

A
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED

AT THE NEW CHAPEL IN THE CITY-ROAD, LONDON,

ON THE NINTH OF MARCH, 1791,

AT THE FUNERAL

OF THE

REVEREND JOHN WESLEY.

And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works follow them.—REV. xiv. 13.

BY JOHN WHITEHEAD, M. D.

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*Know ye not that there is a Prince, and a great man fallen this day  
in Israel? II. SAMUEL iii. 38.*

I SHALL observe only on this passage of scripture, that the Hebrew word which is rendered prince, sometimes signifies a leader, and sometimes a person of superior or princely qualities. In this general sense the passage may be applied to that eminent servant of God, of whose character I am now to speak. This is all the use that I shall make of the words; I consider them as a motto only to the discourse which I intend to deliver.

When we consider the public character of the late Rev. Mr. Wesley; the various opinions which have been entertained concerning him; the extent of his labours; the influence which he had over a large body of people; and the prevalence of his sentiments, not in these only, but in other nations; it becomes a matter of some importance to inquire the leading features of his character, both as a man, and as a minister of the gospel.

I. Although the acquisition of human learning has been little esteemed by some religious people; yet it is of very considerable service to a minister of the gospel. The knowledge of the languages, and of the arts and sciences, is not only an ornament to the mind, but it enlarges the human faculties; it improves the understanding; gives a habit of thinking closely and reasoning justly; and prepares the mind, when under a proper direction, for great attainments even in religion. These advantages Mr. Wesley possessed in a high degree, and he knew well how to improve them to the most useful purposes in his ministerial labours. His mind was richly furnished with literature in its various branches: he was well read in the ancient, and several modern tongues. In the learned languages he was a critic; and must have studied them with peculiar pleasure in his youth, or he could not have made that progress in classical learning, which so justly raised him to a distinguished rank as a scholar. It has been acknowledged by men who were good judges, and no great friends to Mr. Wesley, that when at college he gave proofs of a fine classical taste: and there are some poems which he wrote at that time, that show that he had formed his taste on the best models of antiquity. Those who were much in his company, and who heard his apt and pointed quotations from the Greek and Roman classics, on the various occasions which occurred in travelling and conversation, could not but be sensible that he read them as a critic, that he admired their style, and entered into their spirit, and was

delighted with their beauties.—He has selected some pieces from the Roman classics; and as he travelled, he would sometimes read them for his amusement.

But he did not confine his studies of this kind to profane literature: sacred learning likewise occupied much of his time and attention. He was well read in the Hebrew scriptures; and in the original language of the New Testament he was an able critic, and so conversant with it, that sometimes, when he has evidently been at a loss to repeat a passage out of the New Testament in the words of our common translation, he was never at a loss to repeat it in the original Greek; the words seemed to flow without the least difficulty or hesitation, and he was always correct in reciting them; which made it evident, that the words and phrases of the original were more familiar to him than the words of any translation.

The works of God in the creation, afford another fruitful source of instruction and pleasure to an inquiring mind; and the five volumes which he published on *Natural Philosophy*, show how well he had studied that branch of knowledge. He did not study the higher branches of the mathematics; but he esteemed the knowledge of this science of great importance in the improvement of the mind. It forms a person to a habit of close attention to a subject, and of thinking and reasoning justly upon it. And he applied himself to the study of it in his youth, so far as to make himself master of Sir Isaac Newton's *Principia*, and his theory of light and colours.

The *Art of Logic* was another branch of science, which he had cultivated with the utmost attention and care. It has been universally acknowledged that he was a master in it. But logic, in his view of it, is not what has been commonly so called in the schools: it is not the art of wrangling, nor of making frivolous distinctions, often without a difference. Logic, according to him, is common sense improved by art; or in his own words, "The art of good sense; the art of comprehending things clearly; of judging truly; and of reasoning conscientiously: or, in another view of it, the art of learning and teaching."

If we take a view of his conduct in the early part of life, we shall find that he paid a strict attention to religion: his character was moral from early youth; he always revered God and his sacred word: he was attentive to the forms of religion, and so far as he at that time understood it, he was conscientious and regular in the practice of all its duties.

If we consider his qualifications for inquiring after truth, we shall find that he possessed every requisite to examine a subject, that we could expect or wish a man to have: a strong natural understanding, highly cultivated, and well stored with the knowledge of languages, and of the various arts and sciences; he had a reverence for God; he was conscientious in all his ways, and intent upon discovering the truth in every thing that became the subject of his inquiries. And he had firmness and resolution to embrace truth wherever he found it, however unfashionable it might appear. This is not the case with all men of learning: many persons persuade themselves that they are searching after truth; but if they meet with it dressed in a different form to that under which they have been accustomed to consider it, they are ashamed of it. This cannot be said of Mr. Wesley; cautious in his inquiries, he sought truth from the love of it, and whenever he found it, had firmness to embrace it, and publicly to avow it. These are evidences of a strong and liberal mind, possessed of every requisite to prosecute inquiries after truth.

This is a just representation of him; for, notwithstanding the extent of his knowledge, the seriousness of his devotion, and the regularity of his conduct; and although at this time he gave all he had to feed and clothe the poor, and was not only blameless in the eye of the world, but in many things excelled; yet, after a diligent and patient examination of the scriptures, he became sensible that all he knew and all he did, was insufficient to reconcile him to God: he became sensible that all he could do, could never atone for one sin. I will give you his own words; which he wrote, not

by way of ostentation, but of humiliation; and to awaken reflection, if possible, in the minds of those who might think of themselves as he had formerly thought of himself.

“Are they read in philosophy? so was I. In ancient or modern tongues? so was I also. Are they versed in the science of Divinity? I too have studied it many years. Can they talk fluently on spiritual things? the very same could I do. Are they plenteous in alms? Behold! I gave all my goods to feed the poor. Do they give their labour as well as their substance? I have laboured more abundantly than they all. Are they willing to suffer for their brethren? I have thrown up my friends, reputation, and ease. I have put my life in my hand. I have given my body to be parched up with heat, consumed with toil and weariness, or whatever God should please to bring upon me. But does this make me acceptable to God? Does all I ever did or can *know, say, give, do, or suffer*, justify me in his sight? By no means. If the oracles of God are true; if we are still to abide by the law and the testimony; all these things, though, when enabled by faith in Christ, they are holy, just, and good; yet without it are dung and dross. This then I have learned, that, having nothing in or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

These were the thoughts he had of himself, when his understanding was opened to the view of gospel truths; when he began to see the purity and holiness of God and his own sinfulness; notwithstanding all the excellencies he had to plead in the opinion of others.

