John Wesley and Hester Ann Rogers had a most remarkable relationship. In spite of the fact that Wesley was Hester's senior by more than half a century, they seemed to establish an immediate rapport from the moment of their first meeting. The Rev. Mr. Wesley and "Hetty" were truly kindred spirits. It is not surprising that Wesley soon became her personal friend, devoted correspondent, and spiritual mentor. Hester faithfully kept a journal during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. In the pages of this record one can trace her brief but fruitful relationship with John Wesley. Her journal not only provides countless insights regarding the nature of the Methodist Movement and the organization of the Societies during those crucial years, but also affords a glimpse of the mature Wesley as viewed through the eyes of this sensitive Methodist laywoman.

Hester Ann Rogers was famous among the Methodists for her eminent holiness, zeal, and Christian influence. This fame was due in large measure to the publication of extracts from her journal following her death. First published by R. Edwards of Bristol in 1796, The Experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers became an extremely popular devotional tract which went through many subsequent printings during the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, almost all of the material dealing with Hester's relationship with Wesley, from their first meeting in 1776 to her marriage to one of Wesley's itinerants, James Rogers, in 1784, was deleted from the original and all subsequent editions. In fact, only one journal entry dealing with their relationship during this eight-year period has been retained, namely, the brief account of their first encounter.

1Hester Ann Roe (1756-1794) married the Rev. James Rogers on August 19, 1784. For convenience her married name is used throughout this paper. She was affectionately known as "Hetty."

2This tract, fully entitled The Experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers. Written by Herself. To Which are Added, Some Select Letters, Written to Her By the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Which afforded her much Spiritual Consolation. Bristol: Printed by R. Edwards; and sold (continued)
Therefore, in order to discover the details concerning this amazing relationship, it is necessary to turn to the pages of Hester Ann Rogers’ original papers. Of her manuscript journal three volumes are available which cover the period between July 30, 1775 and October 21, 1784. Reading and studying these volumes is an exercise in stepping through their pages into the world of late eighteenth century England. Hester’s journal affords information regarding her developing relationship with John Wesley, nurtured particularly by Wesley’s recurrent visits to her native town of Macclesfield; it reveals several facets of the life and work of that master craftsman of Methodism; and finally, it provides a personal portrait of a man, as “Hetty” remembers “Dear Mr. Wesley.”

Methodism in England was little more than a “new sect” by the middle of the eighteenth century. It was only in 1739 that John Wesley “submitted to be more vile” and began to proclaim the message of salvation in the open fields of the English countryside. Eight years later, on a spring afternoon in 1747, it was probably curiosity more than anything else that drew the people of Macclesfield to a vale called the Waters. For it was there that the ringleader of the people called

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at the Methodist Chapels, 1796, a 60-page duodecimo volume, contains not only the journal extracts, but 6 letters from John Wesley. Three additional duodecimo pamphlets were printed by R. Edwards at this same time. The 60-page tract, entitled Spiritual Letters by Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, Written Before and After Her Marriage; Peculiarly Calculated to Illustrate and Enforce Holiness of Heart and Life. Bristol: Printed by R. Edwards; and sold at the Methodist Chapels, 1796, originally contained 29 of Mrs. Rogers’ letters. Subsequent nineteenth century editions include these and 6 or 7 additional pieces of correspondence. The 60-page A Funeral Sermon, Preached in Spitalfields-Chapel, London, On Sunday, October 26, 1794, On the Death of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, By the Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D. Also, An Appendix, Written by Her Husband; with Various Pieces, selected and transcribed by him from her Manuscript Journal. Bristol: Printed by R. Edwards; and sold at the Methodist Chapels, 1796, contains information concerning the life of Mrs. Rogers, and in addition to those materials listed in the title, includes one of her poems entitled “The dying bed of a Saint and Sinner contrasted” and the “Epitaph inscribed to her Memory in St. Mary’s Chapel-Yard, Birmingham.” A final pamphlet of 12 pages is entitled Thoughts on a Future State, Occasioned by the Death of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers, By a Young Lady, who met in her Class: Also, an Elegy, By Another Friend: to which are Added, Stanzas On the Same Occasion. Bristol: Printed by R. Edwards; and sold at the Methodist Chapels, 1796.

