

The Sermons of John Wesley

A Collection
for the Christian Journey

Edited by Kenneth J. Collins
and Jason E. Vickers

Abingdon Press
Nashville

THE SERMONS OF JOHN WESLEY
A COLLECTION FOR THE CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

Copyright © 2013 by Abingdon Press

All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted by the 1976 Copyright Act or in writing from the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed to Permissions, The United Methodist Publishing House, P.O. Box 801, 201 Eighth Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37202-0801 or permissions@umpublishing.org.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

The sermons of John Wesley : a collection for the Christian journey / edited by Kenneth J. Collins and Jason Vickers.

pages cm

ISBN 978-1-4267-7495-9 (pbk. : alk. paper) 1. Wesley, John, 1703-1791—Sermons. 2. Practical theology—Sermons. 3. Methodist Church—Doctrines—Sermons. 4. Wesleyan Church—Doctrines—Sermons. I. Collins, Kenneth J., editor of compilation.

BX8217.W54S47 2013

252'.07—dc23

2013012910

Scripture quotations are from the King James or Authorized Version of the Bible.

The Board of Directors of the Wesley Works Editorial Project has granted its approval for the editors of this collection to use the critically established texts of John Wesley's sermons as published in the Bicentennial Edition. The organization of the sermons and the introductions to them are the work of the editors of this collection; any views or interpretations expressed by the editors are their own.

13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22—10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

To the memory of Albert C. Outler

Contents

Abbreviations	ix
General Introduction.	xi
1. The Image of God—Gen. 1:27 [The Goodness of Creation]	1
2. Original Sin—Gen. 6:5 [The Fall]	10
3. Free Grace—Rom. 8:32 [Free Grace]	20
4. ‘Awake, Thou That Sleepest’—Eph. 5:14 [Awakening].	31
5. The Spirit of Bondage and of Adoption—Rom. 8:15 [Awakening]	42
6. The Way to the Kingdom—Mark 1:15 [Prevenient Grace and Repentance]	53
7. On Working Out Our Own Salvation—Phil. 2:12-13 [Prevenient Grace and Repentance]	62
8. The Means of Grace—Mal. 3:7 [Prevenient Grace and Repentance]	70
9. The Duty of Constant Communion—Luke 22:19 [Repentance and Converting Grace]	84
10. The Almost Christian—Acts 26:28 [Repentance]	94
11. The Original, Nature, Properties, and Use of the Law—Rom. 7:12 [Repentance]	102
12. The Righteousness of Faith—Rom. 10:5-8 [Justification]	115
13. Salvation by Faith—Eph. 2:8 [Justification]	125
14. Justification by Faith—Rom. 4:5 [Justification]	134
15. The Lord Our Righteousness—Jer. 23:6 [Justification and Imputation].	144
16. The New Birth—John 3:7 [Regeneration]	155
17. The Marks of the New Birth—John 3:8 [Regeneration].	165
18. The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God—1 John 3:9 [Regeneration]	175
19. The First-fruits of the Spirit—Rom 8:1 [Assurance].	184

The Sermons of John Wesley

20. The Witness of the Spirit, I—Rom. 8:16 [Assurance]	194
21. The Witness of the Spirit, II—Rom. 8:16 [Assurance]	204
22. The Nature of Enthusiasm—Acts 26:24 [Assurance]	214
23. The Witness of Our Own Spirit—2 Cor. 1:12 [Assurance]	224
24. Scriptural Christianity—Acts 4:31 [The Christian Life].	233
25. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Sixth— Matt. 6:1-15 [The Christian Life]	246
26. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Seventh— Matt. 6:16-18 [The Christian Life]	261
27. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Eighth— Matt. 6:19-23 [The Christian Life]	275
28. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Ninth— Matt. 6:24-34 [The Christian Life]	289
29. The Use of Money—Luke 16:9 [The Christian Life].	302
30. The Danger of Riches—1 Tim. 6:9 [The Christian Life]	312
31. The Good Steward—Luke 16:2 [The Christian Life].	324
32. Self-denial—Luke 9:23 [The Christian Life]	336
33. On Visiting the Sick—Matt. 25:36 [The Christian Life]	346
34. The Reformation of Manners—Ps. 94:16 [The Christian Life]	356
35. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Tenth— Matt. 7:1-12 [Challenges to the Christian Life]	371
36. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Eleventh—Matt. 7:13-14 [Challenges to the Christian Life]	381
37. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Twelfth—Matt. 7:15-20 [Challenges to the Christian Life]	390
38. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Thirteenth—Matt. 7:21-27 [Challenges to the Christian Life].	399
39. A Caution against Bigotry—Mark 9:38-39 [Challenges to the Christian Life].	408
40. Catholic Spirit—2 Kings 10:15 [Challenges to the Christian Life].	420
41. The Cure of Evil-speaking—Matt. 18:15-17 [Challenges to the Christian Life].	431
42. The Wilderness State—John 16:22 [Challenges to the Christian Life].	440
43. Heaviness through Manifold Temptations—1 Pet. 1:6 [Challenges to the Christian Life].	452

