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Introduction

In the article, “Charles Wesley’s Bristol Hymns and Poems,” the author addresses Wesley’s literary productivity during the years he lived in Bristol, England, which were some of the most productive of his life. Here it was that he settled after marrying Sarah Gwynne in 1749. From that time until they moved to London in 1771, he published more than one-fourth of his total poetic output during his entire lifetime. Among Wesley’s numerous works during this period are some poetical works of considerable length: *Short Hymns on Select Passages of the Holy Scriptures* (1762), a two-volume devotional commentary on the Bible, *Hymns on the Trinity* (1767), and *Hymns for the Use of Families, and on various occasions*. One finds hymns and poems linked to the Christian year, to specific occasions, and others to natural occurrences, events (e.g., the earthquake of March 8, 1750), and persons (e.g., George Whitefield). In 1755 some of his poetry writing took on a different character. Moving beyond hymn writing, Wesley began composing lengthy poetic epistles to various friends on subjects which were of interest to him. Some of these hymns are extremely insightful as regards Charles Wesley’s theology, moral fiber, and personal relationships. This article is a careful chronological survey of Charles Wesley’s published and unpublished poetical works between the years 1749 and 1771.

Some years ago John A. Newton wrote an article, “The Ecumenical Wesley,” for the periodical *The Ecumenical Review*, which was concerned with John Wesley. In “Charles Wesley, Ecumenical Hymnographer” Newton turns to the poet-priest-brother, Charles, in whose hymns he finds the same ecumenical emphasis that characterizes John’s writings. Newton describes the political violence and religious turmoil in which Charles Wesley uttered the cry for tolerance, peace, and unity. While Charles Wesley is not viewed as a twentieth-century ecumenist, he is seen as a contributor to present-day ecumenism by creating a lyrical corpus of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, by emphasizing Christ-like love, or *agape*, as that which unifies, and by creating a lyrical theology that is sung world-wide.

Not very much has been written about Sarah Wesley (Sally, Jr.), daughter of Charles and Sarah (Gwynne) Wesley. She was one of the three children, of the eight born to the Wesleys, who survived the first year of life. Five died at birth or in the first year of infancy. We know more of her brothers, Charles, Jr., and Samuel, both musicians, than of Sally, Jr. In the article “Sarah Wesley, Woman of Her Times” Wilma J. Quantrille paints an interesting picture of this bright and talented woman, setting her in the family, literary, and intellectual contexts of her time. She was a gifted woman who circulated among some of the literary elite of her day, and who also wrote poetry. A significant debt is owed her for the care with which she preserved many of the Charles Wesley family papers.

In the article “Mon tres cher Ami” Peter Forsaith examines the letters of John Fletcher, friend and “Methodist” preacher, who was born in Switzerland. Forsaith

Sarah Wesley

Woman of Her Times

Wilma J. Quantrille

Sarah Wesley, daughter of Sarah Gwynne and Charles Wesley, was born in Bristol, England, on April 1, 1759, and died September 19, 1828, on a visit to Bristol.

Sarah was a quiet island of composure, calm, independence, and grace in the midst of the swirl of energy—the energy of the bustling commercial city of Bristol where the Charles Wesley family lived until Sarah was twelve years old. Of much greater significance in her life was the movement called Methodism that centered on the brothers, John Wesley and Charles Wesley, uncle and father.

Called “Sally” by her parents, she was a woman of character, intellect, and poetic sensitivity. Throughout this article she will be referred to as “Sally” and her mother as “Sarah.” Sally was carefully educated in the classical languages and literature. Her achievements were not particularly distinguishing nor did they attract attention to her, yet Sally was content to be eclipsed by the far more dramatic and far-reaching evangelistic activities of her father and uncle, as well as by her brothers, who claimed the fascination of Charles, their father, because of their amazing childhood musical genius.

Yet Sally became a young woman of grace, intellect, and social sophistication. Her social and intellectual life were enhanced by her connections with the Gwynne family, her mother’s family, with the Wesley family, and with the Methodist movement. Her presence was requested and enjoyed in many fine homes of England. Her close association with her aunt Martha Hall gave her entrée to the literary London of her time, including friendship with Dr. Samuel Johnson.

Sally became a writer of poetry, though she did not presume to be an author of the stature of her father Charles or her aunts Hetty and Martha. She was also an artist; however, little evidence of her art work has been preserved.

