

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

John Wesley - Revival and Revolution: From the Publisher

Warm heartfelt thanks to the many of you who have written in response to our "inaugural" issue devoted to Count Zinzendorf and the early Moravian missionary movement.

Requests and inquiries for subscriptions flow in on a daily basis and we regret that final plans for frequency of publication and subscription are still not settled. We hope to reach commitments and decisions on this shortly.

We are already at work on the life on John Wycliffe. This coming issue of ***Christian History*** will commemorate the 600th anniversary of his translation of the Bible into English.

This present issue, devoted to John Wesley, will prompt you to dig into his writings. And what a study is John Wesley! The essence of his message bursts forth from its eighteenth century shell with a contemporary prophetic and evangelistic power. Especially see the sermons in the special foldout section.

In the book ***Lord Vanity*** Samuel Shellabarger (we thank Frederick Maser for this citation) described the impact of Wesley on one of the characters in this novel:

In the churches of Venice and at his Jesuit school, Richard had heard sermons on this theme before, but Wesley had the gift of making it seem both new and ultimate. He spoke with an authority lacking to the urbane, rhetorical Abbati in their lofty pulpits. Why? Because of his own absolute singleness of purpose. It occurred to Richard, that behind Wesley's voice, behind the thoughts he uttered, amplifying and authenticating them, lay the thousands of miles on horseback up and down England, lay the hardships, dangers, courage, poverty, effort, and persecution of the twenty years. Whatever he said was backed by that sanction. His power derived not only from believing but from living his doctrine. It was the power of Paul of Tarsus or Francis of Assisi or Loyola.

Many have been curious as to where we are coming from and what is our purpose. The questions are fair because every communicator or communications presentation has an agenda whether conscious or unconscious.

Christian History is published by Christian History Institute. We have no particular denominational or sectarian position to actively promote. We come from a variety of Christian denominations. Our conviction is that the Lord of history will continue to direct and lead his people to new levels of understanding and obedience in the future as he has in the past. We believe that we are better prepared to discern his leading as we are grounded in our heritage.

So it is not our intention to romanticize the Christian past but to examine it. We will draw upon qualified specialists and scholars and communicate in a way that can be understood by the lay person. We do not seek to contrive any particular response to the historical materials presented but trust that as individuals and groups deal with them they will be moved to see, learn and respond and grow.

Recall the words from the Book of Isaiah 51:1–2

***Hearken to me, you who pursue deliverance, you who seek the Lord;
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
And to the quarry from from which you were digged.***

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John Wesley: Did You Know?

John Wesley *never intended* to form a church separate from the Anglican Church. The separation occurred as a result of his personally ordaining preachers destined for America after the Revolutionary War. "Ordination is separation."

During his ministry John Wesley *rode over 250,000 miles on horseback*, a distance equal to ten circuits of the globe along the equator. He preached *over 40,000 sermons!*

Charles Wesley wrote over 6500 hymns! Many of those hymns are still in hymnals the world over today.

Though not a doctor of medicine, John Wesley invented many cures for diseases he had, wrote a book on medicinal cures for the masses, and started clinics for the poor. If this were not enough to show him interested in medicine, he also *experimented on the effects of electric shock* to treat nervous disorders and treated thousands this way—none had adverse side effects from the treatments!

John Wesley *preached in the open air* to audiences estimated in the tens of thousands after Anglican pulpits were closed to him. Sometimes he began preaching at daybreak or even before daybreak, and regularly he preached three times a day.

Churches, said Wesley, should be built "in the octagonal form" (with eight sides) and the interior should have a *rail in the middle "to divide the men from the women."* There were to be no pews and no backs to the seats!

Benjamin Franklin printed Wesley's sermon "On Free Grace" and several sermons by Wesley's friend and fellow preacher George Whitefield. In turn, *Wesley read everything Franklin wrote on the physics of electricity*, then wrote his own treatise on electricity. The two men never met!

Because of the enormous output of publications designed for the common man, John Wesley has been called "*The Father of the Religious Paperback.*" Sermons, tracts, pamphlets of every kind—numbering around 5000 items came from his pen!

John Wesley was *one of eighteen children*, eight of whom died in infancy.

When John and Charles Wesley founded the "Holy Club" at Oxford in 1729, *not more than five or six members of the House of Commons went to church at all!*

Before John and Charles Wesley went to Georgia as missionaries in 1735, they consulted their mother, who said, "If I had twenty sons, I should rejoice if they were all so employed, *though I should never see them more.*"

When John Wesley had his "heart strangely warmed" on May 24, 1738, he was *already ordained as a minister of the Anglican Church!*

The greatest success of Methodism was not among the rich and “successful” but among the poor, but ironically, ***simple commoners were often the very ones who persecuted*** Wesley and the open air preachers most!

For all the power of his eyes and voice, John Wesley measured ***five-feet-three inches tall and weighed 128 pounds!***

At John Wesley’s death in 1791 his followers numbered 79,000 in England and 40,000 in America, but by 1957 there were 40 million Methodists world-wide!

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John Wesley's Rule for Christian Living

John Wesley

***"Do All the Good You Can,
By All the Means You Can,
In All the Ways You Can,
In All the Places You Can,
At All the Times You Can,
To All the People You Can,
As long as Ever ...
...You Can!"***

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Revival and Revolution

John Wesley grew up in a world of rapid change, very much like ours in some respects and very different in others. The whole way of work was changing in eighteenth-century England. Revolutions in smelting, spinning, and distilling created whole new industries. The world of science was unfolding—the first chemical tables, the first comprehensive biological classification system, the first experiments with the physics of electricity, of photographic materials, and of the steam engine, emerged during Wesley's life.

Meanwhile, the cities collected the debris of society. Poverty, gin, and filthy living conditions in the city contrasted with the refined life of the new city gentry and the new country gentry, with their ample incomes or lands. The gentleman with his fixed income did not worry about work. He bought a military commission or spent his days with good friends and good literature, as did the young James Boswell. Very few Britishers were this fortunate.

When Wesley began his itinerant preaching in the seventeen thirties, there were no railroads, only a few coach lines, a network of notoriously bad dirt roads, no well-marked maps, no restaurants, and only occasional inns. Instead of welfare or any other relief for the poor, the government gave punishment for the crime of poverty—confinement to a work house. Churches helped some of the poor, but they were mainly the domain of the well-to-do. Still, only five or six members of Parliament even went to church!

Personal health and cleanliness were deplorable. The plague, smallpox, and countless diseases we call minor today had no cures. Rodent and insect control was minimal. Most dwellings had no running water, had chamber pots only for elimination, and had no soap as it was not yet in common use. Infant mortality was extremely high, and a person's life expectancy was in the forties. Clothing was expensive, so many of the cities' poor wore rags that were, like their bedding, full of lice. Even though the penalties for crimes today seem barbaric (hanging for petty thievery), no man was safe in the cities or on the highways or even on the high seas.

Imagine a world with no street lights, with no numbers on the doors of homes to tell addresses, with no television, no radio, no telephone, no telegraph, no efficient mail system, no frozen foods or even effective refrigeration, no cars, no vending machines, no electricity, no free libraries, and no aspirin. School of any kind was for the very few; therefore literacy was very rare. Corporal punishment was public—the stocks, the whip, the clipping of ears and nose, worse.

To us today even the terms of apprenticeship seem more like slavery than like work. Young boys and sometimes girls were bound over to a master for seven years of training. They worked six days a week, every day from dawn to dusk and often beyond. Finally they might gain their freedom and set up shop on their own. Or they would journey to work for whatever masters could use them for a while.

Those that migrated to the cities from rural areas neither had the proper skills nor could find many jobs. Perhaps you could sweep streets, run behind a man's carriage, or sell yourself as a lowly servant. Perhaps you might drink with a group of good soldiers and awaken in camp with other forcibly recruited vagabonds, bound for the wars. If you were unlucky and starving, you might fall foul of the law and be packed off to the stench of Newgate Prison. From there you might have the chance to

go to the New World in a boat loaded with prisoners of all sorts. Once you left the countryside, which was closing up, you did not return. Men took to theft, women to prostitution—whatever would feed them.

Samuel Johnson, the great doctor and creator of the great dictionary of English, wrote that if a man is tired of London, "he is tired of life." Yet Johnson himself had to write with fury a book called *Rasselas* to make money to give his mother a decent burial; otherwise she would have been cast in a pauper's grave. Johnson's friend Oliver Goldsmith wrote *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a documentary view of poverty in the rural England of his day. In the city or in the country poverty was the norm.

Views of city and country life with a touch of romance are in *Tom Jones*, by Henry Fielding, and *Roderick Random*, by Tobias Smollett. Fielding was a judge and Smollett was a medical doctor who retired to write and to live off his wealthy wife's fortune. The Rev. Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, was so outraged by the injustice around him that he wrote "A Modest Proposal," which ironically suggested that child abuse and infant mortality were so bad in Ireland that children there should be raised only to be cooked and eaten. Poor Swift died mad and in delirium.

One of the greatest indictments of the age was in William Hogarth's prints about the conditions of life around him. Hogarth's print series warn about promiscuity and idleness and extreme religiosity, particularly that strain of evangelism brought out by George Whitefield, Wesley's friend. *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street* rival, and in some respects surpass, present-day city scenes. One ragged mother in *Gin Lane* is letting her crying baby fall to his death while she, oblivious, seeks her moment's pleasure in a glass of gin. Gin was fed to the babies too, to keep them quiet, with blindness and often death as a result. The people's love of tormenting animals at bull-baitings was equalled only by their delight in a public execution.

If a woman could find work in the slave-trading town of Bristol, Wesley's base of operation, she could look forward to none of the privileges of modern workers. Stifling heat or bitter cold, no breaks, no benefits, no child-care, small wages, and firing for the least provocation were standard fare. Of course, there were no unions. Swearing and physical abuse set the tone of work. There was no variety, there were no vacations, there was no advancement.

If a man was able to find work in one of the coal mining towns (started when the iron works shifted from charcoal to coke), he was thankful to rise at three-thirty AM for breakfast, work in the mine shafts with poor ventilation all day, then creep into bed at nightfall to begin again the next day. On Sunday he was too dirty and too poor to find comfort in a church, and he was likely to be turned away by an Anglican beadle if he tried. He lived in a warehouse-like building in the same enormous room with other mining families and had no privacy. Yet he bred many children, and those who lived went back to work in the mines when they were old enough. It was the overseers' policy to keep miners on the edge of starvation, and what were the miners to do? They could barely eat and there was nowhere else to work.

What we know of today as a social conscience was not a prevailing state of mind in Wesley's day. Remember that the Declaration of Independence was written when Wesley was an old man and the Rousseau's *Social Contract* was written when he was in middle age. Political guarantees were considered revolutionary. The Church of England preached that man's station in life was a reflection of his state of grace. The monarch was God's vicar, and the power descending down the chain of being from the throne reached to the gentry and perhaps the artisans and no further.

In this world of little hope and few options, John Wesley appeared on the scene. Where his brother Samuel followed the prescribed path for sons of the clergy—to become a stolid gentleman preacher in the Anglican Church, associating with the gentlemen and wits of the day, John and Charles Wesley took a path that was hazardous and requiring self-sacrifice. John decided to live on a stipend of 28 pounds annually (well below the poverty level by today's standards), using any additional earnings to

fund his various ministries. Charles turned down a fortune in inheritance from an Irish relative to do God's work. What made such men? And why did they turn out so very different from their elder brother Samuel?

John Wesley was born in 1703 during the reign of Good Queen Anne. His childhood was ruled by his pious and strict mother and exacting father. His mother believed that children's wills should be subdued, that they should be whipped soundly when they misbehaved and that they should cry softly after being whipped. John was the fourteenth child. He would have perished in a fire at Epworth Rectory except that he was snatched from the blaze by a neighbor who stood on another neighbor's shoulders. He was seven years old at the time, and frequently thereafter his mother would remind him that he was "a brand plucked from the burning". She felt—and he later felt—that he had been spared for a purpose, to serve God.

