flowers and sunsets, took little children in His arms, opened the eyes of the blind, healed the sick, even the ungrateful sick, turned water into wine at a wedding, sat at table with publicans and sinners, the Church in continuing His incarnation will seek to touch life at every point. Bad houses, bad wages, bad industrial conditions, bad education — the Church must challenge them all in the interest of the salvation of the human spirit. But above all the Church must be positive, positive in her love of beauty, of truth, of goodness, and by being positive I mean that she must placard them abroad in the world for all to see.

JAMES MACKAY

A STUDY OF JOHN WESLEY'S READINGS

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Owing to the limited number of words allowed for this Essay, many brief references have been inserted where full quotations would have been much more satisfactory. Nor has there been space to prove many of the assertions made, whilst most illustrations of various points have been relegated to footnotes.

A discussion of the primary sources will be found in an Appendix.

The following abbreviations are used:

J. v. 10. *The Journal of John Wesley*. Standard Edition, Vol. 5, p. 10.

L. v. 10. *The Letters of John Wesley*. Standard Edition, etc.

Works, v. 10. *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* . . . Standard octavo edition in 14 volumes.

Green 58. The publication of Wesley numbered '58' in *The Works of John and Charles Wesley. A Bibliography*. By the Rev. Richard Green.

W.H.S. *Proc.* v. 10. *The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*.

JOHN WESLEY'S heredity and environment were such that an inquiring, studious mind was almost inevitable. He came of a line of keen and independent thinkers. His father's miscellaneous library provided a happy hunting-ground, whilst his mother's patient tuition assisted him to an early acquaintance with all types of literature. And of all the Wesley children who shared these opportunities John seems to have been the most precocious, the most thoughtful, and the most determined. Little wonder that we can trace this most-documented man of his century reading his way through the best (and most improving) literature of many ages and many tongues.

Both at Charterhouse and Christ Church, Oxford, John Wesley seems to have gained a reputation for deep and painstaking study. His wide reading in these early College days may be summed up in an extract from a little-known Methodist 'epic':

> *At Seventeen* he was to *Oxford* sent —
> On vast improvements there his mind was bent.
> That seat of science was his soul's delight,
> Where depths to sound he labour'd day and night.
> He search'd the Heathen Sages (not in vain)
> Each glowing word and scatter'd truth to glean;
> There lib'ral Arts his mind a polish gave,

> *Yet taught him not the* SAVIOUR'*s Way to save.*
> His tow'ring genius, with a NEWTON's, flew
> Of distant worlds and suns to take a view;
> This world and others measur'd to a span,
> At least as near as other mortals can:
> The art of Rhet'ric taught him to persuade,
> Of whose fine flowers he vast collections made;
> While Logic shew'd him all the Sophist's art,
> And drew those lines which truth from error part.
> He, round the circle of each Science flew,
> Designing more to know, the more he knew.
> Sequester'd from the world's confused din,
> Our Pupil eager drank each science in,
> While many youths were ruin'd quite by sin.[1]

In his nineteenth year he commenced a more methodical use of his time for various studies, in which he was encouraged by his tutors, Revs. George Wigan and Henry Sherman, in whom he was peculiarly fortunate, as both were studious and conscientious men. Gradually this new seriousness crystallized into a decision to enter Holy Orders, a decision which was reinforced by the reading of Jeremy Taylor's *Holy Living and Holy Dying*, and Dean Stanhope's translation of Kempis's *Imitatio Christi*, and also by the meeting with a 'religious friend' on April 14, 1725, one of his 'red-letter days'.

During the next few years he read much in books of religion, but continued to study the Classics, Science, Poetry, and Drama, as well as attending to his various pastoral duties. When in November, 1726, he became Lecturer in Logic and Greek at Oxford, he announced to his brother Samuel:

> Leisure and I have taken leave of one another.

For his new seclusion, as master of his own time, he drew up a scheme of studies, giving 'Mondays and Tuesdays to the Classics, Wednesdays to logic and ethics, Thursdays to Hebrew and Arabic (?Aramaic), Fridays to metaphysics and natural philosophy, Saturdays to oratory and poetry, Sundays to divinity — leisure intervals were given to French and modern literature'[2]

His time was divided between the University and the country, between classical scholarship and religion, until in November, 1729, he took up more permanent residence at Oxford. Together with the others of the 'Oxford Methodists', he threw himself heartily into the work of improving the religious tone of the University, and no less into furthering the Greek revival which was beginning there. His interest in 'practical divinity', however, was steadily growing, and in February, 1732, he was considering officially renouncing all except the study of practical religion. His expenditure on books from May, 1732, until September, 1733, shows the strong devotional trend of his mind, with a tendency towards mysticism and ritualism. There is little doubt that in this he was influenced largely by John Clayton, whom he met on April 20, 1732 (another red-letter day, which he compares in his *Diary* with the day when 'Varanese' came into his life). Through Clayton he met Dr. Deacon,

[1] *The Methodist: attempted in Plain Metre*, Nottingham, 1780, p. 12.
[2] W.H.S. *Proc.* xviii. 8.

who deeply influenced his ecclesiastical views, and started him reading furiously various accounts of the primitive church.

The same interests continued throughout Wesley's Georgia period. Dr. Harrison shows that during his stay of nearly two years in Georgia he read between 90 and 100 books, still with a strong High Church liturgical flavour, but with that interest gradually giving place to one in church history and religious biography. A significant point is made:

> There is, however, singularly little interest shown in general literature. Even the Classics seem to have been put on one side. The only Greek or Latin author read (apart from Ecclesiastical History) is Plato in the *Phaedo*.[1]

May 24, 1738, was the last great turning-point. From henceforth he was no longer hesitantly groping his way, he was a spiritual 'man-of-the-world'. He was done with asceticism and ritualism as saving forces, though they were to take their part in the general background of his life. From now on 'all things were lawful' for him, though not all were expedient, to aid in his great purpose of spreading Scriptural holiness through England. Accordingly we see the narrowly-restricted bonds of his reading being loosened once more. His warmed heart most certainly did not mean a paralysed mind. Scholarship still had a real appeal for him, and often he wished for the quiet seclusion of a University don. Now he must study, however, as best he could.

