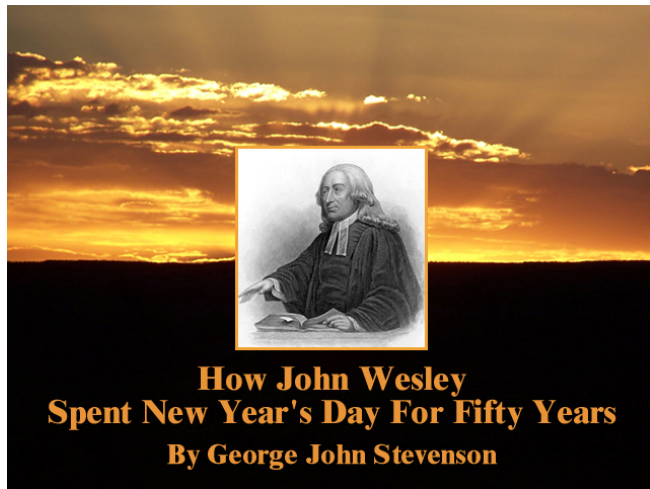


Copyright Holiness Data Ministry -- All Rights Are Reserved For This Digital Publication, And Duplication Of This DVD By Any Means Is Forbidden. Also, Copies Of Individual Files Must Be Made In Accordance With The Restrictions Of The B4UCopy.txt File On This Disc.

**HOW JOHN WESLEY SPENT NEW YEAR'S DAY FOR FIFTY YEARS**  
By George John Stevenson



From The Methodist Magazine  
Volume 29 -- January To June 1889  
W. H. Withrow, Editor

Toronto:  
William Briggs, Methodist Book Room

Halifax:  
S. F. Huestis, Methodist Book Room

\* \* \* \* \*

Digital Edition 12/27/07  
By Holiness Data Ministry

\* \* \* \* \*

**INTRODUCTION TO THIS DIGITAL FILE**

HDM recently purchased the Methodist Magazine volume from which this file is taken. It is a 576-page book, dedicated in elegant script,

"To Father

from  
Jim and Annie  
Christmas 1889."

Thus, the book was a Christmas gift 118 years ago, this Christmas just past, December 25, 2007. It is not my intention to digitize this entire volume, but rather only selected portions therefrom, of which this is the first.

The author of this article chronicles how John Wesley spent New Year's Day from 1737 through 1791, actually a period of 54 years. Before its publication in The Methodist Magazine, the article appeared in a publication named the "Methodist Recorder." -- Duane V. Maxey, Surprise, Arizona, December 27, 2007.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **HOW JOHN WESLEY SPENT NEW YEAR'S DAY FOR FIFTY YEARS** By George John Stevenson

It is interesting to Methodists to learn how Mr. Wesley spent this time on any day, but it is more so to ascertain for the long period of half a century how he commenced every year--what was his chief occupation on the first day of each year; and seeing that an important, and indeed solemn religious service, was his chief work, no matter on what day of the week it might fall, he had that fascination about him that during that period he gathered at this special service congregations varying from one to two thousand persons. He especially names eighteen hundred on various occasions, gathered from all London. They walked to the service, and walked home afterwards, there being then no public conveyance and cheap fares, such as are now so common. The age of Mr. Wesley will be added to each year. As Mr. Wesley was born in June, 1703, the age given will be that previous to the year named.

1737. Age 33. In Georgia, America. At the end of the year 1736 Mr. Wesley and Charles Delamotte, both missionaries, set out on foot to Cowpen, missed their way in the wood, walked through a cypress swamp, with the water breast high, and they slept on the ground, out of doors, in their wet clothes, which during the night were frozen, and in the morning were white as snow. They arrived at Frederica, January 5, 1737, and had a cold reception.

1738. Age 34. Sunday. On board ship returning from America to England. All in the ship excepting the captain and steersman were present both at the morning and evening service Mr. Wesley held, and they appeared as deeply attentive as the poor people at Frederica did, while the Word of God was new to their ears.

1739. Age 35. Mr. Wesley was converted in the May previous. Monday, January 1. "Mr. Hall (my brother-in-law), Kenchin, Ingham, Whitefield, R. Hutchins, and my brother Charles were present at our lovefeast in Fetter-lane, with about

sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing instant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, insomuch that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of His Majesty, we broke out with one voice -- 'We praise Thee, O God; we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord.'

1740. Age 36. Tuesday. "I endeavoured to explain to our brethren the true, Christian, Scriptural stillness, by largely unfolding those solemn words --'Be still, and know that I am God.'" The doctrine of "stillness" had nearly broken up the society; many fell away from God.

1741. Age 37. "I explained, 'If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.' Many of our brethren had no ears to hear, having disputed away both their faith and love. In the evening I expounded those words of St. Paul, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'"

1742. Age 38. At London. "After a night of quiet sleep, I awoke in a strong fever, but without any sickness, thirst, or pain. I consented to keep my bed, but on condition that everyone who desired it should have liberty to speak with me; fifty or sixty persons did so this day; nor did I find any inconvenience from it. In the evening I sent for all the band members into my room, who were in the house, that we might magnify our Lord together."

1743. Age 39. Saturday. "Between Doncaster and Epworth I overtook one who accosted me with so many impertinent questions I was amazed. I asked him, Are you aware that we are on a longer journey than this -- that we are travelling toward eternity? He replied instantly, 'O, I find you, I know who you are; is not your name Wesley? 'Tis pity, 'tis great pity; why could not your father's religion serve you? Why must you have a new religion?' Before I could reply, he cried out, 'I am a Christian! I am a Churchman! I am none of your Culamites,' as plain as he could speak, for he was so drunk he could scarcely keep on the horse he rode. Having, as he thought, put them all down, he put spurs to his horse on both sides, and rode off. In the evening I preached at Epworth."

1744. Age 40. He opened this year with a troubled mind, arising from a letter he had received from a poor man who was in lamentation, mourning and woe. He prints the letter in his Journal.

1745. Age 41. In London, doing pastoral work amongst the members.

1716. Age 42. In London. "Wednesday I preached at the Foundery at four in the morning, on 'I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.'"

1717. Age 43. In London, visiting the societies, and resuming a vegetable diet he had discontinued for several years.

**1748. Age 44. In London. "We began the year at the Foundery at four in the morning with joy and thanksgiving. The same spirit was in the midst of us both at the noon and evening service."**

**1749. Age 45. Preparing for a journey to Rotterdam, but gave it up and spent nearly twenty days in that displeasing employment--answering Dr. Middleton's book against the Fathers.**

**1750. Age 46. "A large congregation met at the Foundery at four o'clock, and began the Year of Jubilee in a better manner than they at Rome are accustomed to do."**

**1751. Age 47. In London. The only record in his Journal relates to a long and remarkable letter on Mr. Whitefield's preaching which he prints.**

**1752. Age 48. No entry about the New Year, but at that period Mr. Wesley was greatly tried by the disloyalty of some of his preachers.**

**1753. Age 49. In London. "A large congregation met at the Foundery at four, and praised Him with joyful hearts and lips who had given us to see another year."**

**1754. Age 50. "I returned once more to London, and set out next day for Bristol." He was but slowly recovering from that consumption which many feared would end his life, when he wrote the inscription for his grave; but God raised him up.**

**1755. Age 51. No Journal entry; but Mr. Wesley was in London, commencing to edit the works of his early college friend, the Rev. James Hervey.**

**1756. Age 52. "We had a large congregation at the Foundery at four in the morning."**

**1757. Age 53. Mr. Wesley was doing pastoral work in London, but makes no record before January 3.**

**1758. Age 54. At Bristol, where he had arrived after Christmas, and began the New Year on Sunday with a great congregation at four in the morning, rejoicing and praising God.**

**1759. Age 55. Having received a pressing letter asking him to visit Bristol, he took horse on the morning of January 1st, and reached Bristol on the evening of the 2nd.**

**1760. Age 56. At London. "Began the New Year at the Foundery at four in the morning. A great number attended, and God was in the midst, strengthening and refreshing their**

souls."

1761. Age 57. Mr. Wesley was engaged in a painful controversy with the London Chronicle, in which he describes Newgate Prison as a seat of woe not exceeded on this side hell.

1762. Age 58. "We had pretty near two thousand members of the society at Spitalfields in the evening, where Messrs. Berridge, Maxfield, and Colley assisted me at the Sacrament. We found God was in the midst, while we devoted ourselves to Him in the most solemn manner at the Covenant."

1763. Age 59. "Met for renewing the Covenant; a time of blessing."

1764. Age 60. Sunday. "We met in the evening for the solemn purpose of renewing the Covenant."

1765. Age 61. "I wrote an answer to a warm letter, published in the London Magazine, written by a man who was displeased with me for my doubts of modern astronomy."

1766. Age 62. Wednesday. "A large congregation met at the Foundery at four o'clock, and ushered in the New Year with praise and thanksgiving. In the evening we met, as usual, in the church at Spitalfields to renew our Covenant with God. This is always a refreshing season, at which some prisoners are set at liberty."

1767. Age 63. London, Thursday. "The whole society met in the evening in Spitalfields Church, and solemnly renewed their Covenant with God."

1768. Age 64. Mr. Wesley was visiting the society in London and relieving prisoners in the Marshalsea, in for debts.

1769. Age 65. "We met at Spitalfields Church to renew our Covenant with God. We never do this without a blessing."

1770. Age 66. "About eighteen hundred of us met together at Spitalfields; it was a most solemn season; we did indeed avouch the Lord to be our God, so did He avouch us to be His people."

1771. Age 67. "A large congregation met at Spitalfields in the evening to renew with one heart and one voice their Covenant with God. The Spirit of glory and of God, as usual, rested upon them."

1772. Age 68. London, Wednesday. "We met in the evening in order, solemnly and explicitly, to renew our Covenant with God."

1773. Age 69. London, Friday. "We, as usual, solemnly renewed our Covenant with God."

1774. Age 70. No entry made in January; he was in London in poor health, and was resting to promote recovery, but using his pen.

1775. Age 71. London, Sunday. "We had a large congregation at the renewal of the Covenant. I do not know that we ever had a greater blessing. Afterwards many desired to return thanks, either for a sense of pardon, for full salvation, for a fresh manifestation of grace, or healing all their backslidings."

1776. Age 72. "About eighteen hundred of us met together in London to renew our Covenant with God, and it was a very solemn opportunity."

1777. Age 73. "We met, as usual, to renew our Covenant with God. It was a solemn season, wherein many found the power present to heal, and were enabled to urge their way with renewed strength."

1778. Age 74. London, Thursday. "We had a very solemn opportunity of renewing our Covenant with God."

1779. Age 75. London, Friday, January 1st. "At length we have a house (City-road Chapel opened a few weeks previously) capable of containing the whole society. We met there this evening to renew our Covenant with God."

1780. Age 76. London. "We had the largest congregation at the renewal of our Covenant with God which ever met upon the occasion, and were thoroughly convinced that God was not departed from us. He never will, unless we first depart from Him."

1781. Age 77. London, Monday. "We begun, as usual, the service at four, praising Him who, in spite of all our enemies, had brought us safe to the beginning of another year."

1782. Age 78. London, Tuesday. "I began the service at four at West Street Chapel, Seven Dials, and again at ten. In the evening many of us at the new chapel, City Road, rejoiced in God our Saviour." [Three services at the age of 78!]

1783. Age 79. London, Wednesday, January 1. "May I begin to live today!"

1784. Age 80. London, Thursday. "Weary and worn," he wrote, "I retired for two or three days to Peckham."

1785. Age 81. London, Saturday. "Whether this year be my last or no, may it be the best year of my life!"

1786. Age 82. London, Sunday. "We began that solemn service, the renewing of our Covenant with God, not in the evening as heretofore, but at three in the afternoon, as more convenient for the generality of the members. God was with us of a truth."

1787. Age 83. London, Monday. "We began the service at four in the morning, to an unusually large congregation. We had another comfortable opportunity at the new chapel at the usual morning hour, and a third in the evening at West Street, Seven Dials." [Three services at 83.]

1788. Age 84. Mr. Wesley's Journals for January and February have not been printed, but letters written early in January indicate that his mind was occupied in promoting Sunday-schools and prayer-meetings.

1789. Age 85. London, Thursday. "If this is to be the last year of my life, according to some of those prophecies, I hope it will be the best. I am not careful about it, but heartily receive the advice of the angel in Milton--

'How well is thine: how long permit to heaven.'

1790. Age 86. London, Friday, January 1. "I am now an old man, decayed from head to foot. My eyes are dim; my right hand shakes much; my mouth is hot and dry every morning; I have a lingering fever almost every day; my motion is weak and slow. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour; I can preach and write still."

1791. Age 87. Mr. Wesley discontinued his Journal on October 24, 1790. From letters which the writer has seen, he was writing to Adam Clarke about the dawn of 1791. His mind was clear, although his body was feeble. His last New Year's Day, it is believed, was spent at the chapel-house in City Road.

So far as these records show, it is clear that John Wesley conducted one, two, or three religious services on New Year's Day for half a century, and a small pamphlet of hymns, specially adapted for that day, was used on those solemn occasions.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE END