278, v.5 "Our Heavenly Guide
With us shall abide,
His comforts impart,
And set up His kingdom of love in our heart".

Obviously this love promoted Christian fellowship for pilgrims on the heavenly way:

720, v.5 "Love, like death, hath all destroyed,
Rendered all distinctions void...".

721, v.4 "Touched by the loadstone of Thy love
Let all our hearts agree,
And ever towards each other move,
And ever move toward Thee".

It has well been said by G. H. Findlay, "Heaven is the final goal, Perfect Love the royal road".

745, v.2 "To our high calling's glorious hope,
We hand in hand go on".

## REFERENCES

1. ed. John Telford, *The Letters of The Rev. John Wesley A.M.* Vol. 8 p 238.
2. J. S. Simon, John Wesley Vol. 1 pp 207-8.

Note: The Hymn numbers given in this and the previous paper are those in *The Methodist Hymnbook* (for use in Australasia and New Zealand) (1933). This Hymnbook (without the Australasia and New Zealand Supplement) is also used in England.



# 6

# *Susanna Wesley: Puritan, Parent, Pastor, Protagonist, Pattern*

***Frank Baker***

Methodism loves her saints, and the average Methodist is tempted not to inquire too closely into the fleshly reality behind the plaster image. Methodism canonized one woman many generations ago, chiefly because she was the mother of the Wesleys, and all except a few suspicious or rebellious scholars have been content to worship at her shrine ever since, without any arduous research to discover what lies behind the radiant blend of myth and mystique, to discover if her halo truly fits. Yet it is surely necessary to examine the myth, to analyze the mystique, to shade one's eyes from the dazzling nimbus of the woman who bore and fed and educated and prayed for and encouraged the founders of a major branch of our Christian faith. It is a difficult, and possibly a dangerous exercise, because we need to uncover many facts unknown to our canonizing forefathers. St. Susanna, however, like her son St. John, bears the minutest scrutiny well.

The main facts about her life are quickly summarized. She was born Susanna Annesley on January 20, 1669. On November 12, 1688, she married Samuel Wesley, a newly-ordained deacon of the Church of England, who was aged twenty-six to her nineteen. They had many children, almost half of whom died in infancy. She was widowed at 66, and herself died in 1742, aged 73.

What lies behind this humdrum outline, however? What were

her childhood dreams? How did she get along with her husband? What kind of a mother was she? What were her frustrations as a woman in a man's world, what her principles, her enthusiasms, her triumphs, her lasting influence? In order to answer such questions at least in part, and far too briefly for full satisfaction, we glance at the unfolding tapestry of her life as a Puritan, a parent, a pastor, a protagonist, and see how she became a pattern.

## PURITAN

Susanna Annesley was born into Puritanism. Her father, Dr Samuel Annesley (c.1620-99), was known as "the St. Paul of the Nonconformists". Even the sceptical Daniel Defoe, a member of his congregation, praised him for "the zeal, the candour, the sincerity of his mind, the largeness of his charity, the greatness of his soul, the sweetness of his temper, and the vastness of his designs to propagate the kingdom and interest of his Master". Susanna was the last of his twenty-five children, and the Annesley household constituted a family church, where were laid (to quote Susanna's words to her son John), "the foundations of solid piety... in sound principles and virtuous dispositions". Puritanism for her certainly meant "solid piety", but it did not imply either joylessness or tyranny. Indeed Susanna from her youth was what might now be called a liberated woman, because her father was a liberated man. In those days of arranged marriages he told John Dunton, suitor to his daughter Elizabeth, that a father's consent was not enough — he must win the girl's love. The same was surely true when Samual Wesley came a-courting young Susanna, whom he had apparently met at Elizabeth's wedding, when Susanna was a girl of twelve, and Samuel a beginning theological student training for the Dissenting ministry.

Even at twelve, however, Susanna Annesley exercised a thoughtful independence, and deliberately turned away from Dr Annesley's presbyterianism to embrace the episcopalian Church of England, drawing up a document carefully recounting her reasons for such a step. Her understanding father generously accepted her allegiance to the Church which had thrown him out of his living before her birth, and they remained warmly attached to each other to the end of his days, when he bequeathed to her his manuscripts.



