THE WORKS OF
JOHN WESLEY

VOLUME 25

LETTERS
I
1721–1739

EDITED BY

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SIGNS, SPECIAL USAGES ABBREVIATIONS

[ ] Entries within square brackets indicate editorial insertions or substitutions in the original text, or (with a query) doubtful readings.

⟨ ⟩ Entries within angle brackets indicate conjectural readings where the original text is defective.

. . . Three points are used to indicate a passage omitted by the writer from the original, for which Wesley generally used a dash.

[. . .] Three points within square brackets indicate a passage omitted from the original text by the present editor. (N.B. The distinguishing brackets are not used in the introduction, footnotes, appendix, etc.)

[[ ]] Entries within double brackets are supplied by the editor from shorthand or cipher, from an abstract or similar document in the third person, or reconstructed from secondary evidence.

(( )) Entries within double parentheses have been struck through for erasure.

/ A solidus or slant line indicates the division between two lines of text.

[a], [b], [c], Small superscript letters indicate footnotes supplied by Wesley.

[1], [2], [3] Small superscript figures indicate footnotes supplied by the editor.

Cf. 'Cf.' before a scriptural or other citation indicates that Wesley was quoting with more than minimal inexactness, yet nevertheless displaying the passage as a quotation.

See 'See' indicates an undoubted allusion, or a quotation which was not displayed as such by Wesley, and which is more than minimally inexact.

Wesley's publications. Where a work by Wesley was first published separately its title is italicized; where it first appeared within a different work such as a collected volume the title is given within quotation marks. References such as '*Bibliog*, No. 3' are to the forthcoming Bibliography in this edition, which has a different numbering system from Richard Green's *Wesley Bibliography*, although cross-references in the new bibliography are given to Green's numbers.

Book-titles in Wesley's text are italicized if accurate, given with roman capitals (following Wesley's normal usage) if inaccurate, and if comprising only one generic word (such as 'Sermons' for a volume entitled *Discourses*) are given in lower case unless that word forms a major part of the original title, when it is italicized.

Abbreviations. The following are used in addition to many common and obvious ones such as *c*[*irca*], cont[inued], ed[itio]n, espec[ially], intro[duction], MS[S], n[ote], orig[inal], para[graph], st[anza].

A.M.	Wesley, *Arminian Magazine* (1778–97), cont. as *M[ethodist] M[agazine]* (1798–1821), and *W[esleyan M[ethodist] M[agazine]* (1822–1913).
A.M. Supp, 1797	*A Collection of Letters on Religious Subjects, from various ministers and others, to the Rev. John Wesley. Being a Supplement to the Methodist Magazine*, London, Whitfield, 1797.
Asp	John Wesley's transcript of selections from his correspondence with Mrs. Pendarves, 1730–4 (in MA).
Atmore	Atmore, Charles, *The Methodist Memorial; being an Impartial Sketch of the Lives and Characters of the Preachers*, Bristol, Edwards, 1801.
A.V.	Authorized Version of the Bible, 1611 ('King James Version').
B.C.P.	The Book of Common Prayer, London, 1662.
Benham	Benham, Daniel, *Memoirs of James Hutton*, London, Hamilton, Adams, 1856.
Benson	Benson, Joseph (ed.), *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 17 vols., London, Conference Office, Jones, Cordeux, 1809–13, espec. Vol. 16, comprising Wesley's letters.
Bibliog	Bibliography of the publications of John and Charles Wesley, in preparation by Frank Baker to form Vols. 32–3 of this edition.
BL	The British Library, London (formerly British Museum).
Bristol Wesley	Wesley College, Bristol, England (manuscript collections).
Clarke	Clarke, Adam, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, 4th edn., revised, corrected, and considerably enlarged, 2 vols., London, Tegg, 1860.
Coulter & Saye	Coulter, E. Merton, and Albert B. Saye, eds., *A List of the Early Settlers of Georgia*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1949.
Curnock	Curnock, Nehemiah (ed.), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley. A.M., . . . enlarged from Original Manuscripts*, 8 vols., London, Epworth Press, 1938.
CWJ	Wesley, Charles, *Journal*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 2 vols., London, Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, n.d.
Delany	Llanover, Lady (ed.), *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, 6 vols., London, Bentley, 1861–2.
D.N.B.	*The Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, 22 vols., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1921–2.
Drew	Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, U.S.A.
Duke	Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, U.S.A.
Egmont *Diary*	Egmont, Earl of, *Diary of Viscount Percival, afterwards First Earl of Egmont*, 3 vols., London, Historical Manuscripts Commission, 1920–3.

Egmont *Journal*	McPherson, Robert G. (ed.), *The Journal of the Earl of Egmont: abstract of the Trustees' Proceedings for Establishing the Colony of Georgia*, 1732–1738, Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 1962.
Egmont Papers	Papers of the First Earl of Egmont, University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, U.S.A.
Emory	Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.
end	endorsement/endorsed by (only the more important are noted).
Foster	Foster, Joseph, *Alumni Oxonienses*, 8 vols., 1887–91.
Garrett	Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.
Gent's Mag	*The Gentleman's Magazine*, London, Jeffries, etc., 1731–1907.
Green	Green, V. H. H., *The Young Mr. Wesley*, London, Arnold, 1961.
Hall MS	Fragment of MS in hand of JW giving account of his brother-in-law, the Revd. Westley Hall (in MA); cf. Curnock, VIII. 147–52.
Hampson	Hampson, John *Memoirs of the late Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 3 vols., Sunderland, Graham, 1791.
Hearne	*Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, Vols. VIII (1722–5), IX (1725–8), X (1728–31), XI (1731–5), Oxford, Oxford Historical Society, Vols. 50, 65, 67, 72 (1907, 1914, 1915, 1918).
Heitzenrater	Heitzenrater, Richard P., 'John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1725–35', Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1972.
Herrnhut	Archiv der Brüder-Unität, Herrnhut, DDR.
Homilies	*Certain Sermons or Homilies appointed by the King's Majesty* (1547), usually referred to as The Book of Homilies.
Jackson	Jackson, Thomas (ed.), *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 3rd edn., 14 vols., London, Mason, 1829–31.
Jones	Jones, George Fenwick (ed.), *Henry Newman's Salzburger Letterbooks*, Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 1966.
JWJ	John Wesley, *Journal*, ed. by W. Reginald Ward to form Vols. 18–24 of this edition; cf. Curnock.
Kempis	*De Imitatio Christi*, published by John Wesley as *The Christian's Pattern*, London, Rivington, 1735 (*Bibliog*, No. 4).
Law, *Serious Call*	Law, William, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (1728), 5th edn., London, Innys, 1750.
Lawton	Lawton, George, research files of Wesley's usage of words, lying behind his volume, *John Wesley's English* (London,

	Allen & Unwin, 1962) and his articles on Wesley's use of slang and proverbs in W.H.S., kindly made available to the editor.
LB	A letter-book into which Wesley transcribed copies of letters from his family, 1724–9 (in MA).
Loeb	The Loeb Classical Library, London, Heinemann; Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press.
Lond Mag	*The London Magazine: or Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer*, London, Ackers, etc., 1732–85.
MA	Methodist Archives, The John Rylands University Library of Manchester.
M.M.	*Methodist Magazine* (1798–1821), continuing *A.M.*
Moore	Moore, Henry, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, London, Kershaw, 2 vols., 1824–5.
MorA	The Moravian Archives, Muswell Hill, London.
Morgan MSS	Wesley's correspondence with Richard Morgan, 1732–4, transcribed by Charles Wesley (at Drew).
Musgrave	Musgrave, Sir William, *Obituary prior to 1800*, Vols. 44–9 of the *Publications* of the Harleian Society, 1899–1901.
O.E.D.	*The Oxford English Dictionary upon Historical Principles*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933.
Poet. Wks.	John and Charles Wesley, *The Poetical Works*, 13 vols., ed. G. Osborn, Wesleyan-Methodist Conference Office, 1868–72.
Priestley	Priestley, Joseph, *Original Letters by the Rev. John Wesley and his Friends*, Birmingham, Pearson, 1791.
P.R.O.	The Public Record Office, London.
Sel	John Wesley's transcript of selections from his correspondence with Ann Granville, 1730–1 (in MA).
Simmonds list	a passenger list for the ship *Simmonds* on which Wesley sailed to Georgia, 1735–6 (at Bristol Wesley); imperfect transcript in Clarke II. 175–7.
S.M.U.	Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.
S.P.C.K.	The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London: Archives, espec. 'Henry Newman's Miscellaneous Letters', 'Abstracts of Letters Received and Read to the Society', and 'Minutes'.
S.P.G.	The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, London: Archives.
State Papers: Col	*Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series, America and West Indies*, XLII (1735–6), XLIII (1737), XLIV (1738), London, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1953, 1963, 1969.
Stev	George J. Stevenson, *Memorials of the Wesley Family*, London, Partridge, [1876].

Taylor, *Works*	Taylor, Jeremy, *Works*, ed. Reginald Heber, revised Charles Page Eden, 10 vols., London, Longman, etc., New Edn., 1862, espec. Vol. III, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living and Dying*.
Telford	Telford, John (ed.), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*, 8 vols., London, Epworth Press, 1931.
Tyerm (*JW*)	Tyerman, Luke, *The Life and Times of John Wesley*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 3 vols., 1870–1.
Tyerm (*OM*)	Tyerman, Luke, *The Oxford Methodists*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1873.
Tyerm (*SW*)	Tyerman, Luke, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley*, London, Simpkin, Marshall, 1866.
Tyerm (*Wd*)	Tyerman, Luke, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield*, 2 vols., 2nd edn., London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1890.
V.C.H.	The Victoria History of the Counties of England (in progress).
Venn	Venn, John and J. A., *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 10 vols., 1922–54.
Weis	Weis, Frederick Lewis, *The Colonial Clergy of Maryland, Delaware, and Georgia*, Lancaster, Mass., 1950; cf. similar vols. on New England (1936), the Middle and Southern Colonies (1938), Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina (1955).
Wes Ch	Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London.
Wesley, *Works*	Wesley, John, *Works*, 32 vols., Bristol, Pine, 1771–4.
Whitefield, *Journals*	Whitefield, George, *Journals*, London, Banner of Truth Trust, 1960.
Whitefield, *Works*	Whitefield, George, *Works*, 7 vols., London, Dilly, 1771–2.
Whitehead	Whitehead, John, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 2 vols., London, Couchman, 1793–6.
W.H.S.	*The Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, Burnley and London, 1898–.
W.H.S. Pub.	Occasional publications of the W.H.S.
W.M.C.	The World Methodist Council, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, U.S.A.
W.M.M.	*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine* (1822–1913), continuing A.M. and *M.M.*

(Cf. also the abbreviations used in the Appendix only, pp. 705–60 below.)

Postmarks.	See especially 'B/ris/tol', described p. 612.
Seals.	The numbers within parentheses after the occasional descriptions refer to the forthcoming table of seals in Vol. 31.

INTRODUCTION

I. WESLEY AS SEEN IN HIS LETTERS

JOHN WESLEY'S life is documented as fully as that of any man of his age, perhaps of any age. For a full thirteen years of his young manhood and for his last decade we possess a diary which covers not only the events of almost every day, but of almost every hour. For the forty intervening years, and overlapping at both ends, we can turn to a published journal of his activities. In manuscript we have commonplace books, memoranda on various subjects and events, financial accounts. We have four hundred works which he published. These documents tell us in detail what Wesley did for most of his eighty-seven years, and what he thought. Strangely enough, however, only rarely do they reveal what he felt. Contrary to popular belief, John Wesley did not wear his heart—even his warmed heart—on his sleeve. He was never effusive, never given to ecstatic writing—a reticent, private man compelled by inner impulses to occupy the centre of the stage in what he was convinced was a divinely directed drama. True, his emotions frequently surfaced in his writings as his spiritual energies were directed at some national shame, some piercing human need, but very rarely in recording events in his personal life. Only in his diary for a few years from 1734 do we find a code of symbols denoting how he actually *felt* each hour,[1] though a vestige of this was continued throughout his life in the exclamation mark singling our incidents in his diary (or letters selected for preservation) which had proved greatly moving. The careful reader of his *Journals* is able to read between the lines and discover the private behind the public John Wesley. The fullest personal revelation, however, undoubtedly comes in his letters. Here he expresses emotion more frequently and more fully. Here only can we meet the John Wesley known personally to his friends and followers, when he was writing to and for one person alone, whom instinctively he visualized, and to whom he wrote, as it were, face to face. His letters form the proving-ground for all the theories about him which we derive from his published writings, the source of many new insights. In this introduction we are able to touch on

[1] Heitzenrater, pp. 252–7.

only a few of the aspects of the John Wesley who is revealed by his letters.

Even from the outset Wesley's letters reveal him as a probing, logic-chopping thinker. In correspondence with his mother in his early formative years he almost instinctively developed a theological position which formed part of the core of his later teaching:

> What then shall I say of predestination? An everlasting purpose of God to deliver some from damnation does, I suppose, exclude all from that deliverance who are not chosen . . . How is this consistent with either the divine justice or mercy? . . . Is it merciful to ordain a creature to everlasting misery? Is it just to punish man for crimes which he could not but commit?[1]

As he matured, doctrinal definitions and expositions appeared frequently in his letters, to preachers, laymen, and women alike, sometimes in language echoing what he had already proclaimed in sermon or treatise, often fresh-minted and crisp:

> By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and man ruling all the tempers, words, and actions, the whole heart and the whole life. I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole.[2]

> Nothing is sin, strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. Therefore every voluntary breach of the law of love is sin—and nothing else, if we speak properly.[3]

> The plerophory (or full assurance) of faith is such a divine testimony that we are reconciled to God as excludes all doubt and fear concerning it. This refers only to what is present. The plerophory (or full assurance) of hope is a divine testimony that we shall endure to the end; or, more directly, that we shall enjoy God in glory. This is by no means essential to, or inseparable from, perfect love.[4]

We see him as a perfectionist, of course, not only in his frequently-repeated exhortation, 'Go on to perfection', but in his careful attention to the administrative details of the Methodist societies.[5] It was largely this which led to his irascibility with inefficient subordinates, which in turn led them occasionally to complain about his autocracy. 'All our preachers', he maintained, 'should be as punctual as the sun, never standing still, or moving out of their course.'[6] 'I hate delay,' he wrote, 'The King's business requires haste!'[7] If preachers did not measure up to his own high standards he did not disguise his impatience: 'I am surprised at what you say of the total neglect of discipline in the Armagh Circuit. Was Thomas

[1] July 19, 1725, to his mother.
[2] Jan. 27, 1767, to Charles Wesley.
[3] June 16, 1772, to Mrs. Bennis.
[4] Oct. 6, 1778, to Elizabeth Ritchie.
[5] e.g. his letter to Heath, p. 92 below.
[6] Nov. 2, 1763, to Lady Frances Gardiner.
[7] Sept. 3, 1763.

Halliday dead or asleep? He stands in the *Minutes* as the Assistant. Has another taken his place?'[1] When a major principle of his organization was challenged, such as the autonomy of the preachers in Conference (under his supervision, of course), he dug his heels in firmly. He told the trustees at Dewsbury, edging towards a congregational polity: 'The question between us is, "By whom shall the preachers sent from time to time to Dewsbury be judged?" You say, "By the trustees." I say, "By their peers, the preachers met in Conference." You say, "Give this up, and we will receive them." I say, "I cannot, I dare not, give up this." Therefore, if you will not receive them on these terms, you renounce connexion with, Your affectionate brother, J. Wesley.'[2] Allied to this granite efficiency was a puritanical streak. To Joseph Cownley he wrote: 'The great hindrance of your spiritual health in time past was, want of seriousness. You used to laugh and cause laughter . . . "Be serious." Let this be your motto.'[3] Yet an impatient letter could quickly be followed by an apology, as when he confessed to a preacher: 'I wrote to Molly Dale on Saturday in haste; but today I have wrote her my cooler thoughts.'[4]

The truth should be faced, that Wesley (like most of us) was a bundle of contradictions, though apparently inconsistent beliefs or behaviour achieved a form of consistency in constituting equally a following of the will of God as he saw it from moment to moment. This did not necessarily mean that he was subject to will-o'-the-wisp whims, but that he had an alert, flexible mind, and was courageous enough, and humble enough, to venture upon experiments, and then to cast them aside if initial success turned to failure. He was eager for spiritual advance: 'What a shame it is that we should so long have neglected the little towns round Dublin, and that we have not a society within ten miles of it!'[5] He strove to maintain a balance, however, between the venturesome pioneer and the cautious consolidator: 'I doubt not you will be useful in Dundee Circuit, provided you, (1), strive to strike out into new places . . . and (2), constantly visit *all the society* in course from house to house.'[6] And he warned that pioneering called for patience, not hit-and-run tactics: 'To preach once in a place and no more very seldom does much good; it only alarms the devil and his children, and makes

[1] Feb. 25, 1778, to John Bredin.
[2] July 30, 1788.
[3] Sept. 17, 1755.
[4] Feb. 14, 1768.
[5] June 21, 1784, to Arthur Keene.
[6] Oct. 3, 1784.

them more upon their guard against a fresh assault.'[1] Nevertheless, as he told another preacher, 'When no good can be done, I would leave the old, and try new places!'[2] His mind was sufficiently open to admit that some of his teaching had been erroneous. About Christian perfection he wrote to his brother Charles: 'Can one who has attained it, fall? Formerly I thought not; but *you* (with T. Walsh and Jo. Jones) convinced me of my mistake.'[3] Similarly he confessed to Sarah Crosby: 'I am more and more inclined to think that we have been a little mistaken in this matter, that there are none living so established in grace but that they may possibly fall.'[4]

Contrary to popular opinion, it seems clear that Wesley's self-analysis was correct: 'I am very rarely led by impressions, but generally by reason and by Scripture. I see abundantly more than I *feel*.'[5] He was basically an honest inquirer rather than an enthusiast, in spite of his brother Charles's repeated charges of credulity: 'When my brother has told me ten times, "You are credulous," I have asked, "Show me the instances." He could not do it. No, nor any man else. Indeed, jealousy and suspiciousness I defy and abhor as I do hell-fire. But I believe nothing, great or small, without such kind of proof as the nature of the thing allows.'[6] Similarly he wrote to the Revd. Thomas Stedman: 'With regard to the accounts of demoniacs and apparitions which I have occasionally published I observe, I am as certain of the facts as I am of the war between the Turks and Austrians. I do not retail them from books (like honest Richard Baxter), nor take them at third or fourth hand, but have them all either from the testimony of my own eyes and ears, or at first hand from eye- and ear-witnesses.'[7] This was always his approach to the supernatural, as to other strange phenomena. He kept an open mind, neither believing nor disbelieving until the evidence was in, even though he was indeed always eager for fresh instances of the uncanny. An early letter described in detail an account of levitation, and speculated on an appearance of the devil and a haunted house—yet at the same time offered a pedigree authenticating the narrative of the levitation, and affirmed about the haunted house: 'I design to go thither the first opportunity, and see if it be true; which I shall hardly believe till I am an eye- or ear-

[1] Nov. 30, 1786.
[2] Dec. 3, 1780.
[3] Feb. 12, 1767.
[4] Nov. 7, 1784.
[5] Feb. 24, 1786, to Elizabeth Ritchie.
[6] Mar. 20, 1762, to Samuel Furly.
[7] Sept. 1, 1774.

witness of it.'[1] He corresponded with his brother about 'music heard before or at the death of those that die in the Lord', offering the opinion that this was not 'the inward voice of God', but 'rather the effect of an angel affecting the auditory nerve, as an apparition does the optic nerve or retina'.[2] He was deeply interested in the afterlife and in communication with the dead, affirming that since her death he had 'found a wonderful union of spirit with Fanny Cooper', and had 'sometimes suddenly looked on one side or the other side, not knowing whether I should not see her'.[3] This deep interest clothed itself in the words of the scientific observer, with true intellectual curiosity, who nevertheless regarded the Bible as an integral element in the factual evidence:

> But what is the essential part of heaven? Undoubtedly it is to see God, to know God, to love God. We shall then know both his nature, and his works of creation, of providence, and of redemption. Even in paradise, in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, we shall learn more concerning these in an hour than we could in an age during our stay in the body. We cannot tell, indeed, *how* we shall then exist, or what kind of organs we shall have. The soul will not be encumbered with flesh and blood; but probably it will have some sort of ethereal vehicle, even before God clothes us 'with our nobler house Of empyrean light'.[4]

Wesley's eager inquiry into natural and supernatural wonders throughout his life was for him quite deliberately (to use the title borrowed from John Ray for his oft-revised scientific compendium) *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*.[5] Like his prayers for weather conducive to his evangelistic enterprise,[6] this was based upon a conviction that God was even now at work in the world: 'It is a great step toward Christian resignation to be throughly convinced of that great truth, that there is no such thing as chance in the world; that fortune is only another name for Providence. Only it is *covered* Providence. An event the cause of which does not *appear* we commonly say "comes by chance". Oh no! It is guided by an unerring hand; it is the result of infinite wisdom and goodness.'[7] He remained eager to discover and describe to his friends examples of God's moving in his mysterious ways—a trait which made Alexander Knox somewhat uncomfortable.[8]

[1] Dec. 18, 1724; cf. Sept. 25, 1723.
[2] Oct. 20, 31, 1753.
[3] Feb. 17, 1780; cf. Mar. 3, 1769.
[4] Apr. 17, 1776.
[5] See *Bibliog*, No. 259, and Vol. 17 of this edn.
[6] e.g. Apr. 11, 1785 to Charles Wesley.
[7] Jan. 2, 1781, to Ann Bolton.
[8] Of Wesley's letters Knox wrote: 'In those prompt effusions all Mr. Wesley's peculiarities are in fullest display: his confident conclusions from scanty or fallacious

Because he was thus conscious of living under the shadow of the eternal the humility which Wesley had rigorously pursued during his early years became as natural to him as breathing, and he attempted to analyse himself, his strengths and his weaknesses, with utter honesty. To 'John Smith' he wrote in 1746: 'To this day I have abundantly more temptation to *lukewarmness* than to *impetuosity*, to be a saunterer *inter sylvas academicas* ['in academic glades'], a philosophical *sluggard*, than an itinerant *preacher*. And, in fact, what I now do is so exceedingly little compared with what I am convinced I ought to do, that I am often ashamed before God, and know not how to lift up mine eyes to the height of heaven.' 'Smith' replied that this was 'over-done humility', but Wesley insisted: 'I do not spend *all* my time so profitably as I might, nor all my strength; at least not all I might have if it were not for my own *lukewarmness* and remissness, if I wrestled with God in constant and fervent prayer.'[1] In 1765 he wrote: 'When I was young I was *sure* of everything. In a few years, having been mistaken a thousand times, I was not half so sure of most things as before. At present I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to men.'[2] To be humble for Wesley was to recognize human limitations in the presence of God: 'The knowledge of ourselves is true humility; and without this we cannot be freed from vanity, a desire of praise being inseparably connected with every degree of pride. Continual watchfulness is absolutely necessary to hinder this from stealing in upon us.[3]

Allied with this humility was a childlike simplicity in Wesley's acceptance of life. This was true of his approach to money, as he told his sister Patty: 'Money never stays with *me*. It would burn me if it did. I throw it out of my hands as soon as possible, lest it should find a way into my heart.'[4] He encouraged this guileless behaviour

premises; his unwarrantable value for sudden revolutions of the mind; his proneness to attribute to the Spirit of God what might more reasonably be resolved into natural emotions or illusive impressions. These and suchlike evidences of his intellectual frailty are poured forth without reserve; in strange union, however, with observations on persons and things replete with acuteness and sagacity.' ('Remarks on the Life and Character of John Wesley', in Robert Southey, *Life of Wesley*, New edn. 2 vols., ed. C. C. Southey, London, 1864, II. 295.)

[1] June 25, § 1; Aug. 11, 1746, § 3; Mar. 25, 1747, § 4.

[2] Jan. 4, 1765 (*Lond Mag*, 1765, p. 28).

[3] May 30, 1776, to Miss March.

[4] Oct. 6, 1768. Cf. his letter to Mrs. Charles Wesley, July 25, 1788: 'My wife used to tell me, "My dear, you are too generous. You don't know the value of money." I could not wholly deny the charge.'

in his followers, writing to Hannah Ball: 'I was glad . . . that you was not ashamed to declare what God had done for your soul . . . Even this kind of simplicity, the speaking artlessly, as little children, just what we feel in our hearts, without any reasoning what people will think or say, is of great use to the soul.'[1] For this he commended Ann Bolton: 'You seem not only to retain simplicity of spirit (the great thing), but likewise of sentiment and language.'[2] This was what others saw in his own life, reproduced faithfully in his letters, as Alexander Knox testified: 'He wrote as he spoke. Their unstudied simplicity must give this impression; and I myself, who so often heard him speak, can attest to its justness . . . He . . . literally *talks* upon paper.'[3]

Wesley's letters to many correspondents display a frankness remarkable in a public man, though with others he deliberately sought to hold himself in check, as he admitted to Sarah Crosby: 'I speak of myself very little to anyone, were it only for fear of hurting *them*. I have found exceeding few that could bear it. So I am constrained to repress my natural openness. I find scarce any temptation from any *thing* in the world. My danger is from *persons*.'[4] To Dorothy Furly he wrote: 'I am so immeasurably apt to pour out all my soul into any that loves me.'[5] He tried to describe his mental processes in writing to a correspondent with whom such inhibitions were banished: 'When I speak or write to you, I have *you* before my eyes, but, generally speaking, I do not think of myself at all. I do not think whether I am wise or foolish, knowing or ignorant; but I see *you* aiming at glory and immortality, and say just what I hope may direct your goings in the way, and prevent your being weary or faint in your mind.'[6]

One characteristic which comes through in Wesley's letters as nowhere else is his personal warmth. He loved people. He wrote once to his wife, 'Without a companion in travel I am like a bird without a wing.'[7] In the age of reason words like 'affectionate' and 'love' occur on almost every page of his letters, to men and women

[1] Sept. 1, 1773. [2] Aug. 8, 1773. [3] Knox, op. cit., II. 296.
[4] May 11, 1780. [5] Jan. 18, 1761.
[6] July 6, 1770, to Miss March. This approach also he urged upon his correspondents: 'When we write to a friend, to one we can trust, it is good for us to *think aloud*. What would be prudence in conversing with others has no place here. The more openness you use, the more comfort you will find; especially in the case of strong temptations.' (June 15, 1766, to Mrs. Woodhouse. Cf. his words to Eliza Bennis, July 25, 1767: 'You have only to *think aloud*, just to open the window in your breast.')
[7] Apr. 22, 1757.

alike. To Alexander Knox he wrote: 'The longer I know you, the more I love you. I am not soon tired of my friends. My brother laughs at me, and says, "Nay, it signifies nothing to tell you anything; for whomsoever you once love you will love on through thick and thin."'[1] Knox himself realized this, realized also that Wesley was especially drawn to women:

> It is certain that Mr. Wesley had a predilection for the female character; partly because he had a mind ever alive to amiability, and partly from his generally finding in females a quicker and fuller responsiveness to his own ideas of interior piety and affectionate devotion. To his female correspondents, therefore, . . . he writes with peculiar effluence of thought and frankness of communication. He in fact unbosoms himself, on every topic which occurs to him, as to kindred spirits, in whose sympathies he confided, and from whose re-communications he hoped for additional light.[2]

For at least one correspondent this warmth was kindled even before he met her. To Ann Loxdale he wrote—and we turn in relief from Knox's turgid 'literary' language: 'I cannot tell that I ever before felt so close an attachment to a person whom I had never seen. Surely it is the will of our gracious Lord that there should be a still closer union between you and, Yours in tender affection, J. Wesley.'[3] John Wesley was indeed built for friendship. Sadly, however, he believed it necessary to wear a mask in public, and thus was frequently misjudged both by his contemporaries and by posterity. He explained his predicament to Sarah Crosby:

> 'I used to wonder', said one, 'that you was *so little affected*, at things that would make *me* run mad. But now I see it is God's doing. If you *felt* these things as many do, you would be quite incapable of the work to which you are called.' Consider this well. I am called to a peculiar work. And perhaps the very temper and behaviour which you blame is one great means whereby I am capacitated for carrying on that work. I do not 'lessen my authority' . . . over two hundred preachers and twenty thousand men and women by any tenderness of speech or behaviour . . . God exceedingly confirms my authority thereby . . . The wants I feel within are to God and my own soul; and to others only so far as I *choose to tell them*.[4]

Wesley was not the unconcerned manipulator of people whom many thought they discerned, but a man who was suppressing his feelings lest they run away with him, and thus undermine the effectiveness of his mission. All the more did he need at least a few confidants with whom prudence could be cast aside. We cannot recapture his

[1] Nov. 18, 1780.
[2] Knox, op. cit., II. 295.
[3] Dec. 16, 1781.
[4] Sept. 12, 1766.

private conversations with these close friends, but at least we can hear him talking to them in his letters, as when he tried whimsically to encourage a little thaw in Miss March, a pious gentlewoman with whom he had been corresponding for fifteen years: 'Very possibly, if I should live seven years longer, we should be acquainted with each other. I verily think your reserve wears off, though only by an hair's breadth at a time. Quicken your pace . . . Am I not concerned in everything which concerns you?'[1]

And yet . . . We must not swing to the other extreme of envisaging Wesley as the victim of dangerously suppressed emotions, or a person who was in the third heaven one moment and in the depths of despair the next. For most of his life he sailed along calmly on an even keel. He thus analysed himself to one of his confidants: 'I do not remember to have heard or read anything like my own experience. Almost ever since I can remember I have been led in a peculiar way. I go on in an even line, being very little raised at one time or depressed at another.'[2] The marriage of this calm temperament to an acquired belief in special providence issued in the remarkable serenity which suffuses his letters. In a letter written when he was 74 he seemed to ascribe this to his opportunities for solitude (while travelling like a broken-winged bird!), though he certainly knew that there was more to it than that:

> You do not at all understand my manner of life. Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry; because I never undertake any more work than I can go through with perfect calmness of spirit. It is true I travel four or five thousand miles in a year. But I generally travel alone in my carriage, and consequently am as retired ten hours in a day as if I was in a wilderness. On other days I never spend less than three hours (frequently ten or twelve) in the day alone. So there are few persons in the kingdom who spend so many hours secluded from all company. Yet I find time to visit the sick and the poor; and I must do it, if I believe the Bible . . . When I was at Oxford, and lived almost like a hermit, I saw not how any busy man could be saved. I scarce thought it possible for a man to retain the Christian spirit amidst the noise and bustle of the world. God taught me better by my own experience. I had ten times more business in America (that is, at intervals) than ever I had in my life. But it was no hindrance to silence of spirit.[3]

This serenity did not arise from ease or seclusion, but from his acceptance of life, and of people, as they were. To Samuel Furly's critical comments he replied: 'Sammy, beware of the impetuosity

[1] June 9, 1775. [2] Feb. 24, 1786, to Elizabeth Ritchie.
[3] Dec. 10, 1777, to Miss March.

of your temper! It may easily lead you awry . . . Don't expect propriety of speech from uneducated persons. The longer I live, the larger allowances I make for human infirmities. I exact more from myself, and less from others. Go thou and do likewise!'[1] To Furly's sister Dorothy he expounded another of his multifarious rules: 'It is a rule with me to take nothing ill that is well meant; therefore you have no need ever to be afraid of my putting an ill construction on anything you say.'[2]

In his approach to both people and events Wesley was an almost incurable optimist, reminding Mary Bosanquet, 'You know I am not much given to suspect the worst. I am more inclined to hope than fear.'[3] Yet he claimed that this was at least in part caused by self-discipline rather than temperament, announcing still another rule: 'My constant rule is to believe everyone honest till I *prove* him otherwise. But were I to give way to my natural temper I should believe everyone a knave till I *proved* him honest. And that would turn me into a man-hater, and make life itself a burden.'[4] Contentment with life as it was came also through trusting in God: 'By the grace of God I never fret, I repine at nothing, I am discontented at nothing. And to hear persons at my ear fretting and murmuring at everything is like tearing the flesh off my bones. I see God sitting upon his throne and ruling all things well.'[5] Even a few months before his death he wrote cheerfully of his ailments: 'In August last my strength failed almost at once, and my sight in great measure went from me. But all is well: I can still write almost as easily as ever, and I can read in a clear light. And I think, if I could not read or write at all, I could still say something for God.'[6]

Throughout his life Wesley's vitality was remarkable, and this seemed if anything to increase during his last quarter of a century. To his brother Charles he wrote in 1766: 'I find rather an increase than a decrease of zeal for the whole work of God, and every part of it. I am φερόμενος,[7] I know not how, that I can't stand still.'[8] Frequently he compared his health in these later years with that of his youth: 'It pleases God that my health and strength are just the same now that they were forty years ago. But there is a difference in one point: I was then frequently weary, my body sunk under my work. Whereas now, from one week or month to another, I do not

[1] Jan. 25, 1762. [2] Sept. 25, 1757. [3] Jan. 2, 1770.
[4] Nov. 17, 1780. [5] Aug. 31, 1755. [6] June 6, 1790.
[7] 'borne along', like Paul's vessel, Acts 27: 15, 17. [8] June 27, 1766.

know what weariness means.'[1] Not that he was free from ailments, of course, but he observed: 'My disorders are seldom of long continuance; they pass off in a few days, and usually leave me considerably better than I was before.'[2] The pearl (or cataract) which afflicted one eye in 1788 was accepted with wry humour: to Henry Moore he wrote: 'Lately I have been threatened with blindness. But still you and I have two good eyes between us. Let us use them while the day is!'[3] In his eighty-sixth year he realized that old age was at last catching up with him, telling R. C. Brackenbury: 'My body seems to have nearly done its work, and to be almost worn out. Last month my strength was entirely gone, and I could have sat stock still from morning to night. But, blessed be God, I crept about a little and made shift to preach once a day.'[4] He wrote to Freeborn Garrettson in America: 'Time has shaken me by the hand, and death is not far behind.'[5] Yet still he planned ahead, writing to Mrs. Armstrong in Dublin: 'My sight is no worse than it was some months since, and my strength ⟨is cons⟩iderably increased. It is not impossible I may live ⟨till spr⟩ing; and if so, I am likely to see Ireland once more.'[6] In September, 1790, he was perceptibly weaker, but as late as Jan. 6, 1791, he wrote, 'I hope I shall not live to be useless', and one of his last letters, if not the very last, written less than a week before his death, voiced a rousing challenge to William Wilberforce: 'Go on, in the name of God, and in the power of his might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.'[7]

II. AN AGE OF CORRESPONDENCE

The writing of letters is an ancient art (or craft), not unknown in the Old Testament, and comprising over one-third of the New. That it was an art would doubtless be claimed by Cicero and Pliny, yet the world of scholarship has been immeasurably enriched by the Egyptian business correspondence unearthed at Tel-el-Amarna, making no pretensions to literary excellence. Indeed the craft of true letter-writing implies not only the concealment of art, but its forsaking. Communication by letters is a kind of private conversation

[1] Feb. 26, 1786; cf. July 13, 1782; July 23, 1784; Feb. 2, 1785.
[2] Oct. 30, 1782.
[3] Apr. 6, 1788; cf. May 28, 1788.
[4] Sept. 15, 1789.
[5] Feb. 3, 1790.
[6] Aug. 4, 1790.
[7] Feb. 24, 1791.

across the barriers of space and time, demanding that each writer should think of the other, not of a possible public audience. By means of his letter the writer should therefore appear in spiritual image before his reader, warts and all. In this Wesley, as we have seen, succeeded admirably.[1] Even Horace Walpole, in spite of keeping one eye on posterity most of the time, maintained that he had 'no patience with people that don't write just as they talk', letters being 'nothing but extempore conversations on paper'—and the evidence shows that in fact he *did* write as he talked.[2] Any artifice beyond what is common to his conversation when the writer is 'on form', therefore, would push the letter over the hairline that separates this skilled craft from the art of 'epistolary literature'—which, in spite of its ugly name, does have its uses.

The debate continues, however, and neither the definition of a letter given above, nor any other, is assured of universal acceptance. What is certain, however, is that the letter is one of the most enduring literary forms, as well as the most intimate and revealing. For that reason many great literary figures (notably Walpole) live most fully in their letters, whether because of the fascination exerted by the personality thus displayed, because of their disclosure of the social scene and the human elements in the making of history, or simply because they deliberately chose this medium for their most polished literary efforts. Although there is no evidence that either Walpole or John Wesley ever read the volume, their own correspondence aptly illustrates the advice of *The Compleat Letter Writer; or, New and Polite English Secretary:*

> . . . This sort of writing should be like conversation . . . But, though lofty phrases are here improper, the style should not be low and mean; and to avoid it let an easy complaisance, an open sincerity, and unaffected good nature, appear in all you say; for a fine letter does not consist in saying fine things, but in expressing ordinary ones with elegance and propriety, so as to please while it informs, and charm even in giving advice.[3]

The full flowering of letter-writing as a literary form came during Wesley's lifetime, but as a personal means of expression and of communication it had formed the subject of 'How to' handbooks from Elizabethan times. *The Enimie of Idleness* (1568), *A Panoplie of Epistles* (1576), *The English Secretarie* (1586), and *The Merchants*

[1] See p. 7 above.

[2] W. S. Lewis, *Selected Letters of Horace Walpole*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1973, pp. xv–xviii.

[3] *The Complete Letter-Writer*, 3rd edn., London, 1746, p. 46.

Avizo (1589?) were followed by dozens of similar works during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[1] Some of these ran through scores of editions, as did *The Young Secretary's Guide* from 1687 to 1764.[2] Increasingly they developed into collections of sample letters for all occasions, of which the best was Samuel Richardson's *Familiar Letters*, from the preparation of which—and in the same form—developed his first experimental novel, *Pamela* (1740).[3]

The eighteenth century. The largest output of letters during the eighteenth century was probably that of Voltaire (1694–1788), whose published correspondence comprises twenty thousand letters to and from some seventeen hundred correspondents, necessitating almost a hundred volumes, together with nine devoted to appendixes and indexes.[4] The correspondence of England's greatest letter-writer, Horace Walpole (1717–97), is about half as voluminous, with something over four thousand letters to about two hundred correspondents.[5] Walpole is generally acknowledged to be supreme in quality, though some have followed Macaulay in sniping at him (apparently without sufficient cause) for superficiality and lack of true humanity. His letters constitute a fascinating social chronicle of sixty years—anecdotal, gossipy, whimsical, witty, though occasionally unkind. He stands head and shoulders above the rest.

Nevertheless eighteenth-century England produced other giants, though none approaching Walpole's stature: Alexander Pope (1688–1744), who in 1737 published the first collection of literary letters; Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762), the 'elegant language' of whose *Letters* (1763) failed to convince Wesley that the Turks were socially and spiritually to be preferred to Christians;[6] Thomas Gray (1716–71), a writer of solid conversational correspondence on a higher intellectual plane than that of Walpole; Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773), whose letters to his

[1] K. G. Hornbeak, *The Complete Letter-Writer in English, 1568–1800*, Northampton, Mass., 1934, pp. 128–45.

[2] Ibid., pp. 77–85.

[3] Ibid., pp. 100–16; see Samuel Richardson, *Familiar Letters on Important Occasions*, with an introduction by Brian W. Downs, New York, Dodd, Mead & Company, 1928, pp. ix–xxvi.

[4] Ed. Theodore Besterman, 1953–65; cf. *Editing Eighteenth Century Texts*, ed. D. I. B. Smith, University of Toronto Press, 1968, pp. 7–24.

[5] George Sampson, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1941, p. 539; *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, II. 1591; 39 of the projected 50 volumes had been completed between 1937 and 1974, including some 3,300 letters by Walpole and 6,500 from his correspondents.

[6] Sermon 63, 'The General Spread of the Gospel', § 4.

son (1774) frankly depicted an age in which impeccable manners were more important than virtuous conduct; and William Cowper (1731–1800), with his 'divine chit-chat'. Scores of other names could be added, some of them more recent discoveries, including a number of Wesley's own correspondents, Philip Doddridge (1702–51), Samuel Johnson (1709–84), Mary Delany (1700–88), and Alexander Knox (1751–1831). Nor is it too much to claim that John Wesley himself (1703–91) merits a place among the literary figures of his day, for his letters almost equally with his *Journal*—letters comparable in numbers to those of Walpole, but encompassing a longer period, and written to eight times as many correspondents; letters completely different in tone and style, briefer and pithier, offering not entertainment but improvement, yet with their own interest and charm despite their earnest purpose, perhaps occasionally because of it.

Writing materials. Like most of its literary kind, *The Complete Letter-Writer* gave much attention to style, and not a few hints on grammar, spelling, and even the use of capitals—but said nothing about the physical aspects of letter-writing. In this it has been followed by most literary historians and editors, apparently upon the assumption that the reader will assimilate such antiquarian trivia by osmosis. Unfortunately experience proves that this is not the case: not only booksellers' catalogues, but even the index cards of learned museums and libraries occasionally furnish the information (quite nonsensical when relating to the letters of Wesley or his contemporaries): 'The envelope is missing.' The envelope, of course, was not invented until after Wesley's death, just as many other writing materials which we take for granted are comparatively recent innovations.

Yet the absence from the eighteenth century of commonplace artifacts of the twentieth leaves a void which the imagination is unable to fill unless furnished with the contemporary facts of literary life—as is exemplified by the reference to Wesley's envelopes. It is therefore important to recount (or in the case of some readers to recapitulate) the actual conditions under which these letters were written—not only their personal and social and historical setting, but their background of writing customs and habits and everyday artifacts, especially those which have now been completely replaced. At times this reconstruction of Wesley's background is extremely difficult, especially as scholarly studies, even of the more ancient artifacts connected with letter-writing, such as paper, and seals, have concentrated upon the centuries before his. Nor is it only to recover with some accuracy the historical texture of literary life in Wesley's day that a study of contemporary writing materials and processes should be undertaken. Frequently such details enable us to interpret an obscure passage, to restore a missing phrase, to piece together a mutilated document, to demonstrate or disprove authenticity, or to clarify the reasons for certain occurrences. In those days as in these, postal history frequently exercised a direct impact on personal history, on social history, and even on national history.

Paper is, of course, a very ancient product, yet in Wesley's day some of the varieties to which we have become accustomed were not available. Although China clay had been discovered in 1733 it was not much used to make 'art paper' until early in the nineteenth century.[1] Similarly 'wove' paper, though rediscovered during the eighteenth century, was slow in being adopted, and came into general use only after Wesley's death.[2] All Wesley's publications, and all his letters, were produced on handmade 'laid' paper, prepared by dipping a rectangular mould or sieve into a porridge made of rotted rags soaked in water. The thicker crossed wires of the mould were called 'chains', and with the thinner wires fastened at narrow intervals between them formed a grid of translucent indentations in the pulp 'laid' on them. Usually added to these chain-lines and wire-lines impressed in the paper were watermarks distinctive of the manufacturer and of the paper size, and occasionally the date. These were made by wire fashioned into letters, figures, or other patterns which were sewn into the mould with very fine wire. The watermarks frequently furnish important evidence (as do the chain-lines and wire-lines) about the conjugacy of parts of a letter which have become separated, accidentally or deliberately (both causes having been at work); in turn the proof that one half belongs to the other may determine the identity of the recipient, or whether we are dealing with two letters sent at the same time on the same sheet. Occasionally watermarks furnish confirmation of the approximate date of an undated letter.[3]

[1] Dard Hunter, *Papermaking*, 2nd edn., London, Alciades Books, 1947, p. 490.

[2] Ibid., p. 495; cf. Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974, pp. 65–6.

