1958

2. John Wesley and Evangelical Methodism

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2. John Wesley and Evangelical Methodism

Abstract
The Enlightenment had, it is true, appeared to solve many problems by ridding Western Civilization of
medieval superstitions of all sorts. It disproved miracles. It denied the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It
denounced intolerance and persecution. But it did not, immediately answer the question of what was to be put
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immediate problem was: What was to replace them? [excerpt]

Keywords
Contemporary Civilization, Post-Enlightenment, John Wesley, Evangelical Methodism, Deism

Disciplines
Comparative Methodologies and Theories | European Languages and Societies | History | New Religious Movements

Comments
This is a part of Section XII: The Post-Enlightenment Period. The Contemporary Civilization page lists all
additional sections of Ideas and Institutions of Western Man, as well as the Table of Contents for both volumes.

More About Contemporary Civilization:

From 1947 through 1969, all first-year Gettysburg College students took a two-semester course called
Contemporary Civilization. The course was developed at President Henry W.A. Hanson's request with the
goal of "introducing the student to the backgrounds of contemporary social problems through the major
concepts, ideals, hopes and motivations of western culture since the Middle Ages."

Gettysburg College professors from the history, philosophy, and religion departments developed a textbook
for the course. The first edition, published in 1955, was called An Introduction to Contemporary Civilization and
It is this second edition that we include here. The copy we digitized is from the Gary T. Hawbaker '66
Collection and the marginalia are his.

Authors
E. Richardson, and W. Richard Schubart

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contemporary_sec12/2
The Enlightenment had, it is true, appeared to solve many problems by ridding Western Civilization of medieval superstitions of all sorts. It disproved miracles. It denied the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. It denounced intolerance and persecution. But it did not immediately answer the question of what was to be put in the place of the things it had thrown out. The ideas and institutions it denounced had given society certain ideals of conduct, standards of thought, and objects of belief, inadequate as they may have been. The immediate problem was: What was to replace them?

The basic deistic tenets of nature as a machine created by God and then left to follow its own laws, which were also the standards for men's thoughts and actions, and which could be discovered by rational methods, did not give any clear answer to this question. It seemed equally reasonable to assert that God was no longer present in the world at all as to assert that He was equally present everywhere. During the first part of the Enlightenment the accepted interpretation seemed to be that He was nowhere in the world, and that pleasure, expediency, power, and wealth could be sought for their own sakes without any further justification. In the post-Enlightenment opinion changed to the belief that He was everywhere in the world, that everything could be given a spiritual interpretation. Obviously at least one of these interpretations had to be wrong. Throughout the whole Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment, men struggled to find some means for drawing the distinctions upon which intelligent moral and spiritual choices could be made.

This basic problem produced the great number of controversies which contributed to the variety and color of England during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One of the questions raised was by what right the church or the state could rule, pass judgment, and punish: what justification was there for these time-honored institutions to perform such acts? Along with this question went a whole series of others which weighed heavily on the consciences of the more sensitive clergy. What was the basis for the benefices and privileges which remained in the Church of England? On a deistic basis what would
be the nature of a church: contractual or hierarchical? Close on this question followed that of the relationship between the established and the non-established churches. Who was to say that any dissenter from the Church of England was wrong? And finally, to which was man's supreme loyalty, church or state?

Another controversy appeared in the field of ethics and morals. If all actions were natural, how could one decide which actions were more natural, and therefore to be preferred, than others? These practical questions were greatly complicated by the tremendous increase in population and the appearance of a new group of people in the industrial cities. As the Industrial Revolution began taking hold it created a class of people, not unlike those of the early medieval cities, who were outside the established social and religious framework, and for whom little provision had yet been made. Unchurched, uneducated, and uncared for, these people were without roots in the society which bore them. They quickly accepted the new cheap gin ("drunk for a penny; dead drunk for two" read one of the tavern signs) as an escape if not a solution. Many of the clergy were more interested in fomenting and trying to find deistic arguments for their privileges than in trying to solve the innumerable problems which this new class presented.

The political and economic leadership of the eighteenth century was also largely uninterested in trying to find solutions to such practical and intellectual problems. Peace and prosperity were their watchwords. They were intent on preserving and consolidating the political gains which had been achieved by the Glorious Revolution of the previous century. And they had no desire to upset the balance of the governmental machinery which had put them in a most favored position. They were interested in acquiring their share of the growing wealth of a prospering country.

