

*A Zealous (but Respected) Adversary: John Lewis's
Correspondence with John Wesley*

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ABSTRACT

This article contains annotated transcriptions of several previously unknown letters between John Wesley and Revd John Lewis of Holt, Wiltshire, in the mid-1740s. Holt's letters articulate the concerns of a typical Anglican parish priest about irregular ecclesial practices and some doctrinal emphases of the Methodist revival. Wesley's responses contain his most frank (or pessimistic) evaluation of Anglican clergy—that two thirds of those he has known are 'blind leaders of the blind, dumb dogs that cannot bark, priests of Baal rather than God.' Together the letters provide an instructive window into the reception of early Methodism.

Keywords: Church of England clergy (eighteenth century); conversion; enthusiasm; John Lewis; John Wesley; Methodist revival; new birth; schism

As the Methodist revival gained momentum in the mid-1740s, it also drew increasing opposition, particularly from Church of England clergy. Many of these opponents made their case in print, and drew public responses from John Wesley. Prominent examples include Josiah Tucker,¹ Edmund Gibson (anonymously),²

1. Josiah Tucker, *A Brief History of the Principles of Methodism* (Oxford: James Fletcher, 1742); to which Wesley replied in *The Principles of a Methodist* (1742) [vol. IX of The Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*] (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984–), IX:48–66. This edition cited hereafter as *Works*.

2. [Edmund Gibson], *Observations on the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually distinguished by the Name of Methodists* (London: E. Owen, 1744); [Edmund Gibson], *The Case of the Methodists Briefly Stated* (London: Edward Owen, 1744). Wesley replied in *Farther Appeal to Men or Reason and Religion*, Part I (1745), III:2–9, and VI:4–12 (*Works*, XI:119–30, 178–86).

Richard Smalbroke,³ and Thomas Church.⁴ These public exchanges focused particularly on doctrinal and moral issues, charging Wesley with enthusiasm and antinomianism; but they touched as well, in varying degrees, on irregular ecclesial practices like engaging in field-preaching and encouraging lay preachers.

Wesley also carried on private correspondence with clerical critics in the early years of the revival. One of these was Revd John Lewis of Holt, Wiltshire.⁵ In October 1750 Wesley described Lewis as ‘one of the most zealous adversaries we have in England’—then added that when he visited Lewis in person, he ‘found a calm, sensible, venerable old man; and spent above an hour in friendly altercation.’⁶ The joining of these two characterizations piqued my interest in their prior exchanges. A perusal of the relevant volume of the Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley* revealed that Frank Baker was aware of only one surviving letter, from Lewis to Wesley.⁷ Checking various listings, I learned that Lewis’s manuscripts (comprising five volumes) were held by the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.⁸ However, inspection of this collection uncovered no further letters between Lewis and Wesley, or mention of their correspondence.

Just as resignation was setting in, I stumbled upon a record of Wesley’s correspondence with John Lewis in an unanticipated spot—a manuscript notebook among the papers of Revd John Wight (1707–77).⁹ The notebook includes transcriptions of (an initial draft of) Lewis’s letter to Wesley known to Baker, an earlier letter to Wesley, and two of Wesley’s letters in reply.

3. Richard Smalbroke, *A Charge Delivered to . . . the Clergy in Several Parts of the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry* (London: John & Paul Knapton, 1744); to which Wesley replied in *Farther Appeal*, Part I (1745), V.4–32 (*Works*, XI:141–76).

4. Thomas Church, *Remarks on the Reverend Mr. Wesley’s Last Journal* (London: M. Cooper, 1745), which drew Wesley’s *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Church’s Remarks* (*Works*, 9:81–122); and Church, *Some Further Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Wesley’s Last Journal* (London: M. Cooper, 1746), which was answered in *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained* (*Works*, IX:161–237).

5. John Lewis (b. 23 Aug. 1685; d. 1761), a graduate of St Edmund Hall, Oxford, was master of the school at Tetbury (1705–12), then rector of Great Chalfield and curate of Holt and Atford (or Atworth) in Wiltshire (1712–61). He resided in Holt.

6. Wesley, *Journal* (23 Oct. 1750), in *Works*, XX:364.

7. John Lewis to John Wesley, 5 Oct. 1747, in the Methodist Archives and Research Centre (MARC), The John Rylands Library, University of Manchester, accession number MA 1977/610/95. Frank Baker published an abridged form in *Letters II: 1740–1755*, ed. Frank Baker [vol. XXVI of *Works*] (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 262–5.

8. Bodleian Library, MSS Eng. misc., e. 23–27.

9. The notebook is held in the Gloucestershire Archives, item D6755/3/1. The transcribed letters appear in the midst of the notebook, on the verso side of twenty unnumbered pages, with a discourse on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch occupying the recto side of each page.

The overlap with the known letter supports the authenticity of these transcriptions, which also appear to be in the same hand as Lewis's materials at Oxford. The main puzzle is how it came into the hands of Wight. Wight served as vicar of Tetbury, Gloucestershire, between 1741 and 1777. John Lewis began his career as master of the school at Tetbury (1705–12) before moving to Holt. Lewis and his wife Esther purchased a house in Tetbury in October 1754.¹⁰ So Lewis quite likely knew Wight, and may have given this notebook to him (which also included sermon notes and other pieces). There seems little reason to doubt the authenticity of the transcribed letters contained therein.

One result of this discovery is that we can update Frank Baker's proposed timeline of exchanges between Lewis and Wesley.¹¹ Lewis's first letter to Wesley was in February 1746 (not May). Wesley sent a brief reply immediately, including some tracts and wondering whether Lewis desired a more detailed response. Wesley then sent a longer reply in July 1747 (which was apparently not triggered by an intervening letter from Lewis). This drew Lewis's letter of 5 October 1747 (which appears in the notebook in an early draft dated 18 September). One of Wesley's lay preachers next gave Lewis a couple of recent Wesley publications, apparently in early 1750, and Lewis recorded reflections on these in the notebook. Finally came Wesley's visit with Lewis in Holt in October 1750 (recorded in his *Journal*).

While these letters will eventually appear in a set of additions and corrections to the Bicentennial Edition,¹² they are of sufficient interest to publish now separately. They capture the concerns of a typical Anglican parish priest about irregular ecclesial practices of the Methodist revival. And they include what is likely John Wesley's most frank (or pessimistic) evaluation of his fellow Anglican clergy—that two thirds of those he has known are 'blind leaders of the blind, dumb dogs that cannot bark, priests of Baal rather than God'!

What follows, then, are annotated transcriptions (following the style of the Bicentennial Edition¹³) of what were themselves transcriptions of letters. The only original letter mailed between Lewis and Wesley known to survive is dated 5 October 1747 and is in the Methodist Archives.

