A New Edition of Wesley's Works

No one—and least of all the Methodists—can take much pride or satisfaction from the fact that there is not now available, even for interested readers, a complete and critically edited text of the prose writings of John Wesley. To redress this embarrassing situation and to make Wesley available to students and churchmen generally, four universities (SMU, Duke, Drew, and Emory) have undertaken the academic sponsorship of a definitive edition of Wesley's works, with an appropriate critical apparatus—introductions, notes, indices, etc.

It is proposed in this edition that every original or mainly original work by John Wesley be presented in full. The many works which he edited, abridged or adapted, will be reproduced where they constitute a particularly important exhibition of his own viewpoint. In all cases, his original material such as prefaces, notes, comments or important alterations in text will be made available.

In addition to Wesley’s original published works, the editors expect to reproduce all his known manuscripts which make any significant contribution to his published writings and to list and characterize those which are not reproduced in full. The volumes of his Letters will be kept as a separate unit, but other manuscript material will be associated, as far as practicable, with relevant published works either in text notes or appendices.

The problem of the scheme and contents of the edition is still under active consideration by the Editorial Board. But already it is agreed that there are obvious blocs of material that should be presented as such (e.g., Sermons and Notes) and there are segments of the corpus which may be dealt with in the late stages of the Project (e.g., Journals, Letters).

At the present juncture, it is impossible to predict exactly the number of volumes in the complete edition. This will depend on decisions yet to be made as to several batches of materials Wesley edited and published but did not write himself; on the amount of introductory and footnote materials that are to be supplied; format and printing, etc. The minimum estimate is thirty volumes; the largest estimate yet made in the Committee runs to forty volumes.

The Association of Methodist Historical Societies has endorsed the Project and recommended it to the Jurisdictional and Conference organizations for financial contributions.
To Mr. Dodsley, Bookseller in Pall Mall

Windmill Hill, December 12, 1744

Sir

I received an anonymous letter today, which informs me you are displeased at my printing Extracts of the Night-thoughts in “a Collection of Moral & Sacred Poems.”

I am not conscious of having done any Wrong herein, either to you or any other Person. If you apprehended I had, I should have looked upon it as a favour, had you given me any intimation thereof, at any time after my publishing the Proposals for that Collection, & I would immediately have stayed my hand.

All I can do now is this. I am ready to refer the matter to any Number of Arbitrators. And whatever Damage they judge you to have sustained, I will willingly make good. I am,

Sir
Your humble Servant
John Wesley

To Jenny Hilton in Beverley Yorkshire

London
Feb. 2, 1769

My Dear Sister

I have not received any letter from you since that of Dec. 11th. I almost wondered that you did not write & began to fear you had almost forgot me. So that your last gave me joy mixt with grief. I was grieved that you should be under any concern. And yet I could not but feel a very sensible joy at having a fresh proof of your affection. Never think, my Dear Friend, that my affection for you can be lessened by the Freedom with which you speak or write. This is the most endearing circumstance of all: Pour out your soul without reserve. I shall be the better instructed how to write. And certainly if I observe anything amiss, I will tell you. For I know God has given you a teachable spirit. From me, at least, you can bear anything: For I believe there are not many persons whom you love better.
Do you never lose your sense of the Presence of God? Do you always pray? And in everything give thanks? Does He “bid you even in sleep go on”? Does the enemy get no advantage over you in Dreams? What do you commonly dream of? Are you still sensible of God, when you wake, at night, or in the morning? Does your soul ascend to Him continually?

My Dear Jenny
Adieu!

To Miss Padbury at Whittlebury near Towcester
Jan. 10, 1783

My Dear Sister

It is not an easy thing for me, to refuse anything which you desire. As soon as Dr. Coke returns to London (which I suppose will be in two or three weeks) I doubt not but George Whitefield will be ready, to take up his cross again. It is certain, there is an absolute necessity, that something should be done. And it should be done as soon as you possibly can, for fear the roof should fall in. I hope you are gaining ground daily. I love you much and am, My Dear Betsy

Yours most affectionately
J. Wesley

(To Mr. Suter ¹ at the Preaching House in Plymouth Dock)
Cork
May 4, 1784

My Dear Brother

Immediately add to the Outward an Inward Remedy, namely the Diet Drink “for Scorbutic Sores,” ² which is in the Primitive Physic. I judge your Disorder is a degree of the King’s Evil. You do well to take it in time.

But you say nothing of poor Lawrence Kane. Is he come to his

1. Alexander Suter.
2. "198. Scorbutic Sores. A diet-drink.—Put half a pound of fresh-shaved lignum guaiacum (called by the block-makers, lignum vitae,) and half an ounce of senna into an earthen pot that holds six quarts. Add five quarts of soft water, and lute the pot close. Set this in a kettle of cold water, and put it over a fire, till it has boiled three hours. Let it stand in the kettle till cold. When it has stood one night, drink daily half a pint, new milk-warm, in the morning, fasting, and at four in the afternoon. Wash with a little of it. In three months all the sores will be dried up: Tried." (Primitive Physic)
senses again? Tell him I expected better things from Him! I really thought he was a patient man. That putting out the lights in the room was a terrible Emblem!

