

and members should remain seated, and converse as they would in the family circle, relieving the posture occasionally by rising and singing a verse of a hymn. Even in a larger room where the leader might not hear the conversational tone of the speaker, it is best that the *members should remain seated*, the leader drawing near to each member in rotation. Everything that savors of stiffness or formality should be banished from the class-room, which is the place where a Christian family ought to meet in unreserved confidence and fellowship.

It has already been said that class-meetings are only prudential regulations. Neither in form nor name are they *divinely commanded*. The obligation resting upon Methodists to attend them we have elsewhere spoken of. Those passages of Scripture which have been sometimes quoted to show them to be divinely commanded do not seem to us to warrant such a conclusion. These texts are not *commands* in any proper sense of the word. They are but records of facts, statements of the custom of pious men in every age, which show that they often conferred together on spiritual subjects, because they found such intimate fellowship promotive of their personal piety and happiness. Thus we are told that they "spake often one to another," doubtless of God and the things of God; that they confessed their sins one to another, and prayed for one another that they might be healed," etc. And everywhere in the Scripture there is an implied commendation of this custom as being both the evidence and the safeguard of their piety. The rule that requires attendance upon class-meetings only requires that we follow the good example of those who feared God in the days of the prophets and the apostles. They thus "assembled themselves together," not because God had specifically commanded it, but because they found great spiritual profit therein. They had learned that by the use of such means they more rapidly grew in grace and "in the knowledge and love of God continually," if indeed they had not also learned that without such aids they were in constant danger of falling from grace. And what are we better than they that we should neglect such helps to the maintenance of spiritual life? Have we not the same fallen and perverse nature, the same trials and temptations, the same hopes and joys, the fears and sorrows, the same needs and the same experiences? And can we devise a better means of keeping ourselves unspotted from the world than that which the fathers in Israel, and the first Christians, employed so successfully that it is commendably recorded in the sacred volume? How can we better overcome the evil that is ours by nature, and foster the good that is ours by grace? The great and gifted Richard Watson says:

"It is by these blessed institutions (class-meetings) which so constantly respect the end of all preaching and of all religious profession—the work of God in the heart—that the blind are led in the right way! the penitent encouraged to the exercise of that faith in Christ whereby cometh salvation; the tempted comforted; and all urged forward by the counsels of experience and the prayers of those who are united in this interesting fellowship, to the mark of the prize of our high calling."

Equally pertinent is the language of Bishop Morris in his introduction to Dr. Miley's Treatise:

"As to the peculiar institution of class-meeting, whether we view it in its spiritual, pastoral, disciplinary business, or social aspect, it is of vast