This opinion was not taken up rashly: no doubt many of his friends, when they heard him speak in this manner, thought him beside himself: when they considered his former manner of life, and his regularity in every part of his conduct, and heard him say that he was a sinner, a sinner under the wrath of God, a sinner that stood in need of mercy; they looked upon him as almost insane. But this opinion of himself was the result of the most mature inquiry; it was not an enthusiastic notion, the effect of a heated imagination; it was a conviction of his mind founded on a scriptural and rational view of the nature of God, and of his own state. Consider, what I have been observing of his qualifications to inquire after truth: a man of a strong understanding, of a cultivated mind, accustomed to the habit of reasoning, accustomed to investigate every thing in the most cautious manner before he drew his conclusions: and tell me if this be the conduct of an enthusiast? If it be the character of one that takes up things rashly; that follows the dictates of a wild imagination? Will any man calmly affirm this? We must say, that this opinion of himself was not formed in any such way. He tells us, that after conversing with people of experience, he sat down and read his Greek Testament over, with a view to the grand and leading doctrines of justification: he could not be satisfied with any thing less than this: he proceeded upon conviction in every step that he took. And could any man proceed with more caution, or take wiser methods to guard against error, in a matter of such importance to his own comfort and happiness, and to the peace and comfort of others? And here we may again trace the marks of a great and liberal mind; when he saw the truth, he embraced it, though it condemned himself. This is not the case with all: how many see the truth and shrink from it! He, on the contrary, embraced it, though it condemned him; and though he knew the profession of it would expose him to ridicule, and contempt, and reproach. Is it possible for any man to give a stronger proof than this, that he acts from conviction, and from a love of what he conceives to be the truth? Had all those who have read Mr. Wesley's writings, or heard him preach, acted with the same sincerity and firmness that he did, the number of converts would have been much more numerous.

II. We shall now take a view of his religious sentiments. He made up his mind upon the doctrines which he taught in the most cautious manner, examining the scrip-

tures continually, never adopting any opinion without evidence from scripture and reason. So far was he from following a heated imagination, or taking up opinions as an enthusiast, that he maintained we ought to use our understanding, compare one thing with another, and draw just conclusions from such comparisons, as well in matters of religion as in other things. It is in this sense he uses the word reason when he says, "There are many that utterly decrie the use of reason in religion, nay, that condemn all reasoning concerning the things of God, as utterly destructive of true religion; but we can in no wise agree with this. We find no authority for it in holy writ. So far from it, that we find there both our Lord and his apostles reasoning continually with their opposers. Neither do we know in all the productions of ancient and modern times such a chain of reasoning and argumentation, so close, so solid, so regularly connected, as the epistle to the Hebrews. And the strongest reasoner whom we have ever observed, excepting Jesus Christ of Nazareth only, was that Paul of Tarsus; the same who has left this plain direction for all Christians, 'In malice or wickedness be ye children; but in understanding, or reason, be ye men.'"

Hence it is evident, that Mr. Wesley deemed it necessary to use his reason in searching into the things of God. He read the Scriptures, and used his understanding in the best manner he could, to comprehend their meaning. He formed his religious principles in this way; he examined every step he took, and admitted no doctrine, nor any interpretation of Scripture, but what appeared to him to be agreeable to reason.

How absurd is it to suppose, that we must lay aside our reason in matters of religion! What has a man to guide him, if he lay aside the use of his reason? You will say, the scriptures are the rule of our faith and practice: but, can a man apply the rule without using his reason? What has he to show him that he applies it right rather than wrong? A man that gives up his reason in matters of religion or of experience—in matters that concern the internal state of his own mind, abandons himself to imagination, and is liable to be carried away by his passions, he knows not whither; like a ship at sea, without a rudder and without a compass, he has nothing to direct him how to steer his course, and he cannot tell whither he is going. How justly then did Mr. Wesley adopt this principle, that we ought to use our reason to guard our minds from error, and to enable us to form a true judgment both from scripture and experience!

Speaking to one who required a religion agreeable to reason, he says, "We join with you, in desiring a religion founded on reason, and every way agreeable thereto. But one question remains to be asked, What do you mean by reason? I suppose you mean the eternal reason, or the nature of things: the nature of God, and the nature of man, with the relations necessarily subsisting between them. This is the very religion we preach: a religion evidently founded on, and every way agreeable to, eternal reason, to the essential nature of things. Its foundation stands on the nature of God, and the nature of man, with their mutual relations."

We have here his general view of religion; and he publicly avows that the Gospel which he preached is agreeable to this view; that is, agreeable to the nature of God and the nature of man, with their mutual relations. He was indeed at the utmost distance from the supposition, that the Gospel, as a system, is inconsistent with reason. And he explained and illustrated, on some occasions, the general doctrines which he taught, in such a way as to show that they are conformable to the general principle which he has here laid down. The outcry then which has been raised against him, and the whole body with whom he was connected, as enthusiasts and fanatics, is wholly unfounded; it proceeds from the workings of a prejudiced mind, and a want of attention to the things spoken.

The Gospel, considered as a general plan of salvation, he viewed as a display of the divine perfections, in a way agreeable to the nature of God; in which all the divine attributes harmonize, and shine forth with peculiar lustre. Divine love in the gift of a Redeemer; divine wisdom conspicuous in the plan of redemption; divine justice

tempered with mercy to man, in the death of the Saviour; and divine energy and power in making the whole effectual to raise a fallen creature from a state of sin and misery, to a state of holiness and happiness, and from a state of death, to immortal life and glory. All these are conspicuous in the gospel, as a general plan of salvation; and shine forth in the face of Jesus Christ, with peculiar glory. Thus far then, the gospel, in his view of it, is worthy of God, and coincides with our notions of the harmony and unity of the divine attributes.