Samuel, John's father, was a scholar, for many years at work on a monumental scholarly work on the Book of Job. A stern, not to say relentless preacher, once required an adultress to walk the streets in her shame and he forced the marriage of one of his daughters after she tried to elope with a man not of her father's choosing. From his father and mother, John Wesley developed excellent study habits and also became used to physical hardship.

John Wesley went to Charterhouse School in 1714, to Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1720, and in 1726 was elected fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford. After taking a position of curate at Wroote, Lincolnshire, from 1727 to 1729, he returned to Oxford not only to continue his studies but also to begin living the holy life. Many other bright young men had gone through a curriculum like Wesley's, but few had his diligence. He mastered at least seven languages and developed a truly comprehensive outlook on all areas of investigation. His mind never closed to inquiry for the rest of his life. When he resumed to Oxford from Wroote, he assumed leadership of a group called the Holy Club, begun by his brother Charles. Here they sought to reinforce faith through scriptural study and of measuring the quality of holiness of each member's life.

The Holy Club did more than think and pray. They went to the prisons to bring salvation to prisoners. Although they were ridiculed by their fellow Oxfordians, from their small ranks came towering men of the age, particularly the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield. Their regimen required periodic fasts, regular study meetings and self-examination. Only much later did John Wesley realize that they followed more the letter than the spirit of Christianity.

In 1735 great changes beset John and Charles Wesley. Their father died, and both men went with Governor Oglethorpe to the colony Georgia with their mother's blessing and encouragement. Georgia was a test for John, who reamed that he really did not like the Indians and that his strictness was not much appreciated by the Georgians. More important than this was John's contact with a small band of Moravians on the voyage over to the colony. These men and women fearlessly sang hymns during dreadful storms at sea while he despaired. He wanted to know the faith they seemed to have. In 1737 he returned to England.

It is to John Wesley's credit that he could be critical enough of himself to stop now that he was an experienced minister to examine his lack of faith. Peter Boehler, a Moravian, gave him the key—to preach faith until he had it, and then he would preach faith. So it came about that John Wesley dwelled on faith until on Wednesday, May 24, 1738, at the well-known Aldersgate meeting, he had a conversion, a deep and unmistakable experience of faith. His "heart was strangely warmed." Then his real work began in earnest.

For all his independence of mind, John Wesley could still draw on the best resources of the best minds of his time. For example, William Law was his teacher, friend, and mentor for years, but Wesley found

that an important ingredient was missing from Law's program for a devout life—faith. The Oxford Platonists were able to impart to Wesley an intellectual framework that was spiritual rather than material, but Wesley's habit of mind was as much as molded by Newtonian analysis as by Platonism. The Moravians were the closest to a synthesis of all the elements he desired that he could find. He even visited Herrnhut to see how their community worked. But something was missing there as everywhere else, and in 1740 he and his followers broke off from the Moravians, but not before he had learned to give open-air sermons, which were an essential part of his later program.

John Wesley at age 37 began to travel and preach. He often exaggerated the numbers of those who came to hear him. Very often the very people who needed his help the most persecuted him. He would preach in pulpits until they were closed to him, and he would then preach in the open fields. He would preach three times a day, beginning at five AM since workers could stop to hear him as they walked to their daily drudgery.

He sometimes covered sixty miles a day on horseback. Weather conditions made no difference; he made his schedule and kept it regardless. He would flee an angry mob by jumping into a cold pond, swim out and go on to preach again. He had the ability to turn hostile people his way.

He went to South Wales in 1741, the north of England in 1742, Ireland in 1747, and Scotland in 1751. In all he went to Ireland forty-two times and to Scotland twenty-two times. He returned to cities again and again. Sometimes he would return years after his last visit and record that the little society he helped form was still intact and still faithful. He would examine every member of every society personally to search for faith and spiritual growth. The societies thus formed provided the local organization for his movement.

What did Wesley preach? Thrift, cleanliness, honesty, salvation, good family relations, dozens of other themes, but above all, faith in Christ. He did not ask his listeners to depart from their own churches but to continue going to them. He gave them spiritual refreshment they did not find outside his circle. As his decades of trial yielded to decades of triumph the crowds increased. High and low came to hear him speak. He developed networks of lay assistants. His exhortations to live perfectly in love today seem harsh, but consider the effects on his congregations. Swearing stopped in factories, men and women began to concern themselves with neat and plain dress, extravagances like expensive tea and vices like gin were dropped by his followers, neighbors gave one another mutual help through the societies.

Wesley taught as much by example as by his measured sermons. His annual expenses have been mentioned. He published many volumes for use in devotions and turned profits into such projects as a dispensary for the poor. His personal life was beyond reproach. He translated hymns, interpreted scripture, wrote hundreds of letters, trained hundreds of men and women, and kept in his journals a record of expended energy that has hardly a rival in western literature. His manner of speaking in the language of the common man had an immeasurable impact on the emergence of modern English, just as Charles Wesley's numerous hymns had an impact on English hymnody, not to mention poetry of the subsequent Romantic Age.

But the impact of the Wesleys on the lower classes runs deeper than merely in habits of living and in habits of speech. John Wesley provided a religious framework that was local and personal as well as energetically moral. His theology did not disenfranchise anyone, for everyone could find God's grace to resist evil and to be saved, if only he will seek and receive it. The societies that he formed preserved in their studies a focus on faith—a faith that also led to a way of coping with the reality of lower class living. Religion was not just for the rich, but neither was Wesley's preaching a revolt from Anglicanism—until very late and then almost by historical accident.

John Wesley's Anglicanism was very strong, even though Anglican pulpits became universally closed

to him. Only when he was eighty-one years old did Wesley permit a rift between his followers and the national church. Having sent many men to America, in 1784 he ordained more for this missionary effort and, because "ordination is separation," effectively started a new church. Wesley's conservatism was political as well as religious. He published an open letter to the American colonies warning them to stay loyal to Britain just before the American Revolution. He would not have tolerated any talk of civil upheaval in England.

It has been argued that other forces were at work in England besides Wesley and a few other preachers. For example, the coming Industrial Revolution progressed faster in Britain than elsewhere giving men new kinds of work, the Justice of the Peace system and Prime Minister government were unique in form to England and gave much more power than elsewhere was possible to the local middle class, and the major problems that might otherwise have caused revolution—just were not present after 1750. Still, without Wesley and his followers, how could widespread atheism such as existed among French peasants be avoided and how could a downtrodden and vice-ridden underclass see hope?

John Wesley died on March 2, 1791, about three years after his brother Charles died. Up until his final years he made the same journal entry each year on his birthday, thanking God for his long life and his continued good health, and stating that early morning sermons and much outdoor activity had kept him fit for God's work. From the time he became free of influence except from God, he had fifty years of steady service and did England immeasurable good through perseverance, endurance, and faith. His legacy was not just limited to his century or country, but survives today in the faith of millions in a variety of churches.

The following diary entry was made on Tuesday, 28 June, 1774:

This being my birth-day, the first day of my seventy-second year, I was considering, How is this, that I find just the same strength as I did thirty years ago? That my sight is considerably better now, and my nerves firmer than they were then? That I have none of the infirmities of old age, and have lost several I had in my youth? The grand cause is, the good pleasure of God, who doth whatsoever pleaseth him. The chief means are, 1, my constantly rising at four, for about fifty years: 2, my generally preaching at five in the morning, one of the most healthy exercises in the world: 3, my never travelling less, by sea or land, than four thousand five hundred miles a year.

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John Wesley: A Gallery of Family, Friends and Foes

William Law

(1686–1761) spearheaded the Evangelical Revival with his *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728). The most brilliant young men of the time sat at his feet and absorbed his every word—the Wesleys, George Whitefield, and a host of other evangelists were his legacy. What he taught was the way to live a practical holy life. As his thought developed in the 1730's towards mysticism, his young students parted ways with him. This vigorous champion of spirituality took on all comers in defense of Christianity. He feared no opponent. His last twenty years were spent in tireless devotions, study, and charity.

Richard "Beau" Nash

(1674–1762) was a social celebrity and master of ceremonies at the fashionable resort of Bath. He lived high, gambled with great stakes, and had very bad luck confronting John Wesley. Nash told Wesley that he did not like Wesley's preaching. Wesley asked whether Nash had heard any. Nash had not but knows of Wesley's preaching through the reports of others. Wesley then asked whether he should judge Nash only by others' reports of him. Nash was silenced by this rebuke, and one old woman rubbed salt in the wound by telling Nash to leave alone the man who could give them all God's word. Nash's view was typical among the upper crust, but few would have condescended to speak out loud about how they felt. Even Samuel Johnson, the composer of the great English Dictionary, seems to have disapproved of Wesley's "enthusiasm," even though he does seem to have liked Wesley the man and attended one of his sermons!

Peter Boehler

(1712–75) the Moravian missionary and bishop, gave John Wesley the strength to seek faith in his moment of doubt after his return from Georgia. Wesley's journal records the warm and vibrant conversation and correspondence between him and Boehler and reveals the critical role Boehler played in helping Wesley totally reassess the nature of his religious commitment and the meaning of faith. Thereafter Wesley was so interested in Moravianism that he learned German and went to Herrnhut to see the community at the source. Ultimately breaking away from the Moravians, John Wesley's organization, some points of doctrine, and missionary zeal were deeply influenced by them.

Thomas Maxfield

(1720–85) was Wesley's first lay preacher in England, converted at Bristol and put to use but "not to preach." But preach he did, and Wesley, after hearing him, gave him permission. He was imprisoned and persecuted for his work. Finally ordained in 1764 he differed from Wesley over doctrinal differences and with Thomas Bell became head of a congregation that split from Wesley.

The Wesley Family

seems to have been the primary influence of John Wesley's life. On the one hand were his mother's devotions, on the other was his father's scholarship and stern morality. On the one hand was his brother

Samuel's example as a High Churchman, on the other were his brother Charles' friendship and support. At all times he endured with his siblings the regimen of hardship to which preachers' families had to become accustomed in those days. John Wesley seems to have brought away from his family a model for the ideal society, which he had to temper with experience and with a few other models and mistakes. That John and Charles set up their own community at Oxford indicates that they desired to live a life that no one offered ready-made in the educational system of the time.

George Whitefield

(1714–70) the champion of field preaching in England and America urged John Wesley to take to the fields to preach. He was eloquent and powerful as a preacher. His sermons brought crowds to their knees. One report tells how listeners would cry and moan and turn to Christ. The people would gather in crowds numbering 20,000 to hear him preach, and he seems to have been Wesley's match in endurance. Yet he could not match Wesley's organizational ability, for after he had drawn a crowd he had no supportive Christian "family" for his followers to link up with. Because of his ideas on election, he and his Calvinistic Methodists broke off from Wesley's group, but he and Wesley remained friends for life.

Bishop Joseph Butler

(1692–1752) Wesley's contemporary, lamented the encroaching secularity of England and called for nationwide reform and revival of faith, but ironically he was opposed to Wesley's kind of revivalism. Bishop of Bristol, where Wesley established his head camp for the Evangelical Revival, he locked horns with the young "enthusiast" and even told him to stop preaching in his diocese. Butler's noted work *Analogy*, was the major defense of revealed religion against attacks by Deists. In the deepest sense the men were allies and both champions of the historic faith, even though as contemporaries they did not cooperate.

Charles Wesley

(1707–88), John Wesley's younger brother, gave music, heart, and soul to the Methodist movement. Overshadowed by his brother, he directly influenced him throughout his career. Charles began what became the Holy Club at Oxford, went with John to the Colonies, and set up in Bristol to do the work of revival. As energetic in composing hymns as John was in keeping his journals, Charles composed around 6500 hymns, many of which are still sung today. Early in life Charles turned down a fortune to gain a greater crown—that of "Poet of the Evangelical Revival." One of the most famous of his works was his version of "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing."

George Bell

(?–1807) Sometimes a convert to Methodism would turn out to be an opponent. Such a man was George Bell who converted to Methodism in the 1750's. Bell made extravagant claims for himself and his followers, such as they had attained absolute perfection. Finally Wesley excluded Bell and his followers. Bell went on to predict the end of the world with God's judgment on February 28, 1763. The world did not end, but Bell had done very severe damage to the Methodist cause in London.