10. Gloucester Record Office, item D566 T2/3/9.

11. See *Works*, XXVI:262 n. 16.

12. In volume 31, the last volume of letters, to be published several years from now.

13. This includes updating archaic spellings, expanding contractions, and adapting to modern principles of capitalization and punctuation.

Transcription of John Lewis's Correspondence with John Wesley

The Revd. Mr. Westley,¹⁴ who is the head of the Methodists, having sent the Revd. Mr. John Lewis of Holt, Wiltshire one of his books entitled *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*,¹⁵ he wrote and sent him the following answer.

*Holt, Feb. 4, 1745/6*¹⁶

Sir,

I had the favour of your book, and thank you for it. I have read it over without prejudice or partiality, being determined to hear all you say with an unbiassed mind. You make your appeal therein to reason and religion, and having consulted that small share I have of both, I here send you the result of my thoughts on the principles you defend and the measures you pursue, by which you may see I do not entirely approve of either.

I have no objection to the former part of your book,¹⁷ which is a severe satire to the age we live in, for I am afraid your observations and reflections of that head have too much truth in them. It is a melancholy subject that cannot but raise the grief and pity of every considerate person that has a due regard for the glory of God and the good of mankind. I would gladly lend an helping hand, according to my poor abilities, to amend and make it better; but not by irregular methods, as I have reason to think those to be which you have taken.

You seem very sanguine, and talk with great confidence of the work of God in your hands, and how it has prospered there by your own labour and those of your adherents, to the reformation of vast numbers all over the kingdom. But sir, while we are doing God's work, we should be careful to keep in God's way, and not to aim at promoting his glory and the good of our Christian brethren by such ways as are inconsistent with that obedience we owe to his

14. I have retained the transcriber's spelling of Wesley's name.

15. *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (London: W. Strahan, 1745) was issued in two volumes (Part I in vol. I; Parts II to IV in vol. II). Lewis's page references in this letter are to the second volume. Wesley also sent the second volume of *Farther Appeal* to his anonymous critic 'John Smith' in Feb. 1746; see the letter of 'John Smith' to Wesley, 26 Feb. 1746, *Works*, XXVI:184.

16. The location and date appear at the end of the transcription of this first letter. I have moved it to the top to parallel the transcription of the other letters.

17. That is, *Farther Appeal*, Part II (the opening section of vol. 2), *Works*, XI:203–71.

commands. This would be doing evil that good may come, and you know that no intention of any end can justify the choice of wrong means to effect it.

The church of Christ of which you are a member is a society wherein some are to govern and others to be governed. As your station places you among the latter, you are in duty bound to pay obedience to those that have the rule over you. But this obedience you refuse to pay, though an apostle has expressly enjoined it,¹⁸ and though you bound it on your own soul by a solemn promise at your ordination.¹⁹ To say that you will obey them in all things of an indifferent nature, but preaching the gospel is not so, is a very fallacious way of arguing.²⁰ For who is to be the judge? You, or your spiritual governors, who gave you authority to preach the gospel? And who can give a dispensation for a breach of any of their rules or orders? I cannot see how you can justify your conduct in this point either to God or man.

As little justifiable is that part of your proceeding wherein you authorize or at least permit and encourage a set of illiterate unordained persons to preach the gospel. Nay and now at last you go on (I am sorry to see it) to defend the practice and bring what arguments you can pick up to vindicate their taking upon them the sacred office. St. Paul asks, 'How shall they preach except they be sent?'²¹ But you say they may preach without being sent, without a regular mission by imposition of hands. To say they have an inward call to the work and are well qualified for it is a weak pretence, for who is to be the judge of their qualifications but he who has authority to send them? And you know the church of Christ from the apostles' days down to the present times never allowed an inward call sufficient for the ministry without an outward designation.

Methinks it should make you very cautious how you encourage such doings to consider what terrible consequences followed from it in the last century when persons of all ranks and opinions that had good fronts and voluble tongues set up for teachers in

18. Cf. Heb. 13:7 (which Lewis assumes is by Paul).

19. The service for ordination in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer includes a required positive response to the question: 'Will you reverently obey your Ordinary, and other chief Ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgements?'

20. Lewis is alluding to *Farther Appeal*, Part III, I.11, *Works*, XI:278.

21. Rom. 10:15.

religion and thereby let in such a deluge of errors as overwhelmed the land, overturned the established Church and left the minds of multitudes of well-meaning people under the deepest perplexity, in a maze of errors many of which remain to this day, and may to our latest posterity. I wish this liberty assumed in your way may not produce the same effects and that you may not soon see cause to repent of promoting such a practice.

Again it is the duty of every Christian, especially of every minister of Christ, to study the peace and unity of the church, and promote it by all the ways he can. But do you act in this manner? Do you consult the peace and unity of the church in setting up separate assemblies and thereby drawing people from their own parish churches? And when you and your associates depreciate and vilify the Church [of England] clergy, reproaching them as blind leaders of the blind and dumb dogs that cannot bark, and priests of Baal? When you set up a new scheme of religion and tell your hearers that the true gospel of Christ, the true way of salvation, is not taught in our churches, and that they cannot be true Christians but by adhering to your doctrine and taking you for their guide? Do you consult the peace of the church when you suffer or encourage common mechanics, mere laymen, to preach the gospel without any authority, and thereby break in on its established order? And when you uphold irregular assemblies no way countenanced by the laws of God or man? Is not this an actual breach of the church's peace and is not that a sin? And can such ways be agreeable to the will of God who has declared himself a God of peace and order? This deserves to be well considered by you.

But you seem to think the good effects produced by this new method will justify every thing and answer all objections. There is such a reformation, you say, all over the land that plainly demonstrates it to be the work of God. What may be in other places I cannot say, but when I look round my own neighbourhood I see no such thing. I do not see any notorious ill-livers converted from their wicked ways. And for others of a sober life and serious turn of thought who have gone after you, I shall only make this remark of one of the greatest devotees in that way, that I see her much seldomer in the house of God either on Sundays or holy days than she used to be.

However if there be such a real reformation as you speak of elsewhere, I bless God for it and wish those changes may prove

durable and lasting to the saving of souls. But there is room to fear the contrary, since experience has often shown the deceitfulness of such sudden conversions, especially when founded upon imaginary inward feelings, and on transient alarms of conscience.

This would lead me to look into your principles and doctrines. But as you speak of them in general only in your book I shall confine my remarks to two points you mention [on] p. 87,²² where you assert that your tenets are thoroughly scriptural and pure from enthusiasm. If they are really grounded on Scripture as you affirm, I should readily submit to them. But my present thoughts are that they have no foundation there. For as to sudden or instantaneous new birth, or conversion (if this be your meaning), and its being wrought on the soul in an irresistible manner; or that faith is given in a moment, and we are justified by it; that a good life is no condition at all of our acceptance with God, or that this faith gives an immediate assurance of pardon and salvation—I do not find any texts of Scripture that assert these doctrines.

