DO 690 John Wesley's Theology Today

Kenneth J. Collins

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I. Welcome

Welcome to DO 690, John Wesley’s Theology Today. The life and thought of John Wesley is fascinating, marked by highs as well as by lows. It is filled with all the drama of peoples, places and movements, large conversations as well as smaller ones. Besides being the founder of Methodism, John Wesley was the most important single figure in eighteenth-century Anglicanism. Our explorations throughout this course will indicate just why this was so.

Beyond my work in the field of Wesley studies, my theological interests include American evangelicalism, and the history of Christian spirituality.

We are on a journey together and I hope by means of our discoveries that we will have a greater appreciation of the life and thought of John Wesley, of his significance with respect to eighteenth-century Anglicanism and Methodism, and of his relevance for contemporary Christian practice and witness.

II. Office Hours

I will go online on a regular basis to respond to your questions. If I make any changes in this format, I will be sure to inform you.

If you ever need to contact me, I will be available on Friday afternoons from 1:00 until 4:00 p.m. in my office.

My email address is ken_collins@asburyseminary.edu

My office telephone number is 859-858-2368.

III. Support

There are some other people who can help you during this course. They are available to assist you if you have any questions:
ExL Support Contact Information

For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media
contact Information Commons: info_commons@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program,
contact Dale Hale: Exl_Office@asburyseminary.edu
Phone: (859) 858-2393

Accessing Information Commons Materials

1. General Questions:
   
   1. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, 
circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are 
posted here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours

2. Materials Requests:

   1. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: 
http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/

   2. ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of 
journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary's 
Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. 
Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to 
make requests.

   3. ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. 
Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the 
Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:

   1. ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for 
research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a 
paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online 
databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:

   1. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-
text journal databases, go to http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/ 
and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student 
ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student
registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0’s to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

IV. Course Description:

The course will explore the theology of John Wesley in terms of his doctrine of salvation. Principal attention will be given to the following elements:

1) the nature of justification, 2) the significance of Wesley’s Aldersgate experience, 3) the new birth, 4) assurance 5) the faith of a servant, and 6) Christian perfection.

In terms of methodology, the course will proceed in a Socratic and dialogical manner as it entertains an array of possible meanings of selected texts. This process, intense in many ways, should enhance the ability of students not only to understand the thought of Wesley in greater depth in its eighteenth-century context, but also to think historically and critically. Moreover, the course will be attentive to current scholarly interpretations of Wesley’s soteriology and will assess such judgments in light of the primary evidence. All the tasks of the course, then, will concern exploring Wesley’s practical divinity in terms of its relevance for twenty-first century theology and ministry. Student initiative and creativity will be evidenced in the responses to the Questions of the Week.

V. General Goals:

Upon completion of the course successful students will be able to do all of the following:

1) Identify the major elements in Wesley’s soteriology, especially in terms of the order evidenced in the key sermon, “The Scripture Way of Salvation.”
2) Evidence an awareness of historiographical concerns in the interpretation of Wesley’s soteriology, especially in terms of narrow, limited or unfair (biased) perspectives
3) Explore the interplay between religion and culture especially in terms of the intellectual developments (philosophical and theological) of the eighteenth century as reflected in Wesley’s writings.
4) Display an extensive knowledge of the theological distinctions and nuances employed by Wesley in crafting an articulate and well-developed theology, especially in the areas of justification, the new birth, and entire sanctification.
5) Demonstrate an understanding of the continuing significance of Wesleyan theology today especially for the broader ecumenical community.
6) Conceive one's calling as a minister of the gospel in light of the Methodist theology and practice.
7) Articulate the relevance of Wesleyan theology for effective pastoral ministry today

VI. Texts:
Required:

Burwash, Rev N. *Wesley's Fifty Two Standard Sermons*. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 1967.  **Note: All Sermons Must Be Read.**


All of these textbooks may be purchased at the Cokesbury bookstore at Asbury Theological Seminary. The internet link is as follows:

[http://www.asburyseminary.edu/bookstore.html](http://www.asburyseminary.edu/bookstore.html)

