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## DO 690 John Wesley's Theology Today

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**DO 690ExL Summer 2008**  
**JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY TODAY**  
**2 or 3 Credit Hours (Please note the respective assignments)**  
**Larry Wood, Professor**

**Welcome to this study of John Wesley!** I've been teaching the theology of John Wesley for more than 30 years, and I'm as excited about the life and ministry of John Wesley as ever. I hope you will come to share my enthusiasm for this "hero" of the faith as we let him be a mentor to us as we try to navigate through the troubled waters of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Course Description**

This course focuses upon the distinct theological contributions of John Wesley to the larger Christian tradition. It integrates theology and the practice of ministry by showing the impact of Wesley's theology on his ministry and indicating the relevance of the Wesleyan paradigm for the contemporary church.

**Learning Goals**

Upon completion of this course, the student will have an understanding of:

1. Wesley's theology within the spectrum of catholic Christianity;
2. The distinctive beliefs of Wesley's doctrinal thinking;
3. Wesley's emphasis on the significance of doctrine for the Christian life;
4. Wesley's methodical use of the Bible, reason, experience, and tradition as norms for doctrinal formulation;
5. Wesley's concept of Christian perfection as the focus of faith and practice;
6. The role of John Fletcher as Wesley's designated successor and interpreter.
7. The relevant aspects of Wesley's thinking for today.

**Texts and Readings Assignments**

1. The required sermons of John Wesley for this class are listed in the assignment for each module. Students may use the Thomas Jackson edition, which can be downloaded from the Internet. Here is the primary website for these sermons:  
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/Wesley/jwesley3.html> (numeric index)  
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons> (title index)  
Each module will have the website address for each sermon so that the student will only need to click on the address in order to be taken to it on the Internet.

Scholars in their professional work cite *The Works of John Wesley*; begun as "The Oxford Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*" (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975-1983); continued as "The Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*" (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984--); 14 of 35 vols, published to date. This is the recent critical edition of Wesley's writings. These are not available online, but are now available on CD from Abingdon Press. However, students will be allowed to use the Jackson's edition of Wesley's works, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. Thomas Jackson, 14 vols (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872; reprinted Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978) since it is only available on the Internet,

Students who would like to have a hard copy in their hands when they read the assigned sermons may wish to purchase Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991). This anthology is available at a fairly cheap price at Amazon.com. Another choice is N. Burwash, *Wesley's Fifty Two Standard Sermons* (1881, reprinted by Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 1967), which is available in the seminary bookstore.

2. A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart* (Cliff College Publishers, 2004). This is a classic work on John Wesley. ***Christianity Today* says this book is one of the "top 5 books on Church History" (December 2007 issue).** It provides a discussion of his background, his mission, and his message, thus offering a taxonomy of his life and theology in a single work by an internationally respected Wesley scholar. Wood (1917- 1993) was a British Methodist minister, preacher and scholar. For seven years he

was Principal of Cliff College in Derbyshire, and he was elected the first President of the Wesley Fellowship (a professional scholarly society) in the United Kingdom in 1984. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society in the United Kingdom. (Skevington Wood is not related to the professor of this class!). The strength of this book is its biographical details and extensive quotations from Wesley's own writings. Some will consider a weakness of the book to be its idealizing respect for John Wesley, known as hagiography. Skevington Wood was a man with a passion for evangelism, and hence his interpretation of Wesley (rightly noting that Wesley was primarily an evangelist himself) reflects this point of view. Although its tendency toward hagiography may be a weakness from a scholarly standpoint, it nonetheless catches the significance of Wesley's life and ministry as an evangelist and is the most reliable single volume on his life and thought. His high respect and passion for Wesley does not detract from his careful scholarship.

3. L. Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism, Rediscovering John Fletcher As Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002). [Winner of the Smith-Wynkoop 2003 Book of the Year Award presented by the Wesleyan Theological Society]. Understanding the "whole Wesley" also entails understanding John Fletcher whom Wesley authorized to be his interpreter and defender. He is the only "Wesley scholar" to have enjoyed Wesley's imprimatur. Thomas Jackson said: "Next to Mr. Wesley, he was the ablest advocate of the Methodist tenets." J. F. Hurst (the most significant Wesley scholar in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century) said that Fletcher's writings "constitute the greatest prose contribution to the literature of the Methodist awakening as do Charles Wesley's hymns to its poetry." Because of Wesley's approval, Fletcher's writings became the filter through which Wesley's sermons were read and interpreted by the early Methodists. Today it is impossible to understand the emergence of schools like Asbury and even the Pentecostal movement without understanding the significance of John Fletcher. And it is impossible to fully understand the early Methodist movement without reference to the writings of John Fletcher who is "the theologian of Methodism" as Claude Thompson of Candler School of Theology put it in 1960 and recently repeated by Thomas Langford, the late professor of Duke University. Not only did Fletcher serve as Wesley's interpreter, but Wesley was also influenced in his later sermons by Fletcher. One of the great omissions among recent Wesley scholars is their failure to see the larger picture of Wesley's theology because they ignore the intimate relationship between Wesley and Fletcher. If Wesley considered Fletcher to be a co-leader of the Methodists, then a course in the theology of John Wesley cannot ignore him. And if Trinitarian pneumatology (the doctrine of the Holy Spirit) is influential today in part because of Fletcher's writings on this subject in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, then rediscovering John Fletcher is essential for understanding the relevance of "John Wesley's Theology Today," which is the name of this course.

