

TO THE "SERIOUS READER":
THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN WESLEY'S *A CHRISTIAN LIBRARY*
ON METHODISM, 1752-1778

by

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ABSTRACT

After years of selecting, editing, omitting, reducing and correcting what would become printed as over fourteen thousand pages of devotional literature for a young Methodist movement in the wake of the English Evangelical Revival, John Wesley pronounced his *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the choicest Pieces of practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue in Fifty Volumes* (1749-1755) an underappreciated treasure and an overtaxing expenditure. Taking their lead from Wesley's comments, scholars and historians of Wesley studies and Methodism have neglected to take a closer look at the ways the *Library* may have been successful. This study argues that despite being initially a marketing disappointment and an expensive liability, John Wesley's *Christian Library* was influential in helping to shape the spiritual lives of "serious readers" within Methodism, particularly from 1752-1778.

In the preface to the *Christian Library*, Wesley revealed his standard for measuring the influence of the *Library*. However, despite offering a premature and partial assessment of the *Library* in his journal entry at the end of 1752, providing some public responses to criticisms of the *Library* in 1760 and again in the early 1770s, and writing some personal letters that recommended the *Library* to others in the 1780s, Wesley did not publish an evaluation of what he believed the *Christian Library* had accomplished during his life. Thus, based on the collaborative evidence gathered from the personal accounts of early Methodist preachers and the final address of Francis Asbury to American Methodists, this study makes the case that Wesley's *Christian Library* had a substantial positive influence on Methodism.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

After years of selecting, editing, omitting, reducing and correcting what would become printed as over fourteen thousand pages of devotional literature for a young Methodist movement in the wake of the English Evangelical Revival, John Wesley pronounced his *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the choicest Pieces of practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue in Fifty Volumes (1749-1755)* an underappreciated treasure and an overtaxing expenditure. With nearly three years left before he finished publishing the final volume of his largest collection for Methodism, Wesley recorded his disillusionment with the project in his *Journal* entry between 6 November 1752 and 1 January 1753: “In the remaining part of this and in the following month, I prepared the rest of the books for the *Christian Library*, a work by which I have lost above two hundred pounds. Perhaps the next generation may know the value of it.”¹ Taking their lead from Wesley’s comments, scholars and historians of Wesley studies and Methodism have been content to say simply “Amen” to Wesley’s premature and partial assessment of the *Christian Library*. Although there has been a growing academic interest in Wesley’s *Library* over the past three decades, leading scholarship has neglected to take a closer look at the ways the *Library* may have been successful. Therefore, in this study I will argue that despite being initially a marketing disappointment and an expensive liability, John Wesley’s *Christian Library* was influential in helping to shape the spiritual lives of “serious readers” within Methodism, particularly in the period from 1752 to 1778.

¹ W. Reginald Ward and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 20, *Journal and Diaries III, 1743-1754* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991), 443.

Although there is evidence to support the proposition that the *Christian Library* had some measure of influence within Methodism, such as the lives of early Methodist preachers, the record is silent regarding the effect of the *Library* on those outside Methodism. Those who appeared to be unaffected by the *Library* include members of the Church of England and other denominations as well as those who followed Wesley's response to the public criticism of his *Christian Library* in the *London Magazine* in 1760 for purely secular reasons.²

During my research of the primary sources, I focused on answering the key question, how was John Wesley's *Christian Library* an influence on the "serious readers" of Methodism? Wesley used the term "serious reader" repeatedly in the prefaces he wrote for the religious works he published, including the *Christian Library*. Although he never defined explicitly what it meant to be a "serious reader" in any of his writings, Wesley clearly implied how the "serious reader" was to read all religious works. In general, Wesley considered all "serious readers" to have: a manner suitable for receiving divine grace, a resolve for putting into practice what is learned, and a disposition for gaining not only enlightened understanding, but also warmed affections.³ For those "serious readers," who were also fulltime preachers for Methodism, Wesley specified the following reading requirements for their ongoing training: "Read the most useful books, and that regularly and constantly. Steadily spend all the morning in this employ, or, at least, five hours in four-and-twenty."⁴

The sequence of finding an answer to my key question included three informative stages. First, in order to determine Wesley's purpose for the content and design of the *Christian Library*,

² John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed. (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1978), XIII:389. Also see the *London Magazine*, 12 December 1760, 651.

³ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XIV:199, 205-209.

⁴ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VIII:315.

I reviewed his *Journal, Diaries, Letters, Sermons*, and the prefaces within the *Christian Library* as well as the prefaces he wrote for his other published works. Along with these sources, I investigated the curriculum of Wesley's Kingswood School, and the published *Minutes* of the annual General Conferences in order to ascertain the ways Wesley prescribed the *Library* for Methodists. Finally, I explored the experiences of Methodists recorded in the earliest periodicals of Wesleyan Methodism, such as the *Arminian Magazine*, the *Methodist Magazine* and the *Wesleyan-Methodist Magazine*, as well as the journals, biographies and autobiographies of early Methodist preachers and missionaries in order to discover the spiritual influence that the *Library* had on "serious readers."

While the main focus of this study has been to assess how the *Christian Library* influenced Methodism, there has been no effort made to measure how much of it was absorbed by Methodists. According to historian David Hempton, "Establishing what Wesley selected for his followers to read is no easy task, but estimating how much was read, how much was appropriated, and how much was applied to daily life is even more difficult. With our present state of knowledge, there is no easy way of dealing with these questions."⁵ Although the various questions that Hempton raises are relevant to the *Library*, they are beyond the scope of this investigation. Therefore, this work will concentrate only on the influence that resulted from what Wesley selected for Methodists to read in the *Christian Library* and in his other three major collections: *Wesley's Tracts*, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* and the *Arminian Magazine*. In addition to providing a brief background for each of Wesley's four collections in the third

⁵ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 59.

chapter, complete lists of the works Wesley selected for his first three collections are included in the appendixes.

Despite the fact that publishing books on John Wesley and Methodism is currently a cottage industry, only two dissertations have focused specifically on the *Christian Library*. The first is Kwang Yul Kim's work, *A Tension between the Desire to Follow the Example of Jesus' Life and the Desire to Trust in His Redemptive Work: The Theology of John Wesley Reflected in His "Christian Library,"* which Kim finished in 1992 to complete a PhD at Westminster Theological Seminary. Kim's analysis of Wesley's Arminian theology in the *Library* was not evenhanded and reflected the Reformed theological distinctive of his seminary. Therefore, his conclusions were not helpful for this study.⁶

The second dissertation, *The Religion of the Heart and Growth in Grace: John Wesley's Selection and Editing of Puritan Literature for A Christian Library* was written by Karl Ludwig Ganske, a promising young Wesley scholar who earned his PhD at the University of Manchester in 2009, where he was mentored in his dissertation by Wesleyan historical theologian, Herbert B. McGonigle. The insights and direction I gained from my personal conversation with Ganske and his research on Wesley's use of the Puritans in the *Christian Library* has certainly influenced the formation of this paper. Ganske's dissertation is well tested, having withstood the academic scrutiny of Henry D. Rack, Wesley's chief modern biographer,⁷ and the critical review of Randy

⁶ Kwang Yul Kim, *A Tension between the Desire to Follow the Example of Jesus' Life and the Desire to Trust in His Redemptive Work: The Theology of John Wesley Reflected in His "Christian Library"* (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1992), 234. According to Kim, "It is true that with all those faults in Wesleyan Christianity, there have been many Christians who have benefited from the above moralistic teaching of Wesley [in the *Christian Library*] without being affected by its unbiblical implications." Ibid.

⁷ Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 3rd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 2002).

L. Maddox, arguably the leading scholar today on Wesley's practical theology or "practical divinity" as Wesley referred to it in the *Christian Library*.⁸

Overall, the most important secondary sources that shaped this study were: Richard P. Heitzenrater's article, "The *Christian Library* of John Wesley, Then and Now,"⁹ Frank Baker's books, *John Wesley and the Church of England*¹⁰ and *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*;¹¹ and Isabel Rivers' volumes, *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*¹² and *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780, Volume 1, Whichcote to Wesley*¹³ and in particular Rivers' recent chapter contributions to the *Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume V, 1695-1830* (2009)¹⁴ and *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley* (2010).¹⁵ Finally, the introductions to

⁸ Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

⁹ Richard P. Heitzenrater, "John Wesley's *A Christian Library*, Then and Now," in *American Theological Library Association Summary of Proceedings*, 55 (2001).

¹⁰ Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 2nd ed. (London: Epworth Press, 2000).

¹¹ Frank Baker, *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*, 2nd ed. (Stone Mountain, GA: Published by George Zimmermann, Jr., 1991).

¹² Isabel Rivers, ed., *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (New York: Leicester University Press, 1982).

¹³ Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, Vol. 1, Whichcote to Wesley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁴ Isabel Rivers, "Religious Publishing," in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Vol. V, 1695-1830, Michael F. Suarez, SJ. and Michael L. Turner, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 579-600.

the completed volumes of the latest edition of *The Works of John Wesley*, which began as the *Oxford Edition*, but continues to be expanded as the *Bicentennial Edition*, provided useful historical background for this study. Besides the editors already mentioned above, the contributing editors of this definitive and important work who helped inform this thesis were: Albert C. Outler (*Sermons*),¹⁶ W. Reginald Ward (*Journal*),¹⁷ Franz Hildebrandt (*Hymns*),¹⁸ Gerald R. Cragg (*Appeals*)¹⁹ and Rupert E. Davies (*Methodist Societies*).²⁰ Because the story of how the *Christian Library* influenced the spiritual lives of Methodists cannot be understood apart from the life of John Wesley and the rise of Methodism, it is to this historical background that this study now turns.

¹⁵ Isabel Rivers, "John Wesley as Editor and Publisher," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 144-159.

¹⁶ Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 1, Sermons I (1-33) (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984).

¹⁷ W. Reginald Ward and Franz Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 18, Journal and Diaries I, 1735-38 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1988).

¹⁸ Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Oxford ed., Vol. 7, A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).

¹⁹ Gerald R. Cragg, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 11, The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989).

²⁰ Rupert E. Davies, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 9, The Methodist Societies: History, Nature, and Design (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989).

Chapter 2 - John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism

John Wesley (1703-1791), a founder of Methodism, was a clergyman in the Church of England. He was born in Epworth, a small isolated market town in north Lincolnshire, England. His parents were Samuel and Susanna Wesley, and according to Rack, John was their “thirteenth or fourteenth child and the second of three sons to reach maturity.”²¹ In 1709, John and his siblings escaped from a rectory (parsonage) fire. As a result, his parents believed that the rescue of their children was providential. In the years that followed, Susanna, had a significant theological influence on John’s spiritual life, while Samuel, appointed by the Church of England as rector of Epworth, was at times an absentee father.

As a young man being trained for the university, John Wesley attended the Charterhouse School in London, where he was given a classical education for seven years. In 1720, he began his studies at the University of Oxford. While there, Wesley attained a BA from Christ Church in 1724 and received a MA from Lincoln College on 14 February 1727. During the summer following graduation, Wesley returned to Epworth having accepted an invitation from his father to assist him as a curate. Over the next two years, his parish ministry was interrupted only by a brief leave of absence to become ordained as a priest on 22 September 1728.²²

In 1729, Wesley moved back to Oxford to teach as a tutor at Lincoln College. Soon after his arrival, he began meeting with his brother and two others in order to read together the classics

²¹ Henry D. Rack, “John Wesley,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 58, H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 183. Charles Wallace, Jr. estimates that Susanna gave birth to eighteen or nineteen children. Charles Wallace, Jun., “Susanna Wesley,” in *Ibid.*, 209.

²² *Ibid.*, 183-184.

on weekdays and divinity, meaning theology, on Sundays. As the group increased their activities by adding works of service and fasting, they also expanded their association to include other small groups in other colleges. Critics attempted to denigrate the group through several derogatory terms. The group's early nickname, "The Holy Club," soon gave way to the popular label, "Methodists," which was used generally and negatively in the eighteenth century for evangelical enthusiasts.²³ Although Wesley considered an enthusiast to be "one that fancies himself under the influence of the Holy Ghost, when, in fact, he is not,"²⁴ he would come eventually to embrace "Methodism" as an acceptable title for the movement he would lead a decade later.

At the age of thirty, Wesley made a covenant with God, which set him on the path that would lead him ultimately to produce the *Christian Library*. Specifically, he committed to giving the rest of his life to God personally through prayer, reading and meditation, and to others publicly through speaking, writing, abridging and translating. On 19 July 1733 Wesley wrote this pledge:

In the Name of God! Amen! I do resolve to devote the remainder of my life to God my Creator, God my Redeemer, and God my Sanctifier, I. By immediate application to Him, either 1. By Prayer, publick or private, or 2. By Reading (1) The Fathers, (2) True, Affectionate Divinity, or (3) By Meditation, at least from 4 to [4] ½ every afternoon, unless company or absolutely necessary business [prevent]. II. By application to my fellow servants, either 1. By Speaking to (1) Pupils, (2) Relations, (3) Friends, (4) Acquaintance, (5) The afflicted, (6) The wicked, or 2. By Writing – either by Composing (1) Geneses and Letters for my Pupils, Relations, Friends, Acquaintance, (2) Practical Treatises for the P[oo]r and Wicked, (3) Sermons for all: Or by Abridging (1) Uncommon treatises for Pupils

²³ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 84-87.

²⁴ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VIII:106.

and Acquaintance, (2) Plain ones (as Christian Monitor) for the Poor and Wicked:
Or (1) By Translating True Divinity for all.²⁵

As a result of this decision, the *Christian Library* would eventually become the fruit of Wesley's ongoing devotion to God through reading what he called "true, affectionate divinity," which implied a divinity that was not only useful for shaping the thoughts of man, but also the affections as well.

Years later, after returning from a fruitless missionary trip to America, Wesley had a "heart warming experience" on 24 May 1738 that produced in him an assurance of his salvation. Soon after, he began preaching the gospel in England with his brother, Charles, and George Whitefield. Together they won hundreds of thousands of converts to Christ during what became known as Britain's Evangelical Revival.

In London at the end of 1739, John Wesley began to meet with some of these new converts. Although the Church of England had its own religious societies, the first society that Wesley organized grew out of the weekly meetings that he had agreed to have with a small group of individuals concerned about the wrath of God and the salvation of their souls. Before long, the group grew, multiplied and spread to other places. Four years later as Wesley recalled these events, he defined a society as "a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation."²⁶ As the paternal

²⁵ Cited in Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 35-36. See also Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 349 (footnote 78): "In MS 'Colman VII' in Methodist archives, London. This covenant was repeated on 12 October 1733 with a variant ending: 'By Translating Affectionate Divinity for All. Amen!'"

²⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VIII:269.

leader of a young and developing Methodist movement, Wesley devised “General Rules” to govern these societies, which made the following demands of those who would attend:

There is one only condition previously required in those who desire admission into these societies,—a desire “to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from their sins:” But, wherever this is really fixed in the soul, it will be shown by its fruits. It is therefore expected of all who continue therein, that they should continue to evidence their desire of salvation, First, by doing no harm, by avoiding evil in every kind; . . . Secondly, by doing good, . . . Thirdly, by attending upon all the ordinances of God. Such are, the public worship of God; the ministry of the word, either read or expounded; the supper of the Lord; family and private prayer; searching the Scriptures; and fasting, or abstinence.²⁷

In order to meet all the requirements of this third expectation, Wesley instructed the members of the societies to begin or continue attending the worship services of the Church of England to hear the homilies (sanctioned sermons) and to participate in the ordinances. Wesley was devoted to the Church of England, therefore, his “united societies” were not to be legally recognized as churches, and their meetings were not to interfere with the regular services of the Church of England.

To provide oversight and to help Methodists develop a life of holiness, he appointed itinerant preachers to visit periodically the members of each society. Most of these preachers lacked both credentials as clergymen and formal training. Therefore, Wesley required them to read his sermons and other devotional literature, as well as to study his explanatory notes on both the Old and the New Testaments. Following Wesley’s example, they traveled on horseback all across England to preach to the masses and to converts to Christ.

In public, Wesley defended the credibility of Methodists by lobbying the ecclesial and political authorities when necessary. On occasion, he even stood up to violent mobs that

²⁷ Ibid., 270-271.

interrupted his outdoor preaching or the indoor meetings of his societies. In private, he nurtured the spiritual growth of Methodists through personal correspondence.