The gospel, considered as a means to attain an end, discovers as great fitness in the means to the end, as can possibly be discovered in the structure of natural bodies, or in the various operations of nature, from a view of which we draw our arguments for the existence of God. How often have you heard this excellent man enlarge on these things! How often has he shown you that the gospel affords as clear a display of the moral perfections of God, as the works of nature do of his existence! This, certainly, was not an irrational view of the gospel; but showed a mind, enlarged, capacious, capable of comprehending great things, of investigating every part of the gospel, and of harmonizing the whole.

Considering the gospel as holding forth benefits to man, those benefits are suited to the nature and state of man. How often have you heard him explain this! Man is blind, ignorant, wandering out of the way; his mind being estranged from God, he lives without God in the world. But the gospel, as a system of moral truths, is adapted to enlighten the understanding and to direct the judgment. Experience and observation may convince us, as well as scripture, that a man may contemplate moral truths, and learn to discourse well of them, without acquiring a practical moral principle of sufficient strength to reform his conduct. It is conscience that judges of the right or wrong of a man's motives and actions. And till conscience interpose its authority, and pass sentence on him, the man remains insensible of his own state and condition, however well he may discourse on morality in general. He is, in the language of scripture, dead in trespasses and sins. The gospel, then, being the power of God to salvation, must be more than a mere system of morals. It promises, and God actually gives the spirit of promise, which convinces the world of sin. 'The Spirit of God accompanies the word of the gospel, and the other means of grace, and makes them effectual to awaken conscience to the exercise of its offices, to pass the sentence of condemnation for what has been done wrong; and the speculative truths of the understanding being thus combined with the dictates of conscience, a practical principle is formed of sufficient strength to restrain the passions and reform the conduct. This our Reverend Father used to call repentance, and often conviction for sin. And was he irrational in this? Is not this blessing of the gospel agreeable to the state, and to the natural faculties of man?

He considered the gospel as a dispensation of mercy to men, holding forth pardon, a free pardon of sin to all who repent and believe in Christ Jesus. That this is a scriptural doctrine, no man can doubt who reads the New Testament: it is interwoven with every part of scripture. It will bear the test of reason also. It is suited to the state and wants of men, as they stand related to a holy God. It is suited to the wants of every man living: every man has sinned, and comes short of the glory of God; every man, therefore, stands in need of mercy. It was not then irrational in our minister, to hold forth the rich display of divine grace in Christ Jesus to penitent sinners, in the most free manner. His doctrine is founded on a general view of the scriptures; on the peculiar promises of the gospel; and it is suited to the present condition and wants of men, as they stand related to God and to the prospects of another world.

The gospel enjoins universal holiness, both in heart and the conduct of life. The design of it is, to regulate our affections and govern our actions. It requires us to be dead to the world and alive to God: to love the Lord our God with all our heart,

and our neighbour as ourselves : to do unto others as we would wish they should do unto us. And God has promised in the gospel, the continual aid and assistance of his Holy Spirit, to strengthen us with all might in the inner man : Christ is a Saviour that is able to save to the uttermost, all them that come unto God by him ; and there is a throne of grace, at which we may obtain, not only mercy, but grace to help in time of need. To him who rightly believes the gospel, it is a means adequate to the end intended by it : to him it is a quickening spirit, a purifying and cleansing word, the power of God to his salvation ; it influences every faculty of his mind, and regulates every action of his life : to his mind it exhibits such views of paternal love in every part of the plan of redemption, and of a superintending Providence, directing all things with unerring wisdom, to promote his holiness here, and his happiness and glory hereafter, that he is continually animated to the practice of every christian virtue, and strengthened with patience to run the race that is set before him.

The gospel then, considered as a large comprehensive plan of redemption, holds forth blessings suited to our present state of necessities : wisdom to instruct us, grace to justify or pardon, and to sanctify and cleanse us from evil ; with promises of protection and help through the snares and difficulties of life. It operates in a way that is suited to our faculties : it enlightens the understanding, awakens the conscience, governs the will, and regulates the affections. Nor are its benefits confined to the present life ; they extend to the regions of the dead, and expand our views to the prospects of eternity. What a glorious view does the gospel give us of a resurrection from the dead ! Our Lord hath died and risen again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. They that die in the Lord are still under his protection and guidance. Death cannot separate any from the love of Christ. The gospel, therefore, presents blessings suited to our necessities, comprehensive as our wants, and adapted to our state in life and death, and the enjoyments of a glorious and happy eternity.

But in explaining the order in which the blessings of the gospel are promised to man, he showed a mind well instructed in the oracles of God, and well acquainted with human nature. There is not perhaps greater confusion in any part of the system of religion, or in the common explanations given of the gospel, than in this ; the order in which the blessings of the gospel are promised to us, and in which we ought to expect them. Our Father, who is gone to his reward, had an excellent introduction to this part of his ministerial office : he himself had entered in at the right door. When a minister is awakened in his own heart, when he is truly sensible of his sin and of the want of a Saviour ; and comes to God for mercy as a poor sinner, and accepts it as the free gift of God through Jesus Christ ; being sensible that he must be justified by faith, without the deeds of the law ; he is well prepared to instruct others ; and to instruct them, not in the right way only, but also in the right order in which we ought to expect the benefits of the gospel. How accurate was Mr. Wesley in showing that the first step, to be a Christian, is to repent ; that till the conscience be awakened to a sense of the evil of sin, a man cannot enter into a state of justification : it would totally subvert the design of the gospel, were it possible that an unawakened person could be justified. The very supposition frustrates every intention of the coming of the Son of God ; which was to deliver us from sin, to reconcile us to God, and to prepare us for heaven. He has carefully and properly distinguished these matters in his preaching and writings : how often has he told you that the awakening of conscience is the first step in supernatural religion : and that till a man is convinced of the evil of sin and is determined to depart from it ; till he is convinced that there is a beauty in holiness, and something truly desirable in being reconciled to God ; he is not prepared to receive Christ. It would be well if all the ministers of the gospel laid this true foundation of christian experience ; and did not confound the order in which the blessings of the gospel are given to the soul. It has been a singular blessing to you, and to the

Methodists at large, that your ministers have so accurately distinguished these things, and guarded you against error in a matter that so nearly concerns your peace and your progress in the divine life. You have by these distinctions been enabled to judge with more certainty of your state of mind, and to what degree of experience you have already attained in the things of God: you have been enabled to see more distinctly and clearly the benefits of the gospel which are still before you, and have been animated in the pursuit of them, by an assurance of success, if you persevere in the way which God has appointed.

