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## CHAPTER 14

### **Reclaiming an Inheritance: Wesley as Theologian in the History of Methodist Theology** *Randy L. Maddox*

In 1960 Colin Williams published *John Wesley's Theology Today*, which was intended both to provide a much-needed survey of Wesley's theology and to suggest how his theology undergirded Methodism's unique contribution to the ecumenical movement. Harold Bosley's review of this book in the standard journal of theological reflection for the Methodist Church commended Williams for achieving a fine historical study (his first goal), but rejected the assumption behind Williams' second goal. For Bosley, the idea that Methodist pastors or theologians should look *backwards* to Wesley for theological guidance instead of looking to the *present* life of the church and its *future* possibilities was simply preposterous.<sup>1</sup>

This interchange provides a revealing glimpse into the larger setting against which the recent renewed consideration of Wesley by Methodist theologians should be considered. On the one hand it is noteworthy that it took over a century and a half after Wesley's death for a Methodist scholar to provide a fairly comprehensive survey of Wesley's theology. On the other hand it is striking how Bosley—a trained theologian, former seminary dean, and current pastor of a prominent Methodist congregation—scoffed at the suggested relevance of Wesley's theology for contemporary Methodist theological development.

This episode suggests that Wesley's significance *as a theologian* had been receiving little positive attention among his Methodist descendants up to 1960. Broader inspection reveals that this was indeed the case. The purpose of this essay is to sketch some of the

evidence of this neglect of Wesley as a theologian and reflect on its causes. Then I will note how this situation has been changing since 1960.

### *Nineteenth Century Developments*

Since John Wesley died in 1791 we can begin with nineteenth-century developments, recognizing that the roots of these trail back into the last decades of the previous century. In this time period it is particularly helpful to frame the investigation with two foci: one focus of interest being the kinds of things that were published specifically about Wesley (i.e., the area of Wesley Studies<sup>2</sup>); the other being how Methodist theologians were interacting with Wesley.

### **Wesley Studies: Hagiography and Theological Neglect**

From the time of his death through the nineteenth century the vast majority of publications dealing with Wesley fit in the category of biography. Far from being detached scholarly accounts, these biographies were typically triumphalist panegyrics and/or defenses of Wesley—offering loving accounts of “Wesley the Dynamic Evangelist,” “Wesley the Tireless Church Founder,” “Wesley the Pious Christian,” and so on. In short, they were hagiography.<sup>3</sup> This is not to say these biographies were devoid of convictions about Wesley as theologian. Quite the contrary! They generally operated with distinctive assumptions about this topic just below the narrative surface (where their particular model of Wesley could exercise powerful influence, without having to be defended).

What kinds of concerns about Wesley as theologian were involved? The most common was the attempt to disassociate Wesley from his Anglican past. This is quite ironic because Wesley had been concerned throughout his ministry to demonstrate that all of his distinctive doctrinal claims were supported in the Anglican standards of doctrine, and he had struggled until near the end of his life to keep Wesleyan Methodists within the Anglican communion. This struggle failed (for a variety of reasons), and shortly after Wesley’s death British Methodists followed the earlier example of their American counterparts in separating officially from the Church of England. In publications like these biographies, both groups then began the task of legitimating that move by obscuring the most explicit evi-

dences of Wesley's Anglican loyalties and by stressing those aspects of his life or work that favored the dissenting traditions.

The most glaring example of obscuring Wesley's explicitly Anglican side is Thomas Jackson's omission of Wesley's extract of the *Homilies* of the Church of England from what became the standard edition of Wesley's works. This exclusion is indefensible, given the fact that Wesley published at least twenty editions of the extract during his lifetime and included it in his own edition of collected works in 1771–74.<sup>4</sup> What the exclusion demonstrates is that while Wesley considered the *Homilies* authoritative, Jackson (and most other nineteenth-century Methodists) did not.

Such “de-Anglicanization” is also obvious, if more subtle, in many of the biographies. They provide only cursory treatment of Anglican elements of Wesley's life (such as his ordination), while dealing at length with his contacts with Moravians and other dissenting traditions. They express regret over any censure Wesley might bestow on Lutheran, Calvinist, or mystic writers, while ignoring his frequent defenses of Anglican standards.<sup>5</sup> Most of all, they tend to construe Aldersgate as Wesley's “conversion” *from* high-church bigotry and intolerance, *to* the true (i.e., low-church) faith.<sup>6</sup>

The other major theological trend evident in the nineteenth-century biographies of Wesley was a growing contrast between doctrinal convictions and personal religious experience, with the resulting tendency to portray Wesley as one concerned with experience, *rather than* doctrinal convictions. In other words, the caricatures developed by the least-nuanced participants in the Scholasticism/Pietism debates among Protestants were adopted, and Wesley was portrayed as one who—at Aldersgate—was liberated from dry orthodoxy and discovered that the essence of Christianity was *experience* (as contrasted with church membership, ritualistic observances, or doctrinal convictions).<sup>7</sup> As a result, Wesley's nineteenth-century descendants, becoming evermore acclimated to the model of him as a warm-hearted (low-church) evangelist, found any reference to Wesley as a theologian to be increasingly foreign and inappropriate.

This helps explain why the only published monographs specifically on Wesley's theology in the nineteenth century were apparently written by non-Methodists! I have been able to locate only two such studies. In 1857 Michel Haemmerlin, a Lutheran pastor involved in the *Société évangélique* at Strasbourg, published an *Essai Dogmatique sur John Wesley*, which presented an introductory summary of

Wesley's doctrines (particularly soteriology, but branching wider) as found in his full collected sermons.<sup>8</sup> The other study was more ambitious. Robert Brown, apparently an "evangelical" dissenter, published *John Wesley's Theology* in London in 1865, where he used Wesley's theology as a test case to prove that one could remain within evangelical orthodoxy while embracing the current philosophical focus on conscience as the essence of the human (and thus of religion). In making this case Brown explicitly contrasted Wesley with Protestant Scholasticism. He set this contrast up as a difference between a theology that was based merely on the intellect (Scholasticism) and one that was grounded intuitively in the conscience or human heart (Wesley). He argued that Wesley derived his creed from his experience of conscience—which Brown understood to be an immediate voice of God within us, a faculty *distinct from* our understanding.<sup>9</sup> While this argument recognized the importance of the affections and the presence of ethical/praxis dimensions in Wesley's theology, its near dichotomy between the heart and the mind implied that careful intellectual consideration of doctrines played little role in Wesley's thought. His creed was seen as that of a man of obedience and action, *rather than* education and reflection. Whatever questions one might have about the accuracy of this characterization, the ironic point (given Brown's intention) is that for most Methodist theologians of the time it would only have served to justify further their devaluation of Wesley as a theologian!

### **Methodist Theology: Increasing Marginalization of Wesley as Theologian**

To understand this effect we need to appreciate the changes in the style and self-understanding of Methodist theology as it moved outside the Anglican context of its origin. Due to its unique history of development the Anglican tradition understood the standard forms and practice of theology differently from their continental counterparts (both Roman Catholic and Protestant). Instead of identifying "serious" theological activity with the production of scholastic summaries/defenses of doctrine, Anglicans followed the example of the early church in focusing this activity on the production of such formative materials as creeds, collections of catechetical homilies, and liturgies. Thus, John Wesley was functioning as a typical serious

Anglican “divine” (i.e., a theologian) when he devoted the bulk of his theological activity to these forms.<sup>10</sup>

But as Methodists distanced themselves from their Anglican past their default location became in the midst of continental-based Protestant movements (particularly the Reformed tradition). In this new context they were quickly reminded that they lacked a “real” theology. In one of the most vivid examples, E. P. Humphrey argued that Methodist theology was unworthy of serious consideration because it:

. . . has yet to be reduced to a systematic and logical form. . . . We have its brief and informal creed in some five and twenty articles; but where is its complete confession of faith, in thirty or forty chapters? . . . Where is its whole body of divinity, from under the hand of a master, sharply defining its terms, accurately stating its belief, laying down the conclusions logically involved therein, trying these conclusions, no less than their premises, by the Word of God, refuting objections, and adjusting all its parts into a consistent and systematical whole?<sup>11</sup>

What Humphrey was here assuming as the standard against which Methodist theology came up short is a scholastic theology—i.e., a textbook that provides a comprehensive and carefully organized survey of a tradition’s truth claims, defending any controverted claims polemically, and providing rational grounding for the whole. Rather than taking Wesley’s failure to provide such a work as warrant to question the preeminence being given this form of theological activity by their critics, his descendants set out to fill this perceived deficiency in Wesley’s bequest.

The first attempt was the 1825 publication of *Wesleyana: A Selection of the Most Important Passages in the Writings of the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M. Arranged to form a Complete Body of Divinity*.<sup>12</sup> This publication serves well to represent the transition from Wesley being valued *as a theologian* (i.e., as a model of serious theological activity) to him becoming simply a scholastic authority to be quoted on select theological claims.

An after-the-fact collection of excerpts from Wesley could obviously not satisfy the challenge issued by critics like Humphrey. So Wesley’s descendants rapidly moved on to producing full-fledged original scholastic theologies. The trailblazer was Richard Watson, who published his multi-volume *Theological Institutes* in 1825–28.<sup>13</sup> Several others would broaden and pave the path he blazed through the remainder of the century.<sup>14</sup> Thus, at the same time that Brown

was registering a protest (in Wesley's name) against the scholastic style of theology, the majority of Methodist theologians were seeking to "advance" to this style!

But as they advanced, the status of Wesley as a theologian declined yet further. This is because his adequacy as a scholastic source was increasingly called into question. One dimension of the issue of adequacy was comprehensiveness. Since their primary interest in Wesley was his articulation and defense of contested Methodist distinctives, most of which fell in the classic locus of soteriology, Methodist scholastic theologians ended up developing large sections of their theology with little dependence on Wesley. Watson set the precedent for the later scholastic compendiums in referring to Wesley only about a dozen times in his two-volume work, with almost all of these citations confined to the section on soteriology.<sup>15</sup> Thus emerged the common (mis)impression that Wesley's theological concern was limited to a few matters of soteriology.

The second dimension of the issue of Wesley's adequacy as a scholastic source concerned consistency. This dimension came into play precisely in those areas where Wesley was typically cited as an authority in scholastic texts. The best example is the argument over Wesley's teachings on entire sanctification that erupted in nineteenth-century American Methodism.<sup>16</sup> On one side of this debate was a "holiness" camp that consolidated at mid-century, who gathered every instance that they could find where Wesley suggested that entire sanctification was an instantaneous gift available *now* to even the most recent convert. In response, a series of authors demonstrated that there were apparent inconsistencies or temporal transitions in the comments on entire sanctification that Wesley made over the long course of his ministry, and contended that the most balanced reading of Wesley's mature thought would put the emphasis on a slow process of growth toward entire sanctification. These proposals sparked blistering rebuttals that touted Wesley's consistency and intellect over that of the "revisionists."<sup>17</sup> The eventual response of the latter party to such rebuttals was to affirm a general commitment to Wesley while insisting that he was not inerrant. As James Mudge put it, "It is more important to be well-reasoned, self-consistent, and wholly scriptural than to accord in every smallest phrase with Wesley."<sup>18</sup> In other words, Wesley should not be treated as an unquestioned scholastic source even in those limited areas that he frequently addressed.

If Wesley's role was reduced to providing an occasional questionably-authoritative dictum within the scholastic theologies that dominated the nineteenth century, it was further marginalized by the Methodist transition to systematic theologies toward the end of the century. This transition took place more rapidly in America (and Germany) than in Britain as the emerging Methodist Episcopal seminaries adopted with little question the fourfold curriculum being championed in the continental European discussion of "theological encyclopedia" (i.e., Biblical Theology, Historical Theology, Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology).<sup>19</sup> This model stressed the need to maintain clear borders between each of the disciplines and tended to call into question the theological nature of the first three disciplines, because theology "proper" was usually equated with Systematics. Thus, the "true" theologian was now the systematic theologian.

It is small wonder that the new Methodist systematic theologians hardly knew what to make of Wesley as a theologian. On the fourfold model most of Wesley's theological productions would fall within the "application" discipline of Practical Theology, which is precisely the realm to which a few restricted his interest and abilities.<sup>20</sup> Others rejected this narrow classification, allowing that Wesley combined aspects of a professional theologian with those of a practical Christian teacher.<sup>21</sup> But this concession only heightened the problem. What serious theologian would overlook these boundaries? And why did Wesley never undertake the central theological task of a Systematic Theology? Some of his academic descendants were inclined to excuse Wesley on the basis of his "misfortune" of training in the methodological backwaters of Anglican theology.<sup>22</sup> Others appealed to a supposed principle of historical development—that revivals of Christian life inevitably focus on immediate ministry, while creative epochs of theological science necessarily follow and consolidate these revivals.<sup>23</sup> In either case, the departure of later Methodist theologians from Wesley's model of theological activity was neatly justified; after all, he had not been a *real* theologian!<sup>24</sup>

As most nineteenth-century Methodist theologians lost touch with Wesley's Anglican roots, they also lost their awareness of the early Christian setting of his understanding of Christian life. By default, they found themselves trying to articulate Wesley's distinctive soteriological concerns (responsible grace and therapeutic salvation) within the categories of guilt and merit that had come to

dominate later Western theology. This proved to be an impossible blend. The most common result was a shift of emphasis from Divine grace and empowerment to human initiative and ability, with a theology of “gracious ability” being proclaimed in Wesley’s name—a theology that he would have rejected vehemently.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the nineteenth-century Methodist neglect (or dismissal!) of Wesley as a model of theological activity eventually resulted in the obscuring of his distinctive theological convictions.

### *Early Twentieth Century: Wesley as Partisan Theological Hero*

With the transition to the twentieth century, biographical and historical studies of Wesley tended to become a little more critical, moving beyond mere pious recountings of the founder’s life. Moreover, while remaining largely in-house studies for Wesleyan traditions, they began to view Wesley within the larger context of Christian history. This stage of biographical studies is exemplified by the five-volume work of John S. Simon.<sup>26</sup>

Meanwhile most Methodist academic theologians continued to show little interest in Wesley through the first half of the century.<sup>27</sup> They were more interested in coming to terms with the modern intellectual trends that their predecessors had avoided. For many of them it appears that concern about similarities with Wesley was considered a shackle that had to be broken in order to embrace new theological agendas. Randolph Sinks Foster set the tone when he began a multi-volume series of *Studies in Theology* in 1891 with the vigorous insistence that “We know more today than our fathers a hundred years ago [the year of Wesley’s death!]. We have truer beliefs than they had.” Predictably, Foster almost never interacts with Wesley in his series.<sup>28</sup> His precedent was widely emulated in twentieth-century Methodist theology.

This backdrop makes the cases where Methodist participants in the various theological agendas of the twentieth century do appeal to Wesley all the more striking. Investigation shows that their appeal was typically limited to claiming Wesleyan warrant for their particular revisionist theological agenda. As one proponent put it, “Back to Wesley is forward into the spirit of what is best in the twentieth century!”<sup>29</sup>

By this claim, Frank Collier was suggesting that Wesley rejected

all merely traditional dogma, opting for Scripture, reason, and love (*sic*) as the only standards of truth; and that Wesley viewed Scripture as speaking solely on religious topics, not scientific ones. While this is not a complete misreading of Wesley, it is surely a partial and partisan one. Indeed, Collier epitomizes what must be considered the general tendency of the specific theological studies of Wesley that emerged during this period: the appeal to Wesley as a hero, in defense of one's particular theological agenda.<sup>30</sup>

The first examples of such an appeal to Wesley as partisan theological hero were associated with liberal theological agendas. The move from the "pietist Wesley" common in nineteenth-century studies of Wesley to such a "liberal Wesley" was not as far as it might seem. Indeed, Schleiermacher—the founder of modern liberal theology—had himself come from a pietist background. His primary reformulation of this pietist heritage had been to shift the focus of attention from specific religious or conversion experiences to the more general human experience of dependence upon the Mysterious Other (God). He then argued that the only legitimate Christian doctrines were those which were *derived* from this experience.

Thus, when some early twentieth-century studies identified Wesley as a "proto-Schleiermacher," they were not abandoning the contrast between experience and doctrine common in nineteenth-century studies of Wesley; they were refocusing the type of experience to which one appealed. For them it was less a conversion experience than a general sense of assurance (an *optimistic* form of dependence!). They were also assuming that Wesley shared Schleiermacher's agenda of reducing authoritative Christian doctrine to that which could be grounded in or derived from such experience.<sup>31</sup>

For some other early twentieth-century Methodist theologians this romantic version of the appeal to experience was still too narrow. They were more inclined towards the empirical language of the burgeoning natural sciences. To them Wesley was the model of a scientific mind which insisted that the test of truth was verifiability in *general* human experience (not just the "feeling" of assurance).<sup>32</sup> While the experience they appealed to might have been different, the reason for the appeal was the same—to reject sole reliance on traditional authorities.

Besides the subordination of traditional authorities to present experience, another typical agenda of early twentieth-century liberal theology was the critique of an exclusively conversionist model of

Christian initiation. Most liberals found William James' argument that "once-born" persons could develop just as authentic of a spirituality as "twice-born" to be persuasive. This fostered a renewed appreciation of the role of nurture and religious education in Christian life. As Methodist liberals struggled to moderate the conversionist model of Christian life inherited from their immediate predecessors, they discerned a champion in Wesley with his intense concern for catechisms and schools for Methodist children.<sup>33</sup>

One other classic concern of early twentieth-century liberal theology was the Social Gospel, with its emphasis on the *present* reality of Christian salvation—in the form of social and economic improvement. As this movement grew in public awareness, Methodist scholars were quick to remind themselves and others of Wesley's social concern and ministries.<sup>34</sup> Some early contributors held Wesley up as an example of philanthropic ministry.<sup>35</sup> For others, he was a prototype of Christian socialism.<sup>36</sup> The latter suggestion sparked vigorous counterarguments that Wesley instead supported the emerging capitalism of his day.<sup>37</sup> The ensuing debate proved to be very difficult to resolve. As a result, the main focus of scholarly study gradually turned from Wesley's explicit socio-economic *claims* to the theological *grounds* for his claims and the *effects* of his revival on British culture.<sup>38</sup> While this nuanced the discussion significantly, the conflict over appeals to Wesley as theological warrant has continued.

A reaction to the various liberal appeals to Wesley arose as neo-Orthodoxy gained influence between the World Wars. This movement emphatically rejected the experientialism of liberal theology and called for a return to the biblical and doctrinal foundations of the Christian Church. It particularly sought a reappropriation of the Reformation insights of Luther and Calvin. It was not long before a parallel "neo-Wesleyanism" could be detected, which laid claim to Wesley in its criticism of the subjectivism and overemphasis on experience in liberal Methodist theology.<sup>39</sup> This neo-Wesleyanism demonstrated convincingly the limitations of many of the liberal appropriations of Wesley. However, it had its own problems. In particular, neo-Orthodoxy tended towards a one-sided emphasis on human incapacities and forensic justification—emphases that could not do justice to the Catholic side of Wesley's Anglican theology.<sup>40</sup>

Closely following the neo-Orthodox shift in twentieth-century Western Christian theology (*or*, existing with some tension within it) was the articulation of an existentialist approach to Christian faith

and life. The major concern of theological existentialism was to argue that Christian doctrinal affirmations were not primarily objective attempts to describe metaphysical reality but subjective articulations of human anxiety and hope. As with neo-Orthodoxy, some scholars found this approach to be distinctively appropriate to Wesley.<sup>41</sup> This sense was particularly prominent in the renewed interest in Wesley among Japanese Methodist theologians.<sup>42</sup> But others vigorously rejected such an “existentialist Wesley.”<sup>43</sup>

The middle of the twentieth century witnessed the burgeoning of ecumenical concern and dialogue in theological circles. By this point, one is hardly surprised by the emergence of advocates of an “ecumenical Wesley,” who drew attention to his explicit irenic spirit and his distinctive blending of emphases from various Christian traditions.<sup>44</sup>

In general then, the first half of the twentieth century witnessed far more appeals to and interest in Wesley’s theology than its predecessor. However, this interest was typically partisan and partial, focusing on Wesley’s validation of desired theological agendas. While a wealth of insights into Wesley’s theology were uncovered in these studies, several crucial limitations became increasingly evident. First, Wesley was often read too directly in terms of contemporary issues, without sufficient sensitivity to the debates and presuppositions of his original context. Second, attention was typically devoted to individual aspects of Wesley’s thought or practice that were of interest, ignoring his larger doctrinal concerns and the perspective that these might provide for such individual issues. Comprehensive treatments of his theology continued to be exceedingly rare.<sup>45</sup> Finally, these studies retained the nineteenth-century assumption that Wesley may be of importance as a *warrant* in theological argument, but not as a *model* of theological activity. Whatever their particular theological agenda, they typically began with an apology for the fact that Wesley was not really a theologian!<sup>46</sup>

### *After 1960: Recovering Wesley as a Theological Mentor*

Such was the state of the argument when Colin Williams offered his survey of Wesley’s theology as a resource for contemporary Methodism and Harold Bosley scoffed at the suggestion of Wesley’s relevance. Developments since 1960 have shown Williams to be more the “son of a prophet” than Bosley. While there is plenty of reason to

question how widely Wesley is known or appreciated in Methodist churches at large, he has certainly received more attention from Methodist scholars in the last four decades than at any time previously. Due in large part to the leadership of tireless advocates like Frank Baker and Albert Outler, the study of Wesley has grown from an occasional avocation of a few scholars to an academic subject in its own right, with scholarly societies, research specializations, and the rest.<sup>47</sup>

One major expression of this increased scholarly interest has been the undertaking of the first truly critical edition of Wesley's works: *The Bicentennial Edition*.<sup>48</sup> This textual work has been complemented by a proliferation of detailed secondary studies which bring to their investigation a broad knowledge of Wesley's context and an historical-critical realism about his unique stance or contribution. These studies have provided the basis for a revised comprehensive understanding of Wesley that is less partisan and triumphalist than previous examples.<sup>49</sup>

The recent increased sophistication of Wesley scholarship has been as evident in theological studies as in biographical ones. For example, while there has continued to be interest in the relationship of Wesley to contemporary theological trends (in particular, liberation,<sup>50</sup> feminist,<sup>51</sup> and process<sup>52</sup> theologies), it has generally taken the form of tentative suggestions of affinities rather than appeals to a partisan theological hero.

More to the point, the majority of recent theological studies have been devoted to detailed comparative investigations of various individual aspects of Wesley's theology, such as his doctrine of assurance, his epistemology, or his social ethics.<sup>53</sup> These detailed studies have dramatically increased our knowledge of the sources, precedents, and implications of many of his central theological convictions. Thereby, they have contributed important insights to the continuing debate over Wesley's place within the Christian theological traditions. They have also deepened our awareness of developments (or shifts?) in some of Wesley's central convictions during his lifetime and escalated debate over the significance of these changes.<sup>54</sup>

What is most striking about recent theological studies of Wesley, however, is the degree to which Wesley's *model* of theological activity has become a focus of consideration and—increasingly—of positive reevaluation. Throughout the last thirty years Wesley scholars have protested the ease with which previous treatments dismissed any

suggestion that Wesley was a serious theologian. And yet, they have had to admit that Wesley did not exemplify the model of serious theology assumed as normative in academic theological circles. So, how *should* Wesley be viewed?

No one can represent better, or has contributed more to, the changing evaluation of Wesley's model of theological activity than Albert Outler. In 1961, moving very much against the stream, he began to argue that Wesley should be valued as a major theologian.<sup>55</sup> To make this case, he found it necessary to distinguish between academic theology and Wesley's "folk theology." That is, he argued that Wesley's value as a major theologian lay in his ability to simplify, synthesize, and communicate the essential teachings of the Christian gospel to laity, not in contributions to speculative academic theology.<sup>56</sup> This characterization of Wesley as a "folk theologian" remained constant throughout Outler's studies. However, the relative valuation of such folk theology in comparison with academic theology underwent a very important shift. In the early 1960s Outler simply assumed that folk theologians did not belong in the front rank with speculative theologians. By the mid-1980s he was arguing that Wesley's theological model was an authentic and creative form in its own right. It need no longer be compared negatively with academic theology.<sup>57</sup>

It is important to recognize that the current reevaluation of Wesley's model of theological activity, which Outler exemplifies, has not been motivated solely by new insights into Wesley. It also reflects a growing uneasiness with the reigning academic model of theology against which Wesley was previously being measured and found wanting. In contemporary academic theological circles there has been a mounting call for recovering an understanding and practice of serious theological reflection that is more closely connected to Christian life and worship. As Outler came to realize, this move goes far beyond simply valuing "folk theology" alongside academic theology; it recasts the dominant model of theology itself. Along with Outler, several other Wesleyan theologians have begun to suggest that when Wesley is judged in terms of such a practical discipline of theology, he not only receives more favorable evaluation, he emerges as an exemplary model.<sup>58</sup>

The importance of such a renewed appreciation of Wesley's model of practical theological activity should not be underestimated. It was noted earlier that the dismissal of Wesley's model of theologi-

cal activity was accompanied by an obscuring of some of his most distinctive theological convictions. This would suggest that a recovered understanding of his model of theological activity could help significantly in the current attempts to clarify the concerns and implications of Wesley's theological convictions. It could also facilitate the current effort to reclaim Wesley as *a theological mentor* for his contemporary descendants (and the larger Christian community), as opposed to reducing his importance to that of historical originator or enshrining him as a scholastic authority.

## Notes

1. See Colin W. Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1960); and Harold Bosley, "Review of Colin Williams' *John Wesley's Theology Today*," *Religion in Life* 29 (1960): 615–17.

2. Surveys of the history of Wesley Studies that I have found helpful in pursuing the focus of this investigation include Frank Baker, "Unfolding John Wesley: A Survey of Twenty Years' Studies in Wesley's Thought," *Quarterly Review* 1.1 (1980): 44–58; Richard P. Heitzenrater, "The Present State of Wesley Studies," *Methodist History* 22 (1984): 221–33; and Albert C. Outler, "A New Future for 'Wesley Studies': An Agenda for 'Phase III'," in *The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions*, ed. M. Douglas Meeks (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1985), 34–52.

3. The most notable exception—a biography still worth reading—is Robert Southey, *The Life of Wesley and the Rise and Progress of Methodism*, 2 vols. (New York: Gilley, 1820). For brief insightful characterizations of many of these early biographies, see Richard Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984) 2:174–79.

4. This point has been noted in Kenneth E. Rowe, "The Search for the Historical Wesley," in *The Place of Wesley in the Christian Tradition*, ed. K. E. Rowe (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1976), 1–10, p. 1. The extract from the *Homilies* is available in *John Wesley*, 123–33.

5. Cf. John Whitehead, *The Life of the Reverend John Wesley* (New York: R. Worthington, 1881 [ori., 1793–96]), 318.

6. The best examples are Luke Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Reverend John Wesley, M.A.* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1871); and James Harrison Rigg, *The Living Wesley* (New York: Nelson & Phillips, 1874). See also Rigg, *The Relations of John Wesley and Wesleyan Methodism to the Church of England* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1868), esp. p. 41.

7. A classic example is, again, Rigg, *The Living Wesley*. See also: Cyrus D. Foss, "Wesley and Personal Religious Experience," in *The Wesley Memorial Volume*, ed. J. O. A. Clark (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1880), 128–48; and B. P. Raymond, "Wesley's Religious Experience," *Methodist Review* 86 (1904): 28–35.

8. Michel Haemmerlin, *Essai Dogmatique sur John Wesley, D'Après ses Sermons* (Colmar: Camille Decker, 1857). This was originally a thesis for the bachelor of theology at the Protestant faculty at Strasbourg. Haemmerlin

used *Sermons on Several Occasions* (London: Mason, 1847), which contained 137 sermons. I am indebted to Michel Weyer for tracking down biographical information on Haemmerlin.

9.Cf. Robert Brown, *John Wesley's Theology: The Principle of its Vitality and its Progressive Stages of Development* (London: Jackson, Walford & Hodder, 1865), 7, 23–25. This work was reprinted with a new preface (which makes his agenda clearer) as *John Wesley; or, The Theology of Conscience* (London: E. Stock, 1868). See also his *The Philosophy of Evangelicalism* (London, 1857); *The Gospel of Common Sense; or, Mental, Moral, and Social Science in Harmony with Scriptural Christianity*; and *The Fear of God in Relation to Religion, Theology, and Reason* (Edinburgh: A. Elliott, 1876). Kenneth Rowe suggests in the *Methodist Union Catalog* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1975ff) that this Robert Brown is the Wesleyan Methodist minister who published *Membership of Class, a Condition of Membership in the Wesleyan Society* (Manchester, Eng, 1874), but there is no evidence in the latter's obituary of these other works (I am indebted for this information to John Vickers). He identifies himself only as an "evangelical."

10.For more on both the Anglican precedent and Wesley's practice, see Randy L. Maddox, "John Wesley – Practical Theologian?" *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 23 (1988): 122–47.

11.E. P. Humphrey, *Our Theology and Its Development* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1857), 68–69. Note his rejection of even Watson's *Institutes* as adequate in the footnote on p. 69!

12.(London: W. Booth, 1825). This collection was apparently prepared by William Carpenter.

13.Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes: or, A View of the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity*, 3 vols. (London: John Mason, 1825–28).

14.For the transition to Methodist scholasticism in British Methodism see Langford's chapter in this volume (Chapter 2); and Thomas Langford, *Practical Divinity: Theology in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1983), 49–77. For an analysis of specific movement away from Wesley's model in American Methodism see Randy L. Maddox, "An Untapped Inheritance: American Methodism and Wesley's Practical Theology," in *Doctrines and Disciplines: Methodist Theology and Practice*, eds. Dennis Campbell, et al. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998).

15.Watson's precedent is noted by Thomas Langford in *Doctrine and Theology in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1991), 13. Martin Wellings provided a similar analysis of continuing British Methodism in "'Throttled by a Dead Hand'? The 'Wesleyan Standard' in Nineteenth- and early Twentieth-Century British Methodism" (a paper as yet unpublished, presented at the Tenth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, August 1997). For detailed analysis of American Methodism, see Randy L. Maddox, "Respected Founder / Neglected Guide: The Role of Wesley in American Methodist Theology," *Methodist History* 37.2 (1999).

16.For a survey of these debates see Randy L. Maddox, "Holiness of Heart and Life: Lessons from North American Methodism," *Asbury Theological Journal* 51.1 (1996): 151–72.

17.The most vigorous examples are Asbury Lowrey, "Dr Mudge and

His Book,” *Methodist Review* 77 (1895): 954–59; and William McDonald, *John Wesley and His Doctrine* (Chicago, IL: Christian Witness, 1904), 107ff.

18. James Mudge, “A Friendly Word with my Critics,” *Methodist Review* 78 (1896): 125–30, here, 129.

19. On American developments see Maddox, “Untapped Inheritance.” For emerging Methodist theology in Germany, see Karl Steckel, “Zur Theologie der Evangelisch-Methodistischen Kirche,” in *Geschichte der Evangelisch-Methodistischen Kirche*, eds. K. Steckel & C. E. Sommer (Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1982), 243–76.

20. See the extended argument that Wesley should be valued as a preacher but not as a model theologian in Wilbur Fisk Tillett, *Personal Salvation* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury, 1902), 510–14.

21. The best example is George Richard Crooks & John F. Hurst, *Theological Encyclopedia and Methodology* (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1884), 47.

22. Note how Anglican theological activity is specifically dismissed in William F. Warren, *Systematische Theologie, einheitliche behandelt, Erste Lieferung: Allgemeine Einleitung* (Bremen: Verlag der Tractathaus H. Neulsen, 1865), 87 fn1. Importantly, Warren never directly discusses Wesley in this book!

23. The suggestion of John McClintock in “Warren’s Introduction to Systematic Theology,” *Methodist Review* 48 (1866): 100–24, pp. 102–4.

24. For some examples of how standard this concession had become, see F. W. MacDonald, “Wesley as a Theologian,” *Methodist Recorder* 31 (1891): 257; T. R. Pierce, *The Intellectual Side of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: MECS Publishing House, 1897); James W. Bashford, *Wesley and Goethe* (Cincinnati, OH: Jennings & Pye, 1903), 85–86; and Harris Franklin Rall, “Do We Need a Methodist Creed?” *Methodist Review* 89 (1907): 221–30, pp. 222–23.

25. Cf. Elden Dale Dunlap, “Methodist Theology in Great Britain in the Nineteenth Century” (Yale University Ph.D. thesis, 1956), 133–38, 213–14, 286; and Robert Eugene Chiles, *Theological Transition in American Methodism: 1790–1935* (New York: Abingdon, 1965), 49. “Gracious ability” places the primary stress on our human *ability*, rather than God’s grace. For more on Wesley’s alternative see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994).

26. *John Wesley and the Religious Societies* (1921); *John Wesley and the Methodist Societies* (1923); *John Wesley and the Advance of Methodism* (1925); *John Wesley, The Master Builder, 1757–72* (1927); and *John Wesley, the Last Phase* (1934) (all, London: Epworth).

27. For American Methodism see the analysis in Maddox, “Respected Founder.” For British Methodism see the discussion of J. Robinson Gregory and John Shaw Banks in Wellings, “‘Throttled by a Dead Hand’.” A cursory survey of German Methodist theology of the time shows a similar dearth of interaction with Wesley.

28. The quote is from Foster, *Studies in Theology*, Vol. 1: *Prolegomena: Philosophic Basis of Theology; or, Rational Principles of Religious Faith* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1891), vi–vii. The only passing reference to Wesley I have found is in Vol. 6: *Sin* (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1899), 179–81.

29. Frank Wilbur Collier, *Back to Wesley* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1924), 5.

30. Cf. George Eayrs’ description of Wesley as his “human hero,” in *John*

*Wesley, Christian Philosopher and Church Founder* (London: Epworth, 1926), 50.

31.E.g., John C. Granbery, "Method in Methodist Theology," *Methodist Quarterly Review* 58 (1909): 230–43, p. 235; Herbert B. Workman, *The Place of Methodism in the Catholic Church* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1921), 23–26; and George Croft Cell, *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Henry Holt, 1935) esp. 46–51.

32.E.g., Eayrs, *John Wesley*, 58–59; Frank Wilbur Collier, *John Wesley Among the Scientists* (New York: Abingdon, 1928) 49, 61; and Paul Waitman Hoon, "The Soteriology of John Wesley" (Edinburgh University Ph.D. thesis, 1936), 342ff.

33.Note especially John Wesley Prince, *Wesley on Religious Education* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1926); and Alfred Harris Body, *John Wesley and Education* (London: Epworth, 1936).

34.Note how this issue predominates in Francis J. McConnell, "New Interest in John Wesley," *Journal of Religion* 20 (1940): 340–58.

35.E.g., David Decamp Thompson, *John Wesley as a Social Reformer* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1898); John Alfred Faulkner, *The Socialism of John Wesley* (London: Charles Kelley, 1908); and Eric McCoy North, *Early Methodist Philanthropy* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1914).

36.E.g., W. H. Meredith, "John Wesley, Christian Socialist," *Methodist Review* 83 (1901): 426–39; and Kathleen Walker MacArthur, *The Economic Ethics of John Wesley* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1936).

37.E.g., Ernst Cahn, "John Wesley als Vorkämpfer einer christlichen Sozialethik," *Die Christliche Welt* 46 (1932): 208–12.

38.For summaries of this debate see Vilém D. Schneeberger *Theologische Wurzeln des Sozialen Akzents bei John Wesley* (Zürich: Gotthelf, 1974), 25–29; and Luke Keefer Jr., "John Wesley, The Methodists, and Social Reform in England," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 25.1 (1990): 7–20.

39.Note in particular the entire issue of *Religion in Life* 29.4 (1960), which was devoted to the topic of "Neo-Wesleyanism." Significant representatives of essentially neo-Orthodox construals of Wesley include William Cannon, *The Theology of John Wesley, with Special Reference to the Doctrine of Justification* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1946); John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960); Franz Hildebrandt, *From Luther to Wesley* (London: Lutterworth, 1951); Harold Lindström, *Wesley and Sanctification* (Stockholm: Nya Bokförlags Aktiebolaget, 1946); and E. Gordon Rupp, *Methodism in Relation to Protestant Tradition* (London: Epworth, 1954).

40.This point was made in Lycurgus Starkey, *The Work of the Holy Spirit: A Study in Wesleyan Theology* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 162; and Claude Thompson, "Aldersgate and the New Reformers," *Christian Advocate* 6.10 (1962): 7–8.

41.The best example would be Carl Michalson, though his published works do not show how much he felt a Wesleyan identity; cf. Theodore H. Runyon, "Carl Michalson as a Wesleyan Theologian," in *The Contribution of Carl Michalson to Modern Theology*, ed. Henry O. Thompson (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 55–73. For a more recent existentialist reading, see Schubert Ogden, "Process Theology and the Wesleyan Witness," *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 37.3 (1984): 18–33, esp. 25.

42. See esp. Yoshio Noro, "The Character of John Wesley's Faith," and Hiroaki Matsumoto, "John Wesley's Understanding of Man," in *Japanese Contributions to the Study of John Wesley*, ed. Clifford Edwards (Macon, GA: Wesleyan College, 1967), 6–22, 79–98. For an account of the resurgence of Wesley studies in Japan which started in 1959 see John W. Krummel, "Wesley Studies in Japan," *Northeast Asia Journal of Theology* 2 (1969): 135–40. See also the bibliography of "Japan Wesley Studies: 1959–72" in *Wesley and Methodism* (Tokyo: John Wesley Association) 6 (1972): 20–23. It is not clear whether this attraction to existentialism was due to cultural factors or simply a result of the fact that most of the scholars involved studied at Drew under Carl Michalson.

43. E.g., E. Herbert Nygren, "Wesley's Answer to Existentialism," *Christian Advocate* 9.3 (1965): 7–8.

44. The best examples are J. Ernest Rattenbury, *Wesley's Legacy to the World* (London: Epworth, 1928); Williams, *Wesley's Theology Today*; and Michael Hurley, "Introduction," in *John Wesley's Letter to a Roman Catholic* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1968), 22–47. This interest was also central to the emerging work of Albert C. Outler. Cf. Leicester R. Longden, "To Recover a Christian Sense of History: The Theological Vision of Albert Cook Outler" (Drew University Ph.D. thesis, 1992).

45. Paul Hoon appears correct in identifying his 1936 study as the first relatively comprehensive survey of Wesley's theology; Hoon, "Soteriology of John Wesley," 6.

46. For a few examples see John A. Faulkner, *Wesley as Sociologist, Theologian, Churchman* (New York: Methodist Book Concern, 1918), 38; Prince, *Wesley on Religious Education*, 11–12; William Henri Guiton, *John Wesley: Esquisse de sa Vie et de son Oeuvre* (Neuilly, Seine: Depot de Publications Methodistes, 1920), 64–67; and Johannes Schempp, *Seelsorge und Seelenführung bei John Wesley* (Stuttgart: Christliches Verlagshaus, 1949), 9.

47. In addition to the continuing Wesley Historical Society, The Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies began meeting in 1958, the Wesleyan Theological Society was formed in 1965, and a Wesleyan Studies Group was organized at the American Academy of Religion in 1982. Chairs of Wesley Studies have also been established at such universities as Duke and Southern Methodist.

48. For a description, see Frank Baker, "The Oxford Edition of Wesley's Works and Its Text," in *Place of Wesley*, 117–33.

49. Cf. the survey of this period in Heitzenrater, "Present State," and Thor Hall, "Tradition Criticism: A New View of Wesley," in *Inaugurating the Leroy A. Martin Distinguished Professorship of Religious Studies* (Chattanooga, TN: The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 1987), 6–23, p. 7. The two most up-to-date biographical studies reflecting this work are Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1995); and Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, 2nd. ed. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993).

50. For a few representative comparisons (positive and negative) of Wesley and Latin American liberation theology see the articles by Rupert Davies, José Míguez Bonino, and Theodore Runyon in *Sanctification and Liberation*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1981); the articles by Mortimer Arias and Hugo Assman in *Faith Born in the Struggle for Life*, ed. Dow Kirkpatrick (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988); Theodore W. Jennings Jr., *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990); and Kenneth Collins, "John Wesley and Liberation Theology," *Asbury Theological Journal* 42.1 (1987): 85–90.

51.E.g., Earl Kent Brown, "Feminist Theology and the Women of Mr. Wesley's Methodism," in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, ed. Theodore Runyon (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1985), 143–50; Sheila Davaney, "Feminism, Process Thought and the Wesleyan Tradition," in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, 105–16; Randy L. Maddox, "Wesleyan Theology and the Christian Feminist Critique," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 22 (1987): 101–11; and Marjorie Suchocki, "Coming Home: Wesley, Whitehead, and Women," *Drew Gateway* 57.3 (1987): 31–43.

52. See John Culp, "A Dialogue with the Process Theology of John B. Cobb Jr.," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15.2 (1980): 33–44; Davaney, "Feminism"; Ogden, "Process Theology"; Michael Peterson, "Orthodox Christianity, Wesleyanism, and Process Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 15.2 (1980): 45–58; and Suchocki, "Coming Home."

53. Cf. the Select Bibliography in Maddox, *Responsible Grace* (375–408), which includes over 100 book-length studies on aspects of Wesley's theology between 1960 and 1994.

54. For a survey of these debates see Randy L. Maddox, "Reading Wesley as Theologian," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30.1 (1995): 7–54. A good introduction to resulting readings of Wesley's theology can be gained by comparing Maddox, *Responsible Grace*; Kenneth Collins, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997); and Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1998).

55. Albert C. Outler, "Towards a Re-appraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian," *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 14 (1961): 5–14.

56. See Outler, "Introduction," *John Wesley*, vii; Outler, "John Wesley as Theologian—Then and Now," *Methodist History* 12.4 (1974): 63–82, esp. 65; Outler, "John Wesley: Folk Theologian," *Theology Today* 34 (1977): 150–60; Outler, "John Wesley's Interests in the Early Fathers of the Church," *Bulletin of the United Church of Canada Committee on Archives and History* 29 (1980–82): 5–17, esp. 6–7; and Outler, "Introduction," *Works* 1:67.

57. Contrast Outler, *John Wesley*, 119; with Outler, "A New Future," 48.

58. E.g., M. Douglas Meeks, "The Future of the Methodist Theological Traditions," in *Future of Methodist Theological Traditions*, 13–33; Meeks, "John Wesley's Heritage and the Future of Systematic Theology," in *Wesleyan Theology Today*, 8–46; Maddox, "John Wesley – Practical Theologian?"; and Gregory Clapper, *John Wesley on Religious Affections: His Views on Experience and Emotion and Their Role in the Christian Life and Theology* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1989), 169–71.