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Proceedings

OF THE

Wesley Historical Society

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WESLEY IN AMERICA¹

The Wesley Historical Society Lecture for 2003

JOHN Wesley was born three years before Benjamin Franklin and lived one year longer. He spent less than two years in the New World himself, and few people have ever considered his experience there a rousing success by any measure. But the developments in America were never far from his mind throughout most of his adult life, which spanned most of the eighteenth century. He also played a vital role in the origins of Methodism in the United States. The American structures of Methodism, its 'doctrines and discipline' were settled in the midst of the Revolution. Wesleyan ideas, nurtured in the British Isles and transplanted across the Atlantic, had to meet the challenges of American patriotism and democratic thinking. The gradual working out of those tensions during Wesley's lifetime gave the Methodist tradition in America a distinctive form that persists today.

When Wesley first set foot in the New World in February 1735, he carefully recorded his initial reaction in the diary entry for the day 'Beware America - be not as England!'² The precise nature of his concern is not evident in the cryptic context of the diary, but certainly Wesley had specific expectations for his ministry in Georgia. Wesley early acquired certain prejudices that shaped his attitude toward America before he ever experienced the New World for himself. His ministry in the Georgia colony during 1736-37 helped form additional, if limited, impressions of the American continent. His relationship with George Whitefield continued to inform his perspective, as did his involvement in the subsequent evolution of a Methodist organization in North America.

¹ Portions of this paper appear in *Wesley in America* (Dallas: Bridwell Library, 2003); used by permission.

² John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries* (Feb.19, 1736), in *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989),18:p359 (hereinafter *Works*).

Wesley's involvement in the New World and his attitudes toward Americans and their rapidly changing country have been the subject of much offhand comment but little real investigation. It remains a desideratum in Wesley studies for this relationship to be examined more carefully. This paper represents an attempt to summarize several portions of the story and to suggest areas that need further investigation.

Young Wesley in England

The Wesley household in Epworth certainly shaped Wesley in ways that eventually pointed him, mind and body, toward America. Before John was born, his father Samuel started a small religious society in the parish. As he reported to the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, the Epworth society had a missionary outreach as part of its design.³ John's mother Susanna also expressed an interest in mission work, especially that of the Danish missionaries.⁴ Samuel's personal library contained books about mission work, and he dreamed that some day he too would be able to visit distant shores and carry the gospel to people far away. A personal friend of Colonel James Oglethorpe, founder of the colony of Georgia in the early 1730s, Samuel saw the colony as a fresh opportunity for implanting the gospel in the New World. John would also see the possibilities, at least in this instance, of British colonialism and Christian evangelism working hand in hand.

John himself joined his father as a corresponding member of the SPCK in 1732, through which he eventually met the German immigrants from Herrnhut and Saltzburgh who were headed to Oglethorpe's new colony. Shortly after his last minute unsuccessful attempt to succeed his father in the parish of Epworth at Samuel's death in 1735, John found an attractive alternative in an invitation from John Burton, one of the Trustees of Georgia, to go as a missionary to the colony. He had a somewhat typical view of the natives in the New World: unspoiled heathens, noble savages, who in their 'natural' state would be ideal targets for Christian evangelism.⁵

3 W. O. B. Allen and Edmund McClure, *Two Hundred Years: The History of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1698-1989* (1989), pp.189-93.

4 Charles Wallace, Jr., ed., *Susanna Wesley; the Complete Writings* (New York: 1997), p.80.

5 Wesley's early view of native Americans is outlined in his letter to John Burton on his embarkation to America in October 1735: "I hope to learn the true sense of the gospel of Christ by preaching it to the heathen. They have no comments to construe away the text; no vain philosophy to corrupt it; no luxurious, sensual, covetous, ambitious expounders to soften its unpleasing truths, to reconcile earthly-mindedness and faith, the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world. They have no party, no interest to serve, and are therefore fit to receive the gospel in its simplicity. They are as little children, humble, willing to learn, and eager to do the will of God; and consequently they shall know of every doctrine I preach whether it be of God. By these, therefore, I hope to learn the purity of that faith which was once delivered to the saints; the genuine sense and full extent of those laws which none can understand who mind earthly things." *Works*, 25:p439.

John's mother encouraged his decision to answer the call: 'Had I twenty sons,' she told him, 'I should rejoice that they were all so employed, though I should never see them more.'⁶ Finding friends to accompany him in this missionary journey to the unknown was a bit more difficult. Eventually, he persuaded Benjamin Ingham, Charles Delamotte, and his own brother Charles to join the enterprise. Charles succumbed to his brother's pressure, but not without complaining to their other brother, Samuel. A somewhat hasty ordination as deacon and as presbyter in a space of two weeks (instead of the normal two years) allowed Charles to exercise ministerial leadership with John in the new colony.

The Wesleys in Georgia

Wesley's own enunciation of his intentions for going to Georgia - to evangelize the American Indians and to search for his own salvation⁷ - usually provide the basis for later historians' conclusions that his mission was a failure. In neither matter did he meet with success.

Certainly, his experiences in the colony shattered his idealistic view of the natives as exemplars of 'natural man' waiting to receive the grace of God. In early 1737, during his tenure in Savannah, John Wesley sent an account of his conversation with five Chickasaw Indians and their translator to London, both as a report to the Georgia Trustees and for publication in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.⁸ Wesley's questions focus on the nature of God and the fate of the human soul after death. He was no doubt chagrined that his audience had little interest in the 'many things' that could be known from the Bible, since they had 'no time now but to fight.'

His implicit optimism at that point gives no hint of the harshness that will fill his later depictions of the Georgia Indians. In the end, his work with the five tribes in Georgia was only a peripheral enterprise that convinced him that most of the Indians were despicable examples of human vice, as he wrote in his *Journal*: they have 'no religion, no laws, no civil government,' they are all, 'except (perhaps) the Choctaws, gluttons, drunkards, thieves, dissemblers, liars . . . implacable, unmerciful; murderers of fathers, murderers of mothers, murderers of their own children.'⁹

Wesley's experience as a priest searching for his own salvation also presented him with more challenges. He often appears to be the stiff, overly straitlaced Anglican priest who followed the ecclesiastical rubrics too closely for the scruffy population of the colony. His helping to stave

6 Henry Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 2 vols. (1824), 1:p234.

7 *Journal* (January 24, 1738), in *Works*, 18:p211; see also *Letters* (Oct. 10, 1735), in *Works*, 25:p439.

8 *Gentleman's Magazine* 7 (May 1737):pp.318-19; see *Journal* (July 20, 1736) in *Works*, 18: pp.66-67.

9 *Journal* (Dec. 2, 1737), in *Works*, 18:pp.202 ('23).

the rum casks upon their arrival, his opposition to shooting on Sundays, his following the letter of the Olurch law as to baptism, communion, and other practices, appear to be actions of a prudish parson out of touch with his rough-edged parishioners in that colony of debtors and adventurers. On the other hand, those actions could also appear as zealous support of the establishment power structure, since by the colonial charter, rum could not be imported to Georgia, shooting on Sunday was a disturbance of the peace, and adherence to the rules facilitated both ecclesiastical and civil functioning. However, neither of these views-the out-of-touch parson or the establishment functionary - is a fully accurate picture of Wesley.

The reports of British observers who came to the colony during this period to gather information and to report back home present yet another view of the man, portraying Wesley as a rebel who was an anti-establishment trouble-maker. He had, after all, charged Governor Oglethorpe with being a thief and a womanizer, and was himself indicted by the Grand Jury on charges brought by the family of Thomas Causton, the Chief Magistrate. What Causton had not anticipated, however, was that the same Grand Jury that indicted Wesley on ten 'true bills' continued to deliberate a further day and formulated a series of complaints about Causton's mismanagement of the colony!¹⁰

Contemporary reporters of Wesley in Georgia fill in different details of the story and often differ in their final verdict of Wesley. Dr. Patrick Tailfer, a surgeon in Savannah, was a 'proud and saucy fellow'¹¹ who led the opposition to Oglethorpe in Georgia from 1733 to 1740. A ringleader for the introduction of liquor and slavery in the colony, he was indicted in 1734 for beating one of his servants to death. Just before he 'quitted' the colony for South Carolina in 1740, he became captain of an independent militia of about a dozen persons, which was never approved by Oglethorpe.

His account of the colony is virulent. He attacks Wesley for being in collusion with Oglethorpe, all of whose interest, he claims, 'was employed to protect Mr. Wesley'¹² Tailfer's diatribe against Wesley, included the charge that his aim 'was to enslave our minds as a necessary preparative for enslaving our bodies,'¹³ and he supports the charge that Wesley was a Roman Catholic in transparent disguise. A

10 MS "Copy of a Representation, sent to the Trusiees in September last [1737], signed by the sundry persons above named [Grand Jury], transcribed this first day of December 1737," in Methodist Archives, Manchester; see also Patrick Tailfer, Hugh Anderson, David Douglas, et al., *A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia* (Charleston: P. Timothy, 1741), pp.44-48.

11 *Journal* July 10, 1736), n.12, in *Works*, 18:p.164.

12 Tailfer, p.49. Wesley had discovered that Tailfer had fathered a child by his servant girl, whom he beat severely with a whip because her crying child bothered him in company. MS *Journal* (Nov .12,1736), in *Works*, 18:p.445.

13 Tailfer ,p.41.

member of the grand jury that indicted Wesley, Tailfer also signed the resolutions criticizing Thomas Causton, the chief magistrate and uncle of Sophy Hopkey.

Another observer, William Stephens, a member of Parliament and friend of James Oglethorpe, arrived in Georgia when Wesley was already involved in legal proceedings with the grand jury. He gathered information about the colony as conscientiously as he could, attempting to be free of party spirit in his observations. Stephens seems to have been particularly interested in Wesley's preaching and in the dynamics of the controversy in which the colony was embroiled, with the parish priest being indicted by the local grand jury. His evaluation of Wesley's sermons was fairly positive; his reaction to the small congregation quite negative. Stephens spoke privately with Wesley about the Sophy Hopkey matter and was also present on one occasion when Wesley and Causton tried to negotiate a personal truce. Stephens reports that Wesley was the more temperate of the two but also the more intransigent.¹⁴

Nevertheless, Wesley's pastoral ministry seems to have met with some success. The attendance at his church services in Savannah increased noticeably (by his own count), either in spite of these things or because of them. His diary for July and August (his last in Georgia) indicates that the attendance at Sunday services at this point was noticeably better than when he first arrived in the colony, both for morning prayers (55-65 average) and for the Sacrament (25-30). Whether people came simply to observe the rebel in action or out of more serious spiritual hunger is difficult to discern. Wesley also spent many hours in Georgia preparing a *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, which he took to Charleston for publication in 1737 by Peter Timothy, who also published Tallier's narrative critical of Wesley. The small book is especially significant as the first hymnal printed in America. Only two original copies are extant.¹⁵

Wesley's experience in Georgia became for him the occasion for what he called 'the second rise of Methodism.' His own 'Short History of People Called Methodists' recalls his starting a Methodist society at Savannah in April 1736 with forty people meeting at his home on a Sunday afternoon.¹⁶ However, Benjamin Ingham's journal for that period shows that there was already a religious society, organized in the summer of 1735 by Robert Hows, the parish clerk, under the previous priest, Samuel Quincy, meeting in Savannah at that time, and that Ingham and Wesley agreed to encourage them.¹⁷ Several months passed

14 William Stephens, *A Journal of the Proceedings in Georgia* (1742), see esp. pp.42-43.

The Georgia Trustees apparently appreciated Stephens' lengthy report: he was named president of the colony in 1743, the year after the report was published.

15 One in the New York Public Library, the other in the Methodist Archives.

16 *Works*, 9, p.430.

