THE WHEATLEY MEDAL, 1976

The judging of contenders for the Wheatley Medal is never particularly easy. As a measure of the difficulty of this year's selection, the Panel sat for far longer than usual to consider less than one-third as many indexes as were submitted last year.

Only seven indexes were put forward for the 1976 award. It is disturbing that there is apparently so little interest in indexing, a topic of great importance to librarians, and to their clients, and the committee hoped that next year would show some signs of a return to the more normal figure of twenty or thirty candidates.

It is fortunate that almost all of the seven indexes which were submitted were of a high standard, each deserving lengthy discussion. However, the Panel had no hesitation in unanimously awarding the 1976 Wheatley Medal to the indexer of volume 11 of The works of John Wesley: the appeals to men of reason and religion and certain related open letters; edited by Gerald R. Cragg (Oxford University Press, 1976. ISBN 0 19 812498 8).

This index was compiled by John A. Vickers, a life member of the Society of Indexers and a Registered Indexer who is currently in charge of Religious and Social Studies at Bognor Regis College of Education.

The Panel felt that the compiler had produced an index of exceptional merit to works extremely difficult to index. Wesley's writings are discursive rather than pithy, hardly concrete enough, one would think, for an indexer to be able to grasp and express his meaning concisely. That John Vickers has done so with such flair caused the Panel to view his index with enthusiasm and to be pleased that he had in addition carried out the mechanics of indexing with such accomplishment. There were in fact no faults or errors to be found: a model index.

The award-winner was appointed indexer to the new edition of John Wesley's works in April 1970 and the Appeals is the first volume of this to appear. There will be thirty-four in all, the last being a general index and concordance.

Peter Butcher, Wheatley Medal 1976 Chairman, Joint Selection Panel.

INDEXING THE WORKS OF JOHN WESLEY

The new edition of The works of John Wesley, under publication by the Clarendon Press, is the first attempt for over 140 years to provide a collected edition of this prolific writer. It has been planned in 34 volumes, grouped in fifteen ‘units’ of related material, and publication will extend over about twenty years. The final volume will be a General Index to the edition.

I was appointed indexer to the new edition as long ago as April 1970, the only obvious qualification being my comparative youth and the hope that, if the publication schedule was maintained, I might live to see its completion. In the circumstances, perhaps a policy on my life (and sanity?) rather than a life membership of the Society of Indexers would have been the appropriate step.

The first volume—numbered 11 in the series and containing such polemical writings as Wesley's Appeals to men of reason and religion—did not appear until February 1976. But the interval provided an opportunity for extensive discussion of the basic principles to be applied and the preparation of lists of possible subject headings and cross-references. This in turn served as a basis for consideration by members of the Editorial Board. Probably the most important landmark in this period was a detailed statement on indexing procedure which was circulated in the Spring of 1974 and discussed at an editorial conference held at Ammerdown, Somerset, that summer. Within a few weeks of that meeting the first page proofs of Volume 11 began to arrive.

One of the earliest decisions made was to index units, i.e. groups of volumes, rather than each volume individually; the exception being single-volume units, such as Volume 11. There will thus be a single index to the four volumes of Sermons, to the seven volumes of Journal and diaries, etc. It was also decided early on that there should be a separate index of Wesley’s numerous scriptural quotations, whether identified by Wesley himself or (as in many cases) by editorial footnotes. An unanticipated issue which arose in the preparation of the first of these indexes of scriptural quotations related to the quotation of, or from, more than one consecutive verse. I
began with the assumption that a reference to Matt. 12:38,39 implied an ellipsis in the quotation and required the separate indexing of the two verses; whereas Matt. 12:38-39 indicated a continuous quotation from a passage two verses long. This turned out to be a largely nonexistent distinction, since Wesley's own usage in the matter was understandably inconsistent. The distinction was accordingly abandoned. On the other hand, it proved desirable in the course of the indexing to identify scriptural references in passages which Wesley was quoting from other authors (usually those he was seeking to refute) by the use of parentheses.

Work on the main index resulted in an extensive and detailed correspondence with the General Editor of the edition, Dr Frank Baker, in which the issues raised and the decisions taken varied widely from minutiae to major principles. The process was time-consuming and no doubt delayed the appearance of the initial volume in the series. But this seemed fully justified by the fact that we were establishing precedents to be followed throughout the remainder of the edition. In particular, we were agreed from an early date that there should be a consistency of treatment between the unit indexes and the final General Index, and some decisions about the former were made with this point in mind.

The treatment of synonyms raised the usual problems, even when we had agreed on the use of Wesley's preferred term (e.g. 'stillness' rather than 'quietism') with cross-references as required. For instance, it was eventually decided to include a separate entry under 'Turks', even though in Wesley's vocabulary the word sometimes approximates to 'Mahometan' (Wesley's spelling, therefore not 'Mohammedan', still less 'Muslim'). Similarly it seemed necessary and desirable to reflect Wesley's usage by having entries under both 'Papists' and 'popery' (as well as 'Roman Catholicism'); though the further question as to the grouping or dispersion of such related entries remains a difficult one.

More difficult are the theological distinctions—not always the same in Wesley's day as in 20th century theology. How synonymous are terms like 'holiness' and 'sanctification' and (particularly significant in Wesley's thought) 'Christian perfection'? Were we right in distinguishing between 'grace' and the 'grace of God'—the one referring to man's relationship to God, the other a divine attribute? I had a feeling that in doing so we might be falling into some dreadful heresy, but in the event this decision did not have to be made in the index to Volume 11, but is postponed to some future date.

The index to Volume 11 contains relatively few place names, but these will be far more numerous when we come to the Journal and diaries. Two important decisions have already been taken. The index to Curnock's 'Standard Edition' of the Journal, among other errors, manages to confuse different places with the same name. It goes without saying that we shall attempt to avoid such elementary blunders, but identification of places with such names as Whitchurch or Newport by the addition of the appropriate county name is complicated by changes of county boundaries since the 18th century, including recent ones under the Local Government Act of 1972. In Volume 11 this has involved no more than a handful of entries such as 'Kingswood, Avon (formerly Glos.)' and 'Wednesbury, West Midlands (formerly Staffs.)'.

A different problem is posed by the enormous growth of London since Wesley's day. Clearly the convenience of the user is served by grouping together a number of place-names within central London, rather than by dispersing them throughout the index. But where to set the territorial boundary? The pedantic extreme would be to put under 'London' only places within the city of London proper, thereby excluding even City Road Chapel. Eventually, the 'rule of thumb' adopted was that by 'London' we would mean the cities of London and Westminster and the borough of Southwark as these existed in Wesley's time, but excluding such adjacent hamlets as Newington Butts to the south or Islington to the north-east. Contemporary maps such as Kitchin's of 1765 are an invaluable guide here.

Few, if any, of these matters will not be familiar issues to the experienced indexer and perhaps this rehearsal of them will do little more than reveal my own limited experience in the art. It seems likely that the most intractable problems will arise when we come to plan the General Index in Volume 34. How, for instance, can one avoid an endless string of undifferentiated references under such key terms as 'justification' or 'faith'? For the moment, my chief source of consolation is that some more competent indexer will surely come to my rescue and provide the solution between now and 1997.

John A. Vickers
Dear Mr Harrod,

I would like to add something about the indexes to novels. Mr. Knight's note on this subject (The Indexer, April, 1977) is misleading at least in respect of Sir Walter Scott. There are at least three indexes of some sort to the Waverley Novels listed in the Cambridge bibliography of English literature, and although these are not easy to obtain for purchase now, one or other of them is to be found in many reference libraries. These books are:

1. Cornish, S. W. The Waverley manual: a handbook of the chief characters in the Waverley Novels (1871)

2. Rogers, M. The Waverley dictionary (1879)

3. Husband, M. F. A. Dictionary of characters in the Waverley Novels (1910)

Some editions of the Waverley Novels contain a brief index to each novel. One such is the Portrait Edition, 1913. There is, however, another more comprehensive work which might interest Mr Knight. Some years ago I was carrying out some work on the Waverley Novels and found the lack of a comprehensive index a great drawback. I therefore decided to compile one myself. In the April, 1973, issue of The Indexer there was an article on this subject. Mr Eric Moon of the Scarecrow Press saw this and subsequently contacted me with a view to publication of the index. The work appeared in July, 1975 with the title An index to the Waverley Novels.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Bradley

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