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## DO 690 Theology of John Wesley

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**DO 690**  
**THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY**  
**J Term**  
**January 19-23, 2004**  
**Robert G. Tuttle, Jr., Ph.D.**

**Course Description:**

John Wesley was a great theologian, but theology was not his greatest strength. John Wesley was a great preacher, but preaching was not his greatest strength. Wesley's real contribution to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and to the Church as a whole seemed to be in his ability to organize people into the kind of body that would both sustain them and the movement called the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Evangelical Revival. With this clearly in mind, how did John Wesley function as a theologian/evangelist so that his real strength could be manifested practically in the life of the Church? What were his motivating principles? Where did he come out with regard to the basic doctrines of the Church? In short, how did Wesley "do" theology so that he might become a man called of God to change the history of a nation?

**Learning Goals:**

This course will seek to equip students:

1. To identify the formative influences upon the Wesley brothers that helped shape the theology of the Methodist movement;
2. To articulate the so-called "Wesleyan quadrilateral" as a model of authority within the life of contemporary Methodism;
3. To describe how Wesleyan theology revolves around the over-arching theme of grace;
4. To discuss the "synthetic" nature and method of early Methodist theology;
5. To articulate the distinctive Wesleyan "way of salvation," demonstrating a well-developed understanding of repentance, faith, and holiness;
6. To demonstrate the significance of the Christian life as a "way of devotion" and how accountable discipleship informs Christian ministry;
7. To discuss how Wesleyan theology was translated into the life of the church, its sacraments, and ministry;
8. To evaluate one's Christian vocation in the light of the Wesleyan theological heritage.

**Textbooks:**

**Required:**

Kenneth Collins, *John Wesley, A Theological Journey*, Abingdon, 2003. ISBN 0-687-02788-8.

Steve Harper, *The Way to Heaven*, Zondervan, 2003, ISBN 0-310-25260-1.

Albert Outler, ed. *John Wesley*, Oxford, 1964, ISBN 0-19-502810-4 (paper).  
Robert Tuttle, *Sanctity without Starch*, Bristol Books, 1992, ISBN 0-917851-19-6.

### **Recommended:**

Paul Chilcote, *Living Faith*.  
Paul Chilcote, *Praying in the Wesleyan Spirit*.  
Kenneth Collins, *A Faithful Witness*.  
Ken Collins, *A Real Christian*.  
Ken Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*.  
Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate*.  
W. Steve Gunter, ed., *Wesley and the Quadrilateral*.  
S T Kimbrough, ed., *Charles Wesley: Poet and Theologian*.  
Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace*.  
Randy Maddox, ed., *Rethinking Wesley's Theology*.  
Thomas Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity*.  
Albert Outler, ed. *John Wesley*.  
\_\_\_\_\_, *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit*.  
Henry Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*.  
Ted Runyon, *The New Creation*.  
Robert Tuttle, Jr., *John Wesley, His Life and Theology*. (on reserve).  
Robert Tuttle, Jr., *Mysticism in the Wesleyan Tradition*. (on reserve).  
John Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*.  
Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today*.

**AS MUCH OF THE REQUIRED READING AS POSSIBLE SHOULD BE DONE BEFORE CLASS BEGINS.**

### **Requirements and Evaluation:**

1. Critiques: (30%). Each student must complete a one page single-spaced critique for each of the required texts: Collins, Harper, and Tuttle. The critiques must be completed no later than Friday, January 23.
2. Paper: (30%). One paper (approximately 6-8 pages) on some pertinent events in Wesley's life or with some theological issue pertaining to the Revival. Due TBA.
3. Final Examination (40%). This will be a one hour essay exam on the last day of class (Jan. 23).
4. A daily journal of ideas, reflections, thoughts. The purpose is to provide a means of self-expression, in which each person can write about whatever comes to mind as important. Honesty and unambiguous statement of thoughts are central, and will serve as a means of growing in self-understanding and clarity of thought and expression. These will not be read by the professor, unless requested by the student. They will not be graded, but the keeping of the journal is a major assignment for the course.

### **Schedule and Outline:**

**Monday, Jan. 19:**

The Early Years, An Introduction (slide presentation).  
The Fear of Death and the Need for Assurance.  
His Early Ministry, the Impasse.  
Aldersgate.

Assignment: Harper (entire book) and Outler, Part I.

**Tuesday, Jan. 20:**

Wesley's Theology in Review.  
A Theology of Grace, the work of the Holy Spirit.  
Original Sin, a cardinal issue.  
Prevenient Grace, unlimited and resistible.

Assignment: Tuttle (entire book) and Outler, Part II.

**Wednesday, Jan. 21:**

Justifying Grace, justification and the new birth.  
Sanctifying Grace, on to perfection.

Assignment: Collins (entire book).

**Thursday, Jan. 22:**

Wesley, the Preacher/Evangelist, the market cross, a hymn, and a sermon.  
Wesley the Master Builder, the united societies.  
Wesley in Conflict, Deism and Calvinism.  
Wesley under Fire, the mobs.

Assignment: Outler Part III.

**Friday, Jan. 23:**

Final Exam (first hour).  
Wesley on Issues of Justice, fulfilling all righteousness.  
Wesley on the Supernatural, from gifts to ghosts.  
Wesley on Discipline, "the body and soul make a man, but the Spirit and discipline make a Christian."  
Wesley in Transition, no martyr to the bugbear of consistency.

Assignment: Follow Wesley as he followed Jesus, but no further!

## A Chronology:

- 1662 Dec. 17 - Samuel Wesley, Sr., born at Winterborn-Whitchurch, Dorset  
1669 Jan. 20 - Susanna Wesley, born in London  
1690 Feb. 10 - Samuel Wesley, Jr., born in London  
1703 June 17 - John Wesley born at Epworth, 15th child of 19 children (9 died in infancy) of Samuel and Susanna Wesley  
1707 Dec. 18 - Charles Wesley born at Epworth, 18th child of Samuel and Susanna Wesley  
1709 Feb. 9 - John Wesley saved from the burning rectory at Epworth  
1714 Jan. 28 - John Wesley entered Charterhouse, London, 10 1/2 yrs. old, there 5 yrs.  
1720 June 24 - John Wesley entered Christ Church, Oxford; spent five years there  
1724 - John Wesley graduated B.A., Oxford  
1725 Sept. 19 - John Wesley ordained deacon  
1726 - Charles Wesley entered Christ Church, Oxford  
1726 March 17 - John Wesley elected fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford  
1727 Feb. 14 - John Wesley graduated M. A., Oxford  
1728 Sept. 22 - John Wesley ordained priest in the Church of England  
1729 May - Charles Wesley formed the Oxford Holy Club  
1729 Dec.- John Wesley became leader of the Holy Club  
1729 - Name "Methodist" given on account of the "regularity of their behavior."  
1730 - Charles Wesley graduated B. A., Oxford  
1733 Jan 1 - Sermon, "The Circumcision of the Heart" preached at Oxford.  
1733 - John Wesley published his first book, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week*  
1733 March 12 - Charles Wesley graduated M. A., Oxford  
1735 April 25 - Samuel Wesley, Sr., died at Epworth  
1735 October 14 - John and Charles Wesley sailed for Georgia  
1736 Feb. 5 - John and Charles reached America  
1736 August 11 - Charles Wesley leaves Georgia  
1736 Dec. 3 - Charles Wesley arrived back in England  
1737 - John Wesley published his first hymnbook, *A Collection of Psalms and Hymns*, Charleston, South Carolina  
1737 Dec. 2 - John leaves Savannah  
1738 Feb. 1 - John Wesley returned to England  
1738 May 21 - Charles Wesley's evangelical conversion  
1738 May 24 - John Wesley's Aldersgate experience  
1739 April 2 - John Wesley began field preaching in Bristol  
1739 May 12 - John Wesley laid the foundation stone for the New Room in the Horse Fair, Bristol  
1739 Nov. 6 - Samuel Wesley, Jr. died  
1739 Nov. 11 - John Wesley preached the first sermon at the Foundery, which was the first meeting-house in London  
1740 - Wesley withdraws from the Fetter Lane Society (Moravians)  
1740 July 23 - The first Methodist Society founded  
1740 - Wesley and Whitefield separate over doctrine of particular predestination

1741 - The first Methodist newspaper entitled “The Weekly History”

1742 - Wesley and Whitefield re-united.

1742 - Formation of Methodist Classes.

1742 June 6 - Excluded from preaching in the Church at Epworth, John Wesley preaches on his father’s tombstone.

1742 July 30 - Susannah Wesley died in London

1743 - John Wesley writes “An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion”

1744 June 25 - John Wesley held the first Methodist Conference in London

1744 August 24 - John Wesley’s last University sermon at Oxford on “Scriptural Christianity (approximately 176 scriptural verses woven into this sermon)

1745 - John Wesley published *Advice to the People Called Methodists*

1746 - Nov. 6 John Wesley published the first volume of *Sermons on Several Occasions*

1746 - John Wesley read King’s “Account of the Primitive Church”

1747 - August - John Wesley made his first visit to Ireland and Methodism begins there

1749 April 8 - Marriage of Charles Wesley

1749 October 3 - Grace Murray (John Wesley’s “lady friend”) marries John Bennet, one of Wesley’s preachers.

1751 Feb. 18 - John Wesley marries Mary Vazeille

1751 April - John Wesley first visit to Scotland

1755 January - John Wesley published *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, which he had begun in January 1754.

1755 May 6-8 - The question of separation from the Church of England discussed at Leeds

1756 - John Wesley published “A Treatise on Baptism” written by his father

1758 - John Wesley published *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England*

1758 March 10 - John Wesley’s Assize Sermon at Bedford

1759 - “Thoughts on Christian Perfection,” a 30-page publication

1763 - Published tract entitled “Farther Thoughts upon Christian Perfection”

1763 March 28 - John Wesley’s “Sermon on Sin in Believers”

1763 - *Model Deed* issued concerning Preaching Houses

1765 April 25 - “Preface to Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament; last page date, Dec. 24, 1766.

1765 - John Wesley published “The Scripture Way of Salvation” and “The Lord our Righteousness”

1766 - “A Plain Account of Christian Perfection” (last revision in 1777)

1767 April 4 - John Wesley wrote sermon on “The Witness of the Spirit” Discourse II

1768 April 27 - John Wesley makes a will

1768 August 24 - Trevecca College opened

1769 August 4 - John Wesley made the first appointment of preachers to America

1770 Sept. 30 - Death of George Whitefield

1770 November 18 - Wesley preaches Whitefield’s funeral sermon

1771 Jan. 23 - Mrs. Wesley leaves John Wesley

1771 August 9 - Wesley published the first in a series of John Fletcher’s *Checks to Antinomianism* (“In all his publications, Fletcher had not only Wesley’s approval, but his high commendation,” (Luke Tyerman, *Wesley’s Designated Successor*, p. 298)

1771 Sept. 4 - Francis Asbury sails for America  
 1771 John Wesley issues the first five volumes of his collected works  
 1775 John Wesley published *A Calm Address to our American Colonies*  
 1775 April 27 - Death of Peter Böhler  
 1778 January 1 - First number of the *Arminian Magazine*  
 1778 November 1 - John Wesley opened the New Chapel in City Road, London  
 1780 May 1 - John Wesley published *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*.  
 1781 October 8 - Mrs. John Wesley (Mary Vazeille) died, aged 71  
 1782 August - Adam Clarke at Kingswood School  
 1784 Feb. 28 - John Wesley executed the “deed of declaration,” the Charter of Wesleyan Methodism  
 1784 September 1-2 - John Wesley ordained preachers for the United States  
 1784 Dec 25-27 - John Wesley ordained and set apart Francis Asbury as General Superintendent for America  
 1785 August 14 - John Fletcher died  
 1786 Sept. 24 - Dr. Thomas Coke sails with three missionaries  
 1786 Sept. - November - John Wesley wrote a biography of John Fletcher  
 1788 March 29 - Charles Wesley died in London, burial on April 5 in Marylebone  
 1790 - His revised Translation of the New Testament published, his last important publication  
 1790 July 27 - Wesley’s last Conference, in Bristol  
 1790 July 30 - Letter to William Wilberforce  
 1790 October 6 - John Wesley preached his last open-air sermon  
 1790 October 24 - John Wesley’s last *Journal* entry  
 1791 Feb. 1 - John Wesley’s last letter to America  
 1791 Feb. 22 - John Wesley preached his last sermon, at Leatherhead  
 1791 Feb. 24 - John Wesley made the last entry in his diary  
 1791 Feb. 24 - John Wesley wrote his last letter to William Wilberforce  
 1791 Feb. 25 - John Wesley returns to City Road  
 1791 March 2 - John Wesley dies at City Road 10 A.M. His last words, “The best of all is, God is with us.”  
 1791 March 9 - John Wesley was buried at City Road

### **Wesley’s Original Works on Sanctification/Christian Perfection:**

1733 Sermon, Circumcision of the Heart  
 1740 Preface to Hymns and Sacred Poems  
 1741 Sermon, Christian Perfection (written 1739)  
 1742 Principles of a Methodist, Definition of Perfection  
 1742 The Character of a Methodist  
 1759 Thoughts on Christian Perfection  
 1762 Sermon, A Blow at the Root  
 1762 Cautions and Directions Given to the Greatest Professors in the Methodist Societies  
 1763 Sermon, Sin in Believers  
 1763 Farther Thoughts upon Christian Perfection

1765 Sermon, Scripture Way of Salvation  
1766 A Plain Account of Christian Perfection  
1767 Brief Thoughts on Christian Perfection  
1768 Sermon, Repentance of Believers  
1777 A Plain Account of Christian Perfection from 1725-1777  
1787 The More Excellent Way

## **Final Exam Study Guide:**

1. Discuss the formative influences upon the Wesley brothers that helped to shape the theology of the early Methodist movement.
2. John Wesley's theology is sometimes described as a "theology of grace." What does he mean by grace, and how is Methodist doctrine shaped by this over-arching theme?
3. Wesleyan theology has been described in class as an expression of "living faith." Discuss the "synthetic" nature of this theology with reference to two characteristic conjunctions.
4. Describe Wesley's so-called "order of salvation."
5. The Wesleys viewed the Christian life as a "way of devotion." What does this mean and how does this understanding influence your conception of ministry?
6. The Wesleyan Revival was both evangelical and sacramental. Discuss.
7. The "means of grace" figured prominently in early Methodism. What are these means, and what continued relevance do they have for the life of the church today?
8. Describe the so-called "Wesleyan quadrilateral" as a model of authority within the life of contemporary Methodism.
9. Personal piety and social action are necessary components of Christian vocation from the Wesleyan perspective. Discuss.
10. How can Wesleyan theology be translated into the life of the church, its sacraments, and ministry today?