17 For the details of this story, see my article, "The Second Rise of Methodism: Georgia," in *Methodist History* 28 (Jan.1990):pp.117-33.

before Wesley actually became actively associated with that Savannah society. In the meantime, nevertheless, he implemented a similar plan in Frederica, down the coast on St Simons Island. In June 1736, he built a small Methodist society there around the Hird family, whose son Mark was the only attendee at the first meeting an inauspicious beginning for Methodism in America! John increasingly directed his attention to activities in Savannah, however, where by the spring of 1737 his parish activities were gaining attention, and his involvement with an extracurricular religious society in the parish had essentially transformed them into Methodists.

Historians seldom mention one important feature of his sojourn in Georgia – his acquaintance with a number of non-English-speaking colonists. Certainly, his association with the German pietists is frequently mentioned, largely because his developing theology benefited from interaction with their ideas. Having begun to learn German during the voyage, Wesley was then able to translate their hymns into English. In April of 1737, Wesley began to learn Spanish in order to converse with his Jewish parishioners such as Dr. Nuñez, some of whom, he said, 'seem nearer to the mind that was in Christ than many of those who call him Lord.'¹⁸ At the same time, he studied Italian and could communicate with persons who spoke that language. He also began preaching to the French settlers just outside Savannah at Highgate on Saturday afternoons. On one Sunday at the end of October 1737, he mentions his 'full employment' for the day: Morning Prayer in English from five to six-thirty; Italian service (read to a few Vaudois) at nine; second English service, with preaching and Communion, from ten-thirty to twelve-thirty; French service at one 'for a large number who did not understand English'; catechism for the children at two; about three the English evensong service, at the end of which was reading, prayer, and singing praise; about six, the service of the Moravians in German, 'at which,' he says, 'I was glad to be present, not as a teacher, but a learner.'¹⁹ His linguistic interests also led him to spend part of his time with Sophy Hopkey tutoring her in French. His interest and abilities in the languages led him later to write textbooks for his school at Kingswood in English, French, Greek, Hebrew, and Latin between 1748 and 1765.

Nevertheless, the notoriety Wesley attracted among the populace, for a number of reasons, often aligned him with other disgruntled groups in the colony, including many miscreants. Even the friends who formed a small party to help him eventually escape the colony while he was still under bail for his indictment, going by foot with him across the swamps to a ship in Charleston, were generally thought to be scoundrels (not

¹⁸ *Journal* (Apr. 4, 1736), in *Works*, 18:p.178.

¹⁹ "Short History," in *Works*, 9:p.430 (¶7); see also *Journal* (Oct. 30, 1737), in *Works*, 18:p.194.

men of the best reputation). The manner of his exodus, indelibly emblazoned in his last memories of Georgia, must certainly have come to mind during his subsequent contacts with America.

Whitefield in America

The departure of Wesley from the colony did not mark the end of Methodist presence in America or the end of his interest in the New World. His successor was George Whitefield, who had associated himself with John Wesley and the Methodists during the Wesleys' last months of residence at Oxford. Whitefield was ordained in 1736 (when only 21 years of age) and answered John's appeal for help in Georgia.²⁰ Although delayed for nearly a year, he was eventually appointed by the Trustees of the colony to replace Wesley, who resigned his assignment upon returning to England in early 1738. In fact, when Wesley's ship arrived at Deal harbour, Whitefield's departing ship was still at anchor. The last events of John's experience in Georgia seem to have changed his mind about the value of the colonial missionary enterprise. He sent George a note saying that he had cast lots, and according to his reading of God's providence, George should abandon his idea of going to America and return to London (an action that John disclaims in his *Journal*).²¹

George persisted in his mission to Georgia in 1738, however, the first of his thirteen trips to America. His impact on the colony and on its Trustees in London, was quite different from Wesley's. He was interested in starting an orphanage and school at Bethesda, near Savannah, and practically demanded that the Trustees expand his tract by 500 acres without charge and also allow him to use slaves, against the stipulations of the colony charter. He also told the Trustees that he would not bother to go to Frederica until the Trustees built a parsonage for him on St. Simon's Island. The Trustees, typified by the Earl of Egmont, were clearly annoyed by Whitefield's demands and refused to capitulate to his threats to move his whole operation to Pennsylvania and take the Methodists with him.²² Bethesda School for Boys in Georgia and the University of Pennsylvania both exist today as a continuation of Whitefield's eventual efforts in both places. Whitefield's impact on the general spread of Methodism in America during his three decades of

²⁰ Having returned to England, Charles Wesley had followed up this letter with his own appeal to Whitefield in December, to which George responded, "I think God calls me in a particular manner to assist your brother." Letter, Whitefield to Charles Wesley (Dec. 30, 1736), in George Whitefield, *Letters* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 1:p.488 (additional letters not included in 1771 edition).

²¹ *Journal* (Jan. 29, 1738), in *Works*, 18:pp.213-14.

²² Allen D. Candler, comp., *The Colonial Records of Georgia* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner, 1908), 5:p.162, pp.357-60. Egmont's marginal note in his minutes of one of the meetings dealing with Whitefield was, "N.B. A very unsettled head." *Ibid.*, p.324

ministry here, however, is less clear.²³

Most of the biographies of Wesley and the standard histories of Methodism treat the period from 1740 to 1765 as a virtual gap in the presence of the Wesleyan tradition in America. And Methodists in Georgia generally do not even consider Wesley's experience there in the mid-1730s to be a part of their early history as Methodists. They understand their beginnings to have grown out of the immigration of Methodists from South Carolina to Georgia in the 1780s.²⁴

This period is not a total vacuum, however, devoid of Methodist activity (or Wesleyan influence, for that matter). George Whitefield was, until the mid-1740s in England, the person who was most commonly recognized by the public as the 'Methodist' leader.²⁵ His robust preaching gave him a reputation that surpassed Wesley's in England until at least the riots of the mid-1740s, and the organization of the Wesleyan movement into circuits at the end of that decade. By that time, theological differences and organizational separation began to present a clear distinction between the two leaders. Whitefield, a Calvinist Methodist, became more closely associated with Lady Huntingdon's movement, which never aligned itself with the Wesleys' organization.

Whitefield's participation in the Great Awakening in America, then, brought the strong presence of a Methodist (of sorts) onto the American scene. No less a judge than Benjamin Franklin attested to his reputation as a powerful preacher.²⁶ The usual image of Whitefield, however, portrays him as a preacher who casts a powerful spell over his crowds of listeners but then moves on to the next preaching venue, leaving the listeners to deal with their spiritual reactions for themselves. Whitefield did not have the Wesleyan interest in organizing societies; consequently his followers were, to use Wesley's phrase, like a 'rope of sand.'²⁷

23 See Wesley's short descriptions in his "Sermon on the Death of Whitefield" and in "The Late Work of God in North America." Sermons 53 and 133, in *Works*, 2:pp.233-36; 3:pp.597-98.

24 See, e.g., George G. Smith, *The History of Georgia Methodism, 1786-1866* (Atlanta: Caldwell, 1913).

25 When anti-Methodist literature during the period 1735-44 designated a target by name, it was more often Whitefield than Wesley. See Richard Green, *Anti-Methodist Bibliography* (1902); Clive D. Field, *Anti-Methodist Publications of the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Rylands Library, 1991); and Donald H. Kirkham, *Pamphlet Opposition to the Rise of Methodism*, Durham, NC, Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1973.

26 Stuart Henry, *George Whitefield: Wayfaring Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1957), pp.60-64; Arnold Dallimore *George Whitefield* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 1:pp.350-54, 2:p.223, pp.441-44. The legendary nature of his speaking / acting abilities is shown in the persistent stories that he purportedly could make women faint, people weep, tremble, or even convert to Christianity simply by the way he pronounced "Mesopotamia."

27 Sermon 113, "The Late Work of God in North America," I.9, in *Works*, 3:p.599; see also his letter to brother Charles (Apr121,1741): "I must go round and glean after G. Whitefield." *Works*, 26:p.55.

The American scene, however, tantalizes with evidence of sporadic Methodist activity during this period. Apparently, shortly after Whitefield landed in Lewes, Delaware, on his second trip to the colonies, people began to gather as a small society in a home there, which still bears a reputation (and a historical marker) as a Methodist meeting place. A woman observer in Philadelphia in April 1740 attributes the formation of twenty-six societies for 'social prayer and religious conference' to Whitefield's visit there for a fortnight in April.²⁸ Whitefield's journal also indicates that after preaching to a society in Philadelphia on May 9, 1740, he started a society of young men there and preached to a society of young women the following day.²⁹ He also claims that he assisted in forming children's societies.³⁰ There were also in Philadelphia and New York, societies for black people and for black and white together.³¹ William Seward, a British Methodist travelling companion of Whitefield, reported in April 1740 that a society in New York had increased from 70 to 170 and was still growing.³² One biographer of Whitefield claims that in the eighteen months following Whitefield's visit to Boston in the fall of 1740, thirty religious societies began in the city.³³

What confounds the historian is the lack of any reference to any of these groups as enduring beyond the first few months or years after their organization. The Lewes group had all but disappeared by 1742. No Methodist societies later in the century traced their roots to Whitefield. Yet, one hint that Whitefield hosted a continuing Methodist presence is the reproduction of Wesleyan publications in America during this period. At least three Wesley sermons and a series of Whitefield sermons, journals, and letters appeared that aired Whitefield's conflict with Wesley over the issue of predestination and free grace. Wesley's sermon on 'Free Grace,' his first major public attack on the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, appeared in 1739 in England and was reprinted the following year in Philadelphia at Benjamin Franklin's press, a frequent publisher of Whitefield material, followed by a 1741 edition produced by John Fleet in Boston. Both printers also produced Whitefield's retort, in one version entitled 'Free Grace, Indeed!'³⁴ Printers often produced materials on both sides of a dispute, perhaps for reasons of profit if not fair-mindedness.

28 Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:p.491 quoting Mrs. Hannah Hodge (1806).

29 George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals* (Edinburgh, 1960), pp.420-21.

30 Luke Tyerman, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, 2 vols.(1876-77), 1:p.437.

31 Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 1:pp.588-89.

32 John Gillies, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield* (1772), p.57, an extract from Mr. Seward's journal (Apr. 26, 1740).

33 Tyerman, *Whitefield*, 1:p.425.

34 *Free Grace Indeed!* Reprinted Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1741. Whitefield's point was that his theology did, in fact, spell out a divine grace that was truly "free," unfettered by human decisions.

During the 1740s, while Whitefield was at odds with Wesley theologically, George also made use of John's publications to raise money for his orphanage project in Georgia. He had by then published one treatise with William Bradford in Philadelphia that noted on the title page that it was 'for the benefit of the Orphan-House in Georgia.'³⁵ Bradford also published at least one edition of Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in Philadelphia in the 1740s, again with a note on the title page that the proceeds would benefit the Whitefield project in Georgia. Two more Wesley publications also appeared in Boston between 1743 and 1746, both sermons that dealt with the topic of Wesley's dispute with Whitefield over predestination and free grace.³⁶ And Andrew Steuart in Philadelphia published Wesley's *Primitive Physick* in 1764. Over the years, this medical handbook became one of the most frequently republished Wesleyan publications. It is said to have been, along with the Bible, one of the most frequently found books in frontier homes in the nineteenth century. The presence of these Wesleyan works elicits the question, were there Methodists following in the wake of Whitefield's preaching in the 1740s and 50s (or perhaps emigrating from Great Britain) who were having these materials published? Were they gathering anywhere for meetings as Methodists before the mid-1760s (the 'traditional' beginning of Methodism in America)?

Wesley was distressed by Whitefield's strong 'letter' responding to his sermon on free grace.³⁷ Copies were surreptitiously distributed before a Wesley preaching service in London, resulting in Wesley tearing up a copy of the offending letter during the service in front of the startled congregation.³⁸ Several authors on both sides of the issue entered the pamphlet warfare between George Whitefield and John Wesley on the matter of free grace and predestination. Even Susanna Wesley seems to have joined the fray on her son's side.³⁹ She presents a very strong argument in favour of Wesley's position over against the attacks of George Whitefield, whose youth and inexperience, she explains, 'renders him somewhat pitiable.' She also claimed that, upon his first return from Georgia, Whitefield was envious of the Wesleys' newfound reputation 'among the better sort of people.' Therefore, fearful that 'his own glory suffered some diminution,' he fell victim to

35 A republication of Wesley's abridgement of William Law's work, entitled *The Nature and Design of Christianity*, in 1744. This treatise gained even wider distribution with three editions published in German in Philadelphia in the 1750s.

