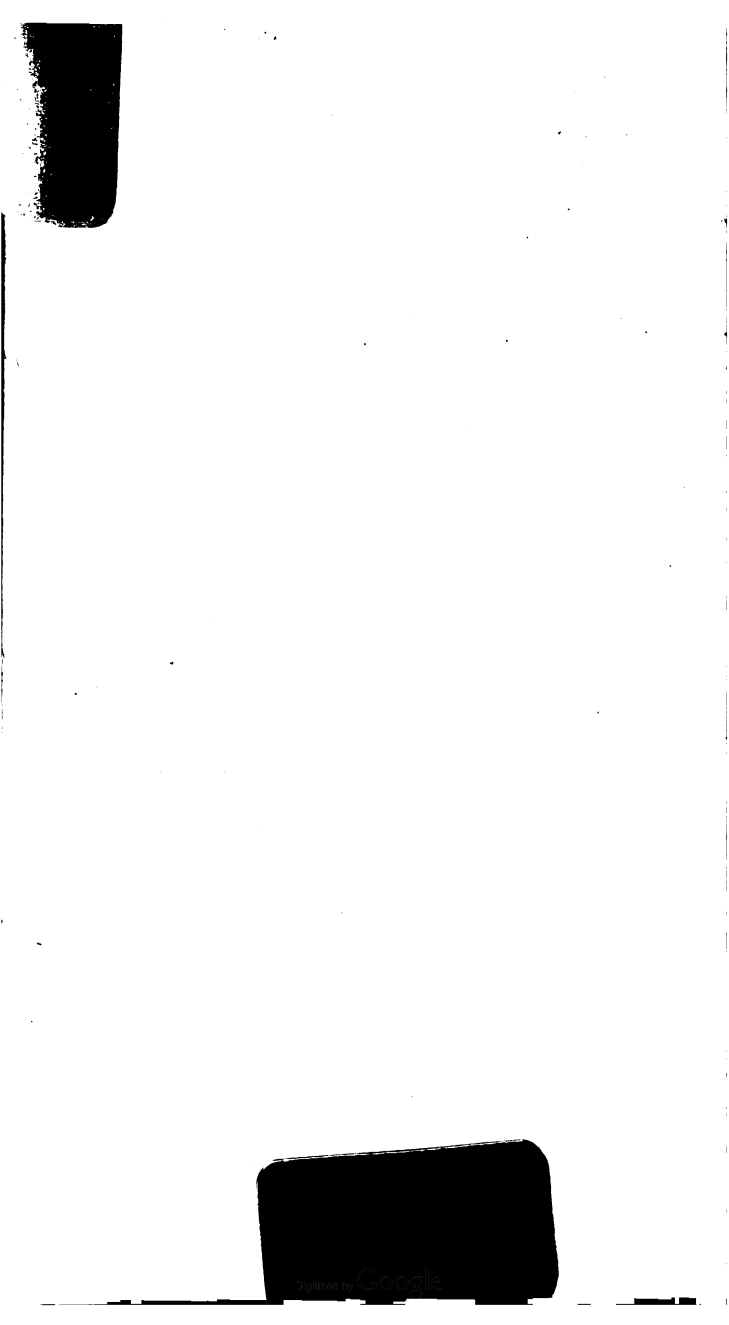

This is a reproduction of a library book that was digitized by Google as part of an ongoing effort to preserve the information in books and make it universally accessible.

Google™ books

<https://books.google.com>







1/1357 cu. 12.

SERMON

Job

PREACHED ON THE

W Sunday Evening preceding the opening

OF THE

CONFERENCE OF THE PREACHERS

Lately in Connexion with

The Rev. John Wesley,

C AT MANCHESTER, JULY 26, 1791.

BY JOSEPH BENSON.

WITH SOME

R

J Alterations.

He being dead yet speaketh.

Job



BIRMINGHAM,

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY J. THOMPSON,

And Sold at the Rev. Mr. WESLEY's Preaching-houses
in Town and Country.

.....

MDCCLXCI.

Job Smiths
Book



A

S E R M O N.

.....

HEB. xiii. 7. *Remember them that had the rule over you, who spake to you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*

I. I MAKE no apology for reading the passage thus, though not quite according to our common translation, because *that* must appear improper even to an English reader, as being manifestly contradictory to itself. For it supposes the persons, here referred to, to be *dead*, and yet speaks of them as *now* presiding over the Hebrews. Bishop *Lloyd*, in his funeral Sermon for Bishop *Wilkins*, gives it as his opinion that the words may refer to the two *James's*, viz. *James* the elder, the Son of *Zebedee*, the brother of *John*, who was beheaded by Herod in the year of our Lord 44, and *James* the less, the Son of *Alpheus* or *Cleophas*, the brother, that is the kinsman of our Lord, who also, it seems, was taken hence before the writing of this Epistle, suffering martyrdom, as is supposed, in the year 62. And when it is considered that both of these Apostles had resided at Jerusalem and had had the oversight of the church there, and that the latter *James* had only

B

been

been removed a few months when this Epistle was written, having been preserved to instruct and oversee the Hebrew Christians almost twenty years after the death of the former, it must appear highly probable that the Bishop is right in his conjectures. At the same time, however, the Apostle expresses himself in such a manner as to include all, who, under the direction of these Apostles, had spoken the word of God to the Hebrews and had presided in their assemblies.

2. But as no Scripture is of any *private* or *particular* interpretation, but is intended to be of general use, may we not consider this apostolic advice as given to ourselves, with a reference to those eminent servants of God whom the Lord has lately removed from among us, viz. the Rev. *John Fletcher*, the Rev. *Charles Wesley*, and the Rev. *John Wesley*? men famous in their day, and eminently distinguished in the churches, for their abilities, their labours and their success in spreading the gospel of the grace of God. In particular, we seem, on this occasion, to be called upon to remember the person last mentioned, who, though the first of them in the work, and more advanced in age than either of the others, was yet spared to out live them both, and almost all his cotemporaries, and was under God our *Father* and *Overseer*; who presided over us and spake to us the word of God for above half a century, and whose presence amongst us at these Meetings was of such great use and importance to us.

