

Wesley Heritage Study Guide

An Introduction to the World of John Wesley



Dear Reader:

Many denominations trace their roots to the life and ministry of John Wesley. Every Sunday, Christians the world over lift their voices to sing one of thousands of hymns written by John Wesley's brother, Charles Wesley.

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“Scriptural Christianity”

Introduction

On August 24, 1744, John Wesley preached a sermon to the men of Oxford University. The subject and title of his sermon was “Scriptural Christianity.” He asked the audience, “Where does this Christianity now exist? Where, I pray, do the Christians live? Which is the country, the inhabitants whereof are all thus filled with the Holy Ghost? Are all of one heart and of one soul?.... Let me ask you then, in tender love, and in the spirit of meekness, Is this a Christian city? Is Christianity, scriptural Christianity, found here? Are we, considered as a community of men, so ‘filled with the Holy Ghost,’ as to enjoy in our hearts and show forth in our lives, the genuine fruits of that Spirit?”

Through his questions, Wesley taught all of Oxford that theological discussions are not nearly as important as living clean, decent, wholesome lives. The ultimate fruit of true discipleship, he said, was to become “lively portraiture of Him whom ye are appointed to represent among men.”¹

After the Oxford speech, Wesley wrote in his journal: “I preached for the last time before the University of Oxford. I am now clear of the blood of these men. I have fully delivered my own soul.” Such was the purpose and conviction of John Wesley, who preached that others might know the way of “true Christianity.” What is this way? It “consists, not in a set of opinions, or of forms and ceremonies, but in holiness of heart and life, in a thorough imitation of our divine Master.”²

Methodism

Wesley taught that Scriptural Christianity, or holiness, was the aim of Methodism. He wished the name Methodist had never been applied to the people, however, which was “fixed upon them by way of reproach, without their approbation or consent.” So little did Wesley desire to lead a sect or party, he should have rejoiced “if the very name [Methodist] might never be mentioned more, but be buried in oblivion.”

After presenting the character of a Methodist, Wesley commented, “If any man say, ‘Why, these are only the common fundamental principles of Christianity!’ thou hast said; so I mean; this is the very truth; I know they are no other; and I would to God both thou and all men knew, that I, and all who follow my judgment, do vehemently refuse to be distinguished from other men, by any but the common principles of Christianity—the plain, old Christianity that I teach, renouncing and detesting all other marks of distinction.”³

Wesley’s Life’s Work

Wesley focused his life on developing righteousness in himself and in those he preached to. He sought to restore decency and morality to England, to expose wickedness, and to attack ungodliness. He knew, as do all preachers of righteousness, that the word of God has power to lead people to holiness and good works, that it has a more powerful effect on the mind than anything else.

Toward the end of his ministry, Wesley summarized his lifelong work and objectives: “Let us observe what God has done already. Between fifty and sixty years ago, God raised up a few young men, in the University of Oxford, to testify those grand truths, which were then little attended to: That without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that this holiness is the work of God, who worketh in us both to will and to do; that he doeth it of his own good pleasure, merely for the merits of Christ; that this holiness is the mind that was in Christ; enabling us to walk as he also walked; that no man can be thus sanctified till he be justified; and, that we are justified by faith alone. These great truths they declared on all occasions, in private and in public; having no design but to promote the glory of God, and no desire but to save souls from death.”⁴

John Wesley spent his life among the people preaching personal holiness or “true religion.” The English Reformation had already spawned two hundred years of struggling between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Thus, to fully appreciate the history of Methodism one should know something of the times in which it grew. The day of John Wesley and for renewing the Church of England had dawned.



John Wesley (portrait by Frank O. Salisbury)

Methodism's Christian Heritage

"We have all reason to expect the heaviest [judgments] of all...unless we return to the principles of the Reformation, the truth and simplicity of the gospel...O God...Be glorified in our reformation, not in our destruction!...Let the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness!" John Wesley (April 4, 1742)⁵

The Reformation was a sixteenth-century religious movement that began in Western Europe. Men such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox aimed to reform the Roman Catholic Church, but ended up breaking with the church and establishing Protestantism. The *English* Reformation began with Henry VIII (1491-1547), who, with the help of Parliament, separated the English Church from the Roman Church, and replaced the Pope as the head of the Christian Church in England.⁶

With King Henry as head of both church and state, the Church in England became the Church of England. It was the official state religion, and an integral part of English politics.

King Henry's closest religious advisor, Archbishop **Thomas Cranmer**, was under the influence of the continental reformers, some of whom he brought to England as early as 1532. This same year the Archbishop secretly married Margaret Oslander, the niece of the well-known Lutheran reformer Andreas Oslander.

In 1546, Cranmer published the first **Book of Homilies**, a collection of twenty-one sermons that the clergy used to give the official interpretation of orthodox doctrines. In 1549, Cranmer published the **Book of Common Prayer**, which, by an act of Parliament, became the official liturgy of the English Church.⁸ He also helped revise and publish a doctrinal statement called the **Forty-Two Articles**, which Edward VI accepted less than a month before he died in 1553. The Articles represented a revised standard of English orthodoxy, much more Protestant than any previously published document.

Mary I (1553-1558)

The death of Edward VI marked twenty-one years of English religious reform, during which the Roman Church lost ground to the spreading influence of continental Protestantism. When Edward's sister, Mary, came to the throne, she cruelly tried to reverse the spread of Protestantism by forcing England to accept traditional

Catholicism. In the end, Mary's cruelty backfired. The people she had exiled for their Protestant views returned after her death, calling for even greater reforms. The people she had executed died martyrs, which solidified the opposition and earned for Mary the ignominious epithet "Bloody Mary." In particular, burning three bishops, including Cranmer, fanned the flames of opposition to anti-Protestant reform.⁹

Despite acts of Parliament favoring the Roman Church, Mary's short reign was ineffectual in reversing the advance of Protestantism in England. The Marian exiles returned with their Calvinist or "Geneva Bibles" as they were called,¹⁰ which they used for devotional study, Protestant theological interpretation, and as a guidebook for additional reforms.

The objective of strict English Calvinists was to purify the Church of England of non-scriptural elements, including the ecclesiastical office of archbishop, and the monarch's role as "head" of the Church of England.¹¹ These Calvinists were called Puritans.

Elizabeth I (1558-1603)

After Mary's oppressive reign, the task of the monarchy under Elizabeth I was to return political stability to England, and to establish a balance between the opposing forces of Roman Catholicism and the more radical reform tendencies of the Puritans. This is known in history as the "middle way" between Rome and Geneva. As described below, acts of Parliament under Elizabeth established a religious framework for the English that not only endured many generations but had a decisive influence on John Wesley.

Elizabethan Settlement

Using the English Church under Henry VIII as its model, the parliamentary **Act of Supremacy** (1559) established Elizabeth as head of state and "Supreme Governor" of the English church (as opposed to "head" of the Church). Parliament had gained an appreciation for the problems Henry encountered when he tried to establish himself as "head" of the Church.¹²



King Henry VIII



Thomas Cranmer



Mary I

The **Act of Uniformity** (1559) established three sources of official church liturgy and doctrine. The clergy was required to use the **Book of Common Prayer**, subscribe to the doctrines contained in the **Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion**, and read regularly from an enlarged **Book of Homilies** that contained the accepted teachings of the Church. These parliamentary acts, known collectively as the Elizabethan Settlement, defined for generations the relationship between the monarchy and the Church of England, and established the doctrinal standards of the Church.¹³



Elizabeth I

Anglican Theology

Controversy over the Act of Uniformity ensued, which directly affected the Wesley family. Strict Calvinists protested the political and theological strictures imposed on them concerning liturgy, episcopacy,¹⁴ and doctrine. Complicating matters for Roman Catholics, Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth in 1570, calling upon the English to depose her. The English Roman Catholics had to decide between loyalty to the queen (denying the Pope's authority) and obedience to the Pope (betraying the English monarchy).

To relieve the tension between Puritans and Roman Catholics caused by the Elizabethan Settlement, Richard Hooker¹⁵ wrote a response, which by the eighteenth century became the definitive work defending the settlement's middle way. Hooker's treatise had an important influence on Samuel Wesley, confirming his loyalty to the authority of the Church of England.¹⁶



Martin Luther

Hooker listed three authorities for answering basic questions about ecclesiastical structure and doctrine. The first authority was **scripture**, which he considered the primary source of truth. Scripture, however, was not a handbook that provided answers to all questions, as the Puritans believed. Instead, scripture was a tool, providing direction for thought and action. The second authority was **tradition**, by which he meant authoritative explanations of scriptural truths from the period closest to the Apostles. Tradition did not include Roman Catholic tradition, and was limited to the first few centuries after Christ. The third authority was **reason**, the means by which "scripture and tradition can be scrutinized and understood by thoughtful persons."¹⁷

Wesley's preface to the third edition of the *Works of John Wesley* (1774) reflects how well grounded he was in Hooker for answering ecclesiastical and doctrinal questions. It also explains his purpose. First, Wesley desired to "methodize" the tracts "under proper heads,

placing those together which were on similar subjects, and in such order that one might illustrate another." As important as this was, it was more important to "correct" the tracts than methodize them. Wesley attributed many errors to the press. Nevertheless "there were others of a different kind, which were more necessary still. In revising what I had wrote on so many various subjects and occasions, and for so long a course of years, I found cause for not only literal or verbal corrections, but frequently for correcting the sense also. I am the more concerned to do this, because none but myself has a right to do it. Accordingly I have altered many words

or sentences; many others I have omitted; and in various parts I have added more or less, as I judged the subject required: So that in this edition I present to serious and candid men my last and maturest thoughts, agreeable, I hope, to *Scripture, reason, and Christian antiquity*."¹⁸

Intra-Puritan Dispute

About the same time Hooker was writing his response to the Elizabethan Settlement, attempting to calm the tension

between Calvinists and Roman Catholics, antagonism was growing between strict Calvinists and **Arminian** Puritans. Jacob Arminius (1560-1609) was a Dutch theologian who challenged the absolute predestinarianism of John Calvin on the grounds it denies human responsibility. For Luther and Calvin, predestination was a fundamental belief, grounded in the concept of God's sovereignty (His omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence). According

to this view, God alone chooses who will be saved (people can do nothing of themselves to gain salvation), and faith is the only response of a person who has been chosen. Predestinarianism says that Christ died for a chosen few, whom God elected to eternal salvation. It denies the universal atonement, which says Christ died for all.

Jacob Arminius opposed predestinarianism by teaching that salvation is available for all who choose faith, accepting God's gift of grace. He was careful not to convey the belief that people are saved by works. The Puritan position emphasized good works that *prove* one's elected status, while the Arminian position emphasized good works only to show one's acceptance of God's election and grace.

