

## AN AGENDA FOR WESLEY STUDIES

Frank Baker<sup>1</sup>

In June 1943 the Wesley Historical Society celebrated its fiftieth birthday with a special Jubilee Number. A neophyte in his early thirties, Frank Baker, was invited to match A. W. Harrison's leading article, "Fifty Years of Studies in Methodist History" with one entitled "The Next Fifty Years."<sup>2</sup> In this I urged that Father Maximin Piette's plea for "a truly critical edition" of the works of John Wesley should be our major aim. I stressed that this "would supply an undoubted need for those "who wish to consult an authoritative text of Wesley's own words, and who also desire to know about such things as the sources of his quotations, how his thought developed, and how his conclusions compare with modern thought and knowledge." I also issued a warning that, even with the Wesley hymns excluded this, was "a formidable undertaking, and one not likely to attract a publisher, as the work would be arduous and the volumes not likely to sell extensively or speedily." After nearly forty years I realize how prophetic was that last sentence, in all its elements!

These last twenty years have seen the planning for the fulfilment of that dream, not by the Wesley Historical Society itself, but mainly through the vision and generosity of a dedicated group of leaders of American theological institutions, egged on by Professor Albert Outler. According to the calendar vision of 1943 it would be most appropriate if this happy conclusion were reached in 1993—when I at least, if allowed to survive and continue in this work, would still not have reached John Wesley's terminal age. Although the Wesley text for two-thirds of the volumes is prepared however, only three are at present available to the public, which we expect will become five by 1983, and hope will become seven by 1984. The main problem now is not scholarship but money. This edition remains the most important event in the history of Wesley Studies, and therefore one whose status and contribution to our agenda for Wesley Studies merits careful analysis.

Basic among the concerns prompting the preparation of this edition were the following:

- (a) To secure a definitive text.
- (b) To further its understanding by the provision of appropriate introductions, footnotes, and other apparatus.
- (c) To present it, not in an antiquarian facsimile style, but in volumes intended to be handled and read for their value as religious literature as well as reference material.
- (d) Both to support and stimulate research in Wesley studies.

Our major contribution is seen as the definitive text, produced in easily readable form.

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Baker presented this paper at the Seventh Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, July 26–August 6, 1982, at Keble College, Oxford. It remained unpublished at his death, and is found in Box 44 of The Frank Baker Papers, in the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Duke University, Durham, NC.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Baker, "The Next Fifty Years [of The Wesley Historical Society]," *WHS* 24 (1943): 35–39.

Yet the edition has never been thought of as a simple reprint of an improved text, no more than it has been thought of as a text supplemented by a running devotional commentary, but as a text supported by the fruits of research, leading to continued research, and furnishing at least some of the tools necessary for further research. The basic tools of research, indeed, have constantly been at the forefront of our mind—bibliographies, indexes, references to sources, information about primary editions and variant readings—even though we have tried not to let the apparatus become too obtrusive, and to confine it to a display of Wesley’s life and thought and meaning rather than to his editors’ learning.

Throughout these last twenty years there has been a constant emphasis, not confined to my office, first as bibliographer, then as textual editor, then also as editor-in-chief, upon creating minor research tools which might further the production of this 34-volume major research tool. It is probably well that a larger audience should know what goes into the preparation of the Wesley text for one of the volumes of this new edition. This has been entrusted to me for the whole corpus, while for individual volumes or groupings of volumes the unit editor supplies introduction and notes, along with appendices. Whenever I complete the proof-reading of another volume of Wesley text—nineteen so far—and send it off to the unit editor, with it I send much footnote documentation for his consideration, containing some or all of the following:

- (a) All the scriptural citations or allusions which a helper and I have been able to identify, including those in the Apocrypha and the Book of Common Prayer.
- (b) Citations for all the non-scriptural quotations identified.
- (c) Bibliographical peculiarities or problems in the known contemporary edition of each Wesley work reproduced in that volume.
- (d) Page references and essential quotations from contemporary editions of the works to which Wesley was replying, so that the course of a controversy may be followed.
- (e) Cross-references to other volumes in this edition, of which the basic contents of each volume is now planned, though the internal order may not be known.
- (f) Linguistic notes, identifying Wesley’s peculiar, unique, or remarkable usages, based on an examination both of the complete *Oxford English Dictionary* and of Dr. George Lawton’s private concordance to Wesley’s writings.
- (g) Where a unit editor desires them—and in any case it is his option whether and how to incorporate these suggestions in his own footnotes—occasional statements about problems of Methodist history where I may have some special competence or some unusual information.