In 1739, Wesley began publishing short and inexpensive religious tracts and abridged literary works in order to address the issues that confronted Methodism, especially those which he was unable to rectify in person. First, he printed two treatises to clarify that Methodists were not separated from the Church of England because they still adhered to the same articles of faith. Second, he printed three tracts, “Extracted from a late Author,” to refute the doctrines of election, reprobation, and predestination, which were held by his friend George Whitefield, by Calvinistic Methodists, and by many Calvinists in the Church of England. These views contradicted the Arminian doctrine of free will held by Wesley and the Wesleyan Methodists. Third, Wesley printed extracts from the writings of John Norris, *The Imitation of Christ* (credited at the time to Thomas à Kempis), and the biography of Thomas Haliburton (a Puritan whom he had read about earlier while in America) to foster scriptural holiness (the godliness described in the Bible) in the lives of Methodists.²⁸ Throughout the 1740s, Wesley continued to address these same issues using similar types of publications.

Beginning in 1744, Wesley and other leading Methodists acknowledged that antinomianism posed a real threat to the vitality of their movement.²⁹ Having gathered for the first annual Conference of Methodist preachers, John Wesley, Charles Wesley, John Hodges

²⁸ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XIV:210-211.

²⁹ Heitzenrater’s definition of antinomianism is useful for this study: “Wesley was . . . convinced of the primary necessity of faith for salvation but could not abide a sola fide [“faith alone”] that cancelled out works of piety and mercy as if they were attempts to earn salvation by doing good works. For Wesley, such anti-legalism, or antinomianism, was . . . a challenge to vital Christian living.” Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 106.

(Rector of Wenvo), Henry Piers (Vicar of Bexley), Samuel Taylor (Vicar of Quinton) and John Meriton had several conversations about the “doctrine, discipline, and practice” of Methodism.³⁰

During their first conversation on 25 June 1744, they assessed the state of Methodism in the following ways:

Q. 17. Have we not then unawares leaned too much towards Calvinism? A. We are afraid we have. Q. 18. Have we not also leaned towards Antinomianism? A. We are afraid we have. Q. 19. What is Antinomianism? A[.] The doctrine which makes void the law through faith. Q. 20. What are the main pillars hereof? A[.] (1.) That Christ abolished the moral law. (2.) That therefore Christians are not obliged to observe it. (3.) That one branch of Christian liberty is, liberty from obeying the commandments of God. (4.) That it is bondage to do a thing because it is commanded, or forbear it because it is forbidden. (5.) That a believer is not obliged to use the ordinances of God, or to do good works. (6.) That a Preacher ought not to exhort to good works; not unbelievers, because it is hurtful; not believers, because it is needless.³¹

From this conference forward, an inventory of the leanings of Methodism toward the persistent threats of Calvinism and antinomianism would be an ongoing topic of discussion among Wesley and his preachers throughout the remainder of Wesley’s life.

In the following year, further evidence that antinomianism had infiltrated Methodism surfaced in Wesley’s publication of *Aphorisms of Justification* by Richard Baxter, a leading English Puritan. In the preface he wrote for Baxter’s treatise, Wesley, recalling that *Aphorisms* (originally published in 1649) had been successful in combating antinomianism earlier in England’s history, offered the following prayer: “O may He . . . give the same blessing to this little treatise now as he did near an hundred years ago! May He once again make it a powerful antidote against the spreading poison of Antinomianism; and thereby save many simple, unwary

³⁰ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VIII:275.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 278.

souls from ‘seeking death in the error of their life!’”³² Wesley’s prayer and the publication of this “antidote,” written by Baxter, foreshadowed the Puritan writings Wesley would select for his *Christian Library*.

Although Wesley’s purpose for publishing Baxter’s treatise was understandable, some have criticized the ethics of Wesley’s editing. According to Outler:

His [Wesley’s] *Extract of Mr. Richard Baxter’s Aphorisms of Justification* (1745) is an instructive example of Wesley’s way with sources. Baxter had published the *Aphorisms* in 1649, but had quickly thereafter disavowed them as a misleading statement of his actual views. Thus there were no further editions of the *Aphorisms* after 1649; in their place Baxter had composed a *Confession of Faith* (1655), with the same doctrine of divine initiative and human response more carefully nuanced. Wesley discovered a copy of the original *Aphorisms* in 1745, a rare book then, and rarer since. Preferring the *Aphorisms* over the *Confession*, Wesley “extracted” them for the use of his preachers and people, blithely ignoring Baxter’s disavowals. In his *Extract* Wesley discarded all of Baxter’s copious technical references, along with the careful distinction between God’s “decretive” and “elective” will; Baxter’s eighty “theses” were reduced to Wesley’s forty-five “propositions.”³³

Although Baxter would not have recommended that Wesley publish what he came to believe was a misleading treatise, Wesley’s plan to meet the pressing needs of Methodism in that moment did not include discrediting Baxter, whom he held in high regard. Wesley would later write in his *Journal* on 1 May 1755: “I finished the ‘Gentleman’s Reasons’. . . . In how different a spirit does this man write from honest Richard Baxter! The one dipping, as it were, his pen in tears, the other in vinegar and gall. Surely one page of that loving, serious Christian [Baxter] weighs more than volumes of this bitter, sarcastic jester.”³⁴

³² Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XIV:216.

³³ Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1, 26-27.

³⁴ W. Reginald Ward and Franz Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 21, *Journal and Diaries IV, 1755-65* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 10.

In addition, Wesley became increasingly concerned in the early 1740s about Methodists falling back into fear and sin after conversion. Therefore, in 1741, he published for the first time a spiritual biography to instruct Methodists on how to avoid backsliding. The exemplary example that he selected was the Puritan Thomas Haliburton, who after being justified by faith fell back at times into the bondage of sin.³⁵ This use of Puritan examples to instruct the Christian living of Methodists proved to be a precedent for Wesley's extensive use of Puritan spiritual biographies in the *Christian Library*. In the preface to Haliburton's biography, Wesley issued this solemn warning to Methodism:

The work of God in the soul of man is so described in the following treatise, as I have not seen it in any other either ancient or modern, in our own or any other language. So that I cannot but value it, next to the holy Scriptures, above any other human composition, excepting only the "Christian Pattern," and the small remains of Clemens Romanus, Polycarp, and Ignatius. . . . Yet this great servant of God at some times fell back from the glorious liberty he had received into the spirit of fear, and sin, and bondage. But why was it thus? because [*sic*] the hand of the Lord was shortened? No, verily; but because he did not abide in Christ; because he did not cleave to Him with all his heart; because he grieved the Holy Spirit.³⁶

Haliburton's example provided the young Methodist movement with instruction on how to be God's servants as well as an awareness of the consequences should one cease to be devoted to God. Even at this early juncture, Wesley appears to have understood that Methodists needed to learn not only from the writings of those who had been eminent in holiness, but also from their biographies as well.

³⁵ Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 1999), 24 and 31.

³⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XIV:212.

In addition to the problems of antinomianism, and a decline in the faith of some Methodists after conversion, Methodism was being undermined by an increasing number of itinerant preachers who had stopped growing in grace. In 1748, in an apologetic letter entitled, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” Wesley, speaking of himself, emphasized that he had always taken seriously his role in Methodism as one “who marked their growth in grace.”³⁷ From the perspective of hindsight, Wesley recalled in his sermon, “The Wisdom of God’s Counsels,” the failings of some of the itinerant Methodist preachers and the subsequent challenges that this began to present for Methodism beginning in the 1740s:

14. But as these young Preachers grew in years, they did not all grow in grace. Several of them indeed increased in other knowledge; but not proportionably in the knowledge of God. They grew less simple, less alive to God, and less devoted to him. They were less zealous for God; and, consequently, less active, less diligent in his service. Some of them began to desire the praise of men, and not the praise of God only; some to be weary of a wandering life, and so to seek ease and quietness. Some began again to fear the faces of men; to be ashamed of their calling; to be unwilling to deny themselves, to take up their cross daily, “and endure hardship as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.” Wherever these Preachers laboured, there was not much fruit of their labours. Their word was not, as formerly, clothed with power: It carried with it no demonstration of the Spirit. The same faintness of spirit was in their private conversation. They were no longer “instant in season, out of season,” “warning every man, and exhorting every man,” “if by any means they might save some.” 15. But as some Preachers declined from their first love, so did many of the people. They were likewise assaulted on every side; encompassed with manifold temptations: And while many of them triumphed over all, and were “more than conquerors through him that loved them,” others gave place to the world, the flesh, or the devil, and so “entered into temptation:” Some of them “made shipwreck of their faith” at once; some by slow, insensible degrees. Not a few, being in want of the necessaries of life, were overwhelmed with the cares of the world; many relapsed into “the desires of other things,” which “choked the good seed, and it became unfruitful.”³⁸

³⁷ Ibid., 251.

³⁸ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VI:330-331.

Although the scope of this problem with itinerant preachers is uncertain during the first decade of Methodism (1738-1748), Wesley clearly had a group of active preachers serving with him and helping to advise him by the summer of 1744.

On 3 September 1756, Wesley addressed a letter to Samuel Walker (1714-1761), an evangelical clergyman who had formed a non-Methodist, religious society in his own parish at Truro, Cornwall.³⁹ In the letter, Wesley defended his use of lay preachers in Methodism and indicated that “the inconveniences, most of which we foresaw from the very first, have been both fewer and smaller than were expected. Rarely two in one year, out of the whole number of Preachers, have either separated themselves or been rejected by us.”⁴⁰ In short, by the time Wesley began compiling a list for his *Christian Library*, he had ample experience to anticipate accurately what would increasingly become the experience of his itinerant preachers and a problem for Methodism.

To address the problems that were inherent within Methodism, Wesley, acting on his paternal instincts, had generated religious publications that targeted the most important agent for change within the movement, the “serious reader.” The clearest guidelines for how Wesley wanted the “serious reader” to experience all of his religious works are located in the preface to *The Christian Pattern* (1735), which Wesley edited and abridged from *The Imitation of Christ*. Although the preface is not Wesley’s original work, he constructed what came to be considered his own reading instructions for Methodists from the prefaces to earlier editions and translations of *The Imitation of Christ*. To the “serious reader,” Wesley wrote:

³⁹ Frank Baker, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Oxford ed., Vol. 26, Letters II, 1740-1755 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 582.

⁴⁰ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XIII:197.

First: Assign some stated time every day for this employment; and observe it, so far as you possibly can, inviolably. . . . Secondly: Prepare yourself for reading, by purity of intention, singly aiming at the good of your soul, and by fervent prayer to God, that he would enable you to see his will, and give you a firm resolution to perform it. . . . Thirdly: Be sure to read, not cursorily or hastily, but leisurely, seriously, and with great attention; with proper pauses and intervals, that you may allow time for the enlightenings of the divine grace. To this end, recollect, every now and then, what you have read, and consider how to reduce it to practice. Further, let your reading be continued and regular, not rambling and desultory. To taste of many things, without fixing upon any, shows a vitiated palate, and feeds the disease which makes it pleasing. Whatsoever book you begin, read, therefore, through in order: Not but that it will be of great service to read those passages over and over that more nearly concern yourself, and more closely affect your inclinations or practice; especially if you press them home to your soul, by adding a particular examination of yourself upon each head [subject]. . . . Fourthly: Labour to work yourself up into a temper correspondent with what you read; for that reading is useless which only enlightens the understanding, without warming the affections. . . . Conclude all with a short ejaculation [spontaneous prayer] to God, that He, without whom “neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth,” would so bless the good seed sown in your heart, that it may bring forth fruit unto life eternal.⁴¹

These guidelines were Wesley’s ongoing expectations for the “serious reader,” and by encouraging individuals to read in this manner, Wesley hoped to shape the lives of Methodists and bring an increased spiritual vitality to the Church of England and the nation. In a letter dated 8 November 1790 to George Holder, a Methodist itinerant preacher, Wesley wrote what he still believed at the end of his life: “It cannot be that the people should grow in grace unless they give themselves to reading. A reading people will always be a knowing people.”⁴² According to

Rivers:

Wesley’s criteria as an editor are truth, usefulness, brevity, and clarity; he always has in mind the needs of the reader. . . . All Wesley’s publications could be easily carried and referred to at any time; thus the reader was not confined to his study, and reading was not necessarily separate from other activities (Wesley himself did

⁴¹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XIV:208-209.

⁴² John Telford, ed., *The Letters of John Wesley, A.M.*, Standard Edition, Vol. VIII (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 247.

much of his reading while traveling). . . . But reading was never to be an end in itself: the handbooks Wesley selected were all designed to effect a methodical, disciplined transformation in the readers' life.⁴³

Both what the reader needed and what the reader was to become were important to Wesley and guided his preparation and provision of written resources for Methodism.

Printing for the masses, particularly the poor, uneducated and unlearned whom Wesley hoped to reach with the Gospel and the call to live a holy life became easier in the 1740s because copyright restrictions were loosened, transportation improved and paper no longer had to be imported to England as it once was. As a result, printing became cheaper in London as presses and printers sprang up around the city and spread increasingly into the provinces. Greater than the increase of the population of Britain, which nearly doubled in the eighteenth century, was the growing number of new readers.⁴⁴ For Wesley, publishing was more than just affordable, it became a profitable means by which to fund the Methodist movement.⁴⁵ The historical context of England made it easier for Wesley to conceive the viability of the *Christian Library*. Michael F. Suarez, SJ., the director of the Rare Book School at the University of Virginia, explains:

The big expensive books (folios and quartos) are much more likely to have survived than the small cheap ones. Slightly more than half the surviving books published throughout the eighteenth century were octavos (roughly 5 by 8 inches). Duodecimo books (roughly 4 by 7 inches, the favored format for popular religious books [including the first edition of the *Christian Library*]) are . . . the ones most likely to have worn out and been thrown away. . . . Even if we ignore the loss of such material, it is clear that with the possible exception of Daniel Defoe (whose attributions are much disputed), Wesley was editor, author, or publisher of more

⁴³ Rivers, ed., *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, 153.

⁴⁴ Terry Belanger, "Publishers and Writers in Eighteenth-Century England" in *Books and Their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed., Isabel Rivers (New York: Leicester University, 1982), 18-19.

⁴⁵ Rivers, "Religious Publishing," 580.

works (the majority of them short religious pamphlets in duodecimo format) than any other single figure in eighteenth-century Britain.⁴⁶

Therefore, the technological advancements of the eighteenth century set the stage for Wesley to reach the growing number of “serious readers.” Although Wesley looked to the past and began compiling collections that included many of his previously published individual works, his focus was clearly on preparing Methodism to meet the growing challenges of the future. It is within the literary context of Wesley’s four major collections that the discussion of the *Christian Library* now turns in chapter 3.

⁴⁶ Rivers, “John Wesley as Editor and Publisher,” 145.

Chapter 3 - The Literary Context: John Wesley's Major Collections

The importance of the *Christian Library*, Wesley's most ambitious and extensive compilation of practical divinity, cannot be determined apart from his other major collections. In order to examine the literary context of Wesley's writings, this study will interact with the significant contributions of Isabel Rivers, the leading literary historian for Wesley studies. As a scholar of eighteenth-century literature and religion in England, Rivers points out what is required to understand the historical significance of Wesley's *Library*: "The collection contains a good deal of fascinating material that he never published elsewhere. Although Wesley designed it as a virtually self-contained library for his preachers' use, it should not be studied in isolation."⁴⁷ Thus, before taking a closer look at the uniqueness of the *Library* in the next chapter of this study, an attempt will be made to determine what it has in common with Wesley's other major collections.

In order to gain a better grasp of the significance of the *Library* based on its literary context, the question needs to be answered: why did Wesley produce major collections? Rivers suggests that one plausible reason is because "divinity students, clergy and ministers of different denominations were in urgent need of guides to the mass of religious publications that poured from the presses [in eighteenth century Britain]."⁴⁸ In addition, most guides for eighteenth-century religious publications, according to Rivers, "Assumed that the reader would somehow find access to books, in college or academy libraries or through the kindness of clergy or

⁴⁷ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁸ Rivers, "Religious Publishing," 584.

ministers.”⁴⁹ However, Wesley attempted to overcome this obstacle by publishing major collections of what he considered to be the best religious works for the “serious readers” of Methodism.⁵⁰

To clarify the relationship between Wesley’s major collections, Rivers offers an important insight:

To a large extent Wesley expounded his ideas through the writings of others. Throughout his career he edited, abridged, printed, and distributed on a wide scale different kinds of religious writings by authors belonging to a number of different religious traditions, from Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and high church to puritan and nonconformist. He issued many of these in individual editions, but he also published them in collected form. The principal collection is *A Christian Library* . . . intended primarily for the use of his preachers, for them to expound to the societies; much edited material is included in the 1771-4 edition of the *Works*; the *Arminian [Magazine]* is a remarkable anthology of such material, interspersed with Wesley’s own writing.⁵¹

Before the end of Methodism’s first decade, Wesley began compiling major “collections” for his young movement. Although Wesley published smaller collections of prayers, hymns and sermons, each of his four major collections comprised at least fifteen volumes, and all contained practical divinity that Wesley had selected and edited for Methodism.⁵²

Wesley’s Tracts (1746)

The first major collection, *Wesley’s Tracts*, was published in 1746 and its fifteen volumes contained a total of sixty-five works (see Appendix A). Within the sum, Wesley’s own original writings made up approximately 60 percent of the collection, while the rest consisted of extracts

⁴⁹ Ibid., 586.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 217-218.

⁵² Heitzenrater, “John Wesley’s *A Christian Library*, Then and Now,” 139-140.

and abridgments of other authors' works, which Wesley had published since 1733. Little is known about Wesley's first major collection, which is referred to as *Wesley's Tracts* because of the name that appears on the spine of the few remaining volumes. Having recently rediscovered this collection, Heitzenrater reports:

No attention has been given to the fact that Wesley's works were first offered as a collected set in 1746. This fifteen-volume collection, advertised in a booklist at the back of an edition of his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*. . . . What is particularly noteworthy . . . is that of those sixty-five items, bound together in volumes with "Wesley's Tracts" on the spine, twenty-five of them (nearly 40%) were extracts of works by other authors. . . . And yet Wesley seems to have had no compunction about referring to them as his "works."⁵³

Even though the majority of *Wesley's Tracts* appears to be lost, what is found in the list of the contents represents an early stage in Wesley's trajectory of increasingly compiling a wider scope of extracts from the works of other authors and the spiritual biographies of eminent Christians for each of his subsequent major collections.

A Christian Library (1749-1755)

The second major collection is *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the choicest Pieces of practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue*. Printed in fifty volumes from 1749 to 1755, the *Library* consisted of nearly 125 works that Wesley edited for inclusion. Surprisingly, Wesley did not include any of his own writings in the *Library* (see Appendix B). However, he did expand the range of authors he selected to use in this second major collection. Rivers confirms the presence of such a trajectory between the major collections with her observation that the *Christian Library* contained Wesley's "editions and abridgements of a very wide range of authors of different denominations,

⁵³ Ibid., 139.

the majority from the seventeenth century.”⁵⁴ This collection will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 4 of this study.

The Works of the Rev. John Wesley (1771-1774)

Next, Wesley published *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* in thirty-two volumes in the years 1771-1774. This third major collection consisted of not only Wesley’s own *Sermons*, *Letters*, and *Journal*, but also many of the tracts, which he had edited or written previously and published as separate and inexpensive tracts. Although Wesley’s *Works* included a large number of writings and biographies that others had written and Wesley had edited, it did not include any of his *Christian Library* or his *Notes* on either the New or the Old Testament (see Appendix D).

In the preface to the edition of his *Works*, Wesley, approaching seventy years of age, was concerned not only with preserving the tracts that he had previously published, but also with correcting them. In March 1771, he explained his reasons for publishing this major collection:

I have had a desire, for several years, if God should spare me a little longer, to print in one collection all that I had before published in separate tracts. (I mean, all the prose, except the Notes on the Bible, the System of Philosophy, the Christian Library, and the books which were designed for the use of Kingswood School.) These I wanted to see printed together; but on a better paper, and with a little larger print than before. . . . In revising what I had wrote on so many various subjects and occasions, and for so long a course of years, I found cause for not only literal or verbal corrections, but frequently for correcting the sense also. I am the more concerned to do this, because none but myself has a right to do it. Accordingly I have altered many words or sentences; many others I have omitted; and in various parts I have added more or less, as I judged the subject required: So that in this edition I present to serious and candid men my last and maturest thoughts, agreeable, I hope, to Scripture, reason, and Christian antiquity.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Rivers, “Religious Publishing,” 587.

⁵⁵ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., I:ii-iv.

With the future of British Methodism dependent on his writings, Wesley turned his attention to preparing a more accurate representation of what he had come to understand and believe in the 1770s by correcting what he had written and published previously.

Wesley's *Works* and *Wesley's Tracts* have forty-two works and one preface in common.

According to Heitzenrater:

The main point . . . is that this collection of his "works" resembles in many ways, both in approach and contents, the fifty volumes of the *Christian Library*[.] In addition to most of the abridgments that had been included in the *Tracts*, this collection contained fifteen additional abridged biographies (many of them women) and five additional works abridged from three new authors[.] Several of the thirty-two volumes contain nothing original by Wesley and appear to be virtually a continuation of the *Christian Library* (and, in a real sense, also a continuation of the *Tracts*)[.]⁵⁶

Building on the unprecedented number of spiritual biographies in the *Christian Library*, Wesley widened the scope of what he selected for the *Works* to include for the first time in the trajectory of his major collections the lives of eminent women.

Arminian Magazine (1778-1792ff)

Wesley's last major collection was a periodical entitled the *Arminian Magazine*, which he edited from 1778 until his death in 1791. Each monthly issue included Wesley's choosing and editing of material for four general categories: doctrinal treatises, biographies and autobiographies, letters to and from Wesley, and poetry.

Wesley began publishing monthly issues of the *Arminian Magazine* in 1778, shortly after he finished printing his *Works*. Unlike the *Christian Library*, which contained only practical divinity, Wesley emphasized in the title of his fourth major collection, the purpose for his inclusion of controversial divinity in the *Arminian Magazine*. In the preface to the first issue,

⁵⁶ Heitzenrater, "John Wesley's *A Christian Library*, Then and Now," 140.

Wesley stated: “Our design is, to publish some of the most remarkable tracts on the universal love of God, and his willingness to save all men from all sin, which have been wrote in this and the last century.”⁵⁷ However, Heitzenrater explains:

What unfolds in the successive issues each month is primarily a long series of abridgements and selections from various works by other authors[.] Before long, he began to add biographical works, spiritual letters, sermons (some by himself), and other writings that he felt were especially important and in some cases very scarce or not to be found in English[.]⁵⁸

Because Wesley did not expect the run of the magazine to be so lengthy, he had to adapt the format of his periodical to meet the ongoing circulation demands created by its popularity. Thus, the expansion of what Wesley included in his major collections culminated in the *Arminian Magazine*, with its inclusion of biographies of living people as well as purely secular works.

Considered as the second step in the trajectory of Wesley’s major collections, the *Christian Library* was a catalyst for Wesley’s increasing attempts to use spiritual biographies in his major collections in order to shape the values and actions of Methodism. From Heitzenrater’s perspective:

The *Christian Library* is not the unique production that it is often considered, rather is just one phase or segment of a lifelong publishing project that is both reflected in and connects rather readily to the *Christian Library* itself. The *Library*, then can be seen as just one facet of a larger enterprise that is of a whole and that reflects who John Wesley was [*sic*] a Christian—definitely Anglican [i.e. a member of the Church of England]—with Puritan leanings but ecumenical breadth, with scholarly grounding and a focus on practical divinity, as well as willing to take a stand on controversial issues, especially predestination.⁵⁹

Therefore, in order to understand the potential influence of the *Christian Library*, it is necessary to see the *Library*, not in isolation, but within the context of all four of

⁵⁷ John Wesley, ed., *Arminian Magazine*, Vol. 1 (London: Printed by J. Fry, 1778), v.

⁵⁸ Heitzenrater, “John Wesley’s *A Christian Library*, Then and Now,” 140.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Wesley's major collections. Having introduced the literary context for Wesley's second major collection, this study now turns to explore the uniqueness of the *Christian Library*.

Chapter 4 - The Uniqueness of *A Christian Library*

Against the backdrop of the eighteenth-century Evangelical Revival in England, John Wesley produced his most prolific literary achievement, *A Christian Library*, in the midst of his unceasing itinerant ministry during the rapid rise of Methodism in the period 1738 to 1760. Although the significance of the *Library* is still debated, the primary audience for whom Wesley compiled it was mentioned clearly in Wesley's letters. On 18 June 1746, the prominent educator, Philip Doddridge (1702-1751), wrote to Wesley advising him "on that little Collection of Books, which you seem desirous to make for some young preachers."⁶⁰

Wesley's idea for the *Christian Library* arose primarily as a response to the pressing needs of his preachers in lieu of a seminary education to be trained for ministry and to gain credibility by avoiding doctrinal error. From Wesley's perspective, the preachers, not his organization or writings, were God's primary plan for reforming the Church of England and his nation. From one of the early annual conversations that Wesley had with the preachers he had selected to lead Methodism, the following question and answer were published: "What may we reasonably believe to be God's design in raising up the Preachers called Methodists? . . . Not to form any new sect; but to reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."⁶¹ Like previous puritan movements, Wesley believed that the reformation of a nation took place as an outward extension of reform in one's personal life, which would lead incrementally to the reform of one's family, one's community, the Church, and finally the nation. Thus, Wesley intended the influence of the *Christian Library* to go

⁶⁰ Wesley, ed., *Arminian Magazine*, 1778, 419.

⁶¹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VIII:299.

beyond the preachers in order to bring reform to their Methodist family, which would result in the spread of holiness to the Church of England and eventually to all of Britain.

Wesley wrote the preface to the *Library* on 25 March 1749 from his residence at the Kingswood School that he had established for the poor. Within the academic curriculum he designed for the student preachers who attended his school, Wesley included a full reading of the *Christian Library*. As a result, no student preachers training to be leaders or itinerant preachers for Methodism would graduate without the knowledge and influence of the *Christian Library*.

In the *Minutes* of the British Methodist Conferences, Wesley advised a variety of readings for the ongoing training of his connexion (network) of leaders for Methodism. The connexion consisted of all the preachers considered to be in good standing with Methodism, who gathered annually to have conversations with Wesley in order to update Methodist policies and make plans for the coming year. A careful examination of the changes in the reading requirements for the connexion recorded annually in the *Minutes* beginning in 1753 reveals that the *Christian Library* was consistently the most important work that Wesley prescribed for the spiritual development of his preachers outside of his own writings.

In both 1753 and 1757, the *Minutes* instructed the preachers to read the *Christian Library* twice a day:

Q. What general Method of employing our time would you advise us to? A. We advise you, 1. As often as possible, to rise at four. 2. From four to five in the morning, and from five to six in the evening, to meditate and pray; partly to read the Scriptures, and partly the closely practical parts of the *Christian Library*. 3. From six in the morning till twelve, (allowing an hour for breakfast,) to read in order with much prayer, Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Mr. Boehm's and Nalson's Sermons, the remaining parts of the *Christian Library*, our other Tracts and Poems, *Paradise Lost*, and Professor Frank's Works.⁶²

⁶² *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences 1744-1824*, Volume 1 (Rev. ed.), 508.

In 1763, the instructions regarding the *Library* remained the same, but new restrictions were added to deny preachers permission to choose for themselves what they wanted to read. In fact, the rhetorical answer in the *Minutes* was an emphatic “no” to the following question: “Is it wise to read any [other religious works], till you have read our Tracts, and the *Christian Library*?”⁶³ Beginning in 1770, the *Minutes* listed Wesley’s frank responses to the following excuses voiced by the itinerant preachers who attempted to resist his reading requirements:

“But I have no taste for reading.” Contract a taste for it by use, or return to your trade. “But different men have different tastes.” Therefore some may read less than others; but none should read less than this [see above for prescribed reading]. “But I have no books.” I will give each of you, as fast as you will read them, books to the value of five pounds. And I desire the Assistants [those who handled the finances of book sales in the societies] will take care, that all the large Societies provide the *Christian Library*, for the use of the Preachers.⁶⁴

Wesley was so insistent that the preachers read the *Library*, that he guaranteed the funding necessary to place the *Library* in each large Methodist society so that it would be available for use by the itinerant preachers when they visited during their circuit rounds.

Also, starting in 1770 and continuing in 1772, the *Minutes* ceased to make an explicit reference to the *Christian Library* as part of its ongoing answer to the standard repeated question about how preachers should use their time. Instead, for the first time since 1753, a new answer was given:

2. From four to five in the morning . . . read, partly the Scripture with the Notes, partly the closely practical parts of what we have published. 3. From six in the morning . . . read in order, with much prayer, Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Mr. Boehm’s and Nalson’s Sermons, and the other books which we have published in prose or verse.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 550.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 518.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 508-509.

After the completion of Wesley's *Works* in 1774 and the commencement of the *Arminian Magazine* in 1778, the *Minutes* reverted back to listing explicitly the *Library* in its 1780 requirement for how preachers should use their time. In 1789, the *Minutes* were further expanded to prescribed the following time management: "3. From six in the morning . . . read in order, with much prayer, first, the Christian Library, and the other books which we have published in prose and verse, and then those which we recommended in our Rules of Kingswood School."⁶⁶ Not only did Wesley reintroduce the *Library* to his explicit list of prescribed readings in the *Minutes*, he gave it a place of priority in this instance as first even over the other prose and verse that he had recently published.

In the end, there appears to be no evidence to suggest that Wesley's prescription of the *Christian Library* was not carried out by those whom he and his brother Charles approved to be preachers within British Methodism. The curriculum of Kingswood School guaranteed that during Wesley's lifetime, from 1753 onward, the *Library* was never discontinued in the *Minutes* or replaced in the school as a training resource for Methodist preachers. For almost forty years, Wesley believed that the *Library* was intrinsically helpful in contributing to the spiritual vitality of Methodist ministers.⁶⁷ The ongoing ministry of his preachers along with the growing and enduring nature of Methodism under their leadership after his death strongly suggest that the *Christian Library* was influential as an essential component of Wesley's writings and the organizational structure he left as his legacy.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 509.

⁶⁷ Ironically, the best evidence for the intrinsic value of the *Christian Library* and how it proved to be useful on its own is found in the personal accounts of Methodists who were influenced profoundly by the *Library* without having been required to read it (see Chapter 5).

In addition to requiring all active itinerant preachers as well as preachers in training to read the *Library*, Wesley hoped to influence Methodism through the *Library* by making it available for all members of his Methodist societies to read. According to Charles W. Ferguson, Methodist author, editor and journalist, Wesley had a method for distributing his publications, including the *Christian Library*:

He could expect help only from lay brothers—artisans, merchants, workers in iron and wood. These were his preachers, and his only choice was to teach the preachers to teach themselves. They must learn to read—not casually, but religiously and habitually. On the matter of reading, Mr. Wesley said to them, “Contract a habit for it by use, or return to your trade.” That his preachers might cultivate reading habits as a part of their religious life, Mr. Wesley went into publishing. He wanted publications that were thin and cheap, so that as many as possible might be crammed into saddlebags. And through the reading of the preachers every member of the societies would get a chance to learn. He used his itinerants as distributing agents. . . . every circuit rider became a book salesman, every local society a book club.⁶⁸

On one occasion, Wesley encouraged some of his preachers to employ a method, that Billy Pennington had used in Cornwall in order to increase the circulation of his published works: “Carry one sort of book with you the first time you go the round; another sort the second time; and so on. Preach on the same subject at each place; and, after preaching, encourage the congregation to buy and read the tract.”⁶⁹

The usefulness of the *Christian Library* for Methodist societies was not limited to the influence it had on “serious readers.” Wesley also intended the *Library* to shape the public practice of Methodists. On 13 May 1754, Wesley recorded, “I began explaining to the morning congregation Bolton’s *Directions for Comfortable Walking with God*. I wish all our preachers

⁶⁸ Charles W. Ferguson, *Methodists and the Making of America: Organizing to Beat the Devil* (Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1983), 308-309.

⁶⁹ Cited in *Ibid.*, 309.

both in England and Ireland would herein follow my example and frequently read in public and enforce select portions of the *Christian Library*.”⁷⁰ Wesley further acknowledged the value of reading the *Library* publicly, which he considered to be synonymous with preaching, having been accustomed to public reading of homilies during the worship services of the Church of England. On 25 October 1756, Wesley recalled: “I began reading that excellent book, The Gospel Glass [written by Lewis Stuckley (d. 1687) and included in the *Library*], to the morning congregation—a method which I find more profitable for ‘instruction in righteousness’ than any other manner of preaching.”⁷¹ More than simply providing a sermon, the *Library* helped to fill the void of leadership and to restrain the influence of spiritually immature individuals who were learning how to be leaders within Methodist societies. In a letter of October 1764 to the Societies at Bristol, Wesley revealed this pragmatic reason for prescribing the use of the *Library*:

My Dear Brethren, —I was much comforted among you when I was with you last, finding my labour had not been in vain. Many of you I found rejoicing in God your Saviour, walking in the light of His countenance, and studying to have a conscience void of offence towards God and man. In order to assist you therein, suffer me to remind you of a few things, which I think are of no small concern, in order to your retaining the life of faith and the testimony of a good conscience towards God. . . . To the public, constantly add the private means of grace, particularly prayer and reading. Most of you have been greatly wanting in this; and without this you can never grow in grace. You may as well expect a child to grow without food as a soul without private prayer; and reading is an excellent help to this. . . . Permit me to give you one advice more under this head [main topic]: do not encourage young raw men to exhort among you. It does little good either to you or them. Rather, in every Society, where you have not an experienced preacher, let one of the leaders read the *Notes* [Wesley’s *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*] or the *Christian Library*. By this the wisest among you may profit much, a thousand times more than by listening to forward youths who neither speak English nor common sense.⁷²

⁷⁰ Ward and Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 20, 486.