Sally did have an identity of her own. She guarded well a strong and healthy self-assurance, though her independent spirit was sometimes a frustration to her father, who would have preferred that she be a more enthusiastic participant in the religious spirit which her father and uncle were awakening in England.

Sally was admirable in her ability to see with clear eyes the dilemmas of many of the women with whom she associated. She chose to remain single, accurately observing the misery and grief caused by the marriages of her Wesley aunts, Hetty and Martha, and other women of her acquaintance.

Fortunately for her, Sally’s parents had provided her with advantages and privileges which gave her the greatest possibility of achieving a happy and productive life. She seemed carefully to have planned her life for her enjoyment and for the greatest benefit she could be to others. Of the many factors which influenced

Sally's life, one was the city of Bristol itself, the home of the Charles Wesley family throughout her childhood.

Bristol was a bustling commercial center, swarming with seekers of wealth and fortune. The city boasted a thriving port, industry in glass-making (nearly half filled with beer, cider, perry and Bristol water), copper, and brass.

Bristol was the second largest port in England, occupying a key role in overseas commerce. With a population of about 100,000, it was the focus of economic, social, and cultural life of England.

In 1764 The Theatre Royal was established. Although it was a major cultural achievement, John Wesley remarked:

The endeavours lately used to procure subscriptions for building a new play-house in Bristol have given us not a little concern; and that on various accounts: not barely as most of the present stage entertainments sap the foundation of all religion, as they naturally tend to efface all traces of piety and seriousness out of the minds of men; but as they are peculiarly hurtful to a trading city, giving a wrong turn to youth especially, gay, trifling, and directly opposite to the spirit of industry and close application to business; and, as drinking and debauchery of every kind are constant attendants on these entertainments, with indolence, effeminacy, and idleness, which affect trade in an high degree.¹

Though the work of saving souls continued enthusiastically in Bristol, John Wesley remarked, "I often wonder at the people of Bristol. They are so honest, yet so dull; 'tis scarce possible to strike any fire into them."²

Alexander Pope remarked, "The city of Bristol itself is a very unpleasant place and no civilized company in it."³

The slave trade, centered in the Bristol port from the beginning of the eighteenth century, took advantage of the economic rewards of trading in human beings. Ships from Bristol carried as many as 16,950 slaves between 1701 and 1709. Though London and Liverpool vied in slave trade with Bristol, the city slave traders benefited from the supplying of colonial plantations with slaves from Africa. Men of highest repute in the city were engaged in the traffic—not wicked men, but pillars of society in their own time.

Since Bristol grew quite wealthy because of the slave trade, the city only relinquished this source of revenue when other, more profitable and less controversial fields of investment became available.

An abolitionist movement soon emerged, led by the Quakers, the Anglican and Dissenting clergy, the Moravians, and two gentlemen, Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce.

¹*The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Telford, Standard edition, 8 vols. (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 4:279. (Hereafter cited as "LJW:") To the Mayor and Corporation of Bristol; from London, December 20, 1764.

²LJW, 8:198. To Adam Clarke; from London, January 28, 1790.

³Peter T. Marcy, "Eighteenth Century Views of Bristol and Bristolians," in Patrick McGrath, ed., *Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1972), 29.

Sally was undoubtedly present when, at the home of Hannah More, Wilberforce was first introduced to Charles Wesley. Wilberforce, a young and rising statesman, recorded this about the meeting:

I went, I think in 1786, to see her, and when I came into the room Charles Wesley rose from the table, around which a numerous party sat at tea, and coming forwards to me, gave me solemnly his blessing. I was scarcely ever more affected. Such was the effect of his manner and appearance, that it altogether overset me, and I burst into tears, unable to restrain myself.⁴

The influences which most formed the character of Sally Wesley were those of her brilliant and highly achieving father Charles and her skilled and devoted mother Sarah.

Sarah Wesley, Sally's mother, was privileged to have been the daughter of one of the leading families in Wales. She grew up amid a highly respected landed family of Marmaduke Gwynne, Esquire, who kept a private establishment with twenty servants and a chaplain. The comforts of Sarah's early life, however, she gladly relinquished to become the devoted wife of Charles Wesley, traveling evangelist and poet.

