

A
Plain Account
OF
The PEOPLE called
METHODISTS.

IN A
LETTER

TO THE

Rev^d. Mr. *PERRONET*,

VICAR of *Shoreham* in *KENT*.

BRISTOL:

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A P L A I N

A C C O U N T

O F

The P E O P L E called

M E T H O D I S T S .

In a L E T T E R , & c .



Rev^d. and Dear S I R ,

SOME Time since you desired an Account of the *whole Oeconomy* of the People commonly call'd *Methodists*. And you receiv'd a True, (as far as it went) but not a Full Account. To supply what I think was wanting in That, I send you this Account: That you may know not only their *Practice*, on every Head, but likewise the *Reasons* whereon it is grounded, the *Occasion* of every Step they have taken, and the *Advantages* reaped thereby.

2. But I must premise, That as they had not the least Expectation at first, of any Thing like what has since follow'd, so they had no previous Design or Plan at all, but every Thing arose just as the Occasion offer'd. They saw or felt some impending or pressing Evil, or some Good End necessary to be pursued. And many Times they fell unawares on the very Thing, which secured the Good, or removed the Evil. At other Times they consulted on the most probable Means, following only *Common Sense* and *Scripture*: Tho' they generally found, in looking back, some Thing in *Christian Antiquity* likewise, very nearly parallel thereto.

I. 1. Above Ten Years ago, my Brother and I were desired, to preach in many Parts of *London*. We had no View therein, but so far as we were able (and we knew God *cou'd* work by whomsoever it pleased Him) To *convince* those who wou'd hear, What True Christianity was, and to *persuade* them to embrace it.

2. The Points we chiefly insisted upon were Four: First, That *Orthodoxy* or *Right Opinions* is, at best, but a very slender *Part* of Religion, if it can be allowed to be any Part of it at all: That neither does Religion consist in *Negatives*, in bare Harmlessness of any Kind; nor merely in *Externals*, in doing Good or using the Means of Grace, in Works of Piety (so called) or of Charity: That it is nothing short of or different from *The Mind that was in CHRIST*, *The Image of God* stamp'd upon the Heart, *Inward Righteousness*, attended with the *Peace of God*, and *Joy in the Holy Ghost*. Secondly, That the only Way under Heaven to this Religion, is *To repent and believe the Gospel*, or (as the Apostle words it) *Repentance towards God, and Faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST*: Thirdly, That by this Faith, *He that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the Ungodly*, is justified freely by his Grace, thro' the *Redemption which is in JESUS CHRIST*: And Lastly, That *being justified by Faith*, we taste of the Heaven to which

which we are going: We are Holy and Happy: We tread down Sin and Fear, and *sit in Heavenly Places with CHRIST JESUS.*

3. Many of those who heard this, began to cry out, That we brought *Strange Things to their Ears*: That this was Doctrine which they never heard before, or, at least, never regarded. They *searched the Scriptures, whether these Things were so*, and acknowledged the *Truth as it is in JESUS.* Their Hearts also were influenced as well as their Understandings, and they determined to follow *JESUS CHRIST and Him crucified.*

4. Immediately they were surrounded with Difficulties: All the World rose up against them: Neighbours, Strangers, Acquaintance, Relations, Friends, began to cry out again: "*Be not righteous overmuch: Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?*" Let not much Religion make thee mad."

5. One and another and another came to Us, asking, What they should do? Being distress'd on every Side, as every one strove to weaken, and none to strengthen their Hands in God. We advised them, "Strengthen you one another. Talk together as often as you can. And pray earnestly, with and for one another, That you may *endure to the End and be saved.*" Against this Advice we presumed there could be no Objection; as being grounded on the plainest Reason, and on so many Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New, that it would be tedious to recite them.

6. They said, "But we want *You* likewise to talk with us often, to direct and quicken us in our Way, to give us the Advices which you well know we need, and to pray with us, as well as for us." I ask'd, Which of you desires this? Let me know your Names and Places of Abode. They did so. But I soon found, they were too many for me to talk with severally so often as they wanted it. So I told them, "If you will all of you come together, every *Thursday*, in the Evening,

ing, I will gladly spend some Time with you in Prayer, and give you the best Advice I can."

7. Thus arose, without any previous Design on either Side, what was afterwards called *A Society*: A very Innocent Name, and very Common in *London*, for any Number of People, *associating* themselves together. The Thing proposed in their associating themselves together, was obvious to every one. They wanted to *flee from the Wrath to come*, and to assist each other in so doing. They therefore united themselves "in order to pray together, to receive the Word of Exhortation, and to watch over one another in Love, that they might help each other to work out their Salvation."

8. "There is One only Condition previously required, in those who desire Admission into this Society, *A Desire to flee from the Wrath to come, and to be saved from their Sins*. But wherever this Desire is fixt in the Soul, it will be shewn by its Fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their Desire of Salvation.

"First, By doing no Harm, by avoiding Evil in every kind; especially that which is most generally practised.

("Such as, The taking the Name of GOD in vain; The profaning the Day of the LORD; Drunkenness; Fighting, Quarrelling, Brawling; The Buying or Selling *uncustom'd* Goods; The doing to others as we would not they should do unto us; Uncharitable or Unprofitable Conversation, particularly, Speaking evil of Magistrates or Ministers:)

"Secondly, By doing Good; by being in every kind merciful after their Power; As they have Opportunity doing Good of every possible Sort, and as far as it is possible to all Men:

"By all possible *Diligence* and *Frugality*, that the Gospel be not blamed:

"By submitting to bear the Reproach of CHRIST to be as *the Filth and Off-scouring* of the World, and looking that Men should say all manner of Evil of them *falsely* for their LORD's Sake:

"Thirdly,

“ Thirdly, Be attending upon all the Ordinances of God :

“ Such as, The Publick Worship of God, The Supper of the Lord, Private Prayer, Searching the Scriptures, and Fasting or Abstinence.”

