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MI 735 Wesleyan Theology of Mission

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Asbury Theological Seminary
 Fall Semester, 1999
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[Syllabus available also on the Seminary Network as: MI735 - F99]

MI 735. WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF MISSION

DESCRIPTION

This course examines the life and theology of John Wesley (1703-91), focusing especially on his understanding and practice of mission. Through a study primarily of Wesley's sermons and other writings, students will seek to discern a Wesleyan theology of mission.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective is to understand Wesley's own theology as a theology of mission. Secondary objectives are to draw upon Wesleyan resources for a contemporary theology of mission and to gain missiological insights from the experience of early Methodism.

COURSE METHOD

Class sessions will be conducted as a graduate seminar. Each participant will be expected to contribute to our shared learnings based upon their readings, research, and experience.

We will look at major themes in Wesley's theology and practice to discern the implications for mission. We will concentrate primarily on Wesley's writings rather than the vast literature about Wesley. The course will combine lecture, discussion, and reports from the reading of Wesley's works for each of the major topics considered. The final paper will be based on focused research and will seek to draw relevant missiological implications from the study.

TEXTS

Wesley, John. *Wesley's 52 Standard Sermons*, ed. N. Burwash. Salem, OH: Schmull Publishing Co., 1996.

Heitzenrater, Richard P. *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Snyder, Howard A. *The Radical Wesley and Patterns for Church Renewal* (1980). Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1996, 1999.

The Sermons of John Wesley - Sermons 54-64. Custom Course Packet.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Collins, Kenneth. *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997.

Jennings, Theodore W., Jr. *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990.

Runyon, Theodore. *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998.

Wesley, John. *Sermons*, ed. Albert Outler. 4 vols. (vols. 1-4 in The Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984-87. The definitive text of Wesley's sermons, with helpful introductions and notes.

Wesley, John. *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*. London: Epworth Press, various editions.

Wesley, John. *Explanatory Notes Upon the Old Testament*, 3 vols. Bristol, UK: William Pine, 1765, and reprints.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Class participation based on advance study of assigned readings. The readings interweave Wesley's teachings with historical perspectives on Wesley and early Methodism.
2. Each student will choose one of the points or themes of Wesley's theology for an in-depth study continuing throughout the semester. At appropriate points in the course, students will report the findings of their research.
3. Each student will lead a discussion of one of the assigned Wesley sermons. The presenter should explain the background of the sermon and the discussion should focus on, or show the relevance for, missiological themes.
4. A final paper (approx. 15-20 pages) summarizing the findings on one's chosen theme (#2, above) will complete the course work. The specific topic will be chosen in consultation with the professor. The final paper will be due on Dec. 6. There will be no final exam.

Some possible topics:

- Any major doctrinal theme (Grace, creation, sin, sanctification, the Trinity, ecclesiology, evangelism, etc.)
- Wesley's theological methodology
- Wesley's understanding of mission
- Wesley's use of cell groups (or other structures)
- Wesley's evangelistic methodology
- Wesley's understanding of history (or eschatology)
- Wesley's own experience (in relation to his theology and mission)
- Methodism as a movement
- Wesley's understanding of discipleship
- Wesley and Pietism
- Comparative study: Wesley and some other major figure (missiological comparison)
- Wesleyan theological as interpreted by -- (1 or more interpreters. Give mission focus)

EVALUATION

In grading, the course components will be weighted approximately as follows: Class participation, including input from readings (40%), sermon discussion (20%), final paper (40%).

GUIDELINES FOR FINAL PAPER

1. You may use either the anthropological style (recommended by the ESJ School) or the Chicago/Turabian style, but be consistent. The paper must be typed or computer-printed, and should include appropriate documentation of sources cited or consulted. (See "Academic Writing in the ESJ School," available as a hand-out from the ESJ School Office.)
2. Attach a title page giving the paper's title, your name, course name and number, my name, and date. Staple in upper left-hand corner. Please do not use a cover or binder. (I may later request a second clean copy of your paper for my files.)
3. The paper should be at least 15 pages. More is fine but the grade will depend on the content, development of the argument, and evidence of adequate research, not length.

4. At least half a dozen major sources should be used, and more is not uncommon for this type of paper. Clearly indicate all quoted material.

5. The paper should contain no spelling errors. Use a spell-checker.

6. Students for whom English is not their natural language may want to get editorial assistance. I will evaluate only the final product. Correct English tends to have a favorable influence on grade.

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READING

(Numbering of Wesley Sermons corresponds to Outler, *WJW*, and Burwash)

SEPT. 7 - INTRODUCTION / JOHN WESLEY THE MAN

SEPT. 14 - THE RISE OF METHODISM

Readings: Sermon 107, "On God's Vineyard"
Snyder, 1-64
Heitzenrater, 1-95

SEPT. 21 - WESLEY AS THEOLOGIAN

Readings: Sermon 21, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," I
Sermon 39, "Catholic Spirit"
Snyder, 67-89, 143-52
Heitzenrater, 199-259
Collins, 13-17
Jennings, 9-27

SEPT. 28 - GOD OF LOVE AND GRACE

Readings: Sermon 54, "On Eternity"
Sermon 59, "God's Love to Fallen Man"
Recommended: Collins, 19-45
Runyon, 26-70

OCT. 5 - GOD'S GOOD CREATION

Readings: Sermon 56, "God's Approbation of His Works"
Sermon 141, "The Image of God" (Outler, *WJW*, 4:290-303)
Heitzenrater, 97-146
Recommended: Runyon, 5-25

OCT. 12 - SIN AS FALL AND DISEASE

Readings: Sermon 44, "Original Sin"
Sermon 57, "On the Fall of Man"
Recommended: Jennings, 29-46
Collins, 47-68
Runyon, 71-101

OCT. 19 - THE SCRIPTURE WAY OF SALVATION

Readings: Sermon 1, "Salvation by Faith"
Sermon 43, "The Scripture Way of Salvation"
Sermon 60, "The General Deliverance"
Heitzenrater, 147-98
Recommended: Collins, 69-152
Runyon, 102-45

OCT. 26 - CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Readings: Sermon 40, "On Christian Perfection"

Sermon 41, "Wandering Thoughts"

Recommended: Jennings, 47-69
 Collins, 153-90
 Runyon, 222-33

NOV. 2 - THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

Readings: Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace"
 Sermon 61, "The Mystery of Iniquity"
 Sermon 122, "Causes of the Inefficacy of Christianity"
 Snyder, 91-142
 Heitzenrater, 261-308

NOV. 9 - DISCIPLESHIP: BALANCING LAW AND GRACE

Readings: Sermon 24, "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount," IV
 Sermon 50, "The Use of Money"
 Sermon 51, "The Good Steward"
Recommended: Jennings, 71-117
 Runyon, 146-67

NOV. 16 - THE GENERAL SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

Readings: Sermon 4, "Scriptural Christianity"
 Sermon 63, "The General Spread of the Gospel"
 Sermon 106, "On Faith"
Recommended: Jennings, 119-56
 Dayton in Meeks, 65-96

NOV. 30 - THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

Readings: Sermon 15, "The Great Assize"
 Sermon 62, "The End of Christ's Coming"
 Sermon 64, "The New Creation"
Recommended: Jennings, 157-79
 Collins, 191-204

DEC. 7 - A CONTEMPORARY WESLEYAN THEOLOGY OF MISSION

Readings: Snyder, 153-65
 Heitzenrater, 309-23
Recommended: Jennings, 181-222
 Collins, 205-07
 Runyon, 168-221

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- Ayling, Stanley. *John Wesley*. Cleveland: Collins, 1979.
- Borgen, Ole E. *John Wesley on the Sacraments*. New York, 1972.
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