

CHAPTER V.

OPINIONS AND DEBATES, &c. ON THE NEW PLAN OF ORDINATION: SEVERAL PARTICULARS OF THE LAST YEARS OF MR. WESLEY'S LIFE; WITH AN ACCOUNT OF HIS DEATH IN MARCH, 1791. HIS LAST WILL, &c.

THE following is part of a letter from one preacher to another, when the report that Mr. Wesley had ordained some of the preachers, first began to be circulated in the societies. It may serve to show us what opinion the uninfected itinerants entertained of this strange business. "Ordination—among Methodists! Amazing indeed! I could not force myself to credit the report which spread here, having not then seen the minutes; but now I can doubt it no longer. And so, we have Methodist parsons of our own! And a new mode of ordination, to be sure—on the Presbyterian plan?—In spite of a million of declarations to the contrary! I am fairly confounded.—Now the ice is broke, let us conjecture a little the probable issue of this new thing in the earth.—You say, we must reason and debate the matter.—Alas! it is too late. Surely it never began in the midst of a multitude of counsellors; and I greatly fear the Son of man was not secretary of state, or not present when the business was brought on and carried, I suppose, with very few dissentient voices.—Who could imagine that this important matter would have

stole into being, and be obtruded upon the body, without their being so much as apprized of it, or consulted on so weighty a point? Who is the father of this monster, so long dreaded by the father of his people, and by most of his sons? Whoever he be, time will prove him a felon to Methodism, and discover his assassinating knife sticking fast in the vitals of its body. This has been my steadfast opinion for years past; and years to come will speak in groans the opprobrious anniversary of our religious madness for gowns and bands.—Will it not sting a man that has been honored by his Lord and Master for many years as a lay-preacher, to have a black-robed boy, flirting away in the exercise of his sacred office, set over him?—If not all, but only a few *favorites* are to be honored, will it not raise a dust, that will go nigh to blind the eyes of the whole body?”—Another old preacher, writing to his friend, delivers his opinion to the following purpose—I wish they had been asleep when they began this business of ordination: it is neither Episcopal nor Presbyterian: but a mere hodge-podge of inconsistencies—though it must be allowed, that Mr. Wesley acted under the influence of others, yet he had some reasons for the step he took, which at the moment appeared to him sufficient to justify it. Perhaps they may not appear in the same light to others, and probably would not to himself, had he not been biassed by persuasion. A part of the reasons of his conduct in this affair, are detailed in the letter testimonial, which Dr. Coke carried over with him to the American Conference. It is addressed, “To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our brethren in North America:” and is conceived in the following terms:

“By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of North America, are totally disjoined from their mother-country, and erected into independent states. The English government has no authority over them either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of Holland. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the provincial assemblies. But no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation, some thousands of the inhabitants of these states desire my advice; and in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

“Lord King’s* account of the primitive church convinced me

* King (Peter,) Lord High Chancellor of England, was descended of a good family of that name in Somersetshire, and son of an eminent grocer and salter in the city of Exeter in Devonshire. He was born at Exeter in 1669, and bred up for some years to his father’s business. But his inclination to learning was so great, that he laid out all the money he could spare in books, and devoted every moment of his leisure hours to study; so that he became an excellent scholar before the world suspected any such thing: and gave the public a proof of his skill in church history, in his *Inquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church*, that flourished within the first three hundred years after Christ. London, 1691, and 1713, in 8vo. This was written with a view to promote the scheme of a comprehension of the Dissenters.

His acquaintance with Mr. Locke, to whom he was related, and who left him his library

many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been *importuned* from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers. But I have still refused: not only for peace' sake; but because I was determined, as little as possible, to violate the established order of the national church to which I belonged.

“But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none, neither any parish ministers. So that for some hundred miles together, there is none either to baptize or to administer the Lord's Supper. Here therefore my scruples are at an end: and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending laborers into the harvest.

“I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke, and Mr. Francis Asbury, to be joint Superintendents over our brethren in North America: as also Richard Whatcoat, and Thomas Vasey, to act as Elders among them, by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper. And I have prepared a liturgy, little differing from that of the Church of England (I think, the best constituted national church in the world) which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's day, in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's day.

“If any one will point out a more rational and scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see, any better method, than that I have taken.

“It has indeed been proposed, to desire the English bishops, to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object, 1. I desired the bishops of London to ordain only one; but could not prevail: 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them now, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us! 4. As our American brethren are now totally

at his death, was of great advantage to him. By his advice, after he had studied some time in Holland, he applied himself to the study of the law; in which profession, his learning and diligence made him soon taken notice of. In the two last parliaments during the reign of King William, and in five parliaments during the reign of Queen Anne, he served as Burgess for Beer Alston in Devonshire. In 1702, he published, without his name, the History of the Apostles' Creed, with critical observations on its several articles; which is highly esteemed. In 1708, he was chosen Recorder of the city of London; and in 1710, was one of the members of the House of Commons at the trial of Dr. Sacheverell. In 1714, he was appointed Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas; and the April following was made one of the Privy Council. In 1715, he was created a Peer, by the title of Lord King, Baron of Ockham in Surry, and appointed Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain; in which post he continued till 1733, when he resigned; and in 1734, died at Ockham in Surry. See Encyclop. Brit.

disentangled both from the State, and from the English Hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best, that they should stand fast in that liberty, wherewith God has so strangely made them free.

JOHN WESLEY."

Before we proceed any further, let us pause a moment ; and inquire, how far the general position laid down in this letter as the ground of Mr. Wesley's proceedings, agrees with his practice of ordination. He tells us, " Lord King's account of the primitive church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain." But if this were even admitted, would it justify Mr. Wesley's practice on this occasion? I apprehend not. Let us suppose, that Mr. Wesley was as good an *Επισκοπος* as any in Europe ; and Dr. Coke a regular presbyter ; the position states that they had the same right to ordain. According to this principle then, Dr. Coke had the same right to ordain Mr. Wesley, that Mr. Wesley had to ordain Dr. Coke ! and consequently the doctor's ordination was null and void to all intents and purposes : or, if the doctor received any right to ordain others, which he had not before, and which the very ceremony of ordination implies, then Mr. Wesley's general position as the ground of his practice, is not true. Thus we see, that Mr. Wesley's principle and practice in this affair directly oppose each other. If his principle was true, his practice was bad : if his practice was good, his principle was false : they cannot both stand good together. It is painful to see him fall into such a dilemma, which we have not seen before in the whole course of his life. When he began the practice of ordaining to the ministry, his brother, Mr. Charles, exclaimed,

"T was age that made the breach, not he."

And if we add to this, the influence others had over him in this affair, it is perhaps, the best apology that can be made for his conduct.

In this business, Dr. Coke has reasoned in a manner much more consistent with his general practice, than Mr. Wesley ; which has not indeed often been the case, and is therefore the more worthy of notice. He tells Mr. Wesley, in the letter above transcribed, "The more I consider the subject, the more expedient it appears to me, that the power of ordaining others, should be received by me from you, by the imposition of your hands." Among other reasons for this expediency, are the following : 1. "I may want all the influence in America, you can throw into my scale."—2. "An authority formally received from you, will be fully admitted by the people."—And 3. "My exercising the office of ordination without that formal authority may be disputed." Now all this is intelligible and clear ; and I am confident these reasons would have satisfied any man in similar circumstances,

who had considered ordination as a mere stalking horse to gain influence and dominion.