⁷¹ Ward and Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 21, 80.

⁷² Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, Standard Edition, IV:271-272.

In his advice to the Bristol Societies, Wesley revealed the continuing need in 1764 to find experienced preachers to serve Methodism. In the interim, the role that Wesley's *Library* played in Methodist societies was similar to the function of homilies in the Church of England.

In addition to prescribing the *Library* for public use in society meetings, Wesley also encouraged his family and friends to read it devotionally. In the November 1780 issue of the *Arminian Magazine*, Wesley included a letter he wrote with the following heading, "A Female Course of Study, only intended for those, who have a good Understanding and much leisure: in a Letter to Miss L—, by the Rev. Mr. Wesley."⁷³ Less than one year later, Wesley wrote a letter to his niece Sarah, which was almost verbatim to the letter he had published previously and addressed to "Miss L—" in his periodical. At the beginning of this form letter, Wesley advised his niece about divinity saying: "All you want to know of Him [God] is contained in one book, the Bible. And all you learn is to be referred to this, either directly or remotely."⁷⁴ Then, at the close of the letter, after giving his advice on what to read from a wide range of subjects besides theology, including history, poetry, grammar, arithmetic, geography, logic, philosophy, and metaphysics in order to foster a lifestyle of learning in his niece, Wesley wrote: "You may begin and end [your daily reading] with Divinity [theology]; in which I will only add, to the books mentioned before [,] Bishop Person [,] On the Creed and the Christian Library."⁷⁵ Apart from the Bible and Wesley's published *Notes* on the Old and New Testaments mentioned at the

⁷³ Wesley, ed., *Arminian Magazine*, 1780, 602.

⁷⁴ Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, Standard Edition, VII:81-82.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

beginning of the letter, Wesley included only his *Christian Library* and Person's *On The Creed* as essential reading for the learning of theology.

Practical Divinity

Wesley referred to the essence of his work in the *Christian Library* as practical divinity (theology). He was not a systematic theologian like John Calvin or Martin Luther. Rather, Wesley was a practical theologian concerned about meeting the practical needs of Methodism. According to Thomas A. Langford, former Provost of Duke University and an author on British and philosophical theology:

The most immediately obvious fact is that the *Christian Library* is exactly what Wesley said it should be: "Extracts from the Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity." Intended to nurture Christian living, these writings reveal Wesley's theological sensitivity. Theology is important as it serves the interest of Christian formation. Theology is never an end, but is always a means for understanding and developing transformed living. There was little speculative interest involved in Wesley's theological investigations. He consistently turned theological reflection to practical service.⁷⁶

In addition to Langford, Steven J. Harper, Professor of Spiritual Formation and Wesleyan Studies at Asbury Seminary, highlights the role Wesley played as a spiritual guide for Methodism through his publications:

A further expression of Wesley's spiritual direction comes through the material which he produced for the edification of his followers and any others who might read them. It is not accidental or insignificant that his first published work (1733) was "A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week." This was followed in 1735 with his own translation of Thomas à Kempis' *Imitation of Christ*. Here was early evidence that Wesley would seek through his publications to spiritually guide and enrich the lives of others. The list continues with the publication of *A Christian Library*.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Thomas A. Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1983), 20-21.

⁷⁷ Steven J. Harper, "John Wesley: Spiritual Guide," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, Issue 20 (1985): 93.

The conclusions of these Wesley scholars are not surprising, when one is aware that Wesley took his idea for shaping the spiritual lives of Methodists in part from the precedent of the prominent Puritan Richard Baxter.

In 1662, Baxter, along with over two thousand other clergy, was ejected from the Church of England, because his puritan conscience would not allow him to accept all the doctrine and practices mandated by the Church in the Book of Common Prayer. No longer free to preach, Baxter began to compile *A Christian directory, or, A summ of practical theologie and cases of conscience directing Christians how to use their knowledge and faith, how to improve all helps and means, and to perform all duties, how to overcome temptations, and to escape or mortifie every sin*, which was completed for print in 1673. Baxter was relentless in this task because he had come to believe that the writings of practical divinity were of even greater use to the Church than preaching.⁷⁸ Wesley was also restricted by many bishops from preaching in the Church of England in the 1740s. During this time, he, too, turned to collecting practical divinity to help Methodists within the Church of England learn how to live an improving Christian life in the ordinariness of every day after having experienced conversion in the enthusiasm of the Evangelical Revival. In order to provide a complete body of practical divinity for Methodism, Wesley would turn to the writings of the Puritans.

⁷⁸ Richard Baxter, *An Apology for the Nonconformists Ministry* (London: Printed for T. Parkhurst and D. Newman, 1681), 13.

Why are there so many Puritans in *A Christian Library*?

Responding by letter on 25 March 1747 to John Smith, who opposed the irregularity of using lay preachers, Wesley revealed the heart of why he eventually included so many Puritans in the list of works he was finalizing for inclusion in the *Christian Library*:

I look upon him [Mr. Thomas Cartwright (1534/5-1603)], and the body of Puritans in that age . . . to have been both the most learned and most pious men that were then in the English nation. Nor did they separate from the Church [of England]; but were driven out, whether they would or no. . . . I am not careful for what may be a hundred years hence. He who governed the world before I was born, shall take care of it likewise when I am dead. My part is to improve the present moment. And, whatever may be the fruits of lay-preaching, when you and I are gone to our long home, every serious man has cause to bless God for those he may now see with his eyes; for the saving so many souls from death, and hiding a multitude of sins.⁷⁹

Wesley wanted the eminent learning and piety of the past English Puritans to help shape the present condition of the English Methodists. Outler claims, “Wesley had been reading Anglican and Puritan divinity in Oxford, and maybe before. . . . He knew the great Puritans equally well: William Ames, William Perkins, John Davenant, Richard Baxter, John Goodwin, John Bunyan, Isaac Ambrose, Isaac Watts.”⁸⁰ Moreover, Randy L. Maddox argues:

The Puritans placed a special emphasis on the reading of devotional materials. This was one of the areas where they deeply influenced Wesley. A large number of Puritan devotional writings were among the ‘practical divinity’ that he distilled in the *Christian Library* and elsewhere for circulation among his followers. . . . Wesley commended regular reading of this literature to all who desired to grow in grace.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XII:88.

⁸⁰ Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1, 79-80.

⁸¹ Maddox, *Responsible Grace*, 214.

In Wesley's preface to the Puritans in the *Library*, he explained, "I have . . . selected what I conceived would be of most general use, and most proper to form a complete body of practical divinity."⁸²

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the Puritans that Wesley selected for the *Christian Library* as "English Protestants of the late 16th and 17th centuries, who regarded the reformation of the Church under Elizabeth I as incomplete and sought to remove any remaining elements of church practice . . . which they considered corrupt, idolatrous, or unscriptural."⁸³ In many ways Methodism reflected the organization and methods of the Puritans. According to Patrick Collinson, the foremost modern authority on Puritanism, it "was more than a movement, it was . . . an institution, a church within the Church, with its own standards and nascent traditions, and even its own discipline and spiritual government."⁸⁴ Furthermore, Collinson points out that "the Bible . . . was the only authority which the puritan acknowledged in matters of religion. Where human authority failed to conform with even the general implication of scripture, as expounded and applied by the preacher, it must be resisted."⁸⁵ Based on the content and the authors Wesley selected for the *Library*, it is clear that he held both Puritanism and the Puritans in high regard.

⁸² John Wesley, *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which has been published in the English Tongue in Fifty Volumes*, Vol. VII (Bristol: Felix Farley, 1749-1755), 2-3.

⁸³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), s.v. "puritan, n. and adj.," <http://www.oed.com.er.lib.k-state.edu/Entry/154910> (accessed 15 April 2011).

⁸⁴ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 14.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

However, the paradox in Wesley's use of the *Christian Library* is that all of the Puritans contained in the *Library* faithfully preached the Calvinistic doctrines of predestination, election and adoption, which Wesley strongly opposed in his own preaching and publications and considered dangerous to his young Methodist movement. Wesley's Arminian theology, based in part on the teachings of Dutch Protestant theologian Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609), emphasized the doctrine of free will, and was diametrically opposed to Calvinism, the theology inherited from the reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) and developed by subsequent generations of Calvinists. Moreover, out of the fifty-eight Puritans Wesley selected for the *Christian Library*, all believed and taught some variation of Calvinistic theology.

McGonigle further highlights this peculiarity by claiming that "thirty-two seventeenth-century Puritan writers were used,"⁸⁶ and that "just as Puritan extracts formed the greater part of Wesley's Library, Puritan biographies also dominated this section, use being made of a total of thirty-six."⁸⁷ Although Wesley refuted Calvinism in other publications, he did not include anything in the *Library* that directly addressed the "Arminian/Calvinistic question [free will or predestination?]."⁸⁸ In his preface to the *Library*, Wesley clarified his intention:

Now who will be at the pains to extract the gold out of these baser mixtures!
Who will separate the pure, genuine Divinity, out of this huge, mingled mass? I
have made, as I was able, an attempt of this kind. I have endeavoured to extract
such a collection of English Divinity, as (I believe) is all true, all agreeable to the
oracles of God: as is all practical, unmixed with controversy of any kind; and all
intelligible to plain men.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Herbert Boyd McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2001), 208.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁸⁹ Wesley, *A Christian Library*, I:i-vi.

In order to accomplish this goal, McGonigle points out that Wesley “edited, corrected, revised and abridged, omitting what he considered the unnecessary technical details, and the unedifying theological argumentation.”⁹⁰ Moreover, Rack confirms that “it should be observed (especially by those who emphasize Wesley’s debt to the Puritans) that he carefully edited out their Calvinism.”⁹¹ Finally, McGonigle highlights that “between 1751 and 1755 John Wesley’s conflict with Calvinism was exemplified by his writings on perseverance and predestination, the anti-Calvinism expressed in his New Testament *Explanatory Notes*, and his careful excising of all Calvinistic sentiments from the *Christian Library*.”⁹²

Although Wesley’s editing of the Puritan works he selected for the *Library* is understandable, Rack emphasizes that “there is nothing . . . [in what Wesley had read prior or recommended previously for others to read] to prepare us for the startlingly large proportion of ‘Puritan’ writings in his ‘*Christian Library*’ (1749ff.). What led him to read so many is unclear.”⁹³ In the end, the surprising content of Wesley’s *Library* leads the acute observer to wrestle with the question, why did he include so many Puritans in the *Library*?

Wesley included a preponderance of Puritans in the *Christian Library* because he wanted to prevent antinomianism and because he desired to provide eminent examples for his itinerant preachers to emulate. In order to construct a bulwark against the threat of antinomianism, Wesley selected the literary works of Puritan writers that best instructed Methodists in how to grow in grace in the various circumstances of life. In order to help his itinerant preachers with

⁹⁰ McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, 210.

⁹¹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 307.

⁹² McGonigle, *Sufficient Saving Grace*, 210.

⁹³ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 307.

examples of how to live a life of piety based on conscience, Wesley chose several biographies of Puritans from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What motivated Wesley to prefer Puritans for the *Library* was his concern that history might repeat itself, and that Methodists might become responsible for causing a premature end to the current Evangelical Revival if they did not head off antinomianism and thus continue to grow in grace.

First, Wesley used the writings of Puritans to train young Methodist preachers, who did not have the privilege of formally learning divinity. Wesley considered the Puritans to be able tutors for Methodism because they were well suited for combating antinomianism. In his preface to the Puritans in the *Christian Library* he wrote:

Hence it is, that they [Puritans] are continually tearing up the very roots of Antinomianism, by showing at large, from the oracles of God, the absolute necessity, as of that legal repentance which is previous to faith, so of that evangelical repentance which follows it, and which is essential to that holiness without which we cannot see the Lord.⁹⁴

Wesley believed his careful selection and editing of the Puritan writers offered Methodists a piety to practice after conversion to Christ, which, if applied, would produce in them the antithesis of an antinomian life.

In order to provide Methodists with the Puritan works that would best prevent antinomianism, Wesley had to expurgate the “blemishes” he found in their writings. When he had finished his editing of the Puritans, Wesley wrote: “I persuade myself, most of these defects are removed in the following sheets. The most exceptionable phrases are laid aside; the obsolete and unintelligible expressions altered; ably long sentences shortened; many tedious circumlocutions are dropped, and many needless repetitions omitted.”⁹⁵ In addition, Wesley

⁹⁴ Wesley, *A Christian Library*, VII:2-3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

commented on two other blemishes. The first was the tendency of the Puritans to bring controversy into many of their writings on practical divinity. This weakness was easily rectified through simple omissions, and by carefully extracting only passages that were not controversial. Wesley's second problem with the Puritan writers was that "they generally give a low and imperfect view of sanctification or holiness."⁹⁶ With regard to the correction of this error, Wesley does not exude much confidence, especially when contrasted with the satisfaction he expressed regarding his correction of Puritan controversies:

The former [the controversy blemish] of these it was easy to remedy, by leaving out all that but glanced upon controversy; so that now all that fear God, though of various opinions, may read them both with advantage and pleasure. The latter defect [the low view of holiness], I trust, is fully supplied by the preceding and following tracts [i.e., those not written by Puritans].⁹⁷

Although Wesley believed that the Puritan writings had errors that needed to be corrected, he had high praise for the many "excellences" of the Puritan writers. He wrote: "Their judgment is generally deep and strong, their sentiments just and clear, and their tracts . . . full and comprehensive."⁹⁸ More important to Wesley, the Puritans were Christ-centered in their writings and eminent in their knowledge of the Scriptures:

They do indeed exalt Christ. . . . They speak of Him as those that have seen his glory, full of grace and truth. They sum up all things in Christ, deduce all things from Him, and refer all things to Him. . . . And, next to God himself, they honour his word. They are men mighty in the Scriptures, equal to any of those who went before them, and far superior to most that have followed them.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

By upholding Christ as the pattern for Christian living and by instructing Methodists in practical divinity from a pure knowledge of the Scriptures, Wesley believed the Puritan writings could provide Methodism with an antidote for the poison of antinomianism. By focusing on practical steps to grow in grace, young Methodists could avoid the antinomian trap of believing that their actions after salvation were unbounded.

Wesley turned to the Puritans in order to prevent Methodists from repeating the same antinomian errors of those who truncated a previous revival in England by ceasing to grow in grace and holiness. Wesley mentioned in one of his sermons the history he did not want to see repeated:

And in the year 1627, there was a wonderful pouring out of the Spirit in several parts of England, as well as in Scotland, and the north of Ireland. But from the time that riches and honour poured in upon them that feared and loved God, their hearts began to be estranged from him, and to cleave to the present world. No sooner was persecution ceased, and the poor, despised, persecuted Christians invested with power, and placed in ease and affluence, but a change of circumstances brought a change of spirit. Riches and honour soon produced their usual effects. Having the world, they quickly loved the world: They no longer breathed after heaven, but became more and more attached to the things of earth. So that in a few years, one who knew and loved them well, and was an unexceptionable judge of men and manners, (Dr. [John] Owen [prominent Puritan]) deeply lamented over them, as having lost all the life and power of religion.¹⁰⁰

Wesleyan historian A. Skevington Wood observed that Wesley was a passionate evangelist, who took seriously the ongoing care of those souls that responded to his preaching. Moreover, Wood believed that “[Wesley’s] emphasis on holiness was something more than a matter of sound doctrine or even of right living. Wesley recognized that it was only as Christians grew in grace and went on to maturity, that they would be kept from falling. Paradoxically, to stand still is to

¹⁰⁰ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VI:329-330.

be in danger of slipping back.”¹⁰¹ In Wesley’s estimation, the experiential wisdom of the Puritans would provide a practical solution:

But the peculiar excellency of these [Puritan] writers seems to be the building us up in our most holy faith. It is frequently observed, that, after the first joy of faith wherein the young believer rides as upon the wings of the wind, he either suddenly or gradually sinks down, and meets as it were a vast vacuity. He knows not what to do with his faith, or how to exercise himself unto godliness. There appears . . . a great gulf, an huge chasm, between the first and the perfect love. Now this Mr. Bolton, Dr. Preston, Dr. Sibbs, and their contemporaries, above all others, instruct us how to pass through; how to use the faith which God has given, and to go from strength to strength. They lead us by the hand in the paths of righteousness, and show us how, in the various circumstances of life, we may most surely and swiftly grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁰²

Despite having included the instruction of these Puritans (i.e., Bolton, Preston and Sibbs) in the eleven volumes of the *Christian Library* that he published in 1751, Wesley, at the end of 1752, was still waiting to see the influence that he anticipated the *Library* would have on Methodism. Later, after Wesley began hearing about the *Library’s* influence in the lives of Methodists, he edited and published some of those personal accounts in his *Arminian Magazine* (see chapter 5).

