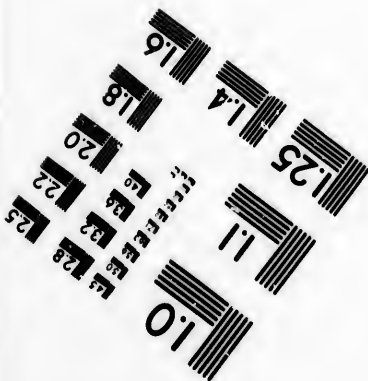
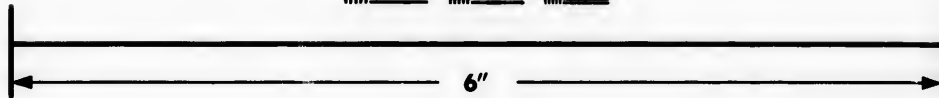
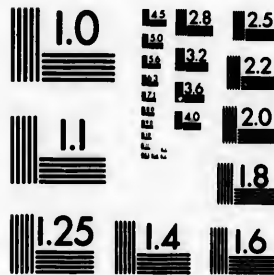


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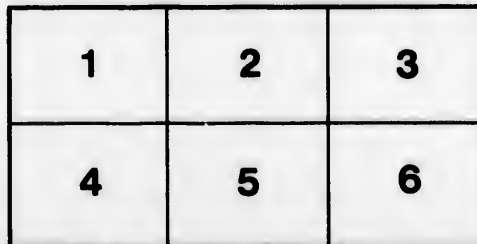
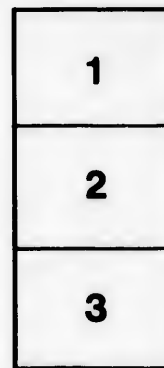
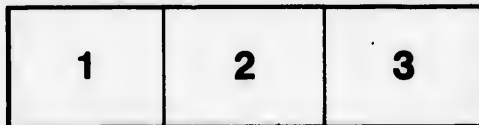
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THE
ANTIDOTE

TO

DR. RYERSON'S SCRIPTURAL RIGHTS, &c.

IN TWO PARTS,

No. 1 RELATING TO CHILDREN,

No. 2 DO. TO ADULTS,

SHEWING THE ERROR OF THE POSITIONS ON
WHICH HIS ASSUMPTION IS FOUNDED,

THAT

ATTENDANCE AT CLASS MEETING

IS NOT

A PROPER CONDITION OF MEMBERSHIP, IN THE
WESLEYAN METHODIST CHURCH.

BY REV. H. WILKINSON,

WESLEYAN MINISTER, LONDON, C. W.

"Great men are not always wise."—Job xxxii., 9.

"Not the Church, but Christ alone saves."—*M. D'Aubigne.*

LONDON, C. W. :

PRINTED BY HENRY A. NEWCOMBE, RIDOUT STREET.

1855.

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TO THE READER.

It is believed, the following pages contain Scriptural Truth in reference to the topics discussed. But why discuss them? Certainly not because of the effect produced by the Pamphlet of Dr. Ryerson. Our People generally reject the Dr.'s positions; while a few lukewarm or backsliden friends, and some enemies, receive them, and rejoice over them. But, perhaps, few of either class clearly understand *why*. An *expose* of the grounds of the fallacious conclusion of the Dr., against the Class Meeting requirement, is needed. Patiently I waited for others to furnish it, and, like Elihu,—Job xxxii., 5—I have “seen no answer.” It is not best that *any one* should be left to take for granted, the Dr. is in error. I am satisfied his positions are at fault, and certain concomitants are at fault also. They, too, will be noticed. I may have written, perhaps, bluntly, though none the less kindly. But I must not detain you at the door. Read and judge. “I owe no *man* anything but love.” To Piety and Truth I owe “much every way.” I alone am responsible for the contents of this work. It is intended to do good. If any is accomplished, the glory is the Lord's.

THE AUTHOR.

THE ANTIDOTE

TO

DR. RYERSON'S "SCRIPTURAL RIGHTS, &c."

As many minds may not be familiar with the Pamphlet of Dr. Ryerson; or may not at present remember the positions he has taken in his late opposition to Wesleyan Methodism, I deem it proper to select such portions of his Pamphlet as clearly and fully express his views. On page 5 he says:—

"The question is, as to whether, on the Wesleyan Conference assuming the positions and functions of a distinct and independent church, a condition of membership has been imposed, which is a departure from the principles of Mr. Wesley, and the doctrine of the Apostolic Church—a condition which ignores the church relation, rights and privileges of the baptized children of the Wesleyan Body, and excludes thousands from its membership upon unscriptural and unwesleyan grounds."

On page 12:—

"I maintain that each child baptized by the church is thereby enfranchised with the rights and privileges of citizenship in it, until he forfeits them by personal misconduct and exclusion."

On page 28-9:—

"I urged, in behalf of both parents and children, the practical recognition of the rights and claims of children who were admitted and acknowledged as members of the church by Baptism, as implied in our Form of Baptism, and according to our Catechism, and according to what the Conference unanimously declared at Hamil'on in 1853, our church holds to be among the privileges of baptized persons, viz., that 'they are made members of the visible church.' And 'Persons cannot of course be members of the 'visible' Church of Christ without being members of some visible branch or section of it.'"

Page 29:—

"To deny that the baptized children of our people are members of our

church, and that they should be acknowledged as such, &c. &c., is to make the sacrament of Baptism a nullity, &c. &c."

Page 30:—

"Parents have a right to claim this relationship and its privileges for their children, until such children are excluded from the church by the lawful acts of its executive authorities."

Page 16:—

"I know of no scriptural authority to exclude any person from the Church of Christ on earth, except for that which would exclude him from the Kingdom of Glory, namely, 'immoral conduct.'"

"I do not regard as Wesleyan, or having the sanction of Mr. Wesley, the making attendance at Class Meeting an essential condition of membership in the Church of Christ."

Page 5:—

"In vain have I sought for an instance of Mr. Wesley excluding an upright and orderly member, for merely non-attendance at Class Meeting."

The above quotations do, I sincerely believe, embrace the substance of Dr. R.'s Pamphlet, so far as his objections to Wesleyan Methodism, therein, are concerned. The sum of all, I take to be,

First.—Baptism *admits* or *makes* children members of the Church of Christ—of the *visible* church—of some *branch* of the visible church—and of the same branch as is the minister who administers the ordinance. These baptized children, by right and privilege, continue to be members of such branch of the visible church until lawfully excluded; which exclusion cannot take place, except for immoral conduct.

Inference.—*Therefore*, attendance on class meeting cannot be a proper condition of church membership.

Second.—It is *unscriptural* to exclude *any one* from the Church of Christ, except for immoral conduct; and *unwesleyan* to separate any upright and orderly member from the church, for mere non-attendance at class meeting.

Inference.—*Therefore*, to make attendance at Class Meeting a condition of membership, is both unwesleyan and unscriptural.

I believe there is grievous error here; that the error lies in the *positions* assumed; and that *both* positions are radically wrong.

No. 1 Position relates to *Children*. It is with no trifling degree of anxiety that I feel, on examination, I shall be obliged to reject the stereotyped terms and sentiments of much that is written in reference to the relationship of children to the church, and the efficiency of baptism in connection with that relationship. There

is much in the phraseology adopted, as well as in the ideas attempted to be conveyed, that I *never* fully received, and that, in fact, to my mind, never became intelligible; and I fancy, for that very good reason, that

“Nonsense can ne'er be understood.”

I beg, therefore, at the outset, to disclaim any special respect for long established prejudices, for superstitious whims, and for Puseyism, either diluted or pure, whether found in creeds or forms, or the expressed opinions of any teacher of any church, Wesleyan or other. Truth alone, I trust, shall decide. It is intended, by the aid of all the light and help I can obtain by means of sincere prayer, much reading and careful thought, simply and fearlessly, and as clearly and fully as possible, to present what I believe to be correct sentiments in reference to the points involved—sentiments in accordance with Scripture, truth, and reason; an honored Trinity always in happy unity.

One very important question meets us at the threshold of the subject—*Are Children members of the Church of Christ on earth?* Without controversy, they are. It is incontrovertibly established by the plainest teachings of the Book of God, that infants and little children are—thanks to Jesus Christ!—*in a gracious state.* See Matt. xviii., 2-5; Rom. v., 12-20; Matt. xix., 14. How full the affirmation!—“Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” If these gracious words of the Saviour mean, that children are “heirs of future glory” then are they, by essential qualification, assuredly members of the church on earth—a church including all accepted and holy persons. If the Lord Jesus Christ does *not* refer to their future state, He must then be understood simply to affirm their membership in the church on earth; and, in so doing, he instructed the Jews, that children suffer no loss by Christianity, compared with Judaism. The “Covenant of Redemptive Love” in Christ Jesus is a merciful provision of Divine Grace, extending backward and reaching forward, so as to place *every child of the human race* in a state of “Justification unto life,” and of unavoidable consequence, members of the true church on earth. “If the ‘many,’ that is, all mankind, have died through the ‘offence of one,’ certainly the ‘gift by grace,’ which abounds unto many by Jesus Christ, must have reference to every human being.”—Dr. A. Clarke. So Rev. R. Watson—“If infants are thus redeemed and sanctified in their nature, and are before death made ‘meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,’ so that in this world they are placed in the same relation to Christ as an adult believer, who derives sanctifying influence from Him; they are, therefore,

the members of His church, as they *partake of the grace* of the covenant." And note, Mr. Watson assumes this to be meant of *children*, as such; all children; not "believers' children" merely, as some erringly talk—No, thank God,

"For all, for all our Jesus died."