Thomas Coke

(1747–1814), joining the Methodists in 1771, rose quickly under Wesley to become president of the Irish Conference in 1782 and joint superintendent with Francis Asbury of the Methodist Church of America in

1784. When Coke arrived in America, Asbury, who had refused Wesley's order to return to England before the American Revolution, forced an election and became the first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church to be consecrated in America. Coke with Asbury wrote the *Doctrines and Discipline* for the Methodist Church of America in 1784, but Asbury, not Coke, was the great organizer in America. Coke travelled between England and America frequently, and his commitment to be a missionary among the heathen finally led him to apply for the position of bishop of India—a position which required his return to the Church of England. Failing in this attempt, Coke raised money on his own and embarked on a Methodist mission to Ceylon, but died on the voyage out.

Francis Asbury

(1745–1816) seized the reins of Methodism in the United States just after its independence and shaped what later became the Methodist Episcopal Church. Riding over 5000 miles each year on horseback, often in bad health, he personally linked up the congregations from Maine to Georgia and set up the method called circuit riding that remained the line of communication for a century. Not always in agreement with Wesley, he was so like him in energy and organizational ability, he has been called the “Wesley of America.”

The Wednesbury Mob

a group of people from the lowest class of society, were after Wesley's limbs and health, if not his life, and they were typical of the violence with which new preaching could be met in the eighteenth century. Not only did Wesley stand his ground as long as possible against this shouting, pot-and-stone-hurling rabble, but again and again he managed to return to the place of violence later and make it his own. In another mob incident, Wesley was interrupted by a bunch of rowdies who brought a bull up to his lectern. Undaunted, Wesley moved a little ways off and began to preach where he had been forced to leave off. In other mob scenes he actually quelled the mobs, turning the leaders back against the crowds and preaching to the quieted masses.

Richard Boardman

(1738–82) was the first Methodist missionary in America, responding to Wesley's call in 1769. With Pilmoor he served in Philadelphia as Wesley's associate until Francis Asbury's arrival. Thus Boardman became not only Wesley's bridge from England to the American colonies, but Methodism's bridge from Wesley to Asbury.

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Tapping the Riches

Wesley set out to renew the church he loved and he was prepared to employ any appropriate material from the whole history of Christianity to do it.

DR. CHARLES YRIGOYEN JR.

The theology of John Wesley was not created in a vacuum. His experience, understanding and practice of the Christian faith were influenced by many expressions of its historic development. His theological heritage was shaped by the views of his parents, formal education, extensive reading and study, and constant reflection. By these means he became familiar with a wide variety of personalities, movements and schools of thought whose theological positions informed his life and beliefs.

Wesley was not reluctant to appropriate any portion of Christian tradition which he considered reputable and suitable to undergird Christian commitment. If it passed his critical scrutiny, he was ready to adopt it for his personal use and for the guidance of the Methodist societies. Without disparaging his creativity one must acknowledge that he was a skillful borrower and synthesizer of ideas from many sources.

An outstanding example of Wesley's ability to use some of the breadth of Christian tradition and to incorporate its riches was the publication of *A Christian Library*. Between 1749 and 1755 Wesley carefully assembled and published this fifty-volume collection of devotional nourishment for the Methodist people and their preachers. It contained what Wesley judged to be the best tracts of "practical divinity." Included were selections from the early church fathers, Pietism, mysticism, the Puritans and Church of England authors. This ambitious project illustrates Wesley's willingness to draw instruction and inspiration from different eras of Christian history.

A comprehensive and definitive account of the influences on Wesley's life and theology has yet to be written. We can mention, however, a few of the principal sources which provided a context for his beliefs and molded his theology. Although they seem to be listed as individual threads, Wesley hardly considered them in isolation from each other. For him they were parts of the whole fabric of a lively and dynamic Christian faith.

John Wesley was a Church of England man. He was born and reared in an Anglican environment. His home, academic training, ordination, missionary service, and the remainder of his ministry to the day of his death were related to the Church of England. It was never his intention to form a new church. We should not be surprised, therefore, to learn that the theological heritage of the Church of England was the first major ingredient in his perception of Christianity. It was the bedrock of Wesley's theology. He highly esteemed and learned much from the writings of classical Anglican thinkers such as Chillingworth, Hooker and Laud. His profound respect for scripture, reason and tradition as authorities for Christian thought and practice was rooted in standard Church of England theology.

Yet the Church of England and its glorious legacy which Wesley loved so much were not above his critical examination. He was troubled by a cold rationalism which threatened to hold it captive. The church's apathy and its inability to minister to the moral and spiritual needs of eighteenth-century England seriously distressed him. He therefore set out to renew the church he loved, and he was prepared to employ any appropriate material from the whole history of Christianity to do it.

The convictions and piety of the early church fathers impressed Wesley. They were represented in **A**

Christian Library by Clement of Rome, Polycarp of Smyrna and Ignatius of Antioch, all part of a first- and second-century body of Christian literature known as the Apostolic Fathers. Also included was material from Macarius the Egyptian whose understanding of Christianity was formed by Gregory of Nyssa, the great eastern Christian teacher of the fourth century. Through the writings of Macarius, Wesley became acquainted with the treasures of Byzantine spirituality. His concept of Christian perfection as a process owed much to this ancient eastern tradition. Patristics, the study of the lives and writings of the early church fathers, was very important to Wesley.

Of course, John Wesley was also indebted to the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century. Chief among them were Martin Luther and John Calvin. Like them, Wesley was persuaded that scripture, grace and faith were of the highest importance in one's knowledge of the faith and the Christian conduct of one's life.

There is more than a casual similarity between Wesley's early (pre-1738) attempt to please God and earn divine favor and Luther's endeavor to do the same about two hundred years earlier. It does not seem strange that the events of Aldersgate on May 24, 1738, the date of his transforming, heart-warming experience, were drawn to a climax as he listened to someone's reading from the preface to Luther's **Commentary on Romans**, the fruit of Luther's spiritual pilgrimage. But Wesley was not uncritical of Luther. He found the great Protestant reformer particularly deficient in his conception of sanctification and the Christian life.

Likewise, Wesley respected the work of John Calvin. He agreed with Calvin's emphasis on the seriousness of original sin and its infection of every person. Furthermore, Wesley found himself in accord with Calvin on the matter of salvation by God's unmerited grace. But he could not accept the Genevan reformer's position that God unconditionally decreed salvation for some and damnation for others. Rather, God's grace was free and available for all and the benefits of Christ's atoning death were free for all. Contrary to the teachings of Calvin's later disciples, Wesley held that divine grace could be rejected; it was not irresistible. And a believer could "fall from grace," lose salvation; there was no necessary "perseverance of the saints."

Wesley read with profit the noted American preacher Jonathan Edwards, but could not accept his Calvinism. He also argued with his friend, George Whitefield, about the latter's commitment to Calvinistic predestination. Wesley preferred to be known as an Arminian to denote his disapproval of predestination Calvinism. Although Wesley appreciated both Luther and Calvin, he was unwilling to give assent to every aspect of their doctrines.

Mysticism also made a significant contribution to Wesley's theology. He was attracted to the mystic's quest and achievement of genuine religious experience and their views on the nature of inward religion and holiness. **A Christian Library** included representatives with a mystical inclination such as Blaise Pascal, Antoinette Bourignon, Don Juan D'Avila and Miguel de Molinos. Wesley also displayed a liking for the mystics Madame Guyon, Francois Fenelon and Jean-Baptiste de Renty. Alas, in Wesley's opinion there were also weaknesses with mysticism. He was especially disturbed by its tendency to withdraw from the world and its too frequent disparagement of the eucharist, scripture, attendance at public worship and service to others as a means of grace.

The English Puritans also figure in the construction of Wesley's theology. Their role may be traced, first of all, to his family background. In both of his parents' ancestry there was a predominant Puritan presence. His maternal and paternal great-grandmothers and grandfathers had strong ties to Puritanism, even though his parents, Samuel and Susanna, had cast their lot with the Church of England. The large number of Puritans in **A Christian Library** attests his admiration for Puritan devotional literature.

There is little doubt that some of Wesley's ideas about worship were formulated in light of Puritan thought and practice, especially his use of extemporaneous preaching and free, spontaneous prayer.

There is also an affinity between his views on education and those of the dissenting Puritan academies. Furthermore, Wesley shared with the Puritans a major commitment to relate the gospel to the daily life of the believer.

Continental Pietism was another force which made its mark on Wesley, particularly through the Moravians. During his struggling missionary months in colonial Georgia and immediately thereafter contacts with the Moravians were critical. From them he gained new insight into the importance of supportive group fellowship, Bible study, hymn singing, and a quiet personal trust in God for salvation. The 1738 heart-warming experience occurred in a meeting in London on Aldersgate Street in which there was a notable Moravian presence. Wesley's connections with the Moravians probably reached their zenith when he visited Herrnhut and Merienborn, their famous settlements on the continent. At Hermhut he conversed with their celebrated leader, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. Wesley was not entirely satisfied with the Moravian way. Among other things he found their view of the church and sacraments lacking and he criticized what he deemed their neglect of holiness.

There have been critics of John Wesley, living and dead, who have accused him of promoting shallow emotional religion and theological ignorance. That labeling may apply to some persons who have called themselves Methodists, even Wesleyans, but it certainly does not pertain to Wesley himself. Quite the contrary. John Wesley was an accomplished theologian. He was a scholar-evangelist-organizer whose reading and reflection spanned his entire adult life. He was acquainted with Christian history and tapped its riches. In the words of Albert Outler, one of the premier interpreters of Wesley in this generation, John Wesley was "one who had glimpsed the underlying unity of Christian truth in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions and who had turned this recognition to the services of a great popular religious reform and renewal."

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

Wesley's Gift for Organization

Wesley was a brilliant organizer whose influence over his followers was so great that the historian J. H. Plumb asserted that Wesley could have successfully led a revolution if he had not been so wedded to the political status quo. What were his secrets of organization?

First, Wesley stressed **practical Christianity**, one that was always demonstrating itself in a person's actions in the world. Neighbors and friends could see the attempts his followers made to live the Christian life. Since for Wesley every man could receive the grace to be good, there was really no acceptable excuse for being bad. Further, although man could not achieve the perfection of Jesus, nevertheless, he could strive towards **perfection** in a state of **holiness** by the process of **sanctification**. All Christians were obligated to follow the ideal pattern of grace, which was their fulfillment.

Second, Wesley formulated a **practical church organization** that worked on many levels, from the repentant individual to the class to the society to the conference to the church (or in the early days to Wesley himself). Wesley stressed the involvement by lay persons on each level, and he differentiated his workers according to their gifts as exhorters, lay preachers, stewards, and the like. He provided what may have been for other churches a static hierarchical structure, but for him it was dynamic in the circulation of preachers, who were always on the move and in the meetings of classes and societies, which constantly assessed, both individually and collectively, their Christian lives.

Third, Wesley provided in himself an unimpeachable example of practical Christianity and the spirit of dynamic organization **without** mistaking himself for the source of his power and influence, which was our Lord Jesus Christ. Everything Wesley did was for Him.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

Finding the Forgotten

Social reform as we conceive of it today would have been impossible in Wesley's time. Society in England during the eighteenth century was rigidly structured, and the only means of advancing from one class to another was preferment, the support of a wealthy benefactor. The nobility, the city and country gentry, and the tradesmen were sharply differentiated from servants, the poor, and slaves, in that order. If you were born, for example, in the servant class, chances were you remained there the rest of your life.

Wesley and his followers did not challenge the order and hierarchy of society. They were not revolutionaries. Rather, within each class they worked to enrich the spiritual dimensions of individual men's and women's lives. There was one exception to Wesley's willingness to accept the status quo—that was slavery. Wesley's journals record his interest in the movement to abolish slavery. Serfdom, or life bondage to the land, was abolished systematically in Europe during this period; slavery was largely abolished during the next century. Late in his career Wesley agreed with Wilberforce, the voice of the antislavery movement—slavery must end. (See "Wesley to Wilberforce")

Wesley and his men and women went into the prisons, hospitals, and work houses to bring the message of salvation. The reform they sought was like that brought to the repentant thief on the cross. They tried to turn people in a hopeless situation to Christ for the sake of their immortality. This was scarcely easy, for prisoners felt themselves irrevocably condemned and ruined. There was no possibility of a life of honor if ever they were released. The sick were taught that illness was a form of God's judgment, and this compounded their despondency at being hospitalized. Debt-ridden folk and female offenders in the work houses had little prospect of release.

