Recent Dissertations in Wesley Studies: 2001–2016

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My intention in the list that follows is to provide sufficient information about the focus of each work for researchers to determine which might be of interest. I do not seek to assess the strengths or weaknesses of the various studies, though I do highlight how they advance specific discussions in the field of Wesley Studies.

This list includes a couple of dissertations from the 1990s inadvertently left off of my published list for that decade. If readers are aware of other dissertations that should be added to this present list, please let me know: rmaddox@div.duke.edu.


Bailey provides a careful comparative analysis of God’s sanctifying work in John Wesley and Gregory Palamas. He highlights their shared emphasis on direct experience of God as central to sanctification, explores their “synergistic” models of Divine/human relations, and sketches the balance between gradual growth and instantaneous transformation in their work. Finally, he considers how these emphases affect the authority of Scripture, Pneumatology, and Christology.


Balzer argues that the Caroline Divines are the most significant influence on Wesley’s understanding of salvation, in some contrast to those who have emphasized the influence of the continental Reformers, the early Greek fathers, and others.


Boyles’s goal is to demonstrate that the affective culture of early Methodist evangelism anticipated literary Romanticism in its commitment to a religion and a language of “the heart.” She opens her argument with two chapters on the literary theory and practice of John and Charles Wesley.


Brooks summarizes the focus on holy living in Wesley’s sermons, but with little attention to contemporaneous practices of preaching. Brooks’ more focal concern is how Wesley’s example might be a precedent for current preaching in Methodist settings.

Brower-Latz explores distinctive aspects of Wesley’s theology related to his ecclesiological practice, particularly the centrality of engagement with urban poverty in his understanding of Christian life and mission. She then brings Wesley’s model of contextual theology into dialogue with the emergent church movement, arguing that Wesley’s insights could help this movement be better equipped to be a reforming movement for the whole church.


Brown’s M.Phil thesis provides a helpful survey of how earlier scholars interpreted Wesley’s millennialism, and demonstrates Wesley’s deep debt to the model of “two millenniums” in Johann Bengel. Brown then relates the nuance of Wesley’s stance on millennialism to his stance on Christian perfection.


Bullen posits that most Wesley scholars assume that, as a “man of one Book,” Wesley developed his theology foundationally from scripture. In contrast, Bullen contends Wesley’s interpretation of the Bible was fundamentally shaped by the presuppositions of eighteenth-century high-church Arminian Anglicanism.


By “perfect love” Burns means an emphasis on divine love as universal and restorative. He compares how this led Wesley to reject slavery, etc., while Whitefield (who affirmed unconditional election) could accept slavery. Burns concludes that Wesley’s stance supports a strong social ethic of inclusion, as well as a celebration of diversity and multiculturalism.


This New Testament dissertation focuses on the emphatic use of “I” in Romans 7, seeking to show that Paul has a consistent portrait of spirituality and Christian maturity. It includes consideration of how the experience described by Paul was understood by John Wesley, Teresa of Avila, and Julian of Norwich. It concludes that Romans 7 describes a regenerate Christian believer, who is growing ever closer and closer to God and at the same time is in pain over the
remaining effects of sin.


Chang compares the understanding of the law in Martin Luther and John Wesley through the central loci of their theologies. He highlights Luther’s concern to correct undue emphasis on human initiative in Roman Catholic theology. In each setting he champions Wesley as reclaiming a more balanced theology of the law, as grounded on the foundation of God’s grace.


Clark uses a close reading of relevant texts and emphasis on social-cultural history to argue that Wesleyan Methodism should be seen less as a gradually maturing “renewal movement” within the Church of England and more as a distinct popular religious movement that had substantially emerged by 1741 through a rapid and intense process of differentiation from conventional Anglicanism, Moravian Pietism, and Calvinistic Methodism. His study includes very helpful discussions of the tensions between the Wesleys, George Whitefield, and the Moravians.


Clarke focuses on the three collections of tunes produced under John Wesley’s authority in the 18th century, as well as other collections such as Lampe’s Hymns on the Great Festivals and Battishill’s Twelve Hymns, seeking to situate them both within the overall framework of Methodism’s evangelistic theology and practice and more widely within in the context of the relationship between congregational song and theological expression.


Coleman demonstrates Wesley’s place within the humanist rhetorical tradition and analyzes the first four volumes of Sermons on Several Occasions in light of the specific rhetorical use of antithesis. He argues that the overarching theological purpose of this set of Sermons was to “distinguish” Scriptural Christianity from the doctrinal imbalances of formalism (primarily moralism) and antinomianism.


