

Rev. Mr. JOHN WESLEY'S

# JOHN WESLEY

AND THE EARLY METHODIST REVIVAL



A Kingswood Course

## Anatomy of a Wesley Sermon:

### “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount” (Discourse IV)

- Written as one of 13 sermons on Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount from Matthew chapters 5-7 for inclusion in the second volume of Wesley’s *Sermons on Several Occasions* in 1748.
- The *Sermons on Several Occasions* ended up in nine volumes which covered a wide range of topics including the nature of God, salvation, the life of devotion, and practical Christian living.
- The subject of this particular sermon consists of an argument that Christianity is an inherently social religion (rather than solitary). Looming in the background is Wesley’s almost decade-old disagreement with the Moravians and mystics (like William Law) about the value of the means of grace and the nature of practical Christian living.

# Auxiliary Components of the Methodist Revival

- Medical dispensary in London (from 1746) and the publication of Primitive Physick (1st ed.1747)
- Lending Stock (from 1746)
- Kingswood School (from 1739; reopened with new bldg in 1748)
- Watch-night Services (from 1742)
- Covenant Renewal Services (from the late 1740s onward)
- Love Feasts (from the late 1730s)

# Leadership Positions within the Methodist Revival

- Class leaders
- Stewards
- Trustees
- Visitors of the Sick
- Helpers (Junior Preachers)
- Assistants (Preachers)

# The General Rules of the United Societies

- Background: Visit to Newcastle in the spring of 1743 revealed problems in the Society that had been formed there the previous year.
- “I read over in the society the rules which all our members are to observe, and desired everyone seriously to consider whether he was willing to conform thereto or no” (Journal for March 6, 1743).

# The General Rules of the United Societies

- Subsequent examination of the members of the Society reduced the membership by 140 persons. 76 of those who departed did so voluntarily, while 64 persons were expelled by Wesley himself. About 700 persons were left in the membership.
- Wesley publishes “The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, in London, Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle upon Tyne” and begins using it as the basis for periodic examinations of all the United Societies, making it the standard by which quarterly class tickets were renewed.

# The General Rules of the United Societies

- 1) Do no harm**
- 2) Do all the good you can**
- 3) Attend upon the ordinances of God:**
  - **The public worship of God;**
  - **The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;**
  - **The Supper of the Lord;**
  - **Family and private prayer;**
  - **Searching the Scriptures; and**
  - **Fasting, or abstinence**

# What Exactly Were the Methodists?

- Leaders were ministers in the Church of England.
- Wesley insisted that Methodists were loyal to the Church of England and told members of Methodist societies to attend their local parish churches.
- Many in the Church of England were critical of Wesley because of both doctrine and practice.
  - Doctrine: the inward witness of the Holy Spirit (assurance) as the evidence of salvation; the notion of Christian perfection that could overcome sin.
  - Practice: organizing local Methodist societies, building Methodist preaching houses, etc.



# What Exactly Were the Methodists?

- Actual makeup of Methodist societies could be diverse: Anglicans; Baptists; Moravians, Quakers, Congregationalists, etc. Participation could also be fluid, with members moving in and out. Methodism was not a church, so communicants from other churches were always the ones taking part in its activities.
- What became known as the “United Societies” in different locales could begin as disparate societies often begun in different circumstances: planted by other evangelical leaders (laity or clergy) or produced by local revival activity. As the movement grew, Wesley consolidated these groups.

# What Exactly Were the Methodists?

- The paradigm of religion in England since the Act of Toleration in 1689 (following the Glorious Revolution) was divided between conformity and dissent. Conformists were those who *conformed* to the teaching and polity of the Church of England. Dissenters were those who *dissented* from the established church and were members of different churches. Wesley's insistence that he was in the Church of England while creating a parallel system of polity caused a great deal of friction. Opponents of the Methodist movement insisted that Methodists should either cease and desist with their activities or else register as dissenters.

# What Exactly Were the Methodists?

- For members of the Church of England, much of the disagreement came over issues of authority:
  - Lay preachers overseen by Wesley (rather than a bishop)
  - Methodist societies resourced by traveling preachers and local lay leadership (rather than an Anglican religious society under a parish priest)
  - Methodist preaching houses existing in a legal gray area—i.e., neither a parish church nor a dissenting meeting house

# What Exactly Were the Methodists?

- The idea of “connection” (or “connexion”) became attached to Methodism as those who were “in connection” with Wesley. This was the term applied to the lay preachers who Wesley authorized to preach according to his direction. Eventually, the terms connection and connectionalism became used for Methodism as a whole as expressive of the Methodist form of polity.

[Heitzenrater, WPM pp.163-171]

# The First Annual Conference – 1744

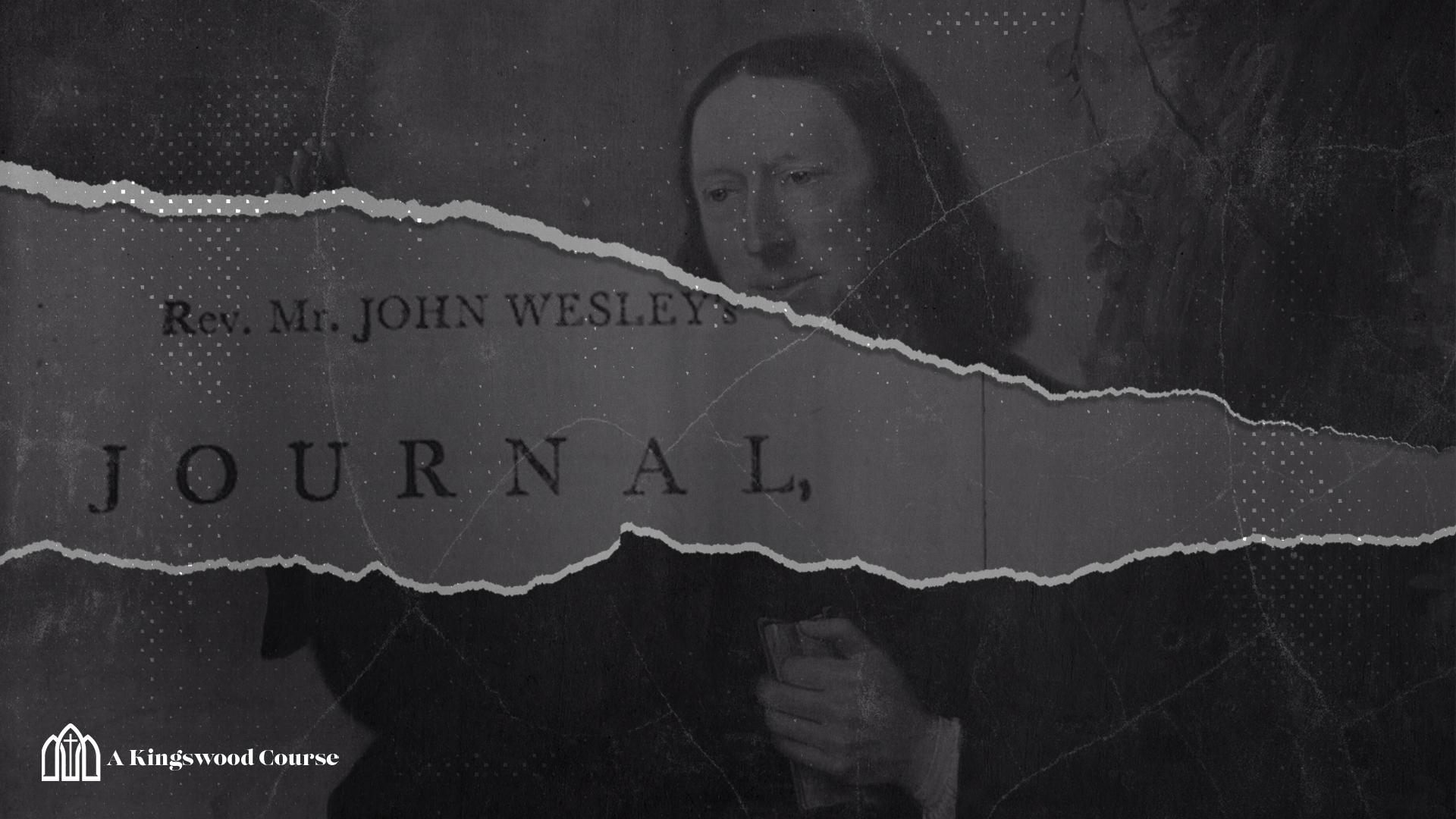
- Met from June 25 to 29, 1744, at the Foundery in London.
- Purpose was to organize the growing movement.
- Three Guiding Questions:
  - What to teach?
  - How to teach?
  - What to do?  
“... that is, how to regulate *doctrine, discipline,*  
*and practice.*”

