

The Friends of Wesleys' Chapel  
Annual Lecture No. 3

John Wesley  
London Publisher  
1733 - 1791

A lecture to the  
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On July 19, 1733, John Wesley wrote one of many series of resolutions into his 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.' He went on to specify the manner in which he planned to set about this, including the dedication of his pen to God in various forms of publication: composing, editing, and translating. Thus, when just turned thirty, he laid out his programme as a religious publisher over the ensuing fifty-eight years, a programme continued by his spiritual heirs to the present day. His first publication appeared later that very year, and apparently in London, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week*. Of this, as of several later editions, no copy now survives.

From then until his death in March 1791 Wesley and his brother Charles issued some 450 literary works, which passed through about 2,000 editions. These averaged 2,000 copies each, so that during their lifetimes they published over four million items, not to speak of millions more administrative documents: class-tickets, class-lists, band-tickets, band-lists, advertisements, book-catalogues, publishing proposals, preaching-plans, itineraries, circular letters, only scattered examples of which have survived—a grand total of at least ten million printed items.

Although Wesley published in more cities than most writers, especially in Belfast, Bristol, Cork, Dublin, Edinburgh, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, and York, the vast majority of his publications first appeared, and appeared most frequently, in London, where from 1739 he spent half of every year, the winter months, when English country roads were almost impassable. That was his time par excellence for writing both letters and books.

During his lengthy publishing career he became familiar with some of the best of London's printing-houses, frequented by the literary giants of his age; but he also employed some of the most obscure printers, whose names are little known, even unknown, to the historians of typography. Indeed his search for the ultimate London printing-house seems to have been almost coterminous with his search for the ultimate Publishing House, one devoted completely to the glory of God rather than to the literary prestige or financial profit of man.

Wesley's literary apprenticeship began while he served as researcher, translator, scribe, and publishing agent for his father, who was obsessed with finishing his Latin *Dissertationes in Librum Jobi* before death laid cold hands upon him, and whose immediate reaction to John's announcement that he would not follow his father as rector of Epworth was: 'All Job is at stake.' As early as 1730 Wesley was securing printed *Proposals* for the work from William Bowyer the elder, and when his older brother moved from Westminster School to Tiverton in 1734, John took over the whole responsibility for seeing *Job* through Bowyer's London press. One of John's last chores before leaving for Georgia in October 1735 was

to have a large-paper copy of *Job* specially bound for Queen Caroline, to whom it was dedicated, and to present it to her personally. Either his memory or Adam Clarke's recounting of the latter incident was somewhat faulty, however, in stating that after she said, 'It is very prettily bound' she returned to 'romping with her maids of honour', for she was in fact a woman of fifty-one who had been seriously ill, and was only two years from death. (1)

Thus did Wesley become deeply involved in the world of books through six years or more of filial labour in hair-splitting scholarship which was almost certainly not really congenial to him, either then or later, as we may see from a subsequent remark: '[*Job*] certainly contains immense learning; but of a kind which I do not admire.' (2) Yet he had thus fulfilled 'a sacred legacy' (3), and gained immense publishing experience which would prepare him for his much more important task of proclaiming a living gospel to a waiting world.

William Bowyer the elder, who printed *Job*, died in 1737, and it was under his son, William Bowyer (1669-1777), the most scholarly printer of the eighteenth century, that the house achieved its greatest fame; it was upon his records that John Nichols based his multi-volume *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* and its successor, *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*. Bowyer was a non-juror, and thus a kindred spirit to Wesley; it was to him that Wesley committed the second volume entitled *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns* which he had prepared in Georgia, for which Bowyer billed him, of all days, on May 24, 1738. Although Wesley had already begun to use other London printers, he continued to return intermittently to Bowyer, especially for the first editions of somewhat tricky works, notably *A Short French Grammar* (1750) and *A Short Hebrew Grammar* (1751), *Predestination Calmly Considered* (1752), *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* (1755), and *A Short Greek Grammar* (1765), as well as several reprints of these works.

