

MINUTES
OF
SOME LATE CONVERSATIONS
BETWEEN
THE REV. MR. WESLEYS AND OTHERS.

CONVERSATION I.

MONDAY, *June 25th*, 1744.

THE following persons being met at the Foundery,—John Wesley; Charles Wesley; John Hodges, Rector of Wenvo; Henry Piers, Vicar of Bexley; Samuel Taylor, Vicar of Quinton; 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; that is, how to regulate our doctrine, discipline, and practice.

We began with considering the doctrine of justification: The questions relating to, with the substance of the answers given thereto, were as follows:—

Q. 1. What is it to be justified?

A. To be pardoned and received into God's favour; 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 every one who believeth not is condemned; and every one who believes is justified.

Q. 3. But must not repentance, and works meet for repentance, go before this 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 *ελεγχος* (*elenchos*) of things not seen; that is, of past, future, or spiritual things: It is a spiritual sight of God and the things of God.

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 Christians this faith? May not a man be justified, and not know it?

A. That all true Christians have such a faith as implies an assurance of God's love, appears from Romans viii. 15; Ephes. iv. 32; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; Heb. viii. 10; 1 John iv. 10, and 19. And that no man can be justified and not know it, appears farther from the nature of the thing: For faith after repentance is ease after pain, rest after toil, light after darkness. It appears also from the immediate, as well as distant, fruits thereof.

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

A. It does not appear from holy writ that a man who hears the gospel can, (Mark xvi. 16,) whatever a Heathen may do. (Romans ii. 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 inward sin.

Q. 8. Does any one believe, who has not the witness in himself, or any longer than he sees, loves, 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 casts away his faith. 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 or 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 frequently permits 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 free 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 it is increased. "To him that hath, shall be given."

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

A. No: (1.) Because they do not speak of the same justification. St. Paul speaks of that justification which was when Abraham was seventy-five years old, above twenty years before Isaac was born; St. James, of that justification which was when he offered up Isaac on the altar.

(2.) Because they do not speak of the same works; St. Paul speaking of works that precede faith; St. James, of works that spring from it.

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

A. In Adam all die; that is, (1.) Our bodies then became mortal. (2.) Our souls died; that is, were disunited from God. And hence, (3.) We are all born with a sinful, devilish nature. By reason whereof, (4.) We are children of wrath, liable to death eternal. (Rom. v. 18; Ephes. ii. 3.)

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

A. We do not find it expressly affirmed in Scripture, that God imputes the righteousness of Christ to any; although we do find that "faith is imputed" to 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," 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 receive a capacity of spiritual life. And, (3.) An actual spark or seed thereof. (4.) All believers become children of grace, reconciled to God; and, (5.) Made partakers of the divine nature.

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

A. We are afraid 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 hereof?

A. (1.) That Christ abolished the moral law.

(2.) That therefore Christians 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.

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

A. The coming of certain men amongst the Galatians, who taught, "Except ye be circumcised, and keep the 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?" (Galatians ii. 16, &c.)

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

Q. 24. What, by being "under the law?" (Gal. iii. 23.)

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? (Gal. v. 1.)

A. Liberty, (1.) From that law. (2.) From sin.

ON TUESDAY MORNING, *June 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?

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

Q. 3. What is implied in being a perfect Christian?

A. The loving the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and soul, and strength. (Deut. vi. 5, xxx. 6; Ezek. xxxvi. 25–29.)

Q. 4. Does this imply that all inward sin is taken away?

A. Without doubt; or how could we be said to be saved “from all our uncleannesses?” (Ver. 29.)

Q. 5. 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: (1.) If we had sufficient evidence of their unblamable behaviour preceding. (2.) If they gave 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 afterwards from time to time, it appeared that all their tempers, and words, and actions, were holy and unreprouable.

Q. 6. How should we treat those who think they have attained this?

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

WEDNESDAY, *June 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?

A. According to the Twentieth 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 Twenty-sixth Article; and in the first, second, and third chapters of the Revelation.)

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

A. A believer, hearing the pure word of God preached, and partaking of the sacraments duly administered, in that 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, 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. 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 the Church. In either case, if opportunity serve, it would be well to speak or write to the Minister.