3. Indeed, *him* we cannot but remember, especially now, when we find such a want of his parental instruction, advice and authority. However, while we bewail the loss we have sustained, and lament the day when the Lord took away our head from us; and while we humble ourselves before God for our great unfaithfulness, and misimprovement

ment of our privileges, let us not forget how long he lent his honoured servant to us, and to what an advanced age he lengthened out his useful life. And while we praise him for this, as well as for many other instances of his undeserved kindness to the community with which we are united, let us earnestly pray that he would sanctify the dispensation, and in some degree make up our loss, by causing a large measure of his Spirit to descend upon all his servants before him, employed in publishing the gospel of his grace!

4. As my intention in this discourse is to recommend the *faith* of our departed Father to your imitation, it will not be foreign to my purpose to endeavour to bring to your remembrance,—

I. A few particulars that respect his *life and character* as a *Man*, as a *Scholar*, as a *Christian*, and as a *Minister of Christ*, a *Shepherd* and *Bishop of Souls*. This I hope will prepare the way for your receiving more favourably,---

II. The exhortation I purpose giving you to *follow his faith*,---considering,

III. *The end of his conversation.*

And, *First*, I am to remind you of a few particulars that respect the life and character of this great man.

1. Though the true faith of our Lord Jesus Christ may certainly be found, and often is found, in persons of small intellectual abilities, yet it must be owned that it appears in such to great disadvantage. Their ideas of the great doctrines of the gospel are neither *clear* nor *distinct*, nor are they able to arrange them in proper order, for the improvement of their own knowledge or the edification of others. The precious truths of Christianity lie in their minds like *gold*, or *silver*, or *precious stones* in the earth, mixed with much dross and in great disorder. In persons

of greater discernment and of a more enlarged mind and refined taste, they may be compared to *precious Stones* cut and polished and set in tablets of gold, or to gold and silver refined from their dross and formed into beautiful and useful vessels. Such was our late Rev. Father and Pastor, a man of a most comprehensive mind and sublime genius. His judgment was clear, his fancy lively, his reason strong and his memory tenacious. No man could be better qualified by nature for discerning the truth himself, or for representing it to others in the most clear and convincing point of view.

2. And he had every help which education could well give him. He was perfect in those ancient languages in which the holy scriptures were originally written, and particularly so in *Greek*, the original language of the New Testament. This, as a tutor he taught many years at Oxford, and, it seems, *Hebrew* too, if not publicly and professionally, at least to some individuals in private. For we find the late Rev. Mr Hervey in one of his letters to him thanking him, as for many other favours, so especially "for teaching him Hebrew." He understood several of the modern tongues, as *French* and *German*. He excelled in *Logic*, was well skilled in *natural Philosophy*, as his many volumes published on that subject shew, and was an accurate *Historian*. And what perhaps affords yet greater help towards the discovery of truth, than any of the branches of literature already mentioned, as tending to habituate a person to think closely upon a subject, and to distinguish between *probability* and *certainty*, he was well read in *Mathematics*, especially in those branches of them which have the nearest relation to usefulness in life. As to *Divinity*, I need say nothing. His voluminous writings shew how much he had studied and how well he understood that subject.

3. But

3. But it will be objected here, and that with great reason, that all these and such like endowments, are not sufficient to qualify a man for understanding the truth as it is in Jesus. It will be urged, that the *natural man* (*Ψυχικός* the man who has indeed a *rational soul* in his body, but no *divine inspiration* in his soul, *discerneth not the things of God*, nay that they are *foolishness unto him*, and that he *cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned*; and that *the things of God knoweth no man but by the spirit of God*. This is freely granted, and therefore his natural abilities, and his advantages of education, would not have been so much as hinted at in this discourse, could we not have given, also, good proof that *he, that commanded light to shine out of darkness, had shined into his heart to enlighten him with the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ Jesus*.

4. It is well known to this congregation, that although he had been strictly educated, and was unblamable as to his outward conduct from a child, yet it was not till about the twenty-second year of his age, when he was pressed by his father to enter into holy orders, that he became acquainted with the nature and necessity of *inward* religion. By reading that incomparable book Thomas a Kempis's *Christian Pattern*, which a kind Providence threw in his way, he was brought to see that true religion is seated in the heart, and that to be *renewed in the spirit of our minds*, is of as great necessity as to have our practice regulated by the commandments of God. At this religion he now began to aim, and though not yet properly convinced of sin nor acquainted with the depravity of his nature, he soon tasted much sweetness in aspiring after it. Meeting also, as he informs us, with a religious friend, he began to alter the whole course of his conversation and to set in earnest upon a new life. He set apart

an hour or two a day for religious retirement. He communicated every week. He watched against all sin, whether in word or deed, and aimed at, and prayed for inward holiness.

5. "Soon after this," says he, "removing to another college, I executed a resolution which I was before convinced was of the utmost importance, viz. to shake off, at once, all my trifling acquaintance. I began now to see, more and more, the value of time, and to apply myself closer to study. I watched more carefully against actual sin, and advised others to be religious according to that scheme of religion by which I modelled my own life. And meeting now with Mr. Law's *Serious Call* and *Christian Perfection*, I was convinced more than ever of the exceeding height and depth, length and breadth of the law of God. The light now flowed in so mightily upon my soul, that every thing appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying him, as I had never done before. Accordingly I began visiting the prisons, assisting the poor and sick in the town, and doing what other good I could by my presence or little fortune to the bodies and souls of men. To this end I abridged myself" (would to God, my brethren, we were all disposed to do the same!) "of all superfluities and of many of what are called the necessities of life. A little after I begun observing the Wednesday and Friday fasts, commonly observed in the ancient church, tasting no food till three o'clock in the afternoon."

6. All this while, however, he was in a great measure a stranger to faith in Christ, and indeed was but little acquainted with himself. Hence, *being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish his own righteousness, he did not submit himself to the righteousness of God.* Accordingly he was still uncertain

uncertain as to his acceptance with God, and in bondage to the fear of death. "At this," says he, "I was then not a little surprized, not imagining I had all this time been building on the sand, and that other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid by God, even Jesus Christ."