[3] See letters of Mar. 15, 1748; Oct. 20, 1788; Aug. 29, 1789. Unfortunately the standard works on watermarks, filling two shelves in the North Library of the British Library, prove of only minor assistance. Charles-Moïse Briquet, *Les Filigranes*, stops

Weight, quality, and even size of this hand-made paper were all subject to at least minor variations, even in the same batch. Wesley normally used a medium weight, similar to that used for most of his publications. Although he hated to waste money, he did secure good quality paper, which has lasted well. Described as 'white', there is little doubt that even without the mellowing of age it was in fact a pale cream. From about 1770 paper with a green tint begins to appear among his letters, greatly increasing in frequency during the 1780s until it accounts for 5 per cent of the paper which he used, including an occasional sheet of a quite deep green.[1]

The first point to be noted about the size of the paper used by Wesley is that very rarely was it a full sheet folded to make four folio pages, even in his journal-letters, though this was the normal practice in this genre for his brother Charles.[2] Instead Wesley used what were technically half-sheets, which he then folded in two for his almost uniformly four-page letters. From the evidence of the edges, this writing-paper was apparently purchased already cut to half the manufacturer's size, and we shall therefore speak of 'sheets' rather than half-sheets, and the resulting leaves when folded as 'half-sheets' rather than quarter-sheets. Wesley normally avoided both small octavo pages (arising from dividing a crown sheet into four) and large quarto pages (from half a crown sheet), though his letters do contain examples of both.[3] Instead he regularly used one of the intermediate foolscap sizes, ranging anywhere from 33·5 × 21·5 cm to 30·5 × 19·8 cm. The variations in size are innumerable; rarely are sheets exactly square, so that rarely do they measure exactly the same.

short in 1600, and Wesley's holographs include a host of watermarks not to be found in either W. A. Churchill, *Watermarks* (1935), or Edward Heawood, *Watermarks* (1957), both of which concentrate on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Even though Mr. Heawood himself and other filigranologists have followed up the latter volume, much more work needs to be done in the field.

[1] This, like some other statistics here given, is based on a detailed comparison of 500 holograph letters in the Methodist Archives, Manchester, which form a representative cross-section of his whole correspondence. Other statements from time to time will be based on 500 letters from various sources comprising his letters to fourteen selected correspondents. (See p. 27 below.)

[2] One extant example, however, is the lengthy letter to the Revd. Samuel Walker, Sept. 3, 1756, though this is a copy prepared by an amanuensis for signature by Wesley; cf. also those of Dec. 6, 1726, to his brother Samuel (a draft), and of Mar. 19, 1727, to his mother (possibly a draft or a copy).

[3] e.g. for small 8vo those to Charles Wesley, May 25, 1764, and Apr. 11, 1785, measuring 23·5 × 18·5 cm, and for quarto that to the Revd. John Newton, May 14, 1785, measuring 37·7 × 23·3 cm.

Although metal pens were known to antiquity, and the principle of the fountain pen was understood in the seventeenth century and was experimentally in use during Wesley's day, in practice the quill-pen held its own well into the nineteenth century. (The very word 'pen', of course, derives from the Latin *penna*, a feather.) Wesley employed no other. Although those from other birds were in use, it seems likely that he accepted the normal goose-quills. The lower barrel of the quill wore so rapidly that it needed frequent 'mending', i.e. sharpening to a point and slitting so that the ink was channelled down the nib. It was this disadvantage which led to their displacement by the more durable steel pen. Although the complete feather was often used, many, perhaps most pens, utilized the lower part of the barrel only, into which was inserted a penholder. The attested 'last pen Mr. Wesley wrote with' is of this kind, as apparently (from the evidence of the compartments in his travelling writing-case) were most of those which he used.[1] Some of the vagaries of the quill-pen are revealed in Wesley's letters, such as their liability suddenly to run out of ink, and to lose their point rapidly.[2] It was handy, however, to be able to switch from his usual fine nib to a very broad one in order to write a Hebrew phrase, as he did in his letter of September 23, 1723.

Writing ink has also been in use for several thousands of years. Early inks depended upon lamp-black suspended in water and gum. In medieval times it was discovered that a more durable ink resulted from the use of galls (oak-apples) and ferrous sulphate (then known as 'copperas' or 'vitriol'). Mixed and stirred for two or three weeks, the iron salt combined with the gallic or tannic acid to make a purplish-black compound, though this black iron ink eventually faded to brown. To secure a denser black, carbon could be added.[3] The attempts to achieve a permanent black ink are reflected in Wesley's letters. A few letters from every period of his life have

[1] Both the pen and the writing-case are displayed in Wesley's House, City Road, London. The pen is $\frac{1}{4}$ in. in diameter and $4\frac{3}{16}$ in. long. The cut for the nib begins $\frac{7}{8}$ in. from the tip, and the central cut is $\frac{7}{16}$ in. deep. The point is stained with black ink up to and beyond the end of the central cut. For pens in general use see L. C. Hector, *The Handwriting of English Documents*, 2nd edn. London, Edward Arnold, 1966, pp. 18–19.

[2] In signing a letter of March 21, 1790, Wesley began with a faint 'J', redipped his pen, and completed the signature over the 'J'. Beginning a letter to a nobleman on Jan. 25, 1783, after two lines he found the writing too coarse, so changed his worn pen (or possibly sharpened the nib), continuing in a much finer hand.

[3] See C. Ainsworth Mitchell and T. C. Hepworth, *Inks: Their Composition and Manufacture*, London, Griffin, 1904, espec. pp. 8–13, 35–46, 87–8, 92–104.

matured to a pale brown or bright orange-brown, though this is more frequent in his earlier years. By 1750 a medium brown, in varying shades, is more typical, and this remains true for about twenty years. From that point onwards we see a gradual darkening of his ink to sepia, through added black pigmentation. This increases from about 5 per cent of his letters during the years 1770–4 to about 75 per cent during the years 1785–9. About 10 per cent of the letters from these closing years, indeed, are written in pure black ink, apparently because of the use of a quite different formula.[1] Wesley told one of his correspondents: 'You must write with better ink if you would have anyone read.'[2] Wesley's own travelling inkhorn is preserved in Wesley's House, London, and this is coated with black powder attesting to the type of ink in use. He seems never to have used red ink for his letters (though it was available), and never to have used pencils, though they also were available, and he occasionally did use them to annotate passages in books.

The use of somewhat uncertain pens led naturally to the danger of blots, or of smears caused by touching ink which had not dried. Blotting-paper had been known in England for over two hundred years, but did not come into general use until soon after Wesley's death. He apparently used the normal contemporary method of letting ink dry naturally, or of spreading upon it fine white sand from a shaker.[3] On the whole his letters are remarkably free from blots, because he tried to keep a fine pen always ready at hand, but occasionally, especially in his old age, they did occur.[4]

[1] The search for black ink is reflected in an article in Wesley's *Arminian Magazine* for 1794, which complained about the difficulty of procuring anything except 'a pale, dirty, yellow liquid', which proved almost illegible, so that the author carefully described how to make one's own by means of logwood chips, best blue galls in powdered form, pomegranate peel, ferrous sulphate, sal ammoniac, and gum arabic (p. 271).

[2] Oct. 28, 1789, to Thomas Taylor.

[3] Hunter, op. cit., p. 476. Cf. three consecutive entries in Wesley's accounts for Feb., 1726-7:

For an Inkhorn, Sandglass, Sand and Cotton	0 – 1 – 10
For paper books and Sermon paper	0 – 6 – 0
For a pencil	0 – 0 – 3

[4] After completing a letter to Henry Moore on Feb. 6, 1791, for instance, he dropped a huge blob of ink near the top of the letter, which splashed eight other large blots in addition to some tiny splatterings. On Aug. 2, 1777, Wesley folded his letter over a blot before it had dried, leading to a symmetrical black frog pattern inside the folds. In one instance (Feb. 11, 1789, to Walter Churchey), he seems deliberately to have smeared a date written in error, in order to make a correction, and in that of July 8, 1777, to Joseph Benson, the error is struck through as well as smeared. Occasionally the ink shows through the paper, and sometimes a photographic image has transferred itself to the

Seals were present, in one form or another, on all Wesley's letters. In an age before envelopes, seals fulfilled two functions, securing the privacy and safety of the folded letter, and proclaiming its authenticity. That the latter use was important to Wesley is illustrated by the fact that when translating a passage from Bengel for his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (1755), about Christ being 'the express image of God' (Heb. 1 : 3), he added the comment: '*the express image*, or "stamp"—Whatever the Father is, is exhibited in the Son, as a seal in the stamp on wax.'[1]

When the letter had been folded (in the manner described later),[2] a dab of wax was usually applied under the flap, which was then pressed down so that the two paper surfaces stuck together. An alternative was the ready-made wafer. Sometimes mechanical pressure was applied to wax or wafer by means of a hand embosser, which left a series of patterned indentations on the outside. In addition, or possibly as the only measure, heated wax was dropped across the edge of the flap and the adjoining paper, and the writer's personal seal was impressed over the junction. This in itself might serve as an adhesive to seal the letter, difficult to replace if tampered with after it had hardened, and the design of the seal would inform the recipient of the identity of its sender. Even during the last decade of Wesley's life impressions are found on his letters from no fewer than fifteen different seals, as well as thirteen different embossed stamps—a fact which prompts many questions. Unfortunately for our purposes the study of seals (sigillography) has been chiefly confined to ancient and medieval examples, but its importance to eighteenth-century correspondence should not be overlooked.

Several kinds of furnishings connected with Wesley's writing of letters are preserved in his former home in London. The major item is his magnificent walnut bureau, with its many shelves (including two extending ones for use as candle-rests), pigeon-holes, and even secret compartments. It was in this bureau that he preserved his correspondence, rifled by his wife when she became jealous of his

sheet resting upon it, apparently after the ink itself had dried; cf. the letter of Sept. 16, 1785, to Alexander Suter, where there is both a mirror-image opposite the right fold, and another opposite the central fold, clearly arising from two different patterns of folding for lengthy periods.

[1] Wesley explained to a correspondent that being 'sealed by the Spirit' (Eph. 1 : 13) implies 'the receiving the whole image of God . . . as the wax receives the whole impression of the seal when it is strongly and properly applied' (Oct. 4, 1771).

[2] See pp. 68–70 below.

many female correspondents. There is a straddle-chair stuffed with horse-hair, supposedly given to Wesley by a cockfight bookmaker; this has a sloping back fitted with an adjustable writing board and recesses for pen and ink. And there is his portable writing-case, a miniature roll-top desk with handles at each side for carrying it, and fitted with several drawers. It measures 12 in. $\times$ $9\frac{1}{2}$ in. $\times$ $6\frac{1}{4}$ in. Pulling out the drawer at the front (for paper already folded) raises the roll-top to reveal three bottles in sockets, two for ink and the central one (with a pierced brass lid) for sand. By bringing the hinged lid forward to rest on the drawer a sloping writing surface is formed from the two leaves, almost 12 in. square, and covered with green felt. Raising the upper leaf reveals a pen tray beneath the inkrack, and beneath the tray two tiny drawers $5 \times \frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{8}$ in., just large enough to hold new quills the size of Wesley's last pen, the holders themselves presumably resting in the tray above.[1]

The postal service. Although postal systems operated in the ancient world, the beginnings of reasonably efficient services for the letters of the general public date from the seventeenth century. England was probably the pioneer, with the appointment by Charles I in 1635 of Thomas Witherings, his 'Postmaster-General for Foreign Parts', to take in hand the organization also of a scheme 'for settling . . . packet posts betwixt London and all parts of His Majesties dominions for the carrying and recarrying of his subject's letters.'[2] Postboys on horseback carried the mail along six post roads fanning out from London: to Plymouth, to Bath and Bristol, to Chester and Holyhead *en route* to Ireland, to Edinburgh, to Yarmouth, and to Dover. These were based upon the Elizabethan post roads, which in their turn can sometimes be traced back to the network set up by the Romans fifteen centuries earlier. From these post roads 'byposts'[3] went to neighbouring towns, usually by means of letter-carriers on foot. The charges were 2*d*. for a distance of not more than 80 miles, 4*d*. up to 140, and 6*d*. over 140, 8*d*. to Scotland, and 9*d*. to Ireland.[4] Little more was done for two centuries than to introduce improvements and modifications of this system, as in 1660 (confirming actions

[1] See Max W. Woodward, *One at London*, London, Epworth Press, 1966, pp. 80, 84, 86, 92, and the illustrated guide, *Wesley's House and Chapel*.

[2] Howard Robinson, *The British Post Office*, Princeton University Press 1948, p. 29.

[3] The term 'bypost' or 'by-post' was more commonly used for the carriage of 'way-letters' passing between two towns on the same post road (see p. 22).

[4] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 23–69; cf. F. George Kay, *The Royal Mail*, London, Rockliff, 1951, pp. 23–7.

taken by Cromwell's Parliament in 1657), when the foreign and domestic services were united in a General Post Office, and changes were made in the rates.[1] Letters were left at the nearest post town, to be picked up personally or to be delivered in some other way negotiated with the local postmaster, sometimes by the payment of an additional charge,[2] though in 1774 the delivery fee was successfully challenged as illegal.[3] The admirable Penny Post was set up in 1680 as a venture in private enterprise to serve London, Westminster, and the surrounding area. For a uniform prepaid charge of one penny anything up to a pound in weight which was taken to one of hundreds of convenient receiving houses was delivered to the inscribed address, and insured throughout its speedy transit. After the government had sued the initiator, William Dockwra, for breaching its monopoly, the scheme was taken over in 1682 by the Post Office itself. The Revolution of 1688 led to a greater use of the postal system, but little change in its methods of operation, except by a gradual extension of regular services between other towns both on and off the post roads, and the adoption of another bright idea from another duly prosecuted private individual (who had set up a halfpenny foot-post), namely that of using bellmen to collect letters, or to announce their arrival at the local post office.[4]

By the Act of 1711 the postal service was both improved and coordinated with the embryo services for Scotland and Ireland. At the same time the rates in England and Wales were increased, a single letter costing 3*d*. for the first 80 miles, and 4*d*. beyond, while from London to Edinburgh or Dublin it cost 6*d*. 'Country letters' (those passing through London) continued to be charged twice, once for carriage to London, and a second time when the London clerks sorted them for the roads leading to their final destination. The original charge (or 'tax') inscribed by the receiving postmaster was then erased and a new combined one added, often preceded by the phrase, 'In All'.[5] The 1711 Act governed the British postal system, with minor modifications, throughout the major part of Wesley's

[1] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 37–58.

[2] Cf. Kay, op. cit., pp. 42–3, and A. D. Smith, *The Development of Rates of Postage*, London, Allen, 1917, pp. 13–14.

[3] Herbert Joyce, *The History of the Post Office*, London, Bentley, 1893, pp. 197–203.

[4] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 77–89; cf. Kay, op. cit., p. 43, and George Brummell, *The Local Posts of London, 1680–1800*, Bournemouth, Alcock, 1938, espec. pp. 15–18, 40–4.

[5] R. M. Willcocks, *England's Postal History*, printed by Woods of Perth, Scotland, for the author, 1975, pp. 32–3, and John G. Hendy, *The History of the Early Postmarks of the British Isles*, London, L. Upcott, Gill, 1905, pp. 11–12.

life.[1] Although prepayment of postage had been permitted by the 1660 Act, and was compulsory under the London Penny Post, it was by no means usual, and charges continued to be collected from the recipients of letters until the nineteenth century. Wesley told one of his correspondents, for instance, 'I shall never think much of paying postage of a letter from *you*.'[2]

Many of the gaps in the provincial services were filled by the labours of Ralph Allen of Bath, to whom was farmed out in 1720 the delivery of letters which did not pass through London, namely the byposts (carrying letters between intermediate points on one post road) and the crossposts (carrying letters across country from one post road to another). Allen extended the system greatly, and by careful supervision secured much more efficiency, so that his contract was periodically renewed until his death in 1764, and he became of far more importance in postal history than any of the Postmasters-General during this period.[3] In 1765 a new Act encouraged local services by reducing the charge for letters carried short distances—for one post stage it became 1*d*., and for two stages, 2*d*. At the same time the Act allowed any town to establish its own Penny Post Office similar to that in London, which Dublin and Edinburgh speedily did.[4]

Massive reforms were instituted by John Palmer through the Act of 1784, which arose at least in part from William Pitt's financial difficulties, so that a greatly improved service was counterbalanced by higher rates. Single letters were now charged 2*d*. instead of 1*d*. for the first stage, 3*d*. instead of 2*d*. for two stages, and 4*d*. instead of 3*d*. up to 80 miles; between 80 and 150 miles now cost 5*d*., beyond 150 miles 6*d*. instead of 4*d*., and from London to Edinburgh 7*d*. instead of 6*d*. Rates in Scotland itself were also raised—the Irish Post Office had been separated from that in Great Britain the previous year.[5] Palmer's various innovations greatly improved the revenue of the Post Office, and greatly increased the speed of delivery; although he himself was shortly dismissed, his improvements remained.[6]

Slowness of delivery had for a century been a frequent complaint,

[1] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 90–8; Smith, op. cit.

[2] Jan. 14, 1764. For prepayment see Willcocks, op. cit., pp. 20–1.

[3] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 99–111. Cf. Benjamin Boyce, *The Benevolent Man*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1967.

[4] Robinson, op. cit., pp. 111–12.

[5] Ibid., pp. 136–7.

[6] Ibid., pp. 141–52.

in spite of the blare of the posthorn, the clatter of hooves, and the traditional cry of 'Haste, post, haste!'.[1] Post-riders did not average more than four miles an hour, and sometimes considerably less.[2] This was largely because of the terrible conditions even of the post roads. Ogilby's survey, printed in 1675, had helped to define the problem, and hundreds of turnpike Acts had brought about some piecemeal improvement, gaining greater impetus during the middle years of the eighteenth century, especially after the General Turnpike Act of 1773 had simplified the legal procedure.[3] John Wesley's letters, however, bear testimony to the frequent delays, even in this period, especially when he used the crossposts, or was in a distant part of the kingdom, witness the frustration revealed in a letter to his wife (in London) from Athlone, July 10, 1756: 'Two or three of your letters . . . I have just received all together, together with eight or ten letters from various parts dated in March. Where they have been stuck these four months I cannot imagine.' A decade later he was still unhappy, writing from Kilkenny, July 5, 1765, to Miss Peggy Dale, 'I send Miss Lewen's letter by Portpatrick, to try which comes soonest.' That to Miss Lewen has not survived, but the evidence of the postmarks on that to Peggy Dale shows that it passed through the Dublin post office on July 9, moved through the London office on July 15, and would take another two or three days to reach her at Newcastle. A letter written to Thomas Rankin in Redruth on the same day bears exactly the same postmarks, although this had been directed by Wesley (fruitlessly), 'per Manchester', altered by him to read, 'per Gloucester'. A letter written in England, July 25, 1775, to Ann Bolton, added a P.S.: 'I did not receive yours of May 8th till yesterday.' Even in 1782 Wesley felt it necessary to warn a correspondent expecting a speedy reply in an emergency: 'You do not consider the slowness of the byposts. A letter could not be wrote on the receipt of yours so as to reach Skillington by Wednesday, January the 1st.'[4] Happily he was able to mingle some wry humour with his complaints, writing from Londonderry: 'The Irish posts are not the quickest in the world, though I have known one travel full two miles in an hour. And they are not the most certain. Letters fail here more frequently than they do in England.'[5]

Problems were compounded, of course, for letters dispatched

[1] George Walker, *Haste, Post, Haste!*, London, Harrap, 1938, pp. 29, 119, 132–4.
[2] Robinson, op. cit., p. 59.
[3] Ibid., pp. 126–7.
[4] Dec. 31, 1782.
[5] June 5, 1787.

overseas, especially trans-Atlantic mail, where, to the obvious dangers of storms, war, and piracy on the high seas, were added long delays while ships waited for a favourable wind, and throughout Wesley's lifetime a very poor postal system in America.[1] In 1775 Wesley wrote to his 'General Assistant' in America, Thomas Rankin: 'That letters travel very slow from us to America is a great inconvenience. But it is a still greater that they travel so uncertainly, sometimes reaching you too late, sometimes not at all.'[2] During 'the troubles in America', of course, and especially after the closing of all the ports except New York to British ships, it was even more difficult, though the British Navy still kept some lanes open, so that on October 20, 1775, Wesley wrote to Rankin, 'I was glad to receive yours by Captain Crawford.'

The gradual improvement of the British roads made possible the greatest accelerator of all, the mail coach, introduced in 1784 by John Palmer, first on trial runs between London and Bristol, and then extended to other post roads, even to the slowest of them all, the Great North Road.[3] By 1787 the mail covered the four hundred miles from London to Edinburgh in sixty hours each way, instead of the round trip of 167 hours in 1757, and over two hundred in 1750. Prior to 1784 those writing from London to other major cities on a Monday could not expect an answer until Friday. Henceforth the answer might arrive on Wednesday.[4] This increased speed may well have been a minor factor associated with the rise in the numbers of extant letters from Wesley after 1784, when he reached the age of 81 and might be expected to reduce his activities.[5]

Franking privileges were retained by the Post Office for its own employers. Members of Parliament and other officers of state were granted free carriage of letters which contained their signature and the words 'Free' or 'Frank'. The letters thus franked came to be more numerous than those that paid postage,[6] and abuses led to an enormous loss of revenue, so that in 1764 the practice had for the first time become subject to legislation, with carefully defined

[1] See Howard Robinson, *Carrying British Mails Overseas*, New York University Press, 1964, and Frank Staff, *The Transaslantic Mail*, New York, Harrap, n.d.

[2] May 19, 1775.

[3] Robinson, *British Post Office*, pp. 126–40.

[4] Ibid., p. 139; cf. Charles R. Clear, *John Palmer*, London, Blandford, 1955, pp. 16–25.

[5] There is no sudden surge during 1784–6, however, and the increase in Wesley's extant letters peaks in the years 1788–9.

[6] Robinson, *British Post Office*, p. 116.

restrictions—but with only minimal effect upon ingrained customs. A similar relatively fruitless attempt at regulation was made in 1784, and in many subsequent years; parliamentary franking was finally abolished in 1840. Mere rules hardly touched an institution which had come to be regarded as a rightful perquisite of office, which could legitimately be extended to one's friends by giving them covers already signed. Franks, indeed, became a kind of public commodity, and Wesley's old tutor, Henry Sherman, writing to him on January 10, 1728, closed, 'Pray let me hear from you. I have accordingly sent you a frank.' Consciences were aroused very little by this custom, or even by the frequent counterfeiting of signatures, although Wesley firmly warned the Methodists against this 'illegal fraud'.[1] Wesley happily accepted franked sheets from his friends in Parliament, although these reveal a gradually increasing strictness in the operation of the system, so that 'Free, James Erskine' in the lower left corner of the address panel gradually gave way to a complete address written in the hand of the M.P., as well as the authorization, 'ffree, W. Strahan'.[2] He even sought to bypass the heavy cost of sending frequent batches of proofs for his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* by returning them to London c/o William Belchier, M.P.[3] And he was naturally irritated when his London helper divided a franked double letter into two before redirecting it to Wesley in Bristol: 'Does not John Atlay know that he should always send me a franked letter as it is? The Duke of Beaufort's, for instance. Half the letter costs something; the whole would cost nothing.'[4]

Postmarks were introduced in 1661 by the first Postmaster-General after the Restoration, Henry Bishop, in order to prevent the dilatory handling of the mail by the letter-carriers. In the two halves of a circle divided horizontally were printed the day and the

[1] Ibid., pp. 50–1, 114–19, 153; cf. George Brummell, *A Short Account of the Franking System in the Post Office*, 1652–1840, Bournemouth, 1936, and Willcocks, op. cit., pp. 54–62. At his Conference in 1758 Wesley reported, 'Counterfeit franks are commonly used in Ireland', and asked, 'Ought any of us to use them? Can a Member of Parliament empower other persons to frank letters for them?' As usual he also supplied the answer: 'By no means. It is an illegal fraud, against which therefore we must warn all our societies.' (Manuscript Minutes, W.H.S. Pub. No. 1, supplemented in *Proceedings*, Vol. IV, Pt. 5 (1904), pp. 70–1.)

[2] Letters dated June 18, 1745, Apr. 4, 1783; cf. Mar. 30, 1751; July 16, 1755; June 5, 1758; Dec. 9, 1760; July 29, 1771; July 10, 1772.

[3] Apr. 9, 1755.

[4] Mar. 12, 1779. For double letters see below, pp. 64–8.

month. With variations in composition, lettering, and size these 'Bishop marks' remained in use until 1787, when they were displaced by concentric circles showing the day, month, and year. The Bishop mark seems to have been used in the head office in London only, to mark the day when the letter was either received, transferred, or delivered, except that Edinburgh and Dublin used a similar mark with the month shown above (as had been true in London until 1713). Under Ralph Allen's leadership (largely as a safeguard against fraud), most provincial cities developed their own distinctive postmarks to use at least on outgoing letters, again with variations in design or size from time to time. Other stamps or inscriptions were occasionally added to the letter to denote various elements in its status, such as 'In All', 'Pd' or 'Post Paid', 'Penny Post Not Paid', 'Free', inspectors' marks (usually a crown, frequently authorizing some added charge), and 'Ship Letter' (with the name of the port of dispatch).[1] The postal charges to be collected at its destination were usually marked on the cover by hand, frequently in stylized figures somewhat difficult to identify, so that a '3' might well be mistaken for a '7'.

Postmarks and postal inscriptions may furnish important evidence about the history of a letter, and it is very unfortunate that in hundreds of instances the cover has become separated from the letter, so that speculation must replace hard evidence upon many points. Postmarks are especially useful, of course, in determining the date of a mutilated or undated letter; from their size and type they may even furnish clues to the year or the letter's place of origin. One minor example from the hundreds in the following volumes may suffice. On the basis of internal evidence John Telford's edition of Wesley's *Letters*[2] dated a letter to William Church as '[London, Aug. 3, 1779]'—a sound deduction as far as it went. The mutilated letter itself, however, probably cut from the foot of another letter, reveals the Bishop mark, '29/IY', proving (along with the other evidence) that the letter was dispatched (and therefore probably written) on July 29, 1779.

Personal letter-carriers. In view of both the cost and the uncer-

[1] Robinson, *British Post Office*, pp. 58, 106–8. For more detailed studies see R. C. Alcock and F. C. Holland, *The Postmarks of Great Britain and Ireland*, Cheltenham, Alcock, 1940, espec. pp. 17–25, 57–63, 76, 87, 92, 106, 125–6, 131–6, 152–3, 193–4, 412, 450. See also R. M. Willcocks, op. cit., pp. 46–53, 102–16, and the same author's *The Postal History of Great Britain and Ireland*, London, Vale Stamps, 1972.

[2] Telford, VI. 351.

tainty of the postal system many letters were delivered by friendly travellers. Thus in a postscript Wesley wrote to James Hutton, 'Pray give our brother Böhler the enclosed, to be delivered with his own hand.'[1] In writing to Mrs. Savage, Wesley closed, 'Be free with Sister Brisco, who brings this.'[2] No fewer than 30 per cent of the extant letters to Wesley's wife which retain their covers thus by-passed the regular mail, and of all Wesley's letters probably one in ten was carried by personal courier—a layman on business, a gentle-woman making a visit, a preacher on his rounds. Many such letters were written to people within the same town, or a short distance away. Nevertheless most travelled quite long distances, from Georgia or Germany to London, from London to Jersey, from London to Londonderry. Letters to or from London, the hub of British communications, were perhaps the simplest to negotiate, and Wesley could frequently find helpful travellers going to other major centres such as Bristol and Dublin. Half of these hand-delivered letters were addressed with the name of the recipient alone ('To the Revd. Mr. C. Wesley' etc.), and the other half added the town ('To Mr. Alexander Knox in Londonderry' etc.). A few of the latter contained more elaborate directions, as if prepared for the regular postal service and handed to a messenger at the last moment—although in fact much detail in addresses was neither necessary nor practicable in Wesley's day, and none of the forty-four letters known to have been posted to Alexander Knox bore any fuller address than that given above.[3] Like the postal system, however, this private letter-

[1] Apr. 28, 1738. 'The enclosed' was in fact a letter written to Charles Wesley on the same sheet; cf. double letters, p.p. 64–8.

[2] Aug. 31, 1771.

[3] On p. 16 above statistics were given from a miscellaneous cross-section of 500 letters. This present summary (like others to follow) is based upon an examination of 500 different letters, compiled to represent the major categories of Wesley's correspondents through most of his writing life. This was done by taking all the holograph letters available in xerox written to fourteen people, preachers, laymen, women, Wesley's family, with one correspondent in Ireland, one in America, one in Canada, covering the years 1738–90 in something like the proportions of the total correspondence. (It would have been quite simple to choose a different five hundred, of course, or a thousand, but it is doubtful whether there would have been any major variation in the findings.) It may be of value to list these persons: Joseph Benson, preacher, 1751–90 (59 letters); Ebenezer Blackwell of London, banker, 1739–62 (30); Mary Bishop, schoolmistress in Bath and Keynsham, 1769–84 (37); William Black, pioneer preacher in Nova Scotia, 1783–90 (6); Ann Bolton, a gentlewoman of Witney, Oxfordshire, 1768–88 (60); James Hutton, bookseller of London, 1737–72 (29); Alexander Knox, theological writer of Londonderry, Ireland, 1775–90 (50); George Merryweather, merchant, of Yarm, 1758–70 (15); Thomas Rankin, preacher, and from 1773 to 1777 Wesley's General Assistant

carrier system occasionally broke down. One of the most important letters in Wesley's personal life, rejecting John Bennet's claims to Wesley's already espoused wife, Grace Murray, was committed to the hands of William Shent, the Methodist barber of Leeds, and—for whatever reason—never delivered, so that a month later Bennet married her.[1]

III. WESLEY AS A CORRESPONDENT

Like the physical aspects of letter-writing, the habits and idiosyncrasies of letter-writers have drawn far less attention than the content of their letters. Yet the one illuminates the other. Some information on this subject may be gleaned from extraneous sources, but for a maximum understanding it is essential to study a large number of original manuscripts. Only in this way can we visualize the processes by which the written letter became a major element in the complex and awe-inspiring ministry of John Wesley. A careful examination may also enable us to make valid deductions about his normal procedures, which in turn may throw light on the many problems of interpretation which arise.

A voluminous correspondence. Wesley's correspondence was enormous. This edition will publish some 3,500 out-letters, about one-third more than those in Telford's edition, yet still only a fraction of his actual output. Nevertheless it is, we believe, a representative fraction, both in its content and in its distribution among the years. For the first decade, 1721–30, we publish (using 'round' figures) only 30 letters, for the second and third decades, taking us to 1750, about 200 each. By this time Methodism was completely developed as a system, though it was not yet fully launched upon its vast expansion. For the following decade, 1751–60, there are about 300 letters, a figure which expands during 1761–70 to 500. By this time Wesley was approaching seventy, but instead of a gradual diminution in his writing of letters there was a doubling during the follow-

in America, 1762–80 (19); Ann Tindall, Methodist poetess of Scarborough, 1774–90 (36); John Valton, preacher, 1769–90 (26); the Revd. Charles Wesley, 1738–88 (77); Mrs. John Wesley, 1751–78 (27); Thomas Wride, preacher, 1771–89 (29). Of these 500 letters 95 lacked the address section, and of the 405 remaining 41 display no evidence of passing through the postal system. (N.B. For various reasons xeroxes of some holographs to these correspondents were not available during the time of this study, so that the above figures do not always represent the totals available for the eventual text.)

[1] Sept. 7, 1749.

ing decade to 1,000, and between 1781 and 1790 this phenomenal increase continued, to reach 1,300. Over 2,000 letters are extant which he wrote after reaching the age of seventy—more than for all the preceding years added together. Undoubtedly this was in part because a larger proportion of his later letters were preserved by eager devotees, and because improved postal services had led to a general increase in letter-writing. The major factor governing this great increase during his later years, however, was surely the demands made upon Wesley's pastoral concern by a rapidly growing Methodist community, combined with his amazing vigour—for even during these years when his physical strength was ebbing he continued to undertake undiminished itineraries throughout the British Isles, and even ventured on two trips to Holland. This view seems to be confirmed by statistics compiled from his diaries (and other sources) of letters which he wrote but which have not survived, which show comparable survival rates for both his earlier and later years.[1]

The number of Wesley's correspondents grew in similar manner over the seven decades of his letter-writing life. For the present edition his named correspondents at present number about sixteen hundred, and many more remain anonymous, pseudonymous, or still unidentified. That his correspondents in fact reached several times this number is implied by his whole style of life, as well as by the facts that some known correspondents are not represented by any extant letters,[2] and that for fewer than 25 per cent of these correspondents do we have both in-letters and out-letters, while 50 per cent are represented only by letters from Wesley to them—in half of these instances by one letter only. (These, of course, are the letters which have been preserved and are known to the editor, and can offer no reliable guide to the numbers of original correspondents or letters.) With such a large percentage of 'one-shot' letters

[1] During the years for which his early diary is extant (1725–41) some 1,650 letters are recorded, of which about 325 are extant in one form or another—20 per cent. During the last nine years for which his diary is available (1782–91) he wrote a minimum of 4,700 (counting all references to 'letters' as two only), of which 1,200 are available in one form or another—25 per cent. If 'writ letters' is interpreted as writing an average of three per session instead of two (which is still probably an underestimate for the much briefer letters of Wesley's later years, especially during writing sessions which sometimes lasted two or three hours), the total figure becomes 6,600, of which those extant form 18 per cent.

[2] e.g. his letter of June 18, 1757: 'I have heard from both Mrs. Gaussen and Miss Bosanquet.' No correspondence with Mrs. Gaussen is known, and none with Mary Bosanquet before 1761.

extant, however, it seems highly probable that more such will turn up, and thus the list of his known correspondents be extended.

It is nevertheless of some value to study statistics derived from the total correspondence so far known. It begins very modestly with one extant letter to him in 1717, when he was fourteen, followed by 24 correspondents during the decade 1721–30,[1] which multiplied to 122 during 1731–40, increased to 152 during 1741–50, and then declined to 139 in 1751–60. The following decade, 1761–70, when Wesley was in his 60s, it increased to 208, and each of the following decades reveals increases of a hundred in the number of Wesley's correspondents, to 306 by 1780 and 406 by 1790. Even during his last two months of letter-writing in 1791 he corresponded with 27 people, more than all noted for his first decade, just as more letters from him are extant for January and February, 1791, than during his first decade, 31 against 28.[2]

A religious duty. For many people writing letters is mere drudgery, for others creative joy, for most a mixture of both. John Wesley belonged to the last group, though the arduous religious chore was relieved by only occasional moments of personal pleasure. Even at the beginning of the Methodist movement, on Nov. 16, 1738, he wrote to Benjamin Ingham and James Hutton—trying to satisfy two correspondents with one letter—'I have four- or five-and-thirty other letters to write, so can say no more.' The rapid growth of Methodism, combining with his own inner urge to maintain personal oversight of its multitudinous ramifications and their attendant problems, necessarily entailed a steady increase in the number of letters which he received, from scores to hundreds every year, and even to many hundreds. Nor was this eased by two of his declared principles: 'I generally write to all that desire it, though not often in many words',[3] and, 'It is a rule with me to answer every letter I receive.'[4] An incidental remark made by him in 1781 was probably close to the truth: 'I have had, for many years, and have at this day,

[1] The figures given are for correspondences which were active during any year of each decade, so that one with letters in 1758, 1769–72 would be counted in three decades.

[2] Obviously one would not expect the number of correspondents to increase at the same rate as the actual letters written to them by an active correspondent, nor do they, but the general curve of increase is similar, though not so steep. Taking the first decade in each case as the norm (and using approximations), during the seven decades Wesley's correspondents increased in the ratio 1 : 5 : 6 : 6 : 8 : 12 : 16, while his actual letters increased in the ratio 1 : 6 : 6 : 10 : 17 : 31 : 43.

[3] Feb. 16, 1787, to John King.

[4] Apr. 5, 1781; cf. July 13, 1783.

a greater number of pious correspondents than any person in England, or perhaps in Europe.'[1] The five thousand extant letters to or from Wesley represent only the tip of the iceberg. The contemporaries of his later years realized something of the enormous pressures thus put upon him, and Henry Moore remarked: 'Mr. Wesley had many correspondents; and it often surprised his friends that he could answer one-fourth of the letters he received.'[2]

The English weather was an influential factor in Wesley's letter-writing, because it tended to govern his travelling. Only during the summer were most of the country roads reasonably passable, so that his major itineraries were undertaken between April and October, including his alternating biennial tours in Ireland and Scotland—though in fact spring was far from ideal for his Scottish itinerary.[3] He found that he could read in a coach or a chaise, and even on horseback, but writing was almost impossible.[4] During his journeys, therefore, he informed his correspondents where and when letters might reach him.[5] Thus at the post towns scattered along the post roads he would collect batches of letters, occasionally answering immediately any that were urgent, but adding the bulk to the bundles of those already awaiting replies. In some parts of the country even this was not practicable, so that after spending most of June and July, 1745, in Cornwall and Wales, and then touring Wiltshire and Somersetshire, he wrote from Bristol: 'I now had leisure to look over the letters I had received this summer.'[6] There were many weeks during his summer itineraries when he seems neither to have received nor to have written any letters.[7] Summer, therefore, except for the few weeks spent every two years in Dublin, and occasional week-ends in other large centres, was not his basic time for correspondence, though he did dispatch letters from a remarkable number

[1] *A. M.*, 1781, Preface, Jan. 1, 1781, § 4.

[2] Moore, II. 152.

[3] See Wesley F. Swift, *Methodism in Scotland*, London, Epworth Press, 1947, p. 19.

[4] e.g. diary, Sept. 8–9, 1740, *en route* from Bristol to London, when he read for a total of 14½ hours.

[5] e.g. July 23, 1768, to Jane Hilton: 'You may direct your next to me in Haverfordwest, Crosspost'. He left instructions for redirecting his letters with his helpers in London and Dublin: 'Letters directed to the Foundery will find me wherever I am' (May 10, 1755; cf. Aug. 6, 1769); 'When I am in Ireland, you have only to direct to Dublin, and the letter will find me' (Mar. 18, 1769).

[6] JWJ, Aug. 12, 1745.

[7] There are no extant letters for Aug. 13 to Sept. 6, 1776, which he spent mostly in Cornwall. On Sept. 16 he wrote from Bristol to Hetty Roe: 'As I did not receive yours of August the 28th before my return from Cornwall, I was beginning to grow a little apprehensive lest your love was growing cold.'

of places—not only from Yorkshire, Lancashire, and the Midlands, but from Cornwall, Wales, and many parts of Scotland and Ireland. This becomes more marked during his later years, with the improvement in the postal services, as well as the phenomenal increase in his own correspondence.

Almost every year, however, he spent about four months in the London area, from November to February, as well as a week or so during the summer to catch up with events.[1] During this one-third of the year he penned roughly one-half of his total letters for the year, sometimes considerably more, sometimes slightly less. The Bristol–Kingswood area was his next most important headquarters, where he usually spent two or three periods a year, of varying lengths, amounting to almost two months in all, though here the proportion of letters sent to time spent is not so stable or so remarkable.[2]

Even during his itineraries Wesley tried to keep on top of his correspondence by setting aside a few hours on most non-travelling days for this task, preferably in the morning.[3] He also attacked large accumulations during periodical bursts of literary spring-cleaning when he could secure appropriate conditions in his own studies in London, Bristol, Dublin, or some other of his preaching-houses, or a private room in a friendly and spacious home. Because he took his writing seriously he always sought the best working conditions possible. He was careful about posture, guarding others (and surely himself) against leaning on their stomachs, or writing for too long at a time.[4]

During his middle years the occasions when he could spend an hour upon a letter became rare indeed, but nevertheless he did manage to secure a few large blocks of time during which he could develop a close-knit argument on important subjects with influential people, witness his correspondence with 'John Smith', a thoughtful but critical clergyman who sought to understand Wesley's theological and ecclesiastical principles. Each of the six letters written to him by Wesley from 1745 to 1748 occupies the space (and presumably

[1] 'In the beginning of October I generally move towards London, in the neighbourhood of which I usually spend the winter.' (Aug. 14, 1782.) This simply confirms the evidence of his journeys recorded in *Journal* and letters, best displayed in 'An Itinerary in which are traced the Rev. John Wesley's Journeys from October 14, 1735, to October 24, 1790', prepared by Richard Green for W.H.S. VI, 1907–8.

[2] These figures are based on spot checks for every fifth year from 1750 to 1790.

[3] See, for example, his diary for July 4, 12, 21, 23, 27, 30, 1739, and his letter to Philothea Briggs, Jan. 25, 1771: 'Whatever you write, you should write in the forenoons.'

[4] Jan. 25, 1771; Jan. 18, 1782.

occupied the time) devoted to seven or eight of his run-of-the-mill letters of that period—or about twice as many of those written forty years later. Wesley explained that for such an important correspondence he would rather write late than write inadequately, and that his letter of Sept. 28, 1745, 'was the longer delayed because I could not persuade myself to write at all till I had leisure to write fully'. To Richard Tompson, with whom he was conducting a doctrinal controversy a decade later, he wrote:

I am a very slow, you seem to be a very swift writer . . . My time is so taken up, from day to day, and from week to week, that I can spare very little from my stated employments; so that I can neither write so largely nor so accurately as I might otherwise do. All, therefore, which you can expect from me is (not a close-wrought chain of connected arguments, but) a short sketch of what I should deduce more at large if I had more leisure.[1]

Thirty years later the greatly increased pressure compelled him to try to work letter-writing sessions into nearly every day, sometimes three or four sessions a day. The time devoted to each letter was (in general) reduced, and long letters became exceptional. He came to feel very distressed about this, confessing to Mary Cooke (who married Adam Clarke): 'Considering that I am usually obliged to write in haste, I often doubt whether my correspondence is worth having.'[2] Some idea of the burden of these chores during his eighties may be gathered from the diary entries for two days chosen almost at random. The first is for January 14, 1789, the second of two days spent with 'old friends at Newington', in the London area:

5.30 prayed, letters; 8 tea, conversed, prayer; 9 on business, letters, journal; 1 dinner, conversed; 2.30 letters; 5 tea, conversed; 6 letters; 8 supper, conversed, prayer; 9.30

The second was during the sessions of the annual Conference in Leeds, July 31, 1789:

4 sleep; 5 prayed, letters; 6 Conf[erence], letters, Conf.; 12 letters; 2 dinner; 3 letters; 5 tea, conversed, prayer; 6 Mark 13:32![3] letters; 8 supper, conversed, prayer; 9.30

(Perhaps it should be pointed out that *none* of at least eighteen letters written on these two days appears to have survived—a fair

[1] Feb. 5, 1756.

[2] Mar. 31, 1787. Cf. a letter to Lady Maxwell: 'I have often wondered that you were not weary of so useless a correspondent' (July 4, 1787.)