The next enquiry is, *Are Children members of the Visible Church?* I answer, no—emphatically, no. I accept the distinction as assumed in Dr. R.'s Pamphlet. There is doubtless existent, what is intended by the visible, and the invisible, or, more properly speaking, the *spiritual* church. The scriptures speak of visible and organized bodies, as the "Seven Churches of Asia," and many other distinct organizations, as so many portions of the visible church. In like manner the whole of these portions, taken together, constitute the *universal* church. This is the visible church of God upon earth; but it is not, in the *highest* sense, the Church of God. In the sight of God, doubtless, many of its members possess but a nominal connexion with the Mystic Body of Christ. In its first and strictest sense, the Church of Christ is the whole company of the "saved," of the justified, of such as are really in spiritual union with the Saviour. The "Body of Christ," to which the title *Church* pre-eminently belongs, includes only an accepted and approved and holy membership. This is eminently the "Body," the "House," and the "Spouse" of Christ; and to it belongs the unity, the oneness, the purity, the safety, the permanence, and the final glorious triumph, so often and variously the glowing theme of the Holy Scriptures. Now, of this church children *are* members; and *all* children are members of it by virtue of their interest in the Covenant of Universal Redemption; as they are in a state of gracious acceptance and salvation; and of consequence, "heirs of eternal life." In *no other* than this highest sense are infants members of the church. Of no other church relationship do they stand in need, as children. Of no other church relationship are they capable. Mystify we may, and write and talk confusedly we may, as hundreds do in reference to this matter; but, affirm it who may, the thing is simply impossible that *infants can* be members of the church, in any other sense.

A Pædo-Baptist says, "When we speak of infants belonging to the church, we do not mean that they belong to the Church in A, or the church in B; not to this branch, or to that branch of the church; but to the Spiritual Church of God. To this church infants *do* belong, and should be acknowledged by all the disciples as they were by the Lord, as, 'Of the Kingdom of Heaven.' They are not responsible as active members of Christ's Church,

but they are *part* of it, and the external sign of their membership is Baptism." Parents should secure for them the "outward sign" of their *gracious state*. Parents are under solemn obligation so to do; but the guilty lack of the parents, in neglecting *their* duty, alters *in no wise* the covenant relation of the children, as accepted in Christ; since *before* as well as *after*, and *with* or *without* Baptism, it is ever true, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven." I quote in place here the following sensible remarks from Dr. Wood, of Andover, U. S.—"It can never be consistent to regard infant children as members of the church, in the peculiar sense in which adult believers are members; *for of this relation they are manifestly incapable*. Nor can it be implied, that baptized children can ever become members of the church in this sense, on *any lower terms* than those which are presented to others. They can be admitted to sustain this peculiar relation only on the condition of their exhibiting the character of real piety. Still it is clear that baptized children bear a real and very endearing relation to the church. And although they are not at present *capable of being members* of the church (the visible church), they will at length, *unless their own wickedness prevent*, become active and faithful members. Such is the design of the economy under which they are placed; and such we may hope will, through the Divine mercy, ordinarily be the happy result." Dr. W. adds—"Thus the relation of baptized children to the church is not an imaginary or unintelligible relation, but one which is real and obvious; securing to them the privileges of that gracious dispensation under which they are placed, and giving them a special prospect of obtaining its spiritual and eternal blessings." This is the true and scriptural relationship of children, of all children, to the Church of God—a relationship including every necessary good; and exactly suited to their present unconscious state and manifest incapacity. Where the authority, then, contrary to reason and common sense, for regarding infants members of an active, repenting, believing, self-denying, working church? Where? Nowhere but in the mere imaginings of men.

We are now come to a very important part of the subject. Dr. R. instructs us, that children are "*admitted*" members of the *visible church* by Baptism; that one of the privileges of baptized persons is, that they are *made members of the visible church*; and that "each child baptized by the church is *thereby* enfranchised with the rights and privileges of the visible church."

Mark these words:—Baptism "admits," Baptism "enfranchises," Baptism "makes" little children "members of the visible

church." Now all this is the merest assumption. It is not only unproven, but utterly incapable of proof. The obvious and solid truth is, that Baptism "admits" into, or "makes" of, the church, infants and little children, in no sense whatever. Not of the *visible* church, since, as *incapables*, infants *cannot be* made members of it. You could just as rationally talk of making them members of parliament. Not of the *invisible* church, because, of the church in this sense they are *already* members, as accepted in Christ Jesus. They *are*, apart from Baptism altogether, now *righteous* before God, through grace; and hence, entitled to Baptism, as a "sign" or "seal" of that "righteousness." (Rom. iv, 11.) In respect to infants and little children, therefore, Baptism neither "admits," nor "enfranchises," nor the contrary, but it is the proper, and scriptural and formal recognition of a gracious state, then existent; the "outward sign" of an "inward and spiritual grace," happily in possession. Rev. R. Watson observes, "If it be asked of what import then is Baptism to children, *if as infants they are already* in a favorable relation to Christ? The answer is, that it is of the same import as Circumcision was to Abraham, which was "a seal of the *righteousness* of faith which he *had*, being yet uncircumcised." * * * "The child to be baptized is presented, *not as a candidate* for introduction into the church, but as an *accepted* candidate. Thus this *previous* relation of infants to Christ, *as accepted*, is an argument *for*, and not *against* their Baptism." But to deny that Baptism makes children members of the church, Dr. R. says, is "to make the sacrament of Baptism a nullity, and to disfranchise thousands of children of their divinely chartered rights and privileges." Now, where is the evidence for all this bugbear stress which is laid upon the visible church membership of children, by means of Baptism? Where? Is it in the *terms* employed? Let us see. Well, what is Baptism? Our 17th Article says—"Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christians are distinguished from others, that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the church." That is sound doctrine, and of course is quite intelligible. Circumcision was a "sign," or "seal," of an interest in covenant blessings, which interest the circumcised parties "*had, being yet uncircumcised.*"—Rom. iv., 11. And St. Paul calls Baptism, the "Circumcision of Christ"—Coloss. ii., 11—or *Christian* Circumcision; as it is the "outward sign" of the present real relation of children, as one with Christ, and truly of His Mystical "Body, the church," in the highest sense. But to tell us, Baptism "makes," Baptism

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"enfranchises," Baptism is the "initiatory" and the "admitting rite" into the visible church, is to "preach another gospel" than the true. These unauthorized terms are *not* synonymous of the terms, "sign" and "seal," the terms of the Bible, and our 17th Article ; but convey a very different, and extra, and unwarranted sense, as they are commonly used. Why this wide departure from the Scriptures, and Wesleyan doctrine? Why, the *necessity* of the case, to sustain an erroneous position.

Is it in the fact that *Baptism is to us in the place of Circumcision?* Circumcision was a "sign" put upon Abraham and his seed, shewing them to be a peculiar people, under peculiar obligations to God, and entitled them to peculiar blessings. It was a seal of the merciful covenant which actually included them, and all covenant good *for* them. Just so Baptism, now, with respect to our children. It is the "sign," and not the *means*, of spiritual mercies. But it is inquired, "Did not circumcision *make* children members of the visible church among the Jews?" Not at all, in the sense intended by the inquirer. Circumcision was the "sign or seal of the general covenant of grace, including both spiritual and temporal provisions."—Watson. That rite put the ordained "sign upon the children as of the covenant seed, and of course of the Congregation of Israel. But these facts were both just as true during the seven days previous to Circumcision as at any time subsequent. Circumcision "made" nothing, "admitted" nowhere; it marked the children as approved of God, and entitled to all the provisions of the covenant. Doubtless the children were of the "Congregation of Israel," or, if you please, the "Church in the Wilderness." Dr. A. Clarke tells us, "The word church simply means an assembly, and must have some other word joined to it to determine its nature, as the Church of God." St. Luke speaks simply of "The Church, or *Assembly* in the Wilderness." Of this assembly, or aggregate of the individuals of the Jewish people, the children were members. How could they be otherwise? It included "all the people of the Jews," and of adults, the worst as well as the best of the nation. Now, was there a visible Jewish church in any other sense? I think not. Then, either with or without Circumcision, Jewish children could not be of the visible church in the sense of the inquiry. Dr. Stone remarks, in point, "The word *Ecclesia* was applied to the people living under the Hebrew polity, a pure theocracy, or state, under the immediate government of God. The church, in our ordinary sense, as *visible*, or separate, or distinguishable from the state, did not exist. Religious worship, with priests and

sacrifices, was maintained; but it was an appendage of the theocratic state, rather than of a separate existing church. The Hebrew polity in the wilderness, as well as in Canaan, appears more like a religious state, a social theocracy, carrying among its individuals the elements of the spiritual church, than like a visible church, existing to the exclusion of the state." Hence, a few choice and appropriate gems of apostolic character. "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but, he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the heart; in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men but of God."—Rom. ii., 28, 29. "They are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children." "That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."—Rom. ix., 6-8. "Know ye, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."—Gal. iii., 7. From all this it is quite clear, that there were a people of God very *distinct* (not separate) from the Assembly or "Congregation of Israel," a *people*, or church, constituted, not by any merely *outward* bond, but by an *inward* state—a circumcised heart—a people whose "praise is not of men but of God." To this spiritual church, the only *people* "counted for the seed," in Heaven's reckoning, all the children belong, and they did so both *before* and *after* Circumcision. That ordinance solemnly marked their happy relationship to God, but "made" it not. Just so Christian Baptism now. Is it in the reference made to the circumcision of children under the Jewish dispensation. Gen. xvii., 14— "And the uncircumcised man child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant." Circumcision was the external seal of the "righteousness of faith" (Rom. iv., 11) of adults, and of the positive *present* covenant relation of children. It was, *also*, a mark, or sign, to distinguish and keep separate, Jews from others. Deut. x., 15, 16,— "Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He *chose their seed* after them, even you above all people as it is this day. Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked. To *this* sort of separation doubtless (Gen. xvii., 14,) refers. If a Jew neglected to Circumcise his child, this important badge of God's chosen "nation" would be wanting; and, in effect, the child would be "cut off" from Israel, as a violater of the covenant, "by despising the seal of it; not *personally*, however, but the parent for him. Yet would that child be still *accepted* of God in the covenant of Grace, and