They now likewise agreed, That as many of them as had Opportunity, wou'd meet together every *Friday*, and spend the Dinner Hour in crying to God, both for each other and for all Mankind.

9. It quickly appear'd, That their this uniting together, answer'd the End propos'd therein. In a few Months the far greater Part of those who had begun to *fear God and work Righteousness*, but were not united together, grew faint in their Minds, and fell back into what they were before. Mean while the far greater Part of those, who were thus united together, continued *striving to enter in at the strait Gate*, and to *lay hold on Eternal Life*.

10. Upon Reflection, I could not but observe, This is the very Thing which was from the Beginning of Christianity. In the earliest Times, those whom God had sent forth, *preached the Gospel to every Creature*. And the *ὁ ἀκροαταὶ*, the Body of Hearers, were mostly either *Jews* or Heathens. But as soon as any of these were so convinced of the Truth, as to forsake Sin and seek the Gospel Salvation, they immediately joined them together, took an Account of their Names, advised them to watch over each other, and met these *κατηχούμενοι* (Catechumens, as they were then called) apart from the Great Congregation, that they might instruct, rebuke, exhort, and pray with them and for them, according to their several Necessities.

11. But it was not long before an Objection was made to this, which had not once enter'd into my Thought. “ Is not this making a Schism? Is not the joining these People together, *Gathering Churches out of Churches?* ”

It was easily answer'd, If you mean only *Gathering People out of Buildings call'd Churches*, it is. But if you

you mean, dividing Christians from Christians, and so destroying Christian Fellowship, it is not. For 1st. These were not Christians before they were thus join'd. Most of them were barefac'd Heathens. 2. Neither are they Christians, from whom you suppose them to be divided. You will not look me in the Face and say They are. What! Drunken Christians? Cursing and Swearing Christians? Lying Christians? Cheating Christians? If these are Christians at all, they are *Devil Christians* (as the poor *Malabarians* term them.) 3. Neither are they divided any more than they were before, even from these wretched *Devil-Christians*. They are as ready as ever to assist them, and to perform every Office of real Kindness toward them. 4. If it be said, "But there are some True Christians in the Parish. and you destroy the Christian Fellowship between these and Them." I answer, That which never existed, cannot be destroy'd. But the Fellowship you speak of, never existed. Therefore, it cannot be destroy'd. Which of those True Christians had any such Fellowship with These? Who watched over them in Love? Who mark'd their Growth in Grace? Who advised and exhorted them from Time to Time? Who pray'd with them and for them as they had Need? This, and this alone is Christian Fellowship: But alas! Where is it to be found? Look *East* or *West*, *North* or *South*: Name what Parish you please. Is this Christian Fellowship there? Rather, are not the Bulk of the Parishioners, a mere Rope of Sand? What Christian Connexion is there between them? What Intercourse in Spiritual Things? What Watching over each others Souls? What Bearing of one anothers Burdens? What a mere Jest is it then, to talk so gravely, of *destroying* what never was? The real Truth is, just the Reverse of this: We *introduce* Christian Fellowship where it was *utterly destroy'd*. And the Fruits of it have been Peace, Joy, Love, and Zeal for every Good Word and Work.

II. i. But as much as we endeavour'd to watch over each other, we soon found some who did not *live the Gospel*. I do not know, that any Hypocrites were crept
in;

in; for indeed there was no Temptation. But several grew cold, and gave Way to the Sins which had long easily beset them. We quickly perceiv'd, there were many ill Consequences of suffering these to remain among us. It was dangerous to others; inasmuch as all Sin is of an infectious Nature. It brought such a Scandal on their Brethren, as expos'd them to what was not properly The Reproach of CHRIST. It laid a Stumbling-block in the Way of Others, and caused the Truth to be evil-spoken of.

2. We groaned under these Inconveniences long, before a Remedy could be found. The People were scattered so wide in all Parts of the Town, from *Wapping* to *Westminster*, that I cou'd not easily see, what the Behaviour of each Person in his own Neighbourhood was. So that several disorderly Walkers did much Hurt, before I was apprized of it.

3. At Length, while we were thinking of quite another Thing, we struck upon a Method for which we have Cause to bless God ever since. I was talking with several of the Society in *Bristol*, concerning the Means of paying the Debts there; when one stood up and said, "Let every Member of the Society give a *Penny* a Week 'till all are paid." Another answered, "But many of them are poor, and cannot afford to do it." "Then said he, Put Eleven of the Poorest with me, and if they can give any Thing, well. I will call on them weekly, and if they can give Nothing, I will give for them as well as for myself. And each of you, call on Eleven of your Neighbours weekly: Receive what they give, and make up what is wanting." It was done. In a While some of these inform'd me, "They found, such and such an one did not live as he ought." It struck me immediately. "This is the Thing: The very Thing we have wanted so long." I call'd together all the *Leaders* of the *Classes*, (so we used to term them and their Companies) and desired That each wou'd make a particular Enquiry, into the Behaviour of those whom he saw weekly. They did so. Many disorderly Walkers were detected. Some turned from
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the Evil of their Ways. Some were put away from us. Many saw it with Fear, and rejoiced unto God with Reverence.

4. As soon as possible the same Method was used in *London* and all other Places. Evil Men were detected, and reprov'd. They were borne with for a Season. If they forsook their Sins, we receiv'd them gladly: If they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared, That they were not of us. The rest mourn'd and pray'd for them, and yet rejoiced, That as far as in us lay, the Scandal was roll'd away from the Society.

5. It is the Business of a Leader.

I. To see each Person in his Class, once a Week at the least: In order,
 To enquire how their Souls prosper?
 To advise, reprove, comfort or exhort, as Occasion may require;
 To receive what they are willing to give, toward the Relief of the Poor.