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The first volume (188pp.) of these manuscript journals is entitled A Short Account of Ye Experience of H A R Written by Herself, Cork, August 30, 1789 and covers the period July 30, 1775 to May 19, 1780. The second volume (188pp.) is entitled the Continuation of Ye Journal of H A R Written by Herself with entries from May 21, 1780 to April 18, 1782. The third volume (199pp.), Continuation of H A R’s Journal, includes entries from April 20, 1782 to October 21, 1784. The original manuscripts belong to the Methodist Archives in the John Rylands Library, Manchester University. Hereafter these volumes are referred to as Rogers, Journal.
“Methodists” made his first appearance to them and preached following Morning Prayer at the local Anglican church. The situation was somewhat altered when Wesley made his second visit to Macclesfield, twelve years later, in April 1759. According to a long-standing tradition, on this occasion Wesley was struck in the face with a stone. He again tasted the lash of persecution.

It is doubtful whether little Hetty Roe, the daughter of the vicar of Macclesfield, remembered this incident at the rare age of three. Indeed, such a violent attack upon the Methodists was an exception and not the rule in that Cheshire village. Their comparative exemption from overt persecution was owing in small part to Hester's father. He was a very strict and pious clergyman, very reminiscent of the rector of Epworth, Samuel Wesley. But the tranquility was due in large measure to the Rev. Charles Roe, brother and successor of the vicar of earlier years, and uncle of Hester. He had married a London Methodist, Miss Stockdale, and was known to be a great lover of evangelical preaching.

The story of Hester’s early years is well known from the extracts of her Journal in The Experience of Mrs. Hester Ann Rogers: the cataclysmic impact of her father’s death when she was nine, the damaging effects of her “worldly” godmother, the spiritual turmoil of her quest for peace and assurance, and the ultimate “conversion” she experienced through the evangelistic preaching of David Simpson and the Methodist, Samuel Bardsley. Her wholehearted involvement with the Methodists led to harsh persecution and ostracism from family and friends. It was her reading, in part, that enabled Hester to persevere during those troubled times. And it was in the reading of Wesley’s sermons and treatises that Hester encountered her future spiritual mentor in a preliminary way. Unwittingly, Wesley had become an influential figure in Hester’s life as this entry, made only several months before their first meeting, confirms:

Mr. Wesley’s Plain Account of Christian Perfection was this day a greater blessing than before: O how very ignorant, how stupid have I been, respecting this great salvation; and even yet I seem to know nothing. Lord, teach me, and save me fully.

It was on Monday, April 1, 1776 that the youthful twenty year old

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5Smith, Methodism in Macclesfield, pp. 51-2.
6Wesley, Journal, vol. 5, p. 86. Hester’s uncle was primarily responsible for bringing the Rev. David Simpson to Macclesfield as his curate. Simpson figured prominently in the life of Hester Roe (Rogers) due to the influence of his “evangelistic preaching.” Charles Roe later constructed a new church, Christ Church, for Simpson when his preaching became too evangelically rich, even for his sympathetic blood.
and the energetic septuagenarian met for the first time. And what an encounter it was. Wesley’s two day visit to Macclesfield was a whirlwind of activity. Between his arrival on Monday and his departure early Wednesday morning Wesley preached three times, met with the Bands and the Select Band, and celebrated the Love-Feast. Hester was initially impressed with Wesley’s “parental tenderness” towards her and the wisdom of his spiritual counsel. To her great delight she was able to spend an hour alone with him after breakfast on Wednesday immediately before he left for Manchester. “What a wonder,” she wrote, “is that dear saint of God? now above 70 years of age. — how healthy and strong? how cheerful in piety? — how active and laborious in the work of God? May a tenfold blessing descend this day upon his hoary hairs.” The remarkable relationship had begun.

Between the years 1776 and 1784 (the years encompassed in Hester’s journal) Wesley never missed his annual visit to Macclesfield. He made only one additional trip to Macclesfield in the fall of 1783. This visit was in conjunction with the convening of the yearly Conference at Manchester but was specifically precipitated by internal problems concerning the Macclesfield and Congleton Circuits. Including this special trip of 1783, Wesley therefore made a total of ten visits to Macclesfield during that nine year period. Hester recorded six of these encounters with Wesley in her journal.

A typical record of Hester’s encounter with Wesley is composed of several elements. She usually recorded geographical and temporal information concerning these meetings. The location of their visits, for instance, was often the home of “old Mr. Ryles,” a pillar of the Macclesfield Society. Another consistent element is Hester’s careful recording of Wesley’s sermons. Not only did she include the text of the sermon and the time of the preaching, but often provided outlines, extensive commentaries, and verbatim accounts. She recorded Wesley’s visits with the Bands, Classes, and individual members of the Society. Occasionally she afforded verbatim accounts of personal conversations with her mentor, indicating Wesley’s health and spiritual state. From these records of Hester Ann Rogers’ encounters with John Wesley at least three aspects of his life and work come into focus: John Wesley as caretaker of his Societies; John Wesley as caretaker of souls; and John Wesley as caretaker of the paradosis, the tradition which was entrusted to his care.

Rogers, Journal, Vol. 1, p. 72. Quotations from Hester’s Journal which include abbreviation are fully transcribed, and frequent capitalization is modernized. Hester’s spelling, however, has been retained throughout.

Ibid.

A seventh encounter with Wesley may possibly be included which occurred in April 1783, when Hester journeyed to Newcastle and spent several days with Wesley while he preached in that area. Rogers, Journal, vol. 3, p. 64.
II

The first aspect of John Wesley’s life and work which is revealed by the journal of Hester Ann Rogers is his activity as director of the Methodist Societies. That Wesley was an organizational genius is hardly a new insight. Of this there is no question. Many ingredients combined in Wesley to produce such a unique gift.

In the organization of the Societies we witness the slow result achieved by his common sense, his perception of the practical value of suggested arrangements, his appreciation of the views of other people, his love of conference and counsel, his willingness always 'to be wiser to-day than the day before.'

It is interesting to note that at the time of Hester’s first meeting with Wesley in 1776 all of the characteristic methods and facets of the Methodist Society had been operative for over three decades. The local Societies had their “Bands” and “Classes,” their Rules and discipline, and their methods of social service. Preaching-houses, itinerant lay preachers, assistants, helpers, stewards, local and circuit administration, and yearly conference were all cherished Methodist “institutions” by then. Hester’s journal reveals Wesley’s ability to keep this vast institutional machine in good repair by means of visitation, participation, and discipline.

We have already seen that Wesley made annual visitations to his Societies in the Manchester area. He was aware of the perils of numerical success and was determined to know his people, such as Hester, individually. This emphasis on the importance of visitation and the development of personal relationships was reflected in the lives of his workers. “I went,” wrote Hester, “with Mr. Rogers to visit many families as he is following Mr. Wesley’s rule — and intended to visit all in Society and some others.”

During these visits Wesley participated fully in the ongoing life of the Societies. He met with Bands and Select Bands and visited the sick. While these periodic visits were necessary in terms of administrative function and oversight, they were also opportunities for spiritual renewal and direction, as Hester remembered:

Dear Mr. Wesley — met Select Band — and called upon some who had formerly enjoyed sanctification to speak and exhorted them to seek afresh — I believe there was a great revival in many hearts — several were lost in tears — and a little few testified they loved God with all their heart.

The Love-Feast in particular afforded Wesley the perfect opportunity to

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become involved in the lives of his people. Hester relished the memory of such an occasion on Easter evening in 1782 when "he was very short [in preaching] because of the love feast afterwards, which was a season of peculiar grace. About 40 made a noble confession, and above one half of these testified."  

Wesley's visits, however, were not always characterized by such joy and spiritual fervor. One particular incident involving the assistant of the Congleton Circuit, James Rogers, later to become Hester's husband, illustrates Wesley's abilities as a reconciler, a quality of extreme importance in the administration of the Societies. And it also demonstrates that the key to Wesley's success as director of the Societies was discipline. A dispute arose concerning the division of the unwieldy Macclesfield Circuit. The Conference directive to create two Circuits was carried out by Mr. Rogers and his colleagues. The problems created by this arrangement became so disruptive that they necessitated Wesley's arbitration. After an impartial hearing of a group within the Society on the one side, and Mr. Rogers and his colleagues on the other, Wesley attempted to reconcile their differences. In her journal Hester recorded what transpired following the long period of debate:

Mr. Rogers said — All I desire is a reconciliation and I appeal to all present if I have not sought it various ways for months past — Mr. Johnson said — I never would nor I never will be reconciled — the rest seemed more flexible — At last Mr. Wesley got up in much warmth and said — You are of your father the Devil — A murderer — and no more in Connection with me. — I will have none connected with me who can deliberately tell me, I never will forgive, etc. — this had the desired effect, Robert Johnson fell on his knees — JL — was near fainting so was J Roe and Mr. Ryle and I wept. — Gods dear servant then proposed — “let all henceforth die in oblivion.” All now agreed to it, and shook hands with Mr. Rogers who wept tears of joy.

Wesley would have nothing to do with prejudice, anger, and bitterness within his Societies, for these groups were designed for the purpose of nurturing faith and love. In order to assure the attainment of that goal it was necessary for Wesley to visit, participate in, and discipline the ever-growing chain of connectional Societies scattered throughout the British Isles.

Secondly, Hester's journal reveals John Wesley as a man of profound pastoral concern. In a letter to his brother Charles, written during a visit to Congleton in 1772, Wesley confided:

O what a thing it is to have a curam animarum! You and I are called to this; to save souls from death; to watch over them as those that must give account! If our office implied no more than preaching a few times in a week, I could play with it: so might you. . . . God says to you as well as me, "Do all thou canst, be it more or less, to save

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the souls for whom My Son has died."\(^{17}\)

The very nature of the Societies made them tremendous aids for the care of souls, and Wesley, as we have seen, certainly used them as such. In addition to this role of the Societies in general, those particular facets of pastoral care which are reflected in Hester’s journal include Wesley’s use of letters, conversation, and the worship, liturgy, and Sacraments of the Church of England.

Correspondence is often neglected as a means of pastoral care. In the case of John Wesley, to overlook this aspect of the curacy would be a gross mistake. Of the Hester Ann Rogers/John Wesley correspondence only 23 letters have survived, 15 of which were penned by Wesley and 8 by “Hetty.” She often recorded having been blessed by receiving a letter from her “Dear Mr. Wesley.” Wesley’s letters to “Hetty” form a picture of counseling by moral exhortation at its best.\(^{18}\)

Hester’s appreciation for the spiritual encouragement Wesley provided her in private conversation during his visits to Macclesfield permeates the pages of her record of those encounters. She recorded spiritual renewal occasioned by “comfortable conversation with him alone” during a visit in April 1777.\(^{19}\) On March 29, 1781 she “spent an hour with his dear servant alone and his fatherly affections and advice and sympathy was a blessing indeed.”\(^{20}\) She was able to bare her soul to Wesley concerning the persecution she experienced from her relatives, her relationships with people, her plans and goals, and most particularly, her quest for holiness.

A little after 7 I went again to Mr. Ryles and sat half an hour with Dear Mr. Wesley alone — and spoke freely to him on many things — Glory be to God it was a time I hope ever to remember — A time of the Lords felt presence and overwhelming grace — especially while his dear servant prayed with a wrestling spirit, that I might endure to the end, and be filled with all the fullness of God.\(^{21}\)

The Methodists of Macclesfield, as elsewhere, by the direction of John Wesley, abstained from holding any religious service during the regular church hours. And so, the rich liturgical and Sacramental heritage of the Church of England must be included as a very important aspect of Wesley’s care of his people. Wesley never failed to appreciate the value of worship, liturgy, and the Sacraments, in the nurture of souls. The members of the Macclesfield Society had been accustomed to at-


\(^{18}\)This subject deserves more attention than can be given at this time. Since this paper is concerned particularly with Mrs. Rogers’ Journal, and since the correspondence has been published in several forms, the acknowledgement of this fact must suffice here.