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constitute also a part of the congregation of Israel, though held responsible, if spared to come to years, to remedy the neglect of the parent, by submitting of his own will to the Divine ordinance, or equitably forfeit his covenant mercies, and be accounted as a heathen. And as the covenant of grace is one and the same in all ages, as not a stake is removed, not a cord is broken, children are still entitled to the "sign" of God's people—Baptism by water. The neglect of the parent to secure for them that enjoined "sign" will place them in circumstances of *deprivation*, so far as the future benefits of the ordinance are concerned. But certainly such neglect on the part of another affects not the children for evil in the sight of God. The spiritual and accepted character and church relationship of either Jewish or Gentile children, *cannot*, in the nature of things, and in accordance with the analogy of bible doctrine, be in the slightest degree affected thereby. D. Isaac well observes—"Though the Quakers withhold Baptism from their children, God will no more withhold His grace, for the fault of the parent, than He would His Holy Spirit from Cornelius, and his family, because of the prejudices of Peter." Circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized, children are, in the highest sense, *a part of the Church of God*. I say *children* are so; the children of Jews, and Turks, and Infidels, and Heathens, and Christians alike—Glory be to God! Nor can one child of Adam's race, considered as a child, by any possibility of circumstance, be separated, or "cut off" from the gracious covenant, fall under condemnation, be injured in its eternal position, or perish in hell. And whatever of theory, or creed, or form of ordinance, is contrary to this great truth, must be *untrue*—is *positive error*.

Once more. Is the evidence for this stress found *in the capacity of Children?* It is wonderful with what confidence of face we are often told of the "capacity of infants." It is, however, a tacit admission of the truth, that visible church membership implies capacity for the worship and service of God. Thus we are gravely told, that "infants are capable of admission into the visible church," are "capable of coming to Christ," and are "capable of making a covenant;" and Deut. ix., 10-12, and Matt. xix., 13, 14, are quoted in proof. To most persons it is full enough to say in reply to all this folly, that *infants* of course can do nothing of the kind. Nor do the passages quoted, or any other, attempt to palm so palpable an impossibility upon our belief. In Deuteronomy we read—"Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord—captains, men of Israel, your little ones, wives, and the stranger—that *thou* shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God."

This was not a gathering for *Circumcision*; but simply a general and glad avowal of their purpose as Jews to cleave unto the true God. The litte ones, and all Israel of course were present, and the moral agents ("thou") entered into covenant for themselves and their children. How forced and impossible the idea of infants entering into covenant! If this be not *really meant*, then pray, speak and write as you mean. Certainly the words of Moses neither declare nor mean so absurd a thing. It is often said, "Infants ought to come to Christ." *Ought* is a word that cannot be applied to infants. As well say, what a flower or a butterfly ought to do. Parents *ought* to bring them to Christ in His church for Baptism, as the "outward sign" of what Rev. Mr. Watson calls their "*previous* relation to Christ." There is an argument for infant Baptism here, but certainly nothing to prove a capacity for visible church membership. They are *utterly incapable* of the "fellowship of saints," and of all those spiritual exercises and acts, which are uniformly predicated of the members of the visible church. They are in a *state of grace*; but you cannot say, they "love God," that they have "put off the body of sin," have "believed," or "obeyed." That they are subjects of grace, is quite enough to constitute a fitness for Baptism, as the prescribed "sign" of what they actually possess. This error of the visible church membership of children—something for which they are manifestly incapable—has involved some principal churches and Christian writers, in much confusion and folly. For instance—The Protestant Episcopal Church, U. S., in view of what visible church membership clearly implies, declares, "Baptism is a profession of faith;" and trusts to her doctrine of sponsors to get her through the slough into which, by this declaration of error, she has plunged. Hear Bishop Hopkins, of the Diocese of Vermont—"But how does this requisition of repentance and faith before Baptism apply to infants? We answer, it does not apply at all; for infants are Baptized upon the repentance and faith of others. * * * In the case of infants they are *adopted* through the repentance and faith of those who present them to the Redeemer; which is available before God, until they are *capable* of repenting and believing for themselves." So one of the Presbyterian churches in the United States. Hear Dr. Miller—"In every case of infant Baptism faith is required; * * * but it is required of the parents and not of the children. So that if the parent really presents his child in faith, the spirit of the ordinance is entirely met and answered."

Even Luther says—"The faith of those who present the children

suffices for them." And a noted Wesleyan author writes as follows, "On the part of the infant God requires faith, love, and obedience unto death." Here is error upon error. Infants *need* repentance and faith in order to salvation; and as *they* are manifestly incapable of these, other parties can do the needful on their *behalf!* Now, can anything be more singularly at variance with the Bible than the principle of these proxy performances, in the concern of personal salvation? I repeat, that in these high quarters the *germ* of this grievous error is found in the dogma of the visible church membership of children. Just allow infants to remain where God has placed them, and intended them to remain, until childhood expires, namely, in the spiritual church, and such folly as I have referred to would cease to be perpetrated. And, on the other hand, be true to the Bible doctrine, that Baptism imports regeneration—is the "outward sign" of a state of inward grace;" and, therefore, manifestly as applicable to infants as to believing adults—and few would be found to "forbid water" in reference to children. Baptism being a "seal," *not of faith*, but of "*righteousness*" (Rom. iv., 11)—a righteousness which children have *without* faith—they are scripturally entitled to Baptism, quite apart from the impossibility of undertaking the responsibilities of membership in the visible church of Christ.

The unscriptural notion that "children are admitted, and made, and acknowledged, members of the church by Baptism," has led to much error in reference to the *proper value* of the "sacrament of Baptism itself." To "deny" this, Dr. R. tells us, is to make Baptism a "nullity." That is, it does *that*, or it does *nothing*. Under the influence of such teaching, what wonder if various shades of error obtain, as to the importance and efficacy of water Baptism in the economy of Salvation? The truth is, however, as observed by M. D'Aubigne—"Undoubtedly the Lord has left His church outward seals of His grace, but he has not attached salvation to these signs." Not the church, but "Christ alone" saves. *Christ*, and not *Baptism*, is "the door" into the church—John x. Surely it does not make Baptism a "nullity" to consider it *less* than Christ?—other than Christ! Baptism is the "sign," that children and believers *are* Christ's, not the *way* to Christ. But mark the various *shades* of error reflected from this pillar in the Dr.'s theory:—*Rome* tells us, "Baptism makes children members of the visible church." "There is no salvation out of the church." "Baptism washes away the stains of sin." "Infants, unless baptized, cannot enter Heaven." Accordingly, she allows, if necessary, laymen, women, Jews, Infidels, and heretics to baptize a

child, to save it from eternal damnation. The *Episcopalian* forms regard Baptism as essentially connected with the *regeneration* of children, and their *initiation* into the visible church. See service after Baptism—"Seeing now, dearly beloved, that this child is by Baptism regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church." So "gross" is their "darkness" in the "form" just quoted, that a most solemn appeal is unblushingly made, to the parents and congregation, by the officiating minister, affirming that *there and then*, by Baptism, the child has been regenerated, and added to the church! No wonder church services become a mere form. One would reasonably imagine, that the case of Simon Magus, found in the "gall of bitterness" still, immediately *after* Baptism; and the case of Cornelius and his friends (regenerated *before* Baptism) would suffice to shew every Bible reader that Baptism is *not* essentially connected with salvation. Not so, however. Hear Bishop Hopkins—after admitting the regeneration of Cornelius, he says, "Yet the apostle does not think all this sufficient for his admission into heaven; but proceeds to have him baptized, for the remission of sins, in the solemn sacrament of regeneration." Again, "Though Saul was converted and changed, still his sins were not forgiven without baptism; for immediately Annanias saith to him, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins." Regeneration not "sufficient" for admission into heaven! Saul "converted," and yet his sins "unforgiven!" And this all-important part of salvation is *afterwards* done, in Baptism! And this is *Protestant* theology in the 19th century! I remark, there are good reasons for Baptism, quite apart from all this nonsense, and confusion, and abuse of Bible truth. Baptism is a "sign" of regeneration, a seal of righteousness; and, therefore, undeniably proper to Saul and Cornelius as adults in a state of grace; and, for the same good reason, is it the positive *right of all children*. It implied a state of grace *existent*. It did not *make* one. That expressive class of passages of holy writ, so often misapplied in this direction, such as, "wash away thy sins, "born of water," the washing of regeneration," simply denote, by obvious figure, our moral pollution as fallen beings, and also our spiritual regeneration by Jesus Christ, through the eternal spirit; and they have a *real* and not a mere figmentary significancy.