36 *Serious Considerations on Absolute Predestination* (1743), and *The Scripture Doctrine Concerning Predestination, Election, and Reprobation* (1746), both printed by T. Fleet.

37 Letter (Sept. 25, 1740), in *Works*, 26:pp.31-33.

38 *Journal* (Feb. 1, 1741), in *Works*, 19:pp.179-80.

39 On the basis of publisher's records, Frank Baker, pre-eminent Wesley scholar of the last generation, identified Susanna Wesley as the "gentlewoman" who wrote *Some Remarks on a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Whitefield to the Reverend Mr. Wesley: in a Letter from a Gentlewoman to her Friend* (London: n.p., 1741).

certain Dissenters who had let it be known that they would 'pave his way with gold' if he would 'preach up predestination in opposition to the Wesleys.'⁴⁰

Wesley himself also reacted strongly to Whitefield's attempt in 1764 to change the orphanage into an academy. 'You had land given and collected money for an orphan-house; are you at liberty to apply this to any other purpose-at least while there are any orphans in Georgia left?'⁴¹ And he certainly must have known of Whitefield's stance on slavery, which differed strongly from Wesley's antipathy to the institution, especially as it existed in America. The pilfering of his publications for profit, by Whitefield and others, may also have distressed Wesley - he certainly developed a policy in the next few years that prevented American preachers from reprinting his work without permission.⁴²

In the meantime, spiritual and theological developments in America impressed Wesley from a new source. Jonathan Edwards, seen by many as one of the great intellectuals produced in America, was a leading theologian and preacher in New England during the 1730s. Wesley read some of Edwards's writings soon after their publication in England and was impressed by Edwards's account of the response of the people to the movement of the Holy Spirit among the New England congregations.⁴³ That treatise was the first of five writings by Edwards that Wesley abridged and published between 1744 and 1773.⁴⁴ In 1746, he published three of them together as volume 13 of his collected *Tracts*; he published all five in volumes 12, 17, and 23 of his own collected *Works* in 1772 and 1773. It is somewhat ironic that Wesley in these publications implicitly aligns himself with Edwards, an American Calvinist, at a time when he was in public debate with Whitefield, a British Calvinist Methodist.

All of these activities preceded anything that is usually associated with the beginnings of Methodism in America, the bicentennial of which was celebrated in 1966.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

⁴¹ John Telford, ed., *Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, 8 vols. (1931),5:p.184 (Feb. 21, 1770); hereinafter Telford, *Letters*.

⁴² See 1773 minutes of the American conference, Rule 4 and 5, in *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, 1773-1813* (New York: Totten,1813), 6 (hereinafter *Minutes*).

⁴³ *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God, in the Conversion of many hundred Souls in Northampton* (London: John Oswald,1737); abridged by Wesley as *A Narrative of the Late Work of God at and near Northampton in New England* (Bristol: Farley, 1744). See *Journal* (Oct. 9, 1738), in *Works*, 19:p.16.

⁴⁴ The others were: *The Distinguishing Marks of the Work of the Spirit of God*, (1744), *Thoughts concerning the Present Revival of Religion In New England* (1745), *An Extract of the Life of the late Rev. Mr. David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians* (Bristol: Pine, 1768), and *An Extract from A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, in vol. 23 of *Wesley's Works* (Bristol Pine, 1773).

Wesleyan Preachers in America

The societies in the Wesleyan tradition that sprang up on American soil in the 1760s were primarily the result of Methodist immigration from Ireland and England. The names associated with the earliest societies in New York, Maryland, and Virginia, are familiar: Barbara Heck, Philip Embury, Robert Strawbridge, Thomas Webb, and others. Similar groups would soon be formed in German-speaking communities by William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, Jacob Albright, and others. The first Methodist leaders in the American colonies during this period were not preachers sent over by Wesley - they were laity who simply brought their Methodism with them to the New World. But some of them had been lay class leaders or band leaders in Methodist societies in their home country and began to exercise similar leadership in their new setting, which was experiencing political tensions and military conflicts. The historic political tensions between France and England extended to the American continent during the colonial period. The British and French both laid claims to certain portions of North America at that time - the descriptions of the challenged territories are often marked on British maps as the 'French encroachments.'⁴⁵

The military conflicts that ensued in the middle of the eighteenth century, especially between 1755 and 1763, brought significant expenses to the British army which was assigned to defend His Majesty's colonies. Attempts by Parliament to impose taxes on the colonists to help pay for their defence brought forth strong reactions such as the Boston Tea Party and the cries of 'no taxation without representation.' Wesley was consistently anti-French, but his sentiments toward American colonists were mixed. After these wars, Wesley generally sympathized with the colonists. After the conflict, in 1767, he took a collection for the American Indian schools,⁴⁶ and two years later began to send Methodist preachers to the New World.

One of the overlooked facts of this early period is that, even as he began sending preachers to America, Wesley himself considered returning to the colonies. Whitefield had been having a great deal of success with his preaching up and down the Atlantic seaboard. On his return to England in the mid-1760s, he claimed that he had left thousands of converts in America. At the same time, he noted the lack of 'proper assistants' for the work, writing to Wesley, 'Here is room for a hundred itinerants.'⁴⁷ He subsequently asked Wesley to come to America to help organize the revival, recognizing that they had different

45 See, e.g., "A Map of the British and French Settlements in North America," J. Lodge, delinq. et sculpt., 1755.

46 See *Journal* (Aug. 8, 1767), in *Works*, 22:p.98.

47 Whitefield's letter to Wesley (Sept 25, 1764), in Dallimore, *Whitefield*, 2:p.438.

gifts. In 1767, however, he came right out and made the request for assistance in person. Wesley's response seems not to have been direct or complete at the time, however, for he followed up with a spelled-out rationale in a letter to George on March 21: 'We are so far from having any travelling preachers to spare that there are not enough to supply the people that earnestly call for them. I have been this very year at my wits' end upon the account.' Wesley did point out that local preachers are often equal to the itinerants 'both in grace and gifts,' and hinted that they might be moved into 'a larger field of action.'⁴⁸

In 1768, a group of Methodist immigrants (largely Irish) that had begun meeting in New York also sent a request to John Wesley asking for help – both money and personnel.⁴⁹ Wesley responded this time not only with a small gift but also with a steady stream of preachers, two a year for several years. These were also lay people but John Wesley had set them apart as preachers appointed them to America. The first two were Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore, who arrived in Philadelphia in October 1769. Pilmore soon reported that the Methodist services there were attracting twice as many people as could get inside the preaching house, and Boardman said that seventeen hundred were attending services in New York, three times as many as the preaching house there would hold.⁵⁰

Wesley mentions the possibility of his own travelling to America in his correspondence as early as December 1769, at which time he had not made up his mind.⁵¹ He also mentions such an inclination on several occasions in the following two or three months, while he was waiting for 'Providence [to] speak more clearly on one side or the other.'⁵² By 1770, Wesley's own agenda had apparently shifted somewhat. Even though (or perhaps because) he had already begun to send itinerants to America, he wrote to Whitefield in February, 'And who knows but before your return to England I may pay another visit to the New World? I have been strongly solicited by several of our friends in New York and Philadelphia. They urge many reasons, some of which appear to be of considerable weight. And my age is no objection at all, for I bless God my health is not barely as good but abundantly better in several respects than when I was five-and-twenty.' In the meantime, however, he asked Whitefield to act as his surrogate by 'encouraging

48 Telford, *Letters* 5:p.45 (March 21, 1767).

49 The letter was written by Thomas Taylor on Apr.11, 1768; see Frank Baker, *From Wesley to Asbury* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1976), pp.70-83.

50 Pilmore soon helped the society acquire larger quarters, an abandoned church building that became St. George's; *ibid.*, 87; see his *Journal of Joseph Pilmore* (Philadelphia: Message Publishing Co., 1969), p.27; see also Dee Andrews, *The Methodists and Revolutionary America, 1760-1800* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.41.

51 Letter to Walter Sellon (Dec. 30, 1769), in Telford, *Letters*, 5:p.167.

52 Letter to Lady Maxwell (Feb. 17, 1770), in Telford, *Letters*, 5:p.182.

our preachers' and, since they are mostly 'as yet comparatively young and inexperienced,' by giving them advice and exhorting them to 'live peaceably with all men.'⁵³ Although Whitefield's ministry in America overlapped with these early Wesleyan-sent preachers, Wesley's suggestion to supervise and advise the new preachers had little impact, since George exhibited little inclination either to act in concert with Wesley or to form societies (which Whitefield said was like weaving 'Penelope's web,'⁵⁴ which unravels as fast as it is woven).

Whitefield died in September 1770, shortly after receiving the instructional letter from Wesley and while he was still in America. He was buried beneath the pulpit of the Old South Presbyterian Church in Newburyport, Massachusetts. More than one printer in America published a hymn that Whitefield had written and had, as the title page of a Boston edition said, 'designed to have been sung over his corpse, by the orphans belonging to his tabernacle in London, had this truly great, pious, and learned man died there.'⁵⁵ John Wesley's *Sermon on the Death of the Rev Mr. George Whitefield*, preached in Whitefield's Tabernacle in London, was published in both London and Boston.⁵⁶ The tone of the sermon, glossing over the tensions between the two men in spite of obvious recent flare-ups, rankled Whitefield's followers both in England and America.

Although Wesley again professed readiness to embark for America at the end of 1770, he acknowledged during the following spring that the 'call to America' was not yet clear. By the summer, his view was, 'I have no business there as long as they can do without me,'⁵⁷ and by the autumn of 1771, he was beginning to sound more like a man who had decided that his business in Britain demanded his full attention.⁵⁸ Perhaps the death of Whitefield had affected his decision on this matter. Perhaps the reports that he was receiving from Francis Asbury convinced him that the preachers he sent over were taking sufficient control of matters. The last we hear of the idea is in a letter to Walter Sellon in February 1772, disclaiming the rumour of his intention to go to America 'to turn bishop.' With tongue in cheek, Wesley responded, 'While I am in Europe, therefore, you have nothing to fear. But as soon as ever you hear of my being landed at Philadelphia, it will be time for

53 Wesley to Whitefield (Feb. 21, 1770), in Telford, *Letters*, 5:p.183.

54 Letter to John Wesley (Sept. 1, 1748), in *The Works of George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (1771), 2:p.170.

55 *A Funeral Hymn, Composed by that Eminent Servant of the Most High God, the late Reverend and Renowned George Whitefield, . . . Who departed this life . . . the thirtieth of September, 1770 . . . at Newbury-Port* (Boston?: n.p., 1770).

56 Published in London by J. and W. Oliver, 1770; and in Boston by John Fleeming 1771.

57 Letters to Mrs Marston (Dec. 1770) and Miss March (July 13, 1771), in Telford, *Letters*, 5:p.212, p.267.

58 Letter to Philothea Briggs (Aug. 14, 1771), in Telford, *Letters*, 5:p.273.

your apprehensions to revive.'⁵⁹ A year later, he decided to send Thomas Rankin and George Shadford to take control of the situation. He wrote to Shadford, 'The time is arrived for you to embark for America. . . . I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can.'⁶⁰ The sending of strong and able assistants seemed finally to close the book on the idea of his own return to America.