Leadership did come, in England, from a group of religious dissenters, the Wesleyans or Methodists. The Wesley brothers were to initiate a movement which was to attempt an answer to the questions and problems which the combined factors of the Enlightenment had produced. Historians have credited their movement with helping to save England from something like the French Revolution. Methodism was a major stream in the English Evangelical Revival and the Great Awakening in the United States. But Methodism did not start without making heavy drafts upon the thought of some earlier thinkers, one of whom was William Law (1686-1761).

Deism had begun with an attack on established religion, and so it was natural that the first criticisms of deism should come from that quarter. There were many defenders of the faith, but the most acute and influential was William Law. He was an English clergyman who had lost his chances of preferment because he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the king. In his Case of Reason (1732) he went to the heart of the deist argument
by asking on what basis the natural "fitness of things" could be used as a standard by which to judge the actions of the Creator. If God be the Creator then He, and He alone, argued Law, is to be the standard of what is fit. And, as for blaming priests for the errors of the times, one might as well blame the doctors for the diseases of the times. Besides, he asked, if a man continually buys brass for gold, whose fault is it but his own?

This last argument, reflecting Law's insistence on one's own individual ethical responsibility, was expressed earlier in his Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life (1728). In this book he personified the different attitudes toward life, giving names to their representatives, using a method of writing much in contrast to the rational and abstract manner characteristic of the deists. This book was so well written that even deists read it with appreciation. It also profoundly influenced many major nineteenth century movements such as Christian Socialism and Anglo-Catholicism, and was not without its effect on Roman Catholicism. The most important of Law's contemporaries to be influenced was John Wesley. When in later life Law turned more in the direction of mysticism, Wesley ceased to be an intimate of his, though he never completely broke with him. Also, Wesley's talents did not lie in that direction. He was too much influenced by the English Puritan tradition and the German pietistic movement.

In the late sixteenth century German Protestantism, as we have already seen, began a century-long movement in the development of a dogmatic theology. Faith, far from being the acceptance of God's free gift of grace, became a rational assent to a set of finely spun intellectual propositions. As a result Lutheranism lost its vigor. But with Philip Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and August Herman Francke (1663-1727) there began a series of small meetings in the homes of church members for Bible reading, prayer, and discussion. This type of gathering came to be called a collegia pietatis, from which the whole movement took its name. Pietism generally stayed within the established German churches where, in addition to the intimate meetings, it inspired such projects as homes for orphans, schools, and the sending out of missionaries (to such scattered places as India and North America).

One group to be deeply affected by German Pietism was the Moravians, a cluster of Protestant refugees from the old Hussite church in Bohemia. Count Zinzendorf (1700-1760), a trained lawyer and Lutheran pastor, was also early touched by Pietism and endeavored to further it. His outstanding opportunity came when these Moravians sought refuge on his large estate in Saxony. There they set up Herrnhut (the Lord's House) which John Wesley visited. Herrnhut took a turn in the direction of Christian communism much like that of the early Reformation perfectionist sects, adding to the original pietistic emphasis that of group self-sufficiency. While Count Zinzendorf hoped
to be able to bring the Moravians into the established church, this communal emphasis and their own tradition forced the constitution of a separate body (1727). Subsequent fear of persecution by the state led to the removal of this group to London, Georgia, and eventually to Pennsylvania.

John Wesley (1703-1791) and his brother Charles (1707-1788) were the fifteenth and eighteenth children of a family of nineteen. Their father was a well-educated rector of the church at Epworth, England; and their mother was a woman of strong character. They went to Oxford where they distinguished themselves academically. They later returned to the University, John as a lecturer in Greek, and were ordained in the Church of England. In 1729 they organized a small group of similarly dissatisfied men into what came to be called, in derision, the Holy Club, or the Methodists. They met for mutual help and inspiration, through prayer and Bible reading; and they were seriously interested in the social and intellectual problems of the day as well. Here began the practice of going out to help others, especially the unfortunate lower classes of the industrial areas. But John's spiritual pilgrimage was not yet finished.

A missionary expedition to the Indians of Georgia (1735) brought the brothers into contact with some Moravians, headed in the same direction. There, in Savannah, John met one of the leading Moravians who asked him, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" John answered, "I know that he is the Saviour of the world." To this the Moravian countered, "True, but do you know He has saved you?" No dialogue could more adequately represent the difference between the point of view of the Enlightenment religion and the pietistic, despite the fact that each side made use of the same verb.