Even during his Oxford days Wesley had developed friendly relations with another prominent in London booksellers, a much older man, Charles Rivington (1688-1742). Rivington had become the leading theological publisher in London, and he may well have seen through the press Wesley's second and third publications. *A Treatise on Christian Prudence* and *Reflections upon the Conduct of Human Life*, both edited from the works of John Norris, and appearing in 1734. Certainly he published Wesley's first major

1. Adam Clarke, *Wesley Family*, 2 vols., London, Tegg, 1844, 1.330. That Princess Caroline received the volume seems impossible in view of Wesley's own testimony in a letter to his brother Samuel, Oct. 15, 1735: 'I presented *Job* to the Queen on Sunday.'

2. Letter of Jan. 11, 1785, in *Armenian Magazine*, 1785, 151.

3. *Letters* (Oxford Edition), 25: 459

work, a translation—adapted from Dr. John Worthington's anonymous 1677 edition—of *The Christian's Pattern*, by Thomas à Kempis, which appeared in both an octavo and a pocket edition in 1735. In that same year Rivington also published for Wesley another work of his father's, the formidable *Advice to a Young Clergyman*, as well as John's farewell tribute to England, his first published sermon, preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, when he saw for himself a possible martyr's death in Georgia, and took as his text Job 3:17, 'There the wicked cease from suffering, and the weary be at rest'—a sermon which he completely neglected after his return two years later.

Wesley's usual home in London had been with the Revd. John Hutton (1676-1750), another non-juror, and neighbour to Wesley's older brother Samuel in Dean's Yard, Westminster—the Hutton's home was one of the boarding-houses for Westminster School. Their son James (1715-95) had been converted under a farewell sermon by John just before he left for Georgia. In the meantime James Hutton had finished his apprenticeship to William Innys, the bookseller, and had set up his own home and business under the sign of 'The Bible and Sun' near Temple Bar, which became both hostel and meeting-place for the Oxford Methodists. For a year or two after Wesley's return from Georgia, Hutton served as his publishing agent—Bowyer had billed to him rather than to Wesley the printing of the 1738 *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*.

Under the influence of Peter Böhler, Wesley chose the landmark theme for his next official sermon at St. Mary's, Oxford, as *Salvation by Faith*, to which he later gave pride of place in his collected *Sermons*. This also Wesley handed to Hutton for publication, and it was possibly through Hutton's initiative that this item was the first of many to be printed by William Strahan (1715-85), a Scotsman who flourished both as Dr. Johnson's printer and as a major publisher. Strahan's voluminous manuscripts, preserved in the British Museum, have proved and will prove of enormous value in throwing new light on English literary history, and not least on Wesley's hundreds of publications. (4)

4. The evidence for the identity of the printer is one of Strahan's ornaments on the title-page, for Strahan's ledgers are not available for his work before 1739; Strahan's name actually appears on all subsequent extant London editions until the 8th, printed in 1747. Other Wesley items printed by Strahan in 1739 do not appear in his first folio ledger—an edition of *The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith, and Good Works*, originally printed in Oxford in 1738, the first edition of Wesley's *Extract of the Life of . . . Thomas Halyburton*, and the first edition of the *Hymns and Sacred Poems*. The first to appear in Strahan's ledger was the second edition of the *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, and also the third, all three in 1739, fifteen hundred of the second and a thousand of the third, both on a page devoted to Mr Charles Wesley, D[ebto]r' apparently as his brother's agent. The following item on that page, dated May 24, 1740, was for two thousand copies of a twelve-page hymn, *The Life of Faith*, probably undertaken as Charles's own responsibility as was the printing of a thousand further copies a week later.

Both John and Charles Wesley became friendly with William Strahan, and John's diary survives long enough to record dining with him in 1740 and 1741. Between 1738 and 1750 Strahan seems to have printed for the Wesleys a hundred or so new works and reprints. Strahan's ledgers show that he printed several ephemeral works for the Wesleys—mainly tiny hymn-pamphlets—about which those ledgers afford our only evidence. In this category one very interesting item appears in November 1747: 'For printing 1,000 Word to a Drunkard to paste up, with paper, 15.0'; there are similar entries running into December, for a thousand each of *Remember the Sabbath Day, Swear not at all*, and *A Word to a Street Walker*. Thus it is from Strahan that we learn of an unusual dimension in Wesley's publishing evangelism—the printing of religious posters for public display.