Yes, it is truly a huge honorary task in which I am engaged, and I sometimes feel weary with my seventeen-hour days, in spite of breaks for recreation. Perhaps I should state why and how I am able to keep going on this task. I count myself as peculiarly fortunate—and therefore charged with a peculiar responsibility—in being lent to American scholarship for twenty years by the British Methodist Church, and thus until 1980 in effect being paid for pursuing my hobby. I am also fortunate in being stationed in Duke University, a wonderful research institution with 3.2 million volumes and 5 million manuscripts, who have so supported my requests that we now have the most complete collection of early Wesley publications assembled anywhere in the world, including both originals, photocopies, and microfilms, as well as the largest collection of 18th century anti-Methodist material apart from that in the Methodist Archives, Manchester. In addition I have a large Wesley research library assembled over 58 years of book-collecting—I

still use in my Wesley research a one-volume edition of the *Spectator*, purchased in Derby market for sixpence when I was a boy of fourteen, and now keyed to a *Spectator* concordance. In addition to this specialist library assembled on 600 feet of deep shelving, I use the cullings of fifty years of research into early British Methodism housed in 50 large filing cabinet drawers, backed up by 50 document boxes and 84 steel card-file drawers with a capacity of 180 feet—happily with much empty space awaiting indexes to come.<sup>3</sup>

As I prepare footnotes on any topic related to Wesley there is always a basic group of sources readily available, even if my personal files contain no specific material thereon. To these I have turned as a preliminary routine over many years: the indexes to Jackson's edition of Wesley's *Works*, to Curnock's edition of the *Journal*, to Telford's edition of the *Letters*—to which I have now added a rough index to 700 Wesley letters not appearing in Telford, though not so far to the remaining thousand or so of his in-letters. I then turn to John Vickers' General Index to the *Proceedings* of the Wesley Historical Society, Vols. I–XXX—wouldn't it be a good idea to publish one for each subsequent ten volumes, to be included as an issue of the *Proceedings*? (We are already into Vol. XLIII.) Next I check the very full indexes to Jackson's *Lives of Early Methodist Preachers* (which I personally prefer to Telford's *Wesley's Veterans* because of these indexes, as well as because of the slightly larger contents). I turn to the biographical and topographical index to the *Arminian* and *Methodist Magazines*, 1778–1839. Then I study the index to Charles Wesley's *Journal* furnished by Thomas Jackson, aided by F. M. Jackson's index to Thomas Jackson's 2-volume *Life* of Charles Wesley. With these I have incorporated in one of my card-files a rough index to the 600 Charles Wesley letters which I have managed to transcribe and (usually) to date. In 1976 we secured an additional source in the index to Wesley's *Appeals* in Vol. 11 of the new edition.

As the final Wesley text for each volume is completed, with its accumulation of miscellaneous though provisional footnotes, it is desirable—though not always immediately practicable—to prepare a temporary index to it, especially to reduce any unnecessary duplications, and to furnish cross-references for other volumes, but also to make accessible the fruits of completed research on biographical and bibliographical references, on themes and events, wherever these supplement information are already available in published sources. And so I also turn to the provisional indexes to Vols. I and II of the *Letters* in the new edition. The study of new themes itself, however, frequently points the need for preparing further research tools to support that research. Neither activity seems normally to be pursued in a vacuum, but hand in hand with the other. Almost every week of my editorial chores has urged the need for some other research tool, large or small, in order to secure or arrange information about some aspect of Wesley's life and thought, which will in turn feed into one of the volumes of his *Works* and directly or indirectly bring some new refinement to our knowledge of his ministry. The same is true of my editorial colleagues. Clearly it is possible only to touch briefly on some of the major projects in which we have engaged, but it is important that these should be known, even in advance of their full fruition in print. I begin with the early volumes in the edition's numbering, and hasten to the last, in the first presentation of such a summary.

