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**THE MANCHESTER WESLEY RESEARCH CENTRE
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PREACHING CHRIST

John Wesley's Definition of the Gospel, 1746–51

KARL GANSKE



ABSTRACT

John Wesley defined ‘the gospel’, discussed its meaning and consequences, and gave instructions for preaching the gospel during the period 1746–51. These thoughts were articulated alongside a synchronization of concepts, including the reign of God in the heart, the Kingdom of God, the new covenant, and gospel’s relationship to law. Wesley’s definition of the gospel was presented within an evangelical conversation that was, at the same time, both an effort to maintain unity as co-labourers in a shared movement and a controversial discussion. Wesley portrayed his definition of the gospel as a contrasting understanding to others within that evangelical identity.

Keywords: John Wesley, preaching, gospel, gospel and law, evangelical

In literature that falls under the label ‘evangelical’, the word ‘gospel’ is often used but seldom defined. The most pronounced interest in the definition of the gospel in recent years has been in biblical studies. Tom Wright and Scot McKnight, for example, have written extensively and directly on the definition and meaning of the gospel.¹ Both of these writers have proposed that the meaning of the term has changed from the use that can be observed in the Bible. They agree that “the gospel” is the story of Jesus of Nazareth told as the climax of the long

1. Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011); N. T. Wright, *Simply Good News: Why the Gospel Is News and What Makes It Good* (New York: Harper One, 2015); N. T. Wright, *How God Became King: The Forgotten Story of the Gospels* (New York: Harper One, 2012).

THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

*An Examination of the Patristic Roots of John Wesley's Theology
and the Relevance of His Theology and Practice for Today*

PHILIP FELLOWS



ABSTRACT

This article examines John Wesley's engagement with patristic sources before bringing Wesley into dialogue with representative contemporary theologians. It argues that Wesley's fusion of traditions and focus upon holiness provides a helpful counterpoint to contemporary emphases. The first section considers Wesley's explicit use of the Church Fathers, considering particularly Ted Campbell's work and the methodological problems involved in such an enquiry. It is then argued that there is evidence of patristic influence upon Wesley's doctrines of prevenient grace and Christian perfection as part of a wider synthesis of eras and Christian traditions. Finally, the contemporary relevance of Wesley's approach is considered.

Keywords: Wesleyan theology, patristic engagement, ecumenism, Thomas Oden, Robert Webber

In contemporary studies the suggestion that Wesley be read in the context of the early Church Fathers (and particularly the Fathers of what came to be known as the Eastern church)¹ can be traced to the work of Albert Outler.² Outler's arguments gave rise to a renewed interest in the patristic sources of

1. 'Eastern' here refers to the Fathers of the eastern wing of the Church and not to the specific theological tradition of Eastern Orthodoxy: Kenneth J. Collins, *John Wesley: A Theological Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 196.

2. Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 3–33, at 9–10. For an older argument, see Alexander Knox, *Remains of Alexander Knox, ESQ.*, 4

‘SHEW US THY SALVATION’

Charles Wesley and the Liturgical Year

KAREN B. WESTERFIELD TUCKER



ABSTRACT

Charles Wesley's objection to his brother John's reduction of 'holy days' in the latter's abridgement of the *Book of Common Prayer* entitled *The Sunday Service of the Methodists* (1784) suggests that Charles valued the Church of England's temporal and sanctoral cycles. To understand this appreciation for the Church's liturgical calendar, Charles's literary output from 1736 to 1756 is examined, a period that corresponds to the time frame of Charles's manuscript journal. The journal itself serves as a source of investigation as do the hymns related to the Christian year that Charles published between 1739 and 1746. Analysis is made of representative hymns to determine Charles's use of, by allusion and/or direct reference, the scripture readings and collects specified by the Prayer Book for Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, and Whitsunday. The study reveals Charles's admiration for festival days as occasions to demonstrate God's ongoing desire for human salvation.