Reading for many people is a thing of one time and one place. For Wesley it was a thing of any time and any place. Whilst he loved a quiet read in the room set aside for him by Mr. Agutter at the Charterhouse, or a browse among the books in Lincoln College Library or the Bodleian, he sometimes found that such an atmosphere was liable to encourage the discursive habits of the book-lover, with its danger of straying into attractive by-paths of learning.[2] He could not do without his libraries, however, and insisted on at least a small nucleus of books for his use at London, Bristol, and Newcastle, expressing, too, the pious hope that all 'preaching-houses' would follow suit. He often found opportunity for study also at the homes where he stayed during his evangelistic tours. Even during his early student days he had been accustomed to reading books in other people's houses — at Stanton Rectory, for instance — and to borrow them for further study. To some of these borrowed books his spiritual awakening was largely due.[3]

Much of his reading was done, however, neither in library, study, nor friend's home, but in odd places, and at odd times. On November 22 and 23, 1725,

[1] See W.H.S. *Proc.* xiii, 25-9; xv, 113-7. For a valuable summary of Wesley's mental background up to January, 1738, see *J.* i. 418-420.

[2] So his work on Bull's *Harmonia Apostolica* in Lincoln College Library was interrupted when he 'took down, by mistake, the works of Episcopius', and spent the whole afternoon reading them (J. ii. 473).

[3] Occasionally he forgot to return a borrowed book. For instance, in February, 1739, two months after his brother Samuel had recommended Bishop Bull's sermon on *The Witness of the Spirit*, he came across Bull's *Works* at James Hutton's, and after looking through them for half an hour, took away the particular volume he needed for further study, so that he was able to express his own opinion (an unfavourable one) on the sermon. This volume he overlooked, however, until five years later, when Mrs. Hutton, dragging up various grievances, mentioned the matter. See J. ii. 144d, L. ii. 25, L. i. 279. Cf. L. vi. 141.

Wesley was not always the gainer by the borrowing habit. A detail of real interest (though omitted by most historians, including Dr. Simon) is preserved in Nightingale's *Portraiture of Methodism*, pp. 70-1, and confirmed by J. i. 399, of his putting up an appeal in the 'Great Square' (Savanna) for the return of books borrowed from him, as he intended to leave for England.

the following entries appeared in Wesley's *Diary* (the sole entries for those days):

> Read ye 6th Sat.(ire) at ye Auction —
> Ended ye 1st b.(ook) read a Sat.(ire) of ye 2.(nd Book) at ye Auction —

This shows Wesley, not only as a buyer-up of second-hand books[1], but also as a buyer-up of odd moments. To the end of his life, though a fine conversationalist, he would not waste time in tittle-tattle, nor allow his preachers to do so. Instead, he would bring out of his pocket a book placed there for use in his 'scraps of time'.[2]

In 1731 he and Charles Wesley discovered

> that it is easy to read as we walk ten or twelve miles; and that it neither makes us faint, nor gives us any other symptom of weariness, more than the mere walking without reading at all.[3]

Peripatetic reading, in an age when travelling occupied so much time, was an accomplishment of which Wesley made great use.[4]

His great journeys throughout England and Ireland, however, could never have been undertaken on foot: for years a horse became his inseparable companion. Very early Wesley discovered the secret of reading on horseback, revealing it in his *Journal* for March 21, 1770:

> Near thirty years ago I was thinking, 'How is it that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading?' (History, poetry, and philosophy I commonly read on horseback, having other employment at other times.) No account can possibly be given but this: because then I throw the reins on his neck. I then set myself to observe; and I aver that, in riding above a hundred thousand miles, I scarce ever remember any horse (except two, that would fall head over heels any way) to fall, or make a considerable stumble, while I rode *with a slack rein*.[5]

On December 18, 1765, however, Wesley had a nasty fall from his horse, making him wonder whether he would ever ride again. Though this fear was not realized, from that date he came to rely more and more on vehicles, in which he had already grown accustomed to ride and read. The following summer Miss Lewen presented him with a chaise and pair.[6] This chaise, painted yellow, and with a bookcase fitted up inside, became a familiar sight up and down the roads of England during the next quarter of a century.

Another obvious environment for reading, as Wesley's journeys to and from Georgia showed, was on board ship, although he never felt happy about reading whilst there was a rough sea on. (Cf. J. vi. 322; vii. 518.)

[1] Cf. L. v. 110.

[2] The *Journal* records at least six books which he read in 'scraps of time' (iv. 139; v. 216, 248, 307, 496; vi, 97) as well as similar phrases, such as 'fragments of time' (iv. 193, 540).

[3] L. i. 84-5. Their method was to walk in Indian file, the one in front looking out for obstacles, whilst the one behind read for them both. It is an interesting fact that C. S. Reinhart's picture of them as 'Men of One Book' depicts them as walking in Indian file, but *both* deep in a book.

[4] See J. i. 83; 'I set out for Oxford. In walking I read the truly surprising narrative of the conversions lately wrought in and about the town of Northampton, in New England.' Even in 1754 he says: 'In my hours of walking I read Dr. Calamy's Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's Life'.

[5] J. v. 360-1. Wesley was not the only eighteenth-century character who read on horseback. Fanny Burney's father 'would ride round the country in the intervals between his lessons, giving his mare, Peggy, a loose rein to pick her way along the lanes and bypaths, indulging in his passion for self-improvement by reading Tasso on horse-back with the aid of a self-compiled dictionary': *Fanny Burney*, by Christopher Lloyd, 1936, p. 17. Cf. W.H.S. *Proc.* xiii. 45.