In marking so distinctly the order in which we experience the benefits of the gospel, Mr. Wesley has followed the example of our Lord and his apostles. Our Lord began his preaching, by saying, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*. Peter, preaching to the Jews at Jerusalem, says, *Repent ye, and be converted*. Paul has made this distinction in the most pointed manner: "I kept back nothing," says he, "that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you, publicly and from house to house: testifying both to the Jews and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*." He has not followed the scripture only in observing this order, but also reason and the natural order of things. Does not the natural order of things require, that a man be first convinced of his faults, before he can be reclaimed from them? Must not a man be conscious of his condemnation before he will apply to God for pardon? Our progress in Christian experience bears a striking analogy to our progress in any art or science. A man must first be instructed in the fundamental principles of an art or science, before he can proceed to the higher branches of it. The first step prepares him for the second, and so on through the whole of his progress. The same order is observable in Christian experience. The first step in it prepares the mind for the second; and so on till we come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

The second important and necessary step in Christian experience is, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, arising from a scriptural view of his priestly office. When the mind is duly prepared to receive Christ in this character, pardon is held forth in the gospel as a free gift, without money and without price; Christ is here proposed to us as the atonement for our sins. How often has he set him forth as crucified before your eyes! He has exhibited him to your view in his priestly character as the atonement for the sins of the world. He has often shown you that the atonement which he has made is complete: that the most vile, helpless sinner who repents and turns from his sins, may come and freely receive pardon as the gift of God in and through Christ, and have free admittance to this throne of grace. How gloriously has he often explained this truth, and with what good effect to many of you! You have been blessed and strengthened under his word, God has borne witness to the truth of it, and sealed its evidence upon your hearts.

In explaining sanctification, he has accurately distinguished it from justification, or the pardon of sin. Justification admits us into a state of grace and favour with God, into the family of heaven; into a state of fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, and lays the foundation of sanctification or Christian holiness in all its extent. He has shown you that the tendency and end of your justification, is holiness of heart and holiness in all manner of conversation; that being justified by faith, your relation to God is altered; your sins are forgiven; you are now become children of God and heirs of all the promises of the gospel, and are quickened and animated with the spirit of it. In this stage of Christian experience, faith realizes the truths of the gospel to the mind; it becomes a practical principle of sufficient strength not only to restrain the passions, but to purify the heart, to influence every faculty of the soul, and every action in life, and to transform the man as a moral agent into the image of God. What a glorious view of the gospel has he afforded you; and how often has he instructed you that Christ, as the living head of his church, and acting upon it, in and

by the means of every part of the gospel, is sufficient to accomplish the end of his coming; to change the heart, write his laws upon our mind, and make us like himself! He has urged these views of the gospel upon you again and again, and roused you to an ardent pursuit of universal holiness and purity. But a great clamour has been raised against him on this subject, because he called his view of sanctification by the word perfection; many even of the professors of religion have thought him very absurd in this matter: he has often explained to you what he meant by that term; and that he did not mean to differ with any one about a word, though it be scriptural; that he meant by the word perfection such a degree of the love of God and the love of man; such a degree of the love of justice, truth, holiness, and purity, as will remove from the heart every contrary disposition towards God or man: and that this should be our state of mind in every situation, and in every circumstance of life. Oh! what a paradise would this earth be, were all Christians sanctified in this degree! Can there be a more amiable picture of the gospel than this? Is it irrational to tell us that God sent his Son into the world to make us new creatures; to give us true views of God and of ourselves; of his love, mercy, truth, and goodness; of his providential care, and his all-sufficiency to bless us with every blessing in heavenly things in Christ Jesus; to give us true views of life, death, and eternity, and hereby to arm us with divine strength to resist and overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to give us those dispositions of mind which prepare us to worship, love, reverence, and serve God, and to be just, true, and helpful to one another in this wilderness, as a preparation for the enjoyment of God, and the society of heaven? And is this to talk irrationally? as an enthusiast? as one who is doing an injury to the world? How rashly do men judge and speak when their passions are inflamed! but candour must acknowledge that in this he excelled, and that though his doctrine is contrary to the lives of the professors of religion in general, it is agreeable to the oracles of God.

There is another point relative to his religious opinions, that has been strangely misunderstood, and a great outcry raised against it—not, indeed, by the bulk of religious people, but by men of abilities, and of learning, who make pretensions to reason and calm discussion—that all the blessings of the gospel are to be obtained by faith. He has told us expressly, that we are saved by faith: he has told us also, what he means by salvation; the being put in possession of the blessings of the gospel; the being justified by the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ; the being sanctified or made holy in heart, and holy in all manner of conversation; he has taught you that all these things are to be obtained by faith: and you can hardly open your Testament in any part but you will find this doctrine taught: you can hardly read a chapter in St. Paul's Epistles but you find it inculcated again and again. It will bear the test of reason also, and will be found, upon the strictest inquiry, to be agreeable to our state and condition in this life. Is it unreasonable, that we should believe in God? that we should believe in him who made us, who upholds us, and who governs all things; in him who conducts the whole machine of nature, in all its vast extent, and in all its complicated operations; who comprehends every thing, as it were, in one grasp; in whom all things live, and move, and have their being? Is it unreasonable that a poor mortal that knows not what is just coming upon him, not even what shall happen to him the next moment, should trust in God? That he should confide in the goodness and providence of him, who sees all things at one view, past, present, and to come; and who sees man at one glance, in every period of his existence, with every surrounding circumstance? Is not this agreeable to the nature of God and the state of man?