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<sup>3</sup>[Editorial note, this vast body of materials is now housed at the Rubenstein Library at Duke, in The Frank Baker Papers, the Frank Baker Collection of Wesleyana, etc.]

Volumes 1–4 comprise the *Sermons*, edited by Professor Albert C. Outler, now in the final stages of preparation by or for the press. And one of the major problems which they present—in a basically theological unit—is literary, the tracing of quotations from the Bible, the classics, the Christian Fathers, both Latin and Greek, post-Reformation theologians and biblical scholars, both of the Continent and of Great Britain—and even America—consorting with an amazing assemblage of historians, essayists, philosophers, scientists, travellers, medical writers, economists, of his own and the previous century. It is scarcely surprising that a dozen or two sources of Wesley’s quotations have so far escaped identification, especially in view of the fact that his quotations, whatever their language, were seldom checked with the originals, and frequently appear in forms slightly different from those originals, and also from his own duplicated or triplicated use of them. But Dr. Outler was well served by his team of two lady searchers and their correspondents among his many friends—among whom several are present in this gathering. He was assisted also by the heritage left in the WHS *Proceedings*.

Nor, as Dr. Outler points out in his introduction, is this search for his sources merely “an exercise in historical curiosity.”

It displays Wesley in new dimensions; it makes it possible to read between his lines; it helps make sense of his eclectic aims and method; it illuminates his theological options at a level beyond his bare texts. The richer one’s knowledge of this half-hidden mosaic, the more nearly full-orbed one’s view of Wesley’s mind and heart might be.<sup>4</sup>

This he illustrates in the surprising quality and character of Wesley’s quotations from the Latin classics—surprising, that is, for a man avowedly dedicated to “plain truth for plain people.”<sup>5</sup>

These are major sources for his notions about human nature, human volition, and the human passions. Out of this heritage had come his predilection for form over raw feelings, his concept of conscience as a universal moral sense. ... Besides, these ancient authors were shrewd critics of human folly; thus Wesley found in them discerning witnesses to the flaws in contemporary proposals about “natural” theology and ethics.<sup>6</sup>

Thus one tool prepared for and fully utilized in this unit has a distinctly theological orientation. Another does not. This is an extension of John Wesley’s own Sermon Registers. Curnock published one such document covering the years 1747–61 converting Wesley’s arrangement from topographical to chronological. Another register exists for 1787–8, again arranged by places. Dr. Outler’s former secretary, Mrs. Wanda Smith, added to these all the references to preaching in Wesley’s *Journal*, Letters, and *Works*, and re-arranged them in three

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<sup>4</sup>The *Oxford Edition of John Wesley’s Works*, Vol. 1 (ed. Albert C. Outler), p. 118 of final typescript [now *Works*, 1:69].

<sup>5</sup>JW, *Sermons*, 1746, Preface, §3, Outler typescript, p. 175 [*Works*, 1:104].

<sup>6</sup>Outler typescript, p. 126 [*Works*, 1:73].

series: by place, by date, and by text. This tool proved of great value in Dr. Outler's annotations for the four volumes, but it seems obvious that here is a tool which is potentially of much wider usefulness, and it seems likely that it may find publication under the joint editorship of Mrs. Smith and Dr. Richard Heitzenrater.<sup>7</sup>

Wesley's biblical reverence and acumen are well known, as is the fact that many of his publications were based upon the writings of others. After a thorough collation of the three large volumes of his *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*, it became quite clear that only a tiny fraction did not derive either from Matthew Henry's *Commentary* or Matthew Poole's *Annotations*, and thus might be original. My graduate student Dr. Michael Casto studied these passages as an important part of his dissertation on "Exegetical Method in John Wesley's *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*" (1977).

