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# WESLEY AND METHODIST STUDIES

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# HANOVERIAN OXFORD AND THE FASHIONING OF JOHN WESLEY, c.1720–1745

NIGEL ASTON



## ABSTRACT

This article is an attempt at recovering the Oxford contexts of John Wesley's young manhood, charting his milieu more exactly in the light of the most recent scholarship, and, in so doing, moving away from the outworn depiction of the virtuous and misunderstood young Wesley in a university setting largely deficient in its Christian practices. It argues that Oxford's unsuccessful relationship and persistent ambivalence toward the mature John Wesley was due at least as much to him as it was to the university.

Keywords: University of Oxford, Christ Church, Lincoln College, John Wesley, Holy Club

A good deal is known about what John Wesley (1703–91), at different periods of his life, thought about the University of Oxford; much less is known about his place within the wider culture of the university in the 1720s and 1730s, and the individuals who helped in his intellectual and spiritual formation, even if that was only in his reaction against them. This article attempts to sharpen our sense of these crucial early contexts, recovering and charting his milieu more exactly and, in so doing, moving away from the outworn reflex and self-justifying trope of the virtuous and misunderstood Wesley *contra mundum*, a *mundus* in which Oxford always looms large. After setting out the essential Oxonian contexts of the early 1720s, it considers five connected categories in his academic fashioning: the nature of the education that he received at the university; theological and ecclesiological influences; political determinants; his social formation

# ANOTHER LOOK AT THE METHODIST/ WESLEYAN LOVE FEAST:

*Introduction, Reception, Adaptation, and Emerging Possibilities*

KAREN B. WESTERFIELD TUCKER



## ABSTRACT

The article considers the viability of the Methodist/Wesleyan love feast today based on historical, liturgical, and practical investigations of its use in selected ecclesial contexts from the eighteenth century to the present. Six categories derived from Wesley's description of the practice in his 'Plain Account' focus the study, enabling an examination of the love feast as an experiential event marked by prayer, a common 'meal', and the sharing of God's love, and done in imitation of apostolic practice as a prudential means of grace. Keywords: love feast, Methodist and Wesleyan practices, Methodist, John Wesley, Wesleyan

During Lent 2020, I received an email from a former student, now a United Methodist Church pastor. She was planning the congregation's upcoming Maundy Thursday service, which, because of COVID-19 restrictions, would occur online. The congregation had a tradition of Holy Communion for Maundy Thursday, but she did not consider this an option under the circumstances—for theological, liturgical, and pastoral reasons. Would a love feast, she asked, be a suitable substitute? She knew that, historically, testimonies were an important part of the love feast. Could she forego that component as well as singing in favour of only prayer, the attendees eating in their respective places, and a simple sharing of joys, sorrows, and frustrations—and still call the practice a 'love feast'? Could she claim this adjusted practice to be part of the 'Wesleyan tradition'?

# THE OLD WESLEYS AND ‘THE NEW LUTHER’:

*Rethinking the Relationship Between their Soteriologies*

JOHN R. TYSON



## ABSTRACT

This article explores John and Charles Wesley’s ambiguous relationship with the soteriology of Martin Luther. Their early admiration for Luther’s theology of justification by faith played a significant role in the conversion experience of both men, but subsequently, John wrote that Luther was ‘ignorant of the doctrine of sanctification’ and ‘confused in his conception of it’. The ‘new’ Finnish reading of Luther’s soteriology, pioneered by Tuomo Mannermaa, opens new avenues for soteriological conversation and consensus between Lutherans and Methodists. A few of the old misunderstandings are untangled and more congenial theological trajectories are suggested by this article.

Keywords: John Wesley, Martin Luther, justification, righteousness, faith

Wesleyan scholars have long been interested in the intersection between the theology of Martin Luther and that of the Wesley brothers. Mark Olson’s recent article, ‘Martin Luther’s Contribution to John Wesley’s Doctrine of Justification’, which appeared in *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, evidences this continued interest.<sup>1</sup> The historical and theological connections between the co-founders of Methodism and the Saxon reformer began with the dramatic events of May 1738, when both Wesley brothers identified the work of Martin Luther as a

This article is a distillation of a paper presented to the Wesleyan Studies section of the Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, 2018.

1. Mark K. Olson, ‘Martin Luther’s Contribution to John Wesley’s Doctrine of Justification’, *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 13/2 (2021), 130–53.



# FAITH SEEKING EFFICACY: JOSÉ MÍGUEZ BONINO AS A WESLEYAN THEOLOGIAN

RYAN R. GLADWIN



## ABSTRACT

This article argues that the late Argentine liberation theologian José Míguez Bonino was a Wesleyan theologian, although he is usually noted for having other theological influences. First, the article documents how Míguez emerged as a constructive theologian with numerous theological influences and concerns for ecumenism and liberation. Second, the article confronts the difficulties of using Wesleyanism as a hermeneutical lens for interpreting Míguez's theology. Third, the article proposes that Míguez is an implicit Wesleyan theologian and that this is most clearly seen in his overarching desire to form a theology committed to social efficacy.

Keywords: José Míguez Bonino, liberation theology, Latin American theology, Argentina, social efficacy

The late José Míguez Bonino (1924–2012) wrote the following in the preface to his 1995 book, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*:

I have been variously tagged as a conservative, a revolutionary, a Barthian, a liberal, a catholic, a 'moderate', and a liberationist. Probably there is truth in all of these. It is not for me to decide. However, when I do attempt to define myself in my innermost being, what 'comes from within' is that I am *evangélico* . . . At least an *evangélico* is what I have always wanted to be.<sup>1</sup>

1. José Míguez Bonino, *Faces of Latin American Protestantism*, tr. Eugene L. Stockwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), vii.

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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. 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](mailto:wgibson@brookes.ac.uk).

*Methodist Studies Seminars*

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