Those who opposed predestination, stressed human responsibility, and believed in a universal atonement were designated Arminians by their Calvinists opponents, who criticized them for permitting too much emphasis on human activity in the process of salvation. Those who believed in predestination and held to an extreme view opposing

legalism, resulting in moral laxity, were designated “antinomians” by Arminians.¹⁹

Wesley was opposed to either extreme, as shown in this journal entry: “At the request of several of my friends, I wrote ‘A Letter to a Gentleman of Bristol;’ in order to guard them from seeking salvation by works on one hand, and Antinomianism on the other. From those who lean to either extreme, I shall have no thanks: But ‘wisdom is justified of her children.’”²⁰ Of the two positions, John Wesley was deeply opposed to antinomianism, which he called “making void the law through faith.”

The name calling that went on between Arminians and Antinomians may have some bearing on the name “Methodist” as it was applied to John and Charles Wesley at Oxford University. Calvinists opposed the *new* methods of Arminian theology, especially in relation to its view of justification and sanctification. The ones holding this view were designated “New Methodists.” It was, in fact, a polemic against new doctrines. Similarly, those who opposed the Wesleys at Oxford called them “Methodists.”

James I (1603-1625)

James I succeeded the heirless Elizabeth I as the first “Stuart” king of England.²¹ In matters of religion, James I supported the English Church. His belief in the divine right of kings,²² and his attempts to keep peace with Spain, eventually led to the English Civil War, which brought down the monarchy as well as the Church of England.

King James little understood the rights or the disposition of the English Parliament, and was in constant conflict with the more radical Protestants, such as the Puritans. James tried to appease his opponents, however, and finally placated them by producing a new “Authorized” or “King James” version of the Bible in 1611. Nevertheless, he was unable to win Parliament, which strongly opposed his attempt to rule as absolute monarch.

Charles I (1625-1649)

The dispute over who should have power in England continued after the death of James I. Charles had the support of the upper classes and of the clergy of the Church of England. The forces of the Puritan-controlled Parliament were led by Oliver Cromwell, who was elected to Parliament in 1640. Civil war broke out in 1642, and the king was forced to surrender in 1646.

A special court created by Parliament

convicted Charles of treason in 1649, and he was beheaded. For a decade England was without a monarchy and without an established church. Religious freedom gave way to religious fanaticism, which had lasting consequences not only for England but for the rise of Methodism in the very next century.



James I

Homilies as the official Church position on doctrine and liturgy. The king was proclaimed Supreme Governor of the Church of England, and bishops were reappointed.

Not all the clergy agreed with the steps taken by Parliament. For example, some held a more radical view



Charles I

than allowed by the Thirty-Nine Articles, and were forced to decide between nonconformity and the official position of the Church. If they dissented as **nonconformists** or **dissenters**, they lost their positions, which meant their living. One of those was the paternal grandfather of John Wesley, founder of Methodism.

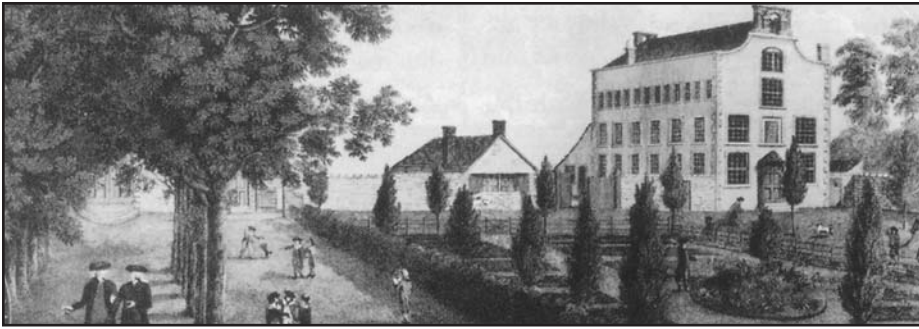
The presence of nonconformists led to a debate within the Church on how to handle diversity. Some leaders believed that doctrinal orthodoxy and liturgical uniformity were not major concerns. One group in particular, the Cambridge Platonists, favored toleration. They felt that “reason” could be used to arbitrate differences in the Church.

In the end, the Church debated two major options. The first was for a national church that was comprehensive and embraced a variety of theological opinions. The second was for a national church that was uniform in doctrine and liturgy, but allowed other groups to exist legally. Parliament implemented the latter by the **Act of Toleration** (1689).

Under the Toleration Act, nonconformists (those who did not subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, dissenting from the official religion) were allowed to exist legally under the following conditions: (1) they had to register their meeting houses with the government; (2) preachers had to be



Charles II



Kingswood School, Bristol. It was completed in 1740 for the education of poor children.

licensed; and (3) worship meetings could not be held in private homes, but had to be held in registered meeting houses. The act stipulated further that Roman Catholic or Unitarian groups could not exist legally and were not to be included under the provisions of the Toleration Act.

Under the Act of Toleration, non-conformists were legally tolerated but gave up many privileges of English citizenship. They could not attend the university, hold public office, hold a commission in the armed forces, or vote in elections. Thus, freedom of doctrine and organization were gained at the expense of political and religious freedom.

Religious Societies

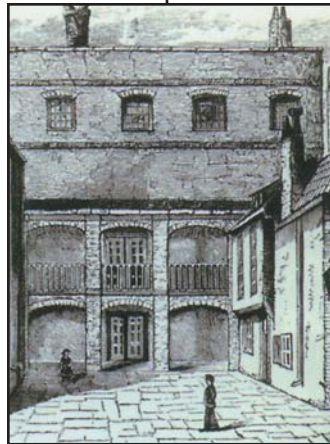
In the aftermath of the political and social upheaval that politicized Puritanism during the reign of Charles I, the English became consciously fearful of explicit religiosity. A general feeling of spiritual apathy and moral laxity ensued. In response, small local societies formed that promoted piety and Christian discipline. These gave rise to organized societies, such as the **Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge** (SPCK) around the turn of the eighteenth century, which became a model and source of encouragement to societies

throughout England. The rector of the Epworth parish, Samuel Wesley, became involved in this movement, as did his son, John, which had important consequences for Methodism.

The approach used by these groups was to change society by changing one person at a time. They advocated prayer several times a day, partaking of the Lord's Supper at least once a month, becoming meek and humble, having holy thoughts at all times, avoiding the appearance of evil (which meant avoiding evil company and known temptations), self-examination, fasting once a month, shunning spiritual pride, reading pious books, walking circumspectly, and so on.

In particular, the SPCK attacked the growing forms of immorality by developing ways to educate the public in Christian principles. They sought to establish charity schools for teaching the poor, promoted the spread of lending libraries, and encouraged visiting prisons to instruct the inmates on principles of Christian living. The society also embarked on an extensive publishing program to make Christian literature available to the public.

The purpose of these enterprises was to bring the common people to a true knowledge of God, to a genuine sense of the importance of religion, and to a serious concern for their eternal welfare. The SPCK also supported a growing missionary effort, including work in the plantations of America. All these activities influenced the life and ministry of the Wesley family, and in particular John Wesley, whose work they became.



Newcastle Orphan House

The Wesley Family

John Wesley (about 1635-?)

John Wesley of Whitchurch was the paternal grandfather of Methodism's chief founders, and the son of Reverend Bartholomew Wesley, rector of Catherston and Charmouth, Dorsetshire. From an early age, John felt concern for the state of his salvation. Thus, from the time of his conversion to the end of his life, he kept a diary of his religious experiences.²³

John began preaching when he was only twenty-two years of age, which he continued doing until the end of his life. Under the **Act of Uniformity**, he was rejected from his living at Charmouth in 1662. He was educated at Oxford, but refused to use the **Book of Common Prayer** in his church services. He successfully defended himself before

the bishop of Bristol, who decided not to take action. John told the bishop he was "called to the work of the ministry, though not to the office." Wherever John went, he was warmly welcomed by nonconformists who provided him with daily opportunities to preach.

John mostly preached in private to avoid arrest under the act of 1665, which imposed a new oath on nonconformists. Severe penalties awaited anyone who preached without taking the oath, or who preached in violation of the oath. Under this act John was arrested many times; he was imprisoned four times.

Samuel Wesley (1666-1735)

Samuel Wesley was born the son of John Wesley of



The Old Rectory, Epworth. Boyhood home of John and Charles Wesley. 1709 Queen Anne period house. Photographer: Colin J. Barton. Used by permission.

Whitchurch. He, like his father, descended from a long line of active, intelligent, and devout ministers of the Church of England. His father intended that Samuel should follow him as a nonconformist minister, and he was trained by his father in nonconformist principles. Nevertheless, Samuel renounced nonconformity and joined the Established Church when only sixteen years of age. After receiving his early education in nonconformist academies, he entered Exeter College, Oxford, in 1683. He remained there until 1688, when he was ordained a deacon.

Samuel worked in different capacities, including chaplain for one year until Queen Anne conferred upon him the living of Epworth, in Lincolnshire, where he remained thirty-nine years. He was rector of the Epworth parish from about 1696 until his death in 1735.

Samuel was a Tory in politics,²⁴ and a staunch High Churchman²⁵ throughout his life. Highly antagonistic of nonconformists, he wrote a private letter in 1703 about their education in private academies, which stirred up an unpleasant controversy. Another incident in 1705 provoked his enemies to the point of having him arrested and cast into Lincoln prison for a small debt. He remained in prison about three months.

In 1698 and 1699, Samuel became interested in the “Society for the Reformation of Manners.” He wrote a letter defending such societies, which were similar to the societies formed by Charles and John at Oxford. Five years before he died in 1735, Samuel wrote that if John was the father of a Holy Club, he must be its grandfather.

Samuel was a prolific writer, which he relied on as a source of income from his early college years. He is credited with a volume of poems, and other works, including one on the “Life of Christ.”

Samuel was a principled man, who never wavered from doing his duty. In 1697, he was forced to resign his appointment as chaplain to the Marquis of Normanby. He offended the Marquis when he protested the scandals that characterized the Marquis’ life.

The quality of Samuel’s character, his piety, his penchant for writing, his regard for the Church of England, and his desire to support religious societies were gifts and attitudes that he saw only partially fulfilled in the lives of his sons, Charles and John. He died the year they left on missions to Georgia.

Samuel Annesley (1620-1696)

Samuel Annesley was the maternal grandfather of John and Charles Wesley, and the father of Susanna Wesley, their mother. He was an eminent nonconformist minister of the Church of

England who was educated at Oxford and greatly respected for his diligence and devotion to the ministry. He acted as a parish priest for a time and as a chaplain at sea, but he refused to obey the **Act of Uniformity (1559)**. For this he was severely persecuted throughout his life. In spite of persecution, he was true to his convictions, and became one of the leading nonconformists of his day.

Samuel Annesley preached nearly fifty years, and was a man described by contemporaries as “totally devoted to God.” His last words before he died in 1696 were, “I shall be satisfied with thy likeness; satisfied, satisfied.”

Susanna Wesley (1669-1742)

Susanna Wesley was born in London. She was well-educated and a devoted wife and mother. She is called by various authors the mother of Methodism, which the following story illustrates.

When Samuel Wesley was away, often for months at a time to convocations in London, Susanna felt it necessary to hold family devotions. Every Sunday evening she gathered her children to read prayers and sermons, and to talk about religious subjects. Neighbors who dropped in one evening were so impressed they requested and received permission to join Susanna’s Sunday night devotionals. Hearing about this activity, Samuel protested on three accounts: “it looked peculiar”; “she was a woman”; and “his public station made it necessary for her to be careful to do nothing to deserve censure.”

