist would ever have made it. That his principles would have hindered him from attempting the experiment, which was necessary to make the discovery in question. So true it is, that though in general, knowledge acquired leads the mind to a farther progress, yet, if we place too much confidence in received opinions, and in the consequences we draw from them, they may sometimes hinder us from discovering the most obvious truths. See Macquer's *Dictionnaire de Chymie*. Tom. 2, page 323, Edit. 1778.

them the distinguishing epithet of *Methodists*, which according to Mr. Charles, was given them before his brother came to Oxford in November. This is probably the most accurate account; for when Mr. Wesley speaks of this appellation, he mentions it only in very general terms, without attempting to state at what period of the society it was first given. "The exact regularity of their lives as well as studies," says he, "occasioned a young gentleman of Christ Church to say, 'here is a new set of *Methodists* sprung up;' alluding to some ancient physicians who were so called.* The name was new and quaint; so it took immediately, and the Methodists were known all over the university.

It does not appear, however, that these gentlemen met together at any fixed or stated times, or that they had made any regulations for this purpose before Mr. John Wesley joined them. When he came amongst them, they gladly committed the direction of the whole to him; and from this time the society began to assume a more regular form; it is from this period therefore, that he commences his history of it, in the following words:

"In November, 1729, four young gentlemen of Oxford, Mr. John Wesley, Fellow of Lincoln College; Mr. Charles Wesley, student of Christ Church; Mr. Morgan, commoner of Christ Church; and Mr. Kirkman, of Merton College; began to spend some evenings in a week together, in reading chiefly the Greek Testament. The next year two or three of Mr. John Wesley's pupils desired the liberty of meeting with them; and afterwards one of Mr. Charles Wesley's pupils. It was in 1732, that Mr. Ingham of Queen's College, and Mr. Broughton of Exeter, were added to their number. To these in April, was joined Mr. Clayton of Brazen-Nose, with two or three of his pupils. About the same time Mr. James Harvey was permitted to meet with them, and afterwards Mr. Whitefield." †

* Themison was the founder of this sect, about thirty or forty years before the Christian era; and it flourished, according to Alpinus, about three hundred years. Le Clerc informs us, that the physicians of this sect were called Methodists, because they took it into their head, to find out a more easy *method* of teaching and practising the art of physic. However this may be, it is certain that some of the greatest physicians of the time in which the sect flourished, were Methodists. That Themison was a man of the most extensive practice, is evidently implied in the words of Juvenal, if he speaks of the same person, which is generally supposed. He is describing the infirmities of an old man, and observes,

————— *Circumflit agmine facto*
Morborum omne genus, quorum si nomina quæras
Promptius expediam —————
Quot Themison ægros autumnò acciderit uno.

"A whole troop of all kinds of diseases rush upon him on all sides; if you ask their names, I could as soon reckon up how many patients Themison killed in one autumn."—Had his practice, however, been very unsuccessful, it is not probable it would have been so extensive as to become almost proverbial.

† Wesley's Works, vol. xv. page 375.

These four young gentlemen continued their meetings for some time, without any other views than their own benefit. But in the summer of 1730, Mr. Morgan called at the gaol to see a man who was condemned for killing his wife, and told them, that, from the conversation he had with one of the debtors, he verily believed it would do much good if any one would be at the pains of now and then speaking with them. Having mentioned this several times, Mr. Wesley and his brother Charles, went with him on the 24th of August to the castle, and were so well satisfied with their visit, that they determined to go thither once or twice a week. They had not done this long, before Mr. Morgan, who seems to have led the way in acts of charity and benevolence to others, desired Mr. Wesley to go with him to see a poor woman in the town who was sick. When they began to reflect on the benefit this might be of to the poor, they thought it would be well worth while to spend two or three hours in the week in this species of charity, especially if the minister of the parish in which such person was, did not object to it. But as this practice was quite *new*, and had an appearance of irregularity, on which account it might give offence, Mr. Wesley did not choose to proceed any further without advice. He wrote to his father, who was remarkably attached to regularity and church-order, stating what they had hitherto done, and what their design was; begging to have his opinion whether they had already gone too far? Whether they should stand still where they were, or go forward?

His father's answer is dated September 21, in which he says, "As to your own designs and employments, what can I say less of them than *valde probo*; and that I have the highest reason to bless God, that he has given me two sons together at Oxford, to whom he has given grace and courage to turn the war against the world and the devil, which is the best way to conquer them. They have but one enemy more to combat with, the flesh; which if they take care to subdue by fasting and prayer, there will be no more for them to do, but to proceed steadily in the same course, and expect the crown which fadeth not away. You have reason to bless God, as I do, that you have so fast a friend as Mr. Morgan, who I see in the most difficult service, is ready to break the ice for you.

"I am afraid lest the main objection you make against your going on in the business of the prisoners, may secretly proceed from flesh and blood. For who can harm you if you are followers of that which is so good? And which will be one of the marks by which the Shepherd of Israel will know his sheep at the last day. Though, if it were possible for you to suffer a little in the cause, you would have a confessor's reward. You own that none but such as are out of their senses would be prejudiced against you for acting in this manner. Go on then in God's name in the path to which your Saviour has directed you, and that track wherein your father has gone before

you? For when I was an undergraduate, I visited those in the castle there, and reflect on it with great satisfaction to this day. Walk as prudently as you can, though not fearfully, and my heart and prayers are with you.

“Your first regular step is to consult with him, if any such there be, who has a jurisdiction over the prisoners; and the next is to obtain the direction and approbation of your bishop. This is Monday morning, at which time I shall never forget you.—Accordingly, to him who is every where, I now heartily commit you.”

This advice, from a person on whose judgment, experience, and orthodoxy they could depend, gave them courage: it confirmed them in their benevolent purposes, and animated them with zeal in the execution of them. They carefully attended, however, to the prudential directions; and Mr. Wesley immediately consulted Mr. Gerard, the Bishop of Oxford’s chaplain, who likewise attended the prisoners when any were condemned to die, for at other times they were left to their own care. He proposed to him their design of serving the prisoners as far as they could, and his own intention of preaching there once a month, if the bishop should approve of it. Mr. Gerard commended the design, and said he would answer for the bishop’s approbation, to whom he would take the first opportunity of mentioning it. The bishop being consulted, not only gave his permission, but was highly pleased with the undertaking, and hoped it would have the desired success.

Sheltered by such respectable authority, they thought themselves secure, and prosecuted their design with diligence. But no human authority is sufficient to restrain the overflowings of a mind at enmity with God. The old drones in religion, who retain little of Christianity but the name, think themselves insulted by any extraordinary piety and zeal in young men: and the gay and thoughtless are irritated, because they think their peculiar pleasures and whole manner of life is thereby condemned. Thus the case seems to have stood between these young men and their opponents at Oxford. The opposition increased. The men of wit in Christ Church entered the lists against them, and between mirth and anger, made a pretty many reflections upon the *sacramentarians*, as they were pleased to call them. Their allies of Merton, thought both this and the title of Methodists, too decent, as implying something commendable; they therefore changed it, and honored them with the title of the Holy Club. But most of these being persons of well known characters, they made no proselytes from the sacrament, till a gentleman eminent for learning, and well esteemed for piety, joining them, told his nephew, that if he dared to go to the weekly communion any longer, he would turn him out of doors. This argument had no success; the young gentleman communicated next week. The uncle now became more violent, and shook his nephew by the throat, to convince him more effectually,

that receiving the sacrament every week was founded in error: but this argument appearing to the young gentleman to have no weight in it, he continued his usual practice. This eminent person, so well esteemed for piety, was however indefatigable in his endeavors to suppress it. He now changed the mode of attack, and like a true agent of satan, kept close to the letter of the Apostle's advice, but grossly perverted the spirit of it. By a soft obliging manner towards him, he melted down the young gentleman's resolution of being so strictly religious, and from this time he began to absent himself five Sundays out of six, from the sacrament. This success gave the opposition new strength, and one of the seniors of the college consulting with the doctor, they prevailed with two other young gentlemen to promise they would only communicate three times a year.

The opposition now becoming more serious, by some persons of influence taking so decided a part against them, the two Mr. Wesleys wrote to their father again, stating their situation, and asking further advice. His answer, which is dated December 1, now lies before me.

“ This day I received both yours, and this evening, in the course of our reading, I thought I found an answer that would be more proper than any I myself could dictate; though since it will not be easily translated, I send it in the original. *Πολλη μοι Κανχησις υπερ υμων· πεπληρωμαι τη παρακλησει υπερπερισσευομαι τη χαρα.** What would you be? Would you be angels? I question whether a mortal can arrive to a greater degree of perfection than steadily to do good, and for that very reason patiently and meekly to suffer evil. For my part, on the present view of your actions and designs, my daily prayers are that God would keep you humble: and then I am sure that if you continue to suffer for righteousness' sake, though it be but in a lower degree, the spirit of God and of glory shall in some good measure rest upon you. And you cannot but feel such a satisfaction in your own minds as you would not part with for all the world. Be never weary of well-doing: never look back, for you know the prize and the crown are before you: though I can scarce think so meanly of you, as that you should be discouraged with the crackling of thorns under a pot. Be not high-minded, but fear. Preserve an equal temper of mind under whatever treatment you meet with, from a not very just or well-natured world. Bear no more sail than is necessary, but steer steady. The less you value yourselves for these unfashionable duties (as there is no such thing as works of supererogation) the more all good and wise men will value you, if they see your works are all of a piece; or which is infinitely more, he, by whom actions and intentions are weighed, will both accept, esteem, and reward you.

“ I hear my son John has the honor of being styled the father of

* 2 Cor. vii. 4. Great is my glorying of you. I am filled with comfort. I am exceeding joyful.

the Holy Club: if it be so, I am sure I must be grandfather of it; and I need not say, that I had rather any of my sons should be so dignified and distinguished, than to have the title of HIS HOLINESS."

In the same letter he advises them to use great mildness towards their persecutors, but at the same time to avoid a mean or sneaking behavior, and rather to show an open manly firmness, which is highly becoming in a mind conscious of acting well.

In answer to this, Mr. Wesley wrote to his father December 11. He says, "We all return you our sincere thanks for your timely and necessary advice; and should be exceedingly glad if it were as easy to follow it, as it is impossible not to approve it. That doubtless is the very point we have to gain, before any other can be managed successfully, to have an habitual lively sense of our being only instruments in his hand, who can do all things either with or without any instrument. But how to fix this sense in us, is the great question.—We hope you and all our friends will continue to intercede for us, to him with whom all things are possible.

"To-morrow night I expect to be in company with the gentleman who did us the honor to take the first notice of our little society. I have terrible reasons to think he is as slenderly provided with humanity as with sense and learning. However, I must not let slip this opportunity, because he is at present in some distress, occasioned by his being obliged to dispute in the schools on Monday; though he is not furnished with such arguments as he wants. I intend, if he has not procured them before, to help him to some arguments, that I may at least remove that prejudice from him, that 'we are friends to none but those who are as queer as ourselves.'"

Under the encouragement of his father's letter they still continued to meet together as usual, and to confirm one another in their pious resolutions. They communicated once a week. They visited the prisoners, and some poor families in the town when they were sick; and that they might have wherewith to relieve their distress, they abridged themselves of all the superfluities and of many of the conveniences of life. They took every opportunity of conversing with their acquaintance in the most useful manner, to awaken in them a sense of religion. But the outcry daily increasing, they thought it proper, by way of self-defence, to propose to their friends or opponents as opportunity offered, these or the like questions:

"1. Whether it does not concern all men of all conditions to imitate him as much as they can, who went about doing good?

Whether all Christians are not concerned in that command, 'While we have time let us do good to all men.'

Whether we shall not be more happy hereafter, the more good we do now?

2. Whether we may not try to do good to our acquaintance among the young gentlemen of the university. Particularly, whether we

may not endeavor to convince them of the necessity of being Christians, and of being scholars?

Whether we may not try to convince them of the necessity of method and industry, in order to either learning or virtue?

Whether we may not try to persuade them to confirm and increase their industry, by communicating as often as they can?

Whether we may not mention to them the authors whom we conceive to have written best on those subjects?

Whether we may not assist them as we are able, from time to time, to form resolutions upon what they read in those authors, and to execute them with steadiness and perseverance?

3. May we not try to do good to those who are hungry, naked, or sick? If we know any necessitous family, may we not give them a little food, clothes, or physic, as they want?

If they can read, may we not give them a Bible, a Common Prayer Book, or a Whole Duty of Man?

May we not inquire, now and then, how they have used them; explain what they do not understand, and enforce what they do?

May we not enforce upon them the necessity of private prayer, and of frequenting the church and sacrament?

May we not contribute what we are able, toward having their children clothed, and taught to read?

4. May we not try to do good to those who are in prison? May we not release such well-disposed persons as remain in prison for small debts?

May we not lend small sums to those who are of any trade, that they may procure themselves tools and materials to work with?

May we not give to them who appear to want it most, a little money, or clothes, or physic?"

It was impossible for any person, who had a grain of either humanity or religion left, to answer these questions in the negative, however averse he might be to practise the duties proposed in them. No one attempted it; but several, when they understood the plan of their designs, increased their little stock of money for the prisoners and the poor, by subscribing something quarterly to it; so that the more persons they proposed their designs to, the more they were confirmed in the belief that they were acting right, and more determined to pursue their plan, notwithstanding the ridicule which increased fast upon them during the winter.

It appears from the questions here proposed, which relate to the students, that Mr. Wesley was not inattentive to their progress in learning, though he endeavored to make them religious. His regular method of study, his diligence, and great care to make his pupils thoroughly understand every thing they read, were admirably adapted to make them scholars. It is indeed universally allowed, that he

was an excellent tutor, and his pupils have in general acknowledged themselves under infinite obligations to him on this account.

This year, Mr. Wesley and his brother Charles, began the practice of conversing together in Latin, whenever they were alone; chiefly with a view of acquiring a facility in expressing themselves in this language, on all occasions, with perspicuity, energy, and elegance. This practice they continued for near sixty years; and with such success, that if their style did not equal, it certainly, on some subjects, approached nearer to the best models of conversation in the Augustan age, than many of the learned have thought it possible to attain.