After this missionary venture failed, the two brothers found themselves back in London, where both came into contact with Moravian societies. John's conversion, as he reported it, is significant for the change that it worked in him and, through him, in much of subsequent Protestantism. In his journal he tells how he heard Luther's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans read at a meeting of an Anglican society (1738) and, about a quarter before nine, while he [Luther] was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt that I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.

The result of this and earlier experiences was an assurance which sent the Wesleys and their helpers all over Great Britain, as well as up and down the Atlantic seaboard of British North America. They spoke anywhere and everywhere, in churches, in
homes, and outdoors, sometimes to crowds of thousands. For John this meant fifty years of traveling an average of 5,000 miles a year on horseback, and an average of fifteen sermons a week. In eloquence he was rivaled only by George Whitefield (1714-1770), an evangelical Anglican clergyman who finally broke with Wesley on the question of predestination. The Methodists carefully avoided the extremes of both quietism and social radicalism. They concentrated on the religious experience of conversion and its moral fruits which were to prove helpful in the new world which the Industrial Revolution was bringing into being as well as on the American frontier. Their services were characterized by the singing of hymns, many of which were written by Charles, and by evangelical preaching which sometimes reached the hysterical.

John Wesley had no quarrel with Anglican theology, and no desire to found a separate church. For a long time he sent the Methodists to the established church for the sacraments. But the hostility of the Church of England which first drove the Methodists to preaching in the fields, the needs of the miners and factory workers who had no church home, and the requirements of the societies which had been established outside England finally moved them at last, albeit reluctantly, to ordain their own leaders. John Wesley, who was finally forced to take this step, died an ordained clergyman of the Church of England; but the break had been made, and a new denomination was born.

Organization had always been one of Wesley's strong points and it became, under him, one of the hallmarks of Methodism. He followed the pietistic method of organizing the churches into societies; but these he further divided into "classes," which met for Bible reading, mutual counseling, and the collection of dues of a penny a week, which, in case of hardship, the class leader himself often provided. Those who passed an initial period of probation were issued cards to that effect. Circuit riders were appointed to open up new territories to evangelism, and superintendents to follow up and consolidate their gains. Before he died Wesley appointed a group of one hundred ministers to take over the responsibility for the church on his death. In this manner was born the annual conference as the supreme authority of the Wesleyan Methodist church, one of its distinctive characteristics. One of the conference's duties was to regularly move the ministers from church to church, thus guarding against any laxness. Such organizational methods helped the Methodists, already more than 100,000 strong before Wesley's death, to expand with accelerating vigor.

The influence of the Methodists is indicative of the larger influence of the whole revival of which it was but the most significant part. The movement was distinctly Protestant, but even this did not keep it from having its influence in Catholic countries. Unlike the Reformation, this evangelical revival was largely without theological or doctrinal emphases. Nor was it limited to national or denominational boundaries within Protestantism. Being activistic it was able to run
parallel with the general expansiveness of the period. It focused on evangelical and missionary work. And, concerned with current problems of the masses, it was also influential in the founding of schools and in all forms of social reform. Because it was not limited to denominations or by doctrine, the movement was further able to influence many people who, without being concerned with conversion, were willing to cooperate with it in attacking problems such as slavery and alcoholism. Therefore the Evangelical Revival was able to produce effects which reached far beyond the period in which John Wesley began to preach.

What Wesley's message gained in warmth it lost in precision. He insisted on dealing with God as a personal Being whose power was available anywhere throughout the whole realm of nature. This raised serious problems when one came to try to discriminate between the works of God and the works which were not of God. In line with ancient popular beliefs, even storms, accidents (such as a horse throwing a shoe), sickness, and earthquakes were given this type of interpretation, along with the emotional effects which sometimes accompanied conversion experiences. At an annual conference one question was settled by lot. This whole tendency looked to the enlighteners of the time like a return to medieval superstition or popery, as they used the word. Such accusations did, however, serve to highlight the major problem of deciding between revelations when everything could be interpreted as a revelation.

The nature of man and of his relationship with God was another problem when placed within this type of thought. Wesley's basic ideas on this matter were close to those of Augustine. Man had been created good, had fallen, and only the grace of God could save him. With the help of God's grace man could do His will. But, what was the relationship between the will of God and that of man? Which was sovereign? Here Wesley's moral freedom clashed with his religion, but he always came out clearly in favor of God, trusting Him to act so as never to destroy man's best freedom. The enlighteners, on the other hand, saw the whole problem as something unsolvable upon such a basis, and therefore sufficient evidence that evangelical thought, as well as action, was wholly inadequate.

