

consulted John Wesley on the step she was about to take. Hence, probably, the religious and doctrinal character of the communication :

“LONDON, October 10th, 1778.

“MY DEAR MISS BISHOP: I am not unwilling to write to you, even upon a tender subject, because you will weigh the matter fairly. And if you have a little prepossession (which, who has not), yet you are willing to give it up to reason.

“The original Methodists were all of the Church of England, and the more awakened they were, the more zealously they adhered to it in every point both of doctrine and discipline. Hence we inserted in the very first rules of our society, ‘They that leave the Church leave us.’ And this we did, not as a point of prudence, but a point of conscience. We believe it utterly unlawful to separate from the Church, unless sinful terms of communion were imposed; just as did Mr. Philip Hervey, and most of those holy men that were contemporary with him.

“‘But the ministers of it do not preach the Gospel.’ Neither do the Independent nor Anabaptist ministers. Calvinism is not the Gospel; nay, it is further from it than most of the sermons I hear at church. These are very frequently unevangelical; but those are anti-evangelical. They are (to say no more) equally wrong; and they are far more dangerously wrong. Few of the Methodists are now in danger of imbibing error from the Church ministers; but they are in great danger of imbibing the grand error—Calvinism—from the dissenting ministers. Perhaps thousands have done it already; some of whom have drawn back to per-

dition. I see more instances of this than any one else can; and on this ground also exhort all who would keep to the Methodists and from Calvinism—‘Go to the Church and not to the meeting.’

“But, to speak freely, I myself find more life in the Church prayers than in the formal, extemporary prayers of dissenters. Nay, I find more profit in sermons on either good tempers or good works than in what are vulgarly called Gospel sermons. That term is now become a *cant* word. I wish none of our society would use it. It has no determinate meaning. Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace, bawl out something against Christ and His Blood, or justification by faith, and his hearers cry out, “What a fine Gospel sermon!” Surely the Methodists have not so learnt Christ. We know no Gospel without salvation from sin.

“There is a Romish error which many Protestants sanction unawares. It is an avowed doctrine of the Romish Church that ‘the pure intention of the minister is essential to the validity of the sacraments.’ If so, we ought not to attend the ministrations of an unholy man; but in flat opposition to this, our Church teaches, in the Twenty-eight Article, that ‘the unworthiness of the minister does not hinder the validity of the sacrament.’ Although therefore, there are many disagreeable circumstances, yet I advise all our friends to keep to the Church. God has surely raised us up for the Church chiefly that a little leaven may leaven the whole lump.

“I wish you would seriously consider that little tract, ‘Reasons