

# United Methodist History

John Wesley  
and the Roots of Methodism



# The Wesley Family



Samuel

Susanna

John

Charles

# Samuel



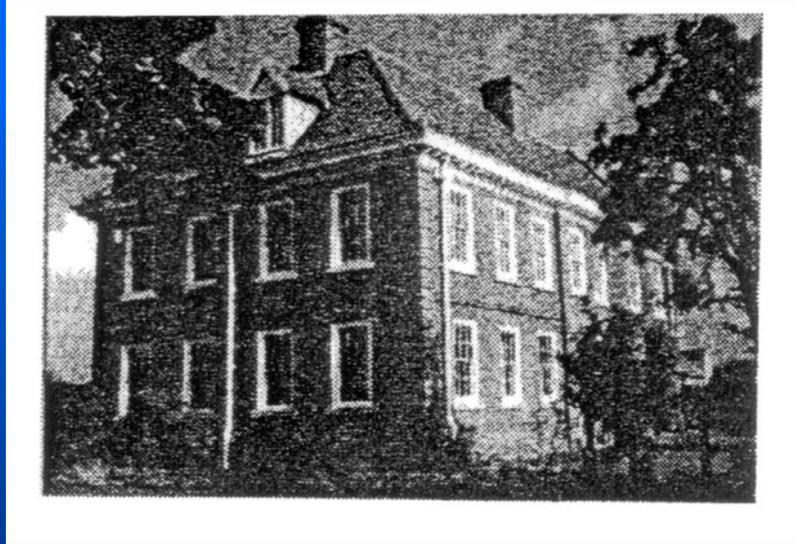
- Father of John Wesley
- Dissenter
- Rector of Epworth
- Disciplinarian who often inquired into the private lives of the parishioners

# Susanna



- Mother of John Wesley
- Nonconformist
- Famous for rigorous discipline, both at home and in education of her children
- Strong political opinions

# Epworth



- Principal town of the Fen Lands
- Site of the rectory of Rev. Samuel Wesley

# “A Brand Plucked from the Burning”



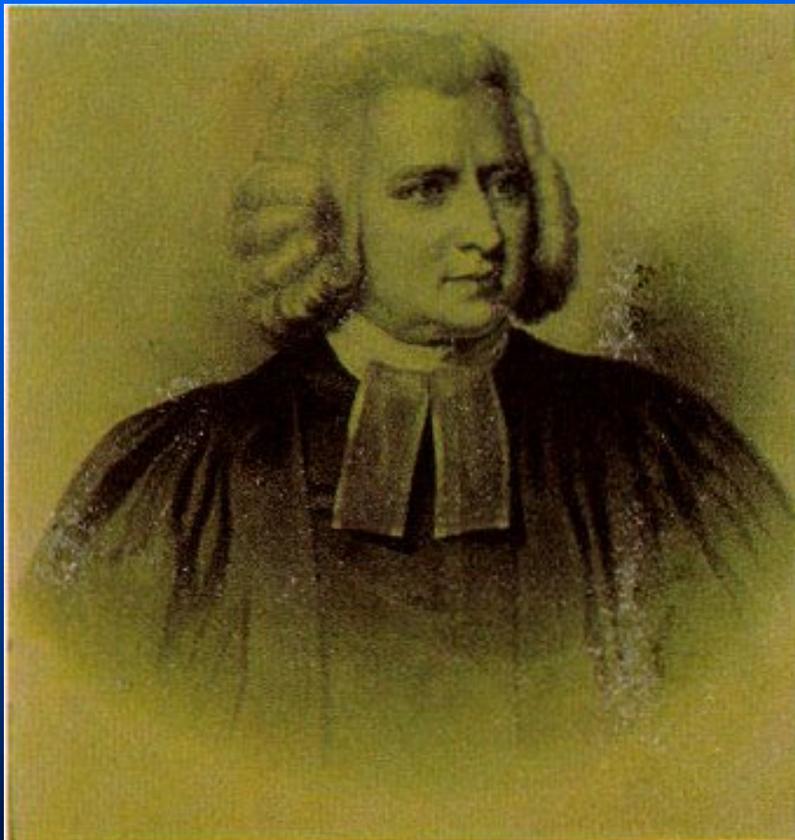
- Rectory set on fire in February 1709, possibly by those who hated Samuel
- John's life spared
- Later saw as evidence of special providence