Q. 6. 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. 7. Do we separate from the Church?

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

Q. 8. What then do they mean, who say, "You separate from the Church?"

A. We cannot certainly tell. Perhaps they have no determinate meaning; unless, by the Church they mean themselves; that is, that part of the Clergy who accuse us of preaching false doctrine. And it is sure we do herein separate from them, by maintaining that which they deny.

Q. 9. But do you not weaken the Church?

A. Do not they who ask this, by *the Church*, mean them-

selves? 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. 10. Do you not 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 a 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.

CONVERSATION II.

BRISTOL, THURSDAY, *August 1st*, 1745.

THE following persons being met together at the New-Room, in Bristol; John Wesley, Charles Wesley, John Hodges, Thomas Richards, Samuel Larwood, Thomas Meyrick, Richard Moss, John Slocombe, Herbert Jenkins, and Marmaduke Gwynne; it was proposed to review the Minutes of the last Conference with regard to justification. And it was asked:

Q. 1. How comes what is written on this subject to be so intricate and obscure? Is this obscurity from the nature of the thing itself; or, from the fault or weakness of those who have generally treated of it?

A. We apprehend this obscurity does not arise from the nature of the subject; but, perhaps, partly from hence, that the devil peculiarly labours to perplex a subject of the greatest importance; and partly from the extreme warmth of most writers who have treated of it?

Q. 2. We affirm, faith in Christ is the sole condition of justification. But does not repentance go before that faith?

yea, and, supposing there be opportunity for them, fruits or works meet for repentance?

A. Without doubt they do.

Q. 3. How then can we deny them to be conditions of justification? Is not this a mere strife of words? But is it worth while to continue a dispute on the term condition?

A. It seems not, though it has been grievously abused. But so the abuse cease, let the use remain.

Q. 4. Shall we read over together Mr. Baxter's "Aphorisms concerning Justification?"

A. By all means.

Which were accordingly read. And it was desired, that each person present would in the afternoon consult the scriptures cited therein, and bring what objections might occur the next morning.

FRIDAY, *August 2d*, THE QUESTION WAS PROPOSED:—

Q. 1. Is a sense of God's pardoning love absolutely necessary to our being in his favour? Or may there be some exempt cases?

A. We dare not say there are not.

Q. 2. Is it necessary to inward and outward holiness?

A. We incline to think it is.

Q. 3. Is it indispensably necessary to final salvation? suppose in a Papist; or a Quaker; or, in general, among those who never heard it preached?

A. Love hopeth all things. We know not how far any of these may fall under the case of invincible ignorance.

Q. 4. But what can we say of one of our own society, who dies without it, as J. W., at London?

A. It may be an exempt case, if the fact was really so. But we determine nothing. We leave his soul in the hands of Him that made it.

Q. 5. Does a man believe any longer than he sees a reconciled God?

A. We conceive not. But we allow there may be infinite degrees in seeing God: Even as many as there are between him who sees the sun when it shines on his eye-lids closed, and him who stands with his eyes wide open in the full blaze of his beams.

Q. 6. Does a man believe any longer than he loves God?

A. In nowise. For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails, without faith working by love.

Q. 7. Have we duly considered the case of Cornelius? Was not he in the favour of God, when "his prayers and alms came up for a memorial before God:" that is, before he believed in Christ?

A. It does seem that he was, in some degree. But we speak not of those who have not heard the gospel.

Q. 8. But were those works of his "splendid sins?"

A. No; nor were they done without the grace of Christ.

Q. 9. How then can we maintain, that all works done before we have a sense of the pardoning love of God are sin, and, as such, an abomination to Him?

A. The works of him who has heard the gospel, and does not believe, are not done as God hath "willed and commanded them to be done." And yet we know not how to say that they are an abomination to the Lord in him who feareth God, and, from that principle, does the best he can.

Q. 10. Seeing there is so much difficulty in this subject, can we deal too tenderly with them that oppose us?

A. We cannot; unless we were to give up any part of the truth of God.

Q. 11. Is a believer constrained to obey God?

A. At first he often is. The love of Christ constraineth him. After this, he may obey, or he may not; no constraint being laid upon him

Q. 12. Can faith be lost, but through disobedience?

A. It cannot. A believer first inwardly disobeys, inclines to sin with his heart: Then his intercourse with God is cut off; that is, his faith is lost: And after this, he may fall into outward sin, being now weak, and like another man.