But the writers of the New Testament seem to teach us otherwise. When St. Paul says our inner man is renewed day by day,²³ not in an instant but by gradual steps. And St. Stephen tells the Jews they resisted the Holy Ghost.²⁴ And St. James assures us that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.²⁵ And accordingly St. Paul commands us to work out our own salvation,²⁶ though still so as wholly to depend on the merits of that precious blood which was shed on the cross for sin. And if faith gives us the immediate assurance of salvation, St. Paul seems to have been without it about twenty years after his conversion. For in his First Epistle to the Corinthians he is under doubts and fears of becoming a castaway.²⁷ And if so great a man as St. Paul dreaded this, what cause have all Christians to work their salvation out with fear and trembling, and not to be overconfident that it is already secured.

As to the point of enthusiasm, I cannot but think the pretences made in yours and Mr. Whitefield's *Journals* to extraordinary

22. See Wesley, *Farther Appeal*, Part III, I.10, *Works*, XI:277. Lewis consistently refers to pages of a book as 'folios' (f.); I have substituted 'page' (p.) as more familiar to modern readers.

23. Cf. 2 Cor. 4:16.

24. Cf. Acts 7:51.

25. Cf. James 2:14–17.

26. Cf. Phil. 2:12.

27. Cf. 1 Cor. 9:27.

presences of God and immediate revelations and directions from him savour strongly of enthusiasm. As do likewise the sudden agitations, agitations, and ecstasies of some of your followers, and their imaginary feelings of the operations of the Spirit within them.

And when you come to clear your principles from this charge [on] p. 87, instead of speaking to these points where the charge lies, you very malapropos²⁸ ask whether there be any enthusiasm in the love of God, of our neighbour, etc. This, sir, you must own is trifling. And I cannot but conclude you could defend that point no better when I see so shifting and evasive an answer to so material a question²⁹ from one that can reason well when he has truth on his side.

There are other things liable to exception in your book, such as your notion of schism, your speaking of inspiration in so indeterminate a manner, and your making church order to consist chiefly in discipline rather than in a due subordination of inferiors to superiors. But that which I would principally remark is that you seem to me too censorious and even uncharitable in your bitter reflections on your brethren the clergy, and your making a question whether any of our people are alive unto God (p. 118³⁰) except such as take you and yours for their guides.

But you are sure the cause you are engaged in is God Almighty's, and you seem to think that will justify everything you do or say. If you really are sent of God, I think you have exceeded your commission. And you would do well calmly and coolly to consider everything that has been urged against your way, remembering what Solomon says in his Proverbs, that a way may seem right unto a man when the end thereof are the ways of death.³¹

However I do not say but that God may have raised you up for many wise and good reasons. For I look upon what has been done by you as an alarm to the nation in general to repent and reform and turn from their evil ways and doings. But how? Not by leaving their lawful pastors, that are set over them in the Lord, and running after irregular and unordained teachers, but by applying their minds to practical religion with zeal and a due concern for the saving of their souls.

28. That is, 'inappropriately'.

29. Lewis actually wrote 'an answer', but surely meant to write 'a question'.

30. See Wesley, *Farther Appeal*, Part III, III.22, *Works*, XI:305–6.

31. Cf. Prov. 14:12.

And further you may be intended to witness against that deism and Socinianism which has infected great numbers in the nation and was increasing among several of high station in the Church [of England] about the time when you first set out—when many rejected Christ and his religion, and many others disallowed any atonement made for sin by his sufferings, and placed the main of religion in the observance of moral duties. And you might be designed to remonstrate against this growing infidelity, and to call people to an acknowledgment of that faith and that mediation through which alone they can be saved. But still it should have been done with a due regard to your spiritual governors, and no allowance or encouragement should have been given to the laity to invade the ministerial office.

Moreover I look upon what has been done by you as a loud call to the parochial clergy to mind the care of their people more, and to exert themselves with greater zeal and assiduity in promoting the glory of God and salvation of souls. And this is the use that with the help of God I design to make of it.

Thus I have hastily thrown together some of the thoughts that occurred to me upon reading your *Appeal*. By sending it to me you seem to expect my sentiments upon it, and I have given them with that same freedom I would desire others to use toward me. I am sir,

Your affectionate brother and humble servant

John Lewis

Mr. Westley's answer to the foregoing letter was as follows.

Bristol, Feb. 14, 1745/6

Reverend Sir,

I sincerely thank you for your favour of the 4th instant, and beg your acceptance of the little tracts sent herewith.³² I did not

32. Among the likely tracts sent would be *The Character of a Methodist* (1742), *Works*, IX:32–46; *The Principles of a Methodist* (1742), *Works*, IX:48–66; *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1743), *Works*, XI:45–94; *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, Part I (1745), *Works*, XI:105–202; *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Church's 'Remarks'* (1745), *Works*, IX:81–122; and *Advice to the People Called Methodists* (1745), *Works*, IX:123–31. Nothing by Wesley appears in Lewis's undated manuscript catalogue of his library (Bodleian Library,

know whether a more particular answer would be acceptable. I am,
 reverend sir,

Your obliged and affectionate brother and servant

John Westley

About 18 months after this he sent me a long letter dated at St. Ives near the Land's End in Cornwall.

Mr. Westley's answer to Mr. Lewis's first letter

St. Ives, July 2, 1747

Reverend Sir,

From the time I received the favour of yours, which is now near eighteen months ago, I determined to answer it when I should have opportunity. The candour with which you write even on the tenderest points convinces me you fear God and desire both to know and do his will. Therefore I am not without hope that (whether I may profit you or not) you may be profitable to my soul.

You mention that your thoughts were hastily thrown together, otherwise I should never have imagined it. Your arguments are clearly and strongly urged, and that in so dispassionate and serious a manner, a manner so becoming a gentleman as well as a Christian, that they cannot but oblige if they do not convince.

I desire coolly and calmly to consider all you urge whether against my doctrine or practice, beginning with those points which (as you touch them but lightly) may be dispatched in a few words.

As to the good effects produced by this new method you observe, ^[c]it may be in other places, I cannot say, but when I look round my own neighbourhood I do not see any notorious ill livers converted from their wicked ways. ^[p]I undertake, if it pleases God to bring me back to Bristol, to send you the names of 40 (not to encumber you too much) who are within six miles of Holt, any of whom will be ready to give you as minute an account of the particulars as you desire.

Most of these, from the time their conscience was alarmed, could have no rest in their spirit till they inwardly felt that love of

MSS Eng. misc. e. 24)—which may indicate that the list predated 1746, or that Lewis chose not to retain the volumes that Wesley sent.

God and love of man, which soon appeared in the entire change of their outward conversation.