In the beginning of the year 1731, a meeting was held by several of the seniors of the college, to consult on the speediest way to stop the progress of enthusiasm in it. Mr. Wesley and his friends did not learn what was the result of this very pious consultation; but it was soon publicly reported, that Dr. ——— and the Censors were going to blow up the Godly Club. This was now their common title; though they were sometimes dignified with that of the Enthusiasts, or the Reforming Club.—It is curious to observe, the different modes of attack sometimes made use of, both against persons and doctrines. When the opposers can derive no advantage, either from Scripture or reason, they give bad names to the best things; in order to prejudice the minds of those, who never think for themselves.

As new difficulties arose, Mr. Wesley lost no opportunity of consulting his friends. He now wrote to his brother Samuel, at Westminster; whose answer is dated April—"I designed," says he, "to have written to Mr. Bateman, to whom I read part of your last letter, concerning the execrable consultation in order to stop the progress of religion, by giving it a false name. He lifted up his eyes and hands, and protested he could not have believed such a thing. He gave Mr. Morgan a very good character, and said he should always think himself obliged to him, for the pains he took in reclaiming a young pupil of his, who was just got into ill company, and upon the brink of destruction.—I do not like your being called *a club*, that name is really calculated to do mischief. But the other charge of enthusiasm can weigh with none, but such as drink away their senses, or never had any: for surely activity in social duties, and a strict attendance on the ordained means of grace, are the strongest guards imaginable against it. I called on Dr. Terry, to desire him to subscribe to Job, but did not meet with him at home; in two or three days, *O rem ridiculam et jocosam!* he did me the favor to call upon me. I said, I hope my two brothers have still good characters at Oxford,—he answered he believed they were studious and sober. When he was got down stairs he turned about, and said, I think I have heard your brothers are exemplary and take great pains to instil good principles into young people. I told him, and you may guess I

told him the truth, I was very glad to hear such a character of them, *especially from him.*”—From the last words, it is pretty plain, that Dr. Terry was an avowed opposer of Mr. Wesley and his friends, though he was constrained to bear testimony to the goodness of their characters: but whether he was the grave gentleman who so piously took his nephew by the throat to convert him to his own way of thinking and acting; and who consulted with the censors how to stop the progress of religion among them, is not certain.

In the midst of such opposition, Mr. Wesley thought it prudent to take every method in his power, to prevent the good that was in them from being evil spoken of; and with this view, and to obtain further advice, he wrote in May, to the Rev. Mr. Hoole,* an aged clergyman in his father's neighborhood, of known wisdom and integrity. Part of his answer runs thus:† “As to my own sense of the matter, I confess I cannot but heartily approve of that serious and religious turn of mind that prompts you and your associates to those pious and charitable offices; and can have no notion of that man's religion, or concern for the honor of the university, that opposes you, as far as your design respects the colleges. I should be loth to send a son of mine to any seminary, where his conversation with virtuous young men, whose professed design of meeting together at proper times, was to assist each other in forming good resolutions, and encouraging one another to execute them with constancy and steadiness, was inconsistent with any received maxims or rules of life among the members.”

On the 18th of April Mr. Wesley, in company with his brother, set out on foot for Epworth; for they now saved every penny they could, to give it to the poor. They returned to Oxford on the 12th of May, and on the 11th of June he wrote to his father, giving him a very discouraging account of their little society. With respect to their walk he observes, that it was not so pleasant to Oxford as from it, though in one respect more useful. “For it let us see,” says he, “that four or five and twenty miles is an easy and safe day's journey in hot weather as well as cold. We have made another discovery too, which may be of some service; that it is easy to read as we walk ten or twelve miles, and that it neither makes us faint nor gives us any other symptom of weariness, more than the mere walking without reading at all.

“Since our return, our little company that used to meet us on a Sunday evening, is shrunk into almost none at all. Mr. Morgan is sick at Holt; Mr. Boyce is at his father's house at Barton; Mr. Kirkham must very shortly leave Oxford, to be his uncle's curate, and a young gentleman of Christ Church, who used to make a fourth, either afraid or ashamed or both, is returned to the ways of the world, and studiously shuns our company. However, the poor at the castle

* Private Diary.

† Wesley's Works, vol. xxvi. p. 99.

have still the gospel preached to them, and some of their temporal wants supplied, our little fund rather increasing than diminishing. Nor have we yet been forced to discharge any of the children which Mr. Morgan left to our care: though I wish they too, do not find the want of him; I am sure some of their parents will.

“Some however give us a better prospect; John Whitelamb in particular. I believe with this you will receive some account from himself, how his time is employed. He reads one English, one Latin, and one Greek book alternately; and never meddles with a new one in any of the languages, till he has ended the old one. If he goes on as he has begun, I dare take upon me to say, that by the time he has been here four or five years, there will not be such an one, of his standing in Lincoln-College, perhaps not in the university of Oxford.”

But notwithstanding their little company was thus scattered, and they left to stand alone, yet they still pursued their designs of doing as much good as possible, with the same diligence and zeal as before. How few attain to this steadiness of mind in that which is good! Who will support an uniform character in an unfashionable attachment to the duties of religion in every situation, uninfluenced by friends or enemies? Surely none but those who act from principle, who do not consider so much what men say or do, as what judgment God forms of them in every action of life. The present situation of these two young men tried and proved them in this respect, and they stood firm as the beaten anvil to the stroke. Some of their friends however began to think that they carried matters too far, and laid unnecessary burdens on themselves. This subject Mr. Wesley mentions in a letter to his mother of the same date with that mentioned above to his father, giving her at the same time some account of the effects of their journey.

“The motion and sun together,” says he, “in our last hundred and fifty miles’ walk so thoroughly carried off all our superfluous humors, that we continue perfectly in health, though it is here a very sickly season. And Mr. Kirkham assures us, on the word of a priest and a physician, that if we will but take the same medicine once or twice a year, we shall never need any other to keep us from the gout.—When we were with him, we touched two or three times upon a nice subject, but did not come to any full conclusion. The point debated was, what is the meaning of being ‘righteous over much,’ or by the more common phrase of, being too strict in religion? and what danger there was of any of us falling into that extreme?”

“All the ways of being too righteous or too strict, which we could think of, were these: either the carrying some one particular virtue to so great a height, as to make it clash with some others; or, the laying too much stress on the instituted means of grace, to the neglect of the weightier matters of the law; or, the multiplying prudential means upon ourselves so far, and binding ourselves to the obser-

vance of them so strictly, as to obstruct the end we aimed at by them, either by hindering our advance in heavenly affections in general, or by retarding our progress in some particular virtue. Our opponents seemed to think my brother and I in some danger of being too strict in this last sense; of laying burdens on ourselves too heavy to be borne, and consequently too heavy to be of any use to us.

“It is easy to observe, that almost every one thinks that rule totally needless, which he does not need himself; and as to the christian spirit itself, almost every one calls that degree of it which he does not himself aim at, enthusiasm. If therefore we plead for either (not as if we thought the former absolutely needful, neither as if we had attained the latter) it is no great wonder that they who are not for us in practice should be against us. If you who are a less prejudiced judge, have perceived us faulty in this matter, too superstitious or enthusiastic, or whatever it is to be called; we earnestly desire to be speedily informed of our error, that we may no longer spend our strength on that which profiteth not. Or whatever there may be on the other hand, in which you have observed us to be too remiss, that likewise we desire to know as soon as possible. This is a subject which we would understand with as much accuracy as possible, it being hard to say which is of the worse consequence: the being too strict, the really carrying things too far, the wearying ourselves and spending our strength in burdens that are unnecessary; or the being frightened by those terrible words, from what, if not directly necessary, would at least be useful.”

The reader will easily observe that this letter, written to a parent, to whom he often laid open all his heart without the least restraint or disguise, speaks a mind ardently bent on a total devotion to God, and anxious to discover the most excellent way of attaining it. The following letter written in November to his brother Samuel, treats on the same subject he had mentioned to his mother, and discovers his sentiments more at large. It seems Mr. Samuel Wesley had suggested to him, that in his general seriousness, and in one or two other points of behavior, he carried matters too far; that these little things might give a prejudice against other parts of his conduct that were excellent, and of the utmost importance; and that he might relax a little in these smaller matters without injuring his general design. In answer to these remarks of his brother, he says; “Considering the other changes that I remember in myself, I shall not at all wonder if the time comes, when we differ as little in our conclusions as we do now in our premises. In most we seem to agree already; especially as to rising, not keeping much company, and sitting by a fire, which I always do, if any one in the room does, whether at home or abroad. But these are the very things about which others will never agree with me. Had I given up these, or but one of them, rising early, which implies going to bed early (though I never am sleepy now) and

keeping so little company, not one man in ten of those who are offended at me, as it is, would ever open their mouth against any of the other particulars. For the sake of these, those are mentioned; the root of the matter lies here. Would I but employ a third of my money, and about half my time as other folks do, smaller matters would be easily overlooked. But I think, '*Nil tanti est.*' As to my hair, I am much more sure, that what this enables me to do, is according to the Scripture, than I am that the length of it is contrary to it.*

"I have often thought of a saying of Dr. Hayward's when he examined me for priest's orders; 'Do you know what you are about? You are bidding defiance to all mankind. He that would live a christian priest, ought to know, that whether his hand be against every man or no, he must expect every man's hand should be against him.' It is not strange that every man's hand, who is not a Christian, should be against him that endeavors to be so. But is it not hard that even those who are with us should be against us; that a man's enemies, in some degree, should be those of the same household of faith? Yet so it is. From the time that a man sets himself to this business, very many, even of those who travel the same road, many of those who are before as well as behind him, will lay stumbling-blocks in his way. One blames him for not going fast enough, another for having made no greater progress; another for going too far, which perhaps, strange as it is, is the more common charge of the two. For this comes from all people of all sorts; not only infidels, not only half christians, but some of the best of men are very apt to make this reflection, 'he lays unnecessary burdens upon himself; he is too precise; he does what God has no where required to be done.' True, he has not required it of those who are perfect; and even as to those who are not, all men are not required to use all means; but every man is required to use those which he finds most useful to himself. And who can tell better than himself, whether he finds them so or no? Who knoweth the things of a man better than the spirit of a man that is in him?

"This being a point of no common concern, I desire to explain myself upon it once for all, and to tell you freely and clearly, those general positions on which I ground all those practices, for which, as you would have seen had you read that paper through, I am generally accused of singularity. 1st. As to the end of my being; I lay it down for a rule, that I cannot be too happy, or therefore too holy; and thence infer that the more steadily I keep my eye upon the prize

* Mr. Wesley wore his hair remarkably long and flowing on his shoulders. As he was often indisposed, his mother thought it injured his health, and was very desirous that he should have it taken off; "I verily believe," says she in a letter, "you will never have any good state of health, while you keep your hair." He objected against parting with his hair, because it would occasion some increase of his expenses, which he could not afford, without giving less to the poor. His brother Samuel took a middle way, and advised him to have his hair cut shorter; and this advice he followed.

of our high calling, and the more of my thoughts and words and actions are directly pointed at the attainment of it, the better. 2. As to the instituted means of attaining it, I likewise lay it down for a rule, that I am to use them every time I may. 3. As to prudential means, I believe this rule holds of things indifferent in themselves; whatever I know to do me hurt, that to me is not indifferent, but resolutely to be abstained from: whatever I know to do me good, that to me is not indifferent, but resolutely to be embraced.

“But it will be said, I am whimsical. True, and what then? If by *whimsical* be meant simply *singular*, I own it; if singular without any reason, I deny it with both my hands, and am ready to give a reason to any that asks me, of every custom wherein I differ from the world. I grant in many single actions I differ unreasonably from others, but not wilfully; no, I shall extremely thank any one who will teach me how to help it.

“As to my being *formal*; if by that be meant that I am not easy and unaffected enough in my carriage, it is very true; but how shall I help it?—If by formal be meant that I am serious, this too is very true; but why should I help it? Mirth I grant is very fit for you; but does it follow that it is fit for me? Are the same tempers, any more than the same words and actions fit for all circumstances? If you are to rejoice evermore, because you have put your enemies to flight, am I to do the same while they continually assault me? You are very glad, because you are passed from death to life; well, but let him be afraid who knows not whether he is to live or die.—Whether this be my condition or no, who can tell better than myself? Him who can, whoever he be, I allow to be a proper judge, whether I do well to be generally as serious as I can.”

December 11. Mr. Samuel Wesley answered this letter, and felt himself a little hurt at some expressions in it; the force of which he endeavored to ward off. Some time afterwards the subject of seriousness was again renewed, and several letters passed between them. At first they seemed to differ in opinion; but when each had explained himself, they were more agreed. Mr. Samuel Wesley closes the debate in the following words: “To the best of my memory your character was but little in my thoughts, and my own not at all, in my late letters. I never designed to justify myself; perhaps my laughter is particularly blameable, as my temper is serious, severe, and melancholy.—Thus ends our notable dispute, or rather we have had none at all. For you are only against excessive laughter, which I was never for; and only for seriousness, which I was never against. There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh. And now methinks each of us may say to the other, as Dick does to Matt—

“That people lived and died I knew,
An hour ago, as well as you.”

About this time his father came up to London and from thence took an excursion to Oxford, to see what his sons were doing, and in what spirit and temper of mind they did it. On his return to London he wrote to Mrs. Wesley, January the 5th, in which he says; "I had yours on new-year's day, on which I returned in one day from Oxford not very well; but well paid both for my expense and labor, by the shining piety of our two sons, of whom I shall write soon more at large." This, the reader will observe, gives the fullest evidence that the father did not think his sons were carrying matters too far.