The Wesleyans were also accused of encouraging immorality by making salvation easy, of preaching that men could be perfect, of dividing and undermining the Church of England, of refusing to follow the ecclesiastical laws, and of not obeying the duly constituted church authorities. To this last charge Charles Wesley replied that he was willing to obey the duly constituted authorities in matters which were "indifferent," but that witnessing and testifying to the gospel was not an indifferent thing, and that in such matters he would obey God rather than man. John Wesley, in reply to an Anglican clergyman who refused him permission to preach within his parish, gave voice to a statement which became, for the Methodist
church, a characteristic battle cry: "The world is my parish."

But John was also interested in answering the charges against him and his answer took a quite different form. He wrote An Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion (1744) and A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion (1745). In these early writings he defended his position clearly and carefully against his critics, reversing the field to attack his attackers and, as was his custom, concluding with an evangelical appeal. In the selection from the first of these appeals, which follows, we get some of the flavor of his style, a style which is homiletical rather than deliberative. We can see his attempt to take the deist idea of God the Creator as his fulcrum and, using the lever of the Scriptures, to try to pry the unwilling deists into a position where they will be forced to make a more direct connection between themselves and God. No such argument was needed for the vast majority of Wesley's unlettered listeners who heard him, took the emotional, moral, and social appeal without raising any of the intellectual questions, enjoyed it, and were loudly converted.

Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? John vii, 51.

1. Although it is with us a "very small thing to be judged of you or of man's judgment," seeing we know God will "make our innocency as clear as the light, and our just dealing as the noon-day," yet are we ready to give any that are willing to hear a plain account, both of our principles and actions; as having "renounced the hidden things of shame," and desiring nothing more, "than by manifestation of the truth to commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

2. We see (and who does not?) the numberless follies and miseries of our fellow creatures. We see, on every side, either men of no religion at all, or men of a lifeless, formal religion. We are grieved at the sight; and should greatly rejoice, if by any means we might convince some that there is a better religion to be attained, --a religion worthy of God that gave it. And this we conceive to be no other than love; the love of God and of all mankind; the loving God with all our heart, and soul, and strength, as having first loved us, as the fountain of all the good we have received, and of all we ever hope to enjoy; and the loving every soul which God hath made, every man on earth, as our own soul.

3. This love we believe to be the medicine of life, the never-failing remedy for all the evils of a disordered world, for all the miseries and vices of men. Wherever this is, there are virtue and happiness going hand in hand. There is a humbleness of mind, gentleness, long suffering, the whole image of God; and at the same time a peace that passeth all understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.
Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind;
Each prayer accepted, and each wish resign'd;
Desires composed, affections ever even,
Tears that delight, and sighs that waft to heaven.

4. This religion we long to see established in the world, a religion of love, and joy, and peace, having its seat in the inmost soul, but ever showing itself by its fruits, continually springing forth, not only in all innocence, (for love worketh no ill to his neighbour,) but likewise in every kind of beneficence, spreading virtue and happiness all around it.

5. This religion have we been following after for many years, as many know, if they would testify: but all this time, seeking wisdom, we found it not; we were spending our strength in vain. And being now under full conviction of this, we declare it to all mankind; for we desire not that others should wander out of the way as we have done before them; but rather that they may profit by our loss, that they may go (though we did not, having then no man to guide us) the straight way to the religion of love, even by faith.

6. Now, faith (supposing the Scripture to be of God) is..."the demonstrative evidence of things unseen," the supernatural evidence of things invisible, not perceivable by eyes of flesh, or by any of our natural senses or faculties. Faith is that divine evidence whereby the spiritual man discerneth God, and the things of God. It is with regard to the spiritual world, what sense is with regard to the natural. It is the spiritual sensation of every soul that is born of God.

7. Perhaps you have not considered it in this view. I will, then, explain it a little further.

Faith, according to the scriptural account, is the eye of the new-born soul. Hereby every true believer in God "seeth him who is invisible." Hereby (in a more particular manner, since life and immortality have been brought to light by the Gospel,) he "seeth the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ;" and "beholdeth what manner of love it is which the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we," who are born of the Spirit, "should be called the sons of God."