You next object to what was said in the *Farther Appeal*, page 87. The former paragraph of those you refer to is this: 'No stress has been laid on anything, as though it were necessary to salvation but what is undeniably contained in the Word of God. And of the things contained therein the stress laid on each had been in proportion to the nearness of its relation to what is there laid down as the sum of all, the love of God and our neighbour. So pure from superstition, so thoroughly scriptural is that religion which has lately spread in the nation.'³³

Be pleased to observe that I am here speaking not of doctrines but of practical religion. Of doctrines I had spoken at large in the first part of the larger *Appeal*, where I had likewise explained on the head of inspiration as well as inward feelings.³⁴

Nor was it my business here to clear either Mr. Whitefield or myself from the charge of personal enthusiasm. This also I had done again and again. I was here concerned only to show that the main constituent parts of the religion practised and taught among those whose hearts God had touched were sober, rational, divine, and diametrically opposite to enthusiasm.

I cannot own that here is anything shifting or evasive. I apprehend it is full and home to the point. P. O.³⁵ extraordinary presences of God, and sudden agony or ecstasies, be they real or imaginary (i.e. enthusiastic) are not the religion of those men; not at all, but the love of God and man. And who can charge this with enthusiasm?

Concerning schism, all that I there assert is this: 1) That it is a causeless separation from the church of Christ. 2) That you have many steps to take before you can prove that a separation from a particular national church, such as the Church of England is, whether with sufficient cause or without, comes under the scriptural notion of schism.³⁶ I think this a very difficult point to be proved, but I am willing to weigh whatever you advance concerning it. That true Christian discipline whereby all the living members of Christ

33. Wesley, *Farther Appeal*, Part III, I.9, *Works*, XI:277.

34. As mentioned in footnote 15, Part I of *Farther Appeal* was issued in a separate vol. I, and the Lewis had been responding to vol. II (Parts II–IV).

35. This is possibly an abbreviation for '*pro obvio*', meaning 'to make it explicit or obvious'.

36. Wesley, *Farther Appeal*, Part III, III.30, *Works*, XI:312.

are knit together in one necessarily implies a due subordination of inferiors to superiors. I am not conscious of any bitterness towards my brethren, though I use great plainness of speech. But I never condemn them indiscriminately. And I could on some say abundantly more than I do. I do indeed make a question concerning some of these whether any of their people are alive to God, though I dare not determine it in the negative. I leave their souls to him that made them.

I come now to consider your main objection, which you most largely and strongly insist upon, that if I am really sent of God I have exceeded my commission. You seem inclined to believe that I ought (as I am able) to witness against deism and Socinianism, against them who either reject the whole religion of Christ or at least disallow the atonement made for sin by his sufferings, and who place the main of religion in the observance of moral duties. You think I may be designed to remonstrate against this growing infidelity, and to call people to a due acknowledgment of that faith and that mediation through which alone they can be saved. But still it should have been done ^[1]with a due regard to your spiritual governors and no encouragement given to the laity to invade the ministerial office^[2].

I know you desire I should speak freely. I trust I have not exceeded my commission. I believe I ought to witness not only against the open bare-faced deism or Socinianism of those who stand in high places but against every approach thereto, whether in high or low, rich or poor. It appears to me that I cannot refrain without destroying my own soul from witnessing against all those who either explicitly reject the religion of Christ, or the atonement made by his blood, or implicitly do the same thing, whether by living in open sin or by seeking to establish their own righteousness as the ground of their reconciliation with God.

I apprehend myself equally to remonstrate against the growing infidelity of open deists, of open sinners, and of those who place their own works in the room of the blood of the covenant, which seems to me to be full as dangerous a species of unbelief as the placing the main of religion in the observance of moral duties. In opposition to all these fatal and still increasing mistakes I would fain call people to an acknowledgment of that faith and that mediation through which alone they can be saved.

But what people should I call? One great question lays here. People of my own, strictly speaking, I have none; so that I must call either those that are in the parishes of other men or I must never open my lips. For a time I did this at the request or by the consent of several ministers. But when they began to look upon me as a beast of prey, and to drive me out from among them, I began to call unbelievers to a living holy faith wherever I had opportunity. Though still with all the regard to my spiritual governors which could consist with my not departing from the work; still without encouraging or allowing laymen to do anything that I conceive to be peculiar to the ministerial office.

Although it is not easy to determine how far the extraordinary situation I am in may justify as meet to require some steps that are not regular, that are not agreeable to those rules which in ordinary cases ought to obtain, you would gladly lend an helping hand to mend an age sunk in vice and infidelity. But you cannot prevail upon yourself to attempt it by *irregular* methods. I know not why you should, having a *regular* sphere wherein you may make full proof of your ministry. But I have not. I have no other choice than this, either not to preach the gospel at all (and that I cannot answer either to God or my own soul) or to preach in an *irregular* manner.

^[4]But is not this inconsistent with that obedience which you owe to his commands? Since in the church some are to govern, others to be governed, and you are among the latter, you are in duty bound to pay obedience to those that have the rule over you.³⁷ I still answer ^[4]I will obey them in all things indifferent, but preaching the Gospel is not so.' You reply ^[4]But who is to be the judge? You or your spiritual governors?^[1] O sir is not this your *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*?³⁸ Who is to be the judge of my conscience? No man living upon earth, no more than the pope of Rome. I call no man rabbi. The last resort must be ever in my own breast. Is not this the grand Protestant principle?

If I implicitly obey any man, or number of men—whatever I am, I am a poor hoodwinked papist still. I would beg you sir whether such an implicit obedience to the governors of the church would not have continued us forever in papal darkness, and have cut off the possibility of a reformation?

37. Here and following Wesley distils Lewis's letter of 4 Feb. 1746.

38. 'First error', or most basic error.

^[4]But England is reformed now!^[2] Is it indeed? Is it so much as reformed from erroneous doctrines? Do not heresy and infidelity of every kind overwhelm our land as a flood? How much are we reformed in practice? O God thy compassions fail not!³⁹

^[4]But still you ought not to encourage laymen to preach. For how shall they preach except they be sent?^[2] I firmly believe they are sent of God. None can do those works except God be with him.

^[4]But is an inward call sufficient for the ministry without an outward? Without episcopal ordination?^[2] In ordinary cases I conceive it is not. In the present case I believe it is sufficient (all circumstances considered)—not for the ministry, but for openly calling sinners to repentance. In the last age as well as this, national sins loudly called for national judgments. And when the decree was gone forth, the land was given into the hands of blood-thirsty and cruel men. These made use of many learned and many unlearned preachers to colour over their dark designs. But it was not even then the preacher, it was the statesmen that overwhelmed the land and overturned the established church.

