

# Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

## Documents Online

**Title:** Testimony of Charles Nisbet against John Wesley

**Date:** August 7, 1770

**Location:** I-TurnbullM-undated-3

### Contact:

Archives & Special Collections  
Waidner-Spahr Library  
Dickinson College  
P.O. Box 1773  
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

[archives@dickinson.edu](mailto:archives@dickinson.edu)

Testimony against the Doctrines contained in an Extract from the Minutes of some  
late Conversations between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and others at a public Conference, held in  
London, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1770, & printed by W. Pine, Bristol.

If there was any thing new in Mr. Wesley's Doctrines, or any thing that had not been answer-  
ed an hundred Times over by able Protestant Divines, they might deserve a long Discussion & Exam-  
ination: But as the Matter of them is so very old & true, & has been so much the Subject of Disputation  
since the Time of Pelagius, it seems impossible at this Day to say any thing new about them. The crude,  
blundering Manner, in which they are express'd, which an Arminian of the lowest form would have  
disdain'd, however favourable it may be to their Reception among ignorant People, is enough to convince  
every Person of Understanding, that Mr. Wesley's Mental Powers, as well as his Orthodoxy, are greatly  
upon the Decline. The only Matter in Debate is this, Whether sinful Men are justified before God, on  
account of any Works or Merits of their own, or solely on account of the Righteousness of Jesus Christ; or in  
other Words, Whether fallen Men can do any thing of themselves that will merit the favour of God & Eternal  
Happiness, or must wholly rely on Christ's Obedience & sufferings for that Effect? - That the latter of these is  
taught by all Protestant Churches, except the Socinians & Arminians (if they can be call'd Protestants) is evi-  
dent from their public Confessions in every one's hands. To oppose to these the Opinions & Doctrines of some  
individual Members of these Societies, may be sufficient to prove the Insincerity of such Divines, in their  
descriptions, but can by no means prove that such Doctrines as Mr. Wesley's are owned by any Protestants  
whosoever. - That Gentleman therefore should now openly confess that in this Article he holds with the Coun-  
cil of Trent, against the concurring Testimony of all Protestant Divines: and indeed his 6<sup>th</sup> Position in the  
Minutes of his late Conference falls little short of such a Confession: - But to say something on each of his Doct-  
rines, in the Order he has set them down;

He says, 1. That he & his Brethren had leaned too much toward Calvinism, with regard to Man's faith-  
fulness. What Calvinism really is, as it contains the Doctrines of a Man who has writ nine Volumes in folio, can  
not be express'd on few Words. But it is plain that by Calvinism Mr. Wesley here means the Doctrine taught  
in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> Articles of the Church of England, by which he says, tho' very confusedly, in  
Opposition to it, Man's faithfulness is, <sup>is</sup> an Expression to signify his state of Mind, that I believe this is the first time  
it was ever us'd for that Purpose. That Man in his natural State is faithful, or obedient to God, can not be pretended by  
any one that believes the fall of Man. That man is naturally faithful or sincere, is contrary to our Lord's Testimony  
out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, - - false witness, blasphemies. But it seems there is a Man's faithfulness which is de-  
nied by the Calvinists, & asserted by Mr. Wesley: and in spite of the Obscurity of his Language, this appears to be no other  
than Man's Obedience to save himself, or to do something whereby he may merit the favour of God, which he chuses to express in these  
strange Words: How contrary such an Assertion is to the holy scriptures, which describe Man in his natural State as dead in sin, and  
prone to all evil, is evident at first Sight. Mr. Wesley seems to contend for Man's faithfulness, only as a warrantable Expression, which  
our Lord has taught us, but upon that single Expression, detached from the rest of Holy Writ, he endeavours to build a System  
contrary to what the Holy Spirit has plainly declared in innumerable Passages of Scripture. Our Lord has not taught  
us to say that Man in his natural State is, or can be faithful, or obedient to God, but in judging of Man's Characters  
he

he has taught us that if a Man be not faithful & honest in the unrighteous Mammon, we ought not to think that God has given him the true riches. It is really amazing that Mr Wesley should put a Man's Justification upon the Condition of his faithfulness in the unrighteous Mammon; so great Sums of Silver and unrighteous Mammon come annually into his hands from ~~various Parts of England~~ <sup>various Parts of England</sup>, to which a great Part of the World here these Sums are disposed of, which must put Mr Wesley's Salvation in a very doubtful Point of View, according to his own System.

2d. With regard to working for life. - Here the language is confused, ambiguous, & unnecessarily obscure. If Mr Wesley means that our Lord has commanded us to work for life, in the Persuasion that our works will merit or purchase

salvation, he is certainly wrong; for our Lord has said that he that is faithful and honest in the unrighteous Mammon, will bring forth much more increase than he that is not. It is therefore evident that our Lord does not require us to work for life, in the Persuasion that our works will merit or purchase salvation.

3d. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of Justification. - In this Particular he is extremely obscure and ambiguous. He says that we are justified by Faith alone, and that Faith is a Gift of God. He also says that we are justified by the Grace of God, which is another way of saying the same thing.

4th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of Sanctification. - He says that we are sanctified by the Grace of God, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that we are sanctified by the Blood of Christ, which is another way of saying the same thing.