Though Mr. Wesley continued with such persevering industry in every means of grace, in acts of self-denial, and in doing good to others to the utmost of his power; yet it was a bare conviction of his duty, and not a gale of passion, that supported him in these laborious exercises; which makes his resolution appear the more extraordinary. When he first set out in this religious course of life, he was fully convinced that he did not possess that state of mind which the gospel speaks of as the privilege of true believers in Christ; he expected that the practice of every duty to the utmost of his power would lead him into this state of mind, and give him peace and joy in God; but he did not find that this effect followed; he was often dull, flat, and unaffected in the use of the most solemn ordinances. This both distressed and perplexed him, so that he seemed at a loss which way to proceed, to obtain the happiness and security he wanted. In this state of perplexity he wrote to his mother on the 28th of February, and after mentioning Mr. Morgan's situation, he observes; "One consideration is enough to make me assent to his and your judgment concerning the holy sacrament; which is, that we cannot allow Christ's human nature to be present in it, without allowing either con—or transubstantiation. But that his Divinity is so united to us then, as he never is but to worthy receivers, I firmly believe, though the manner of that union is utterly a mystery to me.

"That none but worthy receivers should find this effect is not strange to me, when I observe, how small effect many means of improvement have upon an unprepared mind. Mr. Morgan and my brother were affected as they ought, by the observations you made on that glorious subject: but though my understanding approved what was excellent, yet my heart did not feel it. Why was this, but because it was pre-engaged by those affections with which wisdom will not dwell? Because the animal mind cannot relish those truths which are spiritually discerned. Yet I have those writings which the good spirit gave to that end! I have many of those which he hath since assisted his servants to give us: I have retirement to apply these to my own soul daily; I have means both of public and private prayer; and above all, of partaking in that sacrament once a week. What shall I do to make all these blessings effectual? To gain from them that mind which was also in Christ Jesus?

“To all who give signs of their not being strangers to it, I propose this question—and why not to you rather than any?—Shall I quite break off my pursuit of all learning, but what immediately tends to practice? I once desired to make a fair show in languages and philosophy: but it is past; there is a more excellent way, and if I cannot attain to any progress in the one, without throwing up all thoughts of the other, why fare it well! yet a little while and we shall all be equal in knowledge, if we are in virtue.

“You say, ‘you have renounced the world.’ And what have I been doing all this time? What have I done ever since I was born? Why, I have been plunging myself into it more and more. It is enough: Awake thou that sleepest. Is there not one Lord, one Spirit, one hope of our calling? One way of attaining that hope? Then I am to renounce the world as well as you. ‘That is the very thing I want to do: to draw off my affections from this world and fix them on a better. But how? What is the surest and the shortest way? Is it not to be humble? Surely this is a large step in the way. But the question recurs, how am I to do this? To own the necessity of it, is not to be humble. In many things you have interceded for me and prevailed. Who knows but in this too you may be successful? If you can spare me only that little part of Thursday evening, which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not but it would be as useful now for correcting my heart, as it was then for forming my judgment.

“When I observe how fast life flies away, and how slow improvement comes, I think one can never be too much afraid of dying before one has learned to live. I mean even in the course of nature. For were I sure that ‘the silver cord should not be violently loosed;’ that ‘the wheel should not be broken at the cistern,’ till it was quite worn away by its own motion; yet what a time would this give me for such a work! a moment to transact the business of eternity! What are forty years in comparison of this? So that were I sure of what never man yet was sure of, how little would it alter the case! How justly still might I cry out,

“Downward I hasten to my destin’d place;
There none obtain thy aid, none sing thy praise!
Soon shall I lie in death’s deep ocean drown’d;
Is mercy there, is sweet forgiveness found?
O save me yet, while on the brink I stand;
Rebuke these storms, and set me safe on land.
O make my longings and thy mercy sure!
Thou art the God of power.’”

This letter needs no comment; it shows an ardent mind, wholly occupied in pursuit of a saving knowledge of God; but embarrassed and perplexed, not knowing which way to turn, and yet willing to sacrifice the dearest object in life to obtain the end in view.

Mr. Morgan had now been ill more than twelve months; and was so greatly reduced, that he became a burden to himself, and totally useless to others. In this stage of his disease, his understanding sometimes appeared deranged; he became more changeable in his temper than usual, and inconsistent in his conversation. But this was purely the effect of his disease, not the least symptom of the kind having ever appeared, till long after his health had declined.

His father being fully informed of the state of his health, wrote to him in March, and told him that he should no longer be limited in his expenses to any fixed allowance; that such sums as were necessary for his health should be immediately remitted to him; but strongly insisted that no part of it should be given away; that he should lay it out in recreation, medicine, and such other matters as might be necessary for the recovery and support of his health. He then says, "You cannot conceive what a noise that ridiculous society which you are engaged in, has made here. Besides the particulars of the great follies of it at Oxford, which to my great concern I have often heard repeated; it gave me sensible trouble to hear, that you were noted for going into the villages about Holt; calling their children together, and teaching them their prayers and catechism, and giving them a shilling at your departure. I could not but advise with a wise, pious, and learned clergyman: he told me that he has known the worst of consequences follow from such blind zeal; and plainly satisfied me that it was a thorough mistake of true piety and religion. I proposed writing to some prudent and good man at Oxford to reason with you on these points, and to convince you that you were in a wrong way. He said, in a generous mind, as he took yours to be, the admonition and advice of a father would make a deeper impression than all the exhortations of others. He concluded, that you was young as yet, and that your judgment was not come to its maturity; but as soon as your judgment improved, and on the advice of a true friend, you would see the error of your way; and think, as he does, that you may walk uprightly and safely, without endeavoring to out-do all the good bishops, clergy, and other pious and good men of the present and past ages: which God Almighty give you grace and sense to understand aright."

In the month of April Mr. Samuel Wesley visited Oxford, and spent a few days there; no doubt with a view chiefly to satisfy himself on the spot, of the truth or falsehood of the various accounts that were given him of his two brothers. When he returned to London he wrote a hasty poetical epistle to his brother Charles, in which he has clearly expressed his opinion of their conduct, and the views he had formed of their opponents. The latter part of it refers to the unhappy situation of Mr. Morgan.

April 20, 1732.

“ Though neither are o'erstock'd with precious time,
If I can write it, you may read my rhyme ;
And find an hour to answer I suppose
In verse harmonious or in humble prose ;
What I when late at Oxford could not say,
My friends so numerous, and so short my stay.

“ Let useless questions first aside be thrown,
Which all men may reply to, or that none :
As whether Doctors doubt the D— will die :
Or F—— still retains his courtesy ?
Or J——n dies daily in conceit,
Dies without death, and walks without his feet ?
What time the library completes its shell ?
What hand revives the discipline of Fell ?
What house for learning shall rewards prepare,
Which orators and poets justly share,
And see a second Atterbury there

“ Say, does your christian purpose still proceed,
T' assist in every shape the wretches' need ?
To free the prisoner from his anxious gaol,
When friends forsake him, and relations fail ?
Or yet with nobler charity conspire
To snatch the guilty from eternal fire ?
Has your small squadron firm in trial stood,
Without preciseness, singularly good ?
Safe march they on 'twixt dangerous extremes
Of mad profaneness and enthusiasts' dreams ?
Constant in prayer, while God approves their pains,
His spirit cheers them and his blood sustains ?
Unmov'd by pride or anger, can they hear
The foolish laughter, or the envious flier ?
No wonder wicked men blaspheme their care,
The devil always dreads offensive war ;
Where heavenly zeal the sons of night pursues,
Likely to gain, and certain not to lose ;
The sleeping conscience wakes by dangers near,
And pours the light in, they so greatly fear.

“ But hold, perhaps this dry religious toil,
May damp the genius, and the scholar spoil.
Perhaps facetious foes, to meddling fools
Shine in the class, and sparkle in the schools :
Your arts excel, your eloquence outgo,
And soar like Virgil or like Tully flow ;
Have brightest turns and deepest learning shown,
And prov'd your wit mistaken by their own.
If not—the wights should moderately rail,
Whose total merit summ'd from far detail
Is, saunt'ring, sleep, and smoke, and wine, and ale.

“ How contraries may meet without design !
And pretty gentlemen and bigots join !
A pert young rake observes with saucy airs,
That none can know the world, who say their pray'rs :
And Rome in middle ages us'd to grant,

The most devout were still most ignorant.
 So when old bloody Noll our ruin wrought
 Was ignorance the best devotion thought ;
 His crop-hair'd saints all marks of sense deface,
 And preach that learning is a foe to grace :
 English was spoke in schools, and Latin ceas'd,
 They quite reform'd the language of the beast.

“ One or two questions more before I end,
 That much concern a brother and a friend.
 Does John seem bent beyond his strength to go,
 To his frail carcase literally foe ?
 Lavish of health, as if in haste to die,
 And shorten time, t' ensure eternity ?
 Does M—— weakly think his time misspent ?
 Of his best actions can he now repent ?
 Others, their sins with reason just deplore,
 The guilt remaining when the pleasure's o'er ;
 Since the foundations of the world were laid,
 Shall he for virtue first himself upbraid ?
 Shall he, what most men to their sins deny,
 Show pain for alms, remorse for piety ?
 Can he the sacred Eucharist decline ?
 What Clement poisons here the bread and wine ?
 Or does his sad disease possess him whole,
 And taint alike his body and his soul ?
 If to renounce his graces he decree,
 O ! that he could transfer the stock to me ?
 Alas ! enough what mortal e'er can do,
 For him who made him and redeem'd him too ?
 Zeal may to man beyond desert be show'd,
 No supererogation stands to God.”——

In April, this year, Mr. Clayton joined their little society, and about the same time Mr. Ingham, Mr. Broughton, Mr. Harvey, and one or two of Mr. John and Charles Wesley's pupils. They were all zealous members of the Church of England ; not only tenacious of all her doctrines, as far as they yet understood them, but of all her discipline, to the minutest circumstance. By the advice of Mr. Clayton, they now added to their former practices, a regular observance of the fasts of the church ; the general neglect of which, they thought, was by no means a sufficient excuse for neglecting them.

For some years before this, Mr. Wesley had frequently read over, with great attention, Mr. Law's Christian Perfection, and his Serious Call to a Holy Life ; and, as his practice was, had made extracts from them. He had conceived a high opinion of the author from his writings, having often been instructed by them. Being in London, in the month of July, he went down to Putney, to pay Mr. Law a visit, which was the introduction to a personal acquaintance with each other. Mr. Wesley occasionally repeated his visits, and a friendly correspondence followed, which lasted several years. From this time, he began to read the *Theologia Germanica*, and other mys-

tic writers, of which, we shall afterwards have occasion to take some notice.

But, though he was pleased, and perhaps too much captivated with the views which *some* of the mystic writers gave him of religion, as consisting chiefly in contemplation, and inward attention to our own mind; it does not appear, that he was less diligent in the instituted means of grace, nor less active in doing good to others than before.—He was now known to many pious and respectable persons in London, who began to take notice of him. He heartily approved of the conduct of those well disposed persons, who associated together, to carry on a plan of suppressing vice, and spreading religion and virtue among the people; and on the 3d of August, was admitted into the Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.*

Mr. Wesley, and those associated with him, now suffered the entire loss of Mr. Morgan, who had been the foremost in promoting their pious endeavors to do good. He left Oxford on the 5th of June, and died in Dublin on the 26th of August. That this is the true time of his death, is evident from a letter of Mr. Morgan the father, to Mr. Charles Wesley, dated September the 5th. He says, “From the intimacy which I understood to have been contracted between you and my dear son, I make no doubt but you must have some concern upon you at the reading the account of his death, as I have the greatest in writing it. His distemper threw him into a fever, of which he

* In the reign of James II. the fear of Popery was so strong, as well as just, that many, in and about London, began to meet often together, both for devotion, and their further instruction. Things of that kind, had been formally practised only among the Puritans, and the Dissenters; but these were of the church, and came to their ministers to be assisted; and were chiefly directed by Dr. Beveridge and Dr. Horneck. After the revolution, in 1688, these societies became more numerous, and for the greater encouragement of devotion, they got such collections to be made, as maintained many clergymen, to read prayers in such a number of places, and at such different hours, that devout persons might have that comfort at every hour of the day. There were constant sacraments every Lord’s day in many churches; and there were greater numbers, and greater appearances of devotion, at prayers and sacrament, than had ever been observed in the memory of man. These societies resolved to inform the magistrates of swearers, drunkards, profaners of the Lord’s day, and of lewd houses; and they threw in that part of the fine, given by the law to informers, into a stock of charity. From this they were called Societies of Reformation. Some good magistrates encouraged them; others treated them roughly. As soon as Queen Mary heard of this, she encouraged these good designs by her letters and proclamations; and King William afterwards did the same. Other societies set themselves to raise charity-schools for teaching poor children, for clothing them, and binding them out to trades; and many books were printed, and sent over the nation, to be freely distributed. These were called Societies for Propagating Christian Knowledge. At last, a corporation was created by King William, for propagating the gospel among infidels, for setting schools in our plantations, for furnishing the clergy that were sent thither, and for sending missionaries among such of our plantations, as were not able to provide pastors for themselves. It was a glorious conclusion of a reign, that began with preserving our religion, and ended with creating a corporation for promoting it, among infidels, to the remoter parts of the earth. The bishops, and clergy, contributed liberally to it. Upon Queen Anne’s accession to the crown, she continued to them the same favor and protection. See Burnet’s History of his own Time, vol. v. p. 90, &c.

died the 26th past, about four in the morning. This is the soonest that I could attempt writing any thing about him, since my affliction was consummated.—You see I make very free with you, but the candor and generosity which I have heard you commended for, embolden me to it; and I shall, I hope, find some opportunities to make amends, and beg you will, upon all occasions, let me know, when I can be serviceable to you in this kingdom.”