You add 'Do you consult the peace and unity of the Church [of England] in setting up separate assembly and then by drawing people from their churches?'^[2] I answer: 1) Parochial unity so called I do not understand. I could never in my life find any Scripture proof that a man ought to confine himself to his own parish church when he can profit more at another. 2) We do not assemble at any place in the time of Church service, because we would not withdraw the people therefrom. 3) Those assemblies we do hold we know not to be contrary to any law either of God or man. 4.) What unity, what peace, what order can subsist among the barefaced servants of the devil? Show me a church, a congregation of faithful people, of loving, holy believers in Christ, and I will lay down my life (by the grace of God) to preserve their order, peace, and unity. But are not these mere empty sounds among them that know not God, nor obey the gospel of Jesus Christ?

That two thirds of the clergy whom I have personally known are in fact ^[4]blind leaders of the blind, dumb dogs that cannot bark, priests of Baal^[3]⁴⁰ rather than God, dragging them to hell rather than leading them to heaven, I do now sir, between you and me, seriously

39. Cf. Lam. 3:22.

40. Wesley is echoing Lewis's charge in the 4 Feb. letter.

aver before God. But I have never said this in public; nor, I believe, any of my associates. I dare not. I cannot because I love them, and because I am not convinced it would be for the glory of God.

Shall we call these pastors of the flock? They ought to be, but are not. Is not a pastor one *qui pascit oves*?⁴¹ That act is the foundation of this relative title, which has no place where this is not done. He is therefore no pastor who does not feed the flock, who does not give them their meat in due season, who does not lead them forth in the paths of righteousness, to the Great Shepherd of their souls.

It is sure⁴² those poor sinners against their own souls, who are called pastors but are not, do not preach the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. As neither do they live the gospel. The true way of salvation is not taught in their churches. They cannot teach it, for they know it not. They talk a little in a dull, dead, and superficial way of the outward circumstances of religion, but not of the substance of Christ for and in the heart, of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. So the people perish for lack of knowledge and God requires their blood at the watchmen's hands.

Once more, ^[s]you tell your hearers that they cannot be true Christians but by adhering to your doctrines, and following your way? I have heard this objection an hundred times. But it appears to me the most trifling of all others. Why, does not every preacher do so too? Do not you tell your hearers the same? Namely that they cannot be Christians but by adhering to that which you describe as the Christian doctrine? That they cannot be saved but by walking in that way which you point out as the way of salvation? Most certainly, whether mine be the Christian doctrine or no, I must preach it as such or not at all. I must tell all men they cannot be saved but by walking in that way of salvation which I believe to be such—viz., the way of loving faith renewing the soul in the whole image of God, and making us holy as he that hath called us is holy in all manner of conversation. I am sir,

Your obliged and affectionate brother,

John Wesley

41. 'Who feeds the sheep.'

42. Lewis's initial transcription reads 'It is not sure', but he inadvertently duplicates the line a little later (and strikes it out), this time omitting 'not'. This is clearly the wording that fits Wesley's argument.

The Second Letter to Mr. Westley

Sept. 18, 1747⁴³

Reverend Sir,

I had the favour of yours from St. Ives in Cornwall, near eighteen months after your receipt of mine; and should have returned an answer in less than eighteen days if I had known how to have directed to you. But I considered you was an *individuum vagum*,⁴⁴ continually moving from place to place, and I was afraid my letter, in running to the Land's End, might lose itself before it found you.

I expected after so long silence to have received a full answer to all that I objected, but must say that on reading your letter I found my expectations disappointed. However, I shall now reply to the several heads contained in yours, in the order they lie before me. And though perhaps you will think my language in some places a little harsh, as not suited to your way of thinking, yet as all I aim at is the vindication of the truth of religion, and pointing out some of the errors you are fallen into, I persuade myself you will give me a patient hearing.

[1.] As to the reformation you boasted of in your *Appeal*, and which I told you I could not discern among my neighbours, I still adhere to the same thoughts. All that I know within my own district (and I do not look beyond that) were religiously disposed before they fell into Methodism; and I do not find they understand religion one bit better, or live one jot more Christian lives, than they did before. They are mostly weak women that go after this new way. Only two men in this place are fallen in with them, and those two very silly fellows,⁴⁵ whose heads were well fitted to receive new light, being very dark before, and having no judgment to discern between right and wrong.

But supposing that elsewhere there may be reformations wrought, yet I look upon them all as built upon unsound principles, for such I take yours to be. And if this foundation be laid wrong, the superstructure cannot be firm or lasting. It is an house

43. This is a draft (or transcription of a draft) of the letter Lewis mailed to Wesley, dated 'Oct. 5, 1747', now found in MARC (MA 1977/610/95). I reproduce the text as found in the notebook, annotating substantive variants in the letter at MARC.

44. 'A wandering individual.'

45. 'Very silly fellows' changed to 'such' in the letter at MARC.

built on the sand, and when it falls it is to be feared they that set up their rest in it will perish in the ruins.⁴⁶

As to the heterodoxy⁴⁷ of your principles, I will speak to that point by and by, and at present only ask you this question: What is that religion good for that has not a proper regard to the great duties of justice, mercy, and charity?

And what can I think of your reformations, when I see some devotees⁴⁸ in your way carry their religion to such a pitch of fanaticism as (like Muggleton in the last age⁴⁹), with great confidence and a seeming self-satisfaction, most uncharitably to denounce damnation against their neighbours (perhaps as righteous as themselves) because they do not herd with them or express a dislike of their ways; and when I see others so far to forget and overlook moral honesty as to run in people's debts and take no care to pay them? Is not this hypocrisy? And will you call that a reformation which only changes a libertine into an hypocrite, or a sober-minded Christian into a fanatic?

2. Your answer to the charge of enthusiasm in your *Appeal* I cannot but still think to be evasive. You endeavour to clear it from that imputation by saying that you was there speaking, not of doctrines, but the practical constituent parts of Methodism. But sir, if I may be allowed to judge by what I read in your *Appeal*, you are there vindicating the new religion you teach both as to doctrine and practice from the charge of enthusiasm. For [on] p. 86, par. 9, where you assert the purity of your religion, these are your words: 'I speak particularly with regard to the doctrines held by us,'⁵⁰ which you go on to show are free from superstition and enthusiasm. And you challenge us to say that you and yours do not closely adhere to what our church delivers as pure doctrine; or to point out any body of Christians that approve themselves more orthodox, more sound in their opinions. Moreover after you have spoken to the point of enthusiasm you go on to assert that your doctrines are free from bigotry and affirm that the Methodists are in no wise bigoted

46. Cf. Matt. 7:24–7.

47. 'Heterodoxy' changed to 'unsoundness' in the letter at MARC.

48. 'Devotees' changed to 'zealots' in the letter at MARC.

49. Lodowicke Muggleton (1609–98). Muggleton and an associate, claiming to be the 'two witnesses' in Rev. 11:3, gathered followers of their new revelation, while condemning in the strongest terms competing groups like the Quakers.

50. Wesley, *Farther Appeal*, Part III, I.9, *Works*, XI:277.

to opinions, but do indeed hold right *opinions*.⁵¹ So that it is very evident your business in that paragraph which I pointed at was to vindicate the set of doctrines peculiar to the Methodists, and by which they stand distinguished from all other sects as free from enthusiasm.

And is not your answer then evasive when you shift the point in question, and ask whether there be any enthusiasm in the love of God, etc.? Was ever any objection of this kind made to those practical duties? Did ever any person say that there was any enthusiasm in the pure love of God or our neighbour? You know that censure was laid on the pretended revelations and seraphical flights in yours and Mr. Whitefield's *Journals*, and on the ecstatic fits and fancied impulses, feelings, and visions of some of your followers, all of which have certainly a strong tincture of enthusiasm. And as to speculative points, that censure was likewise passed on the Methodist doctrines of an imaginary new birth, an imaginary new faith, and an imaginary assurance—in all which, on the closest inspection I can make into them, I think there is enthusiasm in a very high degree. For as those doctrines (as held by you) have no real foundation in Scripture, but dwell only in the imagination, so being taught and maintained as divine doctrines and gospel truths without ground, I cannot see how you can clear them from the charge of enthusiastic fancies.

For what is enthusiasm when applied to teachers and doctrines but the asserting things for divine truths upon a strong but false imagination that they are such? If then those doctrines of yours abovementioned are unscriptural, and yet preached up by you and received by your hearers for gospel truths, Methodism will still be obnoxious to the charge of enthusiasm. And if you make the observation, I dare say you will find that these novel doctrines are most readily imbibed by persons of a natural or complexional enthusiasm; i.e., people of strong imaginations and weak judgments.

3. You own schism to be a causeless separation from the church of Christ; but that to divide and separate from a particular national church does not come under the notion of schism. But sir, how can you be in union with the catholic church of Christ but by being in union with some branch of it, or some national church, and particularly with that within the verge or pale of which providence has

51. Ibid. I.11, *Works*, XI:278. This entire sentence is omitted in the letter at MARC.

cast your lot? But you are not in union with such a national church, nor consequently with the catholic church unless you live in due subjection to your spiritual rulers, and in unity and concord with your Christian brethren, and submit to the authority and discipline of that church.

I do not indeed charge you with direct schism because you have not completed your separation by setting up altar against altar. But by your forming distinct religious societies, holding separate assemblies, forsaking episcopacy, and setting up laymen to be public teachers, I think you have gone a great step towards it. And nothing remains now but for some of your preachers to take upon them to administer the sacrament, which I am very inclinable to believe they will shortly do, as the French prophets⁵² heretofore did, and then the schism will be complete.

4. When I said in my letter that God might have raised you up, I did not allow that he had authorized or commissioned you to do what you have done. I only supposed that in his wise providence he had permitted this new spirit to arise and pass through the land, to remonstrate against the wickedness of the age, against deism and infidelity, and against the remissness of church discipline, and of the pastoral care. But you know God does not approve of all he permits. He makes use of the sins and follies of men to good ends. And perhaps enthusiasm is now suffered to arise and increase when formality and deadness in religion too much abound. In like manner the spirit of Quakerism sprung up about a hundred years ago with the divine permission, probably with design to witness against common swearing and perjury, equivocation in trade, pride and superfluity in clothes, vain compliments and flattering titles, etc., then grown too much in vogue. And I am apt to think that all the dissenting sects, along with their manifold errors, carry something in them of truth to upbraid the members of the Church [of England] of what they are defective and blameworthy in. I mean not as to doctrine but as to practice. And I am of opinion that if we would reform and amend what they seem to tell us is amiss, they would all soon disappear and drop like meteors, that make a blaze awhile and are extinguished.

52. A small group of French Protestant emigrants in London in the early eighteenth century, led by Elie Marion, who claimed prophetic gifts of the Holy Spirit. See Hillel Schwartz, *French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

If you think that God has raised you up to witness against the deism and infidelity of the present age, give me leave to ask you one question on that head, viz: Among the multitudes that you say you have reclaimed from vice and ungodliness is there any one infidel brought over to the Christian faith? There is no reformation that I can hear of wrought on that side, whereas your scheme is certainly calculated for the conversion of unbelievers and not for the reforming of such as profess the faith of Christ. For you seem to suppose us all destitute of faith, and under a necessity of being new born in order to salvation, and you do not distinguish between the state of the world at the first publication of the gospel and the present state of the Christian church which has been a means to lead you into all your errors.

5. You seem to think that, not having a cure and flock of your own, you are authorized, or at least at liberty, to invade the province of others and to gather a flock out of other men's folds. This cannot be right in the church of God, because if generally practised (as it may be with the same reason) it must introduce strife, confusion, disunion, and every evil work. If you had no cure of your own wherein to exercise your ministry, you should with leave of the diocesan have served a cure for some other clergyman, and waited with patience till providence had opened a way for you, which without all question it would long ago have done. But you was impatient and would not wait God's leisure, as I think you ought to have done, and so you burst the door open, and would break into the fold of Christ by extra-regular ways.

And I cannot help making this observation on what you have done, that one error treads upon the heels of another, and by this first false step you have been led to propagate unscriptural fancies for gospel truths, to break down the pale of episcopal ordination, and on your own head let in a set of illiterate persons to exercise the ministerial office without a lawful call. What the consequence of this may be, God only knows. But when such numerous detachments of these uncommissioned officers swarm throughout the kingdom, and with great zeal labour to gather congregations and fill people's heads with new fangles in religion, what can we expect but blind zeal and religious frenzy—which when overheated may produce the most fatal effects, even though there be no actors behind the scenes to use them as tools and engines for accomplishing their own designs. Those that are sent out by you may

perhaps keep themselves within some tolerable decency, and hold to your plan as long as you live and preside over them; but what may they not do when you are gone? And what may be done by those many others who set up of their own heads, some of whom teach strange doctrines and broach dangerous opinions. Whatever mischief it may occasion, I think the blame will rest with you, and your brother, and Mr. Whitefield. For you opened the sluice. And however fair the pretences for doing it may seem to you, you must be answerable in some degree for the inundation of evils, that shall thence afterwards follow.

6. When I said, in the words of an apostle of Christ, that you was in duty bound to pay obedience to those that have the rule over you, and you tried to evade the force of that injunction by saying that you would obey them in all things indifferent but preaching the gospel is not so, then I ask: Who is to be judge, you or your spiritual governors? And you cry out this is my *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*;⁵³ no man is to be judge of your conscience. Do not you see a fallacy in this way of reasoning? The apostolical injunction is plain, and not to be overruled by any sophistry—viz., that you are to obey your spiritual governors. The only question is, how far you are to obey them. Is not obedience due to such governors in all things except where by obeying them you shall disobey an express law of Jesus Christ? But where is that law in the book of God which you shall disobey if you forbear preaching, and comply as others do to the established rules and canons of the church of which you are a member?

