# PLENARY SESSIONS

## John Wesley's *A Christian Library*, Then and Now

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Two hundred fifty years ago in the mid-eighteenth century, John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was in the midst of a monumental publishing venture He had starting publishing materials for his followers as early as 1733 while still in residence as a Fellow and tutor at Lincoln College, Oxford When the Methodist revival started at the end of that decade, he continued to print at the rate of about five or six items a year By the mid-1740s, he began to think of publishing collections of works, beginning with a volume of sermons in 1746

About the same time, another collection began forming in his mind A letter from Philip Doddridge on June 18, 1746, lists suggestions that Wesley had sought for a "little collection of books [chiefly books of practical divinity] for some young preachers in various parts"[1] On five pages, Doddridge lists a variety of works in logic, metaphysics, ethics, history, natural philosophy, and theology[2]

About two years later, Wesley was making more particular plans for the collection Two letters in August 1748 indicate that he was thinking of publishing sixty to eighty volumes of "all that is most valuable in the English tongue in order to provide a complete library for those that fear God"[3] He noted several other details of the planning John Downes would "give himself up to the work" (Wesley had not actually asked him yet, and he never did superintend the printing), Wesley was going to buy a press, paper, and type (specially cast), they would print ten to twelve volumes per year, one hundred copies of each, they would use finer paper and larger type than usual (Methodist publications were notoriously cheap) It would be a fine edition

The primary goal of the project, however, as pointed out in his preface to the work, was to provide the Christian reader with a manageable collection of the best practical divinity of the past one hundred fifty years[4] There is a wealth of material available in English, he says, but that is part of the problem there is so much published material, and a great deal of it is complicated, and the really good writings are so hard to find—who will provide a guide through such a labyrinth? Of course, when Wesley asks such a question, the answer usually is, Me His collection will tie together knowledge and vital piety (wisdom and devotion) to help make the children of God "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work"

Wesley was not the first to attempt such an endeavor, of course Even the title had a prior history Richard Younge had published *A Christian Library* in 1655, with the subtitle, *A pleasant and plentiful paradise of practical divinity, in ten treatises . composed to pluck sinners out of Satan's snares, and allure them into the glorious liberty of the Gospel.*[5] The second edition five years later was expanded to thirty-seven treatises, but the

whole was still contained within a single volume of 694 pages [6] John's father, Samuel, was one of several persons who had suggested to young clergy a reading bibliography of the most significant Christian writings without actually bringing the texts together in a published collection [7]

John's vision, however, was much larger than that of Younge or his father or any of the others He proposed for himself a daunting task The idea was to do about ten volumes of abridged texts a year, all the while preaching over seven hundred times a year, traveling four thousand miles by horse, and continuing to publish the usual six or seven other items per year In passing, we might note that the generation of income was not a major factor here, since John was still drawing his annual stipend as a Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, well into the time span of this project He did face several other problems, however, beyond financing and marketing (1) selecting the material, (2) editing the material, and (3) presenting the material

## Criteria for Selection

Wesley's principles of selection were clearly enunciated in the preface to the *Christian Library* and occasionally repeated in the introductions to other published abridgements Given the vast storehouse of practical divinity in English, his concern was to sort out the best He had five main concerns

(1) **Veracity.** "In many places," he points out, "more is spoken than is true" Many authors have blended errors with the truth, which must be sorted out
(2) **Utility.** "Many, though true" he continues, "are of little use" In particular, he wants to avoid works emerging from controversies that merely promote "vain jangling"
(3) **Intelligibility.** He points out further that "others are wrote in such a style as is scarcely intelligible" to most people He wants clear, comprehensible prose
(4) **Propriety.** These works should not be trite, on the one hand He realizes that some authors' thoughts "are as common as their expressions" On the other hand, the work should not be too deep He knows of works that are too mystical, that "find hidden meanings in everything , they seek mysteries in the plainest truths"
(5) **Consistency.** Many works are bewildering, they present no consensus or consistency and result only in bewilderment Some authors are so contradictory, even in matters of practical religion, that many readers are led to throw away all religion as jargon and self-inconsistency