Q. 13. How can such an one recover faith?

A. By "repenting, and doing the first works." (Rev. ii. 5.)

Q. 14. Whence is it that so great a majority of those who believe fall more or less, into doubt or fear?

A. Chiefly from their own ignorance or unfaithfulness: Often from their not watching unto prayer: Perhaps sometimes from some defect, or want of the power of God in the preaching they hear.

Q. 15. Is there not a defect in us? Do we preach as we did at first? Have we not changed our doctrines?

A. (1.) At first we preached almost wholly to unbelievers. To those therefore we spake almost continually of remission

of sins through the death of Christ, and the nature of faith in his blood. And so we do still, among those who need to be taught the first elements of the gospel of Christ.

(2.) But those in whom the foundation is already laid, we exhort to go on to perfection; which we did not see so clearly at first; although we occasionally spoke of it from the beginning.

(3.) Yet we now preach, and that continually, faith in Christ, as the Prophet, Priest, and King, at least, as clearly, as strongly, and as fully, as we did six years ago.

Q. 16. Do we not discourage visions and dreams too much, as if we condemned them *toto genere*?

A. We do not intend to do this. We neither discourage nor encourage them. We learn from Acts ii. 17, &c., to expect something of this kind "in the last days." And we cannot deny that saving faith is often given in dreams or visions of the night; which faith we account neither better nor worse, than if it came by any other means.

Q. 17. Do not some of our assistants preach too much of the wrath, and too little of the love, of God?

A. We fear they have leaned to that extreme; and hence some of their hearers may have lost the joy of faith.

Q. 18. Need we ever preach the terrors of the Lord to those who know they are accepted of him?

A. No: It is folly so to do; for love is to them the strongest of all motives.

Q. 19. Do we ordinarily represent a justified state so great and happy as it is?

A. Perhaps not. A believer, walking in the light, is inexpressibly great and happy.

Q. 20. Should we not have a care of depreciating justification, in order to exalt the state of full sanctification?

A. Undoubtedly we should beware of this; for one may insensibly slide into it.

Q. 21. How shall we effectually avoid it?

A. When we are going to speak of entire sanctification, let us first describe the blessings of a justified state, as strongly as possible.

Q. 22. Does not the truth of the gospel lie very near both to Calvinism and Antinomianism?

A. Indeed it does; as it were, within a hair's breadth: So that it is altogether foolish and sinful, because we do not quite

agree either with one or the other, to run from them as far as ever we can.

Q. 23. Wherein may we come to the very edge of Calvinism?

A. (1.) In ascribing all good to the free grace of God. (2.) In denying all natural free-will, and all power antecedent to grace. And, (3.) In excluding all merit from man; even for what he has or does by the grace of God.

Q. 24. Wherein may we come to the edge of Antinomianism?

A. (1.) In exalting the merits and love of Christ. (2.) In rejoicing evermore.

Q. 25. Does faith supersede (set aside the necessity of) holiness or good works?

A. In nowise. So far from it, that it implies both, as a cause does its effects.

ABOUT TEN, WE BEGAN TO SPEAK OF SANCTIFICATION: WITH REGARD TO WHICH, IT WAS INQUIRED:—

Q. 1. WHEN does inward sanctification begin?

A. In the moment we are justified. The seed of every virtue is then sown in the soul. From that time the believer gradually dies to sin, and grows in grace. Yet sin remains in him; yea, the seed of all sin, till he is sanctified throughout in spirit, soul, and body.

Q. 2. What will become of a Heathen, a Papist, a Church of England man, if he dies without being thus sanctified?

∨ A. He cannot see the Lord. But none who seeks it sincerely shall or can die without it; though possibly he may not attain it, till the very article of death.

Q. 3. Is it ordinarily given till a little before death?

A. It is not, to those that expect it no sooner, nor consequently ask for it, at least, not in faith.

Q. 4. But ought we to expect it sooner?

A. Why not? For although we grant, (1.) That the generality of believers whom we have hitherto known were not so sanctified till near death: (2.) That few of those to whom St. Paul wrote his Epistles were so at the time he wrote: (3.) Nor he himself at the time of writing his former Epistles: Yet this does not prove that we may not to-day.

Q. 5. But would not one who was thus sanctified be incapable of worldly business?

A. He would be far more capable of it than ever, as going through all without distraction.

Q. 6. Would he be capable of marriage?

A. Why should he not?

Q. 7. Should we not beware of bearing hard on those who think they have attained?

A. We should. And the rather, because if they are faithful to the grace they have received, they are in no danger of perishing at last. No, not even if they remain in luminous faith, as some term it, for many months or years; perhaps till within a little time of their spirits returning to God.

Q. 8. In what manner should we preach entire sanctification?

A. Scarce at all to those who are not pressing forward. To those who are, always by way of promise; always drawing, rather than driving.

Q. 9. How should we wait for the fulfilling of this promise?

A. In universal obedience; in keeping all the commandments; in denying ourselves, and taking up our cross daily. These are the general means which God hath ordained for our receiving his sanctifying grace. The particular are,—prayer, searching the Scripture, communicating, and fasting.

CONVERSATION III.

TUESDAY, *May 13th*, 1746.

THE following persons being met at the New-Room, in Bristol: John Wesley, Charles Wesley, John Hodges, Jonathan Reeves, Thomas Maxfield, Thomas Westell, and Thomas Willis; it was inquired,—

Q. 1. Can an unbeliever (whatever he be in other respects) challenge anything of God's justice?

A. Absolutely nothing but hell. And this is a point which we cannot too much insist on.

Q. 2. Do we empty men of their own righteousness, as we did at first? Do we sufficiently labour, when they begin to be convinced of sin, to take away all they lean upon? Should we not then endeavour with all our might to overturn their false foundations?

A. This was at first one of our principal points: And it ought to be so still. For, till all other foundations are overturned, they cannot build upon Christ.

Q. 3. Did we not then purposely throw them into convictions; into strong sorrow and fear? Nay, did we not strive to make them inconsolable, refusing to be comforted?

A. We did. And so we should do still. For the stronger the conviction, the speedier is the deliverance. And none so soon receive the peace of God, as those who steadily refuse all other comfort.

Q. 4. Let us consider a particular case. Was you, Jonathan Reeves, before you received the peace of God, convinced that, notwithstanding all you did, or could do, you was in a state of damnation?

J. R. I was convinced of it, as fully as that I am now alive.

Q. 5. Are you sure that conviction was from God?

J. R. I can have no doubt but it was.

Q. 6. What do you mean by a state of damnation?

J. R. A state wherein if a man dies, he perisheth for ever.

Q. 7. How did that conviction end?

J. R. I had first a strong hope that God would deliver me: And this brought a degree of peace. But I had not that solid peace of God till Christ was revealed in me.

Q. 8. But is not such a trust in the love of God, though it be as yet without a distinct sight of God reconciled to me through Christ Jesus, a low degree of justifying faith?

A. It is an earnest of it. But this abides for a short time only; nor is this the proper Christian faith.

Q. 9. By what faith were the Apostles clean before Christ died?

A. By such a faith as this; by a Jewish faith: For "the Holy Ghost was not then given."

Q. 10. Of whom then do you understand those words,— "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" (Isaiah l. 10.)

A. Of a believer under the Jewish dispensation; one in whose heart God hath not yet shined, to give him the light of the glorious love of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Q. 11. Who is a Jew, inwardly?

A. A servant of God: One who sincerely obeys him out of

fear. Whereas a Christian, inwardly, is a child of God: One who sincerely obeys him out of love. But was not you sincere before Christ was revealed in you?

J. R. It seemed to me that I was, in some measure.

Q. 12. What is sincerity?

A. Willingness to know and do the whole will of God. The lowest species thereof seems to be "faithfulness in that which is little."

Q. 13. Has God any regard to man's sincerity?

A. So far, that no man in any state can possibly please God without it; neither, indeed, in any moment wherein he is not sincere.

Q. 14. But can it be conceived that God has any regard to the sincerity of an unbeliever?

A. Yes, so much, that, if he persevere therein, God will infallibly give him faith.

Q. 15. What regard may we conceive him to have to the sincerity of a believer?

A. So much, that in every sincere believer he fulfils all the great and precious promises.

Q. 16. Whom do you term a *sincere believer*?

A. One that walks in the light, as God is in the light.

Q. 17. Is sincerity the same with a single eye?

A. Not altogether. The latter refers to our intention; the former, to our will or desires.

Q. 18. Is it not all in all?

A. All will follow persevering sincerity. God gives every thing with it; nothing without it.

Q. 19. Are not then sincerity and faith equivalent terms?

A. By no means. It is at least as nearly related to works as it is to faith. For example, Who is sincere before he believes? He that then does all he can; he that, according to the power he has received, brings forth "fruits meet for repentance." Who is sincere after he believes? He that, from a sense of God's love, is zealous of all good works.

Q. 20. Is not sincerity what St. Paul terms a willing mind, *ἡ προθυμία*? (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

A. Yes: If that word be taken in a general sense. For it is a constant disposition to use all the grace given.

Q. 21. But do we not then set sincerity on a level with faith?

A. No. For we allow a man may be sincere, and not be jus-

tified, as he may be penitent, and not be justified; (not as yet;) but he cannot have faith, and not be justified. The very moment he believes, he is justified.

Q. 22. But do we not give up faith, and put sincerity in its place, as the condition of our acceptance with God?

A. We believe it is one condition of our acceptance, as repentance likewise is. And we believe it a condition of our continuing in a state of acceptance. Yet we do not put it in the place of faith. It is by faith the merits of Christ are applied to my soul. But if I am not sincere, they are not applied.

Q. 23. Is not this that "going about to establish your own righteousness," whereof St. Paul speaks, Rom. x. 3?

A. St. Paul there manifestly speaks of unbelievers, who sought to be accepted for the sake of their own righteousness. We do not seek to be accepted for the sake of our sincerity; but through the merits of Christ alone. Indeed, so long as any man believes, he cannot go about (in St. Paul's sense) to "establish his own righteousness."

Q. 24. But do you consider, that we are under the covenant of grace, and that the covenant of works is now abolished?

A. All mankind were under the covenant of grace, from the very hour that the original promise was made. If by the covenant of works you mean, that of unsinning obedience made with Adam before the fall, no man but Adam was ever under that covenant; for it was abolished before Cain was born. Yet it is not so abolished, but that it will stand, in a measure, even to the end of the world; that is, If we "do this," we shall live; if not, we shall die eternally: If we do well, we shall live with God in glory; if evil, we shall die the second death. For every man shall be judged in that day, and rewarded "according to his works."

Q. 25. What means then, "To him that believeth, his faith is counted for righteousness?"

A. That God forgives him that is unrighteous as soon as he believes, accepting his faith instead of perfect righteousness. But then observe, universal righteousness follows, though it did not precede, faith.

Q. 26. But is faith thus "counted to us for righteousness," at whatsoever time we believe?

A. Yes. In whatsoever moment we believe, all our past sins vanish away: They are as though they had never been, and we stand clear in the sight of God.

TUESDAY, TEN O'CLOCK.

MR. TAYLOR of Quinton, and T. Glascot, being added, it was inquired,

Q. 1. Are not the assurance of faith, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the revelation of Christ in us, terms nearly of the same import?

A. He that denies one of them must deny all; they are so closely connected together.

Q. 2. Are they ordinarily, where the pure gospel is preached, essential to our acceptance?

A. Undoubtedly they are; and, as such, to be insisted on, in the strongest terms.

Q. 3. Is not the whole dispute of salvation by faith or by works a mere strife of words?

A. In asserting salvation by faith, we mean this: (1.) That pardon (salvation begun) is received by faith producing works. (2.) That holiness (salvation continued) is faith working by love. (3.) That heaven (salvation finished) is the reward of this faith.

If you who assert salvation by works, or by faith and works, mean the same thing, (understanding by faith, the revelation of Christ in us,—by salvation, pardon, holiness, glory,) we will not strive with you at all. If you do not, this is not a strife of words; but the very vitals, the essence of Christianity is the thing in question.

Q. 4. Wherein does our doctrine now differ from that we preached when at Oxford?

A. Chiefly in these two points (1.) We then knew nothing of that righteousness of faith, in justification; nor (2.) Of the nature of faith itself, as implying consciousness of pardon.

Q. 5. May not some degree of the love of God go before a distinct sense of justification?

A. We believe it may.

Q. 6. Can any degree of sanctification or holiness?

A. Many degrees of outward holiness may; yea, and some degree of meekness, and several other tempers which would be branches of Christian holiness, but that they do not spring from Christian principles. For the abiding love of God cannot spring but from faith in a pardoning God. And no true Christian holiness can exist without that love of God for its foundation.

Q. 7. Is every man, as soon as he believes, a new creature, sanctified, pure in heart? Has he then a new heart? Does Christ dwell therein? And is he a temple of the Holy Ghost?

A. All these things may be affirmed of every believer, in a true sense. Let us not therefore contradict those who maintain it. Why should we contend about words?

CONVERSATION IV.

TUESDAY, *June 16th*, 1747.

THE following persons being met at the Foundery: John Wesley, Charles Wesley, and Charles Manning, Vicar of Hayes; Richard Thomas Bateman, Rector of St. Bartholomew's the Great; Henry Piers, Howell Harris, and Thomas Hardwick; it was inquired,

Q. 1. Is justifying faith a divine assurance that Christ loved me, and gave himself for me?

A. We believe it is.

Q. 2. What is the judgment of most of the serious Dissenters concerning this?

A. They generally allow, that many believers have such an assurance; and, that it is to be desired and prayed for by all. But then they affirm, that this is the highest species or degree of faith; that it is not the common privilege of believers: Consequently, they deny that this is justifying faith, or necessarily implied therein.

Q. 3. And are there not strong reasons for their opinion? For instance: If the true believers of old had not this assurance, then it is not necessarily implied in justifying faith. But the true believers of old had not this assurance.

A. David, and many more of the believers of old, undeniably had this assurance. But even if the Jews had it not, it would not follow that this is not implied in Christian faith.

Q. 4. But do you not know that the Apostles themselves had it not till after the day of Pentecost?

A. The Apostles themselves had not the proper Christian faith till after the day of Pentecost.

Q. 5. But were not those Christian believers, in the proper sense, to whom St. John wrote his First Epistle? Yet to these he says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (v. 13.)

A. This does not prove that they did not know they had eternal life, any more than that they did not believe. His plain meaning is, "I have written unto you that you may be the more established in the faith." Therefore, it does not follow from hence, that they had not this assurance; but only that there are degrees therein.

Q. 6. But were not the Thessalonians true believers? Yet they had not this assurance; they had only a "good hope." (2 Thess. ii. 16.)

A. The text you refer to runs thus: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." This *g. od hope* does not exclude, but necessarily implies, a strong assurance of the love of God.

Q. 7. But does not St. Paul say even of himself, "I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified?" (1 Corinthians iv. 4.)

A. He does not say of himself here, that he was not justified, or that he did not know it; but only, that though he had a conscience void of offence, yet this did not justify him before God. And must not every believer say the same? This, therefore, is wide of the point.

Q. 8. But does he not disclaim any such assurance in those words, "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling?" (1 Cor. ii. 3.)

A. By no means. For these words do not imply any fear either of death or hell. They express only a deep sense of his utter insufficiency for the great work wherein he was engaged.

Q. 9. However, does he not exclude Christians in general from such an assurance, when he bids them "work out" their "salvation with fear and trembling?" (Phil. ii. 12.)

A. No more than from love; which is always joined with filial fear and reverential trembling. And the same answer is applicable to all those texts which exhort a believer to fear.

Q. 10. But does not matter of fact prove, that justifying faith does not necessarily imply assurance? For can you believe that such a person as J. A., or E. V., who have so much integrity, zeal, and fear of God, and walk so unblamably in all things, is void of justifying faith? Can you suppose such as these to be under the wrath and under the curse of God; especially if you add to this, that they are continually longing, striving, praying for the assurance which they have not?

A. This contains the very strength of the cause; and inclines us to think that some of these may be exempt cases. But, however that be, we answer,

(1.) It is dangerous to ground a general doctrine on a few particular experiments.

(2.) Men may have many good tempers, and a blameless life, (speaking in a loose sense,) by nature and habit, with preventing grace; and yet not have faith and the love of God.

(3.) It is scarce possible for us to know all the circumstances relating to such persons, so as to judge certainly concerning them.

(4.) But this we know, if Christ is not revealed in them, they are not yet Christian believers.

Q. 11. But what will become of them then, suppose they die in this state?

A. That is a supposition not to be made. They cannot die in this state: They must go backward or forward. If they continue to seek, they will surely find, righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. We are confirmed in this belief by the many instances we have seen of such as these finding peace at the last hour. And it is not impossible but others may then be made partakers of like precious faith, and yet go hence without giving any outward proof of the change which God hath wrought.

CONVERSATION V.

WEDNESDAY, *June 17th.*

Q. 1. How much is allowed by our brethren who differ from us, with regard to entire sanctification?

A. They grant, (1.) That every one must be entirely sanctified in the article of death.

(2.) That, till then, a believer daily grows in grace, comes nearer and nearer to perfection.

(3.) That we ought to be continually pressing after this, and to exhort all others so to do.

Q. 2. What do we allow them ?

A. We grant, (1.) That many of those who have died in the faith, yea, the greater part of those we have known, were not sanctified throughout, not made perfect in love, till a little before death.

(2.) That the term "sanctified" is continually applied by St. Paul to all that were justified, were true believers.

(3.) That by this term alone, he rarely, if ever, means saved from all sin.

(4.) That, consequently, it is not proper to use it in this sense, without adding the word "wholly, entirely," or the like.

(5.) That the inspired writers almost continually speak of or to those who were justified ; but very rarely, either of or to those who were wholly sanctified.

(6.) That, consequently, it behoves us to speak in public almost continually of the state of justification ; but, more rarely, in full and explicit terms, concerning entire sanctification.

Q. 3. What then is the point wherein we divide ?

A. It is this : Whether we should expect to be saved from all sin before the article of death.

Q. 4. Is there any clear scripture promise of this ; that God will save us from *all* sin ?

A. There is : "He shall redeem Israel from *all* his sins." (Psalm cxxx. 8.) This is more largely expressed in the prophecy of Ezekiel : "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : From *all* your filthiness, and from *all* your idols, will I cleanse you. I will also save you from *all* your uncleannesses." (xxxvi. 25, 29.) No promise can be more clear. And to this the Apostle plainly refers in that exhortation : "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Cor. vii. 1.) Equally clear and express is that ancient promise : "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul." (Deut. xxx. 6.)

Q. 5. But does any assertion answerable to this occur in the New Testament ?

A. There does, and that laid down in the plainest terms. So St. John : " For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil ;" (1 Epist. iii. 8;) the works of the devil, without any limitation or restriction : But all sin is the work of the devil. Parallel to which is that assertion of St. Paul : " Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it ; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Ephes. v. 25, 27.) And to the same effect is his assertion in the eighth of the Romans : " God sent his Son—that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Verses 3, 4.)

Q. 6. Does the New Testament afford any farther ground for expecting to be saved from all sin ?

A. Undoubtedly it does, both in those prayers and commands which are equivalent to the strongest assertions.

Q. 7. What prayers do you mean ?

A. Prayers for entire sanctification ; which, were there no such thing, would be mere mockery of God. Such, in particular, are, (1.) " Deliver us from evil ;" or rather, " from the evil one." Now, when this is done, when we are delivered from all evil, there can be no sin remaining. (2.) " Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John xvii. 20, 21, 23.) (3.) " I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—that he would grant you—that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." (Eph. iii. 14, 16–19.) (4.) " The very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. v. 23.)

Q. 8. What command is there to the same effect ?

A. (1.) " Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in

heaven is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.) (2.) "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matt. xxii. 37.) But if the love of God fill all the heart, there can be no sin there.

Q. 9. But how does it appear that this is to be done before the article of death?

A. First. From the very nature of a command, which is not given to the dead, but to the living. Therefore, "Thou shalt love God with all thy heart," cannot mean, Thou shalt do this when thou diest, but while thou livest.

Secondly. From express texts of Scripture: (1.) "The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, having renounced (*αρνησαμενοι*) ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for—the glorious appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." (Titus ii. 11–14.) (2.) "He hath raised up an horn of salvation for us,—to perform the mercy promised to our fathers; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life." (Luke i. 69–75.)

Q. 10. Is there any example in Scripture of persons who had attained to this?

A. Yes. St. John, and all those of whom he says in his First Epistle, "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment: Because as he is, so are we in this world." (iv. 17.)

Q. 11. But why are there not more examples of this kind recorded in the New Testament?

A. It does not become us to be peremptory in this matter. One reason might possibly be, because the Apostles wrote to the Church while it was in a state of infancy. Therefore they might mention such persons the more sparingly, lest they should give strong meat to babes.

Q. 12. Can you show one such example now? Where is he that is thus perfect?

A. To some who make this inquiry one might answer, "If I knew one here, I would not tell you. For you do not inquire

out of love. You are like Herod. You only seek the young child, to slay it."

But more directly we answer, There are numberless reasons why there should be few (if any indisputable) examples. What inconveniences would this bring on the person himself, set as a mark for all to shoot at! What a temptation would it be to others, not only to men who knew not God, but to believers themselves! How hardly would they refrain from idolizing such a person! And yet, how unprofitable to gainsayers! "For if they hear not Moses and the Prophets," Christ and his Apostles, "neither would they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

Q. 13. Suppose one had attained to this, would you advise him to speak of it?

A. Not to them who know not God. It would only provoke them to contradict and blaspheme: Nor to any, without some particular reason, without some particular good in view. And then they should have an especial care to avoid all appearance of boasting.

Q. 14. Is it a sin, not to believe those who say they have attained?

A. By no means, even though they said true. We ought not hastily to believe, but to suspend our judgment, till we have full and strong proof.

Q. 15. But are we not apt to have a secret distaste to any who say they are saved from all sin?

A. It is very possible we may, and that on several grounds; partly from a concern for the honour of God, and the good of souls, who may be hurt, yea, or turned out of the way, if these are not what they profess; partly from a kind of implicit envy at those who speak of higher attainments than our own; and partly from our slowness and unreadiness of heart to believe the works of God.

Q. 16. Does not the harshly preaching perfection tend to bring believers into a kind of bondage, or slavish fear?

A. It does: Therefore we should always place it in the most amiable light, so that it may excite only hope, joy, and desire.

Q. 17. Why may we not continue in the joy of faith even till we are made perfect?

A. Why indeed! since holy grief does not quench this

joy; since, even while we are under the cross, while we deeply partake of the sufferings of Christ, we may rejoice with joy unspeakable.

Q. 18. Do we not discourage believers from rejoicing evermore?

A. We ought not so to do. Let them all their life long rejoice unto God, so it be with reverence. And even if lightness or pride should mix with their joy, let us not strike at the joy itself, (this is the gift of God,) but at that lightness or pride, that the evil may cease and the good remain.

Q. 19. Ought we to be anxiously careful about perfection, lest we should die before we have attained?

A. In nowise. We ought to be thus careful for nothing, neither spiritual nor temporal.

Q. 20. But ought we not to be troubled on account of the sinful nature which still remains in us?

A. It is good for us to have a deep sense of this, and to be much ashamed before the Lord: But this should only incite us the more earnestly to turn unto Christ every moment, and to draw light, and life, and strength from him, that we may go on conquering and to conquer. And, therefore, when the sense of our sin most abounds, the sense of his love should much more abound.

Q. 21. Will our joy or our trouble increase as we grow in grace?

A. Perhaps both. But without doubt our joy in the Lord will increase as our love increases.

Q. 22. Is not the teaching believers to be continually poring upon their inbred sin, the ready way to make them forget that they were purged from their former sins?

A. We find by experience it is; or to make them undervalue and account it a little thing: whereas, indeed, (though there are still greater gifts behind,) this is inexpressibly great and glorious.