Supposing the case doubtful, I still ask who is to be judge how far the obligation of the law reaches? The governor or the governed? The legislator or the subject? If the latter, then the force of any law may be eluded and interpreted away; then laws are but words, and words but wind, etc.; and good and evil, duty and sin, will be the most precarious things in the world and vary as men's opinions do. Besides sir, if you may act in this manner, every other minister may do the same. And if private persons may thus make themselves judges in matters of public cognizance, and practice upon their own judgment contrary to the established laws, then farewell all law, rule, or order, decency, or discipline in the church. All will be governors and then it will be nothing but misrule and

53. 'First error.'

confusion. And if such doings were allowable no society, sacred or civil, could subsist.

Remember sir, the only authority you have for preaching the gospel was conveyed to you by these your governors. And when they gave you this authority it was under this express restriction, that you should exercise that power of preaching God's word to the congregation where you should be lawfully appointed thereunto.⁵⁴ If then you take upon you to exercise your ministry in direct contradiction to this limitation, and there is no law of Jesus Christ that enjoins you (in the circumstances you are in) to preach his gospel, what are you doing every day you preach but breaking an express law of God under a false persuasion that you shall sin if you forbear preaching?

In short, God's law is the rule of conscience and that expressly enjoins you to obey your governors. The only question then is: What law of God you shall transgress by forbearing the exercise of your ministry? Unless you can produce some express command from the sacred text that requires you to preach the gospel independent of those human laws, you as a subject ought to obey. Your preaching must be a thing indifferent and consequently you ought to be guided and directed therein by your spiritual governors to whom by the apostolic injunction your obedience as well as mine is due. To call this an implicit obedience is giving it a very unfair turn.⁵⁵ For both the divine and human law are explicit and clear. And as these are the rule by which your conscience is to be guided, so your obedience cannot be blind and implicit. For the general commands to obey are very plain; and if the command to disobey, in the particular instance under consideration, be not equally plain and positive, I do not see how it can possibly justify your disobedience.

7. As to the peace and unity of the Church [of England], it is too evident that you do not consult it, as a presbyter of the Church should, when you refuse subjection to its governors, break decent order, and uphold irregular assemblies, whereby people are drawn from their own parish churches; and when you throw such odious aspersions on the Church clergy, and tell your hearers that we

54. 'Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy Sacraments in the congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto' (1662 Book of Common Prayer service for 'The Form and Manner of Ordering of Priests').

55. 'Very unfair turn' changed to 'wrong name' in the letter at MARC.

do not teach the true gospel of Christ; and moreover when you invade other men's provinces, and gather congregations out of their folds, and encourage unlearned mechanics to usurp the ministerial office. All these measures plainly tend to introduce strife, envy, dissension, and numberless other mischiefs inconsistent with the peace and unity of the Church.

8. As to your lay preachers, it is absolutely an indefensible point, and the necessity you allege for it does not appear. But the mischiefs that flow from it are already too apparent, and will every day, I doubt, grow worse and worse.

9. I should be very sorry if all you say of the parochial clergy be true. But I consider it is a good plea to justify your own measures, and therefore I am willing to believe that the account you give is not quite impartial, nor exactly true. However if what you say was true in fact, though it might be allowable to insert it in a private letter, yet I think in prudence and Christian charity you should not have published it so openly to the world as you have done in your *Appeals*, when no good could come from such a publication, but much harm.

10. As to the last head, wherein you reply to the objection that you confine Christianity to your own party, and say that none can be true Christians who do not adhere to your doctrines, etc. You say you have heard this objection a hundred times. Methinks that should have put you upon a close examination of your doctrines, whether they are perfectly agreeable to the Word of God or not. But you look upon it as too trifling a censure to be regarded, because you say every clergyman does the same. But surely, there is some difference between preaching a set of peculiar⁵⁶ doctrines of private invention, and preaching doctrines established by the authority of the Church as consonant to, and plainly deduced from the Word of God, and supported by the judgment and practice of the primitive fathers in the first and purest ages.

But do you really think none can be saved but those that come into your way, and pass your new birth in the manner you describe it, and feel your new faith produced in them by a new creation? Then let me ask you one question. Are the doctrines you preach the same which are taught in the Church [of England] or not? If they are (as in some of your writings you would persuade us they be),

56. 'Peculiar' changed to 'new' in the letter at MARC.

then the gospel of Christ and the true way of salvation is taught by the Church-clergy as well as by you and your partisans. If they are not the same, then you have a scheme of religious principles, which you call the gospel of Christ, peculiar to yourselves; and then all the members of the Church who do not embrace your doctrines and put in practice your rules are by your assertion excluded from salvation. For if we are not true Christians who do not fall in with your plan, we can have no interest in Christ nor salvation by him. And then surely it concerns us to examine well your principles and see upon what grounds you lay down so uncharitable a position.

In casting my eye on your last *Appeal* after I had sent you my thoughts upon it, I was much alarmed by reading what you say towards the end of your book, where you speak of your being engaged in the work of God with as much confidence as if you had a commission under the broad seal of heaven in your pocket.⁵⁷ And you seem to be astonished that we do not all fall readily in with your scheme and design; judge us inexcusable, stupid, and infatuated; and almost denounce an anathema against us for rejecting and opposing, or even not encouraging your measures. This put me upon examining your doctrines, which I have done with a sincere desire and endeavour to discover the truth. And I take the freedom with all sincerity to tell you that upon comparing them with the Rule of Truth, I believe them in general, from first to last, to be erroneous—excepting where you say that everything that is good in us proceeds from the operation of the Spirit of God, and that there is no final justification without holiness and good works.

You will smile to hear this, I suppose, and pity my ignorance. But let the error rest where it ought. What I here say has no regard at all to the practical duties of the love of God and our neighbour, of inward piety and outward holiness of life, wherein you would place the essence of Methodism. These are quite out of the question, being taught in the Church by the lawful pastors, and pressed with as much earnestness as you or yours can do it, and all upon sound principles. These therefore are no part of Methodism, strictly speaking, or considered as a distinct sect.

They are the speculative points of a new birth, new faith, etc., which have an influence on practice, that I here condemn. But

57. See, for example, Wesley, *Farther Appeal*, Part III, III.33, *Works*, XI:314–15; and IV.9–18, *Works*, XI:320–5.

I should much exceed the bounds of a letter to expatiate on these heads as I might, and therefore will only just give you a hint where I think your *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*⁵⁸ lies.