The wedding itself was an omen of a happy union. Charles remembers, "Mr. Gwynne gave her to me (under God), my brother joined our hands. It was a most solemn season of love! Never had I more of the divine presence at a sacrament."⁵

The marriage was one of the most propitious of circumstances for Sally Jr. and her brothers. Always did Charles Wesley express freely his affection and love for and his devotion to his wife Sarah, whom he often called *dearest friend*. Their relationship is well expressed in this exclamation: "Blessed be the day on which my dearest Sally was born! It has been continual sunshine; the fairest, calmest, brightest day, since I left you in Bristol. Such may all your succeeding ones be; at least may you enjoy that 'perpetual sunshine of the spotless mind.'"⁶ A prayer of Charles during their courtship expressed this deep love: "O Eternal Spirit of Love, come down into my heart and into my Friend's heart, and knit us together in the bond of perfectness."⁷

The two-fold commitment—to the church and to each other—sustained them both. Sally was a willing fellow-traveler and later a strong and courageous mother and family-maker. Though Charles's expectations were high, she never disappointed him nor he, her.

⁴*Life of Wilberforce*, 1:248; quoted in Thomas Jackson, *The Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols. (London: Published by John Mason, at the Wesleyan Conference Office, 1841), 2:371. (American edition, abridged [New-York: Published by G. Lane & P. P. Sandford, for the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1842], 711.)

⁵*The Journal of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M.A.*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 2 vols. (London: Wesleyan Methodist Book-Room, 1849; and later reprints), 2:55. (Hereafter cited as "CW, *Journal*.")

⁶CW, *Journal*, 2:200.

⁷Frank Baker, *Charles Wesley: As Revealed by His Letters* (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), 57. To Sarah Gwynne; from Holyhead, August 12, 1748.

A few months after their marriage, Charles Wesley engaged a small house in Bristol, as a home for his wife, "such a one as suited a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth."

Charles called the home a "convent" because not only did Sarah move in but also her two sisters. There were always friends and neighbors present.⁸

The house on Charles Street quickly became a rendezvous for the itinerant Methodist preachers, to whom Sarah's well-ordered home and gentle welcome offered a delightful respite. She was a hostess of skill and warm hospitality. Charles's time for study and composition was constantly interrupted.

It was in this busy yet happy circumstance that their daughter Sally was nurtured. It made possible Sally's ability to establish a self-possessed and independent character even in the midst of the virtual whirlwind of dynamic activity in the service of the movement called Methodism. Her father and uncle were the center of the storm of activity, their full concentration and focus on the saving of souls and the awakening of the Spirit in the lives of those languishing in sin.

It was Sally's mother who provided the calm, nurturing home which carried on the strong tradition of Susanna Wesley, mother of Charles. All three of the children received education, not only in religion, but also in classical literature, languages, and music. Sally was given all the encouragement and opportunity afforded her brothers.

Sarah herself had been carefully educated by private tutors, and possessed one talent outstanding even among her musical brothers and sisters: a lovely voice of great power and range. She was also an accomplished harpsichordist. She shared these gifts freely with her family and especially with her children.

Even in the city of Bristol, not noted for its genteel society or upper-class manners, the Charles Wesley family provided their children with a home in which culture was valued and the children's nurture and education had high priority.

Charles Wesley was, however, unable for a number of reasons to attend closely to his daughter's rearing. First, Charles was already fifty-two years old when Sally was born. He was absent from the household continually. Although he had by this time ceased itinerant ministry, he was spending some eight to ten months a year in London. He possessed an almost superhuman ability to write verse. He was an outstanding and effective preacher. His skills and gifts as pastor to all who were suffering were remarkable. Sally, Jr., benefited not so much by her father's presence as by the witness he provided of a life of great discipline and achievement.

Two anecdotes illustrate the relationship between father and daughter. Charles had converted one of Miss Chapman's boarders, a young woman named Miss Morgan. She rose at six and went to bed at ten. She accompanied Charles on his

⁸Mabel Richmond Brailsford, *A Tale of Two Brothers: John and Charles Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 172.

daily rides and followed a plan of study suggested by him. She memorized a part of Matthew Prior's *Solomon on the Vanity of the World* and was learning shorthand.⁹

Charles Wesley asked himself, "Why am I not as useful to my own daughter?"¹⁰ He could see that Sally had a great thirst for knowledge and a capacity to learn, but he was discouraged by her inability to rise early and study regularly. He would like to have read something with her every day and to have achieved what good he could in the little time that he had left.