Susanna responded that everything “looked peculiar that was religious, yet to be performed out of the pulpit.”²⁶ She also reminded him that, “though, a woman, yet in his absence the spiritual interests of the family were entrusted to



Susanna Wesley's kitchen in the Old Rectory, Epworth. The place where Susanna conducted the "conventicles" that John and Charles attended as children. Used by permission (Trustees of Epworth Old Rectory).

her care." These answers satisfied Samuel until he heard from the curate, who wrote that Susanna had turned the rectory into a "conventicle"²⁷ and that the church was in danger of scandal from such irregular proceedings. Again, Samuel wrote Susanna to protest her actions, ordering her to stop. She responded by describing the good that had been accomplished and expressed her willingness to obey as long

as he was willing to accept responsibility for the people's souls. From then on she was allowed to hold her Sunday night meetings with the full sympathy and support of her husband.²⁸

Susanna was a devoted mother who saw to the strict education of her children. She prepared many treatises on religious subjects, which the family used as textbooks. This activity speaks well of her knowledge, her dedication to religious principles, and her acquaintance with religious doctrine and piety. She was particularly mindful of John, who received special attention after his providential escape from the rectory fire in 1709. In her own words, she was "to be more particularly careful of the soul of a child whom God had so mercifully provided for."²⁹

Like her husband, Susanna early renounced nonconformity. She was throughout her life a devoted member of the Established Church, who continually feared God and did much good on behalf of her family and friends. Her devotion and loyalty to the church were reflected in her children, whose devotion to High Church principles was evident throughout their lives and in their individual ministries.

"The Rise of Methodism"

"What was the rise of Methodism, so called? In 1729, two young men, reading the Bible, saw they could not be saved without holiness, followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 they saw holiness comes by faith. They saw likewise, that men are justified before they are sanctified; but still holiness was their point. God then thrust them out, utterly against their will, to raise a holy people." John Wesley³⁰

The Wesley family records were destroyed when the rectory at Epworth burned in 1709. Of the nineteen children born to Samuel and Susanna Wesley, the names of only thirteen are known. These include John and Charles Wesley, founders of the movement known as Methodism.

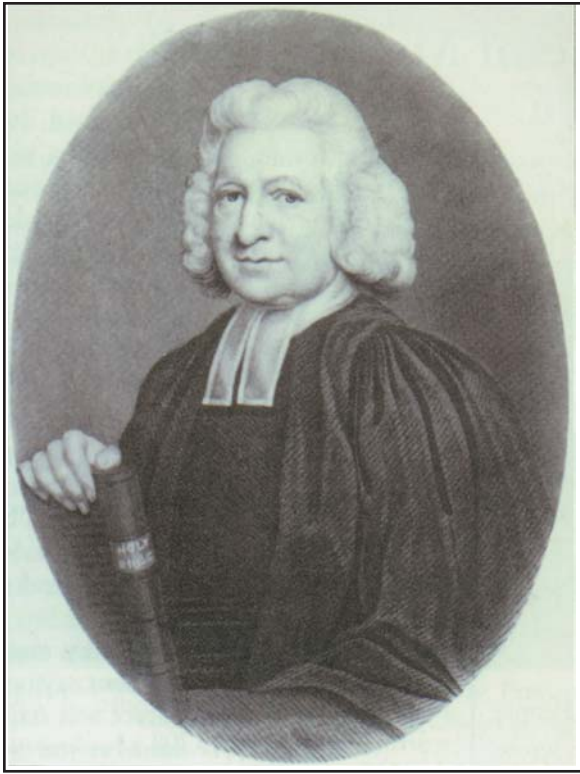
In his "Short History of the People Called Methodist," John Wesley wrote that the first rise of Methodism was in November 1729, when he and three companions met together at Oxford. The second rise of Methodism was at Savannah, in April 1736, when twenty or thirty persons met at his house. The third and final rise of Methodism began in London, May 1, 1738, when forty or fifty people agreed to meet together every Wednesday evening to talk, sing, and pray. "In all our steps we were greatly assisted by the advice and exhortations of Peter Böhler, an excellent young

man, belonging to the society commonly called Moravians."³¹

An introduction to the three stages that gave rise to Methodism begins with Charles Wesley, who brought together the first group of students to meet at Oxford University. John Wesley joined the group shortly thereafter, and assumed its leadership.

Charles Wesley

Charles Wesley was born at Epworth, December 18, 1708. He was educated by his mother until eight years of age, when his parents sent him to Westminster School in London. There he came under the supervision of his oldest brother, Samuel Wesley, a strong, High Churchman who taught Charles devotion to the Church of England.³² Charles



Charles Wesley

was admitted to St. Peter's College, Westminster, in 1721. After five years he was elected to Christ Church College, Oxford (1726).

During the three years Charles attended Christ Church, he became very much concerned with his soul and for religious matters in general. He and a few other students banded together, forming a small group marked for its diligence and devotion to religious exercises, and for the methodical manner in which they performed their duties, pursued their studies, and improved their time. For their efforts they received from their fellow students the name of "Methodists."³³

After receiving his degree, Charles continued at the college as a tutor, to which profession he intended to devote his life. When John decided to go to Georgia in 1735, Charles resolved to be ordained a minister and go with him. Consequently, he was ordained a deacon by the Bishop of Oxford, and priest by the Bishop of London.

Charles' Conversion

After his brief mission to Georgia,³⁴ Charles returned to England in 1736, unsatisfied with his religious life. He did not feel that he had received the new life in Christ that he desired for himself. He endeavored to be instructed by men such as William Law, Count Zinzendorf, and Peter Böhler, who acquainted him with the doctrine of regeneration and of a living faith. He also learned from the teachings of Luther, specifically regarding Paul's epistle to the Galatians on justification by faith.

On May 21, 1738, all things were made clear and Charles received peace. The following account explains: "Mr. Charles Wesley also was made partaker of the same grace [as his brother, John Wesley]. Peter Böhler had visited him in his sickness at Oxford; but it was the reading of Halyburton's *Life*, some time afterwards, which convinced him of the want of that faith which brings 'peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.' Luther on the Galatians deepened his convictions, and increased his earnestness in seeking salvation, till at length, on Whitsunday,³⁵ May 21st, three days before his brother John found peace, he was enabled, while reading some encouraging portions of Scripture, to view Christ as set forth to be a propitiation for his sins, through faith in his blood; and he received that peace and rest in God which he had so ardently sought."³⁶

Thereafter, Charles preached whenever and wherever he had opportunity, in both churches and open fields. He also volunteered his labor visiting prisons, where he instructed and comforted the prisoners. Charles was very popular with the people, but hated by the clergy who often persecuted him for his beliefs. John and Charles Wesley called not only the people but also the clergy to a deeper spiritual walk with God. And, much like the religious authorities in Jesus' day, the clergy knew much but loved little. They quoted discipline and dogma, but overlooked the plain truths the Wesleys preached to the people.

Charles is best known for writing 7,000 hymns, many of which are sung today in Christian worship. These include "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today, and "Jesus, Lover of My Soul." For twenty years as evangelical preacher, Charles helped John shape the Methodist movement, writing about 480 of the 525 hymns in the Methodist *Collection of Hymns*, published in 1780.

After Charles was married in 1749, he settled into a parish ministry, while continuing to serve the Methodist movement as close adviser of John. After 1756, Charles confined his labors mainly to London and Bristol.

Charles was active in the Methodist movement to the end of his life, although he was worried that the Methodists would separate from the Church of England. His High Church convictions shaped his expressions and acts in a way that distinguished him from John and other coworkers, though they also considered themselves High Churchmen. In 1758, John Wesley published his "Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England." Charles added a postscript in which he expressed his approval for the pamphlet, but also signified that his own views on the subject were much stronger than those of his brother John.

Charles Wesley died March 29, 1788, and was buried in Marylebone churchyard. His life was filled with hardships and persecutions, but the enthusiasm he awakened in the people forms a story in its own way no less thrilling than the story of his famous brother, John Wesley.



Fire at the Old Rectory, Epworth. Susanna, Samuel, and the family look on as John is saved through the window.

John Wesley

John Wesley was born at Epworth, June 17, 1703. It was a day of learning and enlightenment—a time when English authors believed that life and literature should be guided by reason and common sense.³⁷ It was also a time of moral decline in England, when “every man chased after the arm of his own flesh.”³⁸

John’s own education was attended to by his mother until he was ten and a half, when he entered Charterhouse School in London.³⁹ At age 17, John started university life at Christ Church College, Oxford. There he dedicated himself to religious studies, while training to follow his father as a clergyman in the Church of England. He was ordained deacon September 19, 1725, in Oxford Cathedral. Six months later, he was elected fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. His academic studies led to a Master of Arts degree, which he received February 14, 1727. He was ordained priest (presbyter) September 22, 1728.

Hand of Providence.

When John was between six and seven years old a fire destroyed the Epworth rectory. The children’s nurse seized two-month-old Charles and fled the flames, directing the other children to follow. John, however, was left sleeping. His father tried to rescue him, but a burning stair case made the attempt impossible. In complete despair, Samuel dropped to his knees and commended his son to God. Meanwhile, John awoke and climbed on a chest next to the bedroom window. He was spotted by a man who placed himself against the wall below the window. Another man climbed on the first man’s shoulders and rescued John just moments before the roof fell in with a crash. John was safely “plucked as a brand from the burning” house.⁴⁰

Church of England

The Church of England was embroiled in a bitter struggle between High Churchmen and nonconformists. The monarchy favored the High Church party, on which it bestowed special favors. The Whigs raised the voice of dissent, making it known the Church was in danger. Parliament responded by passing a resolution condemning nonconformists as enemies to both the queen and the Church.⁴¹

Wesley was raised in the theological tradition of the Church of England, which was later reinforced at Charterhouse School. His parents also taught him to avoid two extremes. The first manifested itself in the Roman Catholics, who stressed outward works over faith. The second was evident in the radical Protestants, who emphasized faith without works to the point of obscuring “all the rest of the commandments.” Wesley accounted for the Protestant position, saying it was “the natural effect of their overgrown fear of Popery; being so tempted with the cry of ‘merit and good works’ that they plunged at once into the other extreme.” In 1725, however, he was in his own words “utterly lost, not being able to find out what the error was, nor yet to reconcile this uncouth hypothesis either with Scripture or common sense.”⁴²

Wesley eventually found himself in the works of men who stressed holy living as an essential component of true Christianity. At the suggestion of Jeremy Taylor,⁴³ Wesley began accounting for his time by keeping a diary, where he recorded and kept track of his effort to live a holy life. After reading Thomas A. Kempis’ “Christian Pattern,” Wesley “began to see, that true religion was seated in the heart, and that God’s law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions.” Wesley described the result: “I began to alter the whole form of my conversation, and to set in earnest upon a new life. I set apart an hour or two a day for religious retirement. I communicated every week. I watched against all sin, whether in word or deed. I began to aim at, and pray for, inward holiness. So that now, ‘doing so much, and living so good a life,’ I doubted not but I was a good Christian.”⁴⁴

Seeking holiness informed Wesley’s theology and became its focus. In 1725, he believed that sensing God’s forgiveness was prerequisite to a personal assurance of salvation. Such an assurance, however, was no guarantee against sin, an argument Wesley used often in his lifelong struggle against Calvinistic predestination.⁴⁵

William Law

In 1726, William Law published his “Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection,” and soon after his “Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life.” Wesley called the latter “a treatise which will hardly be excelled, if it be equaled, in the English tongue, either for beauty of expression, or for justness and depth of thought.”⁴⁶

Law emphasized that Christian-ity requires a change of nature, a renunciation of the world, self-denial, and a life perfectly devoted to God’s service. He reminded the clergy that Christian living requires visiting the poor and sick, giving relief to the needy, and curing souls.