I first lay it down as a truth that in Scripture there is no new birth but the baptismal, nor is there any justification spoken of by St. Paul but the baptismal and the final. And I think it is evident beyond all contradiction that the justification by faith asserted by that apostle is no other than the baptismal, when adult converts were, on embracing Christianity and declaring their faith in Christ, received into covenant with God and into the membership⁵⁹ of Christ's church by baptism; and then⁶⁰ were justified from all their past sins⁶¹ by faith alone in that mediator whose religion they became converts to.⁶² But you misapply all that the Scripture says of the new birth in baptism to a new birth subsequent to baptism. And what the Scripture saith of justification by faith in baptism, you misapply to a justification by faith after baptism; whereas it is very certain that all justification after baptism depends on our fulfilling or not fulfilling the terms of the covenant we then enter into.

You may think perhaps our case differs very much from that of the adult converts in the Apostles' days, who could make an explicit declaration of their faith in Christ by which they were justified. But I think that alters the case very little. For as we are in our baptism in infancy regenerate by the Holy Ghost and admitted into covenant with God (as the Jewish children were in circumcision) on the faith of our parents, and on the declaration we make both of faith and future obedience by the mouth of our sponsors, we are thereby savingly born both of water and of the Spirit and consequently put into a justified state.

As to your definition, or rather description, of the new faith which you imagine to be produced and perfected in an instant after baptism, and on which as a foundation all your religion rests, I cannot find it in the New Testament. It is quite unscriptural, and was never heard of in the church of Christ for fifteen hundred years. I am told it was coined at Geneva by J[ohn] Calvin, and thence

58. 'First error.'

59. 'Membership' changed to 'communion' in the letter at MARC.

60. 'Upon their repentance' added after 'then' in the letter at MARC.

61. 'How wicked soever they had been' added after 'sins' in the letter at MARC.

62. 'And this I take to be the sense of our Church in her Articles and Homilies' added as an additional sentence in the letter at MARC.

brought hither by our English divines who fled thither from Queen Mary's persecution. And I admire how you come to lay such stress upon it when it has no foundation in the book of God.

I hope you will weigh and consider these hints with an unbi-ased mind, and not reject them till you have thoroughly examined them. And believe me to be,

Your affectionate brother and humble servant,

John Lewis⁶³

Some time after this epistolary correspondence ended, one of Mr. Westley's disciples brought me two books,⁶⁴ desiring me to read them and hoping they would give me a better opinion of the Methodist religion. With reluctance, after much pressing, I took the books and having cursorily looked them over returned them with the following remarks.

One was Mr. Westley's answer to a book entitled *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*; which, if written by Mr. John Westley, is one of the worst performances that I have seen to bear his name.⁶⁵

If the Bishop of Exeter (as is generally believed) was the author of that book, Mr. Westley does not treat him with common decency but in a scurrilous abusive manner, very unbecoming a clergyman towards a governor of the church. [On] p. 36 of his tract he insinuates that the bishop has no regard to truth, but with him truth must always give way to wit;⁶⁶ that by comparing Methodists with papists he blasphemes the great work of God,⁶⁷ viz., in the reformation wrought by the Methodist preachings. And further he tells the bishop it is time

63. The letter at MARC adds a postscript: 'The definition of faith which I tax as unscriptural is that which you give in your *Farther Appeal*, Part I, p. 3, line 24, etc.' Lewis's reference is to Part I, I.4, lines 3–6, *Works*, XI:107: 'a sure trust and confidence that Christ dies for *my* sins, that he "loved *me* and gave himself for *me*". And the moment a penitent sinner believe this, God pardons and absolves him.'

64. The two books mentioned were published by late Feb. 1750. They were likely given to Lewis, and this response penned, prior to Wesley's visit with Lewis in Holt in late Oct. of that year, since there is no indication of the visit in Lewis's remarks.

65. *A Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (1750), *Works*, XI:361–76; replying to *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* [Part I] (London: J. and P. Knapton, 1749), which was indeed published anonymously by George Lavington, bishop of Exeter.

66. See Wesley, *Letter*, §30, *Works*, XI:372.

67. *Ibid.* §33, *Works*, XI:375.

for him to leave his skulking place,⁶⁸ and intimates what an inconsiderable creature he will appear when he puts off his fool's coat.

But Mr. Westley does not clear himself or his new sect from the charge of enthusiasm, which I think is made good against them in many flagrant and notorious instances. For the bishop's book plainly shows that the Methodists and popish saints very much resemble one another in various particulars. They both alike condemn fine clothes and recreations of every kind and degree. Both alike talk of the pangs of the new birth, of dereliction, of despairings and combats with Satan. Both alike assert a new created faith, and that the new birth or conversion of a sinner is in an instant. He shows likewise that the Methodists and popish enthusiasts do assert an absolute assurance of forgiveness and salvation, and lay claim to perfection and an unsinning state. How they both alike boast of inspiration, revelations, illuminations, and special presences of God, of Christ appearing among them and familiar conversation with him. They both alike lay presumptuous claims to inspiration of the Holy Ghost in their preaching and doctrine to special directions from God, internal voices and calls by immediate revelation. And the writings both of Methodists and Papists abound with seraphic rhapsodies of divine love. And in a multitude of other instances the bishop shows a great resemblance between our modern enthusiasts and those of the Church of Rome.

The other book recommended to my perusal was a volume of Mr. Westley[s] sermons on our Lord's Sermon on the Mount,⁶⁹ in which he has vented many unscriptural doctrines in the way of Methodism, concerning faith, justification, a new birth, and assurance. But I shall here make only one remark on his twelfth discourse, in which he has cast very uncharitable and scandalous aspersions on the Church [of England] clergy, whom he reproaches with great virulence and bitterness of expression as blind guides, false prophets, traitors to God and man, the first-born of Satan, and murderers of souls, as leading their people to hell and to be damned themselves. They are his own words, and that he means the Church [of England] clergy seems evident from p. 44, secs. 3, 4, 5, etc.,⁷⁰ and from his numbering them at ten thousand,⁷¹ which is the main body of the English clergy.

On the other hand he there and elsewhere magnifies the success of his own preaching and the goodness of his followers in a fulsome manner and compli-

68. Ibid.

69. See Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions*, vol. III (London: Strahan, 1750).

70. See Wesley, Sermon 32, 'Sermon on the Mount, XII' (on Matt. 7:15-20), II:3-5, *Works*, I:679.

71. Ibid. I:7, *Works*, I:678.

ments the Methodist preachers as true prophets and teachers sent from God; but warns the people to beware of the Church ministers, for they only destroy and devour the flock and neither can nor will lead them to heaven, and to beware of their doctrine for that they preach lies. But does not Mr. Westley in these severe censures on his brethren the clergy betray a very unchristian and uncharitable spirit? I wish both he and his followers (who freely denounce damnation on such as do not herd with them) would seriously consider what the Apostle teaches in the 13th chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians and the church in her collect for Quinquagesima Sunday⁷²—viz., that all our doings without charity are nothing worth, that it is the bond of peace and of all virtues, and without it whosoever liveth is counted dead before God.

J. L.

72. The final Sunday before the beginning of Lent.