II. To meet the Minister and the Stewards of the Society, in order
 To inform the Minister of any that are Sick, or of any that are disorderly and will not be reprov'd;
 To pay to the Stewards what they have receiv'd of their several Classes in the Week preceding.

6. At first they visited each Person at his own House: But this was soon found not so expedient. And that on many Accounts. 1. It took up more Time, than most of the Leaders had to spare. 2. Many Persons lived with Masters, Mistresses or Relations, who would not suffer them to be thus visited. 3. At the Houses of those who were not so averse, they had often no Opportunity of speaking to them but in Company. And this did not at all answer the End propos'd, of exhorting, comforting or reprov'ing. 4. It frequently happen'd, That one affirm'd

affirm'd what another denied. And this cou'd not be clear'd, without seeing them both together: 5. Little Misunderstandings and Quarrels of various Kinds, frequently arose among Relations or Neighbours: Effectually to remove which it was needful to see them all Face to Face. Upon all these Considerations it was agreed, That those of each Class should meet all together. And by this Means, a more full Enquiry was made, into the Behaviour of every Person. Those who cou'd not be visited at Home, or no otherwise than in Company, had the same Advantage with others. Advice or Reproof was given as need required; Quarrels made up, Misunderstandings removed. And after an Hour or two spent in this Labour of Love, they concluded with Prayer and Thanksgiving.

7. It can scarce be conceiv'd, what Advantages have been reap'd from this little Prudential Regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian Fellowship, of which they had not so much as an Idea before. They began to *bear one another's Burthens*, and *naturally to care for each other*. As they had daily a more intimate Acquaintance with, so they had a more endear'd Affection for each other. And *speaking the Truth in Love, they grew into Him in all Things, which is the Head, even CHRIST: From whom the whole Body, fitly join'd together, and compacted by that which every Joint supplied, according to the effectual Working in the Measure of every Part, increas'd unto the Edifying itself in Love.*

8. But notwithstanding all these Advantages, many were at first extremely averse to meeting thus. Some, viewing it in a wrong Point of Light, not as a *Privilege* (indeed an Invaluable one) but rather a *Restraint*, disliked it on that Account, Because they did not love to be restrain'd in any Thing. Some were *ashamed* to speak before Company. Others honestly said, "I don't know why; but I *don't like it.*"

9. Some objected, "There were no such Meetings, when I came into the Society first. And why should there
there

there now? I don't understand these Things, and this changing one Thing after another continually." It was easily answer'd, 'Tis Pity but they had been at first. But we knew not then either the Need or the Benefit of them. Why we use them, You will readily understand, if you read over the Rules of the Society. That with Regard to these little Prudential Helps we are continually changing one Thing after another, it is not a Weakness or Fault (as you imagine) but a peculiar Advantage which we enjoy. By this Means we declare them all to be merely Prudential, not Essential, not of Divine Institution. We prevent so far as in us lies, their growing Formal and Dead. We are always open to Instruction; willing to be wiser every Day than we were before, and to change whatever we can change for the better.

10. Another Objection was, "There is no Scripture for this, for Classes and I know not what." I answer, 1. There is no Scripture *against* it. You cannot shew One Text which forbids them. 2. There is much Scripture *for* it, even all those Texts which enjoin the Substance of those various Duties, whereof this is only an indifferent Circumstance, to be determined by Reason and Experience. 3. You seem not to have observ'd, That the Scripture in most Points, gives only *General* Rules: And leaves the *Particular* Circumstances to be adjusted, by the Common Sense of Mankind. The Scripture (for Instance) gives that *General* Rule, *Let all Things be done decently and in Order.* But Common Sense is to determine on *Particular* Occasions, What Order and Decency require. So, in another Instance, the Scripture lays it down, as a *General*, standing Direction, *Whether ye Eat or Drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the Glory of God.* But it is Common Prudence which is to make the Application of this, in a Thousand *Particular* Cases.

11. "But these, said another, are all *Man's Inventions.*" This is but the same Objection in another Form. And the same Answer will suffice for any Reasonable Person. These are Man's Inventions. And what then?

then? That is, They are Methods, which Men have found, by Reason and Common Sense, for the more effectually applying several Scriptural Rules, couch'd in General Terms, to particular Occasions.

12. They spoke far more plausibly than these, who said, “The Thing is well enough in itself. But the *Leaders* are insufficient for the Work. They have neither Gifts nor Grace for such an Employment.” I answer, 1. Yet such Leaders as they are, it is plain God has blessed their Labour. 2. If any of these is remarkably wanting in Gifts or Grace, he is soon taken Notice of and removed. 3. If you know any such, tell it to *me*, not to others, and I will endeavour to exchange him for a better. 4. It may be hoped, they will all be better than they are, both by Experience and Observation, and by the Advices given them by the Minister every *Tuesday* Night, and the Prayers (then in particular) offer'd up for them.

III. 1. About this Time, I was inform'd, That several Persons in *Kingswood*, frequently met together at the School, and (when they cou'd spare the Time) spent the greater Part of the Night, in Prayer and Praise and Thanksgiving. Some advised me to put an End to this: But upon weighing the Thing thoroughly, and comparing it with the Practice of the Antient Christians, I could see no Cause to forbid it. Rather, I believ'd, it might be made of more General Use. So I sent them Word, “I design'd to watch with them, on the *Friday* nearest the Full-Moon, that we might have Light thither and back again.” I gave publick Notice of this, the *Sunday* before, and withall, That I intended to preach: Desiring, They and they only would meet me there, who could do it without Prejudice to their Business or Families. On *Friday* abundance of People came. I began Preaching between *Eight* and *Nine*; and we continued 'till a little beyond the Noon of Night, Singing, Praying and Praising God.

2. This we have continued to do once a Month ever since, in *Bristol, London* and *Newcastle* as well as *Kingswood*. And exceeding great are the Blessings we have found therein: It has generally been an extremely Solemn Season; when the Word of God sunk deep into the Heart, even of those who 'till then knew Him not. If it be said, "This was only owing to the Novelty of the Thing, (the Circumstance which still draws such Multitudes together at those Seasons) or perhaps to the awful Silence of the Night," I am not careful to answer in this Matter. Be it so: However, the Impression then made on many Souls, has never since been effaced: Now allowing, that God did make Use either of the Novelty or any other indifferent Circumstance, in order to bring Sinners to Repentance, yet they are brought. And herein let us rejoice together.

3. Nay, May I not put the Case farther yet? If I can probably conjecture, That either by the Novelty of this *Antient* Custom, or by any other indifferent Circumstance, it is in my Power to *save a Soul from Death, and hide a Multitude of Sins*: Am I clear before God if I do it not? If I do not snatch that Brand out of the Burning?

IV. 1. As the Society increased, I found it requir'd still greater Care, to separate the precious from the vile. In order to this, I determin'd, at least once in three Months, to talk with every Member myself, and to inquire at their own Mouths, as well as of their Leaders and Neighbours, Whether they grew in Grace and in the Knowledge of our LORD JESUS CHRIST? At these Seasons I likewise particularly enquire, Whether there be any Mis-understandings or Differences among them? That every Hindrance of Peace and brotherly Love, may be taken out of the Way.

2. To each of those, of whose Seriousness and Good Conversation, I found no Reason to doubt, I gave a Testimony under my own Hand, by writing their Name
on

on a *Ticket* prepared for that Purpose: Every Ticket implying as strong a Recommendation of the Person to whom it was given, as if I had wrote at length, "I believe the Bearer hereof to be one that fears God and works Righteousness."

3. Those who bore these Tickets (these Σύμβολα or *Tesserae*, as the Antients term'd them; being of just the same Force with the ἐπιστολαὶ συστατικαὶ, *Commendatory Letters* mention'd by the Apostle) where-ever they came, were acknowledg'd by their Brethren, and received with all Chearfulness. These were likewise of Use in other Respects. By these it was easily distinguish'd when the Society were to meet a-part, who were Members of it and who not. These also supplied us with a quiet and inoffensive Method, of removing any Disorderly Member. He has no New Ticket, at the Quarterly Visitation; (for so often the Tickets are changed) and hereby it is immediately known, That he is no longer of this Community.

V. The Thing which I was greatly afraid of all this Time, and which I resolv'd to use every possible Method of preventing, was, A Narrowness of Spirit, a Party-Zeal, a being straiten'd in our own Bowels; That miserable Bigotry, which makes many so unready to believe, That there is any Work of God but among themselves. I thought it might be a Help against this, frequently to read, to all who were willing to hear, The Accounts I receiv'd from Time to Time, of the Work which God is carrying on in the Earth, both in our own and other Countries, not among us alone, but among those of various Opinions and Denominations. For this I allotted One Evening in every Month. And I find no Cause to repent my Labour. It is generally a Time of strong Consolation to those who love God, and all Mankind for his Sake: As well as of breaking down the Partition Walls, which either the Craft of the Devil, or the Folly of Men has built up: And of encouraging every Child of God to say, (O when shall it once be?) *Whosoever doth the Will of*

my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother and Sister and Mother.

VI. 1. By the Blessing of GOD upon their Endeavours to help one another, many found the Pearl of great Price. Being justified by Faith, they had *Peace with GOD, thro' our LORD JESUS CHRIST.* These felt a more tender Affection than before, to those who were Partakers of like precious Faith: And hence arose such a Confidence in each other, that they pour'd out their Souls into each other's Bosom. Indeed they had great Need so to do: For the War was not over, as they had supposed. But they had still to wrestle both with Flesh and Blood, and with Principalities and Powers: So that Temptations were on every Side: And often Temptations of such a Kind, as they knew not how to speak in a Class; in which Persons of every Sort, young and old, Men and Women, met together.

2. These therefore wanted some Means of closer Union: They wanted to pour out of their Hearts without Reserve; particularly with Regard to the Sin which did still *easily beset* them, and the Temptations which were most apt to prevail over them. And they were the more desirous of this, when they observ'd, it was the Express Advice of an inspired Writer, *Confess your Faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.*

3. In Compliance with their Desire, I divided them into smaller Companies; putting Married or Single Men, and Married or Single Women together. The chief Rules of these *Bands*, (*i. e.* Little Companies; so that Old *English* Word signifies) run thus:

In order to *confess our Faults one to another and pray one for another that we may be healed*, we intend,

“ 1. To meet once a Week, at the least;

2. To

2. To come punctually at the Hour appointed;
3. To begin with Singing or Prayer;
4. To speak each of us in Order, freely and plainly, the true State of our Soul, with the Faults we have committed in Thought, Word or Deed, and the Temptations we have felt since our last Meeting:
5. To desire some Person among us (thence called a *Leader*) to speak *his* own State first, and then to ask the rest in order, as many and as searching Questions as may be, concerning their State, Sins and Temptations."

4. That their Design in meeting might be the more effectually answered, I desired all the Men-Bands to meet me together every *Wednesday* Evening, and the Women on *Sunday*; That they might receive such Particular Instructions, and such Exhortations, as from Time to Time, might appear to be most needful for them: That such Prayers might be offer'd up to God, as their Necessities should require: And Praise return'd to the Giver of every Good Gift, for whatever Mercies they had receiv'd.

5: In order to increase in them a grateful Sense of all his Mercies, I desired that One Evening in a Quarter, all the Men; on a Second, all the Women wou'd meet; and on a Third, both Men and Women together; That we might together eat *Bread* (as the Antient Christians did) *with Gladness and Singleness of Heart*. At these *Love-Feasts* (so we term'd them, retaining the Name, as well as the Thing, which was in Use from the Beginning) our Food is only a little plain Cake and Water. But we seldom return from them, without being fed not only with *the Meat which perisheth*, but with *that which endureth to everlasting Life*.

6. Great and many are the Advantages which have ever since flow'd, from this closer Union of the Believers with each other. They pray'd for one another, That they might be healed of the Faults they had confess'd: And it was so. The Chains were broken: The Bands were burst in funder, and Sin had no more Dominion over them. Many were deliver'd from the Temptations, out of which 'till then they found no Way to escape. They were built up in our most holy Faith. They rejoiced in the LORD more abundantly. They were strengthen'd in Love, and more effectually provok'd to abound in every Good Work.

7. But it was soon objected to the *Bands* (as to the *Glasses* before) "These were not at first. There is no Scripture for them. These are Man's Works, Man's Building, Man's Invention." I reply, as before, these are also Prudential Helps, grounded on Reason and Experience, in order to apply the General Rules given in Scripture, according to Particular Circumstances.

8. An Objection much more boldly and frequently urged, is That "all these Bands are mere *Popery*." I hope, I need not pass a harder Censure on those, (most of them at least) who affirm this, than that they talk as they know not what, that they betray in themselves the most gross and shameful Ignorance. Do not they yet know, That the only *Popish* Confession is, the Confession made by a single Person to a Priest? (And this itself is in no wise condemn'd by our Church; nay, she recommends it in some Cases) whereas that *we* practise is, The Confession of several Persons conjointly, not to a Priest, but to each other. Consequently, it has no Analogy at all to *Popish* Confession. But the Truth is, This is a stale Objection, which many People make against any Thing they do not like. It is all *Popery* out of Hand.

VII. 1. And yet while most of these who were thus intimately join'd together, went on daily from
Faith.

Faith to Faith; some fell from the Faith, either all at once, by falling into Known, Wilful Sin: Or gradually and almost insensibly, by giving Way in what they call'd little Things; by Sins of Omission, by yielding to Heart Sins, or by not Watching unto Prayer. The Exhortations and Prayers used among the Believers, did no longer profit these. They wanted Advice and Instructions suited to their Case: Which as soon as I observ'd, I separated them from the rest, and desired them to meet me a-part on *Saturday* Evenings.

2. At this Hour; all the Hymns, Exhortations and Prayers, are adapted to their Circumstances: Being wholly suited to those, who *did* see God, but have now lost the Light of his Countenance: And who mourn after Him, and refuse to be comforted, 'till they know He has heal'd all their Backsliding.

3. By applying both the Threats and Promises of God, to these Real (not Nominal) *Penitents*, and by crying to God in their Behalf, we endeavour'd to bring them back to the Great Shepherd and Bishop of their Souls: Not by any of the Fopperies of the *Roman* Church, altho' in some Measure countenanced by Antiquity. In prescribing Hair-Shirts and Bodily Austerities, we durst not follow even the Antient Church: Altho' we had unawares, both in dividing *οἱ πεισσοὶ* the Believers from the rest of the Society, and in separating the *Penitents* from Them, and appointing a peculiar Service for them.

VIII. 1. Many of these soon recovered the Ground they had lost. Yea, they rose the Higher for their Fall: Being more watchful than ever, and more Meek and Lowly, as well as stronger in the Faith that worketh by Love. They now out-ran the greater Part of their Brethren, continually walking in the Light of God, and having Fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, JESUS CHRIST.

2. I saw.

2. I saw it might be useful to give some Advices to all those, who thus continued in the Light of God's Countenance, which the rest of their Brethren did not want, and probably could not receive. So I desired a small Number of such as appear'd to be in this State, to spend an Hour with me every *Monday* Morning. My Design was, Not only, to direct them, How to *press after Perfection*; to exercise their every Grace, and improve every Talent they had receiv'd; and to incite them to love one another more, and to watch more carefully over each other: But also to have a *Select Company*, to whom I might un-bosom myself on all Occasions, without Reserve: And whom I could propose to all their Brethren as a Pattern of Love, of Holiness, and of all Good Works.

3. They had no Need of being incumber'd with many Rules: Having the Best Rule of all in their Hearts. No peculiar Directions were therefore given to Them: Excepting only these Three.

First, Let nothing spoken in this Society, be spoken again. (Hereby we had the more full Confidence in each other.)

Secondly, every Member agrees, To submit to his Minister in all Indifferent Things.

Thirdly, Every Member will bring once a Week, all he can spare toward a Common Stock.

4. Every one here has an equal Liberty of speaking, there being none greater or less than another. I could say freely to these, when they were met together, *Ye may all Prophecy one by one* (taking that Word in it's lower Sense) *that all may learn and all may be comforted.* And I often found the Advantage of such a free Conversation, and that *in a Multitude of Counsellors there is Safety.* Any who is inclined so to do, is likewise encouraged, to pour out his Soul to God. And here especially.

pecially we have found, that the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man availeth much.

IX. 1. This is the Plainest and Clearest Account I can give of The *People*, commonly call'd *Methodists*. It remains only, to give you a short Account, of those who *serve* their Brethren in Love. There are *Leaders* of Classes and Bands (spoken of before) *Assistants*, *Stewards*, *Visitors* of the Sick, and *School-masters*.

2. In the Third Part of the *Appeal*, I have mention'd, How we are led to accept of *Lay-Assistants*. Their Office is, in the Absence of the Minister,

1. To expound every Morning and Evening :
2. To meet the United Society, the Bands, the Select Society, and the Penitents once a Week :
3. To visit the Classes (*London* and *Bristol* excepted) once a Month :
4. To hear and decide all Differences :
5. To put the Disorderly back on Trial, and to receive on Trial for the Bands or Society :
6. To see that the Stewards, the Leaders, and the School-masters faithfully discharge their several Offices :
7. To meet the Leaders of the Bands and Classes weekly, and the Stewards, and to over-look their Accounts.

3. I think, he must be no Fool, who has *Gifts* sufficient for these Things: As neither can he be void of the *Grace* of God, who is able to observe the Rules of an Assistant, which are these that follow :

1. Be diligent. Never be unemploy'd a Moment. Never be triflingly employ'd. Never *while away* Time. Neither spend any more Time at any Place than is strictly necessary.
2. Be Serious. Let your Motto be, Holiness to the LORD. Avoid all Lightness, as you wou'd avoid Hell-fire.
3. Believe Evil of no one. If you *see* it done, well: Else take Heed how you credit it. Put the best Construction on every Thing. You know, the Judge is always supposed to be on the Prisoner's Side.
4. Speak Evil of no one. Else *your* Word especially wou'd eat as doth a Canker. Keep your Thoughts within your own Breast, 'till you come to the Person concern'd.
5. Tell every one what you think wrong in him and that plainly and as soon as may be. Else it will fester in your Heart. Make all Haste to cast the Fire out of your Bosom.
6. Do nothing as a Gentleman. You have no more to do with this Character than with that of a Dancing-master. You are the Servant of all. Therefore
7. Be ashamed of nothing but Sin; Not of hewing Wood, if Time permit, or drawing Water.
8. Take no Money of any one. If they give you Food when you are hungry, or Cloaths when you need them, it is Good: But not Silver or Gold. Let there be no Pretence to say, We grow rich by the Gospel.
9. Be Punctual. Do every Thing exactly at the Time.

10. Act in all Things, not according to your own Will, but as a *Son in the Gospel.*”

4. In order to try these, before we can receive them as *Assistants*, we enquire,

First, Do they know in whom they have believed? Have they the Love of God in their Hearts? Do they desire to seek nothing but God? And are they Holy, in all Manner of Conversation?

Secondly, Have they *Gifts*, as well as *Grace*, for the Work? Have they (in some tolerable Degree) a clear, sound Understanding? Have they a Right Judgment in the Things of God? Have they a just Conception of Salvation by Faith? — And has God given them any Degree of Utterance? Can they express themselves justly, readily, clearly?

Thirdly, Have they *Success*? Do they not only so speak (where Trial was made) as to convince and affect the Hearers? But have any received Remission of Sins by their Means? A clear and lasting Sense of the Love of God?

5. Those in whom these Three Marks undeniably concur, we gladly receive to assist us in the Work. And these we advise, 1. Always to rise at Four. 2. From Four to Five in the Morning, and from Five to Six in the Evening, partly to use Meditation and Private Prayer; partly to read the Scripture; partly some close Practical Book of Divinity: Such as, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, *The Christian Pattern*, *Bishop Beverege's Private Thoughts*, *Mr. Law's Practical Works*, *Dr. Heylin's Devotional Tracts*, *The Life of Mr. Halyburton* and of *Mr. de Renty*. 3. From Six in the Morning till Twelve, to read, in order, slowly, and with much Prayer, *Bp. Pearson on the Creed*, *Bp. Fell*

Fell on the Epistles, Mr. *Boehm's* and Mr. *Nelson's* Sermons, Mr. *Pascal's* Thoughts, *Cave's* and *Fleury's* Primitive Christianity, and *Echard's* Ecclesiastical History.

And we believe they who thro'ly digest only these few Books, will *know* enough to save both their own Souls and those that hear them.

X. 1. But long before this, I felt the Weight of "far different Care, namely, Care of Temporal Things. The Quarterly Subscriptions amounted, at a mean Computation, to above *Three Hundred Pounds* a Year. This was to be laid out, partly in Repairs, partly in other necessary Expences, and partly in paying Debts. The Weekly Contributions fell little short of *Eight Pounds* a Week; which was to be distributed as every one had Need. And I was expected to take Thought for all these Things: But it was a Burthen I was not able to bear. So I chose out first, One, then *Four*, and after a Time, *Seven* as Prudent Men as I knew, and desired them to take the Charge of these Things upon themselves, that I might have no Incumbrance of this Kind.

2. The Business of these *Stewards* is

To manage the Temporal Things of the Society;

To receive the Subscriptions and Contributions;

To expend what is needful from Time to Time;

To send Relief to the Poor;

To keep an exact Account of all Receipts and Expences;

To inform the *Minister* if any of the Rules of the Society are not punctually observ'd;

To tell the *Assistants* in Love, if they think any Thing amiss, either in their Doctrine or Life.

3. The Rules of the Stewards are,

1. Be Frugal. Save every Thing that can be saved honestly.
2. Spend no more than you receive. Contract no Debts.
3. Have no long Accounts. Pay every Thing within the Week.
4. Give none that asks Relief either an ill Word, or an ill Look. Do not hurt them, if you cannot help.
5. Expect no Thanks from Man.

4. They met together at Six every *Thursday* Morning: Consulted on the Business which came before them: Sent Relief to the Sick, as every one had Need, and gave the Remainder of what had been contributed each Week, to those who appear'd to be in the most pressing Want. So that all was concluded within the Week; what was brought on *Tuesday* being constantly expended on *Thursday*. I soon had the Pleasure to find, that all these Temporal Things, were done with the utmost Faithfulness and Exactness. So that my Cares of this Kind were at an End. I had only to revise the Accounts, to tell them, if I thought any Thing might be amended, and to consult how Deficiencies might be supplied from Time to Time. For these were frequent and large (so far were we from Abundance) the Income by no Means answering the Expences. But that we might not faint, sometimes we had Unforeseen Helps, in Times of the Greatest Perplexity.

plexity. At other Times we borrowed, larger or smaller Sums. Of which the greatest Part has since been repaid. But I owe some Hundred Pounds to this Day. So much have I *gain'd* by Preaching the Gospel!

XI. 1. But it was not long before the Stewards found a great Difficulty, with Regard to the Sick. Some were ready to perish, before they knew of their Illness. And when they did know, it was not in their Power, (being Persons generally employ'd in Trade) to visit them so often as they desired.

2. When I was apprized of this, I laid the Case at large before the whole Society: Shew'd, How impossible it was, for the *Stewards* to attend all that were sick in all Parts of the Town: Desired the *Leaders* of *Classes* wou'd more carefully inquire, and more constantly inform them, Who were sick; and ask'd, "Who among you is willing as well as able, to supply their Lack of Service?"

3. The next Morning, many willingly offer'd themselves. I chose Six and Forty of them, whom I judg'd to be of the most tender, loving Spirit: Divided the Town into Twenty-three Parts, and desired Two of them to visit the Sick in each Division.

4. It is the Business of a *Visitor* of the Sick,

To see every sick Person within his District thrice a Week;

To enquire into the State of their Souls, and advise them, as Occasion may require;

To enquire into their Disorders, and procure Advice for them;

To relieve them, if they are in Want;

To do any Thing for them, which he (or she can do;

To bring in his Accounts weekly to the Stewards.

Upon Reflection, I saw, How exactly in this also, we had copied after the Primitive Church. What were the Antient Deacons? What was *Phibe* the *Deaconess*, but such a *Visitor* of the Sick?

5. I did not think it needful to give them any Particular Rules, beside those that follow:

1. Be plain and open in dealing with Souls;
2. Be mild, tender, patient;
3. Be cleanly in all you do for the Sick;
4. Be not nice.

6. We have ever since had great Reason to praise God, for his continued Blessing on this Undertaking. Many Lives have been saved: Many Sickneses heal'd, Much Pain and Want prevented or removed. Many heavy Hearts have been made glad; many Mourners comforted. And the *Visitors* have found from Him whom they serve, a present Reward for all their Labour.

XII. 1. But I was still in Pain for many of the Poor that were sick: There was so great Expence, and so little Profit. And first, I resolv'd to try, Whether they might not receive more Benefit in the *Hospitals*. Upon the Trial, we found, there was indeed less Expence: But no more Good done than before. I then ask'd the Advice of several Physicians for them: But still it profited not. I saw the poor People pining away,

away, and several Families ruin'd, and that without Remedy.

2. At length I thought of a kind of desperate Expedient. "I will prepare, and give them Physick myself." For *Six or Seven and Twenty* Years, I had made Anatomy and Physick the Diversion of my leisure Hours: Tho' I never properly studied them, unless for a few Months, when I was going into *America*, where I imagined I might be of some Service to those, who had no Regular Physician among them. I applied to it again. I took in to my Assistance an Apothecary, and an experienced Surgeon: Resolving, at the same Time, not to go out of my Depth; but to leave all Difficult and Complicated Cases, to such Physicians as the Patients should chuse

3. I gave Notice of this to the Society: Telling them, that all who were ill of *Chronical* Distempers (for I did not care to venture upon *Acute*) might, if they pleas'd, come to me at such a Time: And I would give them the best Advice I could, and the best Medicines I had.

4. Many came: (And so every *Friday* since.) Among the Rest was one *William Kirkman*, a *Weaver*, near *Old-Nichol-Street*. I ask'd him, "What Complaint have You?" "O Sir, said he, a Cough, a very sore Cough. I can get no Rest Day nor Night." I ask'd, "How long have you had it?" He replied, "About *Threescore* Years: It began when I was *Eleven* Years old." I was nothing glad, that this Man should come first: fearing our not curing Him, might discourage others. However I look'd up to God and said, "Take this *three or four* Times a Day. If it does you no Good, it will do you no Harm." He took it *two or three* Days. His Cough was cured: And has not returned to this Day.

5. Now let Candid Men judge, Does Humility require me to deny a notorious Fact? If not, Which is *Vanity*? To say, I by my own Skill, restored this Man
to

to Health? Or to say, God did it by his Own Almighty Power? By what Figure of Speech this is call'd, *Boasting*, I know not. But I will put no Name on such a Fact as this. I leave that to the Rev^d. Dr. *Middleton*.

6. In five Months, Medicines were occasionally given, to above Five Hundred Persons, several of these I never saw before; for I did not regard, Whether they were of the Society or not. In that Time Seventy-one of these, regularly taking their Medicines, and following the Regimen prescribed (which Three in Four wou'd not do) were entirely cured, of Distempers long thought to be incurable. The whole Expence of Medicines during this Time, was (nearly) *Forty Pounds*. We continued this ever since, and by the Blessing of God, with more and more Success.

XIII. 1. But I had for some Years observ'd many who altho' not sick, were not able to provide for themselves, and had none who took Care to provide for them: These were chiefly, Feeble, aged Widows. I consulted with the *Stewards*, How they might be reliev'd? They all agreed, If we could keep them in one House, it wou'd not only be far less Expensive to us, but also far more Comfortable for them. Indeed we had no Money to begin. But we believed He wou'd provide, *who defendeth the Cause of the Widow*. So we took a Lease of Two little Houses near: We fitted them up, so as to be warm and clean. We took in as many Widows as we had Room for, and provided them with Things needful for the Body: Toward the Expence of which I set aside, First, The Weekly Contributions of the *Bands*, and then All that is collected at the Lord's Supper. It is true this does not suffice: So that we are still considerably in Debt, on this Account also. But we are persuaded, it will not always be so: Seeing *the Earth is the LORD's and the Fulness thereof*.