It is also from Strahan's ledgers that we derive the clinching evidence about Wesley's publication of his mother's defence of Methodism, *Some Remarks on a letter from the Reverend Mr. Whitefield to the Reverend Mr. Wesley*, for in 1742 Strahan records his charge 'for the printing and paper of Mrs. W.'s pamphlet'. It was Strahan who printed the translation into French of *The Character of a Methodist* (1743), with an additional charge 'for recomposing . . . in a more literal translation'. Strahan printed the first editions of Wesley's *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1745), *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London* (1747) and of *Primitive Physick* in the same year. Strahan printed the first editions of the first two volumes of Wesley's *Sermons* (1746, 1748). It was he who printed *The Desideratum: or Electricity made Plain and Useful* (1760)—and at first forgot to charge Wesley for the paper. Perhaps even more of a revelation is the fact that in 1784, a year before Strahan's death, Wesley turned to him again to print the two thousand copies of *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*, as also the annexed *Collection of Psalms and Hymns*. On this occasion his named agent was 'The Revd. Dr. Thomas Coke (at Mr. Wesley's)'. Although in the nation as a whole Felix Farley and William Pine of Bristol probably did more printing for Wesley, there is no doubt that his most prolific London printer was William Strahan.

By the end of 1750 Wesley had been publishing for eighteen years. In that time he and his brother Charles had published over 170 separate works, which had already passed through 500 editions. (5) Wesley was already embarked on a fifty-volume enterprise. It may not unreasonably be claimed that he was an author, editor, and translator with more than a modest share of publishing experience. He already knew at first hand the trials of working with printers, of managing finances, of distributing printed works, of the much-neglected copyright laws, of which he ran afoul in 1744 with his three-volume

*Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems*. (6) He had already engaged in various practices well known in that age, but not so familiar now: publishing in weekly numbers, publishing by subscription, issuing printed *Proposals* for this method of securing payment in advance. And he had already arrived at a philosophy of publication: he was determined to use all the sophistication known to his age, but to avoid the showy and expensive, which merely raised the price and glorified the author—his nearest approach to that was his illustrated octavo edition of *The Christian's Pattern* in 1735. In general Wesley favoured the duodecimo format, squeezing twenty-four pages out of a sheet of paper, and arranging to publish separable four-page tracts on otherwise unused portions at the end. Even during those eighteen years he had reduced the substance of dozens of large works to their basic essence—usually improving them in the process—thus making them both intelligible and readily available to thousands of people who otherwise would never have laid hands upon them. This in turn assured reprints, if the tiny books really supplied a spiritual need, and so furnished capital for new ventures. Wesley offered to his own age what *Everyman's Library* and the *Reader's Digest* offered to later ages.

Wesley, however, was becoming somewhat restless about his publishing activities, and the need to hang onto the coattails of printers, even good printers such as William Strahan—with whom, however, he had no quarrel. Methodism had now become a national body, with its acknowledged headquarters in London. This was clearly seen in 1749. In July that year Wesley published (in Dublin) companion handbooks of Methodist doctrines and discipline, and initiated a debate at the English Conference on 'a general union of our societies throughout England'. He called the preachers' attention to a 1748 proposal: 'Might not all the societies through England be considered as one body . . .? Might not that in London be accounted the mother church?' If indeed the administrative headquarters of Methodism was to be in London, should not this be the centre also for her publishing activities? And like Methodism in general, should not these be more fully under the control of John Wesley? This as well as the pursuit of greater economy was probably the reason for Wesley's increasing desire for a Methodist press.

He had long toyed with the idea of buying his own printing equipment. On August 14, 1748, he wrote to Ebenezer Blackwell: "I have had some thoughts on printing, on a finer paper and with a larger letter, not only all that we have published already, but it may be all that is most valuable in the English tongue, in threescore or fourscore volumes, in order to provide a complete library for those that fear God . . . Brother Downes would give himself up to the work. So that whenever I can procure a printing-press, types, and some quantity of paper, I can begin immediately." Part of that

6. See *Letters* (Oxford Edition), 26: 119. Eventually Wesley himself did copyright a handful of his own works.

dream began realisation the following year, in the fifty volumes of *A Christian Library* (1749-55), and the thirty-two volumes of his *Works* (1771-74). Both were printed in Bristol, however, the first by Felix Farley and the second by William Pine.

Wesley still dreamed of his London Publishing House, complete with printing-press, but continued to rely on commercial printers. Already in London he had been experimenting with new printers, but the restless workings of his mind may be seen once more in a letter to Blackwell, dated May 23, 1752: 'After our printer's bills are paid, the money remaining, received by the sale of books, does not amount to an hundred pounds a year.' It seemed, he wrote, that the only way of lessening the expense was by undertaking his own printing, and the possibility of using the Foundery undoubtedly presented itself, but was for the time being rejected. (7)

Just as Wesley could hardly hope to supervise his huge evangelistic network alone, so preaching by publishing needed capable administrators, especially business managers and editors. Sales and advertising were for the most part taken care of by the Methodists themselves. Several of the larger preaching-houses, such as the Foundery in London, also maintained a bookshop on the premises, organised by the local steward; (8) Methodist tradespeople often sold Wesley's publications; the preachers were colporteurs, the Assistants in charge of the circuits from 1749 were distribution-managers corresponding regularly with their London headquarters. Because of these proven sources of promotion, after the first few years Wesley advertised very little in newspapers and magazines, perhaps especially in London.

Wesley might still continue to draw up an occasional advertisement on an odd scrap of paper, as he had done on the address sheet

7. It has appeared to many—including myself long years ago—that Wesley did indeed secure a printing-press in the 1750's, and began to print pamphlets at the Foundery. Richard Green helped build that legend by reproducing the titles of many works with the imprint: 'London, printed and sold at the Foundery.' This supposed evidence, however, is subtly, though innocently, deceptive—a trick of punctuation. When the original pamphlets are scrutinized, they usually reveal no comma after 'London', which usually stands by itself on the upper line, followed on the second line (without punctuation) by 'Printed'; there is a semicolon, however, after 'printed'. Thus the two facts claimed are simply that the work was printed in London—often, it seems, by Henry Cock, anonymously—and sold at the Foundery. There is, however, one instance, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Potter* (1758), where the imprint does indeed run: 'London: Printed and Sold at the Foundery, Upper-Moorfields'. The preponderance of the evidence to the contrary, however, implies that this variant punctuation was a printer's error, and that Wesley did not in fact acquire a working press at the Foundery until 1780.

8. In seeking support for the sales of his *Hymns and Sacred Poems* in 1749 Charles Wesley wrote to his brother about 'settling correspondencies with the stewards, alias booksellers, etc.' (Wesley, *Letters*, Oxford Edition, 26: 355).

of a letter sent to him at the Foundery on July 1, 1740 (9), but such chores might better be taken over by lay helpers, to whom he applied the titles of 'book-keeper' or 'book steward'. Thomas Meyrick may have been his first (10), followed in 1742 by Thomas Butts (later a music publisher). Butts was soon joined by William Briggs, who took over as Steward while Butts—with his copperplate handwriting—continued as Wesley's clerk and secretary. (11) In 1753 the two of them circulated an important printed letter pointing out that Wesley had given them power of attorney to manage the whole of his printing, publishing, and bookselling enterprise—an important decision noted in Wesley's *Journal* for February 8 that year, as undertaken 'so that I might have no care upon me, in London at least, but that of the souls committed to my charge'. The Foundery stewards even took over some of the public defence of Methodism, as in a letter of September 8, 1748, to the *Daily Advertiser* protesting against anti-Methodist statements by Bishop Lavington (12). It is difficult to identify all the stewards who followed, even in London, but they included Robert Windsor (1775), Samuel Franks (1759-73), who hanged himself shortly after book-keeping discrepancies were discovered, his successor John Atlay (1773-88), who seems to have been guilty of more culpable mismanagement, and George Whitfield (1789-1804), who served honestly but unimaginatively.