\(^{19}\)Rogers, Journal, vol. 1, p. 120.


\(^{21}\)Ibid., p. 94.
tending Anglican services at the local parish church, St. Michael’s, where Hester’s uncle was vicar. But after the completion of the “new church,” Christ Church, most of the Methodists flocked there to hear the “evangelical preaching” of its curate, David Simpson. It was in this episcopally consecrated church that Wesley was often invited to preach and assist in services. Since Wesley’s visits were customarily in March and April, they occasionally corresponded with the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. Such was the case in 1782. During Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter, Wesley preached no less than nine times and assisted Mr. Simpson in administering the Sacrament to about thirteen hundred communicants on Good Friday and eight hundred on Easter. The Wesley revealed in the pages of Hester’s journal is a true “Church of England man.” But he was also a curate of souls, called by God for the special task of renewing a vital “evangelical” faith within that Church he loved. Toward this end he employed many means. He utilized correspondence, conversation, and the great liturgical and Sacramental tradition of the Church of England.

A third and final aspect of Wesley’s life and work revealed in Hester’s journal proved to be a great channel of God’s grace, namely, the preaching of the Word. Wesley’s own words concerning pastors are strikingly consonant with the image of Wesley portrayed in Hester’s journal:

They are supposed to go before the flock (as is the manner of the eastern shepherds to this day), and to guide them in all the ways of truth and holiness; they are to ‘nourish them with words of eternal life’; to feed them with the ‘pure milk of the word’; applying it continually ‘for doctrine’, teaching them all the essential doctrines contained therein . . . training them up to outward holiness.

Like Timothy in the Epistles, Wesley was entrusted to care for the tradition of Christian faith. He was called to proclaim the pure Word of God. Whereas the Methodist Movement, from its very inception in the quadrangles of Oxford, had been dominated by a concern for personal pastoral care, it first came into the public eye as a preaching movement. Most Methodists today are, or at least should be, aware of Wesley’s Sermons as we have inherited them in “sermonic essay” form. But Wesley hardly preached the way he wrote the Sermons we possess today (excepting those preached at Oxford). Hester’s journal, therefore, affords a glimpse of Wesley as the vivacious preacher of the fields, at the “new

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22On April 9, 1777 Wesley wrote, “The new church here is far the most elegant that I have seen in the kingdom. Mr. Simpson read prayers, and I preached on the first verse of the Second Lesson, Heb. xi.” Wesley, Journal, vol. 6, p. 142. Cf. vol. 6, pp. 269, 346, 411, 443; and vol. 7, p. 64.


church,” and in the Macclesfield Preaching-House. The study of her record of Wesley’s sermons, their theological and doctrinal content, and the effect that Wesley’s preaching had on his audience, brings to life this final facet of the life and work of John Wesley.

Hester was assiduous in her recording of Wesley’s sermons. She was careful to include the text of every sermon she heard him preach. She often commented on his discourse, provided an outline of its contents, and described her impression and personal appropriation of the message. Most importantly, however, she occasionally recorded portions of the sermon verbatim. These records contain not only the “bare facts” concerning Wesley’s preaching but actually bring them to life, revealing the spirit, the mood, and the excitement of the event.

Between April 1776 and August 1783 Hester was witness to twenty-five sermons preached by John Wesley, twenty of them in her native Macclesfield, two at the sister Circuit of Congleton, one at neighboring Leek, and two at Newcastle where Hester had journeyed to accompany the preacher. Twelve of these sermons were preached in the morning (generally at 5:00!), ten in the evening, and three in the afternoon. In her record of these twenty-five sermons, thirteen entries contain barely the text and the time of preaching. Nine of her records include brief commentary on the sermon, an outline of its contents, and/or a personal comment concerning the sermon and its effect. For example, after she heard Wesley expound the text, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man,” during the “wee hours” of April 10, 1777, she recorded in her journal:

