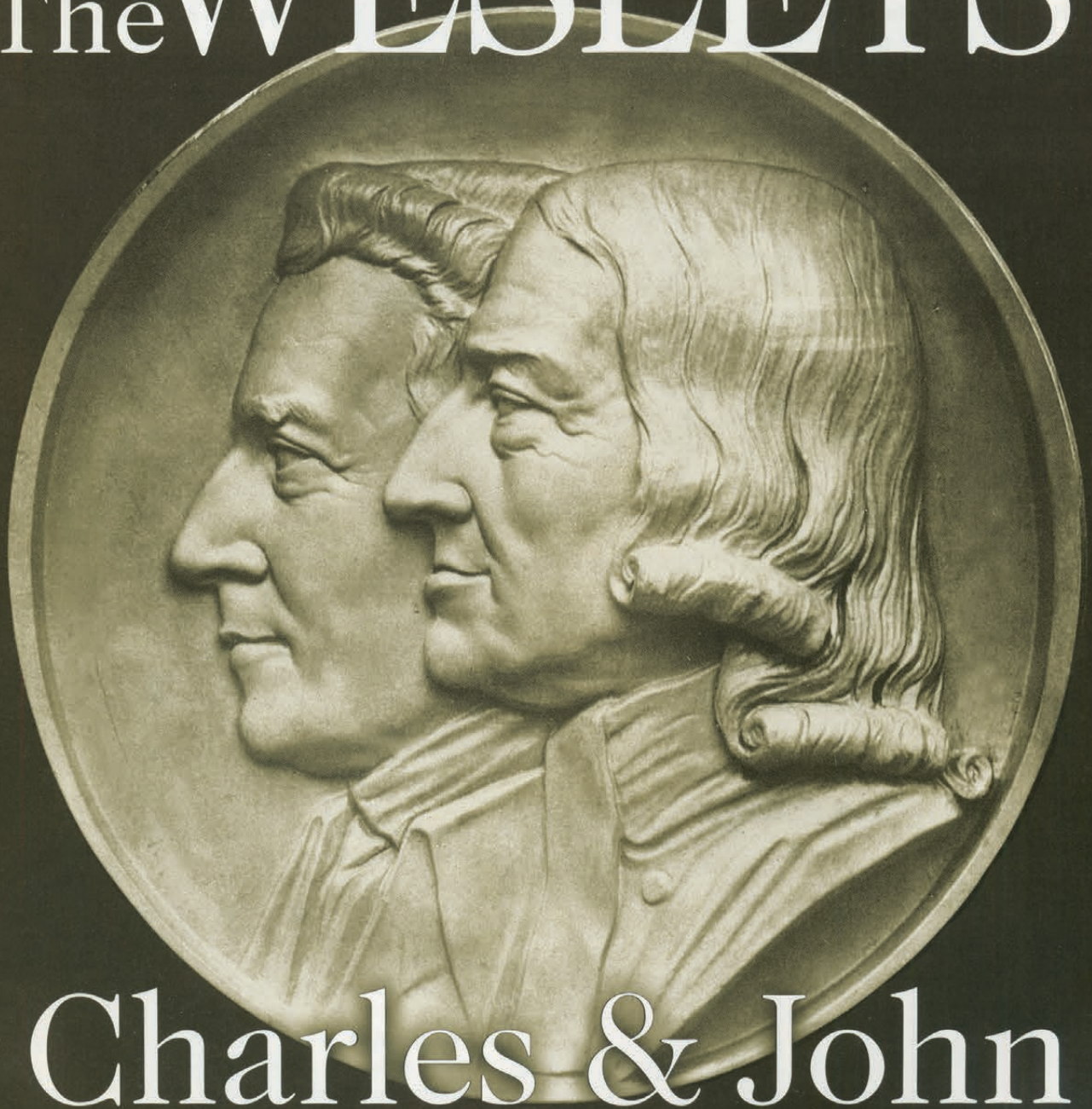


Christian History

ISSUE 69 • Reprint

The WESLEYS



Charles & John

Their struggle for perfection strained their relationship
and sparked revival on two continents.

Did You Know?

Interesting and unusual facts about John and Charles Wesley.

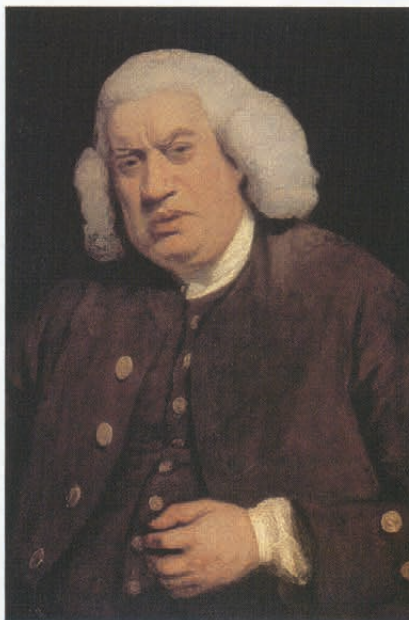
ELESHA COFFMAN

Christmas Miracle

When Charles was born, on December 18, 1707, his parents thought he was dead because he neither cried nor opened his eyes. He was several weeks premature, so they wrapped him in wool until the day he should have been delivered. He eventually came around and apparently had a healthy childhood. His parents lost eight or nine other children in infancy.

Books Are Made for Walking

The Wesley brothers never hitched a ride from college—they walked the 150 miles to Epworth instead. The journey was often marred by bad roads, inclement weather, and even highwaymen. To make matters worse, the brothers read books while they walked. The trip scared their father so badly that he once told them, “I should be so pleased to see ye here this spring, if it was not upon the hard conditions of your walking hither.” John maintained that reading for 10 of his 25 daily miles never caused any harm.



Prickly Peer

The curmudgeonly Samuel Johnson (1709–1784) had mixed feelings about the Wesleys. He knew John at Oxford, and said of him, “John Wesley’s conversation is good, but he is never at leisure. He is always obliged to go at a certain hour. This is very

disagreeable to a man who loves to fold his legs and have out his talk, as I do.” Johnson later applauded Oxford’s expulsion of six Methodist students (see page 22), which could hardly have endeared him to the movement’s founding family. Yet at the end of his life, he wanted to invite John’s brilliant but financially restricted sister Martha to live at his house. Unfortunately, Johnson died before his wish could be carried out.

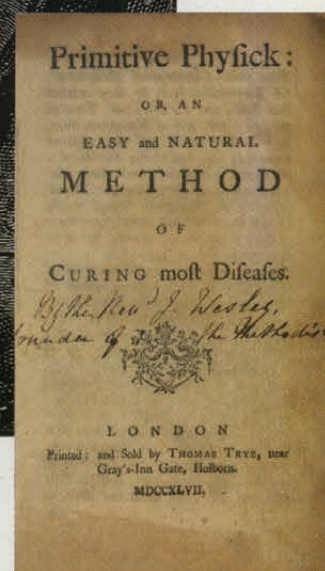
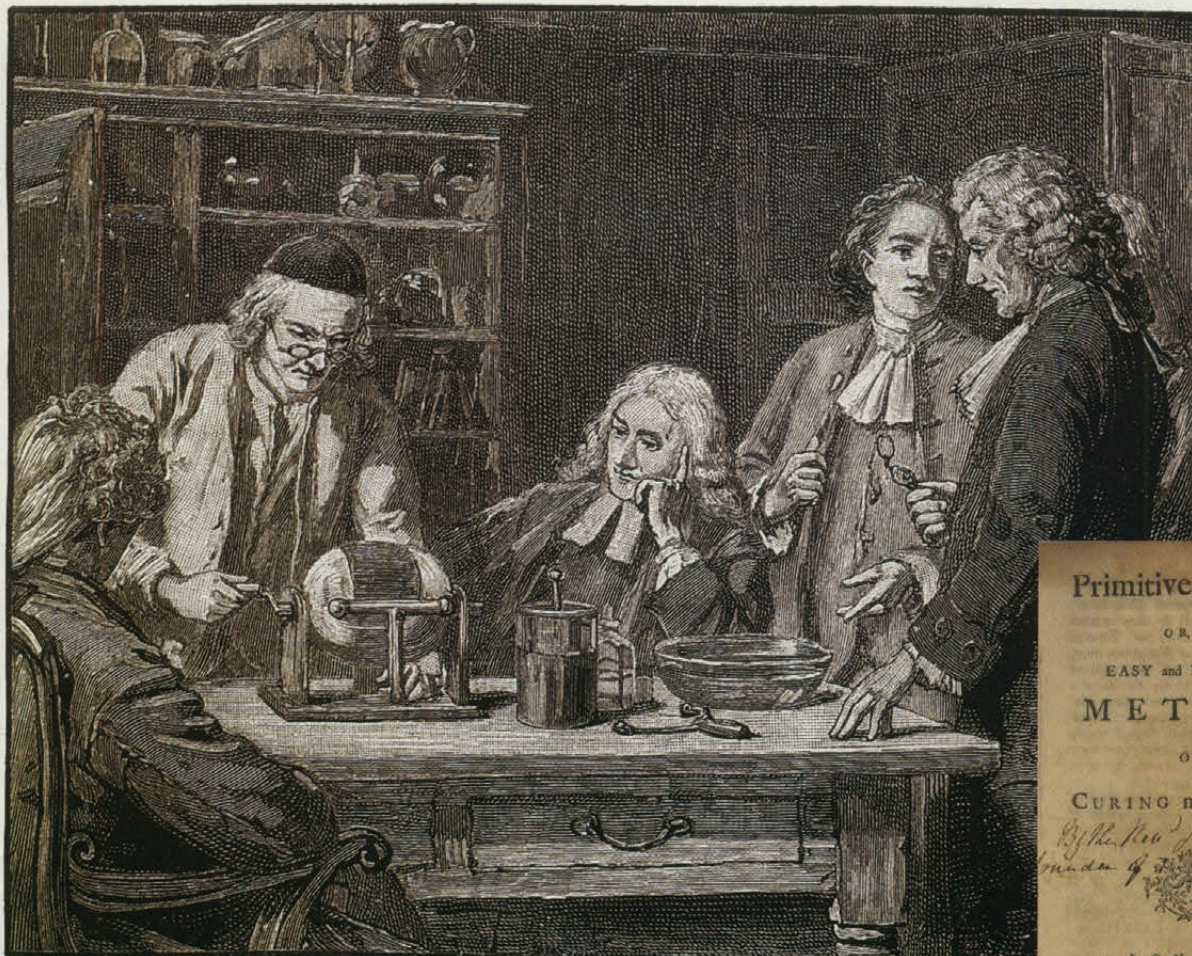
“An Odd Way of Thinking”

Susanna Wesley was not quite sure what to make of her sons’ heartwarming conversion experiences. She wrote to Charles, “I think you are fallen into an odd way of thinking. You say that till within a few months you had no spiritual life, nor any justifying faith. Now this is as if a man should affirm he was not alive in his infancy, because when an infant he did not know he was alive. All, then, that I can gather from your letter is that till a little while ago you were not so well satisfied of your being a Christian as you are now.”



Sounds of Music. Charles wrote no tunes for his 6,500 hymns, but he was a capable musician. He bought himself this organ (left), which is similar to one made for George Frideric Handel, after his wife came into a sizeable inheritance. John played an instrument too—the flute—but his extremely active lifestyle left little time for music.

Prime pulpit. Before John took his message to open fields, he frequently preached from lofty Anglican pulpits like this one at St. Mary the Virgin Church, Oxford. Years before, across the chancel in the same church, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer had preached his last sermon before being burned at the stake. In later centuries, John Henry Newman and C. S. Lewis also spoke from this pulpit.



Inquiring mind. John's interests extended far beyond theology. He experimented with electricity (above). He once attended an archaeological dig. He visited the British Museum and was much taken by the collections of manuscripts, antiquities, and insects. He offered health advice in his book *Primitive Physick*. And he earned his Master of Arts degree from Oxford after completing a Latin theme on *Reason in Brutes and How Flies and Fishes Respire*.

Pepper-upper

Charles could sympathize with today's caffeine addicts. In 1746 he tried to give up tea, but writes, "my flesh protested against it. I was but half awake and half alive all day; and my headache so increased toward noon, that I could neither speak nor think. . . . This so weakened me, that I could hardly sit my horse."

Thanks, but No Thanks

Though the Methodists earned early acclaim for their ministry to marginalized groups such as prisoners, orphans, and the ill, they later became so unpopular that even these doors closed to them.

As John recorded in his journal for February 22, 1750, "So we are forbid to go to Newgate [a prison], for fear of making them wicked; and to Bed-

lam [an asylum], for fear of driving them mad!"

Not Dead Yet

In 1753, John became so ill that his doctor thought he would die. Just in case, John penned this epitaph:

*Here lieth the Body
of
John Wesley
A brand plucked out of the burning:
who died of a consumption in the fifty-
first year of his age,
not leaving, after his debts are paid,
ten pounds behind him:
praying,
God be merciful to me, an unprofitable
servant!*

John, whose mother had called him "a brand plucked out of the burning" after he was rescued from a

house fire in 1709, resolved to cheat death again. Two days after he wrote the epitaph, he made himself a poultice of brimstone (sulfur), egg white, and brown paper, which immediately relieved his pain. He recovered and lived another 38 years.

Ready to Rumble

After increasingly severe earthquakes in England on February 8 and March 8, 1750, a self-proclaimed prophet predicted another quake in April that would destroy half of London. The city went berserk. Charles wrote 19 hymns on the subject and published a sermon called "The Cause and Cure of Earthquakes." On the foretold night, John reported, "Places of worship were packed, especially the chapels of the Methodists." Nothing happened. **CH**

John & Charles Wesley

16

Like Mother, Like Son

John Wesley's parents, especially his mother, profoundly influenced his character and career.

Charles Wallace, Jr.

21

The Matchmakers

When the Wesley brothers agreed to help each other find wives, they never guessed their deal would lead to disaster.

Janine Petry



26

Spare the Rod and Spoil the Church

Though Methodism thrived on big crowds, its survival depended on the discipline of small groups.

Charles Edward White

30

Be Ye Perfect?

The evolution of John Wesley's most contentious doctrine.

Randy L. Maddox

ALSO:

Two Views on Perfection / 32

United Methodist Church Archives/GCAH



A Tale of Two Brothers / 8

Like many siblings, John and Charles Wesley often clashed—and the Methodist movement profited.

Richard P. Heitzenrater

Also: Wesleys in America / 12

Wikipedia. Licensed under CC BY 2.0 via Commons



Attack of the Bible-Moths / 18

From the way Oxford scorned the Holy Club, you would think the Wesleys had created a monster.

Elesha Coffman

34

Start the Presses

No Protestant leader in the eighteenth century made better use of print media than John Wesley.

Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.

37

The Gallery:

The Leadership Team

These early converts supported, strengthened, and spread the Methodist movement—whether John Wesley agreed with them or not.

Charles W. Christian

Robert Schultz

Steven Gertz

41

The Link:

Weeds in the Garden

The Methodist pursuit of holiness has, over 200 years, branched off in some startling directions.

A conversation

with Tom Oden

DEPARTMENTS

• *Did You Know?* / 2

• *From the Editors* / 5

• *Letters from Readers* / 7

• *Timeline* / 24

• *Recommended*

Resources / 44

©2001 CHRISTIANITY TODAY INTERNATIONAL. CHRISTIAN HISTORY (ISSN 0891-9666) is published quarterly (February, May, August, November) by Christianity Today, Inc., 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188. Printed in U.S.A. Canada Publications Mail Agreement No. 1381466. Canadian return address: 27 Edna Street, Windsor, Ontario N8Y 1V2. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE: Please write to CHRISTIAN HISTORY, P.O. Box 37060, Des Moines, IA 50037-0060; include current address label with all correspondence. For faster service, call toll-free: 1-800-873-6986 or e-mail: ctifullfill@christianitytoday.com. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Please write to Elesha Coffman, associate editor, CHRISTIAN HISTORY, 465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream, IL 60188, or e-mail: cheditor@christianitytoday.com. We do not accept unsolicited manuscripts; please send a query letter first. PERMISSIONS: Requests to reprint photographs or text should be directed to our editorial coordinator at the Carol Stream address; phone: 1-630-260-6200 Ext. 318, or e-mail: cheditor@christianitytoday.com. Visit CHRISTIAN HISTORY online at www.christianhistory.net or AOL Keyword: christianhistory. Reprinted by Christian History Institute in 2015.

Cover photo: World Methodist Museum, a ministry of the World Methodist Council

Innovating with the Flow

This issue begins with the childhood years of John and Charles Wesley, but in many ways we are picking up the story mid-stream. For though the Wesleys are rightly known as evangelical pioneers, the momentum for the movement they founded had been building long before they arrived.

In the seventeenth century, frustration with the German state church led to the rise of Pietism, a renewal movement within Lutheranism led by figures like Philipp Spener and August Francke. The revived Moravian Brethren, centered at Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf's estate in Saxony, grew out of this movement. As the map below illustrates, Pietism and Moravianism exerted a huge influence on Europe and beyond, partially through connections with the Wesleys.

Meanwhile in England, Dissenters (including the Wesleys' grandparents on both sides) offered their own alternative to the state church model. Their gatherings, or "conventicles," could meet anywhere and be led by nearly anyone, as long as the format was simple and the focus was on Scripture. Dissenters who eventually joined Methodist society meetings heard many familiar echoes.

The Wesleys consciously drew from all of these traditions in developing their movement. Both brothers experienced spiritual awakening among Moravians. John read and published Pietist classics. He also translated

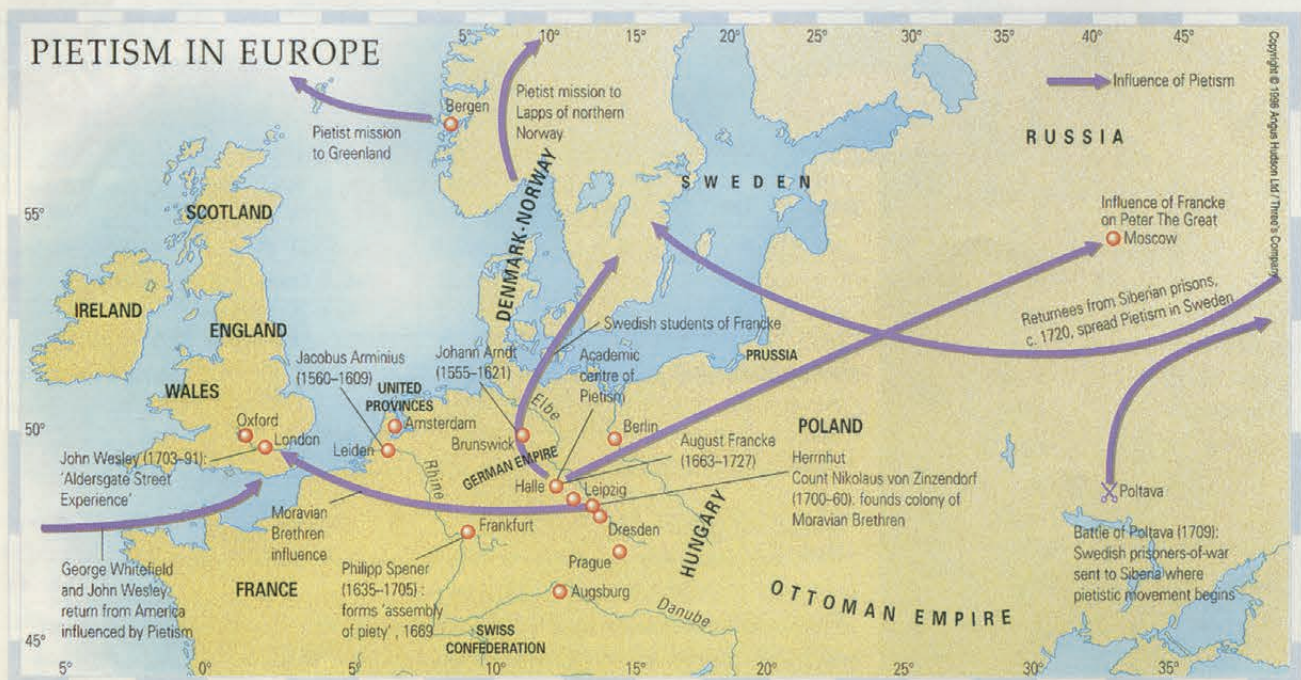
German hymns, while Charles wrote his own Moravian-inspired poetry. Methodist preachers often targeted enclaves of European immigrants, knowing their road would be smoothed by the influence of Continental traditions. And the first Methodist chapels were built in accordance with laws written for Dissenters.

Yet the Wesleys, and Methodists after them, were not merely Pietists, Moravians, or Dissenters. In fact, the Wesleys developed grave concerns about each of these groups. They wanted Methodism to avoid the other movements' errors and excesses—all while sparking revival and staying within the Church of England.

Not surprisingly, the convergence of these multiple movements and motivations created some tension. Early Methodist leaders, and even the Wesley brothers, found themselves on different sides of numerous debates. But instead of halting Methodism or throwing it off track, these disagreements constituted dynamic tension, the chaos that breeds clarity.

The Wesleys did not boldly go where no one had gone before—they boldly harnessed the best impulses surrounding them and forged a new method of Christian living. They were precisely the pioneers eighteenth-century England was waiting for.

—Elesha Coffman

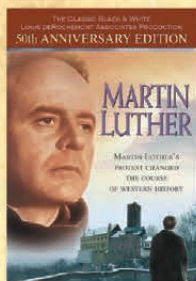


Reformers Who Changed the World

Martin Luther

(1483-1546)

This dramatic black and white film was originally released in theaters worldwide and nominated for an Academy Award. A magnificent depiction of Luther and the forces at work in the surrounding society that resulted in his historic reforming efforts. This film traces Martin Luther's life from a guilt-burdened monk to his eventual break with the Roman Church. Drama, 105 minutes.

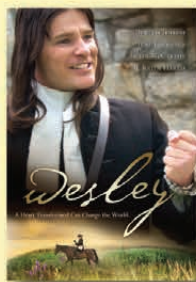


DVD - #4623D, \$14.99 SALE! \$9.99

Wesley: A Heart Transformed

(1703-1791)

Young John Wesley works hard to earn his own salvation, but still cannot find peace. His headstrong ways and self-righteous attitude brings conflict and rejection wherever he goes. His heartfelt struggles, his passion for authentic faith expressing itself through meaningful kingdom work, and his message of saving grace resonate with audiences of all ages and denominations. Starring Burgess Jenkins and June Lockhart. Drama, 117 minutes.

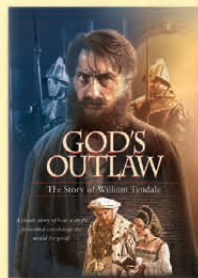


DVD - #50137D, \$19.99 SALE! \$14.99

William Tyndale: God's Outlaw

(1494-1536)

A true story about international politics, church intrigue, and cold-blooded betrayal. A simple God-seeking man, William Tyndale became one of the most wanted men in all of Europe. Tyndale darted across Europe to avoid capture, pushing to complete the task that obsessed him—translate the Bible into English and publish it for his fellow countrymen. Starring Roger Rees. Drama, 93 minutes.

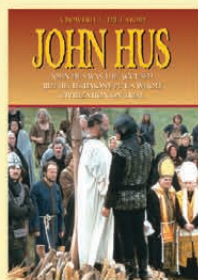


DVD - #4737D, \$14.99 SALE! \$12.99

John Hus

(1369-1415)

John Hus, a Bohemian priest, was convinced and taught openly that the Bible should be presented in the language of the people, that salvation comes by faith in Jesus Christ, and the Word of God is the final authority. In the end, Hus was accused, imprisoned, and charged with heresy. Ultimately, he was condemned and burned at the stake as a heretic. Drama, 55 minutes.



DVD - #4783D, \$11.99 SALE! \$9.99

John Wycliffe: The Morning Star

(1320-1384)

An Oxford scholar and one of Europe's most renowned philosophers, John Wycliffe was a defender of English nationalism against the power of the pope and a champion of the poor against the injustices of the rich. John Wycliffe preached that the only true authority is the Word of God, and the Word could only be understood by all if the people could read it in their native tongue. Drama, 75 minutes.

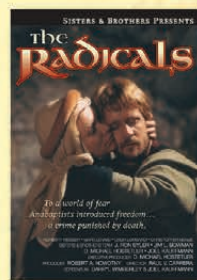


DVD - #4808D, \$14.99 SALE! \$12.99

Michael Sattler: The Radicals

(1490-1527)

The year was 1525. Michael and Margaretha Sattler had fled their religious orders. Their quest: restore the church to the purity of its early days when communities of believers practiced peace, compassion, and sacrificial love. The Sattlers joined a group called the Anabaptists and together challenged the 1,000-year control of the Church by the State. Drama, 99 minutes.



DVD - #4804D, \$19.99 SALE! \$12.99

To Order:

By Phone: 1-800-523-0226

Online: www.VisionVideo.com

By Mail: (Include \$5.99 s/h)

Vision Video

PO Box 540

Worcester, PA 19490

All six DVDs above, only \$29.99
(SAVE \$67.00!)

with coupon code **CHM69C**.
Please mention item #97784D

YOUR SATISFACTION IS GUARANTEED!

Sale expires May 1, 2016



Coming in 2016: A New Series on the Reformation!

This Changed Everything



Christian History®

Executive Editor Marshall Shelley

Art Director Raymond C. Whitlock III

Associate Editor Elesha Coffman

Editorial Coordinator Janine R. Petry

Senior Editors A. K. Curtis, Mark Galli,

Kevin A. Miller

Founder Christian History Institute

Editorial Advisory Board (2000-2001)

THOMAS A. ASKEW, ALVYN AUSTIN, C. STEPHEN BOARD,
MARK FACKLER, LAUREL GASQUE,
CHARLES E. HAMBRICK-STOWE, KEITH J. HARDMAN,
DARRYL HART, HEIDI J. HORNIG, TONY LANE,
DENNIS D. MARTIN, TERRY C. MUCK, BRADLEY NASSIF,
MARK NOLL, TED C. OLSEN, RUSSELL E. RICHEY,
DIANA LYNN SEVERANCE, BRUCE SHELLEY,
JAMES D. SMITH III, RUTH A. TUCKER, MARGUERITE VAN DIE,
GRANT WACKER, TIMOTHY WEBER, DAVID F. WRIGHT



Published by CTL, publisher of:

Christianity Today (1956)

Leadership (1980)

Campus Life (1982)

Marriage Partnership (1984)

Today's Christian Woman (1985)

Christian History (1989)

Your Church (1990)

Christian Reader (1992)

Books & Culture (1995)

Christian Parenting Today (1998)

Men of Integrity (1998)

Executive Chairman Harold L. Myra

President, Publisher Paul D. Robbins

Executive Assistant Laurie Powell

Senior Vice President Keith Stonehocker

Executive Vice President Harold B. Smith

Vice Presidents

David Hemstreet, Vicki Howard, John C. LaRue, Jr.,

Michael Maudlin, Kevin A. Miller, David Neff,

Linda Schambach, Marshall Shelley, Carol Thompson

Advertising: Karen Booker, Kevin Flanagan, John Grey,

Carol Hayes, Walter Hegel, Jim Hilborn, Tim Platek,

Daniel Poorman, Kathryn Stephens, Joel Stombres

Circulation: Norma Bormann, Becki Bustin, Terumi Echols,

Heidi Hall, Julie Kaminski, Sherry Kyle, Diane Lambert,

Jeremy Long, Nancy Nance, Louie P. Parker,

Jo Ann Rosenbaum, Carol Schaley, Bonnie Willman,

Philip Woods

Financial Operations: Gary Johnson, Sandra Johnson,

Jasmine Oh, Cheri Peterson, Judy VanZanten

Human Resources: Kate Bryant, Susan Cronk, Bert Davidson,

Philip DiCicco, Pat Nechvatal, Lew Radabaugh

Inside Sales: Mary Hockett, Lynn Long, Phyllis McGlathery

Internet Online Services: Mark Ahn, Clayton Anderson,

Steven Clark, Kathy DePue, Judy Gill, Wendy Harley,

Michael Herman, Bryan Park, Todd Watermann,

Marty White

Market Research: Grace Ferroni, Kathleen Jackson,

Diane Kielma, Natalia Marandiu, Cynia Solver

Production: Cynthia Cronk, Theresa Phillips, Diana Prange,

Rebeka Santos

Resources: Leslee Baron, Joy Hastings, Brian Larson,

Phyllis Ten Elshof

Technology: Stephanie Benware, Ted Gysan,

Tim Ostermiller

Editorial and Advertising office:

465 Gundersen Drive, Carol Stream IL 60188

Phone (630) 260-6200, Fax (630) 260-0114

Hus heirs (and fans)

This wonderful man was a distant relative of mine. My maiden name was Huss, my family is from the same region as Jan Hus, and we have discovered many links to him in our family tree. What I find funny is that my sister and I are the only evangelical Christians in a long, long line of Roman Catholics. One would think that Hus's battles and convictions would have had more effect on his family.

VICTORIA REED

Mount Vernon Nazarene College

Mount Vernon, Ohio

I am a pastor in the Unity of the Brethren, a church that views itself as a descendant of the Hussite tradition. While the Moravians became what they are through their interaction with Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf, our people are descended from the Hussites who remained in the Czech lands and held onto their beliefs and identity. In the 1800s, cheap farmland in Texas attracted Czechs to the United States. In 1903, rather than merge with an American church, they organized a denomination to exercise their freedom and to honor their religious roots.

MARK LABAJ

Temple Brethren Church

Temple, Texas

The new Jan Hus issue is fabulous! As a historian specializing in Czech things, I've wondered why you hadn't done Hus long ago. I must have bought 10 copies of the Komenisky (Comenius, issue 13) issue for my English-reading Czech friends. I'll be ordering lots of copies of this one, too.

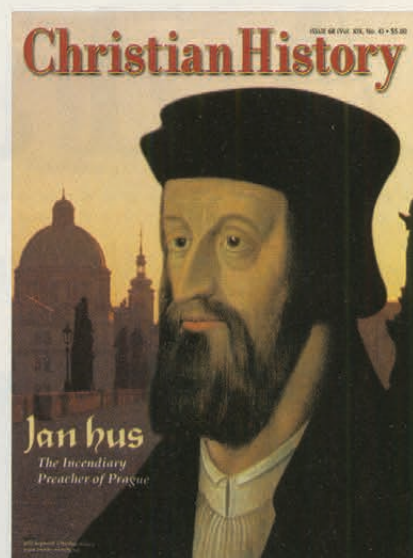
KAREN FREEZE

University of Washington

Seattle, Washington

Name game

I just received my copy of issue 68, and I find references throughout to Pope John XXIII in the fifteenth cen-



ture. I thought John XXIII was the twentieth-century pope who convened Vatican II. Can you clarify this for me?

PAT WADSWORTH

Via msn.com

Because Cardinal Baldassare, the first John XXIII, was not properly elected, the Roman Catholic church considers him an anti-pope. Thus the name John XXIII was still available. But because Baldassare was such a reprehensible character, for 500 years after him no other pope wanted to be called John.

When Cardinal Roncalli became Pope John XXIII in 1958, many were puzzled by his choice of name. He said that he selected it to honor his father and because, historically, Johns tended to have short pontificates (Roncalli was nearly 80 at his election). However, he probably had another reason: the first John XXIII had called the Council of Constance, and the second John XXIII may have been looking ahead already to Vatican II.

—ed.

How to Contact Us:

E-mail: cheditor@christianitytoday.com

Write:

CHRISTIAN HISTORY Editors

465 Gundersen Dr.

Carol Stream, IL 60188

Fax: 630-260-0114

A Tale of Tw

Like many siblings, John and Charles Wesley often clashed—



Master mind. Even though he promoted affectional Christianity, John Wesley was hardly ruled by emotions. "I am very rarely led by impressions," he said, "but generally by reason and by Scripture. I see abundantly more than I feel."

In 1785, at age 82, John Wesley wrote a wrenching letter to his 77-year-old brother Charles, who had for several years been openly critical of John's leadership in the Methodist movement.

"Do not hinder me if you will not help," the older brother scolded. "Perhaps, if you had kept close to me, I might have done better. However, with or without help, I creep on."

The story of early Methodism is, of course, more than the tale of these two brothers. But the development of the movement cannot be fully comprehended without them—both of them.

Dynamic duo

John was 4 years old when Charles was born (eight weeks premature) in 1707. Charles was only 6 when John went off to Charterhouse School in London. The childhood years in Epworth did not allow much time for the two boys to be brothers.

Although Charles also went to school at Westminster, near London, three years after John, they probably did not see much of each other. They got their first opportunity to grow closer when both attended Oxford University in the late 1720s.

As a young student at Christ Church College, Charles had a personal "reformation" in 1728. His older brother, who preceded him (again by about four years) in the quest for a meaningful faith, provided practical suggestions for pursuing the holy life. Within a matter of months, they shared many of the methods of thinking and acting that soon became characteristic of the people called "Methodists."

John Gambold, a friend of both at Ox-

o Brothers

and the Methodist movement profited. RICHARD P. HEITZENRATER

ford, described Charles as being “deeply sensible” of John’s seniority: “I never observed any person have a more real deference for another than he constantly had for his brother.” Gambold felt that Charles imitated his older brother so much that, as he said, “could I describe one of them, I should describe both.”

Among their similarities: Both brothers were published poets, as were their father, Samuel, Sr., their older brother Samuel, Jr., and one of their sisters, Kezzy. Although neither brother composed music, both were musicians—John played the flute and Charles played the organ.

Both were ordained in the Church of England, as was their father. Both attended Christ Church at Oxford. Both had a transforming spiritual experience. Both married. In some cases, older brother John preceded his younger brother. In other matters, however, Charles took the lead, such as in his spiritual awakening and his marriage.

When John decided to become a missionary to Georgia in 1735, he convinced Charles to go along. Charles noted in his journal that his older brother always had the “ascendancy” over him and, even though Charles dreaded taking holy orders, John talked him into it so that Charles could assist with the parish work in the new colony.

Although he was hastily certified (ordained as both deacon and elder within two weeks instead of the usual interval of two years), Charles took his clerical position seriously. And although John would consistently say from then on that he would live and die a “Church of England man,” Charles was actually the one who held closest to the Established Church as the century wore on. In that



Heart and soul. Charles Wesley could be melancholy and even harsh, but he possessed a lively personality. A college associate said he was “a man made for friendship; who, by his cheerfulness and vivacity, would refresh his friend’s heart.”

arena, he became his older brother's conscience.

The brothers' relationship was prickly at times. But they had a trusting respect for each other that allowed personal tensions to produce positive results when larger issues were at stake.

Warmed hearts

When the brothers set sail for Georgia, John had been preaching for a decade, but his younger brother was fresh from under the bishop's ordaining hand. Charles spent part of his time on the ship copying several of John's sermons so he could use them in Georgia.

Neither John nor Charles, however, had a positive experience in Georgia. Both of them lost favor with the political powers they were supposed to assist. Charles, ill and depressed, left for home within half a year. John lasted a year longer, then decided it was better to return to England than face the grand jury indictments his enemies had concocted (see "Wesleys in America," page 14).

Though the brothers' missionary efforts bore little fruit, their interaction with some German Pietist settlers they met while crossing the Atlantic had important consequences.



Smug shot. As a gown boy at Charterhouse school, John reckoned himself not "so bad as other people."

The settlers, a band of Moravians, had remained calm during a potentially deadly sea squall, which greatly impressed the Wesleys. Seeking to have the same depth of spiritual assurance, the brothers sought out Peter Boehler, who became their spiritual tutor.

Boehler's message was simple: a proper faith will result in a clear sense of assurance of salvation. One cannot have one without the other.

And such a faith will be accompanied by love, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. At the same time, one will become free from fear, doubt, and sin. Such a heart-centered experience was necessary for one to become a true Christian.

Charles was the first to have this "Moravian" experience of assurance. On May 21, 1738, he powerfully sensed Christ's forgiving presence. "I felt a strange palpitation of heart" was his own unpoetic description.

John joined the friends who came to Charles's lodgings that evening to rejoice with him, pray, and sing a hymn. John was thrilled for his brother, but his heart must have churned as he went back out into the darkness to face his own doubts and questionings.

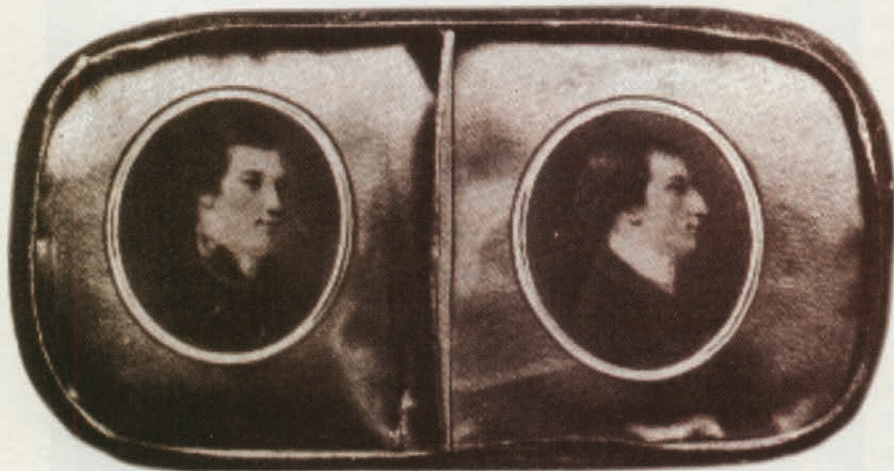
Three days later, John experienced assurance himself. The setting was a small religious society meeting in Aldersgate Street. The catalyst was a Pietist classic: Martin Luther's preface to the Book of Romans. Also in the Pietist tradition, the experience included an intense sensation. As John described it, "I felt my heart strangely warmed."

It is no surprise that these two Moravian-inspired experiences would be expressed in terms of heart imagery. Especially noteworthy, however, is the fact that both brothers found the sensation "strange." Nevertheless, John's account of his Aldersgate experience, as reported in his published journal, became the normative pattern for many of his followers.