Instead of being accepted with open arms when they visited the prisons and work houses, Wesley and his fellow Holy Club members, and later his followers, found hatred, taunts, and intractability. They preached over shouting, mockery, and physical abuse. Peer pressure made true repentance difficult for the downtrodden prisoners. Working under the threat of disease, amid unsanitary conditions, the Methodists continued with calm persistence in the face of abuse and repeated disappointment.

William Morgan, one of the members of the Holy Club, started the prison visitations, and all members followed his example. Wesley made this so basic a part of his program that William Hogarth could satirize in a print the fervid exhortations of a Methodist preacher as he tried to win a condemned soul for Christ on the way to execution. In fairness, Hogarth's print depicts the Methodist as actively seeking to save the lost soul while the official Anglican clergyman sits idly by in comfort.

Wesley preached faith and God's mercy to men and women who might have despaired of redemption. His message was that God's grace is "free in all, and free for all."

Hospitals in the eighteenth century were by no means the clean and elaborate organizations that we know today. Medicine itself was crude and ineffective. The poor were seldom able to get the medical attention they required. Here Wesley's approach to reform was more direct. He established clinics for the poor.

Wesley's success in the work houses seems remarkable even by contemporary standards of reform. Without changing conditions in the fundamental sense, Wesley's preaching inspired inmates. He

emphasized cleanliness and thrift. He records returning to work houses he had preached at previously—and finding evidence of almost total transformation. Particularly among “lost” women his appeal to human decency was heeded.

Cleanliness and thrift were topics of sermons that Wesley preached throughout Britain. “Cleanliness is next to Godliness,” he preached. And in order to inspire thrift, he himself decided to abandon tea. Recorded in his journal is his bout with caffeine fits during the three days just after he quit the tea habit. By example he showed that money could be saved by self-denial. Through analyzing his own reaction to life without tea, he came to know that nothing was lost in dropping the drink entirely.

Certain that the poor could better themselves from within, Wesley provided the inspiration for them to transform. He relentlessly emphasized that one did not have to be filthy or constantly on the edge of monetary ruin and that one should not treat one’s neighbors cruelly. No enormous government subsidies were forthcoming to help the poor. But the poor could, within limits, help themselves. Economic reform was not important for Wesley. He himself set an example of voluntary poverty. He set his income and never varied it. He experimented with frugality even within this self-imposed constraint.

If Wesley dropped tea for its expense, he avoided alcohol and attacked it because of its effects. The eighteenth century was the century of gin. Gin was cheap and deadly, and the poor drank enormous quantities of it. Gin destroyed the mind and body and served as an escape from responsibility. The ideal stance towards alcohol of any kind was abstinence. Temperance was a minimum requirement. In place of drink, the Methodists emphasized true religious enthusiasm.

The strength of early Methodism was its burning desire to seek out and to minister to the forgotten people of Britain. This was the purpose of the open-air sermons. Contemporaries criticized Wesley’s preaching to workers going to work on the ground that a resultant loss in productivity would deal a blow to the economic system. In fact, the reverse was probably true. Capitalism in England was strengthened by the Methodist emphasis on the spiritual dignity of every man.

So Wesley made the open sky his nave. He provided a church for the unchurched. By preaching the simple virtues of cleanliness, temperance, thrift, and faith, he gradually transformed the character of his countrymen. His societies became what one observer has called “Mutual Admonition Societies” where members helped one another live full Christian lives.

Wesley had a hunch about the poor around him—that they wished to live better even though they seemed often incapable of fulfilling their wish, that they liked to think that there was hope for themselves yet, that they enjoyed being clean and striving to save a little money. They knew that they were bound to their class, but wanted their spirits to soar above all class distinctions. So Wesley’s social reform was neither a hand out nor a hand up. He did not teach “coping” or social climbing. He taught Christ as the way through whom all of the best possibilities in man are possible.

In addition, he made great strides forward on the issues of women and slavery. Like the Moravians, he saw fewer distinctions between men and women than other churchmen of his time, though he did not go as far as Quakers. Like the Quakers, he came to see the injustice in slavery, which he condemned as “the execrable sum of all villainies” and called for its abolition.

In sum, for Wesley, genuine faith of necessity manifested itself in concrete acts of service and compassion for the downtrodden and hurting masses.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

The Holy Club

John and Charles Wesley and a handful of other Oxford students devoted themselves to a rigorous search for holiness and service to others.

The Holy Club, the name given to John and Charles Wesley's group by their fellow collegians in mockery of their emphasis on devotions, was the first sign of what later became Methodism. Begun by Charles and led by John after his return to Oxford University in 1729, the Holy Club members fasted until 3 PM on Wednesdays and Fridays, received Holy Communion once each week, studied and discussed the Greek New Testament and the Classics each evening in a member's room, visited (after 1730) prisoners and the sick, and systematically brought all their lives under strict review.

The Holy Club never exceeded twenty-five members, but many of those made significant contributions, in addition to those of Charles and John Wesley. John Gambold later became a Moravian bishop. John Clayton became a distinguished Anglican churchman. James Hervey became a noted religious writer. Benjamin Ignham became a Yorkshire evangelist. Thomas Brougham became secretary of the SPCK. George Whitefield, who joined the club just before the Wesleys departed for Georgia, was associated both with the Great Awakening in America and the Evangelical Revival in England. Looking back from 1781 John Wesley saw in the Holy Club the "first rise" of Methodism. The "second rise" was in Georgia in 1736, when he met with selected members of his congregation on Sunday afternoons. From these grew the idea for "Methodist societies" which became the backbone of the Methodist organization.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

Wesley's Sermon Reprints: The Almost Christian

Acts 26:28

AND many there are who go thus far: ever since the Christian Religion was in the world, there have been many in every age and nation, who were "almost persuaded to be Christians." But seeing it avails nothing before God, to go only thus far, it highly imports us to consider,

First, What is implied in being *almost*:

Secondly, What in being *altogether a Christian*.

I. 1. Now, in the being *almost a Christian* is implied, first Heathen Honesty. No one, I suppose, will make any question of this; especially, since by heathen honesty here, I mean, not that which is recommended in the writings of their philosophers only, but such as the common heathens expected of one another, and many of them actually practiced. By the rules of this they were taught, that they ought not to be unjust: Not to take away their neighbor's goods, either by robbery or theft: Not to oppress the poor, neither to use extortion toward any: Not to cheat or overreach either the poor or rich, in whatsoever commerce they had with them: To defraud no man of his right; and, if it were possible, to owe no man any thing.

2. Again, the common heathens allowed, that some regard was to be paid to truth as well as to justice...

3. Yet, again, there was a sort of love and assistance, which they expected one from another...

II. 4. A second thing implied in the being *almost a Christian*, is the having a Form of Godliness, of that godliness which is prescribed in the gospel of Christ; the having the *outside of a real Christian*. Accordingly, *the almost Christian* does nothing which the gospel forbids. He taketh not the name of God in vain: He blesseth and curseth not; he sweareth not at all, but his communication is yea, yea; nay, nay. He profanes not the day of the Lord, nor suffers it to be profaned, even by the stranger that is within his gates. He not only avoids all actual adultery, fornication, and uncleanness, but every word or look, that either directly or indirectly tends thereto...

6. And in doing good, he does not confine himself to cheap and easy offices of kindness, but labours and suffers for the profit of many, that by all means he may help some. In spite of toil or pain, "Whatsoever his hand findeth to do, he doeth it with his might;" whether it be for his friends, or for his enemies, for the evil, or for the good. For, being not *slothful in this*, or in any *business, as he hath opportunity he doth good*, all manner of good, to *all men*, and to their souls as well as their bodies...

7. He hath the form of godliness, uses the means of grace; yea, all of them, and at all opportunities. He constantly frequents the house of God; and ... behaves with seriousness and attention, in every part of the solemn service. More especially when he approaches the table of the Lord, it is not with a light or careless behaviour, but with an air, gesture, and deportment which speaks nothing else, but "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

8. To this, if we add, the constant use of Family Prayer, by those who are masters of families, and the

setting times apart for private addresses to God, with a daily seriousness of behaviour: he who uniformly practices this outward religion, has the form of godliness. There needs but one thing more in order to his being **almost a Christian**, and that is, Sincerity.

III. 9. By Sincerity, I mean, a real, inward principle of religion, from whence these outward actions flow. And, indeed, if we have not this, we have not heathen honesty; no, not so much of it as will answer the demand of a heathen epicurean poet. Even this poor wretch, in his sober intervals, is able to testify:

Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue: Wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.

So that, if a man only abstain from doing evil in order to avoid punishment, "***Thou shall be hanged***" saith the Pagan; there, "Thou hast thy reward." But even he will not allow such a harmless man as this, to be so much as a good heathen. If then, any man, from the same motive, viz. to avoid punishment to avoid the loss of his friends, or his gain, This reputation, should not only abstain from doing evil, but also do ever so much good; yea, and use all the means of grace; yet we could not, with any propriety say, This man is even **almost a Christian**. If he have no better principle in his heart, he is also a hypocrite altogether.

10. Sincerity, therefore, is necessarily implied in the being **almost a Christian**: A real design to serve God, a hearty desire to do his will: it is necessarily implied, that a man have a sincere view of pleasing God in all things: in all his conversation; in all his actions; in all he does, or leaves undone. This design, if any man be almost a Christian, runs through the whole tenor of his life. This is the moving principle, both in his doing good, his abstaining from evil, and his using the ordinances of God.

11. But here it will probably be inquired, is it possible, that any man living should go as far as this, and, nevertheless, be **only almost a Christian**? What more than this can be implied, in the being a **Christian altogether**? I answer first, That it is possible to go thus far, and yet be but **almost a Christian**, I learn not only from the Oracles of God, but also from the sure testimony of experience...

13. I did go thus for many years, as many of this place can testify; using diligence to eschew all evil, and to have a conscience void of offence; redeeming the time; buying up every opportunity of doing all good to all men; constantly and carefully using all the public and all the private means of grace; endeavouring, after a steady seriousness of behaviour, at all times, and in all places: and God is my record, before whom I stand, doing all this in sincerity; having a real design to serve God; a hearty desire to do his will in all things; to please him who had called me to "fight the good fight," and to "lay hold on eternal life." Yet my own conscience beareth me witness, in the Holy Ghost, that all this time I was but **almost a Christian**.

II. If it be enquired, What more than this is implied in the being altogether a Christian? I answer,

I. 1. First the love of God. For thus saith his word. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Such a love of God is this, as engrosses the whole heart, as takes up all the affections, as fills the entire capacity of the soul, and employs the utmost extent of all its faculties. He that thus loves the Lord his God, his spirit continually "rejoiceth in God his Saviour"...

II. 2. ... The second thing implied in the being **altogether a Christian**, is, The love of our neighbor. For thus said our Lord, in the following words, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." If any man ask who is my neighbor; we reply, every man in the world; every child of his who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh. Nor may we in any wise except our enemies, or the enemies of God and their own souls. But every Christian loveth these also as himself, yea, "as Christ loveth us."

III. 3. There is yet one thing more that may be separately considered, though it cannot be actually separate from the preceding, which is implied in the being **altogether a Christian**, and that is the ground of all, even faith...

4. But here let no man deceive his own soul. "It is diligently to be noted, the faith which bringeth not forth repentance and love, and all good works, is not that right living faith which is here spoken of, but a dead and devilish one..."

6. Now, whatsoever has this faith, which **purifies the heart**, (by the power of God, who **dwelleth therein**;) from pride, anger, desire, **from all unrighteousness**, from **all filthiness of flesh or spirit**; which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind; love that doth the works of God, glorying to spend and be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised, and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict: whosoever has this **faith**, thus **working by love is not almost only, but altogether a Christian**.