Colón-Emeric provides a comparative survey of the teachings of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas on perfection, stressing their common emphasis on the universality of the call to
holiness, the dynamic of the virtues (tempers) in framing the holy life, the centrality of love, and the social character of Christian holiness. In a fine example of ecumenical dialogue, he allows each tradition to probe and enrich the other. (see also Loyer)


Crofford provides the most thorough study to date of the roots of John Wesley’s understanding of prevenient grace in 16th–18th century Anglican, Puritan, and Dissenting theologians, with particular emphasis on Wesley’s indebtedness to Robert Barclay. To this Crofford adds the first detailed exposition of the theme of prevenient grace in the writings of Charles Wesley. He concludes with a survey of how recent Wesleyan theologians have appropriated and applied the theme of prevenient grace.


Cruickshank’s broadest theme is how Charles Wesley’s hymns helped early Methodists make sense of and draw spiritual benefit from the suffering that they endured. She uses this lens to organize perceptively a broad range of Wesley’s theology—from the nature of sin and fallenness, to Christ’s atonement, to sanctification and Christian mission. The result is one of the most significant studies of Charles Wesley’s theology to date.


Crutcher argues against the suggestion that Wesley viewed the “spiritual senses” as providing a distinctive direct avenue for experiencing the spiritual realm, insisting instead that Wesley used this term to describe his practice of interpreting ordinary experience in light of the truth apprehended from Scripture. (Compare Cunningham, Felleman, Lowery, and Mealey)


Cummings provides a detailed account of Wesley’s understanding of and emphasis on “works of mercy,” stressing their centrality to Wesley’s virtue ethics. While aware that the line of influence may be indirect, Cummings stresses particular similarities and divergences between Wesley and Thomas Aquinas’s account of the corporal and spiritual almsdeeds.

Cunningham approaches the larger topic of John Wesley’s theology of the Holy Spirit through careful consideration of his notion of ‘perceptible inspiration’, articulated in correspondence with ‘John Smith’. Cunningham then offers an overview of Wesley’s practical pneumatology—or via Spiritus—in terms of grace, faith, the witness of the Spirit, and fruits of holiness. He interacts significantly with other recent analyses of spiritual sensation and virtue ethics in Wesley (compare Colón-Emeric, Crutcher, Felleman, Lowrey, and Mealey).


Most treatments of the growing divide between John Wesley and Evangelical Anglican clergy focus on theological issues like Christian perfection and predestination. Danker demonstrates that the forces at play were much more multifaceted by exploring the broader political, social, and religious context in which the Evangelical Revival arose in England. One contribution of his study is a more complete account of Evangelical clergy with whom Wesley interacted.


De Blasio focuses on Wesley’s emphasis on a particular and conscious experience of grace, as characterizing the onset of the Christian life and as essential to genuine conversion or the appropriation of saving grace. He argues that this theme pervades Wesley’s teaching from Aldersgate through the end of his ministry. He then defends the emphasis, particularly against the “cognitivist” alternative advanced by Lowery (see below).


Derr focuses on materials published by Wesley for the “faith formation” of children, as opposed to the curricular material he prepared for Kingswood School. She highlights how these materials reflect a shift in the primary setting of faith formation from the church to the family.


Doggett highlights the prominence of use of images from nature (as examples of virtuous living, etc.) in the children’s hymns of John Bunyan and Isaac Watts. His section on Charles Wesley (pp. 46–54) stresses how such appeals to nature are almost entirely missing in Wesley’s Hymns for Children (1763). Doggett attributes this to Wesley’s focus on human flaws and frailties.

Duncan probes John Wesley’s holistic approach for nurturing in his people the character to engage and sustain lives of ministry with the stranger. He elaborates six interwoven strands to Wesley’s moral pathway: orthodoxy, orthokardia, orthopaideia, orthokoinonia, orthonomos, and orthopraxy.


Eby investigates Charles Wesley’s emphasis on the restoration of the “Image of God” as the goal of God’s saving work, showing broad consistency throughout Wesley’s life in his definition of this goal. At the same time, Eby highlights some varying emphases in Wesley’s application of this emphasis over the course of his life.