The editorial assistance upon which Wesley was forced to rely was sometimes good, but nearly always less than excellent. He himself was a neat and careful writer, but with his accumulating responsibilities of many kinds it is a miracle that he managed to keep churning out any publications at all, let alone an average of seven or eight new ones and twenty-five reprints a year. It must be confessed that Wesley himself was hardly a model scholar in his literary habits, rarely checking the text of the multitudinous authors from all centuries whom he quoted so freely. Frequently he did not even name them, so that seven skilfully interwoven passages from *Gulliver's Travels* appeared in his *Doctrine of Original Sin* (1758) as from 'a late eminent hand', and were not attributed to Swift until two hundred years later. (13) In revising a work for a new edition Wesley simply picked up the copy nearest to hand, nor when faced with problems in proof-reading does he ever seem to have consulted earlier editions, but tried to make what sense he could of an obvious error by an immediate alteration on the spur of the moment—often quite inadequately.

9. The text was carefully displayed (fresh lines are noted here by slash marks): Just Published/An Extract of &c/Sold at the Foundery, near/Upper Moorfields, at James H[utton]/near Temple-Bar, at C[harles] R[ivington] in St. P[aul's] Ch[urch] Y[ard], & at Jo[h]n O[swald's] in the/Poultry./Today also are published & sold &/A Sec[on]d Volume of/Hymns & Sacred Poems/By JW, AM[and]/CW, AM, Stud[ent of Chris] Church/Sold at ye places above m[entioned].

10. *Letters* 26: 82.

11. *Ibid.*, 26: 453.

12. *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, XXXIV. 40.

13. *London Quarterly Review*, CLXXIX. 290-300 (Oct. 1954).



Such an author clearly needed good copy-editors and proof-readers, but seldom found them. Many of his preaching colleagues served in one or both capacities, notably his brother Charles, but also Charles Perronet, Thomas Coke, Peard Dickinson, and James Creighton. Thomas Olivers was doubtless the most notorious, and the most dangerous, because his term as Corrector of the Press (1776-89) included the care of the major literary vehicle accepting Methodist articles, *The Arminian Magazine*. When Joseph Benson complained about Olivers's carelessness—probably in his oversight of Benson's reply to Madan's treatise on polygamy in the magazine—Wesley replied: 'I will mend or end T. Olivers as a Corrector.' (14) Wesley was fighting what seemed a losing battle, however. He had appended a sheet of errata to Vol. I of the magazine in 1778, remarking: 'I think I may promise, there shall be no such in . . . the next year.' He was wrong, of course, and in 1786 he issued seven pages of the 'most material' of the errata for Vols. I-VIII, which had been occasioned, he said, 'by my absence from the press'. To Peard Dickinson (whom Wesley had appointed, as a New Chapel clergyman, to supervise Olivers) he wrote in May 1787: 'May not you give [Olivers] an hint that your *Hints* were incorrectly printed?' At length Wesley broke out in fury, on August 15, 1789: 'I cannot, dare not, will not suffer Thomas Olivers to murder the *Arminian Magazine* any longer. The errata are intolerable and innumerable. They shall be so no more.' At long last Olivers was dismissed, and the Rev. James Creighton appointed in his place. Wesley even gave Olivers a pension of £30 in addition to his own private income, possibly out of superabundant mercy, or perhaps in gratitude that Olivers was no longer able to trot out his familiar excuse, 'They were wrote so, I could hardly read them.' (15)