Soon after the ordination, Dr. Coke, with his two companions, sailed for America; where they arrived in time to meet the American Conference held at Baltimore. Here the doctor opened his commission, and consecrated Mr. Asbury a bishop, and gave the societies formed by the preachers on that continent, a new name, calling them, "The Methodist Episcopal Church in America." He preached a sermon on this occasion, which was afterwards printed, and in which he labors to defend this new order of things. He begins this defence by the most severe censures on the clergy, and on the English Hierarchy. It has been supposed that the greatest part of what the doctor here published as his own, was written by Mr. Wesley. But I shall not easily believe, that these censures proceeded from his pen. It would answer no valuable purpose to transcribe them; but it may to observe the very striking difference between the proceedings at the commencement of Methodism, and the practice now adopted—"We are not Seceders," says Mr. Wesley, in the minutes of Conference. "nor do we bear any resemblance to them. We set out upon quite opposite principles. The Seceders laid the very foundation of their work, in judging and condemning others: we laid the foundation of our work, in judging and condemning ourselves. They begin every where, with showing their hearers, how fallen the church and ministers are: we begin every where, with showing our hearers, how fallen they are themselves."—Dr. Coke, in laying the foundation of his new church in America, adopted the principles and practice, in this respect, of the Seceders, and quitted those of the old Methodists. He tells Mr. Wesley, some time after, in a letter from Ireland, that he would as soon commit adultery as preach publicly against the church. But I must say this of the doctor, that, with respect to adultery I think him very innocent, but in bringing railing accusations against others, I think him very guilty. And it is very probable, that the Methodist Episcopal Church now forming in England, will have the same foundation as it had in America: the founders of it begin with judging and condemning others who dissent from them, and exalting themselves: some very glaring instances of which have already appeared. I leave others to judge of the consequences.

Dr. Coke, in his ordination sermon, and also in his congratulatory Address to general Washington, gives us to understand how much he is enraptured with the American Constitution; so far that he thinks it is fit to be an exemplar to all other nations.—But I leave the doctor's politics, to consider the defence he gives us of his new scheme of ordination.

"But what right have you to ordain?" To this question the doctor answers, "The same right as most of the reformed churches in Christendom: our ordination in its lowest view, being equal to any of

the Presbyterian, as originating with three presbyters of the Church of England."

It is possible the doctor might believe himself, when he wrote this sentence. But is it true, that the presence of three presbyters in a private chamber, is the only requisite essentially necessary to give validity to an ordination among the Presbyterians? I apprehend not. Nor do I know any denomination of Dissenters, among whom such a secret ordination would be deemed valid.

"But what right have you to exercise the episcopal office?" To this the doctor answers, "To me the most manifest and clear. God has been pleased, by Mr. Wesley, to raise up in America and Europe, a numerous society well known by the name of Methodists. The whole body have invariably esteemed this man as their chief pastor under Christ. He has always appointed their religious officers from the highest to the lowest, by himself or his delegate. And we are fully persuaded, there is no church-office which he judges expedient for the welfare of the people intrusted to his charge, but, as essential to his station, he has a power to ordain. After long deliberation, he saw it his duty to form his society in America into an independent church; but he loved the most excellent liturgy of the Church of England; he loved its rites and ceremonies, and therefore adopted them in most instances in the present case."

It is not easy to make observations on an argument like this, without falling into levity on the one hand; or too great severity on the other. Brevity, therefore, will be the best security. The doctor states the matter thus, "He (Mr. Wesley) has always appointed the religious officers from the highest to the lowest (among the Methodists) by himself or his delegate: and we are fully persuaded, there is no church-office which he judges expedient for the people, but as essential to his station he has power to ordain."—Now, if these words contain anything like an argument, they must mean, that the officers whom Mr. Wesley had always appointed, were church-officers; and consequently, that his societies were churches. If this be not the meaning, then the words which go before, have no immediate connexion with the conclusion drawn from them. The premises and the conclusion, would speak of two things totally different, and therefore the one could not be inferred from the other. But the minutes of Conference, and Mr. Wesley's other writings testify in the most express manner, that the Methodist societies were not churches: that the appointments and rules he made, were nothing more than prudential regulations, which he often changed as circumstances altered. It cannot, therefore, be argued, that because Mr. Wesley had always exercised the power of making prudential regulations for the government of his societies, he had a right to ordain any church-office he might judge expedient; which is a thing quite different from what he had hitherto attempted to do; and consequently no right to do it, could arise out of his former practice.

But there is another view of this argument, which makes it appear still more absurd. Whatever power Mr. Wesley had always exercised over the Methodist societies, it was no proof of his right. Power and right are two things. Power does not imply right: otherwise, the power of speech would imply a right to speak treason: the power of deceiving, and robbing, would imply a right so to do! Whatever right, therefore, Mr. Wesley might have for making prudential regulations for the societies, it cannot be proved from his power. But Dr. Coke here brings forward Mr. Wesley's power, and his former practice in the exercise of it, as a proof that he has a right to do what he may think expedient for the good of the people. Now, if a man in common life were to plead his former practice as a proof that he had a right to do what he might judge expedient in future, and should act upon this principle, I suppose he would soon be sent to Bedlam or to Newgate.

I shall only take notice of one article more in the doctor's sermon. "Besides," says he, "in addition to this, we have every qualification for an Episcopal church, which that of Alexandria, a church of no small note in the primitive times, possessed for two hundred years.—Our bishops or superintendents, as we rather call them, having been elected, or received by the suffrage of the whole body of our ministers through the continent, assembled in general Conference."

Now the truth of the fact is this; that the ordinations among the Methodists, bear no resemblance to the ordinations in any primitive church; either that of Alexandria, or any other, when deemed regular. Lord King, on whose authority Mr. Wesley seems to rest his cause, tells us, "At the ordinations of the clergy, the whole body of the people were present. So an African Synod, held 258, determined, 'That the ordination of ministers ought to be done with the knowledge, and in the presence of the people; that the people being present, either the crimes of the wicked may be detected, or the merits of the good declared; and so the ordination may be just and lawful, being approved by the suffrage of all.'"* To the same purpose speaks *Clemens Romanus*; an Apostolic man, who having been acquainted with the Apostles themselves, knew their customs in all the churches. He shows us in his first epistle to the Corinthians, that the custom was to ordain, *συνευδοκησασθης τῆς ἐκκλησιας πασης*, with the consent of the whole church. So Origen says, in his 8th Homily on Leviticus, *requiri in ordinando sacerdote, præsentiam populi*: † "in ordaining a minister the presence of the people is necessary." The testimonies of the ancient writers on this head are very numerous, and might easily

* The words of Cyprian are, "Ordinationes Sacerdotales, non nisi sub populi assistentis conscientia fieri oportere, ut plebe præsentate, vel detegantur malorum crimina, vel bonorum merita prædicentur, et sit ordinatio justa et legitima, quæ omnium suffragio et iudicio fuerit examinata." Thus quoted by Lord King, p. 24, edit. 1713.

† See the note on the passage of *Clemens Rom.* above mentioned, in Le Clerc's edition of Cotelerius, tom. i. page 173.

be produced, but the authorities already mentioned will hardly be disputed. It is indeed evident from the Apostolical Constitutions, lib. 8, cap. 4, and other ancient testimonies, that in the first ages of the church, the people generally chose their own ministers; and in every case of an election, their consent and approbation was essentially necessary. And this practice continued, even at Rome, in the election of a pope till the beginning of the twelfth century, when Innocent II. changed the ancient custom; though I cannot think him quite innocent in so doing.

In direct opposition to the practice of the primitive church, the ordinations among the Methodists were performed in secret. The people were not assembled: they were not consulted; nor even so much as acquainted that ministers were to be ordained among the Methodists as their proper pastors. The whole was performed by an arbitrary power, in the exercise of which, no regard was had to the rights of the people, as having either judgment or choice in the matter.—But Dr. Coke tells us, they have the same qualifications for an Episcopal Church, which the Church of Alexandria possessed. “Our bishops,” says he, “having been elected, or received, by the suffrage of the whole body of our ministers through the continent, assembled in general Conference.”—There were but two bishops, so called, Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury. The doctor was ordained (or consecrated, if the reader choose) secretly in England, and received orders to ordain Mr. Asbury in America. Now these surely were not elected, in any sense whatever, either by the preachers or people. But, “They were elected or received.”—When a writer thus links words together of different import, as though the meaning amounted to the same thing, we have just cause to suspect that he intends to deceive us, and lead us into a false notion of the subject he is discussing. Received perhaps they might be, under a system of arbitrary government, which leaves no alternative to the people, nor to many of the preachers, but that of passive obedience, or to go about their business and quit the connexion. But their being received in any way, is nothing to the point in hand. It is indeed manifest, that this whole affair, from first to last, bears no resemblance to the mode of electing and ordaining ministers in the purer ages of the primitive church.