Contents

44. Satan's Devices—2 Cor. 2:11 [Challenges to the Christian Life]	463
45. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the First—Matt. 5:1-4 [The Sum of True Religion]	473
46. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Second—Matt. 5:5-7 [The Sum of True Religion]	486
47. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Third—Matt. 5:8-12 [The Sum of True Religion]	499
48. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Fourth—Matt. 5:13-16 [The Sum of True Religion]	512
49. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Fifth—Matt. 5:17-20 [The Sum of True Religion]	525
50. The Law Established through Faith, Discourse I—Rom. 3:31 [Illumination and Second Repentance].	539
51. The Law Established through Faith, Discourse II—Rom. 3:31 [Illumination and Second Repentance].	549
52. On Sin in Believers—2 Cor. 5:17 [Second Repentance].	558
53. The Repentance of Believers—Mark 1:15 [Second Repentance]	569
54. The Scripture Way of Salvation—Eph. 2:8 [Pressing on to Christian Perfection]	581
55. The Circumcision of the Heart—Rom. 2:29 [Christian Perfection]	591
56. Wandering Thoughts—2 Cor. 10:5 [Christian Perfection].	600
57. Christian Perfection—Phil. 3:12 [Christian Perfection]	609
58. The General Deliverance—Rom. 8:19-22 [The Extent of Redemption] . . .	624
59. The Great Assize—Rom. 14:10 [Judgment and Glorifying Grace].	635
60. The New Creation—Rev. 21:5 [Glorifying Grace]	647
Notes	655

Abbreviations

- B = Burwash, Nathanael. *Wesley's Fifty Two Standard Sermons*. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 1967.
- C = Cragg, Gerald R. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol. 11, *The Appeals to Men of Reason and Religion and Certain Related Open Letters*. Bicentennial ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975.
- D = Davies, Rupert E. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol. 9, *The Methodist Societies, I: History, Nature, and Design*. Bicentennial ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- FB = Baker, Frank. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vols. 25–26, *Letters I & II*. Bicentennial ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1980–82.
- H = Henry, Matthew. *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2008.
- HAR = Harrison, W. P., ed. *The Wesleyan Standards: Sermons by the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* Nashville: Publishing House of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1921.
- HTZ = Heitzenrater, Richard P. "At Full Liberty: Doctrinal Standards in Early American Methodism." In *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism*, edited by Richard P. Heitzenrater, 189–204. Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989.
- J = Jackson, Thomas, ed. *The Works of Rev. John Wesley*. 14 vols. London: Wesleyan Methodist Book Room, 1829–31.
- JAB = Bengel, John Albert. *New Testament Word Studies*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel, 1971.
- NT = Wesley, John. *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*. London: William Bowyer, 1755.
- O = Outler, Albert C. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vols. 1–4, *Sermons*. Bicentennial ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984–87.
- OD = Oden, Thomas C. *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, 1988.
- ODNB = *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- OH = Outler, Albert C., and Richard P. Heitzenrater. *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991.
- OT = Wesley, John. *Notes Upon the Old Testament*. 3 vols. Edited by William M. Arnett. Salem, Ohio: Schmul Publishing Co., 1975.
- R = Rack, Henry. *The Methodist Societies: The Minutes of Conference*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011.

Abbreviations

- S = Sugden, Edward H., ed. *Wesley's Standard Sermons*. 2 vols. London: Epworth Press, 1921.
- SOSO = Wesley, John. *Sermons on Several Occasions*, 1746–60, 1771, 1787–88.
- SS = Wesley, John. *John Wesley's Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America*. Nashville: Quarterly Review, 1984.
- T = Telford, John. *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley*. 8 vols. London: Epworth Press, 1931.
- WH = Ward, W. Reginald, and Richard P. Heitzenrater. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vols. 18–24, *Journals and Diaries I–VII*. Bicentennial ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988–2003.
- WWS = Smith, Wanda Willard. *Register of John Wesley's Preaching*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Divinity School, 2011. http://divinity.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/cswt/Register-04_Register_of_John_Wesley's_Preaching_Texts.pdf.

Note: *If readers notice numerous uses of the O abbreviation in the introductions to the sermons, that is only because, in most instances, it represents the voice of Wesley himself.*

General Introduction

The provision of resources for the theological and spiritual formation of believers has been a matter of deep and abiding concern in the life of the church across space and time. In the ancient and medieval Western church, for example, this concern is on display in resources such as Augustine's *Confessions* and Ignatius's *Spiritual Exercises*. In the ancient Eastern church, this concern is perhaps best reflected in Chrysostom's *Baptismal Instructions*.

Like their Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox forebears, Protestants have developed significant resources for the theological and spiritual formation of believers. For example, Luther published numerous postils or homilies, an instructive series of sermons whose form was taken up by subsequent Lutheran leaders (Philipp Melancthon, Martin Chemnitz, Andreas Osiander, and Johann Arndt) to communicate the genius of the faith. This rich history of employing sermons or homilies for theological and spiritual formation, so evident in the Lutheran tradition and present among Puritans as well (Richard Baxter readily comes to mind), was continued in the Anglican communion. Indeed, from the beginning, Anglicans have privileged the so-called Edwardian homilies of Thomas Cranmer in faith formation. However, they have also made ample use of sermons from other divines, including John Jewel, Richard Hooker, and Edward Stillingfleet.

While John Wesley was familiar with many resources used for formation in the ancient, medieval, and magisterial Protestant churches, he was most familiar with the formational materials and practices of his native Church of England. Thus when Wesley grew increasingly concerned about the theological and spiritual formation of the people called Methodists, he began assembling a collection of sermons for their edification. In these sermons, Wesley addressed a wide range of perennial concerns related to Christian living. For example, he dealt at length with the image of God; the origins, nature, and scope of sin; the need for repentance; the nature of faith; justification, regeneration, and sanctification; the place of works; temptations; Christian perfection; and the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the midst of it all. In addressing these and many other concerns, Wesley provided Methodists with a ready resource for their theological and spiritual formation.

John Wesley's Sermon Collections

John Wesley drafted early sermons from the period 1725 to 1737, many of which he chose not to publish. In other words, these compositions (“On Mourning for the Dead” and “On Guardian Angels,” for example) remained manuscript sermons and were omitted from the first collection of sermons that he produced in 1746.¹ In his preface to the *Sermons on Several Occasions* (SOSO) that year Wesley gives his readers a hint of some of the memorable changes that had taken place in his life during the years 1737–38 and that led to the creation of several vehicles for his practical theology: “The following sermons contain the substance of what I have been preaching for between eight and nine years last past” (O, 1:103). Not surprisingly, the pivotal sermon “Salvation by Faith,” which Albert Outler referred to as Wesley’s “evangelical manifesto” (O, 1:110) and which was preached before Oxford University shortly after Wesley’s Aldersgate experience, marks the head of this early published collection.

In an attempt to provide the Methodists with a suitable means of grace for instruction and devotion and as an aid to right practice, Wesley published several editions of his sermons (in 1746, 1748, 1750, and 1760) such that by the year 1760 the collection embraced forty-three works. According to Outler, Wesley eventually included the sermon “Wandering Thoughts” in the second edition of volume III (which was published around 1762), and it therefore brought the number to forty-four sermons (O, 1:41).

Something of Wesley’s practical theological design in publishing these sermons is revealed once again in his preface to the edition: “I have accordingly set down in the following sermons what I find in the Bible concerning *the way to heaven*; with a view to distinguish this way of God from all those which are the inventions of men” (O, 1:106). Similarly, Wesley exclaims: “Every serious man who peruses these will therefore see in the clearest manner what those doctrines are which I embrace and teach as the *essentials of true religion*” (O, 1:103). Moreover, operating out of a firm belief in the universal love of God manifested in Jesus Christ, Wesley viewed his audience quite broadly as embracing not simply those who *already* knew the religion of the heart, that is, faith working by love, but also those “who [were] just setting their faces toward heaven” (O, 1:106).

The Model Deed (1763)

As an effective administrator, Wesley realized the dangers of idiosyncratic and self-referential behavior among his preachers. He, therefore, executed a Model Deed in 1763 that brought greater order in terms of *what* was preached from a Methodist pulpit. As Henry Rack has pointed out, preaching-houses that were not grounded on this Model Deed “could cause trouble, as the Birstall and Dewsbury Chapel cases showed even after 1784” (R, 10:85). Edward Sugden, late professor of Queen’s College, the University of Melbourne, cited the language of the Model Deed in his work as follows:

Provided always that no person or person whomsoever shall any time hereafter be permitted to preach or expound God’s Holy Word or perform any of the usual acts of Religious

General Introduction

Worship . . . in the said Chapel . . . who shall maintain promulgate or teach any doctrine or practice contrary to what is contained in certain Notes on the New Testament commonly reputed to be the Notes of the said John Wesley and in the First Four Volumes of Sermons commonly reputed to be written and published by him. (S, 2:331)

Since the Model Deed was promulgated in 1763, the reference to the sermons in this document would include the forty-three of the 1760 edition plus the sermon “Wandering Thoughts” that was added in 1762, bringing the total to forty-four. In other words, when Wesley drafted this disciplinary instrument, he obviously viewed these forty-four sermons, and not his entire sermon corpus, as being of remarkable and distinct value in the ongoing life of Methodism.

When Wesley collected his works in 1770–71, he issued a new edition whose first four volumes were taken up by sermons, although nine more were now added, bringing the total to fifty-three (some later editions, published elsewhere, removed the sermon On the Death of George Whitefield to arrive at fifty-two). In the preface to this edition Wesley reveals that he wanted to “methodize these tracts, to range them under proper heads, placing those together which were on similar subjects and in such order that one might illustrate another” (S, 1:14). Beyond this, Wesley points out that “there is scarce any subject of importance in practical or controversial divinity, which is not treated more or less, either professedly or occasionally” (S, 1:14) therein, thereby highlighting the value of the collection for Christian formation. “His aims,” Sugden observed, “were thus elucidation and completeness of presentation,” indicating that Wesley’s larger purpose in this endeavor included nothing less than the presentation of materials that would constitute a living tradition. Put another way, his ever-present goal in publishing the sermons was that the genius of Methodist life, faith, and practice might be suitably passed along from generation to generation. Indeed, Wesley himself drafted the following declaration that became a part of his introductory comments to the 1771 edition:

Sermons on Several Occasions. First Series. Consisting of fifty-three discourses published in four volumes in the year 1771, and to which reference is made in the trust deeds of the Methodist Chapels as constituting, with Mr. Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament, the standard doctrines of the Methodist Connection. (S, 2:336–37)

The nine additional sermons that filled out the 1771 edition are as follows:

The Witness of the Spirit, II—Rom. 8:16

On Sin in Believers—2 Cor. 5:17

The Repentance of Believers —Mark 1:15

The Great Assize—Rom. 14:10

The Lord Our Righteousness—Jer. 23:6

The Scripture Way of Salvation—Eph. 2:8

The Good Steward—Luke 16:2

The Reformation of Manners—Ps. 94:16

On the Death of George Whitefield—Num. 23:10

Remarkably, when Wesley brought forth a new edition (and the last one) of his sermons in 1787–88, it was identical to the volumes already published in 1746, 1748, 1750, and 1760, and it included the sermon “Wandering Thoughts” (S, 1:13). Wesley omitted the nine additional sermons of the 1771 edition just cited above. Sugden speculated that Wesley perhaps reverted to the composition of the earlier editions because he realized “the legal difficulty that would have arisen had he changed the standard of doctrine set out in the deeds executed before 1771, not that he had changed his mind as to the importance of the added sermons” (S, 1:14). In other words, Wesley knew that “the previous four volumes formed part of the legal standard of doctrine for his preachers; and he could not alter that without creating difficulties” (S, 1:14). Sugden also observed that after 1787 the form of the works in the Model Deed “was altered to ‘the first four volumes of sermons’” (S, 1:13).

These observations help to illuminate the subsequent *publishing history* of the sermons in British Methodism, especially with regard to the preference for forty-four sermons and not fifty-two or fifty-three. In the twentieth century the British Conference actually went on record to maintain that the natural sense and proper intention of the phrase “the first four volumes of sermons” . . . referred to the 1787–88 edition of *Wesley’s Works* (forty-four sermons), and not to Wesley’s collected works of 1771 (S, 1:14; OD, 106). However, we agree with Outler’s judgment that the omission of these eight sermons (if the one on Whitefield is excluded) in any published collection “would represent a serious loss” (O, 1:43–44), especially since it would shunt aside the two landmark sermons, “The Scripture Way of Salvation” and “The Lord Our Righteousness” (O, 1:42), which are so necessary for properly understanding Wesley’s overall practical theology.

One of Wesley’s more productive periods, homiletically speaking, was during the 1780s when he drafted more than sixty sermons, several of which contained his well-worked theme of real Christianity. Many of these sermons appeared in the *Arminian Magazine* that began publication in 1778 as a suitable contrast to the Calvinist *Gospel Magazine*. Accordingly, volumes V–VIII of the SOSO were filled with these sermons such that by the 1787–88 edition, Wesley’s sermons numbered about one hundred (OH, 9). After Wesley’s demise, George Story, who was at the time responsible for Methodist printing, gathered together Wesley’s sermons written after 1788 and published them in a ninth volume. Through this effort, Wesley’s published output of sermons expanded greatly and now totaled 151 (OH, 9).

The Publishing History of Wesley’s Sermons: American, Canadian, and Australian Contexts

The publishing history of Wesley’s sermons in the North American context is somewhat different from its British counterpart and more complicated in that it reflects the

basic ambiguity entailed in the failure of the 1808 American Conference to state specifically, when Francis Ward had posed the question, what sermons constituted “our present and existing standards of doctrine” (HTZ, 197). By that late date, well after Wesley’s death, the entire corpus of 151 sermons was no doubt published on occasion. However, other important editions emerged much later, and were widely circulated, that focused on the fifty-two sermons of the 1771 edition of Wesley’s works (the sermon “On the Death of George Whitefield” was sometimes omitted).

Four subsequent editions of Wesley’s sermons, not all of them North American, warrant significant attention: the first was that of Nathanael Burwash, dean of theology, Victoria College, Canada. His *Wesley’s Doctrinal Standards, Part I, The Sermons*, or more popularly known as *Wesley’s Fifty Two Standard Sermons*, was published in 1881 and was reprinted on numerous occasions for Canadian and American consumption. The second major collection that once again focused on fifty-three sermons (the one on Whitefield was this time included) was that of Edward Sugden in 1921, and it enjoyed a wide reading in Australia and beyond. The third major collection was produced in that same year by the Reverend W. P. Harrison, the American book editor of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Deeply appreciative of the work of Burwash, Harrison offered a revised edition of the fifty-two sermons specifically adapted for the use of students. Harrison’s witness to the value of this particular arrangement of sermons is evident in his observation that it was the practice of the bishops of The Methodist Episcopal Church, South to include two volumes of Wesley’s sermons (volume I, sermons I–XXVI; volume II, sermons XXVII–LII) for ministerial preparation in the Course of Study (HAR, 2:6). And so when North American and Australian Methodists of the last century were reading Wesley’s sermons, it was likely some form of the fifty-two (three) sermons that went back to the 1771 edition of Wesley’s works. The British, for their part, during the last century were likely reading a collection of forty-four sermons for the reasons already suggested.

The fourth and most recent edition of Wesley’s sermons, however, departed from this dominant trend of focusing on either forty-four or fifty-two “standard sermons” in a rather dramatic way. In *John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology*, Albert Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater produced a collection that aimed (1) to broaden the list of sermons beyond the traditional lists and (2) to demonstrate how Wesley’s theological emphases and wider concerns developed over time. With respect to the second aim, the editors organized the volume in a temporal sequence, beginning with “The Image of God” (1730) and concluding with “On Living without God” (1790). Suffice it to say, this volume has made a significant contribution in Wesley studies, giving scholars and students ready access to less familiar sermons and providing an impetus for a fresh interest in the matter of Wesley’s theological concerns across time.

Readers, however, should note in light of this history that we are *not* making the case for what constituted standard sermons in the American context, though even the Plan of Union (1966–67) that led to the formation of The United Methodist Church in 1968 affirmed that the First Restrictive Rule of the Conference of 1808 would include “as a minimum, Wesley’s forty-four *Sermons on Several Occasions* and his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*” (HTZ, 190).² Our purpose instead has been to lay the

historical groundwork necessary for readers to understand why, after all is said and done, we have chosen to gather together the British forty-four (which clearly had Wesley's seal of approval), plus those eight additional sermons (we have omitted the one on George Whitefield) that were published in the 1771 edition of Wesley's works and that were republished again and again in the last century through the careful efforts of Sugden, Burwash, and Harrison.

Why a New Collection of Sermons Is Needed

Until recently, with the publication of the present work, readers of John Wesley's sermons basically had three options. First, they could try to find some edition of the fifty-two sermons whose publication has been erratic of late. Second, they could download sermons piecemeal from the Internet without suitable introductions, outlines, or a suggested ordering. Third, they could read the Outler and Heitzenrater volume, *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, which, while highly valuable for the purposes described above, was never intended primarily as a resource for theological and spiritual formation. Indeed, though the Outler and Heitzenrater volume (OH) is clearly valuable, especially for a graduate seminar, its arrangement and composition in our judgment are not best suited for use in active, full-orbed Christian discipleship. To illustrate, the OH volume is arranged *chronologically*, which makes it appropriate to discern the subtle shifts and nuances of Wesley's developing thought. In contrast, our volume is arranged *soteriologically*, following the *way* of salvation in general and the *ordo salutis* in particular, ever with an eye on the process of serious Christian formation. In other words, the focus is not so much on Wesley himself, in terms of his personal chronology or biography, as it is on the sermons themselves as evocative tools, as engaging instruments of transformation, in other words, as suitable and lively *means of grace*.

In addition, since the OH collection includes *seven* of the nine additional sermons from the 1771 edition of Wesley's sermons (the ones on Whitefield and The Reformation of Manners are deleted), its major differences from other collections are due in large part to which sermons of the British forty-four are left out. Consider then the following observations with respect to the composition of the OH anthology: (1) it *excludes* many of the forty-four sermons that Wesley viewed quite favorably as representing the substance of what he was preaching, (2) these same forty-four sermons were in fact protected by the Model Deed in 1763 and were subsequently given formal status in British Methodism, (3) these sermons have had a rich publishing history as a distinct and valuable body of material in the formative life of Methodism from the eighteenth century and beyond, and (4) these sermons have been and remain integral to Christian formation and substantive catechesis. The lists below reveal precisely the sermons of the forty-four that are omitted from the OH collection. We divide such deletions into three major sections to illustrate our larger point:

Sermons That the Outler-Heitzenrater Anthology Leaves Out (from the British Forty-Four)

(1) *Faith and Assurance*

- 6. The Righteousness of Faith—Rom. 10:5-8
- 8. The First-fruits of the Spirit—Rom. 8:1
- 11. The Witness of Our Own Spirit—2 Cor. 1:12
- 32. The Nature of Enthusiasm—Acts 26:24

(2) *Wesley's Theological Ethics*

- 16. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the First—Matt. 5:1-4
- 17. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Second—Matt. 5:5-7
- 18. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Third—Matt. 5:8-12
- 22. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Seventh—Matt. 6:16-18
- 24. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Ninth—Matt. 6:24-34
- 25. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount: Discourse the Tenth—Matt. 7:1-12
- 26. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Eleventh—Matt. 7:13-14
- 27. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Twelfth—Matt. 7:15-20
- 28. Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Thirteenth—Matt. 7:21-27

(3) *Challenges to the Christian Life*

- 36. Wandering Thoughts—2 Cor. 10:5
- 37. Satan's Devices—2 Cor. 2:11
- 40. The Wilderness State—John 16:22
- 41. Heaviness through Manifold Temptations—1 Pet. 1:6
- 42. Self-denial—Luke 9:23
- 43. The Cure of Evil-speaking—Matt. 18:15-17

First of all, the issue of assurance was not only an emphasis of Wesley throughout much of his career; it also remains a vital part of contemporary Methodist witness to the broader catholic church. The reception of salvific graces, properly speaking, is marked by a *twofold* assurance that embraces the *direct* witness of the Holy Spirit that one is indeed forgiven and a child of God as well as the *indirect* witness, the assurance of our own spirit,

as Wesley put it, to this same saving reality. The sermons “The First-fruits of the Spirit” and “The Witness of Our Own Spirit” fill out the indirect witness in a way that illustrates the balance and comprehensiveness of Methodist teaching, its conjunctive nature, if you will, on a topic so vital to mature Christian development.

Second, Wesley’s series on the Sermon on the Mount, written from 1748 to 1750, is one of the best vehicles available to comprehend his basic Christian ethic; it displays, in other words, what form Christian graces should take on both personal and social levels. Moreover, the practical, ethical value of these sermons (How then shall we live?) can be appreciated once one realizes that these sermons treat, in an extensive way, the *moral law* that makes up such an integral part of Wesley’s practical theology. Indeed, the *entirety* of the Sermon on the Mount, as Wesley clearly taught, and not simply the material reflected in SOM, Discourse the Fifth, is a suitable expression of the moral law, the holy law of love, whose Old Testament counterpart is seen in the Ten Commandments. It is difficult to find more practical ethical counsel in Wesley’s writings apart from this material. Beyond this, the last sermons of this series (SOM, Discourses the Tenth through the Thirteenth) treat in a very realistic way some of the more perplexing obstacles to the Christian life.

Third, this last area of challenges to the Christian life (how such a graced life can *yet* go awry) is perhaps the greatest weakness, in our judgment, of the OH anthology from the standpoint of Christian formation. Indeed, not only has this assortment omitted much of the Sermon on the Mount series, but it has also eliminated those sermons that depict what may prove to be for some believers the darker, uncomfortable, and distressing aspects of a flesh-and-blood Christian journey, such sermons as “The Wilderness State” and “Heaviness through Manifold Temptations” in particular. Without these and many of the other sermons listed in the third section above, the OH anthology fails to offer a painstakingly realistic picture of what serious Christian formation actually looks like in its challenges, setbacks, and occasionally (though unnecessarily) defeats. Thus it is primarily with the work of formation and catechesis in mind that this present volume will include the *entirety* of the British forty-four sermons, but unlike this traditional collection, it will include those eight additional sermons of the 1771 edition of Wesley’s works, many of which both Outler and Heitzenrater found so valuable.

Why the Traditional Collections of Burwash, Harrison, and Sugden Must Be Augmented

Though the fifty-two (three) sermons go a long way in expressing the heart of Wesley’s practical theology, they nevertheless must be supplemented with several of his other sermons in order to offer a better and more accurate picture of his overall practical theology. Furthermore, since our social location today is removed from eighteenth-century British Methodism in terms of time and place, it is necessary to take up and reflect somewhat differing interests and concerns through the inclusion of other sermons. Our hope in joining together older interests with new ones is to take part, once again, in a living tradition. That is, our goal in embracing eight additional sermons beyond the fifty-two

is to pass on the legacy of the Methodist tradition in a practical and relevant way to the current generation. The “new” sermons are as follows:

Eight Additional Sermons beyond the Fifty-Two

1. The General Deliverance—Rom. 8:19-22 [60]
2. The New Creation—Rev. 21:5 [64]
3. On Working Out Our Own Salvation—Phil 2:12-13 [85]
4. The Danger of Riches —1 Tim. 6:9 [87]
5. On Visiting the Sick—Matt. 25:36 [98]
6. The Duty of Constant Communion—Luke 22:19 [101]
7. Free Grace—Rom. 8:32 [110]
8. The Image of God—Gen. 1:27 [141]

These sermons were carefully chosen in conversation with Methodists around the world. They represent the interests and judgments of lay leaders, pastors, and scholars about how the Wesleyan way of salvation should be filled out in additional sermons that will have cash value, so to speak, for the practical tasks of ministry and for generous Christian development. Though space prohibits a discussion of the reasoning behind each selection, three nevertheless warrant additional consideration.

First of all, the sermon “The Danger of Riches” is necessary beyond the sermons “The Use of Money” and “The Good Steward” because Wesley recognized that the love of wealth, in its various forms, can so easily interlace itself in the human heart deflecting the love of God and neighbor in significant ways. During the 1780s as he was thinking of the future of Methodism and his legacy, Wesley feared that the Methodists would lose the power of religion to rest content merely in its form due to the corrupting power of riches. In fact, during this period he wrote three sermons specifically on wealth: “The Danger of Riches” being the earliest one (1781) followed by “On Riches” (1788) and “The Danger of Increasing Riches” (1790). This emphasis must be reflected in any representative collection of Wesley’s sermons.

Second, the sermon “On Visiting the Sick” is one of the best windows on how Wesley considered the relation between temporal ministry, which focuses on the maintenance needs of the poor, and spiritual ministry, which unabashedly considers the eminent value of the human soul. As such, this sermon offers contemporary settings, both near and far, a number of Wesley’s practical value judgments in terms of the proper relation between what our age has called personal and social action. In addition, this sermon is well focused on the ends, the goals, and the high calling of all ministry that bears the name of Christ, and it therefore deserves inclusion.

Third, the sermon “The General Deliverance” demonstrates clearly that Wesley’s understanding of redemption was remarkably broad and embraced the animal realm

as well. Such inclusion within the orbit of God’s love and concern highlights the utter goodness, mercy, and providential care of the divine being for all sentient beings. This view accords quite well with current ecological interests and breaks out of the strictures of a mere anthropocentric understanding of redemption. Moreover, in underscoring the goodness and generosity of God, Wesley engages in the following remarkable speculation: What if the Almighty in the consummation of things invited the animal realm to become “Creatures capable of God? Capable of knowing, and loving, and enjoying the Author of their being” (O, 2:448)? How great then in Wesley’s eyes is the extent of God’s love and mercy!

With the inclusion of these eight additional sermons, helpful in filling out Wesley’s practical theological judgment, the substance of our new collection can now be presented in the following chart:

Collections of John Wesley’s Sermons			
British Forty-Four)	North American and Australian (Fifty-Two)	Additional Sermons New Collection	Total
44	+8	+8	60

The Arrangement of the Sermons

With an eye on serious Christian development, we have arranged the present collection in terms of the way of salvation in general and the *ordo salutis* in particular. In other words, the way of salvation, the *via salutis*, in its open and more general orientation, will embrace such elements as self-denial and good stewardship, for example, so necessary to Christian life and practice that are not specified in the Wesleyan *ordo salutis* (Outler’s preferred terminology) as expressed, for example, in the summary sermon, “The Scripture Way of Salvation.”³ However, if the proffered way of salvation so envisioned does not gather up the *specifics* of the *ordo salutis* such as the two foci of redemption, for instance, in the form of justification/regeneration and entire sanctification as well as their attendant doctrines (such as repentance and works suitable for repentance) and their proper relations, then it is not Wesley’s way of salvation that is actually being described. In this instance, the *way* so conceived would be too loose, far too amorphous for ready use in catechetical work.⁴ In light of such considerations we employ both terminologies in this book to bring together Wesley’s general counsels as well as his particular soteriological advice, and we have arranged the sermons accordingly, from the goodness of creation (“The Image of God”) to the consummation in glorifying grace (“The New Creation”) and every step along the way. The order is reflected in the following theological categories that are listed on the contents pages with each sermon:

General Introduction

- The Goodness of Creation
- The Fall
- Free Grace
- Awakening
- Prevenient Grace and Repentance
- Repentance and Converting Grace
- Repentance
- Justification
- Justification and Imputation
- Regeneration
- Assurance
- The Christian Life
- Challenges to the Christian Life
- The Sum of True Religion
- Illumination and Second Repentance
- Second Repentance
- Pressing on to Christian Perfection
- Christian Perfection
- The Extent of Redemption
- Judgment and Glorifying Grace
- Glorifying Grace

The process of ordering the sermons for this book was a lengthy one and involved the advice of Methodists from the United States, England, Germany, Kenya, South Korea, India, and Australia, among other places. We wanted to *listen* to a global, diverse community as to what arrangement of sermons would be most helpful to the tasks of ministry in general as well as for the hope and promise of formation in particular. We are especially grateful to the community of scholars and researchers who took part in the Wesleyan Studies Summer Seminar held in Wilmore in June 2012. Their advice and, on occasion, their correction have been invaluable. We especially would like to thank Dr. Phil Meadows of Cliff College, England, and Dr. Don Thorsen of Azusa Pacific University for their wonderful and at times memorable insights.

Of course, no order of sermons is perfect; each is subject to criticism. Yes, other arrangements are indeed possible; nevertheless, we believe that after a lengthy and informed process, we have arrived at one that will serve the global church well. Two particular sermons and their positioning, however, require further attention, a task that will

acquaint readers with at least some of the reasoning behind this creative process. First of all, the sermon “Free Grace” is placed early on in the order, right after “Original Sin.” We wanted to highlight that in Wesley’s theology the universality of sin is matched by the universality of grace. That is, “Free Grace” underscores the *extent* of the *provision* that God has made for humanity in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Moreover, “Free Grace” has been placed early, ahead of the sermon “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” for example, because it highlights that the grace of God, in some sense, must also be understood as a sheer gift, the work of God *alone*. “Thus is his grace free in all, that is, no way depending on any power or merit in man,” Wesley writes, “but on God alone, who freely gave us his own Son, and ‘with him freely giveth us all things’” (O, 3:545). In other words, Wesley’s depiction of grace in this setting is sophisticated, informed by both Protestant (free grace) and catholic (co-operant, synergistic, responsible) understandings of grace in a carefully balanced conjunction. Our order therefore reflects such balance.

Second, the sermon “Catholic Spirit” is placed under the heading “Challenges to the Christian Life” not because such a spirit itself is problematic; rather it is the contrary uncatholic spirit that devolves upon the narrowness of opinion that may frustrate genuine communion among the people of God. This sermon is therefore placed right next to “A Caution against Bigotry” and with it shows some of the many ways that the universal love of God can be deflected by lesser interests that are often invested with far too much value, resulting in narrowness, parochialism, and even outright bigotry.

And finally, the first five sermons of the series “Upon our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount” are positioned right after the challenges to the Christian life because they represent a very helpful summary of Christian experience. Beyond this, these same sermons display the very highest graces (think of the text “blessed are the pure in heart”) as believers look to repenting of the carnal nature, through the ministrations of the Holy Spirit and the moral law, even to realize, by God’s grace, nothing less than heart purity. These sermons, then, prepare the way for all that is to come.

Textual Considerations

The text of Wesley’s sermons provided here represents the very best of scholarship, and it is drawn from the critical edition of *The Works of John Wesley* that was originally published in Albert Outler’s four volumes of sermons. Outler’s notes have been removed for the sake of space, though all of Wesley’s original notes have been retained. Many of Wesley’s observations were scriptural in nature, and the references for these are placed in the text in parentheses. Wesley’s Greek and Hebrew citations have been carefully reproduced, and foreign phrases (Latin, for example) have been italicized.

The brief introductions to the sermons (though nowhere else) employ the following convention in formatting in terms of the title so that readers can quickly determine from what collection each sermon has been drawn:

General Introduction

British Forty-Four Sermons	No special formatting
Burwash, Harrison, and Sugden	
Additional Eight	<i>Italicized</i>
Eight “New” Sermons	<u>Underlined</u>

Moreover, the sermons are simply numbered from 1-60 in the table of contents to indicate the position of each entry in this volume. However, the number of each sermon drawn from the Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley* is only retained (if readers care to consult this edition) at the heading of the sermon text itself in this current collection.

Appreciation

We would like to thank Christine Johnson, doctoral student at the University of Manchester in England, for her careful work in terms of preserving the accuracy of the text of the Bicentennial Edition of *The Works of John Wesley* that is reproduced in this present volume.

Also special thanks go to Asbury and United Theological Seminaries for their support of this project. Our hope is that this new collection of sermons, which has been years in the making, will serve the global Wesleyan community generously to the glory of God’s love manifested in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Feast of St. Augustine of Hippo
August 28, 2012

Kenneth J. Collins
Jason Vickers