

BOOK REVIEWS

Teresa Berger, *Theologie in Hymnen? Zum Verhältnis von Theologie und Doxologie am Beispiel der "Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists" (1780)*. Altenberge: Telos, 1989. 234 pages. DM 29,80.

This volume is a dissertation in liturgy for the Catholic faculty of the Westfalian Wilhelms-University of Münster, West Germany. It is unequivocally one of the finest treatments of Charles Wesley's theology written to date. Most such attempts have utilized thematically arranged excerpts from his poetry in which the organizing principle of theological themes often has controlled, if not shaped, the material. Berger, however, sets Wesley's thought, as couched in the hymns of the 1780 *Collection*, within the context of theology as doxology. Where themes surface she allows them to grow out of the hymns, rather than impose them on the texts. Since she limits the study solely to the 1780 *Collection*, in one sense this is a filtered or cross-sectional view of Charles Wesley's thought. His brother John edited the volume and often made editorial choices based on his own opinion of what was most useful and worthy of Charles's work for the community of faith. The concept of theology as doxology is Berger's focus here, and since there is such a wide range of Wesley's thought in the 1780 *Collection* much of the discussion is applicable to the broader spectrum of his poetical corpus and thought.

There is a tendency in this study to view the hymns unilinearly as they appear in the 1780 *Collection*, as little attempt is made to treat the social location of Charles Wesley's poetry and thought or John's editing of the texts.

The book is organized into three parts. The first is divided into two sections. I. *Definition of the themes*, i.e., doxology, theology in hymns, liturgical-ecumenical perspectives, and the corporate language of faith. II. *Doxology and Theology* in contemporary discussion as seen in Roman Catholic liturgical science, in Protestant systematics (the difference between statements of dogma and statements of faith), in the Orthodox tradition (liturgy as theology and theology as doxology), and in the ecumenical tradition (common language as the source and highpoint of church unity). The second is the largest single part and is devoted to the book's title, *Theologie in Hymnen*. It includes a superb introduction to the 1780 *Collection*. In this part the characteristics of the Wesley hymns are discussed from the standpoint of poetry, literary context, Holy Scripture, and the impulse from ecclesial-theological traditions. The final portion of the part treats specific theological themes, particularly those related to soteriology, the experience of salvation, and Christian perfection. The third part discusses the relationship of doxological speech and theological reflection.

This volume brings the discussion of “theology in hymns” with integrity into the arena of contemporary theology:

In most instances doxology utilizes poetry as its medium of speech, which is directed primarily to God. Theological reflection functions argumentatively-descriptively (from and about God’s history with humankind), doxology speaks ascriptively (to God). The highest form of doxology is accomplished in song, while that of theology is scientific reflection and discussion. Theology seeks coherence and understanding and doxology seeks transparency (pp. 22-3).

From this perspective Charles Wesley’s hymns are viewed as “theology which one can sing(!)” (p. 24). They are a rich source of spirituality which also finds echo and agreement among Christians beyond the bounds of Methodism. These hymns form the “secret norm” of the Methodist community—its “actual identity” (p. 25). This view is perhaps more valid for English Methodism than American Methodism, although both are characterized by a theology of doxology.

In the second section of the first part Berger sees her work as part of the attempt to delineate the specific contribution of doxological traditions to the sum of the expression of the belief of God’s people. In this context Charles Wesley’s hymns take on a new significance viewed not merely as the captive provenance of Methodism, but as part of the common doxological language of primary Christian church traditions: Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. Churches can share more readily in prayer and witness than in statements of belief (p. 58). An important affirmation of Vatican II is supported here: “in many instances it is possible in the structure of prayer and proclamation to make common statements on the same theme which are not possible within the structure of dogma” (p. 59).

The volume includes one of the finest discussions to be found of the historical, theological, and spiritual context of the 1780 *Collection*, a hymnal which has had more of an impact on English language hymnody than almost any other. John Wesley edited and arranged it according to the personal experience of salvation, a lyrical *Pilgrim’s Progress* (p. 83). Berger effectively discusses the well-known hymn, “O for a thousand tongues to sing,” as the doxological “upbeat” to the 1780 *Collection*. She maintains that the hymn embodies a summary of Charles Wesley’s central ideas and a dialogical structure of speaker and addressee which corresponds to doxology and proclamation.

