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SUSANNA WESLEY'S SUNDAY AFTERNOON BIBLE STUDY



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Cover: The cover image is an illustration drawn from Elmer Clark's An Album of Methodist History (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), page 24. To rediscover Charles Wallace's article, "Susanna Wesley's Spirituality: The Freedom of a Christian Woman," with Rachel Cope's recent introduction, go to page 224.

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Alfred T. Day III, Editor

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CONTENTS

Contributors	204
Editor's Note	205
“Thy Secret Mind Infallible”: The Cast of Lots Among Leaders of Eighteenth-Century English Methodism <i>by Samuel J. Rogal</i>	207
Introduction to “Susanna Wesley’s Spirituality: The Freedom of a Christian Woman” <i>by Rachel Cope</i>	224
Susanna Wesley’s Spirituality: The Freedom of a Christian Woman <i>by Charles I. Wallace, Jr.</i>	226
Remembering the Significance of My Home Church, La Trinidad Iglesia Metodista, Seguin: Personal Memories and Reflections <i>by David Maldonado, Jr.</i>	241
Book Reviews	246
<i>Methodist History</i> Volume LVII: Contributors and Articles	250
<i>Methodist History</i> Volume LVII: General Index	252

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This year marks the 350th anniversary of the birth of Susanna Wesley, mother of Methodism's founders. No single person played as critical a role in the initial and ongoing shape of the Methodist movement than Susanna Wesley.

Born in 1669, Susanna was the youngest daughter and twenty-fifth child of the distinguished Puritan minister Dr. Samuel Annesley. At age thirteen Susanna broke with her nonconformist upbringing and united with the Church of England. Marrying Samuel Wesley, an Anglican priest, Susanna herself gave birth to nineteen children, but only ten survived infancy. Her methodical organization of this large household and her privileged education provided the example for John Wesley's disciplined approach to life and the systematic, edifying structuring of Methodist societies.

The 350th anniversary of Susanna Annesley Wesley's birth is a fitting opportunity to reflect upon the history of Methodism, the life of a pious woman whose sons founded a significant religious movement that continues to influence the world to this day. This issue of *Methodist History* is dedicated to her.

Rachel Cope offers fresh perspective on Susanna scholar Charles I. Wallace, Jr.'s previously published "Susanna Wesley: The Freedom of a Christian Woman" (*Methodist History*, April, 1984). It will inform and inspire *Methodist History* readers to continued engagement of Susanna's life through contemporary social and historical lenses. Immediately following Cope's introduction is a reprint of the Wallace essay from 1984. It provides rich insight into the key components of Susanna's exemplary spirituality: conscience, reason, and religious experience in the pursuit of holiness. In her well-structured devotional life, these facets worked together, making her more than "the mother of Methodism" but a Christian woman for all times, a richly-textured case study of groundbreaking feminine spirituality in eighteenth-century social and religious contexts.

Samuel J. Rogal's "'Thy Secret Mind Infallible': The Casting of Lots Among Leaders of Eighteenth-Century Methodism" is a fascinating, surprising study of a method of discernment employed by Susanna's sons and other early Wesleyan leaders. Casting of lots at decisive moments surely had a place in biblical times but it also found its place as a method to determine divine direction or settle inner conflict or indecision among Methodism's founders. Beginning with Charles and John Wesley's personal lives, and continuing through relationships with the Moravians, George Whitefield, other early leaders in the movement and its hymnody, Rogal shows the Wesleys' reliance on casting lots to resolve many personal, spiritual, or theolog-

ical dilemmas.

David Maldonado's "Remembering the Significance of My Home Church, La Trinidad Igelsis Methodists, Seguin: A Personal Memory and Reflection" is a unique, insightful, and compelling contribution to this issue and to Methodist history in general. It represents a potentially new genre for our journal, the legacy narrative—chronicling the formative, nurturing experiences of twentieth-century church life. This perspective comes from within the distinctive context of Hispanic/Latino United Methodism and raises both commendations and challenges therein, written by one of its most esteemed, prolific progeny.

Good reading. May stimulating discoveries and insights abound.

Alfred T. Day III