# The First Annual Conference – 1744

- The conference began with six ministers of the Church of England. After discussion, four lay preachers were invited to participate.
- Doctrinal topics:
  - Justification
  - Faith
  - Sanctification
- Disciplinary topics:
  - Ecclesiology (“What is the Church of England?”)
  - Methodist organization (Societies & Preaching)

# The First Annual Conference – 1744

- Practice-related topics:
  - Office and Rules of Lay Preachers (called “Lay Assistants”)
  - Office and Rules of Stewards of the United Societies



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JOURNAL,



A Kingswood Course



*Doctrines and Discipline in the Minutes  
of the Conferences, 1744-47*

*Editor's introduction.* In 1785, defending himself in face of the furor lately stirred by his "Deed of Declaration," which had given the annual conference a legal basis for continuing after his death, Wesley felt called upon to review the origins of this unique agency in Methodist polity: <sup>1</sup>

In June 1744, I desired my brother and a few other clergymen to meet me in London, to consider how we should proceed to save our own souls and those that heard us. After some time, I invited the lay preachers that were in the house to meet with us. We conferred together for several days and were much comforted and strengthened thereby.

The next year I not only invited most of the "travelling preachers" but several others to confer with me in Bristol. And from that time for some years, though I invited only a part of the "travelling preachers," yet I permitted any that desired it, to be present, not apprehending any ill consequences therefrom.

But two ill consequences soon appeared: one, that the expense was too great to be borne; the other, that many of our people were scattered while they were left without a shepherd. I therefore determined first, that for the time to come, none should be present but those whom I invited; and second, that I would only invite a select number out of every circuit.

This I did for many years, and all that time the term "Conference" meant not so much the conversation we had together as the persons that conferred — namely, those whom I invited to confer with me from time to time. So that all this time it depended on me alone, not only what persons should constitute the Conference, but whether there should be any Conference at all. This lay wholly in my own breast; neither the preachers nor the people having any part or lot in the matter.

Besides the light this passage sheds on Wesley's concept of his own special authority as leader of the Revival, whose ministry was represented and multiplied by those in voluntary connection with him, it also gives us a valuable clue as to the nature and function of the early conferences.

By 1744 the Revival was beginning to lose something of its novelty and to attract both persecutors and misinterpreters. It seems certain that

1. "Thoughts Upon Some Late Occurrences," *Works*, XIII, 248.

it would have been largely dissipated (as Whitefield's movement was) had it not been for the patterns of polity and discipline which Wesley adopted and enforced. The annual "conference" was one of those strokes of practical genius that marked off Wesleyan Methodism from the other vectors of the Evangelical Revival.

What the Methodist preachers needed was an elementary doctrinal compend and an administrative charter. Both of these were hammered out "in conference," and published in the *Minutes*. The procedure was that of group interrogation and debate. Questions might be posed by anyone and discussed by everyone. But the final answers were always pronounced by Wesley himself, in the light of the discussion. The questions and the answers were then minuted and published. No stronger evidence of Wesley's primary concern for sound doctrine in the guidance of his Societies exists than the records of these early "conferences."

The "minutes" printed here are from the text first published in *Publications of the Wesley Historical Society*, No. 1 (1896). This text should be compared — and contrasted — with that of the so-called "Doctrinal Minutes" of *Works*, VIII, pp. 275-98, or the "Large Minutes" in the same volume, pp. 299-338. For the years 1744, 1745, and 1747, the text is based on John Bennet's record, which is somewhat more complete than the only copy by Wesley which has survived. Bennet missed the Conference of 1746, however, and its record is here supplied from Wesley's copy. Both texts have been compared and their variations indicated by brackets <sup>2</sup> (bracketed scriptural references and translations are, however, editorial additions). Intervals and omissions (of doctrinally irrelevant material) are shown by ellipses, with bracketed notations following.

Clumsy and laconic as these "minutes" are in their form and style, they constitute the most important single exhibition of the manner and the substance of Wesley's theologizing — in the midst of a surging revival, in response to actual, urgent questions, in vigorous conversation with his assistants, whose own views spanned most of the live options extant in the theological forum of the time. The distillate of it presented here provides us with an unequalled access to the mind and methodology of this evangelist-theologian.

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2. For details concerning the manuscript backgrounds of the texts involved, cf. *Wesley Historical Society, Proceedings* (Burnley, 1896), I, 3-6.

THE FIRST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*Monday, June 25, 1744*

The following persons being met at the Foundery — John Wesley, Charles Wesley, John Hodges,<sup>1</sup> Henry Piers,<sup>2</sup> Samuel Taylor<sup>3</sup> and John Meriton — after some time spent in prayer, the design of our meeting was proposed, namely, to consider,

1. What to teach;
2. How to teach; and
3. What to do, *i.e.* how to regulate our doctrine, discipline and practice.

But first it was inquired whether any of our lay brethren should be present at this conference, and it was agreed to invite from time to time such of them as we should think proper. 'Twas then asked, "Which of them shall we invite today?" The answer was, "Thomas Richards, Thomas Maxfield, John Bennet and John Downes," who were accordingly brought in. Then was read as follows:

It is desired that all things may be considered as in the immediate presence of God, that we may meet with a single eye and as little children who have everything to learn, that every point may be examined from the foundation, that every person may speak freely whatever is in his heart and that every question proposed may be fully debated and bolted to the bran.

The first preliminary question was then proposed; namely, how far does each of us agree to submit to the unanimous judgment of the rest? It was answered: in speculative things each can only submit so far as his judgment shall be convinced; in every practical point, so far as we can without wounding our consciences. To the second preliminary question, namely, how far should any of us mention to others what may be mentioned here, it was replied: "Not one word which may be here spoken of persons should be mentioned elsewhere; nothing at all, unless so far as we may be convinced the glory of God requires it. And from time to time we will consider on each head, is it for the glory of God that what we have now spoken should be mentioned again?"