7. But in a little time God opened his eyes, and manifested in *him*, as he has done in many others, the truth of that promise, *If any man will do my will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.* Observing, on shipboard, in his passage to America, the calm and composed behaviour of a few Germans, during some very tremendous storms, he was convinced they were in a very different state from himself, as they were manifestly raised above the fear of death. Some conversation he had with Mr. Spangenberg, a German minister, after he landed, was a means of giving him still farther light, and before he set sail to return to England, December 22, 1737, about two years and four months after he left his own country, the hardships and persecutions he had met with in that remote part of the world, had been so sanctified to him, that he was brought to a very full acquaintance with his own heart, and thus was prepared for that discovery of the love of God in Christ Jesus, which it pleased God soon after to afford him.

8. It was on the 8th of January, 1738, that, being on his passage home, he wrote as follows: "By the most infallible of proofs, *inward feeling*, I am convinced, 1. Of *unbelief*, having no such faith in Christ as will prevent my heart from being troubled. 2. Of *pride*, throughout my life past, inasmuch as I thought I had what I find I have not. 3. Of gross *irrecollection*, inasmuch as in a *storm* I cry to God every moment, in a *calm* not. 4. Of levity and luxuriancy of spirit, recurring "when

“ whenever the pressure is taken off, and appearing
 “ by my speaking words not tending to edify; but
 “ most by my manner of speaking of my enemies.
 “ Lord save or I perish! Save me, 1. By such a *faith*
 “ as implies peace in life and death. 2. By such *bu-*
 “ *mility* as may fill my heart from this hour for ever
 “ with a piercing uninterrupted sense. ‘ I have done
 “ ‘ nothing hitherto,’ having evidently built without
 “ a foundation. 3. By such a recollection as may cry
 “ to thee every moment, especially when all is *calm*.
 “ 4. By steadiness, seriousness, sobriety of spirit, avoid-
 “ ing as fire every word that tendeth not to edifying,
 “ and never speaking of any that oppose me or sin
 “ against God, without all my own sins set in array
 “ before my face.” Could he who writes these
 words be unacquainted with himself?

9. A fortnight after he speaks yet more clearly.
 Some of his expressions are, “ I went to America
 “ to convert the Indians, but Oh! who shall convert
 “ me? Who, what is he that will deliver me from
 “ this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer re-
 “ ligious. I can talk well, nay and believe too, when
 “ no danger is near; but let death look me in the face
 “ and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say to die is gain.

‘ I have a sin of fear that when I have spun

‘ My last thread I shall perish on the shore.

“ I think verily if the gospel be true I am safe.—But
 “ in a storm I think, ‘ What if the gospel be not true?
 “ Then thou art of all men the most foolish. For
 “ what hast thou given thy goods, thy ease, thy
 “ friends, thy reputation, thy country, thy life? For
 “ what art thou wandering over the face of the earth?
 “ A dream, a cunningly devised fable? O! Who
 “ will deliver me from this fear of death? What
 “ shall I do? Where shall I fly from it?”

10. Again, a little after, he says, “ It is now two
 “ years and almost four months since I left my native
 “ country

“country, in order to teach the Georgian Indians the nature of Christianity: but what have I learned myself in the mean time? Why (what I least of all suspected) that I who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God. I am not mad though I thus speak, but I speak the words of truth and soberness; if, happily, some of those who still dream may awake and see that as I am so are they.”

“This have I learned in the ends of the earth, that I am fallen short of the glory of God; that my whole heart is altogether corrupt and abominable, and consequently my whole life (seeing it cannot be that an evil tree should bring forth good fruit): that alienated as I am from the life of God, I am a child of wrath, an heir of hell: that my own works, my own sufferings, my own righteousness, are so far from reconciling me to an offended God, so far from making an atonement for the least of those sins which are more in number than the hairs of my head, that the most specious of them need an atonement themselves, or they cannot abide his righteous judgment: that having the sentence of death in my heart, and having nothing in, or of myself to plead, I have no hope but that of being justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: I have no hope but that if I seek I shall find Christ, and be found *in him, not having my own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.*

II. Of this faith he seems to have had, at this time, a very clear notion, though not so clear as he afterwards obtained, partly by conversing with Peter Bohler, and some others, and partly by continually searching the scriptures upon this head. In this way it pleased God soon to convince him that saving faith

faith (as our Church expresses it) is "a sure trust and confidence, which a man hath in God, that through the merits of Christ his sins are forgiven and he reconciled to the favour of God." He saw too, that holiness and happiness, that love, peace and joy are the never failing fruits of this faith, and that it is frequently given in a moment. But still he himself was not in possession of it: and this was, for some weeks, a source of great bitterness and distress to his soul. "I feel what you say" (says he, in a letter to a friend) "at this time, though not enough; for I am under the same condemnation. I see that the whole law of God is holy, just and good. I know every thought, every temper of my soul ought to bear God's image and superscription. But how am I fallen from the glory of God; I feel that I am sold under sin. I know too, that I deserve nothing but wrath, being full of all abominations; and having no good thing in me to atone for them, or to remove the wrath of God. All my works, my righteousness, my prayers, need an atonement for themselves. So that my mouth is stopped. I have nothing to plead, God is holy, I am unholy. God is a consuming fire. I am altogether a sinner meet to be consumed. Yet, I hear a voice (and is it not the voice of God?) saying, *Believe and thou shalt be saved. He that believeth is passed from death to life.*"

12. He who wrote these words could not be far from the kingdom of God. Deeply convinced of sin as he manifestly was, of his *depravity* and *weakness* as well as of his *guilt*, and groaning for redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of his sins and a new nature, he could not be long without finding mercy. Accordingly a day or two after, while at a meeting at Aldersgate-street, he was enabled

enabled to cast his soul on Christ, and to trust in him alone for salvation, and an assurance was given him that his sins were blotted out and he reconciled to the favour of God. The peace and love he immediately felt in his soul, and the spirit of prayer which he found for his enemies, were sufficient evidences that the work was genuine.

