

READING WESLEY AS A THEOLOGIAN

by
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Six years ago I began a study of John Wesley aimed at providing a book-length survey of his theological convictions. This project finally reached fruition this past Fall with the publication of *Responsible Grace*. One reason that the project took so long was that I began it as an outsider, with only cursory awareness of prior Wesley Studies. As I dug into this field, I discovered several debated issues concerning how best to read Wesley as a theologian. The purpose of this essay is to provide a survey of these methodological debates and to indicate the conclusions that I found most convincing on each issue. As such, it provides a methodological introduction to my reading of Wesley in *Responsible Grace*. My hope is that it will also help foster greater methodological awareness and agreement among future studies of Wesley's theology.

I. THE ISSUE OF WESLEY'S THEOLOGICAL SETTING

The central conviction driving the professionalization of Wesley Studies that has taken place over the last thirty-five years is the need to read Wesley in light of his own theological sources.¹ The most-focused debate that has formed around this conviction is the question of which Christian theological traditions were most influential in the formation of Wesley's doctrinal convictions. This question may appear to be of merely antiquarian interest, but it actually plunges one into the most crucial

¹Cf. Outler 1985a, 41ff.

disagreements over the meaning and implications of Wesley's writings. The reason for this is that the various theological traditions are driven by distinct fundamental concerns. These concerns provide the interpretive focus for each tradition's specific theological claims. As a result, different traditions can use the same terms or references with significantly varying emphases and implications. If one's task is to determine the distinctive emphases and implications of Wesley's theology, it is helpful to know which traditions were most influential in forming his doctrinal convictions, or to which tradition he bore the greatest similarity.

There is significant room for debate about this issue because Wesley grew up and took his theological training in an Anglican context. Eighteenth-century Anglicanism was perhaps the most diverse theological arena of its time, due to its unique history. The original split from Rome had been more over jurisdictional matters than theological ones. As a result, the English church has never lacked influential voices sympathetic to Catholic concerns.² At the same time, there were powerful currents within the newly autonomous church that urged it to complete its reformation by casting off the theology of Rome along with Roman jurisdictional authority. A few of these advocates turned to the Lutheran tradition for a model of a fully Protestant church, while most were attracted to the Reformed tradition as a guide for purging Anglicanism of its remaining "popish" elements. Ultimately, neither Protestant alternative carried the day. Instead, Anglicanism gravitated toward an understanding of itself as a *via media* (middle way) between the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions.

Given this Anglican setting, it is not surprising that there have been debates over Wesley's theological location from the beginning, or that these initially focused on whether he was more Protestant or Catholic. The following survey of the major alternatives in these debates will concentrate on recent representatives.

A. Wesley the Protestant

During his ministry Wesley was frequently accused of being a Roman Catholic in disguise! He rejected this classification rather

²I am using "Catholic" here broadly, to designate an appreciation for such themes as sacramental spirituality, requisite human growth in holiness, and human participation in salvation—themes that characterized much of pre-Reformation Christianity in both its Eastern and Western forms.

sharply.³ These rejections can easily be overplayed. On careful reading, it is clear that Wesley was not intending to reject the broadly Catholic elements of his Anglican setting but only some specific controverted claims of the Roman church. Not all of Wesley's later interpreters have been careful to make this distinction. Indeed, the dominant tendency of nineteenth-century Methodism was to deny or ignore Wesley's Catholic convictions and practices, portraying him as a reactionary low-church Protestant.⁴

While more nuanced than their nineteenth-century predecessors, many recent interpreters of Wesley have continued to argue that he is best understood as essentially Protestant in his theological convictions. The major contention of such a claim is that an emphasis on justification by grace (as contrasted with the Roman Catholic emphasis on infused righteousness) was the measure and determinant of all Wesley's teachings.⁵ That is, Wesley's fundamental concern is assumed to be the preservation of the freedom (sovereignty) of God in offering forgiveness and reconciliation to guilty, undeserving humanity.

Since the basic doctrine of justification by grace was affirmed by both Luther and Calvin, some interpreters simply defend a broad Protestant reading of Wesley (e.g., George Bolster, Roger Ireson, and Gordon Rupp). More typical of the recent discussion has been the attempt to determine which branch of the Protestant family Wesley more nearly resembled.

For example, in 1951 Franz Hildebrandt presented a forceful argument that Wesley was closer to Luther than normally recognized, and much closer to Luther than to Calvin.⁶ His expressed reason for this claim was the contention that Wesley was more concerned to affirm the absolute graciousness of salvation than the sovereignty of God (with its unacceptable corollary of predestination). One suspects that his interest in the correlation between Wesley and Luther also owed much to Hildebrandt's German Lutheran roots. Indeed, even German Methodist studies of

³For examples of such accusations, see his *Journal* for 27 August 1739 (*Works* 19:89), 5 February 1749 (*Works* 20:263), and 2 June 1749 (*Works* 20:279). For responses to this accusation, see *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's 'Review of all the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley'*, §§24–25, *Works* (Jackson) 10:408; and *Popery Calmly Considered*, *Works* (Jackson) 10:140–58.

⁴Cf. Dunlap 1956, 441–48.

⁵Note for example Cannon 1946, 14.

⁶Hildebrandt 1951, 14, 91ff.

Wesley have characteristically focused on the similarities between Luther and Wesley (though there have been a few exceptions).⁷

Aside from German Wesley scholars, it has been more common, particularly since the emergence of neo-Orthodoxy, for Wesley to be identified with the Reformed or Calvinist tradition.⁸ One of the earliest and strongest advocates of this identification was George Croft Cell, who argued that the kinship of Wesleyanism and Calvinism greatly exceeded their common affiliation with Luther.⁹ Behind this claim was Cell's conviction that the stress on human initiative in salvation (synergism) typical of the liberal streams in the Methodist theology of his day needed to be replaced by the neo-Orthodox emphasis on the sole efficacy (monergism) of God in salvation.¹⁰ This emphasis is more characteristic of Calvin than of Luther, and Cell perceived this emphasis in Wesley—hence his identification of Wesley with Calvin. Other Wesley scholars who have joined Cell in reading Wesley in terms of the Reformed tradition include William Cannon, Robert Cushman, Robert Hillman, Paul Hoon, I. Howard Marshall, and Lycurgus Starkey.

Several Wesley scholars, while assuming a general Protestant reading of Wesley, have suggested that the categories “Lutheran” and “Calvinist” are still too broad for adequately characterizing his approach. They have focused attention on particular movements within these traditions. For example, some have stressed the influences of Lutheran Pietism and the closely related Moravians upon Wesley (though recent studies have greatly qualified such influence).¹¹ Others have tried to isolate the distinctive influence of English (Reformed) Puritanism upon Wesley's theology and worship practices.¹² Finally, there has been a

⁷See the generalization of Karl Heinz Voigt, “Der deutschsprachige Zweig der Methodistenkirche in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika,” in *Geschichte der Evangelisch-Methodistischen Kirche*, edited by K. Steckel & C.E. Sommer (Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1982), 51–52. An excellent example of such an emphasis on similarities is Eichen 1934. By contrast, Gerdes 1958 argues that Wesley is more Reformed than Lutheran.

⁸The most significant non-German proponents of affinities with Luther are two Methodist Luther scholars, E. Gordon Rupp and Philip Watson.

⁹Cell 1935, vii.

¹⁰See the recently published letter where Cell explains the purpose of his book (Dunlap 1981).

¹¹The strongest affirmations of similarities between Wesley and forms of Lutheran Pietism are Nagler 1918, Scott 1939, Towlson 1957, Schmidt 1976; and Stoeffler 1976. For studies also noting the differences between Wesley and the forms of Pietism, see Collins 1992a, Hynson 1979, Kinkel 1990, McGonigle 1993, Snyder 1989 (esp. 208), Stephens 1988, and Zehrer 1975.

¹²E.g., Davies 1961, Monk 1966, and Newton 1964.

protracted debate (ever since Cell identified Wesley as monergistic) over whether Wesley would not be better located within the Arminian revision of the Reformed tradition.¹³

There is little doubt that Wesley was influenced by each of these Protestant perspectives. However, the implausibility of an extended identification of him with any of them has become increasingly apparent. Wesley explicitly distanced himself from central aspects of both Calvin and Luther,¹⁴ and several recent studies have substantiated this move by highlighting the differences between Wesley and the Reformers.¹⁵ While Wesley was clearly sympathetic to Protestant concerns, a one-sided Protestant reading of his work has proven to be inadequate.

B. Wesley the Catholic

The most significant problem with an exclusively Protestant reading of Wesley is the pervasive presence of some characteristically Catholic themes in his work: e.g., the assumption of requisite growth in holiness during the Christian life, the emphasis on “faith working by love” (i.e., active human participation in salvation), and his sacramental spirituality. In light of these themes, it is not surprising that there have been several appreciative readings of Wesley by Roman Catholic scholars—beginning with J. Augustin Leger, and including Louis Bouyer, Aelred Burrows, Brendan Byrne, Donal Dorr, Michael Hurley, Charles Koerber, Daniel Luby, Frank McNulty, Mark Massa, Jean Orcibal, Maximin Piette, Thomas Pucelik, Michael Scanlon, John Murray Todd, and Philip

¹³Note already the review of Cell by Gaius Jackson Slosser in *Religion in Life* 4 (1935): 473–75. The earliest extensive discussion of this topic was Pask 1939 (conclusions summarized in 1960 essay). The issues are given independent up-to-date review in Eaton 1988 and McGonigle 1994. Briefer discussions can be found in Keefer 1986 & 1987; and McGonigle 1988. Ultimately, the question of how “Arminian” Wesley was is related to the question of how “Calvinist” Arminius was! On this question see the differentiation of an “authentic” Calvin from both high Calvinism and Arminianism, with suggestions of some of Wesley’s affinities to this authentic Calvin, in Clifford 1990, esp. 125, 132–34, 161, 189.