[6] Not in her will, as the *Standard Journal* suggests (v. 201n). She did not die uhtil October 30, whilst on July 9 Wesley wrote from Stockton to his brother Charles: 'Miss Lewen gave me a chaise and a pair of horses.'

In an age when reading aloud is largely a forgotten art, it is worth remembering that Wesley's spiritual life was quickened on May 24, 1738, under the voice of 'one reading'. Wesley himself spent much of his earlier life reading to other people. It was one of the forms of evangelism which he was constantly using during the Georgia period, and later he used it both as a part of public worship and in order to instruct the Kingswood School pupils or his preachers in retreat. When old age weakened his eyesight, he again had to depend upon the voice of 'one reading', amongst those who served him in this way being Joseph Bradford, George Whitfield, James and Mrs. Rogers, Peard Dickenson, and Elizabeth Ritchie. Even on his deathbed, says James Rogers,

> after retiring half an hour, he desired me to read to him part of the account, just then published, on the sufferings of the poor negroes in the West Indies.[1]

Even as an old man, Wesley's hours of study are something to marvel at. Speaking of Fletcher's *Life*, to which he gave much time and attention in 1786 (at the age of 73), he wrote:

> I now applied myself in earnest to the writing of Mr. Fletcher's *Life*, having procured the best materials I could. To this I dedicated all the time I could spare, till November, from five in the morning till eight at night. These are my studying hours; I cannot write longer in a day without hurting my eyes. (J. vii. 211.)

Even these long hours were sometimes exceeded. On September 29 he rose at 4 a.m., and continued working on Fletcher's *Life* until 11.30 at night! What applies to writing applies equally well to reading.

Wesley recognized the obvious fitness of reading certain books in the neighbourhoods to which they referred. It seems likely that his instinct for 'method', combined with his never-satiated curiosity about places and people, would naturally lead him to this. Sometimes he would scour a locality for a book on the district, and occasionally he would carry one with him to read there.[2]

Similarly, he believed that there was a right *time*, as well as a right place, for most books. He was a firm advocate of beginning the day with devotional reading, and then mixing in doctrine and other types of 'divinity', with science, history, or poetry for relaxation in the afternoon and evening — he always tried to enjoy another devotional interlude in the early evening, however.[3]

He had another principle, however, that of reading one book at a time (see L. i. 104), which often clashed with the former one, so that he would often spend every available moment of the day in reading one book, sometimes for days on end, no matter whether it were theology, history, travel, or poetry.

Most of his reading of devotional literature was done 'slowly, and with much prayer'. The *Diary* provides ample evidence of the careful study devoted

[1] This was *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, written by himself*, amongst the list of subscribers for which Wesley's name appears. His noteworthy last letter, to William Wilberforce, was strongly influenced by the reading of this book.

[2] Among books thus read in their own setting were Borlase's *Antiquities of Cornwall*, a book on the Gowrie Conspiracy (J. vi. 21), Barton's *Lectures on Lough Neagh*, a *History of Norwich*, a *History of Perth*, a *History of Whitby*, Falle's *Account of the Isle of Jersey*, the *City of Bristol*, and the *Account of Holland*, as well as numerous histories of Scotland and Ireland. There is an occasional exception, however, such as Warner's *History of Ireland*, which was read on a journey from Bath to London.

[3] Cf. his advice to his Assistants, W.H.S. *Publication* 1, p. 36.

to his Bible in this way. Poetry, science, and history, of course, got rather less detailed treatment, but none the less thorough. Often he would re-read a book that had made an impression on him, such as Eusebius' *History*, *The Life of Gregory Lopez*, or Ossian's *Fingal*, in addition to the works of Spenser and Shakespeare, which occupied many of his travelling hours during his later years.

The thoroughness of Wesley's reading did not always depend on his agreeing with the author, as is seen in the case of Machiavelli:

> I began with a prejudice in his favour, having been informed he had often bee misunderstood and greatly misrepresented. I weighed the sentiments that were less common, transcribed the passages wherein they were contained, compared one passage with another, and endeavoured to form a cool, impartial judgement. And my cool judgement is, that if all the other doctrines of devils which have been committed to writing since letters were in the world were collected together in one volume, it would fall short of this. . . . (J. i. 313.)

On occasion, however, Wesley gave up a book half-way.[1] Very often, also, he merely skimmed a book, even though it might be an 'improving' one. Sometimes this got him into trouble. In 1775, when the American War was causing so much heartburning in England, someone presented him with a pamphlet called 'An Argument in Defence of the Exclusive Right claimed by the Colonies to Tax Themselves', which he hastily read, and just as hastily recommended to other people. When challenged with this fact later, he procured another copy, read it more carefully, discovered his mistake, and tried to make amends.[2]

One special feature of Wesley's reading is what one might call his habit of 'reading with pen in hand'. Like his father, who 'took down' the discourses at Dissenting meetings in London, John Wesley was an adept at setting down on paper the gist of a sermon or lecture (see J. i. 65) and at 'collecting' a book.[3] This practice of 'collecting' naturally led on to abridging, which he found a very useful addendum to his reading, and a profitable way of making that reading bear fruit. Reading pen in hand came to be a habit with Wesley, and scores of volumes were underlined, and otherwise inscribed by him for publication (as in the *Christian Library*), though many of them did not reach this goal.[4] Other books used by him show that he often used a pen as he was reading more for his personal satisfaction rather than with a view to publication, though he was no 'doodler'.[5]

(*To be concluded in July number*)

[1] In 1727 he wrote to his mother: 'Two days ago I was reading a dispute between those celebrated masters of controversy, Bishop Atterbury and Bishop Hoadly; but must own I was so injudicious as to break off in the middle. I could not conceive that the dignity of the end was at all proportioned to the difficulty of attaining it. And I thought the labour of twenty or thirty hours, if I was sure of succeeding, which I was not, would be but ill rewarded by that important piece of knowledge whether Bishop Hoadly had misunderstood Bishop Atterbury or no.' (L. i. 40.) Cf. J. iv. 298.

