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In a Tradition of Learned Ministry: Wesley's 'Foxe'

by DEVORAH GREENBERG

This examination of John Wesley's emendation and elaboration of John Foxe's Acts and monuments, *shows how Wesley constructed Foxe's text and himself within a tradition of learned English ministry. Offering an expanded vision of the role and function of the popularly styled Book of Martyrs, this article combines readings of Wesley's journals and secondary analyses to permit insights into Wesley's relationship with the established Church of England, his intentions in taking up Foxe's text and his conceptions of hierarchy, pastoral duty and ministry. It contradicts scholarly expectation of anti-Catholic impulses behind Foxeian publications and their effects, and encourages a more nuanced appreciation of the contemporary application of the terms 'Catholic' and 'papist'.*

Foremost among the popular scholar-ministers of eighteenth-century England, John Wesley viewed himself and his life's work in the light of the life and work of a sixteenth-century scholar-minister, John Foxe. This essay reviews John Wesley's work on the *Acts and monuments*, showing how his abridgement promoted a tradition of ministry and his own role within it. The influence of Foxe and of Wesley on English ministry has been the subject of extensive commentary. Integrating their ministries helps to situate the *Christian library* as a direct continuation of the work of *Acts and monuments*, as Wesley understood the task. Contradicting scholarly expectation that the primary effects and purposes of 'Foxe'[1] were as anti-Catholic

[1] 'Foxe', i.e. in quotation marks, signals a reflexive subject as described in Devorah Greenberg, 'Reflexive Foxe: the Book of Martyrs transformed, "Foxe" reinterpreted, sixteenth through twenty-first centuries', unpubl. PhD diss. Simon Fraser University 2002, and '"Foxe" as a methodological response to epistemic challenges: the *Book of Martyrs* transported', in David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe at home and abroad*, Aldershot 2004, 237–56. The publication history of Foxe's *Acts and monuments* (first edn, London 1563) includes hundreds of editions based with varying degrees of textual exactitude on the original. Sheffield University's Foxe Project has developed an on-line *Acts and monuments* which reproduces bks 10–12 of the first four editions and offers interpretive essays on this new critical edition. Research also continues into later and abridged editions, such as that of John Wesley, which contribute to the construction of 'Foxe'. See www.hrionline.ac.uk/foxe for the variorum edition.

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propaganda, Wesley's text harvests a positive tradition of learned ministry, and appears to be designed to tame the godly. The author's apparent rebellion was to conserve and revitalise, not to disrupt, the Church and hierarchical authority – as promulgated and defended in his own Book of Martyrs.

Wesley's treatment of *Acts and monuments* challenges the perception that both the editor and his times were anti-Catholic. Although the popularly titled Book of Martyrs was powerfully associated with anti-popery, Wesley made little of that connection, indeed appears deliberately to avoid exciting such passions. Among the known characteristics of the minister, however, as Russell Richey asserts in common with others, is that Wesley was anti-Catholic. John C. English, in a more detailed study, comments on Wesley's opposition to the Catholic Relief Act (1778), his dealings with the Protestant Association and his signature on their petition, but notes that Wesley thought that Catholics ought to be handled 'gently'.[2] While objecting, then, to Catholics in public office, Wesley would not have had them dealt with harshly. Nor, perhaps more surprisingly given its history, would he use a text such as Foxe's, a text already weighted with blood, as a bludgeon to be used against them. While objecting to papal influences in England, Wesley did not as a corollary object to Catholics or seek their harm. Anti-popery is not the same thing as anti-Catholicism. This is a distinction that twentieth-century researchers generally occlude, but Wesley's contemporaries did not. It is a distinction necessary in attempting to comprehend Wesley's times, his choices and his approaches to Foxe's text.[3]

Engendered by uncertainty, anti-papist attitudes served in eighteenth-century England as a striking anvil for social unrest and as a motor of political action. Gerald Newman and Linda Colley, among others, have argued strongly for the presence of xenophobia in the form(s) of nationalism emerging during this period. Foxe's text could well have been used in what Newman referred to as 'cultural warfare'.[4] Some Foxeian editors deliberately led the English in promoting narrowly nationalistic, anti-papist sentiments. Matthew Taylor observed that 'the many attempts that have been lately made by Popish Emissaries to spread their errors and superstitions … is the cause of his laying the following work before the

[2] Russell E. Richey, 'Book review: *Journals and diaries*, vi', *Church History* lxvi (1997), 839–40; John C. English, 'John Wesley and the rights of conscience', *Journal of Church and State* xxxvii (1995), 349–63.

[3] For arguments for more nuanced readings of the terms 'Catholic' and 'papist', and the counterintuitive effects of Catholic baiting see Devorah Greenberg, 'Eighteenth-century "Foxe": history, historiography and historical consciousness', www.hrionline.ac.uk/foxe/apparatus.

[4] Gerald Newman, *Rise of English nationalism: a cultural history*, New York 1987; Linda Colley, *Britons: forging the nation*, New Haven–London 1992.

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public'. Another publication displays a table of contents that implicates the papacy in the Spanish Armada, Irish rebellion and the siege of Londonderry, the Gunpowder Treason, the Fire of London, the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey and conspiracies against William III, and closes with a 'short account of the most material errors taught in the Romish Church'. Implying that Foxe's offerings had failed to warn people adequately of the dangers, Thomas Bray produced *Papal usurpation and persecution as it has been exercised in ancient and modern times with respect both to princes and people*, 'designed as a supplementary to the Book of Martyrs'. 'A Papist,' he cautioned his readers, 'qua Papist, i.e. acting intirely [*sic*] according to the Principles of their Religion, cannot be an honest Man, a good Neighbour, a good Friend, or a good Subject.'[5]

In his analysis of anti-Catholicism, Colin Haydon is certainly correct to place *Acts and monuments* among the significant texts involved in its transmission. His interchangeable use, however, of the terms 'Catholicism' and 'popery', 'papist' and 'Catholic', obscures important distinctions even while drawing our attention to them.[6] Thomas Bray, for example, refers to 'papists' in his accusation. He identifies here a generalised negative type, rarely if ever realised in any particular person, who might act 'intirely [*sic*] according to the Principles of their Religion'. A specific Catholic neighbour, however, less compelled by religious principles, might indeed be 'an honest Man, a good Neighbour, a good Friend, or [and] a good Subject'.[7]

Eighteenth-century commentators may seem to have used the terms synonomously, as Stephen Taylor observed in a review of Haydon's book. He did not challenge therefore the similar treatment of the terms by Haydon and other scholars as if they were equivalent. Bray, however, could make a distinction between Catholic and papist. Others of Wesley's contemporaries fractured the monolithic term 'Catholic' to distinguish between

[5] Matthew Taylor, *Bloody tribunal or An antidote against popery*, London [1700], p. iii; Anon., *The book of martyrs*, London 1764; Thomas Bray, *Papal usurpation and persecution*, London 1712, p. viii.

[6] 'I have used "Catholicism" and "Popery," "Papist" and "Catholic" as interchangeable': Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century England*, Manchester 1993, 1 n. 1. In a review of Haydon's book, Stephen Taylor recognises this practice and comments that 'Haydon, like contemporaries [eighteenth-century], uses the two terms interchangeably': 'Book review: *Anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century England: a political and social study*', this JOURNAL xlvi (1995), 342–4 at p. 342.

[7] Bray, *Papal usurpation*, p. viii. This may be an example of what Ricky Sherova Marcuse called the 'exceptionality function' which excuses specific examples from negatively generalised types in the interests, perhaps, of social order and conviviality: 'Oh, I don't think of you as *blank*': 'Unlearning Racism Workshop', Vancouver, BC, November 1989. 171.

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Jesuit and Jansenist, and were able to observe the effects on classification engendered by income, geography or passions. A wealthy English Catholic nobleman would have few points of connection (personally or even in the eyes of his enemies) with an Irish Catholic peasant; and a zealous English Catholic might have more in common with an equally zealous English Protestant than either might have with their more moderate neighbours. Compounding the potential for confusion by using these terms interchangeably blurs interpretive distinctions that at least some of Wesley's contemporaries made deliberately, as, for example, by editors of Foxe's text. Introducing his 1807 edition of *The book of martyrs, or, Christian martyrology,* John Milner passionately warned Britons of the dangers of an unchanging papacy, indeed, 'boldly PROTEST[ed] against the emancipation of Catholics', yet he enjoined his readers specifically to 'learn to distinguish between bad principles and the persons who hold them'.[8] As even Haydon notes, 'Popery was not simply a synonym for Catholicism.'[9] Nor was there undisputed agreement about how the terms might be applied, and to whom.

John Wesley remarked in his journal on the removal of 'papists' from London during the days of feared (French) invasion in the spring of 1744. Sullied by contrived association with 'papists', he could not travel during that period. He feared personal injury at the hands of 'rude, gaping, and rabble-rout' mobs whipped up by the gentry. '*Protestants*! [Englishmen]', Wesley lamented in his journal, excusing the mobs as drunken and poor, hired and misled by '(miscalled) gentlemen', by, he concluded in a reversal of epithets, 'Papists'.[10]

While members of the mob applied the term 'papist' to Wesley, to Methodists and to more extreme sectarians, Wesley himself appears to have used it more specifically. They may all have intended it to signal foreignness and danger, but whereas Wesley applied it to what he saw as deluded Englishmen influenced by the Roman prelate, members of

[8] John Milner [F. W. Blagdon], *The book of martyrs, or, a Christian martyrology*, Liverpool 1807, i, pp. vi–vii, viii–ix. I would like to thank Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch for guidance in developing this argument. See Greenberg, 'Reflexive Foxe', ch. v, which contributes to an article in process, 'Tolerance and martyrology: "for a mere difference of opinion"'. Evidence indicates that editors were driven by a need for unanimity and contributed their martyrologies, as a credible genre of history, to defend a strong state Church and English liberties, while promoting global Christianity in support of missions.

[9] 'Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism,* 42.

[10] John Wesley, *Journals and diaries,* ed. W. Reginald Ward, Nashville 1991, iii. 168. For 'Papist'/gentlemen' see iii. 168; 'rabble-rout', iii. 249; 'hired', iii. 13, 24 and passim; '*Protestants*', iii. 64; mob cry, 'Now hey for the Romans!', iii. 336. Also, quoting Martin Dunsford, anti-Methodists are described as 'idle disorderly persons of the lowest class, encouraged by the ignorant and bigotted of the higher rank': iii. 403.

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the mob seem to have meant a less differentiated threat. The terms need further consideration.[11] The mob's lack of discrimination between Methodist and Catholic, and contemporary researchers' differentiation between Catholic and papist, are more apparent than real. More nuanced distinctions may be central to understanding the form of religious nationalism that defined Wesley's society, and the effects of Foxe-derived texts in English culture.

Narrowly nationalistic, anti-Catholic and/or anti-papist campaigns may have conditioned reception of Foxeian publications, but many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editors had other primary purposes, which included the promotion of tolerance and due process of law. Other editors constructed encyclopaedic universal histories as sources for links across all denominations and nations. Developing and formalising the genre of martyrological history, their editions provided examples of appropriate resistance as Christian practice, positively valued, and as models, in Wesley's case, for learned ministry.

The Christian library

John Wesley's abridgment of the *Acts and monuments* appeared in 1750 as the second, third and fourth volumes of his fifty-volume *Christian library*.[12] Wesley complemented John Foxe's work with that of Samuel Clarke. It is worth considering Clarke's *Supplement to Fox* before Wesley's *Acts and monuments*, because it contains no-holds-barred descriptions of the depredations and sufferings of Protestants in foreign lands: Piedmont, Lithuania, Poland, the Netherlands, Ireland and Scotland. Clarke's handling of the material is designed to excite. His graphic descriptions

[11] Haydon comments that 'parallels may be drawn between the ill treatment and perceptions of Catholics, Dissenters, and Methodists in Stuart and Georgian times': *Anti-Catholicism*, 248. Characterised as a kind of symbolic enemy, Wesley described an argument between himself and an alderman who accused Methodists of 'taking people from their work' and of being 'the cause of all the evil that is fallen upon the nation'. 'It has been observed that there has been always such a people before any great evil fell on the land': *Wesley's journal*, iii. 119–20, entry for 22 Apr. 1746. See also Henry Rack, *Reasonable enthusiast: John Wesley and the rise of Methodism*, London 1989, 270–80.

[12] John Wesley, 'Acts and monuments of the Christian martyrs', in *The Christian library* (1750), 2nd edn, London 1819, iii. 262. Due to the fragility of the eighteenth-century edition, the second edition of Wesley's *Christian library* has been used as the primary text in this analysis. I would like to thank Linda McCurdy (Director, Special Collections Library, Duke University), for her assistance in confirming that the broad content and randomly checked texts coincide in the two editions.

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probably helped to provoke the virulent anti-papalism that is associated with 'Foxe':[13]

> In one place [Piedmont] they most cruelly tormented 150 women and children, and afterwards chopped off the heads of some, and dashed out the brains of others against the rocks … such of them as refused to go to mass they cruelly butchered, hanging some, and nailing the feet of others to trees, with their heads hanging downwards. Some were drowned, some burnt, some slain with the sword, some shot to death, some starved, some smothered in the snow, some pined, some killed with staves, some cut in pieces … but though their names are not here, they are written in the calendar of heaven, which their popish adversaries would have written in the dust.[14]

Clarke identified the 'adversary' in his narration of Protestant deaths in Lithuania. There the suffering was instigated by the Tartars' rebellion of 1648, augmented by the 'barbarous' Cossacks, continued by the tyranny of the Muscovites and again by the 'coming of the Swedes' in 1655, who 'treated us as enemies'. In these cases 'papist' refers to the servants of an apocalyptical agency acting in conspiracy against Protestants. In Ireland the 'enemy' acted through 'Jesuits, priests, and friars', whose religious purposes were screened, according to Clarke, by the rubric 'rebellion'. His intimations and descriptions of the rape, infanticide, torture and chaos caused by the 'adversary' fertilised imaginations and opened avenues for the perceived threat of hidden enemies and 'crypto-papists'.[15]

Wesley's inclusion of Clarke's *Supplement* argues for his own intentional participation in promoting anti-papist sentiments, as that text appears to encourage them. Counterintuitively, however, Samuel Clarke's promotion of the idea of an unchanging malevolence that sought the destruction of Protestants may have reduced the virulence of reaction against the current persecutor. Far from encouraging eighteenth-century Protestants into hatred and fear of Catholics, such a long view prompts treating contemporary examples as 'dupes' of the papacy, lost souls in need of care – a sentiment specifically articulated by several later Foxeian editors. Wesley's handling of *Acts and monuments* also suggests more positive aims than to provide 'a negative definition of what was good and acceptable', as Haydon argues was accomplished by anti-Catholic sentiment.[16]

Foxe's text, Wesley thought, complemented the writings of classical Christianity that filled the first volume of the *Christian library*. 'After the

[13] Samuel Clarke, 'Supplement to Fox's Acts and monuments of the Christian martyrs', ibid. iii. 289–427. Samuel Clarke (1599–1683) was a Nonconformist cleric and author of several *Lives* of eminent divines and many martyrologies modelled on 'Foxe'. His best-known work is *England's remembrancer … narratives of deliverances*, London 1657 and several reprints.

[14] Clarke, 'Supplement', 14.

[15] Ibid. 33–5. For the '*peur* of 1745' and popular sentiments see Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, 131–61, and pp. 9–13 for 'hidden Catholics'.

[16] Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, 253.

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venerable remains of Ignatius and Polycarp, closed with the artless, yet lively discourses of Macarius, and John Arndt's nervous account of True Christianity, worthy of the earliest ages; I believed', Wesley wrote in his preface, 'nothing could be more acceptable to the serious reader, than to see this Christianity reduced to practice … I was therefore easily determined to subjoin to these *The Acts and Monuments of Christian Martyrs.*'[17]

'In abridging [Foxe's] vast work', Wesley counselled the reader, 'I have purposely omitted not only all the secular history; but likewise those accounts, writings, and examinations of the Martyrs, which contained nothing particularly affecting or instructive.' The example of God's power expressed in the lives of 'his saints' would, Wesley hoped, excuse a system of expression more suited to an earlier era. 'Phrases which were then both clear and beautiful, have now lost both their elegance and perspicuity.' He warned the reader, however, that he had not had the time to alter the language much, save only 'to change some obsolete expressions' for the benefit of 'ordinary readers'.

Concluding his preface, Wesley prayed 'May we all learn from these worthies to be not almost only, but altogether Christians! To reckon all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the experimental knowledge of Jesus Christ! And not to count our lives dear unto ourselves, so we may finish our course with joy!'

Whatever else might be said of Wesley's 'Foxe', it is not merely or even primarily anti-Catholic propaganda. Throughout his work on *Acts and monuments* Wesley hardly mentions Catholics, the pope or the papacy, and he avoids apocalyptic notions. He refers to the 'two churches', but handles the concept in such a way as more to resemble Augustine's 'two cities' than Foxe's representation of the binary opposition of a corrupt papacy wickedly attacking the true Christian Church. In his introductory passage he wrote:

> I commend two special points to the reader; first to observe the disposition and nature of this world; secondly, the nature and condition of the kingdom of Christ; the vanity of the one, and the establishment of the other; the unquiet state of the one, ruled by man's violence and wisdom, and the happy success of the other, ever ruled by God's blessing and providence … The world I call all such as are without or against Christ … On the other side, the kingdom of Christ in this world I take to be all them which belong to the faith of Christ; the number of whom, although it be much smaller than the other, and always hated and molested of the world; yet it is the number which the Lord doth particularly bless and prosper, and ever will. And this number of Christ's subjects is that which we call the visible church in earth.[18]

[17] John Wesley, 'To the reader', *Christian library*, ii. 2. Manfred Marquardt offers a solid analysis of Wesley's practical Christianity in *John Wesley's social ethics: praxis and principles*, trans. John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter, Nashville 1992. [18] Wesley, *Christian library*, ii. 25.

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Avoiding the distraction of how Wesley transposed in this passage the concepts of 'visible' and 'invisible' from those of John Foxe, it is clear that the editor missed a prime opportunity to fan the flames of anti-Catholic sentiment, if that was what he intended. Some abridgements of Foxe's text may luridly have compared the wicked (visible) Church of Rome with the blessed (invisible) Church of Christ, but Wesley worked for more positive ends than to excite hatred or to create religious identification through opposition to the 'other': 'I set upon cleansing Augeus' stable, [he wrote] upon purging that huge work, Mr. Foxe's Acts and Monuments, from all the trash which that honest, injudicious writer has heaped together and mingled with those most venerable records which are worthy to be had in everlasting remembrance.'[19]

Amidst the 'trash' that Wesley excised from *Acts and monuments* is all the material on relations between the papacy and the Holy Roman empire, and between the papacy and other nations, except for two brief examples concerning England and the German states. Doctrinal disputations largely disappear. Apocalyptic musings fall away. The secular history of England is not included, nor that of the Bohemians, Italians, Hungarians or Turks, although Wesley does include the persecutions, under separate headings, of the 'Merindolians' and 'Waldenseans'. Civil, marital and religious matters under Henry VIII appear only as they touch directly on Thomas Cromwell's life. The course of reform under Edward VI and the process of the return of the country to Rome under Mary Tudor are likewise not included, nor are most of the stories of the common English folk that Foxe had recounted.

Wesley called the material that he jettisoned 'trash'. Given that he read English histories and did not consider them meaningless, and that he considered deeply questions of theology, doctrine and ritual, it is unlikely that he meant to refer in such terms to all the material omitted. He may have dropped the secular material because he thought it inappropriate in an ecclesiastical history, or because he believed it was better handled in other contemporary texts. Since he was concerned about superstition and exaggerated religious enthusiasms, it is no surprise that he left out references to the Apocalypse, yet left in stories of miracles and retold a few of his own in his published journals.[20] Wesley's selection of what to exclude and what to include was guided, in the first instance, by his interest in continuing the work of Foxe's text to situate and elaborate the lives and records of Christian, English martyrs as positively framed models for a specific genre, martryological history.

[19] *Wesley's journals*, iii. 373.

[20] Wesley comments (ibid. iii. 318) that 'In many of these instances [of reported miracles] I see great superstition as well as strong faith. But the "times of ignorance God does wink at still, and bless the faith, notwithstanding the superstition"'.

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In his 710-page abridgement of Foxe's text, Wesley counted among the 'venerable records worthy of remembrance' a 'Life of John Foxe', to which he devoted nineteen pages. A single page covers 'Christ's suffering under Tiberius', the conversion of St Paul and Peter's martyrdom. This page precedes a curtailed transcription of the ten Roman persecutions (40 pages). The text then offers a brief review of how Christianity came to England with Joseph of Arimathea, was confirmed by 'teachers afterward', disrupted by the Saxons, devastated under the Danes and rescued again by King Alfred (11 pages). Wesley saw fit to remind readers that some rulers, unlike Alfred, might betray and destroy the English Christian community:

> In the primitive church of the Englishmen religion did most clearly shine; insomuch that kings, queens, princes, and dukes, barons, and rulers of churches, inflamed with the desire of the kingdom of heaven, forsook all, and followed the Lord. But, in the course of time, all virtue so much decayed among them, that in fraud and treachery, none seemed like unto them: neither was any thing in honour but civil war and shedding of innocent blood. Wherefore Almighty God sent upon them [Englishmen] pagan and cruel nations, like swarms of bees, which neither spared women nor children.[21]

Wesley allocated seventy-five pages in all to this account and then turned to the French Waldensians and their doctrine (6 pages), as a precedent for the histories of the English martyrs, beginning with the Lollards (John Wycliffe, William Swinderby and Walter Brute, William Sawtre, John Badby, William Thorpe and Lord Cobham). Deflected to the continent where sixty-three pages are devoted to the trials of Jan Hus, Jerome of Prague and Martin Luther, Wesley returned to the English reformers, John Colet, John Brown, John Stilman and Thomas Man, each of whom upheld a faith linked to the early English gospel Church.

Wesley then devoted a further 135 pages to foreign martyrs as a context for the English ones – learned and learning individuals, among them only three women, one of common stock (Mrs Smith 'with seven others [men]') and two from the elite (Anne Boleyn, beheaded, and Anne Askew, racked and burned). Women appear more often in the section on the Roman martyrs and in Clarke's *Supplement* (in both cases as valiant victims), but of the many common women counted by John Foxe among the English martyrs only Mrs Smith warrants even the mention of her name, and most of the common men are omitted entirely.[22] Educated men dominate, their academic

[21] *Christian library*, ii. 72.

[22] Wesley's decision to include Anne Boleyn and Anne Askew, but not, for example, Katherine Parr (particularly as the stories of Askew and Parr were so closely intertwined) is among oddities in the text that merit further study, as does his rigorous exclusion of the common women whom Foxe had included. Among the pre-Marian common men that

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pedigrees advanced in the first few sentences of each account, culminating in the examples of Dr Farrar, John Bradford and John Philpot, and in the stories of Ridley, Latimer and Cranmer.

In the order that the learned men appear in Wesley's text the first is Dr John Colet, 'the founder of St. Paul's school', who taught the Epistles of Paul openly in Oxford. Then Thomas Bilney who 'was brought up in the university of Cambridge from a child'; James Bainham, 'virtuously brought up' to know both Latin and Greek, and who studied law; John Frith who 'began his study at Cambridge'; Thomas Benet, 'born in Cambridge and had the degree of Master of Arts in that university'; William Tyndale, 'brought up from a child in the university of Oxford'; and John Lambert, who was 'born and brought up in Norfolk … [and] … studied in the university of Cambridge'.[23]

The citation of learned men continues: Dr Barnes who, 'after he came from the university of Louvain', arrived at Cambridge; Mr Garrett, 'curate in Honey-lane', was taken for selling Tyndale's translation of the New Testament 'to divers scholars in Oxford'; 'Mr. John Rogers was brought up in the university of Cambridge'; Laurence Saunders, 'a man of worshipful parentage, had his bringing up in learning from his youth, in the school of Eaton, and at Kings College, in Cambridge'; John Hooper was a student and graduate of the University of Oxford; Dr Taylor was 'in household' with Archbishop Cranmer; Dr Farrar was bishop of St David's; John Bradford was 'brought up in learning from his infancy, until he attained such knowledge in the Latin tongue and skill in writing that he was able to gain his own living'; Robert Glover was a gentleman and 'well read'; Dr Nicholas Ridley, 'born at Tindale, in Northumberland … learned grammar at Newcastle, and was removed from thence to the university of Cambridge'; Mr Hugh Latimer, of Leicester, was 'trained in the common schools of his own county' and 'sent to the university of Cambridge'; John Philpot, 'a knight's son', was 'born in Hampshire and brought up at New College in Oxford'; Thomas Cranmer was 'descended from an ancient family' of Nottinghamshire. 'He was kept at school from his infancy, and in process of

Wesley includes are Badby (ibid. i. 117), Browne (i. 195), Firth and Hewet (i. 347), Porter (ii. 399), and Testwood, Filmer and Pearson (i. 401). Hatches, Archer, Hawkins and Bond, Wrigham, Landsale and Silkeb are named as accompanying Mrs Smith. Of the Marian martyrs only Tomkins (ii. 74), Hunter (ii. 77), Haukes (ii. 95) and White (ii. 88) appear. Each one is a fair representation of the story offered by John Foxe. The section on foreign martyrs and other witnesses not yet accounted for includes Luther, Voes and Esch, a variety of scattered nationals, and the histories of Merindol, Cabriers and of the Waldenseans (i. 202–337).

[23] Colet (ibid. ii. 201); Bilney (ii. 339); Bainham (ii. 345); Frith (ii. 347); Benet (ii. 350); Tyndale (ii. 356); Lambert, (ii. 364).

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time went to the university of Cambridge … and was chosen a fellow of Jesus College.'[24]

When referring to those few men he included who had not been privileged with a university education, Wesley emphasised the learning they had. Thomas Cromwell, 'born at Putney, being a smith's son', had no university but was none the less learned, 'which it well appeareth', Wesley concluded, 'in his learning the whole New Testament of Erasmus's translation'. John Porter was taken for reading the Bible aloud. William Hunter, a London apprentice, read the Bible. Rawlins White, a Welsh fisherman, was taught to read by his son. Thomas Haukes, 'of honest stock', was 'brought up daintily from his childhood and like a gentleman'. Less than a half dozen other entries refer in passing to plain working men: an apprentice, a tradesman, a baker, a weaver and two brick-makers.[25]

Why did this 'popular' minister, the field preacher, omit the stories of most of the common men and all of the women whom Foxe had included among the Marian martyrs? Who were the men that Wesley selected for inclusion? How might they have seemed to him? [26]

In a tradition of ministry

John Wesley entered a tradition of ministry by including himself in a community across time. He linked himself specifically to John Foxe's ministry not only through editing Foxe's text, but also by following his example and continuing his work. Samuel Clarke, among others, had followed in Foxe's footsteps and collected the stories of later and 'foreign' martyrs to expand on the original. A hundred years later Wesley also augmented Foxe's text. Clarke's *Supplement*, occupying the last quarter of volume iii in the *Christian library*, is only the first of Wesley's choices of works to be added to the *Acts and monuments*.[27] Having begun the project in 1750, by 1768 Wesley's *Christian library* consisted of fifty volumes of writings and narratives of lives selected for the edification of his ministers and their societies. In the same way as Foxe, as Wesley understood, had laboured to preserve the lives and works of

[24] Barnes (ibid. ii. 387); Garrett (ii. 392); Rogers (iii. 6); Saunders (iii. 9); Hooper (iii.15); Taylor (iii. 28); Farrar (iii. 86); Bradford (iii. 113); Glover (iii. 139); Ridley (iii. 153); Latimer (iii. 172–3); Philpot (iii. 192); Cranmer (iii. 233).

[25] Cromwell (ibid. ii. 371); Porter (iii. 400); Hunter (iii. 343); White (ii. 401); Haukes (ii. 415).

[26] John Wesley has been the subject of numerous studies. In considering his abridgement of Foxe's text, I have drawn upon some of their conclusions without directly entering into the various scholarly debates. The analysis which follows is based upon Wesley's reading of 'Foxe' in the *Christian library*, his journals and letters for the years when he was working on the text (1743–54) and some secondary literature.

[27] For a list of his selections see the *National union catalogue, pre-1956 imprints*, London 1968–81, s.v. Wesley, John, *Christian library*.

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sixteenth-century (educated English male) martyrs, so Wesley, two hundred years later, sought to preserve the works and thoughts of seventeenth-century 'Puritans' and others of the English Church, the inheritors of the tradition of the martyrs. The *Christian library* could well have been subtitled 'The greater *Acts and monuments*'.

Concluding his selections from 'Foxe', Wesley wrote:

> After an account of the lives, sufferings, and deaths of those holy men [Foxe's English martyrs], who sealed the ancient religion with their blood, I believe nothing would either be more agreeable or more profitable to the serious reader, than some extracts from the writings of those who sprung up, as it were, out of their ashes. These breathe the same spirit, and were, in a lower degree, partakers of the same sufferings. Many of them took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and all had their names cast out as evil; being branded with the nickname of Puritans, and thereby made a byeword and a proverb of reproach.[28]

For Wesley, seventeenth-century Puritans assumed the mantle of the sixteenth-century martyrs. From their example Wesley took strength, direction and perhaps hope that the following generation would preserve his own monuments. Among the martyrs' inheritors were seventeenth-century writers whose works, except for Wesley's own labour ('in imitatio Foxii'), might have been lost. Among their inheritors is Wesley himself, and among the martyrs chosen as examples from Foxe's text are others like himself.[29]

Consider how similar are the lives and labours of Wesley and Foxe. They appear to follow a template for English ministry: impecunious scholar, tutor, preacher, translator and historian. Tyndale and Foxe can be seen as early examples of this pattern. Both went up to Oxford, to Magdalen Hall, both serving more privileged fellows there. Each acted as tutors in a household, and fled to the continent dependent on the 'goodwill of his master'. Tyndale was martyred to fire, Foxe (willingly) to labour.[30] Emphasising educational similarities between Foxe and other ministers, and (presumably) himself, when Wesley edited Simeon Foxe's *Life* of his father, he included the comment that 'He [John Foxe] was first of Brazen-Nose College, where he

[28] John Wesley, untitled preface to Hall's Meditations, *Christian library*, iv, at p. i.

[29] See *Wesley's journal*, iii. 163, entry for 19 Mar. 1747, where he describes Elizabethan Puritans as 'venerable' yet concludes that they were weak. For a valuable analysis of Wesley's connection to 'Puritans' and the appearance of dissent in the *Christian library* see Robert C. Monk, *John Wesley: his Puritan heritage*, New York 1966, 41, 49–59. Monk finds a 'striking similarity' between Wesley and the Puritans (where Puritan means 'practical application of the gospel'), and argues that Wesley was heavily dependent on Samuel Clarke for 'most of the lives he included in the *Library*', although he deviated from Clarke's text in order to give space to the 'most eminent men of the Church of England'.

[30] See David Daniell, 'Tyndale and Foxe', in David Loades (ed.), *John Foxe: an historical perspective*, Aldershot 1999, 15–28, and *William Tyndale: a biography*, New Haven 2001.

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was chamber-fellow with Alexander Nowell … and it was no great marvel if their manners were so alike in the course of their lives, whose education was the same.'[31] Foxe and, by implication, Alexander Nowell and others similarly educated, was industrious, 'inured to hardiness' and could keep to a hard diet. From the author's own notes Wesley echoed Simeon Foxe, commenting that John Foxe completed the *Acts and monuments* in eleven years after beginning it: 'Neither in all that time used he the help of any servant in writing, or other business … So much doth industry', Wesley concluded with Simeon, 'employed to one purpose, afford more useful assistance, than a mind divided into many cares at once, though it hath ever so many helping hands.'[32]

John Foxe, and others like him, rode at Wesley's shoulder, an example for his life and his personal labours as he translated Hebrew in the saddle while riding between preaching posts. In the years that he worked on his *Christian library*, Wesley also published his journals regularly, along with tracts, doctrinal refutations and foreign language grammars, all these in addition to his primary work of writing and delivering sermons while 'regulating' his societies. He was a model English minister of the established English Church, as he understood it.

Wesley fitted *Acts and monuments* into the tradition of such ministers, a purpose that might well have pleased John Foxe. In the sixteenth century ministers went out from the universities carrying new learning into the counties surrounding London. Their stories and lives were recorded in Foxe's great book. In the seventeenth century ministers again went out from Oxford and Cambridge carrying their message to the counties. Their lives and works were recorded by Wesley in the *Christian library*. So, in the eighteenth century, ministers went forth from the universities to teach in the counties, and further into the northern and western marches. As in the sixteenth century, these ministers carried a message supposedly known in the hearts of the English – in this later century, a knowledge thought to be awoken and revitalised by the words of the ministers, Wesley among them.

Taming the godly

John Wesley's life has been only a little less sanctified than was John Foxe's. His genealogy, as summarised in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, provides him

[31] Wesley, *Christian library*, ii. 5. Norman Wood explains Tudor control of education and the Puritan minister/teachers whose example might also have influenced Wesley's tradition of ministry: *The Reformation and English society*, London 1931, 305–41.

[32] Wesley, *Christian library*, ii. 16. Both Simeon Foxe's assertion that Foxe had no assistants and the messages that Wesley takes from it are examples of 'Foxe' mythologised.

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with a lengthy pedigree, rooting his line with the Anglo-Saxons and in the dissenting movements, crowning it with the flower of the latter-day Methodists, a loyal, peaceable people – or perhaps a coerced and contained people.

Given that the seventeenth-century radical Gerrard Winstanley took very different heroes from *Acts and monuments*, it could be argued reasonably that Wesley's reading of the text worked to contradict interpretations of 'Foxe' that might have challenged the existing social order. Winstanley, the son of a mercer, looked to George Marsh, Rawlins White and William Hunter, to tradesmen and cloth-workers, to 'people of little formal education'.[33] If, as William Lamont suggests, Foxe can be said to have 'domesticated the Apocalypse', Wesley helped to tame the godly.[34] It is no coincidence that Wesley concentrated upon the learned ministers of Foxe's text. In a response to the apparent excesses of seventeenth-century sectarianism, English society and Wesley moved towards moderation.

John Wesley intended to bring Englishmen home to their Church and to their God. In his early ministry he was very clear that he wished no break with the established Church of England. In his mind such a break might well have seemed inherently contradictory. For Wesley, and as implied in much of *Acts and monuments*, the Church meant England and England the Church, potentially the whole of English society.[35] Defending himself against accusations of inciting insurrection, Wesley wrote that 'They [the Methodists] pretended no insults from the Church party, being themselves no other than true members of the Church of England.'[36] The 'Church of England', as it was defined by the 1744 Methodist conference in a declaration subscribed by Wesley, was 'the congregation of English *believers* in which the *pure word* of God is preached and the sacraments *duly* administered'. As Henry Rack notes, this left Wesley and others free to attend primarily to worship and to accept the bishops while obeying them only in those things indifferent.[37]

[33] Thomas W. Hayes, 'Gerrard Winstanley and Foxe's Book of Martyrs', *Notes and Queries* ii (1977), 209–12, directed my attention to Winstanley's *Breaking of the day of God*, London 1684.

[34] William Lamont, *Godly rule: politics and religion*, London 1969, 33.

[35] Patrick Collinson, *English Puritan movement*, Berkeley 1967, 20.

[36] Wesley was here writing in response to a public letter maligning Methodists: *Wesley's journal*, iii. 13.

[37] Rack, *Reasonable enthusiast*, 307, 293 (Rack's italics). Edmund Grindal (1519–83), bishop of London (1563), archbishop of York (1570) and archbishop of Canterbury (1576 until his death) was one of the Marian exiles. While on the continent he conceived the project for an English 'Book of martyrs' and guided a 'committee' to realise it: Devorah Greenberg, 'Community of the text: producing the first and second editions of *Acts and monuments*', *Sixteenth Century Journal* xxxvi (2005), 673–93. As archbishop, Grindal was among the first to propose that it was not necessary to insist on clerical conformity to *adiaphora*, or 'things indifferent'.

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Wesley consistently objected to imputations of dissent. He was a staunch son of the English Church. Defending himself against the charge that the *Christian library* included 'a collection of mutilated writings of dissenters', he distinguished between Puritanism and dissent and affirmed that his inclusions were 'ornaments of the Church of England'. Wesley believed that it was not he but other contemporary clergy who had betrayed the Church of England and the true Gospel: 'The priest that preacheth not the word of God, though he hath none other default, he is antichrist and satan, a night-thief and a day-thief, a slayer of souls, and an angel of light turned into darkness.'[38]

Eloquently quoting Foxe quoting precedent, Wesley dismissed those members of the established Church who would not preach. Their error could not, in any case, damage the structure of the English Church. Refuting and refusing Mr Hall's rationale for pleading a necessary break with the Church, Wesley wrote in 1745 that

> We believe that there is and always was, in *every* Christian church (whether dependent on the Bishop of Rome or not) an *outward* priesthood ordained by Jesus Christ, and an *outward* sacrifice offered therin by men authorized to act as 'ambassadors of Christ' … We believe that the threefold order of ministers … is not only authorized by its 'apostolical institution' but also by the 'written Word' … We no more look upon these *filthy abuses* which adhere to our Church as part of the building, than we look upon any *filth* which may adhere to the walls of Westminster Abbey as part of that structure.[39]

Wesley's ministry had precedents in English history and in English theology for, as he would argue, 'in a Christian, a Protestant country … particularly in England … every man *may* think for himself, as he *must* give an account for himself to God' (Wesley's emphasis). It was a 'privilege of Englishmen to serve God according to the dictates of their own conscience'.[40] Some of the historical roots of Wesley's argument for the necessity of personal judgement and examples of proper ministry lay in Foxe's text, through which the editor learned and helped to define English ministerial duty. Wesley noted Foxe's comment that, after Queen Mary had prohibited public preaching, 'Divers Godly ministers, who had the charge of souls committed to them, did, notwithstanding, according to their bounden duty, feed their flock faithfully, not as preachers authorized by public authority, but as the private pastors of particular flocks.'[41]

Transcribing this description of faithful ministry, Wesley exposed not only the duty but also the problem of public ministry: should one observe one's

[38] Wesley, *Christian library*, iii. 30.

[39] *Wesley's journal*, iii. 109. Wesley's editor adds (iii. 112 n. 17) that 'the view that Bishops and presbyters were essentially of one order remained with JW for life'.

[40] Ibid. iii. 397.

[41] Wesley, *Christian library*, iii. 15.

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duty to the king or obedience to God? In an ideal world these two would coincide. In a flawed world, however, in a 'tottering' world, a minister had always to cling to God for, as Wesley transcribed 'Foxe': 'though we must obey the princes, yet that hath this limitation, namely, in the Lord. For whoso obey them [princes] against the Lord, they be most pernicious to them and the greatest adversaries they have'.[42] In sum, if a subject obeys a king in defiance of God, this is a form of treason, for without obedience to God there can be no duty to kings. 'I must still insist on the right of private judgement', Wesley concluded in 1746. 'I dare call no man Rabbi. I cannot yield either implicit faith or obedience to any man or number of men under heaven.'[43]

Wesley was thought by many contemporaries to be a firebrand, a troublemaker and a rabble-rouser. Preaching in the open fields, his message misunderstood by the propertied who fuelled the flames of intolerance among local authorities and the idle, he has been historically figured as a 'popular', even radical minister. John Walsh and Stephen Taylor recently concluded that Wesley 'transformed and radicalized the Anglican model [of voluntary societies], linking his societies into a new organizational form, the connexion'.[44]

Wesley's break with the established Church, however, came only after continued effort to remain within it, and was given solid impetus when Oxford began to refuse his students. Once Wesley had to assume full responsibility for their education, separation may have seemed more palatable to him. In considering Wesley's radicalism a separation must be made between his early and later ministry. For the period under discussion, the years congruent with his work with Foxe's text, Wesley objected to lay and female preaching, offered to control the mobs in Roughlee (Lancaster) and in 1745 prepared to defend against the 'Pretender'.[45] His apparent dissent was not in any case, by his own account, dissent, and he appeared radical only to his political and religious right. Moreover, as Mervyn James has shown, apparent rebellion and public dissent may act for, and be intended to accomplish, conservative ends.[46]

[42] Ibid. ii. 189.

[43] *Wesley's journal*, iii. 22. John Spurr concludes that 'a puritan pattern does not necessarily mean a dissident pattern': 'The moral revolution of 1688', in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (eds), *The Church of England, 1689–1833*, Cambridge 1993, 128 n. 4.

[44] Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor, *Church of England*, introduction at p. 18.

[45] Henry Rack concludes that 'Wesley seems to have adopted his father's Hanoverian Toryism rather than his mother's religious Jacobitism. His primary concern for religion and his scriptural loyalty to the powers that be led him to transfer the old "passive obedience" to the Hanoverians': *Reasonable enthusiast*, 373.

[46] Mervyn James, *Society, politics, and culture: studies in early modern England*, Cambridge 1986, 179–220. For the offer to control the mob see *Wesley's journal*, iii. 242–3, 90.

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Henry Rack and others have characterised the prevalent public religious sentiment of the period as generally neutral, complacent or disdainful. John Wesley thought it indecent:

> I wonder at those who still talk so loud of the *indecency* of field preaching. The highest *indecency* is in St. Paul's church, when a considerable part of the congregation are asleep, or talking, or looking about, not minding a word the preacher says. On the other hand, there is the highest *decency* in a *churchyard* or *field*, when the whole congregation behave and look as if they saw the Judge of all, and heard him speaking from heaven.[47]

There is something irresistible in the notion that Wesley's equation of sober seriousness with religious conviction had something to do with personal pique at seeing preachers (such as himself) ignored in the pulpit. Certainly Wesley came to see quiet attentiveness as the most suitable reception for God's word as expounded by the preacher: 'In the kirk (Mrs. G[alliton] informed me) there used to be laughing and talking, and all the marks of the grossest inattention, but it was far otherwise here – they remained as statues from the beginning of the sermon to the end.' Of another congregation he noted that 'The very children behaved with remarkable seriousness. I saw but one, a girl of three or four years old, who ran about as in play, till another, not much bigger, reproved her and constrained her to stand still.'[48]

The egalitarianism implicit in Christian theology and explicit in some dissenting English sects was not central to Wesley's societies, or in his understanding. He was the authority. In his school, scriptural instruction was guided using 'Wesley's own explanatory notes'. There is much to support E. P. Thompson's supposition that 'if some sect of Old Dissent had set the pace of the evangelical revival – instead of John Wesley – then nineteenth century Nonconformity might have assumed a more intellectual and democratic form'.[49] Wesley was pleased when, as a result of his ministry,

[47] *Wesley's journal*, iii. 245. See also Rack, *Reasonable enthusiast*, 204, 209, 210.

[48] Wesley's *journal*, iii. 386, 399 and passim.

[49] E. P. Thompson, *Making of the English working class* (1963), London 1980, 40. Robert Wearmouth convincingly argues that a later result of Wesley's work was to encourage labour activism because 'having learned to value their talents and exercise their rights in the Methodist community, it was not easy for some of them to remain quiescent … In chapel life they learned to speak'. That did not, however, compensate for a countervailing training in acceptance which led working men to stand 'in solemn and sullen silence' while their 'young and weeping infants were cast into the streets', and 'to vacate their homes and jobs for blacklegs'. Wearmouth commends their tranquillity, concluding that 'it was inevitable that the miners should be beaten'. The influence of Methodism, in any case, is probably an inadequate explanation for working-class behaviour. See Robert Wearmouth, *Methodism and the working class movements of England, 1800–1850* (1937), London 1972, 206, 216, 228–31. For scriptural instruction at Kingswood see Earl Kent Brown, *Women of Mr. Wesley's Methodism*, New York–Toronto 1983, 51.

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'many of the lions have become lambs', when he could effectively 'regulate' his societies and publicly discredit those who 'wrought folly in Israel'. He defused the words of lay folk, certain that he knew best what was meant. Of a sermon preached by an untrained layman, 'an original enthusiast', Wesley wrote in his journal that he had the man speak 'so that I might understand him the more thoroughly … When he had done I summed up what he said, methodizing and explaining it'. One might wonder what the 'enthusiast' thought of Wesley's reorganisation of his words and his meaning, especially as Wesley concluded the journal entry with 'O what a pity it is that this man should ever speak without an interpreter.' Interpreter of not only Scripture, but also of others' interpretations, arbiter of holiness and final authority, Wesley commanded the godly. It is not accidental that his 'Foxe' resembles more that of Joseph Cotton than of Ellis Hookes. Here the pastoral minister guides his sheep.[50]

A quest for ministerial authority directed Wesley's editing of Foxe's text. He abridged the work to provide a genealogy for his own ministry. His 'Foxe' contains ministers, men educated in England's better schools and especially the universities of Cambridge and Wesley's own Oxford. His ministers are trained, and they are trained to discipline the godly, just as they were in the seventeenth century. 'Puritans' made short work of the Levellers. Wesley was similarly, as Henry Rack notes, 'dealing with an unruly people, and his rules were a necessary expedient to impose some order and coherence on his movement'. Rack's conclusion both acknowledges and conceals the fact that it was only 'Wesley's movement' insofar as he could define and contain it.[51]

It is not accidental that most of the common folk included by Foxe among the Marian martyrs did not appear in Wesley's text. God's Englishmen take guidance from their ministers. Men and women who challenged Wesley's rule and training met his firm conviction. He expelled them from his societies if he could not persuade them to his opinion, because removing dissenters avoided damage to his Christian community. Those excluded could, and sometimes did, go over to the Quakers, but that was a calculated risk that he took, and sometimes deemed preferable to having

[50] 'I will either kill or cure', said Wesley, who rarely said things he did not mean. 'I will have one or the other, a Christian school or none at all': *Wesley's journal*, iii. 86. On this see also Thompson, *Making of the working class*, 412–13. Among seventeenth-century contributors to 'Foxe', Joseph Cotton (unknown dates) and Ellis Hookes (unknown dates) each published several variations of Foxe's text, Cotton from a more paternalistic congregationalist position, Hookes speaking more for the Quakers and active resistance: Greenberg 'Reflexive Foxe', ch. iii.

[51] Rack, *Reasonable enthusiast*, 435–6. E. P. Thompson comments that 'Methodist ministers defended their flocks [from populist literature]: the evidence was abundant that unmonitored literacy was the "snare of the devil"': *Making of the working class*, 811.

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them with him.[52] Through paternal ministry Wesley helped to tame the godly and to control the fractious. Because he expelled the most persistent offenders, his personal impact was in some degree limited, but the effects of his societies and his teaching were to spread. Methodism may have taken a more conservative turn after his death in 1791, but Wesley had already set the pattern, partly through his *imitatio Foxii*, the *Christian library*.

Wesley's ministers were to be learned and they were to be men. Women do not preach in Wesley's abridgement of *Acts and monuments*, despite the several examples that Foxe offers of eloquent and edifying women. Some scholars have made much of Wesley's allowing women to preach, eventually and only after 'cautious progression' in his thinking.[53] It was a little enough step for him to take and, for the pragmatist minister, dictated. Perhaps responding to an earlier tradition exemplified in 'Foxe', some women would speak regardless. Wesley could either have them in his societies and under his tutelage, or he could expel them and risk having strong-willed women speaking publicly against him. In any event the teaching women who stayed with him regulated themselves commendably. Invited by Wesley to speak because of their 'extraordinary calling', they did not preach, but only 'witnessed'. They would not take the pulpit. Rather, they stood beside it, humble women, 'communicating the Gospel in all but preaching'. Their general compliance may help to account for Wesley's being able to refer to a woman teacher in his later years as an 'adornment' to the Gospel.

From Wesley's journal it is difficult to conceive that he took women seriously at all. Despite the examples of his strong-willed mother and of Grace Murray, Wesley's description of one woman as a 'poor, pretty, fluttering thing' (from among his favourite quotations) seems closer to his thinking. Women in his journal are generally archetypical: 'Mother of Israel' or 'women of loose morals'. One woman teacher (Katherine Whitaker) made it into his journal only because she had 'lately adorned the gospel', that is, she was dead. Earl Kent Brown, who has studied the question, describes more respectful relations between Wesley and his women. He

[52] It was a bad idea, Wesley thought, to mix the disorderly with the elect because 'evil communication corrupts good manners': *Wesley's journal*, iii. 43. Wesley struggles here with a different form of the problem of separation outlined by Patrick Collinson in 'The cohabitation of the faithful with the unfaithful', in Ole Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke (eds), *From persecution to toleration: the Glorious Revolution and religion in England*, Oxford 1991, 51–76, esp. pp. 59–65. See also *Wesley's journal*: taking another's flock (iii. 6, 37, 42, 268); regulates societies (iii. 182, 193, 202–3); 'purges' society (iii. 34); names a man who disagrees with him 'a poor sinner' (iii. 5); 'tears up by the roots' from within 'his' society a popular explanation of justification with which he does not agree (iii. 167); Christians should aim to be 'humble and teachable' (iii. 201).

[53] Paul Wesley Chilcote, *John Wesley and the women preachers of early Methodism*, London 1991, 42; Earl Kent Brown refers to the process of Wesley's acceptance as 'evolving' in *Women*, p. xii.

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demonstrates that Methodist women 'transcended the stereotypical roles'. They did not begin to do so, however, much before 1760 when a shift occurred in Wesley's thinking about women preachers, a shift Brown attributes to Wesley's pragmatism. In at least one case from the earlier period, however, Wesley was moved by a woman preacher: 'There was no resisting the Spirit by which she spoke' (August 1746). Yet Wesley 'never formally appointed a woman as a regular itinerant preacher', although he did offer his overt (written) approval.[54]

Wesley permitted laymen to preach more readily than laywomen but even here he retained controls. And while he could note that 'I scarce ever heard so fine a defence of a weak case as was Mr. S.'s sermon … wherein he laboured much to prove the unlawfulness of laymens' preaching', Wesley never fully approved of untrained preachers and permitted none of them to his Conference before 1778.[55] To his friend James Hervey, Wesley stated that honest tradesmen could not be 'public preachers' unless formally 'called', though they could witness in their own sphere. As Henry Rack notes, however, Wesley was involved in a movement which would soon 'throw up preachers of its own accord'. He could either accommodate them or withdraw from the field. [56]

Committed to the tradition of a trained ministry, and compelled by the expulsion of his students from Oxford, Wesley accepted the challenge of teaching those men who would be preachers in his societies. He redesigned his school at London to fill the gap and, indeed, to surpass Oxford's programme. 'I read over', Wesley wrote in his journal in 1747, 'with some young men a compendium of rhetoric and a system of ethics. I see not why a man of tolerable understanding may not learn in six months time more of solid philosophy than is commonly learned at Oxford in four (perhaps seven) years.'[57] As Lady Huntingdon later discovered (her alternative school was established, in Wales, at Trevecka, in 1768), it was easier and perhaps more to the point to attempt to replace Oxford and Cambridge than directly to challenge Canterbury.

Paul Chilcote finds that after Wesley's death the 'Methodist hierarchy began to articulate a conception of pastoral responsibility and authority that was foreign to the democratic spirit and levelling sentiment which pervaded some of the societies.'[58] Conceptions of pastoral responsibility and hierarchy may have been foreign to some Methodist societies, but they were not foreign ideas to Wesley. His ministry and his training of ministers was designed, at least in some part, to fulfil the promise of the Elizabethan ministers and

[54] See Brown, *Women*, 26, 92, and *Wesley's journal*, iii. 128.

[55] Wearmouth, *Methodism*, 20. [56] *Wesley's journal*, iii. 167; Rack, *Reasonable enthusiast*, 189.

[57] *Wesley's journal*, iii. 162. In the journals for the years 1743–54 there is no evidence of Wesley using Foxe's text in his instruction, though this does not necessarily mean he did not do so in other years. [58] Chilcote, *Wesley and the women preachers*, 223.

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moderate Jacobean preachers whose pastoral responsibilities were to be educated and to educate, to become 'a good pastor'. With only limited changes Wesley noted from Foxe's text the fine example of Dr Rowland Taylor, minister, and his family:

> who at his first entering into his benefice did not, as too many do, let out his benefice to a farmer, that should gather up the profits, and set in an ignorant unlearned priest to serve the cure; and so they have the fleece, care little or nothing for feeding the flock; but, contrarily, he left Archbishop Cranmer, with whom he was in household, and made his abode in Hadley. Here, as a good sheperd, he gave himself wholly to the study of the holy Scriptures; most faithfully endeavouring to fulfil that charge that the Lord gave to Peter, saying … 'feed my lambs, feed my sheep'. No Sunday, nor holiday passed, nor other time, when he might get the people together, but he preached to them … and not only his preaching, but all his conversation, was an example of unfeigned Christian life and true holiness. He was void of pride, humble and meek as any child … neither was his lowliness childish or fearful; but as occasion required, he would be so stout in rebuking the evil doers, so that none was so rich but he would tell him plainly his fault, with such earnestness and gravity, as became a good pastor. He was a man very mild; void of all rancour, grudge, or ill will; ready to do good to all men; readily forgiving his enemies; and never sought to do ill to any. To the poor that were blind, lame, sick, bed-ridden, or that had many children, he was a father, a careful patron, and diligent provider; insomuch that he caused the parishioners to make a general provision for them; and he himself (besides the continual relief that they found at his house) gave a portion yearly, to the common alms box. His wife also was an honest and sober matron; and his children brought up in the fear of God, and good learning. In a word, he was a good 'salt of the earth,' savourily biting the corrupt manners of evil men, a light in God's house, set upon a candlestick for all men to imitate and follow. Thus continued this good shepherd among his flock, governing and leading them through the wilderness of this world.[59]

Something might be made out of the fact that the few words altered or omitted by Wesley from this passage include the statement that 'he [Taylor] was a right and lively image or pattern of all those virtuous qualities described by St. Paul in a true Bishop'. Wesley, perhaps, did not want to speak much of bishops. Yet, in his text, as in John Foxe's, even bishops were ministers and pastoral care a primary concern, perhaps especially among those best-educated.[60] 'Latimer continued yet in Cambridge a certain space', Wesley had copied from Foxe's text, 'where he and Bilney used much to confer together … these two were good examples to all such as would follow their doings, both in visiting the prisons, in relieving the needy, and in feeding the

[59] Wesley, *Christian library*, iii. 51.

[60] John Foxe, *Acts and monuments*, London 1570, 1693–4; *Acts and monuments*, ed. Josiah Pratt, New York 1965, vi. 677.

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hungry.'[61] Further among the duties of the ministers, Wesley remarked on Mr Bilney's example:

> by whose industry the gospel of Christ had such success … [that] children and servants were also trained so diligently in the knowledge of God's word that the whole town seemed rather an university of the learned, than a town of cloth-making, or labouring people.[62]

The labouring people might well be praised for their learning. Wesley may have directed Foxe's celebration, however, more towards their stellar teaching ministers –Taylor, Latimer and Bilney. Following the example of such ministers, and Foxe's guidance, Wesley aimed that his students should benefit from his selection of material and instruction, as in the *Christian library*, in the proper role of English churchmen and the tradition that shaped them. While omitting most of the common folk from Foxe's text, Wesley never forgot them. They were after all the flock without which there could be no shepherds. Wesley's elaboration of Foxe's *Acts and monuments* (or rather, primarily the last two books of that vast work) cannot be dismissed as a mere book of martyrs or shown to be framed deliberately to enflame anti-Catholic or, more properly, anti-papist sentiments. Rather, the *Christian library* anchors a positively constructed tradition of learned ministry that Wesley inherited – perhaps extrapolated –and developed from Foxe. Revived in the nineteenth century, Wesley's work was reprinted in 1819 and promulgated once more his and Foxe's vision for later generations of learned English (male) ministers.

[61] Wesley, *Christian library*, iii. 174.

[62] Ibid. iii. 50. Among Christian duties as they appear in his journal, Wesley includes preaching (iii. 56–7 and passim); relieving the sick and imprisoned (iii. 58, 125, 150, 204, 216, 253–60); education (iii. 162); accepting poverty (iii. 127); speaking one's conscience (iii. 57, 66–8, 91, 95); promoting one to 'think and let think' (iii. 66); and not 'yield faith or obedience to any man' (iii. 122).

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