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DO 690ExL
Summer 2003
JOHN WESLEY'S THEOLOGY TODAY
2 Credit Hours
Larry Wood, Professor

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 model for the contemporary church. Prerequisite: ST501 or DO501

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. Kenneth Cain Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs, The Standard Sermons in Modern English*, Volume 1, Sermons 1-20 (Abingdon Press, 2002). Dr. Kinghorn has updated the 18th 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.
2. Also, read these additional sermons: "The Scripture Way of Salvation," "Catholic Spirit," "On Patience," "Of the Church," "On Zeal," "The More Excellent Way," "The Danger of Riches," "The Mystery of Iniquity," "On Perfection," "On Faith," and "The General Spread of the Gospel." Each of these sermons is based on the Thomas Jackson edition and can be downloaded from the internet:
<http://www.ccel.org/w/wesley/sermons/index-name.html>
Or
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/Wesley/jwesley3.html>
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/>
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).

Recommended Reading

1. Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation* (Abingdon Press, 1997).
2. Kenneth Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003). This biography is especially recommended reading.
3. Paul Chilcote, *She Offered Them Christ: the legacy of women preachers in early Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).
4. Paul Chilcote, *Praying in the Wesleyan spirit: 52 prayers for today* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2001).
5. *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 critical edition of Wesley's writings, which scholars now use. However, only 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), is available on the Internet.

Grades

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

1. A grade of "C" will include:
 - ❑ *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism, Rediscovering John Fletcher as Wesley's Designated Successor*, Preface xii-xx, 1-222 (the remaining chapters of the book are used in DO690) ;
 - ❑ A faithful participation in the online interactivity.
2. A grade of "B" will include
 - ❑ All of the above for a grade of "C,"
 - ❑ Plus a ten page term paper on Wesley's concept of Christian perfection, including John Fletcher's Pentecostal perspective,
 - ❑ OR a ten page term paper on Wesley's view of predestination (using proper thesis format as explained in the University of Chicago *Manual of Style*).
3. A grade of "A" will include
 - ❑ All of the above for a grade of "B";
 - ❑ Book Report on Kenneth Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Biography* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003).

Online Interactivity

- ❑ Each student will be assigned to an online team. The purpose of these small groups is to provide students with a structured opportunity to develop more fully their understanding of the issues. Each team will have three or four members.

Bibliography

For an exhaustive bibliography, consult Betty M. Jarboe, *John and Charles Wesley: A Bibliography* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The American Theological Library Association and the Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1987). This book is on the library reference <rev> BX8495 W5 J37 1987.

Also see a more recent bibliography on the Asbury Theological Seminary webpage under "Resources," then "Publications" and then "Wesley's Bibliography." This was prepared by Dr. Kenneth Collins.

See also "A Selected Bibliography" in *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*.

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 writing 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 textbooks in formal, systematic theology."

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. We will also examine some of his later sermons, which were originally printed in *The Arminian Magazine*. 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.

We will also see how Wesley's theology was interpreted through the writings of John Fletcher whom Wesley invited to be his "equal partner" as a co-leader of Methodism. Fletcher was known as Wesley's "Vindicator" and "Designated Successor." Fletcher attempted to make Wesley "consistent" with himself (because there were progressive stages of development in his 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. 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 later interpreters of Wesley 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.

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. A few recent Wesley interpreters have maintained 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. It has even been recently 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" 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1

"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).

- ❑ 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://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/charmeth.stm>
- ❑ A. Skevington Wood, *The Burning Heart* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1978), pp. 19-38. (Library Reserve Shelf).
- ❑ "The Aldersgate Experience." <http://www.matthew548.com/WesleyJ.html>
- ❑ "Susanna Wesley and the Unauthorized Meetings"—J. B. Wakeley. <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/susannawesley.stm>
- ❑ "The Foundry" —by John Singleton
- ❑ "John Wesley's True Love—Grace Murray"—Ruth Dougherty and J. B. Wakeley. <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/gracemurray.stm>
- ❑ "Wesley's Last Hours" by One Who Was Present. <http://www.ccel.org/w./wesley/journal/html/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://gbgm-umc.org/UMhistory/wesley/arminian.stm>
- ❑ Methodist Timeline. http://www.qcah.org/UMC_timeline.htm

Week 2

"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)].

- ❑ "Early Catholic and Anglican Sources of Wesley's Theology—A Lecture (email attachment)
- ❑ "Wesley's Sermons As Normative for Methodist Doctrine—A Lecture (email attachment)
- ❑ "The Context of Wesley's Trinitarian Theology—A Lecture" (email attachment)
- ❑ Wesley, "The Large Minutes" (final revision, 1789). (email attachment)
- ❑ The Standard Sermons
 - Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs, The Standard Sermons in Modern English* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002)
 - "Introduction" pp. 9-25
 - "John Wesley's Preface" pp. 29-32
 - "Salvation by Faith" pp. 33-46
 - "The Almost Christian" pp. 47-57
 - "Awake, Thou That Sleepest" pp. 59-73

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)].

- Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs*, Volume 1
 - "Justification by Faith" pp.94-108
 - "The Righteousness of Faith," pp. 109-123
 - "The Way to the Kingdom" pp. 127-137
 - "The First-Fruits of the Spirit" pp. 138-150
 - "The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption" pp. 151-170
 - "The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse 1" pp. 171-183
 - "The Witness of the Spirit, Discourse 2" pp. 184-198
 - "The Witness of Our Own Spirit" pp. 199-211

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" in Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs*, Volume 1.

"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," in Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs*, Volume 1.

- Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs*, Volume 1
 - "On Sin Believers" p. 212-227
 - "The Repentance of Believers" pp. 228-245
 - "The Great Assize" pp. 246-263
 - "The Marks of the New Birth" pp. 297-312
 - "The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God" pp. 313-323
 - "The Lord Our Righteousness" pp. 324-341.

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)].

"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).

- Sacraments
 - Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs*, Volume
 - "The Means of Grace" pp. 267-283
 - Wesley, "The Duty of Constant Communion"
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/serm-101.stm>
 - Read about "love-feasts" at

- <http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/methdism/lovest.htm>
- Jerry Mercer, "The Centrality of Grace," *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 51.1 (Fall 1995): 223-234. (email attachment)
- Borgen, "No Ends Without the Means," *The Asbury Theological Journal*, No. 46.1 (Spring 1991): 63-85 (Library Reserve Shelf)
- Predestination
 - L. Wood, "Predestination and Holiness—A Lecture" (email attachment)

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).

- Wesley, "The Scripture Way of Salvation" (Sermons 43, 1765) <http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-043.stm>
- Wood, "The Relational Meaning of Grace—A Lecture" (email attachment)
- Wesley's *via salutis*—
 - A graphic explaining the wholeness of salvation in several stages (email attachment)

WEEK SEVEN

"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.

- The Later Wesley and John Fletcher
 - *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
 - Optional for those in ST501 last semester—Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Chapter 1, pp. 19-45, Chapter 2, pp. 47-68.
 - Wesley, "On Zeal" (1781) <http://wesley.nnu.edu/JohnWesley/sermons/092.htm>

WEEK EIGHT

"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)].

- *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
- Optional for those in ST501 last semester as a replacement for *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*—Collins, Chapter 3, pp. 69-100; Chapter 4, pp. 101-130.
- Wesley’s excerpt from John Gambold, “On the Holy Spirit”—1736
<http://wesley.nnu.edu/johnwesley/sermons/141.htm>

WEEK NINE

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.”

- *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*
 - “Wesley’s Authorized Interpreter and Designated Successor” pp. 75-100
 - “The Theologian of Methodism” pp. 101-112
 - “The Doctrine of Dispensations” pp. 113-144
- Optional for those in ST501 last semester as a replacement for *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*—Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Chapter 5, pp. 131-162.
- Wesley, “The Mystery of Iniquity” (1783)
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-061.stm>
- Wesley, “The Catholic Spirit”
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-039.stm>

WEEK TEN

“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.

- *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, pp. 145-162
- Wesley, “The General Spread of the Gospel” (1783)
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-063.stm>
- Wesley, “On Faith” (1788)
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-106.stm>
- A sermon by Mary Bosanquet Fletcher
- Optional for those in ST501 last semester as a replacement for *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, Chapter 6, pp. 153-190.

WEEK ELEVEN

“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).