Not only did Wesley make good use of the Puritan writings in the *Library*, he included the biographies of the Puritans to provide appropriate examples for how to be related properly to God and to the Church. Biographies were included in the *Christian Library* because Wesley viewed them as valuable illustrations of “Christianity reduced to practice.”¹⁰³ In Wesley’s preface to *Fox’s Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs*, he emphasized the importance of

¹⁰¹ Arthur Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley: Evangelist* (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2007), 218.

¹⁰² Wesley, *A Christian Library*, VII:2-3.

¹⁰³ Wesley, *A Christian Library*, II:209.

the affective influence that comes through seeing and being inspired by the excellent examples of those, who reduced Christianity to practice:

After the venerable remains of Ignatius and Polycarp, closed with the artless, yet lively, discourses of Macarius, and John Arndt's nervous account of true Christianity, worthy of the earliest ages, I believed nothing could be more acceptable to the serious reader [emphasis mine], than to see this Christianity reduced to practice. I was therefore easily determined to subjoin to these, "The Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs." Here we see that pure and amiable religion evidently set forth before our eyes; assaulted, indeed, by all the powers of earth and hell, but more than conqueror over all. 2. In abridging this vast work I have purposely omitted, not only all the secular history, but likewise those accounts, writings, and examinations of the martyrs, which contained nothing particularly affecting [influential] or instructive. . . . 4. May we all learn from these worthies, to be, not almost only, but altogether, Christians! to reckon all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the experimental [experiential] knowledge of Jesus Christ! and not to count our lives dear unto ourselves, so we may finish our course with joy!¹⁰⁴

As a result of encountering these instructive spiritual biographies, Wesley hoped that Methodists would better learn what it meant to be altogether Christian, and increasingly value above all else an experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ, which was portrayed in the lives of Christian martyrs.

More than any other group in English history, the Puritans exemplified for Wesley how to live a pious life after the initial enthusiasm of conversion subsided. As Methodism embarked on its second decade of existence, many who had experienced radical transformation at conversion, were now faced with the challenge of continuing to pursue godliness within a society that was increasingly more accepting of their movement. More than the organizational structure and resources, which Wesley provided, Methodists needed concrete examples for how to live and maintain their faith in the various circumstances of life.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Fixated on the spiritual transformation that the Puritans offered potentially to Methodists, Wesley discounted the possible ramifications for Methodism with the Church of England if it were to embody the ideas and piety of Puritanism. As a result, he provided Methodism with two types of Puritan examples that were not wholly productive to maintaining an ongoing relationship with the Church of England: the commitment of Puritans to bring reform to the Church without becoming separatists, and the non-conforming actions of Puritans determined by their conscience, which disregarded personal consequences.

First, Wesley highlighted the Puritan examples of commitment to the established Church, while passionately attempting to reform it. Until the last decade of his life, Wesley instructed Methodists to do two things continually in the Church of England: attend worship services for the preaching of the Word and receive the ordinances (also referred to as sacraments, which included the Lord's Supper and Baptism). He did not believe Methodists were to separate from the Church of England.¹⁰⁵ On 27 June 1744, Wesley and the preachers he had invited to advise him at this first annual Conference for Methodism recorded the following *Minutes* from their conversation: “we began to consider points of discipline: . . . Q 7. Do we separate from the

¹⁰⁵ On 11 December 1789, in an article for the *Arminian Magazine* entitled, “Farther Thoughts on Separation from the Church”, Wesley wrote: “When the people joined together (simply to help each other to heaven) increased by hundreds and thousands, still they had no more thought of leaving the church than of leaving the kingdom. Nay, I continually and earnestly cautioned them against it, reminding them that we were a part of the Church of England, whom God raised up not only to save our own souls but to enliven our neighbours, those of the church in particular. And at the first meeting of all our preachers in Conference, in June 1744, I exhorted them to keep to the church, observing that this was our peculiar glory, not to form any new sect, but abiding in our own church to do to all men all the good we possibly could.” Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XIII:272-273. However, following Wesley's death on 2 March 1791, Methodism separated from the Church of England because, Wesley's “passing from the scene would remove both the centre of unity for the Methodists themselves and their strongest link to the Church. For some years, therefore, he had carefully been taking steps to prevent this inevitable separation.” Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, 2nd ed., 320.

Church [of England]? A. We conceive not: We hold communion therewith for conscience's sake, by constantly attending both the word preached, and the sacraments administered therein."¹⁰⁶ Like many of the Puritans he selected for the *Library*, Wesley struggled to remain connected to the Church of England in part because he hoped to bring reform to it and to the nation.

Second, Wesley also drew attention to the examples of Puritans whose actions of non-conformity to the Church were governed by their conscience. Even before he edited their biographies for Methodists, Wesley was attracted to the lives of the Puritans. Rack offers a suggestion for how this may have happened:

This opening up to the old Puritan divines was very probably partly due to experience as well as reading. Though it is unlikely that their irregularities influenced his own, Wesley did become aware of their views and sufferings and sympathized with them, seeing parallels with the Methodist case up to a point. The Puritans, too, had preached the gospel without fully conforming to church order and had been persecuted and ejected for it.¹⁰⁷

Wesley hoped to sharpen the consciences of his young Methodist preachers through an observation of how the Puritans lived so courageously according to their conscience, which had been shaped by their knowledge of the Scriptures. Although Wesley encouraged both connection and non-conformity, Methodists became more detached from the Church as they became more like the late seventeenth-century Puritans, whose works he included in the *Christian Library*. However, unlike the Puritans, who were ejected from the Church of England in 1662, Methodists, in spite of Wesley's lifelong effort to the contrary, eventually separated themselves from the Church of England after Wesley's death. Although Wesley's unique use of

¹⁰⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VIII:279-280.

¹⁰⁷ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 307.

Puritan writings and biographies in the *Christian Library* contributed to the unintended result of separation, the influence of the *Library* on the spiritual lives of Methodists also helped to accomplish what Wesley intended for Methodism. In the next chapter, this study will explore how to evaluate whether Wesley's expectations for the *Christian Library* were met, and further how the *Library* may have influenced Methodism.

Chapter 5 - An Appropriate Standard

Wesley stated the standard by which he would ultimately determine the success of the *Christian Library* in the prefaces he wrote throughout the fifty volumes of his collection. Because his goals for the *Library* were to be measured by a qualitative change in the lives of Methodists, Wesley did not mention any quantitative goals for it in the prefaces of the *Library* or in any of his other works. Although he had written, edited and abridged numerous short and cheap publications that had generated funds for Methodism, Wesley's purpose for the *Library* was not monetary gain. Instead of discontinuing his work on the *Library* after journaling his disappointment at the end of 1752, Wesley continued his inexhaustible efforts to publish the remainder of the *Library* over the next three years because of the influence he wanted the completed collection to have on the lives of Methodists. Also, as previously discussed, Wesley further subsidized the purchase of the *Library* for preachers who could not afford it. Despite Wesley's standard for the *Library*, the influence he intended it to have on Methodism (which will be analyzed later in this chapter), recent scholarship has chosen to interpose other inappropriate standards, which have resulted in the current consensus that Wesley's *Christian Library* was a failure.

The Alleged Failures of A *Christian Library*

There are two inappropriate standards that Wesley scholars have interposed on the *Christian Library*, which Wesley himself never used to measure its success or failure. On the one hand, most scholars have assessed that the *Library* was a financial failure because of the limited sales and the debt that Wesley incurred by its publication. According to Rivers, "With a

print run of one hundred for each volume, the *Library* had a much narrower circulation than Wesley's other publications in his lifetime, and was probably more influential in Thomas Jackson's revised second edition [1819-1827]."¹⁰⁸ From a similar point of view, Rack concludes that, "the *Christian Library* . . . was not a particularly successful project, though individual works of the same devotional kind were published more successfully."¹⁰⁹ Although Wesley would have agreed that the devotional works that he included in the *Library* would have had wider circulation and more success if they had been published separately, his relentless commitment to providing what he called a "complete body of practical divinity"¹¹⁰ for his preachers and all Methodism attests to a different overriding purpose for the *Library* than sales or distribution.

On the other hand, some scholars have determined that the *Christian Library* was a literary failure, filled with inconsistencies in its approach and misrepresentations of what other authors intended to communicate through their works. Regarding Wesley's approach, Heitzenrater argues:

The results of his efforts in the *Christian Library* are impressive, both from an editorial and from a publishing point of view[.] The principles by which he developed the project are more or less evident in the finished product[.] However, if we test his principles by his practices (results), we discover that the collection did not necessarily live up to all of his (or others') expectations.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Rivers, "Religious Publishing," 587.

¹⁰⁹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 347.

¹¹⁰ Wesley, *A Christian Library*, I:i-vi.

¹¹¹ Heitzenrater, "John Wesley's *A Christian Library*, Then and Now," 136.

Although Wesley had acknowledged on one occasion that his expectations for the *Library* had not been met, he never indicated that this would prevent the *Library* from eventually accomplishing its purpose of influencing the spiritual lives of Methodists.

In addition to Heitzenrater's literary criticism of Wesley's *Library* as a finished product, Rivers adds her concerns about the integrity of Wesley's treatment of the works he selected:

Wesley's lifelong aim was to reconcile these extremes, the Reformation, puritan, and nonconformist tradition of faith and experience with the Catholic and seventeenth-century Anglican tradition of works and holiness. From the point of view of his opponents he failed dismally: to Anglican moralists he was an enthusiast, and to Calvinists and 'antinomians' a preacher of the law. His *Christian Library* can be seen as a brave and equally doomed attempt to achieve in a relatively popular and accessible way what Baxter laboured at more systematically and for a more sophisticated audience in *Catholick Theologie*. Wesley's awareness of the strengths and historical limitations of each tradition is explicit in his prefatory comments on the puritan writers he edited and on *The Whole Duty of Man*. . . . Thus the puritans build up faith but neglect holiness; the *Whole Duty* offers instruction in holiness to those already justified by faith. Wesley is attempting to make works which in their historical context were discontinuous and mutually antagonistic into a complementary whole.¹¹²

But Rivers does not stop there with her literary concerns about Wesley's *Library*. She further believes that "Wesley's editorial practice created certain problems. His decision to delete what he regarded as error and to make all his chosen authors consistent with one another meant that he drastically misrepresented some of them. A striking example of this is Bunyan."¹¹³ After abridging and reworking sections of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* for publishing in 1743, Wesley cut the trial of the Doubters out of his abridged edition of *The Holy War in A Christian*

¹¹² Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, 252.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 218-19.

Library in order to restrain Bunyan's predestinarianism.¹¹⁴ Unleashing some of her most spirited comments, Rivers contends:

[The] reshaping of Bunyan's beliefs justly brought down on Wesley's head the wrath of his Calvinist opponent Richard Hill, who in *A Review of all the Doctrines taught by the Rev. Mr. John Wesley (1772)* characterised Wesley's abridged Bunyan as a counterfeit. . . . He showed that Wesley's attempt to make the works he edited consistent with themselves and with his own writings had failed, and he compiled a list of contradictions entitled "A Farrago."¹¹⁵

Although Rivers may overestimate Hill's accuracy in his indictment of Wesley, the example well illustrates the opposition Wesley faced outside Wesleyan Methodism because of his agenda-driven editorial methods.

Wesley read and prepared some of the selections for the *Christian Library* while riding his horse between visits to Methodist societies. In 1772, when "Mr. Hill" challenged Wesley's claim to have edited out all the contradictions between the writings he selected for the *Christian Library*, Wesley admitted that not every sentence in the fifty volumes was agreeable to the oracles of God before offering this explanation:

I was obliged to prepare most of those tracts for the press, just as I could snatch time in traveling, not transcribing them . . . but only marking the lines with my pen, and altering or adding a few words here and there, as I had mentioned in the preface. (2.) As it was not in my power to attend the press, that care necessarily devolved on others; through whose inattention a hundred passages were left in, which I had scratched out; yet not so many as to make up "forty volumes," no, nor forty pages. It is probable too, I myself might overlook some sentences which were not suitable to my own principles. It is certain, the correctors of the press did this, in not a few instances. . . . The plain inference is, If [emphasis is Wesley's] there are a hundred passages in the "Christian Library" which contradict any or all of my doctrines, these are no proof that I contradict myself. Be it observed once for all, therefore, citations from the "Christian Library" prove nothing but the carelessness of the correctors.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., X:382.

Previously, on 5 May 1771, in a letter addressed to Christopher Hopper, Wesley had already voiced his intention to correct the mistakes that remained in the *Christian Library*: “If I live to finish the correction of my own works, I shall then revise the *Christian Library*.”¹¹⁷ There is nothing, however, that followed in Wesley’s writings or correspondence to suggest that he ever carried out his intention. Moreover, even though Wesley made tentative plans to correct the *Library* before his death, he never ceased to mandate that his itinerant and student preachers read the *Christian Library* in its entirety even after it was attacked publicly for its inconsistencies.

One scholar who included both types of alleged “failure” in his evaluations of the *Christian Library* was Thomas Walter Herbert. In his book, *John Wesley as Author and Editor*, Herbert argued that “in many respects the work was a dismal failure. Despite all efforts for distribution through the channels of a highly efficient organization, and in spite of his own earnest recommendations, the sale was slow. . . . Most disappointing of all, the *Library* was itself an intrinsically faulty performance.”¹¹⁸ Herbert goes on to explain:

His habit in abridging was to furnish the printer with the original volume of a work through which he had gone, scratching out passages to be deleted and writing other necessary alterations between the lines or in the margins. This was his procedure with *The Christian Library*. The printers and correctors of the press, either through their own carelessness or through inevitable misunderstanding of Wesley’s markings, left in the text ‘a hundred passages’ which he had meant to exclude.¹¹⁹

Thus from Herbert’s perspective, the haste and inefficiency of Wesley’s practices did not afford him the very product he desired.

¹¹⁷ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., XII:311.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Walter Herbert, *John Wesley as Editor and Author* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1940), 25.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

In the end, even Heitzenrater, who attempts to concede some level of success to the *Library*, is unfair in his comments:

Apparently Wesley's publicity efforts succeeded, at least in one respect[.] The edition appears to have sold out, since no copies were listed in the 1791 inventory of publications remaining in stock at his death[.] Nevertheless, he never produced the second edition (and/or corrigenda) that he had contemplated in his sparring with Richard Hill[.] It remained for a subsequent editor, Thomas Jackson, to reproduce the work early in the nineteenth century[.]¹²⁰

By inferring that the *Library* failed because Wesley died and was unable to revise and republish it, Heitzenrater offers another example of how scholars have used inappropriate standards in their attempts to evaluate the historical significance of the *Christian Library*.

Wesley's Standard for A *Christian Library*

In order to be fair to Wesley, it is appropriate to determine the failure or success of the *Christian Library* on Wesley's terms not on the terms imposed by scholars. Therefore, to evaluate the *Library* from Wesley's perspective, one must look at the influence it had on the "serious readers" of Methodism. In his preface to the *Library*, Wesley stated four outcomes that he hoped the *Library* would produce in the lives of Methodists, which provide an appropriate standard for measuring the eventual success or failure of the *Library*'s influence.