It is the ear of the soul, whereby a sinner "hears the voice of the Son of God, and lives;" even that voice which alone wakes the dead, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee."

It is (if I may be allowed the expression) the palate of the soul; for hereby a believer "tastes the good word, and the powers of the world to come;" and "hereby he both tastes and sees that God is gracious," yea, "and merciful to him a sinner."

It is the feeling of the soul, whereby a believer perceives, through the "power of the Highest overshadowing him," both the existence and the presence of Him in whom "he lives, moves, and has his being;" and indeed the whole invisible world, the entire system of things
eternal. And hereby, in particular, he feels "the love of God shed abroad in his heart."

8. By this faith we are saved from all uneasiness of mind, from the anguish of a wounded spirit, from discontent, from fear and sorrow of heart, and from that inexpressible listlessness and weariness, both of the world and of ourselves, which we had so helplessly laboured under for many years; especially when we were out of the hurry of the world, and sunk into calm reflection. In this we find that love of God, and of all mankind, which we had elsewhere sought in vain. This we know and feel, and therefore cannot but declare, saves every one that partakes of it, both from sin and misery, from every unhappy and every unholy temper.

Soft peace she brings, wherever she arrives;
She builds our quiet, as she forms our lives;
Lays the rough paths of peevish nature even,
And opens in each breast a little heaven.

9. If you ask, "Why then have not all men this faith? all, at least, who conceive it to be so happy a thing? Why do they not believe immediately?"

We answer, (on the Scripture hypothesis,) "It is the gift of God." No man is able to work it in himself. It is a work of omnipotence. It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create a soul anew, but He who at first created the heavens and the earth.

10. May not your own experience teach you this? Can you give yourself this faith? Is it now in your power to see, or hear, or taste, or feel God? Have you already, or can you raise in yourself, any perception of God, or of an invisible world? I suppose you do not deny that there is an invisible world; you will not charge it in poor old Hesiod to Christian prejudice of education, when he says, in those well-known words,

"Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, whether we wake, or if we sleep."

Now, is there any power in your soul whereby you discern either these, or Him that created them? Or, can all your wisdom and strength open an intercourse between yourself and the world of spirits? Is it in your power to burst the veil that is on your heart, and let in the light of eternity? You know it is not. You not only do not, but cannot, by your own strength, thus believe. The more you labour so to do, the more you will be convinced "it is the gift of God."

11. It is the free gift of God, which he bestows, not on those who are worthy of his favour, not on such as are previously holy, and so fit to be crowned with all the blessings of his goodness; but on the ungodly and unholy; on those who till that hour were fit only for everlasting destruction; those in whom was no good thing, and whose only plea was, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" No
merit, no goodness in man precedes the forgiving love of God. His pardoning mercy supposes nothing in us but a sense of mere sin and misery; and to all who see, and feel, and own their wants, and their utter inability to remove them, God freely gives faith, for the sake of Him in whom he is always "well pleased."

12. This is a short, rude sketch of the doctrine we teach. These are our fundamental principles; and we spend our lives in confirming others herein, and in a behaviour suitable to them.

Now, if you are a reasonable man, although you do not believe the Christian system to be of God, lay your hand upon your breast, and calmly consider what it is that you can here condemn? What evil have we done to you, that you should join the common cry against us? Why should you say, "Away with such fellows from the earth; it is not fit that they should live?"

13. It is true, your judgment does not fall in with ours. We believe the Scripture to be of God. This you do not believe. And how do you defend yourselves against them who urge you with the guilt of unbelief? Do you not say, "Every man must judge according to the light he has," and that "if he be true to this, he ought not to be condemned?" Keep then to this, and turn the tables. Must not we also judge according to the light we have? You can in no wise condemn us without involving yourselves in the same condemnation. According to the light we have, we cannot but believe the Scripture is of God; and while we believe this, we dare not turn aside from it, to the right hand or to the left.

14. Let us consider this point a little further. You yourself believe there is a God. You have the witness of this in your own breast. Perhaps sometimes you tremble before him. You believe there is such a thing as right and wrong; that there is a difference between moral good and evil. Of consequence you must allow, there is such a thing as conscience: I mean, that every person, capable of reflection, is conscious to himself when he looks back on any thing he has done, whether it be good or evil. You must likewise allow, that every man is to be guided by his own conscience, not another's. Thus far, doubtless, you may go, without any danger of being a volunteer in faith.