13. But the grand and most satisfactory evidence of any man's conversion is his subsequent-temper and conduct. These in the Rev. Mr. Wesley, I trust, were such as confirmed his profession. This congregation, I am persuaded, will not think I exaggerate, if I represent him as remarkable for almost every grace or virtue that does or can adorn a follower of Jesus. He was strong in *faith* and mighty in *prayer*, not a few, in the course of his seventy years labours in the Lord's vineyard, having been healed in body or mind, or both, while he was engaged in prayer to God with or for them. His *resolution* in undertaking and prosecuting whatever he believed would be for the glory of God and the good of mankind was unconquerable. Nor was he discouraged by difficulties, how many or great soever. His *confidence* in God, his *courage* and *tranquility* amidst tumults of the people, waves of the sea, dangers and deaths, was equally remarkable. He trusted in the Lord, and therefore was kept in perfect peace: nay, was as Mount Zion which cannot be removed. And what shall I say of his *humility*? Of the very deep and constant sense he manifestly had of his infirmities and imperfections, and of his continual need of the mercy of God and of the merits of Christ? This was undoubtedly, to his dying day, the uninterrupted temper of his mind, and language of his lips and life. His *resignation*, likewise, to the divine will, and *patience* under the dispensations of his Providence, were equally manifest, as

as also his *meekness*, *gentleness*, and *long suffering*, amidst the very many insults, and injuries, and much ill usage he met with. And as no man was ever more attached and faithful to his *friends*, so no man ever more freely forgave his enemies, of which class, it is well known, like all other great and good men, he had not a few.

14. But how remarkable soever he might be for these graces, he was yet more eminent for *benevolence*, mercy and charity. His life was *one continued good work*, *one constant labour* to do good to the bodies and souls of men. And as he fed thousands and myriads with the living bread, so also not a few with the bread that perisheth. Whatever he could spare from the profits of his fellowship before his marriage, or from the income arising from the sale of his books afterwards, together with the donations made him now and then by particular friends, was wholly distributed to the sick and needy. He was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame: a light (as it were) to them that sat in darkness, making the hearts of the fatherless and the widows to sing for joy. His *generosity* and *liberality* according to his power, cannot be described nor hardly conceived by those that did not know him. His *temperance* also and *self-denial* must not be passed over in silence. It is true that for many years last past, many, in town and country, were eager to shew their love to him and his friends, by providing very liberally when he was to visit them on his journeys through the kingdom. But it is well known that his general rule was only to eat of one dish. In short all the graces and virtues, that adorn the christian character were more or less, found in him and that mixed with such sweetness, affability, courtesy and good-breeding, that he was the delight of every company he came in, nor was it possible, almost, for any one to be a few
minutes

minutes present while he was conversing with his friends, in a free and familiar manner, without being at once edified and highly delighted. He had read and seen so much; was so well acquainted with men and things, with the world and with the church, that he had an inexhaustible fund for entertaining and useful conversation: nor could any feast, how elegant and sumptuous so ever, afford half the pleasure and delight which his most enlivening and exhilarating discourse afforded.

15. As a *Preacher* he was always heard with deep attention, generally with much profit, and not seldom with surprizing and wonderful effect; whether of sorrow in those that were cut to the heart by his word, or of joy in those whose tears were wiped away, and whose wounds were healed by the balm of his doctrine. He was always *concise* and *clear*. He never advanced any thing *unnecessary* or *more than enough*, nor delivered himself in a manner that was not intelligible to the meanest of his hearers, if attentive. He was often *full* as well as clear, and to such as were intelligent, gave perfect satisfaction upon almost every subject he undertook to explain. And his preaching was so *forcible* and *convincing* that it was hardly possible to hear him attentively, without being as much displeased at one's self as one was pleased with the preacher. The Lord's word in his mouth was indeed *quick* and *powerful*, and *sharper than any two edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and was a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*

16. As a *Writer* he is much to be admired. He employed his pen on almost all subjects that are useful to mankind, and treated them in a manner always agreeable and often highly pleasing. His
C
method

method was easy, natural, and exact. His style, though not laboured and flowery (a kind of style which he never admired) yet was pure, perspicuous, and manly; much like that of Addison, universally acknowledged one of the most pleasing writers this or any nation has produced. Though most of his publications are in prose, yet they are written in such a lively and entertaining manner, that they are read with as much pleasure as most poetical pieces. Of his abilities in Poetry too he has given us many specimens. And it appears that had his more serious and important studies and labours permitted him to employ himself that way, that he would not have fallen short of his brothers Charles, or Samuel Wesley, or the pious and ingenious Dr. Watts.

17. I have only to speak of him in the character of a *Shepherd* and *Bishop* of souls, in which he peculiarly shone, which was his *chief calling*, and his principal employment, and for which he was most admirably fitted by nature, and by grace. As probably no person has existed since the Apostles days, who ever had so many souls under his care, so many to *feed* and *oversee*; so perhaps no one was ever better qualified for such a work. The *health*, *strength* and *activity* of his body, capable of so much labour and fatigue, the *vigour*, *resolution*, and *firmness* of his mind, regarding neither pleasure nor pain, and recollected and undaunted in the midst of the greatest difficulties and dangers; the retentiveness of his memory, enabling him to recollect the persons, names, and places of abode of such multitudes of people; his extensive knowledge of things human and divine; his deep and long experience both of the devices of Satan and of the work of God in the soul, and above all, the grace of God that was in him:---these and such like endowments fitted him for

for this great work ; and he executed it in a manner which few have done before or I believe will do after him.

18. Add to this, that in proportion as the societies increased in *London, Bristol, New-castle-upon-Tyne, Leeds, Manchester,* and all over Great Britain and Ireland ; and it became more and more impossible he should superintend and take care of them all, should provide food for their souls, oversee their behaviour, take notice of, and prepare and administer remedies for their spiritual diseases, and lead them forward in the paths of righteousness: and as few or none of the clergy of the established church were willing to expose themselves to reproach, and engage heartily with him in the work ; he had wisdom and courage enough to go out of the common track, to take the Lord Jesus and his Apostles for his models; and to avail himself of the gifts and grace bestowed for this very purpose, no doubt, upon many of his people. Hence dividing the societies into little companies called classes, he appointed the most knowing, the most experienced and the most pious to take charge of the rest. Several of these, from praying with and advising their little companies in private, proceeded, in consequence of pressing invitations to exhort them and others in public, and in the end even to expound to them and enforce upon them the word of God.