[2] See L. vi. 188, J. vi. 88-9. Cf. for an earlier example L. i. 56-7, 76-7.

[3] The first page of the first *Oxford Diary* shows Wesley busy applying this method to a devotional book by the author of *The Whole Duty of Man—The Government of the Tongue*.

[4] Such as *The Life of Mrs. Joanna Turner*, given to Wesley on March 19, 1788, which he read and abridged at the end of that month (see J. vii. 266-7d and W.H.S. *Proc.* iv. 57-9). Cf. for other examples *Homes, Haunts, and Friends of John Wesley*, pp. 116-8. Still others are housed in the Kingswood School Library.

[5] For example the 'Vita Philippi Melancthonis Authore Joachimo Camerario', of 1655, Wesley's copy of which is preserved in Kingswood School Library. He has apparently collated it with another edition, using sometimes a pen and sometimes a pencil. Passages of special interest to him, on pages 107 and 156, he has marked, with references to them (one in pencil, the other in ink) on a fly-leaf at the back of the book.

'He repeated to Mr. Langton with great energy, in the Greek, our Saviour's gracious expression concerning the forgiveness of Mary Magdalene: Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace. He said, "The manner of this dismission [*sic*] is exceedingly affecting" '.

It was a word of God to Samuel Johnson too, though still there clung about him tatters of the old beliefs, as the conversation with Dr. Adams in June, 1784 shows.

'Dr. Adams suggested that God was infinitely good. Johnson: "That he is infinitely good as far as the perfection of His nature will allow, I certainly believe; but it is necessary for good upon the whole, that individuals should be punished. As to an *individual*, therefore, He is not infinitely good; and as I cannot be *sure* that I have fulfilled the conditions on which salvation is granted, I am afraid I may be one of those who shall be damned". Dr. Adams: "What do you mean by damned?" Johnson: (loudly and passionately) "Sent to Hell, sir, and punished everlastingly". . . . Miss Adams: "You seem, sir, to forget the merits of our Redeemer." Johnson: "Madam, I do not forget the merits of my Redeemer; but my Redeemer has said that he will set some on His right hand and some on His left." '

'*My* Redeemer.' It is shortly before his death. 'For some time before his death', said Dr. Brocklesby who attended him, 'all his fears were calmed and absorbed by the prevalence of his faith, and his trust in the merits and *propitiation* of Jesus Christ. He talked often to me about the necessity of faith in the sacrifice of Jesus, as necessary beyond all good works whatever, for the salvation of mankind. He pressed me to study Dr. Clarke and to read his sermons . . . "because he is fullest on the *propitiatory sacrifice*." '

'Grant, O Lord', runs his last prayer when he received the Sacrament a week before he died on December 13, 1784, 'that my hope and confidence may be in His merits and Thy mercy. . . .'[1]

The evangelical revival had not passed him by. Perhaps we ought to put it that John Wesley had not failed his friend.

HARRY BELSHAW

A STUDY OF JOHN WESLEY'S READINGS

PART II

(Concluded)

A brief survey of the wide field covered by John Wesley's reading through the years reveals certain dominant interests and aversions. It is well known, of course, that he proclaimed the Bible to be the one book of importance, and his practice accords with this view, in spite of the catholicity of his tastes. The Bible formed the foundation of his life, from youth to age. He was not one to despise any 'helps' that were available, and besides being familiar with the originals, knew also most of the English versions (see especially for this point

[1] *P. and M.*, §175.

Works, vii. 46, on the word *agapé*). His love of, and debt to, the Bible may perhaps be summed up in his words to Henry Venn, in 1763:

> I believe all the Bible as far as I understand it, and am ready to be convinced. If I am an heretic, I became such by reading the Bible. All my notions I drew from thence; and with little help from men, unless in the single point of Justification by Faith.[1]

Next in importance to the Bible came 'practical divinity', on which his mother had urged him to concentrate when he announced his intention of entering Holy Orders, although his father had put in a plea for critical scholarship. For a time it almost seemed that he might forsake the Classics altogether. He engaged in an orgy of devotional and theological reading, absorbing anything that came his way, if it had any bearing upon religious experience. These early years at Oxford laid the foundations of religious beliefs which he never seriously revised to his life's end. Looking back in 1778 he could say:

> Perhaps, indeed, I may have read five or six hundred books more than I had then, and may know a little more history, or natural philosophy, than I did; but I am not sensible that this has made any essential addition to my knowledge of divinity. Forty years ago I knew and preached every Christian doctrine which I preach now.[2]

An analysis of the *Journal* references shows that the intensive devotional reading of the years 1733-38 only gradually gave place to more general literature, which he nearly always judged against the standard then laid down. Only towards the end of 1747 does anything which can truly be called 'general reading' gain mention in the *Journal*, though from that date references to books on history, the classics, medicine, travels, botany, astronomy, the occult, etc., become more and more frequent; this does not become marked, however, until after 1755, when his great work on the *Christian Library* was ended.[3]

Amongst the books which most influenced his religious life those by Kempis and Jeremy Taylor, and also William Law, are well known. Nor must the importance of Henry Scougal's *Life of God in the Soul of Man* be overlooked.[4] Other books which seemed to him so important that he was constantly recom-

[1] L. iv. 215.