The gospel promiseth to us a state of intercourse and fellowship with God, in the present enjoyment of spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ. Faith is made a necessary condition of entering into this state of intercourse and enjoyment. In this, God has dealt with us in a way suitable to our faculties, and our state of intercourse with one



another. For you have no kind of connection with each other, without faith; all must acknowledge that faith is the bond of human society. Can you transact any kind of business without it? You can have no enjoyment of the things of this life without an act of faith preceding it. All your expectations and future prospects in life are founded on faith. You will find, upon examination, that in every branch of business, in every social intercourse, you must first believe, and then you will obtain the thing you expected, provided your faith be rightly placed. You cannot engage a servant, without faith in him. A merchant cannot transact business with any one, without first having faith in the person with whom he transacts that business. When the husbandman ploughs his land and sows his seed, faith is the principle from which he acts. Unless, then, we act from faith, we can have no fellowship with one another, nor enjoy the comforts of life. And, if the mind be sufficiently furnished with knowledge and prudence, our success will be in proportion to the degree of faith, and the exertions that are made in consequence of it. This great man, then, has shown himself well acquainted both with scripture and human nature, in explaining this important article of Christian experience.

How does faith operate on the mind in Christian experience? In repentance, the first step towards the Christian life is, a man must believe that there is a God, who is holy, just, and good: he must believe the word of God; that there is a judgment to come, when every thought and action will be examined, and when the wicked will be condemned to punishment, and the righteous will inherit eternal life. He must believe also that God is merciful, that pardon may be obtained through Jesus Christ: for a view of the holiness of God and of his own sinfulness, would, without this, produce despair, which is not gospel repentance. When, by the grace of God, these things are impressed upon the mind of a man, with full conviction of their truth, they awaken the conscience, and excite him to attention and self-examination, and gradually prepare him to receive Christ in his mediatorial character. With respect to pardon, when the mind is rightly prepared for it, the gospel has made faith the express condition of it. How ably has our aged minister established this truth, and defended it against all opposition. Pardon of sins is obtained for us by the blood of Christ, it is promised to us by the word of God; but must be received by faith; we must believe in the word of promise, in order to receive it. And he that believeth is justified: he is justified now, the moment he receives Christ as his mediator, as his saviour, as his atonement. His faith is counted to him for righteousness, it gives him a title to the promise of pardon, and to the blessings connected with it.

If we examine how faith purifies the heart, we shall find nothing irrational in the doctrine. There is nothing better adapted to remove every evil from the human heart than faith in Christ; there is nothing more efficacious, to preserve us from evil through life, than faith rightly explained and rightly exercised; faith, as it unites us to Christ our living head, gives us a principle of divine life; we begin to live unto God, from a principle of love in the heart; to live a life that is given by him who is the resurrection and the life, and who raiseth the soul to an union with God. When this has taken place, old things are done away, all things are become new; the views, the purposes and the affections of the man are changed: he no longer acts from the same motives, nor by the same rule as before: a new principle of action is formed in the heart, which directly leads to holiness and to God.

Faith, as a practical principle, is called by Paul, *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*. It gives the things hoped for a present subsistence in the mind, in that degree which is suited to our present state. It is the evidence of things not seen; it realizes the truths of the gospel to the mind, and enables it to view them with as much certainty as we have of the existence of corporeal objects, when we feel their influence on our senses. A man who acts under the influence of this faith, who has gospel truths full in his view, with all the certainty that his senses

can give him of the existence of external objects, will undoubtedly find his heart powerfully affected by them. This faith will work by love, it will purify the heart from every thing contrary to the mind that was in Christ. It will enable him to acknowledge God in all his ways, to set him continually before his eyes, to live as in his presence, with a view to his glory, and resigned to his will. Let us instance in one thing only at present. Suppose a man believes that there is a Providence which superintends human affairs: if he be assured that Divine Love can intend nothing but good in every thing that happens to him, and that Infinite Wisdom cannot err in adapting the means to the end intended: if he be as fully assured of these truths as he is of the existence of the things which he sees or hears; will not this faith lead him to a reverential fear of God, and to a perfect resignation to his will in every occurrence of life? It will make him cautious in his conduct, and attentive to every part of his duty. He will be anxiously careful for nothing, but, living under a deep sense of the Divine presence and care, his mind will be kept in perfect peace, because it is stayed upon God. In this, then, our Father in Christ spoke agreeably to Scripture and to reason.

Let us now notice his notions of the universality of the gospel blessings. Here he shone with peculiar lustre; here he did honour to God and to the Divine attributes; he maintained that God is a God of love—not to a part of his creatures only, but to all; that he who is the Father of all, who made all, who stands in the same relation to all his creatures, loves them all; that he loved the world, and gave his Son a ransom for all without distinction of persons; that there is no respect of persons with God. This is an amiable character of the Deity. It always appeared to him, that to represent God as partial, as confining his love to a few, was unworthy our notions of the Deity. He, therefore, explained the gospel in the most glorious and extensive point of view. He maintained that Christ died for all men, that he is to be offered to all; all are to be invited to come to him; and whosoever comes in the way which God has appointed, may partake of his blessings. He maintained that sufficient grace is given to all, in that way and manner which is best adapted to influence the mind. And may we not appeal to every man's experience for the truth of this? How often has he appealed to the consciences of men! Have not your hearts reprov'd you? Have you not at times trembled for your sins? Have you not been ashamed of yourselves—have you not detested your own conduct in secret, when none has seen you but God, and none has been privy to your actions but your own heart? Whence does this arise? Certainly not from man, but from God. It is an evidence that there is salvation for thee, O man, who art in this state; God is not willing that thou shouldst perish: he is calling thee, inviting thee to turn from thy sins, and to turn to God. He has thus stated the truths of the gospel with convincing evidence. The expressions of Scripture are positive in favour of this doctrine; there are passages which so positively declare it, that it is impossible to give any other construction to them without the greatest violence; but there is not a single passage in the New Testament, which seems to favour the doctrine that Christ died for a part of mankind only, which will not easily admit of a different construction.

He raised some enemies by this doctrine. He has been called an Arminian; and perhaps many who have used the term, have annexed an idea to it by no means just. How often has he wished—and it is devoutly to be wished by all the friends of true religion—that the names of Calvinist and Arminian were buried in oblivion; they have tended to keep up strife and discord only, amongst those who ought to love one another as brethren, however they have differed on some points of doctrine. But some have supposed that to be an Arminian, is to maintain salvation by works; that it is to degrade Christ, and to throw the lustre of redemption by Christ into a cloud at any rate, if not to overturn it. Was this the case with our minister of the gospel? Did he not preach free grace as much as any Calvinist? Did he not assert that

pardon is the free gift of God, without money and without price? Did he not assert that repentance itself only prepares the heart to receive the gift of God—that it does not give any kind of merit to the man? How often has he declared to you that the best works any man can perform need atonement! So far was he from putting works in the place of the blood of Christ, that he gave them their just value only; he placed them in the order of Christian experience where the gospel places them; as the fruits of a living, operative faith, and as the measure of our future reward; for every man will be rewarded, not for his works, but according to the measure of them. This is undoubtedly a scriptural representation of this matter, and it would be well if all Christians were to attend to this distinction more than they do. It is to be feared that some may have cried out against works, not from the very best motives; at least from some inclination to relax in holiness. The way in which some have preached faith, has done no honour to the gospel; and may, probably, have encouraged some persons to pay less attention to Christian duties than they ought to do. But while he insisted on good works, as the necessary fruits of faith, he gave the whole glory of salvation to God, from first to last; not in the general plan of it only, but in the order of communicating the benefits of Christ to the mind. He believed that man would never turn to God, if God did not begin the work: nay, how often has he told you, that the first approaches of grace to the mind are irresistible; that a man cannot avoid being convinced that he is a sinner; that God by various means awakens his conscience; and whether the man will or no, these convictions approach him. He gave all the glory of the work of salvation in the heart to the grace of God; he ascribes no merit to works; he tells you, indeed, that in proportion as you improve the grace given, you shall have more, and be rewarded according to your works, with grace here as well as glory hereafter.

There is one subject more which I must touch upon, Christian experience. It is well known that this able minister of the gospel, together with his brother Charles, and the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, have been the principal instruments in the hands of God, of diffusing the knowledge of this important article of the Christian religion, amongst the bulk of the people of this country. And in this respect only, they have been a blessing to every class and order of men. For though all have not believed their report, yet, many have believed it in every station of life, and borne a happy testimony to the truth of it. How ably has our beloved Father illustrated and defended this part of Christianity! Many, indeed, have supposed that what we call experience is mere imagination: that it is nothing more than the working up of our own minds into a fancy of something which can have no foundation in truth or reason. But Christian experience is something real and not imaginary; it rests upon as solid a foundation as the evidence of our external senses. We have no more reason to doubt the reality of our experience, when it is scriptural, than we have to doubt of the existence of an object which we see with our eyes, or of a sound which we hear, when these organs are in the most sound and healthy state. But what is Christian experience, and what degree of certainty is there in it?

Christian experience is the present possession of the benefits of the gospel which relate to this life, and which prepare us for the enjoyment of God in glory. If we use the word in the most extensive sense, so as to include the preparation of the mind to receive Christ in his mediatorial character, it will imply repentance towards God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit, so admirably described by Paul; love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness and temperance, with all the privileges of the Christian state here. In the gospel we are commanded to repent and return to God; to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to be filled with the fruits of the Spirit. The gospel promises every necessary aid and assistance to put us in possession of these benefits; and we read also in the New Testament of many persons who professed to have experience of these things. If, indeed, the gospel

be a fable, then the things of which it speaks, and the promises which it makes, signify nothing real, they are purely imaginary, and to profess any experience of them must be delusion. But, as we have the most certain evidence that the gospel is of God: that it gives a true account of what God has done and is now doing for the salvation of men, and of the means by which he is accomplishing this great purpose, the promises it gives us must signify something real, and they must be as certain as the existence and truth of God himself. It is evident then, that we may experience the blessings which it promises to us, if we seek them in the way which God hath appointed.

If we inquire into the evidence which a man has that he does experience the things which we here speak of, we shall find that it is of the strongest kind possible. If a man's understanding be enlightened with gospel truths; if his conscience be awakened to decide justly on his motives and actions, as they are related to God and his law; if in consequence of this, he turns from his sins, and is humbled, abased, and ashamed before God for them, and prays for mercy; how is it possible for such a change as this to take place in the dictates of his conscience and in the opinion he has had of himself, and he not know it? The very supposition is absurd; he must be as conscious of it as he is of his own existence, or of any thing that happens to him. In like manner, when a person, in the state I have now described, is enabled to believe in Jesus Christ to the saving of his soul; to rely fully upon him for pardon and acceptance with God; must not such a person be conscious of this act of his mind, and of the change in his views of God, and in the feelings of his mind that are subsequent to it? Will he not be as conscious and certain of these things as he is when he sees an object before him, or feels pleasure or pain? If he that believeth be filled with love, joy, peace, and the other fruits of the Spirit just mentioned, must he not be certain of this? Our internal consciousness carries the same conviction of reality with it, as our external senses. Would it not appear exceedingly absurd to you, if you heard a person say in the common affairs of life, that he loved an object dearly, but that he was not conscious of any love; that he rejoiced exceedingly in a thing, but that he did not feel any joy? It is just the same in Christian experience. If from proper views of the gospel and faith in Christ, I feel peace, I cannot be ignorant of it; if I look up to God through Jesus Christ with holy confidence, and feel pleasure and delight, I must be conscious and certain of it.

Christian experience, then, has certainty in it; if a man has it, he cannot be ignorant of it. How is it possible for any man who has not felt the peace of God to form a just notion of it? Its evidence stands on the same ground as the evidence of our external senses. For if a man had never seen colours, he could not form any true idea of them; if a man had never felt pain or pleasure, he could not be taught to understand what they are; however perfect his rational faculties might be, he must feel them to know them. So it is with Christian experience, you must enter into it and feel it, and then you will know what it is; and will as easily distinguish it from the feelings or consciousness arising from other things, as you distinguish seeing from hearing, or the touch from the smell.

III. Having considered the character of the Rev. Mr. Wesley as a man of learning, and well qualified to examine a subject and to discover the truth; and having taken a view of his principal and leading opinions in religion; my intention is, very briefly to consider his labours as a minister of the Gospel, and the effects of them.

