



DISCOVERY

Edited by
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This quarter we received fascinating contributions for *Discovery* from two leading Methodist scholars — Dr. Frank Baker of Duke University, and Dr. John Vickers of England. Both men have written prolifically on various phases of Methodist history and biography, and both are deeply involved in the current Wesley's Works Project.

In this issue of *Discovery* Dr. Baker sets the record straight on what Wesley did or did not say in a little jingle attributed to him and Dr. Vickers presents a new insight concerning the life of Charles Wesley when in Bristol. Dr. Baker's contribution is entitled *John Wesley's Rule?* He writes:

A short time ago I received a greeting card inscribed thus:

Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever you can.

Beneath was imprinted: "John Wesley (1703–1791)," and on the rear, "This quote is from John Wesley's sermon 'On the Use of Money', circa 1771," then the name of a Methodist Seminary and a note, "This card designed to recognize the generous support of The Wesley Council."

While the sentiment of this motto *is* present in Wesley's sermon (which he first published in 1760), it is not true to the actual words. "The Use of Money" has three headings: "Gain all you can," "Save all you can," and "Give all you can." The closing paragraph ends:

No more covetousness. But employ whatever God has entrusted you with in doing good, all possible good, in every possible kind and degree, to the household of faith, to all men. . . . Give all ye have, as well as all ye are, a spiritual sacrifice to him who withheld not from you his Son, his only Son; so 'laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that ye may attain eternal life'.

Certainly Wesley used the phrase, "Do all the good you can" in several of his surviving pastoral letters, notably three in 1771: one on August 10, continuing with "to

all"; one on August 14, inserting the name "Miss Lambert"; and one on December 14, adding, "while it is called today." But never six clauses — or the traditional variant seven, which adds as a fourth line, "In all the places you can." The belief that this was indeed "John Wesley's Rule," however, seems to be gaining strength. Some years ago I received a call, "This is the White House speaking," on behalf of the President, who wondered about using this maxim at a Methodist gathering; apparently on this occasion President Carter did *not* quote Wesley. It is interesting to note, however, that Hilary Rodham Clinton regards the seven clause version as her personal rule. One day even Hallmark may inquire about Wesley's role in his supposed rule.

An otherwise reliable Methodist historian, George Eayrs, seems to have attributed this to Wesley, introducing it as a footnote in his 1915 volume, *Letters of John Wesley*. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* took this up as genuine, as did Bartlett's (omitting the seventh line). Stevenson, the nineteenth century biographer of the Wesley family, cut out the second line, spoke of a similar tombstone inscription, and the adoption of this as his motto by Dwight L. Moody. Probably this was first introduced by Benham, a British Methodist preacher and biographer, in a four-line abridged version, opening, "For the Lord Jesus Christ's sake." This was noted by Moody as from a tombstone in Shrewsbury, England. The clue was followed up by researchers in Southern Methodist University, but a Methodist librarian in Shrewsbury was unable to locate it.

John Telford's *Sayings and Portraits of John Wesley* (1924) offered negative evidence. He did not include even "Do all the good you can" in his 365 daily words from Wesley. He closed with the fact that the maxim is indeed in the *spirit* of John Wesley, but we can offer no solid proof that he actually wrote more than the opening clause of this attractive jingle as a specific rule of conduct.

It is interesting to see how an error is continued as one authority quotes the mistake of another so-called authority.

Dr. Vickers writes on:

Charles Wesley's Homes in Bristol

The homes in which the great and famous have lived are a source of endless interest to tourists and pilgrims alike, redolent as they are with their literary or historical associations. Here the great man (or woman) lived and worked, slept and — dare we say it? — made love and begat his (or bore her) offspring. We come away enlightened and enriched by our contact with the past.

Such a shrine is No. 4 Charles Street, Bristol which was the home of Charles Wesley, hymn-writer of Methodism and of the Church universal, even though it no longer contains any furnishings or other family belongings. As funds become available in response to a major appeal, it is planned to restore the fabric of the house and refurnish it as in the days of the Wesley family. In that way it will become once again a place worthy of its 18th century occupants.

Meanwhile, some painstaking and detailed research has been undertaken by Mr. Robert Brown, one of the New Room stewards in Bristol. Ever since the end of the last century, when the house was identified as the Wesley family home, there have been tantalising gaps in the evidence, provoking persistent questions. Earlier enquiries were inconclusive at certain points for lack of evidence. Now a variety of rare books for the area, along with early city maps, have helped Mr. Brown establish the details of the Wesley family's years in Bristol.

Charles Wesley and Sally Gwynn of Garth, Breconshire were married in April 1749 and later that summer Charles brought his bride to Bristol. The evidence shows that they had temporary lodgings in a house in Stokes Croft until they were able to move into their first home in Charles Street. 'First' is here the operative word, because

Mr. Brown's researches have established that this was not No. 4, the house that since about 1908 has been marked by a plaque recording the Wesleys' residence there. No. 4 turns out to have been their home only in the last six of their twenty-two years in Bristol. Before that, from 1749 until 1766, they were living in a house on the opposite side of Charles Street — probably No. 19 (long since demolished).

It was in this first Charles Street home that their eight children were born (only three of whom survived childhood) and many of Charles's hymns were written. On the other hand, those were the years in which Charles was all too often absent for lengthy periods, since he continued for some years to travel widely in the service of Methodism. By the time they moved across the road to No. 4, he had settled down, despite the disapproval of his energetic (and less happily married) brother, and was giving much more time to his growing family: Charles (born 1757), Sally (born 1759) and Samuel (born 1766), not to mention his devoted and long-suffering wife! So No. 4 (one of the only two Charles Street houses that survive from those days) was in a very real sense their family home, and the one in which the musical gifts of the two brothers began to show themselves.

Mr. Brown's research is of great interest not only for its important conclusions, but for the glimpse it gives us of the sources and methods he employed. He has produced a detailed report, in which he includes facsimile maps and pages from rare books, so that we can see for ourselves the basis of his findings.

The report may be obtained through Dr. John Vickers at 87 Marshall Avenue, Bognor Regis, W. Sussex P021 2TW, England for \$5.50 post free.