First, Wesley hand-picked exceptional content for the *Library* in order to help the "serious reader" gain the most from his life through reading what Wesley considered the finest examples of practical divinity available in the English language from the past:

WE commonly believe, that there is not in the world, a more complete body of Practical Divinity than is now extant in the English tongue, in the writings of the last and the present century. And perhaps this belief is not altogether owing to a natural prejudice in favour of our own country. It seems rather to be grounded on the truth of things, on solid, rational observation. . . . Indeed there can be no

¹²⁰ Heitzenrater, "John Wesley's *A Christian Library*, Then and Now," 138.

reasonable doubt hereof, in any who do but calmly consider, (even before they are acquainted with the writings themselves,) that we have not wanted men of natural abilities, no ways inferior to those other countries have produced, whether in earlier or later ages. Whatever assistance art could give, we have also largely enjoyed. And may we not add, (“Not unto us, O Lord, but unto thy name be the praise!”) that the piety which has shone in many of our countrymen, has been equal to their learning? They were indeed burning and shining lights, in their successive generations; men whom the Spirit of God endued with the truest wisdom, and taught to understand even the deep things of God. . . . Hence we have in English as great a variety of books, on every branch of religion, as is to be found, (I believe it may be said) in any language under heaven. And this variety has been abundantly increased, particularly in the present age, by numerous translations from all languages, ancient as well as modern. So that were a man to spend four-score years, with the most indefatigable application, he could go but a little way toward reading over what has been published in our own tongue, within these last hundred and fifty years. . . . But this very plenty creates a difficulty. One who desires to make the best of a short life, is lost among five hundred folios, and knows not where to begin. He cannot read all, and would willingly read those only that will best reward his labour. But who will point out these? Who will give him a clew, whereby he may guide himself through this labyrinth?¹²¹

Wesley began his preface with a general description of the content of the *Library*, and the exemplary people whose practical divinity he had selected and abridged in order to inspire and instruct efficiency in the spiritual lives of Methodists. What he wanted to see in Methodism was the same eminent piety and learning accompanied by wisdom and a deep understanding of God that he had encountered in the writings and biographies of past English countrymen. For him there was a clear connection between reading and helping Methodists make the most of their spiritual lives. Therefore, Wesley designed the *Christian Library* to guide the “serious readers” of Methodism toward experiencing the greatest spiritual return from their willingness to read practical divinity.

¹²¹ Wesley, *A Christian Library*, I:i-vi.

Second, Wesley edited the *Library* to help the “serious reader” become “perfect [as a Christian], thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.”¹²² To facilitate the possibility of this spiritual transformation in the lives of Methodists, Wesley carefully mined what he selected for the *Library*. He described his intentions in the preface:

Now who will be at the pains to extract the gold out of these baser mixtures! Who will separate the pure, genuine Divinity, out of this huge, mingled mass? I have made, as I was able, an attempt of this kind. I have endeavour’d to extract such a collection of *English Divinity*, as (I believe) is all true, all agreeable to the oracles of God: as is all practical, unmixed with controversy of any kind; and all intelligible to plain men: such as is not superficial, but going down to the depth, and describing the height of Christianity. And yet not mystical, not obscure to any of those, who are experienced in the ways of God. I have also particularly endeavour’d to preserve a consistency throughout, that no part might contradict any other; but all conspire together, “to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.” . . . But in order to this, I have been obliged, not only to omit the far greatest part of several eminent authors, but also to add what was needful, either to clear their sense, or to correct their mistakes. And in a design of this nature, I apprehend myself to be at full liberty so to do. I therefore take no author for better, for worse; (as indeed I dare not call any man Rabbi:) but endeavour to follow each so far as he follows Christ.¹²³

Although Wesley himself never claimed to have experienced Christian perfection and did not consider Christian perfection to be normative for the Christian life, he did believe it was a possibility for all Methodists. Defined most often in simple terms as the experience or ongoing condition of loving God and loving others perfectly, Wesley saw Christian perfection as a gift that God could give any Christian who positioned his spiritual life to receive it. Though this difficult theological concept is beyond the scope of this study, Wesley listed very specifically what “doing good” and “doing no harm” should increasingly look like in the lives of the Methodists (see Wesley’s “General Rules” for his societies cited earlier in this study). Should

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

the *Library* prove to be as influential as Wesley desired, more Methodists would either experience Christian perfection or demonstrate a progress toward perfection by their good works and good words.

Third, Wesley organized the *Library* in chronological order to help the “serious reader” become “more clearly satisfied that the genuine religion of Jesus Christ [or true Christianity], has been one and the same from the beginning.”¹²⁴ Wesley continued:

I follow (nearly, not scrupulously) the order of time, wherein these authors wrote. And that for two reasons: first, that the serious reader may be the more clearly satisfied that the genuine religion of Jesus Christ, has been one and the same from the beginning: and secondly, that if it should please God to call me hence, before the work is brought to a period, any who thinks good to pursue the same design, may the more easily go on where I leave off.¹²⁵

Beginning with German Lutheran John Arndt’s work, *True Christianity*, in the first volume of the *Library*, Wesley was intent on demonstrating through his selecting and editing of works for the *Library* that primitive (true) Christianity was a common thread that connected them all. If the *Library* was influential, Methodists would follow the lead of Wesley and become more open to learning from others in the history of Christianity, persons of eminent piety and theological understanding who stood outside Methodism and the Church of England.

Fourth, Wesley prayed that God would use the *Library* to shape the hearts of Methodists. He closed the preface with this prayer for the *Library*: “May the Giver of every good gift, give it his blessing, and write his love in every reader’s heart! Kingswood-School, March 25, 1749”¹²⁶ What Wesley believed, Wesley prayed. He believed that only God could make the *Library* a successful influence. Therefore, he asked God to bless Methodism by pouring His love into the

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

hearts of “serious readers” who would read the practical divinity of the *Christian Library*. While an historical analysis cannot measure “heart change,” historians can and should examine the words and actions of Methodists who have claimed to experience the influence of the *Library* in this way. Thus, this study now turns its focus to the lives of Methodists to determine whether the *Library* was instrumental in producing the four intended outcomes that have just been discussed.

The Influence of A *Christian Library*

The successful influence of the *Christian Library* is best observed in the personal accounts of Methodists. Part of the success of the *Library*’s influence on Methodism came simply from its association with Wesley. On 11 January 1750, the “Rev. Mr. [J] Milner” wrote to Wesley from Chipping:

My most dear and Rev. Brother, whom I love in the Truth. Great was my astonishment at my first reading, of those wonderful things that God by your instrumentality has wrought: And scarcely was my surprise less, when I received the kind notice of your Christian Library. A work that will be a blessing to all for future ages, as well as the present, and promote the glory of God and the good of souls to the end of time, Most cheerfully do I subscribe to it. . . . I endeavoured, when at Clapham, to engage my friend to write to you. . . . If you think proper to give him a word of encouragement and advice,—for he has a high veneration for your judgment, and send him the proposals for the Christian Library, I hope he will engage in promoting so good a design. For my part, I will not fail to press him to it, and some others of my acquaintance.¹²⁷

Only someone as great as Wesley was in the eyes of Wesleyan Methodists could have elicited such a response from someone who had just subscribed to something he had never read.

Most of the evidence for the influence of the *Christian Library* on Methodism is found in the autobiographies of obscure preachers published by Wesley in his monthly periodical, the *Arminian Magazine* and later included in the multi-volume work, *The Lives of Early Methodist*

¹²⁷ Wesley, ed., *Arminian Magazine*, 1797, 512.

Preachers, edited by Thomas Jackson who was also the editor for the second edition of the *Christian Library* (1819-1827). In addition to the influence the *Library* had on the lives and ministries of men who served Methodism behind the scenes, it had a significant influence on the most prominent early American Methodist, Francis Asbury (to be discussed later in this chapter).

Following Wesley's instructions, many early itinerant Methodist preachers kept journals or wrote autobiographies. One instance is John Valton, an early Methodist preacher and contemporary of Wesley. For this study, Valton is a clear example of a person who experienced the spiritual direction Wesley provided for Methodism through the *Christian Library*. Valton wrote:

March 6th.—I have been exceedingly tried and tempted for the last four days. I have been too dead to God; and if I trifle but for a moment, I receive condemnation. The voice of God, by the secret influence of His Holy Spirit, warns me of the least danger. It seems as though the Lord were calling me off from terrestrial things to close communion with Himself. Lord, I bless Thee, that Thou hast put it into my heart to pray for this; and hast discovered to me my utter helplessness, that without Thee I can do nothing. I have lately read in “the *Christian Library*” a treatise on Fasting, Robert Bolton; a holy minister, and a skilful surgeon. It is either by fasting twice a week, or by early rising, that I am so weak as not to kneel upright in prayer for any length of time. If it proceed from the latter, I am sure it will be a far heavier trial to lie in bed than to rise at an early hour.¹²⁸

The practical instruction that Wesley selected for the “serious readers” of Methodism was useful to this distressed preacher, who was stuck in his attempt to discern the cause of his spiritual weakness. This is the result Wesley intended for the practical divinity he made available to Methodists in the *Christian Library*.

Later, Valton, having recently heard Wesley preach in London, mentioned again the usefulness of the *Christian Library* in his life:

¹²⁸ Thomas Jackson, ed. *The Lives of Early Methodist Preachers*, Vol. VI, 3rd ed. (London: Printed by William Nichols, 1866), 32-33.

August 12th.—I have received great light by reading the “Gospel Glass,” in “The Christian Library:” a very searching book. I discovered many spots, but was persuaded the Lord would wipe them all away; and I saw so many marks of a sound conversion as to afford me great comfort, and, especially, as I was assured, that what I had discovered amiss should all be done away. O, how manifold are the mercies of God to me! To recount them would be as impossible as to number the sands on the sea-shore. God is love: and they that have most love are most in the Divine favour; for God loves His own image. O Lord, I do beseech Thee, enable me to glorify Thee in my body and my spirit, which are Thine; make me willing to be spent for Thee in Thy service, upright and honest in Thy sight! Let Thy glory only be my aim, Thy cross my boast and joy, and Thy crown my final portion! I long to serve Thee for Thy own sake, to be wholly Thine, and ever abased, as a poor nothing, at Thy feet.¹²⁹

In addition to receiving spiritual direction earlier through the writings of Bolton, Valton later experienced through the serious reading of Larry Stuckley’s, *Gospel Glass*, what he described as conviction and forgiveness of sin, followed by assurance and a longing to respond to God’s mercies by giving his life wholly to God’s service.

In another autobiographical account, Robert Wilkinson wrote about what he experienced in his soul in 1767, prior to becoming an itinerant preacher:

In the beginning of July, as Stephen Watson and I were sitting together, he had a volume of the Christian Library in his hand, out of which he read one of Mr. Rutherford’s Letters. When he had done, “Stephen,” said I, “I find, as it were, a melting warmness in my breast.” “So do I too,” said he. He then asked, “Cannot you believe that God has pardoned your sins?” “No,” said I, “I dare not:” on which I immediately lost my comfort. Sunday, July 12th.—Joseph Watson preached in the chapel in Weardale. He gave out that hymn,—“*All ye that pass by, To Jesus draw nigh: To you is it nothing that Jesus should die? Your ransom and peace, Your surety He is; Come, see if there ever was sorrow like His. For you and for me, He pray’d on the tree: The prayer is accepted, the sinner is free.*” Then all within me cried out, “That sinner am I, Who on Jesus rely, And come for the pardon God cannot deny.” I then believed that God for Christ’s sake had forgiven all my sins, and found that peace which arises from a sense of reconciliation. The people of God who knew my distress perceived by my countenance that the Lord was gracious to me, before I had the opportunity to tell

¹²⁹ Ibid., 53.

them. I then went rejoicing home, and could not help telling what God had done for my soul.¹³⁰

Here again, Wesley's purpose for the *Library* was realized. Wilkinson, recalling his encounter with the "Letters" of Samuel Rutherford, testified that the *Christian Library* was instrumental in helping him to believe emphatically that God had forgiven all of his sins.

Another example that illustrates the Library's influence in the early life of itinerant preachers is Thomas Hanson. In his autobiography, Hanson gave an account of the *Library's* importance in his life following a sequence of events that began on 16 July 1757:

On July the 16th, at night, 1757, under my brother Joseph's prayer, I yielded, sunk, and, as it were, died away. My heart with a kind, sweet struggle melted into the hands of God. I was for some hours lost in wonder, by the astonishing peace, love, and joy which flowed into my heart like a might torrent. When I came to recollect myself, I asked, what hast thou done? It was sweetly, but deeply impressed, "I have made thee mine." No tongue can tell what peace, love, joy and assurance I then felt. . . . A few days after my happy conversion, I felt anger at one who persecuted us. Soon after my peace left me. Then the tempter said "He that is born of God sinneth not. But thou hast sinned: therefore thou art not born of God. Thou hast deceived thyself." I was then in a great measure ignorant of his devices: so gave up my shield: and was in the depth of distress, ready to chuse strangling for near two hours. It then came to my mind, what if I had deceived myself? Pardon is free and given in an instant. It is ready for needy, lost sinners, I will go as I am, cast myself on the ground, and on Christ at once. My former peace, love, and joy returned in a moment. This sore trial taught me more watchfulness. After this I walked in great love, and peace, for near two years, buying up every opportunity for prayer, hearing, and reading. I read the chief part of the Christian library, with Mr. Wesley's works that were then published; and several other books to my great help, instruction and comfort.¹³¹

Hanson's story illustrates the reality that many young converts to Christ in Methodism faced.

They needed instruction for how to continue living as a Christian with peace, love and joy after

¹³⁰ Ibid., 211, 214-5.

¹³¹ Wesley, ed., *Arminian Magazine*, 1780, 481.

conversion. In Hanson's life and the lives of others, reading the *Christian Library* helped to provide guidance, understanding and the consolation Methodists desired.

The *Library* was also useful for helping to develop leaders within Methodist societies. Members of the societies who were serious about pursuing holiness were organized into small groups that were called classes, which usually consisted of twelve people and a leader. These classes often provided women and those who were uneducated with a rare opportunity to be leaders. Some, like John Mason, developed their leadership skills as class leaders before they became itinerant preachers. Before he ever labored as a traveling Methodist preacher in parts of England, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, Mason learned how to be a class leader in Portsmouth. Describing what he experienced in his soul, Mason recorded:

When Mr. Francis Gilbert appointed me to take care of a class, it was a great trial. But so much the more did the Lord make it a blessing to me. For while I prayed for my brethren, and laboured to help them forward in the way to the kingdom, he gave me great consolation in my own soul. And I began to feel a stronger desire for the salvation of poor sinners. I reproved, advised, and comforted, as opportunity served: being, at the same time, particularly careful over my own behaviour. Mean time, by the desire of my friends, I sometimes read a Sermon, or some part of the Christian Library. I did this, first in our own Society, and afterward in that of a neighbouring town. Sometimes also, I ventured to give a few words of exhortation; and the people not only bore with my weakness, but urged me to do it more frequently. Some time after, I felt a strong conviction, that it was my duty to preach. I did so occasionally; and though it was with much weakness, fear, and trembling, the Lord owned my feeble attempts: the people were profited, and my own soul was helped forward in the grace of God.¹³²

Mason's life is an example of those who were aided by the resource of the *Christian Library* to begin to develop as leaders in Methodism. Wesley's *Library* was an effective teaching tool for leaders at every level within Methodism.

¹³² Ibid., 653-654.

Although it is unclear how much influence the *Christian Library* had on late eighteenth-century Americans or early American Methodism, what is clear is that it was read by Methodists who became missionaries to America. The most notable example of the *Library*'s influence on one of Wesley's missionaries to America is Francis Asbury. A current leading historian of Early American Methodism, John Wigger, argues:

Francis Asbury lived one of the most remarkable lives in American history, a life that many have admired but few have envied. The son of an English gardener, he became one of America's leading religious voices and the person most responsible for shaping American Methodism. Through sheer perseverance and dedication to a single goal, he changed American popular religion—and by extension American culture—as much as anyone ever has.¹³³

At the end of 1776, during the American Revolution with English and American armies cannonading in the distance, Asbury was reading the *Christian Library*.¹³⁴ Asbury, the only American missionary sent by Wesley to remain in America throughout the war, being limited in his ability to itinerate, records his peaceful and relaxing experience of reading the *Library* on 25 November 1776, "My soul was calm and comfortable. I have applied myself much to reading Whitby [an apologist for Arminian theology]: but he has so much to say about different men's opinions, that it makes the labour of reading him too dry and tedious. Now I began to read the *Christian Library*."¹³⁵ What volumes Asbury had and how much he read is unknown. However, if he followed Wesley's reading instructions for the preachers published in the *Large Minutes*, he

¹³³ John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 2.

¹³⁴ James Lewis, *Francis Asbury: Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church* (London: Epworth Press, 1927), 58.

¹³⁵ Elmer T. Clark, Editor-in-Chief, J. Manning Potts and Jacob S. Payton, eds., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, Vol. 1 (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 205.

would have read whatever volumes he had on hand straight through from the beginning to the end.