# Charterhouse



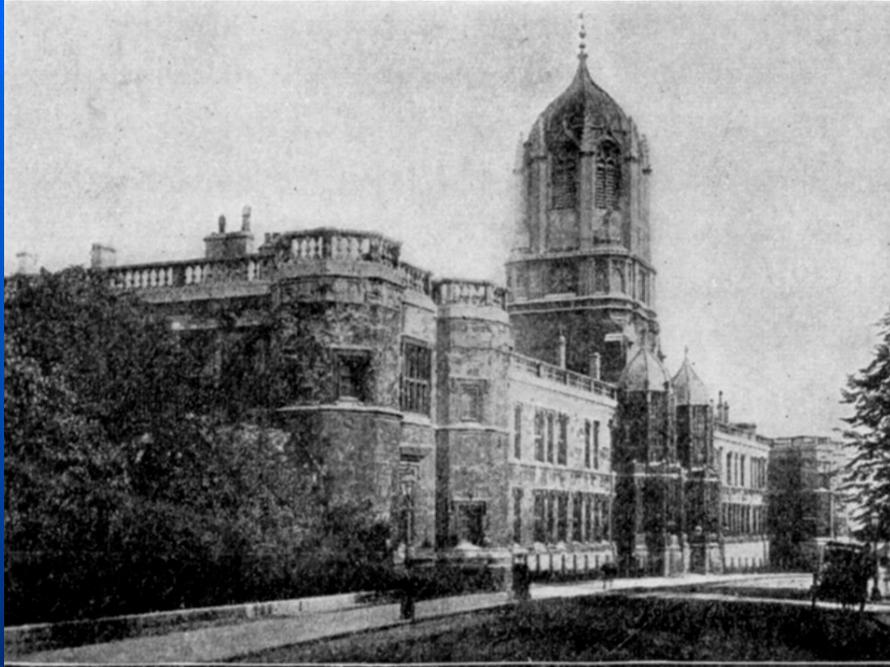
- Famous school where John was educated
- Nominated by father's patron, Duke of Buckingham

# Charles



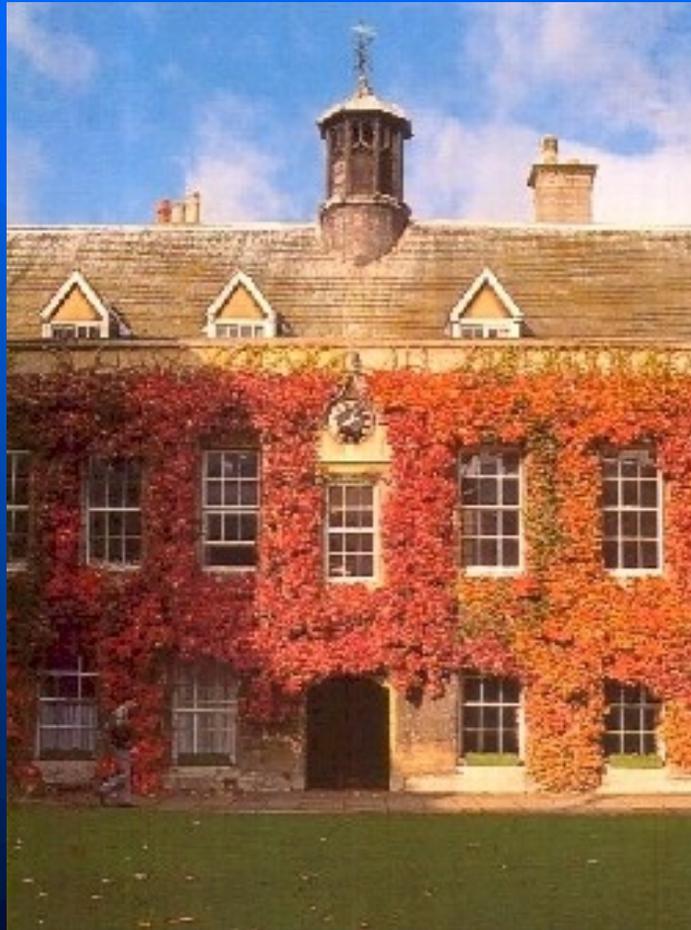
- Brother of John
- 18<sup>th</sup> child of Samuel and Susanna
- Wrote several thousand hymns, many of which we still sing today

# Christ College, Oxford



- College Wesley entered after his studies at Charterhouse
- John ordained deacon in 1725

# Lincoln College



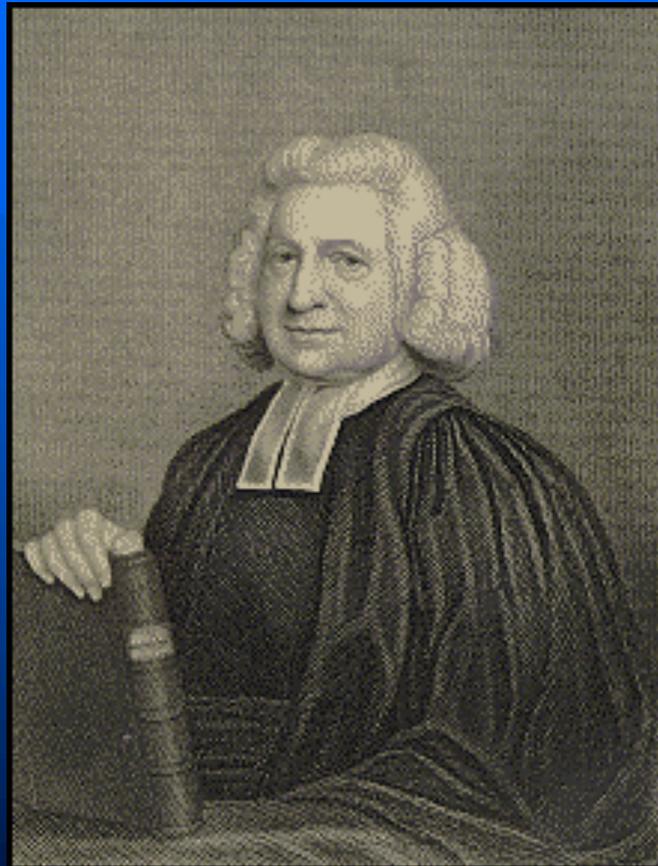
- John elected fellow of Lincoln in 1726
- Received Master's Degree in 1727

# Holy Club



- Informal club that met for study and devotion at Oxford
- Charles founded club, but when John returned to Oxford in 1729 he took over as leader
- Focus on social concerns

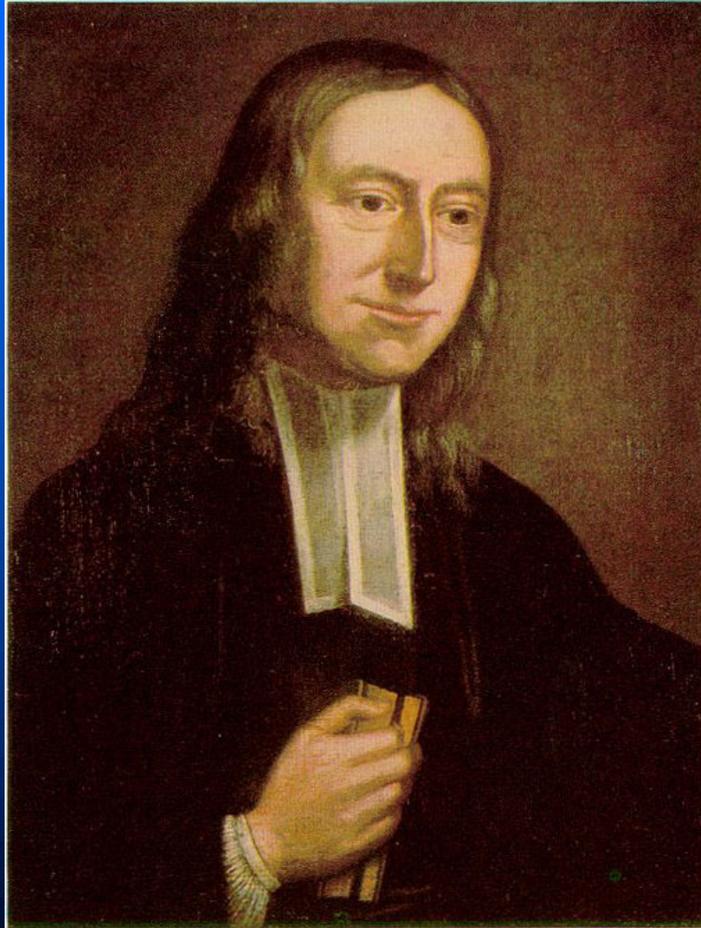
# “Methodist”



Charles Wesley

- Holy Club members ridiculed by others at Christ College
- “Bible Bigots, Bible Moths, Sacramentarians, Supererogation Men,” some of the other names they were called

# “Methodist”



- Of all these names, “Methodist” stuck
- Intended to be an insult
- John rather favored the term, defining a Methodist as “one that lives according to the method laid down in the Bible.”

# Holy Club Activities



The Bocardo Prison, which the Oxford Methodists visited

- First work to study the Bible
- Visit prisons
- Visit sick
- Gave away all they had, after providing for their necessities
- Accountable to one another

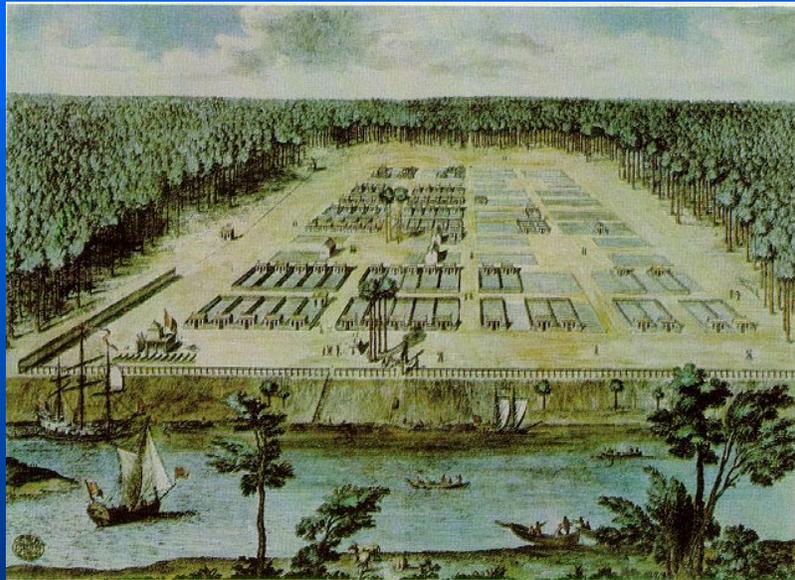
# Other Holy Club Members



George Whitefield

- William Morgan
  - Advocate of Greek Testament study, weekly Communion, visiting of prisons, care for the poor
- George Whitefield
  - Innovated field preaching, supposedly could make you cry by the way he pronounced “Mesopotamia”

# On to Georgia



Savannah Colony

- John agrees to serve parish in Savannah, Georgia
- Originally hoped to be a missionary to the “Indians”
- Charles goes along as well

# Aboard the *H.M.S. Simmonds*

James Oglethorp, Esq; Member of Parliament for Haslemere in the County of Surrey, embarks on board the Simmonds, Capt. Cornish, for Georgia, this Day.

*Tuesday Morning James Oglethorpe, Esq, set out by Land for Gravesend, and the Rev. Mr. John Wesley, Student of Lincoln College, Oxon; the Rev. Mr. Charles Wesley, Student of Christ-Church-College, and the Rev. Mr. Ingram of Queen's, in order to embark for Georgia.*

*There were sent along with these Gentlemen, as a Benefaction of several worthy Ladies and Gentlemen, 550 of the Bishop of Man's Treatises on the Sacrament, and his Lordship's Principles and Duties of Christianity, for the use of the English Families settled in Georgia.*

- Departs for Georgia in October 1735
- Meets the Moravians, a group of German emigrants going to Georgia as religious refugees

# The Storm



- As the Germans sang a Psalm, a great storm came
  - Mainsail split, water pouring into lower decks
  - English crying out in fear
  - Germans kept singing
- John fascinated by their calmness; later longed for that same kind of assurance

# Georgia Troubles



Gen. Oglethorpe

- Georgia parishioners resent John's "high churchmanship"
- Conflicts with General James Oglethorpe, founder of the Savannah colony

# It Only Gets Worse

Tu. March 8. Miss Sophy engages herself to Mr W, a person not remarkable for Handsomeness, neither for Gentleness, neither for Wit, or Knowledge or Sense, & last of all, for Religion. And on Sat: 13, they were married at Durny Church (as were Mr Bowsy & Mr Burrows) This being 4<sup>th</sup> Day is compleated 7<sup>th</sup> Year from my first speaking to her. What Thou dost, O God, I know not now: But I know hereafter. O give her not up yet, to a strong Delusion, if she sh<sup>d</sup> believe a Lie.

Sund. 20. M<sup>rs</sup> Williamson told me privately, That her Husband had forbid her, to speak to me any more. Ah poor Sophy! If it is in the beginning, what will the End be?

John's letter re: Miss Sophy

- John's relationship troubles
  - Oglethorpe's women
    - » Mrs. Hawkins
- Sophia Hopkey
  - Regular attendee of John's services
  - John has affection for her

# Miss Sophy



- Gives John every chance to marry her
- John continues to vacillate
- She eventually runs off with Mr. Williamson to be married
- John then refuses to serve them Holy Communion
- Lawsuits galore – indicted on 10 counts
  - Baptism rules, refusal to read burial services for dissenters, charges from Sophia's husband

# John's Disappointing Departure



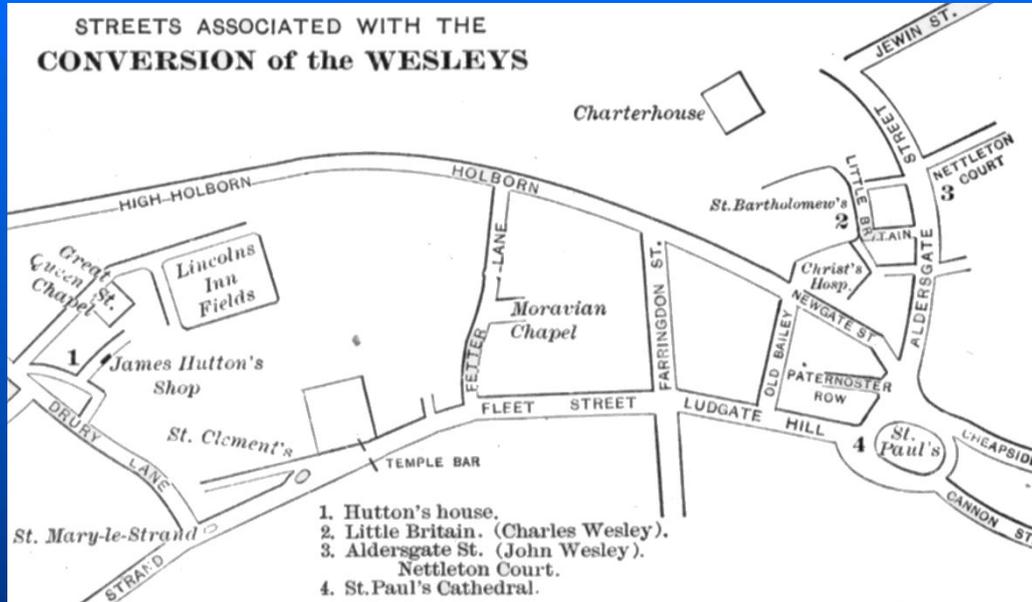
- Under indictment and discouraged, John leaves Georgia under cover of darkness in December of 1737
- Later writes in his journal, “I went to America to convert the Indians, but oh, who shall convert me?”

# Peter Bohler



- Moravian preacher serving church in London
- John amazed at Bohler's accounts of the holiness and happiness which attended living faith
- Advised John to “preach faith until you have it and then because you have it, you will preach faith.”

# Aldersgate



- Site of John's conversion experience in May 1738
- “Unwillingly” went to society meeting on Aldersgate street
  - Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans being read

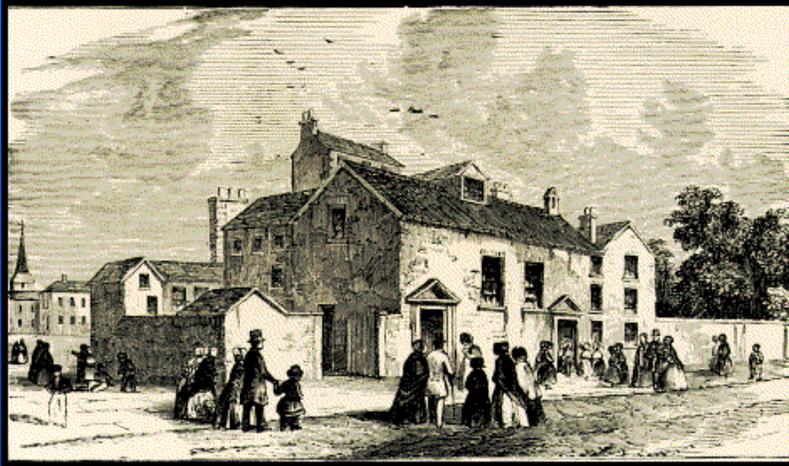
# “Heart Strangely Warmed”



Nettleton Court off  
Aldersgate Street

- As John listened to the change God works in the heart through faith, he felt his own heart strangely warmed
- Trusted Christ
- Felt assurance that God had taken away his sins and saved him from death

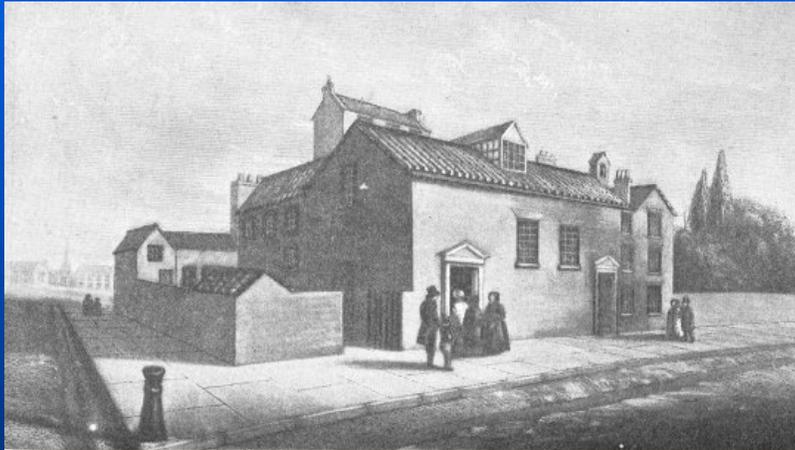
# New Zeal for Ministry



The Foundry

- Field preaching in Bristol
  - Reached out to coal miners, others who were “left out” by the Church of England
- Established the Foundry
  - Abandoned building near Moorfields, once used to make cannons
  - Opened for worship in November of 1739
  - Headquarters of Methodism in London
  - Charity school, dispensary, almshouse, loan society

# Classes, Bands, and Societies



The Foundry

## ■ Classes

- Change in behavior
  - » 12-20 people, mixed ages/sexes
  - » Not for academic learning
  - » Mutual confession of sin

## ■ Bands

- Change in direction
  - » 5-10 people, same age & sex
  - » Desire to grow in love & holiness
  - » Accountability

## ■ Societies

- Change in knowledge
  - » Lecture, preaching, hymn singing

# The Church of England Responds



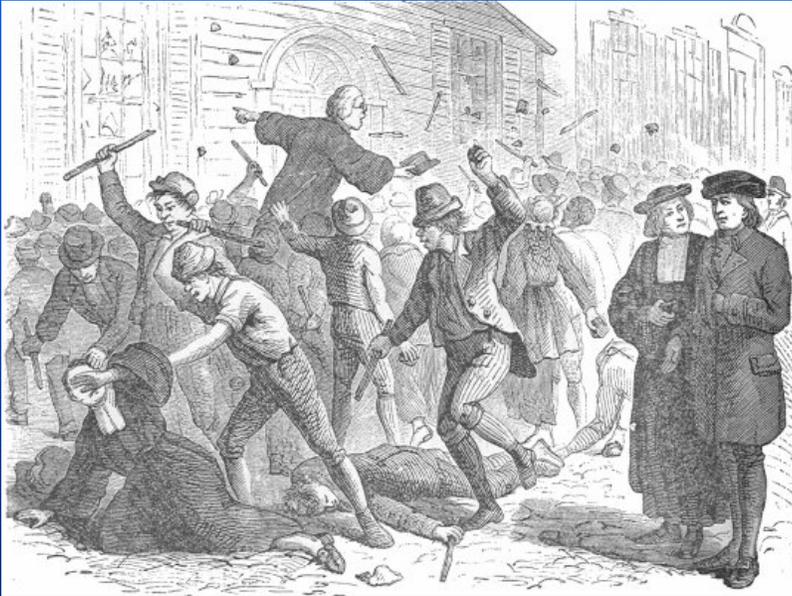
- In 1740, the Wesleys barred from pulpits and excluded from Communion table
- John continues to preach to huge crowds outdoors
  - 20,000 people at Kennington Common
- Schism
  - John's organizing of societies, ordination of clergy to administer sacraments

# John Preaches Anyway



- Upon return to Epworth, barred from his father's old pulpit
- Preaches outside, from atop his father's grave, for 3 days
  - "I am well assured," writes Wesley, "that I did far more good to my Lincolnshire parishioners by preaching three days on my father's tomb than I did by preaching three years in his pulpit."
  - Preached 8 nights there

# Mob Mentality



- Clergymen and “gentlemen” stir up riots among excitable people
- Multiple attempts to keep John from speaking
- John’s calm courage makes impressions even among captains of the rioters
  - “always to look a mob in the face.”

# Early Conferences and Circuits

A. 1. Be diligent, never be unemployed a moment, never be triflingly employed, [never while away time,] spend no more time at any place than is strictly necessary.

2. Be serious. Let your motto be, Holiness unto the Lord. Avoid all lightness as you would avoid hell-fire, and laughing as you would cursing and swearing.

3. Touch no woman; be as loving as you will, but hold your hands off 'em. Custom is nothing to us.

4. Believe evil of no one. If you see it done, well; else take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction on every thing. You know the judge is always allowed [supposed]† to be on the prisoner's side.

5. Speak evil of no one; else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your [own] breast, till you come to the person concerned.

6. Tell everyone what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, and as soon as may be, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste, therefore, to cast the fire out of your bosom.

7. Do nothing as a gentleman: you have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. You are the servant of all, therefore

8. Be ashamed of nothing but sin: not of fetching wood, or drawing water, if time permit; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbour's.

9. Take no money of any one. If they give you food when you are hungry, or clothes when you need them, it is good. But not silver or gold. Let there be no pretence to say, we grow rich by the Gospel.

10. Contract no debt without my knowledge.

11. Be punctual: do everything exactly at the time; and in general do not mend our rules, but keep them, not for wrath but for conscience sake.

12. Act in all things not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct: partly in visiting the flock from house to house (the sick in particular); partly, in such a course of Reading, Meditation and Prayer, as we advise from time to time. Above all, if you labour with us in our Lord's vineyard, it is needful you should do that part of the work [which] we prescribe [direct]\* at those times and places which we judge most for His glory.

- Five years after the formation of the first society class, the first Conference was held in London, in 1744
- The division of the kingdom into “circuits” first appears in the Conference Minutes of 1746.

# John's Enduring Legacy



- Never intended to start a new “denomination”
  - Saw Methodist “movement” as a corrective to the Anglican practices
- Emphasis on grace and holiness
- “Christian perfection”

# Social Holiness



Newcastle Orphan House,  
established by Methodists

- John called on British government to intervene in economic, employment problems of poor
- Spoke out against slavery
- Advocate for children
  - Health
  - Education
- Advocate for prison reform
  - Debtor's prison often cruel

# More Social Holiness

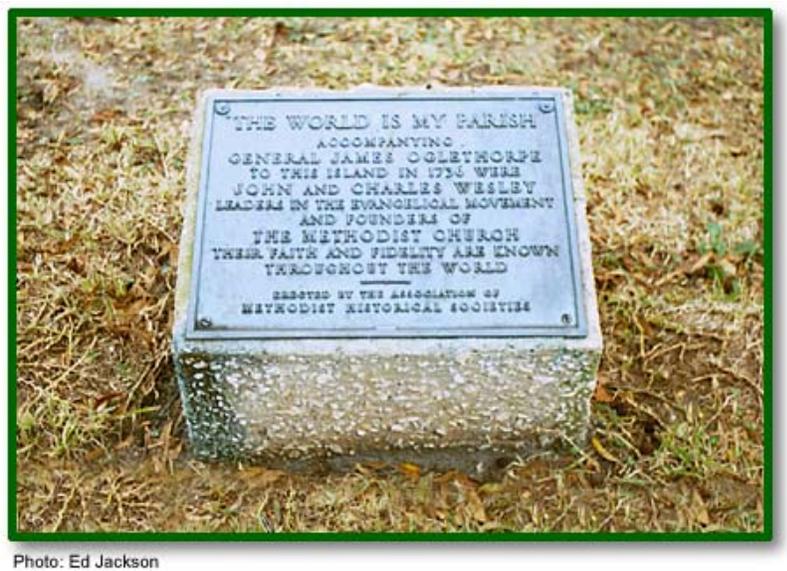
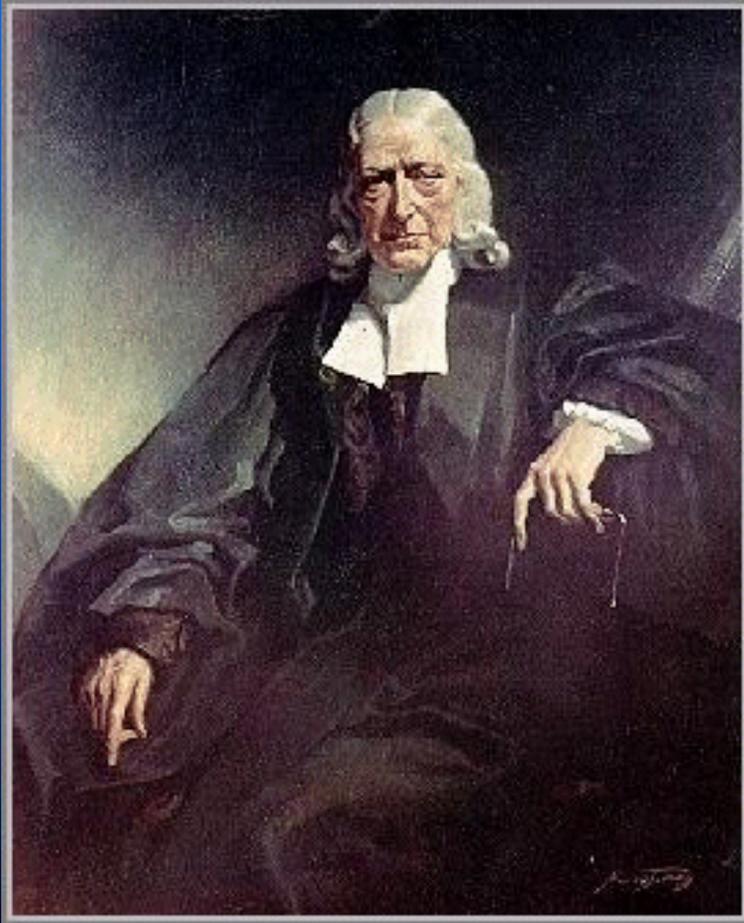


Photo: Ed Jackson

“The World is My Parish” plaque,  
Located at the rear of the Visitor's  
Center, Fort Frederica National  
Monument, St. Simons Island,  
Georgia

- “No holiness apart from social holiness.”
- Cannot separate out private holiness from public holiness.
  - “Holy” cannot exist in a vacuum - exists only in relationship to those around you
- John sought to be in relationship with people around him
  - “The world is my parish.”

# Wesleyan Theology



- Personal salvation through Christ
- We are justified by faith, not by good works
- Our faith should be reflected by our social concern to help the poor, the sick, the uneducated, and those not cared for by society
- We have free will to respond to God's gift of grace
- The Bible is primary authority for guiding our Christian life

# John Wesley Statistics



- Wrote over 400 publications
  - Mostly religious, but also on health and electricity
- Delivered over 42,000 sermons
  - 4 to 5 sermons daily
- Traveled over 250,000 miles
  - Much of it on horseback
  - Averaged 20 miles per day
- Voice said to have traveled over 140 yards

# Holy Club Questions

- 1. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I'm better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite?
- 2. Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?
- 3. Do I confidentially pass on what was told to me in confidence?
- 4. Can I be trusted?
- 5. Am I a slave to dress, friends, work or habits?
- 6. Am I self-conscious, self-pitying or self justifying?
- 7. Did the Bible live in me today?
- 8. Do I give it time to speak to me everyday?
- 9. Am I enjoying prayer?
- 10. When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?
- 11. Do I pray about the money I spend?
- 12. Do I get to bed on time and get up on time?
- 13. Do I disobey God in anything?

# Holy Club Questions

- 14. Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?
- 15. Am I defeated in any part of my life?
- 16. Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
- 17. How do I spend my spare time?
- 18. Am I proud?
- 19. Do I thank God that I am not as other people, especially as the Pharisees who despised the publican?
- 20. Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what I am doing about it?
- 21. Do I grumble or complain constantly?
- 22. Is Christ real to me?

# John's Final Days



- Wrote letter to William Wilberforce denouncing American slavery
- Last open-air preaching held under an ash tree in the churchyard at Winchelsea, Sussex, on October 6, 1790
  - Preached at noon so the workers could hear
- John passed away on March 2, 1791
- As his friends gathered around him, he raised his arms and said, “The best of all, God is with us.”

# Methodism in America (Briefly)

- 1784, The Christmas Conference (Baltimore)
  - The Methodist Episcopal Church officially organized
  - Francis Asbury ordained and consecrated bishop in the span of three days
- 1844, North and South split within The MEC
  - Slavery
  - Roll of the Episcopacy
- 1939, The Methodist Church formed
  - The MEC, The MEC South, and The Methodist Protestant Church unite
- 1968, The United Methodist Church formed
  - The Methodist Church and The Evangelical United Brethren Church unite

# Next Week!



## ■ Wesleyan Order of Salvation

- Preventive Grace
- Justification
- Sanctification
- Other confusing terms



John's seal