

A Decade of Dissertations in Wesley Studies: 1991–2000

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Over the second half of the twentieth century scholarly consideration of John and Charles Wesley underwent a dramatic transformation. Coming into this period as a side avocation of a few scholars, it ended the century as an area of academic focus in its own right—with dedicated academic chairs, degree programs, and publishing imprints. As one might expect, this growth is reflected in the number of doctoral dissertations devoted, in whole or in part, to the Wesleys. In the decade 1951–60 there were about 15 dissertations with this focus. The number grew to about 25 in the 1960s and held steady at this level through the 1970s. In the period of 1981–90 there was a noticeable increase to nearly 40 works, and below I list 45 dissertations that I have been able to locate that were produced between 1991–2000 (I would appreciate hearing of any I have missed).

There are several characteristics of this list of dissertations from the past decade that are worthy of attention. Consider first their years of publication. There is a fairly stable regularity, with at least one dissertation appearing every year, and around four in most years. The most striking year is 1999, when thirteen dissertations were approved. This appears to be an anomaly, rather than indicative of the level to expect in the future. The list shows only one dissertation for 2000, and I am aware of only one approved in the year 2001.

A second significant characteristic of the list is the number of institutions at which these dissertations were pursued. There are 33 different

schools, most of which produced only one dissertation on the Wesleys in the decade. Four institutions [Bristol, Claremont, Edinburgh, and Marquette] produced two studies, while one [Trinity] produced three. The most prolific was Drew University, which fostered and approved seven dissertations on the Wesleys in this decade. This range of institutions suggests that serious academic study of the Wesleys is gaining broad recognition. However, it also means that many of these works are pursued at schools where there is no faculty mentor with expertise in Wesley Studies, which helps explain why some studies do not engage the most significant existing secondary works (or the most up-to-date critical texts) relevant to their topic.

While the number of institutions sponsoring dissertations on the Wesleys has grown significantly over the last few decades, their geographical clustering has remained fairly stable. Most continue to be done in the United States or the United Kingdom (Scotland, England, and Wales). The exceptions in the past decade are from the closely related settings of Australia, Canada, Ireland, and South Africa.

On the other hand, there is a notable increase of Asian and African scholars in this batch of dissertations. Most of these scholars chose to focus their creative suggestions more on the implications of John Wesley's theology/practice for their socio-cultural setting than on the challenges their setting might raise for Wesleyan theology and practice, or for reigning interpretations of this theology and practice. But such implications can be gleaned from their work, and will surely be a growing part of the contribution of such new voices in the field of Wesley Studies.

The specific topics chosen for these dissertations also reflects some transition. While several still focus on questions of the *sources* of the theological emphases of John and Charles (with particular attention paid to early "Eastern" Christian and contemporary Anglican sources), there is a shift in overall balance from previous decades with more dissertations focusing on the *implications* of Wesleyan theological convictions for present issues and contexts. In other words, we are seeing more of what Albert Outler called "Phase III" in Wesley Studies emerge.

One of the biggest disappointments in terms of topic is that only one dissertation in this decade focused on Charles Wesley. This is down from three dissertations in each of the two preceding decades. Charles deserves more attention than he has been receiving. Fortunately the recent creation of the Charles Wesley Society and the establishment of

a Charles Wesley Research Centre at Liverpool Hope University are helping rectify this imbalance. One of the fruits of this new interest will be a dissertation on Charles by Gareth Lloyd in 2002.

My intention in the list that follows is not to give a detailed critique of each dissertation, but to provide as much information as necessary beyond what the title conveys so that scholars can determine which works would be most relevant to their interests. I do try to indicate which dissertations advance specific discussions in the field of Wesley Studies itself. Fortunately two of the dissertations that are most deserving of wide reading in the field have just been released in published versions (indicated below), making them more accessible.

The Dissertations, 1991–2001

1. Anderson, Neil Douglas. "The Influence of Clement of Alexandria upon the Thought of John Wesley." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

While acknowledging the importance of indirect influence, Anderson seeks to demonstrate some more direct influence of Clement of Alexandria upon Wesley, particularly as this was mediated by one of Wesley's mentors, John Potter.

2. Baik, Chul. "Christian Religious Education for the Formation of Full Humanity: A Comparative Cross-Cultural Study of Yi T'oegye and John Wesley." School of Theology at Claremont Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Baik stresses similarities in the way that Wesley and the neo-Confucian Yi T'oegye viewed education as a means of restoring the fullness of human nature.