#### **Recommended Reading**

1. Paul Chilcote, *She Offered Them Christ: the legacy of women preachers in early Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).
2. Ken Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Abingdon Press, 1997)
3. Allan Coppedge, *John Wesley in Theological Debate* (Wilmore, KY: Wesley Heritage Press, 1988).
4. Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *John Wesley and Christian Beliefs, The Standard Sermons in Modern English*, (Abingdon Press, 2002). Dr. Kinghorn has updated the 18<sup>th</sup> century idioms and phrases in the sermons of John Wesley. This is not a paraphrased version of Wesley's sermons, but a transcription of eighteenth-century English for contemporary readers. This transcription helps one to understand Wesley's precise meanings. This work comes in three volumes, including all of the standard sermons of John Wesley, and students are encouraged to buy all three volumes for their personal use and reference. As pastors, you will find that this contemporary transcription of Wesley's sermons will help lay people to have easier access to Wesley's ideas.
5. Larry Wood, "John Fletcher's Influence on the Theology of John Wesley," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*. 85.2-3 (Summer and Autumn 2003): 387-404.

6. Larry Wood, "Methodism and the Recently Revised Baptismal Liturgy," *The Asbury Theological Journal*. 59.1-2 (Spring 2004, Fall 2004): 233-241.
7. Larry Wood, "The Biblical Sources of John Fletcher's Pentecostal Theology," *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Fall 2007).

#### Some recommended Wesley sites:

<http://new.gb-gm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/> This is the main source for Wesley's sermons.

John Wesley's Heritage. <http://wesley.nnu.edu/JohnWesley/methodist/ch1.htm>

John Wesley: An online exhibition by the John Rylands Library.

<http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/methodist/jwol1.html>

1703-2003—The Tercentenary of John Wesley: <http://www.wesley2003.org.uk/index2.htm>

The Roots of Methodism. <http://umc.org/churchlibrary/discipline/history/roots.htm>

The Character of a Methodist. <http://gb-gm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/charmeth.stm>

Wesley's Journal entries selected from over the scope of his life and written by and written by Hugh Price Hughes, a highly influential, late 19<sup>th</sup> century British Methodist leader.

<http://www.matthew548.com/WesleyJ.html>

"Susanna Wesley and the Unauthorized Meetings"—J. B. Wakeley.

<http://gb-gm-umc.org/umw/wesley/susannawesley.stm>

"The Foundry"—by John Singleton <http://www.umns.umc.org/98/sep/537.htm>

"John Wesley's True Love—Grace Murray"—Ruth Dougherty and J. B. Wakeley.

<http://gb-gm-umc.org/umw/wesley/gracemurray.stm>

"Wesley's Last Hours" by One Who Was Present. <http://www.ccel.org/w./wesley/journal/hm/vi.xxi.htm>

"Wesley Used Secular Tunes, But Not Drinking Songs"—Dean McIntrye.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20020821-11870300.htm>

"What Is An Arminian?" by John Wesley. <http://gb-gm-umc.org/UMhistory/wesley/arminian.stm>

*Methodist Timeline*. [http://www.gcah.org/UMC\\_timeline.htm](http://www.gcah.org/UMC_timeline.htm)

#### Grades

Each student will contract for the grade desired in this class.

#### 1. A grade of "C" will include the following:

- ✚ Read the assigned sermons of Wesley.
- ✚ Participate faithfully each week in the interactive sessions. This is the main component of the course. **Your answers to the study guide question must be at least 75 words, unless otherwise noted. Strictly enforced.**
- ✚ Read A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart*.
- ✚ Read *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism, Rediscovering John Fletcher as Wesley's Vindicator and Designated Successor*, Preface xii-xx, 1-198
- ✚ Type a 2-3 page essay (double spaced) on "Justice and Mercy in the Life and Thought of John Wesley." A highly recommended primary resource for this paper is Leon Hynson, *The Wesleyan*

*revival: John Wesley's ethics for church and nation.* [Radical righteousness: studies in evangelical and Wesleyan theology, ethics, and history] (Schmul Publishers, 1999). This is an expanded version of Hynson's classic book entitled, *To Reform the Nation* (1984). It is available in the bookstore.

