H I S T O R I C A L B U L L E T I N
(formerly News Bulletin)
World Methodist Historical Society
(an affiliate of World Methodist Council)

Volume 11 First Quarter, 1982

FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate our editor, Dr. Frederick A. Norwood, for the excellent NEWS BULLETIN that he edited as his first publication in this office. We hope that you, the readers, appreciated its content as much. The editor however must depend upon officers, readers, and other interested persons who will send him material which can be used. He cannot fabricate articles and thus serve the purpose of this publication. If each member of the Society were to be responsible for one article per year, he would have a selection available for excellent use.

To fulfill the purpose of the HISTORICAL BULLETIN the editor wants articles that share events past, present or future within world Methodism. If any Methodist body, national an/or autonomous, has a historical event, anniversary, publication, etc., please share this with the editor.

May the year, 1982, become a great one within all branches of world Methodism. And to you, our readers, we wish that God's blessings may be showered on you and His grace be sufficient for all your needs.

- - - - - -

It is with deep regret that we report the passing of Mrs. Florence Norwood, wife of our editor. Death came in early January, 1982 following a series of heart attacks. The membership of the Wor ld Methodist Historical Society joins with friends of the Norwood family in extending our deepest sympathy in this period of sorrow. We join in prayer that God's mercy and grace will sustain the bereaved family at this translation.

HISTORICAL BULLETIN
World Methodist Historical Society
Box 460
Mont Alto, Pa., 17237, USA
--- Published Quarterly ---

John H. Ness, Executive Secretary
Subscriptions, Dues, General Correspondence
Frederick A. Norwood, Editor
1200 Wildwood Lane, Glenview, Illinois,60025 USA
Editorial Correspondence and News

EDITOR'S RUMINATIONS ;

Unlike so many ecclesiastical publications, including Methodist ones, the Historical Bulletin, continuing the News Bulletin, of the World Methodist Historical Society is not an organ for promotion of church programs. It is not actively interested in support of the plans of organized agencies of denominations, nor of campaigns for spiritual revival, institutional growth, financial increment, or moral discipline. All of these are Good Things and deserve discriminating support. But the Historical Bulletin is not the place for their promotion.

Of course you will interject that this publication is nevertheless a promotional organ, recommending regional conferences and a quinquennial global meeting. TRUE. But the Society, of all agencies of the church, is the least programmatic, has the fewest "projects." It certainly is the least bureaucratic.

This condition does bring on some practical problems. And one cannot claim pristine innocence as before the Fall. Even we worry about circulation and postal rates. But it is comforting to reflect that most of our concern is with history. We do not develop an "agenda." Our agenda exists as a result of the flow of Methodist history over which we have very little control. Editors and readers of the Historical Bulletin do not so much make history as meditate upon it.

Perhaps as a result this publication may be a little more free from human calculation and a little more obedient to the will of God in the world. It is our hope that, in the reporting of events, the observance of anniversaries, and the interpretation of trends, this serial may in its own way become a voice. however small and wavering, for the greater glory of God.

PUBLISHING TO THE GLORY OF GOD
John Wesley As Seen in His Writings

Dr. Frank Baker

What turns people into authors? Why write for publication. As the perpetrator of a dozen or so volumes, and several hundreds of chapters and articles these are questions I have asked about myself. Today I want to ask them about John Wesley. There are two simple answers, both correct, yet both insufficient. One is that some people suffer from an uncontrollable urge to write, which Wesley diagnosed (and unsuccessfully tried to cure) in some Methodists of his day, writing in 1761:"I hope we have effectually provided against that evil disease, the scribendi cacoethes, in our preachers, as we have agreed that none shall publish anything for the time to come till he has first submitted it to the judgment of his brethren met in Conference."[1] The Latin phrase came from the poet Juvenal, and was translated by Dryden, "The curse of writing is an endless itch." The other oversimplified reason for authorship is that we write and publish from mixed motives--which might also be said of almost everything else we do. There is no question that Wesley himself did suffer mildly from the itch to write. But what were the other ingredients in his individual mixture of motives? Were some more important than others, for part of the time, or for all of the time? Was one motive supreme at one period, later to be supplanted by another? Was there a common drive co-ordinating these varied motives? This paper offers a brief explanation of Wesley's reasons for writing, together with a summary of his methods, as offering clues to his personality and influence.