With the *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* however, Volumes 5–6 of the new edition, edited by Rev. John Lawson, the position is quite different. Wesley notes several different works which he utilized, and a study of the six editions through which the work passed during his lifetime demonstrates revisions at each stage, including a major enlargement in the three-volume edition of 1760–62. Other documents fill out our knowledge: William Bowyer's records of printing the work, a set of marked-up proof pages of the first edition, a number of preparatory manuscripts available in different parts of the world. Clearly this could be a greatly enriched unit. This still did not address the measure of its originality, however, whatever its importance ecclesiastically or (as John Deschner well demonstrated) theologically.<sup>8</sup> Professor John Lawson, then of Emory University, now of Exeter, undertook the collation of Wesley's resultant text with the four major sources whom Wesley named, Bengel, Doddridge, Guyse, and Heylyn. This collation was for both the New Testament text and for the notes thereon. Even though the resulting likenesses must often be regarded as parallels rather than proven borrowings, yet this process gives a demonstration of the extent and nature of Wesley's indebtedness to these four men, one of whom he had available only in Latin or German. For some time it remained in doubt whether this material should be published in an appendix, or in a separate volume, but eventually it was decided to incorporate it into the text itself by means of symbols, leaving a rather more spotty page than we had planned, yet with the parallels readily available to the scholar without presenting too obtrusive a hindrance to the general reader.

For the *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists*, Vol. 7, edited by Drs. Franz Hildebrandt, Oliver Beckerlegge, and James Dale, among the tools furnished one is clearly and directly theological, others not. The volume opens with a study by Dr. Hildebrandt on the hymns as "A Little Body of Experimental and Practical Divinity"<sup>9</sup>—Wesley's own phrase from the 1779 Preface. Another very valuable one was supplied by Dr. Beckerlegge, with a little assistance from me: a complete index to the tunes to which Wesley set the hymns in the 1786 edition, listed together with the history of those tunes, where they are to be found, and the hymns

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<sup>7</sup>[Editorial note, this register is now available: <https://wesley-works.org/sermon-register/>]

<sup>8</sup>John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: an interpretation* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960), see esp. pp. 7–8, 10–12.

<sup>9</sup>[*Works*, 7:1–22.]

to which each is set.<sup>10</sup>

Made available for Vol. 8, *Forms of Prayer and Worship*, edited by Reverends Raymond George and Gordon Wakefield, is a study of Wesley's early devotional life, with a transcription of his Oxford prayer manual and an attempted identification of his sources, by Dr. Steve Harper of Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky.

In Vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies*, edited by the Reverend Rupert Davies, will be the reconstruction of two Irish anti-Methodist pamphlets answered by Wesley, whose originals seem completely to have disappeared, as well as some samples of early Methodist society and circuit records.

Vol. 10, the *Methodist Conference*, edited by the Reverend Henry D. Rack of Manchester University, created its own needs for tools. Of these by far the most important, applying as it does to many other volumes, is a complete index of all the itinerant preachers employed by Wesley, for however brief a period, with biographical data and a listing of the circuits where they were stationed; this will also attempt to standardize the spelling of their names. A companion tool is an index to the circuits, showing their changing names and composition during Wesley's lifetime, and the preachers stationed therein. With these are being incorporated similar details of Methodist preachers in the New World prior to Wesley's death. If it proves impracticable to include this material in Vol. 10 it will probably be published as a separate entity.

In Vol. 12, *Theological Treatises*, edited by Professor Robert E. Cushman, an experiment was made of preparing the text of almost all published material which was potentially appropriate, including much which was merely edited by John Wesley. This demonstrated that much of this edited work complemented and extended and enriched Wesley's more original work—with one strange exception. I included *The Nature and Design of Christianity*, adapted by Wesley from the opening chapters of William Law's *Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection*. Here Dr. Cushman was startled by the difference in style and content between this and the remainder of the material in the volume, claiming that with its reflection of Law's mystical piety it jarred with everything else—and yet Wesley continued to publish this to his dying day, so that it went through 35 editions during his lifetime: like it or not, it seems that Wesley never shook off the influence of Law. (This, however, with other interesting material, must be omitted to avoid making an excessively large volume.)

