

Remnants of John Wesley's Personal Library

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This is the last in a series of lists of books owned by John Wesley—by authors other than himself or Charles—that have been identified as still extant. The largest collection of these books is now on exhibit at Wesley's House in London, and was detailed in a previous list.¹ This London collection is far from complete. A major reason for this is that Wesley sent a significant portion of his personal library to the Kingswood School around 1768, when he decided to upgrade the curriculum offered there. Thus, another prior list detailed the volumes that remain in the Kingswood collection which can be traced back to Wesley.² Together, these two collections contain the majority of the extant books from Wesley's personal library. There are a couple of dozen books, however, scattered in other present collections, that can be shown—or have been claimed—to have belonged to Wesley. This list is devoted to gathering, and assessing, these scattered volumes.

Volumes that Clearly Belonged—or had a Connection—to Wesley

It is not surprising that parts of Wesley's library would be scattered beyond the two main collections. To begin with, he was prone to give (or bequeath) individual volumes to favored assistants and family members, as can be illustrated by three such volumes which eventually made their way back into the collection at Wesley's House.³ At least two of the works below (Johnson and Münster) passed in this way from Wesley's library into other hands and eventually found a home in their present setting. Another dynamic for scattering Wesley's library was the situation of the collection at Kingswood up until at least 1936, which appears to have allowed several volumes with his inscription to be removed by persons seeking Wesley memorabilia.⁴ At least two of the items in the list below (Halkett and Mills) are marked as gifts to Kingswood by Wesley, and were apparently removed at a later time from that collection.

Whatever the details of their journey, books that can be confidently assumed to have been owned by Wesley are present today in five collections

¹Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley's Reading: Evidence in the Book Collection at Wesley's House, London," *Methodist History* 41.3 (2003).

²Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley's Reading: Evidence in the Kingswood School Archives," *Methodist History* 41.2 (2003): 49–67.

³See the 1772 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the two Greek New Testaments on the list in *Methodist History* 41.3 (2003).

⁴Cf. *Methodist History* 41.2 (2003): 49.

beyond those at Wesley's House and Kingswood. The largest set of these remnants is in the Methodist Archives at the John Rylands University Library in Manchester.⁵ Three works are held in the archives of Wesley College in Bristol.⁶ Two volumes were located and collected by Frank Baker, and now reside in the Special Collections of Duke University. One volume is in the New Room Chapel in Bristol. And a four-volume set is now in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York City.

The list which follows identifies the location of each item, and the evidence that connects the item to John Wesley. In most cases this is an inscription in John Wesley's hand, as indicated by putting the inscription in **bold font**. Nearly all of the inscriptions were authenticated by Frank Baker, and I have verified their content and continuing presence.⁷ The most interesting item in the list is surely the Hebrew/Latin bible (Münster) that belonged originally to Wesley's father.

Bacon, Nathaniel (1593–1660). *A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira: after he turned apostate from the Protestant Church to Popery; as also the miserable lives, and woeful deaths of Mr. John Child ... and Mr. George Edwards* London: for the booksellers in London, 1770.

Methodist Archives: **“J.W.”** on p. 57; corrected and annotated throughout by Wesley

[Eugene, Prince of Savoy (1663–1736).] *The Life and Actions of Prince Eugene of Savoy, Generalissimo of the Emperor's Forces in Italy.* 2nd edition. London: s.n., 1707.

Methodist Archives: **“J.W.”**

Gastrell, Francis (1662–1725). *The Certainty of the Christian Revelation and the Necessity of Believing it Established. In opposition to all the cavils and insinuations of such as pretend to allow natural religion, and reject the gospel* 2nd edition. London: Thomas Bennet, 1703.

Methodist Archives: **“John Wesley”**

Gillies, John (1712–96). *Appendix to the Historical Collections Relating to Remarkable Periods of the Success of the Gospel.* Glasgow: J. Orr, 1761.

Methodist Archives: “To the Rev. Mr. John Wesley from his

⁵I am grateful to Gareth Lloyd, archivist of the collection, for assistance in locating these items.

⁶I am grateful to Janet Henderson, librarian at Wesley College, for enabling me to consult these volumes.

⁷Baker lists the inscriptions (and abridging marks) as authentic on notecards now in the possession of Richard Heitzenrater, who made them available for my consultation. The one inscription not mentioned by Baker is in the Samuel Johnson set. In this case I obtained a photo of the inscription and confirmed with Heitzenrater that it is authentic.

obliged servt. John Gillies. 14 Aug. 1761”⁸

Goodwin, John (1594?–1665). *Eirenomachia [Greek], The Agreement and Distance of Brethren; or, A brief survey .. these important heads of doctrine: 1. Election & Reprobation, 2. the death of Christ, 3. the grace of God ..., 4. the liberty or power of the will ..., 5. the perseverance of the saints*. London: Peter Parker, 1671.

Wesley College: Wesley’s abridging marks throughout

Goodwin, John (1594?–1665). *The Pagan’s Debt and Dowry; or, A brief discussion of these questions, whether, how far, and in what sense such persons of mankind amongst whom the letter of the Gospel never came, are notwithstanding bound to believe on Jesus Christ*. London: Peter Parker, 1671

Wesley College: bound with Goodwin, *Eirenomachia*

Halkett, Anne (1622–99). *Meditations on the Twenty-fifth Psalm; also meditations and prayers upon the first week, with observations on each day’s creation; likewise instructions for youth*. Edinburgh: Bayne & Mennons, 1778.

Duke University: **“J. Wesley 1778” “An Excellent Woman”
“Kingswood 1778”**

Horbery, Matthew (1707–73). *An Enquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning ... Future Punishment*. London: J. & P. Knapton, & J. Rivington, 1744.

Wesley College: **“J.W. 1757”**

Johnson, Samuel (1709–84). *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets, with Critical Observations on their Works*. 2nd edition. 4 vols. London: C. Bathurst, W. Strahan, J Rivington, et al., 1781.

Pierpont Morgan: **“J. Wesley, the gift of the author, 1781”** and “S. Wesley, the Legacy of her much honoured Uncle, J. Wesley, 1791” (in Sarah Wesley Jr.’s hand)

Ludovici, C[hristian] (1660–1728). *Teutsch-Englishes Lexicon*. Leipzig: Thomas Fritschen, 1716.

Methodist Archives: **“J. Wesley” [MAW CW342]**⁹

⁸While this dedication is not in Wesley’s hand, he worked with Gillies in preparing the original volume to which this was an appendix (see *Journal* [24 June 1755], *Works* 21:20), so there is little reason to doubt the volume was given to Wesley.

⁹The shelf number indicates this is part of the “Charles Wesley family” collection in the Methodist Archives Wesley materials.

- Middleton, Patrick (1661–1736). *A Short View of the Evidences upon which the Christian Religion, and the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures is Established*. London: Strahan, 1734.
Methodist Archives: **“J. Wesley”**
- Mills, John (d. 1784?). *An Essay on the Management of Bees*. London: Johnson & Davenport, 1766.
Methodist Archives: **“J.W. 1769” “Kingswood”**
- Münster, Sebastian (1489–1552), editor. *En tibi lector Hebraica Biblia, latina planeque noua Sebast. Munsteri tralatione* 2 vols. Basle: Michael Isingrin, 1546.
Methodist Archives: **“J. Wesley”**
Note: This Old Testament in parallel Hebrew and Latin text was owned by Samuel Wesley Sr., and has extensive notes in his hand. It is said to be the only volume rescued from the Epworth Rectory fire of 1709. It was passed down to John, and later into the possession of Adam Clarke.
- The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*. London: Bonham Norton & John Bill, 1619.¹⁰
Methodist Archives: **“J. Wesley”**
- Rodriguez, Alfonso (1526–1616). *A Treatise of the Virtue of Humility*. 4th edition. London: Charles Rivington, 1733.
Duke University: **“Miss Granville, 1733”¹¹**
- Sternhold, Thomas (d. 1549), John Hopkins (d. 1570), et al. *The Whole Book of Psalms, collected into English metre*. Birmingham: John Baskerville, 1762.
New Room: **“J. Wesley. The gift of Mrs. Johnston. May 26, 1773”**
- Wells, Mary (fl. 1787). *The Triumph of Faith over the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; exemplified in the life, death, and spiritual experience of that bright and shining light Mrs. Joanna Turner*. Bristol: T. Mills, 1787.
Methodist Archives: **“The Gift of Mrs. Turner. March 9, 1788”** and his abridgment marks in book
- Wilson, Andrew (1718–92). *Human Nature Surveyed by Philosophy and Revelation in Two Essays: I. Philosophical reflections on an important question; II. Essay on the dignity of human nature*. London: Whiston & White, 1768.
Methodist Archives: bound with Mills, *Essay on Bees*, some editorial marks in Wesley’s hand

¹⁰Tradition says that this was used by Wesley when visiting the sick.

¹¹It appears that this inscription indicates Wesley’s gift of this book to Miss Granville.

Volumes that *Likely* Belonged to Wesley

There are four other works in the Methodist Archives collection that likely belonged to John Wesley. The ambiguity about their status arises from the journey of the collection now in Wesley's House. Around 1860 the books that had been part of Wesley's library in London were transferred to Richmond College, under the care of Thomas Jackson, to provide resources for the recently opened institution. At Richmond they were shelved together with a collection of books that had belonged to Charles Wesley and some of his family members—a collection which Jackson had helped the Conference to purchase from Charles Wesley Jr. in 1831.¹² While we can assume that there was care to keep the collections distinct, we must also note the exigencies of the times. Consider in particular Oliver Beckerlegge's recent comments on his initial days as a student at Richmond College in 1946. The college had been closed during the war, and damaged by a bomb near the end of the war. Beckerlegge was entering just as it reopened, and discovered the bookcases containing the Wesley materials in some disarray. He reports being given permission to clean, dust, and "rearrange" them.¹³

This incident suggests the possibility that there was some mixing of the two collections. A broad intermixing was unlikely, because most books in each set have clear autographs (or initials) to indicate owners. But several books are unsigned and in a few the autographs are indistinct. The ambiguity this raises is clear in a manuscript catalog of the combined collection of "Wesley Family books" at Richmond College that was prepared in January 1951 by two students: John H. Crouch and John P. Horner.¹⁴ The compilers group the books in sections by ownership, starting with books belonging to Charles Wesley Sr., then Sarah Gwynne Wesley, then the children of Charles and Sarah, then some broader family members, and then those belonging to John Wesley. They note that in some cases the decisions are unclear, and there are evidences of correcting earlier entries as the work progressed. There is also evidence of a later hand altering some of the suggested classifications. This later altering was likely related to handling of the collection after Richmond College closed in 1972. The collection was initially moved to the Methodist Archives in the basement of the Epworth Press building in London. Then, after four years of considering options, it was decided to return to Wesley's House those books originally taken from there—that is, the ones that would have belonged to John Wesley. The rest were sent to the John Rylands University Library, as the "Charles Wesley family" collection.

¹²For more details on the pedigree of this collection, and a listing of its current contents, see Randy L. Maddox, "Collection of Books owned by the Charles Wesley Family, Methodist Archives, John Rylands Library," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 38.2 (Fall 2003).

¹³See Oliver A. Beckerlegge, *The Shorthand of Charles Wesley* (Madison, NJ: Charles Wesley Society, 2002), 1.

¹⁴This catalog now sits (uncataloged) beside volume 429 of the "Charles Wesley Family" collection in the Methodist Archives at the Rylands.

The division between the two collections was guided by John Bowmer, and can be considered broadly reliable. However, it should be noted that there are now two books at City Road that were clearly part of the collection obtained from Charles Wesley Jr.¹⁵ Conversely, one of the volumes with John's autograph listed above (Ludovici) came to the Rylands as part of the Charles Wesley family collection. These relatively clear cases of intermixing warrant the possibility that some works now in the Charles Wesley family collection which are not autographed may have belonged instead to John Wesley. Four such works indeed seem likely to have belonged to John:

Freylinghausen, Johann Anastasius (1670–1739). *Geistliches Gesangbuch den Kern alter und neuer Lieder ... Nebst ... 1. Theil*. 17th edition. Halle: Wäysenhausen, 1734.

Methodist Archives: [MAW CW312]

Howard, John (1726–90). *The State of the Prisons in England and Wales*. London: T. Cadell & W. Conant, 1777.

Methodist Archives: “To the Rev. Mr. Wesley with Mr. Howard's Respects”
[MAW CW337]

Howard, John (1726–90). *An Account of the Principal Lazarettos in Europe, with various papers relative to the plague*. Warrington: T. Cadell, 1789.

Methodist Archives: “Mr. Howard requests Mr. Wesley will be kind enough to accept this book as a small testimony of his esteem”
[MAW CW340]

Hoffman, Friedrich (1660–1742). *Opera omnia Physico-Medica*. 6 volumes in 4. Geneva: De Tournes, 1748. (missing volume 1)

Methodist Archives: [MAW CW330–332]

The volumes donated by John Howard to “Mr. Wesley” were surely given to John, who met Howard at about the time of the publication of the second volume (which was after Charles's death!). Likewise, John showed an active interest in the medical writings of Friedrich Hoffmann, while Charles had no such interest. And it seems likely that John picked up the Freylinghausen hymnal while in Halle, at the same time he obtained the Zinzendorf *Gesang-buch* that is now in the London collection (because it is autographed), though he may well have subsequently given Freylinghausen to Charles.

Volumes that *May* have Belonged to Wesley

We come finally to a few volumes that are purported to have belonged to Wesley, but for which the evidence is either weak or disputed. One item

¹⁵The Charles Wesley items in London are listed at the end of Maddox, “Collection of Books.”

in this category would be a 1683 edition of the Anglican *Homilies* in the Special Collections of the Bridwell Library at Southern Methodist University.¹⁶ Inside the cover of this volume is inscribed: “Bought from Goodspeed. ‘A volume of sermons reported to have been in Wesley’s library.’ G.T. Banks.” But there is no autograph by Wesley or any other internal evidence to confirm the claim in the inscription.

A second unclear possibility is a book on astronomy by Edward Wells.¹⁷ This volume is in the Methodist Archives collection at the Rylands Library, and has the inscription “John Wesley, Hartfd., Georgia 1737.” But there are reasons for being hesitant in accepting the claim of the inscription. First, there is no clear pedigree tracing it back to the Wesley House library; rather, it was reported to have been “discovered” in 1901 in a box of books headed for the trash.¹⁸ Second, Richard Heitzenrater and Jack Bowmer were consulted about the authenticity of the inscription in the 1970s and concurred that it was not in Wesley’s hand.

The report of the discovery of the Wells’ volume mentions a second book on Newton’s philosophy rescued at the same time. It claims that this volume was inscribed as a gift to Wesley from George Whitefield in 1740.¹⁹ Unfortunately, I have been unable to find any trace of the present location of this book, so there is no way to judge its authenticity.

The final case of a claimed identification of a book from Wesley’s library that can not presently be verified is surely the most disappointing. In the summer of 1938 a major exhibition celebrating Wesley (on the bi-centenary of Aldersgate) was hosted in the Usher Art Gallery at Lincoln College, Oxford. One of the items listed in the catalogue of the exhibition is a “16th century missal, with parallel Greek and Latin” liturgy for mass.²⁰ This missal is said to have the autograph of Samuel Wesley Sr. (“S. Wesley”) inside the front cover, and an indication that it belonged to John Wesley after his father’s death. The missal is identified as the property of Lincoln College. Unfortunately, despite rigorous searching in preparation for the pending celebration of the 300th anniversary of Wesley’s birth, officials at Lincoln College have not been able to locate this volume in any of their holdings. As such, we remain unclear both of the bibliographical details and the authenticity of this potential remnant of Wesley’s library.

¹⁶Church of England, *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth* (Oxford: printed at the Theatre and sold by Thomas Guy, 1683).

¹⁷Edward Wells (1667–1727), *The Young Gentleman’s Astronomy, Chronology, and Dialling*, 4th edition (London: James, John & Paul Knapton, 1736).

¹⁸*PWHS* 3 (1901–2): 88

¹⁹The book in question is apparently Henry Pemberton (1694–1771), *View of Sir Isaac Newton’s Philosophy* (London: S. Palmer, 1728).

²⁰See *Catalogue of an Exhibition held in the Usher Art Gallery, Lincoln 15th June to 31st July 1938, celebrating the bi-centenary of the founding of Methodism, John Wesley converted 24th May, 1738* (City of Lincoln, 1938), p. 30, item 264. There are copies of the catalogue in the Lincoln College archives and at the New Room Chapel in Bristol.