[2] J. vi. 209. Of this estimated number there are *Journal* references to about 300, including many sets of *Works*, often comprising several books. Added to these are 200 large volumes, by over 75 authors, included in the *Christian Library*. Other miscellaneous evidence shows that Wesley was certainly underestimating his reading, especially if with books one includes pamphlets—and it is difficult to draw a dividing line between them! The present writer has a complete alphabetical file of all the authors with whose works Wesley was acquainted: it contains about 1000 names, there being an average of at least two books per author.

[3] This does not mean that he had not *read* books of a general character. He was so conscious that by speaking of such books he might lead other people without his mental background into danger that they found no place in his public *Journal*. Even when such references to secular literature were admitted, it was nearly always with a strongly critical note attached to them. In spite of this reservation, however, the *Journal* is a safe index to the gradual change-over from purely devotional to more general reading.

[4] See Rev. D. Butler's *Henry Scougal and the Oxford Methodists*. Cf. Rev. Joe Brice's 'Scougal-Marshall thesis' in a recent *Methodist Recorder* article, where, however, he has undoubtedly exaggerated the influence of Marshall on Wesley's thought.

mending them were the sermons of Boehm and Nalson.[1] Religious biography also occupied a large share of Wesley's attention, both as reader, editor, and publisher; the lives of Thomas Haliburton, M. de Renty, Gregory Lopez, and David Brainerd merit individual mention. Of the 50 volumes of the *Christian Library*, eight were completely devoted to biography.

As far as doctrine was concerned, Pearson *On the Creed* continued to be his chief authority. Although he read many other definitely 'theological' works, their influence upon him was nothing like as marked as that of the books classed as 'practical divinity'.

Wesley found much of value in the writings of the Mystics, both German and French, but so great were the attendant dangers that he felt compelled to issue frequent condemnations of 'the poison of Mysticism',[2] as 'a snare of the devil'.[3]

One of the reasons why Wesley disliked such books was that they nearly always got their religion mixed up with philosophy, whilst he preferred to keep the two things separate, even though related. Thus his *Thoughts upon Jacob Behmen* in the 1781 *Arminian Magazine*, p. 268, contain the following criticism of Behmen's scheme:

> The whole foundation of it is wrong: the very attempt to explain Religion . . . by an abstruse, complicated, philosophical Theory.

Similar objections he urged against the philosophical religion of Swedenborg, and other more rational blends such as Ramsay's *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion:*

> The treatise itself gave me a stronger conviction than ever I had before both of the fallaciousness and unsatisfactoriness of the mathematical method of reasoning on religious subjects.[4]

His distrust of speculative reasoning as applied to religion was, strangely enough, learned from William Law, who had said to him:

> You would have a philosophical religion; but there can be no such thing. Religion is the most plain, simple thing in the world. It is only, 'We love Him because He first loved us.' So far as you add philosophy to religion, just so far you spoil it.[5]

Wesley was well read in both sides of the Deist controversy, and, as one would expect, firmly took the orthodox side.[6] Exponents of moral philosophy gained little more favour in his eyes, even though they might make no open attack on religion. He strongly opposed the 'Intellectual School' of Clarke, Wollaston,[7] and Price, with their identification of God with nature, as well as such writers as Shaftesbury and Mandeville.

Not that Wesley abhorred *all* that could be classed as philosophy. He believed

[1] *Not* Nelson, as so often supposed. The book is the *Twenty Sermons* of Valentine Nalson, published 1724, one of which Wesley prepared for the 1791 *Arminian Magazine*.
[2] J. v. 28. [3] J. vi. 10. [4] L. iii. 104. [5] L. iii. 332.
[6] He took great pains in countering Conyers Middleton's *Free Inquiry*, and referred to David Hume, whose book against miracles appeared at about the same time, as 'the most insolent despiser of truth and virtue that ever appeared in the world' (J. v. 458).
[7] With Wollaston Wesley frequently linked Francis Hutcheson, whom he described as 'a beautiful writer; but his scheme cannot stand, unless the Bible falls' (J. v. 492).

that every clergyman should know Dr. Clarke's *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*,[1] whilst he was constantly recommending to preachers, people, and Kingswood scholars alike a study of the 'human understanding' under the guidance of Bishop Browne, John Locke, or Malebranche. Other textbooks which he used were Langbain's *Compendium of Ethics* and Whitby's *Compendium of Metaphysics*. Although his critical attitude to philosophy almost suggests a distrust of reasoning as such, this is far from being true. With Scripture, Reason formed his constant measuring-line. In order to make full use of reason, he strongly maintained that no man, certainly no preacher, could do without a knowledge of logic, which he said,

> although now quite unfashionable, is even necessary next, and in order to, the knowledge of the Scripture itself.[2]

It will be seen from what has been stated above that in the eighteenth century the contest was between Religion and Philosophy, not, as in the late nineteenth, between Religion and Science. Indeed, during the major part of the century Science and Religion walked hand in hand. Science then, of course, was known as 'Natural Philosophy', which was a favourite leisure-hour occupation of Wesley, together with History and Poetry. That it had for him a definite religious impulse and purpose may be seen from the very title of his compilation on the subject, *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation: or, a Compendium of Natural Philosophy*.[3] This work covered a study of Man (including his soul), the animal and vegetable kingdoms, fossils, metals, astronomy, physics, chemistry, mechanics, 'sensation', 'knowledge', and even 'Occult Qualities', a subject which always held a strong fascination for Wesley.