In Vol. 14, *Pastoral Writings*, edited by Professor A. Lamar Cooper, is demonstrated how much original Wesley is embodied in some of his borrowed publications.

In the case of Wesley's *Journal*, Volumes 18–24, edited by Professors W. Reginald Ward of Durham University and Richard Heitzenrater of Dallas, we remain true to our initial principle, that apart from most of the *Letters* our design is to reproduce what Wesley himself published, treating manuscript remains as supplementary to the basic text. (Curnock incorporated manuscripts sometimes to the exclusion of the original printed *Journal*.) Here, of course, our major tools are Wesley's diaries, from 1725 to 1741, and from 1782 to 1791, furnished by Dr. Heitzenrater. With the diaries will be incorporated in appendices for the relevant volumes whatever manuscript journals are available, which in the case of the Georgia period will mean

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<sup>10</sup>[*Works*, 7:770–87.]

the conflation into one continuous narrative of the five more or less complete but differing versions of the Georgia journals preserved in Wesley's hand. This supplementary material, of which there are examples scattered throughout Wesley's lifetime, will usually be presented, like most secondary material in all the volumes, with very few explanatory footnotes.

I am responsible for the editing of Volumes 25–31, Wesley's *Letters*, of which the first two volumes are now published, covering 1721–55. Here the statistical research, even when crystallized in a series of simple statements about the physical process of letter-writing as practised by Wesley, some reviewers have found difficult to swallow. I confess that I remain unrepentant about this pioneer venture in the field; it still seems necessary to describe letter-writing in the 18th century so long as index cards in well-known libraries can report of Wesley letters, "the envelope is missing," and when the spurious aspects of some displayed documents may be discovered most readily by the interplay of the minutiae which I there present. The necessary tools for the *Bibliography*, Volumes 32–3, which also I am preparing, are many and complex. They include lists of Wesley's printers and booksellers, the ornaments by which during at least the first half of the century it is sometimes practicable to identify otherwise anonymous printers, lists of publishing ephemera such as Wesley's book catalogues and his proposals for printing books by subscription,<sup>11</sup> evidence from the printing ledgers maintained by William Bowyer and William Strahan, lists of books by others kept on sale by Wesley, and an inventory of his stock taken immediately after his death. As I prepare these two volumes I am constantly presented with bibliographical problems which find historical answers, and vice versa, reinforcing my conviction that the science of bibliography and the art of history may work hand in hand, just as can and must the overlapping disciplines of theology and history, each furnishing an essential background as well as important ingredients for the other. For each item published by the Wesley brothers I am trying to prepare a detailed study describing the setting and history of the work, prefixed to a bibliographical description of all editions up to 1791.

I am hitching my wagon to a faraway star, Vol. 34, the *General Index*, edited by John Vickers, whether it be published in 1993 or—much more likely—considerably later. That should prove a wonderful consummation: the gathering into one of fifteen separate indexes to units and volumes, each a major contribution in itself; the incorporation of all discovered quotations arranged under their authors, doubtless with many additions to those noted in the preceding volumes;<sup>12</sup> also, not a concordance indeed, but the assembling of Wesley's uses of proverbs, and of his own aphorisms and notable sayings. Then indeed would we be able to echo one of his own favourite scriptural quotations, "What hath God wrought!"

As pointed out earlier, upon our agenda for Wesley Studies must rank highly both the preparation of such tools and the pursuit of themes. Professor Outler has already suggested many

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<sup>11</sup>[Editorial note, see Baker's unpublished essay on Printers' Flowers, also in this collection.]