About seven o'clock we began to consider the doctrine of Justification, the questions relating to which were as follows, with the substance of the answers thereto:

Q. 1. What is it to be justified?

1. Rector of Wenvoe.      2. Vicar of Bexley.      3. Vicar of Quinton.

A. To be pardoned and received into God's favour and into such a state that, if we continue therein, we shall be finally saved.

Q. 2. Is faith the condition of justification?

A. Yes, for everyone who believeth not is condemned and everyone who believes is justified.

Q. 3. But must not repentance and works meet for repentance go before faith?

A. Without doubt, if by repentance you mean conviction of sin, and by works meet for repentance, obeying God as far as we can, forgiving our brother, leaving off from evil, doing good and using his ordinances according to the power we have received.

Q. 4. What is faith?

A. Faith, in general, is a divine supernatural *ἐλεγχος* ["evidence," "manifestation"] of things not seen, *i.e.* of past, future, or spiritual things. 'Tis a spiritual sight of God and the things of God.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, repentance is a low species of faith, *i.e.* a supernatural sense of an offended God. Justifying faith is a supernatural inward sense or sight of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. First, a sinner is convinced by the Holy Ghost: "Christ loved me and gave himself for me." This is that faith by which he is justified, or pardoned, the moment he receives it. Immediately the same Spirit bears witness, "Thou art pardoned, thou hast redemption in his blood." And this is saving faith, whereby the love of God is shed abroad in his heart.

Q. 5. Have all true Christians this faith? May not a man be justified and not know it?

A. That all true Christians have this faith, even such a faith as implies an assurance of God's love, appears from Rom. 8:15, Eph. 4:32, 2 Cor. 13:5, Heb. 8:10, 1 Jn. 4:10 and 19.<sup>5</sup> And that no man can be justified and not know it appears farther from the very nature of things — for faith after repentance is ease after pain, rest after toil, light after darkness — and from the immediate as well as distant fruits.

Q. 6. But may not a man go to heaven without it?

A. It doth not appear from Holy Writ that a man who hears the gospel can,<sup>6</sup> whatever a heathen may do.<sup>7</sup>

4. This is Wesley's standard definition, often repeated with only slight variations. For examples, see *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Pt. II, par. 1 (below, pp. 275-76), *An Earnest Appeal*, par. 6 (below, p. 386), *A Farther Appeal*, Pt. I; cf. *Works*, VIII, 48; *Letters*, II, 48-50; III, 162, 174.

5. This corrects the text, which actually reads: "and last 1 John v. 19."

6. [Au.] Mk. 16:16.

7. [Au.] Rom. 2:14.

Q. 7. What are the immediate fruits of justifying faith?

A. Peace, joy, love, power over all outward sin and power to keep down all inward sin.

Q. 8. Does any one believe who has not the witness in himself or any longer than he sees, loves and obeys God?

A. We apprehend not: "seeing God" being the very essence of faith; love and obedience, the inseparable properties of it.

Q. 9. What sins are consistent with justifying faith?

A. No wilful sin. If a believer wilfully sins, he thereby forfeits his pardon. Neither is it possible he should have justifying faith again without previously repenting.

Q. 10. Must every believer come into a state of doubt or fear or darkness? Will he do so unless by ignorance or unfaithfulness? Does God otherwise withdraw himself?

A. It is certain a believer need never again come into condemnation. It seems he need not come into a state of doubt or fear or darkness, and that (ordinarily at least) he will not, unless by ignorance and unfaithfulness. Yet it is true that the first joy does seldom last long, that it is commonly followed by doubts and fears, and that God usually permits very great heaviness before any large manifestation of himself.

Q. 11. Are works necessary to the continuance of faith?

A. Without doubt, for a man may forfeit the gift of God either by sins of omission or commission.

Q. 12. Can faith be lost but for want of works?

A. It cannot but through disobedience.

Q. 13. How is faith made perfect by works?

A. The more we exert our faith, the more 'tis increased. To him that hath, more and more is given.

Q. 14. St. Paul says Abraham was not justified by works; St. James, he was justified by works. Do they not then contradict each other?

A. No, first, because they do not speak of the same justification. St. Paul speaks of that justification which was when Abraham was seventy-five years old,<sup>8</sup> above twenty years before Isaac was born; St. James,<sup>9</sup> of that justification which was when he offered up Isaac on the altar.

No, secondly, because they do not speak of the same works. St. Paul speaks of works that precede faith, St. James, of works that spring from faith.

Q. 15. In what sense is Adam's sin imputed to all mankind?

8. Cf. Rom. 4:1-25.

9. Cf. Jas. 2:21-26.

A. In Adam all died — *i.e.* (1) our bodies then became mortal; (2) our souls died — *i.e.* were disunited from God; (3) and hence we are all born with a sinful, devilish nature, by reason whereof (4) we all are children of wrath, liable to death eternal.<sup>10</sup>

Q. 16. In what sense is the righteousness of Christ imputed to believers, or to all mankind?

A. We do not find it affirmed expressly in Scripture that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any, although we do find that faith is imputed unto us for righteousness. That text, "As by one man's disobedience all men were made sinners, so by the obedience of one all were made righteous" [Rom. 5:19], we conceive means, by the merits of Christ all men are cleared from the guilt of Adam's actual sin. We conceive farther that, through the obedience and death of Christ:

1. The bodies of all men become immortal after the resurrection;
2. Their souls recover a capacity of spiritual life;
3. And an actual seed or spark thereof;
4. All believers become children of grace;
5. Are re-united to God; and
6. Made partakers of the divine nature.

Q. 17. Have we not then unawares leaned too much towards Calvinism?

A. It seems we have.

Q. 18. Have we not also leaned towards antinomianism?

A. We are afraid we have.

Q. 19. What is antinomianism?

A. The doctrine which makes void the law through faith.

Q. 20. What are the main pillars thereof?

- A. 1. That Christ abolished the moral law;
2. That Christians therefore are not obliged to observe it;
3. That one branch of Christian liberty is liberty from obeying the commandments of God;
4. That it is bondage to do a thing because it is commanded or forbear it because it is forbidden;
5. That a believer is not obliged to use the ordinances of God or to do good works;
6. That a preacher ought not to exhort to good works — not unbelievers because it is hurtful, not believers because it is needless.

10. [Au.] Rom. 5:18; Eph. 2:3.

Q. 21. What was the occasion of St. Paul writing his Epistle to the Galatians?

A. The coming of certain men among the Christians who taught, "Except ye be circumcised and keep the whole law of Moses, ye cannot be saved."

Q. 22. What is his main design therein?

A. To prove, (1) that no man can be justified or saved by the works of the law, either moral or ritual; (2) that every believer is justified by faith in Christ without the works of the law.