He had corrected Sally's *Ode to Peace*. She should then be ready to read Thomas à Kempis and William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*.¹¹

Sally, thought her well-meaning father, should follow Miss Morgan's example. Charles pointed out to Sally that she would be sorry one day that she had not made more use of her father. Charles felt that he would need only one year to communicate enough knowledge to Sarah that she might be able to continue without him. Charles was also interested in Sally's riding. He suggested they go riding together. He would be willing to provide her with the proper dress.

Charles also guided her in the literature with which she might become familiar. In a letter to Sally, Charles remarked:

I think you may avail yourself of my small knowledge of books and poetry. I am not yet too old to assist you a little in your reading, and perhaps improve your taste in versifying. You need not dread my severity. I have a laudable partiality for my own children. Witness your brothers, whom I do not love a jot better than you; only be you as ready to show me your verses as they their music.¹²

Charles was obviously frustrated by her lack of interest in these pursuits.

In another letter he chides her on the wearing of "narrow fashionable heels." She was at the time recovering from a fall, caused, according to father Charles, by the fashionable but unreasonable shoes. "I think it will be a warning to you, and reduce you to reason," he wrote.¹³

Charles was encouraged to hear through his brother John that Sally, Jr., had had something of an awakening, as she was attending the bands in Bristol. Charles made a valiant attempt to use restraint in regard to the religious training of his gifted daughter. He admitted that there might be the possibility that she would "meet some stumbling-block in the Society, which might give you an (unjust) prejudice against religion itself."¹⁴

"I never thought the bands would suit you. Yet many of them possess what you are seeking. You also shall bear witness of the power, the peace, the blessed-

⁹CW, *Journal*, 2:278.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²CW, *Journal*, 2:276.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴CW, *Journal*, 2:277.

ness of heart-religion; you also shall know the Lord, if you follow on to know Him.”¹⁵

Another story regarding the relationship of Charles Wesley and his only daughter is one told of their visit to the London prison, Newgate. Charles Wesley, since the days of the Holy Club, had considered visiting of prisoners one of the signs of Christian discipleship upheld by Scripture. Therefore he would regularly go to Newgate and preach to those who were under sentence of death. When Sarah was still a little girl, her father asked her to go with him. Sally’s mother shuddered at the prospect, considering that her feelings were so tender she could not endure it.

When, as was their custom, Sally accompanied Charles to his bed-chamber at nine o’clock, she heard him saying to himself, “Sick and in prison, and ye visited me not.”

The next morning at six o’clock, she told him, “Father, I will go with you to Newgate this morning.”¹⁶

Sarah was placed in a pew near the unhappy culprits, and the only sound she heard was the clinking of their chains. Charles Wesley, after entering the pulpit, was so overcome by his sympathies that it was many minutes before he could begin the prayer. Then he burst forth with an energy which impressed the whole auditory, “O let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoner come up before thee! According to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those who are appointed to die.”¹⁷

When they returned home and Mrs. Wesley asked what possible good the visit could have been, Mr. Wesley said, “It expanded our sympathies, it excited gratitude to our heavenly Father for the grace which alone preserved any human being from similar offenses to their fellow creatures, it excited our prayers for them.”¹⁸

Sally’s father continued to remind her that she had not fully reached his expectations regarding the Christian life. In one of his letters to her, Charles suggests that indeed, “All your powers and faculties are so many talents, of which you are to give an account. You improve your talent of understanding when you exercise it in acquiring important truth. You use your talent of memory aright when you store it with things worth remembering; and to be always getting something by heart.”¹⁹ He then encouraged her to memorize parts of Prior’s *Solomon, the Vanity of Knowledge*. Charles was concerned that his daughter’s voracious reading was not well directed or more carefully focused on the concerns of faith.

Yet Sally established herself as a person of value in her own right. Friends of the family continually invited her as a house guest, and others sought her company at her aunt Martha Hall’s. A person of bright mind, well read in both ancient

¹⁵CW, *Journal*, 2:279.

¹⁶Rev. J. B. Wakeley, *Anecdotes of the Wesleys* (New York: Carlton & Lanahan, 1869), 384.

¹⁷Wakeley, 384–5.

¹⁸*Wesleyan Magazine*, 1839, p. 831, as quoted in Wakeley, 385.