During the course of this summer, Mr. Wesley made two journies to Epworth. In these excursions he often went considerably out of his way, to spend a night, and sometimes two or three, with a friend; most frequently with the parents or relations of some of his pupils. In the first journey, while he was standing on the garden wall at a friend's house, it fell flat under him: but he escaped unhurt. His second journey was in order to meet his brother Samuel, &c., at Epworth, and that the whole family might once more assemble together, before their final separation by death. This meeting must have been very affecting: as their father was growing infirm, and his son Samuel was now going to reside wholly at Tiverton, in Devon, it was not probable they would ever see each other again.—Mr. Wesley returned to Oxford on the 23d of September; and as soon as it was known there that Mr. Morgan was dead, a report was propagated, that the rigorous fasting he had imposed on himself, by the advice of Mr. John and Charles Wesley, had hastened his death. As this report was highly prejudicial to their character, and might hinder their usefulness; and as it was probable it would reach the father, and might afflict him, and prejudice him more deeply against his son's conduct, and the persons with whom he had been connected, Mr. Wesley thought it best to write to him, and state the matter as it really was. His letter is dated the 18th of October, this year.* “The occasion,” says he, “of giving you this trouble, is of a very extraordinary nature. On Sunday last I was informed, as no doubt you will be ere long, that my brother and I had killed your son: that the rigorous fasting which he had imposed upon himself by our advice, had increased his illness, and hastened his death. Now, though considering it in itself, *it is a very small thing with me to be judged of man's judgment*; yet as the being thought guilty of so mischievous an imprudence, might make me less able to do the work I came into the world for, I am obliged to clear myself of it, by observing to you, as I have done to others, that your son left off fasting about a year and an half since, and that it is not yet half a year since I began to practise it.

* In all the printed copies of this letter which I have seen, the date is 1730. But in a manuscript, in Mr. Charles Wesley's hand-writing, the date is 1732; which is the true date of it, as appears from Mr. Morgan's account of his son's death. The true date may be collected from the letter itself, compared with Mr. John Wesley's short history of Methodism, which fixes the time when they became acquainted with Mr. Clayton.

“I must not let this opportunity slip of doing my part towards giving you a juster notion of some other particulars, relating both to him and myself, which have been industriously misrepresented to you.

“In March last he received a letter from you, which not being able to read, he desired me to read to him; several of the expressions I perfectly remember, and shall do, till I too am called hence.—In one practice for which you blamed your son, I am only concerned as a friend, not as a partner. Your own account of it was in effect this: ‘He frequently went into poor people’s houses about Holt, called their children together and instructed them in their duty to God, their neighbor and themselves. He likewise explained to them the necessity of private as well as public prayer, and provided them with such forms as were best suited to their several capacities; and being well apprized how the success of his endeavors depended on their good will towards him, he sometimes distributed among them a little of that money which he had saved from gaming and other fashionable expenses of the place.’——‘This is the first charge against him, and I will refer it to your own judgment, whether it be fitter to have a place in the catalogue of his faults or of those virtues for which he is now numbered among the sons of God.

“If all the persons concerned in that ridiculous society, whose follies you have so often heard repeated, could but give such a proof of their deserving the glorious title which was once bestowed upon them, they would be contented that their lives too should be counted madness, and their end thought to be without honor. But the truth is, their title to holiness stands upon much less stable foundations; as you will easily perceive when you know the ground of this wonderful outcry, which it seems England itself is not wide enough to contain.”

He then gives Mr. Morgan a short history of their little society, informing him what their practices were, and of their care to consult wise, learned, and pious clergymen, in every step they had taken, in the manner described above. He subjoins, “As for the names of Methodists, Supererogation men, and so on, with which some of our neighbors are pleased to compliment us, we do not conceive ourselves to be under any obligation to regard them, much less to take them for arguments. To the law and to the testimony we appeal, whereby we ought to be judged. If by these it can be proved we are in an error, we will immediately and gladly retract it: if not, we have not so learned Christ, as to renounce any part of his service, though men should say all manner of evil against us, with more judgment, and as little truth as hitherto. Your son already stands before the judgment seat of him who judges righteous judgment; at the brightness of whose presence the clouds remove; his eyes are open and he sees clearly whether it was ‘blind zeal and a thorough mistake of true

religion that hurried him on in the error of his way,' or whether he acted like a faithful and wise servant, who from a just sense that his time was short, made haste to finish his work before his Lord's coming, that when 'laid in the balance he might not be found wanting.'"

This well timed letter, containing a simple narrative of facts, fully satisfied Mr. Morgan, and gave him a better opinion of the society with which his son had been connected. His answer, which is dated November 25, shows him to have been a man of moderation and a friend to piety. It is as follows. "Your favor of the 20th past was delayed in its passage, I believe by contrary winds, or it had not been so long unanswered. I give entire credit to every thing and every fact you relate. It was ill-judged of my poor son to take to fasting with regard to his health, which I knew nothing of, or I should have advised him against it. He was inclined to piety and virtue from his infancy. I must own I was much concerned at the strange accounts which were spread here, of some extraordinary practices of a religious society which he had engaged in at Oxford, which you may be sure lost nothing in the carriage, lest through his youth and immaturity of judgment, he might be hurried into zeal and enthusiastic notions that would prove pernicious. But now indeed, that piety and holiness of life which he practised, affords me some comfort in the midst of my affliction for the loss of him; having full assurance of his being for ever happy. The good account you are pleased to give of your own and your friend's conduct in point of duty and religious offices, and the zealous approbation of them by the good old gentleman your father, signified in a manner and style becoming the best of men, reconciles and recommends that method of life to me, and makes me almost wish that I were one amongst you. I am very much obliged to you, for the great pains you have been at in transcribing so long and so particular an account for my perusal, and shall be always ready to vindicate you from any calumny or aspersion that I shall hear cast upon you. I am much obliged for your and your brother's great civilities and assistances to my dearest son: I thank — the author of those lines you sent me, for the regard he has shown to his memory. If ever I can be serviceable to any of you in this kingdom, I beg you will let me know."

A correspondence took place between Mr. Wesley and Mr. Morgan, and the year following Mr. Morgan sent the only son he now had, to Oxford, and placed him under Mr. Wesley's care; which was the strongest proof he could possibly give, that he approved of his conduct.

During the two last years, Mr. Wesley made frequent excursions to London, and different parts of the country, besides his journies to Epworth, and the places he visited in his way thither and back, all of which he performed on foot. He observes in his Diary, that he had

walked about 1050 miles; I suppose he means within the year he is speaking of. In these excursions he constantly preached on the Lord's-day, if he had an opportunity; so that he might now be called, in some sort, an itinerant preacher, though on a plan very different from that which he afterwards adopted, and of which he could not at this time have the most distant conception.

By reading Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection*, and his *Serious Call to a Holy Life*, he was confirmed in the views he before had of the effects the gospel is intended to produce on the minds of those who sincerely embrace it; and was fully convinced of the absurdity and danger of being an half christian. On the 1st of January, 1733, he preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the university, on the circumcision of the heart. In this discourse, which is printed in the second volume of his sermons, he has explained with great clearness, and energy of language, his views of the christian salvation to be attained in this life; in which he never varied, in any material point, to the day of his death. He was indeed, at this time, almost wholly ignorant of the gospel method of attaining this salvation, but he sought it with his whole heart, according to the knowledge he then had, and was willing to sacrifice the dearest thing he had in the world, for the attainment of it.

His father was now in a bad state of health, and seemed declining apace. On this account he set out on horseback for Epworth, in the beginning of January. As he was passing over the bridge beyond Daintry, his horse fell over it with him; but he again escaped unhurt. When the events of life glide smoothly on, and follow certain previous circumstances in regular succession, we see nothing wonderful in them, because there seems to be some common principle on which the succession depends. But in extraordinary deliverances from danger, and in many other instances of human affairs, we plainly perceive, there is no such principle, which connects the previous circumstances with the following event: the interposition of Providence, almost stands visible before our eyes, and a strong conviction of it takes place in the mind, which nothing but inattention or false reasoning can obliterate. On these occasions Mr. Wesley did not fail to return God the tribute of praise and thanksgiving, and renewed his diligence in serving him.

The state of his father's health occasioned his parents to turn their thoughts to the means of obtaining the living of Epworth for him, in case of his father's demise. The thing was mentioned to him when he was now with them, but he seems to have given them little answer. After his return to Oxford, in February, he wrote to his mother on the subject. "You observe," says he, "when I was with you, that I was very indifferent as to the having or not having the living of Epworth. I was indeed utterly unable to determine either way; and that for this reason: I know, if I could stand my ground

here, and approve myself a faithful minister of our blessed Jesus, by honor and dishonor, through evil report and good report; then there would not be a place under the heaven like this, for improvement in every good work. But whether I can stem the torrent which I saw then, but see now much more, rolling down from all sides upon me, that I know not. It is true, there is one who can yet, either command the great water-flood that it shall not come nigh me, or make a way for his redeemed to pass through. But then something must be done on my part: and should he give me, even that most equitable condition, 'according to thy faith be it unto thee,' yet how shall I fulfil it? Why he will look to that too. My father and you helping together with your prayers, that our faith fail us not."

The difficulties which Mr. Wesley foresaw, did not arise from any new persecution which threatened him, but from the danger of unsteadiness in the young gentlemen, who had for some time met with him. He easily perceived, that unless he could overcome this difficulty, there was but little prospect of doing any lasting good in his present situation. And it must be confessed, that, though his practice gives the most convincing evidence of his integrity, disinterestedness, and sincere desire to serve God, yet, there were few young men who had sufficient resolution to persevere therein. His frequent absence too, could have no good influence upon them, as his own example, regularity, steadiness, and advice, were the principal means of preserving them in the same disposition with himself. But it seems that he did not attend to this circumstance at present; for in May, he set out again for Epworth, and took Manchester in his way to see his friend Mr. Clayton, who had now left Oxford. From thence he proceeded to Epworth, and returned to Manchester on Saturday the 2d of June. The next day he preached three times, once at the Old Church, again in Salford, and at St. Anne's. When he reached Oxford, he perceived the bad effects of his absence upon his pupils, and the members of their little society. He now found himself surrounded with enemies triumphing over him, and friends deserting him; he saw the fruits of his labors in danger of being blasted before they had attained maturity. But he stood firm as a rock, and being conscious of his own integrity, that he had nothing in view but to serve God in righteousness and true holiness, and to benefit his neighbor, he viewed his situation without any great emotion: no gusts of passion rose to cloud his understanding, no fear to damp his zeal; he was enabled to say, the Eternal God is my refuge, I will not fear. He wrote to his father in the simplicity and fullness of his heart; and this letter shows the man, and his manner of viewing difficulties, infinitely better than any description which another can give of him.

This letter is dated the 13th of June, and runs thus: "The effects of my last journey I believe will make me more cautious of staying any time from Oxford for the future; at least till I have no pupils to

take care of, which probably will be within a year or two. One of my young gentlemen told me at my return, that he was more and more afraid of singularity: another, that he had read an excellent piece of Mr. Locke's, which had convinced him of the mischief of regarding authority. Both of them agreed, that the observing of Wednesday as a fast, was an unnecessary singularity: the Catholic church (that is, the majority of it) having long since repealed by contrary custom, the injunction she formerly gave concerning it. A third who could not yield to this argument, has been convinced by a fever, and Dr. Frewin. Our seven and twenty communicants at St. Mary's, were on Monday shrunk to five: and the day before, the last of Mr. Clayton's pupils, who continued with us, informed me, that he did not design to meet us any more.

"My ill success, as they call it, seems to be what has frightened every one away from a falling house. On Sunday I was considering the matter a little more nearly; and imagined that all the ill consequences of my singularity, were reducible to three; diminution of fortune, loss of friends, and of reputation. As to my fortune, I well know, though perhaps others do not, that I could not have borne a larger than I have: and as for that most plausible excuse for desiring it, 'While I have so little I cannot do the good I would;' I ask, can you do the good God would have you do? It is enough. Look no further.—For friends, they were either trifling or serious: if triflers, fare them well; a noble escape: if serious, those who are more serious are left, whom the others would rather have opposed than forwarded in the service they have done, and still do us. If it be said, but these may leave you too; for they are no firmer than the others were. First, I doubt that fact; but next, suppose they should, we hope then they would only teach us a nobler and harder lesson, than any they have done hitherto: It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put any confidence in man. And as for reputation, though it be a glorious instrument of advancing our Master's service, yet there is a better than that, a *clean heart*, a single eye, a soul full of God! A fair exchange, if by the loss of reputation we can purchase the lowest degree of purity of heart! We beg my mother and you would not cease to work together with us, that whatever we lose, we may gain this: and that having tasted of this good gift, we may count all things else but dung and dross in comparison of it."

Mr. Wesley now redoubled his diligence with his pupils, that he might recover the ground he had lost. His pupils indeed continued with him whether they adopted his religious practices or no. But as he had been blamed for singularity, both by friends and enemies, and many had thought that he too rigorously imposed some particular practices upon others; he informs his mother what the singularity was, which chiefly gave offence at Oxford, and explains the methods he made use of with his pupils, to instruct them in the things of God.

This letter is dated August the 17th; "The thing," says he, "that gives offence here is, the being singular with regard to time, expense, and company. This is evident beyond exception from the case of Mr. Smith, one of our Fellows; who no sooner began to husband his time, to retrench unnecessary expenses, and to avoid his irreligious acquaintance, but he was set upon, by, not only all these acquaintances, but many others too, as if he had entered into a conspiracy to cut all their throats: though to this day he has not advised any single person, unless in a word or two and by accident, to act as he did in any of those instances.

"It is true indeed, that 'the devil hates offensive war most, and that whoever tries to rescue more than his own soul from his hands, will have more enemies, and meet with greater opposition, than if he was content with, having his own life for a prey.' That I try to do this, is likewise certain: but I cannot say whether I 'rigorously impose any observances on others,' till I know what that phrase means. What I do is this. When I am intrusted with a person who is first to understand and practise, and then to teach the law of Christ, I endeavor by an intermixture of reading and conversation, to show him what that law is; that is, to renounce all unsubordinate love of the world, and to love and obey God with all his strength. When he appears seriously sensible of this, I propose to him the means God hath commanded him to use, in order to that end; and a week or a month or a year after, as the state of his soul seems to require it, the several prudential means recommended by wise and good men. As to the times, order, measure, and manner, wherein these are to be proposed, I depend upon the Holy Spirit to direct me, in and by my own experience and reflection, joined to the advices of my religious friends here and elsewhere. Only two rules it is my principle to observe in all cases; first, to begin, continue, and end all my advices in the spirit of meekness: as knowing that the wrath or severity of man worketh not the righteousness of God; and secondly, to add to meekness long-suffering: in pursuance of a rule which I fixt long since, 'never to give up any one till I have tried him, at least ten years; how long hath God had pity on thee?'