Farrell’s focus is contending for Methodist contributions to William Blake’s thought. In the process he provides extended comparisons of Blake with John Wesley’s theology and of their mutual engagement with the poets Edward Young and John Milton.


Felleman identifies a significant influence behind Wesley’s notion of “spiritual senses” as George Cheyne’s writings in Natural Philosophy, where these sense do provide their own access to God’s general revelation. Felleman then explores how this casts light on Wesley’s maturing understanding of faith and his goals in *The Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation*. (Compare Crutcher, Cunningham, Lowery, and Mealey)


Fitzgerald’s ultimate focus is accounting for the diminished role of celebration of Eucharist in The Church of the Nazarene, which he argues is due to a lack of clarity and consistency in their doctrine of the church. But the dissertation opens with solid chapters on John Wesley’s ecclesiology and his views on Word and sacraments, which will be helpful to Wesley scholars.


While not on Wesley, this study will be of interest to Wesley scholars because of the shared prominence of the theme of dispensations in Fletcher and Wesley. Frazier argues that this theme in Fletcher must be appreciated as a specific case of his larger affirmation of the doctrine of
accommodation—that God accommodated divine revelation to the fallen human condition in order to communicate effectively to human beings, and that preachers should accommodate their message (like Fletcher did) to congregants.


Friedman includes a chapter focused on John Wesley, arguing for similarities in Wesley with the emphasis on union with God in Macarius, pietists, and others.


Forsaith provides a scholarly edition of all surviving letters from John Fletcher to Charles Wesley, accompanied with helpful commentary. These letters provide significant insight into the close relationship of Fletcher with Charles Wesley, in some contrast with the relationship of Fletcher and John Wesley.


Ganske focuses on the Puritan literature selected by John Wesley for inclusion in his Christian Library, demonstrating that Wesley’s key interest (and principle of selection) was literature that encouraged growth in grace. This leads Ganske to reject suggestions that the Christian Library evidenced preference for legal descriptions of salvation over therapeutic descriptions. Ganske also highlights how the Puritan literature which Wesley selected emphasizes not only the divine initiative but also the requisite human response to that initiative for the heart to be changed.


Goodhead puts the class meeting in its larger historical context, analyzes several dimensions that made it truely affective for the earliest Methodists, and then identifies social dynamics that he contends led to the “inexorable and inevitable” demise of the class meeting among the second generation—as changes introduced by Wesley himself turned Methodism from a charismatic movement into a routinized sect.


Gorman develops an argument for understanding the Holy Spirit as the “Love of God” through comparison of sermons by Augustine and John Wesley on the epistle of First John. He provides a nuanced reading of Wesley’s five extant sermons on this epistle.

Gray contends that rather than opposing the intellectualism of enlightenment empiricism, eighteenth-century evangelical theologians (including John Wesley) consistently drew from the findings of natural philosophy in the creation of their theology—specifically relating the new birth to current discussion of “generation” or childbirth.


Hammond offers the most extended analysis to-date of how John Wesley’s ministry aboard the Simmonds during his trip to Georgia and his parish ministry in Georgia were shaped by his interest in the ecclesial practices of primitive Christianity. The study opens with a very helpful survey of patristic study in the Church of England, and of the particular influence of the Nonjuror vision of the early church on Wesley.


Hiatt stresses the theme of salvation as healing in Wesley, noting its prominence and its scope which incorporates spiritual, physical, social and cosmic dimensions. This leads to an account of Wesley’s holistic approach to mission and its implications for mission today.


The background of Hill’s study is debate in Sociobiology over the possibility or not of authentic altruism. After defending this possibility, Hill uses explanatory categories of sociobiology to probe how Wesley’s use of class meetings and other social structures were integral formation of altruistic love—as central to Christian holiness.


Hoover explores eighteenth-century British cultural conceptions of an “enthusiast” through a range of authors. She devotes chapter three to John Wesley.


Hucks relies largely on secondary studies in his analysis of Wesley, focusing his concern on recommendations for pastoral leadership in the present.

Huson challenges the strand of recent scholarship that has sought to emphasize areas of resonance between John Wesley and Eastern Orthodox theology. Her central argument is that Wesley and Lossky have significant differences in theological method, that are based on fundamentally different understandings of the Christian faith in several key areas. She argues that those who see a real affinity between Wesley and modern Orthodoxy have failed to appreciate how significantly the Byzantine era shapes current Orthodox theology.