She also inherited much of his own acumen, his gentle disposition, and his independent spirit, and was the only one of his family to make a major contribution to Christian history. Samuel Wesley was following a similar theological path, and shortly after her he also renounced the Nonconformists, to continue his education at Exeter College, Oxford. Much of the independence, as well as the piety, of the Puritans entered Methodism through John Wesley's parents, especially through his mother.

## PARENT

Like many couples before and since Samuel Wesley took his bride back to her parent's home, which was in Spitalfields, London. To finance their undertaking he accepted a naval chaplaincy (which paid twice as much as a shore-based curacy), and Susanna conceived her first child shortly before he left for his ship. The baby was born at the Annesleys' on February 10, 1690, and was christened Samuel, like Susanna's father and her husband. Shortly afterwards Samuel — the husband, was offered a curacy at Newington Butts in Surrey, and took a house there for his tiny family. In the summer of 1691 he at last secured a permanent church living, as rector of South Ormsby in Lincolnshire. In 1695 he was instituted to the living of Epworth, vacant through the consecration of Dr James Gardiner as Bishop of Lincoln.

The marriage of Susanna and Samuel Wesley was undoubtedly prolific, though it fell short of her own parent's total. Susanna was just past twenty-one when she gave birth to her first child, and either forty or forty-one when she had her last. She bore a minimum of seventeen to a maximum of nineteen children. Samuel admitted to uncertainty about the number of their offspring, and even his phrase about "eighteen or nineteen" is probably an error. Nine births can now be solidly documented, leading to the correction of several errors in family tradition, errors passed on by John Wesley himself, including the belief that he had been christened John Benjamin. The children were almost evenly divided in sex, with nine girls and eight boys for certain, and two possible children of unknown sex. The boys were subject to greater mortality than the girls, only three of the eight surviving, while seven of the nine girls reached maturity. The highest mortality was

among the two (probably three) sets of twins, of whom only one child survived. During twenty arduous years never a year passed without Susanna Wesley either beginning or ending a pregnancy. Her longest respite preceded the birth of John. And here a contemporary source enables us to clothe a legend with flesh.

The coming of William and Mary to the throne of England in 1688 caused much searching of conscience among loyal churchmen, who found it impossible to swear allegiance to a king who was not of their own divinely appointed royal line, for this would entail breaking their previous oaths to James II. Nine bishops and about 400 priests were thereupon deprived of their church livings, as Nonjurors. For Samuel Wesley this raised no problem, but Susanna's sympathies were with the Nonjurors. The death of the exiled James II, on Sept. 6, 1701, paved the way for marital problems. One evening early in 1702 Samuel Wesley called Susanna to his study after family prayers, asking why she had not said "Amen" to the prayer for King William. As she recounted the incident later, Susanna could not recollect the words of her reply, but continued: "Too, too well I remember what followed. He immediately kneeled down and imprecated the divine vengeance upon himself and all his posterity if ever he touched me more, or came into a bed with me, before I had begged God's pardon and his for not saying Amen to the prayer for the King". (Adam Clarke's version of the incident, from John Wesley's lips, recorded Samuel's words more epigrammatically: "If we have two kings we must have two beds"!) Only the almost complete burning down of the rectory on July 31, 1702, finally brought him to his senses. Again he began to sleep with his wife, and the first fruits of their reconciliation was John Wesley.

Susanna Wesley was an independent, thoughtful, and well-read woman. She had developed her own ideas of child-raising — largely from the influential philosopher, John Locke. One principle which she took from Locke, and which has been attacked most vehemently by modern educationists, was that the first essential in training children was "to conquer their will". Harassed mothers of today might forgive this if indeed it made her successful in teaching all her children, by the time that they were a year old, "to fear the rod, and to cry softly", so that "that most odious noise of the



crying of children was rarely heard in the house, but the family usually lived in as much quietness as if there had not been a child among them". Susanna would claim, however, that this was no expedient of desperation, but a deeply held spiritual policy: "This is the only foundation for a religious education. When this is thoroughly done, then a child is capable of being governed by the reason of its parent till it's own understanding comes to maturity...Let none persuade you it is cruelty to do this; it is cruelty not to do it". Her principle, however theoretically arguable, proved highly successful because it was practised with both patience and love.