5th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of Predestination. - He says that we are predestinated to eternal Life, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that we are predestinated to eternal Damnation, which is another way of saying the same thing.

6th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of the Church. - He says that the Church is a Society of Believers, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that the Church is a Body of Believers, which is another way of saying the same thing.

7th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of the Kingdom of God. - He says that the Kingdom of God is within us, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that the Kingdom of God is without us, which is another way of saying the same thing.

8th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of the Resurrection. - He says that we shall rise again, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that we shall be raised up, which is another way of saying the same thing.

9th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of the Last Day. - He says that we shall be judged, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that we shall be rewarded, which is another way of saying the same thing.

10th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of the Millennium. - He says that Christ shall reign a Thousand Years, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that Christ shall reign forever, which is another way of saying the same thing.

11th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of the Final Judgment. - He says that we shall be judged at the Last Day, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that we shall be rewarded at the Last Day, which is another way of saying the same thing.

12th. Mr Wesley's Doctrine of the New Heaven and New Earth. - He says that the New Heaven and New Earth shall be created, which is another way of saying the same thing. He also says that the New Heaven and New Earth shall be inhabited, which is another way of saying the same thing.

Testimony against the Doctrines contained in an Extract from the Minutes of some late Conversation between the Rev.<sup>d</sup> Mr. Wesley & others, at a public Conference, held in London, August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1770, & printed by W. Pine, Bristol.

If there was any thing new in Mr. Wesley's Doctrines, or any thing that had not been answered an hundred Times over by able Protestant Divines, they might deserve a long Discussion & Examination: But as the Matter of them is so very old & trite, & has been so much the Subject of Disputation since the Time of Pelagius, it seems impossible at this Day to say any thing new about them. The crude, blundering Manner, in which they are express'd, which an Arminian of the lowest form would have however favourable it may be to their Reception among ignorant People, is enough to convince every Person of Understanding, that Mr. Wesley's Mental Powers, as well as his Orthodoxy, are greatly upon the Decline. The only Matter in Debate is this, Whether sinful Men are justified before God, on Account of any Works or Merits of their own, or solely on Account of the Righteousness of Jesus Christ; or in other Words, Whether fallen Men can do any thing of themselves that will merit the favour of God & Eternal Happiness, or must wholly rely on Christ's Obedience & Sufferings for that Effect? - That the latter of these is taught by all Protestant Churches, except the Socinians & Arminians (if they can be called Protestants) is evident from their public Confessions in every one's hands. To oppose to these the Opinions & Doctrines of some individual Members of these Societies, may be sufficient to prove the Insincerity of such Divines in gtorn, Scriptures, but can by no means prove that such Doctrines as Mr. Wesley's are owned by any Protestant Church whatsoever. - That Gentleman therefore should now openly confess that in this Article he holds with the Council of Trent, against the concurring Testimony of all Protestant Divines; And indeed his 6<sup>th</sup> Position in the Minutes of his late Conference falls little short of such a Confession - But to say something on

each of his Doctrines, in the Order he has set them down,

He says, 1. That he & his Brethren had leaned too much toward Calvinism, with regard to Man's faithfulness. What Calvinism really is, as it contains the Doctrines of a Man who has wrote nine Volumes in folio, can not be express'd in few Words. But it is plain that by Calvinism Mr. Wesley here means the Doctrine taught in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, & 13<sup>th</sup> Articles of the Church of England, by what he says, tho' very confusedly, in Opposition to it. Man's faithfulness is so old an Expression to signify his State of Mind, that I believe this is the first time it was ever used for that Purpose. That Man in his natural State is faithful, or obedient to God, can not be pretended by any one that believes the fall of Man. That man is naturally faithful or sincere, is contrary to our Lord's Testimony out of the heart proceed evil thoughts,---false Witnesses, & Blasphemies. But it seems there is a Man's faithfulness which is denied by the Calvinists, & asserted by Mr. Wesley: And in spite of the Obscurity of his Language, this appears to be no other than Man's Power to save himself, or to do something whereby he may merit the favour of God, which he chuses to express in these strange Words. How contrary such an Assertion is to the holy Scriptures, which describe Man in his natural State as dead in Sin, and prone to all evil, is evident at first Sight. Mr. Wesley seems to contend for Man's faithfulness, only as a warrantable Expression, which our Lord has taught us, but upon that single Expression, detached from the rest of Holy Writ, he endeavours to build a System contrary to what the Holy Ghost has plainly declared in innumerable Passages of Scripture. Our Lord has not taught us to say what Man in his natural State is, or can be faithful, or obedient to God, but in judging of Men's Characters he has taught us that if a Man be not faithful or honest in the unrighteous Manner, we ought not to think that God has given him the true Riches. It is really amazing that Mr. Wesley should put a Man's justification upon the Condition of his faithfulness in the unrighteous Mammon, as great sums of the

said unrighteous Mammon come annually into his hands from many Parts of England, & it is yet a Secret to the World how these Sums are disposed of, which must put Mr. Wesley's Salvation in a very doubtful point of View, according to his own System.

2<sup>d</sup> With regard to working for life. - Here the language is confused, ambiguous, & unnecessarily concise. If Mr. Wesley means that our Lord has commanded us to work for Life, in the Persuasion that our works will merit or purchase