[3] The text of the 'official' sermon which he preached at the Conference.

indication of the fractional nature of the extant letters, even for Wesley's later years.)[1]

With a few correspondents, however, Wesley did spend more time, not only because they sought spiritual improvement, but because he was actually enjoying himself, simply allowing his pen to flow along almost effortlessly as he imagined himself talking to them, just as he innocently relaxed like a contented child in the company of congenial, cultivated, and devout young women—who predominated among these favoured correspondents. To Jenny Hilton he wrote: 'There would be little cross in writing letters if I found it as pleasant to write to others as it is to write to *you*.'[2] In a similar vein he wrote to Ally Eden, at the same time expounding his strict economy of effort in correspondence:

> If either young or old were to write to me on trifles, there would be room to blame them. Indeed, I should blame them myself, and soon put a stop to such unprofitable correspondence. But Nancy Bolton and you and two or three more who write to me, though they are young, are not triflers. Neither do they write on subjects of a trifling nature, but on those of the greatest importance. Let my dear Ally Eden continue to do this, whoever praises or blames. You give me much pleasure thereby, and sometimes reap profit to yourself.[3]

Opening a correspondence. As might be expected, Wesley rarely initiated a correspondence. One clue to this is to be found in an incidental phrase in a printed letter addressed to the subscribers to his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, which was being issued in weekly numbers and proving a heavy burden to him: 'All my time is swallowed up, and I can hardly catch a few hours to answer the letters that are sent me.'[4] The vast majority of his own letters were such, 'answers to the letters . . . sent' him, asking help or advice of some kind. When the origins of fifty fairly large series of correspondence are checked, it is seen that in only twenty-four is there any indication of the initiator, and in only five does it appear to have been Wesley; the others seem to have been begun byWesley's correspondents. In opening a correspondence with Elizabeth Ritchie he points out that this is quite contrary to his normal practice:

> My dear Betsy,
>
> It is not common for me to write to anyone first; I only answer those that write to me. But I willingly make an exception with regard to *you*; for it is not

[1] Nor is the diary necessarily a complete record of the letters sent. For September, 1787, a check of extant letters shows one dated Sept. 7 and two dated Sept. 30, though no letter-writing is noted in the diary for those dates.

[2] Mar. 1, 1769. [3] May 2, 1771. [4] June 20, 1766.

[a common] concern that I feel for you. You are just rising into life; and I would fain have you not almost but altogether a Christian.[1]

Other exceptions, of course, were his preachers. As the one who called them into the itinerant work it was clearly up to him to make the first approach, and a typical instance is probably his letter to Zechariah Yewdall, just launching into his first circuit:

Wherever you are, be ready to acknowledge what God has done for your soul, and earnestly exhort all the believers to expect full salvation. You would do well to read every morning a chapter in the New Testament, with the *Notes*, and to spend the greatest part of the morning in reading, meditation, and prayer. In the afternoon you might visit the society from house to house, in the manner laid down in the *Minutes* of the Conference. The more labour, the more blessing![2]

There is also some evidence that in addition to occasional letters to them Wesley made a practice of writing each winter to all his preachers, or at least to all his 'Assistants'—those preachers in administrative control of the circuits.[3]

Frequency of writing. The same pattern continued throughout Wesley's correspondence. In general he responded to the writer's letter, rather than venturing upon many new points of his own, apart from the almost universal closing paragraph or sentence of spiritual exhortation. Normally he did not reply immediately unless he sensed an emergency. To John Fletcher's widow he wrote: 'When I receive letters from other persons, I let them lie, perhaps a week or two, before I answer them. But it is otherwise when I hear from *you*. I then think much of losing a day, for fear I should

[1] May 8, 1774. He did make overtures to other people from time to time, however, though not always successfully, as he told Samuel Bardsley: 'I wrote to Mr. Powys, as I promised, but I never had any answer' (Jan. 28, 1770.)

[2] Oct. 9, 1779. Similar models of compact advice are to be seen in his first responses to the opening letters of those asking help of various kinds, witness those to Alexander Knox (June 6, 1755, a health regime), the spiritual exhortation to Penelope Newman (June 3, 1763), and the critique on Ann Tindall's verse of July 6, 1774.

[3] This statement is based on a study of Wesley's letters to the twelve preachers with names beginning between B and H to whom he addressed from four to thirty letters. To these men he wrote 175 letters during a combined total of 89 connexional years, i.e. from July of one to June of the following. During these 89 years extant winter letters were sent by Wesley in no fewer than 74, although in four cases these were from Bristol rather than London. Even making allowances for the fact that Wesley wrote more letters during the winter months, this shows a very high proportion dispatched to preachers at this period of the year. The statistics seem especially significant in the case of Samuel Bardsley: of 29 extant letters written to him during 19 years, in only two of those years is there no London letter during January to March, and in eleven years this is the only known letter.

give a moment's pain to one of the most faithful friends I have in the world.'[1] Probably nearer the norm was his correspondence with Mrs. Eliza Bennis of Limerick, Waterford, and then Philadelphia, as revealed by extracts published in 1809 by her son.[2] These show a pattern of four or five letters each per year from 1763 to 1776, though there are a few gaps where letters were apparently not preserved, certainly not utilized. In all except one instance (when Wesley was returning some of her manuscript journals), his letters were always replies to hers, and although her letters were sometimes written months after receiving his last, Wesley's own always recur at regular intervals of about two or three weeks after hers. We are able to visualize his putting the letter at the bottom of a growing pile after reading it, to await its turn for a reply—unless, indeed (which is quite possible), he was maintaining in these later years as well as in his earlier ones a written scheme of correspondence with various people.

Wesley let it be known that he did not welcome letters too frequently, and that there should be something important to answer when letters were sent to him. Thus Mrs. Bennis, after receiving his letter of April 1, 1773, delayed until August 25 before writing: 'The want of anything particular this some time past has prevented my troubling you, or intruding on your more precious time. But the desire of receiving a line from you has obliged me to break through.' With most correspondents letters were no more frequent than one a month, so that Wesley himself wrote to them about every two months. Wesley informed a preacher in Ireland, 'You should not write seldomer than once in two or three months.'[3] When Ann Tindall delayed in writing beyond this, he chided her: 'I really think it would be a pardonable fault if you wrote once in two months instead of once in six.'[4] Wesley's letters to Alexander Knox followed a similar two-monthly pattern, but they tailed off considerably during some years, and there are none from Wesley dated 1786 or 1788. On Sept. 3, 1781, however, Wesley wrote apologizing to

[1] Jan. 13, 1786. What little evidence is available supports Wesley's statement; on July 12, 1782, he answered her letter of the 5th, and on Sept. 15, 1785, he was able to announce the publication of her lengthy letter to him about Fletcher's death, written to him Aug. 18.

[2] *Christian Correspondence: being a Collection of Letters written by the late Rev. John Wesley and several Methodist Preachers in connection with him to the late Mrs. Eliza Bennis, with her answers*, Philadelphia, Graves, 1809.

[3] Dec. 14, 1761.

[4] Jan. 19, 1776.

Knox for a slight delay beyond his normal waiting period: 'Almost ever since I received yours I have been in perpetual motion, travelling from Yorkshire to London, from London to Bristol, and thence through the West of England. Otherwise I should not have delayed writing so long, lest you should imagine I was regardless of you.'[1] The implication seems to be that in a complete series any lengthy gaps were due more to the lack of overtures from his correspondent than to Wesley's abnormally delayed responses.

With a few people Wesley exchanged letters more rapidly, at least for a period of several months or years at a time. He told Thomas Olivers in London, 'Certainly you should write to me a little oftener—once a month at the least.'[2] To Nancy Bolton, Wesley wrote anywhere from eight to ten letters a year between 1768 and 1791, answering hers about two or three weeks after he had received them, though occasionally sooner. The same pattern is seen in his correspondence with Elizabeth Ritchie, 1774–88, during which period he wrote nine or ten letters a year, usually replying to hers after two or three weeks.

It is quite clear that Wesley greatly preferred a rhythmic exchange of letters, whether every two weeks, every month, or at longer intervals, though occasionally letters did cross in the post, or the correspondence was disrupted in some other way. He wrote to his wife, far less methodical than he: 'I can easily remove that difficulty of your not knowing which of your letters I answer, by writing just letter for letter. Then there can be no mistake. There could never have been any if I had not wrote two or three letters to your one.'[3] In an emergency, of course, he tried to reply immediately. To Mary Bishop he wrote about a problem which had arisen in Bath: 'I have laid your letter so carefully by that I cannot find it. But as I am going into Norfolk early in the morning I will not stay till I come back before I write.'[4] Unusual circumstances occasionally broke the rhythm from time to time both for others and for Wesley himself. During the early months of 1761 Mary Bosanquet was experiencing something like sanctification, as well as being involved with a spiritual revival in the local Methodist society. Within two

[1] Knox seems to have preserved all his letters from Wesley carefully, a total of fifty, all bound in a volume except one, which is loose. No letters from Knox to Wesley have been preserved, but the evidence of Wesley's travels implies that he had received Knox's letter in late July or early August; the answer, therefore, was only a week or so beyond the period when it would be expected.

[2] July 10, 1756. [3] May 21, 1756. [4] Oct. 31, 1773.

months she wrote ten letters, a kind of running commentary upon these events. None of Wesley's replies survive, but it is highly unlikely that he matched her letters one for one, though hints are given of two which have disappeared.[1] Similarly Wesley himself wrote three letters within the space of nine days to Samuel Tooth, the contractor who was building the New Chapel in City Road, London,[2] and in 1788 wrote three letters in eleven days to Henry Moore.[3]

Drafts and copies. Like most careful writers, Wesley usually prepared drafts for his more important letters, and also kept fair copies for reference. Occasionally these drafts have survived, including those for three letters written in his climactic year of 1738, two to William Law, and one to his brother Samuel.[4] In the case of his letter to Mary Bishop, attempting to elucidate the doctrine of the atonement, Wesley retained the draft, and the actual letter itself has also survived.[5]

A draft, of course, might also serve as a reference copy, and in the absence of any corrections it is not always certain whether a holograph letter did not originally function as a draft. The absence of an address, and of Wesley's characteristic folding and sealing, will in most instances announce immediately that the document is not the letter itself, as dispatched to the recipient. Many of these copies retained by Wesley remain when the letter itself has disappeared, and their evidence (like that of a draft) is almost as valuable as that of the letter itself as far as literary content is concerned, though they tell us nothing of the letter's postal history, and are occasionally inaccurate.[6] Both John and Charles Wesley made copies of letters and other documents prepared by the other—indeed several of John Wesley's sermons have been preserved only through Charles Wesley's copies. Frequently, perhaps usually, copies were made by amanuenses, such as one endorsed by Wesley, 'To G. Wh[itefield], March 16, 1739', and a controversial letter to Francis Okeley of Oct. 4, 1758. One letter to Mrs. Mary Parker of Fakenham, dated Jan. 21, 1784, gave a lengthy rebuttal of her reasons for denying Methodist

[1] Her letters were dated February, Mar. 7, 19, Apr. 1, 6 (two), 17 (two), May 1 and 5; his were probably written *c.* Feb. 2 and Apr. 11.

[2] Sept. 27, Oct. 1, 5, 1778.

[3] May 6, 11, 17.

[4] May 14, 20, Oct. 30.

[5] Feb. 7, 1778.

[6] For instance, the draft preserved by Wesley as a reference copy of his letter of May 14, 1738, to William Law, does not contain one criticism added to the letter as sent (see p. 542 below).

preachers access to the pulpit in her private chapel; of this the original is extant, as also a contemporary copy in two different hands. The copy of an ultimatum to his wife, however, written July 15, 1759, was (not unexpectedly) prepared by Wesley himself. The preparation of such copies was an important part of contemporary letter-writing, and it was doubtless for this purpose mainly that Wesley secured secretarial assistance for a day spent in answering the 'abundance of letters' which awaited him at Bath in 1787.[1] It was from such copies that he occasionally published his own letters in his *Journal* or in the *Arminian Magazine*.[2]

Wesley sometimes duplicated the same or a very similar letter to different persons. Such was one about the beginnings of the Methodist campaign in Kingswood, which he published in the *Journal* as having been written to 'Mr. D[unscombe?]'. Within a few days a copy was written to Howell Harris, and another a little later to 'Mr. Thomas Price'.[3] The most important examples of this time-saving practice are the duplicate letters pleading that Britain should not become involved in war against the Americans, one of which Wesley wrote on June 14, 1775, to Lord Dartmouth, Secretary of State for the Colonies, and the other on June 15 to Lord North, the First Lord of the Treasury—letters which are identical except for a few minor variants. On at least one occasion he seems to have signed handwritten copies of no fewer than sixty-two letters sent to all his Assistants about various aspects of Methodist discipline: the manuscripts of at least three survive, and another was printed from a different original in 1821.[4] Similarly he seems to have employed amanuenses to prepare copies of a letter to his preachers seeking Methodist support for his abridgement of John Goodwin's treatise on justification,[5] of which the copy sent to Thomas Rankin has survived—addressed, dated (Nov. 2, 1764), and signed by Wesley himself.

Frequently Wesley followed a simpler path, making multiple copies by the relatively inexpensive method of printing, signing

[1] JWJ, Sept. 15, 1787.

[2] e.g. that of Sept. 15, 1762, to the Revd. Samuel Furly, which appeared in the *A.M.* for Dec., 1781 (IV. 670–1).

[3] JWJ; see p. 701 below.

[4] See Nov. 12, 1779. Three of the Assistants were Thomas Carlill of Tiverton, William Church of Glamorgan, and John Mason of Taunton; to the identity of the other there is no clue.

[5] *Bibliog*, No. 266.

them, and distributing them through the mail—a very different practice, of course, from actual publication.[1] One example is that of Oct. 15, 1766, seeking the co-operation of evangelical clergy, for which Wesley reproduced one written to Lord Dartmouth on April 19, 1764. He utilized the same expedient for circulating letters seeking help in securing financial stability for Methodism. If that of Nov. 24, 1767, is any guide, Wesley himself addressed copies to the few people known personally to him in each circuit, and then instructed his Assistant to distribute them to the remainder of the likely prospects. Thus his letter to Robert Costerdine: 'I have wrote to T. Colbeck, Jam. Greenwood . . . The rest in your circuit I leave to you . . . When you receive the printed letters, seal, superscribe, and deliver them in my name to whom you please.'[2]

Interruptions. With a correspondence so voluminous it is scarcely surprising that Wesley sometimes failed in his good intentions. 'Ten times, I believe', he told one correspondent, 'I have been going to answer your last, and have been as often hindered.'[3] Occasionally he began a letter, was interrupted, and never finished it.[4] Sometimes he would head a sheet with the place of writing, probably utilizing a few moments insufficient to complete a letter, but when eventually he took it up again found it necessary to alter the heading.[5]

Letters sometimes took two or even more sessions to complete. On Jan. 10, 1775, Wesley began writing to Ann Bolton early in the morning, but broke off after the first paragraph because he was setting out on a preaching tour. He finished it the following day, witness the postscript: 'I began this at London, but could not end it till I came to Luton.'[6] This letter was delayed still further in the mail.

[1] They remain private, quite unlike 'open letters' on sale to the public, even when (as was apparently the case with *A Plain Account of the People called Methodists*, *Bibliog*, No. 159, printed in Vol. 9 of this edition) they originated as personal letters to individuals.

[2] Cf. similar letters dated Nov. 20, 1769, and Dec. 12, 1772, and those in later years appealing for the New Chapel, City Road, London, or for that in Dewsbury, which (as Wesley told Henry Moore, Sept. 5, 1789) 'should be printed and sent to every Assistant'.

[3] Nov. 5, 1762; cf. July 11, 1763.

[4] As on Oct. 28, 1758, when he broke off in the middle of the second sentence of a letter. Those of Dec. 28, 1784, and July 4, 1789, he abandoned after the opening sentences, striking through those passages a few days later and using the same sheets to write complete letters; on the first he wrote the letter of Dec. 30, 1784, to Ann Tindall, on the second that of July 7, 1789, to Mr. Hall. Cf. a sheet addressed to Nancy Holman and later used for a letter to Joseph Benson, dated Dec. 21, 1779.

[5] See a letter dated 'Witney, Oct. 16, 1783', and re-dated, 'London, Oct. 17, 1783'.

[6] The break is confirmed and pinpointed by the different pen, ink, and handwriting.

Postmarks enable us to trace the individual misadventures of many letters. One to Samuel Furly, for example, written from Mountmellick on June 19, 1769, was not postmarked by the London post office until July 12, and still had to travel north to Yorkshire. It is quite possible, of course, that on this occasion as on others the delay was Wesley's fault rather than that of the postal service. Another letter to Ann Bolton, for instance, was written Feb. 17, 1774, but bore the following conclusion: 'March 2, 1774. I found the above (which I thought had been finished and sent) among my papers this morning. I hope you did not think you was forgotten by, My dear Nancy, Your affectionate brother, J. Wesley.'[1] Far worse was the fate of a letter to Mr. York of Stourport, which Wesley discovered in his bureau over three weeks later—after the visit to Stourport to which it referred.[2] Sometimes a letter seems to have remained unanswered because Wesley did not quite know what to do with it.[3] Personal emergencies might intervene for him as well as for his correspondents. Thus to his letter of Nov. 20, 1755, to the Revd. Samuel Walker, Wesley added the postscript: 'All but the last paragraph of this I had wrote three weeks ago, but the dangerous illness of my wife prevented my finishing it sooner.'[4] A few letters Wesley held back permanently because of second thoughts or the advice of friends. This happened to his loyal address to George I, written March 5, 1744, upon the urgent request of some Methodists, but abandoned when his brother Charles argued: 'It would constitute us a sect; at least it would *seem to allow* that we are a body distinct from the national Church, whereas we are only a sound part of that Church.'[5]

Corrections and revisions. To Nancy Bolton Wesley confessed, 'I often write in haste',[6] and this was especially true of his personal letters, which are riddled with minor corrections and revisions—as well as undiscovered errors. Of seventy-six holographs of his letters

[1] Similarly on Nov. 20, 1766, he wrote a letter to Christopher Hopper, but discovered it still unsent on Nov. 27, whereupon he added another message, beginning, 'It is well my letter was overlooked till I came home. So one will do for two.' Still later he added a further postscript revising the second message before he sent the letter on its way.

[2] Feb. 6, 1791, with the postscript dated (apparently) Feb. 28, 'This morning I found this in my bureau.' That the letter was in fact dispatched is shown by the postmark and the postal-charge inscription.

[3] Oct. 20, 1768.

[4] As the cover was in fact postmarked Nov. 22 it is clear that what Wesley had finished earlier was a draft of this important letter.

[5] CWJ, Mar. 6, 1744.

[6] Jan. 29, 1773.

to his brother Charles, stretching from 1738 to 1788, no fewer than sixty-eight show alterations of one kind or another, including both the earliest and the latest. Some of these are afterthoughts, such as the addition of the sentence, 'I never saw it till it was printed.'[1] Most (like the last) are written over the line, and indicated by a caret, implying that they were added during a later perusal of the letter, possibly whilst preparing a reference copy—a good argument for such a practice! Occasionally the revision was certainly made during the process of writing, as where the manuscript reads, '~~to~~ "Take thou authority . . . "'[2] or 'be ~~at~~ the ~~he~~ chief'.[3] Usually they are careless errors caused by haste, such as writing 'horse' for 'house',[4] but sometimes stylistic, even the changing of the position of quotation marks.[5] Easily the largest group of errors, however—and a clear indication of how his thoughts frequently ran ahead of his pen—consisted of the omission of a word or words. No fewer than thirty-five of the seventy-six letters contain such corrections, one having three, including two in one line,[6] and another no fewer than five.[7] The same is true of the series to Alexander Knox and Ann Tindall, of which once more about half contain corrected errors of omission, and occasionally such errors uncorrected.[8] Indeed, so universal (and so multitudinous) are the alterations in Wesley's extant manuscripts, whether of letters or works intended for publication, that there seems little point in indicating them in the text unless in very exceptional circumstances.

Wesley's handwriting. There is a slight family resemblance between the hands of John Wesley, his brother Charles, and several of his sisters; some of Wesley's preachers—whether by chance or design is not always certain—used a similar hand. Yet his remains distinctive, and once recognized is difficult to confuse with that of anyone else.[9] Wesley's first extant letter (Nov. 3, 1721) is in a fully rounded, forward sloping, somewhat feminine hand, with each letter formed separately ('script'). By the time of his second extant letter (Sept. 23, 1723) this had become somewhat firmer, and was much more so

[1] Feb. 22, 1774. [2] June 23, 1739.

[3] Feb. 28, 1766, changing 'be at the he[lm]', the last word unfinished, to 'be the chief'.

[4] Sept. 28, 1760. [5] June 23, 1739.

[6] June 8, 1789. [7] Nov. 3, 1775.

[8] e.g. Aug. 5, 1782, to Ann Tindall, with one corrected and one not.

[9] For fuller details on Wesley's calligraphy see an article by the editor in W.H.S. XXV. 97–9. Michael Fenwick is said deliberately to have mimicked Wesley in many ways (see Atmore, p. 123), and evidence of his success can be seen in his letter of Aug. 26, 1790, to Samuel Bardsley (in MA).

by his third (Nov. 1, 1724), when he began to forsake script for a cursive hand, and the edge was taken from its almost too precise beauty. This was explained in the letter itself: 'I should have writ before now had I not an unlucky cut across my thumb, which almost jointed it, but is now pretty well cured. I hope you will excuse my writing so ill, which I can't easily help, as being obliged to get done as soon as I can.' In the following letter (Dec. 18, 1724), script again appeared alongside cursive, as it did also in 1725. The speed of the cursive hand, however, answered the needs of Wesley's proliferating correspondence, and script was gradually discarded —or almost discarded. His handwriting continued to present something of the general appearance of script, and even into old age he used the script epsilon and sigma as well as the cursive 'e' and 's', and made breaks after other letters within words. Age, of course, including varying periods of semi-blindness and shaking hands, brought near ruin to his calligraphy, proving a trial both to himself and to his readers, and bequeathing to future generations many errors caused by the inability of compositors and scholars alike to interpret some of his later scrawls.

What about the character evidenced by this handwriting? One of these days the writer of these lines hopes to offer some graphologist (probably through an intermediary) a specimen of Wesley's handwriting which does not immediately give him away by its subject-matter—if indeed such can be found. Forty years ago a gentleman with forty years' practical experience as a graphologist did offer such an opinion, claiming that his slight knowledge of Wesley's history and teaching (as a non-Methodist) had not been allowed to influence him. His delineation, though somewhat lengthy, is worth preserving, and every claim could indeed be illustrated from independent documentary evidence:

> The handwriting of the Rev. John Wesley reveals a refined and sensitive nature; one who feels intensely any unkindness or slight; but who appreciates most gratefully any token of affection or esteem.
>
> The mind is cultured, expressing grace and refinement; there is considerable business ability, mental dexterity, clearness of ideas, and application to detail.
>
> The character is straightforward, candid, honest, and conscientious. There is real affection, a gentle spirit, true humility, and an unusual degree of kindness.
>
> His habits are methodical and precise; he cannot endure disorder or confusion of any kind.
>
> Artistic taste and a poetic temperament are clearly revealed. He has an imaginative mind; is versatile, having a knowledge of and interest in many

subjects. His ideas follow each other in logical sequence; he can express his thoughts fluently, in words both pleasing and graceful.

The handwriting discloses his innate economy, his scrupulous neatness in dress, and in his domestic arrangements.

Discouragement affects his spirit; he suffers silently, more than his outward behaviour reveals; he is a patient man, persevering without wavering.

He is quick to criticism; he sees at once the weak point in the argument of an opponent; he has a facility for making comparisons, and illustrating ideas.

Throughout, his handwriting reveals a purity of heart and mind, elevation of thought, and deep spirituality.[1]

Amanuenses and secretaries. Wesley frequently used an amanuensis to prepare a copy of a letter. Occasionally the letter dispatched was itself in the hand of an amanuensis, such as one of Sept. 21, 1739, to Charles Wesley, in which only a covering note and the address were written by John. This was in effect a journal-letter, apparently copied at Wesley's request from his written journal. A similar case is an account of Methodist activities in Kingswood, of which duplicates appear to have been made.[2] Other types of letters are also found in the hands of scribes, probably because Wesley had prepared a draft, which was retained as the reference copy, while a companion was asked to write out a fair copy to send to the recipient. Instances of such letters are reported by Dr. John Whitehead as written by Benjamin Ingham,[3] and those to 'John Smith'. Wesley's letter to 'John Smith' dated Dec. 30, 1745, referring back to the previous letter, states, 'I find my transcriber has made a violent mistake, writing 13,000 instead of 1,300.'[4] (Which implies that although Wesley usually proof-read letters and thus discovered at least some of his own errors, he did not always proof-read fair copies of important letters dispatched on his behalf.) Similarly on Jan. 4, 1768, in sending Richard Libby a copy of his printed circular of Nov. 20, 1767, a covering note was added in the hand of a scribe, to which John Wesley appended his signature. Transcriptions of letters copied by an amanuensis and authorized by Wesley's signature continued to appear until his closing years.[5] Occasionally Wesley wrote the letter and his amanuensis the address, as well as folding the sheet (quite differently from Wesley's normal practice).[6]

[1] Mr. W. A. Brewster, Lancing, in *The Methodist Recorder*, Dec. 16, 1937. There is no indication about which manuscripts he had studied.

[2] Dec. 6, 1739.

[3] Feb. 24, 26, 1737, to Oglethorpe and Bray's Associates.

[4] § [8].

[5] e.g. Nov. 29, 1782; Mar. 13, 1787; Mar. 13, 1788.

[6] Nov. 11, 1786.

During his eighties, however, another factor began to operate, when there seems to have been no intention of preserving a copy. Because of failing eyesight or some other physical infirmity he dictated a letter to a companion, simply adding his own signature. Such were the letters written during Wesley's last month, to Thomas Roberts on February 8, 1791, to John Gaulter on the 10th, to Francis Wrigley on the 18th, to Walter Churchey on the 22nd. The marvel is that he continued to address at least some of these letters, and even from his deathbed to write out a few completely, including his famous letter to William Wilberforce, attacking slavery, on February 24, 1791.

In addition to utilizing the services of amanuenses who copied verbatim what he had written, or who wrote at his dictation, Wesley also employed what might be called confidential secretaries, who were charged to pass on messages on his behalf. These, of course, signed their own names, but made it quite clear that they were acting for him, not for themselves. Dr. Thomas Coke wrote letters of this kind, such as one to Robert Dodsley, Feb. 24, 1781: 'Sir, Mr. Wesley is desirous of employing two or three booksellers in different parts of the town to sell his publications, allowing the 25 per cent profit, the usual allowance to booksellers . . .' Many others performed this function from time to time: Peter Jaco (Feb. 18, 1777), Thomas Tennant (Nov. 12, 1783, and Feb. 12, 1785), John Atlay (Feb. 23, 1784), Henry Moore (Dec. 24, 1784), John Broadbent (Jan. 24, 1787), Joseph Bradford (June 14, 1788), and probably many others, including a layman, Arthur Keene (see July 31, 1785). Andrew Blair wrote such a letter on Wesley's behalf on April 28, 1790, and Wesley added a note in his own handwriting. The process was reversed in a letter written by Wesley on Feb. 6, 1791, to which a postscript on his behalf was added by James Rogers. Wherever such letters are discovered, containing a specific message explicitly written on behalf of Wesley, they have been included among his own correspondence.

IV. THE ANATOMY OF A LETTER

John Wesley had his own idiosyncrasies, not only in his general approach to writing letters, but in handling the specific elements of which a letter was composed. If we are to understand the significance, not only of what was said, but of how it was said, we need to establish norms for all the bones and sinews which constitute the anatomy of a letter. Because these norms are also of major importance in helping the reader to assess the authenticity and finer points of the letters which he may wish to study with special care, as also in evaluating conjectures about such matters as their context, dates, and recipients, we make no apology for dealing with this complex and generally neglected subject at some length and in some detail.

Place and date of writing. Wesley was much more regular than many of his correspondents (including his brother Charles) in furnishing settings in time and space for his letters, and he displays some marked preferences in the method of their presentation. Both pieces of information were present in 95 per cent of his letters, usually on separate lines.[1] In fewer than 7 per cent (scattered throughout the years with no discernible rationale) were these details given on one line rather than two. In only 3 per cent were they given at the end rather than at the beginning of the letter (most of the exceptions appearing during Wesley's early years), and in only six out of 500 letters did the place appear after the date.

Very rarely indeed did Wesley supply any more than the name of the town from which he was writing, except that occasionally he did locate the smaller places by reference to the larger, as in 'Kighley, near Leeds' (Apr. 29, 1755), or 'Ennis, near Limerick' (July 12, 1760), though much more frequent is the less specific 'near Leeds', 'near Oxford', and especially 'near London', apparently indicating that he was staying with friends in Lewisham, Newington, or some other retreat—though the names of these two places do themselves occur. Occasionally Wesley identified the specific building: in his early years he sometimes used 'Christ Church' or 'Lincoln College' instead of 'Oxford' (or 'Oxon.'), and in his later years 'City Road', instead of London, and 'Whitefriar Street' instead of Dublin, or some similar indication of the Methodist preaching-house from which he wrote. An almost unique heading is, 'Tetsworth, 42 miles from London', but this is explained by the fact that he had just left his newly wedded wife, and was counting the miles between them, asking her, 'Do I write too soon?'[2]

Almost invariably Wesley wrote his dates in the form, 'Dec. 26. 1771', abbreviating the months from August to February, and writing

[1] Statistics based on the 500 letters noted on p. 27.

[2] Mar. 27, 1751.

the others in full.[1] In 3 per cent of his letters he reversed the order, writing '3 July. 1751.' (He seems always to have used periods rather than commas in his headings, and spread them about much more liberally than we shall do henceforth in quoting from him, even writing such headings as 'Dublin. 15. March. 1747/8'; all such idiosyncrasies are normalized in the text.) In only 0·5 per cent did he use an ordinal instead of a cardinal number for his dates, and on one occasion at least he employed the form, 'July ye 17th, 1785'—though on only one of three letters extant for that date.

From one only out of five hundred letters did Wesley omit the date completely, giving only the place of writing,[2] and in one other he omitted the year.[3] He was usually very careful in giving a date precisely, in the form which would prevent future problems in letters retained for reference. Until 1752, when the calendar was reformed, confusion was rife, because in the Old Style ('O.S.') the legal year in England began on March 25 and ended on March 24, although common usage accepted the Julian calendar, which reckoned the year as beginning on January 1. The only certain way to avoid ambiguity about dates between January 1 and March 24 was to list both years of which they formed a part in the different styles, and this Wesley did in twenty-two out of the thirty holograph letters available,[4] giving the dates as 'Janu. 8, 1745/6' etc. In the other eight instances (occurring in 1736, 1740, 1748, 1750, and 1751), he showed his own strong preference by accepting the common usage, the New Style ('N.S.'), made standard in 1752.[5]

Only very rarely did Wesley add the day of the week, but three instances occur in the five hundred selected letters, including one which adds an even rarer feature, the time of day: 'Friday, April 1, 1774, 5 o'clock'.[6]

Like most people, he occasionally misdated his letters, especially

[1] His normal abbreviations were: 'Aug.', 'Sept.', 'Oct.', 'Nov.', 'Dec.', 'Janu.' and 'Feb.', but cf. 'Apr. 23, 1745', 'Septr. 1, 1777', and 'Jan. 8, 1774'—even though a letter to James Hutton of the same date has 'Janu. 8, 1774'.

[2] Jan. 28–9, 1770.

[3] Nov. 24, 1738.

[4] Not including transcripts of any kind, even by Wesley himself.

[5] The reforms of 1752 also incorporated the suggestions of Pope Gregory XIII for various measures correcting the defective computations of the Julian calendar, the most radical being that of omitting several dates—in England, almost the last to adopt the system, Sept. 3–13, 1752. (Cf. JWJ, Sept. 14, 1752.)

[6] Cf. July 31, 1742; Sept. 29, 1773. For another instance of the unusual pinpointing see a letter to Charles Wesley: 'Bristol, March 17, 1788, between four and five'.

at the beginning of a new year or a new month.[1] Other more peculiar errors occur, by no means so simple to explain. In a sheet combining letters to both Miss Gibbes and her younger sister Agnes, Wesley dated one (correctly), '25th April, 1783', and the other, 'April 25, 1785'.[2]

Salutations. Occasionally Wesley launched right into a letter without a salutation, but this happened in fewer than one in twenty letters, and those almost always to his friends. Following the normal convention of an opening salutation he employed a hierarchy of terms (without any following punctuation mark) which we may arrange in ascending order of intimacy: Sir/Madam; Dear sir/Dear madam; My dear Mr.—/Mrs.—/Miss X; My dear brother/sister; Dear James/Jane, etc.; Dear Jemmy/Jenny, etc. The frequent variations in his mode of address between 'brother' or 'sister' and a personal name, however, implies that the difference in warmth was not as greatly marked as it might be with us, and perhaps was almost imperceptible to those who could mentally hear the affectionate tone in which 'My dear brother' was spoken. This was even true of 'Dear sir', which Wesley consistently used to address some of his friends. Nor did he apparently feel any nuance of greater intimacy in 'My dear Nancy' than in 'Dear Nancy', using them interchangeably, though the latter is easily his preferred term in addressing his favourite correspondent outside his immediate family, Ann Bolton. Similarly he mixed up 'Dear Alleck' (twenty-nine times) with 'My dear Alleck' (twenty times) in his correspondence with Alexander Knox. Wesley also frequently incorporated into his letters a closing salutation, usually a repetition of the opening one, omitting this feature in about one of five instances. When the closing salutation was different from that at the beginning it tended to be slightly less formal.[3]

[1] Thus a letter to his brother Charles was headed 'Janu. 5, 1762', when in fact it was 1763, and one to R. C. Brackenbury written in 1784 was dated 'Janu. 4, 1783'. Similarly he headed a letter, 'York, June 10, 1774', when he should have written 'July 10', and in another instance discovered his error in time, smearing out 'Aug.' before writing 'Sept. 10, 1785'. In each case the place of writing clinches the actual date, and in one instance this is confirmed by the postmark which is available.

[2] The final '5' in the year may have been caused by the influence of the final '5' in the month. For an unexplained post-dating see two letters to Charles Wesley, both dated Oct. 19, 1775, but written from two different places, at which he was apparently present respectively two days and one day earlier, and a letter dated Dec. 17, 1787, which is shown by the postmark to have been dispatched two days earlier.

[3] Thus in his thirty-six letters to Ann Tindall he usually began, 'My dear sister', but

Even with members of his own family Wesley employed formality, remembering childhood rules about speaking politely to everyone, and prefixing a sibling's name with 'brother' or 'sister'.[1] His father was uniformly addressed as 'Dear sir', his mother as 'Dear mother', and both his brothers as 'Dear brother' to the end of their days, with no hint of a personal name. He relaxed a little with his sisters, perhaps because there were so many of them. The evidence is scanty, however, letters to only two having survived. One only is extant from the dozens which were written to his oldest sister, and it begins, 'Dear Emly',[2] but Martha continued to be addressed as 'Dear sister' until at least 1756, the first occurrence of 'Dear Patty' being in 1761. With his wife it was very different. The one letter written before their marriage both opened and closed with the slightly formal, 'My dear sister', but most of the remainder began, 'My dear Molly', varied with, 'My dear love', or occasionally 'My dear soul', 'My dear life', or simply 'My dear'.

Allied to the measure of formality seen in his family letters was Wesley's sensitivity to age and rank or position. Members of the nobility were always saluted formally, as 'My Lord',[3] and 'My Lady', or 'My dear Lady'.[4] A person in the professions or the upper classes was addressed as 'Dear sir', and his wife as 'Dear madam', which would probably continue even after they had become friends instead of acquaintances.[5] Merchants and artisans seem usually to have been greeted as 'Dear brother', or (as throughout fifteen letters to George Merryweather, Methodist stalwart of Yarm) 'My dear brother'.

His fellow clergy Wesley addressed as 'Reverend and dear sir', 'Reverend sir', or 'Dear sir', with the apparent implication that the longer the title the more formal the tone. Only with close friends did he unbend further, to 'My dear brother'. Even the intimate colleagues of his Oxford days, such as Benjamin Ingham and George

ended, 'Dear Nancy' (twenty-three times) or 'My dear Nancy' (six times), though in two fairly late instances he both began and ended, 'Dear Nancy'.

[1] See Mrs. Susanna Wesley to John Wesley, July 24, 1732.

[2] June 30, 1743.

[3] See the Earl of Dartmouth, June 14, 1775, and Lord North, June 15, 1775.

[4] See the Countess of Huntingdon, Jan. 8, 1764; Sept. 15, 1776, etc.; D'arcy, Lady Maxwell, June 22, 1766, etc. Here one does detect added warmth in the prefixed 'My'.

[5] As in the case of Ebenezer Blackwell, the banker, although with Mrs. Hutton of Dean's Yard, Westminster, he actually began with two letters to his former critic as 'Madam' before unbending to 'Dear madam' (Aug. 22, 1744; Jan. 18, 1746; June 19, 1746).

Whitefield, were thus addressed, not by their personal names.[1] In the sixteen extant letters to John Fletcher only once did Wesley forsake 'Dear sir' for 'My dear brother',[2] and Dr. Thomas Coke was always, 'Dear sir', as was James Creighton. In 1785 Wesley addressed young Peard Dickinson, however, as 'My dear brother', then twice in 1787 as 'Dear sir', returning to 'My dear brother' for the ten extant closing letters of their correspondence.

Always, of course, there was with Wesley the hope, and indeed the likelihood, of deepening friendship, for he undoubtedly possessed great charm. This would be followed by the confident use of diminutive personal names, especially with those young enough to be his children, such as Peard Dickinson (1758–1802). Similarly with the Revd. Samuel Furly (*c.* 1736–95) he quickly moved from 'Dear sir' to 'My dear brother', and then to 'Dear Sammy'.[3] With Furly's sister Dorothy, however, he seems only to have progressed from 'Dear Miss Furly' to 'My dear sister'—if we may trust Joseph Benson, who is our sole source for the twenty-three letters to her.[4] Wesley was not always successful in achieving *rapport*. He failed in the case of Miss Mary Bishop. All thirty-seven of his extant holograph letters began and usually ended, 'My dear Miss Bishop' or 'My dear sister', except for one occasion when at the end he tried out 'My dear Molly'—an experiment which was not repeated and so was apparently not welcomed; their relationship remained cordial, but a trifle formal.[5]

With the Methodist preachers Wesley seems normally to have begun a correspondence with 'My dear brother', then quickly to have broken through to a diminutive Christian name, especially as befitted a father-in-God to his 'sons in the gospel'.[6] In some in-

[1] But James Hervey was greeted as 'My dear friend' (Nov. 21, 1738), and then 'My dear brother' (Mar. 20, Aug. 8, Oct. 25, 1739), though during and after his controversy with Wesley in 1756 this became 'Dear sir' (Oct. 15, 1756; Nov. 29, 1758).

[2] Oct. 1, 1773.

[3] Mar. 30, Sept. 21, 1754, etc., and Sept. 15, 1755.

[4] In this matter, however, Benson is hardly to be trusted, for in his edition of Wesley's letters he consistently (and surely deliberately) altered Wesley's use of personal names in his salutations to women, as in the case of Ann Bolton, where every instance of 'Dear Nancy' found in the extant holographs was transformed into the innocuous 'My dear sister'.

[5] Similarly he confessed: 'After an acquaintanceship of four-and-thirty years, I myself cannot have freedom with Miss Johnson.' (June 17, 1774.)

[6] It is an interesting fact that although he lived to a great age, and was loved by many young men and women (and in his turn loved them), he never seems to have addressed them as 'Dear boy' or 'Dear son', 'Dear daughter' or 'Dear girl', but almost always by

stances, as with Joseph Benson, no shortened form was used, but this was probably due less to a lack of warmth than to the fact that 'Joe' or 'Joey' were not then in common use.[1] Nor does the lack even of the usual Christian name in the salutation necessarily imply coldness or lack of respect, but was probably a connotation of seniority or status: John Valton remained 'My dear brother' to Wesley throughout twenty-one years and twenty-six extant letters (having joined the itinerary ranks from commerce when he was about 35), and Robert Carr Brackenbury, the squire of Raithby Hall, who served as an itinerant preacher during Wesley's last decade, was always addressed as 'Dear sir', though any implied lack of cordiality is belied by Wesley's frequent subscription, 'Your very affectionate friend and brother'.

Occasionally, of course, Wesley had to deal with critical and even offensive letters. To one very stiff letter he replied, 'My dear brother, or to speak civilly, Sir,' and ended, 'Your affectionate brother, or if you choose it rather, Your humble servant'.[2]

All this emphasizes the fact that Wesley lived in a formal age, was himself a formal person, and carefully practised the formalities, though in such a manner that we can detect subtle graduations and nuances which should carefully be observed, and their importance noted though not exaggerated, bearing in mind always that Wesley's shades of meaning were not necessarily those which we have inherited or invented. Even apart from the value of his salutations in illuminating his character and the setting of his letters, however, his norms for their use may prove of great importance in establishing or confirming, as well as in refuting, the identity of many undocumented recipients.

The body of the letter. Sandwiched between somewhat formal yet often very revealing opening and closing courtesies came the letter itself. Throughout most of his life Wesley felt no need to embroider a simple message, nor to use up all the paper available to him.[3] Sometimes the letter proper was far shorter than the formalities, or than the address. Most of these shorter ones were, of course, simple directions or challenges to his followers. To one preacher he wrote:

their given names or diminutives of them, though on at least one occasion he did write, 'My dear maiden' (Jan. 18, 1790).

[1] Joseph Cownley was also addressed as 'Joseph', as were others bearing the same name, including Pescod, Pilmore, Sutcliffe, and Taylor.

[2] Apr. 27, 1748.

[3] To one of his inquirers he wrote: 'Indeed my time seldom allows me to write long letters. But we can tell our minds without a multitude of words.' (Nov. 6, 1756.)

'Are you out of your wits? Why are you not at Bristol?'[1] To another the message was, 'You shall be in Oxfordshire.'[2] The complaints of a Sunday School superintendent Wesley countered with, 'John White, whoever is wrong, you are not right.'[3] The shortest letter of all consisted of three words to James Chubb, another Methodist layman. We reproduce it completely:

Aug. 13, 1774

My dear brother

All is well. I am,

Yours affectionately
J. Wesley

One of the longest personal letters—as opposed to controversial or apologetic letters prepared for publication—was that to his wife, written Dec. 9, 1774, covering over seven pages.[4] There were very few such. Wesley believed strongly in economy of time and expense, and both these principles were reinforced by his characteristic desire for simplicity and brevity. Only very rarely indeed, therefore, did he venture beyond the four small pages which should be sufficient for any normal letter written in a neat, compact hand, and (by writing a little smaller) for most longer ones also.

There seems little doubt that Wesley planned each letter in advance, even when he did not prepare a draft, deciding whether it was going to occupy one page, two pages, or three.[5] For each approximate length he had a different procedure, from which he rarely varied. His basic letter covered one of the four small pages made by folding his half-sheet in two. We will call this page 1, as if this were a 4-page folder. The letter always began on this page. The address was written on p. 3, inscribed on a central panel, writing from the foot to the head of the paper, and from the centre of the page towards the outer edge.[6] At least half of Wesley's letters were in exactly this form, the first extant being that of Mar. 31, 1737, to the Georgia Trustees.

A planned two-page letter usually followed the same procedure (at least until the 1750s), with the address on p. 3, and the overflow

[1] Sept. 15, 1773, to Francis Wolfe.

[2] June 1, 1784, to Simon Day.

[3] [July, 1784].

[4] The letters to 'John Smith', defending his teaching and practice, must similarly have used two half-sheets of paper folded to make eight pages.

[5] To Nancy Bolton he wrote, Nov. 28, 1772: 'I designed to have wrote but one page. But I know not how, when I am talking with *you*, I can hardly break off.'