Keywords: Charles Wesley, Church of England, hymns, lectionary, liturgical year

In a letter penned in Bristol and dated 9 September 1784, John Wesley defended the 'little alteration' made in his newly printed abridgement of the Church of England's *Book of Common Prayer* (1662), which he entitled *The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America. With other Occasional Services*.¹ However,

1. On John Wesley's *Sunday Service* in the context of other eighteenth-century Prayer Book revisions, see my article: Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, 'John Wesley's Prayer Book Revision: The Text in Context', *Methodist History*, 34/4 (1996), 230–47.

METHODISM IN THE ROYAL NAVY, 1740–1815

ANDREW NELSON PICKERING



ABSTRACT

The relationship between Methodism and the armed forces dates from the very early days of the movement. The Methodist soldier preachers of the eighteenth century have been the subject of considerable historical study; the navy has received much less attention. Owen Spencer Watkins recognized that evidence of Methodism in the Royal Navy ‘was at most very occasional. The result is that a most interesting chapter in the history of our Church is lost to us.’¹ There is a paucity of material, certainly in comparison with the army; however, it is possible to give sufficient evidence of a thriving Methodist subculture in the Royal Navy during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Keywords: Methodism, Royal Navy, sailors, Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

The presence of Methodism among British soldiers during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries has received much attention, whereas Methodist influence in the Royal Navy has hitherto been largely neglected. John Haime and other Methodist soldiers are frequently referred to in Methodist historiography. John Wesley wrote a number of letters to Haime and spoke with pride of the bravery and steadfast faith that Methodist soldiers had shown at the Battle of Fontenoy in 1745.² Michael Snape has described the extensive, ‘forgotten’ Methodist subculture that developed in the British Army, and which was

1. Owen Spencer Watkins, *Soldiers and Preachers Too: Being the Romantic Story of Methodism in the British Army* (London: C. H. Kelly, 1906), 50.

2. Wesley to the Major of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 26 October 1745: *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, ed. John Telford, 8 vols (London: Epworth Press, 1931), II:53.

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The MWRC supports the research of scholars studying the Methodist, Wesleyan, and Evangelical traditions, particularly from MWRC partner institutions. Each year visiting research fellows are welcomed for short periods of intensive research in Manchester. The MWRC helps facilitate access to the world-renowned Methodist Archives and Research Centre at The John Rylands Library in Manchester. It also has its own specialist library with research space for visiting research fellows and PhD students studying at MWRC partner institutions. The Centre hosts student-led research colloquiums, an annual lecture by a leading scholar in Methodist/Wesleyan Studies, and occasional international conferences. For more information about the Centre and upcoming events, go to: www.mwrc.ac.uk or contact the Centre's Director, Dr Geordan Hammond: ghammond@nazarene.ac.uk.

The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History

The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History is a research centre of Oxford Brookes University, which embodies the relationship between the university and the trustees of the former Westminster College, Oxford. The Centre is home to important resources, including the Wesley Historical Society Library and a number of archive and art collections, including the Methodist Collection of Modern Art. The Routledge Methodist Studies series of monograph research publications is also edited from the Centre. The Centre offers a small number of visiting research fellowships each year to enable scholars to come to Oxford to use its resources. The Centre also has a number of research students working in the broad field of religious history and culture. It also sponsors lectures, conferences, and other research activity. For more information, go to: <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/hpc/research/oxford-centre-for-methodism-and-church-history/> or contact the Centre's Director, Professor William Gibson: wgibson@brookes.ac.uk.

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The Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History, Oxford Brookes University, and the Manchester Wesley Research Centre have worked in partnership for a number of years. In 2012, the centres established a biannual seminar series that has now extended to include the Wesley Study Centre, St John's College, Durham University; Wesley House, Cambridge; Cliff College; and The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham. The seminars provide an opportunity for established and emerging scholars of Methodist Studies to present the findings of their research. We conceive of Methodist Studies broadly and aim to provide opportunities for students of history, theology, literature, art, material culture, and other fields related to Methodism. For further information, visit: www.mwrc.ac.uk/methodist-studies-seminars/.