

## Foreword

This volume of essays is presented to M. Douglas Meeks in honor of the significant gifts he has offered to the church and the academy. As editors, we are grateful, first and foremost, to Doug Meeks: for the personal and professional relationships we share with him, for his kindness and generosity to his students, and for his deep love for the church. We are also grateful to the contributors to this volume who, through the gift of their time and talent, seek to honor Doug by offering a contribution to the ongoing theological dialogue with his work.

The process of bringing this volume to completion has spanned at least seven years, beginning with a discussion among some of Doug's students at the Twelfth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theological Studies, held at Christ Church, Oxford. It should be noted that, for many years, Doug has been the organizing force behind the Oxford Institute, which is a significant gathering for the worldwide Wesleyan communion. As time went on, we would work on bits and pieces of the project, but it really began in earnest in the spring of 2012. Shortly after an invitation went out to contributors, we began receiving affirmative and enthusiastic responses, sometimes with a chapter attached. Cascade Books, an imprint of Wipf and Stock, responded swiftly and affirmatively with an offer to publish this book.

Early on, we were grateful to have the involvement of Jürgen Moltmann, who agreed to serve as the General Editor as well as contribute a foreword and chapter to the volume. Tim Eberhart has been absolutely fundamental to this project and has taken on the lion's share of the work with the contributors to bring it to fruition, in addition to writing the commendable introduction to this volume. To all who had a part in this volume, I express my deepest gratitude.

Over the years of my association with Doug Meeks, first as teacher, then doctoral examiner and friend, he has consistently emphasized two themes that must predominate in the vocation of the clergy. First, those who seek to serve the church as pastors must be theologians. Their first and

most important task is to communicate for the church and the world the grace of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. When pastors lose sight of this, they become administrators of a dying nonprofit. When pastors grasp hold of the centrality of speaking of God, they become prophets in a world deeply in need of, but likely not desiring, the disorienting word. This leads to the second theme: we need prophetic leadership in the church. He once described this to me by saying that the church needs more “rascals” in leadership: people who are called to speak the Word of God and willing to embody that Word in their own lives. Accordingly, rascal-theologian pastors speak the truth, with a heart full of love and grace for God’s hurting world, to the pain of the whole world. They speak God’s *oikonomia* of freedom and salvation to economies that bind and enslave. This is tough work, because very few people actually like rascals or theologians who speak their minds as they seek to embody God’s grace. Doug’s legacy is represented far beyond the contributors to this volume. His legacy is represented by a long line of rascal-theologian pastors, denominational leaders, bishops, professors, and laypeople who have found their vocational purpose through Doug’s labors.

There are several people who helped in large and small ways with bringing this book of essays to completion. First, we wish to thank two splendid copy editors, Blair Meeks and Eleanor Moore, both of whom carefully read through the text and helped create a manuscript that was consistent and beautiful. Second, special thanks to Blair Meeks and Angela Flanagan for translating chapters from German and Spanish, respectively. Third, a word of personal thanks to Michael Nausner for delivering the first version of the manuscript to Professor Moltmann’s front door in Tübingen, saving a good amount of postage. Finally, everyone who has worked on this book, from the editors to the contributors, has done so out of gratitude for the life and work of M. Douglas Meeks. To God be the glory.

Matthew W. Charlton