

and misunderstanding in the increasingly complex field of crosscultural communication and church planting.

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Oden, Thomas C. *John Wesley's Teachings, Volume 1: God and Providence*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 240 pp. Paper, \$22.99.

_____. *John Wesley's Teachings, Volume 2: Christ and Salvation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 319 pp. Paper, \$22.99.

_____. *John Wesley's Teachings, Volume 3: Pastoral Theology*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 303 pp. Paper, \$22.99.

_____. *John Wesley's Teachings, Volume 4: Ethics and Society*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, forthcoming.

Thomas C. Oden, Professor Emeritus of Theology and Ethics at Drew University, is a prolific author and promoter of theological thought leading beyond the uncertainty of modernism to positive Christian life and thought. There are more than 60 volumes bearing his name in the James White Library at Andrews University.

A brief overview of the trajectory of his thought revealed in these publications provides the background for an understanding of the purpose and significance of *John Wesley's Teachings*. Some thirty years ago, concerned regarding the bankrupt state of contemporary theology, Oden published *Agenda for Theology: Recovering Christian Roots*. Having broken ranks with liberal theology, and pointing to the ruins of postmodernism, he advances an agenda obtained by the recovery of classical orthodoxy. An edited and enlarged version, *After Modernity... What?* (1990) points to a new way forward. This conviction was movingly confirmed in a subsequent publication, *Requiem: A Lament in Three Movements* (1995), which, despite the lament at the "appalling theological disorientation," (13) consists primarily of "An Invitation to the Feast," (9)—a feast of the riches of Christianity gained in a serious return to classical Christianity. This was reaffirmed in *The Rebirth of Orthodoxy: Signs of New Life in Christianity* (2002) and again in his three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1992-2006).

Oden is also a significant leader in bringing the light of the early church fathers back to contemporary Christianity. He initiated and serves as the General Editor of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*. However, there is also another side to his contributions to contemporary thought: he is a Methodist and his publication of 15 of Albert Outler's essays in *The Wesleyan Theological Heritage* (1991) indicates his concern to awaken interest in Wesleyan theology. Outler had pointed to the significance of Wesley's thought and the influence of the early church and Byzantine fathers on his soteriology in *John*

Wesley (Oxford University Press, 1964). Subsequently, he edited the *Sermons* of J. Wesley, published in the first four volumes of the *Bicentennial Edition of the Works of John Wesley* (1984-1987). Oden followed Outler's essays with two publications: *The Transforming Power of Grace* (1993) and a three-volume *Systematic Theology* (1992-2006), in which his deep interest in the classical church fathers and Methodism is united.

Having covered the development of Oden's theological pilgrimage from modernism to affirmation of the positive spiritual and intellectual benefits of classical and Wesleyan theology, we are ready to explore *John Wesley's Teachings*. The extensivity of Wesley's publications of homilies, letters, journals, doctrinal tracts, essays, and diaries upon which Oden draws is revealed by the 35 scheduled volumes of 500-700 pages (16 of which have been published) of the *Bicentennial Edition* of his writings. The *Teachings* volumes are composed of constant citations from Wesley's publications, systematically organized under categories appropriate to the theme explored.

In volume 1, *God and Providence*, Wesley's teachings regarding God, creation, providence and evil, man, sin, and original sin are organized in categories basic to systematic theology. Wesley did not publish a volume on systematic theology and has often been regarded as a folk theologian; however, an examination of the writings drawn together by Oden indicates the profundity of his thought. Perhaps the most significant section of this volume consists of the four chapters dealing with the fundamental sources of Wesley's theology, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience. This term coined by Outler remains in general use, but is not intended to imply that they have equal weight. The primacy of Scripture reveals the importance and function of Scripture in Wesley's spiritual experience and theology. While he did not accept *sola Scriptura* in the sense affirmed by the Reformers, Scripture was certainly the primary authority. As regards tradition, Oden clearly indicates that Wesley's thought and experience was profoundly influenced by the scriptural exegesis of the early fathers whom he regarded as teachers of genuine Christianity. Furthermore, he defended the orthodoxy of his teachings as being in harmony with the three ancient creeds—the Apostle's, Nicene, Athanasian—and the 39 Articles. Having indicated the weight Wesley gave to Scripture and tradition, Oden turns to his use of reason as a special God-given gift and outlines its benefits and limitations. He then proceeds to the most sensitive issue in the Quadrilateral, that of experience. Again, using frequent citations, he outlines the significance of spiritual experience in the Wesleyan revival, deals with the dangers of bigotry and excessive enthusiasm, and the importance of true love that governs the senses. Oden proceeds to present Wesley's theology of creation and original sin, pointing forward to redemption.

In the longer volume 2, *Christ and Salvation*, Wesley's understanding of the doctrine of salvation is clearly presented with the aim not merely of

systematic exposition, but of encouraging thought relevant to Christian experience. Many of the citations drawn from Wesley's academic teachings are spiritually enriching. Themes handled include Christology, the scriptural way of salvation, justification, the Holy Spirit, grace, predestination, salvation by faith, regeneration, sanctification, sin remaining after justification, eschatology, judgment, and the new creation. Oden indicates where Wesley's understandings are in harmony with the early fathers, the great Reformers, and Anglican thought. He uses Wesley's responses to his critics to outline the issues regarding the *ordo salutis*, which are under dispute and to illustrate the consistency of his thought. Among these are Wesley's affirmation of the third use of the law in contradistinction to the Lutheran position—his rejection of *simul justus et peccator* and affirmation of the doctrine of sanctification. Enabled by the Spirit, the Christian turns away from the death of sin, is justified by faith, and the process of sanctification and the joys of right living commence. He affirms freedom of the will and defends against charges of Pelagianism and righteousness by works.

Volumes 1 and 2 constitute excellent textbooks for the study of Wesley's theology. In addition to demonstrating the cohesion and depth of Wesley's theology for beginners, the text-by-text references provide unparalleled access to source materials for professionals. I have not previously read books in which thought is so consistently developed in terms of relatively brief citations from external sources or with so many footnotes identifying the sources. Oden's ability to select statements relevant to particular topics promotes the impression that he lives in Wesley's thought world, and he takes the reader with him. Both of these volumes could be used to enrich courses in general Wesleyan studies whether historical or theological and would be useful in acquainting students with the vast body of source material available. In addition, they could be utilized to enrich discussion in general courses on systematic theology.

Volume 3, *Pastoral Theology*, fills an important gap in Wesleyan studies. Much has been written on the theology and history of Methodism, but relatively little on Wesley's teaching on the ministry, the church, and pastoral care. Topics covered include the office and gifts of ministry, soul care, pastoral care for the family, church and ministry of the word, ministries of baptism and the Lord's supper, the unity of the church, effective church leadership, and the ministry of evangelization. Oden has excavated insights close to the heart of Wesley and organized his clear directives and teachings in categories relevant to the broad outline of topics relevant to contemporary pastoral care. Throughout he seeks to inspire ministries that encourage the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of believers. Special attention is paid to the sacraments of baptism and the blessings of the Lord's supper. The overall concern is to promote effectiveness in the ministry and a deepening of religious experience in the congregation.

The breadth and wealth of publications on every aspect of the Wesleyan heritage during the past 30 years, including the *Bicentennial Edition*, *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies*, and countless historical and theological studies is amazing. Notwithstanding, there is nothing I am aware of that is comparable to *John Wesley's Teachings*, nothing that uses Wesley's teachings as frequently, and nothing that provides such direct connection with Wesley's thought on a wide variety of topics as do these volumes. In addition to their value as textbooks in Wesley study courses, they constitute source books for the location of fundamental Wesley teachings. Inasmuch as Adventist understandings of the way of salvation are basically grounded in Wesleyan/Arminian patterns of thought, these volumes constitute an excellent source of information regarding our own theology. Reading these volumes generated the feeling that I was entering into the thought world and experience of Wesley in a way not previously experienced. I highly recommend the use of these volumes in seminary courses on Wesleyan studies, pastoral ministry, personal spirituality and theology, and especially in those dealing with issues in the way of salvation. I cannot avoid feeling that Outler, the mentor who revived Oden's interest in Wesley, would be highly pleased with these volumes and the contributions they make. I have no criticisms or suggestions to offer.

These volumes are well organized. Each contains a helpful Preface and Introduction that present a clear view of the purpose and subject matter of the volume, including a list of Abbreviations of the 97 publications referred to in the footnotes. There are many finely printed footnotes on every page indicating sources of quotations, and fairly extensive lists of Further Reading at the end of chapters and some subsections. Appendices include a list of sermons, published bicentennial volumes, and subject and Scripture indices.

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