Irelan affirms Wesley’s emphases about the formation of holy tempers (sanctification) through participation in the means of grace, while joining others in suggesting that his notions of the self and of spiritual sensation are inadequate to support these emphases. She argues that Peirce’s semiotic theory provides a better model for how participation in communal practices is central to ongoing formation of the habits that constitute a person. Her final section applies the Peircian model to the embodied spiritual practices of a group of 18th-century Methodist women.


Iwig-O’Byrne examines the spiritual autobiographies and biographies in The Arminian Magazine, with attention to how they exemplify Wesley’s theology and regimen of transformation—from awakening to entire sanctification.


Jackson’s focus is on current constructive proposals about the nature of evangelism in Wesleyan circles. His concern is to develop a multifaceted matrix of evangelism that includes a positive role for proclamation. Scholars of Wesley and early Methodism will find Chapter Four of interest, in its survey of early Methodist practices of evangelism.


While placing Wesley within the “art of dying” tradition, Johnson goes beyond earlier studies in elaborating Wesley’s three-fold understanding of death (physical, spiritual, and eternal) as the result of sin, and in tracing the interconnections of death with his doctrines of free grace, the new birth, progressive sanctification, and Christian perfection.

Johnson argues that an appreciation for John Wesley’s focus on “heart religion,” or forming the holy tempers/affections, best explains his eclectic sources for Methodist worship and the distinctive ways in which Wesley abridged, revised, and interwove these sources. This is a helpful study of the spiritual dynamic of Wesley’s liturgical theology.


Kerr surveys the historical context, textual formation, and theological shape of the Hymns on the Lord’s Supper, with a focus on their theological relevance and ecumenical potential for Roman Catholic-Methodist dialogue about ecclesial identity.


Khoo surveys both the eucharistic practices and eucharistic theology of the Wesley brothers, drawing on earlier studies, then focuses her contribution of “eucharistic spirituality” or the integral connection of regular participation in the Lord’s Supper to growth in Christian holiness.


This comparative study focuses more on differences than similarities. Kim argues that Yulgok’s model of the ideal human self is framed in terms of sincerity, while Wesley’s model is framed in terms of love. This difference is identified as a “fundamental option,” but Kim also suggests the two models can learn from each other.


Kim probes the earliest stages of the predestination controversy in Methodism, focusing on the years 1739–41. He attributes the initial divide with Whitefield as much to John Wesley’s authoritarian leadership style as to theological divergences. And he argues that Charles Wesley played a more prominent role in the divide than often recognized, particularly through the two volumes of Hymns on God’s Everlasting Love (1741).


Kim surveys Wesley’s teachings on anthropology, stressing the three states of 1) original
holiness, 2) the fall, and 3) salvation as restoration of the Imago Dei.


Knapp traces the emergence of hymnody as a genre in British ecclesial and broader cultural settings. He includes a discussion of the range of Charles Wesley’s poetic collections, placing them in this literary context (pp. 183–218).


Grounded in recent calls to recover appreciation for “theological reading” of Scripture, Koskie engages Wesley as a possible context-determined model, with a focus on what would be a viable Wesleyan practice of reading Scripture today. Koskie is clear that he is not primarily interested in the “historical Wesley.” Even so, his chapter (5) on Wesley’s sense of the “literal sense” of Scripture is an insightful articulation that makes a contribution to Wesley Studies.


Lacher surveys John Wesley’s revisions in the Sunday Service and focuses on the implications of Wesley’s principles of revision for worship in post-Christian America (with a particular eye to his own tradition – The Church of the Nazarene).


Lee contends that the influence of the Halle branch of pietism (Augustus Franke, etc.) was more formative for emphases in John Wesley’s mature theology than Moravian pietism.


Lee-Koo focuses on Wesley’s sermons in expositing his understanding of humility as “self-knowledge before God,” through the various dimension of the way of salvation or journey to Christian perfection.


Lelos seeks to highlight the ongoing connections between German Pietism, Wesleyanism, and the American Methodist revivals, as mediated in imagery in hymns that emphasize the possibility of unmediated spiritual experience— thereby destabilizing established churches. She stresses how John Wesley took over the German Pietist emphasis on emotional sympathy of the believer for the suffering Jesus, and related emphasis on Jesus as lover, in his translation of German hymns. While allowing that Wesley later excised much of this imagery, she contends that enough
remained in his own translations and in hymns of his brother Charles to mediate such emphases to American Methodism.