As ordination among the Methodists forms a remarkable era in their history, it deserves to be fully examined, as to its validity and propriety. But before we proceed any further, let us see what Mr. Charles Wesley has said on the subject. In his letter to Dr. Chandler,* in the beginning of the year 1785, he says, “I can scarcely yet believe it, that in his eighty-second year, my brother, my old intimate friend and companion, should have assumed the Episcopal character: ordained elders, consecrated a bishop, and sent him over to ordain our

* One of the American bishops, ordained in England.

lay-preachers in America ! I was then in Bristol, at his elbow : yet he never gave me the least hint of his intention. How was he surprized into so rash an action ? He certainly persuaded himself that it was right.

“ Lord Mansfield told me last year, that ordination was separation. This my brother does not, and will not see : or, that he has renounced the principles, and practice of his whole life ; that he has acted contrary to all his declarations, protestations, and writings ; robbed his friends of their boastings ; realized the Nag’s-head ordination ; and left an indelible blot on his name, as long as it shall be remembered.

In August, Mr. Charles took courage, and wrote to his brother on the subject. “ I have been reading,” says he, “ over again and again, your reasons against a separation—and entreat you in the name of God, and for Christ’s sake, to read them again yourself with previous prayer ; and stop, and proceed no further till you receive an answer to your inquiry, ‘ Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do ? ’—Every word of your eleven pages deserves the deepest consideration : not to mention my testimony and hymns. Only the seventh, I could wish you to read—as a prophecy, which I pray God may never come to pass.

“ Near thirty years since then, you have stood against the impudent solicitations of your preachers, who have scarcely at last prevailed. I was your natural ally, and your faithful friend : and while you continued faithful to yourself we two could chase a thousand. If they had not divided us, they could never have overcome you. But when once you began ordaining for America, I knew, and you knew, that your preachers here would never rest, till you ordained them. You told me, ‘ They would separate by and by.’ The doctor tells us the same. His ‘ Methodist Episcopal Church at Baltimore,’ was intended to beget a ‘ Methodist Episcopal Church ’ here. You know he comes armed with your authority to make us all Dissenters. One of your sons assured me, that not a preacher in London would refuse orders from the doctor. It is evident, that all seek their own, and prefer their own interest to your honor ; which not one of them scruples to sacrifice, to his own ambition. Alas ! what trouble are you preparing for yourself, as well as for me, and for your oldest, and truest, and best friends ! Before you have quite broken down the bridge, stop, and consider ! If your sons have no regard for you, have some regard for yourself. Go to your grave in peace ; at least suffer me to go first, before this ruin be under your hand. So much, I think, you owe to my father, to my brother, and to me, as to stay till I am taken from the evil. I am on the brink of the grave, do not push me in ; or imbitter my last moments. Let us not leave an indelible blot upon our memory, but let us leave behind us, the name and character of honest men.”

Mr. John Wesley immediately answered his brother’s letter. The

answer is dated Plymouth,* August 19; in which he says, "I will tell you my thoughts with all simplicity, and wait for better information. If you agree with me, well: if not, we can, as Mr. Whitefield used to say, agree to disagree.

"For these forty years I have been in doubt concerning that question, 'What obedience is due to heathenish priests, and mitred infidels.' I have from time to time proposed my doubts to the most pious and sensible clergymen I knew. But they gave me no satisfaction: rather they seemed to be puzzled as well as me. Some obedience I always paid to the bishops, in obedience to the laws of the land. But I cannot see, that I am under any obligation to obey them, further than those laws require.

"It is in obedience to those laws, that I have never exercised in England, the power which I believe God has given me. I firmly believe, I am a scriptural *Επίσκοπος*, as much as any man in England, or in Europe: for the uninterrupted succession, I know to be a fable, which no man ever did or can prove. But this does in no wise interfere with my remaining in the Church of England: from which I have no more desire to separate, than I had fifty years ago. I still attend all the ordinances of the church, at all opportunities. And I constantly and earnestly desire all that are connected with me, so to do. When Mr. Smyth pressed us to 'separate from the church,' he meant, go to church no more. And this was what I meant seven and twenty years ago, when I persuaded our brethren, 'not to separate from the church.' But here another question occurs, 'What is the Church of England?' It is not all the people of England. Papists and Dissenters are no part thereof. It is not all the people of England, except Papists and Dissenters. Then we should have a glorious church indeed? 'No: according to our twentieth Article, a particular church is, a congregation of faithful people (*Cætus credentium*, the words of our Latin edition) among whom the word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered.' Here is a true logical definition, containing both the essence and the properties of a church. What then, according to this definition, is the Church of England? Does it mean, 'all the believers in England (except Papists and Dissenters) who have the word of God, and the sacraments duly administered among them?' I fear this does not come up to your idea of the Church of England. Well, what more do you include in that phrase? 'Why, all the believers that adhere to the doctrine and discipline established by the convocation under Queen Elizabeth.' Nay, that discipline is well nigh vanished away, and the doctrine both you and I adhere to.

"All those reasons, against a separation from the church in this sense, I subscribe to still. What then are you frightened at? I no

*The printed copy of this letter is dated Plymouth Dock. *Arminian Mag.* vol. ix. page 50.

more separate from it now, than I did in the year 1758. I submit still, though sometimes with a doubting conscience, to mitred infidels. I do indeed vary from them in some points of doctrine, and in some points of discipline: by preaching abroad, for instance, by praying extempore, and by forming societies. But not a hair's breadth further than I believe to be meet, right, and my bounden duty. I walk still by the same rule I have done for between forty and fifty years. I do nothing rashly. It is not likely I should. The high-day of my blood is over. If you will go hand in hand with me, do. But do not hinder me, if you will not help. Perhaps, if you had kept close to me, I might have done better. However, with or without help I creep on. And as I have been hitherto, so I trust I shall always be,

Your affectionate friend and brother."

In September Mr. Charles Wesley replied to his brother's letter. "I will tell you my thoughts," says he, "with the same simplicity. There is no danger of our quarrelling, for the second blow makes the quarrel; and you are the last man upon earth I would wish to quarrel with. That juvenile line of mine, 'Heathenish priests and mitred infidels,' I disown, renounce, and with shame recant. I never knew of more than one mitred infidel; and for him I took Mr. Law's word.

"I do not understand what 'obedience to the bishops' you dread. They have let us alone, and left us to act just as we pleased for these fifty years. At present, some of them are quite friendly towards us, particularly towards you. The churches are all open to you: and never could there be less pretence for a separation.

"That you are a scriptural *Επισκοπος*, or overseer, I do not dispute. And so is every minister who has the cure of souls. Neither need we dispute whether the uninterrupted succession be a fable, as you believe, or real, as I believe? or whether lord King be right or wrong? Your definition of the Church of England, is the same in prose, with mine in verse.—You write, 'All those reasons against a separation from the church, I subscribe to still. What then are you frightened at? I no more separate from it, than I did in the year 1758. I submit still to its bishops. I do indeed vary from them in some points of discipline, by preaching abroad, by praying extempore, and by forming societies, (might you not add, and by ordaining?) I still walk by the same rule I have done for between forty and fifty years. I do nothing rashly.'—If I could prove your actual separation, I would not; neither wish to see it proved by any other. But do you not allow, that the doctor has separated? Do you not know and approve of his avowed design and resolution, to get all the Methodists in the three kingdoms, formed into a distinct compact body, a new Episcopal church of his own? Have you seen his ordination sermon? Is the high-day of his blood over? Does he do nothing

rashly? Have you not made yourself the author of all his actions? I need not remind you, *Qui facit per alium, facit per se.*

“I must not leave unanswered your surprizing question, ‘What then are you frightened at?’ At the doctor’s rashness; and your supporting him in his ambitious pursuits—at an approaching schism, as causeless and unprovoked as the American rebellion—at your own eternal disgrace, and all those frightful evils which your reasons describe.—‘If you will go hand in hand with me, do’—I do go, or rather creep on in the old way in which we set out, and trust to continue in it till I finish my course.—‘Perhaps, if you had kept close to me I might have done better’—When you took that fatal step at Bristol, I kept as close to you as close could be; for I was all the time at your elbow. You might certainly have done better, if you had taken me in to be one of your council.