✚ **Those receiving 3 hours credit are required to:**

- Read carefully the remaining chapters of *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism* (Chapters 10-16).
- Mark up your pages of *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism* according to the general guidelines of Mortimer Adler, who was one of the leading university educators in America and was the late professor of philosophy from the Univ. of Chicago (he died in 2001 at the age of 98!). He has shown that marking up your pages makes its contents a part of your intellectual makeup and is an invaluable learning tool. See his guidelines: <http://radicalacademy.com/adlermarkabook.htm>.
- Students will report to the professor that they have marked up the book according to Adler's guidelines and will send a photocopy of two pages from the book as a sample of the quality of your marking to: Larry Wood, Asbury Theological Seminary, 204 N. Lexington Avenue, Wilmore, KY 40390) **OR** you can email me a scanned copy.
- **Instead of marking up your book**, the student may choose to take notes (one typed page for each 20 pages read). Two pages from these notes as a sample of your work should be mailed to the professor via USPS at: Larry Wood, Asbury Seminary, 204 N. Lexington Avenue, Wilmore, KY 40390, or send me a scanned copy as an email attachment..
- **N.B. If you choose to mark up your books instead of taking notes, you must use a clean copy. You are not permitted to use a book that is already marked. If you have a book that is marked up, you must choose the note-taking option.**

2. **A grade of "A" or "B":**

- ✚ All of the above for a grade of "C,"
- ✚ Students must either mark up their books (*The Burning Heart* and *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*) according to the guidelines of Adler (see above) **OR** take notes (350-400 words per 20 pages read).
  - **N.B. If you choose to mark up your books instead of taking notes, you must use a clean copy. You are not permitted to use a book that is already marked. If you have a book that is marked up, you must choose the note-taking option.**
- ✚ Students must write a brief devotional-theological comment (just a few sentences) about each of the assigned sermons by John Wesley. I would recommend that you have a file entitled "Devotional-Theological Comments on Wesley's Sermons" in which to store your comments. If you own a copy of one of the editions of Wesley's sermons, you can mark it up in place of writing a devotional comment.
  - Students will scan two pages from these notes and email them to me, **OR** send them via USPS by the last week of the class.
- ✚ Students will write a 15 page term paper (using proper thesis format as explained in the University of Chicago *Manual of Style*) on one of the following topics:
  - Wesley's concept of Christian perfection;
  - Wesley's view of predestination;
  - Wesley's and Fletcher's view on the meaning of confirmation;
  - Other options may be chosen if approved by the professor.
- ✚ The paper is due August 11.

**What is the normal reading load to expect for ATS courses?**

By official policy, the expected reading assignments are between 400 and 500 pages per credit hour. Hence, a two hour course would normally have 800 to 1000 pages of assigned reading, while a three hour course would normally have 1200 to 1500 pages of assigned readings. Variations occur under certain conditions.

### Hours per Week

*The Asbury Theological Seminary Catalog* specifies that “students in masters level courses at the Seminary will normally expect to invest two and one-half (2.5) to three (3.0) hours of work per week outside of class in preparation for every hour of credit to be earned” in on-campus classes.

### Interactive Learning

- ❑ This course is divided up into modules, which are intended to involve all of us in an interactive learning experience.
- ❑ Each student will answer the assigned questions contained in the forums. **Each question (unless otherwise specified) should include at least a 75-word answer.**
- ❑ Each student should answer these questions by **Friday midnight (EST)** of each and every week. No late postings, unless approved by prior arrangement with the professor because late postings create a time problem for others.
- ❑ The purpose of the weekly interactive discussions is to provide students with a structured opportunity to develop more fully their understanding of the issues. Effective learning usually takes place better in a conversational environment than in a strictly lecture setting.
- ❑ You will be guided each week on how many questions to answer and how many responses to make to other students. Your responses to other students’ posting will be due on **Monday midnight (EST)**. This is a basic requirement of the course. If anyone fails to fulfill this interactive assignment properly, they will be notified and will be subject to a grade reduction for the course.
- ❑ If you have specific questions for me, you can send those in the section entitled “To the Professor,” especially if you wish your questions or comments to be confidential.
- ❑ I believe you will enjoy this exchange of ideas as we get to know each other while at the same time getting to know John Wesley. These assignments will often connect us with other significant persons in the life of John Wesley, including people from the earliest times in Church history as well as his contemporaries.
- ❑ I hope your introduction to these key theological leaders will make you feel personally connected to them as well as make you feel acquainted with John Wesley himself.
- ❑ Think of it this way. Each one of us is getting acquainted with one another by transcending the ordinary means of time and space. Asynchronicity means that we are not confined to one place at a certain time in order to communicate with each other as a result of the Internet.
- ❑ Likewise we can transcend the limits of our present time/space and transport ourselves imaginatively into the past lives of those who continue to be present with us by their communications which has been preserved in writing. They also continue to shape us because of the relationships which they formed with others, who in turn influenced and shaped the lives of each succeeding generation.
- ❑ In a memorial sermon for John Wesley, one of his preachers (Joseph Benson) preached a sermon at the annual conference held in Manchester on July 26, 1791, on the subject, "He being dead yet speaketh." If we listen well, we may hear some of these voices from the past who influenced John Wesley. We may also hear John Wesley speak to us today through the heritage that is ours.
- ❑ We must be "online" to connect with him. Our conversations together as we interact with Wesley's thoughts will make us feel connected with our Methodist mentor in a remarkably surprising way.
- ❑ So stay "on line" as we connect with the past and bring it into the present. After all, the title of this course is "John Wesley's Theology Today"!

- ❑ There are no DVD requirements. This is an online Internet course and not a correspondence class with video lectures. The key to Internet-based learning is the free exchange of ideas among participating persons, not merely delivering and receiving information to absorb. This exchange of ideas is made possible by the Internet in an unprecedented fashion and is revolutionizing the nature of learning.

### **Special Note about Failure to do Assignments**

Moodle is our new platform for ExL. One of its many features is that it keeps an infallible and individualized record of everybody's participation in the class. With a single glance, the professor knows what you have read or downloaded and what you have posted. This makes it easier to monitor what is going on. **I mention this because your weekly involvement is required to successfully complete this course.** This makes accountability more efficient. Each week that a student does not answer the questions or interact, his/her grade will be reduced by ½ grade—unless one has otherwise made an arrangement with the professor. It is recognized that there are extenuating circumstances that occasionally and legitimately arise. Simply forgetting or neglecting to participate is not seen as an excuse.

### **Wesley's Sermons**

Wesley's sermons were intended to shape the beliefs of his preachers. It was typical of the Anglican tradition for theology to focus on liturgical issues in contrast to the Lutheran and Calvinist traditions, which specialized in pure doctrine and ethical treatises. With his Anglican background it was only natural that Wesley's theology found its primary expression in sermons rather than in formal, academic treatises. As British theologian and John Wesley scholar, John Lawson, once remarked to me in a personal conversation, "John Wesley did not write a systematic theology because he was British, and British scholars do not generally write text books in formal, systematic theology." As William Abraham has noted, Wesley should not be idolized as "a great theologian (or even a theologian)," but rather we should "receive him for what he is, an extraordinary evangelists, a great saint, and a remarkable spiritual Father in God" [William J. Abraham, "The End of Wesleyan Theology," *The Wesleyan Theological Journal* 40.1 (Spring 2005), p. 25].

Wesley's father had at first discouraged him from taking holy orders in favor of becoming a critical scholar with an academic career, but he acted upon the advice of his mother who counseled him to pursue "practical divinity" and prepare for "holy orders" immediately. Most Americans think of "practical" as the opposite of theoretical and critical thinking, but not so for Anglicanism in Britain. In Wesley's thinking, "practical" included critical theory. Wesley was himself for a time a Greek lecturer, as well as a lecturer in philosophy and logic at Oxford. In his work as an itinerant preacher, on occasions he met with his preachers and taught them philosophy and logic, as his essay, "Advice to the Clergy," reveals, as well as his diary notes of March 4, Wednesday, 1747. Wesley's sermons capture the essence of his theology and reveal in the best sense of the term just what "practical divinity" means. For him, what is "true" is also "scriptural" and "experimental" (see "Preface" to his Sermons).

This class will give serious attention to some of the so-called standard sermons, which Wesley referred to as "Sermons on Several Occasions" - a title which was borrowed from Anglicanism and used in reference to homilies preached by Anglican dignitaries in the big cathedrals. Wesley chose this title to show that he believed his sermons were of significant importance. We will also examine some of his later sermons, which were originally printed in *The Arminian Magazine* and subsequently published by Wesley in a second collection of "Sermons on Several Occasions." Wesley's sermons are the primary source of Wesleyan-Arminian beliefs and a model of how to think in a Wesleyan way.

Since Wesley stood within the Anglican tradition and accepted the whole body of classical orthodox teaching, we will exam only those distinctive beliefs that came to characterize Methodism.

### **The Role of John Fletcher**

We will also see how Wesley's theology was interpreted through the writings of John Fletcher whom Wesley invited to be his successor. Fletcher attempted to make Wesley "consistent" with himself (because there were progressive stages of development and shifts in Wesley's thinking). His five volumes of *Checks to Antinomianism* were highly influential in Methodism and were placed next to Wesley's own writings as the basis of Methodist theology. Fletcher's importance has largely been lost to contemporary Methodism, and frankly many, if not most, Wesley scholars today have a limited or even misunderstanding of the role of Fletcher in early Methodism and his intimate relationship with Wesley. We have many Wesley scholars today, and each in

his/her own way has provided an interpretation of Wesley's theology often reflecting their own agendas and specific views and picking and choosing from various isolated texts in Wesley and not understanding the progressive development in Wesley's theology. So some will (mis)quote an early statement by Wesley from an early period in his life and ignore his latest views.

Because of the clash of interpretations by contemporary Wesley scholars, William Abraham of Perkins School of Theology has spoken of the "The End of Wesleyan Theology" in a recent article in *The Wesleyan Theological Journal*, noting how different Wesley scholars offer competing versions of Wesley's theology. He writes: "There are as many Wesleys as there are Wesley scholars" (ibid., p. 13). In the light of this confusion, he suggests that we should reconsider John Fletcher's role as Wesley's interpreter. He notes that Wesley's idea of perfection "deserves a fresh, sympathetic visit now that we have a spirited revision of what happened to the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit after Fletcher of Madeley," which Abraham says my book, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, has initiated (ibid., p. 21). Abraham's evaluation suggests that Fletcher deserves to be heard again, especially in the light of the fact "the quest for the historical Wesley [by contemporary Wesley scholars] has morphed into a discovery of the Wesleys of faith, with Wesley turning out to be very much like the mirror images of the historian under review" (ibid., p. 14). Abraham thus calls for "a radically fresh start in theology" with a frank recognition of who Wesley was as a "spiritual Father in God and as a saint of modern Protestantism," not as a systematic theologian (ibid. p. 25)

This course will show in a realistic fashion how Wesley and Fletcher together shaped the theology of early Methodism. Of particular significance is the fact that Wesley edited, corrected, published, and promoted the writings of Fletcher as one who had "a clear understanding . . . , particularly of the Methodist doctrine and discipline."

Fletcher had the unique privilege of Wesley correcting and approving his interpretation of Wesley's own theology! This is a privilege that later Wesley scholars could not have. It will be seen that if Fletcher expanded some of the implications of Wesley's theology, he did it with Wesley's blessing. Although Wesley's own writings should be the primary basis for interpreting Wesley, the fact that Wesley entered into a close liaison with Fletcher and took the responsibility of correcting, publishing, and promoting his writings as normative for Methodists, even highlighting in some instances an asterisk in front of some paragraphs as especially insightful, shows that a complete understanding of Wesley's views should entail a consideration of Fletcher's works.

Because of Fletcher's unique relationship to Wesley and his decisive influence in shaping the theology of early Methodism, his interpretation will be given preference over all later interpreters. Some recent Wesley interpreters believe that Fletcher misinterpreted Wesley's theology. The irony of this misconception is that it is like saying Wesley misinterpreted his own ideas since he gave Fletcher his own imprimatur by correcting and publishing Fletcher's *Works* and by saying that Fletcher properly understood Methodist doctrine and hence should be his successor. A recent Wesley scholar recklessly claimed that Fletcher enjoyed no special place of privilege with Wesley. This misconception is inexplicable and reflects a contemporary theological bias against Fletcher. Wesley not only invited Fletcher to be his successor, he offered to make Fletcher his "equal partner" (Wesley's terms) and even suggested that he would be willing to put himself under Fletcher's supervision! Whatever few minor criticisms Wesley had of Fletcher's writings occurred only in the manuscript stage when Wesley was correcting them. Fletcher accepted all of Wesley's suggested changes in the manuscript stage of his works. Wesley never had even a minor criticism of Fletcher's published writings, but rather all praise and full recommendation. If Methodism was decisively shaped by Fletcher's interpretation of John Wesley's theology, it is important to give attention to their relationship.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### Week 1

"Methodism, so called, is the old religion, the religion of the Bible, the religion of the primitive Church, the religion of the Church of England" [John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial edition), 3, 585. Sermon 112, 'On Laying the foundation of the New Chapel' (1777)].

"We look upon ourselves, not as the authors or ringleaders of a particular sect or party; (it is the farthest thing from our thoughts;) but as messengers of God to those who are Christians in name, but Heathens in heart and in life, to call them back to that from which they are fallen, to real genuine Christianity" [John Wesley, *Works*, XIII, 195-196. *Reasons against a Separation from the Church of England* (1758)].

Assignment

Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart*, Introduction through Chapter 8

**Week 2**

"Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of God upon earth" (John Wesley, *Letters*, VI, 272. Letter to Alexander Mather, [August 6], 1777).

"I am become, I know not how, an honourable man. The scandal of the cross is ceased; and all the kindom, rich and poor, Papists and Protestants, behave with courtesy [toward me], nay and seeming good will! It seems as if I had well nigh finished my course, and our Lord was giving me an honourable discharge" (John Wesley, *Letters*, VII, 277. Letter to Miss Ritchie, June 26, 1785).

Assignment

Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart*, Chapters 9-18

**Week 3**

"God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be *homo unius libri*" [John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial edition), I, 105. Preface to *Sermons on Several Occasions* (1746)].

"The Bible is my standard of *language* as well as sentiment. I endeavour not only to think but to speak *as the oracles of God*. Show me any one of the inspired writers who mentions Christ or faith more frequently than I do, and I will mention them more frequently" (John Wesley, *Letters*, V, 8. Letter to John Newton, April 1, 1766).

"But I try every Church and every doctrine by the Bible. This is the word by which we are to be judged in that day" (John Wesley, *Letters* III, 172. Letter to William Dodd, Mach 12, 1756).

"For from hence we may learn, first, that a catholic spirit is not *speculative latitudinarianism*. It is not an indifference to all opinions. This is the spawn of hell, not the offspring of heaven [John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial edition), 2, 92. Sermon 39, 'Catholic Spirit' (1750)].

Assignment

Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart*, Chapters 19-25

**Week 4**

"Do those who are in Christ have sin remaining with them? Is there any sin in those that are born of God, or do they have complete deliverance from it? . . . Resolving this matter very greatly concerns both one's present and eternal happiness."—"Sin in Believers"

"Repentance in believers includes their understanding that they are sinners. Yes, even though we know that we are children of God, we are still guilty, helpless sinners." "The Repentance of Believers,"

Assignment

- ✚ "Wesley's Sermons As Normative for Methodist Doctrine—A Lecture
- ✚ "Trinity and Transformation: Exploring the Context of John Wesley's Theology"—A Lecture
- ✚ John Wesley's "Preface" (1746)
- ✚ "Salvation by Faith" (1738)
- ✚ "The Almost Christian" (1741)
- ✚ "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" (1742, by Charles Wesley)
- ✚ Browse through Wesley, "The Large Minutes" (final revision, 1789).

**Week 5**

Baptism is the outward sign of this inward grace which is supposed by our Church to be given with, and through that sign to all infants, and to those of riper years, if they 'repent and believe the Gospel'" [John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial edition), 11, 107. *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion. Part I* (1745)]

"It is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he can" [John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial edition), 3, 428. Sermon 101, "The Duty of Constant Communion" (1787)].

Assignment

- ✚ Wesley, "The Means of Grace" (1746)
- ✚ Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion"(1787)
- ✚ Read about "love-feasts" at
- ✚ <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/lovefest.htm>
- ✚ Wesley, "Marks of the New Birth" (1748)
- ✚ Borgen, "No Ends Without the Means," *The Asbury Theological Journal*, No. 46.1 (Spring 1991): 63-85 (Contained in this module)
- ✚ "On Sin in Believers" (1763)
- ✚ "The Repentance of Believers" (1767)

### Week 6

"Nay, remember, there can be no little sin, till we can find a little God! [John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial edition), 3, 383. Sermon 97, 'On Obedience to Pastors' (1785)].

"Nothing is sin, strictly speaking, but a voluntary transgression of a known law of God. Therefore every voluntary breach of the law of love is sin; and nothing else, if we speak properly" (John Wesley, *Letters*, V, 322. Letter to Mrs. Bennis, June 1, 1772).

"But is 'a voluntary transgression of a known law' a proper definition of sin? I think it is of all such as is imputed to our condemnation. And it is a definition which has passed uncensured in the Church for at least fifteen hundred years. . . . The thing is plain. All in the body are liable to mistakes, practical as well as speculative. Shall we call them sins or no? I answer again and again, Call them just what you please" (John Wesley, *Letters*, IV, 155. Letter to John Hosmer, June 7, 1761).