15. Now then, be consistent with yourself. If there be a God, who, being just and good, (attributes inseparable from the very idea of God,) is "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," ought we not to do whatever we believe will be acceptable to so good a Master? Observe: If we believe, if we are fully persuaded of this in our mind, ought we not thus to seek him, and that with all diligence? Else, how should we expect any reward at his hands?

16. Again: Ought we not to do what we believe is morally good, and to abstain from what we judge is evil?
By good I mean, conducive to the good of mankind, tending to advance peace and good will among men, promotive of the happiness of our fellow creatures; and by evil, what is contrary thereto. Then surely you cannot condemn our endeavouring, after our power, to make mankind happy; (I now speak only with regard to the present world;) our striving, as we can, to lessen their sorrows, and to teach them, in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content.

17. Yet again: Are we to be guided by our own conscience, or by that of other men? You surely will not say that any man’s conscience can preclude mine. You, at least, will not plead for robbing us of what you so strongly claim for yourselves: I mean the right of private judgment, which is indeed unalienable from reasonable creatures. You well know, that, unless we faithfully follow the dictates of our own mind, we cannot have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man.

18. Upon your own principles, therefore, you must allow us to be, at least, innocent. Do you find any difficulty in this? You speak much of prepossession and prejudice; beware you are not entangled therein yourselves! Are you not prejudiced against us, because we believe and strenuously defend that system of doctrines which you oppose? Are you not enemies to us, because you take it for granted we are so to you? Nay, God forbid! I once saw one, who, from a plentiful fortune, was reduced to the lowest extremity. He was lying on a sick bed, in violent pain, without even convenient food, or one friend to comfort him: so that when his merciful landlord, to complete all, sent one to take his bed from under him, I was not surprised at his attempt to put an end to so miserable a life. Now, when I saw that poor man weltering in his blood, could I be angry at him? Surely, no. No more can I at you. I can no more hate, than I can envy, you. I can only lift up my heart to God for you, (as I did then for him,) and, with silent tears, beseech the Father of mercies, that he would look on you in your blood, and say unto you, "Live."

19. "Sir," said that unhappy man, at my first interview with him, "I scorn to deceive you or any man. You must not tell me of your Bible; for I do not believe one word of it. I know there is a God; and believe he is all in all, the Anima mundi, (the soul of the world,).... But further than this I believe not: all is dark; my thought is lost. But I hear," added he, "you preach to a great number of people every night and morning. Pray, what would you do with them? Whither would you lead them? What religion do you preach? What is it good for?" I replied, "I do preach to as many as desire to hear, every night and morning. You ask, what I would do with them: I would make them virtuous and happy, easy in themselves, and useful to others. Whither would I lead them? To heaven; to God the Judge, the lover of all, and to Jesus
the Mediator of the new covenant. What religion do I
preach? The religion of love; the law of kindness
brought to light by the Gospel. What is this good for?
To make all who receive it enjoy God and themselves; to
make them like God; lovers of all; contented in their
lives; and crying out at their death, in calm assurance,
'O grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be unto God, who
giveth me the victory, through my Lord Jesus Christ.'"

20. Will you object to such a religion as this, that
it is not reasonable? Is it not reasonable then to love
God? Hath he not given you life, and breath, and all
things? Does he not continue his love to you, filling
your heart with food and gladness? What have you which
you have not received of him? And does not love demand a
return of love? Whether, therefore, you do love God or
no, you cannot but own it is reasonable so to do; nay,
seeing he is the Parent of all good, to love him with all
your heart.

21. Is it not reasonable also to love our neighbor,
every man whom God hath made? Are we not brethren, the
children of one Father? Ought we not, then, to love one
another? And should we only love them that love us? Is
that acting like our Father which is in Heaven? He
causeth his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and
sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. And can there
be a more equitable rule than this: "Thou shalt love thy
neighbour as thyself?" You will plead for the reasonable
ness of this; as also for that golden rule, (the only
adequate measure of brotherly love, in all our words and
actions,) "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto
you, even so do unto them?"

