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The Life of Wesley; and the Rise and Progress of Methodism

Edited by
Tim Fulford

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2022
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-0-367-02309-6 (set)
eISBN: 978-0-429-40031-5 (set)
ISBN: 978-1-032-21102-2 (volume I)
eISBN: 978-1-003-26674-7 (volume I)

DOI: 10.4324/9781003266747

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

CONTENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all in the family of Southey scholars; their work has made this edition possible. In particular, my fellow editors of Southey's prose works, Carol Bolton, Tom Duggett, Jonathan Gonzalez, and Cristina Flores Moreno have shared their enthusiasm, their insights, and their frustrations. Lynda Pratt, Ian Packer, and Daniel E. White have encouraged me and shared their detailed knowledge of Southey. Jason Konig and Ian Mackenzie provided invaluable help tracing and translating classical sources. Marylynn Rouse provided information about John Newton; Paul Cheshire about William Gilbert; Mike Pettit about Augustus Toplady; Jeff Strabone about Coleridge.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CLRS	*The Collected Letters of Robert Southey*, gen. eds. Lynda Pratt, Tim Fulford and Ian Packer. Romantic Circles Electronic Edition, 2009–ongoing
CM	S. T. Coleridge, *Marginalia* V, ed. H. J. Jackson and George Whalley (Princeton, 2000)
Life and Correspondence	*The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. C. C. Southey, 6 vols (London, 1849–50)
New Letters	*New Letters of Robert Southey*, ed. Kenneth Curry, 2 vols (New York and London, 1965)
RSLPW	Robert Southey, *Later Poetical Works 1811–38*, gen. eds. Tim Fulford and Lynda Pratt, 4 vols (London, 2012)
RSPW	Robert Southey, *Poetical Works 1793–1810*, gen. ed. Lynda Pratt, 4 vols (London, 2004)

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EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Origins

In 1820, when Southey's *The Life of Wesley; and the Rise and Progress of Methodism* was published, there were, in a population of 16 million, 215017 Methodists in Britain and Ireland.[1] In 1730 there were none, meaning that within ninety years the 'Connection' that Wesley began had expanded exponentially to become by far the largest dissenting church in the nation (in the United States it had grown, from the first missions of the 1760s, to become the largest denomination). This growth had not gone unnoticed by people of Southey's class—educated 'gentlemen' and women—and many of them suspected it constituted a threat to social order as well as clerical orthodoxy. Few of them, however, knew much about Wesley himself or the Wesleyan movement. Southey's biography was aimed squarely at them. In 2020, the situation is reversed: the Methodist movement, millions strong, is no threat to social order but an accepted part of society. Its principles and theology are well known. Nonetheless, the details of its early history and of Wesley's life are remembered chiefly by Methodist scholars studying its development to the present day. How Wesley was received in the early nineteenth century, and how Romantic writers understood him and his movement, is ripe for reconsideration—for his impacts on ecclesiastical and social history and also for his effects on literary culture and political debate. It is such a reconsideration that this edition of Southey's *Life* is designed to produce.

Southey's biography was needed not because lives of Wesley, who had died in 1791, had not appeared but because they had. Competing, partial and biased accounts were published from within the Methodist Connection and by disaffected former followers.[2] This situation created confusion, memorably mocked in Southey's 1807 *Letters from England*, which remarked that 'a curious scene was exhibited at his different chapels, where the books of the society are always sold. One was crying "The true and genuine life of Mr. Wesley!" another bawling against him, "This is the real life!" and a third vociferating to the people to beware of spurious accounts, and buy the authentic one from him.'[3] The first such 'real life', by John Hampson, appeared shortly after its subject's death. *Memoirs of the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (1791) was the work of the son of a preacher

whom Wesley had excluded from the 'Conference' of men that he chose to inherit Methodist property from him and to run the Connection after his decease. Hampson took a decidedly disenchanted view of Wesley, showing him to have been capable of arbitrary decisions and vengeful actions. His biography was disapproved of by the official biographers whom the Connection selected, although his close-up accounts of Wesley's appearance and social manner, derived from personal knowledge, were borrowed by them. Southey also made use of his book.

The next biographers were Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, two of the trustees of Wesley's papers and notable figures in the Methodist movement who had known Wesley well. Their joint work, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (1792), was however, short on both personal anecdote and on documentary sources. It was a somewhat anodyne, official book and did not pretend to analyse or criticize the great man. It sold 10000 copies among the Methodists at whom it was aimed, despite having been rushed so as to forestall Hampson and also John Whitehead's more extensive work. Whitehead, a former preacher and latterly Wesley's physician, had been authorised by a committee to write the official Methodist biography but had fallen into disputes about the remuneration offered and about his use of Wesley's papers. His *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* (1793–96) was a far more detailed account than Coke and Moore's, but also lacked the personal touch. It contained strong criticism of Coke, implying that he had browbeaten the elderly Wesley into doing what he had hitherto always refused to do because he knew that it would effect a secession from the Church of England—arrogate to himself the power of ordination. It also attacked the extremely hierarchical composition of the 'Legal Hundred' that Wesley selected to govern the Methodists after his demise.

The background to the disputes between Whitehead and Coke and Moore is detailed in William Myles, *A Chronological History of the People called Methodists* (1803), which Southey reviewed in 1803. Southey also used Joseph Nightingale's *Portraiture of Methodism* (1807), a work that claimed to take an 'impartial' view of its subject and which contained much criticism of Coke's influence over Wesley in his later years. In the Preface, Nightingale singled out Southey's 1803 review of Myles's history in *The Annual Review*[A] as an example of the kind intolerant alarmism about Methodism from which he wanted his criticism to be distinguished.

Southey's 1803 review was his first assessment of Methodism. It reflected his fascination with mass enthusiasm and the conditions that produced it. He attacked Methodism's doctrines as 'moral poison' and its believers as 'liars and systematic hypocrites; they call themselves the vilest of sinners and believe themselves the elect of God' (211). Touching on a theme to which he would return in 1820, he suggested that its adherents were motivated to become preachers by worldly ambition—the lures of social climbing and of receiving flattery from women: 'by no other possible pursuit could they so certainly and so fully gratify this passion, how craving soever …. Dear man! Sweet man! Fine man! Blessed man! These are the aspirations that ascend from old women and young women to the orator's ears' (210). Southey raised the spectre of this praise leading to improper intimacy,

in which prayer becomes a surrogate for adultery: 'no sooner then is her husband gone from home, than the dear helper is apprised, that he may come and solace her in private with comfortable prayer. Pestilent insects! Thus it is they canker the fair flower of domestic-peace; whatever they touch they fly-blow, and leave it to ferment and fester' (210; Southey made similar criticisms of Catholic confessors).

Methodism was not simply sexually dangerous and morally repugnant, but also politically threatening, Southey argued, with the French Revolution in mind. He called Wesley 'a man of inordinate ambition' and likened him to Napoleon, with whom Britain was about to return to war: his 'object was to establish a Methodist republic, one and indivisible, and to be chief consul of it himself as long as he lived' (207). Its 'immediate object [was] to destroy the church establishment' and to return the nation to the days of seventeenth-century Puritan rule: 'from which triumph of ignorance, craft and fanaticism, from which renewal of intolerance and persecution, God preserve the people of England!' (210).

That Southey should have sounded so alarmist and loyalist a note in 1803 would have surprised many, who associated him with Jacobin politics in the 1790s, when he had been an opponent of both the monarchy and the church establishment. It might be thought that the review showed the zeal of a convert, anxious to demonstrate his new-found orthodoxy. But although its tone bordered on the hysterical, many of its arguments about Methodism's moral influence and social effect would remain, in attenuated form, in his later thinking. His deepest concern, throughout, was Methodism's power to generate, on a mass scale, irrational conviction—'enthusiasm' and 'fanaticism.'[5] In the hands of a charismatic 'consul' like Wesley, with his genius for maintaining a disciplined organization, Methodism seemed to Southey a tremendous social force that could be used for good or bad, as the examples of Robespierre and now Napoleon revealed. This was the chief concern that led him to write Wesley's biography in the way that he did.

The Fall of Robespierre (1794), jointly written with Coleridge, had been Southey's first large-scale attempt to portray the charisma of a leader capable of inducing fanatical loyalty. It identified as the source of Robespierre's power an oratory that made people believe a thing was its opposite: 'He caught / The listening crowd by his wild eloquence, / His cool ferocity that persuaded murder, / Even whilst it spake of mercy!' (Act III, lines 200–3).[6] In 1796 Southey produced a more subtle and nuanced account of an earlier revolutionary leader who inspired the French people—Joan of Arc. Over the course of a poem of epic scale, clearly intended as an allegory of the present situation—France in turmoil and at war with England—Southey showed how Joan's visionary religion gave her conviction and how her powerful eloquence produced patriotic fervour: the lowly 'maid of Orleans' revitalised the French nobility. In 1801, Southey followed *Joan of Arc* with an epic about a Muslim fanatic, *Thalaba the Destroyer*, the eponymous hero of which believes himself guided by signs and aided by talismans sent by God. His self-appointed suicide mission is to purify Islam by destroying in their stronghold the corrupt priests who have perverted it. A tale for our times ('Thalaba' is the singular form of the noun 'Taliban'), the poem shows the fanatic bringing

down not only the church but also the kingdom it dominates. Southey's later epics *Madoc* (1805) and *The Curse of Kehama* (1810) also depicted world-changing strife as a conflict between men of immense self-belief and self-righteousness who think themselves especially chosen by God, and the corrupt exploiters of established religion who use superstition to enthral the people.

That Southey should have repeatedly diagnosed world conflict in terms of a struggle between charismatic fanatics and corrupt, superstition-exploiting establishments demonstrates the lasting influence of his interpretation of the events of the early 1790s. Then, his intellectual formation had occurred among middle-class liberal dissenters—men such as Thomas Beddoes, who welcomed the French Revolution in its pre-regicidal stages, and who argued for a republican reform in Britain. Some of these men were Quakers, some deists, some Unitarians. They emphasised a rational religion, rejecting 'superstitious' aspects of orthodox Christianity such as the incarnation and the eucharist. They aimed to bring about a peaceful revolution in Britain through secular, rational arguments. Liberty, they claimed, was a creature of reason: a liberated Britain would replace the tyrannical domination of the common people, mired in grinding poverty, by the elite who exploited Church and State for their own benefit.

For such men, two events were devastating blows. In Birmingham in July 1791 common people, manipulated by Church and King loyalists, went on a spree of rioting directed at the very rational dissenters who were arguing for their liberation from tyranny. In Paris in September 1792, revolutionary oratory, in the name of rational argument, so played on the common people's fears that they became a lynch mob. Thousands were massacred. Both outbursts showed that liberals could not assume that rational argument would engage the poor, even if what was proposed was in the poor's interests. On the contrary, the poor—badly educated, semi-literate, unused to political debate—were conservative, prejudiced, and likely to express their frustrations in violence. They were prone to manipulation by demagogues who were able, by exciting speeches, to whip their hopes and fears into an unthinking 'enthusiasm.' It was this situation, in which the poor's justified anger was misdirected into mob violence, that shaped Southey's political, social, and psychological analysis for the rest of his life, and that he configured again and again in his poems and journalism (it was also adopted by Coleridge and Wordsworth).

It was Southey's analysis of the 1790s that led him to try, again and again, to evaluate Methodism. He returned to it not least because it seemed so symptomatic of the situation he diagnosed, but it was not clear quite where Wesley—who was himself contradictory—and Wesley's followers stood. Southey was unsure whether the Methodist leader's mission was to purify corruption, and to inspire others to do so or whether it was to rule his followers by producing symptoms that they took to be the effects of the supernatural. Or was the second an engine of the first? Southey considered Methodism again briefly in *Letters from England*, but came to no conclusion, although he re-iterated this view that it constituted a threat to the established church. Its system of public confession in class and

band meetings particularly concerned him. It gave, he thought, the local leaders or preachers who ran these meetings 'a more intimate knowledge of all persons under their influence than ever was yet effected by any system of police how rigorous soever. While Wesley lived,' Southey continued, 'his authority was unlimited. He resolutely asserted it, and the right was acknowledged.'[7] Here again the implicit analogy was with the French police state instituted by Napoleon. Methodism had a disciplinary rigour that the Church of England lacked. The reading public, Southey thought, should be alarmed.

Drafting and publication

Wesley, with his divided loyalty to the Church of England and to his own movement, remained an unresolved figure in Southey's imagination, and it was from the resultant tension that the idea for a full-scale biography came. The first inklings of the project occurred in August 1812 when Southey, putting the finishing touches to *The Life of Nelson*, his first major biography, wrote to its publisher John Murray 'I want to give you a Life of Wesley' (letter of 12 August; *CLRS* 2135). At this point, it seems, he conceived of an extended review article in Murray's journal *The Quarterly Review* (such an article had laid the basis for the Nelson book). However, although he reviewed various histories of the dissenting churches in the October 1813 number of the *Quarterly*, he did not there expatiate on Wesley or Methodism. The project effectively went into abeyance, as Southey busied himself with long poems (*Roderick, the Last of the Goths* (1814), *The Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo* (1816), *The Lay of the Laureate* (1816)), with the second and third volumes of his *History of Brazil* (1816; 1819), and with political journalism. It was not until November 1816 that he turned in earnest to the biography, prompted (as was so often the case in his later years) by a lucrative request to write for a periodical—a new journal issued by Southey's longtime publisher Longmans and edited by an acquaintance, John Stoddart. *The Correspondent; Consisting of Letters, Moral, Political, and Literary, between Eminent Writers in France and England; and Designed by Presenting to Each Nation a Faithful Picture of the Other* was a post-war venture intended to increase literary interchange in a newly re-opened Europe. Southey seized the opportunity to inform its readers about a significant English figure little-appreciated beyond his own followers. He began drafting an article on Wesley shortly after 10 November and had completed it by the end of the year, telling his friend Grosvenor Charles Bedford 'Perhaps I may enlarge it one of these days for publication in a separate volume,—which the subject certainly deserves—& perhaps the execution' (letter of 29 November 1816; *CLRS* 2868).

The *Correspondent* article did indeed lead to the book-length biography, also published by Longmans. It stimulated Southey to begin research (a process he much enjoyed); it reminded him that he liked biographical writing (his *Life of Nelson* had been highly praised). What he wrote was detailed enough to appear over two numbers of the journal (1 (1817), 26–48; and 2 (1817), 157–76); it

constituted a sketch that the full biography would complete, setting out, from the perspective of an outsider who was supportive of the established church and state, what Southey viewed as the key events of Wesley's life and of the growth of Methodism. Thus Southey's was principally a socio-political and only secondarily a theological or ecclesiastical, account: he wished readers to learn, by comparing the new intellectual movements of England with those of France, about the causes of a revolution that had only just been defeated in Europe and that, in face of popular protest at home, seemed imminent in Britain. What worried him was not so much Wesley himself, but his followers. After Wesley's death, the Methodists had set up as a separate church, formalizing a split from the Church of England to which Wesley's actions had been leading. They thus became, his article declared, 'a distinct people in the state, an imperium in imperio' (26). He likened the popular consequences of Wesley's thought to those of Voltaire's, whose 'remains had scarcely mouldered in the grave, before those consequences brought down the whole plan of government in France, overturned her altars, subverted her throne, carried guilt, devastation, and misery into every part of his own country, and shook the rest of Europe; like an earthquake. Wesley's doctrines, meantime, were slowly and gradually winning their way; but they advanced, every year, with accelerated force; and their effect must ultimately be more general, more powerful, and more permanent; for he has set mightier principles at work' (26).

The alarmism of the *Correspondent* article very much reflected its time of writing. In 1816 the post-war economic depression led to unemployment, desperate poverty, and a revival of popular political radicalism. On 2 December, a protest meeting at Spa Fields led to an armed attack on the Tower of London and Royal Exchange. The attack was in fact abortive, but the government was sufficiently alarmed to pass 'Gagging Acts' the following March. These banned public meetings, restricted the popular press, and suspended Habeas Corpus. Southey supported them in the press and was vilified by liberal admirers and acquaintances for so doing. Himself a radical and a dissenter in the 1790s, he was embarrassed when some of his former radical, dissenting allies—resenting his current implication that dissenting religionists were a danger to the state—published his revolutionary manuscript of 1794, *Wat Tyler*.

It was towards the end of 1817, when the political situation was calmer, that Southey began working on the book-length biography. On 6 December he told the Irish clergyman John Jebb 'I am writing the Life of Wesley in such a manner as to comprise our religious history for the last hundred years. It is a subject which I have long meditated, and may God bless the labour' (*CLRS* 3047). He sought information from Jebb about Methodism in Ireland; he wrote to William Wilberforce seeking personal reminiscences (*CLRS* 3057, 3063). By March 1818 he was deeply involved in the task, 'going thro the whole set' of the journal begun by Wesley—*The Arminian Magazine*—and making extensive notes from the seventeen-volume *Collected Works* issued from 1809 to 1813. He also read Wesley's journals, the biographies compiled by Hampson, Coke and Moore, Myles, Whitehead, and Nightingale,[8] several histories of the Moravians,[9]

and many volumes of the organ of Wesley's Calvinistic opponents—*The Gospel Magazine*:

> This Life of Wesley is a more operose business than one who is not acquainted with my habits would suppose. – I am given to works of supererogation, & could do nothing to my own satisfaction if I did not take twice as much labour as any other person would bestow upon it. In this case it will be well bestowed,—I am treating of a curious part of history just at the right time, – & in as fair a temper as it could be possible to bring to such a subject. The materials are very copious & very curious.
>
> (letter to Charles Watkin Williams Wynn, 8 March 1818; *CLRS* 3088)

Although Southey had no access to manuscripts, Wesley's journals (published in instalments in his lifetime and collected in the 1809–13 *Works*) gave a day-to-day account of his deeds and thoughts over a fifty-five year period. And Southey supplemented their record by painstaking enquiries. Accurate dates for Wesley's father's period at Oxford were sought from John Coleridge (then a fellow of Exeter College) after Southey had come to suspect that 'John Wesley is … not always to be implicitly trusted in his relation of facts. I never suspect him of any intentional deceit,—but he eagerly believed any thing which he wished to believe, & sometimes gave himself no time for reflection, nor for examining the truth or credibility of what he repeated' (letter to John May, 7 April 1818; *CLRS* 3113).