These five criteria represent Wesley's main concerns at the first level of selection

## Criteria for Editing

Wesley's criteria for editing and/or abridgement aimed toward clarity and brevity In the process of editing the material, he often found it necessary to **omit** a great deal, "even from eminent authors," as he pointed out This necessity was emphasized in a later comment in the *Arminian Magazine* "The size of a book is not always the measure of the writer's understanding Nay, I believe if angels were to write books, we should have very few folios in heaven "[8] Yet at times, Wesley noted, it was necessary to **add** something "needful" to the texts in order to clear the authors' sense or correct their mistakes

Wesley was concerned with both literary matters, including economy of thought and of style, and theological matters But he did not feel that one had to agree with everything an author said in order to find it useful He stressed this point in a letter to Elizabeth Ritchie in November 1774

> There are many *excellent* things in Madam Guion's Works, and there are many that are exceedingly *dangerous* *And it is not easy to distinguish the one from the other Perhaps, therefore, it might be safest for you chiefly to *confine yourself* to what *we* have published You will then neither be perplexed with various sentiments, nor with various language, and you will find enough on every head of religion, speculative or practical [9]

These comments about content epitomize the goal of his publishing project—usefulness to the reader Also, he was not always completely put off by inadequate writing style, as he noted in a proposed preface to one abridgement "The strong sense in the following tract, will I apprehend, make amends for the roughness of the style "[10] In the end, he claims to have no favorites as to theology, content, or style Rather, he states that he will simply follow each insofar as they follow Christ [11]

## Criteria for Presentation

Wesley's primary principle of organization in the Christian Library was chronology His stated purpose in this regard was twofold (1) he wanted people to see the long-term consistency of Christian truth—that "the genuine religion of Jesus Christ has been one and the same from the beginning", and (2) he realized that the ambitious design might exceed his energy or lifespan and that, by using a chronological approach, someone else could easily pick up where he left off [12]

He was still left with the question of what medium of presentation to use An oral format was not really feasible for this project Another option that he had used with his friends at Oxford, handwritten copies, was still useful for some things but not practical for this design [13] The best technology of his day for mass circulation of reading material was the printing press, which had not changed in basic design in the three centuries since Gutenberg [14] But this medium still allowed for several different formats broadsides, pamphlets, monographs, serials, multi-volume sets

Wesley had used all these forms for various works up to this point but chose the latter for his Christian Library Although his previous concern had usually been an affordable price, and many of his publications appeared as cheap as they were (poorly inked, crooked on the page, etc ), in this case he expressly hoped that the work would be on better paper and printed with larger type, specially made for this project [15]

**The Finished Product**

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

*Selection*

Wesley intended to select "the best" writings in divinity of the previous one hundred fifty years, including works both by and about notable Christians If we look at the authors he included in the fifty volumes, we can see a rather eclectic selectivity There are writings by several Early Church writers, including Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Macarius There are also some non-British writers, such as John Arndt, Blaise Pascal, Antoinette Bourignon, Don Juan D'Avila, and Miguel de Molinos The largest two groups are Church of England and Puritan writers, with such familiar names as Jeremy Taylor, Richard Allestree, Robert South, Benjamin Calamy, Henry Scougal, John Tillotson, and Edward Young in the first category, and John Fox, John Bunyan, Richard Baxter, Joseph Hall, John Owen, and Thomas Goodwin in the second [16] Other writers in these two categories include such less familiar names as Nicholas Horsman, Susannah Hopton, Charles Howe, John Worthington, as well as Herbert Palmer, Francis Rous, John Kitchen, John Brown, and Lewis Stuckley (most of them hardly household names) In all, there are seventy-one authors, twenty-seven of which he had noted reading while he was at Oxford as a student and tutor, 1725–35, when he "collected" or abridged many of them [17]