22. Is it not reasonable then, that, as we have oppor
tunity, we should do good unto all men; not only friends
but enemies; not only to the deserving, but likewise to
the evil and unthankful? Is it not right that all our
life should be one continued labour of love? If a day
passes without doing good, may one not well say, with
Titus,...My friends, I have lost a day! And is it
enough, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to visit
those who are sick or in prison? Should we have no pity
for those

Who sigh beneath guilt's horrid stain,
The worst confinement, and the heaviest chain?
Should we shut up our compassion toward those who are of
all men most miserable, because they are miserable by
their own fault? If we have found a medicine to heal
even that sickness, should we not, as we have freely re-
ceived it, freely give? Should we not pluck them as
brands out of the fire? the fire of lust, anger, malice,
revenge? Your inmost soul answers, "It should be done;
it is reasonable in the highest degree." Well, this is
the sum of our preaching, and of our lives, our enemies
themselves being the judges. If therefore you allow,
that it is reasonable to love God, to love mankind, and
to do good to all men, you cannot but allow that religion
which we preach and live to be agreeable to the highest
reason.

23. Perhaps, all this you can bear. It is tolerable
enough; and if we spoke only of being saved by love, you
should have no great objection: but you do not comprehend
what we say of being saved by faith. I know you do not.
You do not in any degree comprehend what we mean by that
expression: have patience then, and I will tell you yet
again. By those words, "We are saved by faith," we mean,
that the moment a man receives that faith which is above
described, he is saved from doubt and fear, and sorrow of
heart, by a peace that passes all understanding; from the
heaviness of a wounded spirit, by joy unspeakable; and
from his sins, of whatsoever kind they were, from his
vicious desires, as well as words and actions, by the love
of God, and of all mankind, then shed abroad in his heart.

24. We grant, nothing is more unreasonable, than to
imagine that such mighty effects as these can be wrought
by that poor, empty, insignificant thing, which the world
calls faith, and you among them. But supposing there be
such a faith on the earth as that which the Apostle
speaks of, such an intercourse between God and the soul,
what is too hard for such a faith? You yourselves may
conceive that "all things are possible to him that" thus
"believeth;" to him that thus "walks with God," that is
now a citizen of heaven, an inhabitant of eternity. If
therefore you will contend with us, you must change the
ground of your attack. You must flatly deny there is any
faith upon earth; but perhaps this you might think too
large a step. You cannot do this without a secret condem­
nation in your own breast. O that you would at length
cry to God for that heavenly gift! whereby alone this
truly reasonable religion, this beneficent love of God
and man, can be planted in your heart.

25. If you say, "But those that profess this faith are
the most unreasonable of all men;" I ask, Who are those
that profess this faith? Perhaps you do not personally
know such a man in the world. Who are they that so much
as profess to have this "evidence of things not seen?"
that profess to "see Him that is invisible," to hear the
voice of God, and to have his Spirit ever "witnessing
with their spirits, that they are the children of God?"
I fear you will find few that even profess this faith,
among the large numbers of those who are called believers.

26. "However, there are enough that profess themselves
Christians." Yea, too many, God knoweth; too many that
confute their vain professions, by the whole tenor of
their lives. I will allow all you can say on this head,
and perhaps more than all. It is now some years since I
was engaged unawares in a conversation with a strong
reasoner, who at first urged the wickedness of the Amer­
ican Indians, as a bar to our hope of converting them to
Christianity. But when I mentioned their temperance,
justice, and veracity, (according to the accounts I had then received,) it was asked, "Why, if those Heathens are such men as these, what will they gain by being made Christians? What would they gain by being such Christians as we see everywhere round about us?" I could not deny they would lose, not gain, by such a Christianity as this. Upon which she added, "Why, what else do you mean by Christianity?" My plain answer was, "What do you apprehend to be more valuable than good sense, good nature, and good manners? All these are contained, and that in the highest degree, in what I mean by Christianity. Good sense (so called) is but a poor, dim shadow of what Christians call faith. Good nature is only a faint, distant resemblance of Christian charity. And good manners, if of the most finished kind that nature, assisted by art, can attain to, is but a dead picture of that holiness of conversation which is the image of God visibly expressed. All these, put together by the art of God, I call Christianity." "Sir, if this be Christianity," said my opponent, in amaze, "I never saw a Christian in my life." 27. Perhaps it is the same case with you. If so, I am grieved for you, and can only wish, till you do see a living proof of this, that you would not say you see a Christian. For this is scriptural Christianity, and this alone. Whenever, therefore, you see an unreasonable man, you see one who perhaps calls himself by that name, but is no more a Christian than he is an angel. So far as he departs from true, genuine reason, so far he departs from Christianity. Do not say, "This is only asserted, not proved." It is undeniably proved by the original charter of Christianity. We appeal to this, to the written word. If any man's temper, or words, or actions, are contradictory to right reason, it is evident, to a demonstration, they are contradictory to this. Produce any possible or conceivable instance, and you will find the fact is so. The lives, therefore, of those who are called Christians, is no just objection to Christianity. — We join with you then in desiring a religion founded on reason, and every way agreeable thereto. But one question still remains to be asked, What do you mean by reason? I suppose you mean the eternal reason, or the nature of things; the nature of God, and the nature of man, with the relations necessarily subsisting between them. Why, this is the very religion we preach; a religion evidently founded on, and every way agreeable to, eternal reason, to the essential nature of things. Its foundation stands on the nature of God and the nature of man, together with their mutual relations. And it is every way suitable thereto; to the nature of God; for it begins in knowing him; and where, but in the true knowledge of God, can you conceive true religion to begin? It goes on in loving him and all mankind; for you cannot but imitate whom you love: it ends in serving him; in doing his will; in obeying him whom we know and love.
29. It is every way suited to the nature of man; for it begins in a man's knowing himself; knowing himself to be what he really is,—foolish, vicious, miserable. It goes on to point out the remedy for this, to make him truly wise, virtuous, and happy; as every thinking mind (perhaps from some implicit remembrance of what it originally was) longs to be. It finishes all, by restoring the due relations between God and man; by uniting for ever the tender Father, and the grateful, obedient son; the great Lord of all, and the faithful servant; doing not his own will, but the will of him that sent him.

