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DO 690 John Wesley's Theology Today

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DO 690 B

THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY

FALL 2002

Dr. Allan Coppedge

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PURPOSE

A study of the theological doctrines and opinions of John Wesley and the origin of Methodism as a vigorous reaffirmation of the evangelical faith of Christendom. The development of the doctrinal position of Wesley is studied with reference to his life, work, religious experience, and the Evangelical Revival in England in the

eighteenth century. This heritage is studied in order that it may be critically and appropriately explained and communicated.

LEARNING GOALS

1. To provide an introduction to the theology and thought patterns of John Wesley in the following areas:

Prevenient grace and sin; Universal atonement and transforming grace; Justification and regeneration; Sanctification and Christian perfection; Christian life and means of grace; the Church and ministry; The Triune Nature of God; Doctrines of Grace; Predestination; Religious Authority; Pluralism and the Bible.

2. To offer an analysis of the background factors that influenced Wesley's life and thought.
3. To introduce the life of Wesley and his influence in shaping eighteenth century Methodism.
4. To understand how Methodism is a part of the larger Christian Church and where it contributes to it, especially in the areas of theology and the practice of the Christian life.
5. To see some historical models of the transforming power of grace in the application of Biblical truth to individual lives, the Church, and society.
6. To recognize the practical implications of the theological ideas.
7. To understand the positive and negative lessons from the rise of Methodism and personal lives, the collected body of believers, and the culture at large.
8. To be able from within this heritage to address the theological issues that confront the church and the world today. This goal will be accomplished primarily through lecture and discussion in class.
9. The global impact of Wesley's theology and methods of ministry.

REQUIREMENTS

I. Study Assignments

- A. Reading and outlining of assignments as indicated in the syllabus.

- B. A Collateral chart (included in syllabus) is to be kept which should include a record of the number of hours per week spent reading, outlining and taken notes. The number of hours studied will determine the grade options available to the student for the entire course. To be eligible to earn any grade up through an “A”, a total of at least 52 hours should be spent over the term. For a “B”, at least 46 hours per term. For a “C”, at least 40 hours per term. At least 36 hours per term is required for a passing grade.
- C. A notebook should be kept of all outlines and notes taken (but not class notes), plus a record of the student’s reading. The notebook should be organized by subject (justification, sin, sanctification, etc.). A grade will be given the notebook and the completion of assignments on time. It will constitute 33.3% of the final grade.

II. Examinations

There will be a mid-term and final that will cover reading assignments and class presentation. The date for the mid-term examination is Wednesday, October 23; the final is Wednesday, December 11, 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.

III. Attendance

Attendance at all class periods is expected. Students should report the number of class periods from which he/she has been absent on his/her collateral sheet.

Out of courtesy to other members of the class, it is requested that no food or beverage be consumed in class.

IV. Textbooks

- A. **Required:**
 John Wesley, Wesley’s Fifty-two Standard Sermons, ed. N. Burwash.
 _____, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection.
 Kenneth Collins, The Scripture Way of Salvation.
 Harold Lindstrom, Wesley and Sanctification.
 Kenneth Collins, A Real Christian.
- B. **Recommended:**
 Allan Coppedge, John Wesley in Theological Debate.
 Kenneth Collins, A Faithful Witness.
- C. **Requested:**
The Holy Bible (English Standard Version) in class.

READING SCHEDULE

Outlining should be done so that the key arguments from any chapter or sermon can be seen from it. Normally two or three pages per chapter and one page per sermon will cover the material, although here are several exceptions to this guideline. In your syllabus is a guide to taking notes from Wesley’s A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. This should be used for the assignment on A Plain Account October 23. After September 11, all work for the week should be done by class time on Wednesdays..

****BACKGROUND****

September 3-6

Read and Outline: (Required)

Collins, Kenneth, The Scripture Way of Salvation, Introduction, pp. 13-17. Chapter 2: Convincing Grace, pp. 47-68.

Wainwright, "Methodism and the Apostolic Faith," What Methodists Should Teach, ed., Douglas Meeks.

Read only: (Recommended as hours permit)

Oden, Thomas, Scriptural Christianity, pp. 19-27.

Collins, Kenneth, A Real Christian.

****BACKGROUND****

September 9-13

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, John, Standard Sermons, Sermon I, "Salvation by Faith," Sermon II, "The Almost Christian."

Wesley, John, Works, VIII, "The Principles of a Methodist."

Collins, Kenneth, The Scripture Way of Salvation, Chapter 3: Justification, pp. 69-100.

Read only: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, III, "Awake, thou that sleepest." Charles Wesley.

Collins, A Faithful Witness, Chapter 2, "Christology."

Collins, A Real Christian. Complete this work.