Law’s books produced an immediate and positive effect on Wesley, who wrote, “These convinced me, more than ever, of the absolute impossibility of being half a Christian;



The Holy Club in session. John Wesley stands at the head of the table. George Whitefield is to his immediate right. Benjamin Ingham and Charles Wesley are seated at the table in conversation.

and I determined, through his grace (the absolute necessity of which I was deeply sensible of) to be all-devoted to God, to give him all my soul, my body, and my substance.”⁴⁷

Savannah, Georgia

In 1735, John and Charles went to Georgia with the governor, Mr. Oglethorpe, who founded a colony there. John went as a missionary to the colonists and the Indians. He held services in English, and, for the benefit of the few foreigners in the colony, he read prayers in French and German. Because of the strictness of his religious life and teachings, John met opposition from some of the colony’s leading families. As a result, he returned to England after only two years. Wesley’s experiences in Georgia changed the course of his life forever.

German Moravians

Wesley’s chief motive for going to Georgia was “the hope of saving [his] own soul.” To a friend he wrote, “A right faith will, I trust, by the mercy of God, open the way for a right practice.”⁴⁸ Wesley hoped to find this faith in the wilderness of America, where the love of money and of the vile attractions that spring from it could not tempt him. Wesley believed that after he was converted, God would use him to strengthen his brethren, and to preach His name to the gentiles.⁴⁹

Two events, once aboard ship and the other after he arrived in Georgia, altered Wesley’s religious views and left him feeling unfulfilled in his spiritual life.

A group of people called the Moravians immigrated to America in 1735, the same year Wesley made his journey to Georgia. The Moravian church is a Protestant denomination that emphasizes the sole authority of the Bible, simplicity in worship, and disciplined Christian living.⁵⁰

After three months at sea, a terrible storm arose that tossed the *Simmonds* about, nearly sinking the ship and drowning all its passengers. The winds started about seven in the evening, Saturday, January 17, 1736. By nine the sea was breaking over the ship “from stern to stern.” A great

wave crashed through the windows of the state cabin, soaking Wesley and several others. At about eleven Wesley went to sleep, uncertain whether he should awake alive and ashamed of his unwillingness to die. He wrote of this experience, “O how pure in heart must he be, who would rejoice to appear before God at a moment’s warning!”

A week later, on Friday, January 23, another storm began. By morning it was so severe, the crew was forced “to let the ship drive.” Wesley again chided himself, “How is it that thou hast no faith? being still unwilling to die.” In the afternoon, a huge wave came over the ship, completely covering Wesley, and which so stunned him that he “scarce expected to lift up [his] head again, till the sea should give up her dead.” The storm ceased about midnight.

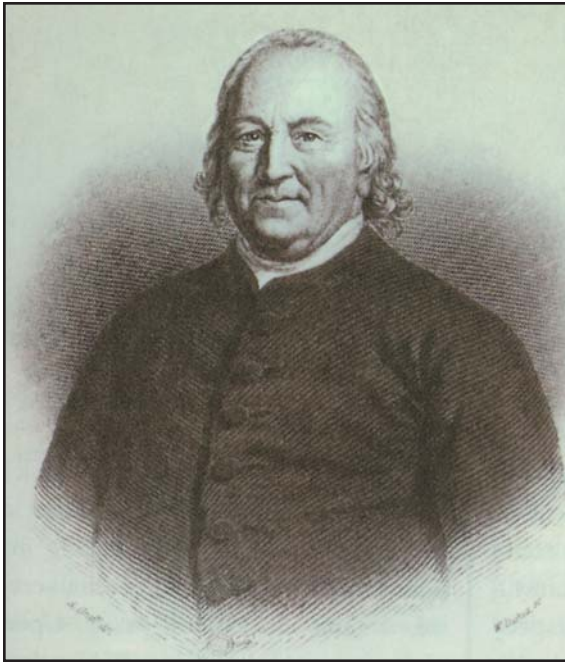
A third and final storm struck Sunday, January 25, more violent than the others. Every ten minutes a wave crashed against the stern or side of the ship with such violence that Wesley thought it should “dash the planks in pieces.” At seven in the evening, he joined the Moravians in their usual service, singing a psalm of praise. Upon observing the Moravians, Wesley had been struck by their willingness to perform the most menial tasks for the other passengers, “which none of the English would undertake,” and by their meekness, “which no injury could move.” And now, in the midst of a severe storm, the Moravians showed they also had been delivered from the spirit of fear. The sea suddenly broke over the ship, split the mainsail in pieces, and poured in between the decks “as if the great deep had already swallowed us up.” Wesley marveled at the contrast between the screaming English and the calm Moravians who never stopped singing.

At the conclusion of the service, Wesley asked one of the Moravians, “Were you not afraid?” The answer came, “I thank God, no.” Wesley asked again, “But were not your women and children afraid?” The answer came, “No, our women and children are not afraid to die.”

Wesley’s fear of death highlighted his own lack of faith, and raised the question of his salvation. He concluded his description of this experience with these words: “I went to [the Moravians’] crying, trembling neighbours, and pointed out to them the difference in the hour of trial, between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not. At twelve the



The *Simmonds*, in which John Wesley and his companions sailed to Georgia.



Augustus Spangenberg

wind fell. This was the most glorious day which I have hitherto seen.”⁵¹

The second event happened to Wesley after he arrived in Savannah. One of the first to meet him was the well-known Moravian elder, Augustus Gottlieb Spangenberg. Wesley asked his advice on how to begin his labors, and was surprised to hear Spangenberg answer with a question of his own, “My brother, I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?” When Wesley hesitated, Spangenberg continued, “Do you know Jesus Christ?” Wesley answered that he knew Jesus Christ was the Savior of the world. Spangenberg pressed further, “True, but do you know He has saved you?” Wesley answered, “I hope He has died to save me.” Spangenberg ended his questions with, “Do you know yourself?” Wesley replied, “I do.”

Although Wesley answered that he knew, his answer was not from the heart with faith. He later wrote about his response, “I fear they were vain words.” Nearly two years passed before Wesley began to understand the doctrines that Spangenberg’s questions caused him to ponder. Nevertheless, after his experience with the Moravians, Wesley willingly submitted himself to the spiritual tutelage of a people whose faith and personal assurance of salvation he wanted for himself.

The Mission

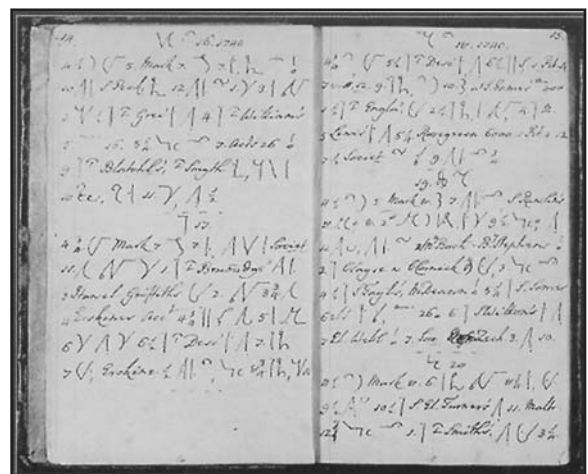
In Georgia, Wesley divided his time between Savannah, Frederica, and other small settlements. He also preached among the Indians, who were the stated object of his mission. Wherever he went, he was true to the high-Church principles learned in his youth, showing always that he was a faithful servant of the Church of England. For example,

he excluded all nonconformists from the Holy Communion, demanding first that they give up their faith and that they be rebaptized by him. In addition, he received Roman Catholics as Saints; enforced confession, penance, and mortification; mixed wine with water at the sacrament; and appointed deaconesses in accordance with what Wesley called the “Apostolic Constitutions.”⁵²

Some of the Georgians took Wesley for a Roman Catholic. Others were not sure. One man told Wesley, “[the people] say they are Protestants. But as for you, they cannot tell what religion you are of. They never heard of such a religion before. They do not know what to make of it.”⁵³

Wesley’s manner of preaching led to conflict with the unchurched English, who objected to his frank and open chiders. In Frederica, for example, Wesley publicly reproved a man for swearing. Afterward, the man “seemed much moved, and gave [Wesley] many thanks.” The following Sunday, Wesley “summed up what [he] had seen or heard at Frederica, inconsistent with Christianity.” The result was typical: “Some of the hearers were profited, and the rest deeply offended.”⁵⁴ One man said to Wesley, “I like nothing you do.” He continued, “Your sermons are satires on particular persons, therefore I will never hear you more; and all the people are of my mind, for we won’t hear ourselves abused.”⁵⁵

After Wesley departed Frederica for the last time, he wrote about his experience and provided this conclusion: “After having breathed the air in this unhappy place for twenty days, on January 26th I took my final leave of Frederica. It was not any apprehension of my own danger, though my life had been threatened many times, but an utter despair of doing good there, which made me content with the thought of seeing it no more.”⁵⁶

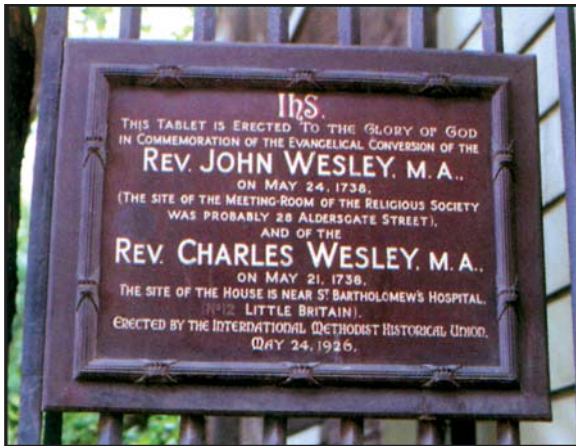


Page from John Wesley’s journal.

Home to London

Wesley was away from London two years and nearly four months. Although he did not successfully teach “the Georgia Indians the nature of Christianity,” he trusted that

God had in some measure humbled him, proved him, and shown him what was in his heart. He had been taught to beware of men, and that if people acknowledge God in everything, He will direct their paths where reason cannot.⁵⁷



Plaque commemorating the conversions of John and Charles Wesley in 1738.