The human body, both in health and disease, had occupied his attention from very early days, and later it was to become for him a vocation, for which he read practically every medical work he could come across. Closely linked with the study of medicine for Wesley was that of electricity, which revealed itself to him as 'the noblest Medicine yet known in the World'. As such he eagerly devoured almost all that was written on the subject, and also conducted practical experiments, started an electrotherapeutic clinic, and published a digest of the available knowledge on the subject.[4]

Another occupation of Wesley's 'leisure hours' was history. The field of British history was full of interest for him, and he had decided views (springing from books he had read) on certain subjects, which strongly coloured his *Concise History of England*, based mainly on Goldsmith, Rapin and Smollett. For instance, after the chapter on Richard III he remarked:

> Whoever desires to know the real character of King Richard should read the *Historic Doubts*, written by Mr. Walpole. An extract from them is here subjoined.

[1] See *Works*, x. 492. [2] See *Works*, x. 483.
[3] The title was not original, but borrowed from the great John Ray, whose *The Wisdom of God manifested in the Works of the Creation* Wesley used for his own compilation.
[4] See *John Wesley, Physician and Electrotherapist*. By W. J. Turrell, M.D., D.M.R.E., President of the Duchenne Society for the Advancement of Electrotherapy (Blackwell, Oxford, 1938), which makes obeisance to Wesley as one of the great pioneers of electrotherapy, pointing out that his *Desideratum: or, Electricity Made Plain and Useful* was the *second* English work on the subject to be published, the first being Richard Lovett's *The Subtile Medium*, published four years earlier, and used by Wesley for his own book.

The ensuing condensation of Walpole's book, which had convinced Wesley of Richard's innocence when he read it shortly after its publication,[1] occupies more than four times the space of the original chapter! Another pet subject with Wesley was the innocence of Mary Queen of Scots, of which he had been convinced by Tytler's *Historical and Critical Enquiry*. All books on Scottish history which he subsequently read were judged in accordance with the authors' attitude to Mary, Guthrie and Stuart thus receiving Wesley's praise, but Robertson his censure.

Geography and Chronology Wesley regarded as 'the two eyes of History', and showed great interest in them both, recommending Randal's *Geographical Grammar* as the most useful book on the one, and *Marshall's Chronological Tables* for the other, in addition to the *Introductio ad Chronologicam* of Bengel (*of Gnomon* fame).

In English Literature Wesley had read both widely and critically. From the list of hundreds of authors with whom he was acquainted, the only notable omissions are Fielding and Richardson. This reveals one of the most important features of Wesley's general reading — he had little patience with fiction. He was proud to say that he had never read a page of *Sir Charles Grandison*. The novelists whose works had come under his eye were usually dismissed with scorn — see his attitude to Laurence Sterne.[2] When he does quote large sections from a work of fiction (*Gulliver's Travels*), he does so under a cloak of anonymity.[3] In Wesley's own reading History afforded the relaxation which he might otherwise have found in novels, for he believed that truth was better, as well as often stranger, than fiction. All things considered, one of the most amazing things in his career is his publication of Henry Brooke's novel *The Fool of Quality*, and his modified recommendation of another of Brooke's novels, *Juliet Grenville*. His general attitude towards fiction can be well summed up by quoting his advice to Mary Bishop:

> I would recommend very few novels to young persons, for fear they should be too desirous of more. . . . The want of novels may be supplied by well-chosen histories.[4]

The poetry which impressed him most in his earlier years, and which he continued to recommend, was that of Spenser, Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (translated by Fairfax, or later by Hoole), Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Sir John Davies' *Immortality of the Soul*, and (strangely enough, considering the character of his life) the poems of Matthew Prior. In his later years Byron and Cowper made a strong impression on him. Of the dramatists only Shakespeare can be called a firm favourite.[5]

Wesley was trained as a student of the Greek and Latin Classics, of course, and occupied the position of Lecturer in Greek at Oxford. In spite, therefore, of the temporary switching over to Patristic writings and the Greek New

[1] See J. v. 322. [2] J. v. 445, L. v. 386. [3] See *Works*, ix. 220-3. [4] L. vii. 288.
[5] This in spite of his reference to Shakespeare as 'our heathenish poet' (J. iii. 217). He commends 'select parts of Shakespeare' to Miss Lewen in 1764 and to Sally Wesley in 1781, as well as including him in the Fourth Year of the advanced Kingswood Course. In the 1786 *Arminian Magazine* (pp. 631-2) he reprinted the 'All the world's a stage' speech from *As You Like It*, under the title 'The Progress of Life'—but with no indication as to its authorship. Cf. the numerous reminiscences of Shakespeare in the *Methodist Hymn Book* (W.H.S. *Proc.* x. 75-8), and the well-known story of the destruction of his annotated Shakespeare.

Testament, his zeal for the Classics continued to be a strong influence in his life, and quotations from them abound throughout his *Journal*, *Letters*, and *Works*. They formed the nucleus of his study libraries at London, Bristol, and Newcastle, and were an important feature of the Kingswood School curriculum. His mature opinion of the Classics can be seen in a letter to John Benson:

> You would gain more clearness and strength of judgment by reading those Latin and Greek books . . . than by four score modern books.[1]

Undoubtedly Wesley had a definite flair for languages. Hebrew, of course, he regarded as a fundamental need for any clergyman. He was also familiar with French,[2] German, Spanish, and Italian, and in 1785 (at the age of 82!) tried to learn Irish, which he found

> not only beyond all comparison worse than any ancient language I know anything of; but below English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, or any other modern language. The difficulty of reading it is intolerable.[3]

Yet though he read books in foreign languages well on into old age, especially those in Greek, Latin, and French, as a general rule he preferred, for speed of reading, a translation.