On 8 January 1816, in the last address he wrote to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Asbury made clear that his first experience of reading the *Library* was in England, not America. While addressing the issues that were confronting American Methodism, Asbury makes some revealing comments about Wesley's "collecting" (his practice of extracting and abridging the best sections of practical divinity, which he began as a student at Oxford) for the *Christian Library*:

We think that among the very best, and greatest human authors who have written to admiration on the great truths of God, yet have written large volumes on different subjects and have made large extracts from other authors, have been led into seeming or real inconsistencies, which might be made use of by their enemies as contradicting some of the great truths of gospel doctrine and order, which they had nobly defended in some of their other writing, and that by oversight, and that we scruple not to say of our great John [Wesley] the divine. You yourselves having only read his own works think and believe you find some strong Calvinistic expressions in his own writing and doubtless you would find many more if they are not corrected in the fifty volumes of his Christian Library extracted from Puritan-Calvinistic writers. Our old Father [John Wesley] in the last grand Fletcher controversy was most severely pressed by his Calvinistic opponents on these Calvinistic phrases left in his own works and in the Christian Library. Your Father [Francis Asbury] when a youth became possessed of Mr. Wesley's writings, and for some years almost laid aside all other books but the Bible, and applied himself exceeding closely in reading every book that Mr. Wesley had written because he had such ways and means of obtaining the use of them without a purchase.¹³⁶

Asbury's comments implied that those attending the conference had neither read Wesley's *Library* nor been informed about the editorial errors or Calvinistic blemishes that were contained in its first edition. Clearly, Asbury's encounter of the inconsistencies in the *Library* did not hinder the spiritual influence it had on his early development as an itinerant preacher in England,

¹³⁶ Manning J. Potts, Editor-in-Chief, Elmer T. Clark and Jacob S. Payton, eds., *The Journal and Letters of Francis Asbury*, Vol. 3 (London: Epworth Press, 1958), 531-533.

his unexpected role as the emerging leader of American Methodism following the American Revolution, and his legacy as the first Bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Although Methodists in America apparently had little exposure to Wesley's second major collection, the influence of the *Library* on Asbury did not escape either his final address to the General Conference or his personal influence on the leaders of American Methodism.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

Although the preface of the *Christian Library* reveals Wesley's clear standard for measuring the spiritual influence of the *Library*, he never published his own comprehensive evaluation of the *Library* other than a premature and partial assessment in his journal entry at the end of 1752. In addition, he provided some public responses to specific criticisms of the *Library* in 1760 and again in the early 1770s. Evidently, Wesley maintained his confidence in the *Library* as he published some of his personal letters that recommended the *Library* to others in the 1780s. However, he did not live long enough to complete his revisions to the *Library* nor did he leave Methodism with his final word on the overall significance of the *Christian Library*.

While the *Christian Library* did not have the immediate sales, rapid distribution or multiple editions that modern scholarship uses to determine the success of a published work, Wesley's first edition sold moderately well. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of Wesley and his itinerant preachers to circulate the *Library*, Gordon S. Wakefield, a Methodist author and former connexional editor for Epworth Press, claims: "The Christian Library sold better in the nineteenth century than when it was first published."¹³⁷ Even though Monk points out that the *Christian Library* did not "share the phenomenal success that most of his abridgements enjoyed," he also emphasizes that Wesley "never ceased to insist that his preachers study it for their own instruction and share it with the societies."¹³⁸ Whether Methodists in the societies were

¹³⁷ Gordon S. Wakefield, *Methodist Spirituality* (London: Epworth Press, 1999), 27.

¹³⁸ Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 29.

influenced more by reading the *Christian Library* or hearing it read publicly is difficult to assess. However, the autobiographies discussed in the previous chapter indicate the latter.

Wesley's editing and inclusion of the Puritans in the *Library* helped Methodism in two important ways. First, the writings of the Puritans helped to keep the perceived threat of antinomianism at bay. The fact that Wesley and the connexion continued to evaluate the leanings of Methodism toward Calvinism's main threat, antinomianism, at each of the annual Methodist Conferences from 1744 until 1789 suggests that Methodism never surrendered to antinomianism under Wesley's leadership.¹³⁹ Second, the biographies of the Puritans appear to have encouraged Methodists to maintain a symbiotic relationship with the Church of England. The critical conversations about whether Methodism should separate from the Church of England, recorded in the *Large Minutes* published in 1789, were informed in part by the Puritan biographies of the *Library*, which Wesley had required all preachers of the connexion to read since 1753.¹⁴⁰ According to David Hempton, a social historian of religion, this was beneficial to Wesley and Methodism in the following ways: "Methodists, like clever parasites, took from the tradition [Church of England] what they needed, including the relative tolerance with which it was treated, and then established an independent existence by embracing the enthusiasm and populism that Anglicans generally despised."¹⁴¹ Remaining within the Church of England positioned Methodism to grow in numbers more easily. From Hempton's perspective,

¹³⁹ Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, 3rd ed., VIII:336-338. "The fifth edition [of the *Large Minutes*], garnering the work of JW's lifetime in shaping a formal connexional discipline was published in 1789." W. Reginald Ward and Richard Heitzenrater, eds., *The Works of John Wesley*, Bicentennial ed., Vol. 23, Journal and Diaries VI, 1776-1786 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 181.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, VIII:321-322.

¹⁴¹ Hempton, *Methodism*, 19.

“Eighteenth-century Methodism, throughout the English-speaking world, was essentially a sub-species of Anglicanism, but with a greater capacity to adapt to the changing conditions of a new world order.”¹⁴² The example of the Puritans who attempted to reform without separating from the Anglican Church helped Methodists remain connected to the Church of England in order to accomplish their mission of saving souls and spreading holiness.

Based on the collaborative evidence that supports the intended outcomes that Wesley introduced in his preface to the *Library*, I believe the *Christian Library* had a substantial positive influence on Methodism. First, the *Library* influenced the efficiency of the itinerant preachers of Methodism. Wesley detested idleness and his prescription of daily reading of the *Library* helped Methodist preachers to make better use of their time. For both the student preachers taking courses at the Kingswood School and the itinerant preachers having regular conversations with Wesley, the content of the *Library* provided much of the education they needed in lieu of formal theological training to preach and to have credibility within Methodism. Although many young men became itinerant preachers because they wanted to travel and preach like Wesley, the amount of disciplined reading required to finish the *Library* helped to shape aspiring preachers into “serious readers” and learners like Wesley. By far the best documented life for this type of successful influence is that of Francis Asbury, one of the greatest Methodists other than Wesley himself whom the *Library* clearly influenced to make the most of his life.

Second, the anecdotal evidence for the *Library*’s influence in successfully bringing Methodists closer to Christian perfection is strongly supported by the autobiographies of Valton, Wilkinson, Mason, and Hanson. Although the examples given in this study consist primarily of itinerant Methodist preachers who were obscure,

¹⁴² Ibid.

the ability of the *Library* to shape the spiritual lives of “serious readers” or listeners within the scope of Methodism inwardly and outwardly is clearly attested by their personal accounts.

Finally, the descriptions of God’s love being experienced as the direct result of reading or listening to the *Christian Library* recorded in the autobiographies of the previous chapter suggest that Wesley’s closing prayer in his preface to the *Library* was answered. What happened in the hearts of Methodists was important to Wesley. Therefore, he had asked God to bless the *Library* and “to write his love in every reader’s heart!”¹⁴³ In the end, with or without divine assistance, John Wesley’s *Christian Library* was influential in helping to shape the spiritual lives of “serious readers” within Methodism.

¹⁴³ Wesley, *A Christian Library*, I:i-vi.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A - Wesley's Tracts (Collected Works)

- 1¹⁴⁴ *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week.* [Anon.]
- 2 *A Treatise on Christian Prudence.* Extracted from Mr. [John] Norris. [Anon.]
- 8 *A Sermon on Salvation by Faith.* [On Ephes. 2.8]
- 9 *The Doctrine of Salvation, Faith, and Good Works.* Extracted from the Homilies of the Church of England. [Anon.]
- 10 *An Abstract of the Life and Death of the Reverend Learned and Pious Mr. Tho. Halyburton.* "Recommendatory Epistle" signed by George Whitefield, Feb. 5, and "Preface" by John Wesley, Feb.9, both 1738-9. [Anon.]
- 11 *Free Grace.* A Sermon preach'd at Bristol. [Hymn of 36 stanzas appended] [On Romans 8.32]
- 12 *Nicodemus: Or, A Treatise on the Fear of Man.* Written in German by August Herman Franck. Abridg'd by John Wesley.
- 13 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From His Embarking for Georgia To his Return to London.* [No.I: Oct.14, 1735 – Feb.1, 1738]
- 15 *Hymns and Sacred Poems.* Published by John Wesley and Charles Wesley.
- 16 *Serious Considerations Concerning the Doctrines of Election and Reprobation.* Extracted from a late author. [Isaac Watts]
- 18 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, from February 1, 1737-8, to his return from Germany.* [No.II.]
- 19 *Hymns and Sacred Poems.* Published by John Wesley and Charles Wesley.
- 21 *An Extract of the Life of Monsieur De Renty, A Late Nobleman of France.*
- 22 *Serious Considerations on Absolute Predestination.* Extracted from a late author [Robert Barclay]. [Anon.]
- 23 *A Short Account of the Death of Mrs. Hannah Richardson.* Published by Charles Wesley.
- 24 *A Dialogue Between a Predestinarian and His Friend.*
- 25 *Reflections Upon the Conduct of Human Life:* with reference to learning and knowledge. Extracted from Mr. [John] Norris. [Anon.]
- 26 *An Extract of the Christian's Pattern: or, a Treatise of the Imitation of Christ.* Written in Latin by Thomas à Kempis. Published by John Wesley.
- 27 *The Scripture Doctrine Concerning Predestination, Election, and Reprobation.* Extracted from a late author.
- 28 *The Almost Christian:* a sermon preached at St. Mary's, Oxford, before the University, on July 25, 1741. [On Acts 26:38]
- 29 *Christian Perfection:* A Sermon, preached by John Wesley [On Phil.3:12] [Includes a poem by Charles Wesley, "The Promise of Sanctification"]
- 30 *Collection of Psalms and Hymns.* Published by John Wesley.
- 31 *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love. To which is added, The Cry of a Reprobate.* [Anon.]

¹⁴⁴ The numbering system used in both Appendix A and Appendix D is from Frank Baker's *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*, 2nd ed., (Stone Mountain, GA: Published by George Zimmermann, Jr., 1991). Baker's numbering system is both comprehensive and chronological.

- 32 *Hymns on God's Everlasting Love.* [Anon.]
- 33 *A Sermon Preach'd On Sunday, April 4, 1742; Before the University of Oxford.* By Charles Wesley, M.A. [On Eph.5.14, "Awake, thou that sleepest"]
- 34 *The Character of a Methodist.*
- 35 *The Principles of a Methodist... Occasioned by a late pamphlet, intituled "A Brief History of the Principles of Methodism"* [By Joseph Tucker].
- 37 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal,* From August 12, 1738, To Nov.1, 1739. [No.III]
- 40 *A Sermon Preacher [at the Visitation at Sevenoaks, 21 May, 1742] by the Reverend Henry Piers.* [Anon.]
- 42 *Thoughts on Marriage and a Single Life.*
- 43 *The Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies, In London, Bristol, Kingswood, and Newcastle Upon Tyne.*
- 44 *A Word in Season: Or, Advice to a Soldier.*
- 45 *A Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection. Extracted from a late author* [William Law].
- 46 *The Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that Which is to Come. Abridged by John Wesley.*
- 47 *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion.*
- 48 *A Serious Call To A Holy Life.* Extracted from a late author [W.Law]
- 49 *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God.* Extracted from Mr. [Jonathan] Edwards.
- 50 *Extract of Count Zinzendorf's Discourses on the Redemption of Man by the Death of Christ.*
- 51 *The Life of God in the Soul of Man...* Abridged by John Wesley. [From Henry Scougal]
- 53 *An Extract of the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Journal,* from November 1, 1739, to September 3, 1741. [No.IV] [Two hymns at end]
- 54 *A Narrative of the Late Work of God, at and near Northampton, in New-England.* Extracted from Mr. [Jonathan] Edwards's Letter to Dr. Coleman.
- 55 *Scriptural Christianity.* A Sermon preached August 24, 1744, at St. Mary's Church in Oxford... [On Acts 4.31]
- 56 *The Case of John Nelson.* Written by himself. [Anon.]
- 58 *A Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems* from the most celebrate English authors. By John Wesley...
- 59 *Hymns for Times of Trouble and Persecution.* [Anon.]
- 62 *Instructions for Children.* [Anon.]
- 63 *A Farther Appeal To Men of Reason and Religion.* [Part I]
- 64 *A Farther Appeal To Men of Reason and Religion.* [Parts II & III]
- 65 *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Church's Remarks on the Rev. Mr. Wesley's Last Journal.*
- 66 *Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New-England.* By Jonathan Edwards ... Abridg'd by John Wesley ...
- 67 *An Extract of Mr. Richard Baxter's Aphorisms of Justification.* Publish'd by John Wesley...
- 68 *An Short View of the Difference Between the Moravian Brethren, Lately in England, and the Reverend Mr. John and Charles Wesley.* Extracted chiefly from a late Journal. (Six hymns at the end) [Anon.]

- 69 *A Collection of Receipts for the Use of the Poor.* [Anon.]
- 70 *A Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend.*
- 71 *A Second Dialogue Between an Antinomian and His Friend.*
- 72 *Modern Christianity: Exemplified at Wednesbury, and Other Adjacent Places in Staffordshire...* Publish'd by John Wesley ...
- 73 *Advice to the People Called Methodists.* [Anon.]
- 74 *A Collection of Prayers for Families.*
- 76 *A Word in Season: Or, Advice to an Englishman.* [Two Hymns added.] [Anon.]
- 78 "Swear Not At All", saith the Lord God of heaven and earth. [Anon.]
- 79 *Remember the Sabbath Day, To Keep It Holy.* [Anon.]
- 82 *A Word to a Protestant.* [Anon.]
- 83 *Hymns on the Lord's Supper.* By John Wesley ... and Charles Wesley. With a Preface concerning the Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice. Extracted from Doctor [Daniel] Brevint.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Baker, *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*, 60. This extraction from Baker's *Catalogue* only accounts for 63 of the 65 total works that Richard P. Heitzenrater claims are included in *Wesley's Extracts*.

Appendix B - *A Christian Library* (Authors and Puritan Writings)

Wesley included these authors and Puritan writings in *A Christian Library*. “The following is a complete list of the authors in the order they appear in the first edition of *A Christian Library*. The authors are categorized for easier identification.”¹⁴⁶

Ancient Fathers:

Clement of Rome

Polycarp

Ignatius

Macarius

Foreign Authors (translated into English):

John Arndt (German)

Blaise Pascal (French)

Anthoniette Bourignon (French)

Don Juan D’Avila (Spanish)

Miguel de Molinos (Spanish)

Anonymous Authored Materials:

Devotional tracts translated from the French

A Collection of Prayers for Families

A Country Parson’s Advice to His Parishoners

Church of England Authors:

Jeremy Taylor (1613-67)

Ralph Cudworth (1617-88)

Nathanael Culverwell (d. 1651)

John Smith (1618-52)

*Richard Allestree (1619-81) [Well-known to all or unknown to Wesley]

An Extract from the Whole Duty of Man [Published anonymously]

Robert Sanderson (1587-1663)

*James Garden (n.d.) [Well-known to all or unknown to Wesley]

A Discourse Concerning Comparative Religion [Published anonymously]

John Worthington (1618-71)

Seth Ward (1617-89)

Thomas Ken (1637-1711)

*Nicholas Horsman (d. 1683) [Well-known to all or unknown to Wesley]

The Spiritual Bee [Published anonymously]

Anthony Horneck (1641-97)

William Cave (1637-1713)

¹⁴⁶ Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 247-254.