His own account of good things that happened on his mission included meeting the Moravians and preaching the good word to “all in Georgia.” These included the “African and American Heathens,” and many children who were taught to serve God and be useful neighbors.⁵⁸

Wesley went to Georgia to convert others, but was not himself converted. He wanted and did not have “that faith which enables every one that hath it to cry out, ‘I live not, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.’” The possessor of this faith is freed from sin,⁵⁹ fear,⁶⁰ and doubt.⁶¹

A Heart Strangely Warmed

Wesley departed for England, December 22, 1737. He arrived in London, February 3, 1738.⁶² He and Charles stayed in London seeking inspiration and support from Peter Böhler and his Moravian associates. John sought a clear and undeniable religious experience from which he would receive assurance of his standing before God. During this time of personal struggle, John was more and more earnest in his ministry, preaching often times to thousands of people.

In the afternoon of May 24, 1738, John attended a Moravian prayer service in St. Paul’s Cathedral. In the evening he went to a society in Aldersgate Street, where he heard someone read Luther’s preface to the Epistle to the Romans. John described what happened: “While he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. I

began to pray with all my might for those who had in an especial manner despitely used me and persecuted me. I then testified to all there what I now felt in my heart.” John was at the time thirty-five years old, an accomplished scholar, acute theologian, and able writer.

Soon after this, Wesley visited the Moravians’ center in Herrnhut to learn more about them. He visited August Francke to inspect his orphan house and his publications and plans, which greatly influenced the shape of Wesley’s course and religious activities.

While John was away, Whitefield and Charles preached with such earnestness that the clergy became offended, many closing their doors to them. The earnestness of Charles’ and Whitefield’s preaching stemmed from a desire to have the people, including the clergy, walk closer with God.

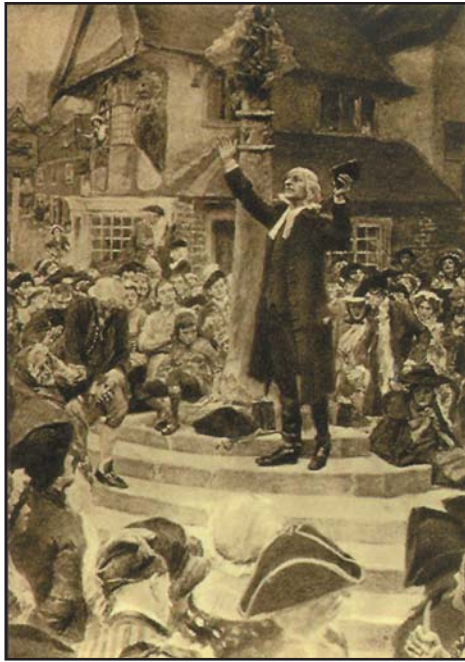
After John returned from Herrnhut, he began his career with great earnest and activity. A few days after his arrival, he wrote “I began to declare in mine own country the glad tidings of salvation to a large company in the Minories. On Monday I rejoiced to meet our little society, which now consists of thirty-two persons. The next day I went to the condemned felons in Newgate, and offered them ‘a free salvation.’ In the evening I went to a society in Bear Yard, and preached ‘repentance and remission of sins.’”

Open-air preaching

The year 1739 opened in a remarkable manner for the Wesleys and Methodism. On January 1, with about sixty of his brethren, Wesley held a “watch-night” in Fetter Lane. He later recalled the experience: “About three in the morning we were continuing instant in prayer; the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we had recovered a little from the awe and the amazement which the presence of the divine Majesty had inspired, we



Peter Böhler



John Wesley preaching at Market Cross, Epworth.

broke out with one voice: 'We praise thee, O God! We acknowledge thee to be the Lord God.'"⁶³

Mr. Whitefield went to Bristol, where he preached in the open air after the clergy closed the doors of their churches to him. The results of open-air preaching were so magnificent that he sent for John Wesley, who had opposed preaching anywhere except in a church. Seeing the results of Mr. Whitefield's preaching, however, Wesley began from that moment what became a common practice, preaching in the open air and in various public places to large congregations. (See p. 17-18.)

Societies

Wesley described how societies began in Methodism: "In the latter end of the year 1739 eight or ten persons came to me in London, and desired that I would spend some time with them in prayer, and advise them how to flee from the wrath to come." Wesley set aside Thursday evening for this purpose. He said that twelve people came the first night, forty the next, and soon one hundred people attended the Thursday prayer meeting. Wesley purchased a building named the "Foundry," which he repaired and remodeled to use for religious worship.⁶⁴ The number of Methodist societies grew under the leadership of the Wesleys. In London, the Fetter Lane Society was perhaps the strongest.

Lay preachers

As the number of societies grew, John could not be present to preach at every meeting. Thus, he selected from the members the most promising to conduct a prayer service in his absence. One of these, Mr. Thomas Maxfield, began to preach. When Wesley heard of it, he returned home to stop Mr. Maxfield from preaching, as it was not his

place. Wesley's mother, Susanna, intervened, saying that Mr. Maxfield was certainly called of God, as much so as he. Wesley, listening to his mother, became convinced that it was God's work, and allowed Mr. Maxfield to continue.

Classes

Wesley established stewards over the societies, who accounted for all the money raised in the societies, and ensured that all disbursements were properly made. The societies were divided into classes of about twelve. Each class had a leader, who was responsible to visit each member at home or work, and to collect a penny a week.

When Mr. Wesley learned that some members conducted themselves in an unworthy and disorderly manner, he directed that the members of each class should meet with their leader once a week. These meetings were to open and close with prayer, followed by religious conversation and instruction from the leader. The leaders met once a week with John Wesley, who received a detailed report from them regarding their collections and meetings.

Circuits

As Methodism grew, Wesley sent lay preachers to visit different towns. In this manner, others were raised up in various localities who unwittingly became part of the Wesleyan movement. To ensure their labors would be properly distributed, and to avoid interference between laborers, Wesley established circuits with boundaries.

Conferences

In 1744, Wesley called his preachers together in the first annual conference of the Methodist Church. The conferences became a center of unity for Methodist societies. To the conferences they sent their reports, and received their ministers. Thus Methodism grew as an organization, not as a preconceived system of religion but to answer the needs of a growing number of followers of Charles and John Wesley.

Wesley's work habits

Wesley was tireless in his activity and work. He was the central influence that kept all the various parts of Methodism together and in motion. He slept seven hours a night; traveled extensively over Great Britain; carried on an immense correspondence; founded a school for children, for which he often went door to door to solicit money; published tracts and distributed them freely; wrote and abridged books; and personally visited every member of each society in London every three months. In addition to everything else, he preached up to five sermons a day, but usually two or three in one place.

Methodism Established

Wesley traveled some 250,000 miles, mainly on horseback, preaching "Scriptural Christianity" to towns and



John Wesley on his death bed.

villages all over Great Britain. When the doors of the church were closed to him, he preached in the open countryside.

Wesley was a gifted evangelist, writer, and talented organizer. He established hundreds of congregations, and an organization consisting of classes, societies, and circuits, which collectively became the Methodist Church. The

system of religion established by Wesley is used by Methodists the world over.

Renewing the Church

The moral decline of England during the eighteenth century is the best witness of why God raised up a man such as John Wesley: "The court of England was corrupt to its very core, and the people were too faithful imitators of a bad example. Popery was intriguing, Dissenters were declining, and the Church was full of fiery and drunken feuds. Reformers, like the Methodists, were needed. Without them, or others of a kindred spirit, the nation must have sunk into an inconceivable depth of depravity, and social and political degradation. In estimating the benefits which have accrued from the great Methodist movement, the reader must think not only of the good effected but of the ill averted."⁶⁵

Such was the mission and legacy of the man called John Wesley, and the happy accomplishment of the people called Methodists.

American Methodism

In 1769, Wesley sent two missionaries to America. A collection provided 50 pounds for the church building in New York (dedicated in 1768), and 20 pounds for the passage of the two missionaries. More missionaries were sent in 1771 and 1773, including Francis Asbury, the future bishop of American Methodism.

Thomas Coke (1747-1814)

Coke was the first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The name of the church was adopted at a conference called by Dr. Coke, which convened for the purpose of organizing the Methodist Church in America. The conference, which John Wesley requested, is historically known as the Christmas Conference. It convened in Baltimore, December 24, 1784, and lasted until January 2, 1785.

The American Methodists had up to the time of the conference formed in societies similar to those in England, relying on the clergy of the Church of England for their sacraments. During the Revolutionary War, the people were largely deprived of church services. With the exception of Francis Asbury, who did not return to England with the other ministers, the work of the church in America was carried on entirely by native preachers.

Ordinations

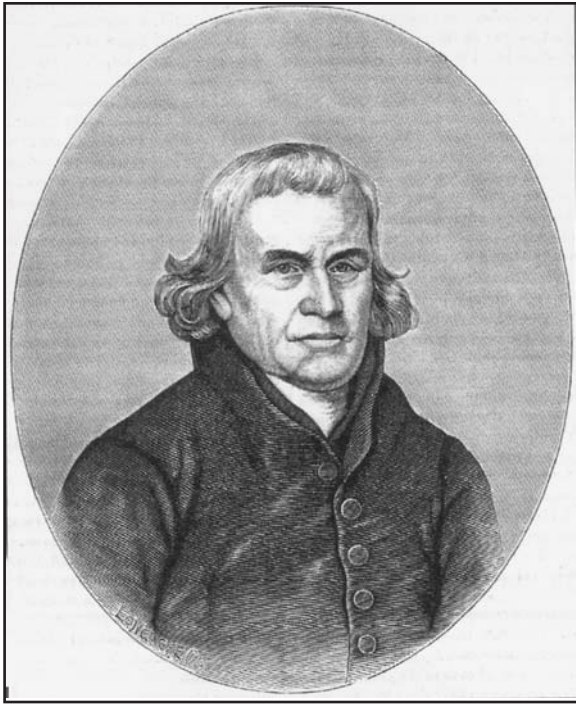
In 1784, the Methodists of America were urging John Wesley to provide a church organization. Accordingly, Mr. Wesley moved ahead with a plan to ordain Dr. Coke as first superintendent,⁶⁶ and suggested that he go to America, organize the church, and ordain Francis Asbury.⁶⁷ Thus,

with the exception of some visitors sent by the Moravians, Thomas Coke was the first Protestant bishop in America. Francis Asbury was the first Protestant bishop *ordained* in America.

Dr. Coke's labors were not confined to America. After Christmas Conference he returned to England to assist John Wesley. After Wesley's death, he presided over the Irish and English conferences, traveling extensively in England, Scotland, and Wales. He also made many visits to America.⁶⁸



Thomas Coke



Francis Asbury

Deeply imbued with the missionary spirit, Coke was responsible for laying the foundation of the Methodist church in many places around the world. He showed the purity of his motives by bearing his own expenses, using his wealth not only to support himself but to build the church. By the time he died, Coke had spent almost his entire fortune laboring in behalf of the missions.

Coke was particularly interested in the vast population of India. At seventy years of age, he embarked with six companions to the East Indies. A few days before the missionaries expected to arrive, he died peacefully in his

sleep. It has been said that no other man except John Wesley did more for the extension of Methodism than Dr. Thomas Coke.