¹⁹CW, *Journal*, 2:280.

and modern literature, Sally was able to converse with interest and delight with the best of London society. On one occasion, when Sally inquired of a Mrs. Allen if she could borrow a copy of the works of John Milton, it was returned without delay, for Sally was such a fast reader. Her father once referred to her as a devourer of books.²⁰

Sally's life was very much affected by the efforts of her father, Charles Wesley, to encourage her brother Charles Jr.'s musical career. Beginning in 1779, a series of concerts were arranged which were held in the Wesley home on Chesterfield Street in London. Tickets were sold and the room, holding only about eighty persons, was crowded with subscribers. Among them were the bishop of London, Lord Dartmouth, Lord Barrington, Lord and Lady Le Despencer, the Honorable Daines Barrington, the Danish and Saxon ambassadors, Dr. Shepherd, Mr. Madan, and several others, both lay and clergy.²¹

Charles's pride was evident in a letter he wrote to his brother John: "I am clear without a doubt that my sons' concert is after the will and order of Providence. It has established them as musicians, and in a safe and honourable way."²² Charles found it necessary to apologize for the life style which of necessity accompanied the promotion of his sons' careers in music. It was a point of criticism by some of the faithful in the Methodist movement that the Wesley family was traveling in social circles above those whom they hoped to serve in the evangelical movement.

When Charles, Jr., became discouraged, it was his sister Sally who gave him comfort.

... he came to her, bringing some of his beautiful compositions, and requesting that she would tie them up for him. "All my works," said he, "are neglected. They were performed at Dr. Shepherd's, in Windsor, but no one minds them now!" She answered, in a sprightly tone, "What a fool you would be to regret such worldly disappointments! You may secure a heavenly crown, and immortal honour, and have a thousand blessings which were denied to poor Otway, Butler, and other bright geniuses. Johnson toiled for daily bread till past fifty. Pray think of your happier fate." "True," said he, meekly, and took away his productions with sweet humility. Having recorded this anecdote, she adds, "Lord, sanctify all these mundane mortifications to him and me. The view of another state will prevent all regrets."²³

When Samuel became attracted to Roman Catholicism, Charles was very much distressed and grieved and wept over the loss of his son to that faith, believing that scripture itself declared the Catholic faith to be corrupt.

Sally wrote a note beside a hymn of prayer which Charles had raised for his son Samuel at the time of his affliction with smallpox. "Alas! this prayer was

²⁰CW, *Journal*, 2:276.

²¹Jackson, 2:347. (American ed., 693.)

²²D. M. Jones, *Charles Wesley: A Study* (London: The Epworth Press, 1919), 233.

²³Jackson, 2:370. (American ed., 710.)

raised for his son Samuel! How little do parents know what evils are prevented by early death!"²⁴

The two other children, Sally and Charles, were witness to the grief of their aging father regarding his son Samuel, but were unable to restore his spirits. However, it gave Charles an opportunity to make the point to Charles, Jr., and Sally, that they had not felt the full effect of a live and powerful faith.

Therefore you and my dear Sarah have great need to weep over him: but have you not also need to weep for yourselves? For, have you given God your hearts? Are you holy in heart? Have you the kingdom of God within you? righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost? the only true religion under heaven. . . . neither you nor he can ever enter into glory, unless you are now cleansed from all pollution of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of God.²⁵

Yet it was Sally who was able, because of her tolerance in regard to Samuel's behavior, to offer him assistance with his family. She rescued Samuel at least once from financial embarrassment. Charles Wesley, eldest son of Samuel and grandson of Charles Wesley, loved his aunt. He was now and then left in her care.

It is important to mention, also, the effect of the lives of Charles's and John's sisters on their niece, Sally. The family was close. John and Charles were able in their later years to care for the sisters when their financial situations became difficult.

Miss Mehetabel Wesley (Mrs. Wright), called "Hetty," had "naturally a fine poetic genius, which . . . shone forth in her with peculiar splendor, and was heightened by her knowledge of the fine models of antiquity." From her childhood she was "full of mirth, good humor, and keen wit."²⁶

However, in spite of her promise, she led a life of misery, precipitated by her father, Samuel, who interfered with the marriage to her preferred gentleman, and, at the last moment, pronounced him "an unprincipled lawyer."