¹⁴On his problems with Calvin’s monergism, see the 1770 *Minutes*, Q. 28, *Minutes* (Mason), 95–96 (also as “Large Minutes,” Qq. 74 & 77, *Works* [Jackson] 8:336–38). On his perception that Luther’s understanding of free grace undercuts sanctification, see Sermon 107, “On God’s Vineyard,” §I.5, *Works* 3:505; and *Journal* (15 June 1741), *Works* 19:200–1. For an argument that Wesley was misreading Luther, see Rupp 1983, 11–12; and Walls 1981. Attempts to reconcile Calvin and Wesley abound in the advocates of a Reformed reading of Wesley.

¹⁵See esp. Hall 1963, Meistad 1987 & 1989, and Wainwright 1983, 1987 & 1988.

Verhalen.¹⁶ Nor is it surprising that parallels have been suggested between some of Wesley's theological convictions and those of prominent contemporary Roman Catholic theologians such as Rahner and von Balthasar.¹⁷

A specialized topic within the general discussion of Wesley's Catholic affinities concerns the influence of mysticism upon him.¹⁸ During his early adulthood Wesley read mystical writers with great appreciation, especially French and Spanish Roman Catholic mystics.¹⁹ Eventually he became critical of some aspects of their teachings (such as their undervaluing of the means of grace and their exaltation of the experience of the "dark night of the soul"), though he always valued their concern for religious experience and their stress on the progressive development of inner holiness. Perhaps the most significant difference between Wesley and many of these mystics was that they tended to pursue a mystic *union* with God while Wesley was more oriented toward *communion* with God.²⁰

These various studies make clear that any adequate reading of Wesley must recognize the Catholic elements in his thought. At the same time, most of them acknowledge several problems that Wesley had with specific claims and practices of *Roman* Catholicism, problems which he enumerated on many occasions, including his tract on "The Advantage of the Members of the Church of England over Those of the Church of

¹⁶The first such study was apparently Leger 1910. Leger's perspective is summarized in his 1914 English article. Massa 1983 summarizes and critiques the approaches of Hurley, Orcibal, Piette and Todd. One further Roman Catholic discussion of Wesley can hardly be classified as appreciative in its perspective, for it caricatures and rejects Wesley as an extreme enthusiast; namely, Knox 1950, 422–548.

¹⁷E.g., Dorr 1964a, 172; Jones 1988, and Maddox 1987.

¹⁸The best studies of this topic are Tuttle 1969 (popularized and slightly updated as Tuttle 1989); Källstad 1988 (reprinted in Källstad 1989 along with some of the relevant primary mystical writings); and Collins 1993b. Note especially Tuttle's thesis about how the mature Wesley integrated the valid concerns of the mystics with his larger theology (1969, 218ff, 229; 1989, 127). See also D. Wilson 1968, but note Tuttle's cogent criticism of Wilson (1969, 225; 1989, 124–25).

¹⁹Cf. Orcibal 1951, and English 1992. The major Protestant mystic that influenced Wesley was William Law. For analyses of this relationship, see E. Baker 1948, Green 1945, and J.R. Tyson 1982.

²⁰Cf. Källstad 1988, 39–40.

Rome.”²¹ Thus, a “Catholic” reading of Wesley would best be construed in the broad sense of the term, designating themes that characterized pre-Reformation Christianity in both its Eastern and Western forms.

Obviously, the most pressing question that the recognition of the Catholic elements of Wesley’s thought raises is how these are related to the Protestant elements already admitted. The typical nineteenth-century claim was that Wesley’s Catholic inclinations were a product of his early training and that he rejected them following his “evangelical conversion” at Aldersgate.²² Such a reading runs aground on the fact that the Catholic aspects of Wesley’s thought and practice can be located throughout his life and seem to strengthen in his latter years. This fact has led some to talk about a temporary Protestant swerve in Wesley that is followed by a fundamental “retroversion” to a basically Catholic stance.²³ More common has been the suggestion that Wesley developed a creative synthesis of Protestant and Catholic themes.²⁴

C. Wesley the Anglican

Talk of a synthesis of the basic Protestant and Catholic concerns obviously returns us to a consideration of Wesley’s Anglican context, for we noted above that this was precisely the goal of Anglicanism. Recently, the course of the debate over Wesley’s theological location has returned full circle to the argument of Richard Urlin (in perhaps the first book devoted to this question) that Wesley was essentially an “Anglican in Earnest.”²⁵ Since the 1960’s a growing group of scholars have portrayed Wesley as a typical moderate eighteenth-century Anglican divine.²⁶

Such an Anglican reading of Wesley is surely more adequate than either of the one-sided Protestant or Catholic alternatives. One simply cannot understand Wesley’s model of theological activity or his theological convictions without properly appreciating their distinctively

²¹*Works* (Jackson) 10:133–40.

²²One of the best examples is Rigg 1868, esp. 41.

²³The term and basic argument is found in Rattenbury 1938, 193.

²⁴This characterization was first suggested by Cell (1935, 347). It has been appropriated broadly in Wesley Studies. There have been critics however, who argue that such a synthesis is fundamentally impossible—e.g., Rupp 1952, 82; and Williams 1960, 174.

²⁵Urlin 1870, 29.

²⁶E.g., Crow 1964 & 1966; English 1969; F. Baker 1970; Knickerbocker 1991; Miller 1991; and Walker 1993.

Anglican tone. And yet, this very point raises other questions. Eighteenth-century Anglicans were a diverse group with competing and sometimes conflicting elements. Which of these elements were most influential on or attractive to Wesley?

D. Wesley the Primitivist

One strand of his Anglican context with which Wesley resonated was the renewed appreciation of *early* Christian theology and practice. When seventeenth-century Anglicans moved toward becoming a *via media*, it was not by direct mediation between contemporary Protestant traditions and Roman Catholicism. Rather, influential voices called for a recovery of the faith and practice of the first four centuries of the church.²⁷ Since this early tradition antedated the later divisions, they believed that its recovery would provide a more authentic mediating position.

Wesley readily adopted this esteem for “primitive” (i.e., pristine!) Christian theology and practice. Moreover, this was hardly a casual attitude of respect. He devoted considerable attention to the scholarship that was being produced by the Anglican patristics renaissance. This has led some to suggest that the distinctive blend of Wesley’s theology reflects more dependance on primitive Christianity than on any of the more contemporary traditions. That is, they argue that Wesley is best understood as a “primitivist.” His differences from the various Protestant and Roman Catholic voices of his day (and his distinctive type of Anglicanism!) are a result of his commitment to recovering the theological balance of the Early Church.²⁸

E. Wesley and Eastern Orthodoxy

The general importance of the Early Church to Wesley’s understanding of Christian life and doctrine has come to be widely recognized by Wesley scholars. Recently, some have drawn attention to a specific aspect

²⁷For descriptions of the appeal to and study of patristic material in England just prior to Wesley see Leslie W. Barnard, “The Use of the Patristic Tradition in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Century,” in *Scripture, Tradition and Reason*, edited by R. Bauckham & B. Drewery (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), 174–203; Robert D. Cornwall, “The Search for the Primitive Church: The Use of Early Church Fathers in the High Church Anglican Tradition, 1680–1745,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 59 (1990): 303–29; and Campbell 1991, 7–21. Campbell distinguishes between polemical, conservative, and programmatic appeals to Christian Antiquity.

²⁸The most vigorous defense of Wesley as a primitivist is Keefer 1982 (synopsis in 1984). The most thorough study of Wesley’s conception of and use of early Christian material is Campbell 1991. Campbell’s focus, however, is not on Wesley’s “primitivism” per se; it is on how Wesley connects this commitment to Christian tradition with his “evangelical” attempt to renew ideal Christianity (104, 114–16).

of the Anglican patristics scholarship in which Wesley showed keen interest—this scholarship devoted particular emphasis to Greek authors who had receded from Western consciousness following the fourth century of the Church’s existence. Wesley not only became aware of many of these Greek authors through his study, he imbibed a marked preference for them over the Latin writers!²⁹

It is becoming evident how important the influence of these early Greek authors (whether directly or through summaries in Anglican patristic scholars) was on Wesley’s theology. The reason for this importance is that early Greek-writing theologians tended toward a different understanding of the relation of creation, sin, and salvation than that which became dominant in the Western churches. Comparatively, the soteriology of the main strands of Western Christianity (both Protestant and Roman Catholic!) has been characterized by a *juridical* focus on guilt and absolution, while early Greek Christian (and later Eastern Orthodox) soteriology has more typically emphasized the *therapeutic* concern for healing our sin-diseased nature.³⁰ A growing number of scholars have become convinced that Wesley shared this more therapeutic understanding of sin and the Christian life.

From where might he have derived such an emphasis? Obviously, a strong historical demonstration of any specific source is extremely problematic. Surely those minority voices in Western Christianity that inclined toward a more developmental and therapeutic model of Christian life (some mystics, many Pietists, and the Anglican “holy living” divines) would be among the likely sources.³¹ However, these scholars contend that another important source of Wesley’s therapeutic emphasis was his exposure to the theological themes of the early Greek-speaking church. They argue that any adequate determination of Wesley’s location in the Christian theological traditions must therefore include Eastern Christian influences and similarities.³²

²⁹Actually, there had once again been early suggestions about the importance of these Greek theologians to Wesley. See especially Alexander Knox, *Remains of Alexander Knox, esq.* (London: Duncan & Malcolm, 1844), 3:483; and Umlin 1870, 10, 59–86. The one most responsible for recovering this agenda in contemporary Wesley Studies is Albert Outler (cf. 1964, viii–ix; and 1980–82).