Simon Patrick (1626-1717)
 Abraham Cowley (n.d.)
 John Goodman (1640-75)
 Robert Leighton (1611-84)
 Isaac Barrow (1630-1677)
 Henry More (1614-87)
 Richard Lucas (1648-1715)
 Edward Reynold (1599-1676)
 *Susannah Hopton [Well-known to all or unknown to Wesley]
 Devotions for Every Day of the Week [Published Anonymously]
 Robert South (1634-1716)
 Benjamin Calamy (1642-86)
 Henry Scougal (1650-78)
 John Tillotson (1630-94)
 Edward Young (1643-1705)
 Charles Howe (1661-1742)
 William Beveridge (1637-1708)

Puritan Authors (along with their writings):

John Fox (1516-87)
 Extracts from the Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs
 Samuel Clarke (1599-1683)
 Supplement of Mr. Fox's *Acts and Monuments*
 Extracted from Mr. Samuel Clarke's General Martyrology
 The Lives of Various Eminent Persons
 Joseph Hall (1574-1656)
 Meditations and Vows, Divine and Moral
 Heaven upon Earth, or Of True Peace of Mind
 Letters on Several Occasions
 A Passion Sermon, Preached on Good Friday, 1609
 Holy Observations
 Solomon's Song Paraphrased
 Robert Bolton (1572-1631)
 A Discourse on True Happiness
 General Directions for a Comfortable Walking with God
 Instructions for Comforting Afflicted Consciences
 A Treatise Concerning the Word of God
 A Treatise on Self-Examination
 A Treatise on Fasting
 John Preston (1587-1628)
 The Breast Plate of Faith and Love
 The New Covenant, or The Saint's Portion
 Richard Sibbes (1577-1635) [Spelled above as "Sibbs" by Wesley]
 A Fountain Opened; or The Mystery of Godliness Revealed
 The Nativity of Christ Celebrated by Angels
 A Discovery of the Near Union and Communion betwixt Christ and the Church

Thomas Goodwin (1600-80)
A Child of Light Walking in Darkness
Christ the Object and Support of Faith
The Heart of Christ in Heaven towards Sinners on Earth
The Return of Prayers
The Trial of a Christian's Growth

Sir Matthew Hale (1609-76)
Contemplations, Moral and Divine

Richard Alleine (1611-81)
Vindiciae Pietatis; or, A Vindication of Godliness
A Rebuke to Backsliders, and a Spur for Loiterers
The Nature and necessity of Godly Fear

John Bunyan (1628-88)
A Relation of the Holy War

*Lewis Stuckley (1622-87) [Well-known to all or unknown to Wesley]
A Gospel-Glass: or, A Call from Heaven, to Sinners and Saints by Repentance and Reformation, to Prepare to Meet God [Published Anonymously]

John Brown (1610-79)
Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life

Sammuel Annesley (1620?-96)
How We May be Universally and Exactly Conscientious
God's Sovereignty Our Support in All Worldly Distractions
The Hindrance and Helps to a Good Memory of Spiritual Things
The Adherent Vanity of Every Condition is Most Effectually Abated by Serious Godliness

John Kitchin (d. 1662?)
How Must We Reprove, That We May Not Partake of Other Men's Sins

Matthew Pool (1624-79)
How Ministers of Christian Friends May and Ought to Apply Themselves to Sick Persons, for Their Good, and the Discharge of Their Own Conscience

Richard Baxter (1615-91)
The Saint's Everlasting Rest

*Thomas Crane (1631-1714) [Well-known to all or unknown to Wesley]
A Prospect of Divine Providence

Stephen Charnock (1628-1680)
Of the Knowledge of God
Of the Knowledge of God in Christ

John Flavel (1630-91)
Husbandry Spiritualized: or, the Heavenly Use of Earthly Things
Navigation Spiritualized: or, A New Compass for Seamen
The Causes and Cures of Mental Error

John Howe (1630-1705)
The Living Temple

- William Bell (d. 1664)
Christ's Spirit, a Christian's Strength
The Building, Beauty, Teaching and Establishment of the Truly Christian Church
The Stumbling-Stone
- Thomas Manton (1620-77)
Sermons on Several Subjects
- Isaac Ambrose (1604-63)
The Doctrine of Regeneration
The Practice of Sanctification: Exemplified in the Believer's Privileges and Duties
Looking unto Jesus: or, the Soul's Eying of Jesus, as Carrying on the Great Work of
Man's Salvation.
- Francis Rous (1579-1659)
Academia Coelestis: The Heavenly University
- John Owen (1616-83)
The Mortification of Sin in Believers, the Necessity, Nature, and Means of It
The Nature, Power, Deceit, and Prevalency of the Remainders of Indwelling Sin in
Believers
Of Temptation, the Nature and Power of It
[...], or A Declaration of the Glorious Mystery of the Person of Christ, God, and Man
Of Communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost
- Herbert Palmer (1601-47)
Memorials of Godliness and Christianity Of Making Religion One's Business
An Appendix, Applied to the Calling of a Minister
- William Whateley (1583-1639)
Directions for Married persons
- Joseph Alleine (1634-68)
An Alarm to Unconverted Sinners
A Counsel for Personal and Family Godliness
Two Practical Cases of Conscience Resolved
- Samuel Shaw (1635-96)
Immanuel: or, A Discourse of True Religion Communion with God
An Extract from the Assembly's Shorter Catechism; with the Proofs thereof out of the
Scriptures
- Samuel Rutherford (1600-61)
Extracts from the Letters of Mr. Samuel Rutherford
- Hugh Binning (1627-53)
Fellowship with God: or, Sermons on the First Epistle of St. John

Appendix C - *A Christian Library* (Exemplary Lives)

“The following is a complete list of the men whose lives are recounted in *A Christian Library* as examples of Christian faith and piety.”¹⁴⁷

Foreign Leaders:

Philip Melancthon
John Calvin
Galeacius Caracciolus
Philip de Mornay
Henry Atling
Frederick Spanheim
Gregory Lopez
Peter Martyr

Church of England Leaders:

Bernard Gilpin (1517-83)
Richard Hooker (1554-1600)
Henry Wotton (1568-1639)
John Donne (1573-1631)
George Herbert (1593-1633)
William Bedell (1571-1642)
Henry Ussher (1550?-1613)
Henry Hammond (1605-60)

Puritan Leaders:

William Whitaker (1548-95)
John Bruen (1560-1625)
Richard Blackerby (1574-1648)
Philip Sidney (1619-98)
Richard Mather (1596-1669)
John Rowe (1588-1662)
Joseph Woodward (?-1660)
Nicholas Leverton (1600-62)
Nathanael Barnardiston (1588-1653)
Samuel Fairclough (1594-1677)
James Fraser (1639-99)
Thomas Tregoss (?-1671)
Samuel Winter (1603-66)

¹⁴⁷ Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: His Puritan Heritage*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 255-256.

Puritan Leaders (continued):

Scottish Divines (Hugh Kennedy, Patrick Simpson, Andrew Steward, Mr. Davidson,
Robert Bruce, Robert Blair, John Welsh)

Thomas Cawton (1605-59)

Philip Henry (1631-96)

George Trosse (1631-1713)

Thomas Wilson (1601-53)

John Eliot (1604-90)

Puritan Authors from Appendix B that also had their lives included in *A Christian Library*:

Robert Bolton

John Preston

Richard Sibbes

Thomas Goodwin

Matthew Hale

John Howe

Isaac Ambrose

John Owen

Joseph Alleine

Hugh Binning

Samuel Shaw

Appendix D - *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley (Collected Works)*

The following is a complete list of the publications included in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* (1771-1774) that were published previously in *Wesley's Tracts* (1746):

1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 34, 35, 37, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 53, 54, 56, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 72, 73, 74, 76, 78, 79, 82, 83i (preface only of 83).¹⁴⁸

The remaining publications in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* are:

- 3 *The Christian's Pattern: or, a Treatise of the Imitation of Christ.* By Thomas à Kempis.
 (Preface only)
- 52 *A Brief Account of the Occasion, Process, and Issue of a Late Tryal...* Extracted from
 Mr. Whitefield's Letter by John Wesley.
- 80 *A Word to a Street-Walker.* [Anon.]
- 81 *A Word to a Condemned Malefactor.* [Anon.]
- 86 *A Word of Advice to Saints and Sinners.* [Anon.]
- 87 *The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explain'd:* occasioned by the Reverend Mr.
 Church's Second Letter to Mr. Wesley: In a Second Letter to that Gentleman.
- 88 *Sermons on Several Occasions.*
- 89 *A Short Account of the Death of Samuel Hitchens.* By James Hitchens, Tinner.
 [No indication that was published by Wesley]
- 101 *Primitive Physick: Or, An Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases.* [Anon.]
- 102 *A Short Account of the Death of Thomas Hitchens.* By James Hitchens, Tinner. [Anon.]
- 103 *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London:* occasioned by his
 Lordship's last Charge to his Clergy. [Poem at end]
- 104 *A Word to a Freeholder, &c.* [Anon.]
- 107 *Sermons on Several Occasions.*
- 110 *A Letter to a Clergyman.* [Anon.]
- 113 *A Short English Grammar.* [Anon.]
- 119 *A Letter to a Friend Concerning Tea.*
- 120 *An Extract of the Revd. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From Sept. 3, 1741, to October 27,*
 1743. [No.V]
- 121 *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton, Occasioned by his Late Free Enquiry.*
 [Anon.]
- 122 *A Plain Account of Genuine Christianity.* [Anon.]
- 123 *The Manners of the Antient Christians.* Extracted from a French Author.
 [Claude Fleury] By John Wesley.
- 125 *Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture.* [Anon.]

¹⁴⁸ The numbering system used in both Appendix A and Appendix D is from Frank Baker's *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*, 2nd ed., (Stone Mountain, GA: Published by George Zimmermann, Jr., 1991). Baker's numbering system is both comprehensive and chronological.

- 126 *A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists.* In a letter to the Rev. Mr. [Vincent] Perronet, Vicar of Shoreham in Kent. [Signed by Wesley]
- 134 *A Letter to a Roman Catholick.* [Anon.]
- 135 *Minutes of Some Late Conversations Between the Revd. M. Wesleys and Others.* ["Doctrinal Minutes" of Conferences of 1744-47.]
- 139 *Sermons on Several Occasions.*
- 140 *A Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodist and Papists Compar'd.* [Anon.]
- 143 *A Letter to the Revd. Mr. Baily of Corke,* in answer to a letter t the Revd. John Wesley. [Anon.]
- 149 *Thoughts Upon Infant-Baptism.* Extracted from a late writer [W. Wall] [Anon.]
- 152 *A Second Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of the Methodists and Papists Compar'd.* [Anon.]
- 153 *Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints.* [Anon.]
- 154 *A Second Letter to the Lord Bishop of Exeter,* in answer to his Lordship's late letter.
- 155 *Predestination Calmly Considered.*
- 156 *A Short Method of Converting All the Roman Catholics in the Kingdom of Ireland.* Humbly proposed to the bishops and clergy of this kingdom. [Anon.]
- 158 *Some Account of the Life and Death of Matthew Lee,* executed at Tyburn, October 11, 1752, in the 20th year of his age. [Two hymns added] [Anon.]
- 159 *An Extract of the Life and Death of Mr. John Janeway.* Fellow of King's College in Cambridge. By John Wesley. [Slightly abridged form a publication by James Wheatley with the same title.]
- 160 *An Extract of the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Journal,* from October 27, 1743, to November 17, 1746. [No.VI]
- 166 *An Extract of the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Journal,* from November 25, 1746, to July 20, 1750 [i.e. 1749] [No.VII]
- 171 *Serious Thoughts Occasioned by the Late Earthquake at Lisbon.* [Anon.]
- 175 *An Address to the Clergy.*
- 179 *A Roman Catechism, With a Reply Thereto.* [By John Williams] [Anon.]
- 182 *The Doctrine of Original Sin:* according to Scripture, Reason, and Experience.
- 183 *A Sufficient Answer to Letters to the Author of Theron and Aspasio.*
In a letter to the author.
- 185 *The Great Assize:* A Sermon preached at the Assizes in ... Bedford; on Friday, March 10, 1758. [On Romans 14.10]
- 186 *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. [John] Free.*
- 188 *A Short Account of the Life and Death of Nathanael Othen,* who was in Dover Castle, October 26, 1757. [Anon.]
- 189 *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Potter,* by the Rev. Mr. Wesley.
- 191 *A Preservative Against Unsettle Notions in Religion.*
- 194 *An Extract of the Reverend Mr. John Wesley's Journal,* from July xx, 1750 [= Nov. 2, 1751] to October xxviii, 1754. [No.IX]
- 195 *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Downes,* Rector of St. Michael, Wood-Street; occasioned by his late tract, intitled, Methodism examined and exposed.
- 200 *Sermons on Several Occasions.*

- 201 *Reasons Against A Separation From the Church of England.* By John Wesley, A.M. Printed in the Year 1758. With Hymns for the Preachers among the Methodists (so called), Charles Wesley, A.M. [7 hymns]
- 202 *The Desideratum: Or , Electricity Made Plain and Useful.* By a Lover of Mankind, and of Common Sense. [Anon.]
- 203 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From February 16, 1755, to June 16, 1758.* [No.X]
- 209 *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Horne:* occasioned by his late sermon preached before the University of Oxford. [Signed at the end, "John Wesley"] [Anon.]
- 211 *Thoughts on the Imputed Righteousness of Christ.*
- 212 *A Blow at the Root: Or, Christ Stabbed in the House of his Friends.* [Anon.]
- 215 *The Life and Death of Mr. Thomas Walsh...* By James Morgan ... [Preface dated July, 1762, and recommendatory note by Wesley dated "Jan. 20, 1763"] [Anon.]
- 216 *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester,* occasioned by his tract on the office and operations of the Holy Spirit.
- 217 *A Sermon Preached Before the Society for Reformation of Manners,* on Sunday, January 30, 1763. [On psalm 94.16]
- 218 *A Discourse on Sin in Believers.* [On 2 Cor. 5.17]
- 224 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From June 17, 1758, to May 5, 1760.* [No.XI]
- 225 *Letters Wrote by Jane Cooper: To Which is Prefixt, Some Account of Her Life and Death.* [Anon.]
- 225a *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, By a Gentlewoman.* [Signed "M.B[osanquet]", later Mrs. Fletcher; included in Wesley's *Works*, Vol. 13 (1772), and certainly published by him.] [Anon.]
- 226 *A Treatise on Justification.* Extracted from Mr. John Goodwin. By John Wesley. With a Preface, wherein all that is material, in letters just published, under the name of the Rev. Mr. Hervey, is answered.
- 228 *Thoughts on a Single Life.*
- 229 *A Short History of Methodism.* [Anon.]
- 230 *The Scripture-Way of Salvation:* a sermon on Ephes.ii.8.
- 235 *The Lord Our Righteousness:* A sermon preached at the Chappel in West-Street, Seven-Dials, on Sunday, Nov. 24, 1765. [On Jer. 23.6]
- 236 *Some Remarks on a Defence of the Preface to the Edinburgh Edition of Aspasio Vindicated.*
- 238 *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, As Believed and Taught by The Rev. Mr. John Wesley, From the Year 1725 to the Year 1765.*
- 239 *A Word to a Smuggler.* [Anon.]
- 240 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From May 6, 1760, to Oct. 28, 1762.* [No.XII]
- 241 *Christian Letters.* By Mr. Joseph Alleine. [Anon]
- 242 *The Witness of the Spirit.* A sermon on Romans viii.16.
- 247 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From October 29, 1762, to May 25, 1765. XII.* [Should be "No.XIII."]
- 248 *The Repentance of Believers.* A sermon on Mark i.15.
- 249 *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Rutherford.*

- 250 *An Extract of Miss Mary Gilbert's Journal.* [Forward signed "John Wesley"] [Anon.]
- 251 *The Good Steward: a sermon* [on Luke 16.2.]
- 252 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. [William] Law's Later Works.* [Anon.]
- 253 *An Extract of the Life of the Late Rev. Mr. David Brainerd, missionary to the Indians.*
By John Wesley. [The author was Jonathan Edwards.]
- 255 *Advice with Respect to Health.* Extracted from a late author. [Dr. Tissot.] [Anon.]
- 256 *An Extract from the Journal of Elizabeth Harper.* [Anon.]
- 257 *An Extract of Letters by Mrs. L***.* [Lefevre] [To the Reader...J.W."] [Anon.]
- 259 *A Short Account of the Death of Mary Langson, of Taxall, in Cheshire, who died January the 29th, 1769.*
- 262 *Some Account of the Experience of E.J.* [Elizabeth Jackson] [Anon.]
- 263 *A Short Account of Ann Rogers.* By John Johnson. [Anon.]
- 264 *Free Thoughts on the Present State of Public Affairs.* In a letter to a friend. [Anon.]
- 266 *A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield...*
- 268 *Minutes of Several Conversations Between the the [sic] Reverend Messieurs John and Charles Wesley, and Others.* [The third issue of the "Large Minutes"]
- 270 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From May 27, 1765, To May 10, 1768.* [No.XIV]
- 271 *A Short Account of John Dillon.* [Anon.]
- 274 *The Consequence Proved.* [Anon.]
- 279 *Thoughts Upon Liberty.* By an Englishman. [Anon.]
- 280 *Thoughts Concerning the Origin of Power.* [Anon.]
- 283 *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's Review of All the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley.*
[Anon.]
- 284 *A Short Account of Ann Johnson.*
- 287 *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's Farrago Double-Distilled.*
- 294 *An Extract from a Treatise Concerning Religious Affections ...* By the late Rev. Jonathan Edwards.
- 295 *Christian Instructions,* extracted from a late French author.
- 296 *Instructions for Members of Religious Societies.* Translated from the French.
- 301 *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Journal, From May 14th, 1768, To Sept. 1st, 1770.* [XV]
- 303 *An Extract from Dr. Cadogan's Dissertation on the Gout and all Chronic Diseases.*¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ Frank Baker, *A Union Catalogue of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley*, 2nd ed. (Stone Mountain, GA: Published by George Zimmermann, Jr., 1991), 137-138.