The pursuit of personal holiness was the impetus which launched Wesley on his first major literary enterprise--his diary. The background was his preparation for seeking Holy Orders, and this maintaining of a spiritual ledger of his use of time was prompted by a recommendation in Jeremy Taylor's The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living. It was designed to keep him on his toes in his quest for piety, and was faithfully pursued for nearly sixty-six years, from 1725 until a week of his death in 1791.

His diary records how the search for personal holiness gradually extended into a passion for corporate holiness, in which one of the most important instruments became the printed word. After over eight years of exhausting pilgrimages along varying paths of piety, on July 19, 1733, Wesley saw his way clearly, and entered a weighty resolution in the front of his current diary:

> In the Name of God! Amen.
> I do resolve to devote the remainder of my life to God my Creator, God my Redeemer, and God my Sanctifier,
> I. [First, personal holiness] By immediate application to him, either (1) By Prayer...; (2) by Reading ...; (3) By Meditation....
> II. [Second, corporate holiness] By application to my fellow-servants, either (1) By Speaking...; (2) By Writing....

These were simply the main headings of his resolution, each of which was farther subdivided. His resolution to serve his fellows by 'writing' included the writing of letters, but dealt mainly with the writing of books, which he subdivided three times: 'By Composing', 'By Abridging', and 'By Translating'. Here he set forth the pattern that shaped his whole publishing career. For this was no mere passing dream, but a wholehearted dedication to a divine task, a dedication renewed three months later, in words which differed only slightly, just after he had begun a new diary.[2]

The literary fruits speedily appeared, the first that very year--A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week, for which he wrote the preface on November 26, 1733. Although he assembled this anthology from many sources, it was basically an original work, including much of his own composing. Early the following year he turned from 'composing' to 'abridging': preparing two works from a devout Christian Platonist, John Norris of Bemerton, reducing one to a tenth of its original size, the other to less than half--omitting their philosophical thought, and thus increasing their devotional impact. The following year (1735) he turned to 'translating'. One of the major works which had influenced his own spirituality was the Imitatio Christi, which may well have been composed, as Wesley himself believed, by Thomas à Kempis. He much preferred the Latin text edited by Sebastian Castellio to George Stanhope's English paraphrase, and therefore resolved to prepare a new English translation, based in part on one published in 1677 by Dr. John Worthington, whose title, The Christian's Pattern, he retained, but following the Latin original much more faithfully.

Thus at the age of thirty this young Anglican priest began to publish in the same three categories that he was to follow for 58 years, during which time he sent forth some 450 works, ranging from the fifty volumes of The Christian Library down to a handful of four page tracts and many circular letters, as well as all sizes of publications in between. Altogether these passed through about two thousand editions during his lifetime, or something between one and a half to two billion individual copies, of which many complete editions of two or three thousand have been thumbed to death, or are represented by single survivors in out-of-the-way places.[3]

His literary evangelism was immeasurably enriched from May 24, 1738, by an assurance thatGod in Christ had taken his sins, even his, and had saved him from the law of sin and death. This moment-by-moment certainty, even without a guarantee of its permanence, enabled him to proclaim

with confidence and with enthusiasm that all men might be saved from sin, that they might know that they were saved, and that they might be saved to the uttermost. The holiness--the spiritual wholeness--which he had long sought by self-discipline, he had now simply received as a free gift, as he extended his hands in faith, with the cry, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" This was holiness accepted rather than holiness achieved. To publish this rounded gospel, together with its necessary expression in love to God and love to man, became his life's work, the unifying motive behind all his books and pamphlets.

