1-1-2006

DO 690 Theology of John Wesley

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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:**
   
   Burwash, Rev N. *Wesley's Fifty Two Standard Sermons*. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 1967.  **Note: All Sermons Must Be Read.**


   **Collateral:**


4. **Course Procedures**
This course can be taken for either 2 or 3 credit hours. Those who take the course for 3 hours must complete the outline assignment that will form 25% of the grade. For those who take the course for 2 hours, class participation and attendance will now constitute 50% of the grade.

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 25% of the grade.

C. Students must outline the sixteen 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 on Tuesday (at class time) during the week of the last day of classes. Late submissions will result in grade reduction.

The sermons to be outlined are 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 The Marks of the New Birth
Sermon The Great Privilege of Those that are Born of God
Sermon On Sin in Believers
Sermon The Repentance of Believers
Sermon The Means of Grace
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 25% 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. Students must also indicate at this time how many classes were missed.

5. Reading and Testing Schedule

Instructions:

Please consider the information offered in this schedule in light of this syllabus in which the bibliographical details (author, full title, etc.) are articulated elsewhere.

Though you should keep up with the flow of the course as presented in the following schedule, if you do fall behind, just make sure that you complete the appropriate tasks before you take each exam.

**Week One** (To be Completed by February 13, 2006)

Topic: Salvation by Faith

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: I-V
I. Salvation by Faith
II. The Almost Christian
III. Awake, thou that sleepest
IV. Scriptural Christianity
V. Justification By Faith

John Wesley: A Theological Journey: Chapters 1-2

**Week Two** (To be Completed by February 20, 2006)

Topic: Justification by Faith

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: VI-X
VI. The Righteousness of Faith
VII. The Way to the Kingdom
VIII. The First Fruits of the Spirit
IX. The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption
X. The Witness of the Spirit
Week Three  (To be Completed by February 27, 2006)

Topic:  The Importance of  Humility

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading:    XI-XV
XI.  The Witness of the Spirit
XII.  The Witness of our Own Spirit
XIII.  On Sin in Believers
XIV.  The Repentance of Believers
XV.  The Great Assive

Week Four      (To be Completed by March 6, 2006)

Topic:  The Witness of the Spirit

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading:    XVI-XX
XVI.  The Means of Grace
XVII.  The Circumcision of the Heart
XVIII. The Marks of the New Birth
XIX.  The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God
XX.  The Lord our Righteousness

Week Five      (To be Completed by March 13, 2006)

Topic:  Wesley’s Doctrine of Sin

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading:    XXI-XXV
XXI.  Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXII.  Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXIII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXIV. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXV. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount

John Wesley: A Theological Journey: Chapters 9-10

Week Six (To be Completed by March 20, 2006)

Topic: The Way to Perfect Love

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XXVI-XXX

XXVI. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXVII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXVIII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXIX. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXX. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount

John Wesley: A Theological Journey: Conclusion

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition Chapter 3

First Exam: March 20, 2006

Week Seven (To be Completed by March 27, 2006)

Topic: The Standards of Redemption

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XXXI-XXXV

XXXI. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXXII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXXIII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXXIV. The Original Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law
XXXV. The Law Established through Faith

The Scripture Way of Salvation: Chapters 1 and 2

Week Eight (To be Completed by April 2, 2006)

Topic: The Importance of the Moral Law

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XXXVI-XL

XXXVI. The Law Established through Faith
XXXVII. The Nature of Enthusiasm
XXXVIII. A Caution Against Bigotry
XXXIX. Catholic Spirit
XL. On Christian Perfection

The Scripture Way of Salvation: Chapter 3

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition Chapter 4

Reading Week: No classes April 03-07 2006

Week Nine (To be Completed by April 10, 2006)

Topic: The Catholic Spirit

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XLI-XLV
XLI. Wandering Thoughts
XLII. Satan’s Devices
XLIII. The Scripture Way of Salvation
XLIV. Original Sin
XLV. The New Birth

The Scripture Way of Salvation: Chapter 4

Week Ten (To be Completed by April 17, 2006)

Topic: The Flow of Redemption

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XLVI-XLVIII
XLVI. The Wilderness State
XLVII. Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations
XLVIII. Self-Denial

The Scripture Way of Salvation: Chapter 5

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition Chapter 7

Week Eleven (To be Completed by April 24, 2006)

Topic: Challenges on the Way to Perfection

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XLIX-L
XLIX. The Cure of Evil Speaking
L. The Use of Money

The Scripture Way of Salvation: Chapter 6

Week Twelve (To be Completed by May 1, 2006)

Topic: Personal and Social Ethics

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: LI-LII
LI. The Good Steward
LII. The Reformation of Manners

The Scripture Way of Salvation: Chapter 7 and the Conclusion

Wrap Up Week May 8-12, 2006 (No assignment due)

Second Exam: Exam Week (To be determined)

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 Foundery
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
\[\begin{align*}
&01/31/66 \quad \text{Closer union with Whitefield} \\
&1766 \quad \textit{Plain Account} \text{ Published} \\
&03/30/67 \quad \text{Wesley visits Ireland} \\
&08/18/67 \quad \text{Francis Asbury received on trial} \\
&\text{Jan/68} \quad \text{Appointed chaplain to the Countess Dowager} \\
&08/24/68 \quad \text{Trevecca College opened} \\
&\text{Aug/1770} \quad \text{Doctrinal Minutes of the Bristol Conference} \\
&09/30/70 \quad \text{Death of George Whitefield} \\
&11/18/70 \quad \text{Wesley preaches at Whitefield’s funeral} \\
&01/17/71 \quad \text{Benson dismissed from Trevecca} \\
&01/23/71 \quad \text{Mrs. Wesley leaves him} \\
&09/04/71 \quad \text{Francis Asbury sails for America} \\
&09/04/71 \quad \text{Fletcher’s 1 and 2 Checks published} \\
&08/14/72 \quad \text{Meets Howell Harris at Trevecca} \\
&08/14/72 \quad \text{Fletcher’s 3 and 4 Checks published} \\
&08/14/72 \quad \text{Wesley issues Vols. 11-16 of his Works} \\
&03/14/73 \quad \text{Replies to Richard Hill’s \textit{Farrago Double-Distilled}} \\
&\text{Dec/73} \quad \text{Vols. 17-25 of Wesley’s Works published} \\
&06/04/74 \quad \text{Arrest in Edinburgh} \\
&1775 \quad \textit{Calm Address} \text{ published} \\
&04/27/75 \quad \text{Death of Peter Bohler} \\
&\text{Aug/75} \quad \text{Asbury decides to stay in America} \\
&01/03/76 \quad \text{Death of Westley Hall} \\
&08/18/76 \quad \text{Wesley first meets Dr. Coke} \\
&04/21/77 \quad \text{Foundation-stone of City Road Chapel laid} \\
&01/01/78 \quad \text{First number of Arminian Magazine} \\
&05/30/78 \quad \text{Death of Voltaire} \\
&11/01/78 \quad \text{Opening of City Road Chapel} \\
&1779 \quad \text{Publishes \textit{Popery Calmly Considered}} \\
&08/10/80 \quad \text{Letter to Bishop Lowth on ordination for America} \\
&01/25/81 \quad \text{At his Nephew’s concert} \\
&10/08/81 \quad \text{Death of Mrs. Wesley} \\
&\text{Aug/82} \quad \text{Adam Clarke at Kingswood School} \\
&\text{June/83} \quad \text{Visit to Holland} \\
&02/28/84 \quad \text{Deed of Declaration} \\
&\text{Sep/84} \quad \text{Ordinations for America} \\
&\text{Dec/84} \quad \text{Francis Asbury Ordained} \\
&08/14/85 \quad \text{Death of John Fletcher}
\end{align*}\]
ν 01/24/86  Hears George III in House of Lords
ν 07/25/86  Conference begins at Bristol
ν 08/08/86  Visits Holland
ν 09/24/86  Dr. Coke sails with three missionaries
ν Jan/ 87  Begs £ 200 for London poor
ν 08/04/87  Conference in Manchester
ν 1788  Second Series of Sermons Published
ν 03/29/88  Death of Charles Wesley

ν 04/05/88  Burial of Charles Wesley in Marylebone
ν 08/06/88  Conference at Bristol
ν 07/28/89  Conference at Leeds
ν 1790  Revised Translation of the NT published
ν 07/27/90  Wesley’s last Conference in Bristol
ν 07/30/90  Letter to Wilberforce
ν 10/06/90  Last open-air sermon at Winchelsea
ν 10/24/90  Last entry in Wesley’s Journal
ν 02/22/91  Last sermon, at Leatherhead

ν 02/24/91  Last letter, to Wilberforce
ν 03/02/91  Dies at City Road at 10:00 a.m.
ν 03/09/91  Buried at City Road

8. Bibliography

A Wesley Bibliography

Primary Sources: Books

Unpublished at This Point


**Published**


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.