

Rev. John Wesley was a famous travelling preacher. He was part of the Church of England but started a new movement called Methodism. He is normally considered a very honest person. He also set up schools for the poor and orphanages, and conducted early scientific research into medicine. For a number of years he was also a lecturer at Oxford University.

254

John Wesley's Journal

(Aug. 1746.)

Fri. 29.—^{I = Wesley} I talked largely with S[arah] F[arley], and took from her the following account :

On Saturday, July 16, 1743, S— T—, then about ten years and three quarters old, waked in perfect health. She had never had any fits of any kind, nor any considerable sickness. About six in the morning she was rising, and inwardly praying to God, when, on a sudden, she was seized with a violent trembling. Quickly after she lost her speech, in a few minutes her hearing, then her sight, and at the same time all sense and motion.

Her mother immediately sent for Mrs. Designe,¹ to whom she then went to school. At the same time her father sent for Mr. Smith, apothecary, who lived near. At first he proposed bleeding her immediately, and applying a large blister ; but upon examining her farther, he said, ' It signifies nothing, for the child is dead.' = further

About twelve o'clock she began to stir ; then she opened her eyes, and gave the following account :

' As soon as I lost my senses, I was in a dismal place, full of briars, and pits, and ditches ; stumbling up and down, and not knowing where to turn, or which way to get either forward or backward ; and it was almost quite dark, there being but a little faint twilight, so that I could scarce see before me. I was crying, ready to break my heart ; and a man came to me and said, " Child, where are you going ? " I said I could not tell. He said, " What do you want ? " I answered, " I want Christ to be my refuge." He said, " What is your name ? " And I told him ; but I did not tell him S— T—. I told him a name which I never heard before. He said, " You are the child for whom I am sent ; you are to go with me." I saw it grew lighter as he spoke. We walked together, till we came to a stile. He went over, and bid me stay a little. I stayed about half a quarter of an hour, and then I observed his clothes. They reached down to his feet, and were shining, and white as snow. a type of gate

' Then he came back, and kneeled down and prayed. You never heard such a prayer in your life. Afterwards he said, " Come with me." I went over the stile, and it was quite light. He brought me through a narrow lane, into a vast broad road, and told me, " This leads to hell ; but be not afraid ; you are not to stay there." At the end of that road a man stood, clothed like the other, in white, shining clothes, which reached down to the ground. None could pass in or out without his knowledge ; but he had not the key. The man that was with me carried the key, and unlocked the door, and we went in together.

' For a little way we walked straight forward ; then, turning to the

¹ An early and for many years a prominent Methodist at Kingswood and Bristol.

sulphur

left hand, we went down a very high, steep hill. I could scarce bear the stench and smoke of brimstone. I saw a vast many people, that seemed to be chained down, crying and gnashing their teeth. The man told me the sins they delighted in once they are tormented with now. I saw a vast number who stood up cursing and blaspheming God, and spitting at each other; and many were making balls of fire, and throwing them at one another. I saw many others, who had cups of fire, out of which they were drinking down flames; and others, who held cards of fire in their hands, and seemed to be playing with them.

'We stayed here, I thought, about half an hour. Then my guide said, "Come; I will show you now a glorious place." I walked with him till we came into a narrow road, in which we could hardly walk abreast. This brought us into a great broad place; and I saw the gate of heaven, which stood wide open; but it was so bright I could not look at it long. We went straight in, and walked through a large place, where I saw saints and angels; and through another large place where were abundance more. They were all of one height and stature, and when one prayed, they all prayed; when one sung, they all sung. And they all sung alike, with a smooth, even voice, not one higher or lower than another. *side-by-side*

'We went through this into a third place. There I saw God sitting upon His throne. It was a throne of light, brighter than the sun. I could not fix my eyes upon it. I saw three, but all as one. Our Saviour held a pen in His hand. A great book lay at His right side; another at His left; and a third partly behind Him. In the first He set down the prayers and good works of His people; in the second He set down all the curses and all the evil works of the wicked. I saw that He discerns the whole earth at a glance; and He discerns the whole heavens. At once He beholds earth and heaven with one look.

- Jesus

sees/understands

looks at

'Then our Lord took the first book in His hand, and went and said, "Father, behold the prayers and the works of My people." And He held up His hands and prayed, and interceded to His Father for us. I never heard any voice like that; but I cannot tell how to explain it. And His Father said, "Son, I forgive Thy people; not for their sake, but Thine." Then our Lord wrote it down in the third book, and returned to His throne, rejoicing with the host of heaven.

asked (in prayer)

'It seemed to me as if I stayed here several months; but I never slept all the while. And there was no night; and I saw no sky or sun, but clear light everywhere.

'Then we went back to a large door, which my guide opened; and we walked into pleasant gardens, by brooks and fountains. As we walked, I said I did not see my brother here (who died some time before). He said, "Child, thou canst not know thy brother yet, because thy breath remains in thy body. Thy spirit is to return to the

you
your

earth. Thou must watch and pray; and when thy breath leaves thy body, thou shalt come again hither, and be joined to these, and know every one as before." I said, "When is that to be?" He said, "I know not, nor any angel in heaven; but God alone."

to here

'Then he took me into another pleasant garden, where were all manner of fruits. He told me, "This garden bears fruit always." Here I saw a glorious place, which had large gold letters writ over the door. He bid me read; and I read, "This is a fountain for sin and uncleanness for My people. At what time soever they will return, they shall be cleansed from all their idols." The door stood open, and I looked in, and I saw, as it were, a great cistern full of water, white as milk. We seemed to walk up and down in this garden for some weeks, and he told me what everything meant. I never wanted to eat or drink, nor felt any weariness.

things people worship instead of God

a huge basin

'While we were walking, he said, "Sing." I said, "What shall I sing?" And he said, "Sing praises unto the King of the place." I sung several verses. Then he said, "I must go." I would have fain gone with him; but he said, "Your time is not yet: you have more work to do upon the earth." Immediately he was gone; and I came to myself, and began to speak.'

wanted to

= John Wesley

Her mother told me farther:

further

As soon as ever she recovered her speech, she gave me just the same account; adding, 'I have learned the finest hymn you ever heard in your life.' She then sang three verses, the most solid, awful words which I have ever heard. She continued speaking many awful words, with many sighs and tears, till, about three in the afternoon, she fell into a slumber, which continued till seven. She then spoke the same things to Mrs. Designe; after which she was silent till about five in the morning.

= awesome

She received remission of sins when she was nine years old, and was very watchful from that time. Since this trance she has continued in faith and love, but has been very sickly and weak in body.

forgiveness

SEPT. 1, *Mon.*—I rode with T. Butts¹ to Middlezoy, and preached to a small, earnest congregation. We set out early in the morning, and were thoroughly wet by noon. In the evening we reached Sticklepath.

Wed. 3.—About one o'clock we came to Plymouth.² After

¹ One of Wesley's earliest book-stewards. He frequently travelled with C. Wesley. (*Arm. Mag.* 1779, p. 258; Lightwood's *Hymn Tunes*; also *W.H.S.* vi. 47.)

² Plymouth Methodism began with a class-meeting in 1745. For subsequent history see *Meth. Rec.* Dec. 22, 1904; *W.M. Mag.* 1904, p. 723.