2. In this (commonly called *The Poor-House*) we have now *Nine Widows, One Blind-Woman, Two Poor Children, Two Upper Servants, a Maid and a Man.* I might add *Four or Five Preachers.* For I myself, as well as the other Preachers who were in Town, Diet with the Poor, on the same Food and at the same Table. And we rejoice herein as a Comfortable Earnest, of our eating Bread together in our Father's Kingdom.

3. I have blest God for this House, ever since it began: But lately much more than ever. I honour these Widows; for they *are Widows indeed.* So that it is not in vain, that without any Design of so doing, we have copied after Another of the Institutions of the Apostolic Age. I can now say to all the World, "Come, and see, How these Christians love one another!"

XIV. 1. Another Thing, which had given me frequent Concern, was the Case of abundance of Children. Some their Parents could not afford to put to School. So they remain'd like *a wild Ass's Colt.* Others were sent to School, and learn'd at least, to read and write: But they learnt all Kind of Vice at the same Time: So that it had been better for them to have been without their Knowledge, than to have bought it at so dear a Price.

2. At length I determined, To have them taught in my own House; That they might have an Opportunity of learning to read, write and cast Accompts (if no more) without being under almost a Necessity, of learning Heathenism at the same Time. And after several unsuccessful Trials, I found Two such School-Masters as I wanted: Men of Honesty, and of sufficient Knowledge; who had Talents for, and their Hearts in the Work.

3. They

3. They have now under their Care, near Sixty Children: The Parents of some pay for their Schooling, but the greater Part, being very poor, do not; so that the Expence is chiefly defray'd by Voluntary Contributions. We have of late cloathed them too, as many as wanted: The Rules of the School are these that follow:

First, No Child is admitted under Six Years of Age:

Secondly, All the Children to be present at the Morning Sermon:

Thirdly, They are at School from Six to Twelve, and from One to Five:

Fourthly, They have no Play-Days:

Fifthly, No Child is to speak in School, but to the Masters:

Sixthly, The Child who misses Two Days in One Week, without Leave, is excluded the School.

4. We appointed Two Stewards for the School also. The Business of these is,

To receive the School Subscriptions, and expend what is needful:

To talk with each of the Masters weekly:

To pray with and exhort the Children twice a Week:

To enquire diligently, Whether they grow in Grace and in Learning, and whether the Rules are punctually observed:

Every

Every *Tuesday* Morning, in Conjunction with the Masters, to exclude those Children that do not observe the said Rules :

Every *Wednesday* Morning to meet with, and exhort their Parents, To train them up at Home in the Ways of God.

5. An happy Change was soon observ'd in the Children, both with Regard to their Tempers and Behaviour. They learnt Reading, Writing and Arithmetick swiftly; At the same Time they were diligently instructed, in the sound Principles of Religion, and earnestly exhorted to fear God and work out their own Salvation.

XV. 1. A Year or two ago, I observ'd among many a Distress of another kind. They frequently wanted, perhaps in order to carry on their Business, a present Supply of Money. They scrupled to make Use of a *Paron-Broker*: But where to borrow it they knew not. I resolv'd to try if we could not find a Remedy for this also. I went (in a few Days) from one End of the Town to the other; And exhorted those who had this World's Goods, to assist their needy Brethren. *Fifty* Pounds were contributed. This was immediately lodg'd in the Hands of *Two* Stewards: Who attended every *Tuesday* Morning, in order to lend to those who wanted, any small Sum, not exceeding *Twenty Shillings*, to be repaid within *three* Months.

2. It is almost incredible, but it manifestly appears from their Accounts, that with this inconsiderable Sum *Two Hundred and Fifty* have been assisted, within the Space of *One* Year. Will not God put it into the Heart of some Lover of Mankind, to increase this little Stock?

Stock? If this is not *Lending unto the LORD*, what is? O confer not with Flesh and Blood, but immediately,

“Join Hands with God, to make a poor Man live.”

3. I think, Sir, now You know all, that I know of this People. You see the Nature, Occasion and Design, of whatever is practised among them. And I trust, You may be pretty well able to answer any Questions, which may be ask'd concerning them: Particularly by those, who inquire concerning *my Revenue*, and What I do with it all?

4. Some have supposed, This was no greater than that of the Bishop of *London*. But others computed, That I receiv'd *Eight Hundred* a Year from *Yorkshire* only. Now if so, it cannot be so little as *Ten Thousand Pounds*, which I receive out of all *England*!

5. Accordingly a Gentleman in *Cornwall* (the Rector of *R—*) extends the Calculation pretty considerably. “Let me see, said he: *Two Millions* of *Methodists*: And each of these paying *Two-pence* a Week.” If so I must have *Eight Hundred and Sixty Six Thousand Pounds* (with some odd *Shillings* and *Pence*) a Year.

6. A Tolerable Competency! But be it more or less, 'tis nothing at all to *me*. All that is contributed or collected in every Place, is both received and expended by Others: Nor have I so much as *the Beholding thereof with my Eyes*. And so it will be, 'till I turn *Turk* or *Pagan*. For I look upon all this Revenue, be it what it may, as Sacred to God and the Poor: (Out of which, if I want any Thing, I am reliev'd, even as another poor Man.) So were originally all Ecclesiastical Revenues (as every Man of Learning knows) And the Bishops and Priests *used* them only, *as such*. If any use them otherwise now, God help them!

7. I doubt

7. I doubt not; but if I err in this, or any other Point, You will pray God to shew me his Truth. To have a Conscience void of Offence toward God and toward Man, is the Desire of,

Reverend and Dear SIR,

Your affectionate Brother and Servant,

JOHN WESLEY.

F I N I S.



June 13. 1789.