[6] See illus. facing p. 58.

from the letter on p. 1 written vertically from head to foot of p. 4, again from the inside fold to the outer edge. Postscripts to a one-page letter were added in this same way. The first extant two-page letter of this kind was that sent to his mother, Jan. 13, 1735.[1] In the rare instances when a last-minute addition was needed, this was probably added vertically on p. 2.[2]

With a planned three-page letter Wesley wrote the address on p. 4, began his letter on p. 1, and continued to p. 2 and then to p. 3, writing horizontally all the time except for the address, which was written from foot to head, and again from the centre of the page towards the outer edge. If three full pages proved insufficient he usually continued on the margins and on the head and foot of p. 4, which would later be folded over and hidden from view.[3] Occasionally a letter planned to occupy three pages was finished on two, leaving p. 3 blank, and it appears that in the 1750s Wesley began to write what he had envisaged as two-page letters in this alternative format, and continued to use both methods interchangeably for the remainder of his life.[4]

Wesley was neat and methodical in all his ways, and this reveals itself clearly in his letters. Every page was set out carefully, with a square left margin, and lines so straight and equidistant from each other that one might wonder whether he used a ruled guide.[5] Even when Wesley was well into his eighties, and his legibility was declining

[1] His first extant letter, Nov. 3, 1721, followed a different format, as probably did others during his youth.

[2] Cf. Mar. 27, 1751, to his wife, and Feb. 12, 1767, to his brother Charles.

[3] See below, pp. 68–70, for folding the sheet. See for examples Apr. 29, May 7, May 28, and June 7, 1739, to James Hutton.

[4] A handful of different combinations occur from time to time, but only about one in a hundred letters does not follow the patterns here described as Wesley's normal routine, a fact which occasionally proves of value in resolving various problems connected with the many imperfect letters. Thus it can be stated almost categorically that any supposed photograph or xerox of a Wesley letter with a signed page of text on the right and the address on the left is not genuine, but has been artificially contrived in some way; see, for instance, one so prepared by John Wesley himself because p. 1 was already used by John Atlay, Aug. 13, 1775. (But for one prepared by Wesley three can be cited prepared by later collectors of his letters.)

[5] The watermarks did not offer a built-in guide, for Wesley's chosen format meant that he was writing across the grain of the wire-lines. Only an adjustable guide would have been practicable, for the gap between his lines did in fact vary from letter to letter, though rarely within individual letters: the governing factor was the number of lines per full page, and this depended upon the size of the handwriting, which in turn depended upon Wesley's preconception of the length of the letter. The letter to Benson, Sept. 17, 1788, p. 2, has 19 lines, and in that to Mrs. Wesley, Dec. 9, 1774, pp. 5, 6 have 32; in this letter Wesley allowed himself eight pages, but towards the end realized that

seriously, the almost mathematical precision of his lines continued. Even the letter written from his deathbed to William Wilberforce at first glance seems to vary only slightly from the norm, though in fact the margin wavers somewhat, and every one of the seventeen lines forsakes the absolute horizontal at one point or another. Both eyes and hand, after eighty-seven years, were failing badly, but the inner spirit almost achieved his accustomed neatness.

Wesley's eye was not only accurate in setting out the lines of his page, but artistic in seeking a harmonious balance between its various elements. If he planned a very brief letter he would begin lower on the page, as well as spacing his lines further apart.[1] Each feature was usually begun on a separate line from the others: on the right the place of writing, followed on a fresh line by the date; below that on the left the salutation, again with a line to itself; then the letter proper, its opening line indented. The closing courtesies occupied two or more separate lines according to the amount of space left; the signature was given a line to itself.

The preparation of a draft facilitated neatness in the fair copy dispatched to Wesley's correspondents. When this practice was all but abandoned except for especially important letters, Wesley could never be quite sure whether he was correctly estimating the length and therefore the disposition of the various elements of the letter. Frequently he did find himself cramped for space. Only in extremely rare instances, however, did he vary the size of his writing or the space separating the lines on any individual page, except for the insertion of corrections or afterthoughts.[2] Instead he utilized other expedients to reduce infelicitous overcrowding. One was the running-together of some of the closing courtesies.[3] Another was what we may term the internal paragraph.

he was writing too large a hand (25 lines to p. 2, 27 to p. 3, so that on p. 4 he wrote 30, on pp. 5 and 6, 32, on p. 7, 31—and even then needed to squeeze the ending on to the flap of the address page).

[1] One example is the letter to James Chubb quoted above, written on imaginary lines distant from each other 24, 19, 15, and 16 mm, with the first 23 mm from the head and the last 29 mm from the foot of the scrap of paper, which has apparently been cut down at the foot. A more normal example is a letter of Feb. 24, 1764, to Thomas Hanson, whose thirteen lines are separated by an average 12 mm, with 17 mm between the salutation and the first paragraph, and also between the first and second paragraphs, while from the head of the page to the address line is 16 mm, and from the signature to the foot of the page 31 mm.

[2] In a letter of Dec. 14, 1776, however, he did squeeze together the two lines of courtesies and his signature.

[3] See below, pp. 58-62.

Like many of his contemporaries, in Wesley's first two extant letters he indicated no paragraphs at all, but by the end of 1724 he was familiar with the technique of paragraphing. In 1738 he occasionally introduced a new idea by a less drastic method than that of beginning a fresh line: he left a space of about 1 in. after the previous period instead of the normal $\frac{1}{8}$ in.[1] For two decades this device, which we propose to call an internal paragraph, seems to have remained experimental, but came into frequent use for the remainder of Wesley's life. It proved most valuable to save space when the closing sentence of a paragraph ended only two or three words into a new line, but he also used it when only a small portion of the line was left.[2] This in turn enabled him to manipulate his paper to secure his favourite one-page letters, though he used it also in longer letters, which might thus be prevented from spilling over on to the address page.[3]

Normally Wesley carried his writing very close to the edge of the paper for his right margin, while leaving between $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. for the left margin—sometimes more, sometimes less, depending on the planned length of the letter. Rarely did he follow the compositor's practice of 'justifying' his lines by adding space between words or letters, though to a limited extent he followed the reverse practice of squeezing them together to fit them into his line, and also abbreviated words which he normally wrote out fully, such as 'employ[t]' or 'judgm[t]'.[4] He seems to have sought a page which approached the printed page as nearly as possible without any appearance of

[1] Cf. June 28, 1738, to his mother—the peroration; Nov. 26, 1738, to James Hutton—an internal division within a lengthy paragraph; June 7, 1739, also to Hutton—a clear change of subject.

[2] e.g. a one-page letter to Samuel Furly, July 28, 1758, where the first internal paragraph separates four words at the beginning of the line from four at the end, and the second separates six at the beginning from two at the end. In some instances the space remaining allowed room for only one word at the end of the line, as in letters to Joseph Benson, Oct. 5, 1770, and Jan. 21, 1771.

[3] In seventy-three letters to Charles Wesley, for instance, he used forty-five internal paragraphs, almost equally divided between one-page letters and pp. 1–3 of longer letters. The three internal paragraphs in his letter of Oct. 5, 1770, probably saved writing down the margin or using the flap on p. 4. For an example in the closing courtesies see his letter of Nov. 29, 1775, to Sarah Crosby, facing p. 68.

A similar device was apparently used to distinguish the verse-endings in his presentation of Scripture in continuous paragraphs, though this is so spotty that it may have been a simple extension of compositorial justifying. (See early editions of his *Explanatory Notes* on the New Testament (1755) and the Old Testament (1765).)

[4] e.g. letters of May 1, 1758; Dec. 22, 1768; Dec. 14, 1776; for some compression of the last line see illus., facing p. 58.

artificiality, so that he remained content with a jagged right margin, but was prepared to perform some squeezing at the end of a one-page letter. There seems little doubt that many of his abbreviations were designed with this in mind, for he often used them interchangeably with their full forms, such as 'and' and the ampersand '&'; 'which', 'wch', and even 'w^{c}'; 'that' and 'y^{t}'; 'the' and 'y^{e}'; 'shou'd' and 'sh^{d}', etc. Sometimes they occur in the same letter, though not always with the shorter form near the end of a line, which would offer confirmation that his chief motive was justifying the line or saving space.[1] Occasionally he would lengthen the cross-stroke of an 'f' or a 't' more than normally at the end of a line, however,[2] or slant the last line downwards as well as compressing the words together,[3] or place a stroke over a vowel to indicate a missing final consonant.[4] Perhaps the most revealing measure to achieve something like an even right margin, however, was the division of words at the end of the line, for which he normally used a hyphen, but occasionally a colon. In general he followed accepted practice, with 'hurt-full', 'with:out', 'Hind-marsh', etc.[5] His concern to justify his lines, however, led to some divisions which would be frowned upon by the purist: 'refor-mation',[6] 'persecut-ed',[7] 'un:derstand',[8] 'trans-late', but 'translati-on',[9] 'conside-rable'.[10] One letter alone furnishes the following: 'unim-portant', 're:wards', 'Taberna-cle', 'congre:gations', 'ex:pected', 'Mon:day', and 'Chap: pel'.[11] There is little question that a tidy page mattered to Wesley!

Even margins were deliberately forsaken for two purposes, one connected with the ideal of securing a pleasing layout, the other not. Short prose quotations Wesley ran into the text, with double quotation marks (the closing ones often *over* the last word rather than after it); verse quotations, however, even of one line, he normally indented, again (and this time unnecessarily) enclosed within double quotation marks. The other occasion for a deliberate intrusion into the margin over two or three lines occurred only in longer letters, on p. 3, i.e. on the reverse of the position that he expected

[1] Wesley's 59 holograph letters to Joseph Benson furnish ample illustrations for most of the points made in this section. For interchangeable word-forms see May 27, 1769; Jan. 21, 1771; June 21, 1774; July 31, 1776. Cf. that to Sarah Crosby, Nov. 29, 1775, lines 10, 11, 15 ('the', 'y^{e}'), and also 6 ('sh^{d}') and 19 ('wch') (illus., p. 68).

[2] e.g. Nov. 7, 1768; Dec. 4, 1768; Nov. 30, 1770.

[3] Nov. 19, 1769.

[4] Mar. 16, 1771.

[5] Dec. 4, 1768; Jan. 2, 1769; Aug. 7, 1769; cf. Nov. 29, 1775, lines 5–6 (illus., p. 68).

[6] Dec. 24, 1776.

[7] Jan. 11, 1777.

[8] Mar. 5, 1777.

[9] Oct. 22, 1777.

[10] Dec. 8, 1777.

[11] Nov. 30, 1770.

the seal to occupy; the cutting or tearing of the paper around the seal, or even breaking the seal itself, would often damage the adjacent writing, so that Wesley usually took precautions (not always successfully) against this danger.

A full study of Wesley's stylistic practices would most readily be possible from his letters, for these account for by far the largest body of his extant holograph material. In this introduction a small attempt is being made to note a few of his literary idiosyncrasies, which in general apply not only to the letters themselves but to manuscripts for publication, nearly all of which have disappeared. As we have seen, the body of a letter approximated very closely in his mind to a page intended to appear in print. Both exhibited his strong belief in setting out the material methodically, his tendency towards antiquarianism tempered by a readiness to adapt to changing conventions of literary presentation wherever nothing crucial was lost, so that his later manuscripts, like his later publications, are much freer from archaic spellings, the regular capitalization of all nouns, and the underlinings for italicization of proper nouns—indeed this latter feature, the universal convention for his early printers, is almost completely absent from his manuscript letters. Nor is his underlining for emphasis as prolific as some published versions have implied.[1] (In accordance with the policy for this edition as a whole, we do not here reproduce archaisms which do not affect Wesley's meaning or pronunciation, nor (in general) idiosyncrasies of styling).

A handful of other stylistic features of Wesley's letters should be noted briefly, and may be illustrated from one page of one letter, that to Joseph Benson, Jan. 8, 1774.[2] He made lavish use of the apostrophe in verbal forms such as 'conquer's',[3] as well as 'conquer'd'; frequently he omitted the silent 'e' altogether, as in 'seemd';[4] he used the comma as a rhetorical rather than a grammatical device, often in place of the word 'that'.[5] He always capitalized

[1] It is necessary to distinguish between Wesley's own sparse underlinings and those of his correspondents, which can falsify the nuances of what Wesley was himself saying. Almost half the letter to his wife dated May 22, 1752, for instance, is underlined, but only the closing two phrases were so distinguished by Wesley himself, the remainder having been done by his wife. Similarly in the letter of Nov. 3, 1775, to his brother Charles, one phrase was underlined by John, the remainder by Charles, and in that of Oct. 28, 1785, all fifteen instances of underlining were made with Charles's broad nib. In this edition only Wesley's own underlinings will be reproduced in the text, though others will usually be shown in footnotes as indicating the reactions of the correspondent.

[2] Facing p. 58. [3] Line 19. [4] Line 17. [5] Lines 8, 12, 20.

each letter in 'GOD', and continued to capitalize what he deemed other specially important words, including the technical terms of Methodism,[1] such as 'Conference' and 'Society'. Occasionally (as noted above) he underlined for emphasis, but very rarely for other purposes, such as distinguishing the titles of publications.[2] He frequently abbreviated words or used the ampersand for some purpose (or possibly whim) unconnected with the urgent saving of space.[3]

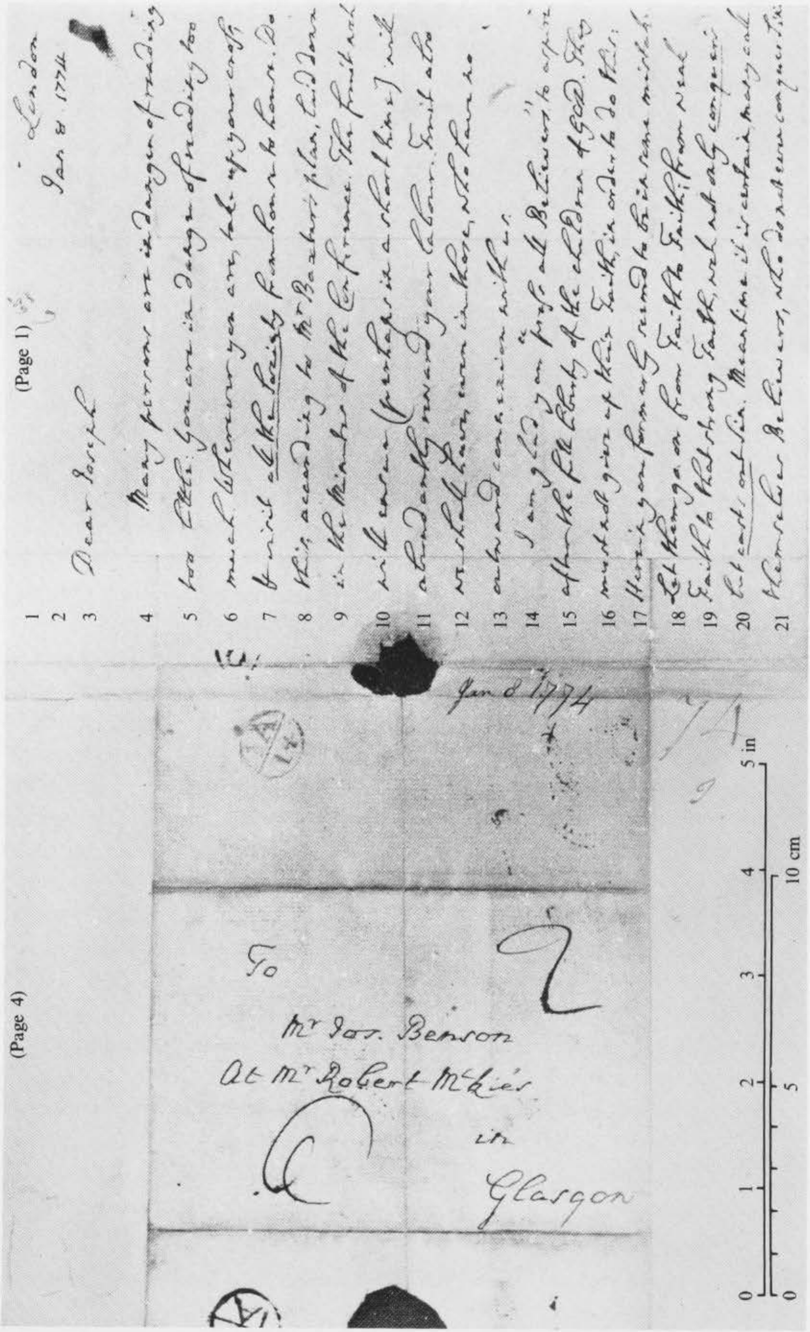
Whether the letter were short or long, Wesley normally closed on a pastoral note, with a challenge, a promise, a blessing, a prayer or a request for prayer, frequently in scriptural language. These closing sentences were often memorable, such as his words to Benson: 'Beware you be not swallowed up in books. An ounce of love is worth a pound of knowledge.'[4] Compare those to Thomas Wride: 'Be zealous, serious, active! Then you will save your own soul and them that hear you!'[5] A letter to Ann Tindall he ended: 'O be all in earnest! Life is short!'[6] To his brother Charles: 'I must and will save as many souls as I can while I live, without being careful about what may *possibly be* when I die.'[7] Sometimes he sought to infuse confidence into the wavering: 'But you cannot, shall not, depart hence, till your eyes have seen his salvation.'[8] Or in a closing paragraph he would call for complete dedication: 'As long as you are seeking and expecting to love God with all your heart, so long your souls will live.'[9] Sometimes the closing message would be embodied in verse:

> All the promises are sure
> To persevering prayer.[10]

Frequently these pastoral challenges were followed by a blessing, as in a letter to Charles Wesley: 'It is not safe to live or die without love. Peace be with you all! Adieu.'[11] One of his favourite closing phrases was, 'Peace be with all your spirits', and another, 'Peace be with you and yours', though many changes were rung upon this basic theme.

Closing courtesies. As noted earlier, even one so far from enslaved

[1] Lines 7, 9, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21. [2] Lines 7, 9 ('Minutes'), 19, 20.
[3] Lines 7, 19. [4] Nov. 7, 1768. [5] Sept. 7, 1771.
[6] Feb. 20, 1786. [7] Sept. 19, 1785. [8] Apr. 7, 1768, to Ann Bolton.
[9] June 24, 1770, to George Merryweather.
[10] Oct. 13, 1784, to John Valton, quoting Charles Wesley, *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, 1749.
[11] Aug. 10, 1775.


(Page 1)

London
Jan 8 1774

Dear Joseph

Many persons are in danger of reading too little: You are in danger of reading too much. Wherever you are, take up your cross, & visit all the Society from house to house. Do this according to Mr Baxter's plan, laid down in the Minutes of the Conference. The fruit wch will ensue (perhaps in a short time) will abundantly reward your labour. Fruit also we shall have, even in those, who have no outward connexion with us.

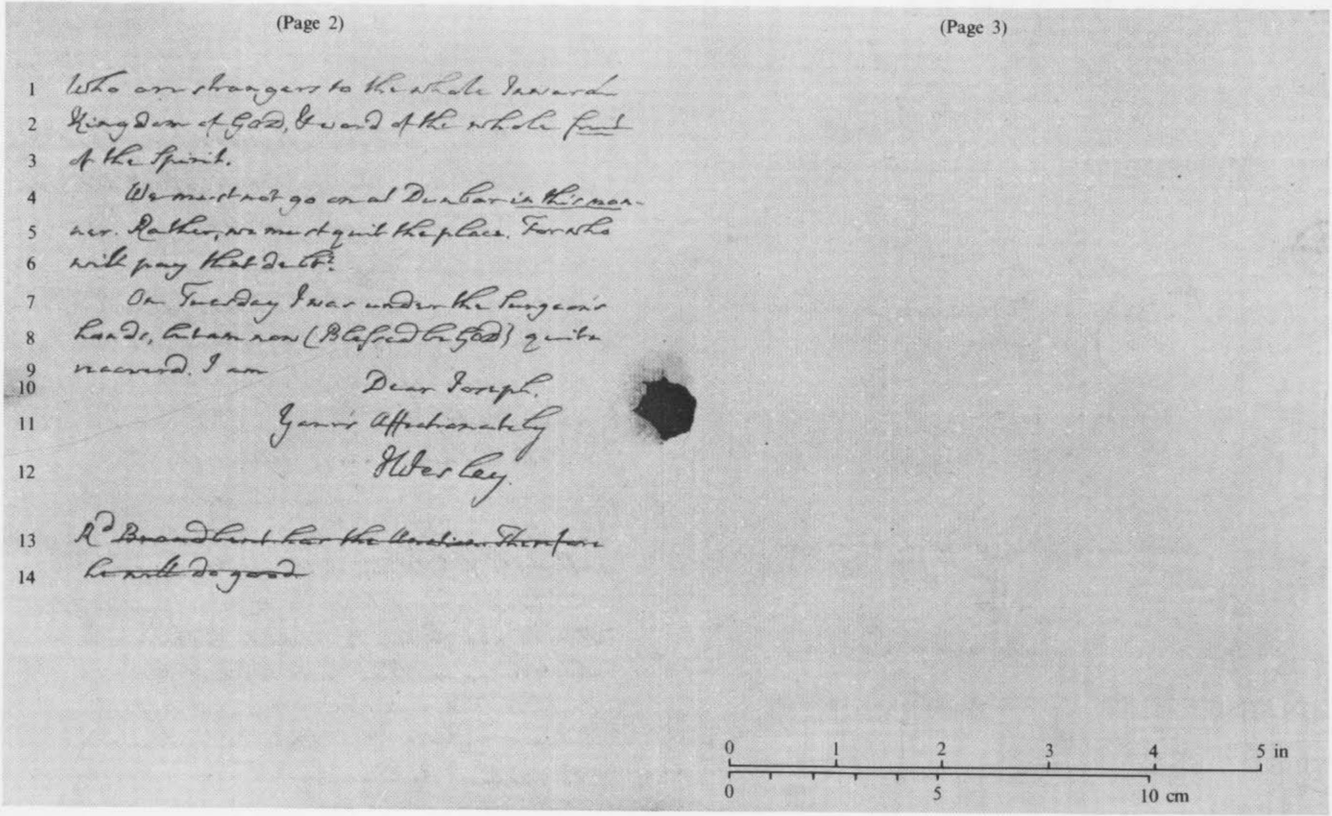
I am glad you "press all Believers to aspire after the full liberty of the children of GOD." They must not give up their Faith, in order to do this: Herein you formerly seemed to be in some mistake. Let them go on from Faith to Faith; from weak Faith to that strong Faith, wch not only conquers but casts out Sin. Meantime it is certain many call themselves Believers, who do not even conquer Sin.

(Page 4)

To
Mr Jos. Benson
At Mr Robert McKie's
in
Glasgow

Jan 8 1774

JOHN WESLEY TO JOSEPH BENSON
Jan. 8, 1774 (recto)



(Page 2)

Who are strangers to the whole inward Kingdom of God, & void of the whole fruit of the Spirit.

We must not go on at Dunbar in this manner. Rather, we must quit the place. For who will pay that debt?

On Tuesday I was under the Surgeon's hands, but am now (Blessed be God) quite recovered. I am

Dear Joseph,

Yours Affectionately

J Wesley

R^d ~~Broadbent has the [illegible]. Therefore he will do good.~~

(Page 3)

JOHN WESLEY TO JOSEPH BENSON

Jan. 8, 1774 (verso)

by custom as John Wesley nevertheless remained class-conscious in a strongly class-conscious age. *The Complete Letter-Writer* and similar manuals prescribed different rules for writing to one's social superiors, equals, and inferiors. Wesley does not seem to have followed the convention that 'letters should be wrote on quarto fine gilt post to superiors', nor that of enclosing such gilt-edged letters loose inside a separate sheet folded and sealed as a cover.[1] He did, however, when closing a letter to strangers of high social standing, follow the accepted pattern: 'When the subject of your letter is finished, conclude it with the same address as at first, as *Sir*, *Madam;* or, *May it please your Grace*, *Lordship*, *Ladyship*, etc., etc.'[2] Thus to the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Bristol he began, 'Gentlemen', and ended, 'Gentlemen, Your obliged and obedient servant, John Wesley'.[3] This shows the three elements which were expected in all closing courtesies: the address (usually repeated from the opening salutation), the 'compliments' or 'services' (normally introduced by the phrase, 'I am' or 'I remain'), and the signature. Only in rare instances did Wesley not end a letter in this manner, and then only to family or close friends. His variations upon the formula, however, are remarkable, and in themselves constitute a useful guide both to his general relationships with the recipient, and to sensitive changes in that relationship.

Some letters to titled persons remained formal throughout the correspondence. With others we can observe cordiality developing, without Wesley being either obsequious or unmannerly. Even with his close friends among the nobility, however, he maintained a framework of formality in his correspondence, although the body of the letter and the closing courtesies witness to the warm relationship which had developed. His twenty-five extant letters to Lady D'Arcy Maxwell (apparently only a minority of those actually written) always begin, 'My dear Lady', and always end, 'My dear Lady, your affectionate servant', with the frequent addition of 'ever' or 'most' or 'very' before 'affectionate', but (if we may follow the evidence of the eight holograph controls) no variation in the closing 'servant'.[4] Yet the letters themselves are genuinely and warmly affectionate, and occasionally forthright in their challenge.

[1] *The Complete Letter-Writer*, 10th edn., 1765, pp. 36, 38–9; cf. *The New Art of Letter-Writing*, 3rd edn., London, 1763, p. 17.

[2] *Complete Art*, p. 38; cf. *New Art*, p. 18.

[3] Dec. 20, 1764.

[4] Telford follows Jackson and Benson in printing 'Friend' in the letter of June 4, 1767, but the holograph clearly reads 'Servant'.

As noted earlier, Wesley used a very formal address to strangers (and even friends) in the professions and the merchant class. The formal salutation of 'Dear sir' was almost automatically repeated in a formal closing, introducing Wesley's 'services', which furnished the thermometer registering the degree of warmth in the relationship. All the letters to Ebenezer Blackwell, using the formula 'My dear sir' at beginning and end, followed with, 'Your affectionate servant' (occasionally adding 'ever', 'most', 'very') or 'Your affectionate brother and servant', and once, 'Your affectionate friend and servant in Christ'; in only two out of thirty letters did 'servant' not appear, when Wesley closed, 'Yours most affectionately'. Yet these formalities are so cordial that by themselves they are almost sufficient to refute the suggestion that a letter ending with a cold, 'Your obedient servant' was in fact written to Blackwell.[1]

The vast majority of Wesley's letters, however, were written to those whom he addressed as 'My dear brother', 'My dear sister', or by their Christian names. Usually this address was repeated in the conclusion, frequently with a little more intimacy, 'My dear sister' becoming 'My dear Nancy', etc. His basic 'compliment' after this closing salutation was, 'Your affectionate brother', to which 'Yours affectionately' ran a close second. Popular variants were, 'Your affectionate friend and brother' (with 'ever' and 'very' sometimes added), and occasionally a reversal of pronoun and adverb to 'Affectionately yours' or 'Very affectionately yours'.[2] No fewer than fifty different forms occur, however, in five hundred letters, including many examples of 'Ever yours', and single instances of 'Your affectionate / J. Wesley' and 'Yours in tender affection'.[3]

Most of these phrases were introduced with the words, 'I am', though not always on the separate line which strict etiquette demanded. Occasionally Wesley introduced variants here also, such as, 'and am',[4] 'I always am',[5] 'You know I am',[6] or 'Everywhere I am'.[7] Sometimes greetings intervened between the introductory formula and the salutation: 'I am, with tender love to all the family, My dear Alleck, Yours affectionately, J. Wesley'.[8] With friends Wesley

[1] Mar. 17, 1760.
[2] Dec. 5, 1776, to Alexander Knox; Feb. 26, 1778.
[3] Aug. 20, 1776, to Alexander Knox; June 8, 1785.
[4] Dec. 26, 1769, etc., to Joseph Benson.
[5] Oct, 26, 1776, to Ann Tindall.
[6] July 27, 1773, to Ann Bolton.
[7] May 28, 1776, to Ann Bolton.
[8] Feb. 10, 1783, to Alexander Knox.

frequently omitted the formula completely, running his letter over into the address and closing 'services': 'Write quite freely to, Dear Joseph, Your affectionate brother, J. Wesley';[1] 'O lose no time! Buy up every opportunity of doing good; and give more and more joy to, My dear friend, Yours affectionately, J. Wesley';[2] 'Be of good courage! Strengthen yourself in the Lord, and you will see good days, and will send better news to, Dear Tommy, Your affectionate friend and brother, J. Wesley'.[3] To his closest female friend, Ann Bolton, such endings occurred in over half of his letters, even after the formal opening, 'My dear sister': 'Continue to love and pray for, My dear Nancy, Yours most affectionately, J. Wesley';[4] 'Write without any reserve to, My dear Nancy, Yours invariably, J. Wesley';[5] 'Still love and pray for, My dear Nancy, Your ever affectionate brother, J. Wesley'.[6]

Other variations appeared in letters to close members of his family. Almost invariably he ended letters to his brother Charles with 'Adieu!' (usually in Byrom's shorthand—), although occasionally he added or substituted *Ἔρρωσο* or *Ἔρρωσθε*,[7] both meaning 'Farewell', a word which is occasionally found also in English, and at least once in shorthand—[8] Once he closed, 'So adieu!'[9] Wesley occasionally used 'Adieu' to other very close friends: 'Aspasia', 'Selima', James Hutton, Ann Bolton, Joseph Benson, Alexander Knox, and his wife. The closing courtesies to his wife form a microcosm of their stormy relationship: 'Ever yours'; 'Dear Molly, adieu!'; 'My dear soul, adieu!'; 'My dear, adieu!'; 'Your affectionate husband, lover, and friend'; 'Your much injured, yet still affectionate husband'; 'Your affectionate husband' (with 'affectionate' struck through, apparently by Mrs. Wesley); 'Your still affectionate husband'; and (the final letter), 'I bid you farewell, John Wesley'.[10]

Not only was this closing letter to his wife signed in full: so were all the last fifteen out of the twenty-three complete extant holographs to her—basically all those which did not end with 'Adieu!',

[1] Jan. 21, 1771, to Joseph Benson. [2] Dec. 26, 1776, to Mary Bishop.
[3] Dec. 4, 1773, to Thomas Rankin. [4] Sept. 27, 1777.
[5] May 18, 1779, [6] Jan. 2, 1781.
[7] From the Textus Receptus margin of Acts 23:30; see June 21, 1767 and June 14, 1768; Mar. 25, 1772. [8] Feb. 22, 1774.
[9] Aug. 3, 1771.
[10] Mar. 11, Apr. 2, 7, 1751; July 10, 1756; Apr. 24, 1757; Apr. 9, 1759; Mar. 23, 1760; Dec. 9, 1774; Oct. 2, 1778.

which in Wesley's practice seems to have rendered a signature superfluous.[1] Wesley's more formal letters in general ended with his full signature, including those to the nobility and gentry. Letters to everyone else normally closed, 'J. Wesley' (though with no period after the 'J'), or occasionally with no signature at all in his more informal correspondence. The occasional letter of rebuke, however, might transform the usual 'J. Wesley' into 'John Wesley'.[2] In a mere handful of instances did Wesley employ his initials alone.[3]

Postscripts. The *Complete Letter-Writer* advised: 'When you write to your superiors, never make a postscript; and (if possible) avoid it in letters to your equals, especially complimentary postscripts to any of the person's family or relations to whom you write, as it shows disrespect in your neglecting such persons in the body of your letter.'[4] John Wesley, like many before and since, found this too much a counsel of perfection. In our sample five hundred letters no fewer than ninety-two carry a postscript of some kind. Most are brief, but a few cover two or three themes, one of them five points (as if in response to a letter or message received later),[5] and the longest comprised an additional page written a day after a two-page letter had been completed.[6] A few give mailing directions, or information about Wesley's projected itineraries. Some seem to have been added in order by isolation to emphasize a pastoral or practical point, such as the appeals to James Hutton to despatch Wesley's publications[7] or to John Valton to spread the *Arminian Magazine*.[8] There are several deeply affectionate appeals to Ann Bolton: 'Write soon; or come. Write and come!';[9] 'Write soon, and write freely.';[10] 'If possible, you should ride every day.'[11] One of the most interesting is that to Thomas Rankin, in charge of American Methodism, who had apparently given up one bad habit (in Wesley's opinion) only to embrace another, and whom Wesley wished at the

[1] In one strange instance Wesley closed a letter to Ann Bolton, 'My dear Nancy, Your affectionate brother, J. Wesley', and then added on the left, as a postscript, 'My dear Nancy, Adieu!' (Jan. 12, 1769).

[2] Witness the letter to Thomas Wride, Aug. 29, 1774.

[3] See July 12, 1758, to Ebenezer Blackwell, and Aug. 13, 1775, to Thomas Rankin, where he was short of space. Strangely enough, however, three of the nine extant letters to Mary Cooke were signed 'JW' (Sept. 24, Oct. 30, 1785, and Dec. 12, 1786); three ended 'Adieu!', and the other three, 'J. Wesley'. Initials also appear in drafts, and occasionally in letters prepared by amanuenses.

[4] Op. cit., p. 38.

[5] Sept. 8, 1761, to Charles Wesley.

[6] July 9, 10, 1766, to Charles Wesley.

[7] Nov. 16, 1738; May 16, June 7, 10, 1739.

[8] Dec. 31, 1780.

[9] Nov. 7, 1771.

[10] Nov. 26, 1775.

[11] May 28, 1776.

very least to dissuade from infecting others: 'If you love me, Tommy, grant me two things: (1). Never take snuff more, nor let any of our preachers. (2). Let no ⟨one⟩ ever *see you smoke*.'[1]

A few postscripts related to events which had clearly come to Wesley's attention after the letter had been completed, as when he told James Hutton, 'I had wrote before I received yours,'[2] or one to his wife (added after his letter to her had been folded): 'It is believed John Fenwick cannot live twelve hours.'[3] Almost half of them, however, seem to have been sheer afterthoughts, indications that Wesley had probably prepared no draft in advance, but was reading through his letter to see that all the major points in his correspondent's letter had been covered, and all his own messages conveyed. To James Hutton he began one postscript quite frankly, 'I forgot . . .'.[4] Writing to Ebenezer Blackwell he added postscripts: 'I suppose my brother will be with you almost as soon as this',[5] and, 'I thank you for sending me the letters.'[6] To William Black in Halifax, Nova Scotia, he added as an afterthought: 'My brother is alive and tolerably well.'[7] After signing a letter discussing with Joseph Benson the editing of some of John Fletcher's manuscripts he added; 'But hold! Does not Mrs. Fletcher consider this impression as *her* property?'[8] Some were afterthoughts confessing that the original letter had been delayed or mislaid.[9] One that later he wished to retract was written to his wife: 'If any letter comes to you directed to the Revd. Mr. John Wesley, open it: it is for yourself.'[10]

The smaller postscripts Wesley usually added at the bottom left of his page, opposite the signature, but the longer ones almost always formed a continuation of the letter proper, following the signature. Occasionally they were written, or partially written, down the margin.[11] Frequently, however, the postscript was divorced from the main letter by being written down p. 2 or 4 of a one-page letter, and has sometimes been overlooked.[12] On one occasion Wesley broke the seal of a letter to add a second postscript (distinguishable by different ink and slightly different hand), noting on the cover: 'I opened this to insert the postscript.'[13]

[1] July 28, 1775. [2] Jan. 10, 1772. [3] June 10, 1774.
[4] Apr. 9, 1739. [5] Mar. 15, 1748. [6] Aug. 15, 1761
[7] May 11, 1784. [8] Sept. 17, 1788. [9] See above, pp. 40–1.
[10] Mar. 27, 1751—but he may have been warning hert o expect a franked letter (see under date).
[11] e.g. Apr. 7, 1751, to his wife; July 5, 28, 1765, to Thomas Rankin.
[12] Nov. 20, 27, 1766; Sept. 26, 1774. [13] July 31, 1785.

Enclosures and double letters. Almost one in ten of Wesley's postscripts were added for the purpose of saving time and money by persuading his correspondents to convey a message to someone else. Thus to Thomas Rankin he wrote: 'Pray give my love to brother Mallon of Mary Week society. I thank him for his letter, and exhort him to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free.'[1] To John Valton he wrote: 'Pray send my love to Geo. Brown, and tell him I have his letter.'[2] Occasionally this message was conveyed in a separate letter folded within the one sent through the mail. In writing to his wife from Ireland he added in a postscript, 'Pray put the enclosed into the post directly.'[3] In this instance the enclosure was almost certainly for someone in London, and the saving between the London Penny Post and an additional letter from Ireland was considerable. The same principle operated in reverse when Wesley wrote from London to R. C. Brackenbury in Jersey, saying, 'I enclose a few lines to Miss Bisson, for whom I feel an affectionate concern.'[4] An additional motive was at work when Wesley enclosed in a letter to Mrs. Eliza Bennis in Limerick another letter which he had written to a preacher, saying: 'I enclose James Perfect's letter . . . on purpose that you may talk with him. He has both an honest heart, and a good understanding; but you entirely mistake his doctrine.'[5] Very rarely some more bulky 'enclosure' accompanied a letter, such as the book which Wesley sent to Dr. Wrangel.[6]

In nine cases out of ten, however, Wesley's use of the term 'enclose' did not imply what it seems to imply. Rather than 'enclose' he should have written 'incorporate'. He was availing himself of a device which was very neat, but which has led to many problems for scholars who have not understood his methods of correspondence: on one sheet he wrote two letters to two different people. This was relatively simple, of course, in writing to members of the same household, such as the two Miss Gibbes. Indeed, of the ten extant letters to Miss Agnes Gibbes the first four were written on p. 3 of four-page letters addressed to her older sister, in such a

[1] Jan. 13, 1765.

[2] Jan. 16, 1783.

[3] Apr. 22, 1757; cf. Sept. 20, 1789, where also the presence of the complete letter shows that Wesley's reference was in this instance to a physically enclosed separate letter.

[4] Oct. 20, 1787.

[5] Mar. 1, 1774; cf. hers to him, Apr. 12, 1774. In the event Perfect was 'on the circuit', so that she was not able to deliver Wesley's letter personally, but left it for him.

[6] Jan. 30, 1770.

format that they could have been separated without the elder Miss Gibbes losing anything except the address on p. 4.[1] Similarly at least two of Wesley's letters to his brother's recently bereaved widow and her daughter Sally were written on the same sheets, even though they were later separated, so that they now appear to be four distinct letters.[2] Wesley also wrote such double letters to married couples, each of whom had formerly been his correspondents, such as Joseph Benson and his wife,[3] John Pawson and his wife,[4] the Revd. John Fletcher and his wife, the former Mary Bosanquet,[5] and the Revd. Levi and Mrs. Heath, the first President of Cokesbury School.[6] Although he usually addressed the man, as was to be expected in that era, on at least one occasion he wrote a double letter to a woman, Mrs. Ann Smith, his housekeeper at the New Room, Bristol, with an appended letter for John Whitehead, the preacher with whom she was contemplating marriage.[7]

An early extant example of a double letter is that sent from Cologne on June 28, 1738, addressed to his brother Charles in London, which begins: 'You will send my mother, wherever she is, her letter, by the first opportunity.' 'Her letter' was written on pp. 1–2, which Charles therefore cut off and dispatched to his mother, presumably under a separate cover containing a letter from himself. Dozens of other examples might be cited, spread over every decade to within a few months of Wesley's death. Some, to close partners, have remained unseparated on the one sheet.[8] Most have become separated, as Wesley usually intended that they should be, and have sometimes found their way into different collections. In numerous instances one half only is known, crying aloud for an explanation, such as the half of a double letter written from Ireland, on April 16, 1773, bearing on one side the address of Mrs. Kathy Lambe in Edinburgh, and on the other the heading, 'To Mollie Lowrie' and a complete letter beginning, 'My dear sister'. These were undoubtedly pp. 3 and 4 of a letter on p. 1 of which (or possibly on pp. 1–2) Wesley had written his main letter to Mrs. Kathy Lambe, which has disappeared: a heading such as, 'To Molly Lowrie', always carries with it a strong implication that this is in fact a subsidiary message intended by Wesley to be cut off and delivered by the

1 Apr. 25, May 19, June 10, Aug. 16, 1783; the following six were written to Miss Agnes independently of her sister's chaperonage.

2 Apr. 14, 21, 1788. 3 May 21, 1781. 4 Nov. 26, 1785.

5 Apr. 2, 3, 1785. 6 Oct. 20, 1788. 7 June 16, 1769.

8 Cf. that to Charles Wesley, in Wesley's letter to James Hutton, Apr. 28, 1738.

recipient of the complete double letter. In some instances the other half alone is extant, a one-page letter with no address on the verso, indistinguishable from other such half-letters separated from their address sheets except for some internal clue, such as that in a letter of May 12, 1785, written from Ireland to Charles Wesley: 'To save tenpence postage I will write a few lines to Patty in your letter.' To one of his preachers Wesley wrote: 'To save her postage I write a line or two in yours to poor sister Bastable.'[1]

Four of the eight extant letters written by Wesley to Thomas Rankin in America are such double letters. In these some new features of this method of postal thrift are demonstrated. The letter of March 1, 1775, is really three letters in one: the covering letter from Wesley to Rankin, closing, 'I add a line to all the preachers' (p. 1); the challenging pastoral letter to the American preachers in general (p. 2); and a letter to Rankin from Charles Wesley (p. 3, completed in the margin); the address is on p. 4. That of June 13, 1775, from Ireland, was a single letter readied for dispatch, but held back for a reason which Wesley's travelling companion Joseph Bradford explained in a letter added on p. 4, dated June 22: 'In a few hours after Mr. Wesley at [had] wrought your letter he was taken ill of a fever, and have continued so to this houer . . . What the event will be God only knows. I fear he his about to finish his course.' That of July 28, 1775, contains the address on p. 4, a letter to Rankin on p. 1, which ends halfway down p. 2, and is followed by a signed letter 'To Mr. [James] Dempster', and another on p. 3 'To John King'—two of Wesley's preachers in America. The other was written on Aug. 13, 1775, but appeared abnormally on pp. 2–3, because Wesley was using a sheet on which p. 1 had already been commandeered for a letter the previous day, written by John Atlay, the address being in Wesley's hand on p. 4.

According to the 1711 Act any number of letters on a single sheet of paper should be charged at the rate for a single letter, and only the addition of a true enclosure warranted charging the double rate, and an increase above one ounce the quadruple rate. An interpretative Act of 1719, aimed at merchants, sought to extend the double rate to single sheets containing bills of exchange or letters written thereon to different people, which resulted in some opening of

[1] Oct. 12, 1778. In this instance not only is the main letter on p. 1, but the address on p. 2, both pp. 3 and 4 presumably being given over to a long letter to the lady whom Wesley tried to serve in her poverty.

letters by the Post Office to detect double letters and small enclosures. The whole situation remained somewhat murky, however, and the new interpretation did not seem to be widely understood, accepted, or enforced.[1] Certainly Wesley sent such letters without announcing them as double letters under the 1719 Act, and just as certainly they were usually charged as single letters, as were the four in this category sent to the two Miss Gibbes as late as 1783. It is possible that the interpretation as well as the scale of charges became stricter by the Act of 1784. At any rate on Dec. 2, 1788, Wesley wrote to Henry Moore, his senior lay itinerant preacher in London, 'You will seal, and put Mr. Asbury's letter into the post.' This one-page letter was addressed on the verso to Moore, and bore a note for the attention of the postal authorities in the bottom left corner: 'Double Letter. In his absence [i.e. Moore's] to Mr. Whitfield' (the London Book Steward). The postmaster nevertheless scrawled '3' on the cover (the single rate), though this was later struck through, and the charge altered to sixpence.

