

## Wesley and the Character of a Methodist

1767. Thursday, March 5.--I at length obliged Dr. D. by entering into the lists with him. The letter I wrote (though not published till two or three weeks after) was as follows: "To the Editor of Lloyd's Evening Post. "Sir,--Many times the publisher of the Christian Magazine has attacked me without fear or wit; and hereby he has convinced his impartial readers of one thing at least--that (as the vulgar say) his fingers itch to be at me; that he has a passionate desire to measure swords with me. But I have other work upon my hands: I can employ the short remainder of my life to better purpose. "The occasion of his late attack is this: Five or six and thirty years ago, I much admired the character of a perfect Christian drawn by Clemens Alexandrinus. Five or six and twenty years ago, a thought came into my mind of drawing such a character myself, only in a more scriptural manner and mostly in the very words of Scripture: this I entitled, 'The Character of a Methodist,' believing that curiosity would incite more persons to read it, and also that some prejudice might thereby be removed from candid men. But that none might imagine I intended a panegyric either on myself or my friends, I guarded against this in the very title page, saying both in the name of myself and them, 'Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.' To the same effect I speak in the conclusion, 'These are the same principles and practices of our sect; these are the marks of a true Methodist'; that is, a true Christian, as I immediately after explain myself: 'by these alone do those who are in derision so called desire to be distinguished from other men.' (P. ii.) 'By these marks do we labor to distinguish ourselves from those whose minds or lives are not according to the gospel of Christ.' (P. 12.) "Upon this Rusticulus, or Dr. Dodd, says, 'A Methodist, according to Mr. Wesley, is one who is perfect, and sinneth not in thought, word, or deed.' "Sir, have me excused. This is not 'according to Mr. Wesley.' I have told all the world I am not perfect; and yet you allow me to be a Methodist. I tell you flatly, I have not attained the character I draw. Will you pin it upon me in spite of my teeth? "But Mr. Wesley says, the other Methodists have.' I say no such thing. What I say, after having given a scriptural account of a perfect Christian, is this: 'By these marks the Methodists desire to be distinguished from other men; by these we labor to distinguish ourselves.' And do not you yourself desire and labor after the very same thing? "But you insist, 'Mr. Wesley affirms the Methodists (that is, all Methodists) to be perfectly holy and righteous.' Where do I affirm this? Not in the tract before us. In the front of this I affirm just the contrary; and that I affirm it anywhere else is more than I know. Be pleased, Sir, to point out the place: till this is done, all you add (bitterly enough) is mere brutum fulmen; and the Methodists (so called) may still declare (without any impeachment of their sincerity) that they do not come to the holy table 'trusting in their own righteousness, but in God's manifold and great mercies.' I am, Sir, "Yours, "John Wesley."