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# JOHN WESLEY IN AMERICA

*Restoring Primitive Christianity*



GEORDAN HAMMOND

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John Wesley, c.1742 by J. M. Williams. Photograph of an early copy, courtesy of The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University.

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*To Iulia*  
*With love and gratitude*



## Preface

This book is a study of John Wesley in Georgia. While Wesley's biographers have all discussed his Georgia sojourn, no one has yet produced a book-length investigation of his experience in America. The central argument of this study is that the Georgia mission, for Wesley, was a laboratory for implementing his views of primitive Christianity. The ideal of restoring the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the early church in the pristine Georgia wilderness was the prime motivating factor in Wesley's decision to embark for Georgia and in his clerical practice in the colony. Understanding the centrality of primitive Christianity to Wesley's thinking and pastoral methods is essential to comprehending his experience in the New World.

Traditionally Wesley's biographers have not seen his ministry in Georgia as crucially important except insofar as it was perceived to have contributed to a crisis in his Christian faith. This has been partly due to the central role his post-Georgia evangelical 'conversion' at Aldersgate has played in the Wesleyan tradition. Along with this, his Methodist successors on both sides of the Atlantic tended to disparage the Georgia period as a misguided High Church phase. Therefore, it is not surprising that many biographers have seen little of value in the Georgia mission and have labelled it a failure. As a result, Wesley's passion for restoring primitive Christianity has been underappreciated. In order to re-evaluate this period of his life, a careful consideration of the documents written by him and his contemporaries is essential.

The sources of Wesley's understanding of primitive Christianity were rooted in the revival of patristic scholarship in the Church of England in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Knowledge of the early church was conveyed to Wesley by his parents in the Epworth rectory and in the halls of academia at Oxford. However, his interest in the primitive church took a new and more intense direction following the beginning of his friendship with John Clayton and the Manchester Nonjurors in 1732. It was the pervasive influence of Clayton and his mentor, Thomas Deacon, that propelled Wesley to investigate the doctrine, discipline, and practice of the early church. Wesley began a rigorous course of studying primarily the Apostolic Fathers (including the *Apostolic Constitutions* and *Canons*), secondarily the ante-Nicene Fathers, and thirdly select holy men of the fourth century such as Ephraem Syrus. His study was enabled by utilizing editions of the Fathers by recent Anglican patristic scholars and was supplemented by influential works on the primitive church by William Cave, Claude Fleury, and Anthony Horneck among others.

This book critically analyses Wesley's application of his vision of primitive Christianity on the *Simmonds* and in his parish ministry in Georgia. It emerges



that Wesley's ecclesiology was that of the Usager Nonjurors, which was in many respects identical to that of other contemporary High Churchmen. In common with the Nonjuring/High Church movement, Wesley's ecclesial practice stressed the centrality of the sacraments in worship. On the *Simmonds*, the views of Wesley and his colleagues on the early church were manifested in their devotional discipline, sacramental doctrine and practice, and conduct in leading public worship. In Georgia, his endeavour to imitate the practices of the primitive church manifested itself variously through interest in prayer book revision, precise sacramental observance, confession, penance, ascetical discipline, deaconesses, religious societies, and mission to the Indians. Also on the *Simmonds* and in Georgia it is demonstrated that the subject of primitive Christianity dominated Wesley's interactions with the leaders of the Moravians and Lutheran Salzburgers, particularly on the subjects of discipline, episcopacy, the sacraments, hymns, and in his tensions with them.

The final chapter of the book examines opposition to Wesley's ministry in Georgia. Colonists who did not embrace his views of primitive Christianity variously accused him of being an enthusiast, a Roman Catholic, and a divisive clergyman. Opposition also came in the form of male disgust with the manner of Wesley's ministry to women and the magistrates' reaction to his advocacy for poor colonists whom he believed were being oppressed. These sources of hostility combined with the 'Sophia Williamson controversy' brought his Georgia sojourn to a swift conclusion.

Despite the sudden end to the Georgia mission, a close analysis of Wesley's ministry calls for a carefully nuanced view on the vexed question of his success or failure. An evaluation of his ministry in context necessitates an interpretation that does not simply compare it with his subsequent leadership in the Evangelical Revival.

This study also demonstrates that Wesley's interest in primitive Christianity did not end when he left the shores of America. As one might expect, his view of the early church was not static; areas of continuity and discontinuity can be observed in over fifty years of ministry after Georgia. Wesley maintained his belief in the primitive church as a normative model for Christian faith and practice. With this conviction in mind, he worked tirelessly towards the goal of seeing primitive Christianity restored in the Methodist movement.

Through providing a critical evaluation of Wesley's conception and practice of primitive Christianity in Georgia, this book can contribute to debates about the significance of one of the formative periods of his life.

## Acknowledgements

This book is a revised version of a doctoral thesis completed at The University of Manchester. Throughout the project I have been supported by many individuals and institutions. Particular thanks are due to Professor Jeremy Gregory, who provided insightful supervision of the thesis. The initial research was made possible by a studentship granted by the John Rylands Research Institute. The university also generously provided several bursaries to support conference presentations and research trips. I am grateful to colleagues for awarding the thesis with the 2009 Wesleyan Theological Society Outstanding Dissertation Award and the 2011 Jesse Lee Prize in American Methodist History given by The General Commission on Archives and History of The United Methodist Church. Post-doctoral work on this book was greatly aided by sabbatical leave granted by Nazarene Theological College, part of which was happily spent as a Sugden Fellow at Queen's College, University of Melbourne, along with a productive week as a Farmington Fellow at Harris Manchester College, Oxford.

This study has benefited from the expert advice of Dr Gareth Lloyd, Dr Peter Nockles, and the staff of the Methodist Archives and Research Centre at The John Rylands Library. Excellent support was also given by the librarians and archivists of the Bodleian Library, the British Library, Cambridge University Library, The Dalton McCaughey Library at the United Faculty of Theology, the Evangelical Library, Lambeth Place Library, Manchester Wesley Research Centre and library at Nazarene Theological College, Moravian Archives, the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History at Oxford Brookes University, and the Sugden Collection at Queen's College, University of Melbourne.

Portions of several chapters have appeared in the following publications under my authorship and are used by permission here: 'High Church Anglican Influences on John Wesley's Conception of Primitive Christianity, 1732–1735', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 78 (2009), 174–207 (chapter 1); 'The Wesleys' Sacramental Theology and Practice in Georgia', *Proceedings of The Charles Wesley Society*, 13 (2009), 53–73 (chapters 2 and 4); 'Versions of Primitive Christianity: John Wesley's Relations with the Moravians in Georgia, 1735–1737', *Journal of Moravian History*, 6 (2009), 31–60 (chapter 3); 'John Wesley's Relations with the Lutheran Pietist Clergy in Georgia', in Christian T. Collins Winn et al. (eds), *The Pietist Impulse in Christianity* (Eugene, OR, 2011), 135–45 (chapter 3); 'John Wesley in Georgia: Success or Failure?', *PWHS* 56 (October 2008), 297–305 (introduction and conclusion).

This research has profited from engagement with scholars (including students) though my work as Director of the Manchester Wesley Research Centre

and Senior Lecturer in Church History and Wesley Studies at Nazarene Theological College. Knowing that it would require a very long list to acknowledge all to whom thanks is due, I would like to express my gratitude as a whole to the many family, friends, and colleagues who encouraged and challenged me along the way. Without the generous support of my parents this research would not have begun, and apart from the consistent support of my wife, Iulia, it would not have been completed.

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## Abbreviations

BCP	Book of Common Prayer (1662 version unless otherwise noted)
BIJ	Benjamin Ingham's Journal in L[uke] Tyerman, <i>The Oxford Methodists</i> (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1873), 63–80
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
Boltzius, Letters	<i>The Letters of Johann Martin Boltzius, Lutheran Pastor in Ebenezer, Georgia: German Pietism in Colonial America, 1733–1765</i> , ed. and trans. Russell C. Kleckley, 2 vols (Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen Press, 2009)
Bowmer	John C. Bowmer, <i>The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Early Methodism</i> (London: Dacre Press, 1951)
Campbell	Ted A. Campbell, <i>John Wesley and Christian Antiquity: Religious Vision and Cultural Change</i> (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1991)
Collier	Jeremy Collier, <i>Reasons for Restoring some Prayers and Directions: as they Stand in the Communion-Service of the First English Reform'd Liturgy</i> , 2nd edn (London: John Morphew, 1717)
CRG	<i>The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia</i> , 32 vols (1904–89)
CWJ	<i>The Manuscript Journal of the Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.</i> , vol. 1, ed. S T Kimbrough, Jr and Kenneth G. C. Newport (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2008)
Detailed Reports	George Fenwick Jones (ed.), <i>Detailed Reports of the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America . . . Edited by Samuel Urlsperger</i> , vols 3–5 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1972–80)
Egmont, Diary	<i>Manuscripts of the Earl of Egmont. Diary of Viscount Percival afterwards First Earl of Egmont</i> , ed. R. A. Roberts, 3 vols, Historical Manuscripts Commission (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1920–3)
Fleury	Claude Fleury, <i>The Manners of the Antient Christians</i> , ed. John Wesley, 5th edn (London: G. Paramore, 1791)
Fries	Adelaide L. Fries, <i>The Moravians in Georgia 1735–1740</i> (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton, 1905)

GHQ	<i>Georgia Historical Quarterly</i>
Grisbrooke	W. Jardine Grisbrooke, <i>Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries</i> , Alcuin Club Collections (London: SPCK, 1958)
Hammond	Geordan Hammond, 'Restoring Primitive Christianity: John Wesley and Georgia, 1735–1737', Ph.D. thesis (University of Manchester, 2008)
Letters (Telford)	<i>The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.</i> , ed. John Telford, 8 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1931)
Hunter	Frederick Hunter, <i>John Wesley and the Coming Comprehensive Church</i> (London: Epworth Press, 1968)
Johnson	John Johnson, <i>The Unbloody Sacrifice, and Altar, Unvail'd and Supported</i> , 2 vols (London: Robert Knaplock, 1714, 1718)
JW	John Wesley
JWD	John Wesley's Diary in <i>Works</i> , 18:312–571 [unless otherwise indicated JWD, JW], and JWMSJ references are to the date given vol. 18 <i>Journal and Diaries I (1735–38)</i> ]
JWJ	John Wesley's published <i>Journal</i> in <i>Works</i>
JWJ (Curnock)	<i>The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.</i> , ed. Nehemiah Curnock, 8 vols (repr. London: Epworth Press, 1938)
JWMSJ	John Wesley's Manuscript Journal in <i>Works</i> , 18:312–571
LES	E. Merton Coulter and Albert B. Saye (eds), <i>A List of Early Settlers of Georgia</i> (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1949)
MARC	Methodist Archives and Research Centre, The John Rylands Library
MH	<i>Methodist History</i>
Nelson	James Nelson, 'John Wesley and the Georgia Moravians', <i>Transactions of the Moravian Historical Society</i> , 23 (1984), 17–46
NS	New Style (Gregorian calendar)
ODNB	H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), <i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , 60 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) [online edn]
PWHS	<i>Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society</i>
Rack	Henry D. Rack, <i>Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism</i> , 3rd edn (London: Epworth Press, 2002)
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and SPCK Archives, Cambridge University Library
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts and SPG Archives, Rhodes House Library, Oxford

Tailfer	Tailfer, Pat[rick], Hugh Anderson, Da[vid] Douglas, and others, <i>A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America</i> (Charles-Town: P. Timothy, 1741)
Wheatly	Charles Wheatly, <i>A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England</i> , 3rd edn (London: A. Bettesworth, 1720)
Works	<i>The Works of John Wesley</i> (Bicentennial Edition), general ed. Frank Baker and Richard P. Heitzenrater (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975–83 and Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–)
Works (Jackson)	<i>The Works of the Rev. John Wesley</i> , ed. Thomas Jackson, 3rd edn, 14 vols (London: Mason, 1829–31)





## *Note to the Reader*

Unless otherwise indicated, all dates are given in Old Style, the calendar in use in Britain and Colonial America before 1752 when the New Style or Gregorian calendar was adopted. The Old Style or Julian calendar was eleven days behind New Style and the year began on 25 March; however, in this book the year is taken to begin on 1 January.

The term 'Methodist' is employed in this study, since it was currently in use (often derogatorily) as a description of John Wesley and his friends at Oxford. However, to use the word in the contemporary sense as referring to the Methodist Church would be anachronistic for the period covered in this book. In this study, the term 'Methodist' is utilized primarily in reference to the immediate context of Wesley's Georgia mission without reading subsequent developments in the Evangelical Revival back into the period. The word 'Methodist', as used in this book, refers to the methodological approach to spirituality of Wesley and his friends.<sup>1</sup> The label 'Holy Club' is avoided as it was only in use for a few months from the autumn of 1730, Wesley disparaged the term, and it was popularized by Luke Tyerman and other biographers, who mistakenly believed the Oxford Methodists were pursuing 'works-righteousness'.<sup>2</sup> Another contemporary term of derision, 'supererogation men', sheds light on how the Oxford Methodists were viewed by their fellow students and tutors. This designation, denoting their tendency to go beyond what was deemed to be required of pious Anglicans, can usefully be recalled when the word Methodist is used.

<sup>1</sup> On the possible origins of the term as it was applied to the Oxford Methodists, see Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville, 1989), 13–32.

<sup>2</sup> See Richard P. Heitzenrater, 'The Founding Brothers', in William J. Abraham and James E. Kirby (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (Oxford, 2009), 33.



# Introduction

Ever since John Wesley's first biographer, John Hampson, called Wesley's churchmanship in Georgia 'absolute and despotic', the theme of Wesley as an intolerant High Churchman during his Georgia sojourn has featured prominently in many biographies.<sup>1</sup> To the Anglican poet Robert Southey and Reginald Heber, bishop of Calcutta and reviewer of Southey's biography of Wesley, Wesley in Georgia was a High Church enthusiast bordering on the edge of fanaticism.<sup>2</sup> Predictably, amongst British biographers, interest in Wesley's churchmanship increased in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the aftermath of the Oxford Movement, accompanied by the growth of Anglo-Catholicism in the Church of England. In evaluating Wesley's churchmanship, his Georgia ministry was uniformly considered to be of especial importance. The influential Methodist historian, Luke Tyerman, who generally treated Wesley as a venerable hero, was a strident critic of what he saw as Wesley's 'high church nonsense'. Tyerman's comment that Wesley displayed 'high church bigotry and intolerance' in Georgia teaches us more about his disdain for 'half papistical priests and ritualists' of his day than about Wesley himself.<sup>3</sup> American Methodists have likewise traditionally read Wesley 'with a low-church anti-intellectualist bias'; in other words, they evaluated Wesley in the light of what the Methodist Church had become.<sup>4</sup> Nineteenth-century Anglican and Methodist biographers tended to agree that Wesley's High

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (Sunderland, 1791), 1:176. For a useful study on portraits of Wesley by his biographers, see Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2nd edn (Nashville, 2003), 341–94. On his early biographers from 1791 to 1831, see Henry D. Rack, 'Wesley Portrayed: Character and Criticism in Some Early Biographies', *MH* 43 (2005), 90–114. Rack has accurately noted that Wesley's early biographers found it difficult 'to understand the significance and possible value of Wesley's early high church phase' (p. 111).

<sup>2</sup> Southey, *The Life of Wesley and the Rise and Progress of Methodism* (London, 1820); [Heber] 'The Life of Wesley; and the Rise and Progress of Methodism', *The Quarterly Review*, 24 (Oct. 1820). On the identification of the author, see Hill Shine and Helen Chadwick Shine, *The Quarterly Review under Gifford: Identification of Contributors 1809–1824* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1949), 71. The view of Southey and Heber mirrored the criticism of Bishops Gibson, Lavington, and Warburton in the eighteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* (London, 1870), 1:151, 168; cf. Henry Bett's comment that Wesley's conduct was 'deplorably bigoted and tactless': *The Spirit of Methodism* (London, 1937), 18.

<sup>4</sup> Albert C. Outler, 'Towards a Re-Appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian', in Thomas C. Oden and Leicester R. Longden (eds), *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage: Essays of Albert C. Outler* (Grand Rapids, 1991), 53.

Church principles were overly rigid.<sup>5</sup> However, the Wesleyan Methodist minister James Rigg, despite his general intention of playing down Wesley's High Churchmanship, saw parallels between Wesley's ministry in Georgia and nineteenth-century High Church practices such as establishing a service of early morning prayer and a separate service for communion; encouraging fasting, confession, and weekly communion; refusing the sacrament to those who had not been baptised by an episcopally ordained clergyman; requiring baptism by immersion; rebaptizing Dissenters; and refusing to bury those who had not received episcopal baptism.<sup>6</sup> Even more recent biographers such as Frank Baker have seen Georgia as 'an experiment in legalistic churchmanship'.<sup>7</sup> Once again, this comment reveals at least as much about Baker as it does about Wesley. Wesley did not anticipate a future revival of High Churchmanship; he was motivated by renewing the liturgical, doctrinal, disciplinary, and moral life of the primitive church.

Negative assessments of Wesley's churchmanship have been a factor in some influential Methodist writers questioning whether Wesley was a 'true Christian', or at least whether he understood the true evangelical gospel during the Georgia period. Biographers who have taken this position have generally focused on Wesley's comment that he went to Georgia to save his soul, his supposed spiritual depression in Georgia, and his failure to convert the Indians. This strand of interpretation can be found from Thomas Coke and Henry Moore (1792) to A. Skevington Wood (1967), although recent biographers have shied away from this stark conclusion.<sup>8</sup> The reason Wesley was said to have not been a true Christian is simple: he was, according to these writers, not then acquainted with the fullness of the gospel and he was seeking salvation by works in a state of emotional and spiritual confusion.

The related vexed question of the 'success' or 'failure' of the Georgia mission has drawn the attention of nearly all of his biographers, as well as many other

<sup>5</sup> See Julia Wedgwood, *John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1870) and R. Denny Urlin, *The Churchman's Life of Wesley* (London, 1880).

<sup>6</sup> *The Churchmanship of John Wesley: And the Relations of Wesleyan Methodism to the Church of England* (London, 1878), 28–9.

<sup>7</sup> *John Wesley and the Church of England* (London, 1970; repr. 2000), 43.

<sup>8</sup> Coke and Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London, 1792), 97; Whitehead, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.* (London, 1796), 2:1; Henry Moore, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London, 1824), 1:233, 257; Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 1:166; Matthew Lelièvre, *John Wesley: His Life and Work* (London, n.d. [1871]), 20, 21; Frederick E. Maser, 'Preface to Victory: An Analysis of John Wesley's Mission to Georgia', *Religion in Life*, 25 (1956), 280, 285, 288, 292; V. H. H. Green, *The Young Mr. Wesley* (London, 1961), 278 and *John Wesley* (London, 1964), 46; William Cannon, 'John Wesley's Years in Georgia', *MH* 1 (1963), 2–4; A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart: John Wesley, Evangelist* (London, 1967), 53. See the examples given from Joseph Benson, Thomas Jackson, George Croft Cell, J. H. Rigg, and William Cannon in Charles Allen Rogers, 'The Concept of Prevenient Grace in the Theology of John Wesley', Ph.D. diss. (Duke University, 1967), 93–5.

writers who have considered the subject.<sup>9</sup> This issue has divided them into five interpretative camps, each represented by several writers. Some have not hesitated to call the Georgia mission a failure;<sup>10</sup> others have declined to declare it either a failure or a success;<sup>11</sup> while a third option has been to conclude that it was not a failure, although these interpreters have generally also declined to call it an unmitigated success.<sup>12</sup> An alternative approach has been to see Georgia as a 'preface to victory' and to emphasize what Wesley learned by the experience that prepared him for his Aldersgate 'conversion' and the revival;<sup>13</sup> a nuanced version of the first and fourth interpretations has been to label the venture a failure that involved positive developments in Wesley's life.<sup>14</sup>

These arguments have tended to detract from evaluating the Georgia mission in its historical context. Generations of biographers overlooked Wesley's interest in the primitive church during his time in Georgia until Nehemiah Curnock's edition of the Georgia journals and diary (1909) uncovered evidence, particularly from the diaries, that gave a fuller picture of Wesley's reading and practice. Martin Schmidt (1953) and V. H. H. Green (1961) were the first biographers to argue that this was a major theme of the Georgia mission.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>9</sup> See Geordan Hammond, 'John Wesley in Georgia: Success or Failure?', *PWHS* 56 (2008), 297–305.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Watson, *The Life of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (New York, 1831), 35; George Smith, *History of Wesleyan Methodism*, 5th edn (London, 1866), 1:122–8; Wedgwood, *John Wesley*, 104, 113, 114; Lelièvre, *John Wesley*, 25; Cannon, 'John Wesley's Years', 2–4; Green, *John Wesley*, 44; Wood, *Burning Heart*, 53; John Pritchard, *Methodists and their Missionary Societies 1760–1900*, Ashgate Methodist Studies Series (Farnham, 2013), 3–4; the Calvinist C. H. Spurgeon, *The Two Wesleys: A Lecture Delivered in the Metropolitan Tabernacle Lecture Hall, on 6th December 1861* (London, 1894); and the historians of colonial Georgia, E. Merton Coulter: 'When John Wesley Preached in Georgia', *GHQ* 9 (1925), 344; David T. Morgan: 'John Wesley's Sojourn in Georgia Revisited', *GHQ* 64 (1980), 253–62; and in a more guarded sense Harold E. Davis: *The Fledgling Province: Social and Cultural Life in Colonial Georgia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1976), 193, 214–16.

<sup>11</sup> Hampson, *Memoirs*, 186; Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 1:170; Umphrey Lee, *John Wesley and Modern Religion* (Nashville, 1936), 77; Baker, *John Wesley and From Wesley to Asbury: Studies in Early American Methodism* (Durham, NC, 1976), 21–3; Rack, 135 and the early historians of colonial Georgia William Bacon Stevens: *A History of Georgia* (New York, 1847) and Charles C. Jones, *The History of Georgia* (Boston, 1883).

<sup>12</sup> John Telford, *The Life of John Wesley*, rev. edn (London, 1924 [1886]), 87; John H. Overton, *John Wesley* (London, 1891), 51; John S. Simon, *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (London, 1921), 145–6; Richard Green, *The Conversion of John Wesley* (London, 1937), 24; Warren Thomas Smith, 'The Wesleys in Georgia: An Evaluation', *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center*, 7 (1979), 1–11; Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 2nd edn (Nashville, 2013), 66, 75 and 'Wesley in America', *PWHS* 54 (2003), 89.

<sup>13</sup> Whitehead, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 2:31; Coke and Moore, *Life of the Rev. John Wesley*, 94; Haygood S. Bowden, *History of Savannah Methodism from John Wesley to Silas Johnson* (Macon, GA, 1929), 25; Leslie F. Church, *Oglethorpe: A Study in Philanthropy in England and Georgia* (London, 1932), 191, 211, 218; Lee, *John Wesley*, 73; Maser, 'Preface to Victory', 280–93; Baker, *John Wesley*, 51–2 and *From Wesley to Asbury*, 13.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Jackson, *The Centenary of Wesleyan Methodism* (London, 1839), 47; Albert C. Outler (ed.), *John Wesley* (Oxford, 1964), 11–14; Luke L. Keefer, Jr 'John Wesley: Disciple of Early Christianity', Ph.D. diss. (Temple University, 1982), 81–6.

<sup>15</sup> *John Wesley: A Theological Biography*, vol. 1 (English translation, 1962) and *The Young Mr. Wesley*.

In his study of prevenient grace in Wesley's theology, Charles Rogers (1967) emphasized the Georgia period as being crucial for Wesley's theological development.<sup>16</sup> Frank Baker (1970) and Henry Rack (1989) noted the importance of primitive Christianity as a motivating factor for the Georgia mission, but neither of them expounded on this influence in great detail.<sup>17</sup> In the 1980s, three doctoral dissertations were published dealing with the theme of Wesley's primitivism and in a 2003 doctoral thesis Deborah Madden effectively utilized the concept of primitive Christianity to examine his *Primitive Physic* (1747), but, as with Baker and Rack, all of these studies were able to give only a limited treatment of the Georgia period, since their focus was on the whole of Wesley's life.<sup>18</sup> Roughly half of a recent doctoral dissertation on 'John Wesley's America' (2008) is devoted to a largely narrative account of Wesley in Georgia and pays minimal attention to Wesley's theology and the theme of primitive Christianity.<sup>19</sup>

If Wesley saw Georgia as a laboratory to implement his views on the primitive church, what were the sources of his inspiration? As one might expect, the sources ranged from the general context of his life (e.g. his family and the patristic revival in the Church of England) to the more direct influence of John Clayton and the Manchester Nonjurors. The centrality of the Nonjurors in Wesley's thought and practice in Georgia was hardly noticed prior to John Simon's *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (1921), which was the first major biography to benefit from Curnock. Subsequently, their influence has been referenced in some detail by Frederick Hunter (1947, 1968).<sup>20</sup> In *Wesleyan and Tractarian Worship* (1966) Trevor Dearing argued that the Nonjurors and the appeal to the early church link Wesley to the leaders of the Oxford Movement.<sup>21</sup> However, this book is the first full-length study of the Nonjuror influence on the young John Wesley.

<sup>16</sup> Rogers, 'Prevenient Grace'. This study does not support his conclusion that Wesley's 'arrival in Georgia marked the end of the doctrinal confidence of the early Wesley, and the beginning of a period of theological uncertainty and change' (p. 70); cf. Albert C. Outler, 'John Wesley as Theologian—Then and Now', in Oden and Longden (eds), *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> *John Wesley and the Church of England and Reasonable Enthusiast*.

<sup>18</sup> Keefer, 'John Wesley'; Ted A. Campbell, 'John Wesley's Conceptions and Uses of Christian Antiquity', Ph.D. diss. (Southern Methodist University, 1984); Arthur C. Meyers, 'John Wesley and the Church Fathers', Ph.D. diss. (St Louis University, 1985); Deborah Madden, 'Pristine Purity: Primitivism and Practical Piety in John Wesley's Art of Physic', D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 2003). A summary of Keefer's conclusions can be found in his essay 'John Wesley: Disciple of Early Christianity', *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 19 (1984), 23–32. Campbell's dissertation was revised and published as *John Wesley and Christian Antiquity* (Nashville, 1991). Meyers's work is little more than a catalogue of Wesley's references to the Church Fathers. Madden's work has been published as 'A Cheap, Safe and Natural Medicine': *Religion, Medicine and Culture in John Wesley's Primitive Physic* (Amsterdam, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Adam Scott Zele, 'John Wesley's America', Ph.D. diss. (Duke University, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> 'The Manchester Nonjurors and Wesley's High Churchism', *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 172 (1947), 56–61 and Hunter, 9–53.

<sup>21</sup> Prior to the Liturgical Movement and related Parish Communion movement in the twentieth-century Church of England, most Methodist scholars either wrote off any connection

Though they do not focus on the Georgia mission, several studies have made significant contributions to a key concern of this book: Wesley's churchmanship. For example, in contrast to some previous studies, A. B. Lawson (1963) demonstrated substantial continuity before and after Georgia in Wesley's view of ministry and churchmanship.<sup>22</sup>

Recently, a substantial number of Wesley scholars have argued that polarities propagated by Methodist biographers between the pre- and post-Aldersgate Wesley have been overstated, contributing to caricatures of Wesley that stress the discontinuity between a supposed pre- and post-evangelical Wesley to the detriment of recognizing areas of continuity in his life.<sup>23</sup> Themes of life-long intellectual and spiritual unity in Wesley's thought and practice are not difficult to pinpoint. His enduring interest in the Church Fathers as reliable sources of scriptural interpretation and Christian doctrine and his ideal of reviving the primitive church was one of Wesley's consistent beliefs and visions. Even after he began to gradually revise his High Church vision of a near-infallible primitive church (a process which began in Georgia) he did not discard his belief that the early church was a community that embodied the kind of dynamic holiness of heart and life that he believed the Methodists were providentially raised up to reconstitute throughout the British Isles.

In sum, the Georgia mission, while treated by all biographers of Wesley, can arguably be considered the most neglected period of Wesley's much-studied life. Henry Rack has accurately stated that for Wesley's biographers his Georgia 'ministry has generally been judged to be fruitless and ... significant chiefly for its role in bringing him to spiritual bankruptcy'.<sup>24</sup> This anachronistic approach, although avoided by Rack, has often served to devalue a significant period of Wesley's life that deserves to be evaluated in context without reading later developments back into the Georgia mission. When Wesley left England, the Methodists were a tiny loose grouping of like-minded Anglicans, which underscores the need to understand Wesley in his Anglican context. This study, therefore, can serve as a challenge to numerous biographies of Wesley—especially those written by nineteenth-century Methodists—that have 'de-anglicanized' him.<sup>25</sup> In terms of the field of Wesley Studies, this book may be seen as a contribution to what Albert Outler labelled 'Phase III' of Wesley

between Wesley and the Oxford Movement as due to the High Church bigotry of the young Wesley that ended with his evangelical conversion, and/or concluded that the commonality between them was insubstantial. J. Ernest Rattenbury was a pioneer in challenging the traditional interpretation in *The Eucharistic Hymns of John and Charles Wesley* (1948).

<sup>22</sup> A. B. Lawson, *John Wesley and the Christian Ministry: The Sources and Development of His Opinions and Practice* (London, 1963).

<sup>23</sup> See Randy L. Maddox (ed.), *Aldersgate Reconsidered* (Nashville, 1990).

<sup>24</sup> Rack, 133.

<sup>25</sup> Randy L. Maddox, 'Reclaiming an Inheritance: Wesley as a Theologian in the History of Methodist Theology', in Randy L. Maddox (ed.), *Rethinking Wesley's Theology for Contemporary Methodism* (Nashville, 1998), 215.



Studies: evaluating Wesley in his own historical context, which includes seeking to understand Wesley in the light of the sources that shaped him.<sup>26</sup>

For the fruitfulness of devoting research to a particular period of Wesley's life Richard Heitzenrater's influential study 'John Wesley and the Oxford Methodists, 1725–35' might be cited.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, at least four other Ph.D. theses have focused on the early Wesley from 1703–38.<sup>28</sup> Along with the overwhelming majority of theses dealing with Wesley, these studies are primarily theological in nature; therefore, there is a need for historical investigations of the early Wesley. An analysis of a short episode in Wesley's life (i.e. the Georgia mission) might be seen as a welcome addition to the numerous in-depth studies on particular aspects of Wesley's theology. In comparison to the large body of research on Wesley's theology there is a dearth of critical historical investigations of Wesley—one aim of this study is to contribute to our historical and theological knowledge of the early Wesley. Heitzenrater's examination of Wesley in Oxford has furthered our understanding of a significant period in Wesley's life; the Georgia mission also deserves a meticulous study.

A number of secondary themes follow on from the central argument that the ideal of restoring primitive Christianity was at the forefront of Wesley's thinking and is crucial to interpreting the Georgia mission. The first is to analyse Wesley in context as an Anglican clergyman rather than interpreting his Georgia sojourn as a 'preface to victory'. Second, when possible, the connection between Wesley's reading and practice of primitive Christianity is illustrated. Third, a fresh perspective on his interaction with the colonists, Moravians, Lutheran Pietists, and Sophia Williamson née, Hopkey is given by interpreting these relationships within the context of Wesley's goal of renewing primitive Christianity in the Georgia wilderness. In order to demonstrate adequately the primary and secondary arguments and themes, a thorough consideration of the primary documents written by Wesley and his contemporaries is essential. Therefore, a fourth secondary theme is an evaluation of Wesley's sources (i.e. his journals, diary, letters) and the way these documents have been used and sometimes misused by his biographers. Fifth, sources seldom utilized by

<sup>26</sup> Albert C. Outler, 'A New Future for Wesley Studies: An Agenda for Phase III', in Oden and Longden (eds), *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 125–42; 'The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition', in Ogden and Longden (eds), *Wesleyan Theological Heritage*, 82; cf. Kenneth E. Rowe, 'Editor's Introduction: The Search for the Historical Wesley', in Kenneth E. Rowe (ed.), *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition* (Metuchen, NJ, 1976), 1–10.

<sup>27</sup> Ph.D. diss. (Duke University, 1972).

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Kristine Nottingham, 'The Making of an Evangelist: A Study of John Wesley's Early Years', (Columbia University, 1938); Lawrence McIntosh, 'The Nature and Design of Christianity in John Wesley's Early Theology', (Drew University, 1966); Thorvald Källstad, *John Wesley and the Bible: A Psychological Study* (University of Uppsala, 1974); Steve Harper, 'The Devotional Life of John Wesley, 1703–1738', (Duke University, 1981). V. H. H. Green's *The Young Mr. Wesley* also focused on the early Wesley up to 1735.

Wesley's biographers relating to the history of colonial Georgia are incorporated into the study in an effort to give a fuller picture of the Georgia mission than is possible through relying solely on Wesley's writings.

Wesley's journals and diary are key sources for this task, but they must be read critically and be compared to other contemporary accounts of Wesley and of colonial Georgia in general. Although all of Wesley's biographers have discussed the Georgia period, with only a few recent notable exceptions their studies have been deficient due to their reliance largely on an uncritical reading of Wesley's published *Journal*. Generally speaking, Wesley's biographers have usually consulted the journals of Charles Wesley and Benjamin Ingham, but they have rarely combined the evidence of these accounts with that of other lesser-known contemporary documents. The journals of the Moravians August Gottlieb Spangenberg, Bishop David Nitschmann, Johann Töltschig, and Johann Andrew Dober are essential sources for studying Wesley's mission in Georgia.<sup>29</sup> A wealth of primary documents relating to the Lutheran Pietists Johann Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau, their ministry to the Salzburgers, and relations with Wesley are also available.<sup>30</sup> Important comments about Wesley are made by his chief antagonist Thomas Causton in his journal, covering the period from 25 May to 24 July 1737.<sup>31</sup> The little-known *Memoirs* of Philip Thicknesse (1790) also provide valuable reflections on this young colonist's interaction with Wesley in Georgia. The most significant comments of opposition to Wesley's ministry in Georgia (apart from Wesley's journals) can be found in *A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America* (1741) written by a group of discontented colonists.<sup>32</sup>

Wesley's biographers have also paid little attention to the extensive number of primary sources relating to the history of colonial Georgia. In over thirty volumes, *The Colonial Records of the State of Georgia* is the premier collection of primary documents relating to the history of colonial Georgia, but the records have seldom been used by scholars to shed light on Wesley's experience in Georgia. The diary and journals of John Perceval, first Earl of Egmont, a prominent member of the Trustees for Establishing the Colony of Georgia in

<sup>29</sup> Portions of these journals have been published in Adelaide Fries, *The Moravians in Georgia 1735–1740* (1905) and James Nelson's article 'John Wesley and the Georgia Moravians' (1984).

<sup>30</sup> See Henry Newman's *Salzburger Letterbooks*, ed. George Fenwick Jones (Athens, 1966) and the third to fifth volumes of the eighteen-volume *Detailed Reports*; Boltzius, *Letters*. Extracts of letters relating to Wesley have been published in Karl Zehrer, 'The Relationship between Pietism in Halle and Early Methodism', trans. James A. Dwyer, *MH* 17 (1979), 211–17. Of less importance are the journals of Philipp Georg Friedrich von Reck, the leader of two groups of Salzburger emigrants to Georgia: *An Extract of the Journals of Mr. Commissary von Reck... and of the Reverend Mr. Bolzius* (London, 1734) and *Von Reck's Voyage*, ed. Kristian Hvidt (Savannah, 1980).

<sup>31</sup> Published in Trevor Reese (ed.), *Our First Visit in America* (Savannah, 1974).

<sup>32</sup> On the genesis of this book, see Clarence L. Ver Stegg's introduction in the edition of the work he edited, which includes the counterpoints made by the Earl of Egmont (Athens, 1960), ix–xxxiv.