“I thank you, for your intention to remain my friend. Herein my heart is, as your heart. Whom God hath joined, let not man put asunder. We have taken each other for better for worse, till death do us—part? no: but eternally unite. Therefore, in the love which never faileth, I am,

Your affectionate friend and brother,

C. WESLEY.”

Mr. Charles Wesley has spoken chiefly of the impropriety of the step his brother had taken in ordaining Dr. Coke and others in the character of a bishop: but it will be proper to make an observation or two, on the validity of his proceeding. The general position he lays down in justification of what he had done, is, that “bishops and presbyters were the same order, and had the *same right* to ordain.” Upon this principle he ordained, or consecrated Dr. Coke. Now, the very act of ordaining implies a superior right, or a superior authority. If it be allowed, that Mr. Wesley had a superior right to ordain the doctor, then the general position is false: if it be said, he had a superior authority, but no superior right, then it will follow that Mr. Wesley exercised superior authority without any right so to do; which is the very thing for which he is blamed. In both cases the ordination must be void, and of no effect.—But according to lord King, the general position is not strictly or universally true. From a comparison of various testimonies of ancient church writers, he draws this conclusion, That the presbyters were different from the bishops *in gradu*, or *in degree*; but they were equal to them *in ordine*, or, in order.* He tells us, that a bishop was the proper pastor or incumbent of the church over which he presided; and that the presbyters in that church were only his assistants or curates, and therefore could do nothing in his church without his direction or permission—but whatever superiority a bishop had over the presbyters of his own church, it was solemnly and publicly conferred upon him,

* Enquiry into the Constitution, &c. of the Primitive Church, page 54, et sequent.

by the general suffrage of the presbyters and people over whom he was to preside. I suppose, if any presbyter had assumed the Episcopal character and authority without such choice and public ordination to his office, he would have been excommunicated by the other churches. But Mr. Wesley was never publicly elected by any presbyters and people to the office of a bishop; nor ever consecrated to it: which made his brother Charles say,

“So easily are Bishops made,
By man’s or woman’s whim;
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
But who laid hands on him?”

The answer is, nobody. His Episcopal authority, was a mere gratuitous assumption of power to himself, contrary to the usage of every church, ancient or modern, where the order of bishops has been admitted. There is no precedent either in the New Testament, or in church-history, that can justify his proceeding in this affair. And as Mr. Wesley had received no right to exercise Episcopal authority, either from any bishops, presbyters, or people, he certainly could not convey any right to others: his ordinations therefore, are spurious, and of no validity.

Nor can Mr. Wesley’s practice of ordaining be justified by those reasons which Presbyterians adduce in favor of their own method of ordaining to the ministry: for Mr. Wesley ordained, not as a presbyter, but as a bishop! his ordinations therefore were not Presbyterian, nor will the arguments for Presbyterian ordination apply to them.

Let us review the arguments on this subject, reduced to a few propositions: 1. Mr. Wesley, in ordaining or consecrating Dr. Coke a bishop, acted in direct contradiction to the principle on which he attempts to defend his practice of ordaining at all. 2. As Mr. Wesley was never elected or chosen by any church to be a bishop, nor ever consecrated to the office, either by bishops or presbyters, he had not the shadow of right to exercise Episcopal authority in ordaining others, according to the rules of any church, ancient or modern. 3. Had he possessed the proper right to ordain, either as a bishop or presbyter (though he never did ordain as a presbyter) yet his ordinations being done in secret, were rendered thereby invalid and of no effect, according to the established order of the primitive church, and of all Protestant churches. 4. The consequence from the whole is, that the persons whom Mr. Wesley ordained, have no more right to exercise the ministerial functions than they had before he laid hands upon them.

A scheme of ordination so full of confusion and absurdity, as that among the Methodists, can surely never filiate itself on Mr. Wesley: it must have proceeded from some mere *chaotic* brain, where wild confusion reigns. Nor can I easily believe, that Mr. Wesley would ever have

adopted so mis-shapen a brat, had not his clear perception of things been rendered feeble and dim, by flattery, persuasion, and age.

But I willingly quit a subject which is very unpleasant; and most sincerely wish, that both the practice of ordaining among the Methodists, and the memory of it were buried in oblivion. And were the practice, which in my view of it is pregnant with mischief, totally to cease, never to be revived, I would tear the memory of it from these pages, as soon as they are printed.

The following letter written to a travelling preacher in December, 1786, may show us Mr. Wesley's fatherly care over the preachers; and at the same time give us an example of his delicate manner of conveying reproof where he saw it necessary. This delicacy will appear the more honorable to him when we consider, that he was in the eighty-fourth year of his age: a period when those who arrive at it, commonly lose the delicate attention to the feelings of others, which they possessed in middle life; and become authoritative and morose. This indeed is very natural, and arises, perhaps, from the difference of their situations. A man of eighty-four, often finds, that he is considered as a piece of old worn-out furniture, thrown by as useless, and feels his own personal happiness very little connected with the opinions or affairs of mankind: whereas, a man in the midst of life finds, that the delicate attention he pays to the feelings of others, is daily reflected back upon him in a thousand ways, and contributes largely to an increase of his personal happiness. Mr. Wesley did not labor under this infirmity of old age.—“Dear S—,” says he, “you know I love you: ever since I knew you, I have neglected no way of showing it, that was in my power. And you know I esteem you for your zeal and activity, for your love of discipline, and for your gifts which God has given you: particularly, quickness of apprehension, and readiness of utterance, especially in preaching and prayer.

“Therefore I am jealous over you, lest you should lose any of the things you have gained, and not receive a full reward: and the more so, because I fear you are wanting in other respects. And who will venture to tell you so? You will scarce know how to bear it from me, unless you lift up your heart to God. If you do this, I may venture to tell you what I fear, without any further preface. I fear you think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Do you not think too highly of your own understanding? of your gifts? particularly in preaching, as if you were the very best preacher in the connexion? of your own importance? as if the work of God here or there, depended wholly or mainly on you? and of your popularity? which I have found to my surprise far less, even in L——, than I expected.

“May not this be much owing to your want of brotherly love? With what measure you mete, men will measure to you again. I

fear there is something unloving in your spirit: something not only of roughness, but of harshness, yea of sourness! Are you not likewise extremely open to prejudice, and not easy to be cured of it? So that whenever you are prejudiced, you commence bitter, implacable, unmerciful? If so, that people are prejudiced against you, is both the natural and judicial consequence.

"I am afraid lest your want of love to your neighbors, should spring from your want of love to God: from want of thankfulness. I have sometimes heard you speak, in a manner that made me tremble: indeed, in terms that not only a weak Christian, but even a serious Deist would scruple to use.

"I fear, you greatly want evenness of temper. Are you not generally too high, or too low? Are not all your passions too lively? your anger in particular? Is it not too soon raised: and is it not often too impetuous? causing you to be violent, boisterous—bearing down all before you?

"Now—lift up your heart to God, or you will be angry at *me*. But I must go a little further. I fear you are greatly wanting in the government of your tongue. You are not exact in relating facts. I have observed it myself. You are apt to amplify: to enlarge a little beyond the truth. You cannot imagine, if others observe this, how it will affect your reputation.

"But I fear you are more wanting in another respect. That you give a loose to your tongue when you are angry: that your language then, is not only sharp, but coarse, and ill-bred—If this be so, the people will not bear it. They will not take it either from *you*, or *me*," &c.

Mr. Wesley, notwithstanding his advanced age, continued his journeys and labors with the same punctuality, though not perhaps with the same vigor as usual. He still rose at four in the morning, and apportioned his employments to the different parts of the day. It was a fixed practical rule with him, which he observed to the very end of life, that a man who wishes to avoid temptation, and all foolish and hurtful habits, should be constantly employed: and generally, have a certain portion of work to do within a limited time. This, doubtless, is a good practical rule, and will save those whose time is at their own disposal, if they have resolution to follow it, from innumerable inconveniences.—In 1787, he visited Ireland: and passing through the north of that kingdom, called upon a respectable clergyman, whose kind attentions in his sickness at Tandragee had laid him under obligations. After he had quitted this agreeable family, he sent the clergyman the following letter.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR,

"I have obligations to you on many accounts, from the time I first saw you: particularly for the kind concern you showed, when I was ill at Tandragee. These have increased upon me every time that I

have since had the pleasure of waiting upon you. Permit me, sir, to speak without reserve. Esteem was added to my affectionate regard, when I saw the uncommon pains you took with the flock committed to your care; as also, when I observed the remarkably serious manner wherein you read prayers in your family. Many years have passed since that time; many more than I am likely to see under the sun. But before I go hence, I would fain give you one instance of my sincere regard: the rather, because I can scarce expect to see you again till we meet in a better world. But it is difficult for me to do it, as I feel myself inferior to you in so many respects. Yet permit me to ask a strange question, Is your soul as much alive to God as it was once? Have you not suffered loss from your relations or acquaintance, that are sensible and agreeable men, but not incumbered with religion? Some of them, perhaps, as free from the very form, as from the power of it? O sir, if you lose any of the things which you have wrought, who can make you amends for that loss? If you do not receive a full reward, what equivalent can you gain? I was pained, even at your hospitable table, in the midst of those I loved so well. We did not *begin* and *close* the meal, in the same manner you did ten years ago! You was then contrary to almost universal custom, unfashionably serious in asking a blessing and returning thanks. I know many would blame you for it: but surely the Lord said, 'Servant of God, well done!' Wishing you, and your lovely family every blessing,

I am,

Rev. and dear sir,

Your obliged and affectionate brother and servant,

J. W."

In February, 1788, Mr. Wesley observes, "I took a solemn leave of the congregation at West street, by applying once more what I had enforced fifty years before, 'By grace ye are saved through faith.' The next evening we had a very numerous congregation at the New Chapel, to whom I declared the whole counsel of God. I seemed now to have finished my work in London. If I see it again, well: if not, I pray God to raise up others, that will be more faithful and more successful in his work."

On his birth-day this year, he makes the following observations, "I this day enter on my eighty-fifth year. And what cause have I to praise God, as for a thousand spiritual blessings, so for bodily blessings also! How little have I suffered yet, by the rush of numerous years! It is true, I am not so agile as I was in times past: I do not run or walk so fast as I did. My sight is a little decayed. My left eye is grown dim, and hardly serves me to read. I have daily some pain in the ball of my right eye, as also in my right temple (occasioned by a blow received some time since) and in my right shoulder and arm, which I impute partly to a sprain, and partly to the rheu-

matism. I find likewise some decay in my memory, with regard to names and things lately past: but not at all with regard to what I have read or heard, twenty, forty, or sixty years ago. Neither do I find any decay in my hearing, smell, taste, or appetite (though I want but a third part of the food I once did,) nor do I feel any such thing as weariness, either in travelling or preaching. And I am not conscious of any decay in writing sermons, which I do as readily, and I believe, as correctly as ever.

“To what can I impute this, that I am as I am? First, doubtless, to the power of God, fitting me for the work to which I am called, as long as he pleases to continue me therein: and next, subordinately to this, to the prayers of his children—May we not impute it, as inferior means, 1. To my constant exercise and change of air? 2. To my never having lost a night’s sleep, sick or well, at land or sea, since I was born? 3. To my having sleep at command, so that whenever I feel myself almost wore out, I call it, and it comes day or night? 4. To my having constantly, for about sixty years, risen at four in the morning? 5. To my constant preaching at five in the morning, for above fifty years? 6. To my having had so little pain in my life, and so little sorrow or anxious care?—Even now, though I find pain daily in my eye, temple, or arm, yet it is never violent, and seldom lasts many minutes at a time.

“Whether or not this is sent to give me warning, that I am shortly to quit this tabernacle, I do not know: but be it one way or the other, I have only to say,

My remnant of days
I spend to his praise,
Who died the whole world to redeem:
Be they many or few,
My days are his due,
And they all are devoted to Him!”

December 31, 1788, Mr. Wesley makes the following remarks. “A numerous company concluded the old year with a very solemn watch-night. Hitherto God hath helped us: and we neither see nor feel any of those terrible judgments, which it was said, God would pour out upon the nation, about the conclusion of the year—For near seventy years I have observed, that before any war or public calamity England abounds with prophets, who confidently foretell many terrible things. They generally believe themselves; but are carried away with a vain imagination. And they are seldom undeceived even by the failure of their predictions, but still believe they will be fulfilled some time or other.”

January 1, 1789. He says, “If this is to be the last year of my life, according to some of those prophecies, I hope it will be the best. I am not careful about it, but heartily receive the advice of the Angel in Milton, ‘How well is thine; how long permit to Heaven.’”

Notwithstanding his advanced age, and increasing infirmities, Mr. Wesley this year visited Ireland; and travelled through various parts of that kingdom, preaching and meeting the societies as usual.

The following paper is without date; and though I suppose it was written a few years before this period, yet I shall here insert it, omitting an observation or two on the Hutchinsonian philosophy.

“TO THE REVEREND DEAN D——.

“REV. SIR,

“When Dr. Bentley published his Greek Testament one remarked, ‘Pity but he would publish the Old: then we should have two New Testaments.’—It is done: those who receive Mr. Hutchinson’s emendations, certainly have two New Testaments! But I stumble at the threshold. Can we believe, that God left his whole Church so ignorant of the Scripture till yesterday? And if He was pleased to reveal the sense of it *now*, to whom may we suppose He would reveal it? ‘All Scripture,’ says Kempis, ‘must be understood by the same spirit whereby it was written.’ And a greater than he says, ‘Them that are *meek* will He guide in judgment, and them that are gentle will He learn his way.’ But was Mr. H—— eminently meek and gentle!

“However, in order to learn all I could from his works, after first consulting them, I carefully read over Mr. Spearman, Mr. Jones’ ingenious book, and the Glasgow Abridgment. I read the last with Mr. Thomas Walsh,* the best Hebræan I ever knew. I never asked him the meaning of an Hebrew word, but he would immediately tell me, how often it occurred in the Bible, and what it meant in each place! We then both observed, that Mr. Hutchinson’s whole scheme is built upon etymologies: the most uncertain foundation in the world, and the least to be depended upon: we observed, secondly, that if the points be allowed, all his building sinks at once: and thirdly, that setting them aside, many of his etymologies are forced, and unnatural. He frequently, to find the etymology of one word, squeezes two *radices* together: a liberty never to be taken, where a word may fairly be derived from a single *radix*.

“But may I hazard a few words on the points. Mr. H—— affirms, they were invented by the Masorites,† only thirteen or fourteen hun-

* Mr. Thomas Walsh was one of the lay-preachers: an itinerant.

† Masora, is a term in the Jewish theology, signifying a work on the Bible; performed by several learned Rabbins, to secure it from any alterations which might otherwise happen. In order to this, the Jews had recourse to a canon, which they judged infallible; which was, tradition. Accordingly they say, that when God gave the Law to Moses, he taught him first, the true reading of it; and secondly, its true interpretation; and that both these were handed down by oral tradition, from generation to generation, till at length they were committed to writing. The former of these, that is, the true reading, is the subject of the Masora; the latter, or true interpretation, that of the Mishna and Gemara.

According to Elias Levita, the authors of the Masora were the Jews of a famous school at Tiberias, about five hundred years after Christ, who composed, or at least began the Masora; whence they are called Masorites and Masoretic Doctors. Aben Ezra makes

dred years ago, in order to destroy the sense of Scripture. I doubt this; who can prove it? Who can prove they were not as old as Ezra; if not co-eval with the language? Let any one give a fair reading, only to what Dr. Cornelius Bayley has offered, in the preface to his Hebrew Grammar, and he will be as sick of reading without points, as I am; at least, till he can answer the doctor's arguments, he will not be so positive upon the question.

"As to his Theology, I first stumble at his profuse encomiums on the Hebrew language. But is it not the language which God himself used? And is not Greek too, the language which God himself used? And did He not use it in delivering to man a far more perfect dispensation than that He delivered in Hebrew? Who can deny it? And does not even this consideration give us reason at least to suspect, that the Greek language is as far superior to the Hebrew, as the New Testament is to the Old? And indeed, if we set prejudice aside, and consider both, with attention and candor, can we help seeing, that the Greek excels the Hebrew, as much in beauty and strength, as it does in copiousness? I suppose no one from the beginning of the world wrote better Hebrew than Moses. But does not the language of St. Paul excel the language of Moses, as much as the knowledge of St. Paul excelled his.

"I speak this, even on supposition that you read the Hebrew, as I believe Ezra, if not Moses did, with points. For if we read it in the modern way without points, I appeal to every competent judge, whether it be not the most equivocal."—The rest I have not been able to find."

About this time, one or two of the preachers, and a few societies, were harassed by justices of the peace, under a pretence entirely new.

The Methodists were told, "You profess yourselves members of the Church of England; therefore your licenses are good for nothing; nor can you as members of the church receive any benefit from the Act of Toleration." Mr. Wesley saw, that if the proceedings on this subtle distinction were extended over the nation, the Methodists must either profess themselves Dissenters, or suffer infinite trouble. Notwithstanding his ordinations, he has borne ample testimony, that he did not wish the people to alter their relative situation to the national

them the authors of the accents and points which serve for vowels in the Hebrew text, as we now find it.

The age of the Masorites has been much disputed. Archbishop Usher places them before Jerom; Capel, at the end of the fifth century; father Morin, in the tenth century. Basnage says, that they were not a society, but a succession of men. It is urged that there were Masorites from the time of Ezra and the men of the great Synagogue, to about the year of Christ 1030; and that Ben Asher, and Ben Naphtali, who were the best of the profession, and who, according to Basnage, were the inventors of the Masora, flourished at this time. Each of these published a copy of the Hebrew text, as correct, says Dr. Prideaux, as they could make it. The Eastern Jews have followed that of Ben Naphtali, and the Western, that of Ben Asher; and all that has been done since is to copy after them, without making any more corrections, or Masoretical criticisms.

church, &c. and yet he wished them to be effectually relieved from this embarrassment. He stated the case to a member of parliament, a real friend to liberty, hoping the legislature might be prevailed upon to interpose, and free the Methodists from the penalties of the Conventicle Act. There is not much reason to doubt but this privilege would have been obtained, with a little perseverance, had not the new arrangements in the economy of Methodism so manifestly tended to draw the whole body of preachers and people into a new and powerful party in the nation, the consequences of which appear to many of a very doubtful complexion. Mr. Wesley states the case thus—"Last month a few poor people met together in Lincolnshire, to pray, and to praise God, in a friend's house: there was no preaching at all. Two neighboring justices fined the man of the house twenty pounds. I suppose he was not worth twenty shillings.—Upon this, his household goods were distrained and sold to pay the fine. He appealed to the Quarter-Sessions: but all the justices averred, 'The Methodists could have no relief from the Act of Toleration, because they went to church; and that so long as they did so, the Conventicle Act should be executed upon them.'

"Last Sunday, when one of our preachers was beginning to speak to a quiet congregation, a neighboring justice sent a constable to seize him, though he was licensed; and would not release him till he had paid twenty pounds—telling him, his license was good for nothing, 'because he was a Churchman.'

"Now, sir, what can the Methodists do? They are liable to be ruined by the Conventicle Act, and they have no relief from the Act of Toleration! If this is not oppression, what is? Where then is English liberty? The liberty of Christians, yea of every rational creature? who as such, has a right to worship God according to his own conscience. But waving the question of right and wrong, what prudence is there in oppressing such a body of loyal subjects? If these good magistrates could drive them, not only out of Somersetshire, but out of England, who would be gainers thereby? Not his Majesty, whom we honor and love; not his ministers, whom we love and serve for his sake. Do they wish to throw away so many thousand friends? who are now bound to them by stronger ties than that of interest—If you will speak a word to Mr. Pitt on that head, you will oblige," &c.

The paper from which the above is taken, is only a copy: and I have some doubt, whether Somersetshire be not inserted for Lincolnshire before mentioned in the same paper. However this may be, Mr. Wesley wrote to the bishop of ——— the following letter a few months before the above was written.

"MY LORD,

"I am a dying man, having already one foot in the grave. Humanly speaking, I cannot long creep upon the earth, being now nearer

ninety than eighty years of age. But I cannot die in peace, before I have discharged this office of christian love to your lordship. I write without ceremony, as neither hoping nor fearing any thing from your lordship, or from any man living. And I ask, in the name and in the presence of him, to whom both you and I are shortly to give an account, why do you trouble those that are quiet in the land? Those that fear God and work righteousness? Does your lordship know what the Methodists are? That many thousands of them are zealous members of the Church of England? and strongly attached, not only to his Majesty, but to his present ministry? Why should your lordship, setting religion out of the question, throw away such a body of respectable friends? Is it for their religious sentiments? Alas my lord, is this a time to persecute any man for conscience-sake? I beseech you, my lord, do as you would be done to. You are a man of sense: you are a man of learning: nay, I verily believe (what is of infinitely more value) you are a man of piety. Then think, and let think—I pray God to bless you with the choicest of his blessings—

I am, my lord," &c.

To another bishop, who, I suppose, had forbidden his clergy to let Mr. Wesley preach in their churches, he wrote in his own laconic way as follows:

“MY LORD,

“Several years ago, the church-wardens of St. Bartholomew’s informed Dr. Gibson, then Lord Bishop of London, ‘My Lord, Mr. Bateman, our Rector, invites Mr. Wesley very frequently to preach in his church.’ The bishop replied, ‘And what would you have me do? I have no right to hinder him. Mr. Wesley is a clergyman regularly ordained, and under no ecclesiastical censure.’

I am, my lord,

Your lordship’s obedient servant,

JOHN WESLEY.”

Mr. Wesley began now to feel the infirmities of age increase fast upon him, though he continued his usual labors without complaint. But in January, 1790, he observes, “I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim: my right hand shakes much: my mouth is hot and dry every morning: I have a lingering fever almost every day: and my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labor. I can preach and write still.” And on June 28, his birth-day, he further observes, “This day I enter into my eighty-eighth year. For above eighty-six years, I found none of the infirmities of old age: my eyes did not wax dim, neither was my natural strength abated. But last August, I found almost a sudden change; my eyes were so dim, that no glasses would help me: my strength likewise quite forsook me, and probably will

not return in this world. But I feel no pain from head to foot, only it seems nature is exhausted, and humanly speaking, will sink more and more, till,

“The weary springs of life stand still at last.”

This, at length, was literally the case; the death of Mr. Wesley, like that of his brother Charles, being one of those rare instances in which nature, drooping under the load of years, sinks by a gentle decay. For several years preceding his death, this decay was, perhaps, more visible to others than to himself; particularly by a more frequent disposition to sleep during the day; by a growing defect in memory, a faculty he once possessed in a high degree of perfection; and by a general diminution of the vigor and agility he had so long enjoyed. His labors, however, suffered little interruption: and when the summons came, it found him, as he always wished it should, in the harness, still occupied in his Master's work!

Thursday, the 17th of February, 1791, Mr. Wesley preached at Lambeth: but on his return home, seemed much indisposed, and supposed he had taken cold.—The next day, he read and wrote as usual; and in the evening preached at Chelsea with some difficulty, having a high degree of fever. Saturday he still persevered in his usual employments, though to those about him, his complaints seemed evidently increasing. He dined at Islington, and desired a friend to read to him from the fourth to the seventh chapter of Job, inclusive. On Sunday he rose early, according to custom, but quite unfit for the exercises of the day. He was obliged to lie down about seven o'clock in the morning, and slept several hours. In the course of the day, two of his own discourses on the Sermon on the mount, were read to him; and in the evening he came down to supper. Monday, the 21st, he seemed much better, and visited a friend at Twickenham. Tuesday, he went on with his usual work, preached at the City-Road, and seemed better than he had been for some days. Wednesday he went to Leatherhead, where he delivered his last sermon, from “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near.” Thursday he paid a visit to Mr. Wolff's lovely family at Balaam, from whence he returned, on Friday the 25th, extremely ill. His friends were struck with the manner of his getting out of the carriage, and still more when he went up stairs, and sat down in his chair. He sent every one out of the room, and desired not to be interrupted for half an hour. When that time was expired, some mulled wine was brought him, of which he drank a little. In a few minutes he threw it up, and said, “I must lie down.” His friends were now alarmed, and I was immediately sent for, to visit him. On entering the room, he said in a cheerful voice, “Doctor, they are more afraid than hurt.” Most of this day he lay in bed, had a quick pulse, with a considerable degree of fever and stu-

por. Saturday, the 26th, he continued much in the same state; taking very little, either of medicine or nourishment. Sunday morning, he seemed better, got up, and took a cup of tea. Sitting in his chair, he looked quite cheerful, and repeated these words of his brother Charles,

“Till glad I lay this body down,
Thy servant, Lord, attend;
And O! my life of mercy crown
With a triumphant end!”

Soon after he emphatically said, “Our friend Lazarus sleepeth.” Exerting himself to converse with some friends, he was soon fatigued, and obliged to lie down. After lying some time quiet, he looked up, and said, “Speak to me, I cannot speak.” The persons present kneeled down to pray with him, and his hearty Amen, showed he was perfectly sensible of what was said. Some time after he said, “There is no need of more; when at Bristol my words were,

“I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me.” *

Monday, the 28th, his weakness increased. He slept most of the day, and spoke but little; yet that little testified how much his whole heart was taken up in the care of the societies, the glory of God, and the promotion of the things pertaining to that kingdom, to which he was hastening. Once he said, in a low but distinct manner, “There is no way into the holiest, but by the blood of Jesus.” He asked what the words were, from which he had preached a little before at Hampstead. Being told they were these; “Brethren, ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, yet for your sakes became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich,” he replied, “That is the foundation, the only foundation, and there is no other.”—This day I desired he might be asked, if he would have any other physician called in to attend him? but this he absolutely refused.—It is remarkable, that he suffered so little pain, never complaining of any during his illness, but once of a pain in his breast. This was a restless night—Tuesday morning, he sang two verses of an hymn: then lying still, as if to recover strength, he called for pen and ink; but when it was brought he could not write. A

* At the Bristol Conference, in 1783, Mr. Wesley was taken very ill: neither he, nor his friends thought he could recover. From the nature of his complaint, he supposed a spasm would seize his stomach and probably occasion sudden death. Under these views of his situation, he said to Mr. Bradford, “I have been reflecting on my past life: I have been wandering up and down, between fifty and sixty years, endeavoring in my poor way, to do a little good to my fellow creatures: and now it is probable, that there are but a few steps between me and death; and what have I to trust to for salvation? I can see nothing which I have done or suffered, that will bear looking at. I have no other plea than this: ‘I the chief of sinners am, but Jesus died for me.’” The sentiment here expressed, and his reference to it in his last sickness, plainly shows how steadily he had persevered in the same views of the gospel, with which he set out to preach it.

person said, "Let me write for you, sir: tell me what you would say." He replied, "Nothing, but that God is with us." In the forenoon, he said, "I will get up." While they were preparing his clothes, he broke out, in a manner that astonished all who were about him, in singing,

"I'll praise my Maker while I've breath,
And when my voice is lost in death,
Praise shall employ my nobler powers:
My days of praise shall ne'er be past,
While life, and thought, and being last,
Or immortality endures!"

Having got him into his chair, they observed him change for death. But he, regardless of his dying body, said with a weak voice, "Lord, Thou givest strength to those who can speak, and to those who cannot. Speak, Lord, to all our hearts, and let them know that Thou loosest tongues." He then sung,

"To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Who sweetly all agree"—

Here his voice failed. After gasping for breath he said, "Now we have done all." He was then laid on the bed, from whence he rose no more. After resting a little, he called to those who were with him, "to pray and praise." Soon after he said, "Let me be buried in nothing but what is woollen, and let my corpse be carried in my coffin, into the chapel." And again called upon them to "pray and praise," and taking each by the hand, and affectionately saluting them, bade them farewell. Attempting afterwards to say something which they could not understand, he paused a little, and then with all the remaining strength he had, said, "The best of all is, God is with us." And again, lifting his hand, he repeated the same words in a holy triumph, "The best of all is, God is with us." Something being given him to moisten his lips, he said, "It will not do; we must take the consequence. Never mind the poor carcass." Being told that his brother's widow was come, he said, "He giveth his servants rest;" thanked her as she pressed his hand, and affectionately endeavored to kiss her. His lips being again wet, he repeated his usual grace after a meal; "We thank Thee, O Lord, for these and all thy mercies: bless the church and king, grant us truth and peace, through Jesus Christ our Lord." After some pause, he said, "The clouds drop fatness. The Lord is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." He again called them to prayer, and appeared fervently to join in their petitions.

Most of the following night, he often attempted to repeat the psalm before mentioned; but could only get out, "I'll praise, I'll praise." On Wednesday morning, his end drew near. Mr. Bradford, his old and faithful friend, who, with the affection of a son, had attended him for many years, now prayed with him; and the last word he

was heard to articulate was "Farewell." — A few minutes before ten, on the second day of March, while a number of friends were kneeling around his bed, died Mr. John Wesley, without a groan. He was in the eighty-eighth year of his age, had been sixty-five years in the ministry; and the preceding pages will be a lasting memorial of his uncommon zeal, diligence, and usefulness in his Master's work, for more than half a century.—His death was an admirable close of so laborious and useful a life.

March the 9th, was the day appointed for his interment. The preachers then in London, to my utter astonishment, insisted that I should deliver the funeral discourse: and the executors afterwards approved of the appointment. The intention was, to carry the corpse into the chapel, and place it in a raised situation before the pulpit during the service. But the crowds which came to see the body while it lay in the coffin, both in the private house, and especially in the chapel the day before the funeral, were so great, that his friends were apprehensive of a tumult, if they should proceed on the plan first intended. It was therefore resolved, the evening before, to bury him between five and six in the morning. Though the time of notice to his friends was short, and the design itself was spoken of with great caution, yet a considerable number of persons attended at that early hour. The late Rev. Mr. Richardson, who now lies with him in the same vault, read the funeral service in a manner that made it peculiarly affecting. The discourse, which was afterwards printed, was delivered in the chapel at the hour appointed in the forenoon, to an astonishing multitude of people; among whom were many ministers of the gospel, both of the establishment, and the Dissenters. The audience was still and solemn as night; and all seemed to carry away with them, enlarged views of Mr. Wesley's character, and serious impressions of the importance of religion, and the utility of Methodism.

The death of Mr. Wesley, attracted the public notice beyond any former example, perhaps, of a clergyman however dignified. It being generally known, that he died as he had lived; and evinced in death, the uprightness and integrity of his life, the impression on the public mind in favor of his character and of Methodism, was almost universal; so that some persons said, Mr. Wesley will do more good by his death than he did in his whole life. This, however, is certain, that a door of usefulness was now opened to the Methodist preachers, unknown at any former period. And had they strictly adhered to the old *disinterested* plan of Methodism, it is probable they would in the end, have been more extensively useful to the whole nation. But this opportunity is past, and will never return.