Q. 23. What does he mean by "the works of the law" [*cf.* Gal. 2:16; 3:5, 10]?

A. All works that do not spring from faith in Christ.

Q. 24. What is meant by being under the law?

A. Under the Mosaic dispensation.

Q. 25. What law has Christ abolished?

A. The ritual law of Moses.

Q. 26. What is meant by liberty?

A. Liberty (1) from the law; (2) from sin.

On Tuesday morning, June the 26th, was considered the doctrine of Sanctification, with regard to which the questions asked and the substance of the answers given were as follows:

Q. 1. What is it to be sanctified?

A. To be renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness.

Q. 2. Is faith the condition or the instrument of sanctification, or present salvation?

A. It is both the condition and the instrument of it. When we begin to believe, then salvation begins. And as faith increases, holiness increases till we are created anew.

Q. 3. Is not every believer a new creature?

A. Not in the sense of St. Paul, 2 Cor. 5:17, "All old things are passed away in him who is so a new creature and all things become new."

Q. 4. But has every believer a new heart?

A. A great change is wrought in the heart or affections of every one as soon as he believes; yet he is still full of sin, so that he has not then a new heart in the full sense.

Q. 5. Is not every believer born of God, a temple of the Holy Ghost?

A. In a low sense he is. But he that is in the proper sense born of God cannot commit sin.

Q. 6. What is implied in being made perfect in love?

A. The loving the Lord our God with all our mind and soul and strength.<sup>11</sup>

Q. 7. Does this imply that he who is thus made perfect cannot commit sin?

A. St. John affirms it expressly. He cannot commit sin because he is born of God.<sup>12</sup> And, indeed, how should he, seeing there is now none occasion of stumbling in him?<sup>13</sup>

Q. 8. Does it imply that all inward sin is taken away?

A. Without doubt, or how should he be said to be saved from all his uncleanness?<sup>14</sup>

Q. 9. Can we know one who is thus saved? What is a reasonable proof of it?

A. We cannot, without the miraculous discernment of spirits, be infallibly certain of those who are thus saved. But we apprehend these would be the best proofs which the nature of the thing admits (unless they should be called to resist unto blood):

(1) if we had sufficient evidence of their unblameable behaviour, at least from the time of their justification;

(2) if they give a distinct account of the time and manner wherein they were saved from sin and of the circumstances thereof with such sound speech as could not be reproved; and

(3) [if] upon a strict inquiry from time to time, for two or three years following, it appeared that all their tempers, words, and actions were holy and unreprouable.

Q. 10. How should we treat those who think they have attained?

A. Exhort them to forget the things that are behind, to watch and pray always that God may search the ground of their hearts.

Wednesday, June the 27th, we began to consider points of discipline, with regard to which the questions asked and the substance of the answers given were as follows:

Q. 1. What is the Church of England?

11. [Au.] Deut. 6:5, 30:6; Ezek. 36 [25-29].

12. [Au.] 1 John 3:9.

13. [Au.] 1 John 2:10.

14. [Au.] 1 John 2:29. [Ed.] But see 1 Jn. 1:9; *cf.* Ezek. 36:29.

A. According to the 20th Article, the visible Church of England is the congregation of English believers in which the pure word of God is preached and the sacraments duly administered. But the word church is sometimes taken in a looser sense for a congregation professing to believe. So it is taken in the 26th Article and in the first, second, and third chapters of Revelations [*sic*].

Q. 2. What is a member of the Church of England?

A. A believer hearing the pure word preached and partaking of the sacraments duly administered in this Church.

Q. 3. What is it to be zealous for the Church?

A. To be earnestly desirous of its welfare [and increase: of its welfare]<sup>15</sup> by the confirmation of its present members in faith, hearing and communicating; [and] of its increase, by the addition of new members.

Q. 4. How are we to defend the doctrine of the Church?

A. Both by our preaching and living.

Q. 5. Do the 8th, 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 21st, 23rd, and 27th Articles agree with Scripture?

A. We will consider.

Q. 6. How shall we bear the most effectual testimony against that part of the clergy who either preach or live contrary to the doctrine of the Church of England?

A. Not by preaching, for they do not hear us; but by an earnest and tender address from the press.

Q. 7. How should we behave at a false or railing sermon?

A. If it only contain personal reflections we may quietly suffer it. If it blaspheme the work and Spirit of God, it may be better to go out of church. In either case, if opportunity serve, it would be well to speak or write to the minister.

Q. 8. How far is it our duty to obey the bishops?

A. In all things indifferent. And on this ground of obeying them, we should observe the canons so far as we can with a safe conscience.

Q. 9. Do we separate from the Church?

A. We conceive not. We hold communion therewith for conscience sake, by constant attending both the word preached and the sacraments administered therein.

Q. 10. What then do they mean who say, "You separate from the Church"?

A. We cannot certainly tell. Perhaps they have no determinate mean-

15. Brackets denote Wesley's amendments in *Minutes (Works, VIII, 280)*.

ing, unless by the Church they mean themselves, *i.e.* that part of the clergy who accuse us of preaching false doctrine. And it is sure we do herein separate from them by maintaining the doctrine which they deny.

Q. 11. But do you not weaken the Church?

A. Do not they who ask this by the Church mean themselves? We do not purposely weaken any man's hands, but accidentally we may thus far: they who come to know the truth by us will esteem such as deny it less than they did before. But the Church in the proper sense, the congregation of English believers, we do not weaken at all.

Q. 12. Do not you entail a schism on the Church? That is, is it not probable that your hearers after your death will be scattered into all sects and parties, or that they will form themselves into a distinct sect?

A. 1. We are persuaded the body of our hearers will even after our death remain in the Church, unless they be thrust out.

2. We believe, notwithstanding, either that they will be thrust out or that they will leaven the whole Church.

3. We do, and will do, all we can to prevent those consequences which are supposed likely to happen after our death.

4. But we cannot with good conscience neglect the present opportunity of saving souls while we live for fear of consequences which may possibly or probably happen after we are dead.

Thursday, June the 28th, were considered other points of discipline. The substance of the questions and answers was as follows:

Q. 1. How are the people divided who desire to be under your care?

A. Into the United Societies, the Bands, the Select Societies, and the Penitents.

Q. 2. How do these differ from each other?

A. The United Societies (which are the largest of all) consist of awakened persons. Part of these, who are supposed to have remission of sins, are more closely united in the Bands. Those in the Bands who seem to walk in the light of God compose the Select Societies. Those of them who have made shipwreck of the faith meet apart as Penitents.

Q. 3. What are the Rules of the United Societies?

A. Those that follow. (Then they were read.)<sup>16</sup>

Q. 4. What are the Rules of the Bands?

A. They are these (which were read and considered).<sup>17</sup>

16. See below, p. 177 ff.

17. See below, p. 180 f.

Q. 5. What are the Rules of the Select Societies?

A. The same [as above], and these three:

1. Let nothing spoken in this Society be spoken again; no, not even to the members of it.
2. Every member agrees absolutely to submit to his minister in all indifferent things.
3. Every member, till we can have all things common, will bring once a week, *bona fide*, all he can spare towards a common stock. . . . [Q. 6-11 omitted.]

Q. 12. What is the best way of spreading the gospel?

A. To go a little and a little farther from London, Bristol, St. Ives, Newcastle or any other Society. So a little leaven would spread with more effect and less noise, and help would always be at hand.