Young Samuel was slow to speak, beginning with a complete sentence — "Here I am, mother" — just before he was five. This was the signal for her to teach him (and his sisters and brothers in their turn at the same age) the alphabet, and then reading and writing. Soon Mrs Wesley was conducting regular school sessions at the rectory, from nine to twelve and two to four, held in a room set apart for this purpose. She refused to teach any so-called practical skills until her children, especially the girls, could read well, claiming: "The putting children to learn sewing before they can read perfectly is the very reason why so few woman can read fit to be heard, and never to be well understood".

## PASTOR

Various events gradually combined to transform Susanna Wesley's maternal dedication from basic education into a self-conscious pastoral ministry to her family, a ministry which extended also to the parish in general. John Wesley clearly recognized this, testifying that his mother, "as well as her father and grandfather, her husband, and her three sons, had been in her measure and degree, a preacher of righteousness".

When she was about thirty (with apparently only five young children at home) Susanna had begun to follow her father's pattern of setting aside an hour morning and evening — and occasionally even a period at noon — for reading and private devotions, including self-examination and meditation, together with the compilation of a journal of her spiritual experience, which

furnished her with material for letters on moral and religious themes.

Menopause brought a deepening of her spirituality. Her child-bearing years were ending, and the main emphasis of her child-rearing functions were almost inevitably moving from concerns material and mental to concerns moral and spiritual. To all of these she rededicated herself in the pages of her journal: "It is perhaps, one of the most difficult things in the world to preserve a devout and serious temper of mind in the midst of much worldly business... But where a numerous family and a narrow fortune oblige to it, it is not to be declined, lest we break the order of providence...; we must work so much harder, we must be careful to redeem time from sleep, eating, dressing, unnecessary visits, and trifling conversation".

Her pastoral calling found new methods, and greater depth and strength, through reading a book, the *Account* of two Danish missionaries in India. Her husband was in London for the winter, attending the sessions of Convocation, the ecclesiastical parallel to the Houses of Parliament. She wrote to him on February 6, 1712, about this *Account:* "For several days I could think or speak of little else". Then came a kind of revelation. "At last it came into my mind, Though I am not a man, nor a minister of the gospel, and so cannot be engaged in such a worthy employment as they were, yet...I might do somewhat more than I do...I might pray more for *the people,* and speak with more warmth to those with whom I have an opportunity of conversing. However, I resolved to begin with my own children". This constituted a double pastoral call — to her family, and to her parish.

She went on to describe to her husband her new family regime. She set aside an hour or so every evening to discuss their "principle concerns" with the two sons and six daughters then at home, from four-year-old Charles to the two oldest girls (whom she met together on Sunday evenings) — though little Kezia, apparently the "fire-child", was still too young for schooling, let alone pastoral counselling. John Wesley experienced only two years of this guidance, but twenty years later — they remained a golden memory. Seeking her spiritual advice, he wrote to her from Oxford: "If you can spare me only that little part of Thursday evening which you formerly bestowed upon me in another manner, I doubt not but it would be as useful now for correcting my heart as it was then for forming my judgement".



Like the basic education which she was still furnishing for all her children, this deepened pastoral concern was important for her three boys, but much more so for her seven daughters, for whom few schools and no colleges or universities were available. From being a school-teacher Susanna Wesley became a kind of Mother Superior in helping her girls prepare to face an unsympathetic man's world endowed with good habits, firm principles, and a deep religious faith, and she maintained this by correspondence long after they left home. The handful of their letters which survive reveal the daughters' warm response to her care, though none of them made a mark in history as their mother did, nor did any reflect her character so fully as did John. Sadly enough, even her tender loving care, stiffened by Spartan discipline, was not able to forestall the problems to which their relatively sheltered life in an extremely isolated part of the country made them an easy prey: For Emily a thwarted love affair, a cold, late marriage, and a long widowhood; for Suky a brutish husband from whom she fled with her four children; for crippled Molly what her mother called an "unequal marriage", from which she was rescued by death in child-birth; for Hetty an illicit pregnancy followed by a shotgun marriage to a boor, and the death of all her children in infancy; for Nancy desertion by her husband for at least some years; for Kezzy a broken-hearted death because her promised husband threw her over for her older sister Patty — who in the end had the worst of the bargain; because that soft-spoken Oxford charmer turned out to be a practising believer in seduction and polygamy. All this was indeed very sad, but it is doubtful whether any of it may fairly be laid at their mother's door.