Lloyd draws heavily on little used archive resources to cast significant light on Charles Wesley’s contributions to the early Methodist movement, on the relationship between the Wesley brothers, and on the growing tension between Charles Wesley (as a “church” Methodist) and many of the Methodist preachers.


Lohrstorfer traces four stages in the development of Wesley’s understanding of Original Sin: 1) in 1730, with the use of biological or consequential language that he gleaned from Peter Browne; 2) in 1733, with the inclusion of Augustinian and later Macarian disease language; 3) in 1757, as Wesley entered the longstanding debate with his Doctrine of Original Sin; and 4) by 1762, as he embraced the traducian model of Henry Woolnor.


Lowery is seeking to counter models of Christian life and ethics in the holiness wing of the Wesleyan tradition that emphasize subjective experience. He contends that Wesley balanced appeal to subjective feeling by drawing on writers who stressed the role of reason in Christian living, comparing Wesley’s mature thought to a (modified) Kantianism. Lowery is particularly uncomfortable with emphasis on Wesley’s “spiritual sense” analogy. (Compare Crutcher, Cunningham, De Blasio, Felleman, and Mealey)


Loyer focuses on the interplay between love, the Holy Spirit, and holiness in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley. He intends this interchange to help contemporary theology reclaim a richer pneumatology, specifically in relation to the theological virtue of love. He encourages Methodists to embrace Aquinas’ deeply trinitarian pneumatology, while using Wesley’s emphasis on the pursuit of personal and social sanctity in love to shed light on this concern in Catholic theology and spirituality, particularly Aquinas. (see also Colón-Emeric)

Through detailed exploration of his hymns (and supporting consideration of his sermons, letters, and journal) Lunn demonstrates that Charles Wesley integrally relates resignation is to Christian Perfection. She considers resignation not simply as one of the Christian virtues (or tempers), but as a basic orientation towards God that is requisite to sanctification.


McEwan surveys Wesley’s theological methodology, stressing his role as a practical theologian. He speaks of Wesley’s theological method as a dynamic neural network, energized by the living presence of the Spirit, and stresses its relevance for pastoral practice in a postmodern setting.


Madden provides a broad ranging and contextually sensitive study of John Wesley’s interest in medicine. This is now the standard on this topic.


Maddock provides a perceptive and irenic comparison of both the oral preaching and printed sermons of Wesley and Whitefield. He underlines many similarities between the two, including their shared conviction of the scriptural mandate for field preaching and their similar hermeneutic approaches. He highlights the centrality in both of the doctrinal convictions of original sin, justification, and new birth, while teasing out subtle but significant differences in how these were understood by each.


Magallanes-Tejeda stresses John Wesley’s concern for poor, but resists the suggestion that Wesley exercised a preferential option for the poor in the sense championed by Latin American liberation theology.


Raised within the Holiness wing of the Wesleyan tradition, Mann argues that current quandaries
in that tradition about holy living are rooted in inadequate assumptions about anthropology. He draws on Charles Peirce and current work in neuroscience to articulate a more adequate theological anthropology. His analysis engages John Wesley’s teaching in several sections.


Markham’s primary goal is to develop an appreciation for conversion as a holistic formative process. He builds his case on an appropriation of nonreductive physicalism, using Wesley’s equation of “conversion” (in the broad sense) with formation of the holy tempers to provide traditional and theological warrant for his model.


Mealey provides a survey of Wesley’s comments on “spiritual senses,” with a focus on the relation of this concept to faith, the new birth, and assurance. He contends that Wesley drew this theme primarily from scripture and that it became a stable, nuanced, and central aspect of his theology. He emphasizes the Aristotelian tone of this theme in Wesley, offering a critique of those who emphasize strong similarity between Wesley and John Locke. (Compare Crutcher, Cunningham, Felleman, and Lowery)


Mitchell compares the articulated and embodied understandings of the authority of the church in Newman and Wesley. She highlights similarities but ultimately contrasts Newman’s coherent account, that provides for a unified stable church, with Wesley’s inconsistencies that tend to contribute to division and weakening of the church.


Mithra draws together many earlier studies of Wesley approach to education, provides a (generally positive) evaluation of Wesley from the perspective of Paulo Freire’s model of critical pedagogy, and suggest some implications for the work of Christian education in India.


Oh provides an overview of both the sources behind Wesley’s various emphases in ecclesiology and the developments within his emphases.