Hetty was deeply grieved and disappointed and consented to a marriage to a journeyman plumber who was not of her intellectual or social stature. Wright "associated with low, dissolute company; spent his evenings from home; became a drunkard; and, by a series of ill-management and ill-treatment, broke the heart of his wife."²⁷

Her greatest disappointment, however, was the early death of her children. One of her most poignant poems is a lament over her dying infant.

Sally was undoubtedly aware of the deep sadness of her aunt, so full of the potential for happiness and for achievement, if she had had the opportunity to apply her poetic brilliance. Her misery seems to be the result of thoughtlessness on the part of her father, her would-be husband, to say nothing of the husband who brought her nothing but grief.

²⁴Jackson, 2:361. (American ed., 704.)

²⁵Jackson, 2:367-368. (American ed., 707-708.)

²⁶Adam Clarke, *Memoirs of the Wesley Family*, Second Edition (New York: Lane & Tippett, 1848), 534.

²⁷Clarke, 536.

Sally's aunt Martha was also a tragic figure. She was very serious and thoughtful and was so even-tempered that as children her brothers and sisters taunted her in vain in order to provoke an emotional response.

For some time Martha lived with her uncle Matthew Wesley, a surgeon. During this time Martha became engaged to be married to Mr. Westley Hall, who had been one of John Wesley's pupils at Lincoln College. Her engagement was, however, without the knowledge or consent of Charles and John, her brothers.

Though betrothed to Martha, Mr. Hall began a flirtation with Martha's sister Kezziah, grew enamored of her, courted, obtained her consent and that of the family in general, who knew nothing of his engagement to Martha.

In a qualm of conscience, at the very last minute before the wedding, Hall returned to Martha. This was very embarrassing to her, as her family assumed that Martha was responsible for the break between Kezziah and Hall.

Nevertheless, Hall and Martha married, and Martha continued to endure the criticism of her family, some of whom believed that Martha had betrayed her sister Kezziah.

That Kezziah approved of the marriage was evident. Later she chose to go and live with Mr. and Mrs. Hall, though she could have lived with one of her brothers, Samuel or John.

I have the almost dying assertions of Mrs. Hall, delivered to her beloved niece, Miss Wesley, and by her handed in writing to me, that the facts of the case were as stated above; that "so little did Kezziah regret her faithless lover, and so fully sensible was she of her sister's prior claim, that she chose to live with them, and lived in perfect harmony and comfort with her sister. And so far from this disappointment shortening her days, she resided between five and six years under the same roof; and had so completely subdued all affection toward Mr. Hall, that she had formed an attachment to another gentleman, but his death prevented the union."²⁸

Hall had been a clergyman of the Church of England, but became in order a Moravian, a Quietist, an Antinomian, a Deist, if not an atheist and polygamist, the last of which he defended in his teaching, and illustrated by his practice. As a husband, he was unkind and hurtful. He seduced a young woman that Mrs. Hall had taken in as a seamstress. She did not suspect when the girl was in labor, until the others informed her, that the child was her husband's. He abandoned her to live with one of his mistresses in the West Indies.

Her only surviving child, Westley Hall, died of smallpox at the age of fourteen. Nevertheless, Mrs. Hall kept a lively home, entertaining the literarily inclined. Mrs. Hall "spent much time, at his own particular request, with Dr. Samuel Johnson, who was strongly attached to her, and ever treated her with high reverence and respect."²⁹

²⁸Clarke, 567.

²⁹Clarke, 584.

Johnson admired Martha for all she had endured and how gracefully she had borne her injuries.

It was at her Aunt Martha's home that Sally was encouraged to write poetry. "Mrs. Hannah More, Miss Benger, Miss Hamilton, Miss Porter, Miss Aikin, Mrs. Barbauld, Dr. Gregory, and many other persons of distinction, were her personal friends, and none of them had any reason to be ashamed of her companionship."³⁰

Sarah herself seems to have had more literary ambition than talent, to judge from the reference made to her by Charles Lamb, in a letter to Coleridge dated 1800. "Miss Wesley and a tribe of authoresses that come after you here clearly are the shadows. You encouraged that mopsey . . . to dance after you in the hope of having her nonsense put into a non-sensical anthology."³¹ His attitude reflected better his age (he was twenty-five years old), his whimsicality, but more than that the attitude toward women writers in general during that period of time.