3. Basappa, Joseph. "Towards a Theology of Universality: John Wesley's Theological Response to Class Distinctions and its Relevance to Caste Distinctions." University of Manchester (Nazarene Theological College) Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

The strength of Basappa's study is its application to the issue of caste distinctions

4. Blevins, Dean Gray. "John Wesley and the Means of Grace: An Approach to Christian Religious Education." School of Theology at Claremont Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Blevins probes the ways in which the means of grace functioned as educational “ways of knowing” for Wesley, and how this precedent can provide a theological and pedagogical framework for Christian religious education today.

5. Boafo, Paul Kwabena. “An Examination of the Theology of John Wesley with Particular Reference to his Social-Political Teaching and its Relevance to the Ghanaian Situation.” Queens University Belfast Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

The strength of Boafo’s study is its application to specifics of the Ghanaian situation.

6. Bosch, L.C. “The Ethical Implications of the Concept of Faith as Freedom From Society in the Theology of John Wesley.” University of South Africa Ph.D. thesis, 1995.

Bosch tends to read Wesley through the lens of Jacques Ellul, hence considering “society” more as the threat of imposed conformity than as a support for Christian life.

7. Bryant, Barry Edward. “John Wesley’s Doctrine of Sin.” King’s College, University of London Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

Bryant provides a helpful and reliable analysis of Wesley’s doctrine of sin.

8. Clarke, Charles David. “A Still More Excellent Way: An Historical, Theological, and Biblical Evaluation of John Wesley’s Doctrine of Christian Perfection.” Potchefstroom (South Africa) University for Christian Higher Education Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Clarke’s main claim is that Wesley makes love key to his doctrine of Christian Perfection. He engages few recent studies or their insights/questions about this doctrine.

9. Creasman, Ronald R. “Heaven Connected to Earth: Toward a Balance of Personal and Social Eschatology in Wesleyan Theology.” Marquette University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Creasman contends that recent studies of Wesley’s eschatology have tended to focus on its social dimension and miss the important role of personal eschatology, which Wesley understood to play a key motivational role in evangelism and social action. He provides a good survey of the elements of eschatology in Wesley’s writings.

10. Doo, Jin Kim. "Holiness in Calvin and Wesley." University of Bristol Ph.D. thesis, 1995.

This comparative study focuses more on description than interpretive analysis.

11. Eckley, Richard Kevin. "Pneumatology in the Wesleyan Tradition and Yves Congar: A Comparative and Ecumenical Study." Duquesne University Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

The strength of Eckley's study is its comparative exchange, which leads him to suggest that Wesleyans need to appropriate from Congar a deeper appreciation for the ecclesiological dimension of pneumatology.

12. Fletcher, W. Brian. "Christian Perfection in Wesley and Fletcher with Implications for Today." University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1997.

Fletcher aims to show that there was less difference between Wesley and Fletcher than is sometimes claimed. Specifically, he stresses how both place any emphasis on specific experiences in the context of ongoing growth toward Christian maturity. His study is addressed to the European Methodist context and its general devaluation of any claim for attaining Christian Perfection.

13. Fourqurean, David N. "The Politics of Christian Perfection as Peace: Karl Barth and John Wesley in Dialogue." Duke University Ph.D. thesis, 1997.

Fourqurean's primary interest is to criticize Wesley for not adopting pacifism, which he assumes is the only reasonable application of Wesley's theology of pure love.

14. Giffin, John. "The Structure of Authority in the Thought of John Wesley." Fuller Theological Seminary Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Giffin's stated goal is to show that faithfulness to Wesley would require The United Methodist Church to affirm the principle of *sola scriptura*. He provides little interaction with other recent studies of Wesley's understanding and use of scripture.

15. Griswold, John Eliot. "Mystics and the Authority of Experience in John Wesley's Theology." Boston University School of Theology Th.D. thesis, 1999.

In striking contrast with Giffin, Griswold tries to demonstrate in Wesley an openness to mysticism as a theological source, and argues contemporary Methodists need to recover this openness.

16. Haartman, Keith. "Watching and Praying: A Psychoanalytic View of Personality Change in Eighteenth Century British Methodism." University of Toronto Ph.D. thesis, 2000.

While others have given psychoanalytic interpretations of Wesley's own conversion, Haartman applies this grid to Wesley's model for the spiritual development of his people.

17. Hall, Elaine Friedrich. "Pedagogical and Andragogical Principles of John Wesley's Anthology." University of North Texas Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Hall's main argument is that Wesley's catechetical materials and structures reflect an awareness of the different needs for addressing children (pedagogy) and addressing adults (andragogy). This challenges somewhat the assumption that Wesley operated with a model of children as essentially "little adults" (cf. Willhauck).

18. Im, Seung-An. "John Wesley's Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Tension Between the Latin Western Patristic Tradition (Augustine) and the Greek Eastern Patristic Tradition (Gregory of Nyssa)." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1994.

