

growing work, which already had swelled beyond even his, and his Brother's active powers suitably to supply with the ministration of the word of God. Mr. Charles Wesley had discouraged the employment of laymen from the beginning and even he himself hesitated; but with John, the promotion of religion was the first concern, and church order the second, although inferior in consideration to that only. In 1741, Mr. Maxfield who had been left by him to pray with the Society, and to advise them as might be needful, during Mr. Wesley's absence from London, began to preach. On hearing this Mr. W. returned with haste to silence him; but was deterred by his excellent mother. This venerable woman said to him "John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily any thing of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach, as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him yourself." He took this advice, and could not venture to forbid him.

Mr. Wesley's defence of himself in the employment of lay preachers turns upon the disappointment of his hopes, that the parochial Clergy would take the charge of those who in different places had been turned to God by his ministry, and that of his fellow labourers; and affords a key to all that which, with respect to church order, may be called irregularity in Mr. Wesley's future proceedings. God had given him large fruits of his labour in many places; when he was absent from them, the people were "as sheep having no shepherd;" or rather were persecuted by their natural pastors, the Clergy; he was reduced therefore to the necessity of leaving them without religious care, or of providing it for them. He wisely chose the latter, but true to his own principles, and even prejudices, he carried this no farther than the necessity of the case: the hours of service were in no instance to interfere with those of the establishment, and at the Parish Church the members were exhorted to communicate. Thus a religious society was raised up within the national Church, and with this anomaly, that as to all its interior arrangements, as a Society, it was independent of its ecclesiastical authority. The irregularity was, in principle, as great when the first step was taken as at any future time. It was a form of practical and partial separation, though not of theoretical dissent; but it arose out of a moral necessity, and existed for some years in such a state, that, had the Clergy been disposed to co-operate in this evident revival and spread of true religion, and had the heads of the Church been willing to sanction itinerant labours among its Ministers, and private religious meetings among the serious part of the people for mutual edification, the great body of Methodists might have been retained in communion with the Church of England.

On this matter, which was often brought before the leading and influential Clergy, they made their own election. They refused to co-operate; they doubtless thought that they acted right; and excepting the oblo-