****JUSTIFICATION/NEW BIRTH****

September 18

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Standard Sermons, Sermons V, "Justification by Faith," XIX, "The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God," ZLV, "The New Birth."

Collins, The Scripture Way of Salvation, Chapter 4: Regeneration, pp. 101-130.

Read only: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, VI, "The Righteousness of Faith," VII, "The Way to the Kingdom," XVIII, "The Marks of the New Birth." *(continued on next page)*

Read only: (Recommended)

(September 18 continued)

Wesley, John, The Journal of John Wesley, Standard Edition, Vol. II, pp. 121-137, 156-58, 167-88.

Schmidt, Martin, John Wesley, Vol. I, Chapter 7, "The Conversion."

****WITNESS OF SPIRIT/ASSURANCE****

September 25

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Standard Sermons, Sermon X, “The Witness of the Spirit, I.”
Wesley, John, Works, VIII, A Farther Appeal, Part I, Section, I, Sub-section 1-6.
Collins, The Scripture Way of Salvation, Chapter 5: Christian Assurance, pp. 131-152.

Read only: (Recommend)

Collins, A Faithful Witness, Chapter 3, “The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit,” pp. 57-76.
Wesley, Sermons, XI, “The Witness of the Spirit, II” XII, “The Witness of our Own Spirit.”
Wesley, Works, VI, Sermon, LXXXVI, “A Call to Backsliders.”

****DOCTRINE OF GOD****

October 2

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wainwright, Geoffrey, “Wesley’s Trinitarian Hermeneutics,” Wesley Theological Journal, Vol 35, No. 1, (Spring, 2001), pp. 7-30.
Wesley, Works, VI, Sermon LXVII, “On Divine Providence.”
Coppedge, Allan, John Wesley in Theological Debate, pp. 123-132.

Read only: (Recommended)

Collins, A Faithful Witness, Chapter 1, “The Doctrine of God.”
Wesley, Works, Vol. VI: Sermons LV, “On the Trinity,” LIV, “On Eternity,” LVI, “God’s Approbation of His Works,” LXVIII, “The Wisdom of God’s Counsel;” Sermon LXXVII, “Spiritual Worship,” Vol. VII:
Sermons CXI, “On the Omnipresence of God,” CXIV, “The Unity of the Divine Being.”
Wesley, Sermons, Sermon XV, “The Great Assize.”

****SIN AND PREVENIENT GRACE****

October 9

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, Sermon XLIV, “Original Sin.”
Lindstrom, Harold, Wesley and Sanctification, pp. 19-50 (notes on key concepts).
Collins, The Scripture Way of Salvation, Chapter 1: Grace, Creation and Fall, pp. 19-46.

Read only: (Required)

Wood, Burning Heart, Chapter XXI, “The Loathsome Leprosy,” XXV, “The Wrath to Come.”
Wesley, Works, VI, Sermon 85, “On Working Out Your Salvation.”
Collins, The Scripture Way of Salvation, pp. 185-190. *(continued on next page)*

Read only: (Recommended)

(October 9 continued)

Wesley, Works, VI, Sermon LVII, “On the Fall of Man,” LXII, “The End of Christ’s Coming.”
Collins, A Faithful Witness, “The Doctrine of Humanity.”

****SANCTIFICATION****

October 16

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, Sermons XIII, “On Sin in Believers,” XIV, “The Repentance of Believers,” XL, “Christian Perfection,” XLIII, “The Scripture Way of Salvation.”
Lindstrom, Sanctification, pp. 126-160.

Read only: (Recommended)

Wesley, Sermons, Sermon XIV, “The Repentance of Believers,” XVII, “The Circumcision of the Heart.”
Coppedge, The Promise of Something More.
Collins, The Scripture Way of Salvation, Chapter 6: Sanctification, pp. 153-170.
Wood, Burning Heart, Chapter XXIV, “The Grand Depositum.”

****CHRISTIAN PERFECTION****

October 23

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, A Plain Account of Christian Perfection. Use study guide in syllabus.
Lindstrom, Sanctification, pp. 126-160.

Read only: (Recommended)

Wesley, Works VI, Sermons LXXVI, “On Perfection,” and LXXXIII, “On Patience.”
Collins, The Scripture Way of Salvation. Chapter 6: Sanctification, pp. 171-184.

****PASTORAL THEOLOGY****

October 30

Read only: (Required)

Wesley, Works, VIII:
“A Plain Account of the People Called Methodist.”
“Nature, Design, and General Rules of the United Societies.”
“Rules of the Band-Societies.”
“Directions Given to the Band-Societies.”
Schmidt, Martin, John Wesley: A Theological Biography, Vol. 2, Part 1, Chapter 3, “John Wesley as Organizer of the Methodist Movement.”

(continued on next page)

Read only: (Recommended)

(October 30 continued)

Wesley, Sermons, XLVI, “The Wilderness State,” XLVII, “Heaviness through manifold Temptations,” XLI, “Wandering Thoughts,” XLII, “Satan’s Devices.”
Wesley, Works, VIII:
“Minutes of Several Conversations between Wesley and Others.” (Large minutes)
“Advice to the People Called Methodists.”

****THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY****

November 6

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, XVI, “The Means of Grace,” XXXIV, “The Original, Nature, Property, and Use of the Law.”

Wesley, Works VII, Sermon CXV, “The Ministerial Office,” XCVII, “On Obedience to Pastors,” LXXIV, “Of the Church.”

Read only: (Recommended)

Wesley, Works, “Communion,” VII, pp. 147-157, “Baptism,” X, pp. 189-201.

Collins, A Faithful Witness, Chapter 4, “The Doctrine of the Church.”

****PREDESTINATION****

November 13

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Works, Vol. VI, Sermon LVIII, “On Predestination,” Vol. VII, Sermon CXXVIII, “Free Grace.”

Read only: (Required)

Lindstrom, Wesley and Sanctification, pp. 64-75.

Coppedge, Wesley in Theological Debate, pp. 132-143.

Read only: (Recommended)

Collins, A Faithful Witness, Chapter 7, pp. 163-177.

****PREDESTINATION AND AUTHORITY****

November 20

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, Sermon XX, “The Lord Our Righteousness.”

Read only: (Required)

Wesley, Works, Vol. X, “Predestination Calmly Considered,” “What is an Arminian?”

Wesley, Works, X, “A Blow at the Root.”

(continued on next page)

Read only: (Recommended)

(November 20 continued)

Coppedge, Wesley in Theological Debate, pp. 191-222.

PLURALISM/DOCTRINAL STANDARDS**

December 4

Read and Outline: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, Sermon XXXIX, “Catholic Spirit.”

Coppedge, Allan, “How Wesleyan’s Do Theology,” Doing Theology in Today’s World, ed.

John Woodbridge and Thomas McComisky, pp. 267-289. If this has been read in DO501, then read: Coppedge, Allan, "John Wesley and the Issue of Authority in Theological Pluralism" A Specturn of Thought, ed., Michael Peterson..

Read only: (Required)

Wesley, Sermons, Introduction to Edition by N. Burwash, pp. V-XVIII; Sermon XXXVI, "The Law Established Through Faith, II;" Sermon XXXVII, "The Nature of Enthusiasm."

Read only: (Recommended)

Williams, Wesley's Theology, Chapter I, "The Catholic Spirit: Doctrine and Opinion."
Oden, Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition, pp. 15-68.

CHRONICLE OF PRINCIPLE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF JOHN WESLEY

- 1703 Born June 17 at Epworth, England, son of Samuel and Susannah Wesley, 15th of 19 children (nine died in infancy).
- 1707 Charles Wesley born.
- 1709 Feb. 9, saved from the fire, "plucked as a brand from the burning." (Cf. Amos 4:11, ch 3.2)
- 1714 Jan. 28, pupil at Charterhouse, London, 10 ½ yrs. old, there 5 yrs.