7. But who are the living witnesses of these things? I beseech you, brethren, as in the presence of that God, before whom "hell and destruction are without a covering; how much more the hearts of the children of men:" that each of you would ask his own heart, "Am I of that number? Do I so far practice justice, mercy, and truth, as even the rules of heathen honesty require? If so, have I the very outside of a Christian? The form of godliness? Do I abstain from evil from whatsoever is forbidden in the written word of God? Do I, whatever good my hand findeth to do, do it with my might? Do I seriously use all the ordinances of God at all opportunities? And, is all this done, with a sincere design and desire to please God in all things?

8. Are not many of you conscious, that you never came thus far that you have not been even **almost a Christian**? That you have not come up to the standard of heathen honesty; at least, not to the form of Christian godliness: Much less hath God seen sincerity in you, a real design of pleasing him in all things. You never so much as intended to devote all your words and works, your business, studies, diversions, to his glory. You never even designed or desired, that whatsoever you did should be "done in the name of the Lord Jesus," and as such, should be "a spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God through Christ."

9. But, supposing you had, do good designs and good desires make a Christian? By no means, unless they are brought to good effect. "Hell is paved (saith one) with good intentions." The great question of all, then, still remains. Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Can you cry out, "My God and my All!" Do you desire nothing but him? Are you happy in God? Is he your glory, your delight, your crown of rejoicing? And is this commandment written in your heart, That he who loveth God love his brother also? Do you then love your neighbor as yourself? Do you love every man, even your enemies, even the enemies of God, as your own soul? As Christ loved you? Yea, dost thou believe that Christ loved thee, and gave himself for thee? Hast thou faith in his blood? Believest thou the Lamb of God hath taken away thy sin, and cast them as a stone into the depths of the sea? That he hath blotted out the hand-writing that was against thee, taking it out of the way nailing it to his cross? Hast thou indeed redemption through his blood, even the remission of thy sins? And doth his Spirit bear witness with thy spirit, that thou art a child of God? . . .

11. May we all thus experience what it is, to be not almost only, but altogether Christians! Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus: knowing we have peace with God through Jesus Christ: rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, and having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us!

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

John Wesley and the Eighteenth Century World: Christian History Timeline

One hundred years of turmoil, change, and innovation that laid a foundation for our own day.

The word that best characterizes John Wesley's life is **faith**, which became the means to almost superhuman efforts in evangelizing, in promoting good works of every kind, and in organizing men and women for a life of fulfillment through Jesus Christ. Indefatigable energy and boundless hope led him through a time of persecution to a time of nation-wide recognition. Through it all he remained humble and wholly dedicated to God's work through men.

All of Europe legislated or fought wars to clarify lines of monarchical succession as either Protestant (as England) or Catholic (as Austria). The English government added a Prime Minister to guarantee the people's rights under the Hanoverian Succession. Everywhere serfdom was being abolished and slavery coming under attack. England came to dominate the seas and pave the way for Empire. America was the first of two great late-century revolutionary centers; the other was France.

Inventions and advances in all the sciences thrust the world into a new age. Discovery was still advancing too with the voyages of Cook. The evangelism of Whitefield and Wesley struggled against Deism and atheism. Where the century led France to divisive revolution, it led England to a new appreciation of the universe in Romanticism.

John Wesley

1703 John Wesley born

1707 Charles Wesley born

1709 Rescued from a fire at Epworth Rectory "a brand plucked from the burning"

1714 Admitted to Charterhouse School

1720 John Wesley to Oxford

1725 Ordained deacon and friendship with "Veranese"

1726 Elected fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford

1727 Takes up assistant pastorage of Wroote, Lines

1729 Returns to Oxford, takes over leadership of Holy Club

1735 Death of father Samuel. John and Charles leave for Georgia

1737 Friendship with Sophy Hopkey. John departs from America

- 1738** John Wesley's "conversion" Wednesday, May 24
- 1739** Wesley's first open-air sermon modeled after the style of George Whitefield
- 1740** Separates from Moravians
- 1741** Preaches in South Wales for first time
- 1742** Preaches in the north of England for the first time with Charles. They establish an orphanage and Sunday School
- 1744** First Methodist Conference at the Foundry, division of the country into Methodist districts
- 1746** Wesley founds a dispensary for the poor
- 1747** Preaches in Ireland for first time (first of 42 trips). Publishes *Primitive Physic*
- 1749** Officiates at wedding of Charles Wesley and Sarah Gwynne. His friendship with Grace Murray
- 1751** John marries Mrs. Vazeille. Preaches in Scotland for first time (first of 22 trips)
- 1755** Separation of John Wesley from his wife
- 1768** Opening of Methodist Chapel in New York Founding of Lady Huntington's College of Trevecca.
- 1771** Francis Asbury, later known as the "Wesley of America" sails across the Atlantic for America
- 1775** John Wesley publishes *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies*, urging obedience to Britain
- 1778** Opening of City Road Chapel, London
- 1781** Death of Wesley's wife
- 1783** John Wesley visits Holland
- 1784** John Wesley ordains Thomas Coke and others for work in America which eventually and unintentionally leads to break with the Anglican Church: "ordination is separation"
- 1787** Richard Allen forms African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia
- 1788** March 29, Charles Wesley dies
- 1791** March 2, John Wesley dies

World Events

- 1698** Jeremy Collier successfully attacks immorality and profaneness on the English stage

- 1699** Captain Kidd buries treasure near New York
- 1701** Act of Settlement establishes Protestant Hanoverian succession in Britain
- 1702** Anne Queen of England (to 1714)
- 1702** Cotton Mather publishes ecclesiastical history of New England
- 1703** Jonathan Edwards, New England puritan divine, born
- 1704** Isaac Newton publishes *Optics*, latest in succession of influential works on physics—he dominates Oxfordian thought through the century
- 1705** Edmund Halley correctly predicts the return of the comet seen in 1682
- 1707** Act of Union uniting England and Scotland under name Great Britain
- 1707** Isaac Watts' *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*—Watts is most prolific hymnwriter in England before Charles Wesley
- 1709** Steele's *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* with writing by Addison, gentlemen's newspaper with commentary on news and literary and art criticism. Wesley records reading them later.
- 1710** Leibnitz's influential statement "God created the best of all possible worlds" ridiculed later in Voltaire's *Candide*
- 1712** Last execution for witchcraft in England
- 1713** Scriblerian (literary) Club formed in London by Swift, Pope, Congreve, others. Samuel, John Wesley's brother is friend of them.
- 1713** Treaty of Utrecht ends War of Spanish Succession
- 1713** Completion of St. Paul's Cathedral, London
- 1714** George I King of England (to 1727)—speaks no English
- 1715** First Jacobite uprising in Scotland. Catholic attempt to take over Britain through Scotland
- 1716** Christian religious teaching prohibited in China
- 1717** Inoculation against smallpox introduced into England by Lady Mary Wortley Montague
- 1719** Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*
- 1720** Great South Sea Bubble, financial scheme that ruined many great bankers, especially in France
- 1721** Robert Walpole is Britain's first Prime Minister (to 1742)

1722 Herrnhut founded as Moravian settlement in Saxony by Count von Zinzendorf

1726 Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*

1727 George II King of England (to 1760)

1728 William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. Law was John Wesley's mentor for ten years

1731 Expulsion of Protestants from Salzburg

1732 George Washington born

1732 Threshing machine developed by Michael Menzies

1735 Sale of spirits prohibited in Georgia (to 1738)

1736 English statutes on witchcraft repealed

1737 Cruden's *Concordance to the Bible*.

1737 Carolus Linnaeus produces the first classification of plants by genus and species

1742 Handel's *Messiah*

1742 Voltaire, renowned atheist and biting satirist, publishes play *Mahomet the Prophet*

1743 Thomas Jefferson born

1745 The 'Forty Five,' second Jacobite uprising in Scotland and Ireland (see 1715)

1748 David Hume's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* sets the tone of rational philosophy for the rest of the century

1749 Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* depicts farm, city, and prison life at mid-century

1750 Johann Sebastian Bach dies

1752 Benjamin Franklin invents lightning conductor

1755 Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language*, a landmark of lexicography

1755 Great earthquake of Lisbon kills 30,000 people

1755 French and Indian War begins in America (to 1763)

1756 Mozart born

1756 Mayonnaise first made by Duc de Richlieu

1760 First British school for deaf and dumb opened in Edinburgh

1760 George III King of England (to 1820)

1762 Jean Jacques Rousseau's ***Social Contract*** revolutionizes political theory and later influences American Declaration of Independence and Constitution

1763 Peace of Paris among Britain, France and Spain ends Seven Years War. Britain gains Canada and virtually all land east of Mississippi River

(1763–1774) James Watt's improved design of the steam engine heralds the industrial age

1764 James Hargreaves invents Spinning Jenny

1767 World's first public piano concert

1768 Captain James Cook discovers Australia

1770 Benjamin West's painting ***The Death of Wolf***, a celebration of contemporary heroism

1771 Carl Scheele discovers oxygen

1773 Pope Clement XIV suppresses Society of Jesus (Jesuits) who have become economically and politically powerful

1773 Boston Tea Party

1775 George III releases women and children from bondage in Britain's coal and salt mines

1775 Christianity introduced in Korea

1776 American Declaration of Independence

1777 Adam Smith's ***Wealth of Nations***, landmark work of capitalism

1778 Modern flush toilet invented

1779 Franz Antio Mesmer's pseudoscientific experiments in "mesmerizing" with the power of the eye

1779 War of Bavarian Succession ends with Peace of Teschen

1780 Robert Raikes establishes a Sunday School in Gloucester

1781 American War of Independence ends with surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown

1783 First Successful hot air balloon

1784 Shaker leader Mother Ann Leedies at Watervliet, New York

1785 Edward Gibbon's ***Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*** completed, claims that Christianity caused the fall of a great culture

1787 William Wilberforce, 28, begins agitating against slavery in the British colonies

1789 French Revolution begins with storming of Bastille

1792 Denmark is first country to prohibit slave trade

1792 Eli Whitney, 27, invents Cotton Gin, as result, US cotton production jumps from 140,000 pounds in 1791 to 35 million pounds in 1800

1793 Worship of God abolished in France in extremes of French Revolution

1794 Reign of Terror in France

1798 Napoleon Bonaparte leads French Army into Egypt

1798 S.T. Coleridge and William Wordsworth's ***Lyrical Ballads*** with "Romantic Manifesto" in Preface to 1800 Second Edition forms basis of Romantic Age to come

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

Wesley's Sermon Reprints: The Use of Money

Luke 16:9

"The love of money," we know, "is the root of all evil;" but not the thing itself. The fault does not lie in the money, but in them that use it. It may be used ill; And what may not? But it may likewise be used well: It is full as applicable to the best, as to the worst uses. It is of unspeakable service to all civilized nations, in all the common affairs of life: It is a most compendious instrument of transacting all manner of business, and (if we use it according to Christian wisdom) of doing all manner of good. It is true, were man in a state of innocence, or were all men "filled with the Holy Ghost," so that, like the infant "Church at Jerusalem," no man counted any thing he has his own, but "distribution was made to everyone as he had need," the use of it would be superseded; as we cannot conceive there is anything of the kind among the inhabitants of heaven. But, in the present state of man kind, it is an excellent gift of God, answering the noblest ends. In the hands of his children it is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked: It gives to the traveler and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of a husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defense for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain; it may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame; yea, a lifter up from the gates of death!

It is, therefore, of the highest concern, that all who fear God know how to employ this valuable talent; that they may be instructed how it may answer these glorious ends, and in the highest degree. And, perhaps, all the instructions which are necessary for this may be reduced to three plain rules, by the exact observance whereof we may approve ourselves faithful stewards of "the mammon of unrighteousness."

I. 1. The First of these is, (he that heareth, let him understand!), "Gain all you can." Here we may speak like the children of the world: We meet them on their own ground. And it is our bounden duty to do this: We ought to gain all we can gain, without buying gold too dear, without paying more for it than it is worth. But this it is certain we ought not to do; we ought not to gain money at the expense of life, nor (which is in effect the same thing) at the expense of our health. Therefore, no gain whatsoever should induce us to enter into, or to continue in, any employ, which is of such a kind, or is attended with so hard or so long labour, as to impair our constitution. Neither should we begin or continue in any business which necessarily deprives us of proper seasons for food and sleep, in such proportion as our nature requires. Indeed, there is a great difference here. Some employments are absolutely and totally unhealthy; as those which imply the dealing much with arsenic, or other equally hurtful minerals, or the breathing of an air tainted with steams of melting lead, which must at length destroy the firmest constitution. Others may not be absolutely unhealthy, but only to persons of a weak constitution. Such are those that require many hours to be spent in writing; especially if a person write sitting, and lean upon his stomach, or remain long in an uneasy posture. But whatever it is which reason or experience shows to be destructive of health or strength, that we may not submit to; seeing "the life is more" valuable "than meat, and the body than raiment:" And, if we are already engaged in such an employ, we should exchange it, as soon as possible, for some which, if it lessen our gain, will, however, not lessen our health.

2. We are, Secondly, to gain all we can without hurting our mind, any more than our body. For neither may we hurt this: We must preserve, at all events, the spirit of an healthful mind. Therefore, we may not engage or continue in any sinful trade; any that is contrary to the law of God, or of our country. Such are all that necessarily imply our robbing or defrauding the king of his lawful customs.

There are yet others which many pursue with perfect innocence, without hurting their body or mind; and yet, perhaps, you cannot: Either they may entangle you in that company which would destroy your soul;

and by repeated experiments it may appear that you cannot separate the one from the other, or there may be an idiosyncrasy,—a peculiarity in your constitution or soul, (as there is in the bodily constitution of many), by reason whereof that employment is deadly to you, which another may safely follow. So I am convinced, from many experiments, I could not study, to any degree of perfection, either mathematics, arithmetic or algebra, without being a Deist, if not an Atheist: And yet others may study them all their lives without sustaining any inconvenience. None, therefore, can here determine for another; but every man must judge for himself, and abstain from whatever he in particular finds to be hurtful to his soul.

3. We are, Thirdly, to gain all we can, without hurting our neighbor. But this we may not, cannot do, if we love our neighbor as ourselves. We cannot, if we love everyone as ourselves, hurt anyone **in his substance**. We cannot devour the increase of his lands, and perhaps the lands and houses themselves by gaming, by over-grown bills, (whether on account of physic, or law, or anything else), or by requiring or taking such interest as even the laws of our country forbid. Hereby all pawn-broking is excluded: Seeing, whatever good we might do thereby, all unprejudiced men see with grief to be abundantly overbalanced by the evil. And if it were otherwise, yet we are not allowed to "do evil that good may come." We cannot, consistent with brotherly love, sell our goods below the market-price, we cannot study to ruin our neighbor's trade, in order to advance our own; much less can we entice away, or receive, any of his servants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain by swallowing up his neighbor's substance, without gaining the damnation of hell!

4. Neither may we gain by hurting our neighbor **in his body**. Therefore we may not sell any thing which tends to impair health. Such is, eminently, all that liquid fire, commonly called drams, or spiritous liquor. It is true, these may have a place in medicine, they may be of use in some bodily disorders although there would rarely be occasion for them were it not for the unskillfulness of the practitioner. Therefore, such as prepare and sell them only for this end may keep their conscience clear. But who are they? Who prepare them only for this end? Do you know ten such distillers in England? Then excuse these. But all who sell them in the common way, to any that will buy, are poisoners general. They murder His Majesty's subjects by wholesale, neither does their eye pity or spare. They drive them to hell like sheep. And what is their gain? Is it not the blood of these men? Who then would envy their large estates and sumptuous palaces?
...

5. And are not they partakers of the same guilt, though in a lower degree, whether Surgeons, Apothecaries, or Physicians, who play with the lives or health of men, to enlarge their own gain? Who purposely lengthen the pain or disease, which they are able to remove speedily? Who protract the cure of their patient's body, in order to plunder his substance? Can any man be clear before God who does not shorten every disorder "as much as he can," and remove all sickness and pain "as soon as he can?" He cannot: For nothing can be more clear, than that he does not "love his neighbor as himself;" than that he does not "do unto others, as he would they should do unto himself."

6. This is dear-bought gain. And so is whatever is procured by hurting our neighbor **in his soul**; by ministering, suppose, either directly or indirectly, to his unchastity, or intemperance; which certainly none can do, who has any fear of God, or any real desire of pleasing Him. It nearly concerns all those to consider this, who have anything to do with taverns, victualling-houses, opera-houses play-houses, or any other places of public, fashionable diversion. If these profit the souls of men, you are clear; your employment is good, and your gain innocent; but if they are either sinful in themselves, or natural inlets to sin of various kinds, then, it is to be feared, you have a sad account to make. O beware, lest God say in that day, "These have perished in their iniquity, but their blood do I require at thy hands!"

7. These cautions and restrictions being observed, it is the bounder duty of all who are engaged in worldly business to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom, with respect to money, "Gain all you can." Gain all you can by honest industry. Use all possible diligence in your calling. Lose no time ... And do it as well as possible. Do not sleep or yawn over it: Put your whole strength to the work. Spare no pains. Let nothing be done by halves, or in a slight and careless manner. Let nothing in your business be left undone, if it can be done by labour or patience.

8. Gain all you can, by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you. You should be continually learning . . . from the experience of others, or from your own experience, reading, and reflection, to do everything you have to do better today than you did yesterday. And see that you practice whatever you learn, that you may make the best of all that is in your hands.

II. 1. Having gained all you can, by honest wisdom, and unwearied diligence, the Second rule of Christian prudence is, "Save all you can." Do not throw the precious talent into the sea: Leave that folly to heathen philosophers. Do not throw it away in idle expenses, which is just the same as throwing it into the sea. Expend no part of it merely to gratify the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life.

2. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desires of the flesh; in procuring the pleasures of sense, of whatever kind; particularly in enlarging the pleasure of tasting. I do not mean, avoid gluttony and drunkenness only: An honest Heathen would condemn these. But there is a regular, reputable kind of sensuality, an elegant epicurism, which does not immediately disorder the stomach, nor (sensibly at least) impair the understanding; and yet (to mention no other effects of it now) it cannot be maintained without considerable expense. Cut off all this expense! Despise delicacy and variety, and be content with what plain nature requires.

3. Do not waste any part of so precious a talent, merely in gratifying the desire of the eye, by superfluous or expensive apparel, or by needless ornaments. Waste no part of it in curiously adorning your houses; in superfluous or expensive furniture; in costly pictures, painting, gliding, books; in elegant rather than useful gardens. Let your neighbors, who know nothing better, do this: "Let the dead bury their dead." But "what is that to thee?" says our Lord: "Follow thou me." Are you willing? Then you are able so to do!

4. Lay out nothing to gratify the pride of life, to gain the admiration or praise of men. This motive of expense is frequently interwoven with one or both of the former. Men are expensive in diet, or apparel, or furniture, not barely to please their appetite, or to gratify their eye, or their imagination, but their vanity too ...

5. Who would expend anything in gratifying these desires, if he considered, that to gratify them is to increase them? Nothing can be more certain than this: Daily experience shows, the more they are indulged, they increase the more. Whenever, therefore, you expend anything to please your taste or other senses, you pay so much for sensuality. When you lay out money to please your eye, you give so much for an increase of curiosity—for a stronger attachment to these pleasures which perish in the using. While you are purchasing anything which men use to applaud, you are purchasing more vanity. Had you not then enough of vanity, sensuality, curiosity, before? Was there any need of any addition? And would you pay for it too? What manner of wisdom is this? Would not the literally throwing of your money into the sea be a less mischievous folly?

6. And why should you throw away money on your children, any more than upon yourself, in delicate food, in gay or costly apparel, in superfluities of any kind? Why should you purchase for them more pride or lust, more vanity, or foolish and hurtful desires? They do not want any more; they have enough already; nature has made ample provision for them: Why should you be at further expense to increase their temptation and snares, and to pierce them through with more sorrows.?

7. Do not leave it to them to throw away. If you have good reason to believe they would waste what is now in your possession, in gratifying, and thereby increasing, the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eye, or the pride of life; at the peril of theirs and your own soul, so not set these traps in their way ...

8. "What then would you do, if you were in my case? If you had a considerable fortune to leave?" Whether I **would** do it or no, I know what I **ought** to do: This will admit of no reasonable question. If I had one

child, elder or younger, who knew the value of money, one who, I believed, would put it to the true use, I should think it my absolute, indispensable duty, to leave that child the bulk of my fortune, and to the rest just so much as would enable them to live in the manner they had been accustomed to do. "But what if all your children were equally ignorant in the true use of money?" I ought then (hard saying! who can hear it?) to give each what would keep him above want, and to bestow all the rest in such a manner as I judged would be most for the glory of God.

III. 1. But let not any man imagine that he has done anything, barely by going thus far, by "gaining and saving all he can," if he were to stop here. All this is nothing, if a man go not forward, if he does not point all this at a farther end. Nor, indeed, can a man properly be said to save anything, if he only lays it up. You may as well throw your money into the sea, as bury it in the earth. And you may as well bury it in the earth, as in your chest, or in the bank of England. Not to use, is effectually to throw it away. If, therefore, you would indeed "make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness," add the Third rule to the two preceding. Having, First, gained all you can, and, Secondly, saved all you can, Then "give all you can."

2. In order to see the ground and reason of this, consider, when the Possessor of heaven and earth brought you into being, and placed you in this world, he placed you here, not as a proprietor, but a steward: As such he entrusted you, for a season, with goods of various kinds; but the sole property of these still rests in him, nor can ever be alienated from him. As you yourself are not your own, but his, such is, likewise, all that you enjoy. Such is your soul and your body, not your own, but God's. And so is your substance in particular. And he has told you, in the most clear and express terms, how you are to employ it for him, in such a manner, that it may be all a holy sacrifice, acceptable through Jesus Christ. And this light, easy service, he hath promised to reward with an eternal weight of glory.

3. The directions which God has given us, touching the use of our worldly substance, may be compromised in the following particulars. If you desire to be a faithful and wise steward, out of that portion of your Lord's goods which he has for the present lodged in your hands, but with the right of resuming when ever it pleases him, First, provide things needful to yourself; food to eat, raiment to put on, whatever nature moderately requires for preserving the body in health and strength. Secondly, provide these for your wife, your children, your servants, or any others who pertain to your household. If, when this is done, there be an over plus left, then "do good to them that are of the household of faith." If you have an overplus still, "as you have opportunity, do good unto all men." In so doing, you give all you can; nay, in a sound sense, all you have: For all that is laid out in this manner is really given to God. You "render unto God the things that are God's," not only by what you give to the poor, but also by that which you expend in providing things needful for yourself and your household. ...

Render unto God, not a tenth, not a third, not half, but all that is God's, be it more or less; by employing all on yourself, your household, the household of faith, and all mankind, in such a manner, that you may give a good account of your stewardship. I entreat you, in the name of the Lord Jesus, act up to the dignity of your calling! No more sloth! Whatsoever your hand findeth to do, do it with your might! No more waste! Cut off every expense which fashion, caprice, or flesh and blood demand! No more covetousness! But employ whatever God has trusted you with, in doing good, all possible good, in every possible kind and degree, to the household of faith, to all men! This is no small part of "the wisdom of the just." Give all ye have, all well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to Him who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son: So "laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come that ye may attain eternal life!"

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

John Wesley and Women

Intense, charismatic, indomitable, John Wesley lived according to rules established by the only woman living in his time who may have been his equal—Susanna Wesley, his mother. But women for Wesley were a special class of beings with spiritual sensitivity and with gifts for elevated conversation and correspondence. Throughout his life John Wesley was naturally attracted to women, and he attracted a wide range of women to him. Although he was disappointed in love and more so in his marriage, nevertheless, for spiritual comradeship, Wesley especially cherished contact with faithful women.

With men it was otherwise. From his father Samuel and his brothers, particularly Samuel and Charles, to his mentor William Law, to his Holy Club associates, to the Moravians Peter Boehler and Christian David, the early male influences on John Wesley were vigorous and deep, but he systematically transcended any single male influence and by 1738 was finally freely himself. Wesley had the gift of attracting men with the highest personal powers to himself and of organizing them effectively. He used men, he led men. But among men perhaps only his brother Charles was a real, lifelong friend. All other male relationships seem to have been professional in the highest sense—in doing God's work.

So profound was the influence of Susanna Wesley upon her son John Wesley that she has been called "The Mother of Methodism." But the force of her character was also an obstacle to John Wesley's appreciation of women in general, for what woman could possibly have measured up to her?

Susanna Wesley's regime at the parsonage was very strict even by eighteenth century standards. She bore many children—John was the fourteenth—but Susanna Wesley knew precisely what to do with them. She broke her children's wills early so that their young minds could be formed in a wholly Christian fashion. Beatings were administered frequently, and the children learned to cry softly so that they would not be beaten again. Devotions were held before daybreak each day, and study was a normal part of the daily routine for all the family. Harsh cold and a sparse diet also prepared the way ahead for John.

Susanna and Samuel Wesley agreed in their manner of governing the home. The childhood of ministers' children was a product both of the low salary paid to ministers and of the minister's desire to maintain a dignity above any class distinction. Ministers were the educated class, and they prepared their children for the hardship of getting through the best schools without a family fortune behind them. John Wesley won scholarships and a fellowship to put himself through. In his journals and letters he never wrote of one regret for his childhood, and indeed again and again prescribed his own upbringing as the ideal Christian childhood.

In the year that Samuel Wesley died, his two sons John and Charles asked their mother whether they should proceed to Georgia to do the ministerial work for which they had been invited. She answered that indeed they should—even if she should never see them again. Her devotion to God called for the joyful sacrifice of all her children for His glory. Can there be any question why John Wesley, brought up with such a model of Christian sacrifice, was impatient with his early congregations for their easygoing ways?

John Wesley's home was not exclusively dour and serious. He and Charles, being educated and eligible young men, naturally fell in with the upperclass society. In those days children in such circles amused themselves by assuming names and carrying on platonic or abstract philosophical correspondence. John was "Cyrus" and his first love was Sally Kirkham, who was "Varanese." This relationship was different

from that typical of contemporary youth. There was nothing whatsoever physical about it. The record in Wesley's journal is in code and is sketchy—it is clear, though, that John Wesley was reticent even to tell the young girl that he was fond of her. She was the last person of her social position to whom Wesley was personally attracted except through his ministerial role.

After this nebulous first love, John Wesley continued to circulate in the country-house culture, occasionally taking a glass of wine, dancing with his sister, or reading the fashionable literature of his day. Only when he went to Georgia was he again attracted by a young girl, but now the situation was public, not private.

"Sophy" Hopkey was one of John Wesley's young parishoners in Georgia. She was, by all accounts, not very , exceptional, but Wesley saw a lot of her. They would go walking or riding or picnicking. The relationship was not physical in the least. In fact, John Wesley waited so long to tell her that he cared for her that "Sophy" pledged herself to another man. That was betrayal in Wesley's mind, and he took revenge in a most uncharitable way—he refused to perform the marriage ceremony for the girl on the basis of narrow legalistic grounds. As a result, the whole community was in an uproar, and Wesley literally fled the territory, departed for England, and never went to America again. So by the time of his Aldersgate conversion, Wesley had suffered two defeats in love—one minor, the other somewhat unsettling.

Wesley's third encounter with romance was with Grace Murray, who had been his nurse during an illness. Grateful for the kindness she had shown him, Wesley employed her as his assistant while he preached around the country. She was devoted to him, and he became very attached to her. They decided on marriage, but unfortunately Charles and John each had agreed to allow the other to approve or disapprove of his choice of a bride. Charles not only disapproved, but upon discovering the plan, he rode immediately to Grace Murray and forced her to break the engagement and to marry one of John's preachers. No one knows what was said at the interview or why Grace Murray so radically changed her mind, but John Wesley was crushed.

Charles' preemptive strike had a very bad consequence. The next time John Wesley decided to marry, he did so in secret, and the marriage was consummated before Charles knew anything about it. This marriage—to Mrs. Vazeille—was one of the worst mistakes of his life.

Mrs. Vazeille was the wife of a sailor, who was lost at sea during a voyage made shortly after he and his wife had argued about Mrs. Vazeille's frequenting Methodist societies. One novelist has postulated that his death was the gallant suicide of a wronged husband, but nothing really is known concerning the circumstances. Mrs. Vazeille, now Mrs. Wesley, became insanely jealous of her husband, reading his mail for incriminating evidence. She embarrassed her husband in public on numerous occasions. At first she tried to keep up with Wesley in his routine, but finally she could not. The two separated, but never divorced. Wesley's journal entries are significantly cold and detached in their mention of her, even when they record her death.

Clearly, John Wesley never had a satisfactory love relation in the full sense of the term with anyone. "Varanese," "Sophy" Hopkey, and Grace Murray were all will-o-the-wisps, though Grace Murray may have turned out as more than that if Charles had not interfered. Mrs. Vazeille was like a judgment. But what woman could pass family muster or withstand the hardships imposed by Wesley on himself and his associates? With physical relationships closed to him, Wesley concentrated on platonic, non-physical ones.

Selina, Countess of Huntington, one of those who walked out of the Moravian society with Wesley, remained a friend for life. Even though later she personally favored George Whitefield's Calvinism to Wesley's Methodism, she maintained her communications with Wesley and was a voice for him in high places. When Wesley told hostile justices that his power was from the throne, he in part meant that he

had powerful friends in court—like the Countess.

Farther down the social chain were women, who, like many women today, had deep, visionary experiences. Whenever Wesley heard of such a woman, he would interview her and minutely record the experience in his journal. Brought up to consider the world as alive with supernatural powers, Wesley often went out of his way to find this kind of informant, whether male or female. But he seems to have considered women more susceptible to such experiences than men. In the same vein, Wesley records every instance of prophecy and of what we now call telepathy in women. He produced no treatise on the subject, but his scientific interest in women was profound and lasting.

For Wesley women had equal stature to men in God's eyes. He used women in his work, and he elaborated on the special service of women who died doing good for the poor and for prisoners. He did not see equality in God's sight as meaning equality in the world of work or in the world of ordained preachers. But this should not diminish the importance of his elevation of women well above their station in the Anglican Church. Only recently has Wesley's idea of women's roles been explored in biographical studies of some of the early Methodist women, done by women whose own advances chronicle an ongoing development of roles for women in the churches that have sprung from his teachings.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm for John Wesley's contemporaries was no less than a dread disease. It was the opposite, even the deadly enemy of rationality, which was for eighteenth-century man the only healthy state of mind.

The Greek from which "enthusiasm" was taken meant possession by a divine spirit. For people who found fulfillment in being possessed in this way, enthusiasm was the most favorable state of existence. For their enemies enthusiasm was a term of ridicule or worse. So it is today.

Meric Casaubon wrote a treatise against the disease of enthusiasm before Wesley's ministry began. This treatise became a handbook of symptoms of the disease. Other treatises and pamphlets flooded the presses to warn people against enthusiasm.

So when George Whitefield and John Wesley began their ministry, they were called enthusiasts because they preached the Holy Spirit. The majority of people hungered for their appeal to non-rational impulses, but ministers of the Anglican Church, who hated enthusiasm, shut their doors to this renewed appeal to deep spiritual reserves.

For Wesley enthusiasm took many forms, the only acceptable one being the operation of grace in individuals. Wesley was very careful to distinguish this experience from the other kinds of enthusiasm, which were like the forms of hysteria or possession by diabolical spirits.

George Whitefield had a reputation for appealing to all levels and kinds of emotions from the pulpit. Wesley suffered under comparisons to Whitefield. To make matters worse, some of Wesley's followers exploited the worst kinds of enthusiasm. Wesley himself was criticized by Samuel Johnson, whose rationality was offended by the powerful effects of a sermon delivered by Wesley.

The clearest statement Wesley made on enthusiasm is his sermon ***On Enthusiasm***, which is a balanced assessment: of right enthusiasm against the wrong sorts.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Wesley to Wilberforce

John Wesley's last letter from his deathbed

Written February 24, 1791 at age 88 from Balam, England, six days before his death, this last letter of Wesley's was addressed to William Wilberforce. Wesley had spoken out forcibly against slavery, repeatedly referring to the slave trade as the "execrable sum of all villainies". In 1774 he wrote the influential *Thoughts Upon Slavery*.

Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament, was active at the time in an unsuccessful attempt to pass abolition. Debate continued for several years and in 1807 the abolition of slavery was effected throughout the British Empire.

The text of the letter is given below and can be used to follow the aged, faltering hand of the still hearty Wesley. The "tract" to which Wesley refers was written by a former slave, Gustavus Vassa, who was born in 1745 in Africa, kidnapped and sold for a slave in Barbados. In 1757 he was sent to England and, according to church records, was soon converted to Christianity.

24 February, 1791

Balam. England

Dear Sir:

Unless the divine power has raised you up to be as "Athanasius against the world," I see not how you can go through your glorious enterprise in opposing that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature. Unless God has raised you up for this very thing, you will be worn out by the opposition of men and devils. But if God be for you, who can be against you? Are all of them stronger than God? O be not weary of well-doing! Go on, in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.

Reading this morning a tract wrote by a poor African, I was particularly struck by the circumstance, that a man who has a black skin being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a LAW in all of our Colonies that the OATH of a black man against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this!

That He who has guided you from youth up may continue to strengthen you in this and all things is the prayer of, dear sir,

Your affectionate servant,

John Wesley

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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John Wesley: From the Journal

In the previous edition of Christian History we printed excerpts from John Wesley's Journal describing key moments in his spiritual growth and discovery. A large reader response to this particular article prompts us to include here further comments from the Journal wherein Wesley summarizes his early spiritual journey, concluding with his conversion.

Wednesday, May 24, 1738

What occurred on Wednesday May 24, 1738, I think best to relate at large, after premising what may make it the better understood. Let him that cannot receive it, ask of the Father of lights, that he would give more light to him and me.

1. I believe, till I was about ten years old, I had not sinned away that **Washing of the Holy Ghost** which was given me in baptism, having been strictly educated and carefully taught, that I could only be saved **by universal obedience, by keeping all the commandments of God**; in the meaning of which I was diligently instructed. And those instructions, so far as they respected outward duties and sins, I gladly received, and often thought of. But all that was said to me of inward obedience, or holiness, I neither understood nor remembered. So that I was indeed as ignorant of the true meaning of the law as I was of the Gospel of Christ.

2. The next six or seven years were spent at school; where outward restraints being removed, I was much more negligent than before even of outward duties, and almost continually guilty of outward sins, which I knew to be such, though they were not scandalous in the eye of the world. However I still read the Scriptures, and said my prayers morning and evening. And what I now hoped to be saved by was, 1. **Not being so bad as other people.** 2. **Having still a kindness for religion.** And 3. **Reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers.**

3. Being removed to the university, for five years, I still said my prayers both in public and private, and read with my Scriptures several other books of religion, especially comments on the New Testament. Yet I had not all this while so much as a notion of inward holiness; nay, went on habitually, and, for the most part, very contentedly, in some or other known sin: Indeed with some intermissions and short struggles, especially before and after the Holy Communion, which I was obliged to receive thrice a year. I cannot well tell what I hoped to be saved by now, when I was continually sinning against that little light I had; unless by those transient fits of what many divines taught me to call **Repentance.**

4. A When I was about twenty-two, my father pressed me to enter into Holy Orders. At the same time the Providence of God directing me to **Kempis's Christian Pattern**, I began to see that true Religion was seated in the heart, and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions. I was however very angry at Kempis for being **too strict**, though I read him only in Dean Stanhope's translation. Yet I had frequently much sensible comfort in reading him, such as I was an utter stranger to before. And meeting likewise with a religious friend, which I never had until now, I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a **New Life.** I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at and pray for inward holiness. So that now, **doing so much, and living so good a life**, I doubted not but I was a good Christian.