Discovering Wesley's inaccuracy as to facts reinforced the view that reading the journals was causing Southey to form. On 2 April he told his Moravian friend James Montgomery that Wesley was inclined to believe what he wished—what it suited him—to be true (*CLRS* 3108). Having, under the Moravian influence, acted meanly both to Sophia Hopkey, the woman he had intended to marry, and to William Law, his former religious mentor, Wesley then abandoned the Moravians and 'sanctioned the abominable calumnies with which they were assailed.' He was at this point both credulous and vengeful, Southey thought, though '[h]e became wiser & more charitable as he grew older. I have traced the progress of his mind with great care throughout his writings,—he outgrew all his extravagancies, but it was not easy for him to disown them all' (*CLRS* 3108). Here, already, it is apparent that Southey would take a disenchanted view of his subject, one that traced significant aspects of Wesley's development of Methodist doctrine and organisation to discreditable personal characteristics to which Wesley himself was blind—self-serving ambition, disloyalty, and a love of power. For this reason, he thought of the work-in-progress neither as a history of religion nor as a biography of a holy man, but as a contribution to the 'knowledge of the human mind,' more telling 'than all the metaphysical treatises which ever have been written upon that subject' (letter to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, 1 June 1818; *CLRS* 3144).

By 4 April 1818, the first manuscript portion of the biography was on the road from Southey in Keswick to Longmans in London (via Grosvenor Bedford who

as a civil servant was able to receive and forward post free of charge). Southey intended it to run to two octavo volumes of 500 pages each. As with his *Life of Nelson*, Southey worked just ahead of the printer, correcting proofs of one section as he researched and drafted the next (he had the first proof on his desk by 9 May). This was a method that suited his work rhythms, since he had to proceed with many projects at once in order to make a living. It had the advantage of constantly pushing him forward, as regular instalments of proofs arriving for correction triggered the writing of the next portions. It demanded tremendous self-confidence, since it precluded making major adjustments to the early parts of the work in the light of the later ones: much of the biography was already out of Southey's hands before he finished it. The risk involved was lack of overview and resultant self-contradiction, or at least difference of tone across the volumes; another danger was running on too much in the early portions and then having to compress the later sections to fit the page limit. Certainly, more space was devoted to Wesley's formative years than to those of his maturity; work on the early portions went on apace: by 7 June 1818 the sixth sheet of proofs had arrived in Keswick and by 12 July the fifteenth. At this stage, Southey expected the book to be published by the end of the year (*CLRS* 3148, 3166, 3147).

By September, progress had slowed. Although nearly half the book was printed, Southey found himself delayed by the research necessary to produce a chapter containing the history of the Church of England up to the 1730s, 'the purport of which is to show how that general state of indifference & irreligion was brought about, which prevailed in this country when Wesley began his career' (letter to William Wilberforce, 7 September 1818; *CLRS* 3189). This prevailing secularism so worried Southey (at least for its supposed consequence of social disorder) that his account overflowed the bounds of a chapter and was still not completed by 16 September, when he next despatched a portion of the manuscript to London for printing. He consoled himself for what was becoming an extended digression by deciding that 'I shall reserve it as a relief to be introduced where it is most wanted, where the narrative flags in interest, or has been long continued in one strain' (letter to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, 16 September 1818; *CLRS* 3193). In fact, his partiality to church history was a premonition of the full-scale *Book of the Church* by which he followed the *Life of Wesley* in 1824. The retardation of writing that it now produced delayed the completion of the first manuscript volume until the end of November (letter to Thomas Southey, 26 November 1818; *CLRS* 3212).

Once the last portions of the first volume had been delivered, Southey began work on the second. He now, however, became over-optimistic, as he often did, about his capacity to complete the work without being delayed by his many commitments. On 11 December he told John Rickman that he would finish the book before a trip he intended to take in March 1819 (*CLRS* 3219). Writing the biography took up his evenings, while other parts of the day were devoted to reviewing and to his massive, and expanding, *History of Brazil*. He was further slowed by his propensity to become immersed in further research. Remaining in Keswick, he had Longmans send him copies of the works he wanted to consult—thus avoiding

costly visits to urban archives. Turning from Wesley himself to Wesleys' opponents, he began 'to rake in Gospel Magazines;—it is literally searching dunghills for a few grains of wheat' (*CLRS* 3219). These magazines were full of the abusive attacks on Wesley made by Calvinist Evangelicals when, in 1770, he declared predestination a pernicious doctrine (Southey thoroughly endorsed Wesley's view).

Southey also now focused on the stories of Wesley's converts, the lay preachers from poor backgrounds whose biographies were published in *The Arminian Magazine*. These sources brought him to a slightly changed realization of what his purpose was: rather than give an alarmist warning that Methodism would subvert Church and State, the book was to inform the educated middle and upper classes about the culture and beliefs of the labourers and artisans who, overwhelmingly, formed Methodism's constituency. Such was the polarization of classes that Southey felt himself to be writing a book akin to one of the voyage and travel narratives he loved reading: 'will be an especially curious book to those who are unacquainted with the class of men & feelings to which it relates:—to them (& I shall have many such readers) it will be as strange as a tale of Tonga or Tombuctoo.' It will 'introduce them' to a 'new world' (*CLRS* 3219, 3457). Accordingly, he began to incorporate mini-biographies of many of Wesley's preachers and missionaries into his text. The *Life of Wesley* expanded to become a history and analysis of Methodism's rise and progress not only in Britain but also in Ireland and America—and the West Indies, where its opposition to slavery commended it to Southey.

By 19 February 1819, Southey had completed his reading of *The Gospel Magazine* and of the works of its editor Augustus Toplady. He now began an investigation of the controversies and schisms that followed Wesley's death, after which the Methodists had split from the Church of England (1795) and then among themselves (when the New Connexion left in 1797). There was a further split between Church of England Methodists and separatists in Ireland in 1817–18. These matters took up his attention from February to June 1819, but were in the end excluded from the biography, for lack of room, although Southey hoped to discuss them in a third volume or an article for *The Quarterly Review* on the history of Methodism after Wesley's death. That the added volume and article did not appear, and that the material was excluded from the biography itself, shows how far Southey had shifted from the view of Methodism he had taken in *The Correspondent* in 1817. Though he still disapproved of Methodism's split from the established church (a split he saw as weakening the traditional social order), he no longer feared that it was about to precipitate revolution. Indeed he welcomed the moral reform Methodism brought about among the poor, and wished both to bring it back within the Anglican fold and to reform Anglican practice so that the established church also reached the lives of the 'lower orders.'

As he drafted the sections dealing with Wesley's converts and Wesley's disputes with the Calvinist admirers of George Whitefield, the unique aspects of his narrative became clear to Southey. He came to see himself as a biographer of greater veracity than his Methodist predecessors. 'I have learnt enough,' he

wrote to William Wilberforce, 'to know that neither Dr Whitehead, nor Dr Coke & his colleagues can be called faithful biographers. To any other merit they make no pretension; but they are guilty of great sins of omission, keeping out of sight very much which is necessary to a full understanding of Wesleys life & character' (letter of 17 March 1819, *CLRS* 3267). Among the things they omitted was the strength of Wesley's opposition, even at the end of his life, to leaving the established church—as well as details of involvements with women followers so intimate that they enraged his wife Mary ('Molly'). Southey saw his own work as not only more comprehensive and more honest but also more penetrating. He would give the inner, self-contradictory, man rather than the saintly public figure constructed by the official biographers. His book would be of psychological interest, and not only for what it revealed about Wesley himself but also because it contained 'oddities of all kinds, & facts from which a psychologist may learn more than from all the metaphysical treatises that ever spoilt white paper' (letter to Walter Scott, 11 March 1819; *CLRS* 3262). An especial theme was the tendency of Wesley's converts, excited by preaching, to manifest the holy spirit 'saving' their sinful selves by ecstatic manifestations—trembling, 'jumping', convulsions, exclamations, and prophesying. Southey's term for these manifestations, results of belief in defiance of the senses and of reason, was 'enthusiasm.' While Wesley viewed them as signs of God, his brother Charles attributed many of them to attention-seeking pretence. Southey wished, while deprecating them, to view them instead as instances of the believing mind working upon the body (and the excited body on the mind). He likened them to the effects produced by Animal Magnetists, effectively comparing Wesley and his preachers to hypnotists—men who, if sincere, were nevertheless like Anton Mesmer (who was a byword for charlatanism).

On 7 May 1819, Southey had to admit to his publisher that the biography was seriously behind schedule (letter to Longmans; *CLRS* 3291). His researches, the birth of his son, and the *History of Brazil* had taken up his time. Although he worked on the book in July, he then took a break to tour the Caledonian Canal with its engineer Thomas Telford. It was not until October that he had time to 'fall to work,—upon Wesley' again (letter to Herbert Hill, 6 October 1819; *CLRS* 3358). At that stage, 'about a third of the second volume' had been set in type: the printer had long ago caught up with Southey's increasingly tardy production of manuscript. In December 1819 he expected to finish in the following January; in January he predicted February; it was on 1 March that he announced completion. Calling the kettle black, on 21 March he complained that 'the printer ha[d] been very tardy' and that the last proofs had not arrived (letter to John Rickman, 21 March 1820; *CLRS* 3454).

Having finished, Southey felt able to take stock of what he had done and to speculate on its reception. He expected a 'moderate sale & a durable reputation'—a prediction that came to pass, not least because the two octavo volumes that Longmans published in mid-April were expensive, at £1 8 shillings (letter to Grosvenor Charles Bedford, 26 March 1820; *CLRS* 3457). He described the book

not as a single narrative but a 'tesselated tablet' composed of 'many fine things,—pearls raked out of the dunghill.' Indeed, reviewers would notice both the composite nature, deriving from the excerpts Southey had included from his reading, and the uneven tone, implied here by the nouns 'pearls' and 'dunghill.' Southey both admired the Methodists' determination and laughed at what he saw as the vanity of their conviction that the chance events of life were signs from God. Some of the 'odd' stories he had included, he thought might 'provoke a smile' from his civil servant correspondent: among Methodist reviewers, however, they induced resentment at his condescension (*CLRS* 3457). In his own eyes, such a reaction was a token of his independence: he fully expected the book's reception to illustrate the polarization of Britain into separate classes and opposed sects who were either ignorant of or indifferent to each other:

> It is written with too fair a spirit, to satisfy any particular set of men. For the 'religious public' it will be too tolerant & too philosophical; for the Liberales it will be too devotional: the Methodists will not endure any censure of their founder & their institutions; the high Churchmen will as little be able to allow any praise of them. Some will complain of it as being heavy & dull; others will not think it serious enough. I shall be abused on all sides,—& you well know how little I shall care for it.
>
> (*CLRS* 3457)

The ideal reader for whom he hoped would be free of dogma and snobbery; he would value the work for 'the many curious psychological cases which it contains, & the new world to which it will introduce them' (*CLRS* 3457). The biography had become, in Southey's mind, a travel narrative and a psychological casebook illustrating the nature and causes of belief among the British lower classes over the last hundred years.

Features

The Life of Wesley put biography of the man who had transformed eighteenth-century religious practice on a completely new footing. Southey's Wesley resembles Boswell's Johnson, for his life is often told in his own words. Southey offers an intimate portrait, though he had never met Wesley, still less recorded his conversation as Boswell had the Doctor's. Wesley's fifty-five years of almost daily journal writing, published in his lifetime, allowed Southey and his readers access to his unpremeditated comments on his endlessly varied life crisscrossing England, Wales, and Ireland, mostly on horseback, to preach. Southey was also able to see the many private letters published in the *Collected Works* 1809–13, on which he drew heavily.

The biography has an unusual structure—incorporating a mini-biography of Wesley's friend and rival, George Whitefield, whose powerful preaching led his admirers to break with Wesleyan Methodism and set up an informal network

of Calvinistic Evangelicals within the Church of England (the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection). By setting Wesley and Whitefield alongside each other, Southey brings his picture of each into sharper focus; in Wesley's case his genius for establishing and perpetuating an organization emerges as a strong feature, as does his ability to recruit the poor. Whitefield is shown, by contrast, as an emotive, histrionic preacher who built no movement to consolidate the passing effects of his sermons and who was more effective with (and sycophantic towards) the rich and high-ranking. Further, smaller, biographies of Wesley's preachers and missionaries provide close-up accounts of the lives of poor converts to the cause.

Unlike the official Methodist biographers Coke, Moore, and Whitehead, Southey offers a psycho-social account of Wesley's motives and actions. Neither a saint nor a sinner, his Wesley is a complex, self-unknowing, and self-contradictory figure, driven by 'inward restlessness, and a perpetual uneasy sense of discontent' until he found a field wide enough in which to act (I, p. 253). Will to power rather than love of God is his mainspring; he succeeds through his own (sometimes ungenerous and disingenuous) efforts rather than as an instrument of Providence. In this respect he is a decidedly Romantic figure, displaying the sublime egotism that Keats attributed to Wordsworth and akin to the flawed heroes of Hazlitt's collection of character sketches, *The Spirit of the Age* (1825). Byron's 'Ode to Napoleon' is echoed too, when Southey argues that

> the separation from the Moravians and from Whitefield freed [Wesley] from all shackles, and made him the sole head and single mover of the sect which, however much he had once abhorred the thoughts of schism, he had now begun to form and organize. His restless spirit had now found its proper sphere, where it might move uncontrolled, and enjoy a prospect boundless as his desire of doing good, the ambition which possessed him.
>
> (I, p. 252)

Southey called Wesley, in all but name, a despot, albeit a benevolent one: he 'exercised an absolute supremacy over his people … and, however he may have deceived himself, the love of power was a ruling passion in his mind' (II, p. 410).

Southey's Wesley is a startlingly modern figure in his actions (if not his beliefs) since, like Schiller's 'commanding genius', he is a self-made hero whose individuation involves seeking self-validation by finding, and overcoming, obstacles. He consistently set himself against others while pursuing a sense of larger mission—even if the nature of that mission was unclear to him: 'opposition of any kind served only to make him hurry on in his career, as water when it is poured into a raging conflagration, augments the violence of the fire' (I, p. 147). This picture of Wesley's character is built through a number of detailed renditions of particular conflicts, in which Wesley's conduct and motives are shown to be more self-centred than is to be expected of a good man. Some of them, Southey

suggests, reveal a disingenuous, disloyal, and rather heartless person. He dwells, for instance, on a family conflict that occurred when Wesley was at university in Oxford, leading a group of pious students in a religious discipline of fasting and self-denial so severe that one of them died. During that time, his father, dying, requested him to take over the cure of his country parish, so as to ensure his survivors (Wesley's mother and sisters) had a home and were provided for. Wesley, in Southey's account, refused, justifying himself with a series of specious arguments about doctrine and ministry: 'he had made it an affair of religious casuistry, and therefore the interest of his mother and sisters in the decision, nearly as this point lay at the father's heart, seems to have been totally disregarded by him as unworthy of any consideration' (I, p. 67).

Wesley's trip to Georgia, which ended ignominiously with the colonists united against him, is used to indicate an intolerance of and vengefulness towards those who could not meet his standards or would not submit to his authority. As the colonists' priest Wesley applied

> the rubric in opposition to the practice of the English church; he insisted upon baptizing children by immersion, and refused to baptize them if the parents would not consent to this rude and perilous method. Some persons he would not receive as sponsors, because they were not communicants; and when one of the most pious men in the colony earnestly desired to be admitted to the communion, because he was a dissenter he refused to administer it to him, unless he would submit to be re-baptized; and he would not read the burial-service over another for the same reason, or for some one founded upon the same principle.
>
> (I, p. 79)

Worse, Southey showed, was his treatment of a woman, Sophia Hopkey, whom he had courted—and enjoyed, with the acceptance of her guardians—a degree of physical intimacy. He led her to believe he was likely to marry her, and many in the colony believed so too. But, in a pattern he would repeat with other women later in life, he then withdrew, reluctant to commit. In this case, he consulted the Moravian brethren in the colony as to whether he should wed and abided by their decision against. Southey thought this a rigid and somewhat craven procedure, as well as one that threatened to blight the woman's reputation. Then, after Sophia married someone else, Wesley refused to admit her to communion, thus publicly branding her as unfit on the grounds of her unrepentant sinfulness without specifying what offence she had committed. To Southey, the action looked like jealous revenge, as it had to the colonists. Hopkey's guardian took legal action against Wesley which, combined with public complaints, effectively hounded him out of the colony. He left for England without having made any serious efforts to convert the Native Americans to Christianity—his ostensible purpose for going there. Southey remarked 'it will not be deemed superstitious thus to notice as remarkable the manner in which Wesley gave up the object for which he went to Georgia,

without one serious effort for its accomplishment, and apparently without being conscious of any want of effort, or any change in himself' (I, p. 92).

Southey implies that it was because he sensed his own burgeoning power over others that Wesley began to strike out to lead his own movement, but that he told himself a different story so that he should not have to recognise ambition as his motive. This story involved rejecting the teaching of his mentors as a betrayal of the true Christian practice. In his own eyes, Southey suggested, Wesley had seen through others' misleading of him; to everyone else it seemed as if the betrayal was his: his accusations were a way of cutting himself free without accepting blame. In this way, Wesley rebuked William Law, to whose passionate writings and spiritual guidance he owed much. Later, when he turned away from the Moravians, having argued with their leader on points of doctrine and authority, he spread accusations about sexual impropriety in their forms of worship. Of this incident, Southey wrote 'that Wesley should have repeated, and thereby sanctioned those charges, must be considered as the most disingenuous act of his life. For however much he differed from the Moravians, and however exceptionable he might have deemed their doctrine, he well knew that there was nothing in that doctrine which could lead … to such practices' (I, p. 235). Coleridge, influenced by the narrative as Southey told it more than by Southey's interpretation, wrote in his copy of the biography, 'I cannot explain this palliative phrase "disingenuous," for a series of deliberate, revengeful, almost fiendish calumnies' (I, p. 235ni). Southey's technique of producing drama through the detailing of conflict had generated a powerful resentment of Wesley's injustice in the biography's most intelligent and sensitive reader.

Southey shows that once back in England Wesley learned to evangelise successfully, gradually discovering the power of his preaching to move audiences, and discovering from Whitefield that to preach outdoors let him engage with the poor who were unlikely to come to church. Unlike Whitefield, and to the dismay of his brother Charles, Wesley began to induce extraordinary physical displays in many of his auditors—quakings, convulsions, cryings out. He took these, Southey argued, as signs of the struggle to accede to the inflow of God's saving grace, after which the new believer might feel—according to his controversial doctrine—a perfect assurance of God's love and of his own sinless fitness for redemption.[10] It was to be expected that this belief in being new born—which in some of his followers verged on antinomianism—would be reached only after a rough passage. Southey argued that the convulsions and tremblings were often faked by followers who were so keen to reach, and be seen to reach, 'perfection' that they deluded themselves and/or Wesley.

> A powerful doctrine preached with passionate sincerity, with fervid zeal, and with vehement eloquence, produced a powerful effect upon weak minds, ardent feelings, and disordered fancies. There are passions which are as infectious as the plague, and fear itself is not more so than fanaticism. When once these bodily affections were declared to be the work

> of grace, the process of regeneration, the throes of the new birth, a free licence was proclaimed for every kind of extravagance.
>
> (I, p. 161)

Southey's Wesley himself became infected, because exhilarated by his apparent ability to induce signs of fervour: 'the fanaticism which he had excited in others was now re-acting upon himself.' He began to exorcise followers who were apparently possessed by the devil, seeing the process 'as a manifestation of his power, instead of seeking to prevent the repetition of such ravings' or viewing them as attention-seeking displays. Southey implies Wesley was blinded by spiritual pride and proffers a more secular, psychological explanation:

> like Mesmer and his disciples he had produced a new disease, and he accounted for it by a theological theory instead of a physical one. As men are intoxicated by strong drink affecting the mind through the body, so are they by strong passions influencing the body through the mind. Here there was nothing but what would naturally follow when persons, in a state of spiritual drunkenness, abandoned themselves to their sensations, and such sensations spread rapidly, both by voluntary and involuntary imitation.
>
> (I, p. 157)

Southey hints at the sexual implications of some of these encounters, when the person exhibiting convulsions to Wesley was a young woman. Evidently he strongly suspected the frenzy that Wesley induced and licensed was a form of orgiastic self-indulgence—abandonment to sensuality—even when not an exhibition designed to gain the great preacher's attention. Charles Wesley, Southey notes, found that such displays quickly ceased when he ignored the woman concerned. But John Wesley, Southey suggests, was sensually and emotionally stimulated by them. Even though he was innocent of any intention to groom young women so as sexually to enjoy them (even at a slight distance), the whole business brought such grooming to mind:

> That a Franciscan or Dominican confessor should encourage ravings and raptures like these in an enthusiastic girl, with a view to some gainful imposture, or to fouler purposes, would be nothing extraordinary; for such things have sometimes passed current, and sometimes been detected. In Wesley's case it is perfectly certain that no ill motive existed, and that when he sanctioned the rhapsody by making it public, he was himself in as high a state of excitement as his spiritual daughter: but it is remarkable that when the fermentation of his zeal was over, when time and experience had matured his mind, and Methodism had assumed a sober character as well as a consistent form, he should have continued to send it abroad without one qualifying sentence, or one word of caution to

> those numerous readers, who, without such caution, would undoubtedly suppose that it was intended for edification and example.
>
> (I, p. 151)

Here again the implication is one of disingenuousness—that Wesley let the incident stand in his published journal because it testified to the power of his preaching, even though he had come to realize that it was not the work of God and might, in some eyes, have blurred the lines between spiritual advice and sexual impropriety.

Southey's focus on sexual impropriety related to his central need to understand what he saw as the key new trend in world history—fanaticism. In much of his writing, he was trying to understand the psycho-social conditions that produce this fanaticism —that, for instance, foment fanatics' belief that they are being supernaturally guided. He views sexual impropriety as a side-effect of priestly education in fanaticism, occurring when the psychology of fervour had been co-generated in close-up sessions between priests and young women. In Roman Catholicism it was often related to fasting and sleep deprivation, leading the women concerned to experience ecstatic visions of martyrs and angels that were sublimations of sensuality and desire. Cynical priests would take sexual advantage of this induced state. Sincere ones might succumb to the unstated sexual excitement that the sessions made them feel.

Wesley's wife Mary, Southey shows, had little psychological insight into the sexuality of her husband's spiritual guidance of young women. The biography details a stormy marriage characterised by her jealousy, but does not, like Methodist biographers of the time, assume the fault all lay in her. Southey shows that Wesley's wife left him after finding in his pocket a letter he was writing to a woman—Sarah Ryan—whose spiritual guide he had become. Surviving letters between Wesley and Ryan showed Southey that there was a high degree of intimacy in the correspondence, with Wesley revealing his doubts and worries and pressing Ryan to reveal her inmost thoughts and even her dreams. As Southey put it, there was

> an unction about his correspondence with this person, which must have appeared like strong confirmation to so jealous a woman as Mrs. Wesley. He says to her, 'the conversing with you, either by speaking or writing, is an unspeakable blessing to me. I cannot think of you without thinking of God. Others often lead me to him; but it is, as it were, going round about: you bring me straight into his presence. You have refreshed my bowels in the Lord:' (Wesley is very seldom guilty of this sort of canting and offensive language). 'I not only excuse, but love your simplicity; and whatever freedom you use, it will be welcome.'
>
> (II, p. 467).

Even today, most wives would find such a letter alarming; at the time, when it was proper for men to write to married women via their husbands, and was improper

for married men to write to single women at all, it bore many of the hallmarks of seduction. Wesley may have been unaware of ulterior motives (his desire for spiritual intimacy may have been the sublimation of other desires he could not allow himself to recognise[11]); he could not, however, have been entirely blind to how extraordinary his letter might seem to others or to what connotations it might normally be thought to have. The inference that his wife drew—that she had been morally if not sexually betrayed—was certainly neither abnormal nor unjustified, whatever the actual circumstances were. That it was embarrassing when she told the preachers who were Wesley's dinner guests that Ryan, who was serving table, was a 'whore' with 'three husbands' does not mean there was no cause for her outburst. However, Wesley's response, as Southey presents it, was to write his wife a lecture on her faults.[12]

Sarah Ryan was the housekeeper at the boarding school that Wesley had established for the sons of Methodists. Kingswood School, near Bristol, was Wesley's pet project; its curriculum and disciplinary regime were established by him. He made regular visits of inspection. Not many miles from some of the unsatisfactory schools that Southey himself had attended in Bristol, it features in the biography as the epitome of a systematic cruelty that stemmed from Wesley's ignorance of and intolerance towards children. Allowed no playtime and constantly under the masters' eyes, the children were poorly fed and over-worked. If this treatment was not very different from that of many schools of the time (as Southey knew from experience), the pupils at Kingswood were also, Southey claims, whipped up into bouts of hysterical praying and prophesying brought on by fasting and sleep deprivation until many became seriously ill. Wesley, Southey argues, should have known better than to encourage this behaviour; Southey indicts him on the ground of encouraging pretence, declaring it extraordinary 'that any parents should have suffered their children to be bred up in a manner which would inevitably, in ninety-nine cases out of an hundred, either disgust them with religion, or make them hypocrites' (II, p. 385).

If the focus on periods of conflict paints an unattractive picture of a man whom Southey judges, in general terms, to have been good, the biography does reveal that Wesley mellowed in his later years. He is shown as having become a benevolent leader, and as having relaxed the rigidity of his doctrine of perfection. Southey has an astute psycho-social explanation for this mellowing, tracing it to Wesley's personal contentment, having attained a position of power at the head of an organization dependent on him and having established a way of life that constantly brought him validation. Tirelessly travelling the country and preaching thousands of sermons, many to huge congregations who had travelled from miles around, Wesley found his charisma and utility confirmed on a daily basis. While Southey understood this pattern, it presented him with the difficulty that to follow it year-by-year would be to fill the biography with repetitious minutiae. Instead, Southey turned aside to give mini-biographies of some of the converts who became lay preachers and to describe their missionary work in America and the West Indies. The biography of a hero becomes a social history of a movement. It is fascinating

as such, but its narrative arc is broken and its central energy dissipated. The result is that the predominant impression of Wesley given is that of his earlier years—of a thrusting, energetic, power-seeking man, a natural leader, who mistook what he wanted for God's will (sometimes sincerely, sometimes disingenuously)—a man who would never rest till others followed him in an organization shaped in his own image. His charisma is acknowledged, but his extraordinary ability to make converts is attributed less to the efficacy (still less the truth) of his doctrines of new birth and perfect assurance and more to the credulity and desperation of the poorly educated and poverty-stricken labouring classes. Southey views Methodism as a sociologist rather than a Christian: its greatest triumph was not the saving of thousands of sinners from hell but its system of discipline and surveillance in meetings in which the morality of members' conduct was regularly and publicly examined by local leaders. Southey found these immoral, because they encouraged a performance of confession and contrition that might not be sincere, and because they publicized feelings that should have stayed within marriages and families. Yet he admired their efficacy: Wesley, he thought, had produced, bit by bit, a superb system for keeping converts within the fold.

To a degree, Southey writes Wesley in his image of himself—a rather serious Oxford student who did not participate in the undergraduate culture of drinking and dining to excess and a young man whose restlessness led him to desire reform and refuse accommodation to what he saw as institutional laxity. A man of concern for the state of the common people, mellowing in later life and tempering the zeal of followers who resembled his own younger self. A man who came to support institutional stability as a way of avoiding dissension and conflict. But not, as Southey was, a man who understood the love of families or the innocence of children.

It is also true that Southey's Wesley reflected aspects of the author that he did not recognize about himself. Southey's own ambivalence and self-contradiction are apparent in the mixture of, on the one hand, admiring description of poor converts' struggles against authority and, on the other, condescending humour at the expense of their naïve beliefs. The biography is also recognizable as Southey's work to anyone who has read his epic poems *Thalaba the Destroyer* and *The Curse of Kehama*, in which the heroes believe themselves to have divinely sent supernatural powers—and in which readers are asked to admire these powers in operation. Like them it seems not only to analyse but also to accept the claims that, ostensibly, it is written to debunk. Southey condemns but also illustrates enthusiasm so often that he begins to protest too much, and the reader suspects his fascination by and even identification with it—as if it revealed a religion of the heart and a supernatural communication in which he desired to believe but that he would not allow himself to indulge. It may be that this ambivalence reflected an unacknowledged conflict between his self-identification as a dispassionate, evidential historian and critic on the one hand and, on the other, a yearning mourner who struggled to repress the desire to 'see' his dead son Herbert beyond the grave. Certainly Southey had, by 1820, changed from the implicit Unitarianism of his

youth: he not only strongly believed in an afterlife where his lost children could be met again but also accepted Jesus's divinity. That acceptance was, however, part of a private and quietist practice: Southey, always a self-righteous person, had little sense of his own sinfulness and therefore placed little emphasis on the difficulty of achieving personal redemption. Although he supported Christian evangelism, defended the Church of England as an institution and attended its services, he seems not to have felt that church membership, let alone the ritual of absolution, was necessary to reach heaven. Neither did he manifest any fear of hell. The afterlife, he assumed in practice, lay in wait for him—hence he had little sympathy for the sense of sin, the fear of damnation, the new birth, and the conversion experience that were central features of Methodism. The Methodists' inspection of followers' consciences in public meetings also appalled him as a person who hid his doubts, fears, and insecurities from his closest friends and from himself. His reply to criticism was not to look inward and ask forgiveness but to attack the critic; his response to setbacks was to work hard on a new project rather than to exhibit anxiety. These tendencies made Southey admire Wesley's massive work ethic—even when an older man—and applaud his tendency to identify critics as adversaries to be defeated. The lack of self-analysis and reflectiveness in Wesley's journals, which list actions but omit inwardness, was not an issue for Southey.

There was one thing that Southey could not forgive the older Wesley for. Southey had decided that the Church of England tied to the monarchy was the best means of maintaining national stability and avoiding a French-style revolution. Wesley, he argued, hypocritically proclaimed his loyalty to the Church, and his determination to keep his tens of thousands of followers within it, only to take steps that made secession inevitable. Secession, which came about after Wesley's death, 'separated them from general society; substituted a sectarian in the place of a catholic spirit; and, by alienating them from the national church, weakened the strongest cement of social order, and loosened the ties whereby men are bound to their native land. It carried disunion and discord into private life, breaking up families and friendships' (II, p. 584). Southey blamed Wesley's residual power-seeking for this result: in the last resort Wesley had, without admitting it, put his own sect's growth above the needs of the Anglican church and the British nation that he loved.

Reception

Though densely packed and somewhat disparate, the biography did rather better initially than Southey expected. On 26 April 1820 he noted that, within the first week, it had sold 1000 copies of the 1500 printed. Longmans issued a second edition in two small octavo volumes with minimal corrections, later in the year (letter to Edith Southey, 26 April 1820; *CLRS* 3472). Powerful men were impressed: the Bishop of London told him that that 'between the two dangers of seducing people to Methodism by setting its good points in too alluring a light, &

of wounding religion by treating its extravagancies & follies with too much levity, I had steered clear with great discretion' (letter to Edith Southey,19 May 1820; *CLRS* 3484). The Prime Minister 'said that it was a book which could not fail of doing a great deal of good.' Flattered by this praise, Southey vowed 'I shall yet do good service both to the Church and State' (letter to Neville White, 6 July 1820; *CLRS* 3507). He was now, he understood, not simply the independent, conservative maverick that he had previously considered himself: in the establishment's eyes and his own he was now a significant abettor of its instinct to defend the status quo from which it benefitted. In his own eyes, his reasons for writing the biography in the terms that he did had paid off: he had indeed succeeded in alerting the established powers, and middle-class public opinion, to the inner nature of a charismatic leader and his movement. If Wesley could now be judged in an informed manner in relation to Robespierre and Napoleon, Methodism could now be seen, as Southey had intended, as a significant new social phenomenon in that it was the first mass organization of the poor. As such, it must be reckoned with.

When reviews began to appear, Southey's biases and blindspots came into focus. His credentials as a Church and State supporter came under close scrutiny; so did his fitness to be the biographer of a religious leader of labourers and artisans. His theological knowledge and his class consciousness were criticised; so was his alternation between admiration and condemnation and fascination and contempt.[13] On the surface, it seemed that his prediction was exactly right—that each reviewer found a different aspect to dislike according to his own affiliation to Methodism, to dissenting Calvinism, to High Church Toryism, or to other sects and parties. But certain common themes emerged, revealing much about the ambivalence of Southey's own political, social, and religious views as well as about the national divisions between churches and classes and about Wesley's controversial legacy.

The Monthly Review reflected the biases of its radical and Unitarian readers, 'rational dissenters' who wished for a reform of parliament and who did not accept Jesus's incarnation. It attacked Southey and Coleridge—themselves Unitarians in their radical twenties—for having become supporters of Church and King. But it endorsed Southey's view of the conversion experiences induced by Wesley's preaching.

> those strange fits, those 'wrestlings with God,' and 'dislodgements of the evil one,' which … Wesley was able to excite in his congregations … appear in some cases to have been the result of sensibility highly excited; in others, a sort of epileptic affection; in some, an hysterical disorder, highly infectious from sympathy; and in many cases they were the offspring of hypocrisy, and intended merely to create attention. Some, which were effected afterward by Wesley's followers, bear strong marks of a conspiracy between the preacher and the exhibitors. The injury which must be done to any person's senses by constantly aspiring and gasping for a visitation of grace, which was not to be procured by any

> good works or rational exertions, but was to be a sudden influx from 'the pure love of the babe Jesus,' might account for a great portion of these fancies: but a fervid or disordered imagination does not, except at the outset of these vagaries, seem to have had so much agency in producing these effects as a certain craft and subtilty which makes men fond of being parties in wonder-working, and in imposing on the credulity of their neighbours.
>
> (Appendix C)

It also astutely recognised that the chief virtue of Southey's portrait of Wesley was its psychological penetration of an extraordinary and self-contradictory character able to inspire himself and others—to induce belief. Comparing Wesley to Mohammed and to Cromwell, the reviewer implied that the drive and charisma that led people to follow such characters emanated from an unstable mixture of reason and mysticism, clarity, craftiness, and self-delusion:

> Their character has quite different phases under different circumstances. Sometimes we perceive their reason in full splendour, dissipating the mists of superstition, and shewing the clouds of bigotry and faction in the most grotesque and fantastic shapes as in scorn, or marshalling them as ministers and vehicles of its own radiance. At other times we observe the same mighty reason suffering eclipse from the intervention of some malignant planet, which before seemed but to reflect and add to its glory, and shorn of its beams by the ascendancy of fogs which previously it was able to disperse or to irradiate at pleasure. The quick succession, indeed, in such minds, of the suggestions of sagacity, folly, and policy, or of scepticism and superstition, form a curious matter of speculation to those who study the human understanding, and are sensible of the slight limits by which reason is separated from madness.
>
> (Appendix C)

Southey had once begun an epic poem on Mohammed and would later write a life of Cromwell. The reviewer had recognised that, however much he criticised them, men who induced 'enthusiastic' or fanatical belief fascinated Southey: they embodied what he saw as the Spirit of the Age.

'Enthusiasm'—both in Wesley himself and in his converts—was commonly seen as one of Southey's main themes. In *The Quarterly Review*, the young Anglican cleric Reginald Heber recounted what Southey had revealed, taking a dim view:

> Wesley … was not only an enthusiast himself, but the cause of still greater enthusiasm in others, and had the unhappy art of inoculating his audience with convulsions and frenzy, surpassing the most extraordinary symptoms to which animal magnetism has given rise, and calculated

> more than any other possible occurrence, short of actual criminality, to alarm and disgust the rational friends of religion, and to bring disgrace on the name of the Christian religion itself. Violent outcries, howling, gnashing of teeth, frightful convulsions, frenzy, blasphemy, epileptic and apoplectic symptoms were excited in turn on different individuals in the Methodist congregations. Cries were heard in their Love Feasts as of people being put to the sword; and the ravings of despair, which seemed to arise from an actual foretaste of torment, were strangely blended with rapturous shouts of 'glory! glory!'
>
> (Appendix C)

The British Critic—a strong supporter of the Church of England and Tory government—also picked out these enthusiastic displays from Southey's narrative and found them deplorable. To supporters of the established church, the biography graphically revealed Methodism's dependence on a hysterical over-emotionalism that offended against the reflective, calm, rational piety that they valued. Southey confirmed their suspicion that Methodism was a threat to propriety and order.

The evangelicals and Methodists agreed that enthusiasm was Southey's major theme. Richard Watson, in a book commissioned by the Methodists to refute the biography, declared that Southey's attack upon it was so comprehensive that it amounted, albeit inadvertently, to an attack on 'religion itself,' which, 'if the Church of England has rightly exhibited it in her formularies, and in the writings of her greatest divines, is very incautiously and generally resolved into enthusiasm, and other natural causes' (Appendix C). Watson's colleague Henry Moore, in an official Methodist biography rushed into print to counter Southey's, was appalled to 'see religion in its peace, power, and purity, as set forth not only in the writings of Mr. Wesley, but of the Fathers of the Church of England, described as a mental disease of the most pitiable description' (Appendix C). Southey had, as it were, scored an own goal by attributing to natural causes—a distempered imagination—the kinds of spiritual experience reported by many of the priests revered by the Anglican church that he supported. Fundamentally, the Methodists thought, he epitomised a dry, rational faith that suspected all apprehensions of the supernatural to be superstitious. As Watson put it, 'every stirring of religious feeling which may appear new and irregular to a cold and torpid formality, has a ready designation in the equally undefined term fanaticism' (Appendix C). Southey's impatience with theology compounded the issue: *The Evangelical Magazine* noted that he 'discovers indeed … such complete ignorance of theology, even the theology of his own church, as proves his total incapacity for criticism on subjects of that nature. If however it be true, as is commonly reported, that Mr. S. was educated in the Socinian school, we may account for many of his observations, even though now a professed member of the Church of England, some of whose doctrines he nevertheless represents as "horrible and diabolical"— especially Election and Predestination' (Appendix C). From the opposite end of the religious spectrum, *The British Review* agreed: 'Mr. Southey ventures to open his

mouth upon religious doctrines. He has constantly deemed it necessary to express his dissent from the opinions maintained by Wesley. But it so happened, that in many points, and these essential ones, Wesley very nearly agreed with the Church of England. This Mr. Southey seems to have forgotten. Some of Wesley's doctrines, doctrines that are to be found in our Articles and Homilies, he seems even to regard as new' (Appendix C).

