

John Wesley - Evangelist

Preface

THIS book was written by request; otherwise, with the recollection of the many lives of Wesley already before the public, I should not have presumed to add another. This, however, is not designed to be in any true sense a Life.

My aim has been chiefly to present two aspects of Wesley's life history. The first of these embraces his earlier career, in which prominence is given to those events and circumstances which in so remarkable a way prepared him for his great work--a preparation which cannot, without doing violence to its teaching, be regarded as other than providential. But this providential control was accompanied by a human prudential effort, most wisely directed, and unflinchingly sustained, through a long course of years, doubtless without any prescience of its ultimate purpose. These are a twisted strand, which defies disentanglement.

A second object aimed at has been to set forth the one chief purpose for which I believe Wesley was raised up, and to fulfil which he was especially qualified namely, his evangelistic appeal to the heart and conscience of this nation.

I am indebted, more or less, to all Wesley's previous biographers, particularly to the earlier ones Dr. Whitehead, Coke and Moore, and Moore's own later and expanded work; and to Tyerman, whose original researches into the history of the principal agents of the early Methodist revival constitute a treasury from which every subsequent writer has been glad to borrow.

But more especially am I indebted to Wesley's autobiography presented in his printed journals; to his letters, of which I have copies of more than sixteen hundred; to his numerous works, of which I have the advantage of possessing a complete collection--perhaps the only one ever made; and also to so much of Charles Wesley's journal as we possess.

I must also acknowledge my deep obligation for many useful suggestions, to my two valued friends, the Rev. Thos. F. Lockyer, B.A., and the Rev. Henry J. Foster. The latter has kindly added to his other help by reading the proofs for me. I owe a debt of gratitude also to Francis M. Jackson, Esq., of Bowdon, for the admirable Index which he has prepared.

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