<sup>12</sup>As one example, by some accident during the printing of Vol. 11, *The Appeals*, p. 216, n. 6, remained as "Source of quotation unidentified," when in fact the identification (in Samuel Wesley's *Poems*, 1736, p. 106) had been sent to and accepted by the publishers for substitution a year earlier.

important themes, and I will barely mention a few more. It seems to me that one of our major needs is to fit Wesley more accurately into his ecumenical background, especially to present an integrated picture of the revival throughout the British Isles and America between 1735 and (say) 1784, when the spiritual drive was being consolidated into renewed denominationalism. On this a noble beginning has been made by Michael R. Watts, in Chapter Five of *The Dissenters*.<sup>13</sup> Even more study than is now being attempted should be given to the role of women in Wesley's societies. We need a major study in Wesley's training in an ancient university in the art of communication, and its working out in his ministry, a study that goes beyond Dr. George Lawton's *John Wesley's English*,<sup>14</sup> and deals with the nuances of meaning in his use of a formidable vocabulary. We need a full examination of his eschatology, of his study, exegesis, and exposition of the Bible, including his use of the Church of England calendar of scriptural readings.

Yet when we have dealt with all our special themes, we return to the central questions about this key figure in Christian history. The more we know about him, the more we want to know—the more we *need* to know, if indeed he is to exercise his fullest potential as a force in shaping, not a revival of eighteenth-century British Methodism, but a forward-looking Christian community, utilizing all the insights and fruitful developments of its past, of which a solid fraction were among the subjects of John Wesley's own study and experimentation. We need to know what kind of a man it was who left us hundreds of books and thousands of documents from his pen, oceans of information in which we still flounder, striving to understand which of the multitudinous roles which he played reveals the true *persona*—or if indeed there is such a creature as the real John Wesley. Who was John Wesley? What truly happened to him on May 24, 1738? If “conversion” is an apt word for whatever experience he then underwent, what were its main components? What did he regard, before that event, and after that event, as the main purpose of his life, and the best way of pursuing it? Did he have several goals, each clearly conceived? And if so, in what order of importance would he have placed them? Were there any shifting emphases among the four criteria by which he tested the authenticity of what he believed to be God's will for him, Scripture, Christian tradition, reason, and experience? (We note that Bishop McAdoo was able to classify the leaders of the Church of England during the previous century by their varying reactions to the claims of Scripture, tradition, and reason.<sup>15</sup>) Did any changes in his hierarchy of goals or of authorities serve to explain the clear development which is now happily being recognized equally in his Christian experience, in his theological thought, in his churchmanship, in his social relationships? Was the normal ageing process the sole cause of the marked mellowing during his later years, even though there was hardly any reduction in his habits of work, his psychological drive, his sense of spiritual purpose, to correspond to the slow deterioration of his physical functions?

Yet this very many-sidedness, this very flexibility and fallibility, this lack of cold consistency—and even of the warm-hearted consistency into which our unduly loyal Methodist

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<sup>13</sup>[Watts, *The Dissenters*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).]

<sup>14</sup>[London: Allen and Unwin, 1962].

<sup>15</sup>H. R. McAdoo, *The Spirit of Anglicanism; a Survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Black, 1965)



ancestors sought to compress him—simply reveals Wesley’s humanness. His boisterous abandon in flinging himself into one activity after another, his ability to change roles to match his company, while never yielding to ethical compromise to save himself from social embarrassment; his own occasional scorn of his yardstick, sound logic; his never forgetting an appointment but frequently forgetting key dates in his own life, and jumbling events together in memory, sometimes with dramatic effect—as when he recounts how he first came to adopt early rising;<sup>16</sup> sometimes to the confusion of his readers—as when he implies that classes (1742) were introduced into Methodism before bands (1738).<sup>17</sup> All these demonstrate that we are not dealing with a mere Methodist automaton, with a Bible bigot, with a sacramentarian, with a religious fanatic, with *anything* “pure and simple,” but with a man—a strange and unique blend of seemingly irreconcilable or incomprehensible characteristics which somehow under the providence of God made good sense of his life. Even though his was a Methodist life in its general approach, the living was done moment-by-moment, he practised situation ethics, his spiritual experience was, like that of most of us, a series of hills and valleys and undulating plateaux, though the elevation of these plateaux steadily increased as he came nearer to the end of his life in the God who is Love. Surely Wesley came to realize these spiritual fluctuations in himself, as in others, as he penned some later passages in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection*: “By perfection I mean the humble, gentle, patient love of God and our neighbour, ruling our tempers, words, and actions. I do not include an impossibility of falling from it, either in part or in whole. Therefore I retract several expressions in our hymns which partly express, partly imply such an impossibility. ...”<sup>18</sup>