In addition to books which can be classified as religious, historical, philosophical, or literary, Wesley was ready to consider almost anything that attracted his attention. The net of his reading was flung far and wide, embracing education,[4] music,[5] economics,[6] freemasonry,[7] etiquette,[8] law,[9] and shorthand.[10] All this was in addition to his reading of the news of the day, although of newspapers as a whole he had a poor opinion.[11] For the essays contained in the *Idler*, *Tatler*, and especially the *Spectator*, he had a high regard, and frequently reprinted extracts from them in the *Arminian Magazine* — nearly always without acknowledgment.[12] Mention should also be made of the fact that an enormous amount of Wesley's time was given to reading letters, and manuscripts of one kind and another such as autobiographies, accounts of someone's 'Life and Happy Death', and proofs of articles, pamphlets, or books.[13]

It has sometimes been assumed that John Wesley's reading was too discursive. This view needs correcting. Wesley's tastes were catholic, but they were disciplined. Dominating all his reading was a practical purpose. Every book must be related in some way to his call to spread Scriptural holiness through the country. His reading forwarded this end in three chief ways:

(1) It provided useful knowledge, by means of which he was able to serve the physical needs of his fellows. This is obvious in the case of medicine, but is also true of electricity, natural history, education, and other subjects.

(2) It enabled him to give intellectual guidance, always an important

[1] L. v. 118.
[2] He did not admire the French language, however. See *Works*, vi. 185-7, J. iv. 188, etc.
[3] J. vii. 81. [4] Partly in order to assist his Kingswood venture.
[5] J. v. 290. [6] J. vi. 125. [7] J. v. 514.
[8] Castiglione's *Courtier* (*Works*, vii. 140) and Casa's *Refined Courtier*, of which extracts are given in the 1788-9 *Arminian Magazines*.
[9] He had a high opinion of Blackstone's *Commentaries*, and included 'Thoughts on Making Wills' from Blackstone in the *Arminian Magazine*, 1791.
[10] Not only did he know and use Byrom's shorthand; he also possessed, at any rate, a copy of Macaulay's, which was presented to him in 1748 (W.H.S. *Proc.* vi. 148) shortly before that subject was recommended for Kingswood School (in the MS. *Minutes* only).
[11] J. i. 59. L. iii. 177, v. 371. [12] But cf. L. vii. 300.
[13] Such as Churchey's *Poems*. Cf. J. iv. 195.

thing, and especially to a man whose twin standards were Scripture and Reason. His reading, therefore, was largely to fit him to play conscientiously and effectively his varied parts as Oxford tutor, organizer of a Public School, Principal and Staff of a travelling Theological College, and Advice Bureau for preachers and people. Wesley saw that a spiritual awakening was intimately linked up with an intellectual awakening, and by his omnivorous reading, and patient weeding out of the less useful books, he was able to supply his people with sufficient, and suitable, mental food.

(3) Most important of all, Wesley through his wide and careful reading sought to give spiritual protection to his followers. Not only was this done in a positive way, by recommending books of theology or devotion, thus pointing out the way of salvation, or teaching people to pray. An even more necessary form of service was the negative one of showing people what *not* to read. Wesley was peculiarly fitted for this task, with his natural curiosity, disciplined by a trained and critical mind. His eyes were always open for 'dangerous books'. He knew the harm that they could do. Had he not said (amongst many other examples):

> We dined with poor John Webb, now thoroughly poisoned by Robert Barclay's *Apology*, which he was sure would do him no hurt, till all his love to his brethren was swallowed up in dotage about questions and strife of words.[1]

It seemed obviously better for Wesley to read a book that might prove harmful before any of his more susceptible and uncritical followers got hold of it. If it was all right, well and good; it could go on its way, perhaps with a gentle pat on the back. If, however, it was a source of spiritual danger, it must be listed in the Methodist *Index Expurgatorius* — Wesley's *Journal*.

A large part of Wesley's reading and writing was concerned with this desire to shield his followers from harmful books. There were even some books that Wesley felt were dangerous to himself, so that we find him saying of Watts' *Glory of Christ as God-Man Display'd*:

> I read about fifty pages. . . . It so confounded my intellects, and plunged me into such unprofitable reasonings, yea dangerous even, that I would not have read it through for five hundred pounds.[2]

Wesley endeavoured to counteract a dangerous book in one or more of three ways: by issuing a warning against it either in a sermon or in his *Journal*; by publishing a pamphlet or book in reply[3] or by encouraging someone else to undertake this; by preparing an expurgated edition of the offending book.[4] There is at least one interesting example of his using all three methods.[5]

[1] J. iii. 232. [2] L. viii. 89-90. Cf. L. vii. 21; *Works* vi. 237, vii. 292-5.

[3] His largest original work, *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (*Green* 182), is an example of this. Another interesting example is *A Letter to a person lately join'd with the People call'd Quakers* (*Green* 108).

[4] This Wesley was constantly doing, in fact he could say: 'I generally abridge what I answer' (*Green* 287, p. 37). Even poor John Bunyan had to have his Calvinism purged away before his *Holy War* could be entrusted to the Methodists (see *Green* 283, p. 19).

[5] This is the *Account of the Pelew Islands*, as related by George Keate from the journals of Captain Wilson. On January 16, 1789, Wesley devoted ten hours to reading it, finishing it immediately after prayers the next day, and straightway issuing a warning against it in his *Journal*. In December of the same year he wrote a full-length article against it, which appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* for October, 1790, whilst another adverse comment on it was made in the *Journal* for December 1, 1789. Even this was not enough, but he must prepare an expurgated edition, most of which did not appear until after his death, in twenty-three instalments in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1791 and 1792, though his preface was dated January 8, 1790. (Not 1789, as stated in J. vii. 462n.)

Thus a study of Wesley's reading not only presents in clear outline the energy and decision of his mind, and enables one to follow in some measure the growth of that mind; it also reveals him as the man of action, seen as such even in his 'leisure hours', as he ambles along on horseback, book in hand, reading, not merely for his own pleasure, but that the Methodist people might safely become 'a reading People', and therefore 'a knowing People'.

FRANK BAKER

APPENDIX

NOTES ON SOURCES

The sources for the study of Wesley's reading vary both in kind and value. The following gives a brief summary of the material available.

1. *Comments on, References to*, and *Quotations from* various books and authors, to be found in the *Standard Journal*, *Standard Letters*, and Wesley's *Works* (by which is meant not only the octavo edition in 14 volumes, but everything which Wesley published).

2. *Works edited by Wesley*. Many of Wesley's publications, abridgments, re-issues, or 'authorised editions', of other writers, afford direct evidence of his reading and his tastes. Among these the most important are the *Moral and Sacred Poems* (1744), the *Christian Library* (1749-55), the *Survey of the Wisdom of God* (1763, 1770, 1777), and the *Arminian Magazine* (1778-97).

3. *Reading-lists issued by Wesley*. (Cf. his letter to Joseph Benson: 'What I recommend I know.') (L. v. 118.)

4. *Books from Wesley's Library*.

5. *Miscellaneous* sources, such as information as to the books known to have been in his father's library, or in regular use at the Charterhouse or Oxford University, and the books taken out by the S.P.G. missionaries.

1. *Comments, References, Quotations*. Many of these are vague, and much research is needed for their identification. For the books mentioned in the *Journal* Mr. F. M. Jackson did useful work, published in W.H.S. *Proc.* iv, although he did not cover quite all the ground, and a few minor errors crept in. In addition, of course, a fascinating field of study has been added since by the publication of the *Standard Journal*, with so much of the *Diaries* as it contains. The Oxford *Diaries*, when published in full, will afford even more valuable evidence.

(It is just possible that Wesley also kept a reading register, as well as a diary, for there are examples of books read or reviewed in the *Journal* which are not mentioned in the corresponding *Diary*, such as the reading of Gerard and Duff (J. vii. 339-40), and of Withering on the *Foxglove* (J. vii. 149). If a reading-register ever existed, it is doubtful if it will ever turn up, however — it is the kind of thing that John Pawson would have destroyed along with Shakespeare.)

A cursory examination of these sources often gives a false idea of Wesley's reading of certain authors, as the present writer has pointed out with regard to William Cowper (W.H.S. *Proc.* xxii. 179). In the great majority of cases, Wesley quoted authors with no acknowledgment, and the same is very often true of lengthy passages, and even of whole books. The identification of quotations has received a fair amount of attention (see W.H.S. *Proc.* ii. 171-6; iii. 57-63; v. 24-31, 47-53, 87-91; x. 75-8, 97-102. The Standard *Letters* and *Sermons* are well supplied in this respect). Much remains to be done, however. The octavo *Works* contain many quotations and

references which have never been elucidated, and many surprises await the patient student, such as the long (and unacknowledged) quotations from *Gulliver's Travels* in *The Doctrine of Original Sin*.

2. *Works edited by Wesley*. If this is true of the octavo *Works*, it is even more true of the various books compiled or edited by Wesley. Of the poems published by him in *Moral and Sacred Poems*, out of 196 items, 131 were given anonymously — the present writer is still in doubt about the sources of 22 of these. The same is true of the poetry in the *Arminian Magazine*, where out of 660 items (to the end of 1790), only 145 were published under a name, and 56 with initials, leaving 459 anonymous; of the initialled poems the writer has so far identified 26, and 300 of the 459 anonymous, whilst another 43, are inscriptions from tombstones, or contributions from anonymous correspondents, and can thus be probably classed as 'unidentifiable'. The same is true with regard to prose passages in the *Arminian Magazine*, in the *Survey of the Wisdom of God*, and in the *Christian Library*.

It should be noted that the *Arminian Magazine* for the years *after* the death of Wesley must not be neglected: his touch is still plainly to be seen in many of the articles. In the number for April, 1792, the editors clearly acknowledged this:

> We beg leave further to inform our readers in general, that many of the materials now printing, and which will be inserted in our Magazine for some years to come, were collected by Mr. Wesley, or transmitted to him from his numerous correspondents.

Obviously more care must be exercised in using this later material, but it must certainly not be overlooked.

3. *Reading-lists issued by Wesley*. The most important of these are those for the preachers' reading published in successive editions of the *Large Minutes*, but most fully in the Bennet *Minutes* of 1744 and 1746; the list of books which Wesley desired to be kept for his private use at London, Bristol, and Newcastle, in the 1745 Bennet *Minutes*; the *Rules* for Kingswood School (there are slight differences between the lists in the 1748 MS. *Minutes*, the 1748 printed *Rules*, and the 1768 edition), and the supplementary four-year 'university course' appended to the 1768 edition; books recommended in the supplement to the third edition of *Norris' Reflections* (*Green* 25); the letter to Margaret Lewen, 1764, reprinted in the 1780 *Arminian Magazine* (with the alteration of *Concise Church History* to *Mosheim's Introduction to Church History*); letters to Richard Knox (1770), Sally Wesley (1781) (to whom Wesley had previously recommended the *Female Course of Study* in the 1780 *Arminian Magazine*), and Mary Bishop (1784). With these lists should be compared two others which Wesley sponsored, in his father's *Advice to a Young Clergyman* (first compiled in 1724, reprinted by Wesley in 1735) (*Green* 4), and the other in *An Address to the Clergy* (*Green* 175), published in 1756.

A comparative table of these lists, together with one given by Philip Doddridge in response to Wesley's request, and the titles of books included in the *Christian Library* and Samuel Wesley's *Young Students Library*, reveals many points of real interest.

4. The Book-Room, Richmond College Library, and Kingswood School Library contain many such items, and others keep cropping up in various places, such as the copy of Newton's *Principia* inscribed 'George Whitfield to his sincere friend, John Wesley, 1740' (W.H.S. *Proc.* iii. 88), and the set of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* presented by the author to Wesley (W.H.S. *Proc.* vii. 139).