The following inscription, though in my judgment not worthy of Mr. Wesley, has since his interment been put on his tomb.

“To the Memory of
THE VENERABLE JOHN WESLEY, A. M.
Late Fellow of LINCOLN College, OXFORD.

This GREAT LIGHT arose
(By the singular Providence of God)
To enlighten THESE NATIONS,
And to *revive, enforce, and defend,*
The Pure, Apostolical DOCTRINES and PRACTICES of
THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH:
Which he continued to do, by his WRITINGS and his
LABORS,
For more than HALF A CENTURY:
And, to his inexpressible Joy,
Not only, beheld their INFLUENCE extending,
And their EFFICACY witnessed,
In the Hearts and Lives of MANY THOUSANDS,
As well in the WESTERN WORLD, as in these
KINGDOMS:
But also, far above all human Power or Expectation,
Lived to see PROVISION made, by the singular Grace
of God,
For their CONTINUANCE and ESTABLISHMENT,
TO THE JOY of FUTURE GENERATIONS!
READER, If thou art constrained to bless the INSTRUMENT,
GIVE GOD THE GLORY!

*After having languished a few days, He at length finished
his COURSE and his LIFE together: gloriously
triumphing over DEATH, March 2, An.
Dom. 1791, in the eighty-eighth Year
of his Age.”*

A copy of the late Mr. John Wesley's Will.

“In the name of God. Amen!

“I JOHN WESLEY, Clerk, some time Fellow of Lincoln-College, Oxford, revoking all others, appoint this to be my last Will and Testament.

“I give all my books now on sale, and the copies of them (only subject to a rent charge of £85 a year to the widow and children of my brother) to my faithful friends, John Horton, merchant, George Wolff, merchant, and William Marriott, stock-broker, all of London, in trust for the general fund of the Methodist Conference in carrying on the work of God, by itinerant preachers, on condition that they permit the following committee, Thomas Coke, James Creighton,

Peard Dickenson, Thomas Rankin, George Whitefield, and the London Assistant for the time being, still to superintend the printing-press, and to employ Hannah Paramore and George Paramore, as heretofore, unless four of the committee judge a change to be needful.

“I give the books, furniture, and whatever else belongs to me in the three houses at Kingswood, in trust to Thomas Coke, Alexander Mather, and Henry Moore, to be still employed in teaching and maintaining the children of poor travelling preachers.

“I give to Thomas Coke, Doctor John Whitehead, and Henry Moore, all the books which are in my study and bed-chamber at London, and in my studies elsewhere, in trust for the use of the preachers who shall labor here from time to time.

“I give the coins, and whatever else is found in the drawer of my bureau at London, to my dear grand-daughters Mary and Jane Smith.

“I give all my manuscripts to Thomas Coke, Doctor Whitehead, and Henry Moore, to be burnt or published as they see good.

“I give whatever money remains in my bureau and pockets at my decease to be equally divided between Thomas Briscoe, William Collins, John Easton, and Isaac Brown.

“I desire my gowns, cassocks, sashes, and bands, may remain at the chapel for the use of the clergymen attending there.

“I desire the London Assistant for the time being to divide the rest of my wearing apparel between those four of the travelling preachers that want it most; only my pelisse I give to the Rev. Mr. Creighton; my watch to my friend Joseph Bradford; my gold seal to Elizabeth Ritchie.

“I give my chaise and horses to James Ward and Charles Wheeler, in trust, to be sold, and the money to be divided, one half to Hannah Abbott, and the other to the poor members of the Select society.

“Out of the first money which arises from the sale of books, I bequeath to my dear sister Martha Hall (if alive) £40, to Mr. Creighton aforesaid £40, and to the Rev. Mr. Heath £60.

“And whereas I am empowered by a late Deed to name the persons who are to preach in the New Chapel at London (the clergymen for a continuance,) and by another Deed to name a committee for appointing preachers in the New Chapel at Bath, I do hereby appoint John Richardson, Thomas Coke, James Creighton, Peard Dickenson, clerks, Alexander Mather, William Thompson, Henry Moore, Andrew Blair, John Valton, Joseph Bradford, James Rogers, and William Myles, to preach in the New Chapel at London, and to be the committee for appointing preachers in the New Chapel at Bath.

“I likewise appoint Henry Brooke, painter, Arthur Keen, gent. and William Whitestone, stationer, all of Dublin, to receive the annuity of £5, (English,) left to Kingswood School by the late Roger Shiel, Esq.

“I give £6, to be divided among the six poor men, named by the

Assistant, who shall carry my body to the grave; for I particularly desire there may be no hearse, no coach, no escutcheon, no pomp, except the tears of them that loved me, and are following me to Abraham's bosom. I solemnly adjure my executors in the name of God, punctually to observe this.

"Lastly, I give to each of those travelling preachers who shall remain in the connexion six months after my decease, as a little token of my love, the eight volumes of Sermons.

"I appoint John Horton, George Wolff, and William Marriott, aforesaid, to be Executors of this my last Will and Testament, for which trouble they will receive no recompense till the resurrection of the just.

"Witness my hand and seal the 20th day of February, 1789.

JOHN WESLEY. (Seal.)

"Signed, sealed, and delivered, by the said Testator as and for his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us,

WILLIAM CLULOW.

ELIZABETH CLULOW.

"Should there be any part of my personal estate undisposed of by this my last Will: I give the same unto my two nieces E. Ellison, and S. Collet, equally.

JOHN WESLEY.

WILLIAM CLULOW.

ELIZABETH CLULOW.

Feb. 25, 1789.

"I give my Types, Printing-presses, and everything pertaining thereto, to Mr. Thomas Rankin, and Mr. George Whitefield, in trust for the use of the Conference.

JOHN WESLEY."

In the latter end of the summer preceding Mr. Wesley's death a certain person, who had long been trying various schemes to acquire a superior influence over both preachers and people, endeavored to persuade Mr. Wesley, that if he disposed of his literary property by his Will only, his next of kin would claim it; that a deed of assignment was necessary to prevent their claims. Mr. Wesley denied that this would be the case, and resisted the proposition of making a deed of assignment. Being however, frequently, worried on the occasion, he at length, in company with this same person, applied to his confidential solicitor on the question; who told them, that as his literary property was personal estate, his Will was a competent instrument to convey it, and that no deed of assignment was necessary. The party who wished for a deed of assignment that might answer his purpose, was not discouraged by this repulse, but afterwards wrote to the same solicitor for his further opinion on the subject; and received the same answer in writing. Finding Mr. Wesley's solicitor not of an accommodating disposition where integrity must be sacri-

ficed, he applied to another, a total stranger to the Methodist economy, and therefore more under his direction. A deed of assignment was drawn up, to answer the purpose intended, conveying Mr. Wesley's literary property to seven persons therein named (among whom the executors of Mr. Wesley's Will were not included) upon special trust, that they should apply all the profits of the books, &c. to the sole use and benefit of the Conference, in such manner as to *them* should seem most proper and expedient. Things being thus prepared, the old gentleman was carried privately to a friend's house, to execute this deed, five months before he died; a time when his weakness was so great, that we may venture to say, he could not sit five minutes to hear any thing read, especially in the forms of law, without falling into a doze: so that there is not the least probability that Mr. Wesley knew the contents of the deed he executed, or had any suspicion of its tendency or the design of its author. It is very certain the body of the preachers were ignorant of this scandalous transaction; in which an advantage was taken of age and infirmities, by one or two individuals, to gain the management of a large and increasing annual revenue, to serve the purposes of their own influence and ambition. I mention one or two individuals, because it has been said, that one of the preachers named in this deed, was in league with him who ought to be considered as the author of it. But I say no more on a subject that will not bear to be fully examined.