The Eclectic Review was acute enough to see that Southey, despite the ignorance of doctrine and suspicion of enthusiasm produced by his essentially secular attitudes, did not repeatedly describe religious conviction simply in order to condemn it.

> In truth, almost the only thing in 'the Life of Wesley' which comes upon the ear with the impression of uniformity, is the word 'Enthusiasm,' always pronounced in a derisive tone, and yet so made to hover between a good and a bad sense, as if the Writer consciously employed it for a veil, either to wavering convictions, or disingenuous timidity;—seeming himself not to know what opinion to form of the facts before him, or not daring to say what he thinks.
>
> (Appendix C)

Here the reviewer accurately identifies the symptoms, though he does not diagnose the cause, of Southey's ambivalence about the belief that the mind—and body—are infused with spirit, and about the manifestation of that belief in hyper-emotional displays. Southey thought that enthusiasm's psycho-social effect—the creation of mass conversions—was astonishing; he was fascinated by the sense of conviction it gave—his Wesley was a descendant of his poetic hero Thalaba. But frequently he judged its individual manifestations to be ridiculous. He attributed it to hypnotism, mass hysteria and self-delusion, if not fraud. And yet despite his scepticism, he declared himself inclined to believe the testimony of Wesley's siblings that the family home was occupied by a poltergeist that played harmless tricks upon them (they named it 'Jeffrey'). 'Such things' he remarks, 'may be preternatural and yet not miraculous; they may be not in the ordinary course of nature, and yet imply no alteration of its laws. And with regard to the good end which they may be supposed to answer, it would be end sufficient if sometimes one of those unhappy persons who, looking through the dim glass of infidelity, see nothing beyond this life, and the narrow sphere of mortal existence, should, from the well-established truth of one such story, … be led to a conclusion that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in their philosophy' (II, p. 673). Noting the contradiction in Southey's attitude, Heber implied in *The Quarterly* that he was exhibiting the very credulity that he lamented in Wesley's followers. 'Jeffrey', he reminded Southey, was a cheap trickster, and 'whatever has been revealed to us of the spiritual world, or whatever conjectures a sound analogy would lead us to form concerning its inhabitants, is in direct opposition to the idea of their agency being exerted in tricks so apish and insignificant as a well-educated schoolboy would be ashamed of' (Appendix C).

Because Southey was dismissive about the enthusiasm of Wesley's converts, he seemed to evangelical reviewers to voice snobbery as well as scepticism. *The Evangelical Magazine* thought he was pandering to the prejudices of middle-class readers, protesting that 'his ludicrous images and cruel raillery will be long remembered, and eagerly retailed by them, as choice materials for ridicule in the literary club and the convivial party' (Appendix C). Moravian readers objected on similar grounds: Southey belittled the sensuality and naïvety of the verse in which members had expressed their worship of Christ (that Southey was shocked at these objections from a sect whose more recent conduct he highly approved suggests he was unwittingly arrogant rather than deliberately hurtful). *The Eclectic Review* pointed out that the conversion experiences of Wesley's labouring-class followers were little different from those of the first Christians, including St Paul—which Southey, as a putative supporter of religion, did not dare deride. Hence, his tone must be the result of the elite's disdain for the poor and the ill-educated: it was an 'attitude of condescending curiosity directed downwards toward the vagaries of the half-idiot beings of a lower sphere' (Appendix C). There is a grain of truth in this: Southey's pride in his own learning did sometimes make him contemptuous of the ignorant; laughing at the blunders of the over-earnest and over-zealous Methodist converts was an easy way for him to establish solidarity with his readers. However, the reviewers were themselves not free from contempt; they complained about prejudice but also exhibited the resentment by lower middle-class evangelicals of the 'liberal' middle classes, their social superiors. They illustrated the alignment of religious difference with class division.

The reviewers exposed another tension in Southey's discourse. While he aimed to bolster the established church and state, he exhibited little of the piety towards religion that was expected of an Anglican, making him an uneasy bedfellow. His background among the anti-clerical, deistical, and republican intellectuals of the revolutionary 1790s was still detectable: he was an unorthodox defender of orthodoxy. His dislike of Calvinism offended the Calvinist Evangelicals within the Church (descendants of Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon). His impatience with historic doctrine upset High Churchmen just as it did Methodists. 'Is Mr. Southey a believer in Christianity?' asked Watson, a query also made by none other than Coleridge in a marginal note on his copy of the biography (II, p. 682). Southey's lack of a strong personal sense of sinfulness or weakness meant that he had little need of a redeemer. Coleridge, deeply guilty and very much aware of his weakness, was shocked to see 'the love of God and the strong desire for salvation, represented as so many regular symptoms and crises of a bodily disease' (II, p. 455ni). What Coleridge knew to be an unwitting blind-spot in his old friend, Moore viewed as the effect of atheism. 'Mr. Southey,' he declared, 'whatever he may have intended, has written to pull down the faith, though he exalts the man' (Appendix C). Moore likened Southey to Hume and Gibbon, not just unchristian but anti-Christian: 'labouring (… unconsciously, we trust,) to save mankind from "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"' (Appendix C).

While the conjunction of the Methodist Moore, High Church Tories, and the Anglican Coleridge in doubting Southey's Chrisitanity was unexpected, responses to his portrait of Wesley himself were more predictable. Moore and Watson deplored Southey's insistence that Wesley was ambitious and so loved power that he could not brook an equal. They resented the accusation that, in his earlier career, Wesley let himself equate his own advantage with the will of God. They defended him against Southey's aspersion that he credulously believed, without investigating, every unusual manifestation to be a sign of the divine presence. They passed over Southey's demonstration that he had practised bibliomancy and sortilege; they also said little about the spiritual pride and hypocrisy that, Southey judged, led the young Wesley to refuse his dying father's wish that he would take over his parish and that caused him publicly to demean Sophia Hopkey after she married another suitor. Nor did they take up the accusations of his wife that Wesley, under the guise of giving spiritual advice, entered into improper relationships with other women. On the other hand, the reviewers who supported the Church of England seized upon these aspects of the biography to conclude that Wesley was power-seeking, ambitious, and had a cavalier attitude to truth. In *The Quarterly*, Heber attributed some of these faults to a vanity that had a certain justification (since he had, after all, produced an extraordinary religious revival, countrywide):

> Believing himself to be an extraordinary person, and engaged in an enterprize of the most important character, he lent a ready faith to whatever marvels had a tendency to designate him as the favourite of God, or the peculiar object of Satan's fury. If any among his hearers pretended to visions, or to be the victim of diabolical possession, he never seems to have thought it necessary to examine into the truth of the ecstasies, but to have taken all for granted: because, when such a wondrous work was advancing in the world, such wonders and such supernatural agency were in their place, and reasonably to be expected.
>
> (Appendix C)

The Monthly Review was much more severe. Summarizing Southey's depiction of Wesley in America, it concluded that where 'he could domineer over the consciences of others under the pretext of clerical discipline, this he did; and, with the spirit of a Becket, he gloried in his own austerities, in bigotry, and in persecution. In the midst of his intolerance, however, his pride was humbled by a love-adventure, the details of which we do not deem it necessary to recapitulate: but we cannot help observing that the particulars are in the highest degree discreditable to Mr. Wesley's memory as a man of sincerity, or propriety, or humanity' (Appendix C). *The British Critic* came to a similar conclusion in response to Southey's observations on Wesley's refusing to take over his dying father's parish: 'when he deliberately chose to resist the importunities of his father, and to refuse a fair opportunity of professional utility, upon principles false in themselves, defended

by sophistry, and upheld by disingenuously obtaining a shew of episcopal authority, his conduct was as little creditable to his feelings as to his candour and his judgment, but it was clearly indicative of the real tendency of his disposition' (Appendix C). These non-Methodist and non-Evangelical readers demonstrated the power of Southey's narrative strategy of treating a few incidences of conflict as keys to Wesley's inner nature—a nature often hidden to himself.

Wesley and sexual harassment?: an unexpected response to the *Life*

Towards the end of 1820, Southey received a letter from the cousin of the Prime Minister, John Banks Jenkinson, the Dean of Worcester. Jenkinson, having read Southey's castigation of Wesley for his behaviour towards women whose affections he engaged, informed him that he owned a copy of part of a letter from Elizabeth Briggs, a Methodist to whom Wesley had given spiritual guidance in circumstances of close intimacy. Briggs was forty-eight years younger than Wesley; her letter complained about his unwanted physical advances towards her.

A letter of this kind would confirm the inferences that Southey had invited readers to draw about Wesley's compromising relationships with Sophia Hopkey and Sarah Ryan (see I, pp. 85–90 and II, pp. 465–8 below)—relationships that, under the guise of spiritual guidance, had become romantic and, at least in the former case, had involved touching and kissing.[14] More seriously still, it would show that, while married, Wesley made physical advances to another woman—a devastating blow to his reputation as a honourable, good priest (and, for his followers, as a holy leader chosen by Providence to restore Christianity). As Southey had shown, it was after reading letters revealing Wesley's interest in other women that his wife had left him. For opponents of Methodism's increasing influence—churchmen such as Jenkinson and Southey himself—using Briggs's statement would be an effective means of discrediting not only Wesley, but also the movement that set such store upon preachers and leaders closely examining followers' conduct in intimate circumstances. Southey had singled out this practice as morally dangerous.

Reading Jenkinson's copy, Southey was impressed by the internal evidence for its authenticity. He thought its style and manner corresponded to those of published letters by Briggs. He thought it psychologically credible: 'It is written in a most empassioned strain of personal affection, & spiritual reverence, remonstrating with him upon the liberties which he had taken with her, in language that at the same time confesses a boundless love, & expresses the alarm & indignation of a mind which still retained its virtuous principles. In a word, it is such a letter as such a woman would have written' (*CLRS* 3626; see Appendix A). Briggs, as a granddaughter of Vincent Perronet whose conduct was approved of by Charles Wesley and who went on to marry in 1788 the Methodist clergyman Peard Dickinson, was respected by senior Methodists; she did not seem to be a malevolent or unreliable witness. Despite these credentials, Southey did not jump at the chance to damage Methodism by publishing the letter in a new edition of the *Life.* Perhaps in 1803, when writing his alarmist review of Myles's work,

he would have done so. By 1820 he was a seasoned historian who worked from validated sources. He wrote to the person who, according to Jenkinson, held the original letter—Glocester Wilson, a civil servant. Wilson, it was understood, had inherited the letter from his mother, who had received it from Wesley's wife—she having taken many of Wesley's letters with her when she left her husband. Southey told Wilson, 'if it prove to be authentic, affecting Wesley's character as it does, it becomes my duty, tho a most unwelcome one, to make it public Having written his life as fully as the materials before me enabled me to do, & as faithfully as possible, I cannot, consistently with integrity, suppress a fact of this nature' (*CLRS* 3596; see Appendix A).

Wilson replied that his mother had been given a copy rather than the original, and that he believed it was authentic rather than a forgery, as did a person who had known Briggs. The original, however, was not to be found. Southey contacted another potential informant—the Irish priest Alexander Knox who had known Wesley towards the end of Wesley's life and who owned some manuscript letters. Knox, from his own recollection of Wesley's character and from the evidence of his letters, was sure that no improper conduct could have occurred. He notes that Wesley wrote to many young women with 'an unsuspecting frankness'; (he 'unbosoms himself on every topic which occurs to him, as to kindred spirits, in whose sympathies he confided, and from whose re-communications he hoped for additional light on those internal concerns which were ever uppermost in his mind, and nearest to his heart'). But he acquits Wesley of any moral failure: even if the letters reveal 'injudicious guidance' and 'anomaly of mind', Wesley's aim was 'spiritual good.' He argues that, given how many witnesses observed what Wesley did, and how many pious and highly intelligent women corresponded with him, any impropriety of conduct would soon have led to the circulation of damaging rumours, blasting his reputation (this was rather to ignore the fact that Wesley's wife, who saw much of the correspondence, did circulate such rumours, only to be discounted). Knox affirms Wesley's remarkable goodness, but does not speculate on the propriety, for a married man, of the emotional relationships that the letters produced (for his communication to Southey, see Appendix B).

Thus advised, and lacking documentary proof, Southey decided not to publish the Briggs letter, despite being inclined to believe its authenticity. It did, in his eyes, 'show, like many cases in Catholick history, how easily spiritual & carnal affections may be blended'—a comparison that Methodists found most disconcerting (*CLRS* 3603). His decision reveals that his historian's determination to work from reliable sources trumped both his psychological insights and his desire to oppose Methodism's growth.

While it has not been possible since Southey's time to trace the copy to an original Briggs letter, other documents, unavailable to Southey, make it seem likely that its assertions were true. We know that in the case of Hopkey, Wesley oscillated between, on the one hand, the physical intimacy—kissing, holding—that characterizes courtship and, on the other, withdrawal on the grounds of his distrust of sexual desire, his uncertainty about women, and his dedication of himself

to God. Hopkey was left confused as to his intentions, and after protracted doubts, married another—only for Wesley to subject her to public scandal by refusing her the Eucharist. This in turn led to his being prosecuted by her uncle.

We know too, from his own narrative, that he left Grace Murray in a similar confused state, engaging her affections but declaring his desire to marry her so vaguely and conditionally that she did not recognize it as a proposal and instead undertook to marry John Bennet. On that occasion, Charles Wesley stepped in and brought the affair to a conclusion, intending either to free his brother from the personal and public consequences of continuing involvement with a woman who had then contracted to marry another, or to free her from losing her reputation, or both. His action, which decisively favoured Bennet over Wesley, was a highly unusual one for a brother to take. It risked upsetting Wesley (and privately Wesley expressed his deep resentment of it – but, significantly, not until after he had let it happen). That Charles, who was otherwise on good terms with Wesley, took it suggests he was alarmed and did not trust his brother's conduct or judgement—and perhaps this was because he remembered the Hopkey affair and worried that similar results would ensue. Another motive may have been a desire to keep Wesley free of ties that might restrict his commitment to the itinerant preaching on which the spread of Methodism depended.

The intimacy with Sarah Ryan (see II, pp. 465–70 below) was another potentially compromising case, not only because Wesley was by then married but also because Ryan had a background that made many see her as a sexually promiscuous, immoral woman (in Wesley's wife's succinct term, a whore). In sum, it is clear that a pattern existed: Wesley formed intimate relationships with women within the Methodist movement—in later years, much younger women—and strove to sublimate the emotional and sexual attraction that he—and sometimes they—experienced as spiritual enlightenment. It is also clear that, given the correspondence that Wesley's wife read, she had ample reason to be jealous and distrustful. Whether she forged the 'Briggs' letter in vengeance we shall never know (Southey judged her capable of having done so); we do know that its claims are not out of kilter with Wesley's recorded behaviour. Wesley had done similar things before; the difference was that he was now married and that a woman thus involved could not regard the mixture of spiritual and physical relations as merely a confusing attempt at courtship. Another difference, of course, was power: by the time of his ill-advised correspondence with Ryan and Briggs, Wesley was the revered and all-powerful leader of a huge movement, the officers of which were all men. Women seen as too close to Wesley risked being blamed for being so on the grounds of their past 'immorality,' as Ryan was. Women who complained of Wesley's conduct—as his wife certainly did when she accused him of adultery with Ryan in front of several Methodist preachers—found that no investigation was made. Within Methodism, Wesley's wife was viewed as a termagant and a shrew, rather than a person who might have a cause for her undoubted rage. That she may have been, from the outset, a person who did not conform to stereotypical (male) ideals of female conduct (modesty, self-effacement, quietness etc.)

does not mean that her claims were not worth investigating or that she should have been ignored (as she often still is within contemporary Methodism) because labelled as a 'difficult' woman. Thus even Henry D. Rack, whose *Reasonable Enthusiast* is often regarded as the standard biography of Wesley, contrives to usher Molly's accusations offstage, rather than examining them in detail, by implying, using undefined and unevidenced language deriving from psychiatry, that she was suffering from inherent mental illness. She was, he states, subject to 'pathological' and 'natural' jealousy; 'constitutionally neurotic.' 'Charges of sexual misconduct,' he admits, 'were often made' by others as well as Molly; he simply dismisses them en masse, in a single sentence, as 'implausible.'[15] A more questioning course is taken by Briggs Sr and Briggs, who speculate that Wesley may have married a woman likely to chastise him for illicit relationships as an unconscious way of punishing himself for the sinfulness of his desires and of his attraction to female followers.[16] While it is impossible to document their Freudian interpretation, it does provide one possible explanation of why Wesley let his wife read letters likely to arouse her anger and of why he then submitted to her public humiliation of him.

For Southey's correspondence about the Briggs claim, see Appendices A and B.

Coleridge's response

The most intelligent and extensive reading of the Life came from the man who knew Southey's work best, having first collaborated with him in 1794. By 1820 Coleridge was ten years gone from Keswick, where he and Southey had shared a home with their families. In the meantime, Southey had brought up Coleridge's children and supported his wife. The two men no longer corresponded regularly, though Coleridge leapt to his old friend's defence in the press in 1817, when the pirate publication of the 1794 radical play *Wat Tyler* revealed the full extent of Southey's political reversal. For Coleridge, alone in London, reading the *Life* was a safe means of renewing a dialogue that he was too guilty and fragile to continue in person. He recorded his thoughts in marginal notes more voluminous than he made on any other book, although an inveterate annotator.[17] These were evidently written by a man who had suffered anguish—even despair—at his own weakness and guilt and who yearned for saving grace, knowing he was too weak to reform himself and become redeemable through his own efforts. This predicament gave him more sympathy with the spiritual crises of Wesley's converts than Southey shows. His notes derived from several readings—made in May 1820, August 1822, August 1825, and finally in 1832. But although several of them addressed him directly, Southey seems not to have seen them until after Coleridge's death (which occurred in 1834).

Coleridge comments on many aspects of the biography, engaged with Southey's narrative and notes alike. He disputes Southey's reading of seventeenth-century Puritanism, finding merit in its effect on the clergy and the church where Southey finds none. He argues with Southey and with Wesley about Methodist theology,

Calvinist and Arminian. But he also considers the book as a whole, not only noticing, as others did, that it bears the marks of Southey's characteristic flaw—inconsistency, especially as pertaining to his attitudes to belief in the supernatural—but also perceiving that it was the more interesting for it:

> The prominent fault (or what to faultfinders would appear such) of this delightful work, is for me one of its characteristic charms,—the frequent inconsistency, I mean. But observe! only the inconsistency of page this with page that, some forty or fifty pages apart; no inconsistency of Southey with himself under any one existing impression, or in relation to any one part or set of circumstances. And it is this that gives all the finer and essential spirit of the drama to Southey's biography.
>
> (I, p. 261ni)

It was also the more dangerous, since Southey, both crediting and dismissing supernatural experience, threatened to unsettle young intellectuals still in the process of formation:

> O dear and honoured Southey! this the favourite of my library among many favourites, this the book which I can read for the twentieth time with delight, when I can read nothing else at all; this darling book is nevertheless an unsafe book for all of unsettled minds. How many admirable young men do I know or have seen, whose minds would be a shuttlecock between the battledores, which the bi-partite author keeps in motion!
>
> (I, p. 147nii)

Coleridge attributed some of Southey's inconsistency to his political reaction against the opinions he had held in the 1790s. He evidently felt that, with the excessive zeal of a recent convert to Church and King, Southey went to extremes to demonstrate his revulsion by the republican politics and dissenting religion of his youth. He seized on a passage in which Southey said of the Puritan republicans who rebelled against Charles I: 'if the schismatics who cordially co-operated for the overthrow of the altar and the throne, had not turned their malignant passions against each other as soon as the business of destruction was done, they would have established among us an ecclesiastical tyranny of the lowest and most loathsome kind, the only thing wanting to complete the punishment and the degradation of this guilty and miserable nation.' Coleridge's note began 'Merciful God!!—And is this R.S.? He who wrote the Inscription on Martin?' (*CM*, V, p. 144). This comment referred to Southey's poem of 1797 commemorating the regicide Henry Marten, in which he had written

> Dost thou ask his crime?
> He had rebell'd against the King, and sat
> In judgment on him; for his ardent mind

> Shaped goodliest plans of happiness on earth,
> And peace and liberty. Wild dreams! But such
> As PLATO lov'd; such as with holy zeal
> Our MILTON worshipp'd. Blessed hopes! awhile
> From man withheld, even to the latter days,
> When CHRIST shall come and all things be fulfill'd.
>
> (*RSPW*, V, p. 64)

Despite Southey's protestations on behalf of the established church, his residual affiliation to religious dissent was visible in his lack of knowledge of or respect for the doctrines of Anglicanism. Phrases that Southey suggested exemplified the 'outrageous enthusiasm' of Wesley's beliefs were, Coleridge noted, 'the very words' used by the Church of England when ordaining priests (*CM*, V, pp. 163; 163; 142). Like the Methodist and Tory reviewers, Coleridge was brought by mistakes of this kind to ask 'is Southey a Christian?' It was more apparent that he viewed the Church as a defender of the social order and religious moderation than that he believed its doctrines or had personal faith. As a consequence, Coleridge imagined saving Southey from the consequences of a rush to judgement that demonstrated his ignorance:

> O ever highly prized and fondly remembered Southey! Methinks, I could have walked to Keswick bare-foot, with only Bread & Water to support me, and have knelt to you, if by so doing I could have snatched these four pages from the Mss Pacquet for the Printer—<Pages> alike irreconcileable with faith of History, with philosophic Calmness and with Christian Charity—in one word, with Robert Southey!
>
> (*CM*, V, p. 145)

Another aspect of the book's dramatic inconsistency was the difference between what his narrative seemed to show and Southey's explicit interpretation of its meaning. Coleridge found himself constantly engaged by the tension thus generated, especially as regards Southey's remarks on Wesley's conduct. The biographer's 'venial partiality for his Hero' drew several exasperated exclamations from Coleridge (I, p. 223ni). To Southey's verdict that Wesley loved God with all his heart, Coleridge responded incredulously

> Rooted ambition, restless appetite of power and primacy, with a vindictive spirit, breaking out into slanders against those who interfered with his ruling passion, and a logical shadow-fight with notions and words, sustained by the fervour of the game, with an entire absence and unsusceptibility of ideas and tranquil depths of being,—in short, my, my -myself, in a series of disguises and self-delusions. Such is the sum of Southey's statement: and are these compatible with the same Wesley at the same time assuredly loving God with all his heart, and with all his

> soul, and with all his strength? If it were right and possible for a man to love himself in God,—yet, can he love God in himself, otherwise than by making his-self his God?
>
> (I, p. 253ni)

Here the discrepancy between what Southey's narrative indicated about Wesley, and Southey's own interpretation of it, led Coleridge to a telling distinction that was more penetrating about the nature and moral worth of Wesley's egotism than anything in the biography itself, or in other responses to it.

'How much will not philosophy owe to Robert Southey for the preservation of so many facts, that serve as clues through the labyrinth of religious fanaticism!' runs one of Coleridge marginalia (I, pp. 113–14nii). Many of his notes explore in detail the visions of divine love experienced by Methodists during their conversion experiences. These, Southey showed, typically occurred during a crisis in which the sinner, overwhelmed by mental wretchedness, neither slept nor ate. Coleridge was inclined to give a pathological rather than spiritual explanation for them, likening them to the crises induced by Animal Magnetism (hypnotism/Mesmerism). They were, he suspected, self-fulfilling: the process of straining for them eventually produced them: 'In hundreds the disease produced by the mental disturbance itself of the passionate straining after this new-birth' led to pain and exhaustion. Then body and mind, beginning to recover, 'gave creation to the same in-rush feeling of convalescence, which taking its shape and colour from the predominating thoughts and images, becomes assurance and efficient faith!' (I, p. 114nii). He offered as analogous evidence his own visions: 'nothing in the mind that was not there before; only a glow, a vividness over all, as in dreams after I have taken a dose of calomel' (II, p. 455ni) (calomel, one suspects, a euphemism for opium). Here Coleridge is enabled by the narrative Southey provides to leapfrog Southey's response: he arrives at a more penetrating analysis of the psychological process involved than Southey makes (and more succinct than he himself makes anywhere else).

Characteristically, Coleridge was led to reflect on the reading process—and to suggest that his coming to different views from those explicitly taken by the author was to Southey's credit—an aspect of the narrative strategy of a good historian:

> Robert Southey is an Historian worth his weight in diamonds; and were he (which Heaven forefend) as fat as myself, and the diamonds all as big as birds' eggs, I should still repeat the appraisal. He may err in his own deductions from facts; but he never deceives by concealing any known part of the grounds and premises on which he had formed his conclusions. Or if there be any exception,—and pages 272–275 are the only ground or occasion for this 'if,'—yet it will be found to respect a complex mass of facts, to be collected from jarring and motley narratives, all as accessible to his readers as to himself. So here, that I am vexed with him for not employing stronger and more impassioned words of

> reprobation, and moral recoil in this black blotch of Wesley's heart and character, is in another point of view, the highest honour to Southey as an historian, since it is wholly and solely from his own statement of the incidents, that my impressions have been received.
>
> (I, p. 233ni)

Eschewing over-interpretation—what Keats called a 'palpable design upon us'—the good historian displayed the complex sources from which his narrative was constructed, so that, licensed by his text, the reader could arrive at a judgement that might be different from his own.[18] Inconsistency, in this light, is more like acknowledgement of complexity and difference, and as such, precious and brilliant ('worth his weight in diamonds').

Alexander Knox's response

While Coleridge reckoned that the biography showed Southey was too partial to his hero, Alexander Knox thought it was too critical. He wrote to Southey arguing against its verdict that Wesley was not only power-seeking but sometimes hypocritical. While sympathetic to Methodism's efforts to regenerate religious enthusiasm, Knox retained a critical perspective on it and remained within the Church of England. He had been an eye witness during the period in which Wesley quietly did what he had avowed never to do—claim the power to ordain priests, thus precipitating what he had always opposed—the Methodists' split from the Anglican Church. Southey had declared this act to have been driven by ambition, and Wesley's attempts to palliate it to have been disingenuous. Knox argued instead that 'misled imbecility' had been the cause and painted a picture of a mentally feeble elderly leader manipulated by some of his younger preachers. Thus 'while it is impossible to acquit him of lamentable inconsistency, he was utterly unconscious of artifice or duplicity' (Appendix B).

Knox's picture was important in that it made sense of some of the changes of direction of Wesley's last years. It allowed Southey to see Wesley as much more diminished by age than he had thought. It also persuaded him that Wesley was less deliberately and consciously ambitious than he had suggested. According to Knox, Wesley was an ad hoc adaptor of what came to hand rather than a planner or schemer, his motivation having been to perpetuate the emotional energy he generated in the hearers of his sermons: 'when Mr. Wesley formed a Society, he proceeded exactly on the same principle of sensible excitement which characterised his public addresses; and, accordingly, from its origin to the death of its founder, Wesleyan Methodism was no other than an apparatus for cherishing and deepening religious sensation'(Appendix B). From a more critical perspective such as Coleridge's, this motivation was little more than a desire to design a machine that would constantly boost Wesley's ego.

Southey was sympathetic to Knox, for Knox's aim of regenerating the Church of England using some of the means, and the theology, of Wesley was close to his

own. He aimed to reflect Knox's arguments in a revised edition of the *Life*. In the present edition, they may be found in Appendix B.

An unexpected response from Church Methodists

The *Life* brought Southey an unexpected letter from another admirer of Wesley who, like Knox, regretted the split from the Church of England and the moves to make Methodism an entirely freestanding church. On 13 January 1824, Mark Robinson, a draper from Beverley in Yorkshire, wrote to Southey about his hopes of taking many Methodists back into the Church of England (as had occurred in 1817 in Ireland when many thousands of preachers and leaders rejected the decision of the Methodist Conference there to take upon itself the power to administer the sacraments). Robinson and others had received some support from local evangelical clergy; because their plan accorded with the concluding wishes of the *Life*, he now solicited Southey's help (*Life and Correspondence*, V, pp. 159–64). Southey gave this help by passing the request on to the Bishop of London, who in return expressed his anxiety that, if Robinson's Methodists were allowed formally to reunite with the Church, they would strengthen the trouble-making Evangelical faction within it (descending from Whitefield's and the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection). He proposed, instead, 'that in certain situations, more especially in parts of the colonies, a union of purpose and action at least may silently take place, which under discreet management would be productive of much advantage to the one great cause; but this must be effected by prudent use of opportunities, and not, I think, by formal treaty' (*Life and Correspondence*, V, pp. 165–66). This was a somewhat patronizing as well as expedient reply: the Methodists would have no formal status and receive little countenance in Britain, but could be used to evangelize in the empire, since the Church found it difficult to recruit missionaries of its own.

Southey did not give up the cause, although the Archbishop of York was also reluctant for any formal connection to be made. He hoped that the 'Church Methodists' could fulfill auxiliary roles—and thought there was little danger of their boosting the Calvinist Evangelicals within the Church, since the Wesleyans were opposed to Calvinists and vice versa (letter to the Rev J. J. Hornby, 27 August 1829; *Life and Correspondence*, VI, pp. 60–65). But though he pushed the idea in his 1829 publication *Sir Thomas More; or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*, official reluctance prevailed.

This edition

With the biography selling well, Longmans published a second edition, in two volumes, small octavo, later in 1820 (£1 8s). This contained no substantial additions or changes. As the years went by, correspondents made Southey aware of information he had not known when writing, and he began to plan a third edition incorporating this. For instance, in 1835 he took up James Nicholls's offer to lend

him William Beal's *The Fathers of the Wesley Family* (1833). He told Nicholls he already had Adam Clarke's *Memoirs of the Wesley Family* (letter of 17 August 1835).[19] On a copy of the second edition of the *Life*, he made pencilled emendations reflecting what these new sources had shown him (this copy is now held at Johns Hopkins University Library[20]). He also intended to absorb letters from Alexander Knox, 'who laboured to convince me that I had formed a wrong estimate of Mr. Wesley's character, in supposing him to have been actuated by ambitious motives; and I now believe that he was right, and in my new edition I shall acknowledge it.'[21] In addition, as he noted in 1836, he intended take into account the marginalia made in copies of the 1820 edition owned by the Methodist biographer Henry Moore and by Coleridge.[22]

These plans did not come to fruition in Southey's lifetime, probably because by 1838 he had begun to suffer the dementia that, in the years before his death in 1843, overwhelmed him. In 1846, however, his son C. C. Southey attempted to realize them and prepared a third edition that incorporated most of the emendations that Southey had made on his copy of the second edition. These comprise fifteen notes by Southey and over a hundred new lines of text, mostly concerning the history of the Wesley family and early part of Wesley's life. About twenty small changes of wording are also made.[23] The lengthy communication from Knox about Wesley's conduct and character in his last years was also included, as were most of the many marginal notes that Coleridge had made in his copy of the 1820 edition at various times between 1820 and 1832. The notes thought suitable to print were transcribed by Sara Coleridge (Coleridge's daughter, who had grown up in Southey's house and been educated by him) with the help of Southey's daughter Kate. Among the few that were not included was one in which Coleridge admitted to having lapsed into despair and another in which he lamented the volte face that Southey had performed from honouring regicide republicans in 1794 to reviling them in 1820 (they may now be accessed in the fifth volume of Coleridge's *Marginalia* in the Collected Coleridge edition).

This edition is the first to present a collated text of the first, second, and third editions—all those issued under Southey's authority or reflecting his intentions. The copytext is that of the first edition; variants in the second and third editions are presented in footnotes—as are Southey's own notes on his text (editorial interventions in Southey's notes—translations of foreign languages and identification of sources—appear in square brackets). Editorial notes to Southey's main text are placed as endnotes: these identify the sources of Southey's quotations from the writings of Wesley and others (there are altogether over 1300 of them). Coleridge's marginalia as published in the third edition, appear as footnotes. Knox's communication, also from the third edition, appears as Appendix B.

Later editions

The Life of Wesley continued to appear in reprints and new editions for a century after its first publication. C. C. Southey's 1846 edition was reissued in 1858, 1864,

and 1889. Once copyright had expired, the 1820 edition was used by firms who specialized in cheap editions of old books. George Bell and Sons brought out one such edition in 1881 (reissued in 1885 and 1909). Hutchinson published another, abridged with notes by Arthur Reynolds, in 1903. This was reprinted in 1924. In 1925 Oxford University Press published a more scholarly edition with notes by Maurice H. Fitzgerald. This was based on the 1846 edition, but did not collate it with the 1820 editions.

In the United States, where Methodism boomed in the nineteenth century, an edition was produced in New York in 1820, pirated from the London edition, by William B. Gilley. In 1847 Harper and Brothers of New York produced another edition, based on the 1846 London edition, with notes by the Rev. Daniel Curry, the Methodist minister, editor, and author, later Principal of what became DePauw University. This was reprinted in 1874. A German translation appeared in Southey's lifetime, translated by F. A. Krummacher: *J. Wesley's Leben, die Entstehung und Verbreitung des Methodismus* (Hamburg, 1828).

Notes

1 The combined total for Britain and Ireland, derived from Robert Currie, Alan Gilbert, and Lee Horsley, *Churches and Churchgoers. Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700* (Oxford, 1977), p. 140. Quoted in Samuel J. Rogal, 'Southey's Biography of John Wesley Revisited', *Methodist History*, 41 (2003), 103–17 (p. 105).

2 On these, see Frederick E. Maser, 'Early Biographers of John Wesley', *Methodist History*, 1 (1963), 29–42 and Henry D. Rack, 'Wesley Portrayed: Character and Criticism in Some Early Biographies', *Methodist History*, 43 (2005), 90–114.

3 *Letters from England, by Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella*, ed. Carol Bolton (London, 2016), p. 297.

4 *The Annual Review for 1803*, 2 (1804), 201–13.

5 In this fear, Southey echoed earlier reactions to Methodism, including those of two of his sources in the *Life*: George Lavington and William Warburton. For a selection of these reactions, see *Religion in Romantic England. An Anthology of Primary Sources. Documents of Anglophone Christianity*, ed. Jeffrey W. Barbeau (Waco, 2018).

6 *The Fall of Robespierre*, ed. Daniel E. White (Romantic Circles Electronic Edition, 2008) https://romantic-circles.org/editions/robespierre/index.html

7 *Letters from England*, ed. Bolton, p. 297.

8 *Original Letters, by the Rev. John Wesley and His Friends*, ed. Joseph Priestley (Birmingham, 1791); John Hampson, *Memoirs of the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M.: With a Review of His Life and Writings*, 3 vols (Sunderland, 1791); Thomas Coke and Henry Moore, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Including an Account of the Great Revival of Religion in Europe and America* (London, 1792); William Myles, *A Chronological History of the People Called Methodists, of the Connection of the Late Rev. John Wesley, from Their Rise in the Year 1729 to Their Last Conference in the Year 1802* (London, 1803); John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley M.A.*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1805); Joseph Nightingale, *A Portraiture of Methodism: Being an Impartial View of the Rise, Progress, Doctrines, Discipline, and Manners of the Wesleyan Methodists* (London, 1807); Jonathan Crowther, *A Portraiture of Methodism or the History of the Wesleyan Methodists* (London, 1815).

9 Including Henry Rimius, *A Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhuters, Commonly Called Moravians, or Unitas Fratrum, with a Short Account*

of Their Doctrines, Drawn from Their Own Writings, 2nd ed. (London, 1753); *A True and Authentic Account of Andrew Frey: Containing the Occasion of His Coming among the Herrnhuters or Moravians* (London, 1753); Henry Rimius, *A Solemn Call on Count Zinzendorf, the Author and Advocate of the Sect of Herrnhuters, Commonly Called Moravians* (London, 1754); George Lavington, *The Moravians Compared and Detected* (London, 1755); David Cranz, *The Ancient and Modern History of the Brethren, or a Succinct Narrative of the Protestant Church of the United Brethren, or Unitas Fratrum, in the Remoter Ages, and Particularly in the Present Century* (London, 1780).

10 Southey thought this perfectionist doctrine especially dangerous and accused Wesley of equivocating about it. He suggested that Wesley, especially in his later, calmer, years provided moderate restatements of it that sought, while retaining it in name, to redefine 'perfection' and 'assurance' so that they retained little of the sectarian fervour of their original usage and no longer verged on antinomianism. Yet, at the same time, he argued, the belief that one might attain a state of utter assurance of being saved and of sinlessness was still being preached to the poor as the major inducement for conversion.

11 A plausible, if speculative, Freudian reading of Wesley's involvements with women is provided by John P. Briggs, Sr. and John Briggs, 'Unholy Desires, Inordinate Affections: A Psychodynamic Inquiry into John Wesley's Relationship with Women', *Connecticut Review*, 13 (1990), 1–18. http://people.wcsu.edu/briggsj/Wesley.html

12 See Roy Hattersley, *John Wesley: A Brand from the Burning: The Life of John Wesley* (London, 2002), chapter 13.

13 See Peter Nockles, 'Reactions to Robert Southey's *Life of Wesley* (1820) Reconsidered', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 63 (2012), 61–80.

14 Other relationships thought by some of Wesley's contemporaries to have been at best ill-advised were with Sally Kirkham, a married woman, in the 1720s, and Ann Bolton (to whom he wrote, employing the language of romance, in 1775 when he was seventy-five and she thirty-two). See Ted A. Campbell, 'John Wesley as Diarist and Correspondent', in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy L. Maddox (Cambridge, 2009), p. 134; Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Peterborough, 2002), pp. 268–9; and Bufford W. Coe, *John Wesley and Marriage* (Bethlehem and London, 1996), pp. 72–9.

15 Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 266, 267.

16 Briggs Sr and Briggs, 'Unholy Desires, Inordinate Affections', http://people.wcsu.edu/briggsj/Wesley.html

17 His annotated copy of the 1820 edition is now held by the Berg Collection, NYPL. His annotations are published in the Collected Coleridge edition, *Marginalia*, V, ed. H. J. Jackson and George Whalley (Princeton, 2000), pp. 120–93, abbreviated in this edition as *CM*.

18 Letter to J. H. Reynolds, 3 February 1818, in *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. H. E. Rollins, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1958), I, p. 224.

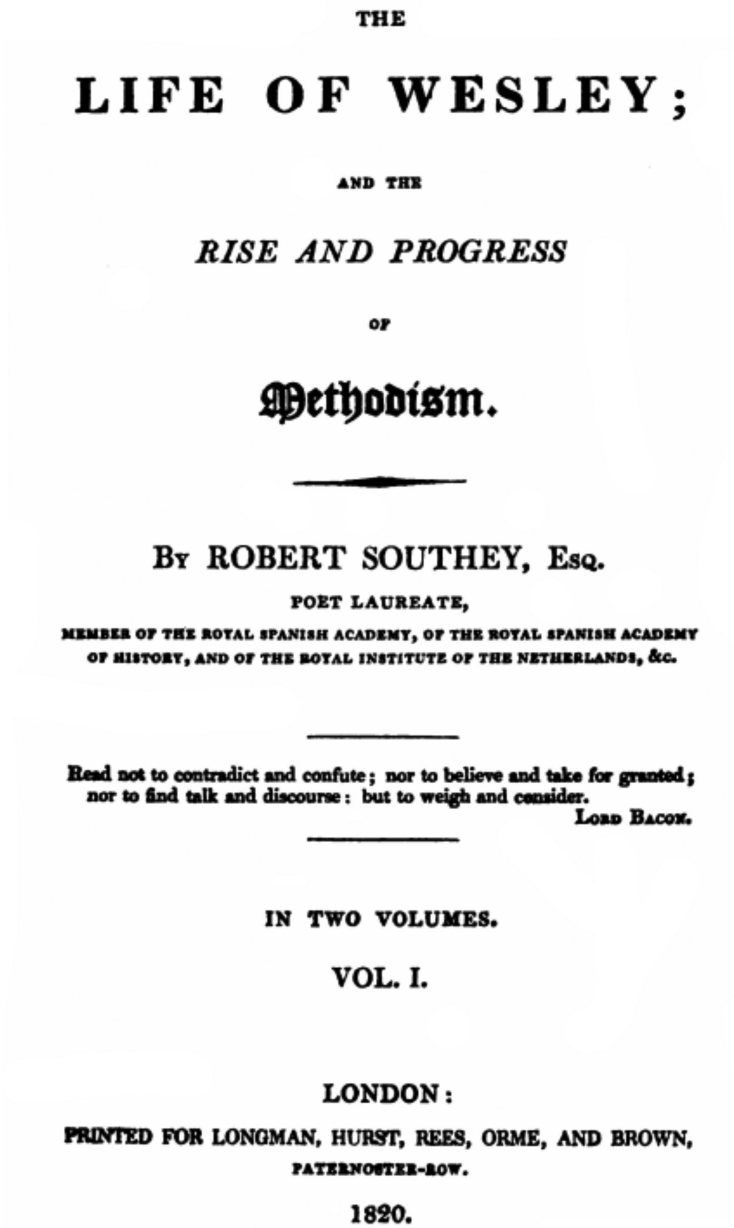
19 Part published in 'Wesley & His Biographers', *The Methodist Quarterly Review*, 3rd ser. 8 (1848), 406–35 (pp. 424–25). The original letter is now in the John Rylands Library, Methodist Archives, MAM PLP 98.8.22.

20 Johns Hopkins University, Sheridan Libraries, Special Collections, PO5464.L7 1820a c. 1.

21 From a communication of Joseph Carne derived from a meeting with Southey in 1836, in 'Wesley & His Biographers', 425.

22 From Carne, 'Wesley & His Biographers', 425.

23 See Raymond D. Havens, 'Southey's Revision of His Life of Wesley', *Review of English Studies*, 22 (1946), 134–6.



THE

LIFE OF WESLEY;

AND THE

RISE AND PROGRESS

OF

Methodism.

By ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq.

POET LAUREATE,

MEMBER OF THE ROYAL SPANISH ACADEMY, OF THE ROYAL SPANISH ACADEMY OF HISTORY, AND OF THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF THE NETHERLANDS, &c.

Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse: but to weigh and consider.

Lord Bacon.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1820.

Figure 1 Title page of *The Life of Wesley; and the Rise and Progress of Methodism* (1820), vol. I

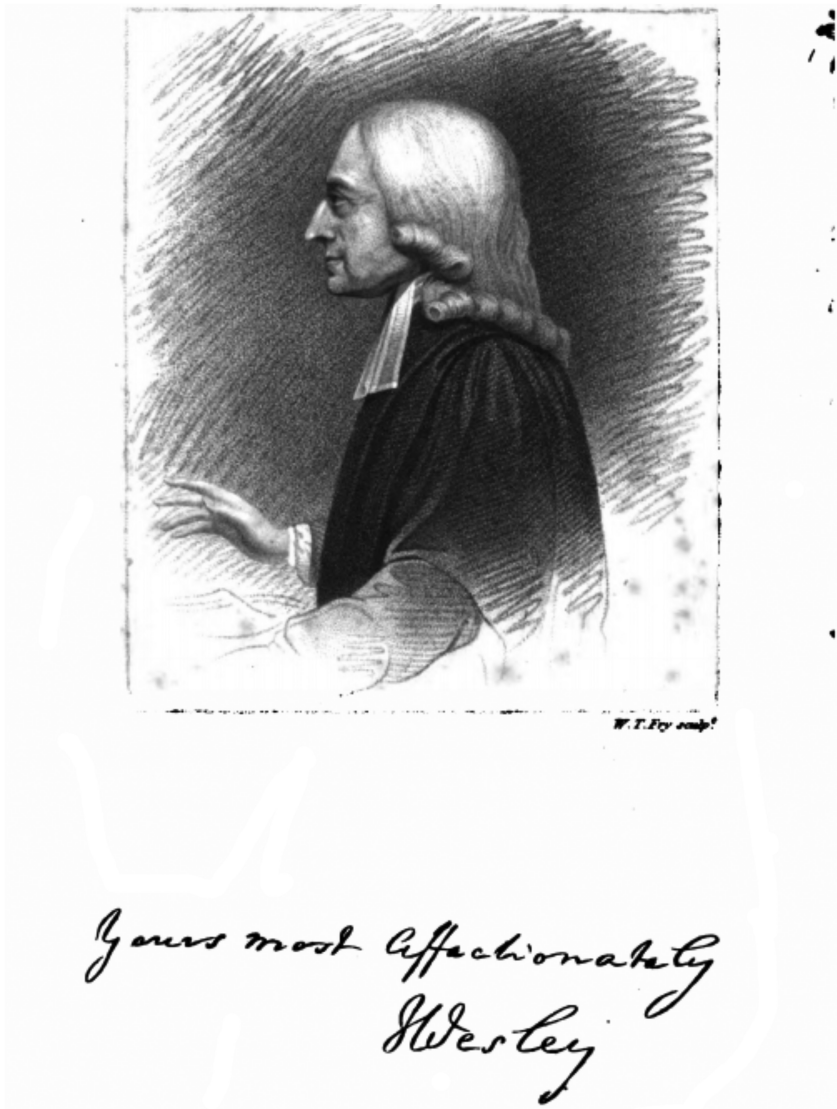


Figure 2 Frontispiece to vol. I of *The Life of Wesley; and the Rise and Progress of Methodism* (1820)

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DOI: 10.4324/9780429400315-1

TO
SHARON TURNER,[2]
AUTHOR OF THE HISTORY OF THE ANGLO-SAXONS,
THE HISTORY OF ENGLAND,
&c &c.
THESE VOLUMES ARE INSCRIBED,
IN THE HOPE
THAT THE OPINIONS WHICH THEY EXPRESS WILL
NOT BE
DISAPPROVED BY HIS JUDGEMENT;
IN THE CERTAINTY
THAT THE FEELING WHICH PERVADES THEM IS
CONGENIAL
WITH HIS OWN;
AND IN MEMORIAL
OF TRUE RESPECT AND FRIENDSHIP.

PREFACE

I[i] HAVE had no private sources of information in composing the present work. The materials are derived chiefly from the following books:

Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. including an Account of the Great Revival of Religion in Europe and America, of which he was the first and chief Instrument. By Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore. 8vo. London, 1792.

Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A. collected from his private Papers and printed Works, and written at the request of his Executors. To which is prefixed, some Account of his Ancestors and Relations: with the Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, M. A. collected from his private Journal, and never before published. The whole forming a History of Methodism, in which the Principles and Economy of the Methodists are unfolded. Copied chiefly from a London edition published by John Whitehead, M.D. 2 vols. 8vo. Dublin, 1805.

Memoirs of the late Rev. John Wesley, A.M. with a Review of his Life and Writings; and a History of Methodism, from its commencement in 1729 to the present time. By John Hampson, A.B. 3 vols. 12mo. Sunderland, 1791.

i 1846 has, before this statement, a Preface by its editor C. C. Southey:] In consequence of the favourable reception of the first and second editions of this work, it was for some years my father's intention to publish a third edition; but, owing to his various other literary avocations, the performance of this purpose was delayed until it was no longer practicable.

This office has therefore fallen upon me; and although it is a subject of regret that the work has not had the benefit of the Author's corrections (with the exception of a few alterations and insertions, which I found made by my father, as was his custom, in his own copy), I have the pleasure of adding to it two new features, which I feel sure will be found to increase greatly both its interest and its value.

The first of these consists of a considerable number of notes by my uncle, the late Mr. Coleridge, whose copy of the work, thus enriched, was after his death, by his request written therein, returned to my father. These notes, it will be seen by the freedom of their expression, were not written with any view to publication, or with any expectation (at the time) that they would meet my father's eye, and they therefore show, in a very interesting manner, the fresh impressions made upon Mr. Coleridge's acute mind.

The other addition to this work is of a somewhat different nature: it consists of a long and elaborate critique on Mr. Wesley's life and character, by the late Alexander Knox, Esq., who knew him intimately for a long period, and who drew up this paper at my father's request, and chiefly with the wish of convincing him that he had judged erroneously, in ascribing to Mr. Wesley any motives of an ambitious character.

These two additions, I am confident, will be well received by the public, as affording them, with the work itself, at one view, the opinions of three men of no ordinary minds upon the life and character of a fourth. Somewhat widely indeed do they, on many points, differ in their estimate; and possibly the reader may be inclined to think the Author's judgment of Mr. Wesley, on the whole, the most just and the most impartial one.

I have only, further, to express my thanks for the kind permission afforded me to publish both Mr. Coleridge's notes and Mr. Knox's letters. For the former, I am indebted to my cousin, Mrs. Henry Nelson Coleridge; for the latter, to the Rev. James J. Hornby, of Winwick, for whose kind courtesy I beg to return my best acknowledgments.

Cockermouth, July 25, 1846.

Original Letters, by the Rev. John Wesley and his Friends, illustrative of his early History, with other curious Papers. Communicated by the late Rev. S. Badcock; to which is prefixed, an Address to the Methodists. By Joseph Priestley, LL.D. F.R.S. &c. Birmingham, 1791. 8vo.

The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, 16 vols. 8vo. London, 1809.

Sermons, by the late Rev. Charles Wesley, A.M. Student of Christchurch, Oxford. With a Memoir of the Author, by the Editor. Crown 8vo. London, 1816.

Minutes of the Methodist Conference, from the First held in London by the late Rev. John Wesley, A.M. in the Year 1744. 3 vols. 8vo. London, 1812.

Arminian Magazine (now called the Methodist Magazine) From its commencement.

A Chronological History of the People called Methodists, of the Connection of the late Rev. John Wesley, from their Rise in the Year 1729 to their last Conference in the Year 1802. By William Myles. 12mo. London, 1803.

A Portraiture of Methodism; or, the History of the Wesleyan Methodists, showing their Rise, Progress, and present State; Biographical Sketches of some of their most eminent Ministers; the Doctrines the Methodists believe and teach, fully and explicitly stated; with the whole Plan of their Discipline, including their Original Rules and subsequent Regulations. Also a Defence of Methodism. By Jonathan Crowther, who has been upwards of thirty years a travelling Preacher among them. 8vo. London, 1815.

A Portraiture of Methodism: being an impartial View of the Rise, Progress, Doctrines, Discipline, and Manners of the Wesleyan Methodists. In a Series of Letters, addressed to a lady. By Joseph Nightingale. 8vo. London, 1807.

Memoirs of the Life and Character of the late Rev. George Whitefield A.M. of Pembroke College, Oxford, and Chaplain to the Right Hon, the Countess Dowager of Huntingdon; faithfully selected from his Original Papers, Journal, and Letters; illustrated by a variety of interesting Anecdotes from the best authorities. By the Rev. J. Gillies, D.D. Minister of the College Church of Glasgow. Second edition, with large additions and improvements. 8vo. London, 1813.

The Works of the Rev. George Whitefield, M.A. &c. Containing all his Sermons and Tracts which have been already published; with a select Collection of Letters, written to his most intimate Friends and Persons of Distinction in England, Scotland, Ireland, and America, from the Year 1734 to 1770, including the whole Period of his Ministry. Also, some other Pieces on important Subjects, never before printed, prepared by himself for the Press. 6 vols. 8vo. London, 1771.

The Two First Parts of his Life, with his Journals. Revised, corrected, and abridged by George Whitefield, A.B. Chaplain to the Right Hon. the Countess of Huntingdon. 12mo. London, 1756.

Memoirs of the Life and Character of the late Rev. Cornelius Winter; compiled and composed by William Jay. 12mo. London, 1809. (This volume contains a much more interesting account of Whitefield than is to be found in any Life of him that has yet been published.)

The Ancient and Modern History of the Brethren, or a Succinct Narrative of the Protestant Church of the United Brethren, or Unitas Fratrum, in the remoter Ages, and particularly in the present Century. Written in German by David Cranz, Author of the History of Greenland; now translated into English, with Emendations, and published with some additional Notes, by Benjamin Latrobe. 8vo. London, 1780.

A Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhuters, commonly called Moravians, or Unitas Fratrum, with a short Account of their Doctrines, drawn from their own Writings. To which are added, Observations on their Politics in General, and particularly on their Conduct, whilst in the County of Büdingen, in the Circle of the Upper Rhine in Germany. By Henry Rimius, Aulic Councillor to his late Majesty the King of Prussia, and Author of the Memoirs of the House of Brunswick, The Second Edition, in which the Latin Appendix in the first edition is rendered into English. 8vo. London, 1753.

A True and Authentic Account of Andrew Frey: containing the Occasion of his coming among the Herrnhuters or Moravians; his Observations on their Conferences, Casting Lots, Marriages, Festivals, Merriments, Celebrations of Birth Days, Impious Doctrines and Fantastical Practices, Abuse of Charitable Contributions, Linen Images, Ostentatious Profuseness and Rancour against any who in the least differ from them; and the Reasons for which he left them; together with the Motive for publishing this Account. Faithfully translated from the German. 8vo. London, 1753.

A Solemn Call on Count Zinzendorf, the Author and Advocate of the Sect of Herrnhuters, commonly called Moravians, to answer all and every Charge brought against them in the Candid Narrative, &c.; with some further Observations on the Spirit of that Sect. By Henry Rimius. 8vo. London, 1754.

The Moravians Compared and Detected. By the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared. 8vo. London, 1755.

An Extract from the Journal of Mr. John Nelson, Preacher of the Gospel. Containing an Account of God's dealings with him from his Youth to the 42d Year of his Age. Written by himself. 24mo. London, 1813.

The Life and Death of Mr. Thomas Walsh, Minister of the Gospel; composed in great Part from his own Accounts. By James Morgan, 12mo. London, 1811.

The Life and Writings of the late Rev. William Grimshaw, A.B. Minister of Haworth, in the West Riding of the County of York. By William Miles. 12mo. 1813.

The Life of the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D.: including in detail his various Travels and extraordinary Missionary Exertions in England, Ireland, America, and the West Indies; with an Account of his Death, on the 3d of May, 1814, while on a Missionary Voyage to the Island of Ceylon, in the East Indies. Interspersed with numerous Reflections, and concluding with an Abstract of his Writings and Character. By Samuel Drew, of St. Austell, Cornwall. 8vo. London, 1817.

Extracts of the Journals of the Rev. Dr. Coke's Five Visits to America. 12mo. 1793.

A History of the West Indies; containing the Natural, Civil, and Ecclesiastical History of each Island: with an Account of the Missions instituted in those Islands, from the Commencement of their Civilisation; but more especially of the Missions which have been established in that Archipelago, by the Society late in Connection with the Rev. John Wesley. By Thomas Coke, LL.D. of the University of Oxford. 8vo. 3 vols. Vol. 1. Liverpool, 1808; Vol. 2. London, 1810; Vol. 3. London, 1811.

The Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott; to which is annexed, a Narrative of his Life and Death; also Extracts from the Journal of the Rev. John Wesley. By John Ffirth. 12mo. Philadelphia. Liverpool (reprinted), 1809.

The Life of the Rev. John William de la Flechere, compiled from the Narrative of the Rev. Mr. Wesley; the Biographical Notes of the Rev. Mr. Gilpin; from his own Letters; and other authentic Documents. By Joseph Benson. 8vo. London, 1817.

The Works of the Rev. John Fletcher. In 10 vols. 8vo. London, 1815.

The Works of Augustus Toplady, A.B. late Vicar of Broad Hembury, Devon. In Six Volumes, 8vo. London, 1794.

The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists compared. In Three Parts. 2 vols. 12mo. London, 1754.