³⁰For further discussion of this difference see Maddox 1990b & 1994.

³¹On the difficulties of historical demonstration of sources see Bundy 1991; and Campbell 1991, 3. In any case, it is noteworthy that the writings of Makarios found a favorable reception among Pietists and Protestant mystics—cf. Ernst Benz, *Die protestantische Thebais* (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1963); and Werner Strothmann, ed., *Makarios-Symposium Über das Böse* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1983). Likewise, many Pietists and mystics placed heavy emphasis on 2 Peter 1:4 (an Eastern Orthodox *locus classicus*); see the survey in Martin Schmidt, “Teilnahme an der göttlichen Natur,” in *Weidergeburt und neuer Mensch* (Witten: Luther-Verlag, 1969), 238–98.

³²For a recent survey of this discussion, see Maddox 1990b. Subsequent contributions are Snyder 1990, Bundy 1991, Lee 1991, T. Martin 1991, McCormick 1991, Campbell 1994, and Im 1994.

F. Evaluation

How should one evaluate the various positions just summarized? It is tempting to play it safe and simply describe Wesley as eclectic in his influences and theological convictions, for he clearly does draw upon a wide range of disparate sources.³³ However, such a response fails to do justice to the basic consistency that can be discerned in Wesley's overall thought, a consistency that I believe results from his orienting concern about "responsible grace." This concern resonates deeply with the therapeutic emphasis noted in early Greek theologians and minority streams of Western Christianity, both of which were important to Wesley. This has led me to the conclusion that Wesley is best read as a theologian who was fundamentally committed to the therapeutic view of Christian life, who struggled to express this view in the terms of the dominant stream of his Western Christian setting, and who sought to integrate some of the central convictions of this setting into his more basic therapeutic viewpoint.³⁴

II. THE ISSUE OF CONSISTENCY IN WESLEY'S PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

The first methodological issue was somewhat external in focus, debating Wesley's location within the spectrum of Christian theological traditions. This second issue is decidedly internal in aim, questioning how best to discern and demonstrate the degree of consistency among Wesley's own theological convictions. Two concerns combine to raise interest in this question. One is the simple desire to construct an adequate account of Wesley's theological convictions, recognizing the contribution of insights concerning consistency to this end. The second concern is more apologetic in tone, assuming that verifiable consistency is central to demonstrating that Wesley merits consideration as a "serious" theologian.

Approaching this issue historically, Wesley himself was forced to respond to accusations that there were inconsistencies among his various published thoughts from nearly the beginning of his revival movement.³⁵ He typically rejected such charges, often arguing that the supposed inconsistencies reflected simply the accuser's failure to recognize variations in the audiences being addressed. For example, if he had preached mainly

³³See the classic summary of these sources in Outler 1964, viii.

³⁴Cf. Maddox 1994, 67, 82, 85, 142ff.

³⁵For one of the first instances (1740), see his response to such charges in *The Principles of a Methodist*, §§14ff, *Works* 9:56–66.

about forgiveness of sins early in the revival, and later shifted his emphasis more to the need for growing in holiness, it was because his early audience were unbelievers while his later audience were followers who had begun the Christian life.³⁶ Contemporary Wesley scholars tend to concede more true tensions in Wesley's writings than he appeared to allow himself. Yet, the majority of them have still agreed with Wesley's basic self-evaluation that there is a fundamental consistency within his theological convictions. As William Cannon once put it, the simple fact "that Wesley was not systematic in the arrangement of his doctrines does not warrant the assumption that he was inconsistent or contradictory in his theological opinions."³⁷

Cannon's claim takes us to the issue at the heart of this matter: What accounts for an appropriate consistency in one's theological convictions? Under the influence of the Hegelian *Encyclopedia*, modern Western university theology has broadly adopted an approach to doctrinal reflection committed to constructing a System in which every item of theological interest is subsumed under, or derived from, a single principle Idea. Accordingly, the standard means for insuring (or demonstrating!) theological consistency has become the construction of a Systematic Theology. The problem that this raises for Wesley scholars, of course, is that he never authored a Systematic Theology. On the terms of the reigning academic model, this omission raises grave doubts about the consistency (and "seriousness") of Wesley's theological work.

Several Wesley scholars have responded to these doubts by attempting to explain away or compensate for this perceived deficit in Wesley's work. For example, some have tried to demonstrate that there is actually an underlying complete System implicit in Wesley's published work.³⁸ A few have even attempted to excavate this System and collect it into a compendium.³⁹ Somewhat more common (and less ambitious) are those who argue that Wesley chose to focus his systematic concern on the doc-

³⁶*Minutes* (2 August 1745), *John Wesley*, 150.

³⁷Cannon 1946, 7–8. For other assertions of a basic consistency in Wesley, see Heitzenrater 1984, 1:28; Outler 1964, 27; and Tuttle 1978, 10.

³⁸A few of the stronger examples as Eayers 1926, 72–73; Coppedge 1987, 14; Coppedge 1991, 268; and Bryant 1992, 11–12.

³⁹The first such attempt was Carpenter 1825 (the work is anonymous and actual editor uncertain, the British Museum attributes it to William Carpenter). The most recent such work is Oden 1994.

trinal locus of the order of salvation, and then offer an organized summary of his thought on this locus.⁴⁰

As I began my own work on Wesley, I became convinced that all of these alternative were measuring (and attempting to read) him by a standard that was historically inappropriate. This led me to argue in a preparatory essay that Wesley's theological activity could only be appropriately understood and assessed in terms of the approach to theology as a practical discipline (*scientia practica*) which characterized the pre-university Christian setting and remained influential in eighteenth-century Anglicanism.⁴¹ For this model the quintessential practitioner of theology was not the detached academic theologian; it was the pastor/theologian who was actively shepherding Christian disciples in the world. Likewise, the defining task of "real" theologians was neither developing an elaborate System of Christian truth-claims nor defending these claims to their "cultured despisers;" it was nurturing and shaping the worldview that frames the temperament and practice of believers' lives in the world. Finally, the primary (or first-order) literary forms of "real" theological activity were not Systematic Theologies or Apologetics; they were carefully-crafted liturgies, catechisms, hymns, sermons, and the like. Judged on such terms, Wesley's voluminous writings emerge as serious theological activity indeed!

This is not to say that recovering an appreciation for Wesley's model of "practical theology" immediately settles the issue of consistency in his theological convictions. It actually heightens the issue, though it also suggests an alternative approach to address the legitimate concern involved. A central aspect of Wesley's model is that theological activity is integrally related to the *praxis* of the Christian community. One of the direct results is that this activity is most frequently occasional and contextual in nature. It is sparked by issues in specific situations and tends to adopt unique emphases or strategies appropriate to each situation. This raises a legitimate concern that the demands of the situation might so dominate theological reflection that there would be no uniformity between the various situation-related theological judgments.

But, what is the nature of this desired uniformity, and how should it be achieved? The Hegelian System sought more than simply a lack of

⁴⁰E.g., Meredith 1962, 45–48; Borgen 1972, 44; Lessmann 1987, 10; and Collins 1989, 129ff.

⁴¹Maddox 1988.

contradiction between theological claims (consistency), it desired their logical entailment (coherence). But it often attained such coherence at the expense of contextual considerations. Within a truly practical theology, consistency would appear to be a sufficient goal; but how can even this be obtained without overriding contextual authenticity? In dialogue with my reading of Wesley, I was drawn to the suggestion that it is the functioning of an “orienting concern” that can potentially provide consistency to situation-related theological reflection. Particular theological judgments might vary as appropriate to their situation and yet remain reasonably consistent if each situation is addressed with a dynamically-consistent concern or “worry.”⁴²

What this means methodologically is that an adequate reading of Wesley’s theology depends less on identifying some System present (even implicitly) in his writings than on discerning the existence and nature of an orienting concern with which he addressed the various situations involved in theologically shepherding his Methodist people. I have tried to make the case in *Responsible Grace* for the existence of such an orienting concern, and to demonstrate that it effectively provided a reasonable consistency among Wesley’s situation-related theological judgments. Whether my specific characterization of this orienting concern proves adequate remains to be seen, but I am convinced that the discussion of Wesley’s theology will be best advanced on these general terms.

III. THE ISSUE OF TRANSITIONS IN WESLEY’S THEOLOGICAL CONVICTIONS

One particular dimension of consistency requires specific attention when dealing with a theologian, like Wesley, who produced work over an extended lifespan—the dimension of consistency *over time* in their convictions. Concern with this dimension of consistency is heightened when, as again in the case of Wesley, there is the obvious existence of some significant transitions in the spiritual life and thought of the theologian. This explains why the issue of transitions in Wesley’s theological convictions has been quite prominent in debates within Wesley Studies.

A. Transitions in Wesley’s Spiritual Development

It is helpful to begin with consideration of transitions in Wesley’s spiritual life. While this issue is interesting in its own right, it also has

⁴²For a more detailed description of the nature and function of an “orienting concern,” see Maddox 1994, 18.

relevance to the methodological question of whether there were transitions in his major doctrinal convictions or overall theological perspective, and what consistency may have survived through these transitions. Given that the experiences to which persons are “open” depend to an important degree upon their presuppositions, Wesley’s spiritual journey is one indicator of his implicit theological convictions and of possible changes in them. Likewise, if Wesley’s theological convictions did change over time, reflections on the inadequacy of his current convictions for making sense of his own experience surely played a role.

Wesley repeatedly mentioned certain transitions in his spiritual development: the formation of the holy club, his decision to enter ministry, his reading of William Law, his Aldersgate experience, and so on. Perhaps no issue has divided later Wesley scholarship more than the evaluation of the significance of these various transitions.

A particular focus of this debate has been the event of Aldersgate. Was this Wesley’s “conversion”? If not, when was he converted? If so, what happened at those previous events? Part of the reason that there has been so much debate on this topic is that Wesley seems to have revised his own perspective on these questions.⁴³

One of the ways that Wesley scholars have attempted to analyze Wesley’s overall spiritual development is by comparison to some standardized pattern. Naturally, different interpreters utilized alternative patterns. The most typical pattern of nineteenth-century biographers was the disjunctive model of conversion that William James was to name the “twice-born” model. These writers adopted Wesley’s own early post-Aldersgate characterization of his previous life as a human struggle to be a Christian, until (at Aldersgate) he finally surrendered his Pelagian inclinations and accepted God’s free gift of grace, becoming (for the first time) truly a Christian. Such a reading has carried over in some twentieth-century studies of Wesley as well.⁴⁴

An explicitly alternative approach has been to emphasize the continuity in Wesley’s spiritual development, viewing him as a “once-born”

⁴³For a detailed history of the differing interpretations of Aldersgate, and a discussion of the issues involved, see the various essays in Maddox 1990a; and the subsequent dialogue in Collins 1991, Maddox 1992, and Collins 1992b.

⁴⁴The most explicit identification of Wesley as “twice-born” is Ross W. Roland, “The Continuity of Evangelical Life and Thought,” *RelLife* 13 (1944): 245–53. The best extended twentieth-century example of such a reading is Jeffery 1960.

person. This model has been particularly attractive to Roman Catholic interpreters of Wesley, though others have championed it as well.⁴⁵

A few interpreters have attempted comparisons of Wesley's spiritual development with the five classic stages of mystical progress: 1) Awakening, 2) Purgation by discipline, 3) Illumination, 4) Mortification or the "Dark Night of the Soul," and 5) Union. However, they have had to modify the model significantly to make it fit Wesley.⁴⁶

Most recently there have been insightful analyses of Wesley's spiritual life in terms of the progressive stages of moral development theory and faith development theory. These studies discern a marked continuity within Wesley's spiritual development, without denying the presence of significant transitions.⁴⁷

This latter reading of Wesley's spiritual development, with its recognition of transitions but emphasis on continuity, is becoming the dominant view of Wesley biographers. A major reason for this is that it appears to be the view that Wesley came to hold himself in his later years.⁴⁸

B. Transitions in Wesley's Theological Convictions

We noted earlier that Wesley had to respond frequently to accusations of inconsistencies in his writings. In these responses he occasionally admitted that there had been a significant alteration in his doctrinal convictions between his earliest publications (1725) and the beginning of

⁴⁵The classic Roman Catholic example is Leger 1910, 77–82, 350, 364. For a sympathetic Methodist review of Leger, see Beet 1912.

⁴⁶A early example is Dimond 1926, 75ff. The most extended treatment is in Tuttle 1989.

⁴⁷See respectively Joy 1983, and Fowler 1985. Note as well James Nelson's claim (1988) that James Loder's conversion theory is more adequate for understanding Wesley's development than Fowler's approach because it puts more emphasis on the discontinuities in conversion. Källstad 1974 and Moore 1979 also attempt psychological readings of Wesley. However, they focus more on genetic explanations for his theological viewpoint or method than on understanding his spiritual development. Their method is rather idiosyncratic and, as a result, controversial in Wesley Studies (cf. the critique of Källstad in Hall 1988, 44–45; and the review of Moore by Heitzenrater in *MethH* 19 [1981]: 243–46). Equally idiosyncratic and controversial is the attempt of Abelove 1990 to "explain" the success of Wesley's revival movement in neo-Freudian categories of the "seduction" of his people (cf. the review by Heitzenrater in *MethH* 30 [1992]: 118–20).

⁴⁸This point is argued in detail in Heitzenrater 1989, 106–49.

the Methodist revival (1738); namely, he had acquired a deeper appreciation for the doctrine of justification by grace and for the experience of faith as a conscious pardon from sin. However, Wesley typically insisted that he had remained thoroughly consistent in his doctrinal convictions since this earlier alteration. As he put it in 1789, “I defy any [one] living to prove that I have contradicted myself at all in any of the writings which I have published from the year 1738 to the year 1788.”⁴⁹ To be sure, there were a few times when he quietly admitted changes on issues even after 1738 (such as whether one must have a sense of pardon to be justified).⁵⁰ But, as Albert Outler has noted, Wesley was more willing to qualify overstatements later than to acknowledge them as being overstatements in the first place, or to admit any inconsistency between earlier and later remarks.⁵¹

Wesley’s own emphasis on continuity in his convictions carried over into the early generations of Wesley scholarship. Through the first half of the nineteenth century, if transitions were noted in Wesley’s theology, they were typically seen as developmental rather than disjunctive. For example, Robert Brown divided Wesley’s life into three major periods, each dominated by Wesley’s appropriation and clarification of a major doctrine: first, the doctrine of justification; then, the doctrine of assurance; and finally, the doctrine of Christian perfection. The key point is that Brown viewed this as a matter of the progressive broadening of Wesley’s theology, free from any significant tensions or radical transitions.⁵²

In the latter half of the nineteenth century the emphasis shifted among Wesley scholars from the continuities to the discontinuities in his theology. This was particularly evident in the struggles over the Catholic elements of Wesley’s early theology. We noted above the typical strategy of negating Wesley’s early training in—and obvious sympathy for—his Anglican tradition (with its Catholic elements) by construing Aldersgate as a radical theological reversal to low-Church Protestant convictions. This basic approach has carried over (in somewhat nuanced form) in most twentieth-century “Protestant” readings of Wesley, which stress the contrast before and following 1738 while minimizing any variations

⁴⁹Letter to William Green (25 October 1789), *Letters* (Telford) 8:179. See also *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Rutherford* (28 Mar. 1768), §I.3, *Works* 9:375; *Journal* (1 September 1778), *Journal* (Curnock) 6:209; and Letter to John Mason (13 January 1790), *Letters* (Telford) 8:196.

⁵⁰See his Letter to Charles Wesley (31 July 1747), *Works* 26:254–55.

⁵¹Outler 1985b, 125.

⁵²See Brown 1865, 12, 45.

thereafter.⁵³ Meanwhile, recent champions of a “Catholic” Wesley have tended to echo the earlier claim that any Protestant deviation in 1738 was temporary, followed by a fundamental Catholic retroversion.⁵⁴

Current Wesley scholarship broadly mediates these earlier positions. It has become common for studies of his theological convictions to distinguish between the “early Wesley” (1733–1738), the “middle Wesley” (1738–1765), and the “late Wesley” (1765–1791). While emphases differ, these designations are typically correlated to transitions in Wesley’s general view of the Christian life from (1) a dominant emphasis on the importance of moral rectitude or conformity to the likeness of God (or, at least, sincere attempts at obedience⁵⁵); to (2) a deeper appropriation of Protestant emphases concerning salvation by grace, creating some initial tensions within his thought; and climaxing in (3) a mature integration of the primacy of grace into his enduring concern for Christian holiness.

Those adopting this threefold model of Wesley’s theological transitions have usually argued that there was both greater continuity between the early Wesley and the middle Wesley, and more significant development from the middle Wesley to the late Wesley than had been acknowledged in prior Wesley scholarship.⁵⁶ For example, it is now widely agreed that the early Wesley did not have a total lack of appreciation for the role of grace and faith in the Christian life. After all, the doctrine of justification by faith is present in the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican tradition. While Wesley undeniably gave this doctrine more orienting influence following 1738, this transition was neither *de novo* nor a total

⁵³The classic example from more recent studies Schmidt 1962–73. He presents a chronological analysis of the developments in Wesley’s thought up through his “Protestant” conversion at Aldersgate. Then he switches to a systematic analysis from 1738 on, assuming a theological consistency throughout the remainder of Wesley’s life.

⁵⁴A good example is Turner 1988, 166–71. Interestingly, Weißbach 1970 has *negatively* evaluated Wesley’s development in similar stages, and there are like suggestions in Kim 1992, 146.

⁵⁵Cf. Heitzenrater 1989, 28.

⁵⁶E.g., Heitzenrater 1984, 1:31. Some early uses of this typology portrayed the moves much too dialectically (especially Tuttle 1969, 409–10). Such uses sparked a strong critique, particularly of emphasis on a transition between the middle Wesley and the late Wesley, in J. H. Tyson 1991. Unfortunately Tyson does not dialogue with the most nuanced presentation of these transitions (Heitzenrater 1991, 106–49).

reversal of his concern for Christian holiness.⁵⁷ Likewise, most of these scholars are convinced that Wesley progressively revised or nuanced several of the assumptions about salvation by grace surrounding the transition to his middle period, integrating them more fully into his continuing interest in holy living.⁵⁸ This move was facilitated in part by renewed emphasis of the older Wesley on the Anglican and early Greek sources that had shaped his early convictions. The result, however, was not simply a Catholic Retroversion. It is better characterized as an “upward spiralling” that wove his deepened conviction of the graciousness of salvation into his consistent emphasis on God’s desire for our holiness in heart and life.⁵⁹

While debate will surely continue over the exact number, nature, and degree of the transitions in Wesley’s theological convictions, their clear existence has important methodological implications. For example, when interpreting any particular piece of Wesley’s work one must always be prepared to ask, as Frederick Maser has put it:

“At what time of his life did Wesley believe this, and how does it compare with what he believed earlier or later?” and “How much of this is the result of Wesley’s matured thought and how much a hasty abridgment of something that temporarily appealed to him?”⁶⁰

Likewise, when considering apparent tensions between multiple sources on any particular theme in Wesley’s theology it is essential to take the possibility of temporal transitions into consideration, rather than resorting immediately to “scholastic” harmonization. Some tensions may be appro-

⁵⁷On Wesley’s earlier awareness of justification by faith, see Rogers 1966. On the continuity of Wesley’s concern for holiness through the whole of his life, see J. H. Tyson 1991.