Many other examples remain of Wesley's writing to two recipients, or of his joining with another writer to send a letter to a third. Probably scores more rest incognito because the tell-tale address half is missing. Sufficient has probably been said, however, to make it quite clear that this important feature of eighteenth-century correspondence may help to explain some literary puzzles. We close this section by describing the background of a letter to be presented in a later volume. On April 21, 1787, John Wesley wrote to John King, a preacher in the Bradford (Wiltshire) circuit, beginning: 'Adam Clark[e] is doubtless an extraordinary young man, and capable of doing much good. . . . He may have work enough to do if he adds the Isle of Alderney to those of Guernsey and Jersey. If you have a desire to go and labour with him, you may, after the Conference.' Three weeks later, on May 15, Adam Clarke himself—the future Bible commentator, of course—returned to Wiltshire from the Channel Islands. This had been his first circuit, and he had come a-courting his future wife, Mary Cooke. He found the letter still lying about awaiting the return of his friend John King from his preaching rounds to the circuit headquarters, having been informed that King would not be back before he must leave on his borrowed horse. Seeing King's name on the cover, recognizing Wesley's handwriting, and thinking of his own frustrated attempt

[1] Joyce, op. cit., pp. 139, 177–9; Robinson, *British Post Office*, pp. 96–8, 123–5.

to get in touch with King, he toyed with the letter, squeezed the sides, and through the partially opened fold saw his own name. That settled it. There might be 'something essential' in the letter concerning himself, and John King was an understanding personal friend who in similar circumstances would do just what he was about to do. He opened the letter, added his own apologetic message within, explaining the situation, and hinting at the reasons for his presence in the area, which he still wished to keep secret from all except his friend King. Such an incident helps us to visualize the long postal delays, the absence of preachers (or of Wesley himself) on itineraries while letters awaited them, and the physical conformation of a letter which enabled words to be glimpsed without unsealing the letter.

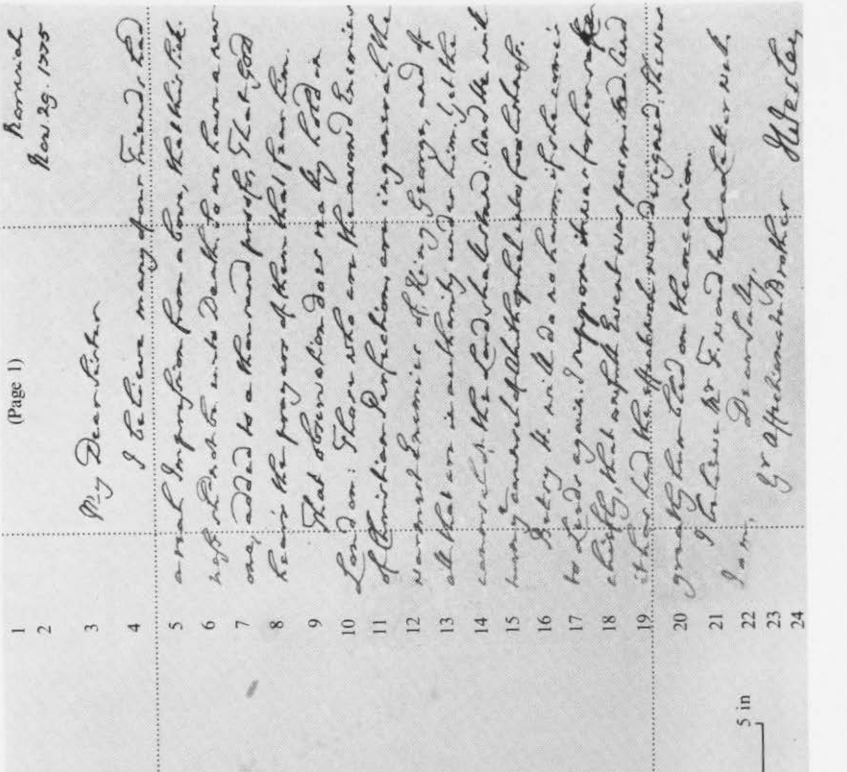
Folding the sheet. It seems possible, even probable, that foolscap sheets of writing paper could be purchased already folded in half to make four equal pages, and many people, probably most, undoubtedly began their folding of a sheet from the centre.[1] Wesley's portable writing-case would hold only such paper, not the flat foolscap sheet. Yet the evidence is overwhelming that Wesley did use a flat sheet for his letters, and when folding it deliberately made his first fold about 1 in. to the right of the centre, apparently in order to achieve a neater and stronger cover.[2]

The process can best be visualized with the aid of the illustrations facing pp. 68–9 (a typical letter with the message on p. 1 only, and the address on p. 3), together with a sheet of paper about 12 in. × 8 in., on which the salient features of the letter should be inserted.[3]

[1] In a series of over a hundred letters from Lady Huntingdon to John and Charles Wesley, 1741–66, in the Methodist Archives, all are on paper folded in various ways (none like Wesley's), but always beginning with a central fold. The same is true for most of those sent to Wesley by his correspondents, including his parents and other members of his family. The one exception is his brother Charles, who used the same method as John in his first extant letter, Jan. 20, 1728, though he was by no means as consistent in its use as John. (There is also at least one instance of their father's using the method, Jan. 27, 1730, in a letter to his two sons at Oxford, though all his previous letters used the normal central fold.) The same central fold seems customary for letters available in the display cabinets at the British Library and elsewhere. The well-known postal historian, R. Martin Willcocks, to whom I am greatly indebted for generous help in interpreting stamps and inscriptions on postal covers, agrees that in the thousands which he has handled he cannot remember any not beginning with a central fold.

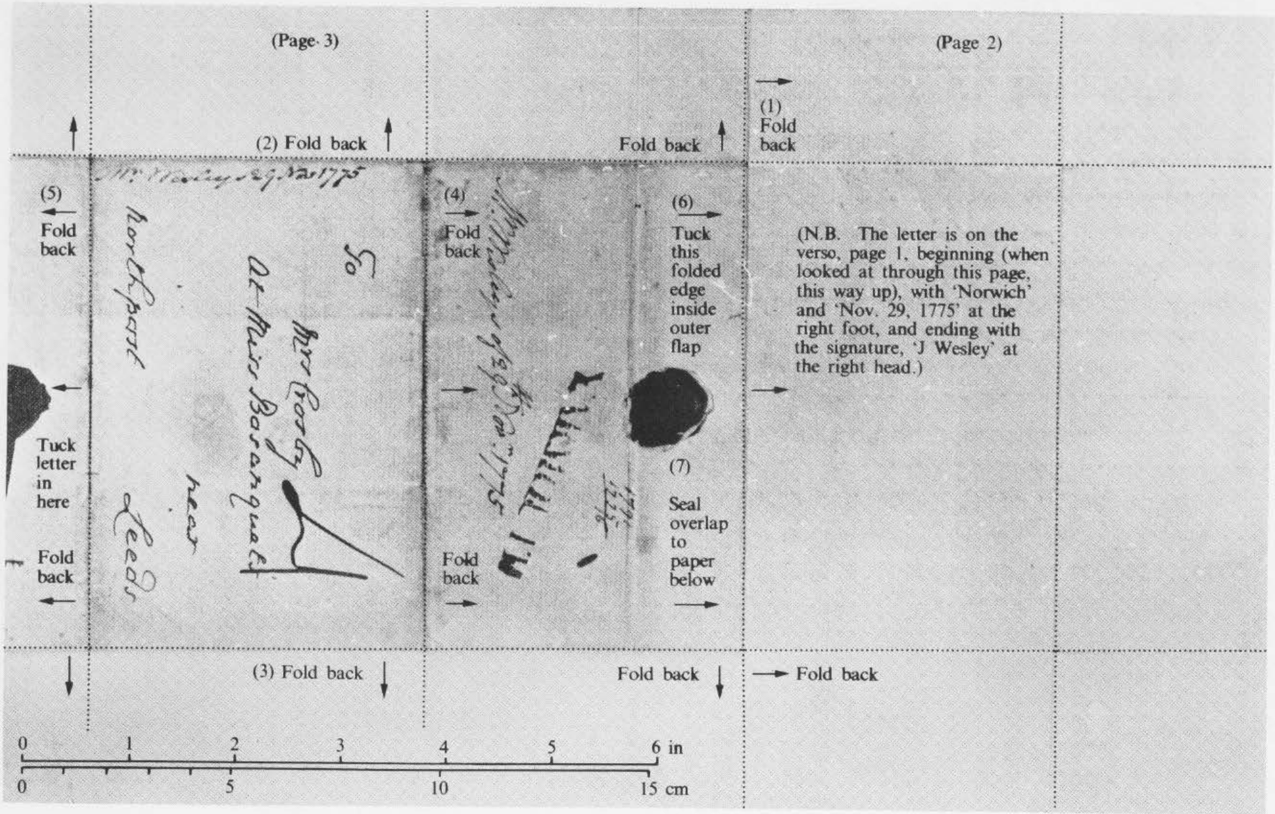
[2] Wesley's holograph letters have usually been preserved folded centrally, but the original folds remain, and are occasionally more marked than those in the centre. The hundreds of instances where Wesley's first fold breaks into his writing furnish abundant proof that the writing came before the folding. (See illus. facing pp. 58 and 68.)

[3] The black saucepan appearing in the photocopy (where the seal has torn away the



THE FOLDING OF WESLEY'S LETTERS

Nov. 29, 1775 (recto)



THE FOLDING OF WESLEY'S LETTERS
Nov. 29, 1775 (verso)

First we place the open sheet in front of us, with the message uppermost and to our right, and the blank p. 4 to our left (p. 68). (1) We fold p. 1 over to our left, thus concealing the message. By making the first fold about 1 in. to the right of the centre, as Wesley did, we leave a 2 in. column of p. 4 uncovered. Turning this folded sheet over from head to foot we now have a narrow leaf underneath (pp. 2, 1) and a wide leaf above (pp. 4, 3), with the address to our left on the uppermost p. 3. (For this and the remaining steps see p. 69). With folds (2) and (3) we turn under the head and foot of the folded sheet, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. each. We are left with a rectangle about 7 in. $\times$ $4\frac{3}{4}$ in. Fold (4) is made perpendicular to (2) and (3), beginning about $\frac{1}{2}$ in. to the right of the centre, turning under a rectangle of about 3 in. $\times$ $4\frac{3}{4}$ in., and leaving at the left a rectangle of about 4 in. $\times$ $4\frac{3}{4}$ in. Fold (5) turns the overlapping portion at the left over the rectangle beneath, making both rectangles of equal size. Thus folded, the letter is turned anti-clockwise through 90°, in which position we write the address.[1] (6) The rectangular panel beneath is then tucked into the winged flap, which because of Wesley's peculiar method of folding contains only one thickness of paper instead of the two which arise from beginning with a central fold. (7) If we follow Wesley's normal practice we then place a small dab of sealing-wax as an adhesive between the inner surface of the flap and the folded rectangle tucked into it. The process of folding and sealing is completed by dropping more of the hot wax in a large circle spreading across the junction of the edge of the flap and the paper beneath; upon this we impress our personal seal.[2]

When folded Wesley's letters displayed many variations in size—all smaller than most modern envelopes—but the same basic system of folding. This he followed uniformly throughout his life except for the early 1720s (for which very few holograph letters are available), when he fashioned a much smaller and squarer address panel, and

edge of the paper) will prove valuable in registering the back and front of the sheet correctly.

[1] Sometimes Wesley added the address after securing and sealing, but we believe that he usually did it just before making the fifth fold, and there is clear evidence that in at least some instances he wrote the address even before he began the message itself (see below, p. 73).

[2] Thus the postboy would carry a kind of flattened tube, whose edges could indeed be pressed open, as in the incident narrated above (pp. 67–8). In the case of the typical one-page letter, however, nothing would then be visible within—a good reason for folding p. 3 inward. With a longer letter, however, addressed on p. 4, such as that to Joseph Benson (between pp. 58–9), portions of the message on p. 1 could thus be read.

occasionally slightly different patterns of folding and sealing. For all practical purposes the only major variant during his last sixty years and more was the rare use of a quarto rather than a foolscap sheet, either folded into four octavo pages or with the letter written on one side and the address on the other. For these also he still employed the same method of folding, though with the four narrower pages the first fold was almost in the centre of p. 1, and the address was written perpendicular to the chain-lines in the paper rather than parallel to them.[1] The single quarto sheet Wesley folded in his normal manner, but tucked into the flap an outer margin instead of the folded centre of the letter.[2]

Seals. The last decisive act was the affixing of a seal. It was through rifling his pockets and reading a letter to Sarah Ryan which Wesley had 'finished but had not sealed' that his wife flew into a rage and left him.[3] Almost all Wesley's letters were sealed in one way or another, usually with red sealing-wax, but occasionally with black. Unfortunately, in only 20 per cent is any identifiable portion of the seal left intact. Most recipients (including the members of the Wesley family) broke the seal in two, or tore the letter open with no attempt to protect the brittle wax. This was true of most of his correspondents, with the major exception of Ann Bolton, who frequently cut round the seal with scissors so as to preserve it intact; almost half the extant letters to her thus retain an unbroken and distinct impression of Wesley's seal.[4] In our cross-section of five hundred only one letter seems clearly to have used no seal of any kind,[5] though in at least a dozen instances an adhesive wafer was used instead, and in one only the internal dab of wax. In over 50 per cent of the extant holographs the only traces of a seal are such things as a hole in the paper where the seal originally adhered, or some tiny fragments of wax, and in 6 per cent the letter lacks the address half where such evidence is most likely to appear, though it seems highly likely that a seal was indeed present. Strangely enough,

[1] See Apr. 11, 1785, to Charles Wesley.

[2] See Jan. 13, 1763, to Jenny Lee; May 31, 1771, to Betsy Perronet; Apr. 5, 1775, to Patty Chapman, and probably that of June 1, 1790, to Henry Moore. These need to be distinguished, of course, from the quarto sheets which have become separated from the other half of a double letter.

[3] Jan. 20, 27, 1758.

[4] Others such as Thomas Rankin occasionally did the same, and one or two cut out the seal and mounted it elsewhere on the letter, as did Lady D'Arcy Maxwell for his letter of June 22, 1766, securing it on the blank p. 3, with the appended note, 'J W, Mr.'.

[5] June 26, 1777, delivered by personal letter-carrier to Mary Bishop.

with all Wesley's use of tapers lit at fire or stove in order to melt the sealing-wax there remain few traces of accidental burns—just one in five hundred, that of Mar. 12, 1759, in which a large hole was burnt, so that he added another seal just to the side.

The first purpose of the seal was to secure the folded letter, and in some instances Wesley assisted this process by pinprick punctures to key the warm wax to the paper before it hardened.[1] Instead of wax he frequently used a ready-made wafer, a thin disc, $\frac{3}{4}$ in. in diameter, made of flour, gum, and colouring matter, which needed only moistening and pressure. (*The Complete Letter-Writer* maintained that these should never be used in letters to superiors, but only to equals or inferiors.[2]) With both wax and wafer he sometimes used embossing stamps to ensure good adhesion. No fewer than eighteen different types of embossing stamps have been noted on his letters, usually consisting of from two to five pressure points within concentric circles, but occasionally in more elaborate designs, within borders—a cross, a lion rampant, and what might be a crown over three cockle-shells and crossed swords, with an indecipherable legend, the second element of which appears to be 'CORI'.

The seal proper, impressed on the warm wax over the junction on the outside of the cover, although serving as an adhesive to secure privacy, was historically employed for authentication of a document as coming from the owner of the seal. This may well have been true with many of the seals which Wesley himself used, but it is a remarkable fact that impressions exist on his letters from over forty different seal-dies. This is all the more strange when it is remembered that these impressions represent only 20 per cent of the extant holographs, roughly about four hundred letters, so that there may well have been several more, in addition to multiplied uses of those with which we are already familiar.[3]

Seal-dies (or matrices) could be important items of jewellery, beautifully carved from agate, or they might be fashioned from metal.[4] The essential feature was the recessed design with which the hot wax was impressed just before it hardened. The very large number of seals used by Wesley prompts many questions which

[1] e.g. July 24, 1725; Feb. 15, 1735; Mar. 11, 1785. [2] Op. cit., p. 39.

[3] These will be listed in an appendix in Vol. VII, and where possible that used will be indicated at the end of each letter.

[4] For a general introduction see Hilary Jenkinson, *Guide to Seals in the Public Record Office*, London, H.M.S.O., 1968, and for much greater detail see A. B. Tonnolly, *Catalogue of British Seal-Dies in the British Museum*, London, British Museum, 1952.

may eventually be answered (or more probably answered in part) by further research. Did he have all or any of these seals (to give them their common misnomer) made for him personally, or did he purchase them from a jeweller's stock? Did he keep different seals at his different headquarters around the country? Did he carry favourites around with him? What led him to change his seals so frequently, in view of the fact that they were almost indestructible? What part did chance or whimsy play in the use of different seals during the same period? How many were borrowed from other people, such as that of Adam Clarke, used on Sept. 23–4, 1789?

What we may affirm with certainty, however, is that he did use seals of many different kinds, with mottoes, monograms, busts, birds, animals, coats of arms. Seals displaying a cross were in use by both John and Charles Wesley in 1738, but for some months following his return from Germany he used one showing a crucifix and the legend, 'Der ist mein' ('He is mine'). During the following decade he came to favour a dove bearing an olive twig, with the legend, 'Nuntia pacis' ('the messenger of peace'). One such seal within an oval frame was used in the late 1740s, another within an octagonal frame in the 1750s, and still another within an oval frame (this time with the spelling 'Nuncia') in the 1760s; still another, in a round frame, has been noted in 1784. Perhaps linked with this favourite motif were seals showing two birds billing, one with the legend 'l'Amitié' (friendship), two similar ones in 1773, single birds in 1748 and 1766, and one with the legend 'l'Amour' (love) in 1766.[1] The two most frequently-used seals during Wesley's later years, however, were his own monogram, 'JW' (adapted by Richard Heitzenrater to become the symbol of this edition of his works), which also carries the legend, 'Believe, Love, Obey' (1774–85), and a tiny sunflower looking up to the sun, bearing the motto, 'Tibi Soli' ('for thee alone', 1774–89).

The 'Tibi Soli' seal-die is extant in his Bristol headquarters, and three others are associated with him. One shows a crown over a cross, and the legend, 'Be thou faithful unto death', which he certainly used on Dec. 13, 1783. A fob-seal of agate in a gold setting preserved in Wesley's House, London, depicts him in profile. A reversible metal fob-seal, showing on one side a profile of Wesley and on the other his monogram, also boasts a pedigree, though no

[1] Cf. 'La Paix' (peace) in 1786, a dove with a twig, 1788, and what may be a dove, 1757.

actual use of the last two seals by Wesley himself has so far been noted.[1] In view of his large collection of seals it is perhaps strange to witness Wesley writing to Ann Bolton, when she seemed to be dying: 'O Nancy, I want sadly to see you: I am afraid you should steal away into paradise. A thought comes into my mind, which I will tell you freely. If you go first, I think you must leave me your seal for a token: I need not say, to remember you by, for I shall never forget you.'[2]

The address. We have seen that Wesley almost uniformly used four pages for his letters, and that if the beginning were termed p. 1, then the address would normally be written on p. 3, unless the message covered two or three pages, when it would appear on p. 4. *The Complete Letter-Writer*[3] assumed that the address would be written after the letter was folded and sealed, and this would indeed seem the natural procedure, removing any guess-work about the actual position of the rectangular panel formed on the outside of the letter by the process of folding.[4] Nevertheless it is clear that Wesley himself sometimes wrote the address first, witness especially the instances when a sheet with the address already written was left unfinished, and the sheet later used for a letter to a different recipient.[5] Wesley seems always to have followed the practice prescribed by *The Complete Letter-Writer*, beginning his address with the word 'To' in the upper left-hand corner, and frequently by writing the recipient's town of abode in slightly larger characters.[6] After the

[1] For the pedigree see W.H.S. XXVIII. 23. The present owner is Dr. Paul Sangster of Kent College, Canterbury, England, who was most helpful in furthering my researches. Another seal with a verbal pedigree going back to the late nineteenth century is now in Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.; this bears the motto, 'Le temps nous joindra' ('time will join us').

[2] June 7, 1768.

[3] Op. cit., p. 39.

[4] Cf. Wesley's instructions to Robert Costerdine about a signed circular: 'Seal, superscribe, and deliver them in my name.' (Nov. 24, 1767.)

[5] See June 26, 1777 to Mary Bishop (first addressed to Mr. Wathen), and Dec. 21, 1779, to Joseph Benson (originally addressed to Nancy Holman). Cf. the address on p. 3, which separates parts of the letter to Mary Cooke, Sept. 24, 1785, and also implies that the address was already written. On the other hand see the letter to Ann Tindall, Dec. 30, 1784, written on a sheet which already contained the beginnings of a letter, but no address.

[6] Op. cit., p. 39. Not one of the 500 selected letters bearing addresses omits the 'To', but the evidence about the prominent name of the town is very mixed, many examples revealing no trend, except that larger writing does not seem to occur with long names such as Newcastle upon Tyne, and those that do occur are usually not much larger than the remainder of the address, and tend to become less frequent in Wesley's later years. See illustrations, facing pp. 58, 69.

line with 'To' followed another with the recipient's title and name in the centre (sometimes with an identifying occupation), another with the local address (if needed), usually another with the word 'in' (or occasionally 'at'), and then the town or county, sometimes two spaces below the previous line, and gaining prominence by this separation if not by its larger size.[1]

Wesley was always very careful about courteous formality on the covers of his letters. Jane Hilton pleaded with him to drop the 'Miss' on the outside when writing to her, as he had speedily done within. He replied: 'You lay me under a difficulty. When I speak to you alone I can't use ceremony. I love you too well. But in superscribing a letter I would be as *civil* to you as if I did not love you at all. Yet I know not how to deny you anything.' This letter, therefore, like the others which reached her every month until her marriage seven months later, was addressed, 'To / Jenny Hilton'—possibly unique in this open formality.[2]

'Civil' in Wesley's day and in his own usage implied positive politeness rather than a negative disguised rudeness. It can be seen also in his desire to use the appropriate title on the cover, demonstrated especially in his many letters to clergy, before whose names he seems always to have inserted 'The Revd. Mr.'. This included his brother Charles.[3] Even some of his lay itinerant preachers, normally addressed as 'Mr. Jos. Benson', 'Mr. Tho. Rankin', etc., were accorded the additional clerical courtesy after he had ordained them for service in Scotland. Thus a letter to Alexander Suter, ordained by Wesley in 1787, was addressed on Nov. 24 of that year, 'To the Revd. Mr. Al. Suter in Aberdeen', but when his return to England rendered that distinction both unnecessary and likely to arouse prejudice among his colleagues, Wesley's superscription once more became, 'To Mr. Suter, At the Preaching house in Plymouth Dock', or 'To Mr. Suter, At the Preaching house in Penzance, Cornwall'.[4]

The lay itinerant preachers had no settled abode, and were usually addressed at one of Wesley's 'preaching-houses' in their circuit, or to the care of the steward or leading layman in the town where Wesley (with his fairly detailed familiarity with the itinerant plans

[1] See illus. facing p. 77.
[2] July 23, 1768.
[3] The only exceptions were two letters written from Europe, addressed in French, 'Monsieur Charles Wesley', June 28 and July 7, 1738.
[4] May 4, 21, 1789; Oct. 3, 1789. He used similar courtesy in addressing the American preachers after 1784: 'The Revd. Mr. Whatcoat' (July 17, 1788) and 'The Revd. Mr. Fr. Garretson' (Jan. 24, 1789), etc.

for all the circuits) expected them to be when the letter arrived. Thus the six sent during the winter of 1764–5 to Thomas Rankin in the Cornwall circuit were directed to him at four different addresses: 'At Mr. John Nance's, in St. Ives', 'At Mr. Joseph Andrew's, in Redruth', 'At Mr. Wood's, Shopkeeper, In Port Isaac, near Camelford' (in each case with 'Cornwall' on the bottom line), and 'At Mrs. Blackmore's, Shopkee[pe]r, in Plymouth Dock'.[1]

In larger centres the name alone might not be sufficient to identify the recipient (or his agent or lodgings), so that Wesley (like his contemporaries) added some descriptive phrase, such as may be seen in his letters to Miss Bishop: 'To Miss Bishop, In the Vineyards, Bath', or 'near Lady Huntingdon's Chapel, in Bath', or 'To Miss Bishop, Schoolmistress, in Bath', which from 1781 became, 'To Miss Bishop, at the Boarding School in Keynsham, near Bristol'. In many instances this was unnecessary, and Wesley's favourite Irish correspondent was addressed uniformly, 'To Mr. Alexander Knox in Londonderry', except that the first letter used the phrase 'at Londonderry', and seven out of thirty-six did not give a separate line to the word 'in', combining it with Knox's name.

If Wesley were away from London when writing he might feel it necessary to give some postal directions in the bottom left-hand corner, indicating the route which he thought the letter should take.[2] Some he labelled, 'North post', thus requesting that they should be carried to London to catch that post, which at least some did;[3] or 'Cross post' (in later years '+ post'), recommending that they should not be sent to London first.[4] Similarly he specified 'per Glo[uce]ster' for various letters, including one from Bristol to Brecon;[5] or 'per Portpatrick' for many letters both to and from Ireland; or 'per London' for one from Portarlington in Ireland to Philadelphia.[6]

Wesley developed very strong habits in adding these addresses, almost always writing towards the outer margin of the folded sheet, though in three instances out of four hundred letters retaining their

[1] Sept. 21, Nov. 6, 1764; Jan. 26, Feb. 9, 1765; cf. Jan. 13, Mar. 9, 1765.

[2] These amounted to some 6 per cent or 7 per cent of all the addressed letters which were not delivered personally.

[3] e.g. from Worcester to Newcastle, July 8, 1777, and from Oxford to Scarborough, Aug. 10, 1779.

[4] e.g. from Rochdale to Bath, Apr. 17, 1776, and from Oxford to Londonderry, Oct. 22, 1777. From the lack of Bishop marks these two in fact did not pass through London, but others marked 'Cross post' did, such as Newcastle to Evesham, June 7, 1768, and Leeds to Witney, July 12, 1768.

[5] Oct. 5, 1770.

[6] Apr. 21, 1775.

addresses in Wesley's hand these were written from the outer margin inwards.[1] The panels upon which the addresses were written varied in size, though normally they were about $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. $\times$ 3 in. (115 $\times$ 76 mm.) In the emergency caused by a very long letter, however, Wesley completed it on the tuck-in flaps, which were therefore made much larger, thus reducing the panel left on p. 4 to $3\frac{1}{4}$ in. $\times$ $2\frac{7}{8}$ in. (83 $\times$ 73 mm).[2]

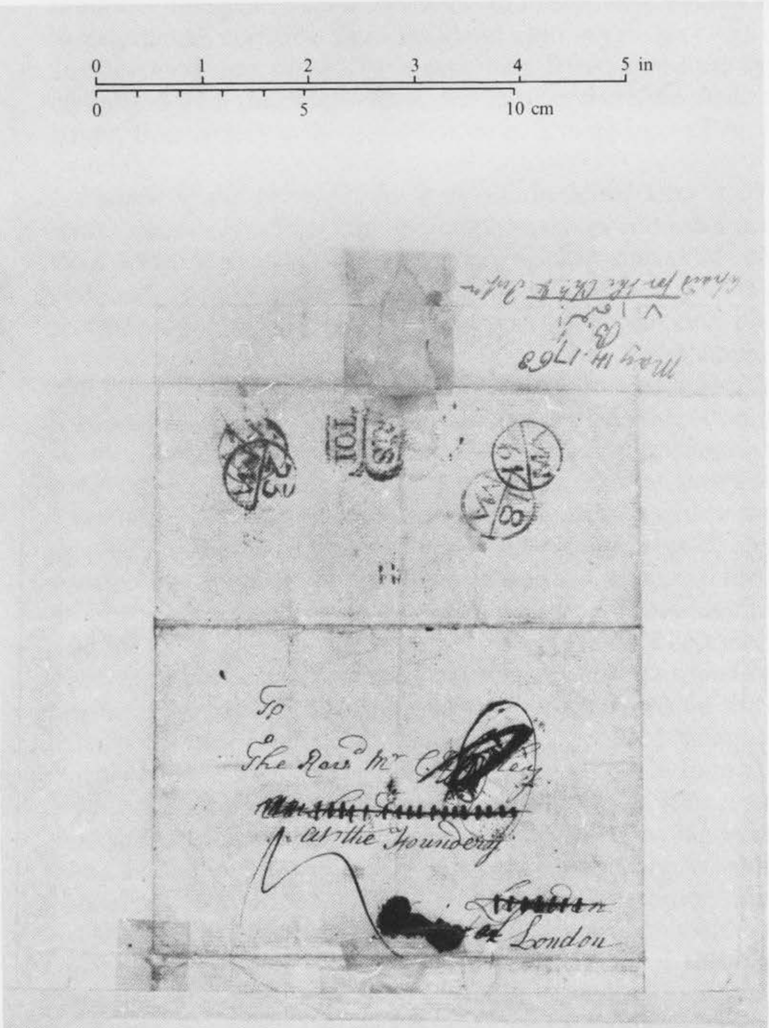
Postmarks and charges. The story of the letter after it left the writer's hands is reflected in the postal markings and other inscriptions which it carries. We have already spoken about the varieties and importance of postmarks,[3] and full details of these will be given at the end of each letter, together with an explanation of their significance when this seems necessary. The date stamps were normally impressed on the back of the folded and sealed cover. The postmasters at the receiving offices also made their own handwritten notes on the address panel, indicating the charges to be collected, which varied according to the number of sheets in the letter and its place of destination. A letter travelling within the area covered by the London Penny Post was usually prepaid, and this was indicated by a triangular 'Penny Post Paid' stamp on the back, to which was added in later years a circular stamp showing the time and the office where it was posted.[4] During Wesley's lifetime, however, prepayment was very rare for letters travelling outside London, and in these cases an indication of the fact was made on the cover either in writing or by the addition of a printed stamp—'PD' within a circle until 1765, 'Post Paid' within a circle from 1766 to 1791, with more elaborate stamps being introduced from 1787 onwards. Very few of these survive on Wesley's letters, however, and even as late as July 17, 1788, his letter to Richard Whatcoat in America was inscribed by hand in the lower left corner, 'Post pd. to New York'. The vast majority of Wesley's unmutilated letters do bear postmasters' inscriptions, but almost all of them simply point out the charges to be paid when the letter was collected or delivered. Sometimes these are small and neat, more often large and scrawling, frequently with erasures and revised charges substituted, usually on the address panel itself, though occasionally

[1] Aug. 23, 1739, to Ebenezer Blackwell; Sept. 15, 1776, to Ann Bolton; and Sept. 5, 1785, to John Valton.

[2] May 7, 1739, to James Hutton.

[3] See pp. 25–6 above.

[4] See letters to Mrs. Hutton, Aug. 22, 1744, and James Hutton, Dec. 26, 1771.



REDIRECTION
John Wesley to Charles Wesley, May 14, 1768

postal inscriptions are found on the back also. This information frequently proves of value in documenting the history of the letter, and an attempt will be made to record the inscriptions in addition to the postmarks wherever they occur. Their absence, of course, from a letter with the integral address half, shows that the letter was either not dispatched, or was delivered by personal messenger.

Many letters needed redirecting when they reached their original address. This seems frequently to have been done without charge in the London area, but Wesley's stewards at the Foundery would also pay the additional penny to have letters for Charles Wesley redirected to his home in Chesterfield Street.[1] Occasionally a letter was redirected several times, and its travels may be followed by means of the postmarks and the added inscriptions. Thus one written by John to Charles from Edinburgh, May 14, 1768, was first stamped on the back with a Bishop mark in Edinburgh, dated 'MY/14', and the charge of sixpence was noted on the address panel, for collection in London.[2] Reaching the London office on May 18, the London Bishop mark was added. By that time, however, Charles was apparently on a brief visit to his wife in Bristol—she was nursing their latest child, John James ('Jacky'), who died in July. The London postal charge was apparently paid, and struck through when the letter was redirected to Bristol the following day, at the same time acquiring another Bishop mark, and probably a further charge of fourpence. When it arrived in Bristol (almost certainly on May 21), Charles Wesley was on his way back to London. It was accordingly redirected to London, receiving the distinctive Bristol stamp, a large 'B' with 'RIS' and 'TOL' enclosed within the loops. At this stage a further fourpence might possibly have been demanded, but perhaps the postmaster was touched by the sad story, and let it go without further charge, although this is conjectural. Once more it arrived at the London office, was postmarked '23/MA', the fourpence was paid, and Charles Wesley, having read the letter, docketed it, 'May 14, 1768, B[rother], for the Church [in shorthand]', and at a later time, 'Afraid for the Ch[urc]h and Perf[ectio]n'.

Many of Wesley's correspondents docketed his letters with notes about the date on which they were written, and occasionally

[1] e.g. June 27, 1781, May 2, 1783, Apr. 11, 1784, Mar. 2, 1788; the first and the last of these examples have the original charge struck through, apparently an indication that this was paid before the Penny Post Paid stamp was added.

[2] See illus. facing p. 77.

summarized their contents, just as Wesley himself did for the letters which he received.[1] These often confirm or even supply the dates in those instances when the letter itself is for any reason deficient or defective.[2] Even more valuable are the replies which are sometimes copied out on a blank page.[3] Some of his correspondents numbered the letters which they received from him—a valuable indication of the actual frequency of writing, as also about any missing letters.[4] All such inscriptions will here be recorded in full.

Like some series numberings, however, many inscriptions were added considerably later. Some were made by booksellers, auctioneers, or collectors—and not always in pencil. Perhaps the most interesting and valuable are editorial annotations made by those who were preparing Wesley's letters for publication. Almost all of the numerous examples in this category are from the pen of Wesley's correspondent from 1768, Joseph Benson, who as a respected Methodist and scholar and connexional editor later edited the first comparatively complete edition of Wesley's *Works*, including one volume devoted mainly to his letters.[5] In many instances Benson's published version constitutes our earliest source. It is therefore the more important to be able to see his editorial practice in actual operation with the holograph letters themselves. He prepared them in a similar manner to that which he had probably witnessed in Wesley himself, striking passages through, altering words, improving grammar and sense, adding link words (all in ink, of course), before handing the heavily amended document to the printer.[6]

[1] Both brothers did this from their early years, e.g. Wesley's letter to his brother Charles, docketed, 'B. Utph, July 7, 1738', and again later, 'B. from Utph, Panegyric on Germany'.

[2] e.g. Wesley dated a letter to his brother, 'Janu. 5, 1762', but Charles docketed it correctly, 'B. festinans lente! Jan. 5, 1763'.

[3] e.g. the letter to Samuel Lloyd, June 19, 1751, which contains Lloyd's reply of June 25, and that to Charles Wesley, Sept. 13, 1785, on which Charles copied his reply of Sept. 19; sometimes Charles copied his replies in shorthand, as in the case of that (Aug. 7) to John's letter of July 31, 1775.

[4] Unfortunately most of the extant numberings were not added by the recipients themselves, but at a later stage, so that their value as evidence of the original correspondence is sadly diminished. One example of a recipient's numbering is in the early letters to Mary Cooke, before she married Adam Clarke, though of the eighteen recorded letters (Sept. 10, 1785, to Dec. 21, 1787) only eight appear to be extant in any form. In the case of Mrs. Eliza Bennis the few extant holographs bear two numberings, one being her own, the other that of her son, who combined Wesley's originals to her with her copies of letters to him (similarly numbered) to publish selections from her correspondence.

[5] See below, pp. 112–13. [6] See below, pp. 119–20, 121; cf. illus. facing pp. 58, 59.

V. WESLEY'S CORRESPONDENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

John Wesley probably had his finger on the pulse of British life as closely as any man, and more closely than most. Among his many hundreds of correspondents were numbered the great of the land: the king and his ministers of state, the lords of the church and the higher clergy, the nobility and titled gentry; they included also the poor and destitute, and not a few criminals both high and low; they were scattered around several European countries and in the rapidly expanding eastern settlements of the New World; above all, however, they comprised any who were eager to foster personal religion, and especially the preachers and leaders of his Methodist societies, developed and nurtured for this express purpose. Deservedly of great interest are his letters offering advice, encouragement, and challenge to Lord North,[1] William Pitt,[2] or William Wilberforce,[3] even though their replies are not known. Yet a letter is never complete in itself; we need to know who and what prompted it, what response it evoked. To understand Wesley's letters we must know something about his correspondents and his correspondence. Sometimes, indeed, the only evidence for missing letters comes from his correspondents, as in the case of Dr. Samuel Johnson, from whom we have two to Wesley but none from him.[4] Without Wesley's in-letters his out-letters put us in the position of someone listening to one end of a telephone conversation upon a subject with which we may be unfamiliar—the more frustrating because the man at our end of the line is normally much the more taciturn of the two, answering lengthy sentences with a brief comment, reacting rather than initiating.

Correspondence in and out. Ideally we would wish to have complete series of both sides of several correspondences over long periods, so that we could study in documented detail the development of relationships and the maturing of ideas over a generation or more, for at least a few truly representative figures. Such we have in the case of Horace Walpole. Not with Wesley, however. Only a few series can be regarded as anywhere near complete, and these for

[1] June 15, 1775.

[2] Sept. 6, 1784; June 22, 1790.

[3] July 30, 1790; Feb. 24, 1791.

[4] Feb. 6, 1776, and May 3, 1779, the latter a letter of introduction for Boswell. There is no question that Johnson and Wesley both respected and were influenced by each other. (See Richard E. Brantley, 'Johnson's Wesleyan Connection', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, X. 143–68 (Winter, 1976/7).)

limited periods only. One is Wesley's correspondence with a learned and sympathetic (though highly critical) clergyman who employed the pseudonym 'John Smith', whose identity remains unknown. Between May, 1745, and Mar. 22, 1748, they exchanged twelve lengthy letters dealing with the beliefs and practices of Wesley and the Methodists. (This correspondence was transcribed by Wesley's trusted friend, the Revd. John Jones.) A fairly complete series of about fifty letters between Wesley and the young Bible scholar Adam Clarke has also survived, stretching over the years 1784–91, including sixteen by Clarke himself—usually two or three times longer than Wesley's. In a few other instances we possess publications by Wesley's opponents making controversial capital out of briefer and less substantial correspondences, such as those by a Baptist, the Revd. Gilbert Boyce (1750), by an Irish Presbyterian, the Revd. James Clark (1756), and by a backsliding Methodist, John Atlay (1788).

Several notable series are available apart from these, but no long one which is even relatively complete from both sides. The longest correspondence of all, that with his brother Charles, covering the years 1724–88, comprises (at present) 113 from John to Charles and 79 from Charles to John, but there are huge gaps where letters undoubtedly passed between them, alike in their youth, their middle years, and their old age, nor do most of the letters so far known connect with one preceding or following. The next largest series consists of 93 to Miss Ann Bolton of Witney, covering the years 1768–91. In this instance also Wesley seems to have preserved those he received, as she did his. After his death, however, her letters were fed to a bonfire behind his home in City Road, London,[1] though fortunately he had already printed extracts from 25 of them in his *Arminian Magazine*. The series of fifty letters to Alexander Knox (1775–90) appears to be complete, but not a single example remains of Knox's letters to Wesley.

The letters which Wesley received were often turned to important advantage in his societies, on regular 'letter-days', when selections would be read emphasizing conversions, spiritual experience, and the progress of the work of evangelism in various parts of the world, a practice which may have been adopted from the Moravians. At a noonday gathering on Saturday, Aug. 9, 1740, for instance, he

[1] James Everett, *Adam Clarke Portrayed*, London, Hamilton, Adams, 1843, I. 345–6.

recorded: 'Instead of the letters I had lately received I read a few of those formerly received from our poor brethren who have since then denied the work of God, and vilely cast away their shield.'[1] Monthly letter-days in London, Bristol, and Newcastle were scheduled at the early Conferences,[2] and the practice seems to have continued through most of Wesley's life. His *Journal* for Dec. 26, 1769, recorded the immediate results of British Methodism's greatest missionary venture, the sending of preachers to America a few months earlier: 'I read the letters from our preachers in America, informing us that God had begun a glorious work there; that both in New York and Philadelphia multitudes flock to hear, and behave with the deepest seriousness; and that the society in each place already contains above a hundred members.'[3]

The major source of holograph letters to Wesley is the Methodist Archives, in which have gradually accumulated most of those which Wesley himself set out to preserve, and which escaped the spring-cleaning enthusiasm at his death. As is demonstrated by his endorsements on wrappers and individual letters, it was his practice to gather them together in labelled bundles: 'L[ette]rs rec[eive]d in Georgia from Engl[an]d';[4] 'Savannah L[ette]rs';[5] 'L[ette]rs writ at Sav[anna]h and a[fte]r my return';[6] 'L[etter]rs of June, July, Aug., Sept., 1740';[7] 'L[ette]rs to be answered',[8] etc. Frequently he burned letters after reading them,[9] though not always—even when his correspondents asked him to do so.[10] Others he weeded out at intervals.[11] Most of them were destroyed once he had transcribed extracts from them,[12] or published them in his *Journal* or elsewhere.[13] The

[1] *Journal* and diary for that date.

[2] See *Minutes* of the Conferences, 1744–7, Vol. 10 of this edition.

[3] JWJ, Dec. 26, 1769; cf. Sept. 3, 1745; Apr. 27, 1748; July 17, 1750; Apr. 18, 1758; Aug. 4, 1760; Sept. 19, 1773.

[4] Nov. 18, 1735, from James Vernon.

[5] Mar. 16, 1736, from General Oglethorpe.

[6] Oct. 9, 1736, from the Revd. Thomas Broughton.

[7] Sept. 2, 1740, from the Revd. Henry Piers.

[8] Dec. 25, 1740, from John Brownfield.

[9] July 10, 1756, to his wife.

[10] e.g. Jan. 1, 1734, from his mother, and May 24, 1788, from his niece Sally.

[11] 'I employed all my leisure hours this week in revising my letters and papers. Abundance of them I committed to the flames. Perhaps some of the rest may see the light when I am gone.' (JWJ, Jan. 21, 1765; cf. Jan. 3, 1740, and Aug. 12, 1745, an occasion which led to the publication of a batch of letters in his *Journal*.)

[12] 'I do transcribe what I choose to keep, and burn the originals.' (May 11, 1780, to Sarah Crosby.)

[13] Ibid., but cf. Aug. 16, 1756, to the Revd. Samuel Walker, and Sept. 15, 1762, to the Revd. Samuel Furly, letters preserved even after he had published them in the *A.M.*

few score which survived were almost always those which he had endorsed with a cross to indicate their importance either in content or as representative samples from a writer of whom he wished to preserve at least one souvenir.

He was rightly concerned about what would happen to his 'papers and letters' after his death, wondering in 1772 whether he should bequeath them to the Revd. John Fletcher.[1] In the end he outlived both Fletcher and his brother Charles, and by his last will (Feb. 20, 1789) stated: 'I give all my manuscripts to Thomas Coke, Doctor Whitehead, and Henry Moore, to be burned or published as they see good.'[2] Unfortunately Whitehead was at loggerheads with the other two literary executors, and all three were to some extent frustrated by the precipitate action of one of the senior preachers in destroying material.[3]

These holographs are supplemented by the in-letters which he himself published, together with those which survive in letter-books, biographies, magazines, and the like, bringing the total at present available to about 1,300, many of them much lengthier than Wesley's own compact missives, which number some 3,500. When to holographs and copies are added clues from diaries, biographies, and other letters, however, it is possible to furnish specific documentation (though not texts) of some ten thousand letters which passed between him and about sixteen hundred correspondents.[4]

Classes of correspondents to 1739. It is helpful to divide Wesley's life into two basic stages, that preparatory to the flowering of Methodism, and that in which he guided its affairs. Although many features of his Methodist societies were foreshadowed by events in Oxford, Georgia, and Germany, the full flowering did not come until 1739, when he ventured upon many practices which set Methodism off from the Church of England as a religious group with a distinct ethos of its own. During this first period, 1717–39, we can document some 1,373 out-letters and 490 in-letters for Wesley, a total of 1,863, of which 226 out-letters and 303 in-letters are extant in one form or another, a total of 529, or about 28 per cent of the whole. Almost three-quarters of these may be described as to family and friends.