19. In this way a great company of preachers, now assembled before you, have been providentially raised up, in general without an university education or even any acquaintance with the learned languages (though some of them are well skilled therein) to supply his lack of service; to *oversee* and *feed*, in his absence, the multitudes of flocks he had gathered, and to take care of them, now he is no more. An astonishing instance of the divine goodness

nets this indeed! For had it not been for this, would not you, my brethren, and some thousands of congregations beside, in Great Britain, Ireland and America, have been this day as sheep without a shepherd? By *these* as well as by his *life*, which will long be remembered, and his *writings*, which will continue to be published and read, he *being dead yet speaketh*, and I trust will speak while England is a nation, or while the English language is known upon the earth. May you, and I, my dear brethren, have ears to hear and hearts to understand! Many of them will address us during this Conference. May we *mark, learn and digest* the blessed truths that shall drop from their lips! the same, I am well persuaded, with those which, in years past, were so frequently dropping from the lips of our aged and reverend father, now removed from us, when with his sons in the gospel about him, he was wont to discourse to us from this and other pulpits. May we recollect and long remember his salutary doctrine! May it be fixed in our minds as a nail in a sure place! May it have its proper influence upon our hearts and lives! Thus, as my text advises, and as I was, *Secondly*, to exhort, we shall find it less difficult to *follow his faith*.

II. Having enlarged so much on the former head, I shall dispatch what I have to say on this and the following in a few words.

I. *Faith* here, as in a few more passages of scripture, may be put for the *object* of faith, the *truths believed*. And the importance of it, in this sense, must be obvious to all who attend to the *mighty*, I may say the *infinite* difference there is between *truth* and a *lie*, and the consequences that do and will follow upon believing the one or the other. There are indeed some, yea many things relating to *the present life* which we may view in a false light,
and

and may believe a *lie* instead of *the truth* respecting them, and no bad, at least *eternally* bad and destructive consequences will follow the mistake. And the reason is plain, this life with every thing in it, is of short duration and is passing away like a dream of the night. But the case is different with regard to things that appertain to the life to come. To receive a lie for *truth* with respect to most of *these*, is to involve ourselves in ignorance, sin and misery, and to preclude our partaking of the salvation of God.

2. For instance to entertain mistaken views of ourselves and of the state we are in by nature; to suppose, with the Jews, that we *see*, when in reality we are *blind*, or, with the Pharisees, that we are *holy*, and *righteous*, when we are guilty and depraved, or, with St. Paul, in his unconverted state, that we are doing God service while we are opposing his truth and persecuting his servants, is effectually to prevent our being enlightened, justified, or brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus: it is to keep ourselves at an immense distance from that poverty of spirit, that humiliation of soul, that holy mourning, to which alone the Lord hath promised the consolation of his favour, and it is to feed that pride of heart which is an abomination before God. The same may be said concerning the *divine nature*, the *person of Christ*, the *way of salvation* through a Mediator, the *will of God* and our *duty*: to have mistaken views of these subjects must, on the one hand, preclude those happy effects which would follow upon right views of them, and, on the other, produce consequences proportionably hurtful.

3. The gospel is represented in scripture as the great mean of turning people from *darkness to light* and from *the power of satan unto God*. But will
 C 3 any

any man say that a *lie* enlightens, or gives real and useful information, like *truth*, and that believing a lie will make us free, as the Lord Jesus has assured us knowing the truth will? St. James informs us that we are *begotten again by the word of truth*; St. Peter speaks of our *purifying our souls by obeying the truth*, and our Lord prays that we may be *sanctified by the truth*. But dare any man affirm that a lie will produce the same effects? that we may be *begotten again* and made the children of God by a *lie*, may *purify our souls* by obeying a *lie*, and may even be *entirely sanctified and fitted for heaven* by a *lie*? Let no man therefore persuade us that it is a matter of no moment what we believe or what sentiments we entertain in religion. If that were the case *zeal for God* would be sufficient, and it would not signify at all whether that zeal were according to knowledge, contrary to the express and repeated declarations of St. Paul. Be upon your guard, therefore, in this point, and remember that we are *chosen to salvation, as by sanctification of the spirit, so also by belief of the truth*.

4. What this truth is I need not now stay to declare. It is well known to this congregation to comprehend those grand doctrines which are termed by the Apostle the *Analogy of faith*, viz. those that respect the Depravity of human nature, the Atonement of Christ, the Influences of the Spirit of God, Justification, Sanctification and Eternal life. But it is declared at large, as in many of Mr. Wesley's other works, so especially in his *Notes on the New Testament*, and in his *four Volumes of Sermons*. Those who wish to see it defended more fully and particularly, will meet with ample satisfaction in reading his *Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, his *Answer to Dr. Taylor on Original Sin*, and his many other controversial pieces. In the mean time compare what you read with the Oracles of God, and bring

bring every doctrine to the test of that infallible touchstone. This, you know, is the *only rule* and the *sufficient rule* of faith as well as of practice. Search, then, the Scriptures, for in them ye have eternal life; and if you do this without prejudice, in humility and simplicity, sincerely desiring to know and embrace the truth as it is in Jesus, and looking unto God for the teaching of his Spirit, I have no more doubt of your finding in them the grand doctrines which our late Pastor and President so continually taught by word and writing, and so ably defended, than I doubt whether you will find in them that *there is a God*, or that Jesus of Nazareth is his Son.

5. But we need not confine the term *faith* to the *object* of faith, the *truths* believed. The expression may also mean here our *belief* or persuasion of those truths. In this sense also let me recommend the faith of our departed Pastor to your imitation. See that you be persuaded, *truly* and *deeply* persuaded, as he was, of the *certainty* and *importance* of these truths. See that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, with all the great doctrines of it, *come to you*, as it did to the Thessalonians, *not in word only*, but *also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance*. See that you so believe that it may be the *power of God unto salvation* to your believing souls: so that it may have its proper influence upon your temper and conduct, while you are, as it were, cast into the mould of it, and all your dispositions, words and actions are as *becometh the gospel of Christ*.