30. But perhaps by reason you mean the faculty of reasoning, of inferring one thing from another. There are many, it is confessed, (particularly those who are styled Mystic divines,) that utterly decry the use of reason, thus understood, in religion; nay, that condemn all reasoning concerning the things of God, as utterly destructive of true religion.

But we can in no wise agree with this. We find no authority for it in holy writ. So far from it, that we find there both our Lord and his Apostles continually reasoning with their opposers. Neither do we know, in all the productions of ancient and modern times, such a chain of reasoning or argumentation, so close, so solid, so regularly connected, as the Epistle to the Hebrews. And the strongest reasoner whom we have ever observed (excepting only Jesus of Nazareth) was that Paul of Tarsus; the same who has left that plain direction for all Christians: "In malice," or wickedness, "be ye children; but in understanding," or reason, "be ye men."

31. We therefore not only allow, but earnestly exhort, all who seek after true religion, to use all the reason which God hath given them, in searching out the things of God. But your reasoning justly, not only on this, but on any subject whatsoever, pre-supposes true judgments already formed, whereon to ground your argumentation. Else, you know, you will stumble at every step; because ex falso non sequitur verum, "it is impossible, if your premises are false, to infer from them true conclusions."

32. You know, likewise, that before it is possible for you to form a true judgment of them, it is absolutely necessary that you have a clear apprehension of the things of God, and that your ideas thereof be all fixed, distinct, and determinate. And seeing our ideas are not innate, but must all originally come from our senses, it is certainly necessary that you have senses capable of discerning objects of this kind: not those only which are called natural senses, which in this respect profit nothing, as being altogether incapable of discerning objects of a spiritual kind; but spiritual senses, exercised to discern spiritual good and evil. It is necessary that you have the hearing ear, and the seeing eye, emphatically so called; that you have a new class of senses opened in your soul, not depending on organs of flesh and blood, to
be "the evidence of things not seen," as your bodily
senses are of visible things; to be the avenues to the
invisible world, to discern spiritual objects, and to
furnish you with ideas of what the outward "eye hath not
seen, neither the ear heard."

33. And till you have these internal senses, till the
eyes of your understanding are opened, you can have no
apprehension of divine things, no idea of them at all.
Nor, consequently, till then, can you either judge truly,
or reason justly, concerning them; seeing your reason has
no ground wherewith to stand, no materials to work upon....

35. What then will your reason do here? How will it
pass from things natural to spiritual; from the things
that are seen to those that are not seen; from the vis-
ible to the invisible world? What a gulf is here! By
what art will reason get over the immense chasm? This
cannot be, till the Almighty come in to your succour, and
give you that faith you have hitherto despised. Then up-
borne, as it were, on eagles' wings, you shall soar away
into the regions of eternity; and your enlightened reason
shall explore even "the deep things of God;" God himself
"revealing them to you by his Spirit." *