

## JOHN WESLEY AND MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS: A LOVE AFFAIR WITH HISTORY

SAMUEL J. ROGAL

Considerable scholarly space has been devoted to discussions of John Wesley's relations with certain women who crossed his generally holy path. As early as 1729-30, when British Methodism lay spawning in the club-rooms of Lincoln College, Oxford, Wesley's correspondence reveals the machinery of a naive, complicated, and almost mysterious romantic network, complete with code names: Varanese (Sally Kirkham), Selima (Ann Granville), Aspasia (Mrs. Mary Pendarves), Sappho (Sarah Chapone), Araspes (Charles Wesley), and Cyrus and/or Primitive Christianity (John Wesley). All of this secrecy brought about a form of intimacy that protected the principals from actually being intimate with one another. Nonetheless, behind piles of epistolary inuendo, real or pretended, lurked the spectre of Susanna Wesley and her own epistolary cautions against entanglements of the heart. Before the glances and the smiles from Sally Kirkham could materialize into anything of substance, John Wesley, son to Susanna and priest of the Church of England, sailed for Savannah, there — almost in a single romantic moment, as it were — to be captivated and then cast aside by the young Sophia Christiana Hopkey, niece of the chief magistrate of the town. As one twentieth-century commentator so accurately observed, "Far across the seas from Epworth's apron-strings, the controls still held good. Susanna had seen to that with her talk of fire and burning brands, and her warnings about the Delilahs of life."<sup>1</sup> In addition, if those "warnings" proved insufficient signs for the thirty-three-year-old missionary, there emerged other items within the confines of his conscience: specifically, the knowledge that five daughters of Susanna and Samuel Wesley the elder — five sisters from the Epworth brood — had managed little beyond suffering and heartbreak from relationships with drunken and generally ne'er-do-well husbands.

Despite the echoes of his mother's warnings and the memories of his sisters' tragedies, Wesley's pursuit of romance did not end with the abortive affair in Savannah. The grand mission on behalf of evangelical social and theological reform would permit time for brief moments of the heart. In Newcastle-upon-Tyne he came upon Grace Murray — housekeeper, mother confessor, and nurse to Methodist preachers; he found her, fell

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<sup>1</sup>G. Elsie Harrison, *Son to Susanna. The Private Life of John Wesley* (Nashville: Cokesbury Press, 1938), p. 135.

in love with her, and lost her to another. Later came that terribly unfortunate and equally unnecessary marriage to Mrs. Molly Vazielle, a waste of energy and emotion for all concerned. In her defense, the plain widow of Ambrose Vazielle thought she had married a man who would at least share his attention and his concerns with her and her children; instead, she found herself anchored to a religious institution that sucked from her every ounce of her own identity. She concluded, all too quickly, that she could not rival God in the mind and heart of her second husband, and the two parted company almost ten years in advance of her death in 1781. Certainly all of John Wesley's women—from Sally Kirkham through Molly Vazielle, as well as assorted workers, followers and female lay preachers ranging from Sarah Ryan of Kingswood to Selina Shirley, Countess of Huntingdon—saw in that diminutive figure of a man real and sincere opportunities for love; they may even have determined the existence of reasonable evidence that at least an adequate portion of their love would be returned. However, they may never have, actually, grasped the concept that, to love John Wesley, they would have to rise almost to impossible heights; each would have to become a mother to a hero and a wife to a saint. Each would, also, have to become a variation on a theme conceived, arranged, and orchestrated by Susanna Wesley.

Susanna Wesley, nonetheless, in her fleshly state or as a memory, could not manipulate the details of history nor her son's imaginative reactions to those details. Therefore, in the safety of the past and in what, perhaps, could be termed the "never-will-be," John Wesley achieved a compromise with the emotions of his heart. He discovered love from the pages of his books and from the scenes of his wanderings. From out of those contexts he formed an image—an ideal of a woman who emerged from history—and he determined that such a figure constituted an entity that he could comprehend, a manifestation with which he could cope without upsetting his all important routine and system. On three occasions within the pages of his journals, Wesley noted, respectively, his having read William Tytler's *Historical and Critical Enquiry* (1759), William Guthrie's *History of Scotland* (1767-1768), and Gilbert Stuart's *History of Scotland* (1782). Those journal entries serve, initially, to outline the dimensions of Wesley's romantic fascination for Mary, Queen of Scots—a woman two centuries removed from his own time, but a woman brought to life in his imagination upon the vehicles of historical controversy and personal frustration.