"If the wise and good will believe those falsehoods which the bad invent, because I endeavor to save myself and my friends from them, then I shall lose my reputation, even among them, for (though not perhaps good, yet) the best actions I ever did in my life. This is the very case. I try to act as my Lord commands: ill men say all manner of evil of me, and good men believe them. There is a way, and there is but one, of making my peace; God forbid I should ever take it. I have as many pupils as I need, and as many friends: when more are better for me, I shall have more. If I have no more pupils after these are gone from me, I shall then be glad of a curacy near you; if I have, I shall take it as a signal that I am to remain

here. Whether here or there, my desire is to know and feel that I am nothing, that I have nothing, and that I can do nothing. For whenever I am empty of myself, then know I of a surety, that neither friends nor foes, nor any creature, can hinder me from being filled with all the fulness of God. Let not my father's, or your prayers be ever slack in behalf of your affectionate son."

On the 21st of September this year, Mr. Wesley began the practice of reading as he travelled on horseback; and this practice he continued near forty years, till his infirmities obliged him to travel in a carriage. His frequent journies, often on foot as well as on horseback, and the great and constant labor of preaching, reading, visiting, &c. wherever he was, with hard study and a very abstemious diet, had now very much affected his health. His strength was greatly reduced, and he had frequent returns of spitting of blood. In the night of the 16th of July, he had a return of it in such quantity as waked him out of sleep. 'The sudden and unexpected manner of its coming on, with the solemnity of the night season, made eternity seem near. He cried to God; "O! prepare me for thy coming, and come when thou wilt."*' His friends began to be alarmed for his safety, and his mother wrote two or three letters blaming him for the general neglect of his health. He now took the advice of a physician or two, and by proper care and a prudent management of his daily exercise, he gradually lost his complaints, and recovered his strength.

Towards the end of this year, he turned his thoughts to a subject of vast importance in Christian experience; the presence of God with his people. But he found it too great for him to comprehend. He talked with Mr. Law, and wrote to his mother upon it; but he received little or no information from either of them. They all seem to have inquired into the nature and manner of the Divine Presence, rather than into the evidences of it. His mother's answer is dated January 1, 1734: she confesses that she did not understand the subject, and that, in this respect, she still worshipped an unknown God. Nothing indeed is more certain than this, that the *manner* of the Divine Presence and operations, both in the works of nature and grace is incomprehensible to us, at the same time that the effects produced, demonstrate his presence and power. Through the want of this distinction, many have run into great errors in explaining the influence of Divine grace on the human mind, and some have even denied it: though to him who rightly understands the Scriptures, and has any degree of christian experience, the effects of it as clearly demonstrate a Divine influence, as the works of nature show the existence of God, though the manner of his presence and operation in both is inexplicable.

The whole force of Mr. Wesley's mind was now bent on religious subjects. In reflecting on the progress of the soul to an entire con-

* Private Diary.

formity to the will of God and a fitness for heaven, he thought that different degrees of virtue are different states of mind ; that is, of the understanding, will, and affections ; and that we must pass through the lower states before we can arrive at the higher ; so that christian experience is a progressive work ; in which the first step prepares the mind for the second, and so on through the whole of our progress. He observed, however, that there are certain states of mind which are more strongly marked than others ; and that these states ascertain our progress with some degree of certainty. He wrote to his mother on this subject. She answered him in a letter of January, " You are entirely in the right in what you say in the second paragraph of your letter. The different degrees of virtue and piety are different states of soul, which must be passed through gradually—for, in all matters of religion, if there be not an internal sense in the hearer corresponding to the sense in the mind of the speaker, what is said will have no effect : this I have often experienced : yet sometimes it falls out, that while a zealous Christian is discoursing on spiritual subjects, the blessed Spirit of God will give such light to the minds of those who hear him, as dispels their native darkness, and enables them to apprehend those spiritual things of which before they had no discernment." In this letter she addresses a pupil of Mr. Wesley's, who appears to have despised religion. " Tell him from me," says she, " I am as good as my word, I daily pray for him, and beg of him if he have the least regard for his soul, or have yet any remaining sense of religion in his mind, to shake off all acquaintance with the profane and irregular ; for it is the freethinker and sensualist, not the despised Methodist, who will be ashamed and confounded when summoned to appear before the face of that Almighty Judge, whose godhead they have blasphemed, and whose offered mercy they despised and ludicrously rejected. The pleasures of sin are but for a short uncertain time, but eternity hath no end. Therefore one would think that few arguments might serve to convince a man who has not lost his senses, that it is of the last importance for us to be very serious in improving the present time, and acquainting ourselves with God while it is called *to-day* ; lest being disqualified for his blissful presence, our future existence be inexpressibly miserable."

Mr. Wesley, and those associated with him, were not only zealous of good works before men, but they were severe and strict in examining themselves in the closet. Each had a string of questions, by which he examined both his actions and his motives in performing them, and also the temper of his mind on every occasion that occurred. It would be too long to insert their whole scheme of self-examination, as is related to every part of duty : I shall therefore only give a specimen of it, in the love of man.

1. Have I embraced every probable opportunity of doing good, and of preventing, removing, or lessening evil? 2. Have I thought any

thing too dear to part with, to serve my neighbor? 3. Have I spent an hour at least, every day, in speaking to some one or other? 4. Have I, in speaking to a stranger, explained what religion is not (not negative, not external) and what it is, the recovery of the image of God; searched at what step in it he stops, and what makes him stop? 5. Have I persuaded all I could to attend public prayers, sermons, and sacraments? and in general, to obey the laws of the Church universal, the Church of England, the state, the university, and their respective colleges? 6. Have I, after every visit, asked him who went with me, did I say any thing wrong? 7. Have I, when any one asked advice, directed and exhorted him, with all my power? 8. Have I rejoiced with and for my neighbor, in virtue, or pleasure? Grieved with him in pain, and for him in sin? 9. Has good will been, and appeared to be, the spring of all my actions towards others? &c. &c. for their scheme of self-examination extended to a very considerable length.

His father's health had been on the decline for several years, and he now seemed approaching towards the close of life. The old gentleman, conscious of his situation, and desirous that the living of Epworth should remain in the family, wrote to his son John, requesting him to apply for the next presentation. We have already seen, that, when the subject was mentioned to him last year, he hesitated, and could not determine one way or the other. But now he was determined not to accept of the living, if he could obtain it, and stated to his father, some reasons for refusing to comply with his request. His father and brother Samuel were disappointed, and both attacked him, with every argument they could possibly bring to bear upon him. He acted on the defensive only, and maintained his ground. But the mode of attack, and of his defence, will give us the best view of his principles and disposition of mind at this time.

His father's letter is dated Nov. 20th, and runs as follows: "Your state of the question, and only argument is: 'The question is not whether I could do more good to others, *there* or *here*; but whether I could do more good to myself; seeing wherever I can be most holy to myself, there I can most promote holiness in others. But I can improve myself more at Oxford, than at any other place.'

"To this I answer, 1. It is not dear self, but the glory of God, and the different degrees of promoting it, which should be our main consideration, and direction in any course of life. Witness St. Paul and Moses. 2. Supposing you could be more holy yourself at Oxford, how does it follow that you could more promote holiness in others, *there* than *elsewhere*? Have you found many instances of it, after so many years' hard pains and labor? Further, I dare say, you are more modest and just than to say, there are no holier men than you at Oxford; and yet it is possible they may not have promoted holiness more than you have done: as I doubt not but you might have done

it much more, had you have taken the right method. For there is a particular turn of mind for these matters: great prudence as well as great fervor.

“3. I cannot allow austerity, or fasting, considered by themselves, to be proper acts of holiness, nor am I for a solitary life. God made us for a social life; we are not to bury our talents; we are to let our light shine before men, and that not barely through the chinks of a bushel, for fear the wind should blow it out. The design of lighting it was, that it might give light to all that went into the house of God. And to this, academical studies are only preparatory.

“4. You are sensible what figures those make, who stay in the university till they are superannuated. I cannot think drowsiness promotes holiness. How commonly do they drone away their life, either in a college, or in a country parsonage, where they can only give God the snuffs of them, having nothing of life or vigor left to make them useful in the world.

“5. We are not to fix our eye on one single point of duty, but to take in the complicated view of all the circumstances in every state of life that offers. Thus in the case before us, put all the circumstances together: if you are not indifferent whether the labors of an aged father for above forty years in God’s vineyard be lost, and the fences of it trodden down and destroyed; if you consider that Mr. M. must, in all probability, succeed me, if you do not, and that the prospect of that mighty Nimrod’s coming hither shocks my soul, and is in a fair way of bringing down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave: if you have any care for our family, which must be dismally shattered as soon as I am dropt; if you reflect on the dear love and longing which this poor people has for you, whereby you will be enabled to do God the more service, and the plenteousness of the harvest, consisting of near two thousand souls, whereas you have not many more scholars in the university; you may perhaps alter your mind, and bend your will to his, who has promised, if in all our ways we acknowledge him, he will direct our paths.”

The old gentleman wrote to his son Samuel on the subject, who warmly took part with his father, and wrote to his brother at Oxford in December, 1734. “Yesterday,” says he, “I received a letter from my father, wherein he tells me, you are unalterably resolved not to accept of a certain living if you could get it. After this declaration, I believe no one can move your mind but him who made it. I shall not draw the saw of controversy, and, therefore, though I judge every proposition flatly false, except that of your being assured, yet I shall allow every word, and have nevertheless this to say against your conclusions, 1. I see your love to yourself, but your love to your neighbor I do not see. 2. You are not at liberty to resolve against undertaking a cure of souls. You are solemnly engaged to do it, before God, and his high priest and his church. Are you not ordained?

Did you not deliberately and openly promise to instruct, to teach, to admonish, to exhort those committed to your charge? Did you equivocate then with so vile a reservation, as to purpose in your heart that you never would have any so committed? It is not a college, it is not an university, it is the *order of the Church*, according to which you were called. Let Charles, if he is silly enough, vow never to leave Oxford, and therefore avoid orders. Your faith is already plighted to the contrary; you have put your hand to the plough, to that plough."—This is strong language, and the argument, if good, was like playing heavy cannon upon his brother. Mr. John Wesley, however, kept himself within his fortress, and answered his brother Samuel with caution. His letter is dated January 15th, 1735, and having explained himself at some length to his father, he sent a copy of that letter to his brother. He observes, "Had not my brother Charles desired it might be otherwise, I should have sent you only an extract of the following letter. But if you will be at the pains, you will soon reduce the argument of it, to two or three points, which, if to be answered at all, will be easily answered. By it you may observe, my present purpose is founded on my present weakness. But it is not indeed probable, that my father should live till that weakness is removed.

"Your second argument I had no occasion to mention before. To it I answer, that I do not, nor ever did, resolve against undertaking a cure of souls. There are four cures belonging to our college, and consistent with a fellowship: I do not know but I may take one of them at Michaelmas. Not that I am clearly assured, that I should be false to my engagement were I only to instruct and exhort the pupils committed to my charge. But of that I should think more."

Though the letter to his father is long, yet it contains such a distinct view of his manner of thinking and reasoning, and of the energy of his language, at this period, that it cannot with propriety be omitted.

"DEAR SIR,

"1st, The authority of a parent, and the call of Providence, are things of so sacred a nature, that a question in which these are any ways concerned, deserves the most serious consideration. I am therefore greatly obliged to you for the pains you have taken to set ours in a clear light; which I now intend to consider more at large, with the utmost attention of which I am capable. And I shall the more cheerfully do it, as being assured of your joining with me in earnestly imploring his guidance, who will not suffer those that bend their wills to his, to seek death in the error of their life.

"2d. I entirely agree, that 'the glory of God, and the different degrees of promoting it, are to be our sole consideration and direction in the choice of any course of life;' and, consequently, that it must wholly turn upon this single point, whether I am to prefer a college life, or that of a rector of a parish. I do not say the glory of

God is to be my first, or my principal consideration, but my only one : since all that are not implied in this, are absolutely of no weight ; in presence of this, they all vanish away, they are less than the small dust of the balance.

“3d. And, indeed, till all other considerations were set aside, I could never come to any clear determination ; till my eye was single, my whole mind was full of darkness. Every consideration distinct from this, threw a shadow over all the objects I had in view, and was such a cloud as no light could penetrate. Whereas, so long as I can keep my eye single, and steadily fixed on the glory of God, I have no more doubt of the way wherein I should go, than of the shining of the sun at noon-day.

“4th. That course of life tends most to the glory of God, wherein we can most promote holiness in ourselves and others. I say in ourselves and others, as being fully persuaded that these can never be put asunder. For how is it possible that the good God should make our interest inconsistent with our neighbor’s ? That he should make our being in one state best for ourselves, and our being in another best for the church ? This would be making a strange schism in his body ; such as surely never was from the beginning of the world. And if not, then whatever state is best on either of these accounts, is so on the other likewise. If it be best for others, then it is so for us ; if for us, then for them.

“5th. However, when two ways of life are proposed, I should choose to begin with that part of the question, which of these have I rational ground to believe will conduce most to my own improvement. And that not only because it is every physician’s concern to heal himself first, but because it seems we may judge with more ease, and perhaps certainty too, in which state we can most promote holiness in ourselves, than in which we can in others.

“6th. By holiness, I mean not fasting, or bodily austerity, or any other external means of improvement, but the inward temper, to which all these are subservient, a renewal of the soul in the image of God. I mean a complex habit of lowliness, meekness, purity, faith, hope, and the love of God and man. And I therefore believe that, in the state wherein I am, I can most promote this holiness in myself, because I now enjoy several advantages, which are almost peculiar to it.