I am,

My Dear Alleck  
Your affectionate Brother  
J. Wesley

Bristol  
Sept. 11, 1784

My Dear Brother  

I am afraid John Accutt is weary of the Cross, and does not design to be a travelling Preacher any longer. He is now quietly and comfortably lodged at home; and I doubt will not be dislodged easily.

I gave the "Scripture text," together with other Papers, to Thomas Olivers long ago, with order to insert it in the Magazine as soon as there should be room. I know what has so long delayed the publication of it, & shall make enquiry.

Sept. 12 I have been talking this afternoon with your son. He seemed to be in a good spirit. I have great hopes he will live to be a comfort to you. I am

Your affectionate Brother  
J. Wesley

To Mr. Suter at the Preachinghouse in White——

Bristol  
Sept. 16, 1785

My Dear Brother  

I doubt we can do Sister Ramsey little good till she is at another spirit. If any one had said a word about it at the Conference, your plea would have been allowed. But possibly it is not too late now: for we are not yet run aground.

To you I may speak in confidence. He is a good man, & a remarkably sensible man. But he is in no wise fit for an Assistant. I have made trial of him in time past. Read over the Duty of an Assistant in the Minutes; & then do your best.

I wrote before that the Thirty pounds Legacy is good for nothing. Give the Executor or Heir good words, & take whatever he will give you. I shall soon be returning to London. If the Work of God prospers, you will want nothing. Whoever will return in a loving Spirit, let them return. I am

Your affectionate Friend & Brother  
J. Wesley
To Mr. Will Holmes at the Preachinghouse in Cardiff, South Wales

London
Jan. 13, 1787

Dear Billy

You do well to exclude all disorderly walkers: We shall be far better without them than with them.

I am afraid the loss of Sally Baker will not easily be supplied at Monmouth unless her Sister or one of Mr. John’s Daughters would rise up and take her place.

Build nowhere, till you find a very convenient situation and this should be a matter of solemn Prayer. I am glad to hear my dear S. Skinner has not quite forgotten me. My kind love to her and Sister Lewis. See that Brother Baldwin & you strengthen each other’s hands in God. I am

Dear Billy,
(signature missing)

London February 10, 1790

My dear Brother

I say to you as to every other Preacher, “If thou mayest be free, use it rather.” But I have no right to use an constraint, only I must remind you, that if I live to another Conference, I must inform all our Brethren that we cannot provide for any more Preachers wives: so that whatever Preachers marry for the time to come; must themselves provide for them. I am

Your affectionate Brother
J. Wesley

Mr. W. Holmes

(This letter seems to have been written by another person, but it is signed by Wesley in a very shaky hand.)

Aberdeen
May 25, 1790

My Dear Brother

On Midsummer Day (if I am here so long) you may after having asked advice of five sensible and faithful—— and those women, of whom you have had sufficient experience (for now we cannot be too wary in matters of such importance) and after you have deliberated with yourselves two hours in a bright starlight night, (if the moon shines may it glisten upon the sea, it may be so much the better) You may perhaps mention to ———— what your Wife’s name was to

Your affectionate Friend & Brother
J. Wesley
My Dear Brother

Mr. Langon wrote to, desiring me to send another Preacher into the Circuit, if I send a single one. This I could not do, but I sent Bro. Answorth, such an one as I had. If the Circuit cannot or will not ———— his Child, send me word, & I will take him away. But then I will send no other. I am

Your affectionate Friend & Brother

J. Wesley

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Jurisdictional Association Meetings

The Northeastern Jurisdictional Association of Methodist Historical Societies met at Drew Theological Seminary on April 24-25, 1962. There were addresses by Bishop Fred P. Corson and President Robert Oxnam, and a one hundred-slide lecture on "The Beginnings of American Methodism," by Dr. W. G. Smeltzer.

The North Central Jurisdictional Association met at McKendree College, Lebanon, Illinois, on July 9-10, 1962. McKendree, founded in 1828, was associated with Peter Cartwright and has his saddlebags among its historical treasures.

The Association of the Southeastern Jurisdiction met at Epworth-by-the-Sea on Saint Simons Island in Georgia on August 21-22, 1962. This area was visited by John and Charles Wesley in 1736, and George Whitefield established his Orphan House at nearby Savannah in 1740.

The South Central Association met in Dallas, Texas, on March 5-6, 1962.

Plans are being made for the formation of Associations in the Central and Western Jurisdictions.