"I believe there is no such perfection in this life as excludes these involuntary transgressions which I apprehend to be naturally consequent on the ignorance and mistakes inseparable from mortality" [John Wesley, *Works*, XI, 396. *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766)]

"A thousand infirmities are consistent even with the highest degree of holiness, which is no other than pure love, an heart devoted to God, one design and one desire" (John Wesley, *Letters*, V, 6. Letter to Mrs. Bennis, March 29, 1766).

### Assignment

- ✚ "The Great Assize" (1758)
- ✚ "The Marks of the New Birth" (1741)
- ✚ "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God" (1748)
- ✚ "The Lord Our Righteousness" (1765)
- ✚ "Justification by Faith" (1746)
- ✚ "The Righteousness of Faith" (1742)
- ✚ "The Way to the Kingdom" (1746)
- ✚ "The First-Fruits of the Spirit" (1746)
- ✚ "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" (1746)
- ✚ "The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse 1" (1746)
- ✚ "The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse 2" (1767)

### Week 7

"Q.74. What is the direct antidote to Methodism, the doctrine of heart-holiness? A. Calvinism . . . . Q. 76. What can be done to guard against it? A. (1.) Let all our Preachers carefully read over ours and Mr. Fletcher's Tracts" (John Wesley, *Works* (Zondervan reprint), The Large Minutes 1744-1789, VIII, 336).

"Is not Calvinism the very antidote of Methodism, the most deadly and successful enemy which it ever had?" (John Wesley, *Letters*, VIII, 95. Letter to lady Maxwell, September 30, 1788).

"I believe, That God, before the foundation of the world, did unconditionally elect certain persons to do certain works, as Paul to preach the gospel: That He has unconditionally elected some nations to receive peculiar privileges, the Jewish nation in particular" (John Wesley, *Journal*, III, 84-85. August 24, 1743).

#### Assignment

- ✚ Wesley, "Circumcision of Heart" (1733)
- ✚ Wesley, "Scriptural Christianity" (1744)
- ✚ Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (1765). This sermon was written in 1765 and represents Wesley's matured interpretation of the way of salvation, clearly laying out the order of salvation. This sermon in a nutshell offers a taxonomy of Wesley's teachings. It is like an abstract of his distinctive teachings. Some of his early sermons sometimes failed to make carefully nuanced distinctions between the justified state and the sanctified state that are found in this sermon.
- ✚ Speed read through Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Available online in this module.
- ✚ Wood, "The Relational Meaning of Grace—A Lecture" (contained in this module)
- ✚ Wesley's *via salutis*—(Contained in this module)
  - A graphic explaining the wholeness of salvation in several stages.

#### **Week Eight**

"You would do more good and gain more benefit from being among us. Come, then, and if you do not wish to be an equal partner with me, I will be ready to serve under you." --This is an excerpt from Wesley's letter to John Fletcher, inviting him to be the co-leader of Methodism when Wesley was 58 years old and Fletcher was 32.

#### Assignment

- ✚ *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, pp. 1-31
  - "Preface" pp. xiii-xx
  - "Introducing John Fletcher and the Forgotten, Later Wesley" pp. 1-15
  - "Rediscovering Pentecost in Early Methodism" pp. 17-31
- ✚ Wesley, "On Christian Perfection" (1741)
- ✚ Wesley, "On Zeal" (1781)

#### **Week Nine**

"Salvation is carried on by 'convincing grace', usually in Scripture termed 'repentance', which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone. Afterwards we experience the proper Christian salvation; whereby, 'through grace' we 'are saved by faith', consisting of those two grand branches, justification and sanctification. By justification we are saved from the guilt of sin, and restored to the favour of God; by sanctification we are saved from the power and root of sin, and restored to the image of God" [John Wesley, *Works* (Bicentennial edition), 3, 204. Sermon 85. 'On Working out Our Own Salvation' (1785)].

#### Assignment

- ✚ *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*
  - "Misunderstanding and Reconciliation Over the Meaning of Pentecost" pp. 33-56
  - "Tensions Over Fletcher's Interpretation of Wesley" pp. 57-73
- ✚ Wesley, "Free Grace" (1739)
- ✚ Wesley, "On Predestination" (1773)
- ✚ Wesley, "On Eternity" (1786)
- ✚ Wood, "Predestination and Holiness—A Lecture" (contained in this module)

#### **Week Ten**

It was then [after the coming of "the sanctifying Spirit" who was not previously given because "Jesus was not glorified"], when he had 'ascended up on high, and led captivity captive,' that 'the promise of the Father' was fulfilled, which they had heard from him. It was then he began to work like himself, showing that 'all power

was given to him in heaven and earth.’ ‘When the day of Pentecost was fully come, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and there appeared tongues as of fire; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.’ In consequence of this, three thousand souls received ‘medicine to heal their sickness,’ were restored to the favour and the image of God, under one sermon of St. Peter’s. Outler, *Sermons*, 2:454, “The Mystery of Iniquity.”