Q. 13. What is the best general method in preaching?

- A. 1. To invite.
2. To convince.
  3. To offer Christ; and, lastly,
  4. To build up — and to do this (in some measure) in every sermon.

Friday, June the 29th, we considered:

Q. 1. Are Lay Assistants allowable?

A. Only in cases of necessity.

Q. 2. What is the office of our Assistants?

- A. In the absence of the minister,<sup>18</sup> to feed and guide, to teach and govern the flock:
1. To expound every morning and evening.
  2. To meet the United Societies, the Bands, the Select Societies, and the Penitents every week.
  3. To visit the classes (London<sup>19</sup> 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 and the Leaders, schoolmasters and housekeepers, faithfully discharge their several offices.

18. *I.e.* the *ordained* rector or curate; *cf.* Wesley's distinction between "priests" and "preachers" in his sermon "On the Ministerial Office," *Works*, VII, 273-77.

19. A later note of Wesley's adds, "and Bristol."

7. To meet the Stewards, the Leaders of the Bands and Classes weekly, and overlook their accounts.

Q. 3. What are the Rules of an Assistant?

- A. 1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment, never be triflingly employed, never while away time; spend no more time at any place than is strictly necessary.
2. Be serious. Let your motto be, "holiness unto the Lord." Avoid all lightness as you would avoid hell-fire, and laughing as you would cursing and swearing.
  3. Touch no woman. Be as loving as you will but hold your hands off 'em. Custom is nothing to us.
  4. 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.
  5. Speak evil of no one, else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned.
  6. Tell everyone 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, therefore, to cast the fire out of your bosom.
  7. 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
  8. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood or drawing water, if time permit; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbour's.
  9. Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry or clothes 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.
  10. Contract no debt without my knowledge.
  11. Be punctual: do everything exactly at the time. And, in general, do not mend our rules but keep them, not for wrath but for conscience' sake.
  12. Act in all things not according to your own will but as a son in the gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct: partly in visiting the flock from house to house (the sick in particular); partly, in such a course of reading, meditation and prayer as we advise from time to time.

Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work which we direct, at those times and places which we judge most for his glory. . . . [Q. 4-5 omitted.]

- Q. 6. What is the office of a Steward?
- A. 1. To manage the temporal things of the Society.  
 2. To receive the weekly contributions of the Leaders of the classes.  
 3. To expend what is needful from time to time.  
 4. To send relief to the poor.  
 5. To see that the public buildings be kept clean and in good repair.  
 6. To keep an exact account of receipts and expenses.  
 7. To inform the Helpers if the rules of the house, of the school, of the Bands, or of the Society, be not punctually observed: and  
 8. If need be, to inform the minister hereof.  
 9. To tell the Helpers in love if they think anything amiss in their doctrine or life.  
 10. If it be not removed, to send timely notice to the minister.  
 11. To meet his fellow Steward weekly, in order to consult together on the preceding heads.
- Q. 7. What are the Rules of a Steward?
- A. 1. Be frugal. Save everything that can be saved honestly.  
 2. Spend no more than you receive. Contract no debt.  
 3. Do nothing rashly. Let every design be thoroughly weighed before you begin to execute it.  
 4. Have no long accounts. Pay everything within the week.  
 5. Give none that ask relief an ill word or ill look. Do not hurt them if you cannot help them.  
 6. Expect no thanks from man.  
 7. Remember you are a servant of the Helper, not his master; therefore speak to him always as such. . . . [Q. 8-13 omitted.]
- Q. 14. What books may an Assistant read?
- A. Sallust, Caesar, Tully,<sup>20</sup> Erasmus, Castellio,<sup>21</sup> Terence, Virgil, Horace, Vida,<sup>22</sup> Buchanan,<sup>23</sup> G. Test.,<sup>24</sup> Epictetus, Plato, Ignatius, Ephraim
20. Marcus Tullius Cicero.  
 21. Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563); cf. his *De haereticis, an sint persequendi* (1554). *GIROLAMO*  
 22. Marco *Giralamo* Vida (c. 1489-1566); cf. his *Ars Poetica* (1527).  
 23. George Buchanan (1506-1582), Scottish humanist and jurist whose Latin translations of the Psalms were much admired in the eighteenth century.  
 24. Greek Testament; cf. Wesley Historical Society, *Proceedings*, I, 29.

Syrus, Homer, *Greek Epigrams*, Duport,<sup>25</sup> Bp. Ussher's *Sermons*, Arndt,<sup>26</sup> Boehm,<sup>27</sup> Nalson,<sup>28</sup> Pascal, Francke,<sup>29</sup> R. Gell,<sup>30</sup> our *Tracts*.<sup>31</sup> . . . [Q. 15-18 omitted, as well as minutes for Saturday, June 30.]



### THE SECOND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*Bristol, Thursday, August 1, 1745*

The following persons being met together at the New Room — John Wesley, Charles Wesley, John Hodges, Thomas Richards, Samuel Larwood, Thomas Meyrick, James Wheatley, Richard Moss, John Slocombe, Herbert Jenkins, Marmaduke Gwynne — it was inquired:

- Q. 1. Should we still consider ourselves as little children, who have everything to learn?
- A. Yes, so far as to have our minds always open to any farther light which God may give us.
- Q. 2. What general method may we observe in our following conferences?
- A. 1. To read and weigh at every conference each article of those preceding.  
 2. To speak freely and hear calmly touching each, that we may either retract, amend or enlarge it.
- Q. 3. Should not the time of this conference be a time of particular watching and self-denial?

25. James Duport (1606-1679), Cambridge classical scholar, best known for his collection of Homeric aphorisms, *Homeri gnomologia* (1660).

26. Johann Arndt (1555-1621), early and influential Lutheran pietist; cf. his *Wahre Christentum* (1606-1610); in English, *True Christianity*, trans. by A. W. Boehm (1712).

27. Anthony William Boehm (1673-1722), German chaplain at St. James's; author of *Discourses and Tracts* (1716). See below, p. 162.

28. Valentine Nalson (1683-1723), vicar of St. Martin's, York; author of *Twenty Sermons preached in the Cathedral of York* (1724; 2d ed., 1737). See below, p. 163.

29. August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), greatest of the German pietists. Cf. his *Nicodemus, or a Treatise on the Fear of Man* (1706) and *The Marvellous Footsteps of Divine Providence* (1706).

30. Robert Gell (1595-1665), chaplain to Archbishop of Canterbury, Rector of St. Mary, Aldermanbury, London; author of *Remains; or Select Scriptures of the New Testament* (1676).

31. Cf. a newly discovered letter from Wesley to Peard Dickinson, in Mrs. John Warnick, "Four Unpublished Letters of John Wesley," *The Perkins School of Theology Journal*, XIII (1960), No. 2, 28-32. See also Wesley Historical Society, *Proceedings*, I, 28-29.

promised is still behind. Therefore, as my work is great, and my time short, I waive that dispute for the present. And perhaps, when I shall have received farther light, I may be convinced that 'gospel holiness' (as Mr. Tucker believes) is 'a necessary qualification, antecedent to justification'<sup>20</sup> and that Christ did not *in any degree* fulfil the terms of justification *in our stead*, but having purchased for us sufficient powers and abilities to perform them, then left us to fulfil them ourselves.<sup>21</sup> This appears to me now to be directly opposite to the gospel of Christ. But I will endeavour, <sup>10</sup> impartially, to consider what shall be advanced in defence of it. And may he who knoweth my simpleness teach me his way, and give me a right judgment in all things!<sup>22</sup>

Rupert E. Davies, ed., The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, + Design, Vol. 9 of the Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> Tucker, pp. 46-47.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50; this passage Wesley omitted from *Works* (1772).