- 1720 June 24, enters a Christ Church, Oxford; spent 5 yrs. there.
- 1725 Sept. 19, ordained deacon.
- 1726 March 17, elected fellow of Lincoln College.
- 1728 Ordained priest in the Church of England.
- 1729 Name "Methodist: given on account of the "regularity of their behavior."
- 1730 "The Holy Club."
- 1733 Jan. 1, Sermon, "The Circumcision of the Heart" preached at Oxford. First printed production, "A Collection of Forms of Prayer for every day in the Week."
- 1735 Oct. 1, Wesley sails for Georgia. (April 25, his father's death).
- 1736 Feb 5, reaches America. Aug. 11, Charles Wesley leaves Georgia.
- 1737 Dec 2, John leaves Savannah.
- 1738 Feb. 1, lands in England. First Hymn Book published.
May 21, Charles Wesley's evangelical conversion.
May 24, John Wesley's evangelical conversion.
- 1739 May 2, Wesley becomes an outdoor preacher, i.e., field-preaching in Bristol.
Nov. 11, preaches in the Foundery, first Methodist meeting-house in London.
- 1740 Wesley withdraws from the Fetter Sane Society (Moravians) First Methodist Society founded on July 23. Wesley and Whitefield separate over doctrine of election.
- 1741 The first Methodist newspaper entitled "The Weekly History."
- 1742 Wesley and Whitefield re-united. Formation of Methodist Classes. June 6, preaches on his father's tombstone. July 30, death of Susannah Wesley.
- 1743 Writes "An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion."
- 1744 June 25, First conference of Methodists. Aug. 24, his last University sermon at Oxford on "Scriptural Christianity." (Approximately 176 Scrip. verses woven in sermon).
- 1746 Wesley's first volume of sermons. Reads King's Account of the Primitive Church."
- 1747 First visit to Ireland; Methodism begins there.
- 1749 April 8, marriage of Charles Wesley; Oct. 3, Grace Murray marries John Bennet.
- 1751 Wesley marries Mrs. Vazeille, Feb. 18, April, first visit to Scotland.
- 1755 Jan., published Explanatory Notes Upon the N.T. which he had begun in Jan. 1754. May 6-8, Question of Separation from the Church discussed at Leeds.
- 1756 Publishes "A Treatise on Baptism" written by his father.
- 1758 March 10, Assize Sermon at Bedford.
- 1759 "Thoughts on Christian Perfection," a 30-page publication.
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- 1763 Published tract entitled "Farther Thoughts upon Christian Perfection." March 28, the "Sermon on Sin in Believers." Model Deed issued concerning Preaching Houses.
- 1765 April 25, Preface to Explanatory Notes on the O.T.; last page date. Dec. 24, 1766. 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, wrote sermon on "The Witness of the Spirit" Discourse II.
- 1768 April 27, Wesley makes a Will. August 24, Trevecca College opened.
- 1770 Sept. 30, Death of George Whitefield; Nov. 18, Wesley preaches funeral sermon.

- 1771 Jan. 23, Mrs. Wesley leaves him. Sept 4, Francis Asbury sails for America. Wesley issues the first five volumes of his collected works.
- 1775 A Calm Address to our American Colonies published. April 27, death of Peter Boehle.
- 1778 Jan 1, first number of Arminian Magazine; Nov. 1, opening of City Road Chapel.
- 1781 Oct. 8, death of Mrs. Wesley.
- 1782 Aug. Adam Clarke at Kingswood School.
- 1784 Feb 28, Deed of Declaration executed. Sep. 1-2, Ordinations for America. Dec. 25-7, Francis ordained and set apart as General Supt. for America.
- 1786 Sept. 24, Dr. Coke sails with three missionaries.
Sept.- Nov., writing John Fletcher's Life (Fletcher died Aug. 14, 1785).
- 1788 March 29, death of Charles Wesley; burial on April 5 in Marylebone. Ordination for England
- 1790 His revised Translation of the New Testament published, his last important publication. July 27, Wesley's last Conference, in Bristol; July 30, letter to Wm. Wilberforce; Oct 6, last open-air sermon; Oct 24, last Journal entry.
- 1791 Feb. 1 last letter to America; Feb 22, last Sermon, at Leatherhead; last entry in his Diary; Feb. 24, Last letter, to Wilberforce; Feb. 25, returns to City Road; March 2, dies at City Road at 10 a.m.; March 9, buried at City Road.

“THE BEST OF ALL IS, GOD IS WITH US”

A Plain Account of Christian Perfection

John Wesley
Study guide

Introduction:

As you read through Wesley's work on Christian perfection/entire sanctification, you will discover he has given us quite a combination of materials related to this subject. Most of these were shorter writings of Wesley done on other occasions. He put them together in this total package without rewriting them. That accounts for the duplication you will find in this work. It may be helpful in trying to get a simple yes or no, or short answer to the question. Take enough notes that you can fully address the issue from Wesley's perspective and keep a record of your page numbers for your answer should you desire to use these materials in some other way.

1. List the major terms Wesley uses for Christian perfection/entire sanctification. When you are finished, indicate three or four of these Wesley uses most often.
2. List the Scripture passages he uses under each term or phrase for this doctrine.
3. List the ways Wesley describes a person who has experienced entire sanctification, i.e., what is characteristic of their lives, attitudes, etc.
4. In what sense may a Christian not be perfect?
5. In what sense may a Christian be perfect?
6. How is perfection related to mistakes, infirmities, temptations?
7. When does this experience happen?
8. Is it an instantaneous experience or gradual?
9. How does Wesley relate these two things?
10. How does Wesley describe sin? Note the difference between sin, properly so called, and sin, improperly so called.
11. Should one give testimony to this experience? If so, why and in what manner?
12. What is the evidence one would have to know that he had this experience?
13. What is the condition for receiving this experience? How does one seek it?
14. Can you lose this experience? Regain it?
15. What are the advices Wesley gives to avoid enthusiasm/fanaticism/extremism, especially regarding this teaching?
16. How does Wesley counsel dealing with subjective experiences like dreams, visions, impressions, etc.?
17. Summarize Wesley's doctrine of Christian perfection.