[1] Apr. 26, 1772.

[2] Somerset House, London.

[3] See above, p. 80 and n.

[4] For details of the brief presentation of this massive correspondence see below, p. 123, and the appendix to this volume. For the reproduction of select letters see pp. 128–9.

Family ties were very important to Wesley, and his diaries furnish a strong illustration of this, including the documentation of letters which are no longer extant. From 1724 until Samuel Wesley's death in 1735 at least 120 letters passed between John and his father. He was even closer to his mother, although letters passed between them at similar intervals, an accumulation of about 160 between 1723 and 1739. Perhaps more remarkable is his correspondence with his older brother Samuel, who died in 1739 after John had recorded writing to him 115 times from June 17, 1724. The Revd. Samuel Wesley, Jun., had apparently written a similar number of letters in reply, although only forty-five are documented.[1] A similar devotion is shown in varying degrees in John's letters to his sisters. Between 1724 and 1739 he wrote forty to Emily; only two to Suky, the next oldest, unhappily married to Richard Ellison, who seems to have made things difficult for her; seventeen to Molly, who died in 1734; seven to Hetty (1725–32); nine to Nancy—widely scattered; fifty-four to Patty (Martha), who married the Revd. Westley Hall; and thirty-nine to the youngest, Kezia (1729–39). To Charles during the same period John records writing thirty-eight letters, although certainly more passed. In spite of the deficiencies in the records and the low survival rate of the actual letters, it can readily be seen that there existed very close ties, not only of duty, but of affection, between Wesley and his parents, and between him and his brothers and sisters, especially Samuel, Emily (ten years his senior), Martha (three years younger), and baby Kezia, six years younger.

Allied with these letters during this preparatory period were a host of letters to a close circle of friends, especially those arising from his career at Oxford. He maintained friendships with other Fellows, with his own students and their families, and especially with the committed few who were nicknamed Methodists. Through his Oxford friends he was introduced to a circle of young women, mainly the sisters of Oxford men, and especially to a group living in three Cotswold villages, with whom he corresponded frequently during the intervals between idyllic holidays in the area. To his various Oxford correspondents during the period 1726–39 he wrote some 333 letters, to the Cotswold group (1725–34), 178, a total of 511, or over 37 per cent of his total correspondence for the whole period under study.

For these two groups, family and friends, during his young

[1] In his diary Wesley recorded in-letters far less frequently than out-letters.

manhood, Wesley maintained careful records of letters sent and received, preserved samples of actual letters received from them, and notebooks containing summaries of their correspondence, not all of which, unfortunately, have survived. His family letter-book furnishes a valuable supplement to those actual letters which have been preserved, and the selections from his correspondence with 'Aspasia' (the young widow, Mary Pendarves, formerly Granville, and later Mrs. Delany, who has herself become known to the literary world for her letters), and 'Selima' (her sister Anne) furnish glimpses of an aspect of his character that would otherwise be extremely difficult to reconstruct. One acute loss is the letter-book containing extracts from his correspondence with 'Varanese'—Sally Kirkham, who probably meant much more to him than either. Their correspondence began in 1725, the year of his ordination, only a few months before she married the Revd. John Chapone, and continued until 1736, during which time she was apparently a happy wife and mother, yet sharing tender feelings of platonic love with Wesley, who wrote at least forty-three letters to her.

The remaining quarter of Wesley's correspondence before 1740 was meagre by comparison: some 150 letters written to individuals and organizations connected with his Georgia ministry of 1736–7; about 164 linked with the beginnings of experimental Methodism in Britain (1738–9); about 50 connected with his publishing activities, notably 41 to Charles Rivington (1731–6); and about 20 linked with the Moravians and his visit to Germany in 1738. This latter period of 1738–9, however, is very fruitful with hints of what was to come: a handful of letters replying to written and printed attacks upon the new movement,[1] letters to the nobility and titled gentry,[2] to civic authority,[3] to sympathetic evangelicals both in the Anglican fold,[4] among the Nonconformists,[5] and in other countries.[6] From 1725 onwards he clearly set out to prove himself 'a faithful minister of our blessed Jesus',[7] committed to saving souls,[8] and by 1739 was

[1] By the Revd. Arthur Bedford, Mrs. Anne Dutton, 'Mr. Hooker' (Dr. William Webster) of the *Weekly Miscellany*, Dr. Henry Stebbing, and the Revd. Josiah Tucker.

[2] Lord Perceval, later the Earl of Egmont, Lady Cox, Sir John and later Sir Erasmus Phillips.

[3] The Mayor of Bristol.

[4] The Revd. Griffith Jones.

[5] Dr. Philip Doddridge.

[6] Dr. Ralph Erskine in Scotland, Howell Harris and Thomas Price in Wales, Dr. Timothy Cutler in Boston, Massachusetts, Dr. Koker in Holland, Messrs. Gottschalk, Marschall, Moschere, Steinmetz, and the Moravians, in Germany.

[7] Feb. 15, 1733.

[8] Jan. 24, 1727.

beginning to look upon all the world as his parish,[1] and in this task was already seeking help from the enthusiastic layman as well as the sympathetic cleric. The fifty years which followed saw the unfolding of this enterprise, together with the inevitable curtailing of the time devoted to family and friends.

Major correspondents from 1740. A statistical survey of Wesley's correspondents for the last fifty years of his writing life is less conclusive than for the first twenty, even though the letters available are multiplied eight times, because it must be based upon the accidents of preservation rather than upon Wesley's own fairly complete records. Nevertheless some general indications may be given from a study of those who are represented by (say) a total of twenty letters or more in either direction. This is true of 48 correspondents, 26 men and 22 women, with similar proportions for the numbers of Wesley letters to those correspondents—882 and 687, a total of 1,569, about 45 per cent of Wesley's extant letters to all correspondents. (It should perhaps be pointed out that the proportion of women in Wesley's total correspondence, including the many to whom no extant letters are available, is much smaller—only 300 out of 1,400.)

The majority of Wesley's favoured letter-receiving and letter-saving men were from the ranks of his itinerant preachers—sixteen out of the twenty-six. Naming these in order of the beginnings of the extant correspondence, they consist of John Bennet (1744–53), who left the ranks to become an Independent minister, after marrying Wesley's espoused wife, Grace Murray;[2] Christopher Hopper (1750–88); Thomas Rankin, his General Assistant in America (1761–86); John Valton (1764–90); Thomas Wride (1765–90); Robert Costerdine (1767–85); Joseph Benson (1768–90); John Mason (1768–90); John Bredin (1772–89); Thomas Rutherford (1774–90); Samuel Bradburn, 'The Methodist Demosthenes' (1775–89); Zechariah Yewdall (1779–89); Henry Moore, one of Wesley's literary executors (1783–91); and Adam Clarke, the young biblical scholar (1785–91). Four were evangelical clergy: Wesley's brother Charles (1728–88); his former pupil, George Whitefield (1735–69); Samuel Furly (1754–73), whom Wesley took under his tutorial wing while Furly was still a student at Cambridge; and the

[1] Mar. 24, 1739.

[2] See Frank Baker, 'John Wesley's First Marriage', *London Quarterly Review*, 192 (Oct., 1967), pp. 305–15.

saintly John Fletcher (1755–85); all except Furly were closely involved in Methodist activities. Two of the six laymen were preachers: Howell Harris (1739–61), one of the two chief leaders of the Welsh revival, and Robert Carr Brackenbury (1779–90), a Lincolnshire squire who served Wesley for a time as an itinerant. The other four were men of intelligence and substance, with strong Methodist sympathies but differing degrees of involvement in the societies: Ebenezer Blackwell of London, a banker (1739–66); Walter Churchey of Brecon (1770–91), an attorney and also a versifier, whose *Poems* Wesley somewhat reluctantly published; Alexander Knox of Londonderry (1775–90), a descendant of John Knox, who achieved some fame as a theological writer, and whose spiritual life Wesley strove to enrich; and Arthur Keene of Dublin (1778–90), described simply as 'gentleman' by Wesley in his will, which appointed Keene one of the trustees for Kingswood School. (It is worth noting that only one of these laymen lived in England, two in Wales, and three in Ireland—the latter in particular a significant indication of the importance of Ireland to Methodism.)

Most of the women with whom Wesley corresponded were either single, widowed, or separated from their husbands, and this is strongly borne out by the list of major female correspondents. Usually his correspondence with those who were single dried up after they married, whether through motives of prudence or courtesy. Again we list them in order of the beginnings of the extant correspondence: Lady Huntingdon, founder of The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (1741–79); Mary Vazeille, whom Wesley married on the rebound from the loss of Grace Murray, but who became psychotically jealous of his relationships with the devout women of Methodism, so that eventually they separated (1750–78); Dorothy Furly, sister of the Revd. Samuel Furly, who married a Methodist preacher, John Downes (1756–83); Mrs. Sarah Ryan, separated from her third husband, whom Wesley regarded highly, and appointed one of his housekeepers, but who became a focal point of Mrs. Wesley's jealousy (1756–66); Mrs. Sarah Crosby, deserted by her husband, who became Wesley's first woman preacher (1757–89); Mary Bosanquet, also a preacher, and a close associate of Sarah Ryan and Sarah Crosby, who eventually married the Revd. John Fletcher (1761–88); Mrs. Eliza Bennis, a Methodist class-leader who emigrated with her husband from Ireland to Philadelphia (1763–76); the widowed Lady D'Arcy Maxwell, one of the most devout and influential Methodist leaders in Edinburgh (1764–88); Mrs. Elizabeth Woodhouse of Owston near Wesley's native Epworth, a staunch Methodist leader in spite of her unsympathetic husband (1764–88); Margaret Dale, who in 1773 married Edward Avison of Newcastle, but died four years later (1765–72); Jane Hilton, a young Methodist of Beverley, Yorkshire, whose correspondence with Wesley continued vigorously even after her marriage in 1769 to William Barton (1766–88); Hannah Ball, the Sunday School pioneer of High Wycombe (1768–89); Ann Bolton of Witney, whom Wesley termed the 'sister of my choice'[1] (1768–91); Philothea Briggs, granddaughter of the Revd. Vincent Perronet of Shoreham, and daughter of William Briggs, Wesley's first Book Steward, and from 1781 wife of Thomas Thompson, the first Methodist Member of Parliament (1769–75); Mary Bishop, proprietor of private schools in Bath and then Keynsham near Bristol (1769–84); Sarah Wesley, his brother Charles's sole surviving daughter (1772–90); Elizabeth Ritchie, who faithfully attended Wesley on his deathbed, and later became Mrs. Mortimer (1774–88); Ann Tindall of Scarborough, whose poems Wesley published in his *Arminian Magazine* (1774–90); Hester Ann Roe of Macclesfield, who married Wesley's preacher, James Rogers (1776–89); Ann Loxdale, who in 1811 married Dr. Thomas Coke as his second wife (1768–91); and Mary Cooke of Trowbridge, another budding poetess, who in 1788 married Adam Clarke (1785–91).

The number of these favoured women correspondents, in a masculine world, serves to emphasize the way in which Wesley was sensitive to the feminine mystique, appreciated female achievements, and encouraged the leadership of women in his societies. Clearly they were not all fashioned from the same mould, just as they were the product of different parts of the British Isles (though mainly English), and came from different social backgrounds (though chiefly from the comfortable, respectable middle to upper class). They shared some important characteristics, however, which drew and retained Wesley's interest: they evinced a strong dedication to personal spirituality, and were usually strongly allied to the Methodist societies; they engaged as far as their health allowed in practical religious service; they were thoughtful and intelligent. Most of them were also teachable and somewhat deferential, perhaps partly because they were younger—and towards the end of the list,

[1] Sept. 27, 1777.

considerably younger—than Wesley himself. It should be said, however, that although Wesley in his seventies and eighties undoubtedly warmed to the company and correspondence of attractive young female disciples, he would brush them off if they proved to be empty-headed hero-worshippers.

These men, these women, therefore, represent the hundreds of others to whom Wesley devoted most of many hours of correspondence almost every week from the beginnings of organized Methodism in 1739 until within a week or two of his death on March 2, 1791. With many other similar persons he maintained a similarly extensive correspondence, though fewer examples, and in some cases none, have survived. There were other hundreds, however, men in public office, editors of periodicals, critics, local clergy, people in urgent distress, to whom he wrote only one or a handful of letters in response to some passing stimulus, and probably never again. With these the occasion or the theme sometimes holds greater significance than the intermediary individual, even though Wesley's letters to men such as Lord North, William Pitt, and William Wilberforce may be also of national importance. In dealing with public affairs as with private concerns, however, Wesley's letters retain their characteristic Methodist overtones.

Occasions. The occasions which brought Wesley into touch with his correspondents were varied, but his annual itineraries around the British Isles proved a source of much correspondence of different kinds. The needs and dangers of the Methodist societies furnished the context of many letters, as did concern for the national welfare as a whole. His constant theme was the well-being of man as a child of God, which involved the fostering of a cultured mind in a healthy body, with happy and disciplined social relationships, and a vigorous personal experience of religion.

As Methodist societies proliferated through England and Wales, to which in 1747 were added Ireland, and in 1751 Scotland, careful planning was needed if Wesley was to keep in touch with them personally, and a multiplication of letters connected with his annual itineraries. The societies *en route*, and especially his preachers and hosts, must be kept informed of his projected route. To John Bennet he wrote on Mar. 12, 1751: 'I expect to leave London on the 27th instant; to be at Wednesbury the 31st, and at Alpraham on Thursday, April 4; whence I think (at present) to go on to Manchester. The Saturday following I am to be at Whiteheaven. The Wednesday and Thursday in Easter week I can spend wherever you think proper. I propose taking Leeds in my return fron Newcastle.' Ten years later he wrote from Newcastle: '⟨My⟩ work in the country cannot be finished before ⟨the l⟩atter end of August, as the circuit is now larger by ⟨two ?⟩ hundred miles than when I was in the north two ⟨years⟩ ago.'[1] Four years later still he wrote to his Assistant in Cornwall, Thomas Rankin: 'You see my plan on the other side. Tell me of any alteration or addition which you think proper, and fix your Quarterly Meetings as you please; only let full notice be given.' This was part of a double letter, the other half being detachable so that Rankin could circulate it to the different societies:

> My dear brethren,
>
> I shall have little time to spare this autumn; yet I will endeavour (with God's leave) to spend a few days in Cornwall. I hope to be at Tiverton on Tuesday, September 3; on Wednesday, 4th, at Bideford; on Thursday evening, 5th, at Millhouse; on Friday at Port Isaac; on Saturday the 7th at St. Cuthbert's; on Sunday morning and afternoon at St. Agnes; on Monday, 9th, St. Just; Tuesday, 10th, St. Ives; Friday, 13th, St. Just; Saturday, 21st, Bristol.[2]

This may be compared with his Cornish itinerary eight years later, sent to the Circuit Steward, Captain Richard Williams of Redruth, because the Assistant was on his way to the Conference in London:

> On Monday, August 16th (if God permit) I shall be at Launceston; on Tue. 17 at Camelford (noon), Port Isaac six in the evening; Wed. 18, St. Cuthbert; Thur. 19, St. Just; Fri. 20, St. Ives; Sun. 22, Redruth; five in the evening, Gwennap; Mon. 23, St. Austell; Tue. 24, The Dock; Thur. 26, Cullompton. I preach at six in the evenings . . . Pray send the plan of my journeys to all the preachers.[3]

Every year brought new societies to visit, though Wesley had the courage to drop a few, so that in 1786 he wrote: 'I have now so many places to visit that the summer hardly gives me time for my work.'[4] Letters outlining his itineraries consumed much thought, but he made liberal use of amanuenses and secretaries (as in the last two instances). In his later years he also resorted to circulating printed itineraries to those affected.

Sometimes Wesley stayed overnight at inns, but more often at the proliferating preaching-houses: 'I always lodge in our own houses',

[1] June 14, 1761. (The angle brackets denote the conjectural restoration of mutilated manuscripts; see p. 125 below.)

[2] Both were dated Limerick, June 9, 1765.

[3] July 31, 1773.

[4] Feb. 22, 1786, to Mrs. Middleton.

he told one preacher.[1] Often, however, he was welcomed to private homes, sometimes on the spur of the moment, sometimes by prior arrangement. This entailed the courtesy of an exchange of letters before the visit or after, and sometimes both. We can trace this pattern developing in 1739, when he accepted a pressing invitation to visit the newly-formed society at Wells, though not to stay overnight, sending a message to that effect from Bristol the previous day.[2] Similarly his visits to Oxford and Bengeworth near Evesham in early October were heralded by letters to Mr. Bedder of Oxford and Benjamin Seward of Bengeworth on Sept. 29.[3] It was just such a visit to Londonderry which eventually led to Wesley's correspondence with his host's son, Alexander Knox, ten years later. After the first unexpected stay in John Knox's home in 1765 Wesley wrote: 'I am much obliged to Mrs. Knox and you for your open and friendly behaviour while I had the pleasure of staying with you; as well as for your helping me forward on my journey.'[4] The same is true of the much briefer correspondence, spreading over some twenty-eight months, with about a letter a month being written, with the two daughters of Sir Philip Gibbes. This began with a typical courtesy letter after his first visit:

I cannot but return my sincere thanks to Lady Gibbes, and to my dear Miss Gibbes and Miss Agnes, for the friendly entertainment I received at Hilton Park, which I shall not easily forget. I have frequently since then reflected with pleasure on those happy moments, and shall rejoice should it ever be in my power to wait upon you again.

I must beg the favour of you to accept of the *Concise History of England*, which fully clears the character of that much injured woman.[5] And I beg Miss Agnes to accept of *Henry, Earl of Moreland*,[6] which I think will speak to her heart. I have ordered both of them to be put up in one parcel, and directed to you at Hilton Park.[7]

On his journeys Wesley usually tried to attend public worship in the local parish church, and encouraged his followers to do the same. By some clergy he was invited to preach; others pointedly preached at him. Where there seemed a possibility of a sympathetic

[1] Oct. 8, 1785, to Thomas Wride.

[2] JWJ, Aug. 9, 1739.

[3] JWJ and diary, Sept. 29–Oct. 3, 1739.

[4] July 20, 1765; cf. JWJ, May 11, 1765.

[5] Mary Queen of Scots, about whom they had doubtless conversed. The *Concise History* was Wesley's own publication in four volumes (*Bibliog*, No. 357).

[6] Again Wesley's own publication, an abridgement of Henry Brooke's novel, *The Fool of Quality* (*Bibliog*, No. 414).

[7] Apr. 7, 1783. He had stayed at Hilton Park Mar. 25–6 (see *Journal*).

response he might offer his services in advance by writing, though not always with the happiest results. During his northern tour in 1780, for instance, Wesley was planning to preach in the new Methodist preaching-house at Sheffield on Sunday morning, July 2, at 8 a.m., and then to accompany his congregation to the parish church, where it was communion Sunday. He therefore wrote to the vicar the previous day:

Revd. sir.

As I apprehend the service tomorrow morning at the Old Church will be exceeding long, I should be glad to assist you in any part of it.

I am, Revd. sir, your affectionate brother and servant,
Rotherham John Wesley
July 1, 1780

The vicar's reply was clearly not very encouraging, for on the Sunday morning Wesley sent him another note:

Sir

There is no harm done. If you don't want *me*, I don't want you.

I am your fellow servant,
July 2, 1780 J. Wesley

(The Methodists attended morning worship nevertheless, and Wesley recorded in his *Journal* that there was 'such a number of communicants as was never seen at the Old Church before'.)

Like most religious leaders, Wesley found himself drawn reluctantly into seeking financial support from his followers. Constantly he pressed the issue of stewardship, as in a letter to the extremely wealthy Sir James Lowther: 'You are not the proprietor of anything—no, not of one shilling in the world. You are only a steward of what Another entrusts you with, to be laid out not according to your will but his.'[1] With the multiplying societies, and the need for buildings to accommodate members who were frequently poor, Wesley realized that Methodism was slipping further and further into debt. In 1767 he organized 'a push toward paying the whole debt', telling his preachers that he would 'state the case in writing to the most substantial men in our society'.[2] For six successive winters he conducted a nation-wide campaign, writing letters to hundreds of people. Some of these appeals were printed, with

[1] Oct. 28, 1754.
[2] *Minutes of some late Conversations* (*Bibliog*, No. 269), 1767, Question 18.

Wesley usually adding a personal note, as well as his signature.[1] Typical of his approach were the letters written in 1768:

Let me have joy over *you*, my brother, in particular. You *have* a measure of 'this world's goods'. You 'see your brother hath need'. *I* have need of your help, inasmuch as the burdens of my brethren are my own. Do not 'pass by on the other side', but come and help as God has enabled you. Do all you can to lighten the labour and strengthen the hands of,

Your affectionate brother
J. Wesley[2]

In the general administration of Methodism Wesley found himself involved in a multitude of different activities, in all of which he sought to give careful attention to detail, following out his own advice, 'Do not make too much haste. Give everything the last touch.'[3] One illustration of this is his effort to guide on his way to America the first president whom he had secured for Coke and Asbury's Cokesbury College, the Revd. Levi Heath, of Stourport:

Dear sir,

In your way to London I believe you must spend the first night at Oxford, where you may inquire at the preaching-house in New Inn Hall Lane for Mr. Harper, who is the Assistant in that circuit. Thence you have four-and-twenty miles to High Wycombe, where Mr. Battin will entertain you hospitably, by a word of recommendation from Mr. Harper. You have then thirty miles to London. At my house near Moorfields I hope you will be at home. And Mr. Bradburn there will recommend you to our friends at Reading, Newbury, Bath, and Bristol. At Bristol I hope you will find your family well, and probably a ship ready to sail. I commend you to the grace of God, and am, dear sir, your affectionate friend and brother, J. Wesley[4]

From his early years Wesley had found it necessary to defend the reputation of Methodism, lest its work be undermined. The open letter printed in pamphlet form was one of his basic weapons of defence, as well as of attack, and more than twenty of his publications appear in this format, addressed to individuals. He pursued a

[1] Dec. 1, 1768; cf. Nov. 24, 1767, Nov. 20, 1769, Dec. 12, 1772, and p. 40 above.

[2] Dec. 1, 1768, in the hand of an amanuensis, but signed by Wesley. See an identical letter, dated Dec. 7, addressed to Mark Middleton. Similarly by writing campaigns and printed circulars Wesley secured financial support for the American Methodists in 1769 (cf. Frank Baker, *From Wesley to Asbury*, Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1976, pp. 70–83), and for the London Methodists from 1776 onwards as they sought to replace the old Foundery with the New Chapel in City Road (Oct. 18, 1776, etc.), though not always successfully (see the correspondence with Richard Ireland, Apr. 25, June 26, 1777).

[3] Feb. 21, 1770.

[4] Aug. 6, 1787; for fuller details see Frank Baker, 'John Wesley and Cokesbury College's First President', *Methodist History*, Vol. XI, No. 2, pp. 54–9 (Jan., 1973).

similar policy in writing letters to the editors of newspapers, daily, tri-weekly, and weekly, both in London and the provinces. More time than he relished was consumed in this unpleasing task. James Erskine, Lord Grange, an evangelical Member of Parliament, drew Wesley's attention to an attack on Methodism in the *Craftsman*. Wesley replied:

I have some scruple as to answering that passage in the *Craftsman*, because I am afraid if I were to begin answering reflections of that kind (especially such as advance no new matter of any sort) I should scarce ever make an end.

In one view, indeed, it may appear worthwhile to take notice of a mere trifle, if it be a providential opportunity of opening the eyes of some whom otherwise we could not well reach.

If I should have a leisure hour tomorrow or the day following, I think on this ground I would write a few lines.[1]

Wesley frequently found himself thus trapped into answering attacks on Methodism and his own credibility: on Methodist 'enthusiasm' in the *Bristol Intelligencer*;[2] on his own truthfulness in the *Gentleman's Magazine*;[3] on his honesty in disbursing money collected for charitable purposes, in the *Morning Chronicle*;[4] in the *London Chronicle* he repudiated George Bell and his prophecy that the world would end on Feb. 28, 1763;[5] he replied to shotgun attacks against Methodism in general in the *London Magazine* and *Lloyd's Evening Post*, whence the controversy spread to the *London Chronicle* and the *Westminster Journal*, continuing for four months;[6] an attack on his popular medical handbook, *Primitive Physic*, by Dr. William Hawes, in the *Gazetteer*;[7] and the most wide-spread furore of all, aroused by his *Calm Address to our American Colonies*, concentrated in three Bristol newspapers, but running over into many London newspapers, and echoed by others all around the country.[8] Wesley tried to observe two basic principles: he rarely answered anonymous letters,[9] and he himself always added his own name.[10] Normally he sought to place his reply in the same periodical which had printed the attack, though this was not always possible. In his *Journal*, for instance, he published two letters to the editor of the *Monthly Review* which will be sought in vain in

[1] July 6, 1745. Wesley did indeed reply, and later published his letter as a four-page pamphlet (*Bibliog*, No. 104).

[2] Jan. 12, 1750.

[3] Mar. 8, 1756.

[4] Nov. 4, 1759; cf. Feb. 18, 1760, in *Lloyd's Evening Post*.

[5] Feb. 9, 1763.

[6] Nov. 17, 1760, etc.

[7] July 20, 27, 1776.

[8] Nov. 28, 1775, etc.

[9] Oct. 6, 1786.

[10] Feb. 10, 1765.

the columns of that unfriendly magazine, apparently because the editor refused to print them.[1] It was partly to remedy this kind of predicament that in 1778 Wesley began his own *Arminian Magazine*, not as a forum for controversy, but as a vehicle for Arminian apologetic and propaganda.[2] From that time onwards Wesley dabbled very little in newspaper controversies (which in any case had died down), though in 1789 he found it necessary to defend himself in the *Dublin Chronicle* because of charges that he was 'a double-tongued knave, an old crafty hypocrite', undermining the Church of England.[3]

Believing as he did in the social outreach of the Christian community, Wesley dealt faithfully with his many requests for transmitting character references to people whom occasionally he knew only slightly. For a needy person seeking to rehabilitate himself Wesley prepared a letter to be delivered personally to Samuel Lloyd, a well-to-do merchant in Devonshire Square: 'The bearer has behaved extremely well from the very time that he left London. I do not perceive that he is addicted to drinking or any other vice. I am apt to think he would made a good servant.'[4] He gave a similar note to James Kenton, a publisher fallen on hard times, to be presented to a potential benefactor whose identity is not known:

Sir,

May I take the liberty to request a favour of you? It is, to assist an honest man. I have known Mr. Kenton, the bearer, these forty years. He has lived in affluence, but is now reduced. If it was convenient for you to speak in his favour to any of the Governors of the Charterhouse, you would much oblige,

Dear sir, your affectionate servant,

⟨Car⟩low John Wesley

⟨26⟩ April, 1789

Wesley saw himself as a servant of the general public as well as of the Methodist societies, and sought worthily to discharge any trust placed in him. Thus when he received £20 from an anonymous donor for the use of those in prison he gave an accounting of its disbursement by means of a letter to *Lloyd's Evening Post*.[5]

One of his most interesting interventions in public affairs was in a letter to William Pitt, the First Lord of the Treasury. Wesley pleaded (as he had earlier and successfully done with Lord North)

[1] Sept. 9, Oct. 5, 1756. The *Journal* in which they appeared was in fact not published until 1761, long after the event.

[2] Jan. 15, 1778.

[3] June 2, 20, 1789.

[4] Mar. 20, 1755.

[5] Feb. 18, 1760.

for Captain Thomas Webb, the Methodist preacher and dispossessed British loyalist, a refugee from America. Having secured Pitt's attention in briefly commending Webb, Wesley devoted the remainder of a very long letter to a discussion of the collection of taxes, suggesting that in the difficult task of increasing the revenue it was probably unnecessary to impose many new taxes, if only Pitt could secure the universal application of the old. He claimed that many people unfairly avoided the land tax, the window tax, the tax on servants, and customs duties, affirming that through smuggling 'in Cornwall alone the King is defrauded of half a million yearly'. Duties on spirits were also avoided, he continued, but here he took another line, urging that the trifling revenue from this source was dearly bought at the cost of the huge waste in grain and the loss of twenty thousand lives a year, urging that distilling should be made a felony.[1]

Wesley advised his preachers, both in England and in America, to stay out of politics, but he certainly did not wish them to be insensitive to national and local affairs, no more than he was himself. His concern about public events sometimes assumed what might be considered a puritanical colouring, as when he urged the Mayor and Corporation of Bristol to follow Nottingham's example by forbidding the erection of a new theatre.[2] Frequently, however, his approach was both unconventional and yet unexceptionable: he wrote to James West, Joint Secretary to the Treasury, offering to secure two hundred Methodist volunteers to give a year's military service in London in the event of the feared invasion;[3] he wrote to the *London Chronicle* heralding the greatly improved conditions in Newgate prison;[4] in a long letter printed in several newspapers, and later enlarged for publication as a pamphlet, he analysed the economic situation, especially the shortage and high price of different kinds of staple foods, and offered some practical remedies.[5] It is scarcely surprising that at the beginning of the 'awful crisis' of the American Revolutionary War he pleaded with Lord Dartmouth to recommend to the king a public call to prayer and fasting.[6] It is a different matter, however, when we discover him canvassing for votes for a specific parliamentary candidate, writing to one of his

[1] Sept. 6, 1784. [2] Dec. 20, 1764.
[3] Mar. 1, 1756. [4] Jan. 1, 1761.
[5] Dec. 9, 1772; cf. *Thoughts on the Present Scarcity of Provisions* (*Bibliog*, No. 344).
[6] Dec. 24, 1775.

preachers in Cornwall: 'Mr. Gregor, I am informed, is a lover of his king and country. Therefore I wish you would advise all our brethren that have votes to assist him in the ensuing election. And disperse everywhere the *Word to a Freeholder*.'[1]

Themes. Wesley was in correspondence with a multitude of people in all ranks of society, in Britain and Europe and America, for a few weeks, for many months, or the greater part of his lifetime or theirs. The ties of blood or friendship, the occasions which linked him in correspondence with strangers, found expression in many different kinds of letters, yet to some extent they were all pastoral, all variations upon one all-pervading theme—personal religion, 'the life of God in the soul of man'.[2] To the Revd. Samuel Walker he wrote: 'I have one point in view—to promote, so far as I am able, vital, practical religion; by the grace of God to beget, preserve, and increase the life of God in the souls of men.'[3] When his wife in psychotic jealousy stole much of his correspondence with women, and twisted excerpts from it to support accusations of infidelity, Wesley claimed: 'The subject of our correspondence was heart-religion, the inward kingdom of God. You have both their letters and mine.[4] Produce them just as they are. And if they do not answer for themselves to any competent judges, I will bear the blame for ever.'[5] A closing letter of appeal to an old Irish friend, James Knox of Sligo, emphasized the same subject:

> Do you now see that true religion is not a negative or an external thing, but the life of God in the soul of man, the image of God stamped upon the heart? Do you now see that in order to this we are justified freely through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ? Where are the *desires* after this which you once felt, the hunger and thirst after righteousness? And where are the outward marks of a soul groaning after God, and refusing to be comforted with anything less than his love?[6]

[1] Oct. 3, 1789, to Alexander Suter; cf. a similar letter to John Mason, Oct. 1, 1789, and another of Dec. 24, 1789: 'As I know the Rev. Mr. Abdy to be both a good man and a good preacher, I wish all that fear God would give him their vote and interest in the present election. John Wesley.' In his *Word to a Freeholder* (*Bibliog*, No. 139), Wesley urged the refusing of gifts at an election, voting 'as if the whole election depended on your single vote', and voting for a man who loved God and the king. Cf. his letter to Bristol Methodists at the approach of the General Election of 1768: 'On no account take money or money's worth . . . Give, not sell, your vote.' (Nov. 7, 1767?)

[2] Wesley took this expression from the title of a book by Henry Scougal (1650–78), which he abridged for publication in 1744; see *Bibliog*, No. 93.

[3] Sept. 3, 1756. The phrase 'vital, practical religion' occurs three times in this lengthy letter.

[4] i.e. copies of the latter.

[5] Dec. 9, 1774, § 5.

[6] May 30, 1765.

Only a few months before his death it was to this that he urged his nephew Samuel:

I fear you want (what you least of all suspect) the greatest thing of all—religion. I do not mean external religion, but the religion of the heart: the religion which Kempis, Pascal, Fenelon enjoyed; the life of God in the soul of man; the walking with God, and having fellowship with the Father and the Son . . . You are called to know and love the God of glory; to live in eternity, to walk in eternity; to live the life which is hid with Christ in God. Hearken to the advice of one that stands on the edge of eternity.[1]

Nevertheless, although (as he frequently said) 'one thing is needful' (Luke 10:42), many other things were highly important, and Wesley's correspondents drew his attention to almost every subject under the sun, though some aspects of the God-guided life were discussed more frequently and stressed more urgently than others.

Wesley's letters often reveal the preacher wrestling to introduce someone to this life of God in his soul, possibly someone of high social standing such as D'Arcy, Lady Maxwell:

Christ has died for *you*; he has bought pardon for *you*. Why should not you receive it *now*? While you have this paper in your hand? Because you have 'not done' thus or thus? . . . O let it all go! None but Christ! None but Christ! . . . Do not wait for this or that *preparation*, for something to *bring* to God! Bring Christ! Rather, let him bring *you*. Bring you home to God! Lord Jesus, take her! Take her and all her sins! Take her, *as she is*! Take her *now*! . . . Let her sink down into the arms of thy love, and cry out, 'My Lord and my God!'[2]

Perhaps even more frequently he urged his faithful followers to seek 'the second blessing', to 'go on to perfection'—a phrase which occurs scores of times, especially in challenging letters to his preachers: 'Never be ashamed of the old Methodist doctrine. Press all believers to go on to perfection. Insist everywhere on the second blessing as receivable in a moment, and receivable now, by simple faith.'[3]

In his letters Wesley displayed the pastor, however, far more than the preacher. An intelligent, as well as concerned, spiritual counsellor, he realized the full significance of this ministry by correspondence, telling one of his inquirers: 'If no other end be answered by your writing, it may be an ease to your own mind. And we know not but God may apply to your heart a word written as well as a word spoken.'[4] In memorable phrases he often summarized the

[1] Apr. 29, 1790. [2] May 25, 1765.
[3] Apr. 3, 1772; cf. Mar. 24, 1757; Oct. 8, 1774; June 4, 1786, etc.
[4] Nov. 6, 1756; cf. Aug. 23, 1763.

Christian way, the Christian hope: 'Keep close to your rule, the Word of God, and to your guide, the Spirit of God; and never be afraid of expecting *too much*.'[1] He prescribed for inquirers various religious exercises: 'It might be of use if you were to read over the first volume of *Sermons* seriously and with prayer. Indeed, nothing will avail without prayer. Pray, whether you can or no. When you are cheerful, when you are heavy, pray; with many or few words, or none at all; you will surely find an answer of peace. And why not now?'[2] His pleading advice might be prefaced by a diagnosis of the spiritual problem:

From the time you omitted meeting your class or band you grieved the Holy Spirit of God . . . I exhort you for my sake (who tenderly love you), for God's sake, for the sake of your own soul, begin again without delay. The day after you receive this, go and meet a class or a band. Sick or well, go! If you cannot speak a word, go; and God will go with you. You sink under the sin of omission! My friend, my sister, go! Go whether you can or not.[3]

He discussed their spiritual ailments in careful detail: 'The difference between heaviness and darkness of soul (the wilderness state) should never be forgotten. Darkness (unless in the case of bodily disorder) seldom comes upon us but by our own fault. It is not so with respect to heaviness, which may be occasioned by a thousand circumstances, such as frequently neither our wisdom can foresee nor our power prevent.'[4] Mrs. Eliza Bennis complained, 'The inconstancy of my mind is a continual cause of grief to me.'[5] Wesley replied: 'As thinking is the act of an embodied spirit, playing upon a set of material keys, it is not strange that the soul can make but ill music when her instrument is out of tune. This is frequently the case with *you*; and the trouble and anxiety you then feel are a natural effect of the disordered machine, which proportionably disorders the mind.'[6] As with other correspondents, however, he had to return to the same problem more than once, reassuring her, 'There may be ten thousand wandering thoughts and forgetful intervals without any breach of love.'[7]

Too frequently for Wesley's comfort his calling as a faithful pastor involved administering a rebuke. He wrote to a prosperous merchant:

The hand of God is over you for good. He is labouring to bring you wholly

[1] June 17, 1761. [2] Jan. 31, 1764. [3] Nov. 4, 1790.
[4] Sept. 13, 1774. [5] Oct. 15, 1771.
[6] Oct. 28, 1771. [7] June 16, 1772.

to himself, that you may give him all your heart. But how many hindrances are in the way! First, the deceitfulness of riches . . . Is not levity another main hindrance of your growth in grace? Often indulged by jesting and foolish talking? Can anything untune the soul more than this does? Or more unprepare it for a deep sense of things eternal?

I fear another hindrance is a kind of natural fickleness and inconstancy of temper. Perhaps it is peculiarly difficult to you to be long at one stay, to retain any impression for any length of time. How often have I known you deeply moved! But did it not pass away as a morning cloud? O that God may stablish your heart in grace! That you may count all things loss, so you may win Christ![1]

Similarly Wesley warned a young lady (later the biographer of Lady Maxwell) who was preening herself as a writer: 'My dear maiden, Beware of pride! Beware of flattery! Suffer none to commend you to your face. Remember, one good temper is of more value in the sight of God than a thousand good verses. All you want is to have the mind that was in Christ, and to walk as Christ walked.'[2] Wesley was sensitive to people's temperaments and true needs, however, and therefore undertook the unpleasant task of chiding with great caution, and urged others to be equally careful. To Thomas Rankin he wrote: 'I am sorry for poor Tommy Rourke . . . He has much more need of comfort than of reproof. His great danger is despair.'[3] He found it far more congenial to offer consolation in distress and sorrow, or practical advice in building a healthy body, a cultured mind, happy human relationships.

Wesley's letters abound in health hints. Typical was his laconic advice to Lady Maxwell: 'I believe medicines will do you little service; you need only proper diet, exact regularity, and constant exercise, with the blessing of God.'[4] The diets he prescribed might be approved today: eating meat in moderation, fruit and vegetables in abundance,[5] and for 'the flux' (diarrhoea) a light diet with milk puddings, toast, and lemonade.[6] He told his niece Sally that like many people she suffered from an unrecognized ailment—'intemperance in sleep'—and went on: 'After all the observations and inquiries I have been able to make for upwards of fifty years, I am fully persuaded that men in general need between six and seven hours' sleep in four-and-twenty, and women in general a little more—namely, between seven and eight . . . I advise you, therefore, from this day ⟨forward⟩ . . . to take exactly so ⟨much⟩ sleep as nature

[1] June 19, 1751, to Samuel Lloyd, who copied his contrite reply on the blank page.
[2] Jan. 18, 1790, to Agnes Collinson (later Bulmer).
[3] Apr. 21, 1775.
[4] July 5, 1765.
[5] June 6, 1775; Apr. 24, 1788.
[6] Oct. 18, 1780.

requires, and no more.'[1] Exercise he constantly urged on the sedentary, such as the young candidate for Holy Orders, Samuel Furly: 'You must, absolutely must, find time for exercise. Otherwise you are penny wise and pound foolish. For one fit of sickness will cost you more time than you have saved in several years.'[2]

In addition to suggestions about regimen, however, Wesley did echo his *Primitive Physic* in offering cures for scores of specific ailments: for colic,[3] gall-stones,[4] gout (a Wesley family complaint),[5] hoarseness,[6] the itch,[7] mortification,[8] nettle rash,[9] and scorbutic sores,[10] to name a few. Usually diet, medicine, and exercise were combined in his prescriptions, as in this to Mrs. Christian:

> The gravel may be easily prevented by eating a small crust of bread the size of a walnut every morning, fasting. But your nervous disorders will not be removed without constant exercise. If you can have no other, you should daily ride a wooden horse, which is only a double plank nine or ten feet long, properly placed upon two trestles. This has removed many distempers and saved abundance of lives. I should advise you likewise to use nettle tea (six or eight leaves) instead of foreign tea for a month, and probably you will see a great change.[11]

So concerned was Wesley about public health that he wrote three successive letters to the *Bristol Gazette* lamenting the use of that 'poisonous weed', hops, in the brewing of ale, claiming from his own experience that unhopped ale kept just as well, while he clearly preferred the 'soft, sweetish taste' of the old-fashioned beverage which he had known in his earlier years, before it began to be 'adulterated by bitter herbs'.[12]

Another aspect of Wesley's pastoral concern which shows up frequently in his letters is his enthusiasm as an educator. He served as a private correspondence tutor for several young men and women, offering them advice on methods of study, the reading of specific books, and even a five-year course of study, which he urged them to follow faithfully, because, as he told Joseph Benson: 'When I recommend to anyone a method or scheme of study, I do not barely consider this or that book separately, but in conjunction with the rest,' adding, 'And what I recommend, I *know*: I know both the

[1] July 17, 1781. [2] Mar. 24, 1757. [3] June 16, 1772.
[4] July 17, 1785. [5] Sept. 26, 1776. [6] Dec. 15, 1764.
[7] July 8, 1774; Jan. 27, 1776. [8] Oct. 5, 1789.
[9] Nov. 5, 1772. [10] May 17, 1781.
[11] July 17, 1785. On Oct. 13, 1784, he had written to John Valton, 'I suppose nettle tea is the best bracer in the world.'
[12] Sept. 7, 25, Oct. 3, 1789.

style and the sentiments of each author, and how he will confirm or illustrate what goes before, and prepare for what comes after.'[1] His guidance for young ladies was a little less rigid, and he wrote to his niece Sally: 'Might not you read two or three hours in the morning, and one or two in the afternoon? When you are tired with severer studies, you may relax your mind by history or poetry.'[2] He was especially concerned that his preachers should develop their minds. To John Trembath he wrote:

> What has exceedingly hurt you . . . is want of reading . . . Hence your talent in preaching does not increase . . . It is lively, but not deep; there is little variety; there is no compass of thought. Reading only can supply this, with meditation and daily prayer . . . O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises . . . Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way: else you will be a trifler all your days, and a pretty, superficial preacher.[3]

The Revd. Vincent Perronet's curate at Shoreham asked Wesley's advice on his own studies, and Wesley's compressed reply provides bibliographical comments on over sixty books and authors which are as frank and revealing as those in his *Journal*: 'Leland's *View* is excellent in its kind; so is Grotius . . . Clerc's works are muddling. The Antiq. Hebraica I have not seen. Seneca's Tragedies and Ovid's Metamorphoses are worth reading once . . . Terence is worth studying. It is the finest Latin in the world . . . Aristotle is an admirable writer.' Wesley's closing comment is typical: 'But you need not half these books. A few well digested are better than ten thousand. It would be worth your while to consider the Course of Female Study in the *Arminian Magazine*.'[4]

Wesley was also approached many times for advice by potential authors. To a young poetess, Ann Tindall, he wrote: 'It is by writing that we learn to write. Some of your verses are good, particularly those you wrote latest.'[5] Subsequently he warned her: 'I am generally thought a severe critic. Take care, therefore, how you fall into my hands. I do not at all consider *who* writes, but *what* is written', and went on to advise her on specific improvements needed in her poem.[6] Eventually he published some of her verse in the *Arminian*

[1] Dec. 22, 1768; cf. Mar. 30, 1754; Feb. 18, 1756.