Conflicted minds

Just as the brothers' spiritual journeys were not identical, their theology and ecclesiology diverged at a few points.

Regarding the process of salvation, Charles seems to have had an earlier sense that the "almost Christian," the one who is struggling with the faith, should be reckoned as having the "faith of a servant." John persisted longer in believing that the "almost Christian" was no Christian at all, because he had not yet experienced spiritual assurance.



Peas in a pod? To many of their Oxford peers, the Wesley brothers seemed identical, but they did not always see eye to eye. John complained that, in his first year, Charles "pursued his studies diligently, and led a regular harmless life; but if I spoke to him about religion, he would warmly answer, 'What, would you have me to be a saint all at once?' and would hear no more." The above miniatures, painted between 1720 and 1730, were discovered in 1917, stored with the will of the boys' sister Martha.



Test of faith. During his trip to America on a ship like this one, John told his journal, "the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English." Yet a group of Moravians on board calmly continued to sing their hymns, which enraptured both brothers.

John struggled with this question for many years, eventually modifying his opinion to allow "exempt cases"—persons who had not experienced assurance but who were surely real Christians. In his later years, he even allowed that one should take Scripture seriously when it says that a person who simply "fears God and works righteousness" is accepted by him.

In general, where the brothers disagreed on theology, John felt it was best if each proceeded with his own strengths. Thus he encouraged Charles to continue emphasizing sanctification as the gift of God's grace in a moment (instantaneous) while he continued to stress the importance of growing in holiness through nurture and grace (process). Since both approaches would meet the same goal—to spread scriptural holiness across the land—both were beneficial.

Overall, the brothers differed less on theology than on the proper organization for their movement. Both

were concerned about the relationship between Methodism and the Church of England. Neither wanted Methodism to become a dissenting religious sect.

Had the Wesleys not taken this issue seriously, Anglican prejudices against enthusiasm and government policies under the Act of Toleration might have radically restricted the Methodist movement. But the question of how distinct the Methodists could be while remaining within the Church of England was often a point of contention. Three flashpoints in this conflict highlight the differences between the brothers.

Lay preachers

Once George Whitefield had convinced the Wesleys that outdoor preaching, though unusual, had good precedent in the Sermon on the Mount, the next major issue for them was whether or not laity would be allowed to preach. This practice also had precedents within the Church of England, but it was even more irreg-

ular than open-air sermons.

Charles was only lukewarm toward outdoor preaching, and he questioned the large numbers that George and John reported at their gatherings. Charles viewed lay preaching even more skeptically. John, however, was convinced (by his mother and his own observations) that lay preachers, such as Thomas Maxfield, could be channels of God's redeeming grace.

As the movement grew and the need for preachers far exceeded the number of Anglican clergy who were associated with Methodism, John appointed more lay preachers to serve the societies. None were set apart for such service, however, until they had been examined for "gifts, grace, and fruits."

Charles began to question not only some of the particular people John was appointing but also the practice itself. John responded in the 1750s by putting Charles in charge of examining the preachers. Though clever, this move did not solve the problem.

Charles insisted that lay preachers have the "gifts" for the work, so he subjected candidates to rigorous examination. He even sent some back to their day jobs. John was less exacting, because, as he said, "Of the two, I prefer grace before gifts."

The brothers' views collided, for instance, in the case of a tailor whom John had made into a preacher. Charles noted proudly to a friend, "I, with God's help, shall make him a tailor again."

John feared that his brother's high

standard was causing a dearth of preachers. He asked Charles to ease up a bit so that there would be enough leaders to meet the growing needs. As long as he had the power, though, Charles was relentless in his attempt "to purge the Church, beginning with the laborers."

Charles engaged several clergy friends to help lobby his older brother against the use of lay preachers. Such efforts simply increased ill-feeling between the brothers, which spread to a number of related issues.

John's conviction that lay preachers should work full-time, combined with his hesitance to pay them a sufficient allowance, rankled Charles. Charles thought that such an arrangement gave John unconscionable control over the preachers' lives. John "ruled with a rod of iron," to use Charles's phrase.

In a bold letter to a friend, Charles argued that preachers must be allowed to earn money on their own. With such support, they would not have to depend entirely upon John

Wesleys in America

WHAT WENT WRONG?

After spending just one day in America, John Wesley already had grave concerns about the new colonies. He wrote in his journal on February 19, 1736, "Beware America, be not as England!"

Just over a year earlier, John and Charles Wesley had stood at their father's bedside as he died. John was asked to accept the Epworth parish, but he declined because he needed the spiritual rigors of the Oxford Holy Club.

Three months later one of the trustees of the Georgia colony challenged John and the Holy Club to go to America and minister to the Indians and colonists.

John worried about leaving his mother, but she spiritedly responded, "Had I twenty sons, I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more." Instead, only two sons boarded the America-bound *Simmonds*, and she saw them both again within two years.

On February 4, 1736, the *Simmonds* came within view of the shoreline of Georgia. John read in his Bible, "A great door and effectual is opened," and he added this prayer, "Oh let no one shut it!"

Although the Wesleys came to Georgia to preach to the Indians, they soon discovered that the leaders of the colony needed them for other duties. Charles became personal secretary to the colony's governor, Colonel James Oglethorpe, and John served as parish minister to the colonists in Savannah.

Almost immediately, Oglethorpe turned against

Charles. The colonel forced Charles to sleep on the floor of a hut, and when this arrangement made him desperately ill, Oglethorpe denied his request for a bed. Bewildered, Charles finally discovered that two women had been spreading vicious rumors about him.

Oglethorpe apologized for his behavior and reinstated Charles's privileges, but Charles remained unwell and discouraged. Soon afterward, the colonel ordered Charles to return to England and put down reports that Georgia was in shambles. Charles was only too happy to go.

In the meantime, John had fallen in love with one of his Savannah parishioners, Sophy Hopkey (see "The Matchmakers," page 23). For various reasons, however, he couldn't bring himself to propose to her, and finally she gave up on him and became engaged to a Mr. Williamson. John thought he would die of grief. He even made out his will.

Following Sophy's marriage, John threw himself into his work. He tried to be the Williamsons' pastor, but of course it did not work. Five months later John refused to serve Mrs. Williamson Holy Communion. No doubt jealousy played a role in his decision, though he said he rejected her because he knew of unconfessed sin in her life.

Wrath from all over the colony fell upon John's head, and the Williamsons sued for defamation of character. The trial dragged on for months, and finally John told his journal, "I saw clearly the hour was come for leaving this place."

In spite of local ban, he left for England on December 2, 1737, and arrived home two months later. His missionary career was over.

—Kenneth O. Brown



Colonel James Oglethorpe



Tribe and nation. John may never have preached to a mixed congregation like this one, but he did reach out to both colonists and Indians in America. Before John even got off the boat, Tomo-chachi, an aged Creek Indian chief, professed that he and his people wished to hear the Great Word. "But," he said, "we would not be made Christians as the Spaniards make Christians: we would be taught before we are baptized." Years after John had returned to England in defeat, other Methodist missionaries crossed the Atlantic to carry on the work.

"for bread," and this would help "break his power . . . and reduce his authority within due bounds."

Charles also felt that such a change would serve "to guard against the rashness and credulity of [John's] that has kept me in continual awe and bondage for many years."

Unfortunately, this letter made its way into John's hands. John quickly scratched off a nasty note to Charles, accusing him of dipping into the funds of the society for his expenses when John was already providing him an allowance of 50 pounds, plus a healthy annuity of 100 pounds from the book funds. Although the sum was more than double what John allowed himself, John failed to consider that Charles was married with three children.

In these conflicts over lay preachers, the brothers mediated each other's extreme views. John kept

Charles from being too harsh on preachers' abilities, and Charles reminded John of the preachers' legitimate financial needs.

Ordination

When the lay preachers and their flocks pushed for ordination, so that sacraments could be distributed within the societies, John at times appeared close to giving in. Charles mounted a frontal attack, certain that such a step was not only totally inappropriate but also would result in a separation from the Church.

In one resulting attempt to cement the preachers in a common covenant, John and Charles produced separate documents for them to sign—John's stressing the need for common loyalty, while Charles's also stated a commitment "never to leave the communion of the Church of England."

As Charles once said, John's first

object was the Methodists, and then the Church; Charles's first concern was the Church, and then the Methodists.

John crossed the Rubicon on this matter when the American colonies signed the Peace of Paris in 1783, severing political and ecclesiastical ties with England. Under those circumstances, John saw the need for American Methodists to have ordained clergy to administer the sacraments.

His ordination of two preachers as deacon and elder for that task, and his setting apart of Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as general superintendents (they assumed the title "bishop" later), was done in private—against the advice of, and without the knowledge of, his senior preachers, including Charles.

Such actions were exclusively reserved, under canon law, for bishops. Charles's reaction was predictable in



The world's a pulpit. Barred by a suspicious curate from speaking in the church at Epworth, John once delivered a sermon from his father's grave (above). He and other Methodist preachers also frequently spoke in the natural amphitheater called Gwennap Pit (right). After a 1781 sermon given there to a crowd of 2,000–3,000, John wrote, "I think this is my *ne plus ultra*. I shall scarce see a larger congregation till we meet in the air."



its substance, but not in its form. The poem he wrote attacking John was merciless in its rhetoric:

*So easily are Bishops made
By man's or woman's whim?
Wesley his hands on Coke hath laid,
But who laid hands on him?*

John argued that in such a "case of necessity," where the Church either had no jurisdiction or refused to act, he had simply responded as a New Testament bishop, providing for the needs of the body of Christ. John recognized his difference of opinion with Charles on this matter: "You say I separate from the Church. I say I do not. Then let it stand."

If John had ignored Charles's anxiety in this matter, the Methodists might have found themselves out of the Church before their time. On the other hand, if John had acquiesced to

Charles, the American Methodists would never have received ordained preachers. They likely would have been forced to remain a subset of the Anglicans who weathered the Revolution and eventually became the Protestant Episcopal Church. Instead, by the nineteenth century, the Methodists were the largest Protestant denomination in the United States.

Hymns

The Methodists were known as a singing people, largely through the poetic work of the Wesleys. And though the brothers sometimes disagreed in this area, their collaboration produced better results than either one could have achieved alone. As John described the relationship to Charles, "I may be in some sense the head and you the heart of the work."

Although Charles is better known

as a hymnwriter, John had published poetry more than a decade before Charles. John even published a hymnal alone in America. When Charles's poetry began appearing in 1738 and beyond, it was generally in collections published under the name of both brothers.

In most instances, John had the final editorial say in what was included and how it was worded. His selection and editing of Charles's work included both literary and theological criticisms. John would publish, as he wrote in the preface to the 1780 hymnal, "no doggerel; no botches; nothing put in to patch up the rhyme; no feeble expletives . . . no cant expressions; no words without meaning."

The more or less definitive *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* included 525 hymns. Most were written by Charles, though John contributed some, including translations from German. All of the hymns passed under John's editorial pen—a vital step.

John examined adjectives theologically. Occasionally he found Charles's hymns too effusive, too Moravian. John amended some of his brother's amatory phrases: "When, dearest Lord" became "When, gracious Lord." John excluded "Jesus, Lover of My Soul" from the 1780 collection entirely.

Besides needing literary and theological revision, many of Charles's poems had as many as 20 verses. John picked the best verses and occasionally divided a long poem into more than one hymn.

Charles did not always accept his brother's limits. Shortly after John worked out an agreement with Whitefield and the Calvinist Methodists to avoid contentious terminology, including any reference to "sinless perfection," Charles worked that particular phrase into one of his new hymns. Also, on more than one occasion, Charles slipped small collections of hymns to publishers without his brother's knowledge.

The 1780 hymnal truly reflected the brothers' symbiotic relationship. This "little body of experimental and

practical divinity" provided the most popular and lasting channel for spreading the Wesleyan theology.

Though the impact of the brothers' hymns, and especially Charles's, should not be underestimated, the hymns' success has in some ways obscured Charles's larger contributions. As John said late in life, "His least fame was in his hymns."

"My company is gone"

In the later years, Charles spent more and more time with his family, especially his musician sons Charles and Samuel. He still preached in the London societies, but he rarely attended the annual Methodist preachers' conferences after 1765.

John perceived that his brother was removed from the mainstream leadership of the movement. Nevertheless, he maintained some hope that Charles would stand by his side, sometimes fancying his brother as his potential successor.

When Charles contracted what would become his final illness in 1788, John still assumed that his brother would outlast, if not succeed,

him. As he rode out on his itinerant rounds, John sent his brother advice to get out of bed and exercise on horseback, a regimen that had saved his own life in similar circumstances.

The shocking news of Charles's death caught up with John in the north country. The depth of his feeling for Charles could not be contained, even in public. At the first service he was leading after receiving the news, John broke down crying during a hymn when he came to Charles's words, "My company before is gone."

Like a good Anglican, Charles was buried in the graveyard of the parish church he attended in Marylebone Street. John, on the other hand, had for some time doubted the necessity of being buried in consecrated ground. "How deep is it consecrated?" was his skeptical question. Consequently, John's burial in 1791 took place behind the Methodist New Chapel in City Road.

That building itself embodied the ambiguity of the Methodists' ecclesiastical situation. More than just a preaching house, it was built on a

sacrament plan—the first Methodist building to include an altar and communion rail. Never mind that the structure was set back from the street in accord with the legal requirements for a dissenting meeting house.

In the end, John was one of the few still convinced that the Methodists had not separated from the Church of England, since they had neither exited by dissent nor been expelled by excommunication.

Although John may have protested that he lived and died "a Church of England man," his epitaph makes no mention of the established Church. Instead, it reflects more of Charles's view on the matter.

The inscription points out that John's life intention was "to revive, enforce, and defend, the pure apostolical doctrine and practice of the Primitive Church." These words bear testimony to the fact that Charles ultimately was unable to keep his brother within the fold of the Church.

CH

RICHARD P. HEITZENRATER is William Kellon Quick professor of church history and Wesley studies at Duke Divinity School.



Wikipedia

Old meets New. Wesley's New Chapel in City Road, London—the "Mother Church of World Methodism"—reflects Anglican and Dissenting sensibilities. When John lived in rooms above the church, the Foundery meeting house was right around the corner, and he could look down on his mother's grave from his window. Nonconformist heroes John Bunyan and Isaac Watts are also buried nearby.

Like Mother, Like Son

John Wesley's parents, especially his mother, profoundly influenced his character and career.

CHARLES WALLACE, JR.

The Reverend Samuel Wesley never cared much for the Isle of Axholme, a slight elevation in the middle of the north Lincolnshire fen country. He was sure his literary and theological talents better suited him for a bishopric or a prime London appointment. But he had been assigned to the village churches at Epworth and Wroot, so there he stayed from the end of the seventeenth century to 1735.

Samuel's wife, London-bred Susanna, also had literary and theological gifts—and a practical orientation that allowed her to get along in their rural setting. But she was not afraid to question her husband's authority.

John absorbed ideas from both of his unusual parents, but his mother clearly had the strongest influence on him. Indeed, Elsie Harrison's incisive biography of John is titled simply *Son to Susanna*.

Susanna earned quite a reputation for squabbling with her husband over theology and politics. Letters to a nearby noblewoman and a renegade conservative cleric reveal details of a marriage-threatening quarrel over who was rightfully king in 1701.

Both Samuel and Susanna supported high church principles and royalist politics, but he had made his peace with the new regime of William and Mary (put in power by Parliament), while she had not. One evening she refused to add her "Amen" to the standard *Book of Common Prayer* petition for King William during family prayers—a not-too-subtle indication of her support for the exiled Stuart family, whom she believed ought to continue to rule by divine right.

Bolstered by the advice of friends, Susanna stuck by her decision and refused to yield to her husband's protests. He finally told her, "You and I must part: for if we have two kings, we must have two beds." In fact, they did part for a few months. Samuel withdrew to London, giving Susanna the only break from pregnancy in her whole reproductive life.

A fire in the Epworth rectory (and a new monarch, Queen Anne, whose pedigree they could both believe in) brought the couple back together. The fruit of their recon-



Susanna Wesley

United Methodist Church Archives CCAH

ciliation was born June 17, 1703, and christened John.

The second clash occurred nine years later and also involved the rector's absence. Samuel traveled to London as a delegate to the Church of England Convocation, and he left the parish in the hands of a lackluster curate. Susanna took up the slack by welcoming parishioners to join the family prayers she was leading Sunday evenings in the rectory kitchen.

Soon these evening services (technically illegal, since any unregistered religious meeting outside the parish church could be regarded as a nonconformist "coventicle") came to the attention of the curate, who tattled to the absent rector. Samuel wrote Susanna from London and demanded that she cease and desist.

Susanna responded by asserting her freedom from his marital and ecclesiastical authority. She argued that, in his absence, she was rightfully in charge of the spiritual

care of their children and servants, and, if others wanted to join in the services, should they not be allowed? Then she delivered her ultimatum:

"If you do after all think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me any more that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your positive command in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good to souls, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Nine-year-old John, who would later sponsor his own extracurricular spiritual gatherings, attended his mother's meetings. Reflecting on them just after her death, he wrote, "Even she had been, in her measure and degree, a preacher of righteousness."

During all of this, Susanna raised the children with a fierce but loving discipline designed to bring them, as she told John in a letter, "into a regular method of living." Part residual Puritanism (her parents' tradition) and part her way of coping with such



Rev. Samuel Wesley

a large household while still finding time for her own devotions, this approach insisted upon "conquering the will" of the children and teaching them to "fear the rod and cry softly."

Though harsh-sounding to modern ears, the practice included fair but firm application of house rules, one-

on-one instruction in reading and religion, and a special determination to educate her daughters beyond the usual expectation. Each child claimed her undivided attention at least once a week.

As Susanna recorded in her diary in 1711, "Molly on Monday; Hetty on Tuesday; Nancy on Wednesday; Jacky, Thursday; Patty, Friday; Charles, Saturday. Blessed be God! One for every day of the week and two [Emily and Sukey] for Sunday."

The methodical child-rearing left a strong imprint on "Thursday's child" and clearly influenced the highly disciplined movement he started some three decades later. John published her famous letter on child rearing in his journal and recommended her approach more than once in his sermons.

"My own mother had ten children," he boasted from the pulpit, "each of whom had spirit enough; yet not one of them was ever heard to cry aloud after it was a year old." **CH**

CHARLES WALLACE, JR., is chaplain and associate professor of religious studies at Willamette University in Oregon.

Family Ghost?

In 1716 and 1717, the house at Epworth hosted a supernatural visitor. "Old Jeffrey," as the children called it, made a variety of noises (groanings, knockings, stampings, and clatterings) and sometimes appeared as a badger-like creature scurrying across the floor. The whole family—as well as a neighboring clergyman—saw or heard it, and no one could find evidence of a hoax.

Though initially skeptical, Susanna wrote to her two oldest sons, who were away at Oxford, that she became "entirely convinced that it was beyond the power of any human creature to make such strange and various noises."

A remark by oldest daughter Emily, however, perhaps provides the best clue to the incidents. She noted that the outbreak had quickly followed her father's preaching against folk religious practice—namely, the consulting of "those that are called cunning men, which our people are given to"—after an alleged outbreak of witchcraft in a neighboring parish.