Nevertheless it was to Samuel Johnson that Sally showed without fear the verses she dared not show her father. Her friend Samuel, who was the dread of the poets of his day, would pat her head, and, turning to her aunt, Mrs. Hall, would pronounce the fateful dictum, "Madam, she will do!"

"When her niece, Miss Wesley, asked her if she would wish that she should attend her in her last moments, she answered, 'Yes, if you are able to bear it; but I charge you not to grieve more than half an hour.'"³²

Martha left to her niece, Miss Sally Wesley, whom she dearly loved, and who well knew how to prize so valuable a woman, the little remains of her fortune, who in vain urged her to spend it on her own life for a few more comforts.³³

One of Miss Wesley's letters says:

Mrs. Susannah Wesley was a noble creature; but her trials were not such as Mrs. Hall's. Wounded in her affections in the tenderest part; deserted by the husband she so much loved; bereaved of her ten children; falsely accused of taking her sister's lover, whereas, though ignorantly, that sister had taken him from her; reduced from ample competency to a narrow income; yet no complaint was heard from her lips! Her serenity was undisturbed, and her peace beyond the reach of calamity. Active virtues command applause; they are apparent to every eye; but the passive are only known to Him by whom they are registered on high, where the silent sufferer shall meet the full reward.³⁴

A great debt is owed to Sally Wesley for her care of her aging father and uncle, for her presence at both their deaths, and for the kind way in which she recorded both events. Charles Wesley was able to repair the mistakes he had made in her early years, and she grew to be the comfort and companion of his old age.

Her comments on the death of John Wesley were as follows:

³⁰Jackson, 369-370. (American ed., 709.)

³¹Charles Lamb, as quoted in Jones, 229.

³²Clarke, 588.

³³Clarke, 588.

³⁴Clarke, 589-590.

'His soul is already in heaven, and his conversation (whether in delirium or perfect intellectual power) evinces it. He suffers no pain, receives all in a sweet and thankful manner, and, on finding great difficulty in speaking began a prayer, "Lord, Thou dost all things well. Thou givest strength to those who can speak, and to those who cannot."' That Tuesday afternoon he gave orders for his burial; called up the family to prayers, and when one of the preachers prayed earnestly he pronounced Amen 'with great energy, after every interesting petition.' 'Without one convulsion, struggle, or groan, he gently sighed out his devoted soul into his Redeemer's bosom.'³⁵

Sally is also responsible for the careful gathering and accuracy of the papers regarding the Wesley family. Her concerns were that details be correct and that the accounts of the lives of John and Charles Wesley give full appreciation for their stature as leaders in a significant religious movement of England and America.

Adam Clarke, the one to whom she gave her Aunt Martha's diary, gave full credit to Sarah Wesley for the help she gave him in writing the biography published in 1823.

He says in the introduction, "To all those who have contributed original documents and other information for the use of these Memoirs, he returns his best thanks: but here he should acknowledge that he stands chiefly indebted to his late excellent friend, Miss Sarah Wesley."³⁶

Sally lived with her mother and her brother Charles in London in a small house. Sarah, Charles's widow, was given a small stipend through the Methodist Book Room from the proceeds of the sales of her husband's hymnbooks. Sarah died at the age of ninety-six, when Sally was sixty-three.

In correspondence to her friend Reverend B. Bury Collins of Bath, Sally gave some evidence of her state of mind, especially in regard to the life of the Spirit. "When I look up to the Almighty [*sic*] as the best of Fathers, the tenderest of Friends—the dying Saviour; When I recall my vows, my encouragements, and my transgressions, the bitterness of the review overwhelms me." In the same letter she writes, "It is not the terrors of the Law, but the comforts of the Gospel which fill me with remorse. What Love have I slighted, what Blessings have I trampled on, what privileges neglected!"³⁷ She asks Reverend Collins if he might act as spiritual guide through this struggle of her mature years.

Sally lived with her brother Charles until her death on a visit to Bristol in 1828.

³⁵*Methodist Magazine*, 1925, pp. 141–2, as quoted in *Sayings and Portraits of Charles Wesley: with Family Portraits, Historic Scenes, and Additional Portraits of John Wesley*; John Telford, Compiler and Editor (London: The Epworth Press, 1927), 255.

³⁶Clarke, 10.

³⁷Letter to Rev. B. Bury Collins from S. Wesley. Clifton, Bristol, May 19, 1793, published in *Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society*, 9(1914),81–83.