5. Removing soon to another College, I executed a resolution, which I was before convinced was of the utmost importance, shaking off at once all my trifling acquaintance. I began to see more and more the value of time. I applied myself closer to study. I watched more carefully against actual sins: I advised others to be religious, according to the scheme of religion by which I modeled my own life. But meeting now with Mr. Law's *Christian Perfection and Serious Call* (although I was much offended at many parts of both, yet) they convinced me more than ever of the exceeding height, and breadth, and depth of the law of God. The light flowed in so mightily upon my soul that everything appeared in a new view. I cried to God for help, and resolved not to prolong the time of obeying him as I had never done before. And by my continued *endeavour to keep his whole law*, inward and outward, *to the utmost of my power*, I was persuaded that I should be accepted of him, and that I was even then in a state of salvation.

6. In 1730, I began visiting the prisons, assisting the poor and sick in town, and doing what other good I could by my presence, or my little fortune, to the bodies and souls of all men. To this end I abridged myself of all superfluities, and many that are called necessities of life. I soon became *a by-word* for so doing, and I rejoiced that *my name was cast out as evil*. The next Spring I began observing the Wednesday and Friday Fasts, commonly observed in the ancient church; tasting no food until three in the afternoon. And now I knew not how to go any further. I diligently strove against all sin. I omitted no sort of self-denial which I thought lawful; I carefully used, both in public and in private, all the means of grace at all opportunities. I omitted no occasion of doing good. I for that reason suffered evil. And all this I knew to be nothing, unless it was directed toward inward holiness. Accordingly this (the image of God) was what I aimed at in all, by doing his will, not my own. Yet when after continuing some years in this course, I apprehended myself to be near death, I could not find that all this gave me any comfort, or any assurance of acceptance with God. At this I was not then a little surprised; not imagining I had been all this time building on the sand, (not so; I was right as far as I went) not considering that *other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid by God, even Christ Jesus*.

7. Soon after a contemplative man convinced me. still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone: and in several conversations instructed me how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God. But even of his instructions, though I then received them as the words of God, I cannot but now observe, 1. That he spoke so incautiously against *trusting in outward works*, that he discouraged me from *doing* them at all. 2. That he recommended, as it were to supply what was wanting in them, *mental prayer*, and the like exercises, as the most effectual means of purifying the soul, and uniting it with God. Now these were in truth, as much *my own works* as visiting the sick or clothing the naked, and the *union with God* thus pursued, was as really *my own unrighteousness*, as any I had before pursued, under another name.

8. In this *refined* way of trusting to my own works and my own righteousness, so zealously inculcated by the *Mystic* writers, I dragged on heavily, finding no comfort or help therein, till the time of my leaving England. On shipboard, however, I was again active in outward works: where it pleased God, of his free mercy, to give my twenty-six of the Moravian brethren for companions, who endeavored to shew me a more excellent way. But I understood it not at first. I was too learned and too wise; so that it seemed foolishness unto me. And I continued... trusting in that righteousness whereby no flesh can be justified.

9. All the time I was at Savannah I was thus *beating the air*. Being ignorant of the righteousness of Christ, which, by a living faith in him bringeth salvation *to every one that believeth*, I sought to establish my own righteousness, and so laboured in the fire all my days. I was now, properly *under the Law*; I knew that the Law of God was spiritual; "I consented to it that it was good. Yea, I delighted in it, after the inner man." Yet I was "carnal, sold under sin." Every day I was constrained to cry out, "What I do, I allow not; for what I would I do not, but what I hate, that I do. To will is indeed present with me; but how to perform that which is good, I find not. For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do. I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me: Even the

law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and still bringing me into the captivity to the law of sin."

10. In this state, I was indeed fighting continually, but not conquering. Before, I had willingly served sin; now it was unwillingly, but still I served it. I fell and rose, and fell again. Sometimes I was overcome, and in heaviness: Sometimes I overcame, and was in joy. For, as in the former state, I had some foretastes of the terrors of the Law, so had I in this, of the comforts of the Gospel. During this whole struggle between nature and grace, which had now continued above ten years, I had many remarkable returns to prayer, especially when I was in trouble: I had many sensible comforts, which are indeed no other than short anticipations of the life of faith. But I was still **under the Law**, not **under Grace**, the state most who are called Christians are content to live and die in. For I was only **striving with**, not **freed from sin**: Neither has **the witness of the Spirit with my spirit**. And indeed could not: for "I sought it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the Law."

11. In my return to England, January 1738, being in imminent danger of death, and very uneasy on that account, I was strongly convinced that the cause of that uneasiness was unbelief, and that the gaining a true, living faith was the **one thing needful for me**. But still I fixt not this faith on its right object: I meant only faith in God, not faith in or through Christ. Again, I knew not that I was **wholly void of this faith**; but only thought, **I had not enough of it**. So that when Peter Boehler, whom God prepared for me as soon as I came to London, affirmed of true faith in Christ, which is but one, that it had those two fruits inseparably attending it, "Dominion over sin, and constant peace from a sense of forgiveness," I was quite amazed, and looked upon it as a new Gospel. If this were so, it was clear I had not faith ...

12. ... they added with one mouth, that this faith was the gift, the free gift of God, and that he would surely bestow it upon every soul, who earnestly and perseveringly sought it. I was now thoroughly convinced; and, by the grace of God, I resolved to seek it unto the end, 1. By absolutely renouncing all dependence, in whole or in part, upon **my own** works or righteousness, on which I had really grounded my hope of salvation, though I knew it not, from my youth up. 2. By adding to **the constant use of all the other means of grace**, continual prayer for this very thing, justifying, saving faith, a full reliance on the blood of Christ, shed for **me**; a trust in him, as **my** Christ, as **my** sole justification, sanctification and redemption ...

13. In the evening, I went very unwillingly to a Society in Aldersgate-Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ; Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me, that he had taken away **my** sins, even **mine**, and saved **me** from the law of sin and death.

14. I began to pray with all my might for those who had in a more especial manner despitefully used me and persecuted me. I then testified openly to all there, what I now first felt in my heart. But it was not long before the enemy suggested, "This cannot be Faith; for where is thy joy?" Then was I taught, that "Peace and victory over sin, are essential to Faith in the Captain of our salvation: But, that as to the transports of joy that usually attend the beginning of it, especially in those who had mourned deeply, God sometimes giveth, sometimes withholdeth them, according to the counsels of his own will."

15. After my return home, I was much buffeted with temptations: But cried out, and they fled away. They returned again and again. I as often lifted up my eyes, and he "sent me help from his holy place." And herein I found the difference between this and my former state chiefly consisted. I was striving, yea, fighting with all my might under the law, as well as under grace. But then I was sometimes, if not often, conquered; now, I was always conqueror.

CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

Fruits of Breaking Wesley's Code

In addition to his popular journals Wesley also kept personal Diaries written in a secret code. Sample entries are shown above. They have largely remained a mystery until recently when they were decoded by Dr. Richard Heitzenrater of Perkins School of Theology who accomplished the monumental task of deciphering the complex web of numbers, letters, and minute marks.

Dr. Heitzenrater told us that Wesley's personal code "incorporates (a) two systems of shorthand, (b) a changing cipher, (c) innumerable cryptic abbreviations, (d) a series of symbols, and (e) a variety of complex number schemes."

The diaries form a densely-packed matrix of detailed information about Wesley's daily life—particularly his formative years at Oxford (1725–35). They give in rapid fire the events and spiritual observances and Wesley's instantaneous responses to them. For example, minute marks indicate such "degrees of attention" at, say prayer, as dead, cold, indifferent, attentive, fervent, or zealous.

John Wesley's use of code in his diaries was not unusual. Many of his contemporaries used shorthand and codes in letters and diaries for economy and secrecy. The discovery of the diary of Benjamin Ingham, another Oxford Methodist, helped in the breaking of Wesley's code. And both persons' works can be used to clarify the Oxford movement of their time.

According to Heitzenrater, the diaries do not cloak "purple passages," but rather open up Wesley's private life as a pious Oxford don. The diaries show that the roots of Methodism grew in Wesley's Oxford experience. Books he read (over one hundred each year!), social action he performed, and rules for holy living as he refined them will now allow a thorough reevaluation of Wesley's Oxford years.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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A Whimsical Epitaph

Taken from "Tales of a Wesleyana Collector" by Frederick F. Maser

Wesley began publication of *The Arminian Magazine* in 1778 and it gained great popularity among the early Methodists. One piece that appeared in 1786 illustrates the capacity for humor among Wesley and his followers. Give yourself a few moments of enjoyment and decipher the piece. The only clue we will give you is that the text does rhyme. If you get stuck or want to check your solution, see Solution to "A Whimsical Epitaph"

The magazine introduced and presented the item as follows:

To be jocular in death is preposterous; nor is it less-so to inscribe low jests on the Monuments of the dead. We insert the following as a remarkable instance of this sort of buffoonery, found, in a country Church-yard, on the tombstone of one Katharine Gray, who in her lifetime had been a dealer in earthen-ware. To understand this ridiculous piece, you are to follow the letters, till they make up a word: not regarding whether they be great or small; nor how they are divided or pointed.

Solution to "A Whimsical Epitaph"

Beneath this stone lies Katharine Gray, chang'd from a busy life to lifeless clay. By earth and clay she got her pelf, and now she's turn'd to earth herself. Ye weeping friends let me advise, abate your grief and dry your eyes. For what avails a flood of tears; who knows but in a run of years, in some tall pitcher or broad pan, she in her shop may be again.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

A Joyful Sound

"The Poet of the Evangelical Revival," Charles Wesley composed around 6500 hymns and has been called "The Father of Methodist Hymnody" and "the greatest hymn writer of all ages." At first the Methodist hymns appeared in print under both John's and Charles' names, but it is generally agreed that John's contribution was in translating hymns from other languages into English; Charles was the composer of original hymns.

What Charles provided was a plain and simple hymnody to complement his brother's plain and simple preaching. Song from the beginning was a major part of the Methodist program. Charles' production of hymns is like his brother's endurance in preaching. Although few people read John's sermons today, much less use them in devotional exercises, many people still sing Charles' hymns, which are a part of nearly every Protestant hymnal.

Charles was vastly more popular than the great hymn writer of the previous age—Isaac Watts (1674–1748). A sign of his love of music is his sons' and grandson's professional involvement in the music world.

Among the familiar hymns of Charles Wesley are:

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul"

"O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

"Hark, the Herald Angels Sing"

"And Can It Be That I Should Gain?"

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

"Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"

To many of his sophisticated contemporaries, the hymns of Charles Wesley were controversial. Today, his hymns are among the classics of hymnody.

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CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 2: John Wesley: Leader of the Methodist Movement

John Wesley: Recommended Resources

The Wesley Works Project, whose *Works of John Wesley* was formerly published by the Oxford University Press, will provide definitive editions of all of John Wesley's works, including a decoded version of the coded *Diaries*. The last of four Oxford volumes—the Hymns—will appear this year. The rest (some thirty-odd) are nearly all ready for press. But until we have them in hand, we will have to depend on the old standbys like Curnock's *Journal*, Telford's *Letters* (Baker's Letters goes to 1755), and the old fourteen volume Jackson edition of *The Works* (1829–31; rpt. 1978). The monumental new complete works, under the general editorship of Frank Baker, Emeritus of Duke University, will provide material for scholars for the next hundred years. The best work for selections from Wesley is Albert Outler's paperback *John Wesley*.

Wesley biography perhaps necessarily lags behind textual scholarship. Lacking a truly definitive biography, we must look to Vivian H. H. Green's *John Wesley*. John Pudney's picture-filled *John Wesley and His World* is a good overview and introduction.

The 1984 Bicentennial has stimulated the production of many good new works and some reprints. Noteworthy are the outstanding bibliography of United Methodist Studies by Kenneth Rowe, and *Women in New Worlds*, the two-volume collection of essays about women in the Methodist movement, edited by Rosemary Keller, Hilah Thomas and (for volume 2) Louise L. Queen. Write to Abington, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37202 for further information.

The best handy reference work on Methodism is Nolan B. Harmon's *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (2 Vols.), and the best collection of excerpts about American Methodism is Frederick A. Norwood's Sourcebook of American Methodism.

See the journals *Methodist History*, *Circuit Rider*, and *Quarterly Review*

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