Not that this basic theme was always obvious in the immediate subject of each publication. Far from it. But every one of a hundred topics was tamed to his over-riding purpose. It may safely be claimed that never was the making of money a major motive in Wesley's publishing, and seldom a secondary one; that the display of learning counted little with him, though he used it occasionally as part of the whole armour of God in defending his mission against learned adversaries; that he never wrote for the sake of writing, but always to achieve a specific clearly visualized purpose, to which he believed himself called by God; that whatever kind of writing he undertook, it was intended to glorify his Creator. In the course of this publishing pilgrimage he touched on more subjects than it is possible to name. To venture on a few: his publications were administrative, anecdotal, apologetic, devotional, ecclesiastical, economic, ecumenical, electrical, evangelical, expository, fictional, grammatical, homiletical, humanitarian, lexicographical, linguistic, liturigical, medical, pastoral, poetical, political, philosophical, rhetorical, sacramental, sartorial, and satirical; he wrote biography and autobiography, dealt with physics and physic, astronomy and gastronomy; expounded on themes biological, mythological, necrological, pedagogical, sociological--and even theological. His publications may have been devoted to one or more of a hundred immediate goals--supplying rules for Methodist conduct, advice about drinking tea, teaching Latin or logic or elocution, giving directions for congregational singing, helping his people to appreciate poetry or to understand the economic situation, awakening sym pathy for slaves or condemned criminals--yet whatever the specific aim, the ultimate intention was that God's creatures should give glory to their Creator. This was the unifying purpose in all. Wesley was directly a preacher in his sermons; he was directly a pastor in his letters; but indirectly he was both preacher and pastor in all his publications.

In is easiest to see this in his original writings, those which he composed--we turn now to the continuing threefold division of his publishing categories. The Sermons, for example, clearly incorporated Wesley's theological and evangelical manifesto. But they were supported by treatises such as his Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, with its many thought-provoking discussions and passages of genuine eloquence, while he sought to defend the unorthodox methods of Methodism as a valid response to desperate need. At another level they were matched by his brief tracts for the people, inculcating religious principles in a worldly society, such as Swear not at all, Remember the Sabbath Day, and (if you want to try one for the directness and cogency of its challenge to those who will soon be interviewing customs officers), A Word to a Smuggler. Even the 144 pages of his Complete English Dictionary attempted to aid his followers to glorify God in their reading, by briefly explaining "those hard words which are found in the best English writers"--'A Methodist' he defined as "one that lives according to the method laid down in the Bible." He himself was rarely long-winded, or showy, or tedious, but usually crisp and to the point, his pen dripping scriptural phrases, homely proverbs,[4] memorable epigrams. Thus he sought to enrich his converts' spiritual lives, to furnish uplifting hymns for warm-hearted worship, to forward their education, to maintain their health, to stabilize their daily work and their family life--in a word to enable them to live more fully to the glory of God, and in their turn to become evangelists and sick visitors and class-leaders and good stewards of money and time and talent.

We misunderstand Wesley's conception of his call to publishing, however, if we think of him as concentrating on original works, on 'composing'. In 1745 he began advertising for sale his collected works bound together in fifteen volumes, of which seven parts were original to eight edited or translated.[5] In 1756 he prepared a similar set, of twenty-seven volumes, of which just under half the material was edited rather than original.[6] During the years 1771-74 he reprinted (or printed for the first time) thirty-two volumes under the title, The Works of the Rev. John Wesley. Yet only ten of these volumes were wholly his own, and once again just under half (fifteen to seventeen) were edited or translated rather than original. In his preface he apologized for not including other prose works, which would in fact have brought the total number of volumes to ninety-nine--but apparently apologized, not because these omitted works were edited rather than composed, but only because they were not sufficiently brief to make inclusion practical. With these works added, only one-fifth of Wesley's Works would have been original, the remainder edited!

To his life's end abridging the works of others remained the major weapon in Wesley's literary armoury, comprising much more than half of all his published volumes. This passion for abridging was based upon the somewhat naive assumption that most authors were like himself, and did not write in order to gain money, but to do good. Therefore they would surely welcome any extensions of their usefulness by being republished, even in the form of extracts made by someone else, with no financial reward for the original writer. Many of Wesley's authors--some might term them 'victims'-- were already dead, and raised no complaint.