We should also note that some obvious writers (some of them Wesley's favorites) are missing from the collection Augustine, Ephrem Syrus, Thomas Hooker, Francis Atterbury, John Bull, Patrick Delany, August Hermann Francke, Robert Nelson, and John Norris This is partly, though not completely, explained by his use of chronological order—he never got to the eighteenth century

The second group of writings were biographical in nature—lives of various Christians who served as examples of Christian faith and piety This group of fifty-two short biographies is also a collection of familiar and not-so-familiar names The non-British persons include Calvin, Melanchthon, and Peter Martyr, as well as the less familiar Galeacius Caraccioulus, Henry Atling, Philip de Mornay, and Frederick Spanheim Anglicans such as Richard Hooker, George Herbert, John Donne, are

joined by Henry Wotton, Bernard Gilpin, and William Bedell George Trosse, Nathanael Barnardiston, Richard Blackerby, John Bruen, and eighteen other less familiar names complement familiar Puritans, such as Joseph Woodward, Robert Bruce, and Richard Mather Of the fifty-two short biographies, Wesley abridged twenty-nine from Samuel Clarke's *Eminent Lives of Christians.*

Overall, the selection is probably not representative of what an editor today would choose to include, even given Wesley's principles of selectivity Of course, Wesley did not have the degree of interpretive hindsight that we enjoy Nevertheless, the table of contents does include a representative group of writers that largely reflect the context of the Wesleyan theological perspective If we examine Wesley's own criteria of veracity, utility, intelligibility, propriety, and consistency in these writings, the judgment from different observers would probably vary widely, depending upon one's theological perspective Wesley intended that his editing technique, however, would help overcome any problems in those five criteria (at least from his perspective) in any book he wanted to include [18]

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### *Edition*

Wesley's general editing methods, reflecting his enunciated principles, can be seen in a few extant examples of material prepared for the printer but never actually published (virtually all the material that he gave printers has been lost, probably discarded by the printer) [19] The theological editing that one would expect from him was linked with a literary editing technique that combined concern for length with concern for rhetoric [20] For example, Wesley omitted a great deal from many authors Looking at a sample page from an extant example, *Of Christ,* one can see that he eliminates verbosity ("their late condition was" becomes "they were"), he reduces several double adjectives to single ("misery and torment" becomes "torment") or totally eliminates the phrase ("their state and condition") Some words or phrases change ("inconstant" becomes "false"), and he makes several other substitutions or additions The result is a text that is reduced by fifty percent and that is more direct and succinct Many modern writers could benefit from his editing technique

### *Presentation*

Wesley published this fifty-volume set between 1749 and 1755 in duodecimo volumes that often contained several items in one volume The set (as seen on most library shelves today) would not win any publication award, but the material quality of the finished product was a step up from many of his other publications The project, however, cannot be seen as an overall success

Distribution and sales were problems—he had not yet developed his "connection" of preachers into the network of colporteurs that later helped market his publications [21] As a result, he lost money on the venture—by 1752, he was £200 behind and in the end lost £100 ($15,000)[22]

Reception was another problem Many of his critics jumped on any questionable detail they could find in this project Richard Hill, a Calvinist antagonist, asked "Is not your 'Christian Library' an odd collection of mutilated

writings of Dissenters of all sorts?" Wesley answered directly "In the first ten volumes there is not a line from any Dissenter of any sort, and the greatest part of the other forty is extracted from Archbishop Leighton, Bishops Taylor, Patrick, Ken, Reynolds, Sanderson, and other ornaments of the Church of England "[23]

Hill had commented on the nature and quality of the project "There is great reason to lament, that so many poor people's pockets should be fleeced for what can do their souls no good" He also accused Wesley of contradicting himself within the *Christian Library,* when the material was compared with other of his works Wesley's answer reveals in part his process in developing the project