At we have seen, Wesley had employed some of the best known London printers of the century. Their work was supplemented by some of the least known, of whom the first to be introduced must be Henry Cock, who is completely unknown to H. R. Plomer's magisterial *Dictionary of Printers and Booksellers* (1932). Nor is there any mention of him in Nichols's *Literary Anecdotes*. And yet this unknown London printer was responsible for at least thirty-nine of Wesley's editions, in nine instances the first editions, of which several comprised quite large volumes. Cock printed works also for other evangelical writers, including John Edwards, John Green, Martin Madan, Edward Perronet, and George Whitefield. (16) When in 1751 he published Wesley's *Second Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd*, Cock gave his address as Bloomsbury Market; he also printed for Wesley his first letter to

14. Letter to Benson, May 19, 1783.

15. Wesley's letter to Dickinson, May 6, 1787.

16. Plomer does repeat however a note from C. H. Timperley's *Dictionary of Printers and Printing* (1842), referring to a fire in Paternoster Row on January 8, 1770, which consumed 'the house of Mr. Cocks printer', as well as the adjoining premises of Johnson and Payne. This may well have been our man, although his address in 1751 was different.

Bishop Lavington the previous year, and his *Second Letter to the Lord Bishop of Exeter* in the following year. (17) Wesley had already employed Cock for four reprints in 1749, and more were to follow every year until they peaked at eleven in 1755. After that Cock's work for Wesley seems to have become less frequent, the last apparently being the second edition of Mary Gilbert's *Journal* in 1768. It seems almost certain, however, that many editions printed anonymously for Wesley during these years were in fact produced by Cock, including a large batch in 1756. Among the first editions which he prepared for Wesley were two of the extracts from Wesley's *Journal*, the concluding Part IV of Wesley's biblical selections, *Lessons for Children*, the important sermon, *Catholick Spirit*, and the biography of Thomas Walsh.

The next London printer used by Wesley was even more important than Cock, but only a little better known—Robert Hawes. (18) The imprints for the 120 or more items which Hawes printed for Wesley show that he moved in 1775 from one address in Spitalfields (34 Lamb Street) to another (40 Dorset Street), where (at least in 1777) he used the sign of 'The Angel and Acorn'. Hawes seems to have first begun printing for Wesley in 1773, and prepared at least twenty of the first editions of his works, including *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1773), *A Calm Address to our American Colonies* (1775), *A Concise History of England* (in four volumes, 1776), *Some Account of the Late Work of God in North America* (1778), *Popery Calmly Considered* (1779), several issues of Wesley's *Journal* and of the *Minutes* of his Conferences, and a back-up edition of parts of the first two volumes of his *Arminian Magazine* (1778-79). Wesley's break with Hawes in 1780 seems to have been caused almost solely by the long delayed setting up of Methodism's first printing establishment.

Before that happened, however, a new London printer came to Wesley's attention, Joseph Fry (1728-87), who did business under the name of 'J. Fry and Co. in Queen Street'—close to Wesley's Foundry headquarters. Joseph Fry was an energetic and very unusual man, who in 1764 had left a good medical practice in Bristol to begin a type-foundry in partnership with Wesley's Bristol printer, William

17. See Gerald R. Cragg, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion*, Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works, 11: 359, 377, 431. The reason for the switch from Strahan for these important controversial works must remain conjectural, but Strahan did work for the publishers John and Paul Knapton, who published Bishop Lavington's volumes, and it may well be that Strahan prudently declined these items, and possibly even suggested an alternative.

18. It seems likely that he was related to the honest printer of devotional works mentioned in John Dunton's *Life and Errors* (1705), and the L. Hawes who shared the publication of Johnson's *Dictionary* (1755) Plomer's *Dictionary* lists Robert Hawes at three London addresses, though the last one, 'The Foundry in Moorfields', is an error arising from Plomer's insufficient knowledge of Wesley, for Hawes (like Henry Cock before him) sometimes used an imprint containing the phrase, 'and Sold at the Foundry in Moorfields,—namely at Wesley's London headquarters bearing that name.