We have a still more perfect illustration of the character and influence of these errors in the grievous bondage they impose upon even enlightened Protestant Evangelical Christians. Why else is it that it is so common for parents to *fear* greatly, when the child is sick, to have it die unbaptized? They will send any dis-

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tance, by night or by day, and at any inconvenience to the minister, and he must make haste, and come down, and baptize the child "ere it die!" Now, what is this but the Popery of Protestantism? or the Puseyism of Evangelism? I should love to proclaim it to the whole world, that children *are of the church of God*. From their earliest existence as children they are so. Through Christ Jesus they are perfectly safe; and as perfectly so *without*, as *with*, Baptism. Die when they may, *as children*, all is well. They are sure of Heaven. It is because they are *in a state of grace* that they are entitled to Baptism. In no sense does baptism fit them for Heaven. Still, at the earliest opportunity, children ought to be presented at the altar of the visible church for Baptism. But please to mark, distinctly, that, in reference to the child, Baptism is for *life*, and not for *death*. And, also, in reference to parents, Baptism is in view of the *life* and not the *death* of the child. The contrary is rank superstition.

That important ordinance of God is intended to express publicly, on the part of parents, their sincere belief in all the great truths of a gospel salvation, such as human pollution, redemption by Christ Jesus, and spiritual regeneration, &c. It becomes a solemn bond to parents for Christian government, instruction, example, and intercession in reference to their children. It admirably serves as a ground of personal obligation and motive to the oft reminded and well instructed child hereafter. The prayers of the church are secured also for both parents and children. And the invaluable "blessing" of Jesus is always present and sure in this spiritual recognition of gospel truth, and the rich covenant grace which includes our children. The children are thus made as sure as is possible of the necessary helps, in due time, to a life of holiness; are placed in the best circumstances to induce them, when arrived at the years of accountability, voluntarily to choose the Lord God of their fathers, and understandingly "enter" into the visible church in some one of its many branches, and work in the master's vineyard; where it is fondly to be hoped they will "have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh, and be finally saved." I should be glad to pass from this reference to the Puseyism of Evangelism, just here; but my duty to truth and faithfulness compels me to notice more fully a specimen of this bondage to error in our own body. I quote from Wesleyan works—"Being by nature born in sin, we are hereby (Baptism) *made the children of grace*." Where is such wonderful efficacy connected with water Baptism in the Bible? Where?

Again—"By Baptism we, who are by nature children of wrath, are *made the children of God.*" Not by baptism; but *by Christ.*

Again—"Outward Baptism is a *means* of the inward." Not so. It is the "*sign*" of it. The *means* and the *sign* of a thing are not the same.

Again—"It is certain by God's word that children *who are baptized*, dying before they commit actual sin are saved." And what if they are *not* Baptized? Why, *they are saved.* Deny it who can.

Again—"Infants *need to be washed from original sin*; therefore they are proper subjects of Baptism." Rather, infants *are* washed from original sin, and therefore entitled to Baptism.

Again—"Children *who receive Baptism rightly* are engrafted into the church." What becomes of such as receive it *wrongly*? What has this *right* or *wrong* of others, to do with the moral condition of the child? Nothing whatever.

Again—"The *infants of believers* * * * always were under the *gospel covenant.*" Are *any children from* under that covenant? Did not Jesus die for all? A noted Wesleyan author, describing the subject of infant Baptism, says—"The scriptural title of believers' children to admission into the visible Church of Christ, and, consequently, to Baptism, is proved from the fact that they are included in the covenant of redemption." Why, the covenant of redemption includes *all children*—without exception or difference, *all children*, the wide world around. And, I repeat, Baptism was instituted, *not* as a means of "admission into the visible church," but as a "sign of regeneration," (Art. 17 of our church), and as a mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized. Surely "admission into the visible church," and "sign of regeneration," are phrases which convey very different ideas. The latter is scriptural, and in accordance with Wesleyan Doctrine; the *former* is of human invention, and I believe is unmixed error.

There is another point to be noticed. Dr. R.'s position includes, "That the baptized children of our people are members of *our church.*" Of course the same is true of all the other churches of the saints. The idea accords with Romish and Puseyitish views, exactly. It only remains for us to adopt it practically, and Methodism will soon become as perfect and as spiritual as they are. It amounts to this:—The Roman priest makes Romish church members by Baptism; the Episcopalian makes Episcopalian church members by Baptism; and Wesleyan ministers make

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Wesleyan church members by Baptism! Few of our ministers but have been annoyed in their respective fields of spiritual labor by certain *exclusives* visiting among their flock, inquiring—"Who baptized you?" And when informed that it was by an Episcopalian minister in England, Ireland, or Wales, (as is often the fact), the ready answer is—"Why, *you* are not a Methodist. You belong to us. You must come to church." Well, we will be offended with such gentlemen no more. They are but seeking their own. The people belong where they were baptized. We will henceforth follow so excellent an example, and cry out with Tertullian—"O happy sacrament of water!" What wonders it performs! In a short season, the large proportion of "our church" would be *Baptism-made* Methodists! and *unconscious* and *infantile* Methodists? And these "thousands" of Baptism-made members are to be regarded as *bona fide* "members of our church," until lawfully excluded, and that for *immorality of conduct* alone. Surely it were enough to put "our church" on a level with our neighbors, without reducing it lower than the low. Why, to *complete* the performance of making Christians by Baptism, the children of the Episcopal church are subjected to a certain process, called "Confirmation," at "a suitable age." They are *required* "audibly, before the congregation, to renew and ratify their baptismal obligations." They must know "the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Catechism of the Church." And Bishop Hopkins says—"No candidate should be admitted to Confirmation who is not ready and desirous to partake of the Holy Communion." I believe the Presbyterian churches also adopt a process of examination as to *spiritual* character, and furnish "tokens," in approved cases, as truly members of the church. But nothing short of "immoral conduct," will warrant any, the slightest question, of a *proper membership* of the baptized "thousands" within the Wesleyan Methodist pale? Verily, we would soon be a church to be "wondered at."

It cannot admit of a doubt but that all the ends of initial justification, and of Christian Baptism, in reference to children, spared to come to years of accountability, can be fully secured on the proper church relationship of children, namely, as members of the spiritual Church of Christ, and of consequence entitled to Baptism, the sign of their regenerated state, and secured in all suitable Christian instruction and example, by the voluntary obligations of parents in their Baptism. The visible church member scheme, aside from its sad error and evil results, can do nothing more or better than this for the children. It amounts to

nothing more. There is a space to be filled up, in their case, talk as we may. And, to meet this essential want of our dear offspring, and secure to them an early and permanent connection with some special branch of the visible church, besides the ordinary helps of parental instruction and example, and public worship, and the sabbath school, our church members need to wake up to a decided co-operation with the ministers in establishing and maintaining catechumen classes, as near as may be, in the form proposed by Rev. Robert Jackson, Wesleyan minister, England. He says—"Let but the *youth* of our congregation, from twelve to twenty years, be placed under an efficient system of religious instruction and protection; and, if there be any truth in the Gospel and the promised presence of Christ with His people, in their attempts to make known its provisions, we shall infallibly secure to our churches not only a perpetuation, but a glorious increase."—Page viii. After many interesting references to these classes, and to the persons conducting them, he adds, page xi.—"A quarterly schedule should be filled up from each class, stating the numbers and age of the catechumens, the increase or decrease, and how many *have become members of the church.*" That is as sensible as it is scriptural. "How many *have become members of the church.*" Become members, not by Baptism, but by choice and voluntary purpose, at a suitable age, voluntarily to be the Lord's. They will then be prepared to be Methodists, and to meet in class, and honor God in a religious profession. In many cases, if the church be faithful, this will occur while they are "yet very young," and with various success as to continuance in the church. It was *just so* in Mr. Wesley's own day. Referring to the Kingswood School children, Mr. Wesley remarks—"From the time that God visited them last, several of them retained a measure of the fear of God. But they grew colder and colder till Ralph Mather met them, in the latter end of August." They had ceased, therefore, to meet in class, as do most who grow "cold" in religion. But he goes on—"Several of them resolved to meet in class *again*, and appeared to have good desires." What a perfect picture of the Methodist church the world over. Pious people who are Methodists believe their children (in common with all other children) saved in Christ; they afford them the authorized "sign" of their *gracious state*, under circumstances the most impressive and salutary; they train them up in the ways of pious instruction and prayers; they take them to the means of grace, and often even to class; and use every proper means to excite in them "good desires," to induce them to give God their hearts, and to join themselves to the church; in

full view of what church membership implies. If, from any cause, they get "cold" and fall away from their steadfastness as *spiritual* persons, they will act just as do many "children of a larger growth," cease to meet in class; and persevering to do so after all the efforts of the church to revive them, they will cease to be of the church. Methodism puts all her members into classes; their *persons* as well as their *names*. She knows nobody not *willing* to be found there. Truly spiritual persons will love the class meeting; cold and fallen ones will not "always call upon God," nor meet in class. Thus the church is kept comparatively pure. On this true principle of conservation in the church, many children will be added thereto, from year to year, and become and continue spiritual and useful members. The visible church membership principle (membership by baptism), while it can in no sense do anything better, practically, *for the children*, would open the flood gate to a sweeping tide of various evil of most disastrous consequences to the vitality, power, life, and glory of our beloved Wesleyan Methodism.

It is to the twofold *position* of the Dr. I object. It is wholly untenable. It is error. And, of consequence, the fond inference deduced therefrom—namely, that attendance at Class Meeting is unwesleyan and unscriptural—ceases to be.

No. 2 Position relates to *Adults*. It is this, as previously given:—It is unscriptural to exclude any one from the Church of Christ, except for "immoral conduct." It is unwesleyan to separate any "upright and orderly member" from the church for mere non-attendance at Class Meeting. *Therefore*, to make attendance at Class Meeting a condition of membership is both unscriptural and unwesleyan.

By morality of conduct, in the highest sense, I understand, those attributes of character which consist in rendering to every one what is equitably due, and being kind and benevolent to all. At *best*, therefore, to be *moral* amounts but to an observance of the "*second* commandment," ("Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;") and can only be regarded in a secondary and subordinate light by the final Judge of all. Good authority tells us—"The highest principle of social morals is, a just regard to the rights of men. The first principle in religion is the love of God." It is quite possible to be quite *free* from immorality of conduct, and, at the same time, to be positively "found wanting" in that love of God which the first and greatest commandment *imperatively* requires. But, according to Dr. R., no person *so* "free" can be lawfully excluded from the Church of Christ. Why? He

answers—"I know of no scriptural authority to exclude any person from the Church of Christ on earth, except for that which would exclude him from the Kingdom of Glory, namely, "immoral conduct." Observe, this position of the Dr. is a *very different* position from that of the discipline of our church. Section 10 of the Book of Discipline provides, that, in reference to a *certain mode of exclusion*, the "crime" must needs "be such as is expressly forbidden by the Word of God, sufficient to exclude a person from the Kingdom of Grace and Glory." For nothing *less* must he be *so* excluded. But our discipline never contemplated that only the commission of such "expressly forbidden crimes" would exclude from heaven, or unfit persons for church fellowship on earth; and, hence, provision is made (sec. 5) for *excluding*, in another form, *other individuals* not charged with those outbrealking sins—viz., they are laid aside for a breach of our rules. That is our Wesleyan position. The position of the Dr. is—"I know of no scriptural authority to *exclude* any person from the Church of Christ on earth, except *for that* which would exclude him from the Kingdom of Glory—namely, *immoral conduct*." The sense of this I take to be, immoral conduct alone excludes from the "Kingdom of Glory," and of course nothing *less* should exclude from the church on earth! And this is the *fair premise* on which the fond conclusion is based, that attendance at class meeting is improperly and unscripturally made a condition of church membership! Free, by the good blessing of Almighty God, in these latter days, from the sore evil of persecution for religion, one of the strong tendencies of the age is to be just such Christians as Mr. Wesley addressed as follows:—"What will it avail to tell the Judge of all—'Lord, I was not as other men were; not unjust, not an adulterer, not a liar, not an *immoral* man? Yea, what will it avail, if we have done all good, as well as done no harm, if we have given all our goods to feed the poor, and have not *love*.'"—Vol. 7, 435. And, "Let me entreat you to consider, that, with all your humanity, benevolence, and virtue, you are still

'Enclosed in darkness and infernal shade.'

You do not see God. You have not received the Holy Ghost. You are not new creatures." Here is a fair representation of what is very possible, and of what actually is the fact, in reference to hundreds of so called Christians, to whom "immoral conduct" cannot be brought home:—

They do not profane the Sabbath.

They do not neglect the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

They do not live without prayer.

- They do not take the Name of God in vain.
- They do not frequent the theatre or card table.
- They do not attend scenes of riot and dissipation.
- They do not defraud their neighbour.
- They do not shun the public worship of God.
- They do not get drunk.
- They do not run a round of gaiety and folly.
- They do not bring up their children irreligiously.
- They do not cast off the fear of God.

These are not "immoral" persons; but are they on the way to Heaven? Have these a "right" to an abiding place in the Church of God? A right equal to the most spiritual and holy? because they *outwardly* "keep the commandments and ordinances of God?" Possibly they *have* a claim to a place in the church *on trial*; a claim, however, only in common with all those who, with apparent sincerity, express a "desire to flee from the wrath to come," and to be saved from their sins; a claim to an opportunity of "seeking the power of godliness" and "working out their salvation." But either as candidates for "Glory," or as *permanent* residents in the Church on earth, they *essentially* "lack," as mere moralists, in the following particulars:—

- They do not love God.
- They do not give God their hearts.
- They have not peace with God by faith in Christ Jesus.
- They have not passed from death unto life.
- They have not washed their robes in the Blood of the Lamb.
- They have not been translated out of the kingdom of darkness.
- They are not the temples of the Holy Ghost.
- They are not sanctified in Christ Jesus.
- They are not new creatures in Christ Jesus.
- They have not that holiness and heart purity essential to seeing God.

Heaven is the abiding home of the "spiritually minded," of the "sanctified wholly," of the "pure in heart." And the church on earth cannot legitimately be claimed as a *home* by any except such as manifest a desire to be saved from their sins, as are saved from sin, or are earnestly seeking to be. What do any others in the Church of God? How unlike the primitive church would be a church composed of mere moralists. No.

"Your claim, alas! ye cannot prove;
Ye want the genuine mark of love."

The invisible or *spiritual* church, alone on earth, is *absolutely* pure; since God alone, with certainty, "knoweth them that are

His." But while it is granted that necessarily much straw and chaff mixes with the true grain in the visible church, and that care is wanting in separating the "precious from the vile," lest the wheat be "rooted up also," it certainly does not follow that we are to *provide* for the preservation, in the church, of anything but the wheat, or "frame" the "mischief by law," that all persons *have a right in the church* except such as *so openly transgress* that they can lawfully be "excluded for immoral conduct." The design of God our Saviour unquestionably is, to secure a church *really and generally* spiritual and pure upon earth, and *universally* so in Heaven. And few will hesitate to admit, that Wesleyan Methodism is eminently qualified to build up a holy "communion of saints," and that the *requirement* of attendance on class meeting is an essential link in the chain of means, under God, by which this result is to be accomplished.

Of the multitude of all sorts of sinners saved by the instrumentality of John Wesley, many of them, we are informed, were "serious, regular, and well disposed people"—very "upright and orderly" people—before they joined the Methodists. But they were not truly Christians. Hence, says Mr. Wesley, "God made me the instrument of making them *living witnesses* for inward and pure religion." He thought, with Mr. Brydges, "one soul converted to God is better than thousands merely *moralized*, and still sleeping in their sins." The class meeting was adopted with direct reference to the *purity* of the church. It was introduced very early in Methodism, in England. It was not the invention of the Wesleys. It came not into being at their *suggestion*. It was *clearly of God*; and doubtless was intended of God to serve the very purpose for which Dr. R. condemns it, viz., by the very spirituality of its character, naturally and easily to "separate" the *merely moral* persons, who *would not* become spiritual, and who *could not* be reached by the law which excludes only for "expressly forbidden crimes," or "immoral conduct"—persons whose continuance and accumulation in the church might otherwise ultimately overthrow Methodism, as a converted and spiritual and holy people, living to God alone, and only existing as a church to "spread scriptural holiness over the land." And the rapid, extensive, and solid achievements of Methodism, "as a distinct and independent church," up to the present hour, is pretty good evidence that she has not mistaken the will of Providence in this respect; and it ought to be understood by Dr. R. as an admonition, to pause in an effort which is about as promising of success as writing on the surface of the sea.

The following account is given by Mr. Wesley himself, of the origin of class meetings:—

“But when a large number of people was joined, the great difficulty was to keep them together; for they were continually scattering hither and thither, and we knew no way to help it. But God provided for this also, when we thought not of it.” It happened that ‘Mr. Wesley met the chief of the society in Bristol, and inquired, ‘How shall we pay the debt upon the preaching-house?’ Captain Foy stood up and said, ‘Let every one in the society give a penny a week, and it will easily be done.’ ‘But many of them,’ said one, ‘have not a penny to give.’ ‘True,’ said the captain, ‘then put ten or twelve of them to me; let each of these give what he can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting.’ Many others made the same offer. So Mr. Wesley divided the societies among them, assigning a class of about twelve persons to each of these, who were termed leaders.

“Not long after, one of these informed Mr. Wesley that, calling on such a one in his house, he found him quarrelling with his wife. Another was found in drink. It immediately struck Mr. Wesley’s mind, ‘This (class meetings) is the very thing we wanted; the leaders are the persons who may not only receive the contributions, but also watch over the souls of their brethren.’ The society in London being informed of this, willingly followed the example of that of Bristol, as did every society from that time, whether in Europe or America. By this means it was easily found if any grew weary or faint, and help was speedily administered; and if any walked disorderly, they were quickly discovered, and either amended or dismissed.”

Now grant that there is no direct and positive scripture proof for making attendance at class meeting a condition of membership in our church; that does not make the *requirement* unscriptural. It is on all sides admitted that no specific form of government is prescribed in Scripture for the New Testament church. But it might reasonably be presumed, *a priori*, that the church was not left without—would be guided into the adoption of *some means* of self-preservation from destruction through the probable increase, in times of peace and worldly prosperity, of merely moral and outwardly reputable individuals within her pale. For this Mr. Wesley prayed—

“Men of worldly low design,
Let not these thy people join,
Poison our simplicity,
Drag us from our trust in Thee.”