Increasing presence of Methodists, however, resulted in an increased reprinting of Wesleyan materials for their use, such as Charles Wesley's sermon, *Awake Thou that Sleepest* (Delaware, 1770), John Wesley's *Primitive Physick* (Philadelphia, 1770), his extract of Thomas à Kempis' *The Christian's Pattern* (New Jersey, 1772,1775), the *Collection of Psalms and Hymns and Hymns for Those that Seek and Those that have Redemption* (New Jersey,1773), and Wesley's extract of Richard Baxter's *Saints Everlasting Rest* (New Jersey, 1775). Wesley had given one of the preachers, Thomas Rankin, permission to print *The Christian's Pattern* in 1775 in order to reduce the debt. But apparently, some of these works were reprinted in America without Wesley's knowledge or permission, as is evident from comments in his correspondence and from regulations imposed upon the preachers, such as Robert Williams.⁶¹ During the early 1770s, Wesley annually appointed two additional itinerants to America and also on occasion suggested that 'problem'preachers in England might want to volunteer for service overseas on their own. The result was a lack of discipline on the part of some preachers and a lack of control by Wesley himself. One of Wesley's first letters to an American Methodist preacher, in 1771, asks Pilmore a series of questions about the discipline in the societies: whether the buildings are properly fixed on a Methodist deed, whether the American preachers are of a 'teachable spirit' whether they are cooperative. Wesley also complains that Pilmore and the others are not writing often enough: 'Surely it would not hurt you were you to write once a month.'⁶²

Part of Wesley's intention in sending lively and forceful young preachers like Francis Asbury and Thomas Rankin was to exclude 'novelties' and to enforce 'good old Methodist discipline and doctrine.'⁶³ The first conference of preachers in 1773 resulted in several stipulations to follow Wesley's rules and acknowledge his leadership as his 'sons in the gospel.' Preachers were not to behave like priests by administering Communion; they were not to print Wesley's writings without

59 Letter (Feb.1, 1772), in Telford, *Letters*, 5:p.303.

60 Letter (Mar. 1773), in Telford, *Letters*, 6:p.23.

61 *Minutes* p.6

62 MS letter, Wesley to Pilmore (Mar. 27,1771), Bridwell Library, Southern Methodist University.

63 Letter to Thomas Rankin (July 21,1774), in Telford, *Letters*, 6:p.103.

permission; they were to follow the directions of the superintending preacher appointed by Wesley. At the same time, Wesley had a tendency to micromanage affairs in America.⁶⁴ Within a few short years, Wesley's attempts at control over the societies would become a sticking point for many American Methodists, including Asbury, as the colonies moved toward rebellion.

The American Revolution/Rebellion

As the political tensions between the colonies and Great Britain grew during the 1760s and '70s, the Methodists at times found themselves in an awkward position – having Wesley, a strong British Tory loyalist, as their leader. These tensions came to a breaking point in the mid-1770s, as the colonies began to take steps to sever ties with Great Britain. The annual conferences of Methodist preachers during this early period of organization often met at nearly the same time and in the same city as the Continental Congress meetings that were debating determinative political issues. As the Congress was nominating George Washington to be commander-in-chief of the American army, Wesley was writing a letter to the Prime Minister, Lord North, explaining his views on the plight of the American colonists, who he felt were 'an oppressed people.'⁶⁵

Although in the 1760s Wesley claimed that 'politics lies quite out of my province,'⁶⁶ he did later publish a modest argument for Christian ministers' duty to 'preach politics' and defend the government.⁶⁷ He himself did not hesitate to comment upon the political tensions that were increasing between Great Britain and her American colonies. Although he was generally a pacifist, he had not interfered with attempts to raise a 'Methodist militia' to help defend England against a threatened French invasion in the 1750s. And although he was naturally indisposed to acknowledge any value in 'liberty' from a republican point of view, he was willing to allow privately that concessions to the Americans on some matters might be wise. In *Free Thoughts on the Present State of Affairs*, written during the French and Indian Wars, Wesley remarked that he did not fully defend the government measures taken in America, saying that they were the fault of the poor policies of a previous administration and implying that the social unrest and political chaos in England were partly the result of French intrigue

64 See, e.g., his letter to Thomas Rankin (Dec. 4, 1773), in Telford, *Letters*, 6:p.57.

65 Letters to the Earl of Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies (June 14,1775), and to Lord North, First Lord of the Treasury (June 15,1775), in Telford, *Letters*, 6:p.156, p.161.

66 *Free Thoughts on the Present State of Public Affairs, in a letter to a friend, written in the year 1766* (London: J. and W. Oliver, 1770).

67 "How Far is it the Duty of a Christian Minister to Preach Politics?" in Thomas Jackson, *Works of the Rev. John Wesley* (1872), 11:pp.154-55

taking advantage of human weakness and sin. In his *Thoughts upon Liberty* in 1772, Wesley denied the broad democratic ideal that political power originates with 'the people,' noting that if that were the case, everyone, including women and children, should then have the right to vote, which was not true.⁶⁸ In June 1775, just prior to the Battle of Bunker Hill Wesley had written privately to the Prime Minister, Frederick North, the Earl of Guilford, and the Secretary of State for the Colonies, William Legge, Earl of Dartmouth, warning them that the homeland opposition to military action against the colonies was strong, and rightly so. He states clearly that, although his 'prejudices are against the Americans' because of his upbringing in passive obedience and nonresistance, he could not help but think that the Americans were seeking 'nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner that the nature of the thing would allow.'⁶⁹

Within weeks, however, Wesley did an about-face, having read Samuel Johnson's new treatise, *Taxation no Tyranny*. Heavily plagiarizing Johnson's work, Wesley published *A Calm Address to the American Colonies* (1775),⁷⁰ which strongly criticized the colonists for their 'no taxation without representation' argument and their babbling about 'liberty,' pointing out that the Americans were as free and as well represented as many British citizens. The taxes were needed to pay for the military protection that the colonists received.

Wesley wavered on the matter of whether the American turmoil was primarily caused by evil Englishmen or rebellious Americans, noting in his *Observations on Liberty* (1776) that his brother Charles had heard talk of revolution as early as his visit to Boston in 1736.⁷¹ This treatise was aimed at the Unitarian, Richard Price, who had joined forces with many Calvinists to support the American cause.⁷² Wesley also pointed out to his libertarian friends that the existence of slavery in America seemed to negate all their cries about the universality of 'unalienable rights. . . of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' In 1774, his *Thoughts upon Slavery* had appeared in several editions in Philadelphia within weeks of appearing in London (and reprinted for decades), outlining his own antipathy to the institution, especially as it existed in America. Wesley's

68 Editions published in London and Bristol in 1772 (no publisher listed).

69 Telford, *Letters*, 6:p.156, p.161.

70 The subtitle of Johnson's pamphlet was *An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress* (London: T. Cadell, 1775). See Frank Baker, "The Shaping of Wesley's *Calm Address*," *Methodist History* 17 (Oct. 1975):pp.3-12, and Donald H. Kirkham, "John Wesley's *Calm Address*; the Response of the Critics," *Methodist History* 17 (Oct.1976):pp.13-23.

71 *Observations on Liberty, Occasioned by a Late Tract* (London: Hawes, 1776), ¶40.

72 He was responding in particular to Price's work, *Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty and the Justice and Policy of the War with America* (London: T. Cadell and Evans, 1776).

book relied heavily upon information he gleaned from the work of a Philadelphia Quaker, Anthony Benezet.⁷³ At least one joint publication appeared in Philadelphia containing writings from both authors under the descriptive title, *The Potent Enemies of America Laid Open; being some account of the baneful effects attending the use of distilled spirituous liquors and the slavery of the Negroes* (1774).

Shortly after writing the Calm Address, John confessed to his brother Charles that he was in 'danger of losing my love for the Americans: I mean for their miserable leaders.' At the same time, he realized that 'the bulk of the people both in England and America mean no harm; they only follow their leaders and do as they are bid without knowing why or wherefore'⁷⁴ He also informed Thomas Rankin in July 1775 that Rankin 'must not imagine that any more [British preachers] will come to America till these troubles are at an end.'⁷⁵ There is evidence that many American Methodists were loyal to the King as late as 1779 and were objects of persecution as a result.

In the midst of the War of the Rebellion, Wesley wrote a sermon on the work of God in North America.⁷⁶ In this sermon, Wesley provides a brief outline of the story of Methodism in America, including the part played by George Whitefield (I.4-7). True to his expressed principles, Wesley saw the hand of God acting in history. In a summary, Wesley provides a list of the primary problems that rested behind the present conflict trade, wealth, pride, luxury, idleness, sloth, slaves, and a hankering after independence from beginning. The latter he claims was witnessed by his brother Charles in 1737 in Boston (II.2). The result of these sins was an 'open and avowed defection from the mother country,' which in effect cut off ninety per/cent of their trade. Caught in an economic bind and being poorer than Ireland, the colonists briefly tried privateering (II.6-9). But as a positive consequence of their dire situation, poverty and scarcity struck at the root of pride and sloth – the hindrances to God's work were thus removed (II.13). Wesley felt that the resulting spiritual blessings from these severe dispensations were at that point ever increasing. Eventually the Americans, shorn of their desire for independence, would be able to enjoy the true liberty of the children of God (II.15). The defeat of the British and the Peace of Paris in

73 Wesley read Benezet's work on February 12, 1772; it was probably *Some Historical Account of Guinea, its Produce, and the General Disposition of its Inhabitants, with an Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the Slave Trade, its Nature and Calamitous Effects* (Philadelphia: Crukshank, 1771). See *Works*, 22:p.307. Crukshank had already published Wesley's *Primitive Physick* in 1770 and would also publish several additional Methodist works in the following three decades, including *The Potent Enemies* (1774).

74 Letter to Charles Wesley (Oct.17, 1775), in Telford, *Letters*, 6:p.179.

75 Letter of July 28, 1775, in Telford, *Letters*, 6:p.169.

76 Sermon 113, "The Late Work of God in North America" (1778), in *Works*, 3:pp.594-608.

1783 disabused Wesley of this vision of an idyllic British colony in America.

At this point, the divisions in the Arminian/ Calvinist theological controversy, which was being waged in pamphlet and journal warfare in England in the 1770s, are reflected in the political divisions over the American question. Wesley's friend and compatriot, John Fletcher, could not help but join the fray against the Calvinist Caleb Evans (as well as Richard Price) and published a strong defence of Wesley's *Calm Address*.⁷⁷ That Fletcher later became a favourite of the American Methodists is a tribute to the strength of his anti-Calvinism, which overcame any prejudice on their part against his political stance on the colonial rebellion.⁷⁸

The religious element became even more complicating to the issues when the French joined the American cause. At that point, Wesley and some others saw a conspiracy among papists to continue their historic attempts to undermine British power in the world. The threat of a French invasion, always in the back of British minds, seemed once again to be imminent and caused near panic in some areas of England. Wesley wrote another *Calm Address (to the Inhabitants of England, 1777)* and a *Compassionate Address to the Inhabitants of Ireland (1778)* to help ease public anxiety and instil confidence in the government in the face of revolutionary movements around the world.

While Charles Wesley did not enter the publishing fray over the American situation, he nevertheless was writing poetry highly critical of the revolutionary politics of the colonists. A long poem of 615 lines on 'The American war' bears equally harsh criticism for the disloyal colonists ('rebels') and the inept British general, William Howe, who failed to press for complete victory once he had 'driven the feeble Yankees out'⁷⁹ Interpreting the foreign actions in the light of homeland politics, Charles viewed the general's ultimately disastrous delaying actions as a disloyal betrayal of the King's commands in order to press gains for his own party's political position. Charles's argument follows the general line of reasoning found in three publications on the conduct of the American war that the Wesleys produced in 1780-81. These books include the perspective of Joseph Galloway, a prominent Loyalist, who outlined 'the absurdity and mischiefs' of using only defensive operations in the American conflict.⁸⁰ Charles is merciless in his

77 John Fletcher, *A Vindication of the Rev. Mr. Wesley's "Calm Address to our American Colonies"* (1775).

78 Fletcher's work was contained in a series of letters to Walter Shirley and Richard Hill, contained in several volumes of *Logica Genevensis*, which represented five 'Checks to Antinomianism.'

79 MS "Howe" (1781) in the Methodist Archives, Rylands University Library of Manchester. See S T Kimbrough, Jr., and Oliver A Beckerlegge, *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1988-92), 1:pp.41-57.