Francis Asbury (1745-1816)

When Francis Asbury came to America, there were fourteen itinerant preachers, a few local preachers, and only 371 members. At his death, there were almost 700 itinerant preachers, 2000 local preachers, and 214,000 members. Francis Asbury is credited for the discipline, organization, and growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church in eighteenth century America. He is also considered its father.

Asbury was converted at the age of fourteen after listening to some distinguished English ministers. His theological studies included the writings of George Whitefield and other well-known Methodists. At sixteen, he held prayer-meetings in his own and other villages. At eighteen he was licensed as a local preacher, which duties he performed every Sabbath and three or four times a week. At twenty-one he was received into the Wesleyan Conference as a lay preacher and appointed to a regular circuit. Asbury acquainted himself with and was committed to the doctrines and practices of Methodism. In 1771, he responded to John Wesley's call by volunteering for missionary work in America.

After the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, nearly all the English ministers returned to Great Britain. Asbury, however, had become attached to the interests of the American colonies, being convinced of the rightness of the cause for which Americans were struggling. He also felt it was wrong to abandon the thousands of people who had entrusted their spiritual lives to the care of Methodist preachers. Asbury was more committed to the cause of

Methodism than of America. He did not believe it was his duty to involve himself in the political struggle between America and Great Britain.

After Thomas Coke returned to England in the spring of 1785, only a few months after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the leadership of the church devolved almost entirely upon Francis Asbury.⁶⁹ Already before Asbury was ordained a superintendent, he complained to Wesley that thousands of children had not been baptized, and that many others had not partaken of the Lord's supper for years.

After Asbury's ordination, the work in America of the Methodist Episcopal Church grew steadily under his careful direction. Asbury had a genius for organization, and for putting the abilities of his preachers to their most useful



Francis Asbury's Episcopal Ordination, by Bishop Coke, Richard Whatcoat, Thomas Vasey, and William Philip Otterbein, at Christmas Conference, Baltimore, Md., December 27, 1784.

purpose. He was equally devoted to general and ministerial education. Thus, immediately after the organization of the church, Asbury laid the foundation of Cokesbury College. He went collecting from house to house to raise money for the building. He also selected its teachers and, on occasion, addressed its students. After the college was destroyed by two successive fires, Asbury devoted himself entirely to the work of evangelism.

Asbury was described as neat and careful in his personal appearance. He never married so that he might give himself wholly to the work. He sent part of his sixty-four dollar a year salary to his widowed mother. When he received other gifts and donations for his support, he took out what he absolutely needed to sustain himself and divided the rest among the other preachers. He did the same with much of his clothing, which he donated to help his fellow-laborers.

Asbury dedicated his entire life to the cause of Christ. He traveled from Georgia to Maine in spite of poor health, riding 4,000 to 6,000 miles on horseback nearly every year of his ministry. He preached with zeal, enthusiasm, and untiring devotion. When convinced of his duty, nothing could divert him from his purpose. Even when traveling through Indian country, he frequently encamped where others refused without adequate protection.

Francis Asbury was, by all accounts, a man of deep thought and wise conclusions. His preaching was clear, forceful, and very earnest—his sermons, powerful and eloquent. He was in every respect a man of God, who devoted his entire life to preaching Christ and establishing holiness in the hearts of the people.

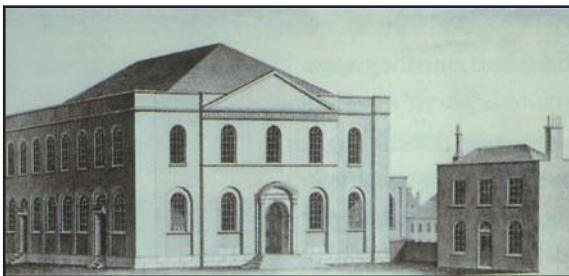
Heritage Tour

London

In the heart of London is Charterhouse School, where John Wesley received his formal education starting at age ten. Many prominent individuals were educated at Charterhouse, including Addison, Steele, Blackstone, Isaac Barrow, and Roger Williams. At his father's suggestion, John ran around the Charterhouse garden three times every morning, which gave him health and vigor to live a long and productive life.

In **St. Paul's Cathedral**, Wesley listened to the choir sing, "Out of the Deep Have I Called Unto Thee, O Lord," The same evening, May 24, 1738, he went to a society in Aldersgate Street, where he felt his heart "strangely warmed." (See p. 25.)

City Road Chapel. John Wesley resolved to move the headquarters of Methodism from the dilapidated Foundry to a new building on City Road, London. It was resolved "to build an elegant church such as even the Lord Mayor might attend without any diminishing of his official dignity; that it should be wholly supplied by ordained clergy of the Established Church, except on weekdays, and that the liturgy should be read at Sunday morning and evening services." It was also resolved to provide a separate residence for John Wesley, who had lived many years in an apartment above the Foundry.



John Wesley's City Road Chapel, sometimes called the Cathedral of Methodism.

After Wesley secured a tract of land across from Bunhill Fields Cemetery, the foundation for the new chapel was finally laid April 21, 1777. Wesley described the occasion: "The rain befriended us much, by keeping away thousands who proposed to be there. But there were still such multitudes, that it was with great difficulty I got through them to lay the first stone."⁷⁰

The new chapel was opened November 1, 1778. Wesley wrote in his journal that day: "It is perfectly neat, but not fine; and contains far more people than the Foundry...Many were afraid that the multitudes, crowding from all parts, would have occasioned much disturbance. But they were happily disappointed. There was none at all. All was quietness, decency, and order....God was eminently present in the midst of the congregation."⁷¹



The Foundry

"The World Is My Parish" statue is at City Road, as well as the lectern from the Foundry chapel. An organ played by Charles Wesley is to the right of the sanctuary in a chapel which commemorates the Foundry.

After John Wesley died at his home in London, his body lay in state in the City Road Chapel, where an

estimated ten thousand people passed to pay their last tribute. Wesley was buried in the churchyard behind the chapel, along with several other leading ministers of Methodism.

Museum of Metho-dism. The museum is housed in the old Crypt below City Road Chapel. Displays tell the story of Charles and John Wesley, and of Methodism from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. Also on display are Methodist ceramics, architecture, and other objects that depict the history of Methodism.

Wesley's Home. Located on the south side of the courtyard, the home contains a number of objects from Wesley's life.

After living nearly forty years above the Foundry, John Wesley occupied his new home in 1779. Today, it is filled with mementos from his life. A large cabinet displays porcelain busts of Wesley. His portable writing desk is also in the collection, which he used in his carriage. Other items of interest include portraits, journals, and letters, as well as Wesley's spectacles, teacup, and preaching robe.

John Wesley died in his home at City Road, London, March 2, 1791, at the age of 87. He is buried in the churchyard behind the building.

Aldersgate Street. The street where John Wesley had his life-changing experience "I felt my heart strangely warmed; I felt [Christ] had taken away my sins, even mine." (See p. 12.)

Just across the street, attached to the railings of St. Botolph's Church, is a plaque commemorating Wesley's conversion. (See p. 12.)

Bunhill Fields Cemetery. Place of Susanna Wesley's grave, and famous English writers such as John Bunyan, author of The Pilgrim's Progress, and the novelist Daniel Defoe.

Little Britain. North of St. Botolph's Church is Little Britain, where Charles Wesley had his faith renewed. A plaque marks the place of John Bray's house where Charles was converted on May 21, 1738, and where John told Charles on May 24, "I believe."

Charles was in John Bray's house recovering from an illness, when he felt "his own assurance of grace" just three days before John's experience in Aldersgate Street. (See p. 8.)



Charles Wesley's organ.
Museum, City Road Chapel.



John Wesley's grave site, City Road, London.

Bath

Bath was a resort town for English high society in the 1700s. Many people believed that its warm springs and mineral waters had health-giving properties. Its sheltered position surrounded by hills gave it a mild and enjoyable climate.

Wesley preached here on many occasions. The following story illustrates something of the courage and confidence of John Wesley:

"There was great expectation at Bath of what a noted man was to do to me there; and I was much entreated not to preach; because no one knew what might happen. By this report I also gained a much larger audience, among whom were many of the rich and great. I told them plainly, the Scripture had concluded them all under sin—high and low, rich and poor, one with another. Many of them seemed to be a little surprised, and were sinking apace into seriousness, when their champion appeared, and coming close to me, asked by what authority I did these things. I replied, 'by the authority of Jesus Christ, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid hands upon me, and said, 'Take thou authority to preach the Gospel.' He said, 'This is contrary to Act of Parliament: This is a conventicle.' I answered, 'Sir, the conventicles mentioned in that Act (as the preamble shows) are seditious meetings. But this is not such; here is no shadow of sedition; therefore it is not contrary to that Act.' He replied, 'I say it is: And, beside, your preaching frightens people out of their wits.' 'Sir, did you ever hear me preach?' 'No,' 'How then can you judge of what you never heard?' 'Sir, by common report.' 'Common report is not enough. Give me leave, Sir, to ask, Is not your name Nash?' 'My name is Nash.' 'Sir, I dare not judge of you by common report: I think it not enough to judge by.' Here he paused awhile, and, having recovered himself, said, 'I desire to know what this people comes here for.' On which one replied, 'Sir, leave him to me: Let an old woman answer him. You, Mr. Nash, take care of your body; we take care of our souls; and for the food of our souls we come here.' He replied not a word, but walked away."⁷²

Bristol

Bristol was a port city, located about seven miles east of the Bristol Channel (arm of the Atlantic Ocean). In the 1700s, Bristol was a major center for shipping African slaves to North America. Its merchants also exported manufactured goods, while importing tobacco and sugar.

Bristol was the place of an early Methodist ministry center, called the "New Room." It was built by John Wesley in 1739, and rebuilt by him in 1748. Wesley, who always preached here when he was in Bristol, recorded one of his early experiences: "I preached at eleven



New Room, Bristol. Interior of the Chapel.

the new-room, which the society had just built in the heart of the town; and our souls were sweetly comforted together.”⁷³

Bristol was the place of a revival in 1739. George Whitefield had found success preaching in the open air, called “field preaching.” Wesley recorded his first impressions of preaching outside the church: “In the evening I reached Bristol, and met Mr. Whitefield there. I could scarce reconcile myself at first to this strange way of preaching in the fields, of which he set me an example on Sunday; having been all my life (till very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church.”⁷⁴

The next day Wesley saw Whitefield preach to thirty thousand people! Wesley’s own attempt at field preaching came at four in the afternoon the day after this experience, when he “submitted to be more vile, and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of salvation, speaking from a little eminence in a ground adjoining to the city, to about three thousand people.”⁷⁵ (See p. 12-13.)