There are discussions on the influence of the Bible and the Anglican liturgy upon Wesley’s work and an excellent excursus on the present state of Charles Wesley research. In the light of the studies of the last twenty years, Berger speaks of a Charles Wesley renaissance.

In exploring the characteristics of Wesley hymns Berger makes some statements which require further clarification. (a) “In the case of the Wesleyan hymns the melodies are almost never part of the [original]

identity of the hymn" (pp. 112–13). If by "identity of the hymn" Berger means its identity as performed text and music, this is generally true; however, there are notable exceptions, such as "Rejoice, the Lord is King" for which G. F. Händel composed the tune GOPSAL. (b) "Wesley knew the original text [of the Bible] well enough in order to see that the AV (Authorized Version) in most instances offered the better translation" (p. 118). He did use the AV widely, but he often made his own translations as indicated by the abbreviations "Heb." (Hebrew) and "Gr." (Greek), which he often employed in manuscripts and published texts to indicate he had referred to or translated the original text. He also depended heavily on the Psalter translation of the Book of Common Prayer. (c) "Rarely does Charles Wesley seek his inspiration outside" of the Holy Scriptures (p. 119). They were indeed his primary source of inspiration, but the word "selten" ("rarely") used here by Berger simply is a wrong qualification and generalization of Wesley's practice. As his secular and sacred poetry clearly illustrate, he drew inspiration for his art also from literature, politics, events, and a plethora of historical figures from monarchs to musicians.

Berger successfully shows that not all of Charles Wesley's hymns deal merely with individualistic-soteriological concentration but also include dogmatic, theological, liturgical subjects. Wesley responded at times to specific theological issues and discussions in his hymns and poems, e.g., *Hymns on the Trinity* (1767) drew upon W. Jones's *The Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity* (Oxford, 1756), and *Hymns on the Lord's Supper* (1745) was based on D. Brevint's *The Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice* (Oxford, 1673). In these works of Wesley along with other hymn collections of his on the church year one sees emphases which were not characteristic of the pietistic awakening.

Berger's discussion of the soteriological concentration in Wesley's hymns of the 1780 *Collection* has a depth seldom found in studies about hymns. The close ties to Lutheranism and Orthodoxy are explored, and emotional experience as the cognitive principle of the objective process of the transmission of salvation is examined (p. 148).

The following claim is made towards the end of the volume: Charles Wesley hymns "are not an invitation to theological reflection but praise of God. They do not develop their true essence as printed texts, as they encounter us in theological analysis, rather as fully developed praise of God in the singing of the believing community" (p. 184). Berger does not wish to imply that doxology does not also present a form of reflection upon belief, but does not see this as its primary sense. Rather, it is a question of implied reflection on belief. How this implied reflection moves to the level of the explicit is the subject of the last few pages of the work.

A strong case is made for a theology of doxology as a sung theology and as applied to Wesley's hymns over against a theology of reflection. There is a difference, however, between the level of hymns as doxological statements to be sung and hymns as poetry or literature (*perhaps at times*

also for theological reflection) as created by Wesley and used by the community of faith in singing. Unquestionably the intention behind the hymns in the 1780 *Collection*, as compiled and edited by John Wesley, is in large measure doxological. One may question, however, whether Charles Wesley's intention with *all* of his hymns included in this hymnal was originally doxological, i.e., in the sense of sung theology which implies three elements according to this volume — hymn text, musical setting, and performance. It cannot be ignored that John as editor often excised polemical statements from Charles's hymns and the latter often wrote long, polemical and apologetical poems, if not lyrical treatises, which do not fit readily into a theology of doxology. He wrote hundreds of poems, many hymnic in nature and others which were not, that were not intended to be sung and were appropriate neither for singing nor for existing tunes of the day. Many of his long, narrative sacred poems based on Holy Scripture lend themselves indeed to a theology of doxology and perhaps occasionally even to a theology of reflection. One might say that much of this poetry is the doxological effervescence of Wesley's soul. Therefore, should not a theology of doxology then encompass more than the sung word? Charles Wesley as a poet-priest was a singer of the gospel in his poetry even when he was writing verse not intended for singing. While Berger treats only the 1780 *Collection*, there is another level of theology as doxology in Charles's poetry which is not bound to the sung word, but includes the song he is ever singing as a poet.

Is it possible that one finds in Wesley's poems and hymns at times a wedding of a theology of doxology and a theology of reflection? If so, it may be in large measure beyond the bounds of the 1780 *Collection*. Of course, the idea of a theology of reflection in poetry breaks the norm of argumentative and descriptive prose theology. It is important to realize here that although the 1780 *Collection* does provide a cross-sectional view of Charles Wesley's thought, its 500 plus hymns authored by him must be viewed in the context of the some 9,000 hymns and poems which he wrote during his lifetime. It remains for further research to establish (a) whether a theology of doxology can be limited to his hymns of singing, (b) the implications of such a theology for the full spectrum of his poetical corpus, and (c) to what extent his poetry may encompass aspects of theological reflection. The final part of the volume, which seeks to delineate the relationship of doxological speech and theological reflection, provides useful guidelines for such study. Berger is careful to point to the importance of the former for the latter and the interdependence of both.

Her work is a treasury of theological insight, which is carefully reasoned and well written. The style is clear, and the choice of the Wesley hymnic materials, which she does not attempt to translate into German, is wisely and eloquently used in the analysis. One will have to refer to volume VII of the *Works of John Wesley* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), a critical edition of the 1780 *Collection*, for documentation of the original

sources of the hymns and excerpts used by Berger, as she generally does not give them.

This is a volume of major importance with valuable contributions to the fields of theology, church history, church music, liturgy, ecumenical studies, and Wesley studies. It is difficult to find enough adjectives to sing its praise.

S T KIMBROUGH, JR.
Madison, NJ

Frances E. Willard, *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle: Reflections of an Influential 19th Century Woman*. Sunnyvale, CA: Fair Oaks Publishing Co., 1991. 104 pp. \$14.95 hardcover, \$8.95 paperback.

In 1893, after a decade and a half as president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Frances Willard was in poor health. The duties of her office and her rigorous schedule as an internationally famous temperance and women's rights reformer kept her constantly on the go, and she was, in contemporary language, "burned out." A team of doctors whom her good friend Lady Henry Somerset called in to consult on Willard's case strongly recommended a regime of diet and exercise which they hoped would help to revive her flagging energy and get her in shape physically. And so, at age fifty-three Willard learned to ride a bicycle, documenting her efforts in a short book originally entitled *A Wheel Within a Wheel* (1895), and reprinted in this volume.

For modern readers who may not be familiar with Willard's life and influence, Edith Mayo, a Smithsonian curator, has contributed a brief but excellent *Introduction* which places Willard in historical context. Lisa Larabee, an historical editor, has written an *Afterword* on the early years of bicycle riding for women which shows how the sport aided in women's emancipation, as Willard insisted it would, by improving health, requiring comfortable, sensible dress, and providing women an independent means to get where they wanted to go.

Willard's account of her mastery of the bicycle is a marvelous example of her style of communicating: humorous, down-to-earth, encouraging, debunking of social conventions which restrict women from taking an active role in every aspect of life. *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* is quintessential Willard and would be a good choice to read in order to experience the personality of this remarkable reformer, not simply for historians but for everybody. One of my friends was moved to take up tap dancing in middle age after reading the book. Consider it for a gift

as well as for a library or for reading in an American history course; its irrepressible optimism is contagious!

CAROLYN DE SWARTE GIFFORD
Evanston, IL

Henry Abelove, *The Evangelist of Desire; John Wesley and the Methodists*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990. xii, 136 pp.

With so many studies of John Wesley on the shelves already, any new study must scream for attention, either by providing new information, by asking new questions, or by assuming a new perspective. For its novelty, this book relies primarily upon a different perspective and thereby tries to give new answers to old questions. The question that gives life to this work assumes that the Methodist revival was unique among its eighteenth-century counterparts in that "it lasted and steadily grew while they did not." The focus of attention is then upon the question, why did Wesley's Methodism "succeed" where others did not?

The approach and terminology of the work fall somewhere between E. P. Thompson's negative historical evaluation of the Methodists and Sigmund Freud's psychological analysis of ego identification (modified somewhat by Jacques Lacan's views), and is sympathetic to Michel Foucault's view of the role of sexuality in history. This is not, however, a psychobiography of Wesley; neither is it a psychohistory of early Methodism. The focus of the book is limited to the question, What is the basis and extent of Wesley's influence over the Methodists? The answer is presented without hesitation: on the one hand, Wesley "played the gentleman and exacted deference" from his people, and on the other hand he "won and monopolized love." This love secured the deference, together providing a "seductive and monopolistic" approach that was uniquely successful in managing the plebeians (read "poor") that comprised the movement.

In the process of clearing the ground upon which to construct the details of his argument, the author relies upon some stereotypes now largely discarded or revised by Wesley scholars, and yet he rejects (with hardly a note) several basic assumptions that have never been seriously challenged. In the former category are his view of Wesley's "private religious club" at Oxford, of Aldersgate as opening "a new epoch in his career," of Methodism's unstinted success shown by "continually increasing" membership, of Wesley's autocratic leadership of the movement. In the latter category are such comments as: that Wesley "had never been an especially good organizer"; that "the Methodists organized themselves entirely on

their own initiative” and often “over his strong objections”; that Wesley contended with his own preachers and “tried to undercut them” so as to heighten his own position by depreciating theirs; that Wesley “really wanted nobody to succeed him”; that Wesley had “taught the Methodists no particular theology”; that Wesley implicitly supported the “devaluing and breaking of family ties” and “same-sex eroticism”; that Wesley’s most powerful impact was based in his advocacy of “antigovernment views”; that the Methodists opposed the theatre since it represented competition — “they had an ongoing theatre of their own” with (class-)tickets and all.

These comments are not simply tossed out as tantalizing hypotheses that might bear investigation; these represent the some of the basic timbers in the structure of the argument, even though they are based on very selective documentation, depend on some radical interpretative presumptions, and are hardly ever tested by the evidence of alternative viewpoints. Several of the more outlandish claims throughout the work are based primarily on contemporary anti-Methodist materials, wrong facts, or twisted interpretations. These include such statements as: that Wesley “all but claimed for himself a virgin birth”; that the Oxford Methodists “had shown a quick and unconventional sympathy with same-sex eroticism”; the “prostitutes sometimes moved into Methodist preaching-houses”; that Wesley chose itinerancy over parish ministry to avoid being “obliged to perform marriages — lots of them.”

Any astute reader will begin to notice that this book not only reads like a gossip column but it is written in the same manner. Words such as “perhaps,” “might,” “seems to,” “may,” are woven throughout many of the allegations. The argument thrives on innuendo, insinuation, and rumor. Some of the more bizarre claims are preceded or followed by comments that indicate such and such “may” have been the case — “It is now probably impossible to know”; or, “to say at once what may be true but cannot now be proved, . . .” Often it appears that the author did not want to know the facts. It is easy enough to discover that for Wesley the word “slut” meant “slovenly or untidy woman,” not “prostitute”; it was obviously important in Bunhill Fields burial ground to show Susanna’s direct connection to dissent through her father; there are primary sources that show the Oxford Methodists defended Thomas Blair because they were certain he was innocent of homosexual charges. Some of the charges against Wesley are baseless or incorrect — John’s claim of writing part of Samuel’s *Job* was true; John did wear wigs in his later years for more than just a few months; Wesley did not “grow rich” through his publications. To Ablove’s description of Wesley playing the gentleman to the hilt by dressing with silk stockings, gold stick pin, silver buckles, brocade coat, etc., must be juxtaposed John Hampson’s eyewitness account — though no friend of Wesley himself, Hampson describes his dress as “a pattern of neatness and simplicity . . . a coat with a small upright collar, no buckles at his knee, no silk or velvet. . . .” Ablove’s source about the

stick-pin also mentions that it was "the sole bit of jewelry the Founder probably possessed."

The most valuable function of this book is to raise the question of human sexuality in relation to the development of this religious movement. The major role of this phenomenon in the mind of the author is indicated by the fact that the chapter on "Sexuality" takes up nearly a quarter of the book. Unfortunately, the author's penchant for sensationalism surpasses even what one would expect from a self-proclaimed "radical historian." He seems, for example, to try for a mental orgasm in some unnecessarily explicit verbal gyrations concerning birth control, and the insinuations of rampant homosexuality (same-sex eroticism) lack real support. In many ways, the work sounds more like a contemporary anti-Methodist polemic than it does a careful historical inquiry.

In this study, Mr. Ablove makes virtually no use of recent works in Wesley or Methodist studies in the nearly twenty years since Bernard Semmel's *Methodist Revolution* (1973). This is explained in part by the fact that work is based on the author's 1978 dissertation, revised into this form the following year (with only minor subsequent spicing up). Even in the revisions, however, Ablove seems careful to avoid, much less learn from, psychological studies of Wesley and Methodism (new or old) done by Thorvald Kallstadt, Robert Moore, James Fowler, or Sydney Dimond. However, the author did delve into a fascinating selection of contemporary diaries and letters from the eighteenth century, raising the important question, What did the Methodist people themselves think and do in the light of Wesley's teachings and actions. Even the rather selective and limited application of that material in this study should inspire others to look further in those directions.

In the end, looking at this portrait of Wesley and early Methodism, one wonders why anyone would follow such a manipulative leader, or join such an odd group of people, or live such an eccentric life. The question of "why Methodism succeeded" takes on a new twist, as one wonders how a movement of the nature described in this study could possibly have survived much less "succeeded."

RICHARD P. HEITZENRATER
Dallas, TX

**MINUTES
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

June 30, 1991
Metropolitan United Methodist Church
Detroit, Michigan

President Robert Sledge convened the meeting at 8:50 A.M. and announced the following agenda: minutes, treasurer's report, section reports, recognition of honorary life members, an amendment to the By-laws, board actions, new business, and announcements.

The minutes of the October 26 meeting, circulated on entry, were approved.

FINANCES: Treasurer Faith Richardson distributed a financial statement, Sept. 1, 1990–May 31, 1991, and noted that receipts are down because of the membership slippage (to 610). The proposed budget also uses a conservative membership figure and the new annual fee of \$20.00. That was moved and passed. The point was then made that the Society should approve the budget pending audit and the query put as to how often audits occurred. Answer quadrennially.

REPORTS OF SECTIONS: Patricia Thompson reported that Historical Societies and Commissions had worked on its by-laws, would elect officers in the 3rd year of the quadrennium, was exploring the best way to draw upon the resources of its membership, opened the issue of how annual conference historical societies and commissions structured their relationships, dealt with finances, urged commissions and societies to care more deliberately for promotion of membership in this Society, and had a very helpful program.

Speaking for Education and Research, Ole Borgen noted the resignation of chair John English, the approval of by-laws, election of new officers (Borgen, chair; Jarrett Gray, vice-chair; John Gooch, secretary; and Nancie Fadeley, liaison to the Society), and discussion of program format which will hereafter include a call for papers. He and Gooch were the program (the Baptism study).

Fern Christensen reported for Genealogy that the section had recognized Vivian Mitchell, put together by-laws, spent considerable time in developing its statement of purpose, followed up on previous actions, and would—through her—take responsibility for a genealogical column in *Historian's Digest*. She called attention to the motion passed at the last meeting requesting that all appropriate agencies work on their union list. The program session was devoted to brainstorming and sharing genealogical techniques.

Recalling its purpose, Gary Ferrell encouraged Local Church History, offered the assistance of officers for churches undertaking one, offered a course outline for a district event (through his new address P.O. Box 295, Cliffside, NC 28204), called attention to the self-publishing kits available through Customs Communication and Tapestry Press, and thanked Bradley Sue Howell and the Anna Howard Shaw staff for excellent programs on record-keeping and oral history.

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS. President Sledge explained this rubric of the By-laws and noted the previous award to Albea Godbold (1989). The award for 1990 was to John Ness and for 1991 to Louise Queen. Sledge remarked on Ness's education, his service first to the annual conference and then to denomination (EUB) as historian, his election to the office of General Secretary in 1958, his effective service in that office from merger to 1981, and his role in the decision and move to Madison, N.J. Ness was present and was invited forward to make remarks. Unable to attend, Queen was recognized for her distinguished service first as assistant to Elmer T. Clark, then as secretary to the Commission, finally as Assistant General Secretary, in which office she took major responsibility for *Methodist History* and *Women in New Worlds*.

OLD BUSINESS. Sledge recalled the motion at the 1989 meeting stipulating that the Board develop procedures to assure greater ethnic diversity in its membership, noted that guidelines were developed at the last meeting, reported that the Board had worked within those guidelines to achieve the text below, indicated that the Board construed the offices under the By-laws to expire in 1993, put the following motion before the Body (but not for action), and indicated that the nominating committee, already selected, would be active in 1992. He placed before the Society an amendment to Article VI, adding a new Section 4 and renumbering the current 4 as 5:

- a. The Nominating Committee shall present at least two nominations for each office.
- b. The Nominating Committee will, in selecting candidates for the officers of the Society, take into account the demographic diversity of the Society's membership.
- c. For purposes of achieving demographic balance, the Board may, at its discretion, elect up to two additional members at large.

An amendment was proposed and passed inserting the word "elective" before "office" in subsection (a) so as to read:

- a. The Nominating Committee shall present at least two nominations for each elective office.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Sledge reported that the site for the 1992 annual meeting had not been set, though Scarritt was a distinct possibility. In 1993, the Society was accepting the invitation extended by A. Mark Conard and South Central for a Dallas meeting in observation of the 25th anniversary of the founding of the UMC. Multi-track memberships will be developed. The Protestant Episcopal Historical Society claims some 3,000 members, noted Sledge, and this Society should as well.

NEW BUSINESS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS: Frederick Maser put a motion of appreciation to the Society and Commission, to the President and General Secretary and the new Assistant General Secretary, to Thelma Boeder, chair of North Central and Vice-President of the Society, to the pastor and staff of Metropolitan UMC. Passed unanimously.

Ferrell noted the request of education and Research for two 90-minute slots at the next meeting. Abram Sangrey reported that 1,000 people had attended the convocation and rededication of Boehm's Chapel and highlighted his new history.

Secretary Richey called Society attention to the proposal to the Lilly Endowment of a major study of United Methodism and invited interest to be indicated to him at The Divinity School, Duke University, which holds a planning grant from Lilly to explore such a possibility.

Adjournment. 10:06 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,
Russell E. Richey
Secretary 7/5/91

APPENDIX I

Sue Alexander, Selma Apel, John J. Baughman, Marvin D. Bean, Paul H. Boase, Thelma Boeder, Ole E. Borgen, Marian Brown, Florine Brunger, Louise Burin, Carl Burrows, Marie W. Capher, Raymond and Fern Christensen, Allen Clark, Mark Conard, Ruth Craig, Helen O. Craig, Frank and Hilda Crisman, Julie and Ralph Dagenais, David Eichelberger, Janet Engle, David B. Evans, Josephine Farmer, Gary L. Ferrell, Charles Finney, A. Mickey Fisher, Robert B. and Barbara Florian, Marilyn S. Foote, Florence Frye, Laurie E. Gage, John O. Gooch, Juanita Hammond, Sue E. Hoher, Bradley Sue Howell, Claudia Kelsey, S T Kimbrough, Jr., Alice Knotts, Bill Lamb, Philip Lawton, Barbara Lenard, Helen Long, Fred and Mary Louise Maser, Edwin H. Maynard, John McEllhenney, Millard Mead, Maness and Vivian Mitchell, Robert C. Monk, Lewis and Louise Morrison, John and Naomi Ness, Richard A. O'Neill, Helen M. Pack, Dale Patterson, Tom Pendell, Rauschenberg, C. Faith Richardson, Russell E. Richey, Abram and Dot Sangrey, Velma Schafer, Rev. Earl W. Sharpe, Bea Shepard, John E. Sims, Robert Sledge, J. Warren Smith, Daniel Swinson, Jeanne Temple, Jeann F. Thomas, Pat Thompson, Lou Tiley, Elder and Jean Traster, T. C. Whitehouse, Marilyn Whiteley, Esther Witherspoon, Lois A. Yast, Charles Yrigoyen, Jr.

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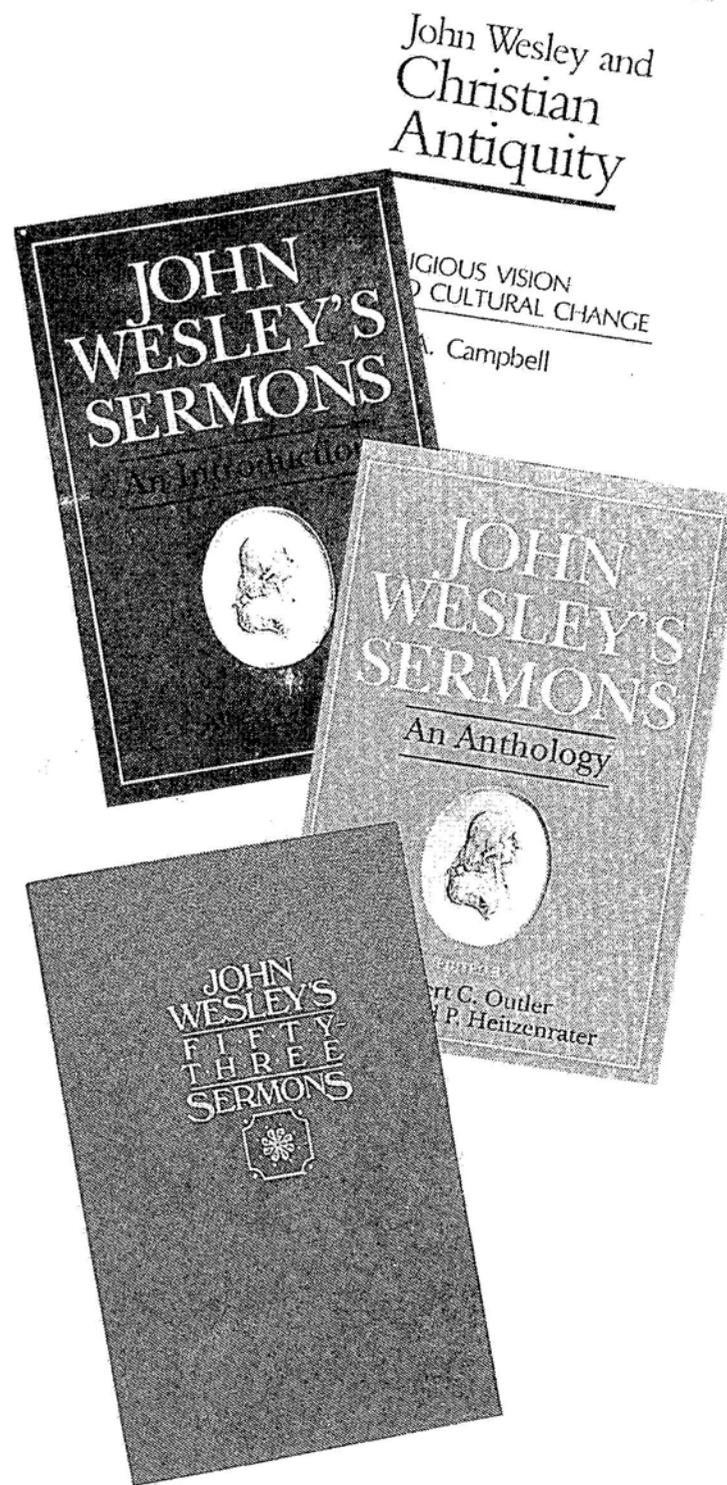
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