It is certain that the government of the church should have strict and primary reference to its purity and spiritual prosperity. It is also certain, that the “right” of any person to a place in the church must be founded, not on *moral* character merely, however perfect and “orderly,” but on the scriptural marks of a religious

character. I can conceive of an association of very amiable and moral and respectable persons calling themselves a church. And general society must, of course, tolerate them as such. But would they constitute a New Testament church? Assuredly not. A church of Jesus Christ is a very different association. Let the Bible decide:—2 Cor. vi., 14-18—"Be ye not, &c. &c. &c.—Wherefore come out, &c." John xv., 19—"If ye were of the world, &c. &c.—I have chosen you out of the world, &c." John xvii., 16—"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Rom. i., 7—"To all that be in Rome, *beloved of God, called to be saints.*" See also, Rom. xiii., 1; 1 Cor. i., 2; Ephe. v., 1-4; Collos. i., 4; 1 Thess. iv., 7; 1 Peter i., 15. Now, do none but persons guilty of "immoral conduct" lack these *essential* marks of New Testament church members? Ah, yes. Thousands of very upright, and orderly, and moral, and amiable, and respectable individuals, professors of Christianity, are emphatically "in," and "of" the "world," are "unholy," are without saving "faith," are not the "sanctified in Christ Jesus," are yet *unsaved sinners*, or worse, *fallen saints*, and apparently willing so to be. Have these a "divinely chartered right" to membership in the church, until forfeited by expressly forbidden crimes or immoral conduct? Nay, verily. Their *separation* from the church, in many cases, may be a nice point, in the present mixed condition of the visible church; but, assuredly, the Scriptures just quoted establish forever the *principle* of separation. They are, in fact, *improperly* in the church. They are the chaff among the wheat on the barn floor. And each church undoubtedly possesses the authority, and is under solemn obligation to Jesus Christ, to use its authority in adopting *some mode* of securing the great ends of church organization, purity, and peace, and spiritual prosperity. A voluntary joining of a church is an explicit declaration of a willingness to conform to the declared rules of that church. A voluntary secession therefrom sets the parties free. The *reception* or *continuance* of an individual in the church is not to be determined by good morals, or liberality, or respectability, but by manifest sorrow for sin, separation from sin, devotion to good, and all the fruits of genuine piety. It will, of course, often be difficult to decide where forbearance should end, or discipline begin; but invariably the rule of requirement is holiness, and not merely morality.

Now, I do most firmly believe that the God of the universal church, and of Methodism, did providentially originate class meetings among us, as a means of securing that all important end. And if there be, comparatively, an extra amount of

impurity and weakness in the Methodism of the present day, as some intimate there is, doubtless one cause is her unfaithfulness in reference to the kind but firm application of the class meeting test. There may have been, in many instances, a departure from the rule; a ceasing practically to seek only a spiritual membership; an unholy toleration in her membership of parties *spiritually dead to God*, for the sake of numbers, friendships, wealth, gifts, and popular fame, at the expense of vital godliness, of moral power, and of the presence and blessing of the Holy Ghost.

In reference to the *really Christian character* of class meetings, our sainted founder observes—"Upon reflection I could not but observe, this is the very thing which was from the beginning of Christianity. In the earliest times, those whom God sent forth 'preached the Gospel to every creature,' and the 'body of the hearers' (*arkomenoi*) were mostly Jews, or Heathens. But as soon as any were so convinced of the truth as to forsake sin and seek the gospel salvation, they immediately joined them together, took account of their names, advised them to watch over each other in love, and help each other work out their salvation."—Vol. viii., 241. Soon after the adoption of this providential regulation, Mr. Wesley bore this striking testimony to its practical effect—"It can scarcely be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation." Because of its manifest excellence, its application became *universal* in Methodism. It was promoted to be a rule; and Mr. Wesley tells us, that the existing societies "in Bristol, in London," and elsewhere, "willingly" came under it. Dr. Bond, of New York, remarks—"The *usefulness* of the regulation led to its universal adoption as a social compact; and, from that time, every one who entered the society, in England or America, came under a personal and individual obligation to conform to it so long as he continued in the connexion." Thus did the Holy Spirit guide and direct His people into a means of grace, second only to the Itinerancy in usefulness, and eminently auxiliary, yea, more, *essential* to the success and perpetuity of the system of Itinerancy. It cannot be denied that our itinerating ministry is a scriptural institution, nor that it is purely providential among the Methodists; and, of consequence, whatever is essential to its existence and usefulness, may be properly *required* of all those who voluntarily put themselves under the pastoral care of such a ministry. In reply to the question—"Is class meeting necessary to the perpetuation and efficiency of the Itinerancy?" Dr. Bond makes the following conclusive and a mirable reply:—

"We have seen that the oversight of the Church is not a matter of choice

or discretion on the part of the ministry, but a duty enjoined by Him who hath called him to preach the gospel, and 'to edify,' that is, to build up 'the body of Christ,' 'the Church of the living God.' And it must be admitted that an itinerant ministry cannot, adequately, fulfil this requirement themselves. They must, therefore, do it in part by sub-pastors, and such are our class leaders. On the part of the laity it is clearly inferable, from the command to the ministry to take the oversight of the Church, as those who are to give an account to God, that those over whom the ministry are to take this oversight, are bound to place themselves in such a relation to their pastors as to enable them to discharge their duty, and, consequently, if under the economy of the Church they require the aid of sub-pastors, to comply with the arrangement as a duty to God and to their own souls. They have voluntarily chosen to belong to a Church which operates by an itinerant ministry, and while they still prefer it, believing it most conducive to their own spiritual interests, and to 'the spread of scriptural holiness,' they are bound by their duty to God to meet in class as an arrangement essentially necessary to a due exercise of pastoral oversight, by the ministry they have chosen. To make class meeting a condition of membership in the W. M. Church is, therefore, only to require our members to submit to pastoral oversight—a requirement which is surely as scriptural as ministerial oversight itself. Brethren, 'let us walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing,' which has been our peculiar blessing from the beginning—only let us do it more faithfully, and look for still greater blessings."

But Dr. R. assumes, that if class attendance were made "voluntary" the class meetings would be "more efficient and useful than they now are." This is not a reliable assertion, since it *cannot* be known to be true. It is wholly untried. And the experiment might cost too much, as dying to correct his views, did the Infidel, "At last convinced. But, O! the die is cast." So far as my personal observations go, for about thirty years past, I am led to a contrary conclusion. The cases, few and far between, of persons professing to *love* the class meeting objecting only to it as a *requirement*, tell decidedly the other way. Such persons are *bad* attenders at class. If all Methodists were like *them*, our Methodism would be but a name. But why this kind of remark at all, when the burden of the pamphlet, in reference to *adults*, is to secure to "many" "the privileges of membership in the Wesleyan church," without meeting in class at all! (Page 10). The class meeting was very early made an essential part of Methodism, because it was considered *necessary* to the life, and vigor, and purity, and efficiency of the church. All who joined met in class. Class meeting is not an appendage of Methodism; it is an essential part of Methodism itself. No Methodist, therefore, *can* be excused from meeting in class. Such an idea, in reference to "compact" and fully formed Methodism, is an entire mistake.

In 1798 Dr. Coke speaks of this precious means of grace as follows:—"In short, we can truly say, that, through the grace of God, our classes form the pillars of our work, and are, in a considerable degree, our universities for the ministry."

But Dr. R. says—"I have sought in vain for an instance of Mr. Wesley ever excluding an upright and orderly member for mere non-attendance at class meeting."—Page 5. Then he has "sought" too partially. In Dec. 1782, Mr. Wesley wrote to his "Dear Zackery," Yewdal—"Those who will not meet in class cannot stay with us."—Vol. xiii, p. 13. Can anything be more in point? This is much more than "an instance." It is authoritative counsel to one of his assistants in the work; affirming the *rule* in the case; expressing briefly the *general and well understood practice* in Wesleyan Methodism. How exactly in accordance with our discipline, then, was the *practice* of Mr. Wesley and his helpers. See Dis. sec. v., quest. 4—"What shall we do with those members of our church who *wilfully* and repeatedly neglect to meet their class?" The answer is—They are to be "laid aside"—*i. e., excluded*. Let Mr. Wesley answer the question—"Those who will not meet in class cannot stay with us"—namely, exclude them. Mr. Wesley *refused admission*—which Dr. R. calls "tantamount to exclusion"—to a Mr. Acourt, because he was a thorough and active Calvinist.—Vol. xiii., 150. He wrote to Mr. John Vatton—"If I. S. will lead the class, whether I will or no, I require you to put him out of our society."—Vol. xiii., 156. Mr. Wesley says of others—"I was so disgusted at them for those dreams that I expelled them from the society." Let us hear no more about exclusion for nothing except "immoral conduct." Let it never again be affirmed that it is *unwesleyan* to exclude for mere non-attendance at class meeting.

But it is said (page 5), Mr. W. might "consistently" have excluded for neglecting class, since to do so would not "affect the membership" of the parties in the English Church. And what of that? That would be just as true if they had been expelled for "immoral conduct." It is mere superstition to account *such* church membership of excluded Methodists of any value. Certainly Mr. Wesley laid no such stress upon *that* sort of church membership. Speaking of the society at Norwich, Mr. Wesley observes—"Upon inquiry I find we have now about 500 members. But 150 of them do not meet in class. Of these, therefore, I make no account."—Vol. ii., 487. Any Methodist preacher will fully understand this. How is it that we have not the slightest clue to the rejoicings of Mr. W. that though these 150,

and many others, were "of no account in Methodism," they were still on the way to Heaven, because they were yet members of the Episcopal Church? He thought of the excluded for non-attendance at class just as his true successors do at this day. As a general thing, such persons are "*of no account*" as Christians, anywhere, or go where they will. And, well assured that the elements of power and prosperity in the Church of Christ are not numbers, nor wealth, nor popular favor, but spiritual life, Mr. Wesley remarked of a society greatly reduced by exclusions—"The half is more than the whole."