The Doctrine of Grace; or, the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit vindicated from the Insults of Infidelity and the Abuses of Fanaticism: with some Thoughts (humbly offered to the Consideration of the Established Clergy) regarding the Right Method of defending Religion against the attacks of either Party. In Three Books. In the Fourth Volume of Bishop Warburton's Works.

Various Volumes of the Gospel Magazine.

I am not conscious of having left any thing undone for rendering the present work as little incomplete as it was in my power to make it; and I have represented facts as I found them, with scrupulous fidelity, neither extenuating nor exaggerating any thing. Of the opinions of the Author, the reader will judge according to his own; but whatever his judgement may be upon that point, he will acknowledge that, in a book of this kind, the opinions of an author are of less consequence than his industry, his accuracy, and his sense of duty.[i]

i 1846 adds a footnote derived from a marginal comment made by Coleridge on his copy of the 1820 edition:] Memento! It is my desire and request that this work should be presented to its Donor and Author, Robert Southey, after my death. The substance and character of the marginal Annotations will abundantly prove the absence of any such intention in my mind at the time they were written. But it will not be uninteresting to him to know, that the one or the other volume was the book more often in my hands than any other in my ragged book-regiment; and that to this work, and to the Life of R. Baxter, I was used to resort whenever sickness and languor made me feel the want of an old friend, of whose company I could never be tired. How many and many an hour of self-oblivion do I owe to this Life of Wesley; and how often have I argued with it, questioned, remonstrated, been peevish, and asked pardon—then again listened, and cried Right! Excellent!—and in yet heavier hours intreated it, as it were, to continue talking to me for that I heard and listened, and was soothed, though I could make no reply. Ah! that Robert Southey had fulfilled his intention of writing a History of the Monastic Orders or would become the Biographer at least of Loyola, Xavier, Dominic, and the other remarkable Founders. S. T. Coleridge.

CONTENTS

VOL. I

He and his associates are called Methodists
Morgan, one of these first Methodists
Birth and boyhood of Whitefield
Officiates as drawer at his mother's inn
Goes as a Servitor to Pembroke College, Oxford
Becomes one of the Methodists
Their mode of life and self-examination
Wesley the father encourages them
John becomes acquainted with William Law
The two brothers travel on foot, and converse in Latin
Wesley doubts the lawfulness of worldly studies
Defends himself against the charge of singularity
Wears his hair loose and unpowdered
Reduces himself to a dangerous state of weakness
Samuel accepts the mastership of Tiverton school
John is urged to apply for the succession to his father's living
His reasons for choosing to continue at Oxford

CHAP. III.

Death of Samuel Wesley the father
Wesley consents to go out to the new colony in Georgia
He thinks it easy to convert the Savages
Charles takes orders, and accompanies him
Delamotte and Ingham their companions
Moravians on board the ship
Wesley advises his brother Samuel to discard the classics from his school
Their rule of life on board
Equanimity of the Moravians
Establishment of the British colony in Georgia
Situation of Savannah
Speech of Tomo-Chichi
Creek Indians in England
Laws of the colony
Wesley's interview with the Moravian pastor Spangenberg
His interview with Tomo-Chichi
He preaches against vanity in dress
Insists upon a rigid observance of the Rubric
Charles becomes obnoxious to the people at Frederica
Oglethorpe treats him unkindly
Falls ill, and sends for his brother
Is reconciled to Oglethorpe
Returns to England
Wesley in love with Sophia Causton

The Moravians forbid him to marry her
She marries Mr. Williamson
Wesley rebukes her
He repels her from the Communion
Williamson prosecutes him for this
He leaves Savannah
Is lost in the woods
Embarks for England
His state of mind on the voyage
He lands at Deal, and describes his own imperfect state of faith
Advantages which he derived from his mission to Georgia

CHAP. IV.

Wesley exhorts Whitefield not to pursue his voyage, in consequence of a lot which he had cast
Whitefield's excess of devotion at Oxford
He experiences the new birth
Is ordained at Gloucester
Whitefield officiates in London with success
Officiates in a village in Hampshire
Resolves to go to Georgia
Preaches at Bristol
Becomes exceedingly popular in that city
His qualifications as an orator
Followed by crowds in London
Excites jealousy concerning his doctrine
Wesley arrives in London as soon as Whitefield leaves it
Wesley meets Peter Boehler
Boehler convinces him of unbelief
Wesley begins to exhort people as he travels
He resolves not to confine himself to a form of prayer
Is persuaded by Boehler, that conversion must be an instantaneous work
The Methodists in London are formed into bands
Their rules
Wesley writes to Mr. Law, reproaching him for not having taught him the necessity of a saving faith
Law's answer
Charles Wesley is *converted*
Wesley's conversion
His conduct at Mr. Hutton's
Mrs. Hutton complains to Samuel
Samuel's remarks upon the conduct of his two brothers
Wesley sets out for Herrnhut

CHAP. V.

The Bohemian Church
Effect of Wickliffe's writings
Religious wars
Expulsion of the Protestants
Comenius writes the history of his Church
Christian David incites the Protestants to emigrate
He obtains permission for them to settle on Zinzendorf's estates
Count Zinzendorf
They name this settlement Herrnhut
Debate whether they shall join the Lutheran Church, decided by lot
Zinzendorf banished
He enters into orders
Wesley visits him at Marienborn
His opinions concerning Justification
Wesley proceeds to Herrnhut
Discipline of the Moravians
Their scandalous language at one time
Wesley hears Christian David preach
He returns to England

CHAP. VI.

Wesley addresses an epistle to the Church of Herrnhut
He objects to the Count's authority
His opinion of his own spiritual state
Delamotte censures him
He accompanies some criminals to Tyburn
Interview with Bishop Gibson
Charles Wesley's second interview
Raptures of the converts
Whitefield returns from Georgia to raise contributions for building an orphan-house there
Love-feasts in Fetter-lane
Whitefield thinks of preaching without-doors, because the church was not large enough for his hearers
He goes to Bristol
Preaches out of doors to the colliers in Kingswood
He resolves to preach in defiance of ecclesiastical authority
He longs for persecution
He invites Wesley to take his place at Bristol
Wesley consults the Bible upon the subject

CHAP. VII.

Wesley at Bristol
- Whitefield lays the first stone of a school for the colliers' children at Kingswood
- Wesley commences field-preaching after Whitefield's example
- Paroxysms of Methodism
- Case of John Haydon
- Correspondence with his brother Samuel
- Conversion of Thomas Maxfield
- Exultation of Wesley at the effect which he produces
- Bands formed
- First Meeting-house built
- Wesley is called to London

CHAP. VIII.

Lay-preaching contended for
- Opposed by Charles Wesley
- Whitefield in Moorfields
- Wesley at Blackheath
- Fits in London
- Origin of the French Prophets
- They produce disputes among the Methodists
- Whitefield produces the same paroxysms as Wesley
- Samuel argues against these extravagancies
- Wesley accused of being a Papist
- Character of Charles Wesley's preaching
- Ceremonies at an evening meeting
- Wesley's mother becomes a convert
- Letter from Samuel on that occasion
- Death of Samuel Wesley
- Wesley's view of the difference between himself and the Clergy
- Cases of supposed possession
- Charles less credulous than his brother

CHAP. IX.

View of the history of Christianity in England
- Christianity long confined to cities
- Imperfect conversion of the people
- Paganism recruited in this island by the Saxons and Danes
- Advantages of the Papacy
- Corruption of the Romish Church

CHAP. X.

CHAP. XI.

CHAP. XII.

VOL. II.

CHAP. XIII.

STATE of Methodism
- Death of Mrs. Wesley
- Wesley's sisters
- Conduct of his brother-in-law Hall
- His sister Wright
- His brother-in-law Whitelamb
- Wesley preaches upon his father's grave
- Letter from Whitelamb
- Converts at Epworth
- The curate at Epworth refuses to administer the sacrament to Wesley

CHAP. XIV.

Offence taken at the extravagance of the Methodists
- Wesley relates miracles
- Reports concerning him
- Charles Wesley taken up for a Jacobite
- John Wesley and Beau Nash
- Riots at Bristol
- Outrages at Wednesbury
- John Nelson pressed for a soldier
- Gross misconduct of the magistrates
- Nelson's enthusiasm and courage
- The Countess of Huntingdon obtains his discharge
- Maxfield pressed in Cornwall
- Wesley attacked by the mob in Cornwall
- Charles Wesley in danger at Devizes
- Wesley's appeal concerning field-preaching

CHAP. XV.

Scenes of itinerancy
- Wesley and John Nelson in Cornwall
- Chance-converts
- Effects of field preaching
- Wesley's love of the poor
- His opinion of the higher classes
- Dislike of the farmers
- Instability of his converts

CHAP. XVI.

Wesley's lay-coadjutors
He justifies himself for admitting them
Advises them to read
But not to affect the praise of learning
Defends them from the charge of being ignorant
His management of them
Their ready obedience instanced in the case of John Jane
Some of the first preachers withdraw
Conversion of John Furz
Of John Thorpe

CHAP. XVII.

JOHN OLIVER
Severity of his father
Falls into despair, and throws himself into the river
Attempt suicide a second time
Runs away from home
Is permitted to follow his own course, and becomes a preacher
JOHN PAWSON
Opposed by his father
His vindication of himself
The father is converted
Pawson becomes melancholy
He receives the assurance
Becomes a preacher
ALEXANDER MATHER
Joins the Rebels in 1705
Is delivered to justice by his father
Goes to London, and marries there
Objects to working at his business as a baker on Sundays
Is admitted by Wesley to preach
Excessive exertions at this time
Cruelly used by a mob
Account of the change wrought in him by religion
THOMAS OLIVERS
A reprobate boy and young man
Affected by hearing Whitefield
Rejected by one of Whitefield's preachers
Attends the Methodists
His exertions as a preacher
Suffers dreadfully from the small-pox

Pays all his debts
Attacked by the mob at Yarmouth
His deliberation concerning marriage

CHAP. XVIII.

JOHN HAIME
His first stage of doubt and despair
In the act of committing blasphemy, he is frightened by a bustard
Enlists as a soldier
Is driven to despair by one of Whitefield's preachers
Charles Wesley comforts him
Goes to the continent
Forms a society in the army in Flanders
Brings one of his comrades to a court-martial for blasphemy
Is in the battle of Fontenoy
His second state of despair
He continues to preach, notwithstanding
Admitted as a travelling preacher
The disease leaves him when an old man
He dies in the fulness of hope
SAMPSON STANIFORTH
His profligate life in the army
Converted through the means of a comrade
Describes a vision, in which he is persuaded that his sins are forgiven
Marries, and leaves the army
Settles as a preacher
His happy old age
GEORGE STORY
His miscellaneous reading
His search after happiness
Becomes an unbeliever
Uneasiness of his mind
Reasons with the Methodists
Joins them from the workings of his own mind
Never becomes an enthusiast

CHAP. XIX.

Provision for the lay.preachers
Allowance for their wives
Wesley establishes a school at Kingswood
System of education there

CHAP. XX.

CHAP. XXI.

CHAP. XXII.

CHAP. XXIII.

CHAP. XXIV.

Wesley in middle age
- Charles Wesley marries
- John takes counsel concerning marriage
- Marries Mrs. Vizelle
- Her jealousy and insufferable conduct
- Their separation
- Tendency of Methodism to schism
- Wesley favours the arguments of the separatists
- But opposes the separation
- James Wheatley
- James Relly
- Scheme of the Rellyan Universalists
- Antinomianism
- Excesses at Everton
- Wesley suspects their real character
- Controversy with Bishop Lavington
- With Warburton
- George Bell
- Maxfield separates from Wesley
- Prophecy of the end of the world
- Wesley's Primitive Physic
- He recovers from a consumption
- His epitaph, written by himself

CHAP. XXV.

Progress of Calvinistic Methodism
- Whitefield's courtship
- His marriage
- He preaches in Moorfields during the Whitsun-holydays
- First Methodist Tabernacle built
- Lady Huntingdon
- Whitefield invited to preach at her house
- She becomes the patroness of the Calvinistic Methodists
- Founds a seminary for them at Trevecca
- Death of Whitefield
- Minutes of Conference in 1771
- Lady Huntingdon offended at these Minutes
- Mr. Fletcher
- Mr. Shirley's Circular Letter concerning the Minutes

CHAP. XXVI.

CHAP. XXVII.

CHAP. XXVIII.

CHAP. XXIX.

CHAP. XXX.

THE LIFE OF WESLEY.

THE sect, or Society, as they would call themselves, of Methodists, has existed for the greater part of a century: they have their seminaries and their hierarchy, their own regulations, their own manners, their own literature: in England they form a distinct people, an *imperium in imperio*: they are extending widely in America; and in both countries they number their annual increase by thousands. The history of their founder is little known in his native land beyond the limits of those who are termed the religious public; and on the Continent it is scarcely known at all. In some of his biographers the heart has been wanting to understand his worth, or the will to do it justice; others have not possessed freedom or strength of intellect to perceive wherein he was erroneous.[i]

It has been remarked, with much complacency, by the Jesuits, that in the year of Luther's birth Loyola was born also:[ii][4] Providence, they say, having wisely appointed, that when so large a portion of Christendom was to be separated from the catholic church by means of the great German heresiarch, the great Spanish saint should establish an order by which the catholic faith would be strenuously supported in Europe, and disseminated widely in the other parts of the world. Voltaire and Wesley were not indeed in like manner children of the same year,[5] but they were contemporaries through a longer course of time; and the influences which they exercised upon their age and upon posterity, have been not less remarkably opposed. While the one was scattering, with pestilent activity, the seeds of immorality and unbelief, the other, with equally unwearable zeal, laboured in the cause of religious enthusiasm. The works of Voltaire have found their way wherever the French language is read; the disciples of Wesley wherever the English is spoken. The principles of the arch-infidel were more rapid in their operation: he who aimed at no such evil as that which he contributed so greatly to bring about, was himself startled at their progress: in his latter days he trembled at the consequences which he then foresaw; and indeed his remains had scarcely mouldered in the grave, before those consequences brought down the whole fabric of government in France, overturned her altars, subverted her throne, carried guilt, devastation, and misery into every part of his own country, and shook the

i 1846 adds a footnote:] 'One,' says the elder Wesley, 'that is resolved to write a book, seldom wants an excuse for doing it, and will be ready to draw one even from the number of those which have gone before him. Besides, there are different writers, suitable to different readers. Acquaintance, inclination, or pure accident may be the occasion of some persons reading one book, when they would not read another; and perhaps, to profit more by it, than they might by another better written on the same subject.'—*Preface to Pious Comforts*.

ii 1846 substitutes, for 'of Luther's … also':] when Luther began publicly to preach the abominable errors of his depraved mind, Loyola was converted to the service of the Lord, and commenced his war against the Devil.

rest of Europe like an earthquake. Wesley's doctrines, meantime, were slowly and gradually winning their way; but they advanced every succeeding year with accelerated force, and their effect must ultimately be more extensive, more powerful, and more permanent, for he has set mightier principles at work. Let it not, however, be supposed that I would represent these eminent men, like agents of the good and evil principles, in all things contrasted: the one was not all darkness, neither was the other all light.

The history of men who have been prime agents in those great moral and intellectual revolutions which from time to time take place among mankind, is not less important than that of statesmen and conquerors. If it has not to treat of actions wherewith the world has rung from side to side, it appeals to the higher part of our nature, and may perhaps excite more salutary feelings, a worthier interest, and wiser meditations. The Emperor Charles V.,[6] and his rival of France,[7] appear at this day infinitely insignificant, if we compare them with Luther and Loyola; and there may come a time when the name of Wesley will be more generally known, and in remoter regions of the globe, than that of Frederic or of Catharine.[8] For the works of such men survive them, and continue to operate, when nothing remains of worldly ambition but the memory of its vanity and its guilt.

Chapter I.

FAMILY OF THE WESLEYS.

WESLEY'S CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION.

THE founder of the Methodists was emphatically of a good family, in the sense wherein he himself would have used the term. Bartholomew Wesley, his great-grandfather, studied physic[i] as well as divinity at the university, a practice not unusual at that time: he was ejected, by the act of uniformity, from the living of Allington, in Dorsetshire; and the medical knowledge which he had acquired from motives of charity, became then the means of his support.[ii9] John his son[10]

i 'Let me,' says the humble moderator, (Bishop Croft) 'speak a word to those of the inferior clergy who take upon them to study and practise physic for hire: this must needs be sinful, as taking them off from their spiritual employment. Had they studied physic before they entered holy orders, and would after make use of their skill among their poor neighbours out of charity, they were commendable: but being entered on a spiritual and pastoral charge, which requires the whole man, and more, to spend their time in this, or any other study not spiritual, is contrary to their vocation, and consequently sinful; and to do it for gain is sordid, and unworthy their high and holy calling. But *necesitas cogit ad turpia*: the maintenance of many ministers is so small, as it forces them, even for food and raiment, to seek it by other employment, which may in some measure excuse them, but mightily condemns those who should provide better for them' [Southey refers to *Naked Truth: The First Part, or, the True State of the Primitive Church*, by a Humble Moderator (Herbert Croft) (London, 1680), p. 50. The 1846 edition adds 'my ancestor' before 'Bishop Croft'].

ii THIS should seem to have been the old resource of ejected ministers.

'At the beginning of the happy raigne of our late good Queen Elizabeth, divers commissioners of great place, being authorized to enquire of and to displace all such of the clergie as would not conforme to the reformed church, one amongst others was convented before them, who being asked whether he would subscribe or no, he denied it, and so consequently was adjudged to lose his benefice, and be deprived of his function; whereupon, in his impatience, he said, That if they, meaning the commissioners, held this course, it would cost many a man's life. For which the commissioners called him back againe, and charged him that he had spoke treasonable and seditious words, tending to the raysing of a rebellion or some tumult in the land, for which he should receive the reward of a traitor. And being asked whether he spake those words or no, he acknowledged it, and took upon him the justification thereof; 'for, said he, ye have taken from me my living and profession of the ministrie. Scholarship is all my portion; and I have no other meanes now left for my maintenance but to turn physitian, and before I shall be absolute master of that mystery, God he knowes how many men's lives it will cost. For few physitians use to try experiments upon their own bodies'.