> I did believe, and I do believe, every tract therein to be true, and agreeable to the oracles of God But I do not roundly affirm this, (as Mr H asserts,) of every sentence contained in the fifty volumes I could not possibly affirm it, for two reasons, (1) I was obliged to prepare most of those tracts for the press, just as I could snatch time in traveling, not transcribing them, (none expected it of me,) but only marking the lines with my pen, and altering or adding a few words here and here, as I had mentioned in the preface (2) As it was not in my power to attend the press, that care necessarily devolved on others, through whose inattention a hundred passages were left in, which I had scratched out It is probable too, I myself might overlook some sentences which were not suitable to my own principles It is certain, the correctors of the press did this, in not a few instances I shall be much obliged to R H[ill] and his friends, if they will point out all those instances, and I will print hem as an *index expurgatorius* to the work, which will make it doubly valuable [24]

Wesley promoted his Christian Library for some time by frequently mentioning and recommending it to his preachers and by including it in the curriculum at his school at Kingswood In the early 1750s, he said in his Journal "I wish all our Preachers, both in England and Ireland, would herein follow my example, and frequently read in public, and enforce select portions of the 'Christian Library'"[25] The *Minutes* of his conferences with the preachers contains another recommendation, when dealing with the general method of employing time (such as getting up at 4 a m) "From six in the morning till twelve, (allowing an hour for breakfast,) to read in order with much prayer, first, 'The Christian Library,' and the other books which we have published in prose and verse, and then those which we recommended in our Rules of Kingswood School "[26]

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

## The Second Edition

The second edition of *A Christian Library* appeared in 1819–27, promoted in advance as a quarto edition in thirty volumes However, the seriatim publication resulted in the entire corpus being fully concluded by the middle of the twenty-ninth volume The editor decided to complete the promised number of volumes by producing a "Supplement," the Preface of which explained that it "consists of [other] abridgments from various Authors, made by MR WESLEY, at different periods, and published in a separate form Several of them are now very scarce, having been long out of print " This statement and its context unfolds a whole new issue—the question of selection of these additional materials raises an overlooked question regarding the relationship between the original corpus of *A Christian Library* and the rest of Wesley's works (and perhaps even the larger question of the nature of Wesley's "works")

## Wesley's Four Major Published Collections of Works

(1) No attention has been given to the fact that Wesley's works were first offered as a collected set in 1746 This fifteen-volume collection, advertised in a booklist at the back of an edition of his *Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (Bristol Farley, 1746), contained sixty-five works—most of the books that Wesley had published in the previous thirteen years What is particularly noteworthy for our study is that of those sixty-five items, bound together in volumes with "Wesley's Tracts" on the spine,[27] twenty-five of them (nearly 40%) were extracts of works by other authors, such as Jonathan Edwards, August Hermann Francke, Thomas Halyburton, Thomas à Kempis, Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, Robert Barclay, William Law, Robert Nelson, John Norris, Henry Scougal, and Isaac Watts And yet Wesley seems to have had no compunction about referring to them as his "works "

(2) The second major set of collected works produced by Wesley was the *Christian Library,* which he began publishing in 1749 [28] As we have seen, these volumes contain works by and about 123 authors, abridged by Wesley

(3) The third major collection of works was produced in the 1770s [29] This thirty-two-volume set is titled *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley* and is usually considered to be the first edition of his collected works In the preface "To the Reader," Wesley lists his principles, which include several items of particular interest to this study (a) In terms of selection, he indicates that this collection will include "all that I had before published in separate tracts but on a better paper and with a little larger print than before" (sound familiar?) What he does not highlight is the fact that he also has included a large number of abridgements of other persons' writings and biographies—there is no hint of that on the title page (b) He points out that the works have been "methodized," placing similar ones together so as to show how they "illustrate" each other and present a comprehensive selection of nearly every topic in practical and controversial divinity (c) He promises to "correct" them, both in terms of rectifying typographical errors introduced by printers and in terms of occasionally amending

the sense (through omission, addition, or alteration) so as to present both an accurate text and his "last and maturest thoughts"[30] (d) He introduces an innovation not found in any other of his other collections asterisks added to the texts before some paragraphs that he "judged were most worthy of the reader's notice"[31]