80 Kimbrough, *Unpublished Poetry*, 1,p.34.

criticism of Howe. He summarized the General's sins in short order. 'His Sovereign basely disobey'd; / His trust perfidiously betray'd; / His Country sold, his duty slighted.'⁸¹ Charles also wrote a collection of poems on patriotism.⁸² This collection is typified by the poem 'Written in October 1782, For the Loyal Americans.' Charles gives high praise to those martyrs who 'lost their all from Principle' in a place 'where Treason and Rebellion reign.'⁸³ After the conclusion of the war, the British government paid the equivalent of over nineteen million dollars in compensation to the loyalists who had given services and experienced losses. The Wesleys no doubt agreed with this supportive action.

A New Church in the New World

John Wesley's public, howbeit natural, position supporting the monarchy of his own country on the question of the American Revolution put the American Methodists in an awkward position. As the tensions reached the breaking point in the colonies, most of the British Methodist preachers returned to Great Britain, along with many of the Anglican priests. But even preachers who sided with the American cause found their association with Wesley to be problematic. Asbury, who decided to stay, found himself under attack because he tried to remain neutral as a pacifist. In revolutionary times, pacifism can be easily taken for disloyalty, and Asbury found it necessary to go into hiding for a period.

The growing lack of Anglican clergy presented a sacramental crisis for those who depended upon their ministrations. Methodists, led by lay preachers, faced a dilemma in this regard: either have the Lord's Supper administered by laity or somehow provide ordination for the lay preachers. Since there were no Anglican bishops in America, ordination was impracticable as a regular practice. Lay administration was unacceptable. Several southern preachers meeting at Fluvanna, Virginia, in 1779, worked out a solution: to form (in effect) a presbytery and ordain each other. The idea of an evangelical movement taking such extraordinary steps, flying in the face of their leaders and their tradition, in order to satisfy their sacramental needs is indeed extraordinary!

Asbury, who was opposed to such action as irregular from an Anglican point of view, was hamstrung by his geographical exile. He knew, however, that Wesley would never allow such an action, and when he heard of the Fluvanna incident, he sent immediate word to his

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.57.

⁸² MS "Patriotism" (1783) in the Methodist Archives. See Kimbrough, *Unpublished Poetry*, 1:pp.59 -167.

⁸³ Kimbrough, *Unpublished Poetry*, I,p.137.

southern brethren that the preachers who had participated in this irregular ordination should refrain from exercising their new-found powers and wait for a proper solution from Wesley.⁸⁴

The willing subordination of the would-be innovators attested to strength of Asbury's personal influence (or perhaps his vicarious use of Wesley as a club). The minutes of the 1780 Conference begin by listing the twenty-four preachers who 'do now agree to sit in conference on the original plan as Methodists.'⁸⁵ The following year, the record of Conference begins with an even more specific note signifying the preachers' subordination to the Wesleyan regimen: the introductory minute lists the forty-one preachers 'who are now determined. . . to preach the old Methodist doctrine and strictly enforce the discipline as contained in the notes, sermons, and minutes published by Mr. Wesley.'⁸⁶ The marvel is that the rebellion of the southern preachers thus seemed to subside, even though Wesley took five years to provide a solution to the sacramental crisis.

During this period, Methodism in America continued to grow, as illustrated by the numbers of members reported in the *Minutes*: from less than 1,000 in 1773, to some 7,000 five years later in 1778, to over 12,000 in another five years, 1783. This expansion is also reflected in an increase in Wesleyan publications available to service American Methodist needs. In 1781, Wesley's 1741 *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* was produced by a German American printer, Melchior Steiner, who set up shop in Philadelphia during the Revolution.⁸⁷ To reproduce a British hymnal for the Methodists during the same year as the surrender of the British at Yorktown was somewhat remarkable. Steiner seems to have copied the work from the edition of Isaac Collins of Burlington, New Jersey, who had printed a set of three Wesleyan hymn collections in 1773.⁸⁸ Steiner also reproduced the other two in 1781: *Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (orig. 1753), and *Hymns for Those that Seek and Those that have Redemption* (1747). The three were typically bound together. Two years later he began to reproduce the collected edition of Wesley's *Works*, published the previous decade in England, although he seems to have produced only the first four volumes, the *Sermons*. Joseph Crukshank, the printer of Quaker staples, also reprinted *Primitive Physick* in 1784 (the same year that he printed a third edition of *Reasons for Quitting the Methodist Society; being a Defence of Barclay's Apology*), and Enoch Story added an edition of *Thoughts upon Slavery* in 1784.

84 Letter to Philip Gatch (May 3, 1779), in Asbury, *Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, ed. Elmer T. Clark, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1958), 3:***.

85 *Minutes*, p.23.

86 *Ibid.*, p.28.

87 The 1741 *Psalms and Hymns* was the collection that Wesley himself chose to abridge in 1784 for the American Methodists.

88 Collins also printed an anti-slavery work by Anthony Benezet that same year.

The surrender of the British after the battle of Yorktown, signalling the end of military conflict between the American colonies and Great Britain, resulted in increasing pressure upon Wesley to resolve the problem of providing the sacraments for the Methodists. Given his position, as expressed in the *Calm Address*, it is no surprise that he did not respond with due haste to the prospect of an emerging independent country in America. Even the official end of the war, the Peace of Paris in 1783, brought no definitive action from Wesley. Longstanding unrest among the preachers led Wesley to send a letter in October 1783 suggesting a number of disciplinary stipulations, subsequently incorporated into the conference *Minutes* of 1784.⁸⁹ These points reiterated the earlier statements that highlighted the crucial role of Wesley's sermons, notes, and minutes for protecting doctrine and discipline. Also, no preachers from Europe were to be allowed in their pulpits except those approved by Wesley or the American conference. Wesley demonstrated his confidence in the leadership there by stating, 'I do not wish our American brethren to receive any who make any difficulty of receiving Francis Asbury as the General Assistant.' 'Wesley's attitude toward sending preachers to the new country at this point was summarized in another letter: 'Indeed, it is an invariable rule with me not to require anyone to go over to America - nay, I scruple even to advise them to it. I shall only propose it at the Conference; and then, of those that freely offer themselves, we shall select such as we believe will most adorn the gospel.'⁹⁰ In the meantime, Wesley was still unsuccessful in obtaining from the Bishop of London (or anyone else, for that matter) official ordination for any of his preachers. By the late summer of 1784, he resolved upon the step of ordaining preachers himself for the American Methodists, convinced that under the exigent circumstances (the need for the sacraments being a 'case of necessity') that he was acting properly as a 'scriptural bishop.'⁹¹

The scheme that Wesley designed for a new Methodist church in America included not only ordination but also doctrinal standards, a hymnal, and a book of discipline. He grudgingly admitted that, 'by a very uncommon train of providences,' the Americans were now separated from Great Britain, both politically and ecclesiastically, and therefore were 'at full liberty' to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church in their mission and organization.⁹² If the Americans thought Wesley's rhetoric indicated that he was cutting them loose, however, they were mistaken. He sent Thomas Coke to them as a General Superintendent and designated Asbury to receive ordination as a

89 Letter "To the Preachers in America" (Oct. 3, 1783), in Telford, *Letters*, 7:pp.190-91; see also *Minutes*, p48.

90 Letter to James Barry (July 3, 1784), in Telford, *Letters*, 7:p.225.

91 See *Minutes*, p.50; and see letter To the Printer of the *Dublin Chronicle* (June 4, 1769), in Telford, *Letters*, 8:p.143.

92 *Minutes*, pp.49-51.

partner to Coke in directing a new and separate organization. Wesley also provided a set of doctrinal standards in *The Articles of Religion* (adapted from the Church of England's XXXIX Articles), a book of liturgy in *The Sunday Service for the Methodists in North America*, and a hymnal in *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* - all three documents printed in London and shipped to America in loose pages to save on the export tax. These writings were often bound together in one book by the American Methodists.

When the Conference met at Lovely Lane Chapel in Baltimore at Christmas time 1784 to form the new church, they spent most of their time revising the Wesleyan handbook of regulations, the 'Large' *Minutes* of the British Methodists, adapting it specifically to the American context in their own handbook, soon to be titled, *Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America*.⁹³ In spite of their self-conscious separate identity, the American Methodists continued to receive specific instructions from Wesley in the form of directives to their leaders. Asbury in particular, however, took their independence seriously and treated Wesley's directions simply as suggestions. At the same time, however, the Anglican leaders in America who were trying to form the new Protestant Episcopal Church, broke off their talks with the Methodist leaders over possible unification of the two bodies, even though (in their view) they had essentially the same doctrine, ordination, and liturgy, because to them Coke and Asbury seemed to consider it 'indispensably necessary' that 'Mr. Wesley be the first link upon which their Church is suspended.'⁹⁴ Wesley, at the same time, sent Asbury a silver chalice, still preserved at St. George's, and a note of congratulations to the Methodists in America, on their organization as a separate denomination.

Tensions between Wesley and the American Methodists

The personal relationship between Asbury and Wesley largely shaped the affiliation between the new church in America and its British founder. Although Asbury considered himself a faithful 'son in the gospel' to his father in God, Wesley (to whom he occasionally referred as 'our old Daddy'),⁹⁵ he held his ground on matters of polity peculiar to the American scene. He resented Wesley's trying to dictate such matters as who should be added to their leadership and what

93 The title changes from the traditional Wesleyan formula, *Minutes of Several Conversations*. . . (1785) to *A Form of Discipline*. . . (1787) to *The Doctrines and Discipline*. . . (1792).

94 Letter, John Andrews to William Smith, quoted in Emory Stevens Bucke, *The History of American Methodism*, 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), 1:pp.213-14.

95 Letter to Jasper Winscom (Aug. 15, 1788), in Asbury, *Journal and Letters*, 3:p.62.

terminology they should use, referring to such attempts as ‘strokes of power we did not understand.’⁹⁶ Although Wesley cringed at Asbury’s use of the title ‘bishop’ (pointing out that he would never think of using such a presumptuous designation),⁹⁷ Asbury and the American Methodists saw the title as a more scriptural (and therefore appropriate) term than ‘superintendent’⁹⁸ Wesley tried to specify even the dates of conferences, disregarding the American Conference’s own schedule, sending a letter to Dr. Coke in September 1786: ‘I desire that you would appoint a General Conference of all our Preachers in the United States, to meet at Baltimore on May the 1st, 1787. And that Mr. Richard Whatcoat may be appointed Superintendent with Mr. Francis Asbury.’⁹⁹ Many of the American preachers felt that Wesley’s suggestions indicated that he was out of touch with the American church. Asbury had, in 1783, tried to convince Wesley that ‘No person can manage the lay preachers here so well, it is thought, as one that has been at the raising of most of them. No man can make a proper change upon paper, to send one here and another [there], without knowing the circuits and the gifts of all the preachers, unless he is always out among them.’ He told Wesley very straightforwardly, ‘If you send preachers to America, let them be proper persons.’¹⁰⁰

With regard to Wesley’s nomination of an additional superintendent in 1787, the American conference that did meet declined to elect Wesley’s nominee, Whatcoat, whom they considered unqualified for the task and unequal to Asbury, who they did not want to lose. Wesley’s response was directed personally toward the American leader, as he explained in a letter to a friend: ‘I was a little surprised when I received some letters from Mr. Asbury affirming that no person in Europe knew how to direct those in America. Soon after he flatly refused to receive Mr. Whatcoat in the character I sent him. He told George Shadford, “Mr. Wesley and I are like Caesar and Pompey: he will bear no equal, and I will bear no superior.”’¹⁰¹

These conflicts resulted in the Americans telling Wesley in May 1787 that his name would be removed from their *Minutes*. ‘The binding minute’ – an avowal of loyalty to Wesley as their leader in all matters of

96 *Ibid.*, 3p.63.

97 Letter of John Wesley to Francis Asbury (Sept 20, 1788), Telford, *Letters*, 8:p.91–“How can you, how dare you suffer yourself to be called Bishop? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call me a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content; but they shall never by my consent call me Bishop!”