Pine, and a skilled foundry-man, Isaac Moore, who apparently brought with him from Birmingham detailed experience in cutting Baskerville's type, which Fry wished to imitate. Fry himself, during a short but busy life, also founded or had large interests in the Bristol Porcelain Works, a chocolate factory, a soap factory, and a chemical works in Battersea. (19) Clearly no single city or enterprise could long hold his restless interest. Both he and Moore moved to London about 1776, and from type-founding Fry extended himself to printing. In 1777, indeed, he printed the bulk of Wesley's publications, including the first editions of five out of nine new works, three of the others being printed by Robert Hawes. (William Pine prepared the other, the *Minutes* of the Bristol Conference that year.) One of the works printed by Joseph Fry was of major significance, the third edition of Wesley's *A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation*, enlarged to five volumes, and beautifully printed. It was from Fry's press that in 1778 Wesley launched his monthly periodical, *The Arminian Magazine*, and Fry also published the second volume, for 1779. This was the last venture with Joseph Fry, though several years later Wesley (via Thomas Coke) turned once more to him in a new partnership at a new address: the 1786 edition of the *Sunday Service* was printed by 'Frys and Couchman, Worship Street, Upper Moorfields'.

We have already seen that Wesley no longer employed Robert Hawes as his printer after 1780, and that in 1779 he had almost severed his relations with Joseph Fry. This does not seem to have been the result of any sudden disillusionment with either of the two printers, but solely because his old dream of a Methodist printing-press in London was at last possible of fulfilment. From 1777, indeed, when he began to use Fry's press, the *Minutes* of the annual conferences were the only Methodist publications not printed in London; now he could set up his own press there.

The long delay was surely because Wesley felt that the multifarious activities carried on at the Foundry were too important for him to sacrifice even for a printing shop, and that to rent a separate building was just as uneconomical as paying commercial printers. Once the New Chapel in City Road was completed, however, he felt able to begin his own printing. The publishing and bookselling activities of the Foundry were transferred to the New Chapel shortly after its opening in November 1778. The slowly decaying Foundry continued for some time to house a few Methodist tenants, but soon space was available for a printing-press. To superintend the work Wesley appointed John Paramore (c. 1737-87), a Methodist class-leader from Sheffield. Paramore's first signal of the new order was a reprint of *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity*, with the imprint: 'London: Printed by John Paramore, at the Foundry. M.DCC.LXXIX.' In 1780 Paramore reprinted three other items,

19. See Talbot Baines Reed and A. F. Johnson, *History of the Old English Letter Foundries*, 1952, 298-303.

and printed the first edition of five new works, including Vol. III of the *Arminian Magazine* and the epochal *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*.

John Paramore continued to print for Wesley at the Foundery, while the books and magazines were sold at the New Chapel, until his death in September 1787. (20) The printing was then taken over by his younger relative, George Paramore (c.1754-1812), though his name did not appear on Methodist publications for two years. The Foundery was soon forsaken, and from 1788 the imprint was altered to 'Printed and Sold at the New Chapel'. The new printer's position was secured by Wesley's last will, dated February 20, 1789. By its terms the London Assistant was 'still to superintend the printing-press, and to employ Hannah Paramore and George Paramore as heretofore'. (21) A codicil of Feb. 25 reveals the importance which Wesley attached to this aspect of his ministry: 'I give my types, printing-presses (22), and everything pertaining thereto, to Mr. Thomas Rankin and Mr. George Whitfield, in trust, for the use of the Conference.' This was also signalized in the 1789 *Minutes* by a new London appointment: 'George Whitfield, Book Steward'.