Mr. Wesley was a man of industry from his youth, and employed his time to the greatest advantage in pursuit of literary knowledge. After he was convinced of the pure doctrines of the gospel, he was assiduous in declaring them to others. How few possess the necessary qualifications for useful studies and for active life! These were united in him in a very high degree. His leading doctrines discover a diligent and patient examination of the Scriptures, great strength of judgment, and closeness

of reasoning: and he was not less remarkable for his zeal, activity, and steadiness in propagating them among the people, for which many thousands have had reason to thank God in their dying moments. At first he preached in the churches wherever an opportunity offered; but his doctrines giving offence to some, and the crowds that attended him raising envy in others, the churches were by degrees shut against him. If we consider his firm attachment to the Church of England, and his fondness for regularity and order in church government, it will appear surprising that this circumstance did not damp his zeal, and shake the firmness of his mind. It is happy that it did not. Being convinced of the importance of the doctrines of the gospel to the people at large, and that it was his duty to preach the glad tidings of peace and salvation to all; knowing also that God loves mercy rather than sacrifice, he thought it would be criminal in him to sacrifice his views of the gospel, and his opportunities of doing good, to the prejudices of others. He therefore went out into the highways and hedges, to invite sinners to repentance, and to make them partakers of gospel blessings. He must have foreseen, that in taking this step, mankind would put different constructions on his conduct; and that to attempt a thing so new in the world, would raise many enemies against him, and expose him to many difficulties. Whatever prospect his former situation had offered him, of ease, honour or wealth, these he left behind him; and nothing could at this time present itself to his view, but labour and weariness, accompanied with reproach, persecution and contempt from men. Is it possible to suppose for a moment, that a man of calm reflection, as Mr. Wesley was, who never took any step of importance without mature deliberation, would have acted as he did at this time, without a full conviction that he was doing his duty—that the doctrines which he taught were the truths of the gospel, and of the utmost importance to the happiness of men? He must have had more than a bare conviction of these truths; he must have been animated with an ardent desire to glorify God in the propagation of his truth, and to be instrumental of good to his fellow-creatures.

The regularity and steadiness with which Mr. Wesley pursued his labours, and the extent to which he carried them, are almost beyond conception, and sufficient to awaken astonishment in the mind of any man who reflects upon them. When he first went out to preach in the different parts of the kingdom, and to carry the light of the gospel to those who sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, he was surrounded with difficulties on every side. In many places he had scarcely food to eat, or a place in which to lie down. In some places, he was considered as an enemy to his country; in others, that he had private and interested views in what he did; for few could at first imagine that any man would undergo the labour and fatigue which he underwent, purely for the good of others. But none of these things ever moved him; he still continued to travel from place to place to do good to those who reviled and persecuted him. He laboured day and night for the good of the people. This he did through persecution, reproach, and every difficulty that lay in his way: nothing turned him aside from the grand object of his preaching the gospel to the poor. Here we cannot but admire the strength and firmness of his resolution, and his love of God and man, which enabled him to persevere in this arduous and difficult undertaking. Oh, what a glorious influence would the gospel soon acquire over the minds of men, if those who are true ministers of it, had the bold, the firm, the intrepid spirit which Mr. Wesley has shown: did they, like him, give up their ease, their pleasure, and everything which is counted dear in this world, to do good unto men, to glorify God, and to bring men to the obedience of Christ! There are many ministers of the gospel who wish well to experimental religion, and many who truly preach it, but their preaching is limited to a few persons, comparatively speaking; his mind expanded to larger views of public good: his arms would have embraced, if possible, all mankind, and as far as his strength would carry him, he spread the knowledge of gospel truth into every part of these kingdoms.

But Mr. Wesley was not proof against labour, persecution and reproach only ; but against the softer and finer feelings of human nature also, when they stood in the way of the great work in which he was engaged : those feelings which are apt to effeminate the mind, or to warp a man from a uniform and steady attention to his duty. He had a peculiar pleasure in reading and study ; and every literary man knows the force of this passion, and how apt it is to make him encroach on the time which ought to be employed in other duties. But Mr. Wesley had the resolution to lay aside any subject whenever the hour came that he was to set out on his journey, or was to preach, or visit the sick. He had a high relish for rational and polite conversation ; but whatever company might happen to come where he was, to converse with him during supper, he would constantly retire to rest at his usual hour, that he might rise at four o'clock in the morning, which was his constant practice, winter and summer, for more than sixty years together. He was far from being insensible to the feelings of friendship ; but whenever any friendship he had formed, interfered with the good of the work he was called to, he could immediately break it off. The work to which God had called him occupied all his time and attention : he considered it as the business of his life, and sacrificed every pleasure and gratification to it. How much do all of you owe him, who has sacrificed everything dear to flesh and blood for so many years together to benefit you. It appears astonishing, to see a man pursuing the public good with so much ardour and steadiness for so long a time, denying himself every gratification and pleasure, except that of doing good. This was his general character for the number of years during which he was engaged in this work.

The industry of Mr. Wesley was almost incredible. From four o'clock in the morning till eight at night, his time was employed in reading, writing, preaching, meeting the people, visiting the sick or travelling. Before the infirmities of age came upon him, he usually travelled on horseback, and would sometimes ride thirty, forty, or fifty miles in a day, and preach two, three, or sometimes four times. He had a constant correspondence with some persons in the different societies all over the three kingdoms, and with the preachers in every part, and would answer his letters with great punctuality. He knew the state of the societies in general, and of many individuals in each of them. He read most publications that were deemed valuable, if they related to religion or natural philosophy, and often made extracts from them. If we consider the whole of his labours, and compare them with what most men of industry have done, we may say that he has lived two or three lives.

The effects of Mr. Wesley's labours have been much more extensive than any person would at first imagine. He was at the head of the little company first formed at Oxford. And if we consider the state of these kingdoms when the two Mr. Wesleys and Mr. Whitefield first went out to preach publicly, we must acknowledge that experimental religion was almost lost, at least among the common people. Without being censorious, religion was little more than loose opinions, and modes and forms of worship among the people in general. The preaching of these three men of God has had a very extensive influence on all denominations of religious people ; it has been the means of awakening their attention to the grand and leading principles of the gospel : and of making them consider the experimental part of it. Their labours also have had a happy influence on the ministers of the gospel of every denomination, although some may have been ashamed to own it. With respect to the whole body of the people commonly called Methodists, they have been the means of raising them up. What were you, before you heard these three servants of God, and those associated with them, declare the glad tidings of peace and salvation ? but you that were not a people, are now become the people of God, by their instrumentality. And what shall I say to you, my brethren, who have been more immediately connected with him who is now no more with us ? You have been knit together by him in the bonds of Christian fellowship : you have been growing up under his paternal care for many

years. He has nourished and cherished you as a tender father: he has watched over you with anxious care, as a faithful shepherd over his flock. Consider the effects of his labours on different bodies of people who have no immediate connection with us: the numerous societies spread over the three kingdoms in connection with him, and over whom he exercised the care of a father; extend your views to America, and consider the thousands and ten thousands, who have felt the influence of his labours in the course of sixty years; and it seems an extent of usefulness beyond that of which we could imagine any one man capable. But the hand of God has been in it; the providence of God has been over it: and it is evident that he was raised up of God for this great work.