And some of the living confirmed Wesley's idealistic theory, like Dr. Samuel Johnson, grateful for having the argument of his Taxation no Tyranny taken up in Wesley's Calm Address to our American Colonies, or the American Quaker, Anthony Benezet, happy that Wesley was following his own regular practice by borrowing portions of two of his books on the slave traffic to incorporate in his Thoughts upon Slavery. Not everyone was so generous, however, and eventually the new-fangled copyright law caught up with Wesley so that he had to pay a fine to Robert Dodsley for including some of the copyrighted work of Edward Young in his Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems.[7]

Yet striking out passages in an already published work, and supplying literary transitions, was a far less wearing and time-consuming process, and potentially more helpful, than the composition of original works by an extremely busy man. Buried in cumbersome, expensive, and long-winded tomes Wesley found gems of devotional and theological challenge which he longed to share with his preachers and people, and therefore published them in his favorite inexpensive duodecimos, whereby a sheet of paper, instead of being folded into two as for a folio, was folded into twelve. What economy! Especially when he was occasionally able to utilize a couple of blank leaves to slip in another edition of one of his four-page tracts or catalogues. Thus he gave his people, even the poorest, who might be just embarked on the adventure of reading, affordable access to the wisdom of the ages. And in this he demonstrated the special gift for compressing lengthy works, a gift which he had developed for his own use at Oxford. In the dozens of separately published abridgements, in the Christian Library, in the Arminian Magazine, he did for the eighteenth century what DeWitt Wallace was to do for the twentieth, in his Reader's Digest--norwas Wesley second in skill to any of Wallace's editors.

Even less known to scholars than his abridgements, and nothing like so numerous are examples of Wesley's work as a translator. They are important, however. In introducing the new edition of Wesley's Sermons, Dr. Albert Outler notes that he has seen no reference in Castellio literature to Wesley's excellent translation of that author's Latin dialogues on predestination, election, free will, and faith.[8] Wesley did not parade his linguistic skills, but he did dedicate them to God in bridging the gap between town and gown. He wishes, for instance, to introduce to the religious public the wonders of science, and already had a good title for his projected compendium, adapted from John Ray--A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation. He did not find Ray's work itself, however, quite suitable for the project, nor indeed any other work in English. But eventually he discovered the Latin writings of a pious German Lutheran, John Francis Buddaeus, who had died in 1729. From Buddaeus[9] Wesley prepared an outline for his own two volumes, translating selections into English as he went along, and among these inserting excerpts from other writers, as well as his own meditations and comments. Wesley's much more famous Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament was prepared in similar manner. The nucleus here was the Latin Gnomon Novi Testamenti of another pious Lutheran, John Albert Bengel, which Wesley translated, interweaving selections from Philip Doddridge's Family Expositor and other works; he also incorporated new translations from Bengel's critical text of the Greek New Testament, and for the Revelation translated parts of Bengel's German commentary on that work.

Thus Wesley dedicated printer's ink, as he had dedicated his voice and his pen, to the glory of God. The story is much too long and complex to tell here in detail. Like the writer to the Hebrews, I must summarize:

> The time would fail me to tell of his many craftsmen and fellow-workers, who aided John Wesley in serving as priest and prophet and pastor through publishing; who through faith subdued the kingdom of the printer's devil, wrought righteousness with books, obtained subscriptions, stopped the mouths of critics, quenched the violence of sin, escaped the edge of bankruptcy, out of weak societies made strong ones, waxed valiant in the fight against illiteracy and ignorant prejudice, turned to flight the armies of the atheists. And he, together with his comrades, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. Wherefore seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race that is set before us, as publishers of good tidings of great joy to all peoples, looking as did Wesley to Jesus, the author of our faith, and its perfect publisher.

---

[1] Letter to Samuel Furly, September 8, 1761.

[2] See Frank Baker, John Wesley and the Church of England, London, Epworth Press, 1970, p. 36; cf. Wesley's Oxford Diary, IV, p. (iv), Oct. 12, 1733 (Methodist Archives, The John Rylands University Library, Manchester, England).

[3] No copies of the first two editions of his Collection of Forms of Prayer seem to have survived, and only one of his second publication, Norris' Treatise on Christian Prudence--in Sion College, London. A similar fate has overtaken dozens of ephemera, such as his publication of the 1768 letter inviting him to stabilize Methodism in America, of which the single known copy was discovered in Regents Park College, Oxford.

[4] Wesley seems to be the first known usage of the proverb, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." See Sermons 88, 'On Dress', and 98, 'On Visiting the Sick', II.6, and The Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs.

[5] See the catalogue bound up behind Wesley's Farther Appeal, Pt. I, 3rd edn., Bristol, Farley, 1746.

