

“no man cared.” Of them it might be said, as truly as of the first propagators of christianity, they had “no certain dwelling-place;” and under the severity of labour, and the wretched accommodations to which they cheerfully submitted, many a fine constitution was broken, and premature death was often induced.

The annual Conferences have been mentioned, and that a correct view may be taken of their character and object, it may be necessary to go back to their commencement. At first every doctrine was fully sifted in successive “Conversations;” and the great principles of a godly discipline were drawn out into special regulations, as circumstances appeared to require. After the Body had acquired greater maturity, these doctrinal discussions became less frequent, a standard and a test being ultimately established in a select number of Mr. Wesley’s doctrinal sermons, and in his “Notes on the New Testament.” The free and pious manner in which these inquiries were entered into was strikingly marked at the first Conferences, in the commencing exhortation; and the widest principle of christian liberty was also laid down, as suited to the infant state of a society which was but just beginning to take its ground, and to assume the appearance of order.

The minutes of the early Conferences are not confined to doctrinal discussions; but we see in them the frame of the discipline of the body, growing up from year to year, and embodied in many copious directions and arrangements. The most important of these remain in force to this day, although some in a maturer state of the Society have gone into disuse.

The doctrines and principal branches of discipline of the body being generally settled, Mr. Wesley desisted from publishing extracts from the minutes of the annual Conferences from 1719 to 1765. In the minutes of the latter year we find, for the first time, a published list of the circuits, and of the preachers. The circuits were then *twenty-five* in England, extending from Cornwall to Newcastle-upon-Tyne; in Scotland four; in Wales two; in Ireland eight; in all *thirty-nine*. The total number of preachers, given up entirely to the work, and acting under Mr. Wesley’s directions, had then risen to *ninety-two*.

Mr. Charles Wesley married in 1719, yet still continued his labours with but little abatement.

The detected immorality and expulsion in 1754, of one of the preachers, James Wheatley, led the brothers to determine upon instituting a more strict inquiry into the life and behaviour of every preacher in connexion with them. Mr. Charles Wesley undertook that office, as being perhaps more confident in his own discernment of character, and less influenced by affection to the preachers. The result was, however, highly creditable to them, for no irregularity of conduct was detected; but as the visitation was not conducted, to say the least of it, in the bland manner in which it would have been executed by Mr. John Wesley, who was indeed alone regarded as the father of the connexion, it led, as might be expected, to bickering. Many of the preachers did not come up to Mr.