O My God — if he in whom there was never spot of sin, could grow in wisdom and Thy favour — Well mayest Thou exhort Thy saints to grow in grace. — Lord help me! — O may I increase in every grace — and deeper sink and higher rise till Thou transport me to the skies.25

Of special interest, however, are the remaining three records which contain verbatim, or at least partially verbatim, accounts of the sermons.26 One of the characteristics of these sermons is a real sense of urgency and of the possibility of instantaneous salvation. In his sermon preached at Leek, Wesley proclaimed:

Art thou willing to know Jesus as thy Savior? and art thou afraid to come? — fear not. look up. he is nigh thee — dost thou want a pardon for all thy sins? — Shall I tell thee thou mayest have it next year — next month — next week? — Nay, I dare not. — I am not sure thou canst. Tomorrow is none of thy own. — But thou mayest have it today — It is at hand — I am sent to offer it — look up now even this moment. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”27

25Rogers, Journal, vol. 2, p. 120.
26Ibid., pp. 93; 173-76; 179-80.
27Ibid., p. 174.
Coupled with this aspect of urgency is the Wesleyan emphasis on the 
enpersonalization of faith, reminiscent of Wesley’s Aldersgate experience 
and illustrated in the same sermon. “Art thou a child of God — a 
believer, and feelst his Kingdom in a measure set up in thy heart — dost 
thou know, he hath loved me and given himself for me?”

Hester’s journal reveals that Wesley was a thoroughly doctrinal 
preacher. In The Principles of a Methodist Farther Explained Wesley 
spoke of repentance as the porch of religion, of faith as the door, and of 
holiness as religion itself. These three pillars of Wesleyan theology, a 
true self-knowledge which issues in repentance, the Reformation doctrine 
of salvation through justification by faith, and Wesley’s peculiar em­ 
phasis on Christian perfection are all reflected in his sermons preached in 
and about Macclesfield.

John Wesley believed that there is a radical universal flaw in 
humankind that separates us from our Creator. The only hope for 
salvation is our turning to and relying upon God alone. The 
acknowledgement of sin, or true self-knowledge, and the necessity of 
repentance were central to his preaching. In his sermon on the “Kingdom 
of God” Wesley, according to Hester, demonstrated the universal ap­ 
plicability of repentance.

He addressed himself to all sorts of people, states, and conditions, old and young, yea 
to children 6 or 7 years old — drunkards, swearers — Sabbath breakers, thieves, 
lyars and lewd persons and told them you may now be delivered from the power of 
your most besetting sins — even this day — this moment. . . Yield now to him who 
loveth you, who died for you, who will save you from all your sins.

Later in that same sermon Wesley exhorted his hearers to an immediate 
repentance of sin and the reception of justification.

It is true that in general the work of repentance is carried on by very slow degrees — 
most people are a long time after they are convinced of sin, before they are justified. 
— But why is it? — Even because of unbelief. — The word of faith is nigh thee — 
fear not — only believe.

The second doctrinal pillar reflected in his sermons is justification by 
faith. On the afternoon of Easter Day 1782 Wesley took as his text, “The 
wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus 
Christ our Lord.” According to Hester, in his exposition:

He insisted strongly on this eternal life being the free gift of God, not obtained by 
works in whole or in part, but alone through Jesus Christ our Lord and through faith 
in him — that this eternal life is Love begun when being justified by faith we have 
peace with God and his love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost so that we 
love him because he hath 1st love us.
Earlier that morning, in his sermon based on “Christ is risen indeed,” Wesley demonstrated how an experimental evidence of the resurrection is one of the fruits of justification. For, as Hester remembered his words, “. . . the moment any vile polluted sinner believes on Christ and is justified . . . he receives the spirit of adoption whereby he can in that moment cry Abba Father, My Lord and My God.”33 The central affirmation for Wesley was faith in Christ. He believed and taught that “if any individual embraces Christ and the glad tidings of salvation by faith — the Kingdom of God is set up in that heart.”34

But Wesley was not satisfied with the tendency of the great Reformers to neglect the doctrine of sanctification in their effort to rediscover faith. If faith is the door to religion, then according to Wesley, holiness is religion itself. The importance of this doctrine, for the Methodists in particular, he made abundantly clear in the early hours of Friday, March 30, 1781:

He showed what were the things committed to Timothy and then confined his discourse to the particular doctrines committed to the Methodists — and proved the doctrine of Christian perfection was the one peculiar point — they were called to preach and practice, and that no other people under heaven did clearly insist on this, as a present and an instantaneous salvation. — that they who did not preach it — or believe it were no Methodists — neither they who were not now preachers, and now hearers. — And who were not now preachers he said, were the Devils preachers, and not sent of God, and he would have no such in Connection.35

The influence of the early Church Fathers, particularly Gregory of Nyssa via Macarius and their conception of holiness as a dynamic process rather than a static state, may be discerned in a sermon based on Ephesians 3:14-20. Addressing the people of Macclesfield he “insisted chiefly on Christian holiness, as implied in being rooted and grounded in Love, . . . yea and a growing in grace till filled with all the fullness of God.”36 Wesley insisted that holiness or Christian perfection, like justification, was also a free gift of God. On Easter morning 1782 he proclaimed that the “indwelling of God as our sanctifier is the privilege of all believers, and is received by faith as well as justification.”37

The effects of Wesley’s preaching varied from place to place and certainly depended greatly on the recipients of his message. For those who were “in Connection,” Wesley’s preaching often brought comfort and renewed strength for their spiritual quest and temporal battles. On one occasion Hester reported that “many hearts were comforted and the

33Ibid., p. 177.
34Ibid., p. 173.
36Ibid., p. 92.
37Ibid., p. 177.
hands of all who love holiness hereby strengthened." 38 Likewise, in 1782 during the Easter series, "one woman was set at full liberty and many were comforted and established." 39 The effects of Wesley's sermons and prayers at Leek were especially dramatic, and Hester went to great lengths to describe the power of that occasion.

He was full of life and love and power and wept several times while he prayed. All the congregation were in tears and a young man who walked from Macclesfield and came to hear him in great distress of soul was set at liberty and met us praising God who he knew had forgiven all his sins. — A young boy about 10 years old wept aloud and was crying for mercy and several more appeared cut to the heart. 40

Wesley especially took delight in the testimony of children. One evening at the home of Mr. Ryles, Wesley confided to Hester, "I was much pleased with that little maid of ten years old — continued he who said — When I felt my sins were all forgiven and I could love God, — it overjoyed me!" 41 Wesley's preaching was not in vain!

III

Hester Ann Rogers remembered John Wesley as leader, as pastor, and as preacher. But most importantly, she remembered him as her "Dear Mr. Wesley." Perhaps what captivated her more than anything else was Wesley the man. Her reminiscences of this personal friend reveal yet another facet of his fascinating character. On their return trip from Leek, while riding in the chaise, "Wesley said, I never saw a more lovely congregation Hetty — they were like melting wax just fit for divine impressions — But God was with us, there's the secret — tears filling his eyes." 42 Before Wesley departed from Macclesfield in the spring of 1781 he visited a dear and dying friend, David Pickford. "It was indeed a solemn scene," Hester recalled, "to see that venerable, happy, dying Christian, with clasped hands, and streaming eyes, call for blessings on God's dear aged messenger, and overwhelmed in holy rapture at the thought of meeting him above." 43 Such were the men and women John Wesley called friend. Hester revealed Wesley as a man radiant with the love of God in his heart. It is a little wonder that later in the day she confided to her journal, "I never saw him more filled with the love and

38 Ibid., p. 93.
40 Ibid., p. 176.
41 Ibid., pp. 180-81.
42 Ibid., p. 176.
presence of his dear Master than this morning.”

The journal of Hester Ann Rogers reveals John Wesley as the indefatigable director of the Methodist Societies, as a priest of the Church of England charged with the care of the souls of his flock, and as a man called by God to proclaim the message of salvation to his world parish. In Hester's journal we catch but a glimpse of John Wesley the saint.

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"Ibid."