It is undeniable that Mr. Wesley regarded *Methodism* as a peculiar revival of pure Christianity; that he regarded *class meetings* as *essential* to Methodism; that he regarded *attendance at class meetings* as a *condition* of "staying" with the Methodists; and that he regarded as of "no account" those who *did not meet in class*, however "upright and orderly" in other respects. All that is Wesleyan. Thank God, it is Wesleyanism still; and, I trust, will be evermore.

Now, suppose, what might very innocently be done, that before Mr. Wesley's death, he had ceased his confessedly extra clinging to the Episcopal Church, and had placed Methodism as it is now, "a distinct and independent church," would not his views of Methodism, of class meetings, of attendance at class, and of non-attending class members, have been just the same? Most assuredly they would. There is not the *slightest* grounds for even a suspicion to the contrary. Well, thank God, Methodism *is* "a distinct and independent church," as Wesley himself foresaw she would be. God has greatly prospered her, too, as a church, "in all the ends for which a church can be supposed to have an existence;" and this, also, in connection with the maintenance and exercise of the condition of membership so strenuously opposed. Then we *cannot consent* to change our excellent rule; well assured that our doing so would be to abandon a vital scriptural help to a pure church, to mutilate and cripple our well working Methodism, and to sin *specially* against our ever faithful guiding star, the good Providence of God over Wesleyanism, from the beginning until now.

Having, as it is believed, shewn that it is neither unscriptural nor unwesleyan to exclude from the Wesleyan Church *others* than persons guilty of "immoral conduct," and that it is neither unscriptural nor unwesleyan to exclude for "mere non-attendance at class meeting," I add a few additional observations:—

1. It is sometimes plausibly objected, that the Prudential

Regulation of *attendance on class meeting* cannot be made a *condition of membership* in Methodism, as a church.

In reference to the rule requiring attendance at class meeting, as a condition of membership, Wesleyan Methodism is strictly consistent with herself, and with the Holy Scriptures. The law of the church which requires the exclusion of *wilful* neglectors of their class, regards the class meeting as a prudential regulation only; and hence, prescribes that they are to be "laid aside" for a "breach of rule," and not for "immoral conduct." Hence, also, the fact, that while attendance at class meeting is clearly implied in our "General Rules," and is even noticed by name, and its early number of members in each class, and the leader and his duty, it is not inserted in the list of the "ordinances" mentioned in the rules, for this good reason—that it is not expressly mentioned in the Scriptures, and, therefore, is not *universally* essential to piety, as are the "public worship of God," the "ministry of the Word," the "Supper of the Lord," &c.; yet none the less properly made a condition of membership in a *particular* church—in the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Pray why may not a Christian church make a confessedly scriptural, and highly valuable regulation, though not included in the enjoined ordinances of God, a term of membership in *that* church? A church in which both the entrance and the continuance is entirely voluntary? Who does it harm? Where is the sin? What commandment is broken? Nobody need come under it but of choice. Why all this ado about nothing? We know there are institutions existent in the church of God, by positive Divine appointment, essential to the very existence of the church, such as, the doctrines of Christianity, the sacraments, and public worship. All these must *really*, if not in precise form, be received and observed by every true branch of the Church of Christ. No church possesses any discretionary prerogative here. It is also certain, that no church may enjoin any usage or regulation for her government, or in her worship, repugnant to the Scriptures, or to experimental and practical religion. But, within these limits, very much is left to the discretion, and wisdom of the church, in view of times and circumstances, and the indications of Providence. No particular mode, or complete draft, according to which a Christian community *must* be planned, is furnished in the Scriptures, in reference to either offices, or officers, or regulations. Governed by certain general principles, and guided by a wise and gracious Providence, she must institute prudential measures for herself, and, in particular, fix the terms of admission into, and exclusion from her communion, keeping ever in view the primary end of

church organization, purity and spiritual prosperity. In adopting such regulations as, in the best judgment of those concerned, will secure these all important ends, and in *requiring* an observance of them at the hands of all who *voluntarily* unite in the particular fellowship, they are acting upon a prerogative at once scriptural and authoritative. These regulations may not be *essential* to salvation, yet, as they serve the purity, and piety, and good order, and efficiency of the church, they may be made conditions of communion in a church. Now, confessedly, the class meeting regulation was adopted in the special order of Divine Providence, and with direct reference to the purity, good order, and spiritual prosperity of the church. It has been continued to this hour, for the same ends. And, after over a century of years of trial, in all lands into which Methodism has obtained, our people, at least universally, are more and more assured of its great value in promoting the spirituality and usefulness of the Wesleyan Church. "Thousands of holy and happy Christians, in the church," writes a noted author of the body, "can bear their testimony to the value of these weekly means of grace; and tens of thousands before the throne, who have gone up 'through much tribulation,' reflect upon them with pleasure, in that land of rest where 'their works do follow them.'" No one ever got harm from the institution. Its tendency is *uniformly* good, the highest good. The Methodist church has wisely made it an essential part of her organization. It is her "life." It works well. Ninety-nine hundredths of her ministry, and her membership, are "*settled* in mind" in reference to their vast utility, and also as to the propriety of attendance at class as a condition of membership. Methodism *everywhere* is agreed, that when either ministers or members will fully refuse to abide by the law of the church in this respect, they should be lawfully "laid aside" or excluded. Let every one bear his own burden. After all suitable efforts to "restore such an one," "he hath no more place among us. We have delivered our own souls."

I subjoin a few excellent remarks from an aged and experienced champion in Methodism, but not in the Itinerant ranks. He remarks—

"When a Methodist refuses to meet his class, he virtually withdraws from the Church. He renounces the social obligation into which he entered when he became a member of the community. He puts it out of the power of the pastors of the Church to fulfil their ministerial duties to him; and as they can no longer watch over him, they cannot be expected to be responsible for him, or to admit him to the communion, his fitness for which they have no longer any means of ascertaining. He is, accordingly, by our rule

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of Discipline, '*laid aside,*' and not expelled for immoral conduct. If it be alleged that a man does not, properly speaking, withdraw from the Church, unless he accompanies the act by some corresponding declaration, in word or writing, we answer that the Church possesses no authority to require a written or verbal withdrawal, or any expired renunciation of church privileges; and is, therefore, compelled to consider an actual removal from pastoral oversight as a withdrawing from church membership. The rule, then, which requires a Methodist to meet in class, is not a penal statute added to the divine laws—it is a voluntary social contract, which, when not fulfilled, implies a renunciation of the compact, which it is admitted every one has a right to make whenever he repents his engagements; but he cannot dissolve the compact, and still retain the privileges which grow out of it. The obligations and the benefits which accrue from it, cease at the same time."

2. It is sometimes objected, "*There is no scriptural authority for class meeting.*" Vol. viii., 245, Mr. Wesley meets this very objection. He observes—"They say there is no scripture for classes. I answer, 1st. There is no scripture against them. You cannot shew one that forbids them. 2. There is much scripture for it, even all those texts which enjoin the substance of those various duties, whereof this is only an indifferent circumstance, to be determined by reason and experience. 3. You seem not to have observed that the scriptures, in most points, give us only general rules, and leave the particular circumstances to be adjusted by the common sense of man." It is admitted the term class meeting is not a Bible word; but certainly this *kind* of meeting is clearly in accordance with the Bible. The experience, the sympathy, the exhortation, and mutual helpfulness, in the life of piety, of class meetings, are eminently scriptural. And in the mutual "speaking," and "comfort," and "edification," and "fellowship," and "prayers," of Matt. iii., 16, 1 Thess. v., 11, and Acts ii., 42, any real Christian can be at no loss in finding the substance of our precious class meeting service. In meeting this objection, it is well said by a writer—

"Nor was there any express command in God's own precious revelation to originate that Missionary Society, of which, perhaps, you are a member and a collector; nor were you told, in so many words, that you ought to visit the humble cottages in your neighbourhood, for the purpose of lending weekly a religious tract; and you might search a long time before you would find in the Bible any mention of Sunday Schools; and yet, it may be, these have your hearty concurrence and support, because you perceive they are means of doing good which have developed by circumstances obviously providential, adjusted by the prudence and zeal of the church, and abundantly honoured of God. The class meeting is to be placed in the same category, received with the same favour, and employed on the same authority."

3. It has been objected to class meetings, "I cannot speak."

"'I cannot speak!' Is it possible? Can you speak in the domestic circle? Are you dumb on common topics of conversation in every day life? Are you penitent, and can you not inquire what you must do to be saved? Are you happy in God's love, and can you not say, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul?' Can you think of the rich, unmerited, countless, and everlasting blessings which cluster around you, and not feel that you are constrained to praise God: and that if you were to 'hold your peace, the very stones would cry out against you?' Can you reflect on your hairbreadth escapes, on your miraculous rescues from danger and from death, without feeling that you are encompassed about with songs of deliverance? And if the songs are written upon every sounding object,—if every part of your dwelling, every member of your family, every year of your history, every page in your diary, presents a song, will you not sing it? And where will you find a more convenient and suitable audience than in the class room? One of the sweet singers of Israel (himself not of Methodist type) says: "Is he, the young and ardent convert, crying in the gladness of his soul, 'Sing aloud unto God our strength; make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob?' Alike in the cathedral and the conventicle, he is apt to be depressed by an organic solo or a rueful dirge; but escaping to the Methodist class meeting, he finds their glory all awake. They are taking the psalm, and bringing the pleasant harp with the psaltery, and blowing the trumpet; and, with exulting rivalry, young men and maidens, old men and children, are praising the Lord. In the eagerness of his first love, is he exclaiming, 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul?' but nobody will stop to listen. And so, for an audience, he is driven away to the love feast or class meeting."

It is a little remarkable, that the plea of inability to take a part in the "speaking" at class meetings is mostly on the part of those whose position in life, whose acquirements and gifts, and the free use of the tongue too, on all other occasions, would lead one to expect exactly the reverse. It is impossible to receive at such hands the plea of being unable to "succeed" in the class exercise. Pray why cannot these intelligent, and usually quite fluent ones, speak a word in class, "speak" as of old to "one another" in a select company of those who specially "fear the Lord?" In ninety-nine cases out of an hundred it is unquestionably for want of religion, or for want of the right *degree* of piety, in the heart. But Dr. R. says—"I attach *less* importance to what a person may say in class, than to uprightness in his dealings, integrity in his word, &c." This is partly correct; but, in reference to the bearing of the remark, in the premises, it is very misleading and mischievous. It is, in effect, saying, "Actions speak louder than words." But everybody ought to know that this is a *one-sided*

proverb, and is only partially true. Actions, upright conduct, and integrity of life, speak loud in their own appropriate sphere. But there is a sphere for Christians to move in, and in which they must move, or in vain do they "profess and call themselves Christians," where such actions are mute as the dumb, and where, in fact, they have neither place nor voice. In *practical* religion "all good works" make a joyful noise unto the Lord;" but, in *experimental* religion (in reference to the "kingdom within you") their voice cannot be heard. With my "glory" (the god-like gift of speech) "will I praise Him," said David, "and not be silent."—Psalms xxx., 12. Only the *tongue*, the "glory" of man, can divulge the joyful secret of the obtainment of the "New name and the white stone." Various good works may mark the *hypocrite*, the *mere moralist*, and the *frozen formalist*, as well as the *true Christian*. Works, therefore, uprightness and integrity of conduct, cannot *primarily* constitute a Christian profession. Or

* * * "tell to sinners round

What a dear Saviour I have found."

Pray has any professing Christian a *right* to be "*silent*" in respect to personal religion, whether of pardon and regeneration or of entire sanctification and a fulness of love? Will any weak and heartless plea excuse from obedience to the rule—"With the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation?" Holy men and women of old "*spake* often one to another," and are not other servants of God enjoying the Spirit of Christ, and salvation in His Name, under solemn obligation, in some shape or form, to echo the cry of experimental godliness?—"Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul."—Psalms lxvi., 16. Surely a "word in season," to *encourage* Christians, generally, to be *declaring* "Witnesses" to His power to save, would be much more profitable to the cause of truth and religion, than this mistaken effort to *minify* the value of the class meeting testimonies—"God is love," "Jesus is precious," "my sins are pardoned," "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth me from all sin." For the benefit of those who assign as *their* reason for not attending their class regularly—"O! I don't enjoy it;" "I have nothing to say;" "It makes me feel so uncomfortable"—permit me to add a fact:—At a Total Abstinence meeting, in England, a Mr. Kingdon rose to speak. He began by saying—"I feel very uncomfortable here, I am not a Teetotaler, and your sympathies are with the pledged against the intoxicating cup." One present modestly begged to interrupt him a moment, just to say, that, "He could put the gentleman upon a very short method

of making himself quite comfortable. Here is the pledge—do but sign it." Now, why not at once resolve on being decidedly for God, my brother, my sister, and make yourself comfortable among His people? A *fully devoted* state of soul would make the class meeting a real pleasure to you. Thousands prove this. Do try it. O, think!—"Ashamed of Jesus! Nothing to say of Jesus! Not comfortable where they meet to talk of Jesus! dare you *live*, dare you *die so*? All in Heaven find something good to say of Jesus. And you may see, by Rev. v., 12, that it is substantially what a happy Methodist Christian has to say in the class meeting. Certainly, *enough* of Religion to make you happy in God, and fit you for Heaven, would enable you to love the class meeting. And, as you hope to sit and talk about Jesus with them in Heaven, would it not be well to commence with them here. Dr. Bond, of New York, bears this testimony—"We have never seen a Methodist, who wilfully neglected class meeting, who did not lose his spiritual enjoyments; and, for the most part, he has lost his religious character altogether."

Dr. Dixon remarks:—

"Our union is probably more complete than that of any community of Christians; and the true doctrine of the new Testament has, we believe, been imbodyed in our practice. Once in the week or oftener, it is expected that every Methodist in the world will meet with others, his brethren in the Lord, for the purpose of enjoying the communion of saints. This is not formal. The joys and sorrows of the heart are laid open; the dealings and ways of God are more known; the progress of the Spirit's work in the soul is unfolded; the temptations and exercises of the life of faith are detailed; the divine affections are quickened and refined by the exercises of praise and worship; and the whole is sanctified by fervent and united prayer. Religion is one, all over the world, when it is divine:—the gift of "one God, and Father of all;" the effect of the one sacrifice of the Son of God; the fruit of one Spirit's operation; the grace obtained by the 'one faith;' and it is identical in all its characteristics. Hence, as our people are called with the same calling, they speak the same language in every place. Were it possible to assemble the whole Methodist community, heart would meet heart in sympathy and love, would join in the same confession of faith, and blend their sacred joys in one harmonious song of praise. All this is deemed (in some quarters) extremely objectionable; tending to make hypocrites, produce spiritual pride, and nurture enthusiasm. The question is as to the practice being in conformity with the teaching and example of the primitive Church. Being satisfied of this, we can endure the scoffs of the world, and the objections of doubting and lukewarm Christians. We hold the faith of Christ as revealed in the Divine records, and we build the communion of saints on the *experimental* profession of this faith; and judge that in this we have the first and primary *note* of a true Church of Christ."

The Rev. R. Watson was a great admirer and faithful attender at class, and we commend his example to those who do not go to class, because "they cannot learn anything. The common people only attend, and they are not edified by the relation of their experience." Mr. Watson's intellect was almost equal to theirs—his education also, and so was his standing. And yet he found much to instruct and profit him in the class-room. Mr. Watson "met in class in reference to his own spiritual improvement." "The class did not consist of the nobility, of the wise, or the learned, or the wealthy, "but consisted mostly of poor people, accustomed to daily labour." "with these simple-hearted people he associated once a week, and their meetings, unobserved by the world, were often seasons of *spiritual refreshment and edification.*" We admire him; but never does he look so great and good as when he requests his name enrolled on the class-book, and when he met weekly with the poor, simple-hearted people, for his own spiritual welfare. This was done when he had reached the very height of his popularity, the zenith of his glory.

In conclusion, the best teacher in religion is experience; for even the teaching of Scripture "is foolishness to the natural man," because it is only spiritually discerned." Now, may we not appeal to the experience of all who have enjoyed the privilege of class meeting for their utility, for their especial fitness and adaptation to the wants of all who are earnestly endeavouring to work out their salvation with fear and trembling? Have we not all found in these meetings the Spirit's quickenings, while others spoke of their trials, their temptations, and deliverances? Have not our resolutions to be more entirely devoted to God been strengthened and confirmed while others spoke of that perfect love which casteth out all fear? And, on the other hand, have we not found our relish for class meeting lessen just in proportion to our backslidings of heart, the decay of earnestness in the great work of personal salvation, and the in-letting of worldly-mindedness? And have we not been spiritually revived and restored to peace and joy in believing, by persisting, notwithstanding our reluctance, to attend these means of grace! We believe there are few of those to whom we address these inquiries who will answer in the negative.

Are any of you, as Methodists, neglecting your class? Why is it so? Have you become so strong in faith as to be able to stand alone?—to be independent of that intimate communion of saints, that sanctifying fellowship, once the delightful source from which you derived so much spiritual strength and growth in grace? Or,

are you really less concerned, less devoted, *less earnest*, in the chief business of life—personal holiness, Christian usefulness, a happy end, and a glorious heaven—than formerly? Have you left your first love? Is not the knowledge of your piety gone? Do you not find it, therefore, *inconvenient* to go to class? Perhaps your worldly circumstances are improved, and the allurements of gay and fashionable society, and follies, are mastering your heart. Perhaps you are even disposed to go over to another church where you would find more ease in conforming to the world, and living mainly just like worldly people; or, perhaps, you too can join with other cold and backslidden Methodists, and say—"I don't see the good of class meeting." O, search your hearts! The trouble, be assured, is there. Go at once to God, in penitence and prayer. Go to class, too, and make your acknowledgments there. Rest not short of a piety that *relishes* the class meeting, that *enjoys* it; and then you will understand, and highly prize the providence of God that led to the adoption of such a regulation in Methodism, and made it *indispensable* for you regularly to be there.

Sons and daughters of Methodist sires! never be ashamed of a church of class meeting notoriety. Cast not away this honoured badge, in which your sainted parents gloried; and which they left to you as a sacred memorial. Think of their holy lives, and their triumphant deaths, and nobly resolve to catch their falling mantles, to tread in their pious steps, and to be followers of their faith and patience and prayerfulness, until happily your hands again are joined in heavenly bliss, to be parted not again forever. "Thus saith the Lord—Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." "And the Lord God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it, and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers." "Therefore, now return ye, and get you unto your tents, and unto the land of your possession."

Are any of you Methodists neglecting your class? Why is it so? Have you become so strong in faith as to be able to stand alone—to be independent of that intimate communion of saints, that sanctifying fellowship, once the delightful source from which you derived so much spiritual strength and growth in grace? Or

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