Birmingham

Birmingham became an industrial city in the 1500s, the result of nearby coal and iron ore deposits, and other natural resources. By the 1700s it was one of the major industrial centers of Great Britain.

however, they did much better as Wesley wrote in his journal. **October 24, 1749:** “I rode to Birmingham. This had been long a dry uncomfortable place; so I expected little good here: But I was happily disappointed. Such a

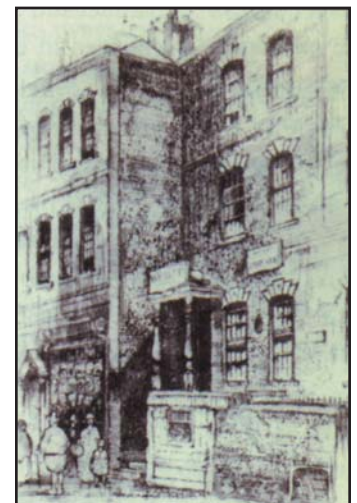
congregation I never saw there before: Not a scoffer, not a trifler, not an inattentive person (so far as I could discern) among them; and seldom have I known so deep, solemn a sense of the power, and presence, and love of God.”⁷⁷

March 31, 1751: “I rode to Birmingham, and found God in the midst of the congregation. I earnestly warned the society against idle disputes and vain



John Wesley on horseback. New Room, Bristol

janglings; and afterwards preached on, ‘If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the Law.’ The hearts of many were melted within them; so that neither they nor I could refrain from tears. But they were chiefly tears of joy, from a lively sense of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.”⁷⁸



Charles Wesley’s home for twenty years, Bristol.

Epworth

Epworth is where the story of John and Charles Wesley began, and where Samuel and Susanna Wesley raised their children in the old rectory.

Samuel's nonconformist background made him especially aggressive towards Dissenters in his parish, who resented the discipline he attempted to impose. They were rough and uncouth people, who jeered the refinement and culture existing in the rectory. Furtive attacks included maiming Samuel's cattle and burning his field of flax. The rectory was partially destroyed when an unknown hand tossed a firebrand on the thatched roof. In 1709, when another blaze threatened the Wesley family, Samuel showed his deep devotion after John was miraculously saved. Calling to all who were there, he said, "Come neighbors, let us kneel down! Let us give thanks to God! He has given me all my eight children: let the house go, I am rich enough!" (See p. 5 and 6.)

John Wesley told the story giving rise to his preaching on his father's grave:

"I went to Mr. Romley, the Curate, and offered to assist him either by preaching or reading Prayers. But he did not care to accept of my assistance. The church was exceeding full in the afternoon, a rumour being spread, that I was to preach. But the sermon on, 'Quench not the Spirit,' was not suitable to the expectation of many of the hearers. Mr. Romley told them, one of the most dangerous ways of quenching the Spirit was by enthusiasm; and enlarged on the character of an enthusiast, in a very florid and oratorical manner. After Sermon John Taylor stood in the churchyard, and gave notice, as the people were coming out, 'Mr. Wesley, not being permitted to preach in the church, designs to preach here at six o'clock.' Accordingly at six I came, and found such a congregation as I believe Epworth never saw before. I stood near the east end of the church, upon my father's tombstone, and cried, 'The kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'"⁷⁹

The nearby Memorial Church was built as a permanent tribute to the Wesley family.

Gloucester

Today in Gloucester one can see the great cathedral, which dominates the city. St. Mary de Crypt Church is also here, where the first Women's Society was organized and where Whitefield was baptized and preached his first sermon.

George Whitefield was born in Gloucester, December 1714. At 17, he became serious about religion. At 18, he was admitted to Pembroke College, Oxford. About a year later, he met the Methodists, "whom from that time he loved as his own soul."⁸⁰

Whitefield was one of the best known religious figures in England and in America. He made seven trips to America between 1738 and 1770. Whitefield is remembered for his



Epworth market place

bold preaching, which often got him in trouble with the clergy who accused him of disrupting their congregations. It is possible they were resentful of his attacks on spiritual apathy. When the clergy refused to let him preach in their churches, he turned to preaching outdoors, often attracting thousands of people who came to hear him. His success influenced John Wesley to preach outdoors. Whitefield was one of the leaders responsible for a series of religious revival movements in America known as the "Great Awakening" (See pp. 12, 17.)



John Wesley preaching on his father's tombstone at Epworth, June 6, 1742.

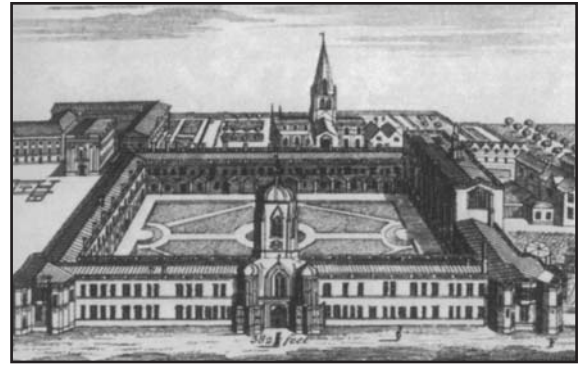
Oxford

Oxford is an old and famous city, known mostly for its university. Oxford University consists of a group of colleges, each with its own building and government. Degrees are issued by the university.

In 1720, John Wesley entered Christ Church College, the largest of the Oxford colleges. He remained there until 1725, when he was ordained a deacon. In 1726, John was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, the same year Charles entered Christ Church. John taught at Oxford from 1729 to 1735, when he and Charles left for Georgia.

Oxford is where Charles and John headed up the Holy Club, and where the name Methodist was first attached to their activities.

For many years, no student could graduate from Oxford without signing the Thirty-nine Articles and becoming a member of the Established Church.



Christ Church College, Oxford

Endnotes

(All references are from the suggested reading list.)

1. *Works*, v. 5, pp. 47-48. "Scriptural Christianity."
2. *Works*, v. 2, p. 362. April 26, 1756.
3. *Works*, v. 8, pp. 341-347. "The Character of a Methodist."
4. *Works*, v. 6, p. 281. "General Spread of the Gospel."
5. *Works*, v. 5, p. 36. "Awake, Thou That Sleepest." See Heitzenrater, chapter 1, "Methodism and the Christian Heritage in England."
6. The Pope refused to allow Henry's marriage with Catherine of Aragon to be dissolved, so he could marry Anne Boleyn. Sir Thomas More was the English statesman and scholar whom Henry had beheaded because More refused to recognize the monarch as the head of the Christian church in England.
7. Mary was Roman Catholic, and tried to reverse the advance of Protestantism in England.
8. Liturgy embodies the set of public ceremonies performed by the Church, including baptism and the Eucharist or Holy Communion.
9. The Book of Martyrs by John Foxe (1563) gave an account of Protestant martyrs during the reign of Mary I. Its widespread popularity gave rise to strong anti-Catholic feelings, which swelled in the hearts and minds of many English who resented the monarchy for encroaching on their religious freedom.
10. The Geneva Bible was a new translation, published in Geneva in 1557 (New Testament) and 1560 (Old Testament). It was not printed in England until 1576. It was the work of Protestant scholars who fled England during the reign of Mary I. The work was carried out under the general direction of Miles Coverdale and John Knox, and under the influence of John Calvin. It soon surpassed in popularity the Great Bible, first ordered by Henry VIII in 1538. Because of its popularity, the Geneva Bible had an important influence on the translators of the "King James" or "Authorized Version," published in 1611.
11. For the influence of Puritanism on John Wesley, see Robert Monk's *John Wesley, His Puritan Heritage* in the selected reading list at the back of this study guide.
12. See Ephesians 5:23 and Colossians 1:18.
13. The Book of Common Prayer and Thirty-Nine Articles contained only slight revisions of the editions published under Henry VIII, but the Book of Homilies contained twice the number of sermons published in 1546.
14. Episcopacy is a system of church government in which bishops are the chief clerics.
15. Hooker was an English writer and theologian, whose work *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1595) was key to the formation of Anglican theology.
16. "Samuel Wesley's Advice to a Young Clergyman (1735) assumes that any aspiring cleric will be well-grounded in Hooker, and John Wesley's own framework for authority owes an obvious debt to the Hookerian perspective that had become pervasive by his day." Heitzenrater, p. 10.
17. Ibid.
18. This editor's explanation also appears in the preface: "[Wesley] felt that 'the world was his parish;' and that he had a message from God to all men...His different works were printed in London, Bristol, Dublin, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne; but they were often confided to the care of men who were incompetent to the task of correcting them; and the itinerant ministry in which he was incessantly employed rendered it impossible that they should undergo his own inspection as they passed through the press. The consequence was, that errors accumulated in them till, in several instances, they failed to express the author's meaning."
19. By legalism, strict adherence to gospel law was meant. By contrast, antinomianism dispensed with the demands of obedience, holding that the gospel freed Christians from required obedience to any law; whether scriptural, civil, or moral. Antinomians viewed law and grace as strictly dialectic.
20. *Works*, v. 2, p. 433. January 3, 1758.
21. The Stuarts were the ruling house of Scotland from 1371 to 1603, and of England and Scotland from 1603 to 1649 and from 1660 to 1714. James VI of Scotland began his reign in 1567 when his mother, Mary, Queen of Scots, gave up the throne. He became King James I of England when his third cousin Elizabeth I died in 1603.
22. The divine right of kings is the belief that kings get the right to rule from God, rather than from the people.
23. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, also kept a diary, which left Methodism a rich and comprehensive history. The reader will notice that Wesley carried on many of the traditions learned from his ancestors.
24. The Tory Party favored maintaining the legal privileges of the English Church and also the powers of the king. The opposing party, or Whigs as they were called, favored increasing the power of the people in the House of Commons (lower house of Parliament).
25. High Churchmen believed in the historical continuity of the Catholic Church, including traditional definitions of authority, the episcopacy, and the nature of the sacraments.
26. The clergy of the Church of England opposed preaching that was not done inside a church. John Wesley, for example, opposed open-air-preaching until 1739.
27. A religious meeting, especially a secret or illegal one, such as those held by nonconformists in England and Scotland in the 16th and 17th centuries.
28. *Cyclopedia of Methodism* (1878), "Wesley, Mrs. Susanna."
29. *Works*, v. 5, p. 505. "The Life of the Rev. John Wesley."
30. *Works*, v. 8, p. 300. "Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others."
31. *Works*, v. 13, p. 307. "A Short History of the People Called Methodists."
32. Samuel Wesley was born in London in 1690. He entered Westminster School in 1704, where he received his formal education. He went to Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1711, where he received his degree before returning to Westminster. He approved his brothers' early efforts at holiness,

but as a staunch High Churchman, he disapproved of the later movement and of the doctrines his brothers preached.

33. As first applied to this small group, the name Methodist was a pejorative term that poked fun at their devotion. Many of the Oxford students viewed Charles, John, and their companions as different, because the Wesley way of Christianity was outside their experience.

34. The following summarizes Charles' mission to Georgia: "They reached Georgia in February, 1736. Mr. Charles Wesley took charge of Frederica, and Mr. John of Savannah, where, the house not being ready, he resided with the Germans, with whose spirit and conduct he became still more favourably impressed. Mr. Charles Wesley, after having suffered great persecution at Frederica, was sent in July, the same year, to England, with dispatches from the Governor, Mr. Oglethorpe, to the Trustees and Board of Trade." *Works*, v. 5, p. 508. "The Life of the Rev. John Wesley."