With us it is a profession can maintaine but a few; and divers of those more indebted to opinion than learning, and (for the most part) better qualified in discoursing of their travailes than in discerning their patients maladies. For it is growne to be a very huswives trade, where fortune prevailes more than

DOI: 10.4324/9780429400315-2

skill. Their best benefactor, the Neapolitan, their grand signieur; the Sorpego, their gonfollinire; the Sciatica, their great marshall, that calles the musterrolle of them all together at every spring and fall, are all as familiar to her as the cuckow at Cankwood in May. And the cure of them is the skill of every good old ladies cast gentlewoman; when she gives over painting she falls to plastering, and shall have as good practice as the best of them for those kinde of diseases.'—*Art of Thriving, by Thomas Powel*. Scott's Somers' Tracts, 7. 200. [Thomas Powel, *Art of Thriving*, *or, the Plaine Path-Way to Preferment* (London, 1635–6, reprinted in *A Collection of Scarce and Valuable Tracts, on the Most Interesting and Entertaining Subjects: But Chiefly Such as Relate to the History and Constitution of These Kingdoms. Selected from an Infinite Number in Print and Manuscript, in the Royal, Cotton, Sion, and Other Public, as Well as Private Libraries; Particularly that of the Late Lord Somers*, ed. Walter Scott, 13 vols (London, 1809–15)].

By the ancient laws of Spain, no monk was permitted to study physic or law; because when under pretence of studying for the advantage of their brethren they had acquired either of these professions, the Devil used to tempt them to quit their monasteries, and go wandering about the world.—*Partida* 1. *Tit.* 7. *Ley*, 28 [the Spanish book of laws, dating from the thirteenth century, *Siete Partidas* (*Livro de las leyes*). Southey owned an edition of Madrid, 1807: *Partidas del Rey D. Alfonso el Sabio cotejadas con varios codices Antiguos por la real Academia de la Historia*, 3 vols].

Baxter, after he was fixed at Kidderminster, assisted the people for some time with his advice in physic, and was very successful; but finding it took up so much time as to be burthensome, he at length fixed among them a diligent skilful physician, and bound himself to him by promise, that he would practise no more in common cases [Southey's information about Richard Baxter (1615–91) is derived from Edmund Calamy's *An Abridgement of Mr. Baxter's History of His Life and Times*, 2nd ed., 2 vols (London, 1713), I, p. 30].

The excellent George Herbert also writes thus, in the chapter which he entitles,

The Parson's Completeness. 'The country parson desires to be all to his parish, and not onely a pastour, but a lawyer also, and a physician. Therefore hee endures not that any of his flock should go to law; but in any controversy that they should resort to him as their judge. To this end, he hath gotten to himself some insight in things ordinarily incident and controverted, by experience; and by reading some initiatory treatises in the law, with Dalton's Justice of Peace, and the Abridgements of the Statutes, as also by discourse with men of that profession, whom he hath ever some cases to ask, when he meets with them; holding that rule, that to put men to discourse of that wherein they are most eminent, is the most gainfull way of conversation. Yet whenever any controversie is brought to him, he never decides it alone, but sends for three or four of the ablest of the parish to hear the cause with him, whom he makes to deliver their opinion first; out of which he gathers, if he be ignorant himself, what to hold, and so the thing passeth with more authority and lesse envy. In judging, he followes that which is altogether right; so that if the poorest man of the parish detain but a pin unjustly from the richest, he absolutely restores it as a judge; but when he hath so done, then he assumes the parson, and exhorts to charity. Neverthelesse, there may happen sometimes some cases wherein he chooseth to permit his parishioners rather to make use of the law then himself: as in cases of an obscure and dark nature, not easily determinable by lawyers themselves; or in cases of high consequence, as establishing of inheritances; or lastly, when the persons in difference are of a contentious disposition, and cannot be gained, but that they still fall from all compromises that have been made. But then he shews them how to go to law, even as brethren, and not as enemies, neither avoiding therefore one another's company, much lesse defaming one another.

Now as the parson is in law, so is he in sickness also: if there be any of his flock sick, hee is their physician, or at least his wife, of whom, instead of the qualities of the world, he asks no other but to have the skill of healing a wound, or helping the sick. But if neither himselfe nor his wife have the skill, and his means serve, hee keeps some young practitioner in his house for the benefit of his parish, whom yet he ever exhorts not to exceed his bounds, but in tickle cases to call in help. If all fail, then he keeps good correspondence with some neighbour physician, and entertaines him for the cure of his parish.

was educated at New Inn Hall, Oxford,[i] in the time of the Commonwealth: he was distinguished not only for his piety and diligence, but for his progress in the oriental tongues, by which he attracted the particular notice and esteem of the then vice-chancellor, John Owen,[11] a man whom the Calvinistic dissenters

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Yet is it easy for any scholar to attain to such a measure of physick as may be of much use to him, both for himself and others. This is done by seeing one anatomy, reading one book of phisick, having one herball by him. And let Fernelius be the phisick author, for he writes briefly, neatly, and judiciously; especially let his Method of Phisick be diligently perused, as being the practicall part, and of most use. Now both the reading of him, and the knowing of herbs, may be done at such times as they may be an help and a recreation to more divine studies, Nature serving Grace both in comfort of diversion, and the benefit of application when need requires; as also by way of illustration, even as our Saviour made plants and seeds to teach the people; for he was the true householder, who bringeth out of his treasure things new and old; the old things of Philosophy, and the new of Grace, and maketh the one serve the other. And, I conceive, our Saviour did this for three reasons: first, that by familiar things hee might make his doctrines slip the more easily into the hearts even of the meanest. Secondly, that labouring people, whom he chiefly considered might have every where monuments of his doctrine, remembering in gardens his mustard seed and lillyes; in the field, his seed-corn and tares; and so not be drowned altogether in the works of their vocation, but sometimes lift up their minds to better things, even in the midst of their pains. Thirdly, that he might set a copy for Parsons. In the knowledge of simples, wherein the manifold wisdome of God is wonderfully to be seen, one thing would be carefully observed, which is to know what herbes may be used instead of drugs of the same nature, and to make the garden the shop; for home-bred medicines are both more easie for, the Parson's purse, and more familiar for all men's bodies. So where the Apothecary useth either for loosing, rhubarb; or for binding, bolearmena; the Parson useth damask or white roses for the one, and plantain, shepherd's purse, knot-grasse for the other, and that with better successe. As for spices, he doth not only prefer home-bred things before them, but condemns them for vanities, and so shuts them out of his family, esteeming that there is no spice comparable for herbs, to rosemary, time, savoury, mints; and for seeds, to fennell and carroway seeds. Accordingly, for salves his wife seeks not the city, but prefers her gardens and fields before all outlandish gums. And surely hyssope, valerian, mercury, adder's tongue, yerrow, melilot, and Saint John wort, made into a salve; and elder, camomile, mallowes, comphrey, and smallage, made into a poultice, have done great and rare cures. In curing of any, the Parson and his family use to premise prayers, for this is to cure like a Parson, and this raiseth the action from the shop to the church. But though the Parson sets forward all charitable deeds, yet he looks not in this point of curing beyond his own parish, except the person bee so poor that he is not able to reward the physician, for as hee is charitable, so he is just also. Now it is a justice and debt to the commonwealth he lives in, not to incroach on others professions, but to live on his own. And justice is the ground of charity.' [*Herbert's Remains. Or, Sundry Pieces of that Sweet Singer of the Temple, Mr George Herbert* (London, 1652), pp. 95–100].

i [In his own copy of 1820, Southey crossed out the first lines of the chapter to this point, as if marking them for revision.]

still regard as the greatest[i] of their divines.[ii] If the government had continued in the Cromwell family, this patronage would have raised him to distinction. He obtained the living of Blandford in his own county, and was ejected from it for non-conformity: being thus adrift, he thought of emigrating to Maryland, or to Surinam, where the English were then intending to settle a colony, but reflection and advice determined him to take his lot in his native land. There, by continuing to preach, he became obnoxious to the laws,[iii] and was four times imprisoned: his spirits were broken by the loss of those whom he loved best, and by the evil days: he died at the early age of three or four and thirty; and such was the spirit of the times, that the vicar of Preston, in which village he died, would not allow his body

i 'The name of Owen', say Messrs. Bogue and Bennet, the joint historians of the Dissenters, 'has been raised to imperial dignity in the theological world by Dr. John Owen.'—'A young minister,' they say, 'who wishes to attain eminence in his profession, if he has not the works of John Howe, and can procure them in no other way, should sell his coat and buy them; and if that will not suffice, let him sell his bed too and lie on the floor; and if he spend his days in reading them, he will not complain that he lies hard at night'.—But 'if the theological student should part with his coat, or his bed, to procure the works of Howe, he that would not sell his shirt to procure those of John Owen, and especially his Exposition, of which every sentence is precious, shews too much regard for his body, and too little for his immortal mind'. *History of the Dissenters*, vol. ii. pp. 223. 236. [Southey refers to David Bogue and James Bennett, *History of Dissenters, from the Revolution in 1688, to the Year 1808*, 4 vols (London, 1808–12), II, pp. 24–5, 225, 236: the life and works of John Howe (1630–1705) are detailed on pp. 214–25. Southey emended this footnote in MS on his own copy of the 1820 publication, by adding the words 'I take this opportunity of saying that I never perused any book more utterly devoid of candour, nor more thoroughly imbued with the spirit of sectarianism and faction than Mr Orme's Life of Owen'—referring to William Orme, *Memoirs of the Life, Writings, and Religious Connections of John Owen, D.D.* (1820)].

ii Cotton Mather has preserved a choice specimen of invective against Dr. Owen, by one of the primitive Quakers, whose name was Fisher. It was, indeed, a species of rhetorick in which they indulged freely, and exceeded all other sectarians. Fisher addressed him thus: 'Thou fiery fighter and green-headed trumpeter; thou hedgehog and grinning dog; thou bastard, that tumbled out of the mouth of the Babylonish bawd; thou mole; thou tinker; thou lizard; thou bell of no metal, but the tone of a kettle; thou wheelbarrow; thou whirlpool; thou whirligig: O thou firebrand; thou adder and scorpion; thou louse; thou cow-dung; thou moon-calf; thou ragged tatterdemallion; thou Judas: thou livest in philosophy and logic, which are of the Devil.' [Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, *or the Ecclesiastical History of New England from 1620 to 1698* (London, 1702), Book VII, p. 26].

iii 1846 adds:] he was driven from Weymouth, though he had formerly been much respected there; an order was made against his settlement in the town; the landlady who received him was fined twenty pounds, and a fine of five shillings a week was imposed upon him, to be levied by distress. He sought shelter successively at Bridgewater, Ilminster, and Taunton, and during three months is said to have met much kindness both for himself and his numerous family, till a benevolent friend to him and the cause ofiered him a good house, rent free, in the village of Preston. This place was so near Weymouth, that the five miles act compelled him to withdraw from it, and leave his family there for awhile. He became an occasional conformist, yet took every opportunity to exercise his own ministry, as he thought himself in conscience* bound. This made him always in danger; he was repeatedly apprehended, [* 1846 adds a footnote derived from William Beal, *The Fathers of the Wesley Family* (London, 1833):] *Mr Beal says, from God and from man Mr Wesley had received a commission to preach the Gospel. But the second commission had been annulled, and how was the first to be produced?

to be buried in the church.[i] Bartholomew was then living, but the loss of this, his only son, brought his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

This John Wesley married a woman of good stock,[12] the niece of Thomas Fuller,[13] the church historian, a man not more remarkable for wit and quaintness, than for the felicity with which he clothed fine thoughts in beautiful language. He left two sons, of whom[ii] Samuel, the younger, was only eight or nine years old at the time of his father's death.[14iii] The circumstances of the father's life and sufferings, which have given him a place among the confessors of the non-conformists, were likely to influence the opinions of the son; but happening to fall in with bigotted and ferocious men, he saw the worst part of the dissenting character. Their defence of the execution of K. Charles[15] offended him, and he was at once shocked and disgusted by their[iv] calf's head club;[16] so much so, that he separated from them, and, because of their intolerance, joined the church which had persecuted his father. This conduct, which was the result of feeling, was approved by his ripe judgement, and Samuel Wesley continued through life a zealous churchman. The feeling which urged him to this step must have been very powerful, and no common spirit was required to bear him through the difficulties which he brought upon himself; for by withdrawing from the academy at which he had been placed,

i 1846 substitutes, for 'the loss of those … church':] by affliction, and he died at the early age of three or four and thirty. He had at that time a small congregation at Poole; but his family seem to have remained at Preston; for in that village he died; and such was the spirit of those days, that the vicar would not suffer him to be buried in the church.* [1846 also adds a footnote derived from Beal, *The Fathers of the Wesley Family*:] *In the churchyard no stone tells where his ashes lie; nor is there a monument to record his worth. The writer (Mr. Beal) would not seem to affect any thing; yet to this village (which he visits regularly, as a small Wesleyan chapel is there) he does not go without remembering the vicar of Whitchurch. In this, and that house, lonely dell, and retired spot, he seems to see the man whose spirit was *crushed*—the Christian hunted to obscurity, and the minister whose lamp, though lighted in the skies, was wickedly quenched by the triumphant spirit of persecution: and he is no stranger to the hallowed spot where his mortal part is deposited. May British Christians be thankful to God for better days: may they long continue! Moderate men rule in the State, and in our churches; and honour ever be cheerfully rendered where honour is due!

ii 1846 substitutes, for 'He left two sons, of whom':] She survived him through some forty years of poverty and destitution. They had a large family; but only two seem to have grown up,—Matthew and Samuel.

iii 1846 adds a sentence before this:] The former was bred to the medical profession; the latter received the first part of his education at the Free School of Dorchester, under Mr Henry Dolling, till he was almost fit for the University, and was then, without any solicitation on his mother's part, taken notice of by some Dissenters, and sent by them to London, in order to his being entered at one of their private academies, and so for their ministry.

iv So Samuel Wesley the son states, in a note to his elegy upon his father. According to him, if his words are to be literally understood, the separation took place when Mr. Wesley was but a boy. There is, however, reason for supposing that he was of age at the time, as will be shown in the note next ensuing. [In this note (which Southey crossed out in his own copy of 1820, as if for removal in future editions), Southey derives his information from John Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley M.A.*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1805), I, p. 15 and *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 17 vols (London, 1809–13), I, p. 13].

he so far offended his friends, that they lent him no farther support, and in the latter years of Charles II. there was little disposition to encourage proselytes who joined a church which the reigning family was labouring to subvert. But Samuel Wesley was made of good mould: he knew and could depend upon himself: he walked to Oxford, entered himself at Exeter College as a poor scholar,[i] and began

i In Dr. Whitehead's lives of the Wesleys, and in the life which is prefixed to the collected edition of Mr. Wesley's works, it is said that Wesley the father was about sixteen when he entered himself at Exeter college. But as he was born 'about the year 1662, or perhaps a little earlier,' he must have been not less than two-and-twenty at that time, as the following extracts from the registers of Exeter College will prove:

Deposit of caution money.

Sept. 26.
1684. Mro. Hutchins pro
Samuele Westley, paup.
schol.de Dorchester, £3.
Ric. Hutchins.
Guil. Crabb.

Feb. 9.
1686. Mro. Paynter pro Sam.
Westley, p. schol. olim
admisso, £3.
Guil. Paynter.
Ric. Hutchins.

Return of caution money.

Dec. 22.
1686. Samueli Westley pro
seipso, £3.
Ric. Hutchins.
Samuel Westley.

Jan. 10.
1687. Mihi ipsi pro impensis
Coll. debitis ad fest.
Nat. 87. £3.
Jo. Harris.

To these extracts, for which I am obliged to a fellow of Exeter College, through the means of a common friend, these explanatory observations are annexed. 'In the entries of deposits the name first signed is that of the bursar, as R. Hutchins, G. Paynter: the name which follows is that of the depositor sometimes, but more usually that of his tutor or friend. Crabb was dean of the college when Westley entered.

The *Pauper Scholaris* was the lowest of the four conditions of members not on the foundation, as the annexed table, copied from one prefixed to the caution book, shews:

Summae tradendae Bursario pro Ratione Diversarum Conditionum Scire.	1. Commensalium) admissorum ad) mensam)	1. Sociorum £6 2. Propriam £5
	2. Battallariorium	£4
	3. Pauperum Scholarium	£3'

his studies there with no larger a fund than two pounds sixteen shillings, and no prospect of any future supply. From that time, till he graduated, a single crown was all the assistance he received from his friends. He composed exercises for those who had more money than learning; and he gave instruction to those who wished to profit by his lessons; and thus by great industry, and great frugality, he not only supported himself, but had accumulated the sum of ten pounds fifteen shillings, when he went to London to be ordained. Having served a curacy there one year, and as chaplain during another on board a king's ship, he settled upon a curacy in the metropolis, and married Susannah, daughter of Dr. Annesley, one of the ejected ministers.[17]

No man was ever more suitably mated than the elder Wesley. The wife whom he chose was, like himself, the child of a man eminent among the non-conformists, and, like himself, in early youth she had chosen her own path: she had examined the[i] controversy between the Dissenters and the Church of England with conscientious diligence, and satisfied herself that the schismatics were in the wrong. The dispute, it must be remembered, related wholly to discipline; but her enquiries had not stopt there, and she had reasoned herself into Socinianism, from which she was reclaimed by her husband. She was an admirable woman, of highly improved mind, and of a strong and masculine understanding, an obedient wife, an exemplary mother, a fervent Christian. The marriage was blest in all its circumstances: it was contracted in the prime of their youth: it was fruitful; and death did not

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'I understand that some of these poor scholars were servitors, but not all'.

'There seems reason to suspect that Dec. 22. 1686, in the first entry of return, should be 1685; for otherwise Samuel Westley will appear to have had two cautions in at once; and from the state of his finances this is peculiarly improbable.'

The name is spelled Westley with a *t*, in these entries, and in his own signature. [Southey again refers to John Whitehead, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1805), I, p. 15 and *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, 17 vols (London, 1809–13), I, p. 13; he derives his information about Samuel Wesley at Oxford from his friends John May (1775–1856) and John Taylor Coleridge (1790–1876) (the latter then a Fellow of Exeter College). See Southey's letters to May, 3 January 1818 (*CLRS* 3062) and to Coleridge, 8 September 1818 (*CLRS* 3190)].

i 'There is nothing I now desire to live for (says Mrs. Wesley in a letter to her son Samuel, dated Oct. 11. 1709,) but to do some small service to my children; that, as I have brought them into the world, I may, if it please God, be an instrument of doing good to their souls. I had been several years collecting from my little reading, but chiefly from my own observation and experience, some things which I hoped might be useful to you all. I had begun to correct and form all into a little manual, wherein I designed you should have seen what were the particular reasons which prevailed on me to believe the being of a God, and the grounds of natural religion, together with the motives that induced me to embrace the faith of Jesus Christ; under which was comprehended my own private reasons for the truth of revealed religion; and because I was educated among the Dissenters, and there was something remarkable in my leaving them at so early an age, not being full thirteen, I had drawn up an account of the whole transaction, under which I had included the main of the controversy between them and the established church, as far as it had come to my knowledge, and then followed the reasons which had determined my judgement to the preference of the Church of England. I had fairly transcribed a great part of it, but before I could finish my design, the flames consumed both this and all my other writings'. [Southey quotes from *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, I, pp. 26–7].