On Friday, 29 May 1768, while in Aberdeen, Wesley "read over an extremely sensible book, but one that surprised me much. It is *An Inquiry into the Proofs of the Charges commonly advanced against Mary, Queen of Scotland.*"<sup>2</sup> Actually, the founder and leader of British Methodism had

<sup>2</sup>Nehemiah Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: Charles H. Kelly, 1909-1916), 5:256-257; all journal references in my text to this edition.

been reading *An Historical and Critical Enquiry into the Evidence produced by the Earls of Moray and Morton, against Mary Queen of Scots. With an Examination of the Rev. Dr. Robertson's Dissertation, and Mr. Hume's History, with Respect to that Evidence* (Edinburgh, 1759—editions, both at Edinburgh and London, through 1790), written by the Scottish historian William Tytler (1711-1792). Wesley termed the work as “sensible” for reasons that focused upon both his scholarly training and his need for a heroine—a Methodist woman who would indeed reflect the attributes (although not necessarily the actions) of his fundamentalist Anglican mother. By relying upon original letters, as well as versions thereof, Tytler set out to correct what he believed to have been historical injustices: to defend the young Queen’s marriage to the aged Bothwell as simply one more sacrifice to the already overwhelming obligations to politics; to depict Mary as an innocent victim of murderers and forgers—particularly of Lords Morray, Mortland, and Maitland. Undoubtedly, such scholarly jousts with the likes of William Robertson and David Hume amply stimulated Tytler’s nationalistic and historic interests, but one may well wonder as to what those details of intrigue and ambition from antiquity would contribute to the heart and mind of the sixty-five year-old patriarch of British Methodism.

The response to such inquiry may lie not so much in the character and actions of Mary Stuart herself, but in the method and the intent of the eighteenth-century Scots historian who sought, almost 175 years after the fact, the Queen’s acquittal from the sentence of her seemingly more virtuous contemporaries. Simply and directly, Tytler, a Jacobite and a Royalist, had set out to vindicate Mary, and he seemed to have encountered not much difficulty in attracting potential converts. “The Stuarts,” wrote Samuel Johnson in his review of Tytler’s volume, “have found few apologists, for the dead cannot pay for praise; and who will, without reward, oppose the tide of popularity? Yet there remains still among us, not wholly extinguished, a zeal for truth, a desire for establishing right, in opposition to fashion.”<sup>3</sup> Johnson’s reference, of course, focused upon a mild controversy among prominent historians of the mid-eighteenth century concerning the innocence or guilt of Queen Mary—a controversy of which Wesley appears to have been aware and about which he demonstrated occasional flashes of interest, particularly during his periodic visits north of the River Tweed.

In 1754, one Walter Goodall (1706-1766)—an antiquary and sub-librarian of the Advocate’s Library, Edinburgh—published (in two volumes and at Edinburgh) *An Examination of the Letters Said To Be Written by Mary, Queen of Scots, to James, Earl of Bothwell; Shewing by Intrin-*

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<sup>3</sup>Samuel Johnson, “Account of a Book, Entitled, *An Historical and Critical Enquiry . . .*,” *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, October 1760, p. 453.

*sick Evidence That They Are Forgeries*. This piece, a prefatory exercise to Goodall's proposed life of Queen Mary, announced the beginning of the grand debate, the first in a succession of apologies for the thoughts and actions of Scotland's most famous (or infamous) monarch. Goodall set out to invalidate the authenticity of the French copies of the "Casket Letters"—epistles supposedly written by Mary approving the death of Elizabeth; those tracts fell into the hands of Lord Walsingham and brought about the trial and eventual death of Scotland's Queen. However, Goodall could only disprove a portion of those letters; David Hume (in his *History of the House of Tudor*, 2 vols, London, 1759) and the Scottish historian and theologian William Robertson (who authored a *History of Scotland*, 2 vols, London, 1759) argued for all of the letters being genuine because they appeared in Mary's own handwriting. Tytler came into the skirmish on the side of Goodall and surpassed his countryman's *Examination* as the standard-bearer for the pro-Marians; his *Historical and Critical Enquiry* went through four editions—including French translations as early as 1772 and as late as 1860. At least five other historians of reputation—William Guthrie, Sir David Dalrymple, John Whitaker, Gilbert Stuart, and Thomas Crawford—participated in the arguments between 1767 and 1793; by 1883, fifteen more scholars on both sides of the English Channel had seen fit to hurl their observations and conclusions into the heavily voluminous debate.<sup>4</sup>

As indicated above, Wesley stated, on 29 May 1768, that he had "read over" Tytler's *Enquiry*. Exactly when he had initially obtained the two volumes, and for how long he had been reading them, we do not know with accuracy. Clearly, however, the Methodist founder knew of the arguments surrounding various attempts to prove Mary's innocence or to underscore her guilt. Equally as clear, Tytler's vindication of the Scottish monarch appeared to him as readily palatable and acceptable. ". . . How then," mused Wesley to himself, "can we account for the quite contrary story, which has been almost universally received? Most easily. It was penned and published in French, English, and Latin (by Queen Elizabeth's order), by George Buchanan, who was secretary to Lord Murray, and in Queen Elizabeth's pay; so he was sure to throw dirt enough. Nor was she at liberty to answer for herself. But what, then, was Queen Elizabeth? As just and merciful as Nero, and as good a Christian as Mahomet" (*Journal*, 5:257). Since the first reference by Wesley to Tytler's volumes appears in the former's journal for 1768, one may wish to establish the beginning of the Methodist leader's conviction of Mary's innocence from the date of that entry. However, John Wesley's vicarious love affair with Queen Mary actually commenced seven years earlier, and that fact also supports

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<sup>4</sup>For a succinct discussion of these works, see Ian B. Cowan's "Introduction" to his *The Enigma of Mary Stuart* (London: Victor Gollancz, Limited, 1971), pp. 20-24.

the idea that his familiarity with the various historical arguments dates from at least the spring of 1761.

On Monday, 11 May 1761, John Wesley visited Holyrood House, Edinburgh, describing the place as “a noble structure.” Further, he alluded, in his journal entry for that day, to the portrait gallery within the palace, “wherein are pictures of all the Scottish kings and an original one of the celebrated Queen Mary. It is scarce possible for any who looks at this to think her such a monster as some have printed her, nor indeed for any who considers the circumstances of her death equal to that of an ancient martyr” (*Journal*, 4:452, 455). What Wesley actually observed on that spring day can only be imagined—or, perhaps, reconstructed from the recorded impressions of others who would gaze upon that same (or similar) sight. For instance, to one observer, Mary’s long face appeared “spoilt by a nose too prominent and a brow too high from which her russet hair was withdrawn. In no breast she inspired great passion, though she could evoke loyal devotion from both sexes.”<sup>5</sup> A British poet of the next century cast a post-romantic view upon

. . . her eyes with those clear perfect brows.  
It is the playing of those eyelashes  
The lure of amorous looks as sad as love,  
Plucks all souls toward her like a net.<sup>6</sup>

Still another observer would hone a critical eye upon the neck of the Scottish Queen, viewing it as “well-formed but not unduly long or slim, and her shoulders were slightly sloped, leading to a vigorous and well-modelled bust. . . . Her general appearance was that of a strong, clever, masterful woman, rather than a beautiful heroine.”<sup>7</sup> And finally, as a significant echo of the effect of that general appearance, there stands what one chronicler referred to as an historical certainty: “Mary was either beautiful, or she bewitched people into thinking her beautiful.”<sup>8</sup> Since Wesley believed in ghosts, not witches, we can only speculate upon the extent to which he stood “bewitched” by the portrait of the Scottish sovereign.

In all sincerity, however, if John Wesley, on that day in mid-May 1761 shaped within his own spirit and imagination anything even closely resembling the preceding comments, then he would have indeed been overcome immediately by Mary’s dignity, her elegance, her grace, and—particularly—her strength in the midst of her tragedy. There, at Holyrood Palace, stood not necessarily the founder and leader of Methodism in Great

<sup>5</sup>Charles S. Terry, *A History of Scotland* (Cambridge: University Press, 1929), p. 206.

<sup>6</sup>Algernon Charles Swinburne, *Chastelord. A Tragedy*, in *The Complete Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne*, ed. Sir Edmund Gosse and Thomas James Wise (London: Russell and Russell, 1925), 8:13 (Act I, Scene 1).

<sup>7</sup>Lionel Cust, *Notes on the Authentic Portraits of Mary, Queen of Scots* (London, 1903), p. 18.

<sup>8</sup>Andrew Lang, *Portraits and Jewels of Mary Stuart* (Glasgow, 1906), p. 13.

Britain and a priest of the Church of England, but a lonely individual who continued to retain within the boundaries of his own slight frame the memory of a dominant mother then twenty years in her grave. Behind that calm countenance burned a soul still trying to salvage some vestige of love and consideration from the widow of the London merchant whom he had married principally to keep alive his memory of Susanna Wesley. Only nineteen days prior to this most recent journey into Scotland, Wesley had written to Molly Vazielle, and the contents of the epistle clearly indicate the state of their relationship. "Although I have not had any answer to my former letters," wrote Wesley from Whitehaven on 24 April, "yet I must trouble you once more, and repeat the advice I gave you before, 'Beware of tale-bearers.'" The problem alluded to concerned, specifically, his wife's harsh reactions to rumors about Wesley's relations with certain females who labored on behalf of Methodism, rumors that the Methodist patriarch characterized as afflictions from God. Indeed, he inquired of his wife whether those outlandish tales "not be admirable means to break the impetuosity and soften the harshness of your spirit?"<sup>9</sup> The frustrations from that loneliness, intensified by the heaviness of an unfortunate and unhappy marriage, shackled a strong chain about the heart and the mind of John Wesley—forged a series of links that extended from the old King's Foundery, Moorfields, and the residence therein of Molly Vazielle Wesley, to the cold hallways of Holyrood Palace, Edinburgh. The portrait of Mary Stuart, Queen of the Scots—of a face that, on the ancient canvas, at least, could well have been blessed by Heaven—momentarily cut through that chain and shattered those links.

The degree to which John Wesley held firm to the image of a virtuous and beautiful Mary Stuart may be discerned from his next vicarious encounter with the Queen of Scots—that occurring in early November 1769, in the sixty-sixth year of his long life. During the 6th through the 17th of that month, while traveling through Norwich and Yarmouth, and then from Yarmouth to London, he read "several volumes" of William Guthrie's *A General History of Scotland to 1746* (10 volumes)—a long and generally undistinguished work by an equally undistinguished (but nonetheless competent) Aberdeen schoolmaster. However, Wesley preferred what he viewed as Guthrie's impartiality in opposition to what he saw as the extreme subjectivity of William Robertson's more noted *History of Scotland during the Reigns of Queen Mary and James VI till His Accession to the Crown of England* (2 vols., London, 1759). According to Wesley, Guthrie did well to identify Robertson's erroneous view of Mary, underscoring how "that much-injured Queen appears to have been far the greatest woman of that age, exquisitely beautiful in her person, of a fine

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<sup>9</sup>John Telford (ed.), *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: The Epworth Press, 1931), 4:152-153.

address, of a deep, unaffected piety, and of a stronger understanding even in youth than Queen Elizabeth had at threescore" (*Journal*, 5:347-348). Interestingly enough, whatever the stories and legends surrounding the first Elizabeth's virtue, piety, and strength, the central figure of British Methodism would have none of it, and one may speculate at length for the reasons behind his negative attitude toward the Virgin Queen of England.

In any event, and with all due respects to Wesley's own personal problems (to include his intense frustration over his inability to establish Methodism in Scotland) and their obvious effect upon his imagination, the reader of his journals finds extreme difficulty in trying to differentiate between the eighteenth-century historians who supported Mary and those who argued against her innocence. For instance, upon reading Guthrie's account, the Methodist leader sees the former as having exposed William Robertson's misrepresentations of historical fact, his inattentiveness to the true circumstances causing Mary's death, and his partiality toward Elizabeth's motives and actions. Such qualities emerged as essentially the same differences as those identified and expressed by Tytler, Goodall, and the pro-Marians. However, the twenty-two year-old James Boswell, upon his initial reading of Robertson's *History* some seven years prior to that of Wesley, claimed that the Scottish historian "has carried me back in Imagination to the ancient days of Scottish Grandeur; has filled my mind with generous ideas of the valour of our Ancestors, and made me feel, a pleasing sympathy for the beautiful accomplished Mary."<sup>10</sup> Whom does one believe? The most rational answer focuses upon Wesley's almost obstinate refusal to fashion even a small measure of respect for William Robertson as writer and historian — a view totally opposite the overall acceptance of the scholar-theologian by such contemporaries as Hume, Walpole, Chesterfield, Garrick, and even Samuel Johnson. Wesley simply perceived Robertson (who had, early in his career, opposed George Whitefield's activities in Scotland on behalf of Methodism) as a Presbyterian churchman first and a historian second. "I cannot admire," noted Wesley in July 1781, ". . . a Christian divine writing a history with so very little of Christianity in it" (*Journal*, 6:326). Thus, the reader's difficulty in judging the accuracy of the various historical arguments relative to Mary and their impression upon the heart and the mind of John Wesley arises, principally, from Wesley's own terribly unscholarly biases.

Little wonder, then, that when Wesley came, in early February 1786, upon a direct challenge to Robertson's work and reputation, he found his lingering image of Mary sharpened and intensified, his aging passions considerably aroused. Gilbert Stuart (1742-1786), whose prime purpose in life

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<sup>10</sup>Ralph S. Walker (ed.), *The Correspondence of James Boswell and John Johnston of Grange* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book company, n.d.), p. 15.

appears to have been to attack and then to eclipse Robertson, an historian whom he both envied and despised, published his *History of Scotland from the Establishment of the Reformation till the Death of Queen Mary* (2 vols., London, 1782). The work came forth as a grand defense of Mary Stuart, however, never really managed to pierce Robertson's scholarly armor; in fact, he seems to have achieved just the opposite, causing one conservative historian of American and British letters to describe him as a "sot, grumbler, scold, and literary Ishmaelite. . . ." <sup>11</sup> Wesley, apparently without knowledge of Gilbert Stuart's habits or motives, pushed forward to embrace that historian's conclusions as almost the final word on the matter. "He proves beyond all possibility of doubt that the charges against Queen Mary were totally groundless; that she was betrayed basely by her own servants from the beginning to the end; and that she was not only one of the best Princesses then in Europe, but one of the most blameless, yea, and the most pious women!" (*Journal*, 7:140). Again, the reader must contend with the differences arising from Wesley's positive emotional response to Stuart's evaluation of both Queen Mary and Robertson's account and the negative reactions to Stuart on the part of that historian's contemporaries. Simply, in the midst of exhaustive and far ranging travels, Wesley could afford in his reading, usually little beyond snatches and fragments of larger themes and issues. He observed and digested the principal details and ideas that he wanted to see — those with which he could feel at ease, both emotionally and intellectually.

Although John Wesley fed his love vision of Mary Stuart with the details from the pages of historical narratives, he also found occasions to rely upon what he captured within the frame of his own mind's eye. For example, he had the opportunity to see the actual articles resulting from the Queen's intense love for embroidery, an activity that provided her with considerable comfort, especially during the lengthy periods of her captivity. On Thursday, 5 May 1768, he toured the royal palace at Scone, near Perth, where he gazed upon "a bed and a set of hangings on the (once) royal apartment, which was wrought by poor Queen Mary while she was imprisoned in the castle of Lochleven. It is some of the finest needlework I ever saw, and plainly shows both her exquisite skill and unwearied industry" (*Journal*, 5:258). In other words, Wesley recalled from this particular image of Mary a vision of his own sense of practical Christianity, an historical manifestation of an earlier (1741) design whereby con-

<sup>11</sup>S. Austin Allibone, *A Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Company, 1858), 2:2291. Stuart, in association with the Scottish writer and publisher, William Smellie, established *The Edinburgh Magazine and Review* (47 numbers between November 1773 and August 1776), from which he launched scathing reviews against those historians whom he attempted to refute and destroy. Actually, in about 1779, Stuart failed to gain the professorship of public law at Edinburgh University; historians believe that Robertson's influence turned the tide against him and that this failure marked the beginning of Stuart's personal campaign to discredit Robertson.

siderable numbers of London women, out of work and thus devoid of funds for their own sustenance, would secure employment in the business of knitting. He had gathered, at the Wesleyan Methodist meeting-house in Moorfields, London, a complement of spinning wheels; girls who had fled their domestic situations or had been discharged from service would at least have opportunities to combine their "skill and unwearied industry" for sixpence per day. Into that vision at Lochleven might well have come another — one of Susanna Wesley bearing and then raising the so-called Epworth brood, applying a combination of "her exquisite skill and unwearied industry" to that survival.

On another occasion, almost exactly twelve years from the visit to Scone (24 May 1780), Wesley walked along the outskirts of Rosslyn Castle, some eight miles from Edinburgh. From that building, in early Spring 1567, Queen Mary rode forth at the head of an army that gave way, practically without striking a blow, to the confederate lords at Carberry Hill on 15 June. The view of the formal walks jutting out over the sea and winding among the rocks may well have affected Wesley's recollection of history, for he thought of Rosslyn Castle as the place "wherein that poor injured woman Mary, Queen of Scots, was confined." His very next statement, however, reflects with accuracy his real concern for history as a grand lesson to and for the future; it also serves to connect his explicitly clear image of the Scottish Queen to that lesson. "But time," reflected Wesley, "has well nigh devoured it [the castle]; only a few ruinous walks are now standing" (*Journal*, 6:280). The relationship between that observation and Wesley's concern over what history had done to shape Mary's personal and political reputation hardly require explanation.

What does cry out for explanation, however (or at least for some degree of analytical probing), focuses upon John Wesley's concern, on an idealistic-romantic level, for Mary Queen of Scots, in addition to his equally romantic-idealistic desire to rectify (at least in his own mind) the injuries committed upon her memory. Clearly, the Methodist leader developed an infatuation for Mary — for the physical and spiritual beauty captured by the portrait painters and for her historical-political role fashioned by certain eighteenth-century historians who sought to re-define her niche in history. To understand why that infatuation eventually came to be, one may initially examine Wesley's actual experiences with love — and those have been outlined at the beginning of this discussion. Beyond that exercise, one must look to the idea (as well as the ideal) of love as it came to John Wesley and, for all purposes, remained within him throughout his long life. The general plan for that project can be formed as quickly and as simply as the initial examination.