6. But some will perhaps be inclined to think that *faith* here means *justifying* and *saving faith*, even that faith in Christ and in the mercy of God and in the promises of the gospel through him, which whosoever hath is *justified from all things*, has *peace with God*, has *the love of God*, *shed abroad in his heart*, by the *Holy Ghost given to him*, and *rejoices*

joices in hope of the glory of God. And certainly, my brethren, it is our duty to take care, that, in this sense also, we follow his faith: that like him we believe in Christ, so as to be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the deeds of the law; that we believe with a faith of the operation of God, a faith working by love, a faith overcoming the world, and purifying the heart. This, indeed, is the most important point of all. For if God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; it surely must be of the deepest importance that we believe aright on him, for, eternal life is attained in this and in no other way.

7. It is above all necessary that we, who speak in the name of God, have faith in this sense; that we be justified ourselves, converted, regenerated, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus. To preach this faith is our grand calling, nor need we go forth unless to preach it. Almost every other branch of christian doctrine has advocates in abundance without us. But faith working by love and justification by faith, together with the new birth or a new creation, manifesting itself by universal holiness of heart and life;—to preach these is the proper office of a Methodist preacher, this being the very doctrine, as we have seen in the former part of this discourse, which our late Rev. Father set out with. And if it be our duty to preach it, surely it is equally, or more, our duty to experience it. For certainly we would not wish to be hypocrites going up and down recommending to others what we have no experience of ourselves.

8. I shall only mention one thing more here. Probably some will think that faith here stands for faithfulness. And certainly there can be no impropriety in taking the word in this sense, whether primarily

primarily intended by the Apostle or not, and recommending the faithfulness of our departed friend and father to our imitation. But who can describe his faith, in this view of it? Who can give those that did not know him any just idea of his faithfulness in the employment of his time and of every talent his great master had entrusted him with? Nay, who, that did not know him, would credit one half of what might be said, and if one wishes to do any justice to the subject, must be said? But it is my happiness this evening to address those that in some measure knew him. And however marvellous and bordering upon romance it might appear to others, you know it to be a fact, and therefore will fully believe me when I say, that during the last fifty years of his life there seldom was a day in which he did not preach twice, thrice, or even four times; travel, during nine months out of ten of the year, thirty, forty, fifty or sixty miles (and for many years on horseback;) answer half a dozen or even a dozen letters; converse with a number of persons, and yet found time to write and to go on with some work intended for the press. So that we may reckon he generally preached one thousand or twelve hundred sermons every year, travelled three thousand or even four thousand miles, wrote two thousand letters, conversed privately with ten thousand or twelve thousand people, over and above meeting-societies, keeping watch-nights, and love-feasts, administering the Lord's Supper, to thousands of communicants in town and country, and writing and publishing, I know not how many books on all subjects. It would be incredible that any one man should go through so much work, if we did not know it to be a fact that he went through it, and that, through the help of God, by attending to *one single circumstance*, and that is, to the *proper use of his*

his time; observing himself most carefully the advice given to us, my brethren, in the large Minutes of Conference. "Be punctual, be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment: never be triflingly employed. Never while away time. Neither spend any more time in any place than is strictly necessary."

9. Ever since he was at Oxford about the twenty-second year of his age, when, as he tells his brother Samuel in a letter, "Leisure and he had taken leave of each other, and he proposed to be busy as long as he lived, if his health should be so long indulged to him," he made it a constant rule, as is well known, to rise at four in a morning: and from the observation of this rule even sickness could scarce prevent him. From that time till he went to rest at night (which was about nine) it may be safely said that he never willingly lost one moment. *Amusement or relaxation* he used none, save what arose from change of employment. His whole life was one scene of serious business. From morning to night, allowing time for his meals, he was either reading or writing, or preaching, or travelling, or conversing seriously with those who applied to him for advice about matters temporal or spiritual. Nay, and frequently when on horseback, in the former part of his life, and almost always in the chaise (since he was obliged through weakness of body to make use of that means of conveyance) he was reading, unless when he judged it better to employ his thoughts in considering some subject intended for the pulpit or the press.

10. We see in him the wonders that time can do: "Time" (as Dr. Young says)

"Than gold more sacred, more a load

"Than lead to fools, and fools reputed wise."

And we see, too, in him the fulfilment of that gracious

cious promise. *To him that hath shall be given.* He had, that is employed, according to the design of the giver, the time vouchsafed him, and therefore the Lord gave him *much of it*. Consider him as *awake* and active from four in the morning till nine or ten at night, and you will find reason to conclude that he lived more in *one year* than many do in half a dozen. And then the Lord protracted his life to the long date of, at least, eighty-eight years. So that his life was long indeed, longer, all things considered, than almost any in these later ages do or will attain to; and what is better, wholly employed for the glory of God and the good of mankind. It may be safely said that from the time he was twenty-two years of age, till his dying day, he hardly ever employed *one hour*, wrote *one line*, travelled *one mile*, or almost uttered *one sentence* but what was, at least, designed by him to be useful to his fellow creatures, nay, and in general, one way or other, was useful.

II. How many thousands have been relieved, or cured in bodily complaints, by his advice given verbally, or in that most useful little book termed *Primitive Physic*. How many tens of thousands owe to him, under God, the health, yea, and everlasting happiness of their souls! How many families and individuals, at variance, has he reconciled, and how much peace and harmony has he been a mean of imparting where it never had been, or of restoring where it had been lost! How many drunken and debauched husbands and fathers have been reclaimed from their vices, and their families saved from beggary and ruin; and how much *industry*, *frugality*, *temperance* and *chastity*, and of consequence, *prosperity* have, through him, been spread through this and other kingdoms! How many hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of miserable objects have been

been or still are relieved by his own charities, or by those of which he was, under God, the main spring, and either set on foot or promoted! How many, at this moment, are praising God on earth that ever there was such a man, and how many more in heaven! How many thousands and myriads, during these fifty or sixty years that he has so successfully exercised his ministry on earth, converted to God, by his instrumentality, directly or indirectly, have gone before him to paradise, and were ready to bid him welcome when he arrived! and how many hundreds of thousands, in *England, Scotland, Ireland, America* and the West Indies, nay, and in other parts of the earth to which his writings have reached, or may hereafter reach, are waiting, or shall hereafter wait, to follow after! Oh! what a meeting, my dear brethren! How many sons and daughters, begotten by him thorough the gospel, shall at that day rise up and call him blessed! shall own and confess him their spiritual father, while he looks round with astonishment, and asks, who hath begotten me *these? These*, where had they been?