At last the dream of a self-sufficient Methodist Publishing House had been fully realised! The period 1779-80, while John Paramore was printing his first major batch of works on Wesley's own printing-press, was so memorable that Wesley found it difficult not to reminisce about the beginnings of his great enterprise. In his sermon, 'The Danger of Riches', written at this time, he wrote: 'Two and forty years ago, having a desire to furnish poor people with cheaper, shorter, and plainer books than any I had seen, I wrote many small tracts, generally a penny apiece; and afterwards several larger. Some of these had such a sale as I never thought of; and by this means I unawares became rich. But I never desired or endeavoured after it [riches]. And now that it is come upon me unawares, I lay up no treasures upon earth, [though] I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence.' (23)

He continued personally to maintain high quality at every level as well as he was able, though now at less expense. There had long been murmuring among Methodist authors—and would-be authors—about having to submit their manuscripts to Wesley before being published, though in the case of articles for the *Arminian Magazine*

20. See G. J. Stevenson, *City Road Chapel, London, 1872*, 492.

21. The relative position of the names may imply that Hannah was the mother or widow of George.

22. Note the plural. The 1791 inventory lists two presses.

23. This sermon was not dated, but was published in the *Arminian Magazine* for January and February 1781. Wesley was clearly thinking back, not to his first publications, beginning in 1733, but to 1738, and had in mind especially *Salvation by Faith* and *The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith, and Good Works*, extracted from the *Homilies*.

the control was not so strict. In 1781, however, the Conference reinforced this close supervision, especially when Wesley pointed out that it was also to the financial advantage of Methodism that all the proceeds from the sale of books by Methodist authors should accrue to Methodism. Question 25 and its answer read:

'Have . . . our Preachers printed anything without my consent and correction?

A. Several of them have (not all to the honour of the Methodists), both in verse and prose. This has (1), brought a great reproach; (2), much hindered the spreading of more profitable books. Therefore we all agreed, (3), that no preacher print or reprint anything for the time to come till it is corrected by Mr. W[esley]. And (4), that the profits thereof shall go into the common stock.'

A few months later, however, Thomas Coke was able to persuade Wesley to share with him the control of the Methodist Tract Society launched in 1782.

The Methodists now had a resource for evangelism, education, and 'spreading scriptural holiness throughout the land', of which they might well be proud. Wesley took great care to keep his important books in print and his Book-Room well stocked. Some items he had dropped from his list during fifty years, but in 1789, when he issued his first classified broadsheet catalogue, it listed 268 books divided among six headings, Poetical, Practical, Historical, Controversial, Political, and Miscellaneous. 'Practical', of course, meant 'Practical Divinity', Wesley's preferred term for the kind of theology which he emphasized, the theology of salvation and holy living. This class included most of his sermons, works edited from many devotional authors, and his series of inexpensive tracts.

By the first clause in his will John Wesley bequeathed his complete stock of books, less a few personal bequests, 'in trust for the General Fund of the Methodist Conference in carrying on the work of God by Itinerant Preachers'. In the inventory taken by George Whitfield upon Wesley's death this stock numbered over a quarter of a million copies of 289 active titles of Wesley publications. (24) The 'country stock' represented seventy-five centres in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and the Channel Isles. It also represented Nova Scotia, the West Indies, and New York. (25)

24. This manuscript inventory was purchased at auction by Duke University, Durham, North Carolina, and a xerox copy deposited with the Methodist Archives, Manchester. Omitted from the detailed listings are dated annual *Minutes* and many other ephemera, though bundled together at the end are about a thousand undifferentiated copies of *Minutes* and hymns. The inventory also contains fourteen thousand items by Methodist authors, not published but kept on sale by Wesley. The London stock was valued at £3930.12.5, and that in the country (after deducting £450 for damaged books) £745.19.0, a total of £4676 11.5.

25. It should be confessed that the New York listing added no valuation, but a terse, 'bad debt'.

The Methodist Publishing House in London, indeed, served the whole of Wesley's world parish. He had left for them a rich heritage of edifying literature, and a challenging example, which was speedily followed by the new Methodist Episcopal Church in the New World. He had deliberately set out long before on a ministry of publication, and had now fulfilled that ministry with such success that he might well have delivered a dying discourse to parallel his rhapsody when he laid the foundation stone of the New Chapel in 1777, which celebrated the impact of the spoken Methodist word in England. Now through the printed word he was being enabled to publish the gospel of salvation and peace among all the nations, and was to do so for generations yet unborn. Well might he have taken that same favourite text for such an occasion: 'What hath God wrought!'

FRANK BAKER.