<sup>22</sup> For the closing phrase see BCP, Collect for Whit Sunday.

## GENERAL RULES AND RULES OF THE BAND SOCIETIES

### AN INTRODUCTORY COMMENT

*Wesley drew up his Rules of the Band Societies (see pp. 77-79 below) in December 1738, before the emergence of the distinctively Methodist societies in Bristol and London. The Methodist societies attracted and included, not only those who were willing to meet 'in band', but also a much larger and less homogeneous group of people who expressed a desire to be saved from their sins, but did not necessarily understand the full implications of belonging to the societies. From 1741 discipline was exercised by renewing or withholding the quarterly ticket of membership, but something more was needed. This became apparent after Wesley had interviewed every member of the societies in London, Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle upon Tyne. In Newcastle he had felt himself bound to exclude fifty members out of eight hundred for non-performance of their Methodist obligations.*

*So he published these General Rules in Newcastle in early 1743. They were intended to illustrate the ways in which the three principles—'doing no harm', 'doing good', and 'attending upon all the ordinances of God'—were expected by Wesley to work out in practical living. He claimed that both the principles and their application were based on the New Testament and the practice of the apostolic church (for his understanding of which he placed great faith in William Cave's Primitive Christianity).*

*In earlier and later editions during his lifetime Charles Wesley's hymn 'A Prayer for those who are convinced of Sin' (beginning 'O most compassionate High Priest') was added as an appendix, and in some editions the Rules of the Band Societies were included. The General Rules (which became the usual name for this work) have been frequently revised and republished since Wesley's time.*

*For a summary of the thirty-nine editions of the General Rules published during Wesley's lifetime, a stemma illustrating the transmission of the text, and a list of the substantive variant readings from the edited text (based on the 1st edn., Newcastle, Gooding, 1743), see Appendix A, pp. 541ff. For fuller bibliographical details see*



T H E  
NATURE, DESIGN,  
A N D  
GENERAL RULES,  
O F T H E  
United Societies,  
I N  
*London, Bristol, King's-wood,  
and Newcastle upon Tyne.*



---

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE,  
Printed by JOHN GOODING, on the *Side*.  
[Price One Penny.]  
M D C C X L I I I .

Intro.—§3      *General Rules of the United Societies*      69  
Bibliography, No. 73. For a stemma of the nineteen editions of the  
Rules of the Band Societies see *Appendix A*, pp. 541ff., and see also  
Bibliography, No. 81.

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the  
United Societies  
in London, Bristol, Kingswood,  
and Newcastle upon Tyne  
(1743)      5

1. In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to me in London who appeared to be deeply convinced of sin, and earnestly groaning for redemption. They desired (as did two or three more the next day) that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come,<sup>1</sup> 10 which they saw continually hanging over their heads. That we might have more time for this great work I appointed a day when they might all come together, which from thenceforward they did every week, namely, on Thursday, in the evening. To these, and as many more as desired to join with them (for their number 15 increased daily), I gave those advices from time to time which I judged most needful for them; and we always concluded our meeting with prayer suited to their several necessities.<sup>2</sup>

2. This was the rise of the United Society, first at London, and then in other places.<sup>3</sup> Such a Society is no other than 'a company 20 of men "having the form, and seeking the power of godliness";<sup>4</sup> united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation'.<sup>5</sup>

3. That it may the more easily be discerned whether they are 25 indeed working out their own salvation, each Society is divided into smaller companies, called Classes, according to their

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 3:7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Plain Account*, I.6, p. 256 below.

<sup>3</sup> 18th edn. (New York, Ross, 1788), 'first in Europe, and then in America'.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. 2 Tim. 3:5.

<sup>5</sup> See Phil. 2:12.

respective places of abode. There are about twelve persons in every class, one of whom is styled *the Leader*. It is his business:

(1). To see each person in his class once a week at the least; in order

5 To receive what they are willing to give toward the relief of the poor;<sup>6</sup>

To inquire how their souls prosper;

To advise, reprove, comfort, or exhort, as occasion may require.

10 (2). To meet the Minister and the stewards of the Society once a week, in order:

To pay in to the stewards what they have received of their several classes in the week preceding;

To show their account of what each person has contributed; and

15 To inform the Minister of any that are sick, or of any that walk disorderly and will not be reprov'd.<sup>7</sup>

4. There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies, 'a desire to flee from  
20 the wrath to come,<sup>8</sup> to be saved from their sins'.<sup>9</sup> But wherever this is really fixed in the soul it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

25 *First*, By doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind—especially that which is most generally practised. Such is:

The taking the name of God in vain.<sup>10</sup>

The profaning the day of the Lord, either by doing ordinary work thereon, or by buying or selling.

30 Drunkenness, *buying or selling spirituous liquors; or drinking them* (unless in cases of extreme necessity).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Some early Irish edns., beginning with that of Dublin, Powell, 1747, here add, 'and the necessary expenses of the Society'. The 18th edn. (New York, Ross, 1788) reads, 'towards the relief of the church and poor', and adds the footnote: 'These parts refer wholly to towns and cities, where the poor are generally numerous, and church expenses considerable.' The added section sign shows that this footnote applied also to the class receipts noted in the second paragraph of *General Rules*, §3(2). (For many minor variants in the American edn. see Appendix A, pp. 541ff. below.)

<sup>7</sup> The 1788 New York edn. omits para. 3 and reverses the order of paras. 2 and 4.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 3:7, etc. The 1788 New York edn. adds here, 'i.e., a desire'.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Matt. 1:21, etc.

<sup>10</sup> See Exod. 20:7, etc.

<sup>11</sup> The 4th edn. of the *Discipline* (Kollock, 1788) included, as the first of the 'useful pieces annexed', the 19th American edn. of the *Rules* and added as an extension: '... drinking them; especially the buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women, or

*Fighting*, quarrelling, brawling; brother 'going to law'<sup>12</sup> with brother; returning evil for evil,<sup>13</sup> or railing for railing; the 'using many words'<sup>14</sup> in buying or selling.

The *buying or selling uncustomed goods*.

The *giving or taking things on usury*.<sup>15</sup>

5 *Uncharitable or unprofitable conversation, especially speaking evil of ministers or those in authority*.<sup>16</sup>

Doing to others as we would not they should do unto us.<sup>17</sup>

Doing what we know is not for the glory of God, as,

The 'putting on of gold or costly apparel', particularly *the* 10 *wearing of calashes*,<sup>18</sup> *high-heads, or enormous bonnets*,<sup>19</sup>

The *taking such diversions* as cannot be used in the name of the Lord Jesus,

The *singing those songs, or reading those books*, which do not tend to the knowledge or love of God;

Softness, and needless self-indulgence;

Laying up treasures upon earth;

children, with an intention to enslave them'. In the 1789 and subsequent edns. of the *Discipline* this addition became a separate rule, with the omission of 'especially the'. Slaveholding was prohibited by the 'Christmas Conference' of 1784-85, a prohibition vigorously supported by Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury, but its enforcement seemed impracticable under the prevailing conditions, and it became a dead letter. This rule does not appear in the separately printed 18th edn. of the *Rules* (New York, Ross, 1788), and the history of its insertion remains a mystery, though one suspects that it was done on the initiative of Thomas Coke. It appears only in the reprint of the *Rules* in the 5th edn. of the *Discipline* (New York, Ross, 1789); cf. J. J. Tigert, *A Constitutional History of American Episcopal Methodism* (6th edn., Nashville, 1916), p. 252; cf. also David Sherman, *History of the Revisions of the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1874), pp. 113-18.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 1 Cor. 6:6. The 1st edn. read 'going to law', the fuller version appearing first in the 7th Bristol edn. (1762) and the 8th London edn. (1764), and frequently thereafter where these editions were the progenitors of others. The alteration probably resulted from the review of this work on Aug. 26, 1756, at Wesley's Bristol Conference (see Vol. 10 in this edn.).

<sup>13</sup> See 1 Pet. 3:9.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Eccus. 20:8, 'He that useth many words shall be abhorred;' see also Eccus. 13:11.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Lev. 25:36; Isa. 24:2, etc.

<sup>16</sup> 'especially . . . authority' was first added in the 4th edn. (London, Strahan, 1744), certainly by Wesley himself. This was altered in the 7th edn., (Dublin, Powell, 1747) and a few which derived their text from this, to 'especially speaking evil of magistrates or of ministers', whose opening word was altered to 'particularly' in the 7th edn. (Bristol, Pine, 1762), and those stemming from it. In some editions 'of' was inserted before 'ministers'. For the relations between the many editions, the stemma showing their relationships, and the other variant readings, see Appendix A, pp. 541ff. below.

<sup>17</sup> See Matt. 7:12, etc.

<sup>18</sup> A 'calash' is a woman's hooped silk hood.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. 1 Pet. 3:3, 'particularly . . . bonnets' was first added (apparently by Wesley) in the 17th edn. (London, Paramore, 1781), and remained a regular part of the text.

Borrowing without a probability of paying: or taking up goods without a probability of paying for them.<sup>20</sup>

5. It is expected of all who continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

5 *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 is possible to all men.<sup>21</sup>

To their bodies, of the ability which God giveth, by giving food to the hungry, by clothing the naked, by visiting or helping them  
10 that are sick, or in prison.<sup>22</sup>

To their souls, by instructing, *reproving*, or exhorting all they<sup>23</sup> have any intercourse with; trampling under foot that enthusiastic doctrine of devils, that 'we are not to do good unless *our heart be free to it*.'<sup>24</sup>

15 By doing good especially to them that are of the household of faith,<sup>25</sup> or groaning so to be; employing them preferably to others, buying one of another, helping each other in business—and that so much the more because the world will love its own, and them only.

20 By all possible *diligence and frugality*, that the gospel be not blamed.

By running with patience the race that is set before them;<sup>26</sup> 'denying themselves, and taking up their cross daily';<sup>27</sup> submitting to bear the reproach of Christ, to be as the filth and offscouring of  
25 the world;<sup>28</sup> and looking that men should 'say all manner of evil of them falsely, for their Lord's sake'.<sup>29</sup>

6. It is expected of all who desire to continue in these societies that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation,

<sup>20</sup> This paragraph was first added by Wesley in the 7th edn. (Bristol, Pine, 1762), and continued as his authorized text. In the 1st edn. it closed, 'paying them'; in which 'for' was first inserted in the 17th edn. (London, Paramore, 1781).

<sup>21</sup> See Gal. 6:10.

<sup>22</sup> See Matt. 25:35-39.

<sup>23</sup> The first three editions read 'we', the correction being made in the major revision of 1744, but only surviving in the 5th (Cork, Harrison, 1748?), the 5th (Limerick, Welsh, 1748?), and Wesley's *Works*, 1772.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Wesley's lengthy challenge to the Moravians, Aug. 5-8, 1740, espec. §16, in refusing to encourage good works, but saying only: 'If you find yourself moved, if your heart is free to it, then reprove, exhort, relieve' (26:30 in this edn.).

<sup>25</sup> See Gal. 6:10.

<sup>26</sup> See Heb. 12:1.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Luke 9:23.

<sup>28</sup> See 1 Cor. 4:13.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Matt. 5:11.

*Thirdly*, By attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are:

The public worship of God;

The ministry of the Word, either read or expounded;

The Supper of the Lord;

Family and private prayer;<sup>30</sup>

Searching the Scriptures;<sup>31</sup> and

Fasting, or abstinence.

7. These are the General Rules of our societies; all which we are taught of God to observe, even in his written Word, the only  
10 rule, and the sufficient rule, both of our faith and practice. And all these we know his Spirit writes on every truly awakened heart. If there be any among us who observe them not, who habitually break any one of them,<sup>32</sup> let it be made known unto them who  
15 watch<sup>33</sup> over that soul, as they that must give account. We will admonish him of the error of his ways. We will bear with him for a season. But if then he repent not, he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls.<sup>34</sup>

John Wesley

Charles Wesley 20

May 1, 1743<sup>35</sup>

*A Prayer for those who are convinced of Sin*<sup>36</sup>

1. O most compassionate High Priest,  
Full of all grace we know thou art;  
Faith puts its hand upon thy breast,  
And feels beneath thy panting heart.

25

<sup>30</sup> 'Family and' were first added to Wesley's orig. 'Private prayer' in the major 1744 revision.

<sup>31</sup> See John 5:39; Acts 17:11.

<sup>32</sup> From 1764 this became in most edns., 'any of them'.

<sup>33</sup> The 1st edn. and its reprint in 1743 (A, B), both have 'unto him who watches', i.e., John Wesley, 'as one that must give account', 'I' to begin the following sentences, and the signature of JW only.

<sup>34</sup> See Ezek. 3:19, etc.

<sup>35</sup> The 1st edn. is signed by JW only, and dated 'Feb. 23, 1742/3'. Several edns. from the 8th (London, n.p., 1764), are dated 'May 1, 1764'. The extant American edns. are signed 'Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury', and dated 'May 28, 1787'.

<sup>36</sup> This composition by Charles Wesley was published in his *Hymns and Sacred Poems* (Bristol, Farley, 1749), II.89-91. The poem was included in all the English edns. of the *General Rules* except the 4th, 1744 (which contained the Band Rules), and that in Wesley's *Works*.

2. Thy panting heart for sinners bleeds;  
Thy mercies and compassions move;  
Thy groaning Spirit intercedes,  
And yearn the bowels of thy love.
- 5 3. Hear then the pleading Spirit's prayer  
(The Spirit's will to thee is known)  
For all who now thy sufferings share,  
And still for full redemption groan.
- 10 4. Poor tempted souls, with tempests tossed,  
And strangers to a moment's peace,  
Disconsolate, afflicted, lost—  
Lost in an howling wilderness.
- 15 5. Torn with an endless war within,  
Vexed with the flesh and spirit's strife,  
And struggling in the toils of sin,  
And agonizing into life.
- 20 6. O let the pris'ners' mournful cries  
As incense in thy sight appear,  
Their humble wailings pierce the skies,  
If haply they may feel thee near!
- 25 7. The captive exiles make their moans,  
From sin impatient to be free;  
Call home, call home thy banished ones!  
Lead captive their captivity!
- 30 8. Show them the blood that bought their peace,  
The anchor of their steadfast hope,  
And bid their guilty terrors cease,  
And bring the ransomed pris'ners up.
- 35 9. Out of the deep regard their cries,  
The fallen raise, the mourners cheer;  
O Sun of righteousness, arise,  
And scatter all their doubt and fear!
- 40 10. Pity the day of feeble things;  
O gather ev'ry halting soul,  
And drop salvation from thy wings,  
And make the contrite sinner whole.
11. Stand by them in the fiery hour,  
Their feebleness of mind defend;  
And in their weakness show thy power,  
And make them patient to the end.
12. O satisfy their soul in drought;  
Give them thy saving health to see,  
And let thy mercy find them out;  
And let thy mercy reach to me.

13. Hast thou the work of grace begun,  
And brought them to the birth in vain?  
O let thy children see the sun!  
Let all their souls be born again!
14. Relieve the souls whose cross we bear, 5  
For whom thy suffering members mourn,  
Answer our faith's effectual prayer,  
Bid ev'ry struggling child be born.
15. Hark how thy turtle-dove complains, 10  
And see us weep for Zion's woe!  
Pity thy suffering people's pain;  
Avenge us of our inbred foe.
16. Whom thou hast bound, O Lord, expel, 15  
And take his armour all away;  
The man of sin, the child of hell,  
The devil in our nature slay.
17. Him and his works at once destroy, 20  
The *being* of all sin erase,  
And turn our mourning into joy,  
And clothe us with the robes of praise.
18. Then when our sufferings all are past,  
O let us pure and perfect be,  
And gain our calling's prize at last,  
For ever sanctified in thee.

# Rules of the Band Societies

Drawn up Dec. 25, 1738

The design of our meeting is to obey that command of God, 'Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another that ye may be healed.'<sup>1</sup> 5

To this end we intend:

1. To meet once a week, at the least.
2. To come punctually at the hour appointed, without some extraordinary reason.
3. To begin (those of us who are present) exactly at the hour, 10 with singing or prayer.
4. To speak, each of us in order, freely and plainly the true state of our souls, with the faults we have committed in thought, word, or deed, and the temptations we have felt since our last meeting. 15
5. To end every meeting with prayer, suited to the state of each person present.
6. To desire some person among us to speak *his*<sup>2</sup> 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. 20

Some of the questions proposed to every one before *he* is admitted amongst us may be to this effect:

1. Have you the forgiveness of your sins?
2. Have you peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ?<sup>3</sup>
3. Have you the witness of God's Spirit with your spirit that 25 you are a child of God?<sup>4</sup>
4. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart?<sup>5</sup>
5. Has no sin, inward or outward, dominion over you?<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jas. 5:16.

<sup>2</sup> The italics are used here and similarly elsewhere in this document to indicate that the alternative 'her' may be substituted as necessary.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 5:1.

<sup>4</sup> See Rom. 8:16.

<sup>5</sup> See Rom. 5:5.

<sup>6</sup> See Rom. 6:14.

May 1750.

\* \* \* \* \*  
 \* If ye love me,  
 \* keep my Com-  
 \* mandments.  
 \* John xiv. 15.  
 \* B

*Josiah Dornford*



*Eliz. Newington  
Oct 1754*

June 24 1765

Be merciful unto  
 me, O God, be  
 merciful unto me.  
 Psa. lvii. 1.  
 U

*James Case*

Sept. 1771.

Walk in Wisdom  
 toward them that are  
 without, redeeming  
 the Time.  
 Col. iv. 5.  
 Ab

*Henry Crispe*

6. Do you desire to be told of your faults?  
 7. Do you desire to be told of all your faults, and that plain and home?  
 8. Do you desire that every one of us should tell you from time to time whatsoever is in *his* heart concerning you?  
 9. Consider! Do you desire we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear, concerning you?  
 10. Do you desire that in doing this we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?  
 11. Is it your desire and design to be on this and all other occasions entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart, without exception, without disguise, and without reserve?<sup>7</sup>

Any of the preceding questions may be asked as often as occasion offers; the five<sup>8</sup> following at every meeting:<sup>9</sup>

1. What known sins<sup>10</sup> have you committed since our last meeting?  
 2. What temptations have you met with?  
 3. How was you delivered?  
 4. What have you thought, said, or done, of which you doubt whether it be sin<sup>11</sup> or not?  
 5. Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The remainder of p. 9 is blank (having space for about eight lines), as is the whole of the following page, and the top one-third of p. 11—clearly in order to allow further questions or rules to be added by hand. The remainder follows without any break. This pattern was followed exactly in the 1748 Newcastle edn. of the *Rules*, except that the following five questions were also omitted.

<sup>8</sup> All the early edns. have five rules, but the later ones omit the fifth, and here read 'four'—all except one, which reads 'five' but actually contains four.

<sup>9</sup> In 1744 the preceding six words are set off in a separate line.

<sup>10</sup> Orig., 'sin'.

<sup>11</sup> Orig., 'a sin'.

<sup>12</sup> This question is dropped from the later edns., beginning about 1779 or 1780.

## Directions given to the Band Societies

Dec. 25, 1744

You are supposed to have the 'faith that overcometh the world'.<sup>13</sup> To you therefore it is not grievous,

- I. Carefully to abstain from doing evil; in particular, 5  
 1. Neither to *buy nor sell* anything at all on the Lord's Day.  
 2. To taste no spirituous liquor, *no dram* of any kind, unless prescribed by a physician.  
 3. To be *at a word* both in buying and selling.  
 4. To *pawn nothing*, no, not to save life. 10  
 5. Not to *mention the fault* of any *behind his back*, and to stop those short that do.  
 6. To wear no *needless ornaments*, such as rings, ear-rings, necklaces, lace, ruffles.  
 7. To use no *needless self-indulgence*, such as taking snuff or 15 tobacco, unless prescribed by a physician.

- II. Zealously to maintain good works; in particular,  
 1. To *give alms* of such things as you possess, and that to the uttermost of your power.  
 2. To *reprove* all that sin in your sight, and that in love, and 20 meekness of wisdom.<sup>14</sup>  
 3. To be patterns of *diligence* and *frugality*, of *self-denial*, and taking up the cross daily.<sup>15</sup>

- III. Constantly to attend on all the ordinances of God; in particular, 25  
 1. To be at church, and at the Lord's table, every week, and at every public meeting of the bands.  
 2. To attend the ministry of the Word every morning, unless distance, business, or sickness prevent.  
 3. To use private prayer every day, and family prayer if you are 30 the head of a family.  
 4. To read the Scriptures, and meditate thereon, at every vacant hour. And,  
 5. To observe as days of fasting or abstinence all *Fridays* in 35 the year.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. 1 John 5:4.

<sup>15</sup> See Luke 9:23.

<sup>14</sup> Jas. 3:13.