35. Also "White Sunday" or day of Pentecost. It is the seventh Sunday after Easter, commemorating the day the Holy Ghost descended upon the disciples in Jerusalem. See Acts 2.

36. *Works*, v. 5, p. 510. "The Life of the Rev. John Wesley."

37. Queen Anne was on the throne. Her reign marked the beginning of what is commonly referred to as the Augustan Age of English literature, which lasted from 1700 to about 1750. The period was so named because literature reached a height similar to that reached in ancient Rome under Emperor Augustus.

38. A modern writer said of the period, "Never has a century risen on Christian England so void of soul and faith as that which opened with Queen Anne...There was no freshness in the past, and no promise in the future. The Puritans were buried, and the Methodists were not born...The reign of buffoonery was past, but the reign of faith and earnestness had not commenced." Tyerman, v. 1, p. 61.

39. Susanna was well-educated, and more than qualified to instruct her children in the basics of an English education. She also gave them a strong foundation in religious principles and doctrine, setting aside time every week for personal conversation and prayer with the children.

40. The following is John's own description of the tragedy: "I was born in June, 1703, and was between six and seven years old, when I was left alone in my father's house, being then all in flames; till I was taken out of the nursery window, by a man strangely standing on the shoulders of another. Those words in the picture, 'Is not this a brand plucked out of the burning?' chiefly allude to this." *Works*, v. 13, p. 409. "Some Remarks on Article X of meeting Mary's New Review."

41. According to Tyerman, many of the high-Church clergy were moral and learned, but "as intolerant as intolerance could make them." The clergy held that none were ministers of Christ unless they were episcopally ordained. Thus, "all sacraments administered by Dissenters were invalid, and all Dissenting churches in a state of sin and damnation." Tyerman, v. 1, p. 64.

42. Heitzenrater, p. 35.

43. Taylor's book was called the *Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Holy Dying* (1650).

44. *Works*, v. 1, p. 99. May 24, 1738.

45. Wesley penned his feelings about Calvinism, "When Satan could no otherwise hinder [the raising of a holy people], he threw Calvinism in the way; and then Antinomianism, which strikes directly at the root of all holiness." *Works*, v. 8, p. 300. "Minutes of Several Conversations Between the Rev. Mr. Wesley and Others."

46. *Works*, v. 7, p. 118. "On A Single Eye."

47. *Works*, v. 11, p. 367. "A Plain Account of Christian Perfection."

48. *Works*, v. 12, p. 38.

49. "I cannot hope to attain the same degree of holiness [in England], which I may [in Georgia]. I shall lose nothing I desire to keep. I shall still have food to eat, and raiment to put on; and, if any man have a desire of other things, let him know that the greatest blessing that can possibly befall him is, to be cut off from all occasions of gratifying those desires which, unless speedily rooted out, will drown his soul in everlasting perdition." *Works*, v. 12, p. 40.

50. One of Wesley's companions, Benjamin Ingham, wrote his mother describing the Moravians who traveled with them to America: "They are a good, devout, peaceable, and heavenly-minded people; and almost the only time you know they are in the ship is when they are harmoniously singing the praises of the great Creator, which they constantly do twice a day. Their example was very

edifying. They are more like the primitive Christians than any church now existing, for they retain both the faith, practice, and discipline delivered by the apostles. They have regularly ordained bishops, priests, and deacons. Baptisms, confirmation, and the eucharist are duly administered. Discipline is strictly exercised, without respect of persons. They all submit themselves to their pastors in everything. They live together in perfect love and peace, having for the present all things common. They are more ready to serve their neighbors than themselves. In business they are diligent, in all their dealings strictly just; and in everything they behave themselves with meekness, sweetness, and humility." Tyerman, v. 1, pp. 121-122.

51. Wesley's experience on board ship is found in *Works*, v. 1, pp. 20-23.

52. Tyerman, v. 1, pp. 147-148.

53. Wesley wrote in his journal: "He was too warm for hearing an answer. So I had nothing to do but to thank him for his openness, and walk away." (*Works*, v. 1, p. 34.)

54. *Works*, v. 1, p. 33.

55. *Works*, v. 1, p. 34. June 22, 1736.

56. *Works*, v. 1, p. 44. January 26, 1737.

57. *Works*, v. 1, p. 83. February 3, 1738.

58. *Works*, v. 1, p. 83-84. February 3, 1738.

59. Romans 6:6-7 "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin." *Works*, v. 1, p. 77.

60. Romans 5:1-2: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." *Works*, v. 1, p. 77.

61. Romans 8:16-17. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with [him], that we may be also glorified together." *Works*, v. 1, p. 77.

62. Wesley wrote in his journal, "I went to America, to convert the Indians; but O! who shall convert me? who, what is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief? I have a fair summer religion. I can talk well; nay, and believe myself, while no danger is near: But let death look me in the face, and my spirit is troubled. Nor can I say, 'to die is gain.'" *Works*, v. 1, p. 74.

63. *Works*, v. 1, p. 170. January 1, 1739.

64. The Foundry belonged to the government, which it originally occupied for casting cannon. An accidental explosion destroyed more than half the building, leaving it in a dilapidated condition for a long time. After Wesley acquired the building for one hundred and fifteen pounds, he repaired it, and made it the first building opened for Methodist preaching. It served the church for almost forty years. The auditorium of the Foundry held about 1500 people. John and his mother lived in an apartment above the Foundry. There were rooms for "classes" and for the school, a sewing room for unemployed ladies, a dispensary for medicine, a coach house for carriages and horses, and lodgings for visiting ministers.

65. Tyerman, v. 1, p. 65.

66. In setting up the Methodist Church in America separate from the Church of England, Wesley used "elder" rather than "priest" or "presbyter," and "superintendent" rather than "bishop" in ordinations. Superintendent is the Latinized translation of the Greek word *episcopos*.

67. Dr. Coke was an ordained presbyter, as was John Wesley. This new ordination signified a formal designation of authority from John Wesley to organize the Methodist church in America. It was equivalent to "Episcopal ordination" or "the power of ordaining others." Heitzenrater, p. 287.

68. In America, Dr. Coke exercised all the functions of a bishop, which included ordaining ministers. In England, however, he did not, as the close connection between Methodism and the Church of England made it improper to do so.

69. After 1785, Coke visited the churches in the United States as often as he could, but for only a few months at a time.

70. *Works*, v. 4, p. 96. April 21, 1777.

71. *Works*, v. 4, p. 140. November 1, 1778.

72. *Works*, v. 1, p. 199. June 5, 1739.

73. *Works*, v. 1, p. 421. May 5, 1743.

74. *Works*, v. 1, p. 185. March 31, 1739.

75. *Ibid.* April 2, 1739.

76. Wesley's strict opposition to antinomianism is best set forth in this story: "In the evening I preached at Birmingham. Here another of their pillars, J—W—d, came to me, and, looking over his shoulder, said, 'Don't think I want to be in your society; but if you are free to speak to me, you may.' I will set down the conversation, dreadful as it was, in the very manner wherein it passed; that every serious person may see the true picture of antinomianism full grown; and may know what these men mean by their favourite phrase, of being 'perfect in Christ, not in themselves.' 'Do you believe you have nothing to do with the Law of God?' 'I have not: I am not under the Law: I live by faith.' 'Have you, as living by faith, a right to every thing in the world?' 'I have: All is mine, since Christ is mine.' 'May you, then, take any thing you will any where? Suppose,

out of a shop, without the consent or knowledge of the owner?' 'I may, if I want it: For it is mine: Only I will not give offense.' 'Have you also a right to all the women in the world?' 'Yes, if they consent.' 'And is not that a sin?' 'Yes, to him that thinks it is a sin: But not to those whose hearts are free.' Surely these are the first-born children of Satan!" *Works*, v. 2, p. 11. March 23, 1745.

77. *Works*, v. 2, p. 165. October 24, 1749.

78. *Works*, v. 2, p. 218. March 31, 1751.

79. *Works*, v. 1, p. 377. June 6, 1742.

80. *Works*, v. 6, p. 168. John Wesley's "On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield." The text of the sermon contains a summary of Whitefield's life.

John Wesley (front cover): Photo by Richard Douglas. Used by permission.

John Wesley Chronology

- 1703 (Jun.17) Birth of John Wesley.
- 1707 Birth of Charles Wesley.
- 1709 (Feb. 9) Epworth rectory fire.
- 1714 Admitted to Charterhouse School.
- 1720 Elected scholar of Christ Church College, Oxford.
- 1725 Ordained deacon. Preaches first sermon at South Leigh.
- 1726 Elected Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.
- 1727 Takes up curacy of Wroote, Lincolnshire.
- 1729 Returns to Oxford. Takes up leadership of Holy Club.
- 1735 Samuel Wesley dies. Oct. 14 sails for Georgia.
- 1738 Heart warming experience in Aldersgate Street.
- 1739 Preaches first open-air sermon.
- 1740 Beginning of mob violence against the Methodists.
- 1741 Begins itinerancy.
- 1744 First Methodist Conference.
- 1751 Marries Molly Vazeille.
- 1778 Opens City Road Chapel.
- 1781 John Wesley's wife dies.
- 1784 Ordains Thomas Coke and others for work in America.
- 1788 Charles Wesley dies.
- 1791 John Wesley dies.

Suggested Reading List

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Front Cover: Charles Wesley (c. 1735); Susanna Wesley (young woman); John Wesley (c. 1742). Background: Epworth market place.
Back Cover: "On Working Out Our Own Salvation."

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

But what are the steps which the Scriptures direct us to take, in the working out of our own salvation? The Prophet Isaiah gives us a general answer, touching the first steps which we are to take: ‘Cease to do evil; learn to do well.’ If ever you desire that God should work in you that faith whereof cometh both present and eternal salvation, by the grace already given fly from all sin as from the face of a serpent; carefully avoid every evil word and work; yea, abstain from all appearance of evil. And ‘learn to do well:’ Be zealous of good works, of works of piety, as well as works of mercy; family prayer, and crying to God in secret. Fast in secret, and ‘your Father which seeth in secret, he will reward you openly.’

‘Search the Scriptures:’ Hear them in public, read them in private, and meditate therein. At every opportunity, be a partaker of the Lord’s Supper. ‘Do this in remembrance’ of him; and he will meet you at his own table. Let your conversation be with the children of God; and see that it ‘be in grace, seasoned with salt.’ As ye have time, do good unto all men; to their souls and to their bodies. And herein ‘be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.’ It then only remains, that ye deny yourselves and take up your cross daily. Deny yourselves every pleasure which does not prepare you for taking pleasure in God, and willingly embrace every means of drawing near to God, though it be a cross, though it be grievous to flesh and blood. Thus when you have redemption in the blood of Christ, you will ‘go on to perfection;’ till ‘walking in the light as he is in the light,’ you are enabled to testify, that ‘he is faithful and just,’ not only to ‘forgive’ your ‘sins,’ but to ‘cleans[e]’ you ‘from all unrighteousness.’

John Wesley