12. "I will invite you, my father and my friend," (said Mr. Hervey, in a letter to him, dated in the year 1736) "to meet me among the spirits of the just made perfect, since I am not like to see you any more in the flesh. Then will I bid you welcome, yea, I will tell of your love before the universal assembly, and at the tremendous tribunal. I will hear, with joy the Lord Jesus say of you (Oh! you that are greatly beloved!) *Well done good and faithful servant!* You have served your Lord, and your generation with your might. You have finished the work which my father gave you to do. If others have turned their thousands you have turned your ten thousands from the power of Satan unto God. Receive therefore a glorious kingdom,

“ kingdom, a beautiful and immortal crown from my
 “ hand. Enter with the children I have given you,
 “ with the souls you have won, O thou blessed one,
 “ thou heir of glory; enter in at those everlasting
 “ doors, and receive there the reward of thy la-
 “ bours, even fulness of joy for ever and ever !”

13. And if Mr. *Hervey* be so eager to come forward and welcome our venerable father into heavenly mansions, shall his son in the gospel Mr. *Fletcher*, be backward? Shall his dear brother and fellow labourer Mr. *Charles Wesley* stand aloof? shall Mr. *Whitfield*, he that set out with him, and with him bore the burden and heat of the day, but finished his task many years sooner?—Shall not he rise up and bid him enter? Methinks even Mr. *Toplady* has lost his bitterness and is melted into love! But why should I name individuals? An immense multitude that knew him in the flesh, and that never knew him, shall join the inviting and applauding chorus, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, pastors and teachers, saints, confessors and martyrs, gathered out of every nation and age, shall be glad to testify their love towards so faithful and eminent a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus. May we, my brethren, be of this company! I hope in God many of us shall. Many of you have long been, and are, at this moment, the sincere friends of the Lord Jesus, and therefore, of whatever denomination or party, cannot be his enemies, cannot be the enemies of one so owned of God, and who has been made such an universal blessing to mankind.

14: Thus have I been led, without intending it, to speak also of the *end of his conversation*, and to anticipate, in a great measure, what might have been advanced under the *third head*. I shall, therefore only add to what has been said, that the *wonderful success* God gave to his labours, the *amazing reformation*

D

mation

mation he made him the great instrument of effecting in this and other kingdoms, the *glorious exit* he made out of life, after having persevered in the good way he had begun in to the end; and the *great and blessed reward* which, we doubt not, he partly has received already and partly will hereafter more abundantly receive at the resurrection of the just; these particulars all included in *την εκβασιν ανατροφης*, that end of his conversation which we are called upon to consider, certainly contain strong and powerful arguments why we should *follow his faith* in the several senses that have been noticed, and proceed on in the way in which he, who for so many years *had the rule over us and spoke to us the word of God*, went before us.

15. Let us then, my brethren, steadily abide by the doctrine he taught and discipline he established, and continue to pursue the plan he in his wisdom saw fit to adopt, being, indeed, as we know, providentially led into it, contrary to his preconceived prejudices; a plan, which God has been pleased greatly to smile upon and to crown with such wonderful success. Let us not attempt to mend it, for indeed we are not able; but taking it up just as it is, adhere to it, and go on in the same tract we have many of us persevered in for twenty, or thirty, or even forty years. It is now too late in the day for us, to change: but if not, to what can we change for the better? Let us, however, mend our pace and quicken our diligence, as our time grows shorter. And as the shades of the evening are coming on, let us, in imitation of our departed pastor, work the harder, *work while it is day, because the night cometh in which no man can work*. Though we have not received his talents, let not that discourage us. Our present duty and our future reward are not and will not be measured by the *number or greatness* of our talents,

talents, or even by our *success* in the use of them, but by our diligence in employing them according to the design of him who entrusted them to our management. *Every man*, we are to remember, *shall receive his own reward according to his own labour; and when our Lord cometh his reward is with him to give unto every man according as his work shall be.* Persuaded of this, let us not make our having received fewer talents than our late Rev. Father an excuse for hiding any of them in a napkin, much less for burying them all in the earth. But if we have received but *one* let us be the more diligent that our *one* may gain *two*, and our *two*, *five*, and perhaps also our *five*, *ten*. Thus shall we also hear him say, *well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord:* thus shall we also receive a full reward in the kingdom of our Father.

END OF THE SERMON.

.....

The following character of the Rev. Mr. WESLEY, has appeared in a certain Periodical Publication and in some of the London Papers. It fell into my hands a few days before the Conference, and happening to have it with me, I read it to the Congregation after preaching the above Sermon. It was so highly approved of by most, if not all, that heard it, that I judged I should do an acceptable piece of service to my readers by subjoining it here.

A CHARACTER

A CHARACTER

of the celebrated

JOHN WESLEY, A.M.

Late Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.

Who died March 2, 1791, Aged Eighty-eight Years.

THIS venerable man, in his indefatigable zeal in the discharge of his duty, has been long witnessed by the world; but, as mankind are not always inclined to put a generous construction on the exertion of singular talents, his motives were imputed to the love of popularity, ambition, and lucre. It now appears that he was actuated by a disinterested regard to the immortal interest of mankind. He laboured, and studied, and preached, and wrote to propagate what he believed to be the Gospel of Christ. The intervals of these engagements were employed in governing the churches he had planted, regulating the concerns of his numerous societies, assisting the necessities, solving the difficulties, and soothing the afflictions of his hearers. He observed so rigid a temperance, and allowed himself so little repose, that he seemed to be above the infirmities of nature, and to act independent of the earthly tenement he occupied. The recital of the occurrences of every day of his life would be the greatest encomium.