If disgruntled parishioners were behind the haunting, it wouldn't have been the first time they caused trouble. Lo-



The Epworth Rectory

cal enemies had already maimed some of the Wesleys' animals, and they might have caused the rectory fires in 1702 and 1709.

Whether a supernatural visitor or flesh-and-blood conspiracy, "Old Jeffrey" might represent one of many clashes between the local world view and a rationally inclined outsider.

—CW

Attack of the Bible-Moths

From the way Oxford scorned the Holy Club, you would think the Wesleys had created a monster.

ELESHA COFFMAN



Straight-laced students. Members of the Oxford Holy Club, which was founded by Charles Wesley and led by John (above, standing), spurred each other on toward perfection. Not all of the students were equally diligent, but the most devoted echoed club member William Morgan, who “resolved to spare no pains in working out his salvation.”

As a college student, Charles Wesley remarked, “Christ Church is certainly the worst place in the world to begin a reformation; a man stands a very fair chance of being laughed out of his religion at his first setting out, in a place where ‘tis scandalous to have any at all.” Yet this wealthy and well-connected Oxford college was the birthplace of the Wesleys’ new

“method” of living.

Eighteenth-century Oxford should have been a good venue for religious training. It existed primarily to prepare young men for ministry in the Church of England, and some 70 percent of its graduates eventually took orders.

Few of these men, however, felt “called” to ministry. Most, like the Wesley brothers, came from middle-

to lower-class families and had few job prospects outside the church. The Wesleys, raised by a pastor, held ministry in higher regard than did most of their peers, though even they originally hoped to use Oxford connections to attain comfortable posts.

In general neither Oxford students nor faculty expressed much interest in godliness—or, according to numerous critics, in scholarship. Oxford was known throughout Europe as a party school, where students and dons alike devoted most of their energies to drinking, gaming, and idle talk.

In a satirical magazine launched in 1721, the school’s self-appointed jester sneered, “I have known a profligate debauchee chosen professor of moral philosophy; and a fellow, who never look’d upon the stars soberly in his life, professor of astronomy . . . and, not long ago, a famous gamester and stock-jobber was elected professor of divinity; so great, it seems, is the analogy between dusting of cushions, and shaking of elbows; or between squandering away of estates, and saving of souls!”

When John entered Christ Church in 1720, he fit in well. Known for being serious yet sociable, he played tennis, danced, read and attended plays, and maintained close—but not scandalous—relations with several young women. He was even punished once for a minor dress code infraction.

It was not until 1726, when he was elected a fellow of Oxford’s Lincoln College, that John focused on self-discipline. “I executed a resolution,” he wrote, “which I was before convinced was of the utmost importance,

Anonymous: John Wesley the Methodist, Eaton and Moline, 1903.

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 that scheme or religion by which I modeled my own life."

That same year Charles matriculated at Christ Church. He too was at first taken with the Oxford social scene, but, due in part to his brother's influence, he quickly shifted his attention to spirituality. In fact, Charles took the lead in organizing what would become the Holy Club.

Charles began by faithfully attending school-sponsored prayers and services. Regular attendance was supposedly mandatory, but so few students complied that this act alone qualified a man as having the "character of a Sanctify'd Person."

He then, so he wrote later, "persuaded two or three young scholars to accompany me, and to observe the method of study prescribed by the Statutes of the University." He even convinced his neighbor who "was got into vile hands" to break off his destructive friendships and seek God instead.

For his efforts Charles earned the nickname "hick-homily," and his friends were soon called "Bible-



Moths," "Sacramentarians," and "Methodists."

The Holy Club

Never a formally organized society, the Holy Club consisted of five or six core members plus a shifting periphery of around 20. The members acknowledged John as their leader, but they were not always in direct contact with him. They usually met privately in groups of three or four for prayer, devotional study, and religious conversation.

In some ways the club resembled other pious and charitable societies of the day. The famous Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, which aimed to erect charity schools, distribute literature, and "in general to advance the honor of God and the good of mankind," had been founded in 1698. John attended SPCK meetings, and the organization paid his passage to Georgia in 1735.

Like the SPCK, the Holy Club emphasized good works. Members regularly visited prisoners and the sick,



Towering tradition. Little changed at Christ Church College between the period engraving at top and the photo of Tom Quad and Christ Church Cathedral at left. In fact, the university's suspicion of change was one of the Methodists' earliest hurdles. As long as the Holy Club operated like other pious societies, it was tolerated and even applauded, but as John Wesley's strong views on discipline became more prominent, Oxford officials turned hostile. Christ Church's Rector Isham took away John's pupils and charged him with "frighten[ing] others from religion" by his example.

a ministry started in 1730 when William Morgan persuaded John and Charles to speak with a man condemned for killing his wife.

John wrote, "We were so well satisfied with our conversation there, that we agreed to go thither once or twice a week; which we had not done long, before he desired me to go with him to see a poor woman in the town who was sick. In this employment too, when we came to reflect upon it, we believed it would be worthwhile to spend an hour or two in a week, provided the minister of the parish in which any such person was, were not against it."

Club members delivered medicines, Bibles, and tracts to the needy. They celebrated Communion in the jail, secured legal aid for the accused, and also taught prisoners to read.

"There are only two in the jail who want this accomplishment," John Clayton reported, "John Clanvill, who reads but moderately, and the horse-stealer, who cannot yet read at all."

Early successes, plus favorable recognition from figures like the bishop of Oxford, made the Wesleys and their friends optimistic that the Holy Club would continue to blossom. As Clayton wrote in 1732, "I hope in God we shall get at least an advocate for us, if not a brother and a fellow laborer, in every College in town."

Such optimism was short-lived. John Wesley had already heard reports that college officials "were going to blow up the Godly Club."

The end of enthusiasm

Three main factors contributed to the demise of the Holy Club. The most obvious was the departure of John and Charles for America in 1735. Though they left behind a capable leader, George Whitefield, the club could not weather the loss of its charismatic leaders.

Bad publicity also proved costly. In 1732 the Methodists were criticized for William Morgan's death. Suffer-

ing from an unknown malady, he had gone insane and died repeating the Wesleys' name. Rumors blamed the death on John's insistence that Morgan fast rigorously, though John had not done so.

The same year, the Methodists were attacked for ministering to a prisoner accused of sodomy. A local



Bailed out. John Wesley's father visited prisons while a student at Oxford's Exeter College, and he later spent some time in debtor's prison. This family history probably helped foster John's special concern for the indigent, for whom he would not hesitate to spend (as the title of this illustration claimed) "His Last Guinea."

man, Thomas Wilson, noted in his diary, "Whether the man is innocent or no they were not proper judges, it was better he should suffer than such a scandal given in countenancing a man whom the whole town think guilty of such an enormous crime. Whatever good design they pretend it was highly imprudent and has given the occasion of terrible reflections."

Less than a month after Wilson's

diary entry, an anonymous letter in the London paper *Fog's Weekly Journal* assaulted "this sect called Methodists." It claimed "the university at present is not a little pestered with those sons of sorrow, whose number daily received addition" and who aimed to "make the place nothing but a monastery." The letter also cited the group's "absurd and perpetual melancholy" and "enthusiastic madness and superstitious scruples," offering advice on how to end "this gloomy stupidity."

The Holy Club did not dissolve in 1732, but events like these placed the group under ever-tightening surveillance. Finally, in 1768, the administration took decisive action against the Methodist vestige, expelling six students on trumped-up charges.

The general attitude toward Methodists—and anyone who would upset Oxford's entrenched culture—shows in this conversation between James Boswell and Dr. Samuel Johnson:

Johnson: "Sir, the expulsion of six students from the University of Oxford, who were Methodists and would not desist from publicly praying and exhorting, was extremely just and proper. What have they to do at an University who are not willing to be taught, but will presume to teach? Where is religion to be learnt, but at an University?"

Boswell: "But was it not hard, Sir, to expel them, for I am told they were good beings."

Johnson: "I believe they might be good beings, but they were not fit to be in the University of Oxford. A cow is a very good animal in a field, but we turn her out of a garden."

Indeed, fields proved to be much more productive sites for the work of John and Charles Wesley. Through open-air preaching they fanned the spark that Oxford had endeavored to snuff out.

CH

ELESIA COFFMAN is associate editor of CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

The Matchmakers

When the Wesley brothers agreed to help each other find wives, they never guessed their deal would lead to disaster.

JANINE PETRY

In 1738, John and Charles Wesley vowed that neither would wed without first receiving the other's approval. For one brother the agreement confirmed a lifelong love, but for the other it probably ruined any chance for happiness.

Back in 1736 John had found his first love, Sophia Hopkey, in Georgia. A good-natured girl of 18, "Miss Sophy," as John always called her, was one of his first friends in America.

John, then 33, felt his heart drawn to her but resolved to watch himself carefully.

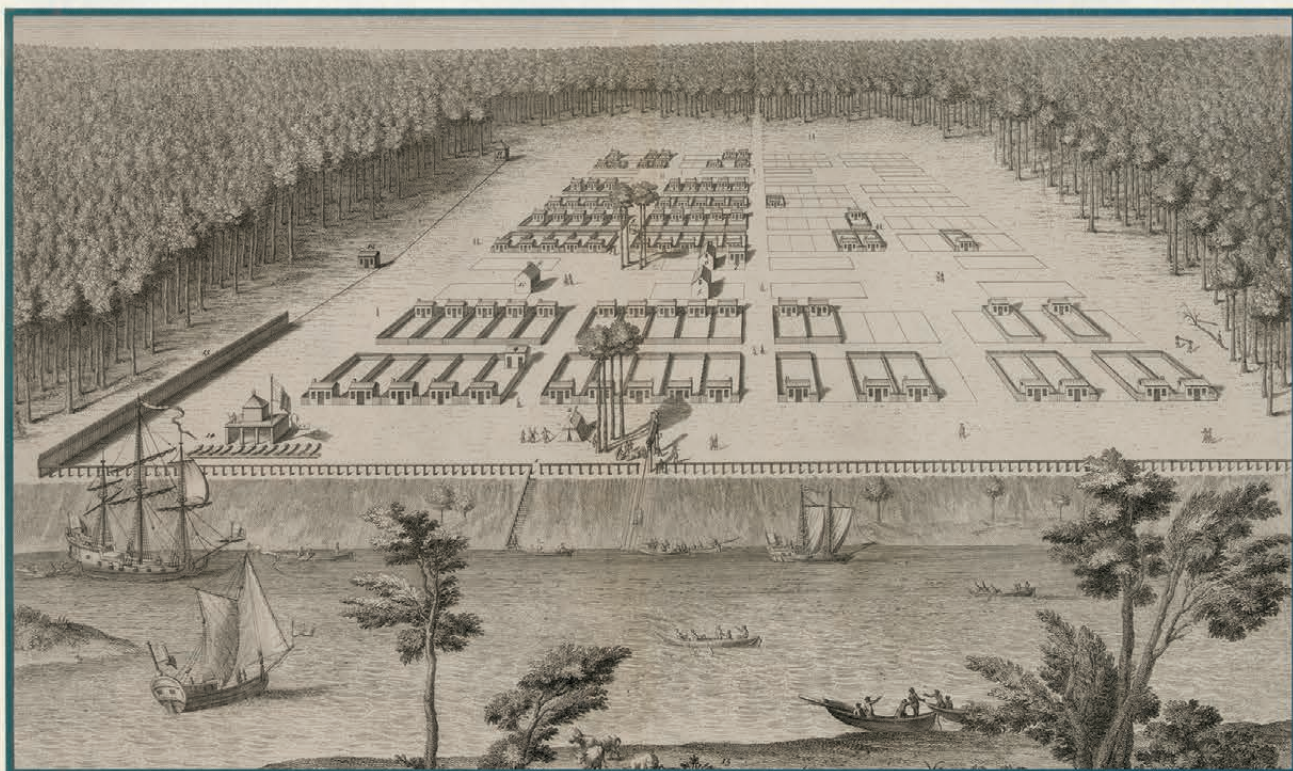
Although he enjoyed spending time with Sophy, he feared that a serious relationship would end his career as a missionary to the Indians. After much prayer, he painfully resolved not to marry until he had begun his work.

Following this announcement, Sophy, who usually took breakfast and

lessons with Wesley, told him she would no longer meet with him alone. He was, however, permitted to visit her at her home.

After one such visit, John wrote in his journal: "This was indeed an hour of trial. Her words, her air, her eyes, her every motion and gesture, were full of such softness and sweetness. I know not what might have been the consequence had I then but touched her hand! And how I avoided it I know not. Surely God is over all."

Soon after this visit John received the shocking news that Sophy had agreed to wed Mr. William Williamson—"if Mr. Wesley had no objection." John wondered at first if she was testing him, but he concluded that if she had given her consent to be married, his chance must



Library of Congress

Best-laid plans. The Savannah Colony, mapped out in its early stages above, was not ready for John when he arrived—neither his house nor his church were finished. Even worse, John was not ready for Savannah. He proved unable to minister to Indians or the colonists, and he was flummoxed by unexpected romance.

have passed. Though distraught, he offered no objection.

For a while, John's emphasis on itinerant ministry led him to renounce marriage altogether. In the pamphlet *Thoughts on Marriage and Celibacy*, he recommended celibacy to all those who could devote themselves to it "for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

Further, he declared that "those who have the power to abstain from marriage are free from a thousand nameless domestic trials," and that "[t]hese highly favored celibates ought to prize the advantages they enjoy, and be careful to keep them."

He later revised his view. He began seeking a partner for life, confident that his brother would help him make a good choice.

A second chance

John met Mrs. Grace Murray when she was 23. The widow of a sailor drowned at sea, she was attractive and had both an engaging personality and an enchanting singing voice.

In the spring of 1740, Charles admitted her into a Methodist society. She later assumed several responsibilities, including oversight of an orphan house at Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

At one point John became sick, and Grace cared for him. As she nursed him, their affections for each other grew. John said to her, "If ever I marry, I think you will be the person." As soon as he was better, he invited her to ride with him as he visited several societies in Yorkshire and Derbyshire.

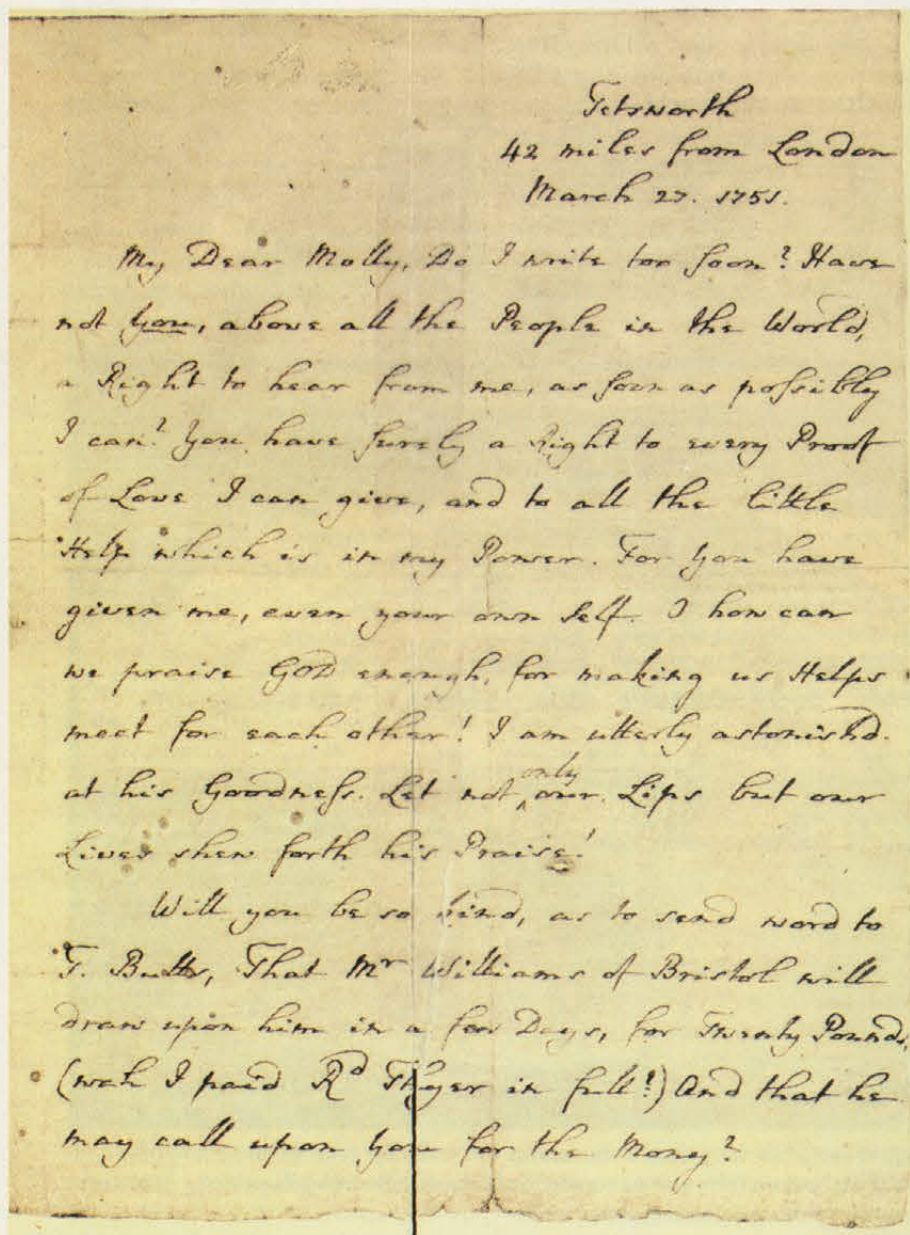
As agreed, John informed Charles that he wanted to marry Grace. Charles balked. Grace came from a poor family and had at one time worked as a domestic servant. Charles was sure this marriage would ruin John's ministry—the preachers would leave him, jealous women would disrupt the Methodist societies, and Grace would not be accepted as the wife of their great leader.

John argued that Grace's lowly origin meant nothing, as it did not affect her spirit or her gifts. But Charles was determined to prevent what he thought would be a tragedy. He rode quickly to meet John and declare his opposition. Then he rode on to where Grace was staying and convinced her to marry John Bennet, one of John's preachers, whom she had also nursed.

Persuaded it was for the best, she reluctantly followed Charles to Newcastle, where Bennet was. The following morning they were wed.

John was heartbroken. Charles thought he had prevented "undesir-

Short honeymoon. John's love for his wife, Mary, glowed when he wrote this letter just a month after their wedding. He gushed, "Do I write too soon? Have not *you* above all the people in the world a right to hear from me as soon as possibly I can? You have surely a right to every proof of love I can give and to all the little help which is in my power. For you have given me even your own self. O how can we praise God enough for making us helps meet for each other! I am utterly astonished at His goodness. Let not *only* our Lips but our Lives show forth His praise!" Sadly, the relationship began to crumble before their first year together ended.





Sally Gwynne



Mary Vazeille

able circumstances," but his impetuous actions probably caused more harm than good.

Strike three

Charles's interference with the marriage to Grace Murray may have spurred John to an even more hurried courtship of Mrs. Mary Vazeille.