[2] Sept. 8, 1781. This was a modified version of a letter published in his *A.M.* for Nov. 1780, entitled, 'A Female Course of Study'.

[3] Aug. 17, 1760. As a spur to other preachers Wesley published this letter in his *A.M.* for Aug. 1780.

[4] Jan. 15, 1785. For the course see note 2 above.

[5] Jan. 19, 1776.

[6] Oct. 26, 1776

Magazine, as he did that of other correspondents, such as the Revd. Joshua Gilpin, to whom he wrote: 'You may preach the gospel in verse as well as in prose; and sometimes with more effect.'[1] Other writers, however, he did not encourage, such as John Glover of Norwich, about whose published work Wesley wrote to Duncan Wright, one of his preachers:

I wish you would go to him . . ., give my love to him, and thanks for the little book he sent me. But what can one say of the book itself? It is well-meant, but exceeding weak. Yet I know not how to tell him so, for fear of grieving him, as he appears to me to be a man of a tender spirit. I would willingly buy a dozen or two of him, if I knew what to do with them. And yet I would not put him upon writing more, because it is not his talent.[2]

Wesley knew perfectly well, however, that 'few authors will thank you for imagining you are able to correct their works'.[3] Reading between the lines of a dozen mildly critical letters one realizes that he suffered greatly when one of his most influential laymen, the Brecon attorney, Walter Churchey, insisted on publishing a huge volume of mediocre verse, which dropped almost stillborn from the press, though Wesley saved him from financial disaster by supervising its publication.[4]

People wrote to Wesley about the perplexities of human relationships in general, and he proved a faithful pastor in seeking to reconcile those who were estranged, such as Jasper Winscom and his son: 'You may say, "Well, what would you advise me to do now?" I advise you to forgive him. I advise you to lay aside your anger (it is high time), and to receive him again (occasionally) into your house. For you need forgiveness yourself: and if you do not forgive, you cannot be forgiven!'[5] The problems with which Wesley found himself confronted most frequently seem to have been those of courtship and marriage. He wrote to one young lady: 'Nothing under heaven is so critical and so dangerous as what is commonly called, "the time of courtship". But God is able, even now, to cause all grace to abound, and to perfect his strength in your weakness.'[6] He laid down one basic rule: parental obedience. He stated that if a preacher 'married a person without the consent of her parents he would thereby exclude himself out of the Methodist connexion'.[7]

[1] Sept. 30, 1787. [2] Oct. 20, 1768. [3] July 8, 1774.
[4] See *Bibliog*, No. 504, and letters to Churchey, 1788–9.
[5] Oct. 13, 1783; cf. Wesley's letter to the son's wife, Dec. 10, 1785.
[6] May 2, 1771, to Ally Eden. [7] Apr. 10, 1782.

He was therefore ready to intervene when a local preacher ventured on this slippery ground:

I was much concerned yesterday when I heard you was likely to marry a woman against the consent of your parents. I have never, in an observation of fifty years, known such a marriage attended with a blessing. I know not how it should, since it is flatly contrary to the fifth commandment. I told my own mother, pressing me to marry, 'I dare not allow you a *positive* voice herein; I dare not marry a person because you *bid* me. But I must allow you a negative voice: I will marry no person if you *forbid*. I know it would be a sin against God.'[1]

On marriage in general he reassured his correspondents: 'Certainly it is possible for persons to be as devoted to God in a married as in a single state.'[2] In that era of match-making he advised what should be weighed in seeking a partner: 'In such a case I should consider: (1), the religion; (2), the natural temper; (3), the understanding and person (in the common sense); and in the fourth and last place, the fortune. This is undoubtedly of some importance, and *caeteris paribus* [other things being equal], might turn the scale. But the other circumstances have a far more direct influence both on our present and future happiness.'[3] He approved, or occasionally disapproved, of their choice of prospective partners: 'I believe J[ohn] D[ownes] is throughly desirous of being wholly devoted to God, and that (if you alter your condition at all) you cannot choose a more proper person.'[4] Sometimes he corresponded with both man and woman about their proposed marriage, occasionally in the same letter.[5]

When Wesley, as a father in God, did frown on a proposed marriage, and the match was broken off, he remained deeply concerned to heal the resulting wounds, even praising the benefits of a single life, upon which he had published a pamphlet.[6] His first extant letter to Ann Bolton began:

My dear sister, The best and most desirable thing of all is that you should live and die wholly devoted to God, waiting upon him without distraction, . . . an whole burnt sacrifice of love. If you have not steadiness and resolution for this, the next thing to be desired is that you marry a man of faith and love, who has a good temper and a good understanding. The temptation you are now in was perhaps the most dangerous one you ever had in your life. God deliver you from that almost certain destruction which attends the being unequally yoked to an unbeliever![7]

[1] Sept. 11, 1781. [2] July 16, 1763. [3] June 7, 1767.
[4] July 16, 1763; cf. letter to Thomas Roberts, Dec. 22, 1787.
[5] June 16, 1769.
[6] *Thoughts on a Single Life*, 1765 (*Bibliog*, No. 263). [7] Feb. 13, 1768.

After an intervening personal conversation he wrote again: 'It was not a small deliverance which you had in escaping the being joined to one who was not what he seemed. If he had acted thus after you were married, it would almost have broke your heart. See how the Lord careth for you! Surely the hairs of your head are all numbered!'[1] Less than ten years later he was again emphasizing the same point:

> God has lately delivered you out of imminent danger, that of being unequally yoked with an unbeliever. That he is so now will admit of no dispute. And it is not plain that ever he was otherwise . . . And now, instead of praising God for your great deliverance, you are reasoning against him, as [if] it were no deliverance at all! . . . My Nancy, arise and shake yourself from the dust! You have acted wisely and faithfully. God has heard your prayer; and he is well pleased with the sacrifice you have made. Admit no thought to the contrary.[2]

Far less attention seems to have been devoted (as was the custom of that age) to problems *within* marriage—with which Wesley himself was even more fully acquainted. But examples are present, and although in general Wesley courteously withdrew from the scene when a female correspondent married, there were exceptions, such as that of Jane Hilton, through whom he continued to assist both partners to build a happy home in Beverley after she became Mrs. Barton.[3] Perhaps unexpectedly, he expressed somewhat liberal views about divorce, even before his own marriage had gone sour, writing to a preacher:

> As to the point in general (though we need not say so much in public, because of accidental ill consequences) nothing under heaven can be clearer than this: (1), that adultery does in that moment dissolve the marriage tie, as much as if the offender had then died; (2), that *divorce* is only an open declaration of that dissolution; (3), that the *method* of divorce now used in England and Ireland is so vile, and clogged with so many diabolical additions, that no honest man would care to meddle with it. I should myself be so far from *seeking* it (in the case of adultery), that I should scruple to *submit to* it.[4]

About remarriage he had no qualms, and after Samuel Bradburn's first wife had died in childbirth happily gave his blessing to the projected second union, replying: 'As soon as I saw you and Sophy Cooke together at Gloucester it came into my mind at once, There is a wife for Bradburn (though I did not tell anybody).'[5]

During his middle and later years a large proportion of Wesley's

[1] Apr. 7, 1768.
[2] Sept. 15, 1777.
[3] Apr. 9, 1769, etc.
[4] Feb. 17, 1753.
[5] June 20, 1786. He replied in similar terms to Sophy Cooke on the same day.

letters were concerned with the well-being of his societies. In large measure the administration of these was delegated to their lay officers, the band-leaders, the class-leaders, the stewards, under the oversight of the preachers stationed in each circuit, or group of societies.[1] To Miss March he wrote about the small fellowship group under her oversight:

As to your band, there are two sorts of persons with whom you may have to do —the earnest and the slack. The way you are to take with the one is quite different from that . . . with the other. The latter you must *search* and find out why they are slack; exhort them to repent, be zealous, do the first works. The former you have only to encourage, to exhort to push forward to the mark, to bid them grasp the prize so nigh! And do so yourself.[2]

The preachers were of key importance, and Wesley tried to keep in touch with all of them personally, and seems to have made a point of writing to the senior preacher, or 'Assistant' in each circuit, at least annually.[3] As we have seen, by means of his letters he guided his preachers' studies and their matrimonial ventures. He also sent them books and advanced them money.[4] He advised them on their preaching, especially along the lines of a letter to Thomas Rankin: 'Likewise, be temperate in speaking—never too loud, never too long.'[5] While he urged some to work harder, he told others to ease off, warning them: 'We must not offer murder for sacrifice. We are not at liberty to impair our own health in hopes of doing good to others.'[6] He also insisted that they must give careful attention to discipline: 'If a man preach like an angel, he will do little good without exact discipline.'[7] Very occasionally he stepped in with his personal authority to bolster their own in a troublesome situation, somewhat like a headmaster dealing in his study with an unruly pupil long suffered by an almost despairing teacher:

Those who will not conform to the rules of our society are no members of it. Therefore I require John Campbell, John Laird, and Peter Ferguson to take their choice, one way or the other. If they will meet their class weekly, they are with us. If they will not, they put themselves from us. And if the rest of

[1] In 1765, when the first annual *Minutes* of the Methodist Conference appeared, there were 26 English circuits, 5 Scots, 1 Welsh, and 8 Irish. At the last Conference which Wesley attended, in 1790, these had increased to 71 English, 8 Scots, 29 Irish, 11 in the West Indies and British North America, and 65 in the U.S.A.

[2] May 13, 1762.

[3] See above, p. 35.

[4] Aug. 31, 1775; Sept. 25, 1787.

[5] Nov. 18, 1765; cf. Oct. 13, 1770; July 28, 1775.

[6] Nov. 19, 1781, to R. C. Brackenbury; cf. Feb. 9, 1780; Mar. 26, 1787.

[7] Oct. 13, 1770.

the society cannot or will not bear the expense, our preachers shall trouble Greenock no more.

But show them the reason of the thing, in the *Plain Account of the People called Methodists.*[1] After they have considered this, let them either join with us upon these terms, or be our friends at a distance.[2]

Sometimes such a letter was itself used not only to give instructions to the preacher but to assert authority (as may well have been true in this instance). Wesley wrote to Samuel Bradburn about the recalcitrant senior preacher in the Cork circuit: 'When therefore you have been four weeks at Bandon I desire you to return straight to Cork. And if John Hampson will not then go to Bandon, I will order one that will. Pray show this letter to Mr. Mackrill, whom I beg to assist you in this matter.'[3]

In his later years Wesley's vision of God's task for the Methodists became ecumenical. He realized that it was hardly possible to send any more preachers to America until the 'troubles' were over.[4] But in 1784 he sent vicarious ordination, a revised Book of Common Prayer, and his blessing, in a pastoral letter ending: 'As our American brethren are now totally disentangled both from the state and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the primitive church. And we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God has so strangely made them free.'[5] Constantly, however, he sought to tighten the bonds between Methodists in the United States, in British North America, and in the United Kingdom, and within a month of his death went beyond even this, exhorting Ezekiel Cooper in America: 'See that you never give place to one thought of separating from your brethren in Europe. Lose no opportunity of declaring to all men that the Methodists are one people in all the world.'[6]

The deep concern which Wesley brought to this many-sided

[1] See *Bibliog*, No. 156, and Vol. 9 of this edition.

[2] Mar. 3, 1776, to Thomas Rutherford, Assistant of the Edinburgh circuit. The Scots, like the Americans, did not take kindly to control from England.

[3] Oct. 17, 1778. Wesley's letters conveyed similar authority overseas, witness a letter from T. R., recently arrived in Baltimore from England, to Lawrence Coughlan, June 21, 1774: 'I . . . conversed with one of Mr. Wesley's preachers; but as I had no letter from Mr. Wesley he seemed very cold.' (L. Coughlan, *An Account of the Work of God in Newfoundland*, London, Gilbert, 1776, p. 60.)

[4] July 28, 1775.

[5] Sept. 10, 1784.

[6] Feb. 1, 1791.

pastoral care through his letters to hundreds of correspondents is seen in one to his brother Charles:

> O what a thing it is to have *curam animarum* [the care of souls]. You and I are called to this: to save souls from death, to watch over them as those that must give account! If our office implied no more than preaching a few times in a week, I could play with it; so might *you*. But how small a part of our duty . . . is this! God says . . ., 'Do *all thou canst*, be it more or less, to save the souls for whom my Son has died.' . . . I am ashamed of my indolence and inactivity. The good Lord help us both![1]

VI. ON EDITING WESLEY'S LETTERS

Sources. The primary and most satisfying source for a letter is the document written fully in the hand of the author, the 'holograph', signed by him, and delivered into the hands of the intended recipient. For this edition well over two thousand Wesley holographs have been traced and utilized.[2] The great treasure-house for Wesley's manuscripts is the Methodist Archives, recently transferred from London to the John Rylands University Library of Manchester. In 1931 John Telford reported over 330 holographs in that collection, to which have been added other collections which he listed: 162 collected by Edmund S. Lamplough, 44 in the James Everett Collection from Hartley-Victoria College, Manchester, 39 in the collection of J. Russell Colman. Since that time hundreds more have been added, so that there are now over 700 holographs in the Methodist Archives, quite apart from the major collection of secondary sources and of letters to him. About one-third of the extant Wesley correspondence is preserved in the Methodist Archives. In one way or another, however, much has disappeared, quite apart from the many letters acquired for resale during this century.[3] Five other institutions own a hundred or more each: Wesley's Chapel, London; Drew University, Madison, New Jersey; Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; Wesley College, Bristol; and Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas (arranged, as are those which follow, in order of the size of their holdings). Five hold

[1] Mar. 25, 1772.

[2] For in-letters see pp. 81–2 above.

[3] For example, Charles Wesley's son sold to the Wesleyan Methodist Conference what the indenture of sale describes as twenty-five letters between Wesley and Mrs. Sarah Ryan—those which especially aroused his wife's jealous anger, of which only three pages appear to remain, and imply that the sale involved another of Wesley's letter-books rather than the holograph letters (see copy of indenture, Drew University).

from sixty-seven down to thirty letters: The Upper Room Library Nashville, Tennessee; The British Library, London; The Moravian Archives, London; The World Methodist Council, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina; and Duke University, Durham, North Carolina. Fourteen other collections include ten or more holographs.[1] The remainder are spread thinly among a hundred institutions and as many private owners. To all of these, grateful acknowledgement is made by the printing of their name or symbol after those letters which they are believed still to own at the time of going to press.

Unfortunately many of Wesley's holographs are mutilated. At least one out of five lacks the address half of the original sheet. Occasionally a fragment has been cut or torn off to satisfy the misapplied zeal of autograph hunters, even one with three fragmentary lines of the letter on the reverse.[2] Sometimes names have been inked over or even cut out as a safeguard for someone's reputation.[3] Scores of letters preserved as relics have been framed in such a way that some inscribed portions are invisible, or have been mounted upon cardboard or stiff paper so that it is almost impossible to determine whether the reverse is indeed blank.

Only very rarely have series of letters from Wesley preserved by the recipient remained intact, the most noteworthy example being the fifty written to Alexander Knox of Londonderry, though even in this case six are without the address halves and one letter which escaped binding inside the volume seems to have disappeared. The usual fate of such collections has been to be divided among members of the family through successive generations, from whom some have been bequeathed to public institutions or have come on to the open market, though others have been forgotten, lost, even destroyed. The migrations of many of these holographs may sometimes be followed through several excursions to Sotheby's auction rooms, via dealers' catalogues, into private collections, and back to the

[1] John Wesley's Chapel, Bristol; The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York; The Public Record Office, London; The Wesley Historical Society, London; Lincoln College, Oxford; Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois; Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.; Dr. Frederick E. Maser, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; The John Rylands University Library of Manchester; The United Church of Canada, Victoria University, Toronto, Canada; The Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London; The Wesley Historical Society, Belfast; Queen's University, Melbourne, Australia; and the Baltimore Conference of the United Methodist Church, Baltimore, Maryland.

[2] At the Methodist Archives, reading '. . . evil. The other, that Mr. Hall . . . assured me (which indeed did n . . . the demand) that whatever h . . .'.

[3] e.g. Sept. 29, Oct. 12, 1764.

auction room again for another round or more, until finally a resting-place is found in one of our major libraries—much to the relief of the weary researcher! One relatively unimportant letter, for instance, to Peter Garforth, dated Dec. 11, 1773, passed through Sotheby's no fewer than four times between the publication of Telford's edition of Wesley's *Letters* in 1931 (Telford did not know of it) and 1955, when it was purchased by the Epworth Press for resale, and eventually came into the hands of a co-operative Methodist collector in South Africa, Mr. Lewis J. Picton. The editor can sadly produce evidence that hundreds of other Wesley holographs are in private hands or less obvious libraries waiting to be 'discovered', and of course is eager to hear of any such, in order to verify the text or possibly publish the letter for the first time. Meanwhile catalogues may furnish useful abstracts or extracts. In using such material, however, we must remain alert, for even expert cataloguers cannot be expected to be familiar with all the peculiarities of Wesley's handwriting, especially in his later years.

Forgeries of Wesley letters are almost unknown. One was published in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, however, as long ago as 1758—a deliberate attempt to hoax the public into buying a refutation of Wesley's *Address to the Clergy*. When Wesley challenged it the editor replied that he 'really believed it to be Mr. Wesley's own writing'.[1] One forgery was illustrated as a genuine Wesley letter even in A. M. Broadley's *Chats on Autograph Collecting* (1910), and eventually found its way into a prominent American seminary.[2] Many years ago the editor himself bought one (for a much lower price than that being asked for the supposedly genuine article!), after having demonstrated that it was a very poor forgery, so poor an invention, indeed, that it is not being included in these volumes. With escalating values it seems likely that more (and better crafted) forgeries will appear on the market in the future, but it is hoped that no careful reader of this introduction will be deceived.

Many facsimiles have been sold, bequeathed, and dignified by cataloguing in libraries, as original holographs. Most of them have been nineteenth-century lithographs, although deservedly popular among collectors have been the two artistic reproductions in W. H. Fitchett's *Wesley*[3] and the three presented by George Eayrs in his

[1] See Sept. 13, 1758.

[2] June 14, 1788. The original holograph is in the Methodist Archives.

[3] London, Smith Elder & Co., 1906. The letters are both to Ann Bolton, dated May 13, 1774, and Feb. 26, 1780.

Letters of John Wesley.[1] Perhaps the most deceiving facsimile of all, displayed as the original by owners on both sides of the Atlantic, is that of Wesley's important letter to the Revd. Samuel Walker of Truro, dated Nov. 20, 1755. The genuine holograph (as well as several facsimiles) resides in the Methodist Archives. The facsimile is in faded ink, correctly reproduced on both sides, including the postmark, though it bears no trace of the seal fragments and endorsements which are present in the original, and—the clinching factor—the paper, though of an authentic tint, is trimmed too regularly, and watermarked 'GR/1815/CMD'. In some instances, however, a facsimile is our only evidence that a letter existed, and can serve as excellent evidence of the text.[2]

Bibliographers are familiar with the phenomenon known as a 'ghost', the record of an imaginary book of which no extant copy is known, but to which references occur in contexts which imply genuine existence, and encourage the hope that eventually a 'flesh and blood' original may turn up. This also occurs with letters, and usually for the same predominant reason, a misread date. With Wesley's letters 'Janu.' is often misread as 'June', '1782' as '1784', '1768' as '1788', etc. Other less likely misreadings occur. On one occasion, for instance, the salutation, 'Dear Sammy', noted in a catalogue for a letter dated 'London, Nov. 9, 1742', immediately sent a warning quiver down my suspicious antennae, and sure enough I found that it was to Samuel Bradburn, and in fact dated 1782. It is too much to claim that all 'ghosts' have been exorcized from this present edition, however, and the editor is far from denying the actual existence of all improbable literary entities which make him suspicious. Nevertheless critical awareness and much cross-checking are essential in every instance where a genuine holograph or other Wesley manuscript is not available. And even then caution cannot be dismissed, for an address panel may have been reversed, a section lost along a fold, or two halves of different letters joined together.

As we have seen, Wesley frequently prepared a preliminary draft of his letters, and he or his amanuenses made reference copies.[3] Sometimes copies or extracts from his more important letters

[1] Jan. 13, 1735, to his mother; May 7, 1767, to Lady Maxwell; and June 16, 1787, to Dr. Leslie. Each is in a special folder dated 1916, although the volume itself is dated 1915.

[2] e.g. that to the Revd. Peard Dickinson, July 10 [1787], preserved in Boston Public Library, Massachusetts.

[3] See pp. 38–9 above.

were sent to others of his correspondents. Wesley's contemporaries frequently made their own copies of individual letters, whose trustworthiness can sometimes be checked by comparison with an original.[1] In keeping with his passion for preserving memoranda of key events and relationships, Wesley also made abstracts of his correspondence with family and friends.[2] It was a great age for keeping journals, and a number of these have survived which include copies of letters to and especially from Wesley. Again the major collection of such secondary documents is that in the Methodist Archives.

Sometimes even posthumous copies achieve a high degree of authenticity, such as the facsimiles carefully penned by James Everett in volumes which later came into the possession of Wesley's biographer, Luke Tyerman. (Indeed Everett's copies seem *always* to be preferable to the printed versions of Wesley's earlier editors.) Unfortunately, however, most later transcripts have proved unreliable in minor details, and sometimes in major points—a fact which led to hundreds of errors in Telford's edition of Wesley's *Letters*, and will inevitably bequeath a heritage of errors to this, because in default of a better source we must make the best of a poor one.

Many letters are known only through contemporary printed sources. Fifty come from Wesley's *Journal*, 130 from his *Arminian Magazine*; over 70 were written to periodicals other than the *Arminian Magazine*,[3] and about 50 come from other contemporary publications—a total of almost three hundred. Altogether, therefore, over 2,600 out of the 3,500 letters included in this edition (about 75 per cent) will be presented from contemporary sources, even though from contemporary sources exhibiting varying degrees of authenticity, fullness, and accuracy. There is reason to hope that this proportion may grow even larger as further holographs come to the knowledge of the editor.

The remaining letters have been accumulated from a variety of

[1] Good examples are the correspondence with Richard Morgan of Dublin, prepared by Charles Wesley (at Drew), and John Bennet's own transcripts of his correspondence with Wesley and others (in MA).

[2] See p. 83–4 above.

[3] Not an outstanding reward, perhaps, for scanning a million (by computation) newspaper columns, except that by this means no fewer than twenty-three letters hitherto unknown to Wesley scholars have been discovered, some of them quite important. At least a few others are surely waiting to be found, for the editor has only been able so far to work through what proved by experimentation to be the most likely and accessible sources.

later printed sources, preference having been given to those known or presumed to have been based on the holographs, such as (in round numbers) 40 from John Whitehead's *Life of Wesley* (1792–6), 100 from Vol. XIII of Joseph Benson's edition of Wesley's *Works* (1813), 130 from Thomas Jackson's edition (1829–31 and later), a similar number (having differing degrees of reliability) from 500 annual volumes of various Methodist magazines, about 200 from many other sources, notably 1,500 Methodist biographies and over two thousand local histories of Methodism issued over the last 180 years, and a similar number printed from untraced sources in Telford's edition of 1931.

Earlier editions. The printing of Wesley's selected correspondence began quite early in his own lifetime, with Ralph Erskine's *Fraud and Fals[e]hood discover'd* (Edinburgh, 1743), and *Letters to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley: against Perfection, as not Attainable in this Life*, published in London the same year by Anne Dutton. A number written by or to him appeared in *A Collection of Letters, on Sacred Subjects*, published in Sheffield, 1761 (republished with additions in Dublin, 1784), and *Spiritual Letters by Several Eminent Christians* (Chester, 1767), though the value of these is diminished by the editorial excisions and the use of initials and dashes, prompted by an almost exclusive interest in 'improving' passages and the desire to disguise the names of the writers. The first scholarly work in this genre was published in the year of Wesley's death by Dr. Joseph Priestley, *Original Letters by the Rev. John Wesley and his friends, illustrative of his early history* (Birmingham, 1791), which contained twelve letters by John and seven to him from various members of the family, in addition to letters among themselves and an account of the Epworth poltergeist.

The first major collection of Wesley's letters was prepared by his preacher, friend, and correspondent, Joseph Benson, who printed 400 in Vol. XVI of his edition of Wesley's *Works* (London, 1813)—the 'second', counting Wesley's own of 1771–4 as the first.[1] Benson began with those already printed in the *Arminian Magazine*, in the order of their appearance therein, though in a somewhat hit-and-run manner, with omissions. Then he turned to those written to Eliza Bennis, as published by her son in 1809. Thenceforward he seems to have presented those which were available to him in holo-

[1] *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 17 vols., London, Conference Office, Jones, Cordeux, 1809–13.

graph form, beginning with those to Lady Maxwell (for whom he remains the sole source for 17 out of 26 known). Other major series included 14 to Ann Bolton, 22 to Elizabeth Ritchie, 15 to Hester Ann Roe, 36 to Benson himself, 23 to Dorothy Furly, and 19 to 'a young disciple'. Benson was an editor of his day, disguising names by the use of initials, erasing what he considered unimproving passages, and altering Wesley's vocabulary and grammar. The holographs for many which he reproduced have survived, so that we can actually see the physical traces left by his editorial pen, and thus speculate intelligently about the changes made in the many letters where the originals have disappeared.[1]

In the third edition of Wesley's *Works* (1829–31) the editor, Thomas Jackson, took over Benson's collection and more than doubled it, so that it contained about 900 letters.[2] He began with the early letters and worked his way onward by series arranged chronologically according to their onset. Jackson presented many letters from the holographs—to Wesley's mother, his brother Charles, to Ebenezer Blackwell, Christopher Hopper, Jane Hilton, Mary Bosanquet, Walter Churchey, Zechariah Yewdall, and others, as well as those appearing in recent Methodist magazines. For the most part he repeated Benson's inaccurate datings and text, though he made some corrections, and presented a more authentic text for those which he personally introduced. Through the years new batches were added from manuscript or magazine, so that by the edition of 1872 the total had risen to 955.

The next outstanding publication was that prepared by George Eayrs, *Letters of John Wesley: a selection of important and new letters, with introductory and biographical notes*.[3] In this selection of over 300 letters, sixty-nine were 'new or little known'. The letters were distributed among several chapters devoted to different groups of people and themes, with a good introduction and a running commentary, as well as three facsimiles.[4]

Even before this time, however, thought had been given to a much fuller and annotated edition of Wesley's letters, as a project sponsored by the Wesley Historical Society, founded in 1893. One of its founders, Richard Green, accumulated notes for this in an

[1] Cf. illus. facing pp. 58–9 above.

[2] *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 3rd edn., ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols., London, Mason, 1829–31. Letters appear in the last three volumes.

[3] London, Hodder & Stoughton, 1915; see pp. 109–10 above.

[4] Ibid.

interleaved set of Wesley's *Journal*, and transcripts of 'new' letters, so that by the time of his death in 1907 he had increased Jackson's total of 955 to 1,600. Green gave the interleaved volumes to his fellow-worker in the Wesley Historical Society, Thomas E. Brigden, who for some years edited its *Proceedings*. These transcripts came to the Methodist Publishing House, London, where John Telford had been appointed Connexional Editor in 1905.[1]

Telford was surrounded by a group of enthusiastic helpers, all members of the Wesley Historical Society: Nehemiah Curnock, the indefatigable editor of Wesley's *Journal*, into whose hands Green's transcripts seem first to have been placed, and who a few months before his death in 1915 was urging a massive campaign to make the letters as complete as possible;[2] Dr. W. L. Watkinson, a retired Connexional Editor, supporting the project from his high standing as a popular preacher and writer, as well as an ex-President of the Wesleyan Conference, who proved of great help to both Curnock and Telford; Marmaduke Riggall, circuit minister, who tirelessly transcribed documents; Brigden, of course, George Eayrs, and Arthur Wallington, a careful reader at the Publishing House. There was some jockeying for position among these. As early as 1911 Brigden had declined to collaborate with Eayrs in editing a separate volume of selected Wesley letters for Hodder & Stoughton,[3] and in 1915 was himself persuaded to defer publishing such a volume incorporating his own findings until after the complete edition had appeared,[4] only to be upstaged by Eayrs's volume—and characteristically to write a generous review of it.[5] Curnock died in 1915, by which time the number of transcripts had swollen to 2,120.[6] His own successful venture behind him, George Eayrs, unlike the others a United Methodist rather than a Wesleyan Methodist, sought fuller involvement in the official Wesleyan project. After some uneasy sparring he was accepted as an assistant to Telford, and eventually as assistant editor, with some payment involved,[7] but was 'concerned and surprised' at the suggestion that his commissioned introductory

[1] The complex story of Telford's edition can best be traced through his papers, preserved in several boxes in the Methodist Archives. See T. E. Brigden to J. A. Sharp, Mar. 25, 1914, therein. Cf. W.H.S. XI. 13, and Telford, I. viii.

[2] Curnock to Telford, Mar. 19, 1915.

[3] Brigden to Telford, Nov. 9, 1911.

[4] Sharp to Brigden, Apr. 9, 1915.

[5] W.H.S. XI. 12–14.

[6] Telford, I. viii.

[7] Eayrs to Telford, May 29, 1919.

chapter on 'Wesley's characteristics as a letter writer' should be switched to the *London Quarterly Review*,[1] a problem which was resolved by his death a few months later. Meanwhile Mr. Wallington was maintaining a chronological inventory of letters and their sources, numbered 1–2,463, with about eighty extra-inserted by him, and more than that number added by Telford, and possibly by his assistant, G. A. Bartlett.[2] Printing specimens for the new edition were prepared in 1926, by which time the proposed four or five volumes had expanded to six.[3] It was eventually published as a set of eight volumes in 1931, the year in which Telford turned eighty and officially retired.

The new 'Standard Edition' contained 2,670 letters, a brief introduction, and many valuable introductory notes to some series and individual letters, as well as many footnotes, an index, and other apparatus. There can be no question that it was not only incomparably fuller than Jackson's edition, but incomparably better. Telford utilized admirably the great manuscript resources of the Methodist Archives as well as the *Proceedings* and personnel of the Wesley Historical Society, and received assistance from collectors in many parts of the world. Unfortunately, however, he was also at the mercy of many poor transcribers whose work he had inherited from others or received through the post. Quite frequently he himself misread the manuscripts which he used, and did not follow out his announced principle of enclosing editorial additions and conjectures within square brackets. Only in the later volumes did he begin to include the addresses on the letters, and very rarely did he note his source. Nevertheless it was a wonderful achievement, and has remarkably served scholars and general readers for over a generation.

Editorial pitfalls. Even when an editor is at least a little younger than Telford, and able to work from many more holograph manuscripts, he still needs care in avoiding the many pitfalls waiting for unwary feet. The major problem is that of misreading the date, and thus placing the letter in its wrong context, and perhaps at the same time conjuring up a 'ghost'. As indicated earlier, Wesley himself occasionally misdated his letters.[4] And his writing, even when firm, is sometimes misleading. He might write '8' with an open loop at

[1] Eayrs to Telford, Mar. 20, Apr. 19, 1926.

[2] See this list, in a notebook among Telford's papers in MA; cf. Telford, I. xi.

[3] Brigden to Telford, Nov. 18, 1919; Eayrs to Telford, May 29, 1919; Eayrs to Telford, Apr. 19, 1926.

[4] See pp. 47–8 above.

the top, so that one Wesley scholar 'corrected' the date of a letter from the actual Oct. 18 to Oct. 10.[1] He might add a tail to his '2', so that it could easily be mistaken for '3'.[2] Misreadings by scholars are legion. On one day the editor received letters from two different librarians listing Wesley letters in their collection: one noted a date as 1733 when it turned out to be 1777; the other transcribed a letter as for 1753 when in fact the date was 1788. Nehemiah Curnock's edition of the *Journal* presents a facsimile of a letter with the implied dating of 1769 when in fact it is 1789.[3] A huge reference folio of facsimiles in The British Library, London, gives the date of one of the Wesley letters in that collection as March 25, 1783, when in fact it is 1787. These problems are compounded when the holograph is not available. There are a few instances of transcripts by different people, each bearing different dates, *both* being admitted into Telford's edition as genuine letters.

Clearly it is essential to examine the date of every holograph very carefully, and to check the handwriting against that of supposedly contemporary letters, as well as the internal evidence and (where available) its postal history. In the absence of the holograph this scrutiny must be redoubled. Fortunately we can fairly easily be delivered from the scores of common misreadings of Wesley's 'Janu.' as 'June', for in January he was rarely out of London, and in June rarely in the city.[4] The evidence of Wesley's known itinerary can be almost conclusive wherever one is sure that the place has not been added to a letter conjecturally by an editor (but not within brackets) solely upon the basis of the (misread) date—of which Telford's edition contains some examples.[5]

[1] W.H.S. XXXII. 175.

[2] e.g. Mar. 12, 1782, where the '12' is normal but the '82' appears like '83'.

[3] Curnock, V. 343.

[4] Thus four letters were at one time published as being written in London in June, 1788—on the 9th, 11th, 18th, and [30th]. One was corrected by Telford to January, two left as June, and the fourth (not in Telford's edition) was noted by the present writer in 1945 as June on the basis of William Toase's printed version of 1874 (W.H.S. XXV. 51). For only the last is a holograph now available, yet because of the combination of 'London' with the transcribed 'June' each may confidently be assigned to January of that year.

[5] e.g. that to Isaac Andrews, where the original has 'Janu. 24, 1776', but no place of writing, while in Telford (VI. 224) the date is misread as 'June 24', and the place where he actually was on that June day, Scarborough, is supplied without indicating that it is a conjecture. Similarly Wesley's letter of Jan. 11, 1775, to William Allwood, taken by Telford from F. F. Bretherton, *Early Methodism in and around Chester* (1903), p. 280, where it was headed 'June 11th, 1775', was anchored in its incorrect situation by Telford's insertion (without brackets) of the place where Wesley was on June 11.

Transcribing the text of Wesley's letters also frequently presents problems, especially when manuscripts are mutilated or written in a hand tremulous with age. Parts of words may be torn away by the breaking of the seal, in spite of Wesley's attempts to minimize this.[1] Wear may render words indecipherable in the folds or at the margins, or a strip may be torn away. Letters may become badly damaged by damp, and through loss of their sizing may disintegrate in whole or in part.[2] Wesley's own errors seemed to increase with age, especially the omission of words.[3] At the same time he became less able and less willing to revise his holographs carefully, so that reading some of the letters written during the closing months of his life almost becomes an exercise, not in deciphering what is physically there, but in trying out different hypotheses about the words and phrases penned, and deciding whether the physical evidence will fit the hypothesis; and one must always bear in mind that one element in the hypothesis might need to be an omission in the text, just as an element in the physical evidence might be the straying of a word or phrase from one line into another.

Reconstruction of the text of a mutilated manuscript may sometimes be completed with a fair amount of certainty when only a narrow marginal strip is missing.[4] With more extensive mutilations a previously published text may furnish a useful guide, though it must nevertheless be accepted to that extent as a secondary substitute for the primary source.[5] Sometimes the combination of context, physical evidence, and earlier publication, is still insufficient to remedy accident or vandalism, if names have been snipped out.[6] This is even more true when a whole address panel and an adjoining flap have taken with them into oblivion more than half a page of writing.[7] Once address sheets or panels have become separated

[1] e.g. Dec. 14, 1770.

[2] e.g. five of Wesley's letters to Mrs. Jane Armstrong, now at Drew University, one of which seems totally to have disintegrated (Apr. 22, 1789), and another almost so (July 19, 1787), before coming to Drew. Fortunately they had all been published in the *Irish Christian Advocate*, so that the text is not completely lost, although (on the basis of the fairly sound originals) the printed versions of both probably contain misreadings.

[3] See pp. 41–2 above.

[4] e.g. Mar. 27, 1781 (?), to Miss Loxdale, where three or four letters are missing from the beginning of fourteen lines; in only two instances is there any real doubt about the letters to be supplied within ⟨ ⟩, indicating the mutilation of the manuscript.

[5] e.g. that to Samuel Bardsley, Jan. 30, 1780, where the holograph has been torn in two since its publication in the 1825 *M.M.*

[6] e.g. Sept. 29, Oct. 12, 1764.

[7] e.g. the letter to Miss Agnes Gibbes, Aug. 1, 1784.

from the parent letter it is difficult to match them up again, though not quite impossible, especially if they remain in the same collection.[1]

One of the major problems facing the editor in those frequent instances when the address is missing is to identify the recipient. Here the most valuable guide will usually be the salutations, studied against the background of Wesley's known methods of addressing different people.[2] The experienced student will soon progress beyond the all-too-common *naïveté* of assuming that 'Dear sister' implies that Wesley was writing to one of the Wesley girls, or that 'Dear Charles' could only mean his younger brother—actually he was in known correspondence with seven preachers and clergy whose Christian names were Charles, and might well have been in touch with five more. (We have already seen that clergy could probably be ruled out, including his brother Charles.[3]) An index of such Christian names both for male and female correspondents can prove enormously useful, as the editor found the first time he turned to it, discovering after going through 33 names out of 101 that the 'Dear Tommy' of a mutilated letter of Feb. 25, 1764, could be none other than Thomas Hanson. In default of a personal name (as well as supplementary to it) the clues afforded by the manner of address and the subject matter, as well as personal reference, may combine to afford a reasonable certainty about the recipient. A consolidated list of Wesley's known correspondence with every known correspondent can show whether this fills a gap at a normal interval, or whether it is at odds with some more fully documented letter, in which latter instance some other possible recipient must be studied. The handwriting of endorsements may furnish a clue, or even proof, of the recipient, and in the case of one series (to John Mason), the major clue comes from the numbering. The patient use of numerous specially devised research tools and methods will not answer every such question, of course, and too often we are left with a hypothetical name or a sad 'If only . . .!'.

In a number of cases problems are caused by differing versions, which need in some way to be reconciled. If one of the versions is the holograph, of course, the problem is quickly settled: we present the

[1] The half-sheet containing the address and a postscript has become detached from the letter to Adam Clarke of Dec. 8, 1787, at Wesley College, Bristol, and is now in Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.

[2] See above, pp. 48–51.

[3] See above, pp. 49–50.

holograph, and probably note any major variants discovered in the draft, or the copy, or any contemporary printed version, but ignore all else. If we have two or more secondary versions, however, we have to decide which best represents the holograph. Nor is that always easy. With Wesley's letter of Dec. 10, 1734, setting out at length for his father the reasons why he was not prepared to accept the Epworth living, we have five good secondary sources, differing slightly among themselves: Wesley's *Journal*, Priestley's *Letters*, Whitehead's *Wesley*, Coke and Moore's *Wesley*, and a copy in shorthand by Charles Wesley. These must be collated and their relationship to each other decided before any clear determination can be made about their relative dependence upon the original. The same is true (though in a less complex manner) of many other letters, usually the more important ones, many of which Charles copied and Whitehead printed, but whether from the holograph, a draft, or a reference copy it may not always be possible to determine, and certainly not without careful investigation. Occasionally a much later version may prove more reliable than an earlier one, because it is based upon the original rather than upon a draft or a copy, or because it was prepared with much greater care. There is therefore no rule of thumb which can eliminate careful study of differing versions of a letter.

One of the elements which must form an important ingredient of such study, as indeed in the study of the text of any letter not clearly based upon the original holograph, is an evaluation of the sources, whether manuscript or printed. It is simple, for instance, to decide from the manuscript letter if Wesley employed an amanuensis to copy a letter: not only will the handwriting differ from Wesley's, but probably the spelling, the punctuation, and even the paragraphing; and the amanuensis will probably introduce his own errors, or possibly try to correct Wesley's. The typical amanuensis, however, was not likely to correct Wesley's grammar, or to alter his vocabulary. Therefore the normal contemporary copy is usually quite reliable as a guide to the basic text of the letter. Wesley himself, of course, was perfectly prepared to make major alterations when he published either his own letters or even those of his correspondents, and we can learn to recognize his literary idiosyncracies.[1] Similarly his early editors felt quite free to alter his grammar to that more suited

[1] See below, p. 124, for his editing for publication of a letter to the Mayor of Newcastle.

to their own taste, so that where Wesley wrote to him, 'Bishop Newton's book on the prophecies is well wrote',[1] Joseph Benson altered the last word to 'written' when he prepared it for publication in Wesley's *Works*, and so it has remained until this edition.[2] Whenever it can thus be demonstrated that a source emended Wesley's original text (as Benson constantly did), a warning signal should flash for the careful editor. The easy acceptance of any form of editorial malpractice may well imply the acceptance, and the practice, of them all. In seeking the genuine text of a letter, therefore, we may be better served by a scribe (whether contemporary with Wesley or a century later) who painfully reproduced each capital, each misplaced comma, each error, or even by one who made careless errors of his own as well as reproducing Wesley's, than by the sophisticated editor who was determined to clothe Wesley in the literary fashions of his own day, or to emend the text in accordance with his own standards of propriety and importance.

Editorial malpractice. Numerous editors in the past, and even a few in the present, have been guilty of conduct unbecoming of an editor and a gentleman. Wesley himself frequently omitted names from his publications, or faintly disguised them by the use of initials, in order to protect tender reputations. He followed this practice in reproducing some letters in the *Arminian Magazine*. When continued to the third and fourth generation, however, this laudable desire to save others pain degenerates into an exaggerated desire to protect oneself or one's friends from the flimsiest link with anything slightly flawed, a readiness to suppress the uncomfortable truth at all costs.[3] Hundreds of examples could be cited of the heritage of problems caused by such malpractice. In editing the letter of March 2, 1782, to Robert Costerdine, John Telford used the text printed in the *Methodist Magazine* for 1845, where he found

[1] Dec. 8, 1777.

[2] There is no question that in Wesley's speech and writing (as in that of his contemporaries) this was no solecism, but normal correct English. Gray's most famous poem was published in 1751 as 'An Elegy wrote in a Country Church Yard' (cf. p. 136 below). Wherever, therefore, 'written' appears in a similar context we may assume that an editorial hand has been at work; and similarly where we find 'wrote' we may assume that we are dealing with a scribe who copied what he found, without emendation. Even Telford (or possibly his sources) was not blameless. He followed his printed sources in changing 'wrote' to 'written' and 'don't' to 'do not', but it was on his own initiative that he changed Wesley's 'you was' to 'you were' (see letters to Benson, Dec. 8, 1777; Mary Bosanquet, Oct. 17, 1773; and Benson again, May 19, 1783).

[3] It is pleasant to note that in reproducing his early *Journal* in his *Works* a generation later (1774), Wesley himself filled out many of the disguising initials.

'a particular account of the behaviour of W. G— toward S. P—'. Assuming that these were two disaffected preachers he extended the initials (unfortunately without using brackets) to William Gill and Stephen Procter. When the original eventually came to light the actual names were found to be W. Goodrich and Sally Phipps, implying a very different context for the letter.[1]

A related form of face-saving has earned the name of 'bowdlering' from Dr. T. Bowdler, whose 1818 edition of Shakespeare omitted 'those words and expressions . . . which cannot with propriety be read aloud in a family'. A strange example comes from Telford's edition, where (one suspects) he was presented with a transcript which had been bowdlerized without his being able to do anything about it, by the omission of five lines describing conflicting reports about Mr. Woodcock having been guilty 'of an immodest thing, said to be done or attempted'. The addition from the holograph is not only of interest in itself, but also because it begins a chain-reaction (as is frequently the case), immediately supplying the background for another hitherto obscure letter.[2]

An extension of this same principle has been the unduly protective attitude which early Methodist editors assumed towards Wesley himself, most of them evincing a strong tendency to suppress anything which might imply that 'Mr. Wesley' was human. Thus when he came to edit Wesley's letters Joseph Benson struck through the opening sentences of one to Sarah Crosby: 'Before you mentioned it, that was my purpose, not to let anyone know of your writing. Therefore I do transcribe what I choose to keep, and burn the original.'[3] A similar motive may have been at work in Benson's constant alterations of Wesley's grammar.[4] Perhaps it is natural to wish your dead hero to look his best, even if it entails the application of cosmetics to his gnarled and faded features.[5] The editors of this edition, however, are clear in their determination that Wesley shall be presented with literary 'warts and all', including

[1] See W.H.S. XXVI. 125–6, where the present editor notes a similar case of Telford extending the initials incorrectly, though on this occasion within brackets.

[2] Mar. 3, 1776, to Mrs. Woodhouse, and Mar. 26, 1776, to Robert Costerdine.

[3] May 11, 1780 (date, place, and recipient's name supplied by Benson on a holograph lacking the address half).

[4] See above, pp. 119–20.

[5] Cf. William Mason's readiness to doctor letters outrageously in order that no one should 'behold Mr. Gray in any light than that of a scholar and a poet'. (See William Henry Irving, *The Providence of Wit in the English Letter Writers*, Durham, North Carolina, Duke University Press, 1955, pp. 231–2.)

colloquialisms, contractions which imply a different spoken expression, and grammatical usages which have now become outdated.

The remaining types of editorial malpractice to be mentioned fall into a different category. One of the most frustrating things for a conscientious editor is to be compelled to rely upon texts which are not only altered in phraseology, obscured by initials, and truncated by excisions, but also wrenched out of their historical context by the compression of two or more letters—or more usually extracts of letters—into one. This was a common practice both in Wesley's day and later, and may often be suspected where it cannot be proved. One example may suffice. In the *Methodist Magazine* for the years 1805–7 the editor presented a series of twelve letters, usually described as 'an original letter of the Rev. John Wesley to Miss B.'. 'Miss B.' was in fact Mary Bishop, to whom thirty-seven holograph letters from Wesley survive. Of the twelve in the magazine only one comprises a single letter, seven contain conflated extracts from two letters, two from three, and two from no fewer than five letters each. Worse still, the range of dates covered in two of these so-called letters is three years! Yet but for the survival of the holographs we should perforce have had to rely upon the editor's avowal that each of these twelve was in fact 'an original letter'. There is little question that some of the texts reappearing in this edition suffer from similar severe limitations.

In view of what has been said above about the importance of Wesley's closing salutations,[1] it will occasion no surprise that the editor of these volumes considers it a serious dereliction of editorial duty to close the text of any letter with a truncated and colourless, 'Yours, etc.'. In reproducing some letters, however, that is the best that can be done, because it was all that was done by former editors, and no better source has been discovered.[2] In this feature Benson gains higher marks than his successors, for he not only reproduced the closing courtesies, but even the signature, in which he was not followed by Jackson and Telford.

It is understandable that the general reader will not enjoy the intrusion of square brackets or angle brackets surrounding groups of letters or words, yet it is the editor's task both to reproduce accurately

[1] See above, pp. 58–62.

[2] e.g. the letters to Thomas Roberts, Aug. 13, 1790, and Feb. 8, 1791, where Telford depended upon Luke Tyerman's transcriptions (Tyerm (JW), III. 622, 647), rather than turning to the 1837 *M.M.*, where both the endings were given fully, though in the second case with a misreading of the date as Feb. 18.

what is present in the text, and not to introduce a fuller text than is actually before him without by some method informing the reader —the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. In a definitive edition to serve twentieth-century scholars anything else would constitute a serious misdemeanour. Endless examples could be cited where the neglect of this has led to historical error, but two have been noted already in another connection.[1] In the present edition all that is humanly possible will be done both to uncover such errors in past transcripts, and to prevent their continuation or initiation.

The Oxford Edition. Readers of this introduction will have realized that the editor has tried to profit from the labours, the experience, the mistakes, of many predecessors. Some elements of what may be expected in this new edition of Wesley's letters have already been touched upon, and the major features will be briefly recapitulated here, along with a statement of the edition's scope and its methods of authentication and presentation.

These volumes set out to reproduce all Wesley's personal letters— to individuals, to groups of people such as his preachers, and to periodicals, upon private or public issues, even if they were reproduced in his *Journal* or on broadsheets for multiple circulation.[2] The major exclusion (which filled well over one of Telford's eight volumes) is published letters, i.e. those which were not only printed but were offered for sale as distinct publications, such as the open letters to his critics.[3] Also normally excluded are letters prefixed to his own publications, which will appear with the publications themselves. Letters represented only by evidence of their composition, by references, by very brief abstracts or extracts, will not be inserted in the main text, but only in an appendix designed to list all his known correspondence, of all kinds, published as well as personal. In this appendix all known letters with specific dates or written by or to specific recipients will be noted in chronological order. The main text will present a selection of Wesley's total correspondence, comprising all his out-letters for which a substantial text is available, and (in smaller type) those of his in-letters (or extracts from them) which illuminate his extant out-letters, or seem of special importance. The editor recognizes—a sad blow to his pursuit of perfection

[1] See p. 116 above.

[2] See pp. 39–40 above.

[3] e.g. the open letters to Edmund Gibson, Bishop of London, George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter, the Revd. George Horne, and William Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, given in Vol. 11; others will appear in Vol. 9.

—that this is the one unit for which an infallible prophecy of incompleteness may be made, for letters hitherto unknown to him will surely continue to surface even after the last volume has added its quota of those coming to hand too late to be included in their chronological setting.

Many different kinds of sources have been employed to prepare this edition,[1] of which the holograph letter is the ideal, and has been secured in about 60 per cent of the letters published in the main text.[2] Failing that, we print any of the following (given in order of preference): the original draft or a reference copy made at the time by Wesley or under his supervision; a facsimile of one of the above; a transcript prepared either during Wesley's lifetime or subsequently by someone known to be trustworthy or demonstrating its own fidelity by reproducing minor details such as capitalization and spelling; an abstract prepared by Wesley—which might need to be supplemented from other sources; some other abstract, preferably contemporary, again supplemented from other sources where possible. If no authentic manuscript is available we use one of the following printed sources, though the actual position in the order of preference depends upon its ascertained relationship to the holograph and the reliability of its originator as demonstrated in other contexts (in some instances these may make a printed source preferable to a Wesley abstract instead of merely supplementary): a printed version published by Wesley; some other published version, preferably in its first appearance and from the holograph, either during Wesley's lifetime or subsequently. As a last resort an inferior transcript may be utilized, or a printed version demonstrably changed in substance by editing. Where the holograph is available other versions may well be ignored, except for the more important variants stemming from Wesley himself. Because the letter as despatched is our primary text, only the more important erasures in preliminary drafts are noted, on the assumption that the final draft is nearest to what we seek.[3] Where only secondary sources are available, the

[1] See pp. 107–12 above.

[2] Thus for the letter of Oct. 26, 1745, to the Mayor of Newcastle, we present the actual letter preserved in the Northumberland County Record Office, rather than the version of it printed by Wesley himself in his *Journal*, which omits the closing sentences from two paragraphs and five single words, as well as making several editorial changes—a clear indication as to how Wesley edited his own letters for publication.

[3] Occasionally, however, even these are extensive, e.g. Dec. 5–6, 1726 (to his brother Samuel), and May 14 and 20, 1738 (to William Law).

preferred one will be presented, supplemented by additional passages from other versions, and with the important variants noted.[1] Conjectural emendations even of unreliable sources are enclosed within square brackets.

Any substantive variant readings arising in printed versions supervised by Wesley himself are footnoted in a similar manner to that followed for the other units in this edition, for it seems important to see not only what he originally wrote, but the way in which for various reasons he was moved to revise it for publication. If he had no hand in parallel printed versions, however, the preferred source furnishes the copy-text, and variant readings in inferior sources are noted only if it appears possible that they reflect the holograph.[2]

Where a manuscript is mutilated an attempt is made to restore missing words within angle brackets, 〈 〉, square brackets, [ ], being reserved for the rare editorial insertions within the text. Ellipses indicated by Wesley are reproduced thus, . . . ; passages omitted by the editor are indicated by an ellipsis within the editorial square brackets, [. . .]. Erased passages in drafts have been enclosed within

[1] One actual instance may be presented in summary to illustrate this investigative process. For Wesley's important letter to William Wogan, March 28, 1737, on the art of Christian conversation, the holograph is missing. There are seven sources, five printed, two in manuscript: (1), in James Gatliff's life of Wogan, prefixed to his edition of Wogan's *Essay on the Proper Lessons*, 1818; (2), in *The Pulpit*, Dec. 20, 1827; (3), a transcript by Thomas Marriott, probably a little later; (4), a transcript by James Everett, dated 1833; (5), in the *W.M.M.*, 1842; (6), in the *Wesley Banner*, 1852; (7), in Telford's edition of Wesley's *Letters*, 1931. One version was typed out, and all the variants in each other version, however minute, were entered in this typescript. This careful collation indicated that the first four versions were all based on the same holograph, but independently of each other. Gatliff, the *Pulpit*, and Marriott's transcript all edited the contents to make smoother reading, Marriott more heavily than the *Pulpit*, changing Wesley's 'chearfullest' to 'most cheerful', and omitting the opening paragraph, which is personal and does not touch on the main theme. The last three are clearly derivative: 1842 was based on Marriott, 1852 on Everett, though each introduced its own minor changes; Telford supplemented Marriott's transcript with the opening paragraph printed in 1852. Everett's transcript is unique in reproducing not only the complete text of the holograph, but even the minutiae of Wesley's capitalization, his known idiosyncrasies of punctuation, and some errors both corrected and uncorrected—it is, in fact, a kind of facsimile. Everett's copy, therefore, even though it is later than at least two other sources, furnishes our copy-text, with footnotes indicating variants from (1), (2), and (3) which may preserve some other features of the holograph.

Similarly with Wesley's letters to Philothea Briggs, both Benson and Telford (or his informant) appear to have used the holographs, which Telford prints more fully, Benson in parts more accurately; if the holographs do not turn up, Telford will furnish the copy-text, with variants inserted or footnoted from Benson.

[2] Thus in the example above, variants arising from Gatliff, the *Pulpit*, and Marriott's transcript *might* be footnoted if sufficiently important, but those arising in the other three would *certainly* be ignored.

double parentheses, (( )). During his Oxford days Wesley used an abridged longhand for his private manuscripts, including copies and abstracts of letters. In this v stood for 'the',– for 'and', ⊃ for 'for', ū for 'but', ō for 'not', etc. Later both he and Charles largely displaced this by the use of Byrom's shorthand for confidential passages in their correspondence, and occasionally for making copies. All such passages, of course, have been presented in deciphered form—with confidence in the case of the abbreviated longhand, occasionally with much uncertainty in the case of the shorthand, for which reason these latter transcriptions are enclosed within double square brackets, [[ ]], and footnoted.

Assigning a likely date when the source presents insufficient or confusing evidence, or when that evidence has been damaged, is an even trickier business, and calls for the interplay of many different internal clues.[1] In this edition scores of letters have been uprooted from the positions which they occupy in Telford's volumes for compelling reasons which it would be tedious to recount at length, though in a few instances with no absolute certainty that their new conjectural date is any more than probable. Any conjecture, however, whether relatively certain or uncertain, is indicated by the use of square brackets.

The letters furnish us with a valuable key to Wesley's preferred styling practices, as distinct from those of his various editors and printers.[2] These latter gentlemen reduced his lavish use of capitals from the 1770s onwards, when it went out of fashion. In his letters, however, he continued to capitalize common nouns selectively until his death, though by that time he rarely used capitals to impart a minor emphasis to adjectives and verbs. In his earlier years he also frequently capitalized pronouns, especially You and Your, though hardly ever pronouns referring to God; the divine name itself he penned completely in capitals until his dying day. In accordance with the principles adopted for this edition as a whole, however, capitals unfamiliar to the modern eye have usually been eliminated.

In his letters Wesley rarely used the underlining which then as now indicated italics, though this was his normal styling for scriptural quotations in his publications. Titles of books he sometimes placed within quotation marks, sometimes simply capitalized; in both cases we have used italics if Wesley cited accurately, but retained his capitals only if his citation was inaccurate. Underlining

[1] See pp. 115–16 above. [2] See pp. 55–8.

carried out by some other hand than Wesley's is not reproduced, though it may occasionally be footnoted.[1]

Wesley's punctuation has been modernized in a manner similar to that in the other volumes of this edition, mainly by omission, aiming at 'open' or minimal punctuation when the meaning remains clear. Wherever there is any doubt about the original meaning, however, and wherever it seems possible that some significant nuance might be lost by any alteration, the punctuation of the holograph is retained. Indeed, whenever holographs are reproduced, the original punctuation is given much greater weight than in the case of the printed works, though no attempt is made to reproduce idiosyncrasies such as Wesley's verbal forms 'seem's', 'clear's', etc. Thus we have followed Wesley in treating many subordinate clauses as if they were complete sentences, and have retained the comma which he used frequently instead of 'that' to introduce a subordinate clause. We have omitted, however, the quotation marks within which he enclosed direct speech transformed into indirect, except for any portions which remain acceptable as direct speech. Wesley frequently inserted one quotation mark only, normally at the beginning; here we have supplied the missing mark, usually without enclosing it within square brackets. We have not added quotation marks, however, where Wesley has none at all, or does not indicate a quotation by his use of italics.

Wesley's frequent abbreviations have been expanded, including his frequent dropping of the final 'e' in the past tense, and his use of the ampersand. Contractions, however, which afford evidence of his actual pronunciation of words and phrases, have been retained: thus he apparently said as well as wrote ''tis' rather than 'it is', and 'can't' rather than 'cannot', and seemed to prefer these terms in print as well as in longhand.

Thus in reproducing the text, antiquarian minutiae such as the lavish use of capitals and abbreviations are forsaken, even though those same minutiae may have proved of importance in deciding the authenticity of a transcript and the descent of the text. No word has been deleted or added or changed, however (except in spelling), without in some way informing the reader, nor have we felt justified in amending Wesley's grammar by changing such phrases as 'you was' or 'this was wrote'.[2] His spelling is quite another matter, however. We have felt few qualms in clothing his words in the

[1] See p. 57 n. 1. [2] See p. 120 above.

typographical dress which became familiar to him in his later years, and almost equally familiar to us, and therefore makes for smoother reading. Nor does the change from 'chearful' (1740) to 'cheerful' (1770), for example, imply any change in pronunciation, but only in spelling fashions. With a very few exceptions, therefore, throughout this edition we follow the spelling conventions normal for the Oxford University Press.

Wherever present the address is given, but in this one instance reproduced *literatim*, though in continuous form rather than on several separate lines. This is followed by details of the surviving seals, postmarks, postal or other inscriptions, and an indication of the source or sources from which the text has been derived. At their first introduction footnotes identify the recipients and supply information necessary to understand the context of the letter. Footnotes also identify allusions in the text to persons, places, events, and subjects. The selected in-letters are footnoted very lightly indeed, if at all. Information is only duplicated in the case of Wesley's quotations, and cross-references are minimal, awaiting the complete index in the final volume. As a partial immediate aid an alphabetical index is furnished covering those correspondents represented in the main text of each volume. The appendix summarizing Wesley's total correspondence is not indexed.

Almost all that has been said above about discovering and reproducing the text of the holograph applies equally to in-letters and out-letters, except that of the in-letters only a select number are reproduced, and sometimes only select portions of that select number. Little attempt has been made to annotate in-letters, except in indicating their relationship to specific out-letters, supplying translations of Latin and Greek quotations, and elucidating points of special importance for an understanding of Wesley's own letters. The principle of selecting only those in-letters which illuminate out-letters has been applied somewhat more generously in his early family correspondence, especially letters from his father and mother, which enable us to visualize the formative period of his life not covered by his *Journal*. Here we have given weight to the words with which he introduced the series of about six hundred letters (both in and out) which he presented in the *Arminian Magazine* from 1778 until his death: 'It is natural to hope that what has been of use to ourselves may be of use to others also. I may then be excused for beginning this Collection of Letters with some that were of use to me many years ago.' 'Letter I' was that written by his father on Jan. 26, 1725, when he was approaching ordination, for which we are fortunate to possess the original holograph, the copy in Wesley's letter-book, and the version in the magazine. Collation of these three (confirmed in other instances where holograph controls are available) demonstrates that his early letter-books (like his later reference copies) usually transcribed the original accurately, almost *literatim*, and often noted omissions either by summaries or a dash. In the later printed versions, however, he treated his originals with very great freedom, reversing the order of phrases, substituting one word for another, omitting words or passages without warning, and even adding phrases. These later alterations, of course, represent Wesley's editorial point of view, and in that they possess their own significance. In attempting to reproduce the actual text of the holograph received by Wesley, however, we must bypass these wherever possible (which is not always the case), though occasionally the more important of these editorial revisions are reproduced in footnotes. Sometimes (as in the letter from Susanna Wesley of June 8, 1725), it is impossible to be absolutely sure which are additions from the holograph and which Wesley's revisions.

VII. THE LETTERS AS LITERATURE

The redoubtable Sir Leslie Stephen, editor of *The Dictionary of National Biography*, and no friend to Methodism, saw in Wesley a great literary talent 'unluckily' gone to waste in 'obsolete theological speculation'.[1] He paid the highest tribute to Wesley's letters: 'He shows remarkable literary power . . . It would be difficult to find any letters more direct, forcible, and pithy in expression. He goes straight to the mark without one superfluous flourish. He writes as a man confined within the narrowest limits of time and space, whose thoughts are so well in hand that he can say everything needful within those limits. The compression gives emphasis and never causes confusion.'[2] The justice of this and a hundred other tributes to Wesley as 'a master of strong, simple, direct English'[3] must already have been realized by the reader of this introduction.

[1] *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 3rd edn., London, John Murray, 1902, II. 423.

[2] Ibid., II. 409.

[3] George Sampson, *The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, Cambridge University Press, 1941, p. 552.

Wesley's direct and forceful style did not come by chance. It arose from a happy combination of his classical education, his reading of the Authorized Version of the Bible (coupled with Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer), and his call to communicate the gospel to the poor—nor would any one of these elements have been quite sufficient without the others.

In the Oxford of Wesley's youth the classics of Athens and Rome remained the basis of higher education, and the swing to modern languages and the sciences had barely begun. Rhetoric was not peripheral but central to those studies. During his Oxford years we can sometimes see Wesley consciously striving to emulate his classical examples, especially in his letters to 'Aspasia' and 'Selima'; witness the following neat, yet somewhat contrived, sentence: 'Indeed, a great part of most days (I sigh while I speak it) is torn from you by your barbarously-civil neighbours.'[1] This deliberately structured use of language, with its tropes and figures of speech, gradually became second nature to Wesley, through the art which conceals art, but remained a dominant element in securing controlled tautness in his sentences, together with an ability to write what the Americans term a good 'punch line'. This may be illustrated in a letter to Francis Asbury, written after Wesley had heard that he and Dr. Thomas Coke, the joint 'superintendents' of Methodism in America, were now using the title 'bishop', and building an institution named Cokesbury College:

> You are the elder brother of the American Methodists: I am, under God, the father of the whole family. Therefore I naturally care for you all in a manner no other person can do . . .
>
> But in one point, my dear brother, I am a little afraid both the doctor and you differ from me. I study to be *little*; you study to be *great*. I *creep*; you *strut* along. I found a *school*; you a *college*! Nay, and call it after your own names! O beware! Do not seek to be *something*! Let me be nothing, and '*Christ be all in all*'!
>
> One instance of this, of your *greatness*, has given me great concern. How can you, how dare you, suffer yourself to be called *bishop*? I shudder, I start at the very thought! Men may call *me* a knave or a fool, a rascal, a scoundrel, and I am content: but they shall never by my consent call me bishop! For my sake, for God's sake, for Christ's sake, put a full end to this! Let the Presbyterians do what they please, but let the Methodists know their calling better.[2]

[1] Sept. 27, 1730, to Ann Granville.

[2] Sept. 30 (?), 1788; not Sept. 20, as transcribed by Moore, when in fact Wesley was in Bristol, not London. One suspects that most of the italicizing was Moore's gilding of the lily.

The second major influence in the forging of Wesley's style was the Bible, allied with the Book of Common Prayer (whose version of the Psalms he seems to have quoted at least as frequently as that in the Authorized Version of the Bible). Daily Bible reading was the basis of Wesley's devotional life, and even of his education at his mother's knee, from his early youth. When at Oxford he became a Bible scholar, devoting much time to the careful study of the Hebrew and Greek originals, he did not forsake King James's version, but apparently continued to read the daily lessons appointed in the Calendar, which entailed reading through most of the Old Testament and much of the Apocrypha once a year, and the New Testament three times a year. He became steeped in its English as well as its teaching and challenge. He thought and spoke and wrote, perhaps sometimes unconsciously, in the language of the English Bible. Long sections of his letters are little more than a stringing together of scriptural phrases,[1] and at least one brief letter consists solely of a quotation from the Psalms.[2] In general this was from a deliberate design 'always to express Scripture-sense in Scripture-phrase'.[3] He told John Newton, 'The Bible is my standard of *language* as well as sentiment.'[4] A letter to Ann Bolton illustrates both his thought and his practice:

> In obedience to that direction, 'In wickedness be ye children, but in understanding be ye men,' I would in every respect both act and speak in the most accurate manner I could. And in speaking for God, particularly in public, we have a farther direction: 'If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.' Now in the oracles of God there is no improper expression. Every word is the very fittest that can be . . . I do not advise either Sammy Wells or Neddy Bolton to use any harder words than are found in St. John's First Epistle.[5]

In order to communicate with the man in the street, however, Wesley moulded his classical and biblical scholarship into 'plain truth for plain people.'[6] He told the Revd. Samuel Furly how in

[1] The comparatively short pastoral letter of Aug. 4, 1738, blends quotations fully indicated with those indicated by one quotation mark and those not indicated at all, twenty-three in all, together with many others which were probably not self-conscious quotations or allusions. Those documented range over fourteen books of the Bible.

[2] Aug. 31, 1775, quoting Ps. 37 : 3.

[3] Sept. 28, 1745, to 'John Smith', §§ 6, 7.

[4] Apr. 1, 1766.

[5] Jan. 29, 1773; Wesley quotes 1 Cor. 14 : 20 and 1 Pet. 4 : 11. He constantly directed people to 1 John, 'by which, above all other, even inspired writing, I advise every young preacher to form his style' (JWJ, July 18, 1765).

[6] *Sermons* (1746), Preface, § 3; see Vol. 1 of this edition.

August, 1730, his attempts at evangelism as an Oxford Methodist were foundering on the rock of academic speech: 'When I had been a member of the university about ten years I wrote and talked much as you do now. But when I talked to plain people in the castle or the town I observed they gaped and stared. This quickly obliged me to alter my style, and adopt the language of those I spoke to. And yet there is a dignity in this simplicity, which is not disagreeable to those of the highest rank.'[1]

There is little doubt that through his tireless visits to the homes of ordinary people throughout the British Isles Wesley knew the common people better than any other educated person of his day. His letters, even more than his *Journal*, constantly reveal this in his use of slang and colloquialisms. He commended a preacher who returned quickly to work after losing his little boy of three, rather than 'sit mooning at home'.[2] He told his brother Charles, 'My wife, I find, is on the high ropes still.'[3] Of Thomas Olivers he averred, 'There is good in him, though he is a rough stick of wood',[4] and of James Deaves that he would 'dispute through a stone wall',[5] and that a book by William Romaine was 'such a hotch-potch as I have seldom seen'.[6] In discussing a 'noble proposal' which entailed considerable financial outlay he warned Freeborn Garrettson that the English Methodists 'do not roll in money, like many of the American Methodists'.[7] Such expressions, freely adopted from common currency, formed a vigorous colouring of his normal speech, and his normal speech was faithfully reproduced in his letters, even to the better educated.[8]

Wesley absorbed and utilized both the language and the wisdom of the common man in another way, his use of proverbs, and probably did it the more readily because this also found strong precedent in Scripture. Literally hundreds of proverbs are to be found in his letters, some of them many times over, and many unrecognized as such, shading from colloquialisms on the one hand to consciously literary epigrams and aphorisms on the other.[1] One that struck the present writer, for instance, in leafing through the letters, was the

[1] July 15, 1764. [2] June 16, 1781, to Samuel Bradburn.
[3] Aug. 3, 1771. [4] Jan. 18, 1762. [5] Apr. 23, 1789.
[6] July 13, 1771, to Philothea Briggs. [7] June 26, 1785.
[8] See George Lawton, 'The Slang and Colloquial Expressions in Wesley's *Letters*', W.H.S. XXXII. 5-11, 25-33.
[9] See George Lawton, 'Proverbs and Proverbial Echoes in John Wesley's *Letters*' W.H.S. XXVI. 111-14, 120-34.

expression, 'It is a bad dog that is not worth whistling for',[1] which only after research did he discover was indeed Wesley's adaptation of a proverb. And what about 'blessings in disguise'? The theme occurs in a number of letters, in the form, 'Afflictions, you know, are only blessings in disguise'.[2] Was Wesley alluding to the phrase as he might have found it in *Reflections on a Flower Garden* (1746), by his former colleague, James Hervey,[3] or David Mallet's *Amyntor and Theodora* (1747),[4] or were all three bringing to the literary surface some folk-wisdom buried in folk-speech? Whatever be the truth of this and a thousand similar puzzles which may yet tempt some post-graduate researcher, the important thing is that Wesley did indeed draw deeply from the well of common speech, and in so doing was able to address Mr. and Mrs. Everyman in terms that were direct, picturesque, and pithy, and that therefore hit their mark.

Thus from the 1730s onwards Wesley developed his own style, at first self-consciously, but eventually without thinking about it, simply setting down the words that first flowed into his fertile mind from the three chief literary streams which enriched his thought. In the opening volume of his letters it is possible to trace the gradual transition from the cultured Oxford don, with his measured periods and somewhat stilted style, to the forceful evangelist, even before he came to experience and proclaim man's utter dependence upon God by faith in Christ for redemption, while his gospel still remained one of salvation by the works of holiness; we can see the strong Anglo-Saxon monosyllables from the Bible invigorating those precise polysyllables derived from the Latin; and we see increasingly demonstrated the truth of his claim in 1745 that 'for little less than twenty years' he had been 'diligently labouring' to 'use the most common words, and that in the most obvious sense', though *any* word from the Bible still remained appropriate: 'I cannot call those uncommon words which are the constant language of Holy Writ.'[5]

[1] May 3, 1786.

[2] Apr. 23, 1776; July 12, 1782; and (to describe 'trials') July 24, 1780.

[3] E'en crosses from his sov'reign hand
Are blessings in disguise.

Cf. *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 2nd edn., p. 248.

[4] Are afflictions aught
But blessings in disguise?

Cf. *Stevenson's Book of Quotations*, London, Cassell, 1934, 16 : 9.

[5] Sept. 28, 1745, to 'John Smith', § 6.

Thus were interwoven into Wesley's spoken and written English the literature of Rome and Jerusalem and the common speech of London, creating a versatile instrument of communication best revealed in its natural, unpolished state in his letters. Writing to a literary parson with a distinctive style of his own, the Revd. John Berridge, Wesley ended: 'I have not time to throw these thoughts into a smoother form; so I give you them just as they occur. May the God whom you serve . . . give a blessing to the rough sincerity of, Dear sir, Your affectionate servant, John Wesley'.[1]

Wesley also became a promoter of this approach to speech and writing in others. His most important and self-conscious discussions of English style appear in his letters to the Revd. Samuel Furly. Furly's new Oxford tutor cast some doubts upon the Cambridge man's basic education, and strove to remedy its deficiencies:

> I doubt you had a dunce for a tutor at Cambridge, and so *set out* wrong. Did he never tell you that of all men living a clergyman should 'talk with the vulgar'? Yea, and *write*, imitating the language of the *common people* throughout, so far as consists with purity and *propriety* of speech! *Easiness*, therefore, is the first, second, and third point. And *stiffness*, *apparent* exactness, *artificialness* of style the main defect to be avoided, next to solecism and impropriety . . . Dr. Middleton is no standard for a preacher—no, not for a preacher before the university. His diction is stiff, formal, affected, unnatural. The art glares, and therefore shocks a man of true taste. Always to talk or write like him would be as absurd as always to walk in minuet step. O tread natural, tread easy, only not careless. Do not blunder or shamble into impropriety. If you *will* imitate, imitate Mr. Addison or Dr. Swift.[2]

They were able to meet shortly afterwards for a conversation on style, and this Wesley followed up with another letter:

> What is it that constitutes *a good style*? Perspicuity, purity, propriety, strength, and easiness, joined together. Where any one of these is wanting it is not a good style . . .
>
> As for *me*, I never think of my style at all; but just set down the words that come first. Only when I transcribe anything for the press, then I think it my duty to see that every phrase be clear, pure, and proper. Conciseness (which is now, as it were, natural to me) brings *quantum sufficit* [as much as is necessary] of strength. If after all I observe any *stiff* expression, I throw it out, neck and shoulders.
>
> Clearness in particular is necessary for you and me, because we are to instruct people of the lowest understanding. Therefore we, above all, if we *think* with the wise, must yet speak with the vulgar. *We* should constantly use the most common, little, easy words (so they are pure and proper) which our language affords . . . Have this end always in your eye, and you will never designedly use

[1] Apr. 18, 1760. [2] Mar. 6, 1764.

an hard word. Use all the sense, learning, fire you have, forgetting yourself, and remembering only, These are the souls for which Christ died! Heirs of an happy or miserable eternity![1]

Furly, however—and who knows what part inter-university rivalry played in this?—continued (as Wesley thought) tiresomely argumentative. Wesley reiterated his basic advice about seeking a simple, natural style, and answered Furly's objections. He added an observation upon the length of sentences:

That 'poor people understand long sentences better than short' is an entire mistake. I have carefully tried the experiment for thirty years, and I find the very reverse to be true. Long sentences utterly confound their intellects; they know not where they are. If you would be understood by them you should seldom use a word of many syllables or a sentence of many words. Short sentences are likewise infinitely best for the careless and indolent. They strike them through and through. I have seen instances of it an hundred times.[2]

It would be possible to illustrate each of the five points listed by Wesley as the essential ingredients of a good style—perspicuity, purity, propriety, strength, and easiness. Most have in one way or another been touched upon already. Precision in the use of words was important to him, and he was ready to make fine distinctions. When the suggestion was put forward that more preachers should attend the annual Conference he wrote: 'I will only *require* a select number to be present. But I will *permit* any other travelling preacher who desires it to be present with them.'[3] He criticized the careless use of catchwords for party purposes: 'I find no such sin as *legality* in the Bible: the very use of the term speaks an antinomian. I defy all *liberty* but liberty to love and serve God, and fear no *bondage* but bondage to sin.'[4]

In spite of his disclaimer to 'John Smith', he did not completely eschew uncommon non-biblical words, such as 'docity',[5] 'coxcomicality',[6] and 'namby-pambical'—coined by Jonathan Swift, and used to describe one or two of his brother's verses.[7] For one of his correspondents he defined a word supposedly coined a few years earlier by Catharine Talbot, but which he found useful: '*Accommodableness* is only the art of becoming all things to all men, without wounding our own conscience. St. Paul enjoins it in those words,

[1] July 15, 1764. [2] Oct. 11, 1764. [3] Aug. 15, 1767.
[4] Nov. 30, 1770; cf. Nov. 27, 1770; Feb. 16, 1771.
[5] May 3, 1786.
[6] Nov. 27, 1766—the earliest example cited by *O.E.D.*
[7] Dec. 26, 1761, to Charles Wesley.

"Please all men, for their good, unto edification." Bare rules will hardly teach us to do this. But those that have a single eye may attain it (through the grace of God) by reflection and experience.'[1] He was quite prepared to coin his own words, as when he claimed, 'A lifeless, unconverted, unconverting minister is the murderer-general of his parish.'[2]

All these unusual words are to be found in letters to persons of superior education, of course. The same is true of most of Wesley's quotations. His letters to the clergy frequently contained tags and longer quotations from both Latin and Greek authors: Aristophanes, Cicero, Homer, Horace, Juvenal, Martial, Ovid, Persius, Phaedrus, Plautus, Suetonius, Terence, Virgil, and others. Often these are remarkably apposite, as when he spoke about the installation of one of the new-fangled organs by the Dublin society: 'An organ! *Non defensoribus istis tempus eget.* This will help them just as old Priam helped Troy.'[3] He was very fond of inserting English verse into his letters, especially those to women correspondents, and an incomplete list of those quoted includes Addison, Byrom, Churchill, Congreve, Cowley, Dryden, Gambold, Herbert, Milton, Parnell, Pomfret, Pope, Prior, Shakespeare ('our heathenish poet'),[4] Spenser, and Watts—a few of them, such as Milton, dozens of times. To one of his young friends who nursed poetic ambitions Wesley prescribed as an exercise an imitation of Thomas Gray: 'You may write in four-lined stanzas, such as those of the "Elegy wrote in the Churchyard".'[5]

Wesley frequently found his own poetic gifts of value as he employed rhetorical devices of various kinds. Examples have already been quoted. He drew his metaphors (the most important of the 'tropes') from many realms: an elaborate topographical metaphor appears in, 'I desire to have both heaven and hell ever in my eye, while I stand on this isthmus of life, between these two boundless oceans';[6] and a nautical one in, 'You was in danger of having more sail than ballast, more liveliness of imagination than solid wisdom.'[7] Sometimes he sustained a metaphor through several phases, as in

[1] June 28, 1784. See Rom. 15 : 2 and *O.E.D.*

[2] Mar. 25, 1747, § 12; neither 'unconverting' nor 'murderer-general' is to be found in *O.E.D.*

[3] Apr. 6, 1788. He quotes Virgil, *Aeneid*, ii. 521–2, 'The time does not need such defenders.'

[4] Oct. 26, 1745.

[5] Oct. 16, 1771.

[6] July 10, 1747, § 1.

[7] Sept. 13, 1771.

this answer to the charge that he was opposing 'the most *fundamental principles* and *essentially constituent* parts of our Establishment':

'The most fundamental principles!' No more than the tiles are 'the most fundamental principles' of a house. Useful, doubtless, they are; yet you must take them off if you would repair the rotten timber beneath. 'Essentially constituent parts of our Establishment'! Well, we will not quarrel for a word. Perhaps the doors may be 'essentially constituent' parts of the building we call a church. Yet if it were on fire we might innocently break them open, or even throw them for a time off the hinges. Now this is really the case. The timber is rotten, yea, the main beams of the house. And they want to place that firm beam, salvation by faith, in the room of salvation by works. A fire is kindled in the Church, the house of the living God: the fire of love of the world, ambition, covetousness, envy, anger, malice, bitter zeal—in one word, of ungodliness and unrighteousness! O who will come and help to quench it? Under disadvantages and discouragements of every kind, a little handful of men have made a beginning. And I trust they will not leave off till the building is saved, or they sink in the ruins of it.[1]

Equally picturesque and compelling is his laconic description of some homiletic products: 'I think those sermons may stop bottles.'[2]

It would prove a relatively simple, though exhausting chore, to search out examples of all the tropes, figures of speech, and 'fine turns' listed in *The Art of Rhetoric*.[3] It is probably preferable, however, to draw attention to what eventually developed from these studies, the instinctive art of balancing phrases, whether by setting off against each other contrasting words and phrases, by piling up synonyms, or by other means. He told Mary Bishop, 'You look *inward* too much and *upward* too little.'[4] To Lady Maxwell, wondering whether he should rebuke her, 'Certainly I would not run the hazard did I not regard your happiness more than your favour.'[5] And again: 'I love your spirit; I love your conversation; I love your correspondence: I have often received both profit and pleasure thereby. I frequently find a want of more light; but I want heat more than light.'[6] To George Holder and his wife he wrote: 'It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people. A people who talk much will know little.'[7] Some of these phrases became favourites, to appear again and again, alone or in combination with others,

[1] Apr. 10, 1761, 3. (7).

[2] Oct. 8, 1785, to Thomas Wride.

[3] This was a common textbook title, of which we may cite that published by John Holmes in 1755.

[4] Feb. 16, 1771.

[5] Sept. 30, 1788.

[6] May 3, 1777.

[7] Nov. 8, 1790; cf. Feb. 11, 1773.

such as, 'God is willing to give always what he gives once.'[1] Perhaps every preacher at one time or another read Wesley's words about recalcitrant Methodists: 'Either *mend* them or *end* them.'[2]

It is not surprising, therefore, to find in Wesley's letters a rich vein of maxims, epigrams, aphorisms, and apophthegms. Only a few nuggets and gems may here be displayed. This gift for the pointed phrase appeared early as a reflection of his classical training: 'Leisure and I have now taken leave of one another.'[3] 'Experience is worth a thousand reasons.'[4] 'Till a man gives offence he will do no good.'[5] 'Elegance of style is not to be weighed against purity of heart.'[6] 'I look upon all the world as my parish.'[7] As the years went by his memorable sayings became more numerous, more pointed, more vigorous, until he came into full stride:

Among my parishioners in Lincolnshire I tried [to do good] for some years. But I am well assured I did far more good to them by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit.[8]

Men who neither preach nor live the gospel are suffered publicly to overturn it from the foundation; and in the room of it to palm upon their congregations a wretched mixture of dead form and maimed morality.[9]

I do not think (to tell you a secret) that the work will ever be destroyed, Church or no Church.[10]

Of all gossiping, religious gossiping is the worst. It adds hypocrisy to uncharitableness, and effectually does the work of the devil in the name of the Lord.[11]

Your lordship did not see good to ordain [John Hoskins]. But your lordship did see good to ordain and send into America other persons, who knew something of Greek and Latin, but knew no more of saving souls than of catching whales.[12]

I look upon that very common custom to be neither better nor worse than murder. I would no more take a pillow from under the head of a dying person than I would put a pillow upon his mouth.[13]

One soul is worth all the merchandise in the world; and whoever gets money, do you win souls.[14]

It is hard to believe that such a man could seriously be regarded as deficient in a sense of humour, though such is a common misconcep-

[1] Dec. 24, 1768; cf. Sept. 13, 1758; May 13, 1764; to Mrs. Fuller (? Feb., 1783).
[2] Mar. 29, 1768; cf. Nov. 12, 1772; Feb. 25, 1778; Nov. 23, 1786.
[3] Dec. 5, 1726. [4] Dec. 10, 1734, § 15. [5] Sept. 30, 1735.
[6] Oct. 15, 1735. [7] ? Mar. 24, 1739. [8] Mar. 25, 1747, § 13.
[9] Apr. 10, 1761. [10] Sept. 8, 1761. [11] June 20, 1772.
[12] Aug. 10, 1780. [13] Nov. 26, 1786. [14] June 14, 1790.

tion, perhaps because most of Wesley's humour was expressed in understatement and in irony. This can be seen from a careful reading of his published works: it is much more evident in his letters. Ironically he referred (as did his brother Charles) to his bitter wife as 'my best friend', and when she was in a good temper remarked, 'Miracles are not ceased.'[1] His dismay at frequent postal delays vented itself in a mild, 'The post-boys in Ireland do not ride Pegasus.'[2] One hopes that Joseph Cownley also possessed a sense of humour when he read, 'A fever is the noblest medicine in the world, if a man does not die in the operation.'[3] And likewise young Sally Wesley, when her uncle wrote: 'I do not advise you to drink any sea water. I am persuaded it was never designed to enter any human body for any purpose but to drown it.'[4] Christopher Hopper certainly enjoyed Wesley's humour, for so much of it is to be found in letters to him, not only quiet whimsicalities, such as a reference to the portraits in the *Arminian Magazine*, 'We must get your goodly countenance by-and-by',[5] but occasional humour of a much more obvious kind: 'Peter Jaco would willingly travel. But how? Can you help us to an horse that will carry him and his wife? What a pity we could not procure a camel or an elephant!'[6]

More important, however, to Wesley as to his readers, is that he was able to make both intelligible and interesting—even at times entertaining—observations upon men and manners, upon man's need and God's bounty, in a way which has rarely been equalled. And what he penned for men and women of his own day has remained remarkably fresh and alive for succeeding generations, in spite of a few archaisms and subtle changes in the nuances of meanings. We present a few pen-pictures. Of Thomas Lee:

> T. Lee is of a shy, backward natural temper, as well as of a slow, cool speech and behaviour. But he is a sincere, upright man, and it will be worth all the pains to have a thorough good understanding with him.[7]

Of Alexander M'Nab, just being stationed in Edinburgh:

> His natural temper, I think, is good: he is open, friendly, and generous. He has also a good understanding, and is not unacquainted with learning, though not deeply versed therein. He has no disagreeable person, a pleasing address, and is a lively as well as a sensible preacher. Now when you add to this that he is quite new and very young, you may judge how he will be admired and caressed! 'Surely such a preacher as this never was in Edinburgh before! . . .

[1] Mar. 24, 1761; July 9, 1766. [2] May 21, 1762.
[3] Sept. 17, 1755. [4] Sept. 1, 1788. [5] Oct. 25, 1780.
[6] Oct. 7, 1773. [7] Dec. 28, 1768.

What an angel of a man!' Now, how will a raw, inexperienced youth be able to encounter this?[1]

Of the Revd. John Fletcher:

He writes as he lives. I cannot say that I know such another clergyman in England or Ireland. He is all fire; but it is the fire of love. His writings, like his constant conversation, breathe nothing else to those who read him with an impartial eye.[2]

Perhaps we may fitly close with one lengthier example of Wesley's style, written when he was sixty, an *apologia pro vita sua* written to the Revd. Henry Venn, one of the lesser leaders of the Evangelical Revival, who was unhappy about a Methodist society continuing to be maintained even in his own parish:

The distance between you and me has increased ever since you came to Huddersfield, and perhaps it has not been lessened by that honest, well-meaning man Mr. Burnett, and by others, who have talked largely of my dogmaticalness, love of power, errors, and irregularities. My dogmaticalness is neither more nor less than a 'custom of coming to the point at once', and telling my mind flat and plain, without any preface or ceremony . . .

The *power* I *have* I never *sought*. It was the undesired, unexpected result of the work God was pleased to work by me. I have a thousand times sought to devolve it on others; but as yet I cannot. I therefore suffer it till I can find any to ease me of my burden.

If anyone will convince me of my *errors* I will heartily thank him. I believe all the Bible, as far as I can understand it, and am ready to be convinced. If I am a 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. But I impose my notions upon none: I will be bold to say there is no man living farther from it. I make no opinion the term of union with any man: I think, and let think. What I want is holiness of heart and life. They who have this are my brother, sister, and mother . . .

As to *irregularity*, I hope none of those who cause it do then complain of it. Will they throw a man into the dirt, and beat him because he is dirty? Of all men living those clergymen ought not to complain who believe I preach the gospel (as to the substance of it). If they do not ask me to preach in their churches, *they* are accountable for my preaching in the fields.

. . . I desire to have a league offensive and defensive with every soldier of Christ. We have not only one faith, one hope, one Lord, but are directly engaged in one warfare. We are carrying the war into the devil's own quarters, who therefore summons all his hosts to war. Come then, ye that love him, to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty! I am now wellnigh *miles emeritus*, *senex*, *sexagenarius*.[3] Yet I trust to fight a little longer. Come and strengthen the hands, till you supply the place of, Your weak but affectionate brother, John Wesley.[4]

[1] Jan. 24, 1771, to Lady Maxwell.
[2] Feb. 8, 1772.
[3] 'A worn-out, sixty-year-old warrior'.
[4] June 22, 1763.