Had he loved wealth, he might have accumulated without bounds; had he been fond of power, his influence would have been worth courting by any party. I do not say that he was without ambition; he had that which Christianity need not blush at, and which Virtue is proud to confess. I do not mean

mean that which is gratified by splendour and large possessions; but that which commands the hearts and affections, the homage and gratitude of thousands. For him they felt sentiments of veneration only inferior to those which they paid to Heaven; to him they looked as their father, their benefactor, their guide to glory and immortality; for him they fell, prostrate before God, with prayers and tears, to spare his doom, and prolong his stay. Such a recompence as this is sufficient to repay the toils of the longest life. Short of *this*, greatness is contemptible impotence. Before this, lofty prelates bow, and princes hide their diminished heads.

His zeal was not a transient blaze, but a steady and constant flame. The ardour of his spirit was neither damped by difficulty, nor subdued by age. This was ascribed by himself to the power of Divine Grace; by the world, to Enthusiasm: Be it, what it will, it is what Philosophers must envy, and Infidels respect; it is that which gives energy to the soul, and without which there can be no greatness or heroism.

Why should we condemn that in Religion which we applaud in every other profession and pursuit? He had a vigour and elevation of mind, which nothing but the belief of the Divine Favour and Presence could inspire. This threw a lustre round his infirmities, changed his bed of sickness into a triumphal car, and made his *exit* resemble an Apotheosis rather than a Dissolution.

He was qualified to excel in every branch of literature; he was versed in the Learned Tongues, in Metaphysics, in Oratory, in Logic, in Criticism, and every requisite of a Christian Minister; his style was nervous, clear, and manly; his preaching was pathetic, and persuasive; his Journals are artless and interesting; his compositions and compilations
to

to promote knowledge and piety were almost innumerable.

I do not say he was without faults, or above mistakes; but they were lost in the multitude of his excellencies and virtues.

To gain the admiration of an ignorant and superstitious age requires only a little artifice and address; to stand the test of these times, when all pretensions to sanctity are stigmatised as hypocrisy, is a proof of genuine piety and real usefulness. His great object was to revive the obsolete doctrines and extinguished spirit of the Church of England; and they who are its friends, cannot be his enemies. Yet for this he was treated as a fanatic and impostor, and exposed to every species of slander and persecution. Even bishops and dignitaries entered the lists against him; but he never declined the combat, and generally proved victorious. He appealed to the Homilies, the Articles and the Scriptures, as vouchers for his doctrine; and they who could not decide upon the merits of the controversy, were witnesses of the effects of his labours; and they judged of the tree by its fruit. It is true he did not succeed much in the higher walks of life; but that impeached his cause no more than it did that of the first planters of the Gospel. However, if he had been capable of assuming vanity upon that score, he might have ranked among his friends some persons of the first distinction, who would have done honour to any party.

After surviving almost all his adversaries, and acquiring respect among those who were the most distant from him in principles, he lived to see the plant he had reared spreading its branches far and wide, and inviting not only these Kingdoms but the Western World to repose under its shade. Who can doubt of the continuance of a cause so deeply established;

established; though at the same time, all must be sensible of the difficulty, if not the impossibility of finding a suitable successor? No sect, since the first ages of Christianity could boast a founder of such extensive talents and endowments. If he had been a candidate for literary fame, he might have succeeded to his utmost wishes; but he sought not the praise of men, he regarded learning only as the instrument of usefulness. The great purpose of his life was doing good. For this he relinquished all honour and preferment; to this he dedicated all his powers of body and mind: at all times and in all places, in season, and out of season, by gentleness, by terror, by argument, by persuasion, by reason, by interest, by every motive, and every inducement, he strove with unwearied assiduity to turn men from the error of their ways, and awaken them to Virtue and Religion. To the bed of sickness or the couch of prosperity, to the prison or the hospital, the house of mourning or the house of feasting, wherever there was a friend to serve, or a soul to save, he readily repaired, to administer assistance or advice, reproof or consolation. He thought no office too humiliating, no condescension too low, no undertaking too arduous, to reclaim the meanest of God's offspring. The souls of all men were precious in his sight, and the value of an immortal creature beyond all estimation. He penetrated the abodes of wretchedness and ignorance, to rescue the profligate from perdition; and he communicated light to those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death. He changed the outcasts of society into useful members, civilized even savages, and filled those lips with prayer and praise that had been accustomed only to oaths and imprecations. But as the strongest religious impressions are apt to become languid without discipline and practice, he divided his people into classes and bands

bands according to their attainments. He appointed frequent meetings for prayer and conversation, where they gave an account of their experience, their hopes and fears, their joys and troubles; by which means they were united to each other and their common profession; they became centinels upon each other's conduct, and securities for each other's character. Thus the seeds he sowed sprang up and flourished, bearing the rich fruits of every grace and virtue; thus he governed and preserved his numerous societies, watching their improvement with a paternal care, and encouraging them to be faithful to the end.

But I will not attempt to draw his full character, nor to estimate the extent of his labours and services: they will be best known, when he shall deliver up his commission into the hands of his Great Master,——
 “ Lord here am I, and the children which thou hast given me.”

N. B. This most extraordinary Man, in the course of the last sixty years, has been the blessed instrument in the hands of God to revive his work of True, Primitive Religion, not only in England, Scotland, and Ireland, but in that large Quarter of the Globe, America. In all of these places, he travelled in the greatness of his zeal, in person, by the sweat of his brow, and with his life in his hand; like his Great Master, delivering the message of the Lord to the poor, but precious and never-dying souls of men.

But glory be to JEHOVAH, his labours did not stop here, as tens of thousands of poor negroes, (and indeed their masters too) in the West Indies, both English, Dutch, and Danish Isles can testify.——In fine we shall say of him separately, as was said of the Holy Apostles, jointly; *viz.* That God's Word, is by him carried through all the Earth; yea, even to the World's End.——O, that my life were like his!

5 DE 30

PRESERVATION SERVICE

SHELFMARK 4135 A12...

**THIS BOOK HAS BEEN
MICROFILMED (1993)**

RPI

MICROFILM NO *SEE ESTC*