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

(4) But that's not the end of this strange tale The fourth major collection of material that Wesley produced can be found in his *Arminian Magazine*, begun in 1778, shortly after his *Works* were published[32] His intention is spelled out in the Preface to the first month's edition "Our design is, to publish some of the most remarkable tracts on the universal love of God, and his willingness to save all men from all sin, which have been wrote in this and the last century" What unfolds in the successive issues each month is primarily a long series of abridgements and selections from various works by other authors Before long, he began to add biographical works, spiritual letters, sermons (some by himself), and other writings that he felt were especially important and in some cases very scarce or not to be found in English

Many of the principles enunciated in and illustrated by these various collections and series published by Wesley are very similar to those evident in the *Christian Library.* Add to all this the fact that many of Wesley's later individual publications fit into this same scheme of presenting a variety of works, many by and about others, and we begin to see that the *Christian Library* is not the unique production that it is often considered, but rather is just one phase or segment of a lifelong publishing project that is both reflected in and connects rather readily to the *Christian Library* itself[33] The Library, then, can be seen as just one facet of a larger enterprise that is of a whole and that reflects who John Wesley was a Christian—definitely Anglican—with Puritan leanings but ecumenical breadth, with scholarly grounding and a focus on practical divinity, as well as willing to take a stand on controversial issues, especially predestination

## A Christian Library for Today

Since Wesley's day, there have been a variety of attempts to produce a "Christian Library" by that or other titles The implicit design is always to present a collection that the editor thinks will represent the best of Christian writing within a certain purview Interestingly, selections from Wesley's writings are often included in these works

In the early nineteenth century, there were a number of comparable attempts, such as the rather large set of small books produced by the American Tract Society

in New York between 1825 and 1849, titled *The Christian Library* (1824–49), containing lives and writings of eminent Christians These forty five volumes also appeared under the title *The Evangelical Family Library* Jonathan Going was the lead editor of another project titled *The Christian Library, A reprint of popular religious works,*[34] which appeared in a number of successively larger sets in the mid 1830s and contained both biographies and theological writings A similar work published about this same time was *The Christian Library comprising a series of standard works in religious literature* (published in Philadelphia) [35] More recently, *The Orthodox Christian Library* is a twentieth century attempt at producing a printed collection designed for a particular group

Until about twenty years ago, the technology of presentation was not much different from the printing of the eighteenth century—the only technological innovation was that microforms could be used to present the printed material in reduced form The limited scope and lifetime of the *Library of Christian Classics* testifies to the limitations still evident in the mid twentieth century

More recently, the electronics revolution has drastically altered the matter of presentation (and therefore of selection, cost, etc ) The appearance of the recorded book, and more recently the electronic book, altered the matter of format And the technology of the CD ROM and the Internet radically altered the question of selection, allowing for almost limitless accessibility to vast quantities of text Some recent efforts along this line would include CD versions of *The Master Christian Library (AGES)* and the *Essential Christian Library (1998)* and the web accessed sources such as the *Internet Christian Library (1994)* [36] Wesley specific sites are available that lead the reader into most of the Wesleyan material—except for his *Christian Library* [37]One interesting example of the intermixing of these technologies can be seen in the projects undertaken and projected by Providence House, a publisher in Tennessee Andy Walker, the publisher, was the first to make Wesley's *Works* (the 1872 fourteen volume "Jackson" edition) available on CD ROM It has also been his long time dream to reproduce Wesley's *Christian Library*, either in electronic or printed form The project is presently on hold, awaiting funding and a market mandate He is convinced that such a body of writing contains spiritual food for which people are hungry today He has asked for my evaluation of the matter, which is not easy to summarize but essentially rests on the observation that it would be difficult to put together any major (though limited) collection of historical Christian (or, more generally, religious) writings today that would meet the spiritual needs of a large group of people beyond particular denominational boundaries After talking with him again the other day about the progress of his project (which at one time I suggested might entail the reproduction of all the original sources that Wesley had abridged), it struck me that the *Christian Library* is of a piece with Wesley's whole approach to publishing his "works " Only then did it strike me that the approach of the editors of his collected *Works*[38] (after Wesley himself) has probably done him a disservice by trying so hard to reduce the corpus of Wesley's "Works" to include only those writings that are verifiably original Wesley material Gone are the abridgements, gone are the lives of eminent Christians (saints) And gone, in fact, is any current edition of *A Christian Library*—either in printed or electronic form