98 See the American footnote to Wesley’s instructions to the Christmas Conference of 1784, *Minutes* p.50, which throws the authority of Scripture right in the face of Wesley’s objections: “As the translators of our version of the Bible have used the English word *Bishop* instead of *Superintendent*, it has been thought by us, that it would appear more scriptural to adopt their term *Bishop*.”

99 Telford, *Letters*, 7:p.339.

100 Quoted in Telford, *Letters*, 8:p.182 (Sept 20,1783).

101 Telford, *Letters*, 8:p.183 (Oct 31,1789).

church discipline and doctrine – was therefore removed from the American *Form of Discipline* for two years. Wesley viewed Asbury as directly responsible for the situation: ‘He quietly sat by until his friends voted my name out of the American *Minutes*. This completed the matter and showed that he had no connection with me.’¹⁰² The following year, the terminology for the American leaders was changed to read ‘bishop’ instead of ‘superintendent’ In 1789, Wesley’s name quietly appeared with Coke’s and Asbury’s in the *Minutes* under the ironic rubric, ‘Who are the persons who exercise the Episcopal office in the Methodist Church in Europe and America?’¹⁰³

To Richard Whatcoat whom Wesley had presumed to appoint as an American superintendent, he wrote a consoling note in 1788; ‘It was not your fault that you did not reach the office which I assigned you.’ He then went on to vent his feelings about Asbury: ‘It was not well judged by Brother Asbury to *suffer*, much less indirectly to encourage, that foolish step in the late Conference. Every preacher present ought both in duty and in prudence to have said, “Brother Asbury, Mr. Wesley is *your* father, consequently ours, and we will affirm this in the face of all the world.” It is truly probable the disavowing *me* will, as soon as my head is laid, occasion a total breach between the English and American Methodists.’¹⁰⁴

Wesley was no longer contemplating an actual return to the New World at that point, but his interests still pointed westward across the sea, beyond the organizational matter of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In a letter to Asbury in November 1787, Wesley had mused about that fate of the American Indians, how they seem to have been either slain or forgotten, in either case left to be judged in their sinful state because of lack of compassion from humankind. Wesley prayed that God would stir up the hearts of some good Christians who would make the conversion of the Indians a matter of prayer (and presumably action).¹⁰⁵ He also read, in 1790, Jonathan Carver’s *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America*, which had been published in 1778. Wesley’s *Journal* indicates that he was especially interested in Carver’s accounts of the Indians, whose noble image had so deteriorated during his own experience in Georgia. At this point, his evident prejudices focused on the evil inherent in ‘natural man,’ displayed through these examples of ‘nature in perfection’ – ‘the savages at Fort William Henry, butchering, in cold blood, so many hundreds of helpless, unresisting men, in the very spirit of the old murderer.’¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Minutes*, p.77. Wesley’s name had not been listed in previous years, and in this instance, the following question asked, “Who have been elected by the unanimous suffrages of the General Conference to superintend the Methodist connexion in America?” The answer was Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury.

¹⁰⁴ Telford, *Letters*, 8:p.73 (July 17, 1788).

¹⁰⁵ Telford, *Letters*, 8:p.24(Nov. 25, 1787)

¹⁰⁶ *Journal* (Oct. 13, 1790), in *Works*, 24:pp.193-94.

During these later years, Wesley saves an equal portion of harsh language for another group of villains—those connected with the slave trade. He had written a treatise in the 1770s on slavery, but in the waning days of his life, he became more personally involved in its political aspects. In February 1791, Wesley read the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano, an African slave also known as Gustavus Vassa.¹⁰⁷ At age 12, Olaudah had been sent to Virginia, but in his teenage years was baptized at St. Margaret's, Westminster. Wesley, who was one of the subscribers to the book listed in the back of the volume, was touched by his story, and the following day wrote to William Wilberforce: 'I was particularly struck by that circumstance, that a man who has a black skin, being wronged or outraged by a white man, can have no redress; it being a *law* in our colonies that the oath of a black against a white goes for nothing. What villainy is this!' Wesley encouraged Wilberforce, a Member of Parliament, to oppose the slave trade, 'that execrable villainy, which is the scandal of religion, of England, and of human nature.' He hoped that Wilberforce would continue the fight in the power of God's name until 'even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.'¹⁰⁸

In spite of these evident needs for mission endeavours in foreign lands, Wesley was not keen to support Thomas Coke's idea of sending missionaries to various other parts of the world, such as India, or the East Indies. He did support work in the West Indies and in the British dominions in Canada. In fact, he chided Asbury for not being more open to the idea of sharing more preachers with his northern neighbours in Canada, pointing out that the British Methodists, in spite of the heavy costs, sent two preachers there for every one that Asbury allowed to go.¹⁰⁹ Until Wesley died, Coke was forced to exercise his mission interests through his involvements in the Methodist Episcopal Church and his efforts with Anglican and ecumenical mission societies.

The American reaction to Wesley's death:

Coke was in America when Wesley died in 1791. He discovered the news while he was in Delaware, and shortly thereafter preached a funeral sermon in Philadelphia for Wesley on two successive Sundays.¹¹⁰ In between these occasions, he published a circular which, in effect, lambasted the Americans for the 'cruel usage' they had given Mr. Wesley in 1787 when 'he was excommunicated (wonderful and most unparalleled step!).' Coke points out that from the moment that

¹⁰⁷ See Diary entries for Feb. 21-23, 1791, the last three days of his entries, in *Works*, 24:p.348.

¹⁰⁸ His last extant letter (Feb. 24, 1791), in Telford, *Letters*: 8:p.265.

¹⁰⁹ Telford, *Letters*, 8:p.25 (Nov. 25, 1787).

¹¹⁰ *The Substance of a Sermon Preached in Baltimore and Philadelphia, on the First and Eighth of May, 1791, on the Death of the Rev. John Wesley (1791).*

Wesley heard of the action, 'he began to hang down his head, and to think he had lived long enough.' Coke has little doubt but that this treatment served to 'hasten his death,' a claim that is very hard to verify.¹¹¹ At the very least, Coke is venting his own (and perhaps reflecting Wesley's) increasingly cynical attitude toward the Americans. At most, Wesley may also have been anxious about secret negotiations that Coke was carrying on with Protestant Episcopalians in America, looking again toward the possibility of merger.¹¹² There is no evidence that Wesley was involved in these conversations, but they did follow shortly after Coke's arrival from England in 1791 and before his hasty return at Wesley's death.

The American Methodists themselves (Coke never put down roots) had a respectful, if somewhat cooled, attitude toward their deceased founder. By 1791, the tensions of the Revolution and the larger split with the British, politically and ecclesiastically, combined with an increasing animosity toward Coke and the friction between Asbury and Wesley, had produced problems for American Methodism that could only find resolution in Wesley's death. Asbury's comments in his own *Journal* regarding Wesley's death are loving and respectful, 'notwithstanding,' he noted, 'a few unpleasant expressions in some of the letters the dear old man has written to me.'¹¹³ In addition to local remembrances of Wesley in America, sermons and eulogies from England were reproduced in the former colonies, Before the year was out, two different Philadelphia printers had reproduced John Whitehead's funeral sermon for Wesley (preached at City Road Chapel), two others had reprinted Elizabeth Ritchie's account of Wesley's last days, and a New York printer had produced an American edition of the *Gentleman's Magazine's* lengthy obituary of the Methodist founder.

In the meantime, however, Wesley's own publications had been receiving ever more exposure through reprints in America. In 1789, the M. E. Church appointed John Dickins as book agent to regularize the church's publication programme, which included an increasing number of Wesleyan materials. The Philadelphia printers that were used regularly by the Methodists during this period include Joseph Crukshank, William Prichard, Perry Hall, and Charles Cist. Their publications include Wesley's *Primitive Physick*, *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, and *A Pocket Hymnbook*, as well as his extracts of

111 Coke's comments are included in William Hammet, *Impartial Statement of the Known Inconsistencies of the Rev. Dr. Coke*. (Charleston, SC: Printed by W. P. Young, 1792), p.7, citing a circular that Coke had written on May 4 addressed to the preachers, "expressive of a number of reforms, which he was to have made on his next return to the continent" (p.6). Hammet says that Coke suppressed the circular after it was printed and therefore few have seen it (p.7).

112 See Coke's "secret" letter to Bishop White (April 24, 1791), in Asbury, *Journal and Letters*, 3:pp.95-98.

113 *Ibid.*, 1:p.673.

works by Richard Baxter, Thomas à Kempis, and Moses Hemmenway. The American Methodists emulated Wesley in a number of ways, including producing a monthly magazine: Dickins produced an American version of Wesley's monthly periodical, *The Arminian Magazine* in 1789 and 1790.¹¹⁴ The Wesleyan works represent a significant proportion of the offerings during the first three years of Dickins' tenure as book agent.

In the decade following Wesley's death, the number of Wesleyan materials increases. The list of printers expands to include Henry Tuckniss, and Wesley's *Sermons* and *Journals* become available in locally produced editions, along with more Wesley abridgements. The project to produce Wesley's *Works* would not proceed beyond its earlier beginnings for another generation, but at least before the turn of the century, the American printers had produced some of the basic Wesleyan doctrinal writings. However, the most frequently published Wesley title at this point, by all accounts, interestingly enough, is *Primitive Physick*, which became in the following century one of the most popular home medical reference books across America.

Subsequent Influence of Wesley in America

Publishing ventures were only one area in which American Methodists continued to emulate their founder, both in design and substance. The Wesleyan heritage continued to flourish on American soil in almost every aspect, from doctrine to discipline to mission to spirituality to social concern. The number of Methodists in the United States at Wesley's death was over 76,000 – some four thousand more than in Great Britain, in spite of its having a shorter history. A generation later, Methodists in the United States numbered over 184,000, while their British cousins claimed about half as many members.

The rapidly increasing size of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in spite of a lingering anti-British sentiment in American society and Methodism's non-democratic structure in the midst of increasingly democratic tendencies in American culture, can be seen in part as a result of certain Wesleyan factors in Methodism's life and thought that were congenial to life on the North American continent. Wesley's

¹¹⁴ Wesley had begun the *Arminian Magazine* in 1778 in the midst of his conflicts with the Calvinists. It contained abridgements of treatises, original sermons by Wesley, accounts of holy living and dying, poetry, and a variety of other articles. The American version a decade later followed the same pattern and, in fact, included some of the same material – starting, for instance, with a short biography of Jacob Arminius. Besides including Wesley material, such as the usual instalments of Wesley's sermons, they also included indigenous American material, such as Francis Asbury's journal, an early segment of which describes his call to America (as discerned by Wesley). The Magazine was produced for two years (1789-90) and was tried again a decade later (1797-98) as the *Methodist Magazine*.

allowance of a significant role for women in the leadership of Methodist societies is reflected in the early history of the societies in America. The tradition of vibrant hymn singing in Methodist worship attracted a wide spectrum of the population. The lack of economic and social class distinction between preachers and their congregations, both largely drawn from the working class, allowed for good communication and a sense of community. The Wesleyan approach, methodical and disciplined, gave structure to the life and thought of Methodist members, who otherwise would not derive such help from their economic and social position. Wesley's championing of black people resulted in a significant black population in the M. E. connection. The Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual growth in holy living gave satisfying purpose and direction to the 'rugged individualism' that often characterized the frontier experience. And the distancing of religion from politics, shaped by Asbury's experience during the Revolution, kept the Methodists from being limited by association with any particular political party.

The continuing recognition of Wesley among his American followers is signalled by the number of institutions that bore his spirit as well as his name, such as 'Wesley (or Wesleyan) College,' or 'Methodist Hospital,' or 'Methodist Home:' or 'Wesley Memorial Church.' The artistic representations of Wesley the man that have been produced on the American side of the ocean or acquired by American individuals and institutions, while not as numerous as those in England, show a significant interest in recognizing his role in the shaping of American consciousness. Even the most 'American' of artists, such as Nathaniel Currier (of Currier and Ives), have produced reproductions of Wesley portraits.

