

extraordinary, in Scotland. Field-preaching in Covenanting times had been quite usual—indeed, almost the only way of worship for those who would not compromise with the government, and it had been revived by the Secession. That religious worship should consist of singing, extempore prayer, and, most important of all, of “preaching the Word,” was unknown among Anglican divines and was found in England only in the rare and secluded non-conformist chapels. On the other hand it had been the method of worship for which Scotland had suffered much at the hand of tyrannical kings. Had not the Scottish Confession of Faith (1560) declared: “The notes of the trew Kirk of God we beleieve, confesse, and avow to be, first the trew preaching of the Worde of God . . . secundly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus . . . lastly, Ecclesiastical discipline uprightlie ministred, as Goddes Worde prescribes, whereby vice is repressed and vertew nurished”—the very foundation stones of Methodism. That laymen should venture publicly to address a religious plea to a congregation was unheard of in the English Church. In Scotland, from the beginning, laymen and elders had their conspicuous place in the congregation, ruling the people and, if necessary, addressing them—though the Scottish elder has always been over-awed by the learning of the ministers.

Let us see how the sturdy people of the north actually received the Methodists. Whitefield’s friendship with the Erskines it was that opened the door to him, though it must be remembered that he was already the most famous orator in the English-speaking world. He met with the Associate Presbytery at Dunfermline in 1741, who, as we have said, while evangelical in their desire to bring God’s word home to the people, were sticklers for the orthodoxy and divine right of Presbyterianism. Let Whitefield describe the experience: “I met most of them, according to appointment, on Wednesday last. A set of grave, venerable men! They soon proposed to form themselves into a presbytery and were proposing to choose a moderator. I asked them, for what