Im contends that the relationship of Latin and Greek influences in Wesley's thought should be seen more as a both/and relationship, rather than in the either/or terms that he believes characterizes earlier studies.

19. Kim, Hong Ki. "The Theology of Social Sanctification Examined in the Thought of John Wesley and in Minjung Theology: A Comparative Study." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1991.

Kim understands "social sanctification" to mean social-political transformation, and this is the focus of his comparison with Korean Minjung theologies.

20. Kim, Kwang Yul. "A Tension Between the Desire to Follow the Example of Jesus' Life and the Desire to Trust in His Redemptive Work: The Theology of John Wesley Reflected in his *Christian Library*." Westminster Theological Seminary Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

Kim contends that the selection of materials in the *Christian Library* show that Wesley's Arminian (or really, in Kim's view, Pelagian) commitments override the classic Protestant commitment to the adequacy of Christ's redemptive work.

21. Kwon, Tae Hyoung. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Prevenient Grace: Its Import for Contemporary Missiological Dialogue." Temple University Ph.D. thesis, 1996.

Kwon argues that Wesley's doctrine of Prevenient Grace allowed him (and us) to accept that there is some truth in other religions, and to develop context sensitive ministries.

22. Leclerc, Diane Cunningham. "Original Sin and Sexual Difference: A Feminist Historical Theology of a Patristic, Wesleyan, and Holiness Doctrine." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1998; published as *Singleness of Heart: Gender, Sin, and Holiness in Historical Perspective*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2001.

Of focal interest for Wesley scholars in Leclerc's study is her innovative argument that we find a gender-sensitive understanding of the basic nature of sin in Wesley's mature work. She traces how this understanding is carried over in Holiness writers like Phoebe Palmer.

23. Lee, Hoo-Jung. "The Doctrine of New Creation in the Theology of John Wesley." Emory University Ph.D. thesis, 1991.

Lee advances two main claims: that Wesley's theology is better read in terms of the organizing scheme of re-creation than that of the *ordo salutis*; and that Macarius and the Syriac tradition were more influential on Wesley than was Gregory of Nyssa.

24. McGonigle, Herbert. "John Wesley - Evangelical Arminian." Keele University Ph.D. thesis, 1994; published as *Sufficient Saving Grace: John Wesley's Evangelical Arminianism*. Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2001.

McGonigle's basic goal is to show that Wesley's understanding of the supernatural gift of grace to all persons enabled him to maintain a near-Augustinian doctrine of original sin, yet reject both Pelagian innate ability and Calvinistic unconditional election. He includes the best evidence to date of Wesley reading actual extracts of Arminius.

25. Marino, Bruce. "Through a Glass Darkly: The Eschatological Vision of John Wesley." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1994.

Marino provides a basic overview of Wesley's stance on traditional topics in eschatology.

26. Meadows, Philip R. "Sādhana and Salvation: Soteriology in Rāmānuja and John Wesley." Cambridge University Ph.D. thesis, 1996.

This is a comparative study in the best sense. Meadows draws upon insights in each camp to suggest new perspectives on long-standing issues in the other. For example, he urges that Rāmānuja's notion of non-duality would be a helpful way to capture the relationship Wesley seeks to defend between Divine initiative and human response in salvation.

27. Miller, Kenneth H. "Ecclesiology, Sin, and Restoration: Toward a Wesleyan Concept of the Church and the Keys." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Miller argues that Wesley provides a model of the role of the church as a key means in our release from sin that is preferable to the more institutional emphasis of the standard Roman Catholic understanding.

28. Miller, Richard A. "Scriptural Authority and Christian Perfection: John Wesley and the Anglican Tradition." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1991.

Miller claims that it was the influence of rationalism that led Wesley's contemporaries to discount Christian Perfection, while Wesley's commitment to literal exegesis—when this did not clash with context—undergird his commitment to this doctrine.

29. Moyer, Bruce Eugene. "The Doctrine of Christian Perfection: A Comparative Study of John Wesley and the Modern American Holiness Movement." Marquette University Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

While Moyer claims to compare Wesley's understanding of Christian Perfection to that found in the American Holiness Movement in recent decades, he bases his summary of Wesley largely on secondary studies by holiness scholars. The resulting similarities should come as little surprise.

30. Parr, Jr., Walter Lamoyne. "John Wesley's *Thoughts upon Necessity* in His Search for the Middle Verity." University of Aberdeen Ph.D. thesis, 1994.

Parr focuses on Wesley's attempt to articulate a defense of human accountability in the midst of the debates over the role of reason, the sentiments, and determinism in the moral theology of his day. He criticizes Wesley for failing to appreciate that Jonathan Edwards' model of voluntarism was compatible with affirming Christian freedom!