The Wesleyan legacy in America was born in controversy and doubt, nurtured in conflict and confrontation, survived in the aftermath of separation and misunderstanding, and has managed to flourish in a form and manner that would probably both surprise and please Mr. Wesley himself. In spite of two centuries of acculturation, Methodism in America claims its founder in a number of significant ways. The distinctive Wesleyan doctrines continue to furnish the basic character of Methodist teaching. Wesley's theological methodology remains paradigmatic for Methodist theological reflection. Wesley's writings are still crucial to ministerial training in Methodist schools. The Wesleyan hymns still resound weekly in Methodist congregations.

Indeed, America has not become as England, which Wesley had initially feared. And American Methodism is now quite different in a number of ways from English Methodism, not least of all in terms of

sheer numbers - the American offspring outnumber their British counterparts by over twenty to one. They both, with other Methodist groups worldwide, have had a long history in which Wesley has played a continually changing role. But Methodism in the New World has seemed to experience a positive symbiotic relationship with American culture over the generations that far exceeded anything that Wesley himself experienced relative to that region of the world. The adaptation of Wesley to the American continent is a story that calls for continued study and analysis, but also allows for celebration during this, the three hundredth anniversary year of his birth.

RICHARD P. HEITZENRATER

(Dr Heitzenrater is Professor of Church History at Duke University, North Carolina and Editor-in-chief of the Wesley Works project).

LOCAL HISTORIES

A Record of Methodism in Hensall [Yorks] by Richard Moody (48pp) 2002. Copies £3.50 post free from the author at 24 Station Road, Riccall, York, YO19 6QJ, cheques payable to 'Hensall Methodist Church.'

'In Spite of Dr Borlase' - the story of Methodism in Madron... by Colin C. Short (58pp) 2002. Copies £6.00 post free from the author at 93 Boscathnoe Way, Heamoor, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 3JS

The Beginning and Early Development of Lytham Methodism by Eric W. Dykes (31pp) 2003. Copies £2.50 post free from the author at 24 Ring Dyke Way, Lytham St Annes, Lancs FY8 4PT

The Small Church with the Big Heart (Haggerston Methodist Mission, East London) by Connie Rees 2002. Copies £5.50 post free from the author at 71 Sish Lane, Stevenage, Herts, SG1 3LS

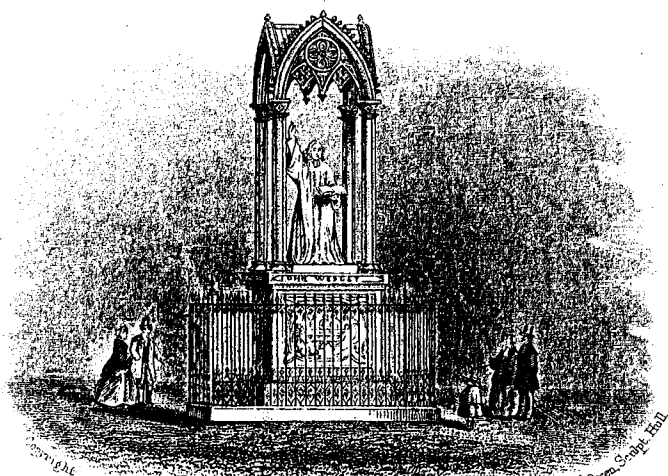
The first 'Monograph' of the Charles Wesley Society is *The Shorthand of Charles Wesley* by Oliver A. Beckerlegge, published shortly before the author's death. It consists of two short papers which explain Charles' use of Byrom's shorthand and give many illustrated examples to show how it may be deciphered. A limited number of copies are available from 26 Roe Cross Green, Mottram, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 6LP, price £3.20 post free.

THE JOHN WESLEY MILLENNIUM STATUE

WHEN the impressive bronze Millennium Statue of John Wesley, sculpted by Sue Reeves, was dedicated at Epworth on May 18 2003 to mark the tercentenary of John Wesley's birth, it was almost 150 years since it was first proposed that a monument to John Wesley should be erected at Epworth.

The First Monument of Wesley Proposed for Epworth

On April 18 1856 in *The Times* newspaper there is a report headed 'Monument to John Wesley'. It says that it was proposed at a public meeting held at 'Epworth, the principal town in the Isle of Axholme in North Lincolnshire...that a statue be erected in the birthplace of John Wesley'. In the *Illustrated London News* on May 24 in the same year there is a column, which mentions that there 'have been memorials raised to the founder of Methodism; but the place of his birth does not possess any sculptural record of the event.' The writer is 'gratified to learn that the good people of the town of Epworth...propose to commemorate his excellence by the erection of a statue'. It was proposed to raise the money required by a National Penny subscription. Dr George Dunn, a medical doctor and an Anglican from Doncaster, was scheduled to give



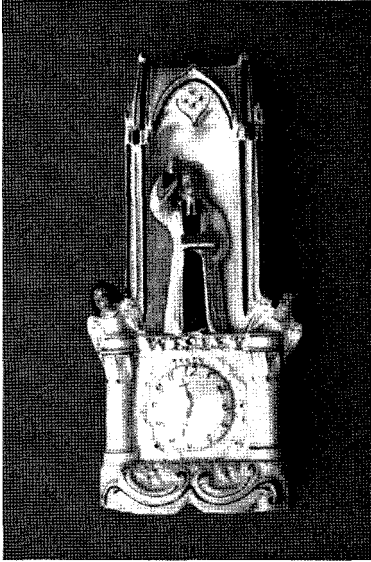
Proposed Monument to John Wesley

at Epworth, Lincolnshire.

EPWORTH MONUMENT

As proposed in 1856

a lecture in Epworth in the early spring of 1856 and in a letter to Josiah Merrills, a solicitor and a Wesleyan living at Epworth, Dr Dunn says that it is humiliating that whilst there are statues in bronze and marble put in place to perpetuate the memory and deeds of soldiers, poets and statesmen there is no statue to John Wesley at Epworth, the birth place of the man who the 'all-wise Providence had saved'. He expresses



Staffordshire Pottery chimney piece flat back ornament inspired by the original Epworth monument c1860

photo D.H. Ryan

astonishment to Mr Merrills that a man who was 'highly gifted and spiritually guarded' and who had brought about a revival of religion such as Wesley had done was not honoured in his own town. He presses home the point by reminding Mr Merrills that Wesley who had suffered for Christ's sake had 'left his name, his fame, and his works as a light, an example, and a triumph for all and every one who dares to be virtuous in a vicious age.' Dr Dunn urges Mr Merrills to call a public meeting, which he was willing to attend. This was not to be a meeting for discussion but a meeting for action. There had to be appointments made of a secretary and a treasurer and subscriptions should be sought. Dr Dunn's enthusiasm for the project comes out clearly in the letter when he says that he is a Churchman and Mr Merrills a Wesleyan and that he believes that, 'Churchmen,

Wesleyans and Dissenters of all denominations will not fail to assist.' He also hopes the people of Epworth will 'not be lukewarm in this matter' and that they will 'listen to no suggestions, which would rob them and their native town of the honour and ornament that such a work would confer.'

The enthusiasm of Dr Dunn for the project had clearly made its mark for we read in *The Times* that Mr Henry Tilbury, who was an artist and well known painter and watercolourist, of Doncaster had come to the meeting with a drawing of the proposed monument. Mr Tilbury's drawing for the monument was a standing statue of Wesley preaching on his father's grave in St Andrew's church yard in Epworth. Wesley was shown wearing a clerical gown and holding an open Bible in one hand and the other one raised above his head. He was to be portrayed

as 'exhorting the people with that earnestness and truth which so distinguished his life.' The statue of Wesley was to be 7 feet 6 inches high and to be placed on a square stone base which would be 9 feet high. On the front and two sides of the base there were to be 6 feet by 4 feet 6 inch alto-relievo panels (carved panels in high relief). The front panel would be a representation of the 'Last Supper' and on one side 'Christ Blessing Little Children' and on the other 'Christ Healing the Sick'. Resting on the base and rising above and over Wesley there was to be a gothic floriated baldacchino (canopy). The height of the monument from the floor to the apex of the arch was to be twenty-five feet.

Alas the great scheme never succeeded and the monumental statue of Wesley was never erected in Epworth even though arrangements were made to appoint agents to collect subscriptions. There are illustrations of the proposed monument issued by R Owen of Hull printed on cards published in October 1856 presumably to help to raise funds and a similar picture appeared in *The Illustrated London News*, in the same year.

The Proposed Monument Made in Staffordshire Pottery

Although the monument was never made, an enterprising but as yet unidentified Staffordshire potter around 1860 made in large numbers commemorative Staffordshire flat back ornaments in two sizes, based on the drawing of the proposed Epworth statue. The larger and more numerous ornament is 11 inches [27.9cm] high and 4⁷/₈ inches [12.2cm] wide. The smaller one is 10¹/₈ inches [25.7cm] high and 4¹/₂ inches [11.4cm] wide. The figure of Wesley is in the same pose as shown in



The Epworth Millennium/Tercentenary statue ready to be taken to the bronze works

photo N. S. Reeves

the drawing and he is standing under a rococo-gothic canopy. On the apex at the front of the canopy are the four roundels seen in the drawing by Tilbury. At first sight it just looks like a highly decorated flamboyant Victorian chimneybreast ornament with an imitation clock. But like the proposed monument it has important symbols. There are at least four, which will be discussed in a future article in the *Proceedings*.

The Millennium Statue Erected in Wesley's Tercentenary Year

The Millennium statue of John Wesley created by Sue Reeves - bronze sculptor who works from her studios in North Lincolnshire, has been erected so that it overlooks the Old Rectory Garden in Epworth. The statue was dedicated on May 18 2003 by the Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt Rev John Saxbee, and the Chair of the Lincoln and Grimsby Methodist District, the Rev Dr David Perry. Also present were the Mayor of North Lincolnshire, Cllr John Berry, Mr. Ian Cawsey MP, Sue Reeves, the Rector of St Andrews, Epworth, Canon Brown along with about 200 other people. Following the dedication there was an open air service in the church yard of St Andrews led by the Bishop of Lincoln when the Rev Dr David Perry preached standing on Samuel Wesley's tomb as John Wesley had done in 1742, when he was refused permission to preach in the church where his father, Samuel Wesley, had been the Rector.



*The Epworth
Millennium/Tercentenary
bronze statue 2003*

photo D.H. Ryan

The Millennium statue began as a wooden frame constructed by the celebrated wood sculptor, of Epworth, Neil Reeves - Sue Reeves' husband, who worked from the drawings and calculations she had made. Sue slowly built up the torso to the correct proportions by using wire mesh 'scrim', and plaster. When working on Wesley's head and hands Sue painstakingly researched the Wesley statues in London, Bristol, and at Wesley's Chapel, and the Museum of Methodism in City Road, London. She also studied the Enoch Wood bust at the Old Rectory at Epworth. Using special techniques Sue made two smaller than life size heads of Wesley, one making him look slightly younger than the other. With the

information she had gained by her research and the making of the two smaller heads of Wesley she was able to sculpt the realistic detail we see in the finished sculpture. When the head and hands were fixed to the torso, the body was clothed in the correct period style of clothing. Great care was taken over such details making sure that the type of buttons was correct, the number of buttons on the breeches was right for the period and the shoes were the same shape. (Until around 1850 all shoes were made on straight shoemakers' lasts. Left and right fitting shoes

were not manufactured until after Wesley's day).

The Bible in Wesley's hand is a cast of a real leather bound Bible produced by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1698. The fine detail of embossing on the cover can be seen in the finished sculpture.

When the model was sculpted and all the fine detail was in place it was taken by Chris Boulton, the bronze caster, to his bronze works in Sheffield. The statue was cut into several pieces and separate moulds were made of each part. Each piece was cast to a thickness of 6mm. After the castings were finished they were bronze welded together with the weld joints expertly worked so that they could not be seen. The bronze statue was brought back to Sue's studio whilst the 2-metre high stone plinth was built in Epworth opposite to the Old Rectory and garden. The statue was dedicated to celebrate the tercentenary of John Wesley's birth at Epworth. On the stone plinth is a plaque with the inscription:

JOHN WESLEY
1703 - 1791
THIS STATUE WAS ERECTED
IN THE YEAR 2003 TO HONOUR
JOHN WESLEY'S TERCENTENARY
'Epworth: which I still love beyond
most places in the world'
'I look upon all the world as my parish'

The power and majesty of Wesley preaching in the open air has been encapsulated in this tercentenary monumental statue at Epworth.

DONALD H RYAN

(The Rev. Donald H. Ryan is a covenor of the connexional Sites, Museums
and Artefacts Task Group and WHS Registrar).

Clerihew Corner

Lorenzo Dow
If living now,
Would have been a disc jockey
Along with James Caughey
ANC

THE ANNUAL MEETING AND LECTURE

The Wesley Historical Society Tea, Annual Meeting and Lecture, attended by around 40 members was held on 30 June 2003 at St. David's Methodist Church, Llandudno. After the opening devotions led by the President, the Rev. Dr. John A. Newton, the Annual Meeting remembered in prayer 11 members who had died during the past year. The Executive Committee was re-appointed with Dr. John A. Vickers agreeing to continue to give valuable help to the WHS Library as Assistant Librarian and the Rev. Gilbert Braithwaite to serve an extra year as 'member at large'. A presentation was made to Dr. John A. Vickers in appreciation for his 40 years service to the Society.

The usual reports were received with the Treasurer, Mr Nicholas Page, presenting his first financial report and budget. The accounts, (printed on p.122), and the recommendation that the subscription rate be raised by £1.00 per annum and pro rata (see inside cover) and that Eur rates be included was approved. Mr Page pointed out that subscriptions are now eligible to be treated as Gift Aid. The Registrar (the Rev. Donald H. Ryan) reported that membership numbers were rather more encouraging this year and outlined his policy for keeping track of members who failed to renew their subscriptions. The General Secretary remarked that publicity via the WHS website and an article in *Flame* had proved useful. The General Secretary presented reports from officers unable to attend the meeting: the Editor (Mr. E. A. Rose) who stated that each issue of the Tercentenary year had contained a Wesley article and that he had a number of scripts and book reviews in hand and the Local Branches Secretary (Mr. Roger F. S. Thome), who had requested reports of Tercentenary celebrations from the branches. Mr Rose had also reported that the Lancashire and Cheshire Branch had disbanded. However, some members present were eager to 'resurrect' a branch in that area and the Rev. Carol Braithwaite, who is moving to Newtown, Powys, said she would like to start one in Wales - the meeting gave encouragement to both projects. In the absence of the Librarian (Mr. John H. Lenton) Dr. Vickers reported briefly that work on accessions, transferring the many pamphlets to low acid/acid free boxes and cataloguing - both card and electronic - was continuing. He emphasised that funds for the Library needed to be ring-fenced, to which the Treasurer gave an assurance. In presenting the report Mr. Forsaith (Marketing Officer) said that he was speaking on behalf of himself and the Rev. Colin Short (Publishing Manager). He remarked that the sale of back issues of the *Proceedings*, amounting to a considerable amount would appear in next year's accounts; that with regard to the stand at Conference it was not certain what would be the position when Conference was 'on campus' at Loughborough University next year and he queried whether it represented value for money. He urged members to publicize the WHS Library and to encourage members and other researchers to make full use of it. With regard

to publications Mr . Forsaith stated that he and Mr. Short were discussing with Dr Vickers about the WMHS titles, but because of pressures on Mr. Short and his involvement with the Tercentenary there was little to report, but matters would go forward in the near future. Mrs Sheila Himsworth (Conferences Secretary) reported that the next residential conference, a joint one with WMHS, would be held 5 - 8 April 2005 at York St. John College on the theme of 'Women in Methodism' All the officers were thanked for their services. Mr. Ryan reported on the WHS website - www.wesleyhistoricalsociety.org.uk and was thanked for all his work in setting it up - it was felt that John Wesley would have approved!

Chaired by the Rev. Dr. Henry D. Rack, the Annual Lecture in this tercentenary year was given by Professor Dr. Richard P. Heitzenrater (Duke University, NC), an authority on John Wesley. The full lecture is published in this issue.

E. DOROTHY GRAHAM

The Travelling Preacher: John Wesley in the North-East of England 1742-1790 by G. E. Milburn. (Peterborough, Methodist Publishing House, 2003, pp x, 121. £4.75 ISBN 1 85852 236 6)

This is a revised and enlarged version of a booklet first published in 1987, largely based on ten talks broadcast by BBC Radio Newcastle in 1985. Between them, John and Charles Wesley paid more than fifty visits to the North East and from their respective *Journals* and other sources, Geoffrey Milburn has created a vivid account of their impact on the region - and the impact the region in turn had on them, not least in the person of Grace Murray. Geoffrey's deep knowledge and love of the area is evident on every page. There are careful end notes to each chapter, a detailed bibliography and a complete itinerary of places visited by both brothers. Altogether a splendid example of readable scholarship and a fine, yet unassuming, addition to the tercentenary literature.

WESLEY CHRISTMAS CARD - SPECIAL OFFER

The John Rylands University Library of Manchester (JRULM) has just added a colourful Christmas card to its range of Methodist greetings cards and postcards (visit <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/promo/methodistcards.html>). The card features the opening two verses from Charles Wesley's original manuscript of the famous carol 'Hark, the Herald Angels Sing' and the text is surrounded by an attractive border and two angels reproduced from Rylands Latin MS 24. Measuring 14.8cm(h) x 21cm(w), the card contains the message 'Season's Greetings' and comes complete with a white envelope. The cards are now on sale at the special introductory price of only £1.00 each or 12 for £10.00. For further details, please contact Ms Judith Kent at the Publications Office, JRULM, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PP (Tel: 0161-2753734; email: judith.kent@man.ac.uk).

ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2002

The Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2002 were approved by the 2003 Annual Meeting. The following is a summary of the audited accounts; a copy of the full Report and Accounts, including the Auditor's certificate, is available on request from the Treasurer.

General Income & Expenditure Account: Year to 31 December 2002

INCOME	2002	2001
Subscriptions	5,898.92	5,794
Irish Branch	712.50	713
Sales of Publications	458.90	531
Advertisements	226.60	164
Bank and Building Society Interest	318.41	485
Other Income	80.85	799
	<u>£7,696.18</u>	<u>£8,486</u>
EXPENDITURE		
<i>Proceedings</i> and Distribution	4,331.68	4,362
Other Printing	321.65	271
Library	1,281.22	1,246
Administration	956.90	878
Income Tax Recoverable written back	-	1,506
Other Expenditure	421.61	426
	<u>£7,313.06</u>	<u>£8,689</u>
Excess of Income over Expenditure	<u>£383.12</u>	<u>-£203</u>

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2002

ASSETS EMPLOYED	2002	2,001
Investments	225.00	225
CURRENT ASSETS		
Sundry Debtors	-	238
Bank & Building Society Accounts	16,618.22	17,728
	<u>16,618.22</u>	<u>17,966</u>
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Sundry Creditors	184.00	62
Subscriptions received in advance	6,341.63	6,812
	<u>6,525.63</u>	<u>6,874</u>
Net Current Assets	<u>£10,317.59</u>	<u>£11,317</u>
REPRESENTED BY		
General Fund (unrestricted)	8,838.04	8,455
Restricted Funds	1,479.55	2,862
	<u>£10,317.59</u>	<u>£11,317</u>

NICHOLAS PAGE

BOOK REVIEWS

John Wesley: A Biography by Stephen Tomkins, (Lion Publishing, 2003 pp.208, £7.99 ISBN 0 7459 5078 7)

2003 is an appropriate year for biographies of John Wesley. There are three new biographies on the market. (To be fair, Roy Hattersley's book was actually published *last* year but I bought the special 'Tercentennial Edition'.) I describe Stephen Tomkins as a 'critical evangelical'; like Wesley he is a reasonable enthusiast. I must confess that his book initially attracted me for the wrong reasons. The bright, colourful cover features a stained glass window from Wesley's Chapel in London. As an occasional student of stained glass windows, it was perhaps inevitable that I should purchase his book first.

Tomkins' book covers all the well-known details of Wesley's life and does not apologise for Wesley's imperfections and weaknesses. Wesley's disastrous dealings with women are a good example. In a token gesture (to Sigmund Freud?) Tomkins says 'One cannot help wondering...if romantic frustration and sexual disappointment fuelled his spiritual crisis.' Regarding Wesley's evangelical conversion he suggests that this occurred when he first preached salvation - by faith alone - to a condemned prisoner in Oxford Castle Prison. One could logically push it back even further. What does Tomkins make of 24 May 1738? He argues: '...if it was a conversion, then to what? Not Christianity per se of course, as he always believed it, and not from nominal Christianity to the real thing, as few Christians alive in the 1730s could have been less nominal than Wesley.' The book contains many such insights, which is why I call Tomkins a 'critical' evangelical. Tomkins presents those insights in a warm and persuasive manner. Another biography might deserve *more* acclaim for being less overtly theological, but that would be totally unjustified in this case. Tomkins does not hide his theology but 'wears' it lightly.

Despite the 'web of contradictions...that is...Wesley' Tomkins shows real admiration for Wesley. Like him, he exhibits a generous catholic spirit throughout the book. Despite his reservations about things like Wesley's politics, personal style, overreliance upon his own opinions, dealings with women, etc., he ends the book on a positive note. At just under 200 pages of text, the story is concise, comprehensive and accurate. Were anyone to ask me to recommend just one Wesley book to take on holiday, I'd probably select this one. Stephen Tomkins has certainly done his subject justice.

DAVID LEYSHON

NOTES & QUERIES

1558 LOCAL PREACHERS' TRANSFERS

To add to Mr Dews' research (Notes and Queries no. 1556), I have found evidence of transfers of local preachers between Methodist bodies in nineteenth-century Southampton. As the Local Preachers Minutes survive from September 1851 for the Wesleyans, and from 1853 for the Primitive Methodists, we can track departures and arrivals from one body to the other. The moves rarely coincide with movement into the circuit, or a change of address. Most would seem to come under the heading of, in the words of the obituary of John Tanner, who died a Primitive Methodist Local Preacher, but who had started as a Wesleyan, 'reasons best known to himself.'

For example:

Primitive Methodist Quarterly meeting 15 Sept. 1873:

'That a kind letter be written to Bro J Harris of Redhill respectfully requesting him to continue in membership with us and Messrs Norris and Crook see him respecting it.'

Wesleyan Local Preachers' Meeting 23 September:

'Bro Harris of Shirley having left the Primitive Methodists and joined the society at Shirley: if his credentials be acceptable to the Superintendent that he be accepted.'

Primitive Methodists 8 December 1873

'That as Bro J Harris has left the Connexion and joined the Wesleyans, his name be removed from the plan.'

Primitive Methodists, 7 June 1875:

'That Mr Harris of Redhill be received into Society and bear his full position on the plan and that he be informed that this vote is unanimous.'

Wesleyans, 22 June 1875

'Bro Harris resigned. Resignation accepted.'

Wesleyan Circuit Plan, 1890. Helpers: J Harris, Redhill.

This related issue: the use of 'helpers' or 'auxiliaries,' may also bear some investigation. It is certainly a regular practice in the 1890s, but note the following, from the Wesleyan Local Preachers' Minutes, 26 June 1855: 'A conversation took place on the subject of some of the Brethren having their names on the printed plans of other communities.' No conclusion was reached.

VERONICA GREEN

1559 WILLIAM BETTS AND THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

William Betts, Esq., of Dover and Southampton, was one of the four major donors to the fledgling Evangelical Alliance in 1846. He was a member of several Wesleyan connexional committees in the 1840s and paid for the chapel at Nottsfeld in the Ashford Circuit (1847). He disappears from the *Minutes of Conference* in 1851 and is not listed in William Leary's index to biographies in the *Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*. Is anything known of his previous or subsequent biography?

MARTIN WELLINGS