The stress on the social gospel during the early part of this century was followed by a resurgence of theological and historical enquiry. Allied with this was a realization that in this enquiry John Wesley was of genuine importance not only as a church builder (in spite of his own declarations to the contrary) but also as a constructive theologian, albeit a "folk theologian," to use the apt description of Albert C. Outler, one of the scholars of international repute who was urging this re-examination of Wesley.

In this re-examination, however, scholars found themselves at a disadvantage because no truly scholarly edition of Wesley's works existed. The last major revision of the works of John Wesley took place 140 years ago, being carried out by Thomas Jackson, connexional editor for the Wesleyan Methodist Conference, who published his fourteen volumes 1829-31. The "First American Complete and Standard Edition" published by John Emory in seven volumes was in effect merely a rearranged reprint of Jackson's "third edition." Other reprints followed on both sides of the Atlantic, including the most recent, a lithographic reproduction of the 1872 English edition by the Zondervan Publishing House.

Although Thomas Jackson used the latest editions of Wesley's writings, complete in many cases with his own manuscript corrections, the text demonstrably suffers from not having been collated with the earlier editions. Careless printing and hasty proofreading too frequently had led to a progressive deterioration of the text. When late in life Wesley himself attempted to prepare definitive editions of his works even he was baffled by some of the errors which had crept in, and resorted to makeshift corrections. So engrossed was he with his main spiritual task that he found it impossible to take the time necessary for checking the later text carefully against his manuscript originals or the early editions, if indeed these were in fact available to him. Once again he was poorly served by his printers, so that in using his latest editions Jackson was unfortunately perpetuating a text which was sometimes contaminated with errors.

Not only was the text deficient, however. The contents also were unsatisfactory, and there was almost no attempt at assisting the reader. Jackson included a few items which he believed were from Wesley's pen, but which we now know were his extracts from the writings of others. (It must not be thought, of course, that these are therefore unimportant as an index to Wesley's mind and influence, but he himself pointed out that it was an error to treat
edited works in exactly the same way as original ones.) Similarly Jackson missed a handful of items which in fact Wesley did publish, as well as most of his manuscripts. More important still, the works presented by Jackson contained no historical or critical introductions, no footnotes identifying quotations or elucidating obscure points about people and places and events, no indication of important alterations made in different editions. Considering the many problems surrounding this one-man task Thomas Jackson was remarkably successful, and maintained higher standards of editorial scholarship than many of his contemporaries. Nevertheless students of Wesley have long looked for a critical annotated edition by means of which his writings could be better understood against his historical and theological setting.

As long ago as 1943 the present writer pleaded for “a critical, fully annotated standard edition” of Wesley’s works as the major task for the second fifty years’ activity of the Wesley Historical Society. His was a voice crying in the wilderness, however. The real impetus for the present undertaking came fifteen years later from Professor Albert C. Outler, engaged in preparing the material for his valuable work on John Wesley in the projected Library of Protestant Thought. So frustrated was he at the lack of a critical edition of Wesley’s works that he prodded a number of his colleagues into imaginative action. At a meeting of the Association of Methodist Theological Schools in 1959 a group of deans agreed to seek financing of such a project from their schools. These pioneers were Bernhard W. Anderson of Theological School, Drew University; William R. Cannon of Candler School of Theology, Emory University; Merrimon Cunninggim of Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University; Robert E. Cushman of The Divinity School, Duke University, and Walter G. Muelder of Boston University School of Theology. In various ways Duke Divinity School provided additional undergirding for the project, and Dean Robert E. Cushman has served as chairman of the Board of Directors from the outset. During the formative years immediately following, Boston in fact found itself unable to support the project financially, but more recently has joined forces with the original group of four sponsors and directors of what came to be known as the “Wesley’s Works Editorial Project,” as did also the Department of Ministerial Education of The Methodist Church and the Association of Methodist Historical Societies (now the Department of the Ministry and the Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church).

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The original board of directors appointed an editorial committee to study the dimensions of the project and to formulate plans for its fulfilment. This task has proved enormously complex and difficult. John Wesley, in association with his brother Charles, published some five hundred items ranging from single printed circulars to the fifty-volume *Christian Library*. Some of these were completely original (or as near as anything human can be original), some partly original, some little more than reprinted extracts from the works of others. A large proportion were published anonymously. Although the editorial committee believed that bibliographical information should be accumulated about all the joint publishing activities of both brothers, it was agreed quite early that our own edition should concentrate upon the original prose writings of John Wesley. Nevertheless, it seemed desirable to include some of the more important edited material as well as the most famous example of his hymn publications—*A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists*.

In order to secure a definitive text it was necessary to identify as many contemporary editions as possible, search for available copies, and then collate them with each other to discover any variant readings. During this process some two thousand editions published during Wesley's lifetime have been discovered, some in unique copies. Some ephemeral works which we know that Wesley published seem completely to have disappeared, however, and a few of the less important editions also have eluded us. The huge investment of time and money in this essential preliminary research, however important, cannot continue indefinitely, but at least we have the assurance now that what still escapes us is only an infinitesimal fraction of the whole. The first stage of this search for editions of Wesley's writings was embodied in a lithographed *Union Catalogue* of all the Wesleys' known publications in all their editions, published in 1966. This was also intended to lay the foundation for the definitive bibliography which the editorial committee believed to be of prime importance in the edition itself.

Another major problem besetting the editorial committee was the fact that Wesley, though an important "folk theologian," was by no means a systematic theologian, and frequently blended in one publication various aspects of his thought. A number of his writings fall readily into groupings such as Sermons and Journal, but many are very difficult to classify. Eventually a series of categories was devised, each forming a "unit" of one or more volumes complete in itself, though often needing some cross-referencing to other units. The order of these units, listed below, is roughly that adopted by Wesley himself when in 1771-74 he published the first edition of his collected *Works*. It should be pointed out that the actual order
of publication will not correspond to the ordering of the units, but will remain flexible, subject not only to the rapidity with which manuscripts can be prepared and approved, but to the anticipated demand for one unit rather than another, and to the problems of their handling by the publishers. Although the resources and cooperation of both the Abingdon Press and the Epworth Press were offered to the project as possible publishers, the directors and editorial committee were most happy that the Clarendon Press of Oxford, England, were prepared to undertake the venture, which is thus lifted out of the denominational realm (however commendable) into that of independent scholarship. In recognition of the birthplace of Methodism as well as in tribute to our publishers the series is to be entitled “The Oxford Edition of Wesley’s Works.”

The general intention of the editorial committee was to insist upon the most exacting standards of scholarship in securing a definitive text, yet to reproduce that text in such a way as readily to be understood and appreciated both by the scholar and the general reader of today, though without ever attempting to disguise the fact that Wesley was an eighteenth century Englishman writing for eighteenth century Englishmen. In order to secure a measure of uniformity throughout the series both in the collation of the different editions and in the presentation of the resultant text the directors appointed one man to act on behalf of and in cooperation with the unit editors for this special task. For him the title “copy text editor” was coined, though probably a more appropriate description is simply “textual editor.”

In addition to furnishing an easily read text on a well-designed page the series will supply a concise introduction to each unit and a brief preface to each major item therein. To these will be added brief annotations elucidating Wesley’s references to names of people and places, to themes and events, as well as supplying citations for his many quotations. The aim throughout will be a maximum exhibition of Wesley himself and a minimum intrusion upon the reader by the editor. An index will be supplied for each unit, and a general index for the whole edition.

A decade of exacting preparation is now being succeeded by at least another decade dedicated to the active work of publication. In April 1970 twenty-three members of the international and interdenominational team of editors and other workers assembled at Duke University to resolve many of the outstanding points of procedure. As a result of their deliberations it now seems realistic to expect the first printed volume within two or three years, and the volumes should then continue to appear at the rate of about two or three a year. Altogether the edition will comprise over thirty volumes, incorporating some five million words of Wesley text un-
dergirded by another million of editorial illumination. The total cost of the editorial preparations alone will be in the region of $250,000; the publishing expenses are being undertaken by the Oxford University Press.

Just as the present plans for publication have painfully evolved over the past decade, not one worker fully realizing all that was involved in this enormous undertaking, so there has been gradual change in the structure and personnel of the project. It is equally certain that other changes in personnel will take place during the following decade, and although the emphasis in recruiting editors has been placed upon established competence a number of younger workers are being involved, upon whom far greater responsibility may eventually fall. In the following pages the present leaders are introduced, with an indication of their respective tasks.

The Board of Directors is responsible for all matters of general policy and for the financial support of the project in its prepublication stage. They also make all appointments. The present directors are: Dr. James M. Ault, Dean of The Theological School, Drew University, Madison, New Jersey; Dr. Robert E. Cushman, Dean of The Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina; Dr. James T. Laney, Dean of Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; Dr. Gerald O. McCulloh, Director of the Department of the Ministry of the General Board of Education of the United Methodist Church, Nashville, Tennessee; Dr. Walter G. Muelder, Dean of Boston University School of Theology, Boston, Massachusetts; Dr. John H. Ness, Jr., Executive Secretary and Editor of The Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church, Lake Junaluska, North Carolina; and Dr. Joseph D. Quillian, Jr., Dean, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

The main responsibility of the General Editors is "to approve editorial policies, to facilitate their implementation, and to conduct negotiations with the publishers, in association with the Editor-in-Chief." They are three in number: Dr. Eric W. Baker, Secretary of the Methodist Conference, London, England; Bishop William R. Cannon, Bishop of the Raleigh Area of The United Methodist Church, Raleigh, North Carolina; and Dr. Robert E. Cushman, Dean of The Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

The Editor-in-Chief "takes over from the former Literary Editors the execution of the editorial processes. He serves as liaison officer between the Directors, the Editors, and the Publishers, implementing the policy of the Directors, cooperating with the General Editors, consulting with the Editorial Committee where needful, coordinating the work of the Unit Editors, and communicating with the Publishers." The present writer serves in this capacity—Dr. Frank
Baker, Professor of English Church History, The Divinity School, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

The Editorial Committee was formed to formulate and revise editorial policy. It continues "to serve as a consultative body in any matters of interpretation which have not been resolved by discussion between the Editor-in-Chief and the Unit Editors." It consists of: the General Editors; the Editor-in-Chief; Dr. Franz Hildebrandt (former Minute Secretary), of Edinburgh, Scotland; Professor John Lawson, Associate Professor of Church History, Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia; Dr. Albert C. Outler, Professor of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas; Dr. Charles A. Rogers, Assistant Professor of Church History, Evangelical Theological Seminary, Naperville, Illinois (Minute Secretary); and Dr. Philip S. Watson, Harris Franklin Rall Professor of Systematic Theology, Garrett Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois.

The function of the all-important Unit Editors is comprised under several headings:

(a) To decide on the reference text to be used for the works assigned to them, in cooperation with the Bibliographer and Textual Editor, Frank Baker, who will furnish them with the textual history of each work and his observations thereon.

(b) To identify quotations and to provide brief footnotes of a factual nature in order to exhibit Wesley's text more clearly.

(c) To prepare a general introduction to their unit, and such brief introductions to the separate items therein as seem necessary.

(d) To incorporate in their footnotes the textual variants which in their opinion are of major importance to the general reader. (All variant readings which embody additions, omissions, or alterations of words, though not matters of styling or obvious errors, will be supplied by the Textual Editor for an appendix to the volume or unit.)

(e) To supply such other appendixes as seem to them necessary and are approved by the Editorial Committee.

(f) To cooperate with the Indexer in supplying an index.

The twelve units and their editors are as follows:

I. Bibliography (2 volumes), prepared by Dr. Frank Baker.

II. Sermons on Several Occasions (4 volumes): Dr. Albert C. Outler.


IV. The Hymnbook: a Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People called Methodists: Editor, Dr. Franz Hildebrandt, with Assistant Editors the Rev. Dr. Oliver A. Beckerlegge, British Methodist minister, Sheffield, England, and Dr. James Dale, Associate
Professor of English, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.


VI. The Methodist Societies: (A) History, Nature and Design: Joint Editors, Dr. J. Hamby Barton, Dean of the College and Professor of History, Southwestern College, Winfield, Kansas, and Rev. Rupert E. Davies, Principal of Wesley College, Bristol, England.


VII. Doctrinal Writings: (A) Appeals: Editor, Dr. Gerald R. Cragg, Professor of Church History, Andover Newton Theological Centre, Massachusetts.

Doctrinal Writings: (B) Theological Treatises: Editor, Dr. John Deschner, Associate Professor of Theology, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

Doctrinal Writings: (C) The Defence of Christianity: Editor, Bishop William R. Cannon.

VIII. Pastor and Teacher (2 volumes): Editor, Dr. A. Lamar Cooper, Professor of Social Ethics, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.

IX. Editor: Editor, Dr. T. Walter Herbert, Professor of English, The University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida.

X. Journal and Diaries (7 volumes): Editor, Dr. W. Reginald Ward, Professor of Modern History, The University of Durham, Durham, England, with Assistant Editor having special responsibility for the diaries Rev. Richard P. Heitzenrater, Instructor in History and Religion, Centre College of Kentucky, Danville, Kentucky.

XI. Letters (7 volumes): Editor, Dr. Frank Baker.

XII. Miscellanea and General Index: Compiler, Mr. John Vickers, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, College of Education, Bognor Regis, Sussex, England. (Mr. Vickers will also be responsible for preparing indexes for the individual units in cooperation with the Unit Editors.)

A panel of Consultants has been enlisted, who are available to offer advice and information to editors in the field of their own special competence, including the possible identification of stubborn quotations. They may also serve as readers of manuscripts. These in-
clude the following: Professor Nelson F. Adams, Dean of Brevard College, North Carolina (Wesleyan musicology); Sir Herbert Butterfield, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge, England (eighteenth century British history); Dr. Geoffrey F. Nuttall, New College, London, England (the English Puritans); Dr. Jean Orcibal, The Sorbonne, Paris, France (the Roman Catholic mystics); Dr. E. Gordon Rupp, Principal of Wesley House, Cambridge, England (history of the Protestant Reformation); Dr. John Walsh, Fellow of Jesus College, Oxford, England (eighteenth century Evangelical clergy); Professor Basil Willey, King Edward VII Professor of English Literature at the University of Cambridge, England (eighteenth century English culture); Dr. George W. Williams, Professor of English, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (literary bibliography, textual problems in English literature, Shakespeare).

The Publishers, as already noted, are The Clarendon Press arm of The Oxford University Press. Arrangements with them are made through Colin H. Roberts, Esq., M.A., the Secretary to the Delegates, Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, and Dan M. Davin, Esq., M.A., Deputy Secretary to the Delegates, who is in charge of this project. Of key importance on this side of the Atlantic is Dr. Wilbur D. Ruggles, Vice President for Religious Publishing of the Oxford University Press, New York.

Making this project possible by means of their financial support is a large number of Sponsors, Sustaining Patrons, and Contributors. The Founding Sponsors consist of the original group of five Methodist seminaries, Boston, Drew, Duke, Candler, and Perkins, to whom have more recently been joined the Department of the Ministry and the Commission on Archives and History of the United Methodist Church. To these it is hoped to add as Co-Sponsors other Methodist denominations and institutions. The Sustaining Patrons include the World Methodist Council and a majority of the Annual Conference Commissions on Archives and History: the continuing assistance of these groups and the patronage of every other Conference Commission is earnestly solicited. The Contributors consist of individuals who have subscribed substantial sums of money sufficient to underwrite the major part of the editorial expenses for one volume: at present they are Messrs. Frank E. Brown, John D. Earld, Dr. and Mrs. W. M. Elliott, Messrs. R. Barton Hayes, B. C. Lineberger, the Dennis Myers Foundation, Messrs. O. J. Mooneyham and Noah O. Pitts. Again this project is commended as a worthy object of financial gifts both large and small.