[6] See his personal library (formerly in Richmond College, Surrey), in the Methodist Archives, Manchester, the contentsof the missing volumes being deduced from a 1755 catalogue of 'Books published by Mr. John and Charles Wesley', in the collection of Dr. Oliver Beckerlegge.

[7] See Frank Baker (ed.) The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 26: Letters II, 1740-1755, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1981, p. 119 and illus.

[8] Typescript of Vol. I, pp. 50-51. The translation was published serially in Wesley's Arminian Magazine for 1781 and 1782.

[9] Elementa Philosophiae Theoretica, seu Institutionum Philosophicae Eclecticae, Tomus Secundus, 2nd edn., Halle, printed at the Orphan House, 1707, pp. (xvi), 392, (xl).

METHODIST CHURCH ARCHIVES, SRI LANKA

By John Vickers, Vice Pres.

BACKGROUND

Methodist Churches throughout the world are increasingly aware of the need to preserve their past records as a necessary basis for any future research into the history of the church. In this they are being encouraged and helped by the World Methodist Historical Society as an agent of the World Methodist Council.

At its quinquennial meeting in Dublin in 1976, the World Methodist Historical Society initiated a project under the guidance of a professional archivist, Dr. Homer L. Calkin of Washington, D.C., with the aim of compiling a detailed register of Methodist manuscript collections throughout the world. Considerable progress has been made, chiefly in America, Britain, and Australasia; and we are now concentrating on other parts of the world.

British Methodism has for some years had a connexional Archives Centre in which the central records of the Church and other historical material are preserved. Since 1969, particular attention has been given to the records of circuits and local churches, partly through the appointment of District and Circuit Archivists. These local records have been tracked down, identified, listed and deposited for safe keeping in county record offices, where they are professionally cared for. In addition, the records of the Overseas Division (formerly the Methodist Missionary Society) are deposited at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London.

RECORDS OF SRI LANKA METHODISM

About two years ago a letter waa sent by the Overseas Division to all autonomous Methodist Churches originating from the work of the M.M.S. The following paragraphs are written in the light of paragraph four of that letter and of my own enquiries during my visit to Sri Lanka.

Records held at Headquarters, Kollupitiya: In the course of a brief survey, I found the items listed in Appendix A-1. These are inadequately housed and in a rapidly deteriorating condition. They have not been sorted and listed, but there are almost certainly a number of gaps, some of which (e.g. in the Synod minutes) may be filled from the duplicates held in London.

Printed material: Though not strictly archival, there are periodicals and other printed material which are valuable as a supplement to the manuscripts. In some cases, there may be no other surviving copies. Many volumes are in a very poor condition. Appendix A-2 lists what I identified during a very cursory check.

Circuit and local church records: These include such items as minute books and accounts from the circuit quarterly meeting, the leaders meeting, trustees meeting, and other committees; also copies of annual schedules, membership lists, and baptismal and marriage registers. Presumably many are in Sinhalese or Tamil. Most, I assume, are still held in circuits though - as in England - many may already have been lost or destroyed. In some cases (e.g. Jaffna), I understand that past records have already been sent to Headquarters for preservation, but Headquarters staff do not seem to be aware of this. Further classification of the present situation is obviously desirable.

Other published material: Since printed items, including those mentioned above, are of historical value, which may be difficult to locate and are vulnerable in tropical conditions, I am compiling a bibliography of Sri Lanka Methodism and will make copies available in due course. This will be based on what I have found at Headquarters, at S.O.A.S. and elsewhere, but for obvious reasons will be confined to publications in English. Inevitably, it will be far from exhaustive, and I would appreciate a note of any additional items. Further, there must be publications in Sinhalese and Tamil [e.g. booklets issued in connection with the centenary of the church (1977) and the 150th anniversary of the school (1978)at Kurana], which should be listed by someone.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Records already at Headquarters, including any sent there from circuits, should be sorted and listed. Any gaps in the surviving records (and also in the periodicals) should be noted, in the hope that they can be filled.

Each circuit should make a list of all records it still holds. A copy of each list should be filed at Headquarters. In some cases circuits may wish to take this opportunity to deposit the records themselves at Headquarters, if provision can be made for adequate storage.

Much deterioration is due to climatic conditions. Two possible steps may help to solve this problem of deterioration and safeguard many records for the future: