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John Wesley's Theology Today

DO 690

Kenneth J. Collins, Professor

1. Course Description and Objectives:

The course will explore the theology of John Wesley in terms of his doctrine of salvation. Principal attention will be given to the following elements: 1) the nature of justification, 2) the significance of Wesley's Aldersgate experience, 3) the new birth, 4) assurance 5) the faith of a servant, and 6) Christian perfection. In terms of methodology, the course will proceed in a Socratic and dialogical manner as it entertains an array of possible meanings of selected texts. This process, intense in many ways, should enhance the ability of students not only to understand the thought of Wesley in greater depth in its eighteenth-century context, but also to think historically and critically. Moreover, the course will be attentive to current scholarly interpretations of Wesley's soteriology and will assess such judgments in light of the primary evidence. All the tasks of the course, then, will concern exploring Wesley's practical divinity in terms of its relevance for twenty first-century theology and ministry.

2. General Goals

Upon completion of the course successful students will be able to do all of the following:

- 1) Identify the major elements in Wesley's soteriology, especially in terms of the order evidenced in the key sermon, "The Scripture Way of Salvation."
- 2) Evidence an awareness of historiographical concerns in the interpretation of Wesley's soteriology, especially in terms of narrow, limited or unfair (biased) perspectives
- 3) Explore the interplay between religion and culture especially in terms of the intellectual developments (philosophical and theological) of the eighteenth century as reflected in Wesley's writings.
- 4) Display an extensive knowledge of the theological distinctions and nuances employed by Wesley in crafting an articulate and well-developed theology, especially in the areas of justification, the new birth, and entire sanctification.
- 5) Demonstrate an understanding of the continuing significance of Wesleyan theology today especially for the broader ecumenical community.

6) Conceive one's calling as a minister of the gospel in light of the Methodist theology and practice.

7) Articulate the relevance of Wesleyan theology for effective pastoral ministry today

3. Texts:

Required:

Outler, Albert C. and Heitzenrater, Richard P. *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991). **All Sermons Must Be Read.**

Collins, Kenneth J. *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2003.

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

Collins, Kenneth J., and John H. Tyson. *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001.

Collateral:

Collins, Kenneth J. *A Faithful Witness: John Wesley's Homiletical Theology* (Wilmore, Kentucky: Wesley Heritage Press, 1993).

Coppedge, Allan. *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press, 1988).

Lindstrom, Harald, *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Francis Asbury Press, 1982), Reprint of 1950 edition.

Oden, Thomas C. *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

Wood, Laurence W. *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism, Rediscovering John Fletcher as John Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2002.

4. Course Procedures

Competency in this course will consist in satisfying the following criteria:

A. Two examinations will be given during the semester: a mid-term and a final. These exams will not only include the designated reading material but will also focus on class discussions. This component will constitute 50% of the grade.

B. It is imperative that students attend class on a regular basis. Absenteeism (missing more than 2 classes) will result in grade reduction. Class participation, attendance, and completion of the assigned readings will constitute 20% of the grade.

C. Students must outline the thirty sermons of Wesley listed below. The outline must reveal the major themes and emphases of each piece in a way that is clear, coherent, and comprehensive. *Do not* simply follow Burwash's outlines (if you consult this resource) in terms of the sermons for they do not pick up enough detail. Besides, the outlining should be original. On the other hand, students should not include excessive detail in the outlines. This task, then, calls for judgment on the part of students as to what is soteriologically important and what is not. Exercise such judgment. In addition, these outlines, which must be typed, should be placed in a notebook (or bound in some other fashion) and are due Thursday, May 06, 2004. Late submissions will result in grade reduction.

The sermons to be outlined as follows:

Sermon	Salvation by Faith
Sermon	The Almost Christian
Sermon	Scriptural Christianity
Sermon	Justification By Faith
Sermon	The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption
Sermon	The Witness of the Spirit I
Sermon	On Sin in Believers
Sermon	The Repentance of Believers
Sermon	The Means of Grace
Sermon	The Marks of the New Birth
Sermon	The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God
Sermon	The Original, Nature, Properties and Use of the Law
Sermon	Christian Perfection
Sermon	The Scripture Way of Salvation
Sermon	Original Sin
Sermon	The New Birth

You must also clearly indicate on the first page of your outlines if you have outlined all of these sermons. If not, you must indicate those which were left out. Failure to complete this assignment or to follow instructions will result in grade reduction. The outlines will constitute 30% of the grade.

D. A reading report which indicates that students have completed all of the assigned readings is due on the day of the final exam. If any reading was omitted, then indicate specifically what was left undone. Failure to submit a reading report will result in grade reduction.

5. Note: this syllabus may be changed, as the professor sees fit, due to academic considerations

6. Office Hours

The professor will post his office hours on his door (AD 405) on the first day of class.

7. Chronology

Life of John Wesley

- √ 6/17/03 Born at Epworth
- √ 2/09/09 Saved from Fire
- √ 5/12/11 Nominated for Charterhouse
- √ 1/28/14 Gown-boy at Charterhouse
- √ 6/24/20 Enters Christ Church
- √ 9/19/25 Ordained Deacon
- √ 3/17/26 Fellow of Lincoln College
- √ 1729 Name Methodist given
- √ 1735 Whitefield joins Holy Club
- √ 4/25/35 Samuel Sr.'s Death

- √ 10/21/35 Sails for Georgia
- √ 02/05/36 Reaches America
- √ 08/11/36 Charles leaves Georgia
- √ 12/02/37 John leaves Savannah
- √ 02/01/38 John lands at Deal
- √ 05/21/38 Charles' Evangelical Conversion
- √ 05/24/38 John's Evangelical Conversion
- √ 06/13/38 Visits the Moravian Church
- √ 05/02/39 Field-Preaching in Bristol

- √ 11/11/39 Preaches in the Foundry
- √ 07/20/40 Withdraws from Fetter Lane
- √ 05/28/42 First visit to Newcastle
- √ 06/06/42 Preaches on his father's tomb
- √ 07/30/42 Death of Susanna Wesley
- √ 05/29/43 Opens West Street Chapel, London
- √ 08/26/42 Sets out for Cornwall
- √ 10/20/42 Riot at Wednesbury
- √ 06/25/44 First Conference

- √ 08/24/44 Last University sermon
- √ 08/09/47 First visit to Ireland
- √ 04/08/49 Marriage of Charles
- √ 10/03/49 Grace Murray marries John Bennet
- √ 02/18/51 Wesley marries Mrs. Vazeille
- √ April/51 First visit to Scotland
- √ 06/01/51 Resigns Fellowship
- √ 11/26/53 Writes his Epitaph at Lewisham
- √ Jan/55 Notes Upon the NT published
- √ 05/06/55 Issue of Separation Discussed

- √ 1757 Charles' itinerancy limited
- √ 03/13/57 Ordination of John Fletcher
- √ 02/16/59 Public Fast; fear of French invasion
- √ 02/21/60 French Landing at Carrickfergus
- √ 10/25/60 Death of George II
- √ 11/26/62 Answer to Bishop Warburton
- √ 01/07/63 Wesley meets George Bell
- √ Mar/ 63 Earthquake panic in London

- √ 04/28/63 Thomas Maxfield leaves Wesley
- √ 04/18/64 Letter to Evangelical Clergy
- √ May/ 64 Hervey Letters published
- √ Jan/ 65 Conference on Ordinations
- √ 01/31/66 Closer union with Whitefield
- √ 1766 *Plain Account* Published
- √ 03/30/67 Wesley visits Ireland
- √ 08/18/67 Francis Asbury received on trial

- √ Jan/ 68 Appointed chaplain to the Countess Dowager
- √ 08/24/68 Trevecca College opened
- √ Aug/1770 Doctrinal Minutes of the Bristol Conference
- √ 09/30/70 Death of George Whitefield
- √ 11/18/70 Wesley preaches at Whitefield's funeral
- √ 01/17/71 Benson dismissed from Trevecca
- √ 01/23/71 Mrs. Wesley leaves him
- √ 09/04/71 Francis Asbury sails for America

- √ 09/04/71 Fletcher's 1 and 2 Checks published
- √ 08/14/72 Meets Howell Harris at Trevecca
- √ 08/14/72 Fletcher's 3 and 4 Checks published
- √ 08/14/72 Wesley issues Vols. 11-16 of his Works

- v 03/14/73 Replies to Richard Hill's *Farrago Double-Distilled*
 - v Dec/73 Vols. 17-25 of Wesley's Works published
 - v 06/04/74 Arrest in Edinburgh
 - v 1775 *Calm Address* published

- v 04/27/75 Death of Peter Bohler
 - v Aug/ 75 Asbury decides to stay in America
 - v 01/03/76 Death of Westley Hall
 - v 08/18/76 Wesley first meets Dr. Coke
 - v 04/21/77 Foundation-stone of City Road Chapel laid
 - v 01/01/78 First number of Arminian Magazine
 - v 05/30/78 Death of Voltaire
 - v 11/01/78 Opening of City Road Chapel
 - v 1779 Publishes *Popery Calmly Considered*

- v 08/10/80 Letter to Bishop Lowth on ordination for America
 - v 01/25/81 At his Nephew's concert
 - v 10/08/81 Death of Mrs. Wesley
 - v Aug/ 82 Adam Clarke at Kingswood School
 - v June/83 Visit to Holland
 - v 02/28/84 Deed of Declaration
 - v Sep/ 84 Ordinations for America
 - v Dec/ 84 Francis Asbury Ordained
 - v 08/14/85 Death of John Fletcher

- v 01/24/86 Hears George III in House of Lords
 - v 07/25/86 Conference begins at Bristol
 - v 08/08/86 Visits Holland
 - v 09/24/86 Dr. Coke sails with three missionaries
 - v Jan/ 87 Beggings £ 200 for London poor
 - v 08/04/87 Conference in Manchester
 - v 1788 Second Series of Sermons Published
 - v 03/29/88 Death of Charles Wesley

- v 04/05/88 Burial of Charles Wesley in Marylebone
 - v 08/06/88 Conference at Bristol
 - v 07/28/89 Conference at Leeds
 - v 1790 Revised Translation of the NT published
 - v 07/27/90 Wesley's last Conference in Bristol
 - v 07/30/90 Letter to Wilberforce
 - v 10/06/90 Last open-air sermon at Winchelsea
 - v 10/24/90 Last entry in Wesley's Journal

- v 02/22/91 Last sermon, at Leatherhead
- v 02/24/91 Last letter, to Wilberforce
- v 03/02/91 Dies at City Road at 10:00 a.m.
- v 03/09/91 Buried at City Road

8. Bibliography

A Wesley Bibliography

Primary Sources: Books

Unpublished at This Point

- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 5-6: Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 8: Worship and Prayer. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 10: The Methodist Societies II: The Conference. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 12: Theological Treatises. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 13: The Defense of Christianity. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
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- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 16: Natural Philosophy and Medicine. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 17: Editorial Works. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 33-34: A Description and Analytical Bibliography of the Publications of John and Charles Wesley. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 35: General Index and Miscellanea. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.

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- Curnock, Nehemiah, ed. *The Journal of Rev. John Wesley*. 8 vols. London: Epworth Press, 1909-1916.
- Jackson, Thomas, ed. *The Works of Rev. John Wesley*. 14 vols. London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1829-1831. Reprinted Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978.
- , ed. *The Journals of Rev. Charles Wesley*. 2 vols. London: John Mason, 1949. Reprinted Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House 1980.
- Outler, Albert C. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vols. 1-4: Sermons. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984-1987.
- Telford, John, ed. *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*. 8 vols. London: Epworth Press, 1931.
- Ward, W. Reginald, and Richard P. Heitzenrater, eds. *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 18: Journals and Diaries I. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 19: Journals and Diaries II. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 20: Journals and Diaries III. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 21: Journals and Diaries IV. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.
- . *The Works of John Wesley*. Bicentennial ed. Vol. 22: Journals and Diaries V. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Wesley, John. *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*. London: William Bowyer, 1755. Most recent reprint, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1987.
- . *Explanatory Notes upon the Old Testament*. 3 vols. Bristol: William Pine, 1765. Facsimile reprint, Salem, OH: Schmul Publishers, 1975.
- . *A Christian Library, Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity which have been published in the English Tongue*. 30 vols. London: T. Blanshard, 1819-1827.
- . *Devotions and Prayers of John Wesley*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1977.
- . *The Journal of John Wesley: A Selection*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

---. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. London: Epworth Press. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990.

---. *Wesley's Forms of Prayers*. Library of Methodist Classics. Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1992.

Students may also access the far more extensive Wesley bibliography on Asbury's homepage (look under "Resources") or download it from <http://wesley.nnc.edu>.