Even before the inspiration of the *Account* had brought a new dimension to her vocation, Susanna's pastoral vision began but did not end with her family. Always when away at Convocation Samuel Wesley had paid a succession of curates to perform his parish duties. In the rectory Susanna filled the spiritual vacuum

during his lengthy winter absences by gathering her total household, both children and two or three servants, to sing psalms and listen to printed sermons, apparently followed by discussion of the spiritual problems thus introduced. After this she would read the Order for Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer. During the winter of 1710-11 some neighbours began to join in the first part of these exercises though not in family prayers. Defensively she informed her husband a year later that this was no deliberate attempt to usurp his priestly prerogative, but arose quite accidentally: "Our lad told his parents; they first desired to be admitted. Then others who heard of it begged also. So our company increased to about thirty, and seldom exceeded forty last winter".

Her resolve during the winter of 1711-12 to "speak with more warmth" quickly bore fruit, and her Sunday evening group increased steadily, so that on February 3, she wrote to him, "I believe we had above 200, and yet many went away for want of room". Nor was this the end of the problem, for these parish guests wanted to stay on for her reading of the Order for Evening Prayer with her family. About this she was very uneasy, confessing that she was not sure that it was "proper for *me* to present the prayers of the people to God". The curate, Godfrey Inman, complained to the rector that his wife was holding an illegal conventicle. Wesley's reply to his wife's first belated letter telling him of the rectory meetings had expressed unease, but mildly. His next letter, however, prodded by Inman's complaints, was much sharper, and implied that she ought to drop the gatherings. Susanna replied: "If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your *positive command,* in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment for neglecting this opportunity of doing good when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ". Wisely the rector allowed the parsonage society to continue — with young Jackie Wesley a thoughtful member of it, making mental notes about an unusual but highly successful method of deepening the religious life of a community.



## PROTAGONIST

The mother of the Wesleys lived just long enough to see the revival well under way, with some of its emotional extremes softened, and its tightly knit organization in smooth running order, ready to bring religious reform to a reluctant Church. Immediately after his heart-warming experience John Wesley visited his mother in Salisbury, where she was staying with her daughter Martha and her unstable husband, the Rev. Westley Hall. Wesley read to his mother his spiritual autobiography, later incorporated in his *Journal.* Her own devout spirit resonated to his self-analysis. Only a year earlier she had written to a friend words which exactly fitted John's pre-Aldersgate approach to religion: "I verily think one reason why Christians are so often subject to despond is that they look more to themselves than to their Saviour; they would establish a righteousness of their own to rest on, without adverting enough to the sacrifice of Christ, by which alone we are justified before God". In August 1739 she became even more *en rapport* with her sons, for she also experienced, during Holy Communion, a personal assurance of God's forgiveness of her sins — the element in Methodist teaching about which earlier she had held strong reservations. She echoed the emphatic personal pronouns of John's Aldersgate words: "While my son Hall was pronouncing those words, in delivering the cup to me, 'The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee,' the words struck through my heart, and I knew, God for Christ's sake had forgiven *me* all *my* sins".

We remember that it was his Methodist mother's restraining hand — almost certainly in 1741 — which prevented John Wesley's hasty destruction of Methodism's greatest instrument in spreading the revival nation-wide, and world-wide — the lay preacher. "Take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are", she said, with which Wesley eventually agreed: "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good".

Susanna Wesley even entered the literary lists as a champion for Methodism, one of its earliest protagonists in print. When Whitefield, now converted to predestinarianism, attacked his former tutor's sermon on *Free Grace* in *A Letter to the Reverend*

*Mr John Wesley,* Wesley's mother sprang to her son's defence, with a reply entitled, *Some Remarks on a Letter from the Reverend Mr Whitefield to the Reverend Mr Wesley, in a letter from a Gentlewoman to her Friend.*

The "friend" to whom this pamphlet was addressed was almost certainly the Countess of Huntingdon, to whom Susanna wrote from the Foundery in London: "I do indeed rejoice in my sons, and am much pleased that they have in any measure been serviceable to your ladyship. And though in the eyes of the world they appear despicable, men of no estate or figure, and daily suffer contempt, reproach, and shame among men, yet to me they appear more honourable than they would do if the one were Archbishop of Canterbury and the other of York, for I esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures in England."

## PATTERN

Any Methodist knows that John Wesley was a remarkable man, and that his mother was a remarkable woman. Too often we have failed to make the connection — that he was remarkable in many ways that she was, and that this was largely because of her example and advice. For all of us the greatest Pattern of all is the Lord Jesus Christ, but more obviously human and contemporary patterns are also important. John Wesley patterned himself after his mother, just as she had patterned herself after her father. Later Methodists have patterned themselves after John Wesley. For women, especially, the pattern has sometimes been Susanna rather than John. Yet in effect they are one and the same: what one did more or less in private the other did more or less in the public eye.

One of the revelations in preparing and presenting the correspondence of John Wesley with his mother for Volume 25 of the Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works has been to realize more clearly the immense spiritual and intellectual stature of this woman who never went to college, and who was surrounded by large families throughout her life, from the cradle to the grave. Another has been to understand a little better the many-sided nature of her influence upon him, and the reasons why he constantly turned to her for advice, not simply because she was his mother, but because she was exceptionally well-read, and extremely wise in the ways



both of God and man. As a critic she successfully challenged the pertinence and logic of his thoughts about humility, set him right on an appropriate definition of faith, and even discussed philosophical points with him, warning: "Dear Jacky, suffer now a word of advice. However curious you may be in searching into the natures or distinguishing the properties of the passions or virtues, for your own private satisfaction, be very cautious of giving definitions in public assemblies, for it does not answer the true end of preaching, which is to mend men's lives, not to fill their heads with unprofitable speculations".

John Wesley was undoubtedly thoughtful by nature, but his eventual style of life was largely the result of his mother's example and training. She herself accomplished so much under the most trying circumstances because she had a daily timetable and a set of household rules as well as a disciplined mind. She was a Methodist long before he was; perhaps he was a Methodist *because* she was. Thus she was able to straighten out and crystallize much of his theological thought, and to assist him in his pastoral functions as Oxford tutor and Methodist leader. When his mother began the enlarged and enthused society meetings in the rectory, John Wesley was on the verge of being confirmed for his first communion, and there can be little doubt that the rise of the Methodist societies owed much, not only to the latent nonconformity in Wesley's genes, but to his mother's prophetic example in the rectory fore-kitchen.

Nor can there be any question that Wesley's mother affected his approach to women in general, giving them a higher status in his eyes, and higher functions in his societies, than otherwise they would have had. His admiration for her nurtured similar qualities — some of which might be termed feminine characteristics — in his own character: her neatness, her uncomplaining acceptance of hardship and suffering, her meekness and patience in teaching others, her serenity in the midst of a whirl of activities, the chaste precision of her speech and writing. Perhaps this very admiration, which almost amounted to reverence, also lessened Wesley's chances of deep marital happiness, for it was almost impossible to find another such woman as a help meet for himself. Nevertheless he was also readied by her example to incorporate women so widely

as workers and officers in the Methodist societies, not only as sick-visitors, as band-leaders and class-leaders, but even for a few women, specially gifted and called, as preachers.

As Susanna Wesley provided a pattern for her most famous son, so she has for generations of his spiritual sons, and more especially for his spiritual daughters, through the centuries, and across the oceans. As mothers, as Christian leaders, as social workers, as thinkers, as writers, as historians, as preachers, Methodist women in general may still find in her both challenge and inspiration, not simply as the most available female counterpart for joint veneration with the male founder of Methodism, not simply as the mother of the Wesleys, but in many respects as the devotional, theological, and ecclesiastical mother of Methodism.



# 7

# *Rural Methodism in New South Wales 1836-1902*

*Eric G. Clancy*

Dr J. David Bollen has written of the early period of Methodism in New South Wales, the period 1815-1836, as *A Time of Small Things*[1], and indeed it was.

I begin immediately after that period, and carry the story on through the Victorian Age to 1902, the year union of the various branches of Methodism was consummated in New South Wales. Ignoring completely Sydney, Newcastle and Broken Hill (the latter two places being mining communities), I intend to concentrate on the Wesleyan Methodist Church in rural New South Wales. During this period there was a large influx of migrants; the discovery of gold and other minerals brought large numbers of miners to a number of areas; and the passing of several Acts relating to settlement on the land created permanent communities in many parts of the State previously unsettled. The purpose of this article is to show how Methodism met the challenges which these pioneering situations presented.

But first, a brief survey of

## THE BACKGROUND

### 1. Settlement

The first white settlers came to New South Wales in January 1788. Concerning their arrival and occupation of this colony Hans Mol comments: