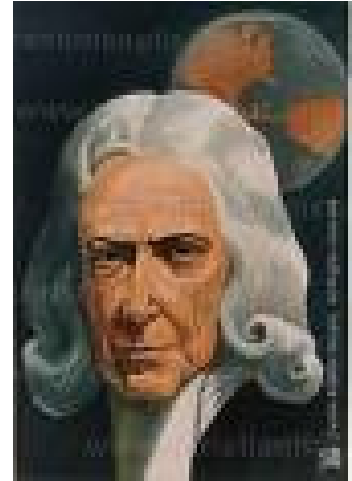




John Wesley

John Wesley was the man who founded the Methodist Church.. As a child he knew grinding poverty and once saw his father being marched off to debtors' prison. He became a Vicar himself but a wealthy one at Oxford University. One day an incident changed his perspective on money. He had just finished paying for some pictures for his room when one of the chambermaids came to his door. It was a cold winter day, and he noticed that she had nothing to protect her except a thin linen gown. he reached into his pocket to give her some money to buy a coat but found he had too little left. Immediately, the thought struck him that the Lord was no pleased with the way he had spent his money.



Wesley records in his diary that one year his income was 30 pounds and his living expenses 28 pounds, so he had 2 pounds to give away. The next year his income doubled, but he still managed to live on 28 pounds, so he had 32 pounds to give to the poor. Even when his income rose into the thousands of pounds sterling, he lived simply, and he quickly gave away his surplus money. One year his income was a little over 1400 pounds. He lived on 30 pounds and gave away nearly 1400 pounds.

Wesley felt that the Christian should not merely tithe but give away all extra income once the family and creditors were taken care of. He believed that with increasing income, what should rise is not the Christian's standard of living but the standard of *giving*.

In those days you had to pay tax on any silver plates you had in your house. In 1776, the tax commissioners accused him of not declaring his silver plate and therefore avoiding the tax. Wesley wrote back: "I have two silver spoons at London and two at Bristol. This all the plate I have at present, and I shall not buy any more while so many round me want bread."

In 1744, Wesley had written, "[When I die] if I leave behind me ten pounds ... you and all mankind [may] bear witness against me, that i have lived and died a thief and a robber." When he died in 1791, the only money mentioned in his will was the miscellaneous coins to be found in his pockets and dresser drawers.

What had happened to the rest of his money, to the estimated thirty thousand pounds he had earned over his lifetime? He had given it away. As Wesley said, "I cannot help leaving my books behind me whenever God calls me hence, but in every other respect my own hands will be my executors."