

INTRODUCTION

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Charles Wesley spent roughly six and one half months in America and about one month on board a ship as it floundered up the east coast from Charlestown to Boston. These two chapters examine his own record of the stay in America from March 9, 1736, the day of arrival on St. Simon's Island in Georgia and his first recorded entry in his Manuscript Journal (MSJ), to October 26, the day the ship on which he was returning to England from Charlestown cleared land and began the homeward voyage. There are three primary geographical locations treated in what may be referred to as the American section of Wesley's *Journal*: the Colony of Georgia, Charlestown (located in the area that would become South Carolina), and Boston of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Where possible Wesley's *Journal* entries have been amplified and/or expanded by his letters written during his stay in the American colonies.

Charles's sojourn in America was formative for the rest of his life. There the seeds were sown that would bear fruit for the remainder of his pastoral and priestly ministries: preaching, counseling, administration of the sacraments, practice of the daily offices, etc. One sees in the American section of his *Journal* also how Wesley appropriated his classical learning in a keen interpretive process, through many citations of classical literature and their integration into his understanding of life and the practice of the Christian faith.

The shorthand passages of the Georgia period of the *Journal* are crucial in revealing the truth about false accusations of sexual impropriety that were made against him. Some of these passages are deciphered here for the first time. Previous editors of Charles Wesley's *Journal* material, e.g. Nehemiah Curnock, John Telford, and Elijah Hoole, no doubt found some of this material too sensitive to print, and, hence, they left much of it undeciphered, or at least unpublished. These shorthand sections provide an important corrective to historians of Methodism and the Wesleys who have maintained that the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, did not return to England from the American colonies as defeated men. Charles Wesley, as one finds in the full text of the MSJ, departed America a beaten man.

In these two chapters clarity is given to the conflict between Charles Wesley and Governor Oglethorpe, the full explanation of which has remained somewhat enigmatic. A newly deciphered shorthand passage, however, sheds new light on the conflict.

In addition, the brief record of Charles Wesley's stay in Charlestown, which is rarely cited in Wesleyan studies, is informative for the understanding of his lifelong opposition to slavery.

Charles Wesley's sojourn in Boston is carefully evaluated here for the first time, as well as the repertory of persons mentioned in the Boston section of the *Journal*. They are identified and Charles's association with them explored. One discovers that Wesley was protected by his Bostonian Anglican colleagues from the hotbed of religious tension in Boston among Dissenters, Puritans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Anglicans. One explores here what perhaps was behind the shielding of Charles Wesley from such tension.

What is one to make of the growing dissension in the Massachusetts Bay Colony caused by the gradually emerging anti-British feeling and loyalty to the British crown? Was Charles Wesley influenced at all by the dynamics of this discord in the colony? In the Boston section of Charles Wesley's MSJ one gains insight, which aids a response to these questions.

Charles Wesley was shaped by the American experience for the rest of his life in terms of his practice of the pastoral and priestly offices, relationships with others, and issues of social justice, such as slavery. Therefore, the study of the *Journal* of his American sojourn is absolutely essential to the study and interpretation of the lives of the Wesleys and the emergence of the Methodist movement.