Early in 1727, while the twenty-three year-old John Wesley labored at Lincoln College, Oxford, but two weeks away from completing requirements for his M.A. degree, he received a lengthy letter from Susanna Wesley, detailing a number of issues that traditionally come under the

heading of "motherly concerns." One of those centered upon the relationship between her son and Sally Kirkham (Varanese), a friendship about which "the more I think of it, the less I approve of it. The tree is known by its fruits, but not always by its blossoms; what blooms beautifully sometimes bears bitter fruit. . . ." Always the teacher who viewed her brood as pupils, as well as children, Susanna Wesley lost little time in applying the specific object of her criticism to a general area of conduct, thus sharpening the lessons of the present for future encounters. "I am verily persuaded," she continues in the same epistle, "that the reason why so many 'seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven, but are not able,' is because there is some Delilah, some one beloved vice, they will not part with; hoping that by strict observance of other duties that one fault will be dispensed with. But alas! they miserably deceive themselves." The issue of which she speaks relates directly to what she hopes will become the thesis of her son's life—Christian perfection—wherein there exists little room for error. "The way to heaven is so narrow," persists Susanna Wesley, "the gate we must enter in so strait, that it will not permit a man to pass with one known unmortified sin about him. Therefore, let everyone in the beginning of a Christian course seriously weigh what it will cost to find it."<sup>12</sup>

Obviously, John Wesley's life-long journey throughout the length and the breadth of Great Britain would lead to numerous confrontations with what his mother tended to identify as sensual pleasures and the desire of sexual associations. His journals, diaries, and letters abound with inferences and suggestions relative to that topic. Nonetheless, the sound and the sense of a secluded and frustrated mother's strong pleas to the most famous of her sons, seemed, at least on the surface, to have determined the outcomes of such experiences. On 24 February 1786, almost halfway through his eighty-third year of life, Wesley concluded a letter to Elizabeth Ritchie, one of his more devoted female workers, with these words: "I am very rarely led by impressions, but generally by reason and by Scripture. I see abundantly more than I feel. I want to feel more love and zeal for God."<sup>13</sup> However, there remains a decided difference between what Wesley *wanted* to feel (or claimed to have felt) and the degree to which strong and immediate impressions did, in all actuality, affect him. For instance, absolutely no doubt exists that the image of Mary, Queen of Scots, bore deeply into the mind and the heart of John Wesley and convinced him of certain human injustices inflicted by one group of human beings upon another in behalf of political expediency. Vying with that image, the memory of Susanna Wesley burned, with at least twice the degree of intensity, into the intellect and the emotions of Methodism's founder and

<sup>12</sup>Frank Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley. Letters. I, 1721-1739* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1980), 25:210.

<sup>13</sup>Telford, *Letters*, 7:319.

leader. That memory, on behalf of Christian perfection, served Wesley, albeit automatically and unconsciously, as a defense against the assault of immediate impressions and reactions to his vicarious experiences.

Beginning either with the journey into Scotland or the deterioration of his marriage to the widow of Ambrose Vazielle, two images contended within the conscience of John Wesley for control of what remained of his romantic vision. Susanna Wesley, mother, represented the realities of what had existed and functioned at Epworth rectory, of what would always exist for her son—an Oxford don and priest who set out to reform the Church of England. The mother of the Wesleys had given to the world a noble spirit, spawned by God and nurtured upon Holy Scriptures, in pursuit of Christian perfection for both himself and his Methodist converts. Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, remained sketched in his mind's eye, a clear outline of a complex historical personage, a vision that marked the romantic middle ground between all that the man hoped to possess and that—because of his having committed to his mother's definition of Christian perfection—he could never possess. "I married," wrote Wesley in the final full year of his life, "because I needed a home, in order to recover my health: and I did recover it. But I did not seek happiness thereby, and I did not find it."<sup>14</sup> Simply, the dream portrait of Queen Mary, gleaned from the subjectivity of historical debate and one or two actual portraits, rose out of antiquity to identify, for John Wesley, one of the more obvious dilemmas of greatness, one of the decidedly human qualities that generally separates—for the great—the ideal from the real.

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<sup>14</sup>Written from Whitby, 19 June 1790, to John Dickens; Telford, *Letters*, 8:223. Born in London and educated at Eton, Dickens moved to Philadelphia, where, in 1789, he served as the one and only Methodist preacher in that city. A serious scholar, he instituted the Methodist Book Concern in Philadelphia.