Olson provides the most detailed exegesis to date of the various Wesley texts reflecting on Aldersgate. While allowing that in later years Wesley backed off of initial suggestions that he was outside of eternal salvation prior to Aldersgate, Olson insists that Wesley consistently viewed his experience that night as instantaneous and as marking his “evangelical conversion.”


Park emphasizes the contextual nature of Wesley’s theology—stressing how it developed in the midst of dialogue with opponents. He focuses on dialogues with William Law, the Moravians, Bishop Butler and Anglicanism, Thomas Maxfield and George Bell, and the Calvinists—esp. Augustus Toplady. Through each of these dialogues, Park contends that Wesley shows a consistent appreciation for holy living and rejection of antinomianism.


Park’s focal concern is the renewal of the church in Korea, enabling it to engage more effectually in service to and transformation of Korean society. He briefly sketches the precedents of Wesley and Zinzendorf for suggestions in addressing this goal.


Park defends the thesis that the “biblical preaching” of Wesley’s forty-four “Standard Sermons” edified the Methodist Societies, which were then foundational in stabilizing 18th century British society. Unfortunately he overlooks distinctions between Wesley’s oral and written sermons, and is unaware of the register of Wesley’s (relatively limited) preaching on these texts.


Peterson’s concern is to counter the anemic ecclesiology and individualistic soteriology prevalent in holiness settings and Methodism more broadly, by recovering, pushing against, and broadening John Wesley’s stress on the intersection of entire sanctification with eucharistic spirituality and compassionate ministry with and among the poor. While primarily a constructive focus, the dissertation includes survey chapters on Wesley’s soteriology, eucharistic theology, and ecclesiology.

While this comparative analysis uncovers little new for Wesley studies, Powe effectively defends Wesley against Cone’s criticism of focusing on “heart religion” to the exclusion of concern for social-political holiness.


Prosser provides an enlightening study of Wesley’s shifting purposes in publishing the Arminian Magazine. Started originally as a form of “controversial theology” to combat Calvinism, Prosser traces the process by which Wesley shifts the content increasingly to meet the needs of providing a broad instructional miscellany for the increasingly literate early Methodist readers.


Rainey investigates the resonance of Wesley’s trinitarian doctrine of God with his doctrine of salvation. Particular emphasis is given to the coherence between Wesley’s convictions concerning salvation and his emphasis on the three offices of Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King.


Randolph draws on Wesley in Chapter 6 of his dissertation, as a Protestant resource for developing an ethic of the common good that can guide environmental ethics.


Riss provides a contextual analysis of Wesley’s comments on the Lisbon earthquake, with comparisons to several other British figures. His analysis challenges the earlier scholarly assumption that a purely natural or secular account of earthquakes was widely spread by the mid-eighteenth century in Britain.


The core of Rodes’ study sketches Wesley’s appropriation and adaptation of the covenant (federal) theology of earlier English Reformed tradition. He argues that Wesley’s appeals to the servant-son metaphor are best understood within the general dynamics of this model, and critiques from this vantage the spectrum of stances on “the faith of a servant” in recent Wesley scholarship. This is an important study for future consideration of this debated topic.

A basic survey of the debate, including contributions by peers on both sides. Ryan’s sympathy is with Toplady, arguing for the superiority of Toplady’s emphasis on the role of “spiritual law” in Christian life, versus Wesley’s emphasis on “moral law.”


Analyzing John Wesley’s thinking and practice on child-rearing and education in its broader social and cultural context, Ryan argues that his endeavours focused less on establishing a system of education than on learning within the home that conformed to Christian values of virtue, morality and piety. His educational practice was more strongly evangelical than intellectual, grounded in the Puritan traditions of the seventeenth century which emphasized original sin rather than new concepts of the innocence of childhood.


Salgård Cunha explores John Wesley’s role in instigating a flourishing literary environment in the early Methodist societies, with specific attention to how the various genres and modes of Wesley’s publications cohere as a body of “practical divinity.”


Schmidt analyzes Wesley’s revision of Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History and several of Wesley’s later sermons reflecting on Christian history, alongside parallel 18th-century English-speaking evangelical treatments. He demonstrates a shared pattern of revival and declension in framing the history of Christianity, while highlighting distinctives like Wesley’s strongly negative assessment of Constantine and his assumption that God does not overwhelm in history.