During twenty years of preparation for this new edition, I have become more convinced than ever that at the very least *almost* everything he did was consciously aimed at this personal goal, with its corollary of spreading scriptural holiness throughout the world. This view—which certainly needs careful testing by many unbiased witnesses—seems to be underlined even by the multitude of errors and infelicities of various kinds which he has bequeathed to us in his printed works. To the end of his days he was much too busy for the scholarly exactness which we expect of writers today.

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<sup>16</sup>*Methodist History* (July 1974), 193–94.

<sup>17</sup>Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (eds.), *A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain* (London, Epworth Press, 1965), 1:219–23, which presents the undoubted documented historical sequence. But cf. Wesley’s *Plain Account of the People called Methodists* (1749) where classes are treated of in II.1–12, and bands (apparently as the outcome of the previously described activities) VI.1–8, with the explicit statement (VI.7), “But it was soon objected to the bands (as to the classes before), ‘These were not at first ...’” [*Works*, 9:268]. For the same implication see Wesley’s “Thoughts upon Methodism,” §§5–7, *Arminian Magazine* (1787), 100–2, 155–6 [*Works*, 9:528–29].

<sup>18</sup>From a revision first published in the *Arminian Magazine* for 1783 (pp. 156–57) of a letter written to his brother Charles on Jan. 27, 1767, summarizing what he had already published (from a 1764 document) in his *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766), §26 [see *Works*, 13:199].

When he was 87 he wrote, “I hope I shall not live to be useless”<sup>19</sup>—nor did he. During fifty years he had travelled 250,000 miles, to become one of the most visible and venerated men in the British Isles. He had preached 40,000 awakening and upbuilding sermons. He had written 20,000 letters, with various aspects of pastoral care as their basic theme. As an extension of his preaching and pastoral ministry he had published 2000 editions of 500 separate works, which were carried to the ends of the earth, and through two centuries retain a challenge and appeal which remain vigorous and timely.

But he was too busied about good works in general to allow adequate time for checking his printed works, for making sure that his quotations from hundreds of books were exact, for careful proof-reading of the misprints arising from careless compositors or occasionally (especially in his later years) from his own shaking hand. As a result literally thousands of such errors—most of them minor, but some of them major—have crept into his works, some of them to be discovered only as the text of our new edition is being prepared.<sup>20</sup> Such was his haste, that most of the corrections which he made were penned on the spot, without recourse to his original manuscripts or to early editions. Occasionally he made major revisions, only to lose them, or to have others bury them. Twice during his 70’s he tried to correct his over-enthusiastic statement in the *Journal* that until May 24, 1738, he was not a Christian, and had no faith—only to have those printed corrections largely lost by most subsequent editors, to be fully restored only in this present edition.

Yet we can forgive both the young man who twenty years after the event published and never corrected a statement that he had been ordained priest a year after being ordained deacon, when in fact it was three years later; just as we can forgive the frail old man who was partially blind, whose hand shook, and whose voice at times became little more than a shrill whistle—but who still read, still wrote, still preached. He may have lived to be sometimes illegible, sometimes inaudible, but he certainly did not live to be useless. To the very end he remained a powerful example of a true man of God—a man who in weakness was made strong, and whose very weaknesses of academic accuracy underline the tremendous strength of his tireless evangelism, solidly founded upon the personal witness of a life lived constantly to the glory of God and in the perceived presence of God.

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<sup>19</sup>Letter to Thomas Taylor, Jan. 6, 1791. Wesley was in fact quoting Bishop Nicholas Stratford (1633–1707); cf. *Journal*, Dec. 8, 1764, and letter of June 21, 1784.

<sup>20</sup>See for instance the loss until 1976 of the third element in Wesley’s description of the three things necessary for justification: faith, repentance, and the fruits of repentance (*A Farther Appeal*, Pt. I (1745), III.11, in *Works* 11:117, n. 2).