**VII. Outline of Wesley’s Life:**

- 6/17/03  Born at Epworth
- 2/09/09  Saved from Fire
- 5/12/11  Nominated for Charterhouse
- 1/28/14  Gown-boy at Charterhouse
- 6/24/20  Enters Christ Church
- 9/19/25  Ordained Deacon
- 3/17/26  Fellow of Lincoln College
- 1729     Name Methodist given
- 1735     Whitefield joins Holy Club
- 4/25/35  Samuel Sr.’s Death

- 10/21/35  Sails for Georgia
- 02/05/36  Reaches America
- 08/11/36  Charles leaves Georgia
- 12/02/37  John leaves Savannah
- 02/01/38  John lands at Deal
- 05/21/38  Charles’ Evangelical Conversion
- 05/24/38  John’s Evangelical Conversion
- 06/13/38  Visits the Moravian Church
- 05/02/39  Field-Preaching in Bristol

- 11/11/39  Preaches in the Foundery
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07/20/40</td>
<td>Withdraws from Fetter Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/28/42</td>
<td>First visit to Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/06/42</td>
<td>Preaches on his father’s tomb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07/30/42</td>
<td>Death of Susanna Wesley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/29/43</td>
<td>Opens West Street Chapel, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/26/42</td>
<td>Sets out for Cornwall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/20/42</td>
<td>Riot at Wednesbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/25/44</td>
<td>First Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/24/44</td>
<td>Last University sermon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/09/47</td>
<td>First visit to Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/08/49</td>
<td>Marriage of Charles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/03/49</td>
<td>Grace Murray marries John Bennet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02/18/51</td>
<td>Wesley marries Mrs. Vazeille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April/51</td>
<td>First visit to Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/01/51</td>
<td>Resigns Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/26/53</td>
<td>Writes his Epitaph at Lewisham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan/55</td>
<td>Notes Upon the NT published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/06/55</td>
<td>Issue of Separation Discussed</td>
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<tr>
<td>1757</td>
<td>Charles’ itinerancy limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/13/57</td>
<td>Ordination of John Fletcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/16/59</td>
<td>Public Fast; fear of French invasion</td>
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<tr>
<td>02/21/60</td>
<td>French Landing at Carrickfergus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/25/60</td>
<td>Death of George II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/26/62</td>
<td>Answer to Bishop Warburton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/07/63</td>
<td>Wesley meets George Bell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar/63</td>
<td>Earthquake panic in London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/28/63</td>
<td>Thomas Maxfield leaves Wesley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/18/64</td>
<td>Letter to Evangelical Clergy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May/64</td>
<td>Hervey Letters published</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jan/65</td>
<td>Conference on Ordinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/31/66</td>
<td>Closer union with Whitefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1766</td>
<td>Plain Account Published</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03/30/67</td>
<td>Wesley visits Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/18/67</td>
<td>Francis Asbury received on trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan/68</td>
<td>Appointed chaplain to the Countess Dowager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08/24/68</td>
<td>Trevecca College opened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug/1770</td>
<td>Doctrinal Minutes of the Bristol Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/30/70</td>
<td>Death of George Whitefield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18/70</td>
<td>Wesley preaches at Whitefield’s funeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/17/71</td>
<td>Benson dismissed from Trevecca</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
01/23/71 Mrs. Wesley leaves him
09/04/71 Francis Asbury sails for America

09/04/71 Fletcher’s 1 and 2 Checks published
08/14/72 Meets Howell Harris at Trevecca
08/14/72 Fletcher’s 3 and 4 Checks published
08/14/72 Wesley issues Vols. 11-16 of his Works
03/14/73 Replies to Richard Hill’s *Farrago Double-Distilled*
Dec/73 Vols. 17-25 of Wesley’s Works published
06/04/74 Arrest in Edinburgh
1775 *Calm Address* published

04/27/75 Death of Peter Bohler
Aug/75 Asbury decides to stay in America
01/03/76 Death of Westley Hall
08/18/76 Wesley first meets Dr. Coke
04/21/77 Foundation-stone of City Road Chapel laid
01/01/78 First number of Arminian Magazine
05/30/78 Death of Voltaire
11/01/78 Opening of City Road Chapel
1779 Publishes *Popery Calmly Considered*

08/10/80 Letter to Bishop Lowth on ordination for America
01/25/81 At his Nephew’s concert
10/08/81 Death of Mrs. Wesley
Aug/82 Adam Clarke at Kingswood School
June/83 Visit to Holland
02/28/84 Deed of Declaration
Sep/84 Ordinations for America
Dec/84 Francis Asbury Ordained
08/14/85 Death of John Fletcher

01/24/86 Hears George III in House of Lords
07/25/86 Conference begins at Bristol
08/08/86 Visits Holland
09/24/86 Dr. Coke sails with three missionaries
Jan/87 Begs £ 200 for London poor
08/04/87 Conference in Manchester
1788 Second Series of Sermons Published
03/29/88 Death of Charles Wesley

04/05/88 Burial of Charles Wesley in Marylebone
08/06/88 Conference at Bristol
07/28/89 Conference at Leeds
1790 Revised Translation of the NT published
07/27/90 Wesley’s last Conference in Bristol
07/30/90 Letter to Wilberforce
10/06/90 Last open-air sermon at Winchelsea
10/24/90 Last entry in Wesley’s Journal
02/22/91 Last sermon, at Leatherhead

02/24/91 Last letter, to Wilberforce
03/02/91 Dies at City Road at 10:00 a.m.
03/09/91 Buried at City Road

**VIII The Modules**

Instructions:

Please consider the information offered in these modules in light of this syllabus in which the bibliographical details (author, full title, etc.) are articulated.

Though you should keep up with the flow of the course as presented in the following modules, if you do fall behind, just make sure that you complete the appropriate tasks before you take each exam.

**Module One**  (First Module to be Completed by September 8, 2008)

Topic: Salvation by Faith

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: I-V
I. Salvation by Faith
II. The Almost Christian
III. Awake, thou that sleepest
IV. Scriptural Christianity
V. Justification By Faith

John Wesley: A Theological Journey: Chapters 1-2

**Module Two**  (Second Module to be Completed by September 15, 2008)

Topic: Justification by Faith

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: VI-X
VI. The Righteousness of Faith
VII. The Way to the Kingdom
VIII. The First Fruits of the Spirit
IX. The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption
X. The Witness of the Spirit
John Wesley: A Theological Journey: Chapters 3-4

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition: Introduction

**Module Three**  (Third Module to be Completed by September 22, 2008)

Topic: The Importance of Humility

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XI-XV

XI. The Witness of the Spirit
XII. The Witness of our Own Spirit
XIII. On Sin in Believers
XIV. The Repentance of Believers
XV. The Great Assyive

John Wesley: A Theological Journey: Chapters 5-6

**Module Four**  (Fourth Module to be Completed by September 29, 2008)

Topic: The Witness of the Spirit

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XVI-XX

XVI. The Means of Grace
XVII. The Circumcision of the Heart
XVIII. The Marks of the New Birth
XIX. The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God
XX. The Lord our Righteousness

John Wesley: A Theological Journey: Chapters 7-8

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition: Chapter 2

**Module Five**  (Fifth Module to be Completed by October 6, 2008)

Topic: Wesley’s Doctrine of Sin

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XXI-XXV

XXI. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXIII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXIV. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXV. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
Module Six  (Sixth Module to be Completed by October 13, 2008)

Topic:  The Way to Perfect Love

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading:    XXVI-XXX
XXVI. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXVII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXVIII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXIX. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXX. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount

John Wesley: A Theological Journey:  Conclusion

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition:  Chapter 3

First Exam:  
Due Friday Morning, 9:00 a.m.  
October 17, 2008

Module Seven  (Seventh Module to be Completed by October 20, 2008)

Topic:  The Standards of Redemption

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading:    XXXI-XXXV
XXXI. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXXII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXXIII. Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount
XXXIV. The Original Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law
XXXV. The Law Established through Faith

The Theology of John Wesley:  Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

Module Eight  (Eighth Module to be Completed by October 27, 2008)

Topic:  The Importance of the Moral Law

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading:    XXXVI-XL
XXXVI. The Law Established through Faith
XXXVII. The Nature of Enthusiasm
XXXVIII. A Caution Against Bigotry
XXXIX. Catholic Spirit
XL. On Christian Perfection
The Theology of John Wesley: Chapter 3

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition: Chapter 4

**Module Nine** (Ninth Module to be Completed by November 3, 2008)

Topic: The Catholic Spirit

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XLI-XLV
- XLI. Wandering Thoughts
- XLII. Satan’s Devices
- XLIII. The Scripture Way of Salvation
- XLIV. Original Sin
- XLV. The New Birth

The Theology of John Wesley: Chapter 4

**Module Ten** (Tenth Module to be Completed by November 10, 2008)

Topic: The Flow of Redemption

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XLVI-XLVIII
- XLVI. The Wilderness State
- XLVII. Heaviness Through Manifold Temptations
- XLVIII. Self-Denial

The Theology of John Wesley: Chapter 5

Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition: Chapter 7

**Module Eleven** (Eleventh Module to be Completed by November 17, 2008)

Topic: Challenges on the Way to Perfection

Fifty-Two Sermons Reading: XLIX-L
- XLIX. The Cure of Evil Speaking
- L. The Use of Money

The Theology of John Wesley: Chapters 6 and 7

**Module Twelve** (Twelfth Module to be Completed by November 24, 2008)
IX. Course Procedures:

This course can be taken for either 2 or 3 credit hours. Those who take the course for 3 hours must complete the outline assignment that will form 20% of the grade, tests 40%, and class participation and reading 40%. For those who take the course for 2 hours, the exams will count for 60% of the grade and class participation and reading 40%.

A. Online Guidelines

Please be sure to share a brief profile (maybe even a picture) of yourself in the Participants Section (Under People to the left of your home screen).

While I am sure that each of you are aware of the intended use of each of the items which appear on our homepage, let me summarize the manner in which I intend to use them this semester:

The Course Related section will contain a copy of the Syllabus.

The Question of the Week forum, listed in each separate week, will be used for all public communications. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the modules, the assignments, or anything else which would be of interest to your classmates and me you should post to the Question of the Week forum.

To the Professor (under the Course Related section) is for private correspondence between you and me. This will contain items that you do not want to appear online before all of your classmates or items that you think may embarrass you or the
professor if they were to appear publicly.

The Files section  (under Administration, on the left hand side of your screen) contains a number of folders with Course Materials.

Resources (under Activities, on the left hand side of your screen) provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL students. These include access to the Student Info Commons, Chapel Services in Orlando and Wilmore, an Academic Calendar, a Wesley bibliography and a Powerpoint Viewer among other things. I encourage you to take advantage of all these resources, and particularly to utilize the chapel access in order to connect with the seminary’s on-campus opportunities for spiritual growth.

B. Testing

Two examinations will be given during the semester: a mid-term and a final. This component will constitute the percentage of the grade with respect to the number of hours taken as listed above. **These are not open-book exams.**

C. Sermon Outlines:

Three Credit hour students must outline the sixteen sermons of Wesley listed below. (Pace yourself by doing about two a week, skipping the week of exams, and you should have no problem.) Each outline must reveal the major themes and emphases of each sermon in a way that is clear, coherent, and comprehensive. **Do not simply follow Burwash’s outlines (if you consult this resource) in terms of the sermons for they do not pick up enough detail.** Besides, the outlining should be original. On the other hand, students should not include excessive detail in the outlines. This task, then, calls for judgment on the part of students as to what is soteriologically important and what is not. Exercise such judgment. In addition, these outlines, which must be typed, should be placed in a notebook (or bound in some other fashion) and are due at the seminary post office on Monday of the last week of class. It is your responsibility to see to it that your sermons arrive on time. **Though you are only outlining sixteen sermons, all fifty-two sermons must be read.** Late submissions will result in grade reduction. The outlines will make up 20% of the grade. They should be mailed to me, bound in some fashion, at the seminary: 204 N. Lexington Ave., Wilmore, Kentucky 40390. **The outlines are due Monday, December 1, 2008 at my seminary address.** Do not send this material electronically; it will not be accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sermon</th>
<th>Salvation by Faith</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sermon</td>
<td>The Almost Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sermon</td>
<td>Scriptural Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sermon</td>
<td>Justification By Faith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
D. Reading Report

An email reading report which indicates that you have completed all of the required reading is due on the date of the final exam. You can simply include this information with your final exam. That is, it should be listed at the top of your exam. If you have omitted any reading, then indicate specifically what you left out. Failure to read all of the assignments will result in grade reduction. For example, if you leave out one hundred pages from the Burwash text, then instead of receiving an “A-“you will likely receive a “B+.” If you leave out more material, then the grade will fall even lower. Also, indicate the number of times you have posted in the course.

E. What Constitutes Reading

There have been several instances when students indicated (in a later confession) that they had simply "skimmed" the reading assignments and counted the pages in their reading report. This is unacceptable and represents deficient work. To prevent this occurrence again students may fulfill their reading assignment in one of two ways: First, they can outline all the reading material for the course and place it in a bound notebook. Or second, they can freshly underline or highlight their textbooks (using a yellow marker or such) giving evidence that they have grappled with the material. Either method is acceptable. You do not have to hand in this material. The professor will take the word of the students that they have abided by this policy.

F. Short Paper on Justice and Mercy

You are required to write a brief, two to three page paper (12 pt, double-spaced) on Wesley's handling of issues of justice and mercy in his theology and ministry. My article, "The Soteriological Orientation of John Wesley's Ministry to the Poor," is posted in the Files section (left hand side of the screen) under Microsoft Word documents. This paper will not be a part of your grade. Send a bound hard copy of your paper to my seminary address: (Asbury Theological Seminary, 204 N.
Lexington Ave., Wilmore, KY 40390). **This paper is due Monday, December 1, 2008 at my seminary address.** Do not send this material electronically; it will not be accepted.

G. Class participation

Class participation and completion of the assigned tasks (CD's and readings) will count as 40% of your grade. I am looking for theological reflection, the ability to think globally, the capacity both to see the larger picture of Wesley’s theology and to make appropriate connections. Be creative, feel free in your thinking, and do have fun. A suitable response might be composed of a paragraph or two of about 50 to 75 words. **Try not to be too wordy.** I look for **quality of thought and reflection not quantity of words.**

**XI. Bibliography**

**Primary Sources: Books**

**Unpublished at This Point**


**Published**


Students may also access the far more extensive Wesley bibliography on Asbury’s homepage (look under “Resources”) or download it from [http://wesley.nnc.edu/](http://wesley.nnc.edu/).
Williams is still king in Wesley's theology. He also presents a case for Wesley being reconsidered as a contributor to the council of churches and the Christian Churches getting their theology closer together. A wonderful read for any scholar, minister or layperson. J. Robert Ewbank, author of "John Wesley, Natural Man, and the 'Isms'".

Wesleyan theology today is noted for its Arminian stance. After his conversion, John Wesley began enthusiastically preaching the gospel wherever he could. He began holding Methodist meetings outdoors, and revival broke out. Methodism became recognized as an evangelical movement within the Church of England, and John was a loyal member of the Anglican Church all his life, even as his followers began forming themselves into a new denomination. John Wesley’s ministry changed the religious landscape of England and the American Colonies, and his influence is still being felt today. His The Journal of John Wesley is a classic of Christian literature. The Methodist and Wesleyan churches around the world owe their existence to John Wesley’s leadership and vision. This item: John Wesley’s Theology Today. by Colin Williams Paperback. $21.49. Williams is still king in Wesley’s theology. He also presents a case for Wesley being reconsidered as a contributor to the council of churches and the Christian Churches getting their theology closer together. A wonderful read for any scholar, minister or layperson. J. Robert Ewbank, author of “John Wesley, Natural Man, and the 'Isms'”. But is the theology of John Wesley really a useful resource for, and is it compatible with, liberation theology? Moreover, are there any elements in this eighteenth-century theology that could possibly issue in a critique of contemporary liberation theology and praxis? Since these two major theologies under consideration are highly developed and extensive, the method of this present essay will be to focus on a representative area of liberation theology, namely its definition of liberation itself, in order to determine whether or not Wesley’s theological conceptions and practice are, in fact, s... Wesleyan theology, otherwise known as Wesleyan–Arminian theology, or Methodist theology, is a theological tradition in Protestant Christianity that emphasizes the "methods" of the 18th-century evangelical reformer brothers John Wesley and Charles Wesley. More broadly it refers to the theological system inferred from the various sermons, theological treatises, letters, journals, diaries, hymns, and other spiritual writings of the Wesleys and their contemporary coadjutors such as John William Fletcher.