A friend introduced John to Mary, a widow, and persuaded him that she would make a fitting partner. John quickly agreed and asked the lady's hand.

Once again, Charles strongly disapproved, but John did not listen. Charles had prevented him from marrying the woman he loved, and he was determined not to let him interfere this time.

John's haste surprised everyone. He mentioned his intention to his brother on Saturday, February 2, 1751. On Sunday, February 10, he fell on ice and sprained his leg. He had himself taken to Mary's house to heal. He stayed there through the week, and the following Monday or Tuesday they were married.

Though John had once feared that marriage would end his ministry, by this point he was too involved in his work to give it up. In the premarital arrangements, he refused control

over his wife's fortunes, and he stipulated that he should not have to limit his preaching or travel. "If I thought it would be otherwise," he told her, "much as I love you, I would see your face no more."

By the time four months had passed, it was obvious John had made a regrettable choice. His wife attempted to travel with him, but she couldn't keep up the pace and frequently complained. John said her gripes were "like tearing the flesh off my bones."

Though his wife had many good qualities, these were overshadowed by her jealousy, especially after she decided to stay home while John traveled. Unable to grasp the uprightness of her husband's intentions, she began spying on him. She opened letters, searched private papers, and sometimes handed them over to his enemies, hoping to attach some stigma to his character.

She left John more than once, returning only when he begged her. After 20 years, though, she left intending "never to return." John wrote in his journal: "January 23d, 1771.—For what cause I know not to this day,—set out for Newcastle, purposing 'never to return.' *Non eam reliqui : non dimissi : non revocabo.* [I

did not desert her, I did not send her away, I will not recall her.]"

One happy ending

Unlike his brother, Charles had relatively little trouble keeping his focus on ministry and off marriage. Then came Sarah Gwynne.

In 1747 he met Miss Gwynne, called Sally, on a trip to Wales. She was 21; he was approaching 40. She came from a wealthy and staunchly Anglican family; he was a poor Methodist itinerant. Nonetheless, as Charles later told her, it was "love at first sight."

Charles set out for a mission trip to Ireland almost a year after he met Sally. Their correspondence while he was away soon ripened into love. The following year, Charles wrote this verse: "Two are better far than one, / For counsel or for fight / How can one be warm alone / Or serve his God aright?"

On October 8, 1748, Charles sailed from Dublin and reached Sally's home. He proposed, and she accepted. But he had another person to consult.

Charles met John in Bristol to discuss the marriage. Although John had feared that marriage would divert his brother from seeking happiness primarily from God, John agreed to the match. Charles recorded, "We consulted together about every particular, and were of one heart and mind in all things." John even agreed to conduct the ceremony.

Charles wrote of his wedding day, "Not a cloud was to be seen from morning till night. I rose at four, spent three hours and a half in prayer, or singing, with my brother, with Sally, with Beck. At eight I led my Sally to church. Mr. Gwynne gave her to me (under God): my brother joined our hands. It was a most solemn season of love! Never had I more of the divine presence at the sacrament. We were cheerful without mirth, serious without sadness. My brother seemed the happiest person among us." CH

JANINE PETRY is the editorial coordinator for CHRISTIAN HISTORY.

THE WESLEYS



Charles and John Wesley

1703 John Wesley born

1707 Charles Wesley born

1709 John rescued from fire at Epworth rectory

1714 John admitted to Charterhouse School

1720 John begins studies at Christ Church College, Oxford

1725 John ordained a deacon

1726 Charles enters Christ Church; John elected a fellow at Lincoln College, Oxford

1729 Charles founds Holy Club

1735 Samuel Wesley dies; John and Charles leave for Georgia

1736 Charles returns to England

1737 John flees America after relationship with Sophy Hopkey fails

1738 May 21: Charles finds himself "at peace with God"

May 24: John feels his heart "strangely warmed"

1739 Following Whitefield's example, John preaches outdoors ►

THE METHODIST MOVEMENT

1714 George Whitefield born

1730 Holy Club member William Morgan urges visitation ministry to ill and imprisoned ►

1732 Whitefield enrolls at Oxford; Holy Club blamed for Morgan's death, attacked in *Fog's Weekly Journal*

1733 Whitefield joins Holy Club

1735 Whitefield becomes first Methodist to experience "full assurance of faith"



1736 Whitefield leads Holy Club

1738 John Wesley visits Herrnhut

1739 Whitefield begins preaching outdoors, makes first trip to America

1740 Methodists break with Moravians in London, begin meeting at the Foundery ►

1741 Calvinist/Arminian debate between Whitefield and John Wesley; Thomas Maxfield, a layman, begins preaching without permission

1743 John Wesley issues *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, an apologetic for Methodism

1744 First Methodist annual conference

1749 John Wesley publishes *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*

CULTURE, RELIGION, AND POLITICS

1703 Jonathan Edwards born

1707 Isaac Watts' *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* published;

J. S. Bach's first work published; Act of Union unites England and Scotland as Great Britain

1714 Hanoverian George I becomes king of England

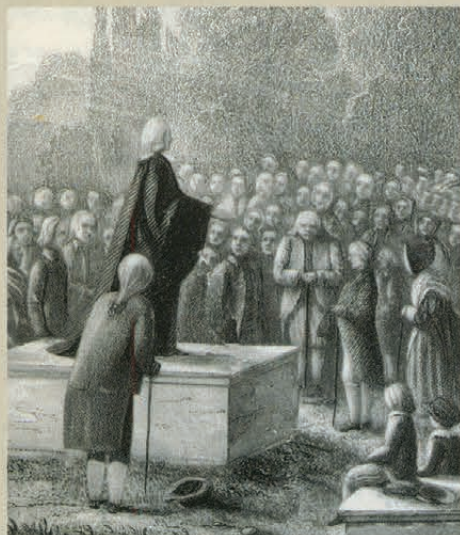
1715 First Jacobite uprising in Scotland seeks to restore Catholicism in Britain

1722 Herrnhut, a Moravian settlement in Saxony, founded by Count Nikolaus von Zinzendorf ►



John Wesley and Zinzendorf

The Christian History Timeline



1742 Brothers establish orphanage and Sunday school

1747 Charles meets Sally Gwynne; John publishes *Primitive Physick*

1749 Charles breaks up John's relationship with Grace Murray; John officiates at Charles's wedding

1751 John marries Mary Vazeille

1755 John and Mary separate

1756 Charles's last nationwide preaching tour

1757 The first of Charles's three surviving children, Charles, Jr., born

1765 Charles stops regularly attending Methodist annual conferences

1775 John publishes *A Calm Address to Our American Colonies*

1780 John publishes the *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*

1788 Charles dies

1791 John dies



1753 Whitefield publishes hymnal

1763 Maxfield joins enthusiast sect, claims "angelic" perfection

1766 John Wesley offers *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*

1768 Oxford administration expels six Methodist students; Methodist chapel opens in New York

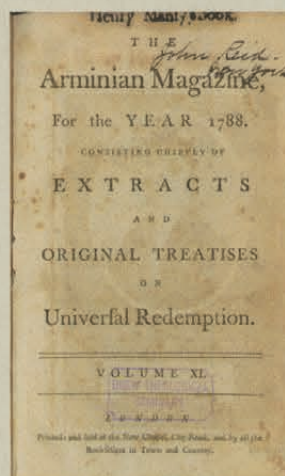
1769 Whitefield makes seventh and final trip to American colonies

1770 Whitefield dies

1771 Francis Asbury sails to America

1776 Methodists in America number 4,921

1778 *The Arminian Magazine* debuts ►



1784 John Wesley names Asbury and Thomas Coke "superintendents" of work in America, issues prayer book, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*

1787 Richard Allen starts the Free African Society, precursor to the African Methodist Episcopal Church

1788 John Wesley rebukes Asbury and Coke for calling themselves "bishops"

1728 William Law's *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* published

1732 George Washington born

1733 Colonel James Oglethorpe founds Savannah, Georgia

1740-41 Great Awakening peaks

1741 Jonathan Edwards preaches "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

1742 First performance of G. F. Handel's *Messiah*

1756 Amadeus Mozart born

1760 George III becomes king of England

1770 Ludwig von Beethoven born

1775 American Revolution begins

1787 William Wilberforce begins crusade against slave trade in Britain

1789 French Revolution

Spare the Rod and Spoil the Church

Though Methodism thrived on big crowds, its survival depended on the discipline of small groups.

CHARLES EDWARD WHITE

When the Methodist movement began to grow, John Wesley faced the problem of dealing with converts who returned to their old ways. Many Methodists came from the lowest social classes, so nothing in their background or environment helped them live the "sober, quiet, godly lives" Wesley prescribed. Their backsliding discouraged those who were trying to follow Christ and gave Methodism's detractors ammunition.

The solution to this problem came in a way no one expected. The Methodists had contracted a debt to build a preaching house. In an effort to pay off the debt, the leaders volunteered to visit each Methodist each week and collect a penny.

When they found that it was easier if the people came to the leader, the Methodist class-meeting was born. The people still paid the penny, but the meetings quickly became more pastoral than financial. Leaders used the meetings to instruct members and

check up on their spiritual progress.

Seeing how effective this practice was convinced Wesley that the work of God could not prosper without church discipline. With church discipline, however, Methodism did prosper, reaching almost a million people

before Wesley's death.

Wesley made church discipline work through four main strategies: (1) he preached it, (2) he taught his lay leaders to administer it lovingly, (3) he organized people into small groups where they could look out for each other, and (4) he publicized the benefits of obeying the Lord in this area.

Preaching "This is the way"

Wesley frequently preached a sermon on Matthew 18, the passage in which Jesus describes the steps to take upon discovering a brother's sin. Wesley said that the admonition to begin the process of church discipline is not just a suggestion, but "a plain command of God." He said, "No alternative is allowed, no choice of anything else: this is the way; walk thou in it."

In teaching 1 Corinthians 5, where Paul tells the congregation to cast out the immoral man, Wesley commented that the congregation has the responsibility to rid itself of the impenitent man because "one sin, or one sinner . . . diffuses guilt and infection through the whole congregation."

Wesley also reminded his followers that the early church practiced discipline. In another oft-preached sermon he informed his followers: "It was a common saying among the Christians in the primitive Church, 'The soul and the body make a man; the spirit and discipline make a



Class act. This 1897 image from *Ladies' Home Journal* recreates a familiar scene: John Wesley teaching a Methodist society.



Future backsliders? Preaching Methodism to skeptical villagers was Wesley's first challenge. Keeping them on the straight and narrow was often even tougher. Wesley relied on class leaders to maintain order between his visits.

Christian'; implying, that none could be real Christians without the help of Church discipline."

The church as a whole needed discipline, too, for without discipline there could be no true Christianity. "Is it any wonder that we find so few Christians," Wesley asked, "for where is Christian discipline? In what part of England (to go no farther) is Christian discipline added to Christian doctrine? Now, wherever doctrine is preached, where there is no discipline, it cannot have its full effect upon the hearers."

Tough love

Wesley lived a disciplined life and was not afraid to hold other Methodists to a similar standard. Reading certain sections of his journal gives the impression that he spent as much time throwing people out of Methodist societies as he did persuading them to come in.

During one early visit to Bristol, he purged almost 20 percent of the society for sins including drunkenness, dishonest business practices, gossip, theft, arguing in public, and

cheating on taxes.

Later, when he found a whole group of Methodists whose behavior was substandard, he "told them in plain terms that they were the most ignorant, self-conceited, self-willed, fickle, intractable, disorderly, disjointed society that I knew in three kingdoms." Evidently the group listened well, for Wesley reported that "many were profited" and not one was offended.

What Wesley learned through his experience administering church discipline, he passed on in sermons like "The Duty of Reproving Our Neighbor" and "The Cure of the Evil-Speaking." The key to success in a case of church discipline, Wesley said, is the spirit of the one who points out the sin.

Because so much depends on a right spirit, the one who goes to reprove should first earnestly ask that the Lord "guard [his] heart, enlighten [his] mind, and direct [his] tongue." The Lord's servant must "avoid everything in look, gesture, word, and tone of voice that savors of pride or self-sufficiency."

Above all, love must be the motive for discipline. Quoting his brother's hymn, Wesley said,

*Love can bow down the stubborn neck,
The stone to flesh convert;
Softens, and melt, and pierce, and break
An adamant heart.*

Sometimes this gentle approach succeeds, but other times, Wesley noted, the "mildest and tenderest reproof will have no effect." In such cases one or two others must go with the one who has already gone, first expressing their love for the errant brother, then establishing the facts of his sin, and finally exhorting him to repent.

If this second attempt fails, the concerned Christians should take the matter to the church. It becomes the minister's responsibility to rebuke the sinner and, if necessary, put him out of the church.

Wesley tells his hearers that the matter is then out of their hands: "When, therefore you have done this, you have done all which the Word of God, or the law of love, requireth of you: you are not now partaker of his sin, but if he perish, his blood is on

his own head."

Emphasizing tenderness in discipline did not prevent Wesley from being blunt. When his first lieutenant, Thomas Maxfield, began to claim sinless perfection and say that no one could teach him anything, Wesley wrote a letter detailing what he liked and disliked about Maxfield's ministry:

"Without any preface or ceremony, which is needless between you and me, I will simply and plainly tell you what I dislike about your doctrine, spirit, or outward behavior. . . . As to your spirit, I like your confidence in God and your zeal for the salvation of souls. But I dislike some-

area. It was divided into groups, or classes, of 12. The people met each week to study the Bible, pray, and report on the state of their souls. Each class had a leader who reported to the preacher in charge of the society.

Wesley published a list of questions for the class leaders to help the members examine themselves:

1. What known sins have you committed since our last meeting?
2. What temptations have you overcome?
3. How did God deliver you?
4. What have you thought, said, or done that might be sinful?

When the questions revealed sin, the offenders were given another

"Do right and fear nothing"

Although church discipline yielded so many positive results, Methodist leaders were not always eager to exercise it. Throughout his career Wesley had to admonish his deputies to examine the societies and expel all who disobeyed the rules.

Wesley wrote to Adam Clarke, "Be exact in every point of discipline." To Francis Asbury he advocated "a strict attention to discipline." To William Holmes, who perhaps feared losing his congregation, he sent this order: "Do right and fear nothing. Exclude every person that will not promise to meet with his or her class, the steward in particular. I require you to do this. You have no choice. Leave the consequences to God."

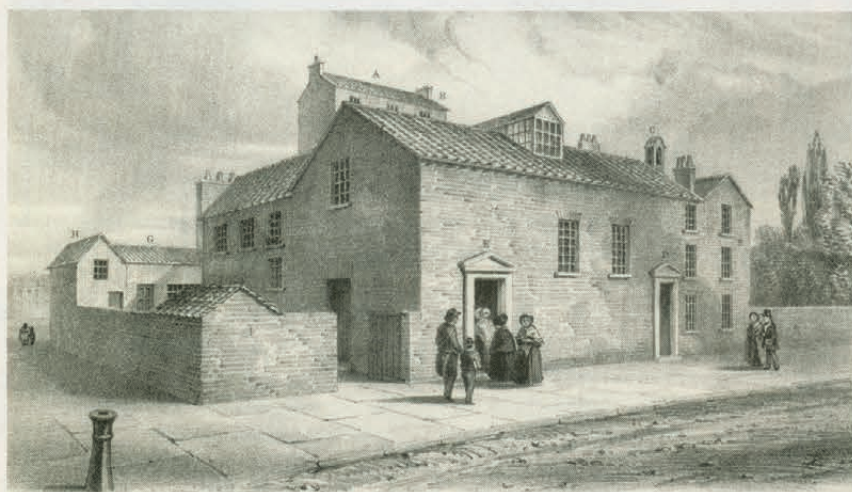
Wesley knew that church discipline can cause churches to split. He nevertheless ordered one of his assistants to remove an errant leader:

"I require you to put him out of our Society. If 20 of his class will leave the society, too, they must. The first loss is the best. Better 40 members should be lost than our discipline be lost. They are no Methodists that will bear no restraints."

To the end of his ministry, Wesley's concern with church discipline remained strong, for he knew that without follow-up, all he had worked for would be lost. A 1763 trip to Wales caused him to give this advice to future Methodist generations:

"I was more convinced than ever, that the preaching like an Apostle, without joining together those that are awakened, and training them up in the ways of God is only begetting children for the murderer. How much preaching has there been for these 20 years all over Pembroke-shire! But no regular societies, no discipline, no order or connection; and the consequence is, that nine in ten of the once-awakened are now faster asleep than ever." **CH**

CHARLES EDWARD WHITE is professor of Christian thought and history at Spring Arbor College.



From cannons to conversions. After Methodists broke with the Moravian group at Fetter Lane, they turned this old foundry into the home for a major London society.

thing which has the appearance of pride, of overvaluing yourself and undervaluing others, particularly the [other] preachers."

Wesley expected other ministers to speak as plainly to him—and to everyone else—as he did to them: "Tell everyone what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, as soon as may be; else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom."

Class confession

Wesley was able to practice what he preached about church discipline because he organized his followers into small groups. A Methodist society included all the Methodists in an

area. "If they forsook their sins," Wesley said, "we received them gladly; if they obstinately persisted therein, it was openly declared that they were not of us. The rest mourned and prayed for them, and yet rejoiced, that, as far as in us lay, the scandal was rolled away from the society."

Because the leaders knew each class member intimately, they could tailor their words to each individual need. The frequent meetings meant that wrong attitudes could be stopped before they developed into sinful actions. In this context of frequent, personal, and loving contact, church discipline became a powerful redemptive force.

Methodist Societies & Other Key Sites



Methodist itinerants traveled circuits throughout the British Isles, preaching and checking up on the societies. Several Methodist "hot spots" are highlighted in purple above.

Be Ye Perfect?

The evolution of John Wesley's most contentious doctrine.

RANDY L. MADDOX

When John Wesley was 6 years old, he overheard his mother advising his brother Samuel to “moralize all your thoughts, words, and actions, which will bring you to such a steadiness and constancy as becomes a reasonable being and a good Christian.”

This disciplined ideal, underscored throughout his childhood, set Wesley on a quest for the answer to one question: “How can I be the kind of person that God created me to be, and that I truly long to be, a person holy in heart and life?”

While Wesley was at college, he investigated these issues through avid reading of spiritual writers—early monastics, Roman Catholic mystics, Pietists, Puritans, and Anglican “holy living” divines.

While united in encouraging the pursuit of holiness, these writers differed on whether true holiness could be expected in this life. Consequently they offered two very different conceptions of perfection: dynamic, ever-increasing maturity; or static, unsurpassable attainment.

Wesley's early writings reflect the tension between these two ideas. He championed pursuit of holiness through spiritual disciplines, typically describing the Christian's goal as “perfect love.” Simultaneously, he issued denials of any “perfect” holiness in this life.

Wesley's early writings also reveal that his aspirations toward holiness



Charge to keep. To the end of his life, John Wesley believed it was his job to promote “the doctrine of Christian Perfection, which God has peculiarly entrusted to the Methodists.”

(sanctification) were driven by a desire for assurance that he was in a state of divine acceptance (justification).

Then his Aldersgate experience convinced him that justification precedes and empowers sanctification, rather than being based upon it. Yet he was initially led to expect (and to proclaim) that justifying faith would bring instantaneous moral perfection!