## Conclusion

What does all this say about the creation of a "Christian Library" for today? Certainly, we have the need, as well as the capability, to produce materials that could meet the needs and desires of almost any individual seeking a collection of such materials And Wesley seemed to be keenly aware that such materials needed to include more than the writings of any one person And especially, he seemed to be aware of the usefulness of the Roman Catholic tradition of the *Acta Sanctorum*—the lives of the saints

After giving a presentation to the American Hymn Society in Dallas some years back, I was met in the parking lot by a gentleman who had heard my talk on the Wesleys' spiritual pilgrimage as reflected in the Wesleyan hymns He commented on the relevance of the material to his own spiritual search for meaning, which had taken several twists and turns, starting (at his pastor's suggestions) with a study of the Bible (reading it cover to cover twice), then to a careful examination of various commentaries on scripture, and eventually to an accidental reading of *Here I Stand*, a biography of Martin Luther by Roland Bainton There, he discovered in Luther another person who had not only faced many of the same issues he was confronting but had worked through some of them in ways that were meaningful to him as a reader His final words were of encouragement to continue unfolding the lives of Christians such as the Wesleys for the spiritual benefit of present-day seekers

That was one person's approach to a meaningful Christian Library for today But it does support what I would say is one of Wesley's main concerns—that people have access to the stories of the lives and deaths of eminent Christians, as well as their writings Many people would agree with that approach, but most everyone would have a different idea of what shape such a collection would take

The trend today is to look for larger and larger collections of material, following the capabilities presented by the technology of the day These vast collections of material, however, are difficult for any person to work through They virtually duplicate the size of small libraries in some instances Wesley's question comes to mind—who will give us a clue to help guide us through such a labyrinth?

The parallel between collecting electronic materials into a large "essential religious library" and the development (and use) of a contemporary theological library can be drawn out a bit further, raising some of the same questions to which Wesley speaks in his prefaces The homepage of the Christian Classics Ethereal Library points us to four issues that are raised in any such attempt—issues that are not so different from what Wesley faced

a) **Purpose:** what is the goal of such a project—in a pluralistic, PC world, how does one define the purpose or target audience of such a collection? Libraries of theological schools, often with diverse student bodies, also face the task of defining similar purposes and goals, often enunciated in mission statements or implicit in the shape of their collections

b) **Selection:** how are the materials selected? Even with the capabilities of the electronic expanses, there must be some principles of selection—everything cannot be included The same is true with the library—space and budgets present very real restrictions to acquisitions

c) **Edition:** how is the material edited? Are critical editions preferred? With commentary or annotations? Should complete editions be reproduced or only selected portions? These are some of the same questions that face librarians when selecting materials for a diverse student body and/or the public

d) **Production:** what media are suitable to the materials? Print? CD? Internet? Audio? Again, libraries are faced with similar decisions when trying to build a collection that is relevant, usable, and affordable

In some sense, then, all theological libraries start to do the work of selecting and raise issues relating to editions and production in the process of their collection building and public services offerings (all of which are getting broader and broader, with all the electronic resources now available) But how would one put together a list of "essential religious readings" from the resources that are available in theological library collections?