Schönberger’s “comparative study” is actually an extended criticism of Wesley’s “synergistic perfectionist” understanding of sanctification (and the holiness and charismatic movements that he helped birth), by contrast with Calvin’s “cross-centered” understanding and Barth’s “covenant-resurrection” understanding. Wesley is charged with semi-pelagian synergism, with undue zeal for realized eschatology, and with conceiving sanctification as a “mystical union” with God rather than “participation in Christ.” In making these charges, Schönberger engages little of the last two decades of scholarship on Wesley.

Shaver engages in conceptual metaphor analysis of English hymns in the 17th and 18th century, with a focus on the theme of life as a journey toward our heavenly home. He includes Charles Wesley among those analyzed.


Shim appeals to Wesley’s theology, practice and fervor for communion to warrant the innovation of online Eucharist, while probing how Wesley’s theology and practice might inform the practice and theology of online Eucharist.


Shin includes a section (pp. 50–81) giving a basic survey of Wesley’s eschatology, and his dependence upon Johann Bengel’s commentary on the book of Revelation.


One of the questions over which Catholics and Protestants divided in the Reformation was in what sense the offering of the Eucharist in Christian worship was a “sacrifice.” Sours surveys ecumenical dialogues on this issue, particularly in Methodist circles, where there is some sense that the Wesley brothers might be a positive resource. He then engages in a comparison of Eucharistic teaching in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley, stressing significant points of convergence that are undergirded by similar anthropologies. Chapter 3 on Wesley will be of interest to Wesley scholars.


Souza probes both John Wesley’s explicit reflections and the ecclesiology implicit in the social and missionary practices of the first Methodists. In dialogue with recent scholarly debate, Souza argues that Wesley’s ecclesiology was shaped most powerfully by his encounter with the poor. The result was a fundamentally “lay” and truly “ecumenical” understanding and practice of church—sensitive to those persons excluded from English society and sufficiently flexible to adjust itself to changing situations. Moreover, the role of the church was made relative to Wesley’s focal concern for via salutis, the renewal of the whole of creation, by the grace of God with responsible human participation.

Stalcup explores early Methodist lay accounts of spiritual transformation, noting the centrality of bodily experience to these accounts and yet the problematic role of appeal to experience in these accounts. The accounts she explores were solicited by Charles Wesley, and Stalcup’s analysis sheds light on how both Wesley brothers were “received” in the early revival period.


Stark focuses on the heightened attention to a “second blessing” of Christian perfection (and for many, a “third blessing” of a sanctified mind) among Wesleyan Methodists in the period 1758–63. He identifies a crucial stimulus in this emergence as John Wesley’s reversal (about 1757) of his earlier view that entire sanctification could not be lost. He draws on a range of manuscript items in capturing lay voices on this topic. He highlights the different reactions of John and Charles Wesley to this revival and its implications for the development of early Methodist identity.


Wesley devoted increased attention to wealth and poverty in sermons and other writings over the last two decades of his ministry. Suárez states that most scholars attribute this to a concern for the spiritual purity of his Methodist people (a purity threatened by wealth). He argues instead that it reflects Wesley’s recognition of how the industrial revolution was transforming English society by the mid-eighteenth century, exacerbating the desperate situation of the poor. In other words, Suárez discerns a nascent awareness in Wesley’s later ministry that the love of God requires critiquing and transforming socio-economic structures.


Thaarup details convergent traits in the central loci of the theologies of John Wesley and N.S.F. Grundtvig, which he contends are reflections of their common interest in early Eastern Christian theologians like Macarius, Clement of Alexandria, and Gregory of Nyssa.


Thompson sheds light on Wesley’s emphasis on and understanding of the means of grace by: 1) tracing the emergence of “means of grace” in the English theological lexicon prior to Wesley, and Wesley’s appropriation of that tradition; 2) highlighting how Wesley’s conceptions of the nature of grace and moral psychology undergird his emphasis; 3) exploring the nature of means of grace.
as “practices”; and 4) stressing the communal nature of these practices.


Torpy provides an overview of the formative influences and the theological and spiritual commitments of Samuel Wesley Sr., drawing on Wesley’s various literary productions.


Trinklein assesses Wesley doctrine of entire sanctification (particularly as understood among North American Holiness scholars) from the perspective of "classical" Lutheran teaching (as distinguished from the "theories" of the Finnish school). He argues that Luther's distinction between believers' "passive" righteousness in relationship to God and our "active" righteousness in relationship to the world is both more biblically warranted and pastorally sensitive than Wesley's insistence on entire sanctification as a prerequisite to eternal salvation.


While this is not a dissertation on John Wesley per se, he figures as a key example for much of the analysis. Of particular note for Wesley scholars will be the attention to the theme of the “imitation of Christ” in the discussion.


Vermilya surveys the works by Lutheran authors that John Wesley read, devoting particular attention to how these influenced Wesley’s theology of mission. He mentions more briefly several authors whose influence on Wesley has been the subject of other studies, and devotes extended attention to Anton Wilhelm Böhm, whose influence on Wesley has not received adequate attention before this study.


Walls compares selected works of Wesley with other Anglican divines and a number of Greek-writing Church fathers. He concludes that there is clear influence of several Greek fathers on Wesley’s understanding of perfection, while allowing some of this influence may be indirect, through other Anglican divines of Wesley’s era.


Wagner provides a solid study of all German hymn texts translated by John Wesley, tracing their
original sources and Wesley’s tendencies in translation. He also casts light on the hymn tunes that Wesley borrowed from German sources.


Watson provides the first detailed study of early Methodist band meetings (as distinct from class meetings), placing them firmly within Wesley’s theology of discipleship. He details how the bands embodied a distinctive Wesleyan synthesis of Anglican and Moravian piety. Drawing on a number of manuscript materials, Watson provides a textured account of the actual practice of bands, highlighting their adaptations (and beginning decline) through the eighteenth century.


Watson provides a psychoanalytic reading of the lives of John and Charles Wesley, focusing on the possibility of their religious views promoting growth, the means by which this growth occurs, and the extent to which change is governed by their differing mental structures and psychological defenses. She opts for Kristevan theory as a less cognitive, ego-driven model of growth to goodness than more traditional developmental theories. Her study includes examination of Charles Wesley hymns for how they address the experience of loss, pain, and separation.


Webster highlights Wesley’s openness to miraculous and supernatural manifestations as central components for understanding divine-human agency, human nature, and history. Topics treated include religious epistemology; the rhetoric of evil; dreams, visions, and the process of sanctification; and healing of the body.


Williams stresses how Whitefield and Wesley drew upon two emerging forms of mass communication in Britain—a burgeoning print culture and the increasingly systematized field of public speaking. He views this use as intentional, to hold the movement together.


Williams stresses that in interpreting these passages Wesley did not just question “what does the text say” but also “how is it being read or used by various readers.” In other words, Wesley is
presented as engaging in a type of “reader response criticism” in interpreting scripture.


Williams includes a survey of Wesley’s interest in health care as a theoretical framework for this proposal regarding current practice in managed health care.


Wong presents Wesley’s understanding of present Christian salvation and life (the Kingdom of Grace) as a pilgrimage—nurtured in the means of grace—that is motivated and sustained by the eschatological conviction that we will see God face to face (the Kingdom of Glory). The closing section relates this conviction to some specific aspects of his Malaysian context.


Wood places Wesley’s ecclesial thought within the evolution of the Church of England from Henry VIII to Wesley’s day, highlighting influential Anglican theologians, to argue that Wesley’s allegiance to the established Church was deeper than is generally claimed. He contends that Wesley is best seen as an Anglican theologian whose ecclesiology is a fusion of sacramental holiness and evangelical practice.


Yang provides a solid survey of Wesley’s doctrine of God—both elements associated by tradition primarily with God as Father and Wesley’s comments on God as Triune. He emphasizes how Wesley’s doctrine is grounded in scripture, in keeping with tradition, and ecumenical in tone. A particular concern is to highlight spiritual and practical implications of Wesley’s doctrinal emphases.


Yu’s main concern is to rehabilitate John Sung’s ministry in China as a model of spiritual awakening and formation, in contrast to those who focus only on the moment of the new birth (and dismiss Sung for not emphasizing this focus). Yu’s section on Wesley stresses how he connects the new birth to an emphasis on continuing spiritual growth nurtured in a full range of the means of grace.


Zele provides a study of John Wesley’s relationship to America throughout his lifetime, with a
particular focus on Wesley’s changing political views, his emerging social ethics, and his evolving theology. Zele argues that Wesley was a frustrated founder who repeatedly attempted to create a new England in America and was repeatedly thwarted by a people who did not want the structure he was attempting to impose. He also contends that Wesley did less to create the Methodist Church in America that is broadly believed.