- *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, pp. 209-222
- Optional for those in ST501 last semester as a replacement for *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*—Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, Chapter 6, pp. 153-190.
- Wesley, “On the Death of The Rev. Mr. John Fletcher” (1785)

- Optional for those in ST501 last semester as a replacement for *Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*—Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation*, chapter 7, pp. 191-207.
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-133.stm>
- Wesley, "On the Death of The Rev. Mr. George Whitefield (1770)"
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/sermons/serm-053.stm>

Week Twelve

"[Wesley's] sermon on Christian perfection is still stronger. For in that discourse, he explicitly rests the doctrine of full Christian regeneration, on the full or Pentecostal dispensation of the Spirit. Take his own words: 'It is of great importance to observe, and that more fully than it has been done, the wide difference there is between the Jewish and the Christian dispensation, and the ground of it, which the same apostle assigns John vii.38, &c. After he had there related those words of our blessed Lord, He that believeth on me, as the scripture that said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters, he immediately subjoins, This spake he of the Spirit, which they who believe on him were afterwards to receive. For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified. Now the Apostle cannot mean here, as some have thought, that the miracle-working power of the Holy Ghost was not yet given. For this was given: our Lord had given it to all his apostles, when he first sent them forth to preach the gospel. He then gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out; power to heal the sick, yea to raise the dead. But the Holy Ghost was not yet given in his sanctifying graces, as he was after Jesus was glorified. It was then, when he ascended up on high and led captivity captive, that he received those gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, then first it was they [the imperfect believers, who were not yet baptized with the Holy ghost and] who waited for the Promise of the Father, were made more than conquerors over sin, By the Holy Ghost given unto them." —An excerpt from Fletcher's essay on the new birth

- Kinghorn, *John Wesley on Christian Beliefs*
 - Wesley, "Circumcision of Hearth" (1733), pp. 284-296
 - Wesley, "Scriptural Christianity" (1744), pp. 74-93
- Selected Homilies of Pseudo-Macarius—Homilies 19, 20, 27, 47—in *PseudoMacarius, The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter*, trans., edited, and with an introduction by George A. Maloney, S.J. (New York: Paulist Press, 1992). (Library Reserve Shelf).
- Tersteegen, "Outpouring of the Holy Ghost," *Gerhard Tersteegen: Sermons and Hymns* (Shoals, IN: Old Paths Tract Society, n.d., Emily Chisholm), pp. 39-65. (Library Reserve Shelf)
 - <http://www.gospelcom.net/chi/DAILYF/2002/04/daily-04-03-2002.shtml>
 - <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/hym/t/h/thouhidn.htm> (a hymn translated by John Wesley)
- A Contemporary Sermon on Pentecost-Confirmation by a Roman Catholic priest—
 - <http://www.stjosephsjax.org/sermons/010604S.html>. See also:
<http://www.stjosephsjax.org/>
- A Classic Holiness Sermon
<http://www.preachersmagazine.org/pastissues/2001Pentecost/classicholinesssermon.html>

Week Thirteen

"This doctrine (entire sanctification) is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appears to have raised us up" (John Wesley, *Letters*, VIII, 238. Letter to Robert Carr Brackenbury, September 15, 1790).

"Always remember the essence of Christian holiness is simplicity and purity; one design, one desire--entire devotion to God. But this admits of a thousand degrees and variations, and certainly it will be proved by a thousand temptations; but in all these things you shall be more than conqueror" (John Wesley, *Letters*, V, 238. Letter to Miss March, April 14, 1771).

"Entire sanctification, or Christian perfection, is neither more nor less than pure love" (John Wesley, *Letters*, IV, 223. Letter to Walter Churchey, February 21, 1771).

"Some of the Mystic writers do not choose to speak plainly; some of them know not how. But, blessed be God, we do; and we know there is nothing deeper, there is nothing better in heaven or

earth than love! There cannot be, unless there were something higher than the God of love! So that we see distinctly what we have to aim at. We see the prize and the way to it! Here is the height, here is the depth, of Christian experience! 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.'" (John Wesley, *Letters*, VI, 136. Letter to Miss Ritchie, January 17, 1775).

- ❑ Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Available online at: <http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/wesley/8317/8317c.htm>
- ❑ Fletcher, *A Treatise on Christian Perfection*, pp. 9:50.

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 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