He soon came to question this expectation, and in 1741 he published a sermon, “Christian Perfection” (see page 34), to answer criticisms of his initial claims. He hoped to sort out the ambiguity by defining both the limits and the possibilities of human perfection on earth.

Inside out

Wesley had to fight on two fronts when clarifying his understanding of Christian perfection. His opponents included other Anglican clergy and Jonathan Edwards.

Most Anglican clergy equated holiness with proper actions and assumed that rational conviction of the rightness of an action regularly induced that action. In other words, if people know what is right, they will do it.

Wesley's spiritual journey undercut these assumptions and drew him instead to an “affectional” model of the Christian life.

He insisted that our actions are not products of isolated decisions but flow from our inner affections, meaning desires or dispositions. As such, we can only hope for consistent outward holiness in actions if we possess the inward holiness of Christlike affections.

Edwards, too, promoted an affectional model of Christian life, but he disagreed with Wesley on how we obtain Christlike affections.

Edwards believed that these affections were unilaterally infused by God and, apparently, instantaneously complete. Wesley, believing that God's grace works cooperantly in salvation, argued that the affections arise in response to God's empowering impact on our lives. These affections strengthen into enduring “tempers” as we exercise them or fade away as we resist them.

This conviction lies behind Wesley's repeated claims: 1) that we are only able to love God and neighbor when we have first felt God's love for us; and 2) that when we allow love of God and neighbor to flow, it produces “every Christian grace, every holy and happy temper. And from these springs uniform holiness of [action].”



Methodism gone mad. Though Wesley's "affectional" religion aimed at perfection, detractors saw his focus on the heart as a recipe for chaos. In satirical illustrator William Hogarth's engraving "Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism," above, a Methodist meeting is "unmasked" as a hotbed of sensuality, papism, fear-mongering, and irrationality.

Now or later?

Wesley's developed notion of Christian perfection can be summarized by saying that he believed God's loving grace can transform our lives to the point where our love for God and others becomes a "natural"

response. But how soon should we hope to reach this dynamic level of maturity? This became one of the hottest debates in Wesleyan circles.

Prior to Aldersgate Wesley had stressed aspiring for holiness, whether it come before death or not.

After Aldersgate, as his appreciation of God's grace deepened, Wesley became convinced that holiness could be attained during this life.

Even so, during the first two decades of the Methodist revival, he placed primary emphasis on "press-

ing toward the goal" by responsible participation in the means of grace. Only toward the end of that second decade did he begin to put emphasis on seeking Christian perfection now.

It is possible that a surge in apocalyptic expectation in the latter half of the 1750s played a role in this change—heightening concern to attain Christian perfection before Christ's return. But Wesley also came to wonder around 1760 if he had been operating with a standard for Christian perfection that was so exacting it hindered people from experiencing its freedom.

To counteract this possibility, he began emphasizing the limits of the deliverance from sin that comes with Christian perfection. With this more modest goal in mind, he encouraged people to seek rapid deliverance.

Wesley also knew by the early 1760s that increased stress on present attainment of Christian perfection had increased the possibility of abuse. The London society led by Thomas Maxfield and George Bell

proved this disturbing reality.

Maxfield and Bell proclaimed a perfection that was instantaneously attained by the simple affirmation "I believe," forfeiting any role for responsible growth prior to this event. And they portrayed this perfection as "angelic" or absolute, such that there was no need for growth after the event, or for the continuing atoning work of Christ.

Controversy resulted, and Wesley responded by integrating his emphasis on attaining Christian perfection in this life with his earlier stress on gradual growth. He articulated this balance in his 1765 sermon "The Scripture Way of Salvation."

Not all of Wesley's associates were convinced that he found the proper equilibrium. The most significant dissenter was his brother Charles.

Too easy

Charles refused to adopt the modified assumptions about entire sanctification that had made it possible for John to stress its present attainment.

Indeed, in reaction to John's modifications and the subsequent perfectionist controversy, Charles moved toward a more exacting expectation of Christian perfection.

Charles remained profoundly aware of imperfection. He became convinced that perfection could be attained only at death.

By corollary, he was progressively more critical of John's heightened emphasis on present attainment. Charles worried that urging novices on too fast caused pride and the loss of their real grace. As he expressed it in a 1762 hymn on Matthew 13:5:

*Lord, give us wisdom to suspect
The sudden growths of seeming grace,
To prove them first, and then reject,
Whose haste their shallowness betrays;
Who instantaneously spring up,
Their own great imperfection prove:
They [lack] the toil of patient hope,
They [lack] the root of humble love.* **CH**

RANDY L. MADDOX is Paul T. Walls Professor of Wesleyan Theology at Seattle Pacific University.

Two Views on Perfection

JOHN AND CHARLES DISAGREED ON THE MEASURE OF HOLINESS
A CHRISTIAN MIGHT EXPECT ON EARTH, BUT BOTH LONGED FOR IT.

from "Christian Perfection" (Sermon 40)

Christian perfection, therefore, does not imply (as some men seem to have imagined) an exemption either from ignorance or mistake, or infirmities or temptations. Indeed, it is only another term for holiness. They are two names for the same thing.

Thus everyone that is perfect is holy, and everyone that is holy is, in the Scripture sense, perfect.

Yet we may, lastly, observe, that neither in this respect is there any absolute perfection on earth. There is no perfection of degrees, as it is termed; none which does not admit of a continual increase. So that how much soever any man hath attained, or in how high a degree soever he is perfect, he hath still need to "grow in grace," [2 Peter 3:18] and daily to advance in the knowledge and love of God his Savior [see Philippians 1:9].

In what sense, then, are Christians perfect? This is what I shall endeavor . . . to show. But it should be

premised, that there are several stages in Christian life, as in natural; some of the children of God being but newborn babes; others having attained to more maturity. And accordingly St. John, in his first Epistle (1 John 2:12 & c.), applies himself severally to those he terms little children, those he styles young men, and those whom he entitles fathers.

"I write unto you, little children," saith the Apostle, "because your sins are forgiven you." Because thus far you have attained, being "justified freely," you "have peace with God, through Jesus Christ" [Romans 5:1].

"I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one"; or (as he afterwards addeth), "because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you" [1 John 2:13-14]. Ye have quenched the fiery darts of the wicked one [Ephesians 6:16], the doubts and fears wherewith he disturbed your first peace; and the witness of God, that your sins are forgiven, now abideth in your heart.

"I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning" [1 John 2:13]. Ye have known both the Father and the Son and the Spirit of Christ, in your inmost soul. Ye are "perfect men, being grown up to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" [Ephesians 4:13].

It is of these chiefly I speak in the latter part of this discourse: For these only are properly Christians. But even babes in Christ are in such a sense perfect, or born of God (an expression taken also in divers senses) as, First, not to commit sin. If any doubt of this privilege of the sons of God, the question is not to be decided by abstract reasonings, which may be drawn out into an endless length, and leave the point just as it was before. Neither is it to be determined by the experience of this or that particular person. Many may suppose they do not commit sin, when they do; but this proves nothing either way. To the law and to the testimony we appeal. "Let God be true, and every man a liar" [Romans 3:4]. By his Word will we abide, and that alone. Hereby we ought to be judged.

Now the Word of God plainly declares, that even those who are justified, who are born again in the lowest sense, "do not continue to sin;" that they cannot "live any longer therein" (Romans 6:1, 2). . . .

The very least which can be implied in these words, is, that the persons spoken of therein, namely, all real Christians, or believers in Christ, are made free from outward sin. And the same freedom, which St. Paul here expresses in such variety of phrases, St. Peter expresses in that one (1 Peter 4:1, 2): "He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin . . . that he no longer should live to the desires of men, but to the will of God." For this ceasing from sin, if it be interpreted in the lowest sense, as regarding only the outward behavior, must denote the ceasing from the outward act, from any outward transgression of the law.

But most express are the well-known words of St. John: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the words of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: And he cannot sin because he is born of God" (1 John 3:8, 9). And (1 John 5:18): "We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

Indeed it is said this means only, He sinneth not willfully; or he doth not commit sin habitually; or, not as other men do; or, not as he did before. But by whom is this said? By St. John? No. There is no such word in the text; nor in the whole chapter; nor in all his Epistle; nor in any part of his writings whatsoever. Why then, the best way to answer a bold assertion is simply to deny it. And if any man can prove it from the Word of God, let him bring forth his strong reasons.

—John Wesley



O Come and Dwell in Me

O come and dwell in me,
Spirit of power within,
And bring the glorious liberty
From sorrow, fear, and sin.

Hasten the joyful day
Which shall my sins consume,
When old things shall be done away,
And all things new become.

I want the witness, Lord,
That all I do is right,
According to thy mind and word,
Well-pleasing in thy sight.

I ask no higher state;
Indulge me but in this,
And soon or later then translate
To thine eternal bliss.

O for a Heart to Praise My God

O for a heart to praise my God,
A heart from sin set free,
A heart that always feels Thy blood
So freely shed for me!

A humble, lowly, contrite heart,
Believing, true and clean,
Which neither life nor death can part
From Him that dwells within.

A heart in every thought renewed,
And full of love divine;
Perfect and right and pure and good,
A copy, Lord, of Thine!

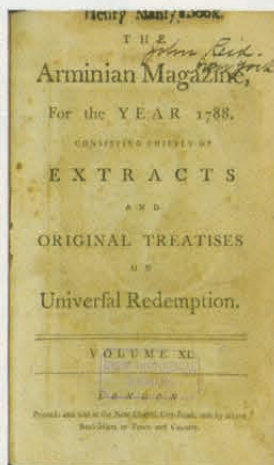
Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart;
Come quickly from above,
Write Thy new name upon my heart,
Thy new best name of Love.

—Charles Wesley

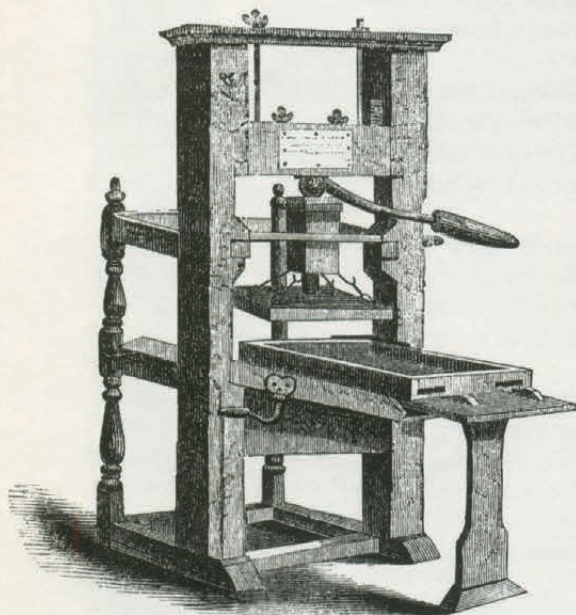
Start the Presses

No Protestant leader in the eighteenth century made better use of print media than John Wesley.

CHARLES YRIGOYEN, JR.



Impressive. Thousands of copies of Wesley's influential *Arminian Magazine*, for years the official voice of Methodism, were printed on a machine like the one at left.



If John Wesley had merely ridden 250,000 miles through the English, Scottish, and Irish countryside, preaching 42,000 sermons along the way, his reputation as one of the most energetic Christians in history would be secure. Yet he somehow found time—rather, made time—to publish hundreds of books, tracts, pamphlets, and a periodical as well.

Wesley was convinced that Christians should be knowledgeable about their faith and the world in which they lived. Therefore, they must constantly read, just as he did. And he was happy to supply the material.

Approximately 500 titles are at-

tributed to the two Wesley brothers, the large majority penned by John. They can be grouped in four main categories: apologetics, spiritual development, exhortation, and instruction.

His side of the story

The Methodists took constant criticism from people who believed false reports about their doctrines and practices. Wesley defended himself and his movement with the press, seeking both to dispel misunderstandings and to generate sympathy.

His pamphlet *Modern Christianity: Exemplified at Wednesbury* features chilling accounts, like this one from

Mary Turner, of the persecution of Methodists in a small town in Staffordshire:

"On Shrove-Tuesday, after two large mobs were passed by, came four or five men to my next neighbor, Jonas Turner's house. I and another woman followed them, to see what they would do. They first broke the windows, then broke down the door, and went into the house. Soon after they were in, they flung out a box at the chamber window, and swore, if any touched it they would murder them. Soon after they flung out a Bible and one of them came out, and in great rage cut it into pieces with his axe."

An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion (1743) and *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1745) are classic examples of Wesley's attempt to explain his message and Methodism's place in English life. Wesley's published *Journal*, which covers the period from 1735 to 1790, describes his ideas and actions in forming the Methodist movement.

Other publications, such as *The Character of a Methodist*, *The Principles of Methodism Farther Explained*, and *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists*, tell the story of Wesley's ministry and why it was necessary for the Methodist movement to be born.

Guidebooks for life

Besides conversion, nothing was more important to Wesley than providing for believers' sanctification, which he called "holiness of heart and life." Consequently much of his writing aimed at nurturing Methodists in holy living.

Since Wesley was thoroughly persuaded that the Bible was the most important book Christians possessed, he published two major biblical commentaries. His *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* was pub-

lished in 1755. It contained not only comments on almost every verse in the New Testament, but Wesley's own translation of the biblical text from Greek into English. His massive *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament* followed in 1765-1766.

Between 1749 and 1755, Wesley edited and issued *A Christian Library*, a 50-volume series that included selections from early church fathers, such as Clement and Polycarp, to writers of his own time. He believed that Christians would be instructed, inspired, and encouraged by reading the selections he had chosen.

Methodists not only read theology, they also sang it, often repeating the words of their foremost hymnwriter, Charles Wesley. John's most ambitious hymnal, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, contained 525 hymns that fully reflected the theology of the two brothers.

Aware of the different needs in his growing movement, Wesley produced "niche" publications: for Americans, *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (based on the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer*); for prisoners, *Prayers for Condemned Malefactors*; and for young Methodists, *Prayers for Children*. The works differed more in content than in style or tone, as even youngsters were instructed to pray lines like these:

"O learn me true wisdom, and let the law of thy mouth be dearer to me than gold and silver, and let my whole delight be therein. O let me be devoted to thee from my childhood. Keep out of my heart all love of the world, or riches, or any other created thing, and fill it with the love of God."

Since Wesley believed that the Christian life is a disciplined life, he gave detailed instructions, such as

The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies ..., which contained the fundamental mandates of the Methodist life. *The Arminian Magazine*, a monthly that first appeared in January 1778, offered even more thoughts on doctrine and discipline, plus spiritually enriching biographies, testimonies, and poetry.

Shape up . . . or else

Wesley regularly exhorted his readers to heed God's call to correct their lives, the church, and the nation, thus fulfilling what Wesley saw as God's charge to the Methodist movement: "to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

Some of his books and pamphlets urged a change in personal, ecclesiastical, or national life. *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774) condemned the practice and pleaded with those engaged in the slave trade to abandon it for



Tough crowd. From the beginning of his itinerant ministry, Wesley faced opposition like the Wednesbury mob shown above. In April 1740 he was expounding Acts 23 to an audience in Bristol when "all the street was filled with people, shouting, cursing, and swearing, and ready to swallow the ground with fierceness." The town magistrate (probably a figure like the man with bell and cane above) finally restored order. Methodists published accounts of such hostilities to defend themselves and to attract sympathy.



Patriotic protest. Completely ignoring Wesley's admonition in his *Calm Address to Our American Colonies* to "fear God and honor the king," New Yorkers tore down a statue of George III in July 1776. The statue was melted down for bullets.

the sake of God and those it exploited. A *Calm Address to Our American Colonies* (1775) reminded the colonists of their loyalty to England and exhorted them to give up any idea of a revolution.

Wesley also wrote "words to" various groups of people, including Sabbath-breakers, smugglers, and drunkards, admonishing them to change their lives. He could be very direct, as in the tract *A Word to a Drunkard*:

"Wherein does a man differ from a beast? Is it not chiefly in reason and understanding? But you throw away what reason you have. You strip yourself of your understanding. You do all you can to make yourself a mere beast; not a fool, not a madman only, but a swine, a poor filthy swine. Go and wallow with them in the mire! Go, drink on, till thy nakedness be uncovered, and shameful spewing be . . . thy glory."

The teaching preacher

Theological and doctrinal issues underlie all of Wesley's publications. Some of his publications, however, have a specific doctrinal focus. Most

notable among them are his published sermons.

Wesley published the first collection of his sermons in 1746. In the preface to the first edition, he stated that these sermons contained the substance of his preaching and teaching. They were theological tracts to be read and studied by his preachers and people as a guide for Methodist proclamation and living. He published 151 sermons in all.

Some of Wesley's other publications tackled specific doctrinal issues. Examples include *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience*; *A Treatise on Baptism*; and his very important *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*.

Wesley also published thoughts on a much wider spectrum of topics—an effort that produced some of his most unusual, and sometimes amusing, work.

Wesley published English, French, Latin, Greek, and Hebrew grammars, and an English dictionary. He even issued a philosophical volume titled *A Compendium of Logic*.

Perhaps the most renowned of Wesley's instructional publications,

and one of his most popular books, was *Primitive Physick*, which contains his advice on health and cures for bodily ills. Some of his ideas are remarkably modern, but most are outrageous.

To cure baldness, he recommends, "Rub the part morning and evening, with onions, till it is red; and rub it afterwards with honey. Or, wash it with a decoction of Boxwood. . . . Or, electrify it daily."

For a head cold, Dr. Wesley prescribes, "Pare very thin the yellow rind of an orange, roll it up inside out, and thrust a roll into each nostril."

The popularity of Wesley's prolific publications had one unintended result: money. "Some of these have such a sale as I never thought of," he said, "and by this means I became unawares rich." It was his nature, however, to give all his riches away, leaving his contemporaries the funds and future generations of Christians the wealth of his writings. **CH**

CHARLES YRIGOYEN, Jr., is general secretary for the United Methodist Church General Commission on Archives and History.

The Leadership Team

These early converts supported, strengthened, and spread the Methodist movement—whether John Wesley agreed with them or not.

GEORGE WHITEFIELD
(1714–1770)

Mouthpiece of Methodism

“What does the boy mean? Prithee hold thy tongue!” This is how George Whitefield’s mother, an innkeeper in Gloucester, greeted his announcement that while running an errand for her, a “very strong impression” was made upon his heart that he should preach. Whitefield pursued his calling anyway, eventually gaining even his mother’s full support.

Whitefield began developing his preaching skills early. In school he developed a strong interest in plays and acted in several. Although he decried the theater in his later years, his journals demon-

strated that his theater experience helped develop his vast oratorical gifts, which would later allow him to preach with ease to crowds of up to 10,000 during the Great Awakening.

Through an influential friend, Whitefield’s mother was able to secure her son a work-study arrangement at Oxford. But before he left Gloucester, a friend named Gabriel Harris, the keeper of the city’s best bookshop, showed him a new book, the second edition of William Law’s *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.

He looked at the book only briefly that day, but he read these words before returning it to his friend: “He therefore is the devout man who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God.” These words sparked a new fire and zeal in Whitefield.

At Oxford, Charles Wesley introduced Whitefield to the Holy Club and to his brother John. Upon meeting Whitefield, Charles noted that he was a “modest, pensive youth who mused alone.” However, Charles quickly established a fondness for the young man and later remarked of that first encounter, “I saw, I loved, and clasped him to my heart.”

After the Wesleys sailed to America, Whitefield assumed leadership of the Holy Club. Of this group, Whitefield later wrote: “Never did persons, I believe, strive more earnestly to enter in at the strait gate. . . . They were dead to the world, and willing to be accounted as the dung and off-scouring of all things, so that they might win Christ.”

In 1735, the same year he became a full member of the Holy Club, Whitefield experienced spiritual “New Birth”—three years before the Wesleys’ similar experience at Aldersgate. He was ordained a deacon at Gloucester in June 1736 and preached his first sermon a week later.

With his booming voice and boundless passion, Whitefield soon looked for ways to expand his ministry beyond the walls of the Church of England. He began preaching outdoors. Though he was not the first to attempt this, Whitefield’s stirring and skilled delivery



made it famous.

John Newton remarked, "The Lord gave him a manner of preaching which was peculiarly his own. He copied from none, and I never met with anyone who could imitate him with success."

At first, John Wesley, who had returned from America, deemed Whitefield's approach "a mad notion." But Whitefield convinced him that the way of the gospel is to go "out in the highways and hedges." Soon Wesley was imitating the orator who "copied from none."

Wesley's experience in America had been so discouraging that Whitefield indicated a desire to preach there, Wesley advised him not to make the trip. Whitefield politely ignored this advice and sailed to Georgia in 1739.

Whitefield's preaching spread the message of Christ life wildfire on dry ground in the Colonies, and even Benjamin Franklin (who once studied Whitefield's strong voice as he preached) was counted among Whitefield's frequent hearers.

Whitefield briefly split from the Wesleys over doctrine. Whitefield was a staunch, if not terribly scholarly, Calvinist, and he perceived the Wesleys' emphasis on

free will as an echo of heretical Pelagianism. The Wesleys accused Whitefield of adopting a theology that excluded too many potential converts.

In his preaching, however, Whitefield was anything but exclusionary. In Philadelphia, he preached, "Whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians? No! Any Presbyterians? No! Any Independents or Seceders . . . any Methodists? No! No! No! Whom have you there then? . . . All who are [there] are Christians—believers in Christ. . . . God help us all to forget having names and to become Christian in deed and in truth."

Through the mediation of a friend, Whitefield and the Wesleys were eventually reconciled, though their theology never completely meshed.

Upon his death, Whitefield's legacy included 33 years of ministry, over 15,000 sermons, and an audience that often included thousands of people. William Cowper penned this tribute to one of the true founders of evangelicalism: "He loved the world that hated him; the tear / that dropped upon his Bible was sincere. / Assailed by scandal and the tongue of strife, / his only answer was a blameless life."

—Charles W. Christian

ADAM CLARKE

(c. 1760–1832)

Second generation star

The strength of any movement is tested when its founder dies, and Methodism passed the test with Adam Clarke.

Clarke came from a poor family and received his only education from his father. He despaired of ever achieving intellectual success, until a visiting teacher told his father, "The lad will be a scholar yet." This encounter, along with Clarke's conversion, redefined his life.

Clarke converted to Methodism in 1778 through the preaching of Thomas Barber. The whole family heard him, and teen-age Adam was so taken by his preaching that he walked to the meeting house four times a week while Barber was in town.

Later, in a field, Clarke fell on his knees and sought God. He was finally comforted with what he described as "a sudden transition from darkness to light." He soon began traveling from village to village, sharing his faith.

Wesley invited Clarke to come to England and train for

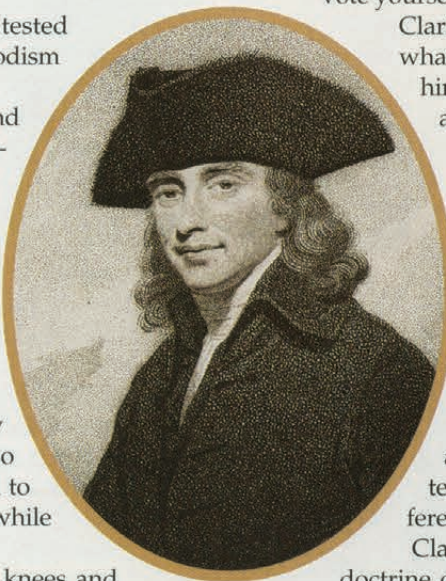
ministry. Clarke's parents reluctantly consented. After a brief stay in Bristol, Clarke was summoned to meet Wesley, who asked, "Well, Brother Clarke, do you wish to devote yourself entirely to the work of God?"

Clarke answered, "Sir, I wish to do and be what God pleases." Wesley then ordained him and sent him to the first of his many assignments as a circuit preacher.

For the next 52 years, Clarke preached around 15,000 sermons and wrote several respected works, including an eight-volume commentary on the Bible that was required reading for Methodist and Wesleyan clergy until the middle of the twentieth century. Although Clarke had no formal university education, he was fluent in at least 20 languages and served an unprecedented three terms as president of the Wesleyan Conference.

Clarke's writings did much to spread the doctrine of sanctification in the American Holiness movement of the late nineteenth century. He died of cholera in 1832, having left a legacy of a strong and organized movement that might have crumbled after Wesley's death if not for his efforts.

—Charles W. Christian



THOMAS MAXFIELD
(1720–1785)

Pioneering lay preacher

When John Wesley received the letter stating that his lay assistant, Thomas Maxfield, had been preaching, he angrily traveled from Bristol to London to confront him. But while Maxfield was a source of agitation for Wesley, he set in motion a key distinctive of early Methodism: lay preaching.

Maxfield came to faith in 1739 under the ministry of John Wesley and George Whitefield. Soon Wesley made Maxfield the lay-leader in London at the Foundry, a cannon factory turned meeting house. His duties included explaining Scripture and praying—but not preaching.

Then in 1741, without sanction from Wesley or any other church official, Maxfield began preaching. Wesley considered this a serious affront to ordained clergy and determined to examine the matter.

Before confronting Maxfield, Wesley called on his mother Susanna, who had heard Maxfield preach. Susanna was not a proponent of lay preaching. “But take care,” she advised her son, “he is as surely called to preach as you are.”

Mollified, Wesley attended a Maxfield sermon. Maxfield was an eloquent expositor, and Wesley was convinced of his gift. Fellow preacher Henry Moore

recounted that Wesley “bowed before the force of truth, and could only say, ‘It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.’” Once this door was opened, many other lay preachers would follow.

Tension between Wesley and Maxfield, however, did not cease. In 1763, Maxfield joined an enthusiast sect and claimed that he had reached perfection—an extreme form of Wesley’s doctrine. Seeing his teaching misapplied, Wesley tried to confront him, but Maxfield refused to listen.

In an open letter, “A Vindication,” Maxfield charged Wesley of spreading false rumors and half-truths about his character and beliefs. He also vigorously denied stealing Wesley’s converts. Maxfield said the opposite was true, that the Methodists “detain Scores, if not Hundreds of mine.” He continued, “Yet they might have put me away without setting me forth . . . as Wicked as the Highwayman: Is this the only reward I get from their hands for my many Years Labour?”

Later Maxfield founded an independent chapel made up largely of disgruntled Methodists. The rift between him and Wesley remained, but there was a touching moment of redemption. Years later, Wesley called upon Maxfield. According to one historian, Wesley “finds him sinking under years and paralysis, and kneeling down, invokes a blessing upon his last days, and preaches for him in his chapel.”

—Robert Schultz



THOMAS COKE
(1747–1814)

Rebel with a cause

Thomas Coke had a passion for lost souls. He almost single-handedly urged the spread of Methodism beyond the English-speaking world.

“If Coke died and someone were to whisper the word, ‘mission’ in his ear,” said his friend Jonathan Crowther, “he would rise to life again.”

In 1772, two years after being ordained in the Anglican priesthood, Coke had a conversion experience under the ministry of Methodist dissident Thomas Maxfield. Coke returned to his parish in South Petherton preaching this newfound gospel to



an unappreciative congregation.

Within a year, Coke’s irate parishioners dismissed him. He immediately joined the Methodists and became one of John Wesley’s most trusted—if troublesome—assistants.

Coke was a risk-taker and found Wesley too hesitant. For Coke, lost souls couldn’t wait. Wesley thought Coke was impulsive and absent-minded. He and others feared that Coke’s reckless passion would destroy the Methodist movement. They also feared his ambition and wondered if

he was vying to be Wesley’s successor. Coke tended to assume more authority than he was given.

The sharpest disagreement arose when Coke began to refer to Wesley, himself, and American Methodist

leader Francis Asbury as bishops instead of superintendents. Coke's bishops functioned like superintendents, but the title connoted more authority than Wesley intended.

English Methodists were stunned. Wesley was livid. "Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content," he said, "but they shall never by my consent call me Bishop!" Coke and Asbury's founding "Cokesbury College" (naming it after themselves) did not help matters.

After success in America, Coke set his gaze to more exotic lands. But Coke's proposal to send missionaries to Africa and India received a lukewarm reception from English Methodists. Wesley agreed only in principle.

Coke's zeal, however, continued unabated. He even sought support from Baptist churches. After years of Coke's pleading and financial sacrifice, the Methodist societies finally supported an outreach to Africa. Yet Coke longed for India.

"I am now dead to Europe and alive for India," he said. "God Himself said to me, 'go to Ceylon.' . . . I had rather be set naked on the coast of Ceylon, without clothes, and without a friend, than not go there."

In tears, an aging Coke finally persuaded the Methodists to allow a mission to India. Fulfilling the call, he accompanied the expedition but died en route. His body was found kneeling in prayer in his cabin.

—Robert Schultz

JOHN FLETCHER
(1729–1785)

MARY BOSANQUET FLETCHER
(1739–1815)

Potential successor and successful wife



Unlike his friend John Wesley, John Fletcher never took to the road as an itinerant evangelist. Instead, as a parish vicar, he accomplished more for Methodist theology than Wesley had.

In his *Checks to Antinomianism* Fletcher entered the Calvinist-Arminian debate by developing a middle way: faith with works. "Once we were in immediate danger of splitting upon 'works without faith,'" he wrote. "Now we are threatened with destruction from 'faith without works.'"

Wealthy in his youth, Fletcher chose the meager income of a vicar in a poor manufacturing town. There he preached for 28 years, pursuing the townspeople, according to Wesley, "to every corner of his parish by all sorts of means, public and private, early and late." This persistence was not always appreciated. Once Fletcher escaped death by the hands of a mob only because his parishioners suddenly called him to preach at a funeral.

Such zeal found a soul mate in Mary Bosanquet, a wealthy woman who, like Fletcher, chose the poverty of ministry. "If I knew how to find the Methodists," she said prior to joining the church, "I would tear off all my fine things and run through the fire with them. If ever I am my

own mistress, I will spend half the day in working for the poor and the other half in prayer."

Mary did throw herself into Christian service by running an orphanage for 18 years. Fletcher wrote Wesley about her, "I thank you for your hint about exemplifying the love of Christ and his Church. . . . I can tell you that my wife is far better to me than the Church [is] to Christ."

Both husband and wife preached with passion. Of Mary, Wesley wrote, "her words are as a fire, conveying both light and heat to the hearts of all that hear her." And Wesley showed similar admiration for Fletcher's preaching, saying that if Fletcher had become an itinerant preacher, "he would have done more good than any other man in England."

But Fletcher's heart was for his flock first, and he lived and died caring for them. He caught the fever that killed him while ministering to the sick. Shortly before falling ill, he had preached, "What do you fear? Are you afraid of catching the distemper and dying? O, fear it no more! What an honor to die in your Master's work."

Wesley had hoped Fletcher would be his successor, but he outlived the younger man by six years.

—Steven Gertz

CHARLES W. CHRISTIAN is pastor of Canby Chapel Church of the Nazarene (Canby, Oregon) and an adjunct professor of religion at George Fox University.

ROBERT SCHULTZ is a freelance writer living in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

STEVEN GERTZ is an editorial assistant at Christianity Today International.

Weeds in the Garden

The Methodist pursuit of holiness has, over 200 years, branched off in some startling directions.

A conversation with Tom Oden

The story of the Wesley brothers doesn't end with their deaths. Their influence continues not only in the Methodist denominations (most prominently the United Methodist, Free Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal, Nazarene, and Wesleyan churches), which total some 25 million adherents worldwide, but in the countless lives

touched by the hospitals, schools, orphanages, prison ministries, and other tangible expressions of Methodist holiness.

To trace the Wesleys' legacy in today's sprawling Methodism, CHRISTIAN HISTORY interviewed Tom Oden, a lifelong Methodist and professor of theology at Methodist-founded Drew University in Madison, New Jersey.

In what ways were John and Charles Wesley products of their times?

Both men were deeply rooted in Anglicanism (from their father) and in rigorous Puritan piety (from their mother). They both wanted to experience salvation in its fullness, but the world they lived in did not encourage such a quest for inward and outward holiness. The Anglican Church in the early eighteenth century was self-satisfied and hardly energetic in seeking to live out the gospel.

Oxford University, when they were there, was undergoing something of a revival of interest in ancient Christian sources—patristic writings, the Eastern church fathers, the desert monastics—that centered on the search for holy life. Rather than see this as an academic exercise, the Wesleys took it personally.

In addition, John Wesley read William Law, Jeremy Taylor, and other writers seeking "Christian perfection."

In the Holy Club, he founded what we'd call a support group for those who wanted to pursue holy living—not merely private piety but public acts of charity and service. John Wesley never saw himself as an innovator. He was just taking seriously what the church said it believed. He was just actualizing the tradition.

How did the movement change after the deaths of its founders?

The Methodist movement quickly became identified with the holiness revival tradition and the camp meeting movement, which focused on gospel preaching and a quest for holi-



Pre-bureaucracy. The first Methodist conference in America, held in 1773 at the austere St. George's Church in Philadelphia, included just 10 delegates. But tension already existed—the group passed three resolutions aimed at a preacher in Baltimore who, against John Wesley's wishes, was administering sacraments.

ness informed by grace. The Holy Spirit was expected to enter a person's heart and transform life in both its private and public aspects.

At the same time, Methodists were ministering to orphans and prisoners, making loans, and in the 1840s, establishing the beginnings of world missions. By 1840 the Methodist Episcopal Church, with 580,098 members, was the largest denomination in America. The emphasis on both inward and outward holiness continued until end of nineteenth century.

At turn of twentieth century,

Episcopal Church was formed with the support of Francis Asbury, who consecrated Richard Allen as first bishop of the new church.

In 1843, the Wesleyan Methodist Church split off to protest the toleration of slavery by the Methodist Episcopal Church.

A year later, largely over the same issue, the Methodist Episcopal Church split into the Methodist Church and the Methodist Church South. Southern Methodist University's name reflects this. The north's counterparts were schools such as Syracuse, Northwestern, Drew, and

In a sermon, Wesley describes the Lord's vineyard as overgrown with weeds. At the end of his life, he's already despairing that his movement is becoming another institution.

Methodism, like many other denominations, began adapting to a progressive and liberal view of social change. Philosophic idealism and the social gospel movement had a secularizing effect. Many Methodist bishops were trained at Boston University and were influenced by "Boston personalism," which led to a more humanistic outlook among the denomination's leaders, even as the grassroots remained pietistic.

What caused the splits in the U. S. movement?

During the American Revolution, Methodist pastors here identified with the revolution. Many Anglican clergy fled to Canada or England. So the Methodists in the United States clearly broke from the Church of England.

Wesley saw it happening and reluctantly gave his blessing. The Anglican church dissolved in North America, leaving the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Methodist societies in Ireland and England didn't split as quickly, but after Wesley's death, they too eventually broke away.

In 1816 the African Methodist

Boston University.

The Free Methodist Church was formed in 1860 over the issues of free pews (not rented), freedom for slaves, and free worship.

In 1939 the northern and southern churches reunited as the Methodist Church, and in 1968 this group merged with the Evangelical United Brethren to form the United Methodist Church.

In what ways is today's Methodist church a continuation of the Wesleys' movement?

Today there's a modest but significant refocusing of Wesleyan influence. At the 1988 Methodist General Conference, doctrinal standards were more sharply defined. Wesley's *Standard Sermons*, his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, and his 25 *Articles of Religion* were affirmed as foundational.

Of course, different groups emphasize different things. Liberals emphasize Wesley's social concern—his opposition to slavery and his championing of the poor. Conservatives focus on sanctificationist themes that enable social action to be viable.

What would John Wesley not recognize in today's Methodism?

The huge bureaucracy of the United Methodist Church. I say this because John Wesley was clearly dismayed when Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury began referring to themselves as "bishops." Wesley's Methodism was focused on teaching, accountability, acts of service, caring for the poor and orphans and prisoners and others in need.

In his sermon "The Lord's Vineyard," Wesley describes the Lord's vineyard as overgrown with weeds. At end of his life, he's already despairing that his movement is becoming another institution.

He also wouldn't recognize the vast and independent executive branch of the United Methodist Church, which is supposed to carry out the will of the General Conference, but now is directing its own way. Because of the enormous endowments accumulated over the years, the headquarters is not strictly accountable to the will of the congregations.

So church agencies find ways to speak apart from the will of the General Conference, for instance, on partial-birth abortion. The stress today in the United Methodist church is the issue of accountability.

Early in Methodism, Thomas Coke championed global missions. What has happened to that vision?

In the UMC, the General Board of Global Ministry has \$500 million in assets. If you talk to those on the board, they'll mention their concerns for evangelism and preaching, yet the percentage of missionaries focused on these areas is small. The real energy is in social-action projects—digging wells and building schools, hospitals, and such.

The endowment is large enough that the board doesn't need to be too attentive to the preferences of congregations or even bishops. In recent years, the board has been criticized for its anti-American, anti-capitalism, pro-gay agenda. In Central America, it was clearly identified with libera-



Erik Alsgaard

Church on the Hill. Across from the U. S. Capitol stands the United Methodist Building, completed in 1923 for \$650,000. Erected by leaders who advocated "civic righteousness as the true foundation of sane progress," the building has housed activists for such diverse causes as Prohibition, civil rights, anti-war protests, Earth Day, and reproductive rights.

tion theology and visibly supported the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

Recently, an alternative mission organization called the Missionary Society has been established, and this group is already sending more preaching pastors abroad than the Board of Global Ministry.

How is Methodism worldwide different from the American brand?

In Africa and Asia, especially, Methodism is more doctrinally centered on salvation by grace through

faith and seeking the holy life. Even in British Methodism, the doctrinal focus is stronger—Wesleyan hymns and piety are more prominent. And Methodism has long been associated with the Labor Party (Margaret Thatcher—a Methodist and a member of the Conservative Party—being a notable exception).

In India in 1870, Methodist bishop William Taylor developed a self-supporting, self-determining church. This concept of an indigenous church not dependent on outside funding eventually moved to China and de-

veloped into what's known today as the Three-Self Church.

What is the relationship between the Methodist, holiness, Pentecostal, and charismatic movements?

Until the 1880s, the holiness movement was essentially strong Wesleyan teaching on sanctification. Holiness preaching also affected some Presbyterian, Congregational, and Quaker groups. In effect, it was an ecumenical revivalist movement.

The movement split in the late 1800s as some argued for entire sanctification as a definite and distinct "second blessing" subsequent to conversion. This produced Nazarene and holiness churches. Pentecostals shared that emphasis but added a focus on glossolalia.

The charismatic movement has influenced Methodism much as it has Anglicanism and Catholicism. Most charismatics wouldn't think of themselves as following a Wesleyan emphasis but simply following the Holy Spirit.

Is there a conscious effort now to recover the legacy of John Wesley?

Within the UMC are 12 renewing movements, all committed to recovery of Wesley's emphases. The Good News movement has been a voice for reform for 30 years. In the last six years, the Confessing Movement, a grassroots lay movement of half a million people, has emerged for the renewal of doctrinal integrity.

What has been the Wesleys' most significant contribution?

The recovery of ancient ecumenical teaching and the focus on small group accountability, grounded in scriptural study and prayer, attentive to social responsibility. These priorities weren't unique to their movement, but they were more intensified than in many others.

The Wesleys were considered radical because they took so seriously the faith and the ethical responsibilities that they considered incumbent on all Christians.

CH

The Wesleys

Any list of resources on the Wesley brothers is necessarily incomplete, because so much has been—and continues to be—written about them. A simple card-catalog search on the title “John Wesley” turns up books by Albert Outler, Vivian H.H. Green, John Pollock, and other experts from both sides of the Atlantic. Resources on Charles are less plentiful but by no means scarce.

Rather than attempting an exhaustive guide, the following list highlights several reliable texts, giving special emphasis to authors found in this issue.

Life stories

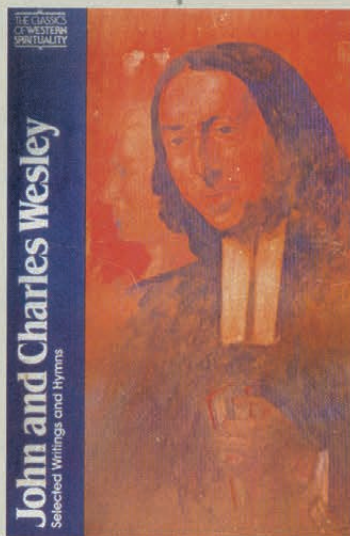
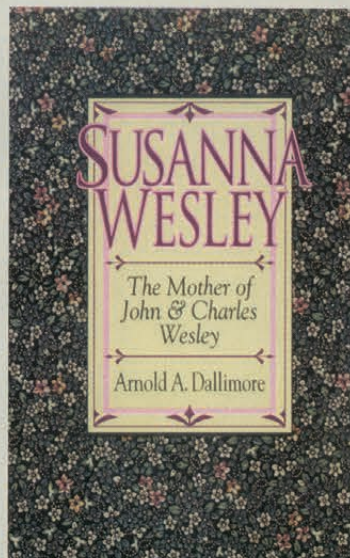
Among the many biographies of John, Henry D. Rack’s *Reasonable Enthusiast* (reprint, Epworth, 1989) stands out as a classic. It’s not an easy book to find, but it provides a wealth of insights.

Another rare find, Elsie G. Harrison’s *Son to Susanna* (R. West, 1937) offers a psychologically informed take on John’s personality. Her ideas are not universally persuasive, but her perspective is unique and valuable.

Richard P. Heitzenrater, author of the lead article for this issue, contributes *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Abingdon, 1994) and *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (Abingdon, 1984) to this category. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr., who wrote the article “Start the Presses” (page 36), also wrote *John Wesley: Holiness of Heart and Mind* (Abingdon, 1996).

Charles Wesley has received much less biographical attention than his brother, but several books will at least introduce you to his character. These include *A Heart Set Free* by Charles Dallimore (Crossway, 1988), *Charles Wesley, Poet and Theologian* by S. T. Kimbrough (Abingdon, 1991), and *Charles Wesley: Man with the Dancing Heart* by T. Crichton Mitchell (Beacon Hill, 1994).

Researching other aspects of the brothers’ lives opens the door to a wide range of books. In preparing this issue, we found Arnold A. Dallimore’s biography *Susanna Wesley* (Baker, 1993), Jan Morris’s *The Oxford Book of Oxford* (Oxford, 1978), and *The History of*



the University of Oxford (edited by L.S. Sutherland and L.G. Mitchell; Oxford, 1986) very useful.

Words, words, words

Both John and Charles were prolific writers, and study of their writing has been similarly prolific.

Richard Heitzenrater has edited some ambitious collections, including a CD-ROM with *Sermons and Hymns of John Wesley* (Abingdon, 1999) and, with Albert Outler, *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology* (Abingdon, 1991). He has also done extensive work on the 34-volume *Works of John Wesley*, published by Abingdon.

Randy L. Maddox, who wrote “Be Ye Perfect?” (page 32), has focused his work on Wesley’s theology. His books include *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Abingdon, 1994) and *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Abingdon, 1990). As an editor, with Theodore Runyon and Rex Matthews, he compiled *Rethinking Wesley’s Theology for Contemporary Methodists* (Abingdon, 1998).

S. T. Kimbrough’s writing centers on Charles’s theological and literary contributions. His books include *A Heart to Praise My God* (Abingdon, 1996) and *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley* (Abingdon, 1988).

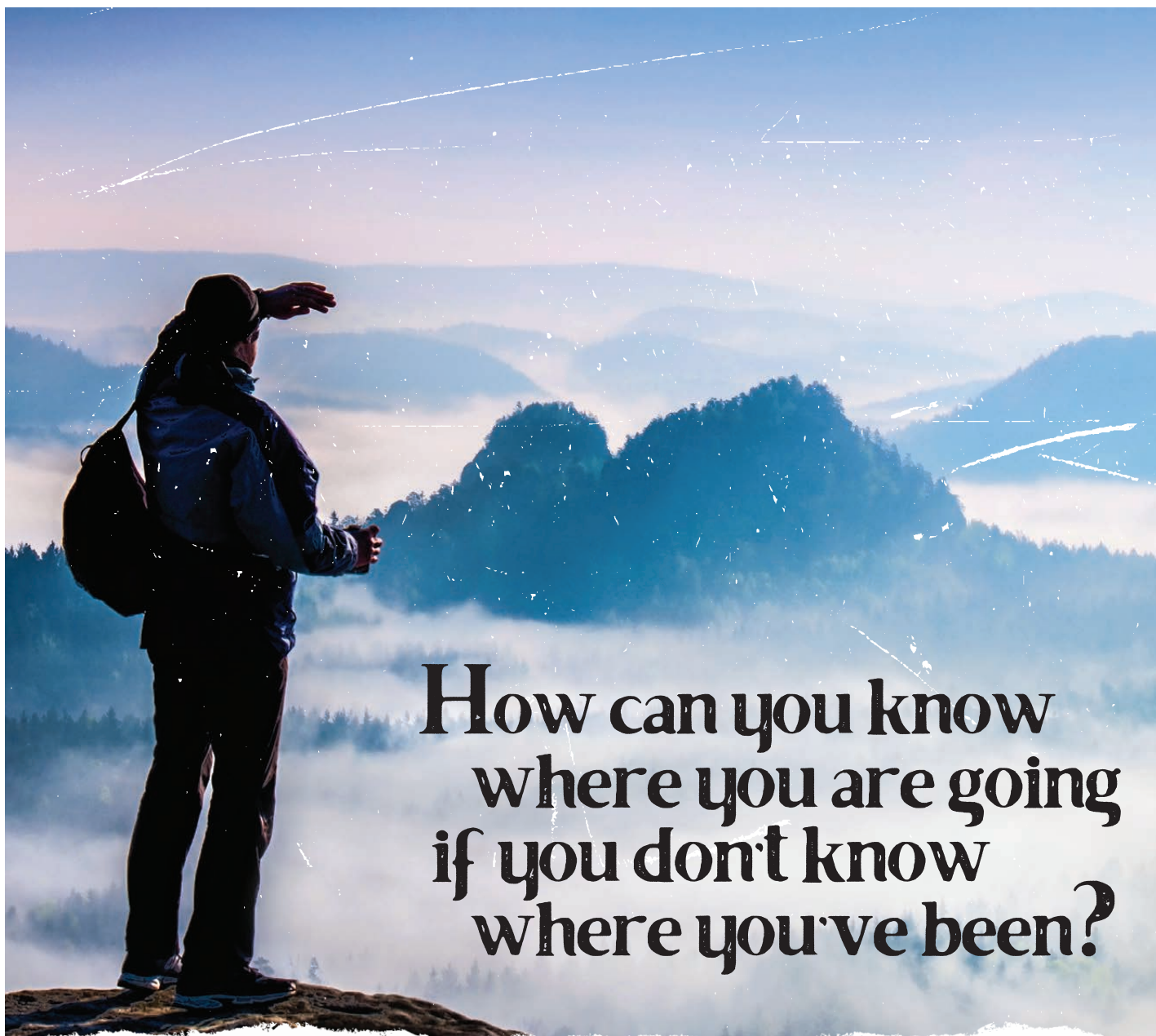
For a quick read of the juiciest bits from John’s personal writing, we recommend *The Journal of John Wesley*,

abridged by Christopher Idle (Lion, 1986). Betty Jarboe contributes *Wesley Quotations* (Scarecrow, 1990). *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns*, from the Classics of Western Spirituality series (Paulist Press, 1981), is also a handy reference.

As helpful as books are, the fastest way to access a broad selection of both Wesleys’ writing is the Web. The Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org) and the Wesley Center for Applied Theology site (<http://wesley.nnu.edu>) are excellent.

For an extensive list of Wesley resources, see www.churchresources.org/theology/bibliography.htm. For links and free historical images, see <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley>.

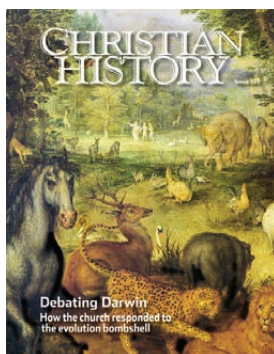
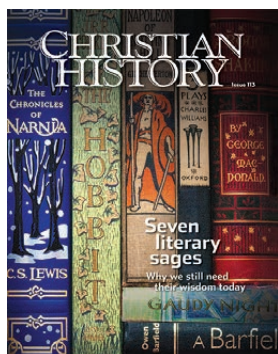
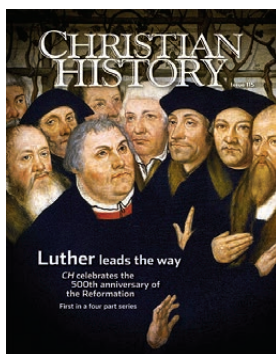
CH



How can you know
where you are going
if you don't know
where you've been?

UNCOVER YOUR FAITH HERITAGE
ONE STORY AT A TIME.

CHRISTIAN
HISTORY
magazine



Subscribe for FREE (donation requested)

Complete set of back issues on CD-ROM
and select printed issues also available.
Use source code **CHM69**.

WEB: christianhistorymagazine.org

PHONE: 1-800-468-0458

MAIL: See order form in center of issue.

Five hundred years ago, an
obscure German monk
published 95 theses for debate
and unwittingly set off
a revolution that continues
to shape the church and
the world to this very day.



Some of the experts featured in this DVD series include

Dr. Sandra
Yocum

Rev. Dr. Timothy
Wengert

Mark
Galli

Dr. Horace
Means

Dr. Karin
Maag

Dr. Scott
Kisker

Shane
Claiborne

Fr. Thomas
Kocik



THIS CHANGED EVERYTHING

500 Years of the Reformation

Christian History Institute presents a new three-part documentary on the Reformation. **This Changed Everything** explores the roots and the fruits of the Reformation while grappling with difficult questions about the legacy of division.

Martin Luther and his fellow reformers stripped away the veil obscuring the good news of grace through Christ alone. Yet the Reformation that followed came at a high price: decades of warfare, political turmoil, and social upheaval, and the specter of Christians killing Christians in the name of the Gospel.

Most agree that the medieval church was in dire need of reform, but could complete schism have been avoided? How should we think about our divisions in light of Jesus' passionate prayer that his followers be "one"?

Leading scholars from a broad range of perspectives tell the dramatic story of the Reformation, analyze its effects, and address vital questions about unity, truth, and the future of the church. Actor David Suchet provides narration.

For more information on the series, go to www.ThisChangedEverything.com.

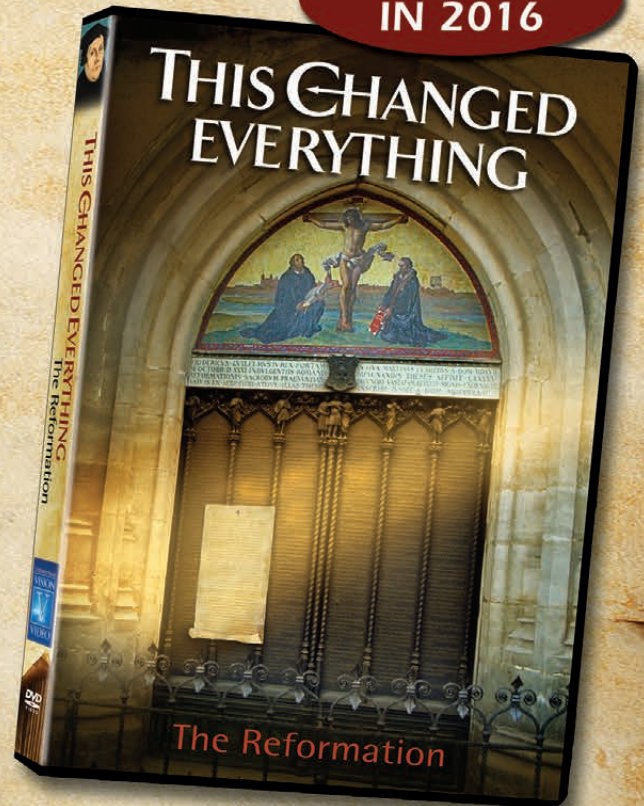


Produced by Christian History Institute
www.ChristianHistoryInstitute.org

Distributed by Vision Video
www.VisionVideo.com
1-800-523-0226



COMING
IN 2016



"Here's what the Reformation really is all about: it's about discovering quite surprisingly that our relationship to God is not based upon what we do but rather what God does for us in Jesus Christ."

~ Rev. Dr. Timothy Wengert, professor of church history,
Lutheran Seminary, Philadelphia

"There can be no real unity without truth."

~ Fr. Thomas Kocik, parish priest,
Archdiocese of Boston

"The Reformation debates, therefore, must continue in the right way, but they must continue in the spirit of oneness."

~ Dr. John H. Armstrong,
President and founder of ACT3 Network



Subscriber #

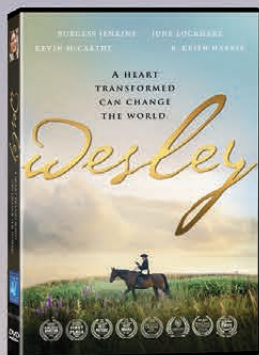
Source Code

7 27985 01672 6

AVAILABLE FROM VISION VIDEO

Wesley: A Heart Transformed Can Change the World

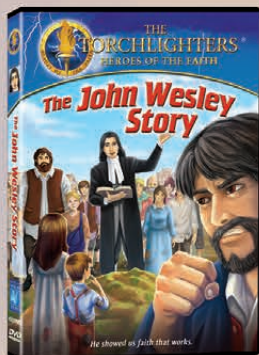
Step into eighteenth-century England, and experience the transformation of one man whose heart-wrenching search for peace haunts him even as he pours himself into a life of service and evangelism. Now, for the first time, John Wesley's fascinating spiritual struggle is presented in this award-winning feature film based on his own private journals. Directed by John Jackman. Starring Burgess Jenkins, June Lockhart, Kevin McCarthy, R. Keith Harris, and Carrie Anne Hunt. Dove Family Approved for ages 12 and up. Drama, 117 minutes.



DVD - #501370D, \$14.99

Torchlighters: The John Wesley Story

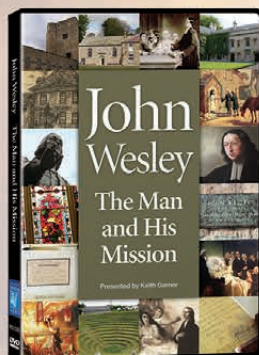
Share the message and ministry of John Wesley with children through this special episode of *The Torchlighters*. When young John is miraculously saved from his family's burning home, his mother is certain that God has a great purpose for the boy's life. After years of trying to live out that purpose on his own strength and good works, Wesley finally embraces saving grace. Will John take his message outside the church walls to the needy and outcast? This action-packed episode of *The Torchlighters* is a high-quality, animated production for ages 8 to 12. 30 minutes plus extras.



DVD - #501596D, \$14.99

John Wesley: The Man and His Mission

Journey throughout England and follow the story of one of the most influential people who ever lived. The work of John Wesley spread around the world and still impacts social justice, politics, and religion today. This beautifully produced documentary, hosted by Wesley expert Keith Garner and shot at key locations, provides a comprehensive view of John Wesley's life and legacy. Documentary, 55 minutes.

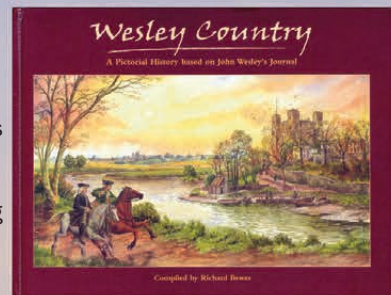


DVD - #501539D, \$14.99

Wesley Country

Based on Wesley's Journals

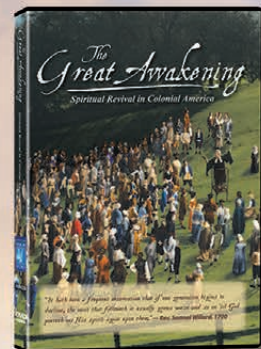
This hardbound book is a pictorial history of Wesley's reflections on society and his meetings with famous people of his time, including George Whitfield, William Wilberforce, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Gray. The layout and treatment of the script give the book a natural period flavor. Compiled by Richard Bewes. Hardcover, 120 pages, 12.5" x 9".



Book - #5239, \$14.99

The Great Awakening

Through the use of extensive source material, unique images, and interviews with historians, this DVD traces the origins and progression of the Great Awakening in the colonies. Celebrate the radical and lasting changes brought about by this movement of the Holy Spirit, and consider the need for spiritual awakening in our time. Documentary, 35 minutes.



DVD - #501423D, \$12.99

Purchase all 5 items for only \$29.99
with coupon code **CHM69B**.
Use item **#97567D** for this special offer.

THREE WAYS TO ORDER:

• Go to www.VisionVideo.com

• Call 1-800-523-0226

Please mention source code **CHM69B** when ordering.

• Mail to (include \$6.99 s/h): Vision Video - Dept. **CHM69B**
PO Box 540
Worcester, PA 19490



YOUR SATISFACTION IS GUARANTEED!