⁵⁸I have tried to draw together the evidence for several such revisions in *Responsible Grace*. See particularly the discussions of Wesley’s views concerning the benefits of initial universal revelation (29–30), the role of suffering in God’s providence (61) the contribution of inherited guilt to human damnation (74–75), the nature of grace as power or pardon (85), the imputation of Christ’s active righteousness to believers (104), the assurance of faith (124–27), the place of works before justification (148–49), the relation of the New Birth to sanctification (159), the expectation of entire sanctification shortly after justification (180–87), the purpose of the means of grace (200–1), and the question of millennialism (236–39).

⁵⁹I take this image from Albert Outler (1987, 139).

⁶⁰Maser 1978, 12.

priately harmonized, but many others are better understood in terms of temporal development.

C. The Wisdom of the “Whole Wesley”

The existence of transitions in Wesley’s theological convictions suggests a normative issue as well; namely, which phase of his thought should be considered definitive of his position. This question may seem subsidiary, at best, if one’s interest in Wesley is merely historical. But most traditions descended from Wesley’s ministry ascribe some continuing authority to his theology. For them, any differences between Wesley’s various phases pose a significant problem.

Perhaps the first detailed articulation of this problem was Albert S. Graves’ article on “Wesley’s Variations of Belief, and the Influence of the Same on Methodism,” published in 1887. Graves wrote in the context of vigorous Methodist debates over the doctrines of conversion and Christian perfection. He noted how each of the alternative positions in the debates was able to cite Wesley as warrant for their view by appealing to different phases in his life. He then raised the crucial normative question “Is the fact that each of the views can find warrant somewhere in Wesley’s corpus a legitimation of them all (i.e., an endorsement of pluralism); or, should one of Wesley’s phases be considered most authoritative?” Graves’ answer was that we should lean most heavily on the wisdom of Wesley’s mature thought, giving it authority over earlier phases.

The basic logic of Graves’ answer remains compelling. Particularly given the important role that Wesley assigned to life-experience in theological reflection, it would seem appropriate to value the “wisdom” that he acquired through the full course of his life.⁶¹ Thus, I would agree with Albert Outler that the broadened and nuanced perspective of the late Wesley should be given more weight in defining his characteristic theological convictions than has been the case in most previous studies of Wesley.⁶² However, I hasten to add that this does not mean that earlier phases (or materials produced therein) should be neglected. Wesley’s mature position coalesced long before 1765 on several issues. Moreover, the dynamic theological consistency that I believe unites the phases of Wesley’s life and ministry is often most evident in his very process of

⁶¹For a discussion of the role of experience in Wesley’s practical theology, see Maddox 1994, 44–46.

⁶²Cf. Outler 1984, 54–55; 1985b, 353.

nuancing disputed issues.⁶³ As such, consideration of the *whole* Wesley is necessary to understand his mature position adequately.

IV. THE ISSUE OF WEIGHTING WESLEY'S VARIOUS PRACTICAL-THEOLOGICAL WORKS

There is one other major issue related to interpreting Wesley's theological convictions that must be considered. This issue is taking on new importance and focus as Wesley scholars are adopting a more positive valuation of his model of practical theology. This adoption brings with it a recognition of both the necessity—and the challenge—of dealing with the full range of Wesley's practical-theological materials. In addition to his well-known sermons, these materials include letters (both public and private), controversial essays and tracts, minutes from conferences, disciplinary guides for Christian life, his journal, other spiritual biographies, and a range of editorial work on creeds, liturgies, prayerbooks, bible study aids, hymnals, catechisms, and devotional guides.

The methodological issue which this wealth of materials creates is clear: How should the various materials be used and weighed in determining Wesley's theological convictions? There are four interrelated aspects to this issue: 1) the question of whether some works should be granted an official status versus the others; 2) the distinction between works that Wesley intended to be published and his private materials that are available to us; 3) the relative value of Wesley's numerous abridged and edited publications of other writers' works, as compared to material he authored; and 4) the relationship between John and Charles Wesley, particularly in reference to publications they released together.

A. An Official Wesley versus the Whole Wesley?

When studies of (or appeals to) Wesley are made within the context of later Methodist doctrinal debates, one often encounters a distinction between those writings of Wesley that are "official" and the remainder of his work. An explanation of this distinction, and reflection on its consequences for understanding Wesley, is an appropriate place to begin evaluating the variety of his materials.

In approaching this distinction, one must remember that Wesley was an Anglican, and remained so to his death. As such, he consistently

⁶³For example, note my discussion of Wesley's nuancing of the doctrines of justification by grace (1994, 51) and entire sanctification (1994, 187).

professed loyalty to the Anglican standards of doctrine: 1) The Thirty-Nine Articles, 2) the Elizabethan *Homilies*, and 3) the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁶⁴ Moreover, Wesley viewed his Methodist revival as being a renewal movement within the Anglican church, not an alternative to it. Thus, he could generally assume (and sometimes bragged) that his Methodist people also affirmed the authority of these standards.⁶⁵

However, while most Methodists were Anglican, not all Anglicans were Methodist. As a result, Wesley frequently found it necessary to explicate the *distinguishing* marks of the Methodists (assuming their larger shared Anglican beliefs and practices). This need was intensified by the fact that not all Methodists were Wesleyan! A rival Calvinist branch of the Methodist revival developed, and Wesley often found it necessary to distinguish his movement from theirs—both to deflect certain criticisms of “Methodists” that did not apply to his societies, and to protect his people from what he considered to be the pathogenic doctrines of Calvinism.

This is the context within which Wesley eventually designated certain materials as “official” expressions of his movement. These materials were to be used for nurturing the members of his societies and, when necessary, for determining who was qualified to be leaders of the societies. The first designation of such materials is found in the deeds developed to monitor the leadership of Wesleyan Methodist preaching houses. The eventual model for these deeds (1763) required that those who preach in these houses “preach no other doctrine than is contained in Mr. Wesley’s ‘Notes upon the New Testament,’ and four volumes of ‘Sermons’.” A second example of such designation dates from 1769, when Wesley circulated an open letter seeking to persuade the various traveling preachers that the best way to maintain union after his death would be the recognition of the minutes of his (nearly annual) conferences with his preachers

⁶⁴The complete title of the *Homilies* is *Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches in the Time of Queen Elizabeth of Famous Memory* (1562; most recent edition, London: SPCK, 1938). The most thorough discussion of Wesley’s general loyalty to these standards (while noting the points where Wesley objected to or departed from them) is F. Baker 1970.

⁶⁵A qualification of this statement is in order. Technically, Wesley encouraged all of his people to attend Anglican worship, but he allowed members of most dissenting churches to participate in his society without changing their denominational affiliation. Such persons were a minority in the society, and Wesley resisted any attempts on their part to lead current Anglicans into dissenting churches.

as the norm for doctrine and discipline. This explains why, while not explicit in their formal “Deed of Declaration” (1784), British Methodists came to ascribe official status to the four volumes of Wesley’s sermons, the *NT Notes*, and the “Large Minutes” (a distillation of the minutes of the various conferences).⁶⁶

The situation of the American Methodists is more complex. The Revolutionary War destroyed any remaining supposition about a connection with the Anglican Church. In 1784 they organized as an independent denomination, with Wesley’s (somewhat reluctant) blessing. Prior to this time they had already pledged loyalty to Wesley’s sermons, the *NT Notes*, and the “Large Minutes”; however, these materials dealt mainly with the distinguishing marks of Methodism. What expression of the larger common Christian faith could they use to take the place of the Anglican Articles, *Homilies*, and *Book of Common Prayer*? Wesley, at least, was very worried about this question and took it upon himself to provide them with materials. He produced edited versions of the *Book of Common Prayer* (the *Sunday Service*) and the Thirty-Nine Articles (the twenty-five Articles of Religion), which he sent to the American church, recommending their adoption. They acknowledged both items in 1784.

Theoretically then, one might characterize the Articles of Religion, the *Sunday Service*, the “Large Minutes” (included with some editing, along with some of Wesley’s doctrinal essays and the General Rules, in their early *Discipline*), the four volumes of Wesley’s sermons, and the *NT Notes* as the “official” doctrinal standards of early American Methodism. In actuality, the Americans saw the *Sunday Service* more as an example of worship (which they almost immediately abandoned!) than a doctrinal standard, their *Discipline* gradually altered or deleted much of its original Wesley material, and the exact status that they assigned to the Wesley’s sermons and the *NT Notes* has been a subject of recent vigorous debate.⁶⁷

⁶⁶The Model Deed is found in Q. 61 of the 1789 edition of the “Large Minutes,” *Works* (Jackson) 8:331. The relevant section of the Letter to the Traveling Preachers (4 August 1769) is found in *Letters* (Telford) 5:145 (Note that the “Large Minutes” would have contained the Model Deed, so the ascription to the “Sermons” and *NT Notes* is implied). For an excellent overview of this entire process, see F. Baker 1970, Chapter 13.

⁶⁷For a general discussion of these issues see Oden 1988. On the status of the *Sunday Service* see Wade 1981. On developments in the *Discipline* see F. Baker 1966. For the recent debate over the “Sermons” and *NT Notes* see Cushman 1989, A.W. Martin 1990, and the collected essays in Langford 1991.

While the task of seeking the most adequate understanding of Wesley's theological convictions is distinct from canonical debates within the denominations descended from his ministry, it is still helpful to reflect upon the unique contribution of each of these "official" sources to this understanding. I will consider the sources in what is often assumed to be the order of their importance, though my discussion will challenge any such clear ordering. In the process, I will also suggest why any exclusive limitation to these sources seriously undercuts the adequacy of our understanding of Wesley.

1. The Minutes of the Conferences. As the early Methodist revival grew, it became clear to Wesley that there was a need to decide (and to control!) several matters of doctrine and discipline. To meet this need, he began (in 1744) to invite several of the Methodist lay-preachers and clergy to meet with him in conference. The minutes of these conferences were published and a compilation of them (the "Large Minutes") came to have defining authority for the Wesleyan branch of Methodism.⁶⁸ There are two characteristics of these conferences that are relevant to the methodological question of the contribution of their minutes to an investigation of Wesley's theological convictions. First is the fact that Wesley carefully controlled the attendance at the conference, the direction of the discussion, and the decisions made. As he put it, the others were there to *advise* him, not *govern* him.⁶⁹ Thus, the minutes of the conferences can be considered a fairly reliable guide to Wesley's own convictions. The other relevant characteristic of the conferences is that their discussions focused on *distinctive* Methodist issues (including the distinctive Methodist General Rules), largely assuming the broader scheme of Christian doctrinal and ethical teaching. Accordingly, it is on such issues that they render most help in determining Wesley's theological convictions.

⁶⁸The most accessible complete text of the minutes of the earliest conferences (1744–47) is in *John Wesley*, 136–77. The other minutes can be found in *Minutes* (Mason), as can a parallel column comparison of the various editions of the "Large Minutes" (443–675). The 1789 edition of "Large Minutes" is also in *Works* (Jackson) 8:299–338.

⁶⁹See the 1766 *Minutes*, Q. 29, *Minutes* (Mason), 61 (also as "Large Minutes," Q. 27, *Works* [Jackson] 8:312); and Letter to Thomas Taylor(?) (18 January 1780), *Letters* (Telford) 6:376. See also Letter to Charles Wesley (9 July 1766), *Letters* (Telford) 5:20; and Letter to Thomas Wride (8 July 1785), *Letters* (Telford) 7:279. Cf. the discussion in Doughty 1944, 17–18.

2. Wesley's Sermons. While the conferences were for deciding disputed theological issues and enforcing such decisions, Wesley's expressed purpose for his published collections of sermons was to provide positive explications of his doctrinal convictions. As he claimed in the preface of his first volume, "I am not conscious that there is any one point of doctrine on which I am accustomed to speak in public which is not here ... (i.e.,) those doctrines which I embrace and teach as the essentials of true religion."⁷⁰ Two characteristics of this volume and its successors help substantiate their doctrinal intent. The first is that Wesley's published sermons were written specifically for this purpose and were shorter and less anecdotal than his oral sermons.⁷¹ The second characteristic is that, while Wesley published some "awakening sermons" addressed to outsiders who were not yet seriously pursuing religion, such sermons were not included in his collected volumes. The collected sermons were intended primarily for the theological sustenance and development of his lay preachers and the members of his societies.⁷²

In this light, the collected sermons surely deserve a central role in the investigation of Wesley's theological convictions. But, *which* sermons should be given most authority? It is on this question that debates about an "official Wesley" have been most intense. We noted that the Model Deed (1763) designated the "four volumes of 'Sermons'" as authoritative. The four volumes then available contained forty-four sermons. When Wesley reissued these volumes as the first four volumes of his collected works in 1771, he inserted nine additional sermons in them, bringing the total to fifty-three. In subsequent canonical debates, British Methodists would decide that only the forty-four sermons in the first edition should be considered authoritative, while the American church would eventually opt for the edition containing fifty-three.⁷³

There is actually a more fundamental question than this choice between forty-four sermons or fifty-three: Why limit ourselves to only the first four volumes of sermons? At the time that the Model Deed was adopted four volumes were all that existed and Wesley apparently did not anticipate that there would be more.⁷⁴ In 1778, however, he published four further volumes. There is good reason to doubt that he had intended

⁷⁰*Works* 1:103. One might also note the roughly contemporary project (pointed out by Bryant 1992, 4) of Ferdinando Warner, *A System of Divinity and Morality: Containing a Series of Discourses on the principal and most important points of natural and revealed Religion* (London 1750). In his Preface Warner says that the purpose of his collection is to provide a system of doctrinal and practical divinity, in the method of sermons.

⁷¹Cf. Heitzenrater 1984, 1:146; Outler 1971, 21–2; and Outler 1984, 14.

⁷²This point is demonstrated in Outler 1987, 422.

⁷³See the discussion in Sugden 1921, 2:331–40; and Outler 1984, 40–44.

⁷⁴Cf. *Journal* (1 October 1759), *Works* 21:231.

the Model Deed to discriminate between the first four volumes and these which followed. As Albert Outler noted, the very title of his collections (*Sermons on Several Occasions*) has an open-ended connotation, allowing for enlargement and development in his thinking.⁷⁵

Whether Outler's suggestion is accepted in ecclesiastical debates over canonical authority or not, it is important to separate such debates from the agenda of Wesley Studies. When we are seeking the most adequate understanding of Wesley's theological convictions, it is surely legitimate to draw on all the volumes of collected sermons that he published. Indeed, we should not even limit ourselves to these. Wesley omitted six previously-published sermons from his final collection (due to their special purposes or topic) and he published eighteen new sermons in his *Arminian Magazine* following the 1778 collection. It would seem equally legitimate to consider these sermons in any analysis of Wesley's theology, since he circulated them publicly.⁷⁶

Not only is consideration of the sermons outside of his first four collected volumes legitimate in analyzing Wesley's theological convictions, it is *methodologically crucial*, for two major reasons. First, we noted earlier the importance of analyzing possible transitions through the course of Wesley's life and works. The first four volumes of sermons contain material exclusively from the middle Wesley. If we limit ourselves to these volumes, we will be deprived of potential insights into the "whole Wesley."⁷⁷ The second reason that it is important to consider all of Wesley's sermons is that the first four volumes deal almost entirely with soteriological issues, reflecting the focus of debate in the early Methodist revival. While these issues are important, the sermons leave largely

⁷⁵Outler 1984, 54.

⁷⁶The fact that Wesley did not include some previously published sermons in his collected volumes does not mean that he intended to disown them. Indeed, some of them went through several editions as independent sermons following the first collection! (These sermons are now available in *Works* 3:533–629). Their lack of inclusion was due to their special audience or topic. (Wesley did include the sermon "Free Grace" in his collected works, but in the section on "controversial writings"!.) Likewise, it is understandable that George Story (Wesley's successor as editor of the *Arminian Magazine*) would consider it appropriate to issue a Volume IX of the Wesley's *Sermons* containing those sermons that were published in the *Arminian Magazine* after the 1778 edition (actually, all but one! Cf. *Works* 4:1). There is no indication from Wesley that he viewed these sermons as significantly different from the others that he had collected. (These sermons are now available in *Works* 4:5–200).

⁷⁷Cf. Heitzenrater 1989, 57–58.

implicit Wesley's broader theological framework. The additional volumes of sermons that Wesley added in 1778 explicate much of this broader theological framework, from creation through eschatology.⁷⁸ As such, consideration of these later sermons dramatically increases one's information on Wesley's theological convictions.

3. The *NT Notes* (and *OT Notes*). The next of the designated "official" materials is the *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*. Wesley prepared this source to enable his people to read through the New Testament with understanding and to answer the exegetical arguments of their opponents. In preparing the *NT Notes* Wesley relied on several previous commentators (J.A. Bengel, Philip Doddridge, John Heylyn, and John Guyse), often summarizing or quoting them at length (without references!).⁷⁹ However, this dependence should not discredit the *NT Notes* as an important source for understanding Wesley's own convictions. At least 50% of the material in the *NT Notes* can be traced to Wesley himself. Moreover, his extractions from his sources comprise only about 8% of their original material and evidence theological discrimination in their selectivity. As such, when used in corroboration with other materials, the *NT Notes* provide a reasonably reliable indicator of Wesley's theological convictions.⁸⁰

Though they are less well-known and were never officially designated like the *NT Notes*, Wesley also prepared a companion *Explanatory Notes on the Old Testament*.⁸¹ This time he relied extensively on two major predecessors: Matthew Henry and Matthew Poole. His additions to Poole and Henry comprise less than 1% of the *OT Notes* and his

⁷⁸This has been pointed out by Theodore Runyon (1985, 11). Since Collins 1989 limits himself to the fifty-three sermons of the 1771 edition of Wesley's works, he finds Wesley discussing only the "order of salvation" (129ff); contrast the larger scope in Collins 1993a, 12–13!

⁷⁹Such utilization of other works was not uncommon in the eighteenth century. Wesley had admitted dependence on these authors in his preface. One of the most significant features of the forthcoming critical edition of the *NT Notes* (*Works*, Vols. 5–6) will be the detailed identification of Wesley's sources and his original contributions.

⁸⁰For the statistical analysis of the *NT Notes*, see McCormack 1986. For a defense of their representativeness of Wesley's convictions, see Lerch 1941, 22, 24.

⁸¹No doubt, the major reason that Wesley did not give the *OT Notes* the same status as the *NT Notes* was that, while he believed that the Old Testament bore witness to the truths of God, he did not believe that the "experience of the Jews" was to be a standard of Christian experience. Compare Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace," §III.9, *Works* 1:388; with Letter to Elizabeth Hardy (5 April 1758), *Letters* (Telford) 4:11.

extracts from them evidence minimal editing. For this reason, the *OT Notes* are much less reliable as an indicator of Wesley's theological convictions, although characteristic themes come through in the few places he adds to or corrects his sources.⁸²

4. The Articles of Religion. As mentioned earlier, Wesley prepared the twenty-five Articles of Religion for the American church by editing the Anglican Thirty-Nine Articles.⁸³ The importance of considering the Articles of Religion in determining Wesley's theological convictions has too often been dismissed, on the grounds that they do not reveal *distinctive* Wesleyan convictions.⁸⁴ Such a dismissal is ill-advised for two major reasons. First, an adequate understanding of Wesley's theological convictions should include those that he held in common with his Anglican tradition as well as his distinctive concerns. Second, one should not underestimate the serious theological nature of the task of editing and revising the Thirty-Nine Articles. If Wesley retained an article in his list, this is evidence of his (often, otherwise implicit) agreement with that common conviction. Likewise, an analysis of Wesley's changes and deletions from the list highlights some of his distinctive concerns about predestination, entire sanctification, and even the use of inclusive language for humanity!⁸⁵

5. The *Sunday Service*. The last of the possible "official" Wesley sources in the *Sunday Service*. Its methodological value for determining Wesley's theological convictions parallels that of the Articles of Religion. It derives from another expression of Wesley's Anglican theological context—the *Book of Common Prayer*. Wesley valued this prayerbook highly but had developed concerns about a few claims and expressions in it. When given the opportunity to edit the prayerbook for his American followers, these concerns found expression.⁸⁶ The significance of the

⁸²See the excellent survey and analysis of *OT Notes* in Casto 1977, esp. 220, 240ff.

⁸³For a handy parallel comparison, see Oden 1988, 112–26.

⁸⁴E.g., Meredith 1962, 48.

⁸⁵For general theological analyses of his editorial decisions, see Wheeler 1908, 14–46; F. Baker 1970, 249–55; and Blankenship 1964. Concerning inclusive language, see Maddox 1991.

⁸⁶See Wesley's earlier delineation of these concerns in "Ought We to Separate From the Church of England?" §II.4, *Works* 9:571–72. For analyses of the theological concerns evident in Wesley's editing of the prayerbook, see F. Baker 1970, 234–48; Bishop 1975, 74ff; George 1984; Selleck 1983; Tucker 1992; and Wade 1981.

resulting editorial changes for highlighting some of Wesley's theological convictions is signaled by his claim that he took care "to alter nothing merely for altering's sake."⁸⁷

B. The Public Wesley versus the Private Wesley

Besides the items that have some traditional warrant for being considered "official" expressions of his doctrinal commitments, Wesley authored several other types of material. One major methodological issue concerning these materials is the distinction between items that Wesley published and unpublished materials that are available to us. This distinction figures prominently in the evaluation of the relative legitimacy and reliability of these various items for determining Wesley's characteristic theological convictions.

1. Major Controversial Writings. Wesley wrote most of his sermons with the spiritual and theological formation of his people as his primary aim. He preferred to pursue this formative type of theological activity. Only with expressed regret did he take up the genre of controversial theology—i.e., seeking to explain or defend his practices and theological convictions that were under attack.⁸⁸

While perhaps not Wesley's favorite type of theological activity, these works of controversial theology are immensely important for understanding his convictions, because he is often forced in them to clarify or balance claims that had been made in his sermons or other materials. Of particular merit in this category is Wesley's longest single theological treatise, *The Doctrine of Original Sin*, which was written in reply to a rejection of the doctrine by the unitarian John Taylor. Likewise crucial is his *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, which Wesley considered to be among the best overviews of his position. The various other controversial writings and appeals contain further helpful insights.⁸⁹

⁸⁷Letter to Walter Churchey (20 June 1789), *Letters* (Telford) 8:144–45. See also the evaluation of James White (1984, 16).

⁸⁸Cf. his comment that sometimes we must write and preach controversially, but the less the better. Letter to Joseph Benson (31 July 1773), *Letters* (Telford) 6:35.

⁸⁹*The Doctrine of Original Sin* can be found in *Works* (Jackson) 9:191–464. The length of this treatise is somewhat deceiving. About 40% is appended abridgements of works by Thomas Boston, Samuel Hebden, and Isaac Watts. Moreover, the other material is composed of extended quotes of Taylor, with Wesley's response. *Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* is available in *Works*, 11:37–94. Some of the other controversial writings are also present in this volume. The remainder will be collected in volumes 12–13. Until then, they can be found scattered in the last few volumes of *Works* (Jackson).

2. Open Letters. A special subset of Wesley's controversial writings is his "open letters." These letters were written in response to public attacks upon his movement or theological claims. Since the debate was public, Wesley published his response. Among the most important of these open letters for understanding Wesley's theology are those to Edmund Gibson, Conyers Middleton, and William Warburton.⁹⁰

3. Tracts. Wesley also published several tracts dealing with political, ethical, and social issues of his time.⁹¹ While not all are overtly theological, these pieces often provide insight into Wesley's characteristic convictions and his specific ethical commitments.

4. Dictionary. One of Wesley's lesser known publications was *The Complete English Dictionary*. This work was intended to enable his unschooled followers to read the "best" English authors. It also aids later students of his theology, by showing *his* understanding of words that he uses.⁹²

5. Journal. Another distinctive publication was Wesley's *Journal*, originally issued in installments. It is crucial to note that Wesley's initial decision to publish selections from his manuscript journal was apologetic. He wanted to defend himself and his movement from attack.⁹³ Not all of these attacks related to theological issues. However, such issues did come into consideration at various points and the relevant accounts can be taken as expressing his theological convictions. One must deal with these materials with care, however. For example, the original *Journal* account of Aldersgate was supplemented with later footnotes that significantly altered Wesley's evaluation of the theological significance of the event. In addition, as Gerald Cragg warns, the very style of the genre of Wesley's *Journal* invited one-sided accounts and must be balanced by a comparison with his more didactic material.⁹⁴

6. Diary. Wesley's published *Journal* must be carefully distinguished from both his manuscript original and his private diary. In

⁹⁰Cf. *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London* (Gibson), *Works* 11:335–51; *A Letter to the Rev. Dr. Conyers Middleton, Letters* (Telford) 2:312–88; *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester* (Warburton), *Works* 11:467–538.

⁹¹See *Works* (Jackson), volume 11.

⁹²For a description and evaluation of Wesley's *Dictionary* see Lawton 1962, 81ff; and Partridge 1932.

⁹³Cf. Rogal 1988; and Ward 1988, 34–40.

⁹⁴Cragg 1975, 7.

particular, the latter document was never intended for publication; indeed, major sections of it were written in a code that scholars have only recently deciphered. The purpose of Wesley's diary was to measure and record his progress in holy living, and to serve as a prod to such progress. Those portions of his diary and manuscript journal available to us are now being published because of their value for reconstructing Wesley's biography and for testing his *public* claims and evaluations of his work.⁹⁵ They also provide insights into his assumptions about the practice of Christian spirituality. They should be used with caution in any theological context, however, because Wesley never imagined that they would have public exposure.

7. Unpublished Early Sermons. Besides the published sermons discussed above, we also have access to eighteen unpublished sermons from the years 1725–41.⁹⁶ These sermons are indicative of the early Wesley and his staunchly Anglican training. They provide some insight into the movement toward the “whole Wesley” but should be used with an awareness of their context and the fact that Wesley chose not to publish them.

8. Private Letters. There is one other major category of originally unpublished Wesley materials available to us: over 5,000 private letters written to or by Wesley in correspondence with his family, his preachers, and numerous members of his Methodist societies. Frank Baker has suggested that the primary value of these letters lies in their revelation of John Wesley as an individual and of the people and events of his day.⁹⁷ While this relative judgment may be correct, their theological importance should not be overlooked.

Many of these letters were responses to requests for clarifications of claims that Wesley had made in his published works. The responses often reveal earlier and more candid insight into specific qualifications of his theological convictions than Wesley chose to provide in his public didactic materials.⁹⁸ They also provide much-needed perspective on the pastoral dimension of Wesley's theological activity.⁹⁹ As such, they can

⁹⁵For a characterization of these materials see Heitzenrater 1988. We have available Wesley's dairies from his Oxford period through 1741, and from 1783 to near his death. Those published so far are in *Works*, volumes 18–20.

⁹⁶Now published in *Works* 4:206–419.

⁹⁷In *Works* 25:ix. See also F. Baker 1980.

⁹⁸For a few examples, see Maddox 1994a, 126, 155–56, 183.

⁹⁹Cf. Baker 1980, 97; and Tracy 1988.

be quite useful in supporting or clarifying claims about Wesley's theology, though one should probably not depend on them as the sole source for interpretive claims. Lest one doubt the propriety of such use of private letters, it can be noted that Wesley himself granted permission for the publication of some of them—provided that it was made clear that they were originally “private letter(s) of a private friend, without any thought of (their) going any farther.”¹⁰⁰

C. Wesley the Author versus Wesley the Editor

In terms of sheer volume, Wesley published more as an editor and abstractor than as an author. It was his common practice to abstract and reprint for his Methodist followers (and whatever larger public that might be interested) any material that he found to be particularly edifying or theologically appropriate. His was an age before detailed copyright restrictions and such practice was not uncommon.¹⁰¹ Typically he identified the source from which he was abstracting, though there are instances where the question of whether Wesley is editor or author is contested.

There is a wide divergence of practice and opinion concerning the use of such edited material in analyzing Wesley's theology. He was not always careful in his editing and it was not uncommon for opponents to point out contradictions between his claims elsewhere and some edited item that he published with his commendation.¹⁰² As such, it would be precarious to base claims about Wesley's theology on these materials alone. Used judiciously, however, they can make a subsidiary contribution. In the first place, an analysis of the items that he selects to commend by republication is itself revealing. Even more significant are analyses of any of his changes in, or omissions from, the original that betray theological concerns. I noted previously that consideration of such points in Wesley's editing of the Thirty-Nine Articles, the *Book of Common Prayer*,

¹⁰⁰Letter to Richard Tompson (22 August 1759), *Letters* (Telford) 4:72. Cf. Letter to Samuel Furly (9 December 1760), *Letters* (Telford) 4:118. Wesley also read letters he received aloud to his people! Cf. *Journal* (3 September 1745), *Works* 20:87; and *Journal* (27 April 1748), *Works* 20:221.

¹⁰¹Wesley was called to task for it a couple of times however—cf. *Works* 20:47 fn13 and 51 fn23.

¹⁰²This is particularly true in the case of the *Christian Library*. Note his concession that he cannot be held accountable for every expression he included therein, in Letter to the Editor of the *London Chronicle* (5 April 1763), *Letters* (Telford) 4:207; and *Some Remarks on Mr. Hill's 'Review of all the Doctrines Taught by Mr. John Wesley'*, §12, *Works* (Jackson) 10:381–82.

and the sources behind his *NT Notes* and *OT Notes* can be very enlightening. While most of Wesley's other edited material were less directly theological than these earlier examples, they are not devoid of theological implications. Unfortunately, there have been few detailed analyses comparing them with their sources.¹⁰³

1. Collected Edited Works. The most significant example of Wesley's editorial activity is the *Christian Library*—a fifty-volume collection of extracts and abridgements of "Practical Divinity." Wesley included in this collection what he judged to be the best examples of such literature in the English language. A consideration of the persons included, and editorial changes made, reveals his theological inclinations at the time of its publication (the middle Wesley).

An analogous type of material would be the various items abstracted or reprinted by the late Wesley in his *Arminian Magazine*. Once again he was endorsing (and editorially correcting) current theological and spiritual writings, though this time including more controversial than practical treatises.¹⁰⁴

2. Edited Devotional/Catechetical Materials. Given his concern for the spiritual formation of his people, it is not surprising that Wesley published several edited items for this purpose. Indeed, his very first publication (1733) was *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for every Day of the Week*, providing a selection of his favorite models. He later published additional collections of prayers for both children and families and an edited version of a devotion manual by John Austin, which Wesley titled *Devotions for Every Day in the Week and the Great Festivals*.¹⁰⁵ For more explicitly catechetical use Wesley developed a series of *Bible Lessons for Children* (1746–54). He also translated and abridged material by Claude Fleury and Pierre Poiret for a volume entitled *Instructions to Children*.

¹⁰³The most notable exceptions are MacDonald 1906 (dealing with the abridgement of the Shorter Catechism in the *Christian Library*); Monk 1966, 49–61 (looking at Puritan material in the *Christian Library*); Kim 1992 (analyzing selectively throughout the *Christian Library*); and Clapper 1984 (reprinted in 1989, 127–53), Brantley 1990, and Steele 1994, 182ff (all considering Wesley's editing of works by Jonathan Edwards).

¹⁰⁴See the prefaces to volumes 2 & 3 in *Works* (Jackson) 14:281–84.

¹⁰⁵Abridged copies of the three collections of prayers can be found in *Works* (Jackson) 11:203–72. The 1733 *Forms of Prayer* was reprinted by the United Methodist Publishing House in 1992.

For his older followers he provided a translated extract of Claude Fleury's *The Manners of the Antient (sic) Christians* and a selection of translated passages from Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (Abbe de Saint-Cyran) in *Christian Instructions*.¹⁰⁶ These materials were used in the homes of his followers and in the schools that Wesley established. The particular value of these sources for considering Wesley's theology is in revealing some of the doxological and formative aspects of his convictions.

3. Theological Commentary on History, Science, Medicine, and Literature. Wesley's own reading interests ranged widely and he encouraged his people to follow his example. In keeping with this desire, he provided them with edited republications of works ranging from history to medicine. The major concern of his editing was to reduce the size and simplify the language of the original. However, he frequently included a preface providing some theological commentary on the work, and sporadically interjected his own opinions into the text. Thus, occasional insights into Wesley's theological convictions can be gained from these works as well. Included in this category of works would be the *Concise Ecclesiastical History*, a *Concise History of England* (1776), the *Primitive Physick*, his *Survey of the Wisdom of God in Creation*, and some selections of classical poetry.¹⁰⁷

D. The Relationship of John and Charles Wesley

The final facet of John Wesley's work as editor warrants separate consideration: his collaboration in the publication of Charles Wesley's early hymn collections. One of the departures of the current Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's works from the example of its predecessors is the inclusion of the 1780 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (hereafter, *Hymns*). Such inclusion might seem inappropriate on first consideration, because it is commonly agreed that Charles Wesley wrote nearly all of the hymns in this collection.¹⁰⁸ To understand the decision to include *Hymns* in John Wesley's works, it is necessary to recognize his editorial role in its original publication.

¹⁰⁶*Instructions for Children* and *Christian Instructions* have a complicated bibliographical history, often being confused with each other and as to their sources. For a brief discussion of this history, see F. Baker 1985, 45–46 & 52–53. *The Manners of Antient Christians* was first published in 1749.

¹⁰⁷For an overview of this various literature see Herbert 1940.

¹⁰⁸On the vexing question of determining authorship of hymns in the Wesleys' joint publications see F. Baker 1988.

In the early years of the Methodist revival John and Charles Wesley were concerned to present a united front against opponents. Therefore, they co-published Charles' earliest collections of hymns. While Charles wrote the hymns, John authored the preface to each collection. John also edited Charles' hymns, with an eye for both stylistic and theological matters. This is the reason that Albert Outler could claim that "one may speak realistically of the theology of John in the hymns of Charles Wesley."¹⁰⁹

Outler's evaluation is particularly appropriate for *Hymns*, because John's contribution to this collection exceeded that of any other.¹¹⁰ To begin with, John conceived of *Hymns* and selected the pieces to be included from previous collections, without consulting Charles. Secondly, John edited the hymns, often omitting several stanzas of the original. In the third place, John developed the distinctive theological organization of the selections in *Hymns*, structured around the differing aspects of human salvation. Finally, John provided the preface for the volume. Thus, while the original hymns were by Charles, the collection nonetheless provides a reliable indicator of John's theological convictions.

There is no better evidence of the legitimacy of drawing on the joint collections of hymns when discussing John's theology than the fact that he repeatedly did so himself! Note especially *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, where he drew on the prefaces and selected hymns from collections jointly published in 1739, 1741, and 1742 to demonstrate a claimed consistency about his doctrine of perfection. He then notes some apparent divergences in a 1749 collection, but disavows any responsibility for this because he did not see these hymns before Charles published them!¹¹¹

As the last sentence suggests, the policy of co-publishing Charles' hymn collections eventually broke down. Behind this change were growing differences of opinion between John and Charles. These differences should not be overplayed. There was a profound level of shared beliefs between the brothers. However, Charles increasingly developed dis-

¹⁰⁹Outler 1964, 18 fn63.

¹¹⁰The following summary is drawn from Beckerlegge 1983, 55–58.

¹¹¹*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection, Works* (Jackson) 11:366–466. Compare §§9 (370), 13–14 (378–82), and 15–16 (383–86) with §18 (391). For some examples of John's reactions to the 1749 volume (written in the margins of his personal copy of this volume) see Dale 1960, 226–27. See also the discussion of this general issue in Rattenbury 1941, 62–63.

tinctive emphases on key issues such as the possibility of entire sanctification, the contribution of suffering to spiritual growth, and the relationship of Methodism to the Anglican Church. These distinctive emphases troubled John, who would edit them out. In response, as Charles became more convinced of his position on these issues, he began to issue volumes of hymns without submitting them to John for editing. This decision strained, but did not break, the relationship between the brothers.¹¹²

The shifting cooperation between John and Charles Wesley suggests guidelines for drawing on Charles' hymns to enlighten John's theological convictions. One should obviously never use the hymns as the sole evidence for John's views. At best, they can provide corroboratory evidence and/or illustrations. Even in this case, one is on firmest ground when drawing on the *Hymns*, due to John's tight control over this volume. Next in value would be those collected volumes that were co-published. Finally would come Charles' independent volumes, which would be of some benefit due to the brothers' broad base of shared beliefs. Of course, if one's task were to highlight the *differences* between John and Charles, the value of the various collections would be reversed!

¹¹²Cf. two letters in which John asks Charles to seek his direction more and be less independent, or quit saying that he is in concert with John: Letter to Charles Wesley (20 October 1753), *Works* 26:527; and Letter to Charles Wesley (31 October 1753), *Works* 26:528.

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