“7th. The first of these, is daily converse with my friends. I know no other place under heaven where I can have always at hand half a dozen persons nearly of my own judgment, and engaged in the same studies. Persons who are awakened into a full and lively conviction, that they have only one work to do upon earth ; who are in some measure enlightened so as to see, though at a distance, what that one work is, viz. the recovery of that single intention and pure affection which were in Christ Jesus : who, in order to this, have,

according to their power, renounced themselves, and wholly and absolutely devoted themselves to God : and who suitably thereto deny themselves, and take up their cross daily. To have such a number of such friends constantly watching over my soul, and according to the variety of occasions, administering reproof, advice, or exhortation, with all plainness and all gentleness, is a blessing I have not yet found any Christians to enjoy in any other part of the kingdom. And such a blessing it is, so conducive, if faithfully used, to the increase of all holiness, as I defy any one to know the full value of, till he receives his full measure of glory.

“8th. Another invaluable blessing which I enjoy here in a greater degree than I could anywhere else, is retirement. I have not only as much, but as little company as I please. I have no such thing as a trifling visitant, except about an hour in a month, when I invite some of the fellows to breakfast. Unless at that one time, no one ever takes it into his head to set foot within my door, except he has some business of importance to communicate to me, or I to him. And even then, as soon as he has dispatched his business, he immediately takes his leave.

“9th. Both these blessings, the continual presence of useful, and uninterrupted freedom from trifling acquaintance, are exceedingly endeared to me, whenever I have spent but one week out of this place. The far greatest part of the conversation I meet with abroad, even among those whom I believe to be real Christians, turns on points that are absolutely wide of my purpose, that no way forward me in the business of life. Now, though they may have time to spare, I have none ; it is absolutely necessary for such a one as me to follow with all possible care and vigilance, that excellent advice of Mr. Herbert,

‘ Still let thy mind be bent, still plotting where,
And when, and how, the business may be done.’

And this, I bless God, I can in some measure do, so long as I avoid that bane of piety, the company of good sort of men, lukewarm Christians (as they are called,) persons that have a great concern for, but no sense of religion. But these undermine insensibly all my resolutions, and quite steal from me the little fervor I have ; and I never come from among these saints of the world (as J. Valdeso calls them,) faint, dissipated and shorn of all my strength, but I say, ‘God deliver me from a half Christian.’

“10th. Freedom from care I take to be the next greatest advantage to freedom from useless, and therefore hurtful company. And this too I enjoy in greater perfection here than I can ever expect to do any where else. I hear of such a thing as the cares of this world, and I read of them, but I know them not. My income is ready for me on so many stated days, and all I have to do is to count and carry it home. The grand article of my expense is food, and this too is provided without any care of mine. I have nothing to do, but at such

an hour to take and eat what is prepared for me. My laundress, barber, &c. are always ready at quarter-day, so I have no trouble on account of those expenses. And for what I occasionally need, I can be supplied from time to time without any expense of thought. Now to convince me what a help to holiness this is (were not my experience abundantly sufficient) I should need no better authority than St. Paul's, 'I would have you be without carefulness.' This I speak for your own profit, that ye may attend upon the Lord without distraction. Happy is he that careth only for the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. He may be holy both in body and spirit, after the Apostle's judgment, and I think that he had the spirit of God.

"11th. To quicken me in making a thankful and diligent use of all the other advantages of this place, I have the opportunity of public prayer twice a day and of weekly communicating. It would be easy to mention many more, and likewise to show many disadvantages, which a person of greater courage and skill than me, could scarce separate from a country life. But whatever one of experience and resolution might do, I am very sensible I should not be able to turn aside one of the thousand temptations that would immediately rush upon me. I could not stand my ground, no not for one month, against intemperance in sleeping, eating, and drinking; against irregularity in study, against a general lukewarmness in my affections, and remissness in my actions; against softness and self-indulgence, directly opposite to that discipline and hardship which become a soldier of Jesus Christ. And then, when my spirit was thus dissolved, I should be an easy prey to whatever impertinent company came in my way. Then would the cares of the world, and the desire of other things roll back with a full tide upon me. It would be no wonder, if, while I preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away. I cannot therefore but observe, that the question does not relate barely to degrees of perfection, but to the very essence and being of it. *Agitur de vita et sanguine Turni*. The point is, whether I shall, or shall not, work out my salvation, whether I shall serve Christ, or Belial.

"12th. What still heightens my fear of this untried state is, that when I am once entered into it, be the inconveniences of it found more or less—*vestigia nulla retrorsum*—when I am there, there I must stay. If this way of life should ever prove less advantageous, I have almost continual opportunities of quitting it; but whatever difficulties occur in that, whether foreseen or unforeseen, there is no returning, any more than from the grave. When I have once launched out into that unknown sea, there is no recovering my harbor; I must on among whatever whirlpools, or rocks, or sands, though all the waves and storms go over me.

"13th. Thus much as to myself. But you justly observe, that we are not to consider ourselves alone; since God made us all for a

social life, to which academical studies are only preparatory. I allow too that he will take an exact account of every talent which he has lent us, not to bury them, but to employ every mite we have received, in diffusing holiness all around us. I cannot deny that every follower of Christ is, in his proportion, the light of the world, but whoever is such can no more be concealed than the sun in the midst of heaven; that being set as a light in a dark place, his shining out must be the more conspicuous; that to this very end was his light given, that it might shine at least to all that look towards him; and indeed that there is one only way of hiding it, which is, to put it out. Neither can I deny, that it is the indispensable duty of every Christian to impart both light and heat to all who are willing to receive it. I am obliged likewise, unless I lie against the truth, to grant that there is not so contemptible an animal upon earth, as one that drones away life, without ever laboring to promote the glory of God, and the good of men; and that whether he be young or old, learned or unlearned, in a college, or out of it. Yet granting the superlative degree of contempt to be on all accounts due to a college drone; a wretch that hath received ten talents, and yet employs none; that is not only promised a reward by his gracious master, but is paid beforehand for his work by his generous founder, and yet works not at all; allowing all this, and whatever else can be said (for I own it is impossible to say enough) against the drowsy ingratitude, the lazy perjury of those who are commonly called harmless or good sort of men (a fair proportion of whom I must to our shame confess are to be found in colleges,) allowing this, I say, I do not apprehend it will conclude against a college life in general. For the abuse of it does not destroy the use; though there are some here who are the lumber of the creation, it does not follow that others may not be of more service to the world in this station, than they could in any other.

“14th. That I in particular could, might, it seems, be inferred from what has been proved already, viz., That I could be holier here myself than anywhere else, if I faithfully used the blessings I enjoy; for to prove, that the holier any man is himself, the more shall he promote holiness in others, there needs no more than this one *postulatum*, the help which is done on earth, God does it himself. If so, if God be the sole agent in healing souls, and man only the instrument in his hand, there can no doubt be made, but that the more holy a man is, he will make use of him the more. Because he is more willing to be so used; because the more pure he is, he is the fitter instrument for the God of purity; because he will pray more, and more earnestly that he may be employed, and that his service may tend to his Master's glory; because all his prayers both for employment and success therein will the more surely pierce the clouds; because the more his heart is enlarged, the wider sphere he may act in without

carefulness or distraction. And lastly, because the more his heart is renewed in the image of God, the more God can renew it in others by him, without destroying him by pride or vanity.

“15th. But for the proof of every one of these weighty truths, experience is worth a thousand reasons. I see, I feel them every day. Sometimes I cannot do good to others, because I am unwilling to do it; shame or pain is in the way; and I do not desire to serve God at so dear a rate. Sometimes I cannot do the good I desire to do, because I am in other respects too unholy. I know within myself, were I fit to be so employed, God would employ me in this work. But my heart is too unclean for such mighty works to be wrought by my hands. Sometimes I cannot accomplish the good I am employed in, because I do not pray more and more fervently; and sometimes even when I do pray, and that instantly, because I am not worthy that my prayer should be heard. Sometimes I dare not attempt to assist my neighbor, because I know the narrowness of my heart, that it cannot attend to many things, without utter confusion, and dissipation of thought. And a thousand times have I been mercifully withheld from success in the things I have attempted; because were one so proud and vain enabled to gain others, he would lose his own soul.

“16th. From all this I conclude, that where I am most holy myself, there I could most promote holiness in others; and, consequently, that I could more promote it here, than in any place under heaven. But I have likewise other reasons beside this to think so; and the first is, the plenteousness of the harvest. Here is indeed a large scene of various action. Here is room for charity in all its forms. There is scarce any way of doing good to our fellow-creatures, for which here is not daily occasion. I can now only touch upon the several heads. Here are poor families to be relieved; here are children to be educated; here are work-houses wherein both young and old want, and gladly receive the word of exhortation; here are prisons to be visited, wherein alone is a complication of all human wants; and, lastly, here are the schools of the prophets; here are tender-minds to be formed and strengthened, and babes in Christ to be instructed, and perfected in all useful learning. Of these in particular we must observe, that he who gains only one, does thereby as much service to the world as he could do in a parish in his whole life, for his name is *legion*; in him are contained all those who shall be converted by him. He is not a single drop of the dew of heaven; but ‘a river to make glad the city of God.’

“17th. But Epworth is yet a larger sphere of action than this; there I should have the care of two thousand souls. Two thousand souls, I see not how any man living can take care of an hundred. At least I could not; I know too well *Quid valeant humeri*. Because the

weight I have already upon me, is almost more than I am able to bear, ought I to increase it ten-fold?

————— *imponere Pelio Ossam*
Scilicet, atque Osse frondosum involvere Olympum.

Would this be the way to help either myself or my brethren up to heaven? Nay, but the mountains I reared would only crush my own soul, and so make me utterly useless to others.

“18th. I need not but just glance upon several other reasons, why I am more likely to be useful here than any where else. As, because I have the joint advice of many friends in any difficulty, and their joint encouragement in any dangers. Because the good bishop and vice-chancellor, are at hand to supply (as need is) their want of experience; because we have the eyes of multitudes upon us, who, even without designing it, perform the most substantial office of friendship, apprizing us where we have already fallen, and guarding us from falling again; lastly, because we have here a constant fund (which I believe this year will amount to near eighty pounds) to supply the bodily wants of the poor, and thereby prepare their souls to receive instruction.

“19th. If it be said that the love of the people at Epworth balances all these advantages here; I ask how long it will last? Only till I come to tell them plainly that their deeds are evil, and to make a particular application of that general sentence to say to each, ‘Thou art the man!’ Alas, sir, do I not know, what love they had for you at first? and how have they used you since? Why, just as every one will be used, whose business it is to bring light to them that love to sit in darkness.

“20th. Notwithstanding, therefore, their present prejudice in my favor, I cannot quit my first conclusion, that I am not likely to do that good any where, not even at Epworth, which I may do at Oxford; and yet one terrible objection lies in the way; Have you found it so in fact? What have you done there in so many years? Nay, have not the very attempts to do good, for want either of a particular turn of mind for the business you engaged in, or of prudence to direct you in the right method of doing it, not only been unsuccessful, but brought such contempt upon you, as has in great measure disqualified you for any future success? And are there not men in Oxford who are not only better and holier than you, but who have preserved their reputation, who being universally esteemed, are every way fitter to promote the glory of God in that place?

“21st. I am not careful to answer in this matter. It is not my part to say whether God has done any good by my hands; whether I have a particular turn of mind for this or not; or whether the want of success in my past attempts, was owing to want of prudence, to ignorance of the right method of acting, or to some other cause. But

the latter part of the objection, that he who is despised can do no good, that without reputation a man cannot be useful in the world, being the strong-hold of all the unbelieving, the vain-glorious, and the cowardly Christians, (so called,) I will, by the grace of God, see what reason that has, thus continually to exalt itself against the knowledge of Christ.

“22d. With regard to contempt then (under which term I include all the passions that border upon it, as hatred, envy, &c., and all the fruits that flow from them, such as calumny, reproach, and persecution in any of its forms) my first position, in defiance of worldly wisdom, is this, ‘Every true Christian is contemned wherever he lives, by all who are not so, and who know him to be such, i. e., in effect, by all with whom he converses; since it is impossible for light not to shine.’ This position I prove both from the example of our Lord, and from his express assertions. First from his example, if the disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord, then, as our Master was despised and rejected of men, so will every one of his true disciples. But the disciple is not above his master, and therefore the consequence will not fail him a hair’s-breadth. Secondly, from his own express assertions of this consequence. ‘If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of his household.’ Matthew x. 25. ‘Remember (ye that would fain forget, or evade it) the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.’ And as for that vain hope, that this belongs only to the first followers of Christ, hear ye him. ‘All these things will they do to you, because they know not him that sent me.’ And again, ‘because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you.’ John xvi. 20. Both the persons who are hated, and the persons who hate them, and the cause of their hating them, are here clearly determined. The *hated* are all that are not of this world, that are born again in the knowledge and love of God; the *haters* are all that are of this world, that know not God, so as to *love* him with all their strength; the cause of their hatred is, the entire irreconcilable differences between their desires, judgments, and affections; because these know not God, and those are determined to know and pursue nothing besides him; because these esteem and love the world, and those count it dung and dross, and singly desire that love of Christ.

“23d. My next position is this, ‘Until he be thus contemned, no man is in a state of salvation.’ And this is no more than a plain inference from the former; for if all that are not of the world are therefore contemned by those that are, then till a man is so contemned, he is of the world, i. e., out of a state of salvation. Nor is it possible for all the trimmers between God and the world, for all the dodgers in religion, to elude this consequence, which God has estab-

lished, and not man, unless they could prove that a man may be of the world, i. e., void both of the knowledge and love of God, and yet be in a state of salvation. I must therefore, with or without leave of these, keep close to my Saviour's judgment, and maintain that contempt is a part of that cross which every man must bear if he will follow him; that it is the badge of his discipleship, the stamp of his profession, the constant seal of his calling; insomuch that, though a man may be despised without being saved, yet he cannot be saved without being despised.

"24th. I should not spend any more words about this great truth, but that it seems at present quite voted out of the world; the masters in Israel, learned men, men of renown, seem absolutely to have forgotten it; nay, censure those who have not forgotten the words of their Lord, as setters forth of strange doctrines. And hence it is commonly asked, 'How can these things be?' How can contempt be necessary to salvation? I answer, as it is a necessary means of purifying souls for heaven, as it is a blessed instrument of cleansing them from pride, which else would turn their very graces into poison; as it is a glorious antidote against vanity, which would otherwise pollute and destroy all their labors; as it is an excellent medicine to heal the anger and impatience of spirit, apt to insinuate into their best employments; and, in a word, as it is one of the choicest remedies in the whole magazine of God against love of the world, in which whosoever liveth is counted dead before him.