The effects of Mr. Wesley's labours on civil society have been, and still will be very considerable. Not particular parts only of the kingdom have received benefit from the preaching of the Methodists, but society in general must feel some beneficial influence from it. If you consider the whole body of people, usually called Methodists, and the immense numbers who attend their places of worship, and are benefited by them, they will amount to several hundred thousands. These are dispersed through the three kingdoms, and occupy almost every situation in life: they are become more conscientious in all their ways; more sober and regular in their behaviour; more true to their word, and more attentive to every social duty than they were before. They are better husbands and wives, better masters and servants, and better neighbours and friends, than before they heard the preaching of the Methodists. Society in general, therefore, has received benefit from them.

There is another view in which we may consider his usefulness; a view which I should not have noticed but for the sake of a pamphlet just now published; in which it is observed that the Methodists are become so large a body of people, that they ought to attract the notice of government. The Rev. Mr. Wesley was a warm and steady friend to the government; you know that he enforced these principles, as far as he could, on the minds of all that heard him. The Methodists, then, are not only made better citizens, but also better subjects. It is a rule in the society, that all the members of it shall submit themselves to the laws. If it be known that any one acts contrary to this rule, he is put away from the society. Now, if you consider a large body of people, increasing on every side, spreading themselves through the whole kingdom, who are friends to the government, friends in every point of view, and from principle; you will acknowledge, that whatever influence these people may have upon government, it must be friendly, and have a tendency to peace and good order. And if all the people were Methodists, no times of difficulty could come; but if such times should arrive, the more numerous this body of people is, the better it will be for the country.

Thus our dear and aged Father in Christ spent nearly sixty years in the labour and work of the Lord, going about from place to place, convincing gainsayers, comforting mourners, building up and strengthening those that believed: and the Church of God increased daily under his paternal care. Thus he spent his life: and his labours lasted very near to the close of it. Oh, how happy a life to be spent in doing good; to have no attachment but to God and his work; to forsake all for it! And his conduct in private life was conformable to his public character. How many persons have been ready to say, that Mr. Wesley had private ends in view; that he was accumulating money and would die rich. All that knew him, knew how false these assertions were; but all did not know him; thousands however did, who have been witnesses of his integrity and disinterestedness: and thousands of poor have experienced his benevolence. He constantly made a rule of giving all that he had to the poor; this was a favourite practice with him. He attended to the words of Christ: *For as much as ye have done it unto these, ye have done it unto me.* He considered the poor as left upon earth, that the followers of Christ might show their benevolence

to them, as they would to the person of Christ himself, were he upon earth. How many have said, How gladly would I have entertained Christ, had I lived in that country where he appeared, and at the time of his appearance! But he has left the poor behind him, that you may exercise your benevolence towards them, as you would have done to him. Mr. Wesley took a pleasure and delight in doing this, and sometimes left himself so destitute, that he had hardly sufficient to defray his travelling expenses.

I was asked the other day, whether Mr. Wesley had not many meeting-houses and chapels that were his property, and whether he did not die rich? I answered, Sir, Mr. Wesley had not one house of his own in the three kingdoms, neither a private house nor a preaching-house; therefore he did not die rich. What money he had, which was the produce of his books, and what charitable persons gave him to distribute to the poor, he constantly gave away: and he observes, it only went through his hands, but none of it remained with him.

We must naturally suppose that a person so devoted to the work and service of God, and for so long a time, must be an object of divine approbation; and God showed marks of it to him even in his last moments; which was a great comfort both to him and to his numerous friends.

IV. I was called to Mr. Wesley on Friday the 25th of February. When I entered the room he cheerfully said, "Doctor, they are more afraid than hurt." I found great oppression on the brain, a universal tremor, great debility of the whole nervous system, and a fever, which I considered as symptomatic, depending wholly on the state of debility. I wrote for him, but he neither took medicine nor nourishment in a quantity sufficient to be of any use. Friday night and Saturday forenoon, the lethargic symptoms increased. It now appeared to me that the powers of nature were exhausted and I was so certain of his approaching dissolution, that I desired Mr. Bradford to ask him if he had any affairs which he wished to settle; or if there were any person either in London or in the country, whom he desired to see. To these questions he gave no answer. We were all extremely anxious that the lethargy might be removed before his departure hence; and on Saturday evening the means made use of were successful: the lethargic symptoms abated, and on Sunday morning he seemed quite in possession of his faculties, and to feel his situation. His debility, however, increased, and the fever continued, with alternate changes of flushings and paleness. On Monday the 28th, I desired he might be asked if he would have any other physician called in to attend him; but this he absolutely refused. On Tuesday it appeared to me that death was approaching, and in the evening it was very evident. I was with him till past twelve o'clock that night. I asked him before I left the room, if he knew me: he answered Yes, and pressed my hand with all the little strength he had. From this time he gradually sunk, and about twenty minutes before ten on Wednesday morning, the 2d of March, he died, without a struggle or groan, and went to receive the glorious reward of his labours.

From these outlines of the illustrious character of Mr. Wesley, it appears that he did not follow cunningly devised fables, but the evidence of gospel truth. And the candid will perceive, that we have not adopted these opinions merely because Mr. Wesley taught them, but because they appear to us to be true. Let us then, my brethren, hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end; and prove to the world that our doctrines are true, not by reason and argument only, but by our tempers and conduct. Let us be careful to act worthy of our holy vocation, and to persevere to the end in well-doing; we shall then receive, with him who is now gone before us, the promised reward: Which may God of his infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.