#### Assignment

- ✚ *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism* (text)
  - “Wesley’s Authorized Interpreter and Designated Successor” pp. 75-100
  - “The Theologian of Methodism” pp. 101-112
  - “The Doctrine of Dispensations” pp. 113-144
- ✚ Wesley, “The Mystery of Iniquity” (1783)
- ✚ Wesley, “The Catholic Spirit” (1750)

#### **Week Eleven**

"The Entire sanctification of the soul from sin is held forth, both as necessary to qualify us for heaven, and as the result of that *baptism of the Spirit* which we receive in answer to prayer, and through faith in Christ."-- Richard Watson, the first systematic theologian of Methodism, in a conversation with youth.

- ✚ *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*,
  - “An Ecclesiastical Dilemma and the Pentecostal Solution,” pp. 145-162.
  - “The Pentecostal Wesley and His Later Sermons,” pp. 163-207
- ✚ Wesley, “The Imperfections of Human Knowledge” (1784)
- ✚ Wesley, “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield” (1770)
- ✚ Wesley, “On the Death of the Rev. Mr. John Fletcher” (1785)
- ✚ Wesley, “On Faith” (1788). This sermon was written after Melville Horne consulted with John Wesley about the meaning of assurance. They particularly discussed John Fletcher’s writings on this subject and the doctrine of dispensations. See a report on their discussion in *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism* (pp. 181-186).

#### **Week Twelve**

"I was intimately acquainted with him for thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and night, without the least reserve, during a journey of many hundred miles; and in all that time I never heard him speak an improper word, or saw him do an improper action. To conclude: Within fourscore years, I have known many excellent men, holy in heart and life: but one equal to him I have not known; one so uniformly and deeply devoted to God. So unblamable a man, in every respect, I have not found either in Europe or America. Nor do I expect to find another such on this side eternity.

Yet it is possible we may be such as he was. Let us, then, endeavour to follow him as he followed Christ." (John Wesley, "The Life of John Fletcher," *Works*, VI, 482).

#### ASSIGNMENT

- ✚ Wesley, “The General Spread of the Gospel” (1783)
- ✚ Read the sermon by Mary Fletcher contained in Henry Moore’s *Life of Mary Fletcher* (Online in Module 12). You will notice that she referred to Wesley’s belief that a global Pentecost was to come to the whole world, but she said that it was important for this worldwide reality was to begin in the hearts of believers now through the baptism with the Spirit. She often met Wesley at locations along his preaching points to exhort after his sermons. This was a typical example of her exhortation that would accompany her ministry with Wesley. She very likely used this exhortation after he preached a sermon on “the general spread of the gospel.”
- ✚ Read the excerpts from the sermon on perfection by Gregory of Nyssa.
- ✚ Read the selected Pseudo-Macarius’ Homilies (1, 5, 9, 15, 21). Wesley translated (based on Thomas Haywood’s translation in 1721) and abridged these homilies and placed them in his Christian Library (a collection of cheap paper books for the purpose of providing helpful literature for Methodists). These homilies highly influenced John Fletcher who read Wesley’s edition. Pseudo-Macarius explicitly

equated “perfection” with perfect love, circumcision of the heart, sanctification, purity, and baptism with the Spirit. See this website for Wesley’s abridged edition:  
[http://wesley.nnu.edu/john\\_wesley/christian\\_library/vol1/CL1Part2.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/christian_library/vol1/CL1Part2.htm)

### Week Thirteen

“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, (Acts 2:1) then first it was [in the history of salvation], that they who “waited for the promise of the Father” (Acts 1:4) were made more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37) over sin by the Holy Ghost given unto them. That this great salvation from sin was not given till Jesus was glorified, St. Peter also plainly testifies” Wesley’s sermon “On Christian Perfection.” “More than conquerors” and “this great salvation” are phrases used consistently by Wesley to mean entire sanctification.

Please read, Wood, “The Biblical Sources of John Fletcher’s Pentecostal Theology,” *The Wesleyan Journal* (Fall 2007). This essay will explain how Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection was understood and explained in Early Methodism, especially in America. You will see from this essay why in Asbury’s Articles of Incorporation that it says that “the purpose of Asbury Theological Seminary is to prepare and send forth a well-trained, sanctified, Spirit-filled, evangelistic ministry to spread scriptural holiness throughout the world.”

### 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 “old style” (Julian) calendar or June 28 in the “new style” (Gregorian) calendar after 1752 when Britain accepted it – 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 Methodist 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 began 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

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