I would suggest that every time a patron asks a librarian, "What is a good book on ," he or she is calling out from the midst of the labyrinth John Wesley suggested that one would need a clue "whereby he may guide himself through this labyrinth " One option is to do as he did and prescribe a list (or the texts) of good books to read The better option, I would suggest, though not the easier option, is to take his or her word seriously and simply provide "a clue" to assist the patron to work himself or herself out of the labyrinth The clue would be, in effect, to teach them how to decide for themselves what good books are (using criteria of selection, edition, and presentation in terms of their own needs), and let them put together the list for an "essential religious library," the customized contents of which the librarian can then begin to provide

**Endnotes**

1 John Wesley, *Letters II*, ed Frank Baker, in *The Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley,* 34 vols (Nashville Abingdon Press, 1976– ), 26 195, hereinafter cited as *Works.*

2 Wesley later published this list in *The Arminian Magazine* 1 (1778) 419–25, under the title, "A Scheme of Study for a Clergyman "

3 Letters to Ebenezer Blackwell and to "a Friend," August 14, 1748, in *Works,* 26 322–23

4 The full title of the collection is *A Christian Library: Consisting of Extracts from, and Abridgments of, the choicest Pieces of practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue* (Bristol Farley, 1749–55), see especially 1 1

5 First edition (London, Crumps, 1655), 14 pts in 1 vol

6 London Printed by M I , sold by James Crumps, 1660

7 One of Samuel's works was published in 1692 by John Dunton of *The Athenian Society* as *The Young Student's Library,* another, *Advice to a Young Clergyman*

(London: C. Rivington, 1935), was published by John Wesley after his father's death. Others who had published similar bibliographies of suggested readings included Richard Baxter and John Wilkins; see Robert Monk, *John Wesley; His Puritan Heritage,* 2nd ed (London: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 247

8. *Arminiam Magazine* IV (London: 1781), Preface It is a pleasure to speak to an audience that doesn't need an explanation of that phrase
9. *The Letters of John Wesley,* ed. John Telford (London Epworth Press, 1938), 6:125
10. MS preface to an unpublished work. See illustration in John Fletcher Hurst, *The History of Methodism,* 6 vols. (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1902), 3:1102.
11. *Christian Library,* 1, Preface, § 10.
12. Ibid., § 11.
13 The Oxford Methodists had circulated manuscript copies of extracts, letters, rules, prayers, and resolutions, but Wesley moved beyond that format in 1733 with his first publication, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week.* It was followed by over four hundred publications during his lifetime. See Frank Baker, *A Union Catalogue of the Works of John and Charles Wesley* (Durham, NC: 1960).
14. The basic English box hose press of the eighteenth century, typified by the Franklin Press in the Smithsonian Institution, followed the same basic design of wooden presses of the previous generations.
15. Letters of August 14, 1748 (see note 3 above); repeated in preface to his *Works* (Bristol: William Pine, 1771), vol. 1, Preface, § 1
16. I am following Robert Monk's categorization of the authors, as found in his *John Wesley, His Puritan Heritage,* Appendices 1 and 2, where he lists all the authors and biographees.
17. See Richard P. Heitzenrater, "John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1725–35," Ph.D. dissertation, 1972, Duke University, Durham, NC; Appendix IV. There are several manuscripts of these early abridgements extant, including his 1732 shortening of Robert Nelson's *The Great Duty of Frequenting the Christian Sacrifice,* which he later adapted into a sermon on Constant Communion. It is particularly interesting to note that these twenty-seven (and perhaps others) were read long before his evangelical experience at Aldersgate in 1738, yet he still considered them as significant enough to include in this collection a decade later.
18. Any analysis of the details of Wesley's editing technique in each item is made somewhat difficult by the fact that he does not indicate the exact source, edition, date, etc., for most of the writings.
19. See, for example, his editing on a page of John Owens, *Of the Death of Christ* (which Wesley never published), illustrated in Hurst, *History of Methodism,* 3:1105. A somewhat less heavy-handed approach can be seen in the editing of his own revised Journal (Extract 8) that was inadvertently omitted by the printer from his collected *Works;* see John Wesley, *Journal and Diaries VII,* vol. 24 of the *Works,* Appendix.
20 For a more extensive discussion of Wesley's editing technique, see Walter Herbert, *Wesley as Editor and Author* (Princeton: University Press, 1940).

Jennifer Woodruff has provided an excellent summary of Wesley's editing technique relative to Wesley's abridgement of Jonathan Edwards, exhibited in the Divinity School Library on the occasion of this Annual Conference

21 In 1749, he was just beginning to establish "circuits" of societies, with groups of preachers assigned to circulate on each circuit See Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville Abingdon, 1995), 162, 180

22 These figures must be seen in light of his presses being worth £18 each ($2700, type worth $21,000) and his book inventory at his death being worth £4,900 ($735,000)—thus the *Christian Library* was not a total disaster by any means

23 Letter to T H , December 12, 1760, in *Letters*, 4 122–23

24 "Some Remarks on Mr Hill's Review," in *The Works of John Wesley*, ed Thomas Jackson (London Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 10 381–82

25 Journal entry, May 13, 1754, in *Works*, 19 486

26 *Minutes of the Methodist Conference* (London 1862), 1 508–9, Qu 29 (30), A 3

27 These volumes are listed in Baker's *Union Catalogue* as item #64b, only two or three extant volumes are listed by Baker, but others might have escaped notice on library shelves with the innocuous title, "Wesley's Tracts," on the spine (although not all books with that title would match the contents listed at Baker, #64b)

28 Between the collected *Tracts* and the *Christian Library,* Wesley began to publish volumes of his collected sermons, which was first designed as a three-volume set In this study, we are dealing with "major" collections of works in terms of fifteen or more volumes in a set

29 Bristol William Pine, 1771–74, sometimes called the "Pine" edition

30 The unpublished copy of his annotated copy of Extract 8 of the Journal, omitted by the printer, Pine (see note 19 above), shows several examples of these changes, including also the filling in of names where there were formerly only initials, the omitting of some whole paragraphs, and the changing of some misstatements, such as altering the phrase at the end of the sentence "we had such a glorious shower as usually follows a calm" to read "follows a storm " The previous reading of the latter had persisted unchanged until the present critical edition, see *Works*, vol 24, Appendix and Errata

31 This feature was a key to identifying the annotated copy of Extract 8 as the one prepared for (but omitted from) the 1770s edition of the *Works* These asterisked selections often highlight accounts of holy living or dying, although the account of his own spiritual experience at Aldersgate is surprisingly (to the modern reader, perhaps) not so noted

32 He acknowledges that his design was based on the *Christian Magazine*, by then defunct *Arminian Magazine* 1 (1778) 8—"To the Reader," § 1

33 It remains for another study to look into some of the questions that might arise from this sketch Why did Wesley not include some of his earlier published abridgements in the *Christian Library*? Were the criteria for selecting extracts in his *Works* different from those in the *Christian Library* or the *Arminian Magazine*?

34 Published in various formats, up to eight volumes (New York Thomas George, Jr, 1834–36) The contents match the selections in *The Christian Library: a weekly republication of popular religious works* (also published by Thomas George in New York), which was apparently the serial version This set of works included Richard Watson's *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, which was a standard Wesley biography of the time

35 Philadelphia Key and Biddle, 1833–34, 2 vols , second series, 1851

36 Portland, OR Worldstar Internet Technologies, 1994—"one of the largest and most complete archiving of 'classical' Christian materials available on the Internet " Statement on homepage

37 The Methodist Archives, Rylands University Library of Manchester, has Wesley texts available at rylibweb man ac uk/data1/dig/Methodist, the Wesley Center for Applied Theology, Northern Nazarene University, has Wesley material at wesley nnu edu/JohnWesley htm, and there are selections in the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, at www ccel org, these are just three of an increasing number of such sites

38 After Wesley himself these would include Joseph Benson, Thomas Jackson, Frank Baker, and myself

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