31. Rose, Bruce Edward. "The Influence of Genre in John Wesley's Journal." University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Rose argues that Wesley's journal should not be read solely as a personal autobiography, it weaves in as well such genres as travel narrative, pilgrimage, and the like.

32. Schwenk, James L. "The Wesleyan/Whitefieldian Paradigm: The Quest for Evangelical Ecumenicity in Eighteenth-Century British Methodism." Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Schwenk's concern is to stress the areas of similarity and shared mission between Wesley and Whitefield, as a counterbalance to whatever theological differences they had. He offers them as an example of the type of ecumenicity we should seek today.

33. Shepherd, Neville. "Charles Wesley and the Doctrine of Atonement" University of Bristol Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Shepherd surveys various models of the atonement, showing Wesley's resonance with each. In an appendix he discusses possible dependence of both John and Charles on Richard Hooker.

34. Smith, Mark Anthony. "John Wesley: A Pattern of Monastic Reform." University of Kentucky Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

Smith argues that Wesley's rules and structure for early Methodism carry strong resemblance to the Medieval Franciscan order of Friars.

35. Studebaker, Richard F. "The Concept of Mind in the Sermons of John Wesley." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

Studebaker's study demonstrates once again that Wesley's understanding of mind was not purely intellectualist, it integrates the more holistic dimensions of piety.

36. Suh, Peter Kikon. "Two Soteriologies: Wonhyo and John Wesley." Northwestern University Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

A comparison of Wesley with a representative of Pure Land Buddhism. Suh suggests the dialogue shows a need in Wesley's theology for more sense of the *now* of salvation.

37. Thelander, Brook A. "On the Healing of the Soul: Therapeutic Paradigms for Salvation in John Wesley and Select Homiletics." Knox College, Toronto School of Theology Th.D. thesis, 1995.

Thelander summarizes recent studies emphasizing Wesley's emphasis on the therapeutic dimension of salvation. His contribution lies in analysis of subsequent homiletics.

38. Ting, Gah-Hing. "John Wesley and the Psalms: An Examination of the Influence of the Psalms on Wesley's Religious Language." University of Queensland (Australia) Ph.D. thesis, 1996.

Ting surveys language and imagery in Wesley's writings that appears to have its source in the Psalms. He suggests, with little development, that the central role of psalmody in Anglican worship may account for this presence.

39. Tucker, Karen Beth Westerfield. "'Till Death Us Do Part': The Rites of Marriage and Burial Prepared by John Wesley and Their Development in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1784-1939." University of Notre Dame Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

The portion of Tucker's study that deals with Wesley is an exemplary study of the sources and editorial changes in these specific liturgical resources.

40. Tyson, John Horton. "The Interdependence of Law and Grace in John Wesley's Teaching and Preaching." University of Edinburgh Ph.D. thesis, 1991.

Tyson provides a reliable discussion of how integrally Wesley relates law and grace in his mature theological works.

41. Walker, G. Clinton. "John Wesley's Doctrine of Justification in Relation to Two Classical Anglican Theologians: Richard Hooker and Lancelot Andrewes." Baylor University Ph.D. thesis, 1993.

Walker argues that therapeutic concerns are found not only in Wesley's emphasis on sanctification but also in his understanding of justification. He sees Wesley much closer to the theological convictions of Andrewes than of Hooker in this regard.

42. Weeter, Mark L. "John Wesley's View of Scripture." University of Wales (Lampeter) Ph.D. thesis, 1997.

Weeter tries to demonstrate that Wesley held the position defended as inerrancy in current debates, but dialogues with none of the more recent studies of Wesley on scripture that would challenge his claim.

43. Wickersham, Ruth C. "The Rhetoric of John Wesley's Sermons: The Logic of the Heart." Northern Illinois University Ph.D. thesis, 1995.

Wickersham argues that the style of Wesley's sermons falls in between Joseph Butler (with his scientific logical tone) and George Whitefield. She assigns Wesley to what has been called the "Christian Grand Style."

44. Willhauck, Susan Etheridge. "John Wesley's View of Children: Foundations for Contemporary Christian Education." Catholic University of America Ph.D. thesis, 1992.

Willhauck provides the best study to date of Wesley's basic assumptions about children and how these assumptions help shape his approach to Christian education.

45. Woodring, Andrew N. "An Investigation of the Possibility of Caricature: Developing A More Objective Model for Determining Misrepresentation in Theological Debate." Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Ph.D. thesis, 1999.

Woodring does a comparative study of Wesley's quotes and summaries of James Hervey with Hervey's original texts during their debate over predestination. He demonstrates that Wesley caricatures Hervey, but does not consider whether Hervey did the same. Nor does he compare this case with the rhetoric common in theological disputation at that time.