"25th. And hence (as a full answer to the preceding objection) I infer one position more. That our being contemned is absolutely necessary to our doing good in the world. If not to our doing some good (for God may work by Judas) yet to our doing so much as we otherwise should. For since God will employ those instruments most, who are fittest to be employed; since the holier a man is, the fitter instrument he is for the God of holiness; and since contempt is so glorious a means of advancing holiness in him that is exercised thereby. Nay, since no man can be holy at all without it, who can keep off the consequence? The being contemned is absolutely necessary to a Christian's doing his full measure of good in the world.—Where then is the scribe? Where is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? Where is the replier against God, with his sage maxims? 'He that is despised can do no good in the world; to be useful, a man must be esteemed; to advance the glory of God, you must have a fair reputation.' Saith the world so? But what saith the Scripture? Why, that God hath laughed all the heathen wisdom to scorn? It saith, that twelve despised followers of a despised Master, all of whom were of no reputation, who were esteemed as the filth and off-scouring of the world, did more good in it than all the tribes of Israel. It saith, that the despised Master of these despised followers left a standing direction to us, and to our children, 'Blessed

are ye' (not accursed with the heavy curse of doing no good, of being useless in the world) 'when men shall revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil of you falsely for my name's sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.'

"26th. These are part of my reasons for choosing to abide (till I am better informed) in the station wherein God has placed me. As for the flock committed to your care, whom for many years you have diligently fed with the sincere milk of the word, I trust in God your labor shall not be in vain, either to yourself or them; many of them the Great Shepherd has by your hand delivered from the hand of the destroyer, some of whom are already entered into peace, and some remain unto this day. For yourself, I doubt not, but when your warfare is accomplished, when you are made perfect through sufferings, you shall come to your grave, not with sorrow, but as a ripe shock of corn, full of years and victories. And he that took care of the poor sheep before you was born, will not forget them when you are dead."

Mr. Samuel Wesley wrote to his brother John at Oxford, February 8, 1735, and made some observations on the letter he had written to his father. He tells him, "Charles was in the right, to desire I might have your whole letter. Though you have stated the point, so as to take away the question, at least all possibility of differing about it, if it be only this, whether you are to serve Christ, or Belial? I see no end of writing now, but merely complying with your desire of having my thoughts upon it; which I here give in short, and I think almost in full, though I pass over strictures on less matters.

"1. Your friends, retirement, frequent ordinances, and freedom from care, are great blessings; all, except the last, you may expect, in a *lower degree*, elsewhere. Sure all your labors are not come to this, that more is absolutely necessary for you, for the very being of your christian life, than for the salvation of all the parish priests in England. It is very strange!

"2. To the question, 'What good have you done at Oxford?' You are not careful to answer: how comes it then you are so very careful about the good you might do at Epworth? The help that is done on earth, he doeth it himself, is a full solution of that terrible difficulty.

"3. The impossibility of return, the certainty of being disliked by them that now cry you up, and the small comparative good my father has done, are good prudential reasons; but I think can hardly extend to conscience. 'You can leave Oxford when you will.' Not surely to such advantage. 'You have a probability of doing good there.' Will that good be wholly undone if you leave it? Why should you not leaven another lump?

"4. What you say of contempt is nothing to the purpose; for if you will go to Epworth, I will answer for it, you shall, in a competent time, be despised as much as your heart can wish. In your doctrine, you argue from a particular to a general. 'To be useful, a man

must be esteemed,' is ascertain as any proposition in *Euclid*, and I defy all mankind to produce one instance, of directly doing spiritual good without it, in the whole book of God.—5. 'God, who provided for the flock before, will do it after my father.' May he not suffer them to be, what they once were, almost heathens? And may not that be prevented by your ministry? It could never enter into my head that you could refuse on any other ground, than a general resolution against the cure of souls. I shall give no positive reason for it, till my first is answered. *The order of the Church* stakes you down, and the more you struggle will hold the faster. If there be such a thing as truth, I insist upon it you must, when opportunity offers, either perform that promise, or repent of it: *Utrum mavis?*" Which do you prefer?

To this letter Mr. John Wesley replied on the 13th of the same month.—"Neither you nor I," says he, "have any time to spare; so I must be as short as I can.

"There are two questions between us, one relating to being good, the other to doing good. With regard to the former: 1. You allow I enjoy more of friends, retirement, freedom from care, and divine ordinances, than I could do elsewhere; and I add, 1. I feel all this to be but just enough. 2. I have always found less than this to be too little for me; and therefore, 3. Whatever others do, I could not throw up any part of it, without manifest hazard to my salvation.

"2. As to the latter, I am not careful to answer, 'what good I have done at Oxford'; because I cannot think of it without the utmost danger. I am careful what good I may do at Epworth, 1. Because I can think of it without any danger at all; 2. Because as I cannot, as matters now stand, avoid thinking of it without sin.

"3. Another can supply my place at Epworth, better than at Oxford; and the good done here, is of a far more diffusive nature. It is a more extensive benefit to sweeten the fountain, than to do the same to particular streams.

"4. To the objection, You are despised at Oxford therefore you can do no good there; I answer, 1. A Christian will be despised any where. 2. No one is a Christian till he is despised. 3. His being despised will not hinder his doing good, but much further it, by making him a better Christian. Without contradicting any of these propositions, I allow, that every one to whom you do good directly, must esteem you, first or last.—N. B. A man may despise you for one thing, hate you for another, and envy you for a third.

"5. God may suffer Epworth to be worse than before. But *I may not* attempt to prevent it, with so great a hazard to my own soul.—Your last argument is either *ignoratio elenchi*, or implies these two propositions: '1. You resolve against any parochial cure of souls. 2. The priest who does not undertake the first parochial cure that offers, is perjured.' Let us add a third: 'The tutor who being in

orders never accepts of a parish, is perjured'; and then I deny all three."

This letter Mr. Samuel Wesley answered, paragraph by paragraph. "1. You say you have but just enough. Had ever any man on earth more? 'You have experienced less to be insufficient.' Not in the course of the priesthood to which you are called. In that way, I am persuaded, though he that gathereth much can have nothing over, yet he that gathereth little can have no lack. 2. 'There is danger in thinking of the good you have done, but not of what you may do.' Vain glory lies both ways; 'But the latter was your duty.' So was the former; without you can compare two things without thinking of one of them. 3. 'The good done at Oxford is more diffusive.' It is not *that good* you have promised. You deceive yourself, if you imagine you do not here think of *what you have done*. 'Your want may be better supplied at Epworth'; not if my father is right in his successions. 4. 'A Christian will be despised every where; no one is a Christian till he is so; it will further his doing good.' If universal propositions, I deny them all. Esteem goes before the good done, as well as follows it. 'A man may both despise and envy.' True; he may have a hot and a cold fit of an ague. Contempt in general, is no more incompatible with, than necessary to, benefiting others.—5. See the first and third. 6. I said plainly, I thought you had made a general resolution; as to taking the first offer, I supposed an opportunity a proper one; and declare now my judgment, should you live never so long, in the ordinary course of providence, you can never meet another *so proper*. 'An ordained tutor, who accepts not a cure, is perjured;' alter the term into, 'Who resolves not to accept;' and I will maintain it, unless you prove either of these two: '1. There is no such obligation at taking orders. 2. This obligation is dispensed with.' Both which, I utterly deny."

Mr. John Wesley now closed the debate, in a manner that does credit both to his head and heart. His letter is dated the 4th of March. He observes to his brother, "I had rather dispute with you, if I must dispute, than with any man living; because it may be done with so little expense of time and words. The question is now brought to one point, and the whole of the argument will lie in one single syllogism.

"Neither hope of doing greater good, nor fear of any evil, ought to deter you from what you have engaged yourself to do; but you have engaged yourself to undertake the cure of a parish: therefore, neither that hope nor that fear ought to deter you from it. The only doubt which remains is, whether I have engaged myself or not? You think I did at my ordination, 'Before God and his high priest.' I think I did not. However, I own I am not the proper judge of the oath I then took: it being certain, and allowed by all. '*Verbis, in quæ quis jurejurando adigitur, sensum genuinum, ut et obligationi Sacramenti*

modum ac mensuram, præstitui a mente, non præstantis sed exigentis juramentum.’—‘That the true sense of the words of an oath, and the mode and extent of its obligation, are not to be determined by him who takes it, but by him who requires it.’ Therefore it is not I, but the high priest of God, before whom I contracted that engagement, who is to judge of the nature and extent of it.

“Accordingly, the post after I received yours, I referred it entirely to him; proposing this single question to him, Whether I had, at my ordination, engaged myself to undertake the cure of a parish or no? His answer runs in these words.* ‘It doth not seem to me, that at your ordination you engaged yourself to undertake the cure of any parish, provided you can, as a clergyman, better serve God and his church in your present or some other station.’—Now that I can, as a clergyman, better serve God and his church, in my present station, I have all reasonable evidence.”

The assertions, that “every true Christian is contemned wherever he lives, by all who are not so,”—that, “until he be thus contemned, no man is in a state of salvation,” &c. will appear, no doubt, the most singular of any in these letters. The expressions certainly are too strong, and the language on the whole too abrupt, to convey his full meaning. Perhaps Mr. Wesley’s opinion on this subject, a little more unfolded, may be reduced to the following propositions.

1. That a true Christian, in the temper of his mind, the motives of his actions, and the whole tenor of his behavior, is not conformed to worldly-minded men, and will therefore be despised, and sometimes persecuted by them.

2. Until a man be thus transformed by the renewing of his mind, and stand opposed to the principles and practices of those who are of the world, and not of God, he is not a Christian.

3. That a Christian being contemned and persecuted by those who are not Christians, will tend to make him more careful and diligent in all the means of improvement in the Christian life, and further his progress to a true conformity to Christ.

4. That a Christian’s being contemned, will not hinder, but greatly increase his usefulness, particularly in times of persecution, when patience, humility, love, and the other virtues of his mind, will be in the highest degree of exercise, and appear to the greatest advantage, in contrast with the opposite dispositions of the persecutors. By these means, Christians, in all ages of the church, have conquered those who hated them most, and been the instruments of their conversion.

I will not assert that Mr. Wesley would have signed these propositions, as containing the whole of his opinion on this subject in 1735, though I believe they vary but little from it; and I am persuaded,

* The bishop’s letter lies before me, and runs in the words mentioned.

that he would afterwards have subscribed them with the greatest readiness.

In the midst of this debate he wrote to his mother, without taking the least notice of it: nor do I find that she wrote to him on that subject; which appears extraordinary, if she was of the same opinion with her husband and her son Samuel. Mr. Wesley's letter is on the subject of christian liberty, concerning which, he wished to have his mother's opinion. He says, "I have had a great deal of conversation lately on the subject of christian liberty, and should be glad of your thoughts, as to the several notions of it which good men entertain. I perceive different persons take it, in at least six different senses. 1. For liberty from wilful sin, in opposition to the bondage of natural corruption. 2. For liberty as to rites and points of discipline. So Mr. Whiston says, 'Though the *stations* were instituted by the Apostles, yet the liberty of the christian law dispenses with them on extraordinary occasions.' 3. For liberty from denying ourselves in little things: for trifles, it is commonly thought, we may indulge in safely, because Christ has made us free. This notion, I a little doubt, is not sound. 4. For liberty from fear, or a filial freedom from fear on account of his past sins; for he believes in Christ, and hope frees him from fear of losing his present labor, or of being a cast-away hereafter. 5. Christian liberty is taken by some, for a freedom from restraint, as to sleep or food. So they would say, your drinking but one glass of wine, or my rising at a fixed hour, was contrary to christian liberty. Lastly, it is taken for freedom from rules: if by this be meant, making our rules yield to extraordinary occasions, well; if the having no rules at all, this liberty, is as yet too high for me; I cannot attain unto it."

Mr. Wesley's father died in April, and the living of Epworth was given away in May; so that he now considered himself as settled at Oxford, without any risk of being further molested in his quiet retreat. But a new scene of action was soon proposed to him, of which he had not before, the least conception. The trustees of the new Colony of Georgia were greatly in want of proper persons to send thither, to preach the gospel, not only to the Colony, but to the Indians. They fixed their eyes on Mr. John Wesley, and some of his friends, as the most proper persons, on account of the regularity of their behavior, their abstemious way of living, and their readiness to endure hardships. On the 28th of August, being in London, he met with his friend Dr. Burton,* for whom he had a great esteem; and the next day was introduced to Mr. Oglethorpe, where the matter was pro-

* John Burton, D. D. was born in 1696, at Wembworth in Devonshire, his father being Rector of that parish; and was educated at Corpus-Christi-College, Oxford. In 1725, being then Pro-proctor and Master of the Schools, he spoke a Latin oration before the determining Bachelor, which is entitled, "Heli; or an instance of a Magistrate's erring through unseasonable lenity." It was written and published with a view to encourage

posed to him, and strongly urged upon him by such arguments as they thought most likely to dispose his mind to accept of the proposal. It does not appear that Mr. Wesley gave them any positive answer. He thought it best to take the opinion of his friends. Accordingly, he wrote to his brother Samuel, visited Mr. Law, and in three or four days, set out for Manchester, to consult Mr. Clayton, Mr. Byrom, and several others whose judgment he respected. From thence he went to Epworth, and laid the matter before his mother, and eldest sister, who consented to his acceptance of the proposal. His brother Samuel did the same. Mr. Wesley still hesitated, and on the 8th of September, Dr. Burton wrote to him, pressing him to a compliance. His letter is directed to Manchester, and franked by Mr. Oglethorpe.

“7ber 8, 1735.

C. C. C. Oxon.

“DEAR SIR,

“I had it in commission to wait upon you at Oxford, whether by this time I imagined you might be arrived. Your short conference with Mr. Oglethorpe, has raised the hopes of many good persons, that you and yours would join in an undertaking, which cannot be better executed than by such instruments. I have thought again of the matter, and upon the result of the whole, cannot help again recommending the undertaking to your choice: and the more so, since in our inquiries, there appears such an unfitness in the generality of people. That state of ease, luxury, levity, and inadvertancy, observable in most of the plausible and popular Doctors, are disqualifications in a christian teacher, and would lead us to look for a different set of people. The more men are inured to contempt of ornaments and conveniences of life, to serious thoughts and bodily austerities, the fitter they are for a state which more properly represents our christian pilgrimage. And if upon consideration of the matter, you think yourselves (as you must do, at least amidst such a scarcity of proper

the salutary exercise of academical discipline. He also introduced into the schools, Locke, and other eminent modern philosophers, as suitable companions to Aristotle. He printed a double series of philosophical questions, for the use of the younger students; from which Mr. Johnson of Magdalene-College, Cambridge, took the hint of his larger work of the same kind.

When the settling of Georgia was in agitation, Dr. Bray, justly revered for his institution of parochial libraries, Dr. Stephen Hales, Dr. Berriman, and other learned Divines, entreated Dr. Burton's pious assistance in that undertaking. This he readily gave, by preaching before the society in 1732, and publishing his sermon, with an appendix on the state of that Colony. On the death of Dr. Edward Littleton, he was presented by Eton-College to the Vicarage of Maple-Derham, in Oxfordshire. When he went to take possession, a melancholy scene presented itself to his view; a widow, with three infant daughters, to be turned out, without a home, and without a fortune. From his compassion arose love; for Mrs. Littleton was handsome, elegant, ingenious, and had great sweetness of temper. The consequence was marriage. In 1760, he exchanged his Vicarage of Maple-Derham, for the Rectory of Worplesdon in Surry. In his advanced age, he collected and published in one volume, all his scattered pieces, under the title of *Opuscula Miscellanea*. He died in February, 1771.

persons) the fit instruments for so good a work, you will be ready to embrace this opportunity of doing good; which is not in vain offered to you.—Be pleased to write a line signifying your thoughts to me, or Mr. Oglethorpe; and if by advice I can be assisting to you, you may command my best, best services.

“Yours, affectionately,

“JOHN BURTON.

“P. S. Mr. Horn telling me, he heard you were at Manchester. I presume you are with Mr. Clayton, deliberating about this affair.”

Mr. Wesley now consented to go to Georgia. He had said to his brother Samuel, that his objections to Epworth were founded on his own weakness. He thought he should have so many temptations to what he then deemed irregularity in eating and drinking, at the visits he should be obliged to make, that he could not stand against them; besides the difficulty he would have of spending his time to the most advantage. But in going to Georgia, he saw a prospect of great usefulness, without any of these dangers to himself. Nay, I have no doubt, but the very difficulty of the undertaking, and the prospect of the hardships he must undergo, had some influence in disposing him to accept of it. Dr. Burton wrote to him again on the 18th of the same month, as follows: “It was with no small pleasure, that I heard your resolution on the point under consideration. I am persuaded, that an opportunity is offered of doing much good in an affair, for the conducting of which we can find but few proper instruments. Your undertaking adds greater credit to our proceedings; and the propagation of religion, will be the distinguishing honor of our colony. This has ever, in like cases, been the *desideratum*: a defect seemingly lamented, but scarce ever remedied. With greater satisfaction therefore, we enjoy your readiness to undertake the work. When it is known, that good men are thus employed, the pious and charitable will be the more encouraged to promote the work. You have too much steadiness of mind, to be disturbed by the light scoffs of the idle and profane. Let me put a matter to be considered by your brother Charles. Would it not be more adviseable that he were in orders?”

On the 28th of the same month, a few days before Mr. Oglethorpe intended to sail, Dr. Burton wrote again to Mr. Wesley, giving him advice on several points respecting his future situation. Amongst other things he observes,—“Under the influence of Mr. Oglethorpe, giving weight to your endeavors, much may be effected under the present circumstances. The apostolical manner of preaching, from house to house, will, through God’s grace, be effectual to turn many to righteousness. The people are babes in the progress of their christian life, to be fed with milk instead of strong meat; and the wise householder will bring out of his stores, food proportioned to the necessities of his family. The circumstances of your present christian pilgrimage will furnish the most affecting subjects of discourse;

and what arises *pro re nata*, will have greater influence than a labored discourse on a subject, in which men think themselves not so immediately concerned. With regard to your behavior and manner of address, that must be determined according to the different circumstances of persons, &c. But you will always, in the use of means, consider the great end, and therefore your applications will of course vary. You will keep in view the pattern of that gospel preacher St. Paul, who became all things to all men, that he might gain some. Here is a nice trial of christian prudence: accordingly, in every case you would distinguish between what is essential, and what is merely circumstantial to Christianity; between what is indispensable, and what is variable; between what is of divine, and what is of human authority. I mention this, because men are apt to deceive themselves in such cases, and we see the traditions and ordinances of men frequently insisted on, with more rigor than the commandments of God, to which they are subordinate. Singularities of less importance, are often espoused with more zeal, than the weighty matters of God's law. As in all points we love ourselves, so especially in our hypotheses. Where a man has, as it were, a property in a notion, he is most industrious to improve it, and that in proportion to the labor of thought he has bestowed upon it; and as its value rises in imagination, we are in proportion more unwilling to give it up, and dwell upon it more pertinaciously, than upon considerations of general necessity and use. This is a flattering mistake, against which we should guard ourselves. I hope to see you at Gravesend if possible. I write in haste what occurs to my thoughts—*disce docendus adhuc, quæ censet amicus*. May God prosper your endeavors for the propagation of his gospel!"

I shall now leave Mr. Wesley, preparing for his voyage to America. While he was abroad, Mr. Gambold, who had been intimately acquainted with him at Oxford, wrote some account of his proceedings there, and endeavored to delineate his character. He sent this to one of Mr. Wesley's relations; and I shall close this chapter with the following short abstract from it:

"About the middle of March, 1730, I became acquainted with Mr. Charles Wesley, of Christ-Church. I had been for two years before in deep melancholy; so it pleased God to disappoint and break a proud spirit, and to embitter the world to me as I was inclining to relish its vanities. During this time, I had no friend to whom I could open my mind; no man did care for my soul, or none at least understood her paths. The learned endeavored to give me right notions, and the friendly to divert me. One day an old acquaintance entertained me with some reflections on the whimsical Mr. Charles Wesley; his preciseness, and pious extravagancies. Upon hearing this, I suspected he might be a good Christian. I therefore went to his room, and without ceremony desired the benefit of his conversation.

I had so large a share of it afterwards, that hardly a day passed while I was at college, but we were together once, if not oftener.

“After some time, he introduced me to his brother John, of Lincoln College: ‘For he is somewhat older,’ said he, ‘than I am, and can resolve your doubts better.’ I never observed any person have a more real deference for another than he had for his brother; which is the more remarkable, because such near relations, being equals by birth, and conscious to each other of all the little familiar passages of their lives, commonly stand too close, to see the ground there may be for such submission. Indeed he followed his brother entirely; could I describe one of them I should describe both. I shall therefore say no more of Charles, but that he was a man formed for friendship; who by his cheerfulness and vivacity would refresh his friend’s heart: with attentive consideration, would enter into, and settle all his concerns as far as he was able: he would do any thing for him, great or small, and by a habit of mutual openness and freedom, would leave no room for misunderstanding.

“The Wesleys were already talked of for some religious practices, which were first occasioned by Mr. Morgan, of Christ-Church. He was a young man of an excellent disposition. He took all opportunities to make his companions in love with a good life; to create in them a reverence for the public worship; to tell them of their faults with a sweetness and simplicity that disarmed the worst tempers. He delighted much in works of charity; he kept several children at school; and, when he found beggars in the street, would bring them into his chambers, and talk to them. From these combined friends began a little society. Mr. John Wesley was the chief manager, for which he was very fit: for he had not only more learning and experience than the rest, but he was blest with such activity as to be always gaining ground, and such steadiness that he lost none. What proposals he made to any, were sure to alarm them; because he was so much in earnest; nor could they afterwards slight them, because they saw him always the same. What supported this uniform vigor, was, the care he took to consider well every affair before he engaged in it; making all his decisions in the fear of God, without passion, humor, or self-confidence. For though he had naturally a very clear apprehension, yet his exact prudence depended more on his humility and singleness of heart. He had, I think, something of authority in his countenance, yet he never assumed anything to himself above his companions; any of them might speak their mind, and their words were as strictly regarded by him as his words were by them.

“Their undertaking included these several particulars: to converse with young students; to visit the prisons; to instruct some poor families; to take care of a school and a parish work-house. They took great pains with the younger members of the university, to rescue them from bad company, and encourage them in a sober studious

life. They would get them to breakfast, and over a dish of tea endeavor to fasten some good hint upon them. They would bring them acquainted with other well-disposed young men, give them assistance in the difficult parts of their learning, and watch over them with the greatest tenderness.

“Some or other of them went to the castle every day, and another most commonly to Bocardo. Whoever went to the castle was to read in the chapel to as many prisoners as would attend, and to talk apart to the man or men whom he had taken particularly in charge. When a new prisoner came, their conversation with him for four or five times was close and searching.—If any one was under sentence of death, or appeared to have some intentions of a new life, they came every day to his assistance, and partook in the conflict and suspense of those who should now be found able, or not able to lay hold on salvation. In order to release those who were confined for small debts, and to purchase books and other necessaries, they raised a little fund, to which many of their acquaintance contributed quarterly. They had prayers at the castle most Wednesdays and Fridays, a sermon on Sunday, and the sacrament once a month.

“When they undertook any poor family, they saw them at least once a week; sometimes gave them money, admonished them of their vices, read to them, and examined their children. The school was, I think, of Mr. Wesley’s own setting up; however, he paid the mistress, and clothed some, if not all the children. When they went thither, they inquired how each child behaved, saw their work, heard them read and say their prayers, or catechism, and explained part of it. In the same manner they taught the children in the work-house, and read to the old people as they did to the prisoners.

“They seldom took any notice of the accusations brought against them for their charitable employments; but if they did make any reply, it was commonly such a plain and simple one, as if there was nothing more in the case, but that they had just heard such doctrines of their Saviour, and had believed and done accordingly. Sometimes they would ask such questions as the following: Shall we be more happy in another life, the more virtuous we are in this? Are we the more virtuous the more intensely we love God and man? Is love, of all habits, the more intense, the more we exercise it? Is either helping or trying to help man for God’s sake, an exercise of love to God or man? particularly, is feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, or prisoners, an exercise of love to God or man? Is endeavoring to teach the ignorant, to admonish sinners, to encourage the good, to comfort the afflicted, and reconcile enemies, an exercise of love to God or man? Shall we be more happy in another life, if we do the former of these things, and try to do the latter; or if we do not the one, nor try to do the other?

“I could say a great deal of his private piety; how it was nour-

ished by a continual recourse to God; and preserved by a strict watchfulness in beating down pride, and reducing the craftiness and impetuosity of nature, to a child-like simplicity; and in a good degree crowned with divine love, and victory over the whole set of earthly passions. He thought prayer to be more his business than anything else; and I have seen him come out of his closet with a serenity of countenance that was next to shining; it discovered what he had been doing, and gave me double hope of receiving wise directions, in the matter about which I came to consult him. In all his motions he attended to the will of God. He had neither the presumption, nor the leisure to anticipate things whose season was not now; and would show some uneasiness whenever any of us, by impertinent speculations, were shifting off the appointed improvement of the present minute. By being always cheerful, but never triumphing, he so husbanded the secret consolations which God gave him, that they seldom left him, and never but in a state of strong and long-suffering faith. Thus the repose and satisfaction of the mind being otherwise secured, there were in him no idle cravings, no chagrin or fickleness of spirit, nothing but the genuine wants of the body to be relieved by outward accommodations and refreshments. When he was just come home from a long journey, and had been in different companies, he resumed his usual employments, as if he had never left them; no dissipation of thought appeared, no alteration of taste: much less was he discomposed by any slanders or affronts; he was only afraid lest he should grow proud of this conformity to his Master. In short, he used many endeavors to be religious, but none to seem so; with a zeal always upon the stretch, and a most transparent sincerity, he addicted himself to every good word and work.

“Because he required such a regulation of our studies, as might devote them all to God, he has been accused as one that discouraged learning. Far from that, for the first thing he struck at in young men, was, that indolence which will not submit to close thinking. He earnestly recommended to them, a method and order in all their actions. The morning hour of devotion was from five to six, and the same in the evening. On the point of early rising, he told them, the well spending of the day would depend. For some years past, he and his friends have read the New Testament together in the evenings; and after every portion of it, having heard the conjectures the rest had to offer, he made his own observations on the phrase, design, and difficult places; and one or two wrote these down from his mouth.

“If any one could have provoked him, I should; for I was very slow in coming into their measures, and very remiss in doing my part. I frequently contradicted his assertions; or, which is much the same, distinguished upon them. I hardly ever submitted to his advice at the time he gave it, though I relented afterwards. One

time he was in fear I had taken up notions that were not safe, and pursued my spiritual improvement in an erroneous, because inactive way; so he came over and staid with me near a week. He condoled with me the incumbrances of my constitution, heard all I had to say, and endeavored to pick out my meaning, and yielded to me as far as he could. I never saw more humility in him than at this time.

“Mr. Wesley had not only friends at Oxford to assist him, but a great many correspondents. He set apart one day at least in the week, to write letters, and he was no slow composer; in which, without levity or affectation, but with plainness and fervor, he gave his advice in particular cases, and vindicated the strict original sense of the gospel precepts.

“He is now gone to Georgia as a missionary, where there is ignorance that aspires after divine wisdom, but no false learning that is got above it. He is, I confess, still living; and I know that an advantageous character is more decently bestowed on the deceased. But, besides that his condition is very like that of the dead, being unconcerned in all we say, I am not making any attempt on the opinion of the public, but only studying a private edification. A family picture of him, his relations may be allowed to keep by them. And this is the idea of Mr. Wesley, which I cherish for the service of my own soul, and which I take the liberty likewise to deposit with you.”

