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# Introduction

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WHEN HENRY D. RACK published his celebrated volume on John Wesley in 1989, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism*, it was recognized as a *tour de force* in the field of Methodist and Wesleyan thought. In artistic fashion, Rack painted a life of John Wesley and the rise of the Methodist movement in the eighteenth century. The depth and precision of Rack's work has yet to be surpassed by other scholars in the field. If Dr Rack's contribution to the study of Methodism had been confined to *Reasonable Enthusiast* it would have been admirable. However, throughout his career he has written on Methodism and its intersection with such issues as religious enthusiasm, class meetings, women in the movement, death-bed experiences, and a vast array of individuals who went on to make their own stamp on the movement. Most recently, he has made another contribution to the study of Methodism by editing the *Minutes* of the Methodist Conference from its inception in 1744 to Wesley's death in 1791. A work that will be a resource for scholars and generations to come.

The life and career of Henry D. Rack is unquestionably one of international distinction and the contributions in this Festschrift highlight the influence of his reading of John Wesley as an important religious individual of the eighteenth century and the movement that has been extended into the modern world. Additionally, the scholars collected here take into account the rich historical background of John Wesley's life, which spanned the eighteenth century, but converse with Rack's creative and instrumental interpretation of the movement that John Wesley inspired.

In the first two chapters W. Stephen Gunter and David Lowes Watson open an understanding of John Wesley's theological programme by looking at two linchpins in ecclesiastical history and reformation thought. Professor

Gunter in his chapter delves into the rich but complicated transition from Arminius's thought to the significance of Arminianism in the seventeenth century. Gunter reminds us that from 1610 to 1620 there was an incredible amount of publications that "was nothing less than rhetorical and theological warfare." His contribution here has incisively traced the loss of a pure Arminian theology to one that jacked up the Synod of Dort (1618–1619) with an increased passion concerning the issues that the Arminians considered essential to theological orthodoxy. For David Lowes Watson's part, a return to Robert Barnes's understanding of the doctrine of Justification by Faith illuminates Wesley's own captivity to the doctrine. Watson points out that after preaching to prisoners in Oxford (1738) John Wesley began to consider the *Homilies* of the Church of England and extracted all that he could find on justification. The following year, Wesley published two more extracts by Barnes on the subject. Watson's detailed analysis of Barnes and his political, social, and theological developments in the sixteenth century is instructive for ascertaining both Barnes's and Wesley's attraction to the doctrine of justification. The intensity of evangelical faith is highlighted among Barnes and Wesley who lived in separate centuries but also faced opposition in remarkably similar ways. Despite neither being considered major theologians, both were both instrumental in igniting the fire of justification in the hearts of men and women in their respective generations. As with Barnes, so also was the case with Wesley, Watson maintains that the fundamental instruction gained for contemporary believers is how can the church avoid a sectarianism that is caused by a spirit of Protestantism while being open to the fundamental truth of justification by faith. For Watson, the doctrine is not a "personalized soteriological antipasto," but a movement of the Holy Spirit that initiates a radical and intimate reconciliation with God. Watson's reading of Barnes provides insightful resources for examining John Wesley and his excitement about justification by faith in its theological sense and in its social and political ramifications—which is at the root of reformation thought.

In the next group of essays important and insightful treatments are offered for understanding John Wesley's theology and its implication for accurately observing the rise of Methodism in the eighteenth century. In chapter 3, Richard P. Heitzenrater examines an often-neglected part of John Wesley's idea of the means of grace: Holy Conferencing. In so doing, Heitzenrater analyzes the idea of Christian Conference in the "Large" *Minutes* and maintains that Wesley valued religious conversation in special and unique ways. Religious talk, Heitzenrater insists, has the qualitative characteristic of holiness which fundamentally means that the Christian must emulate Jesus Christ. Therefore, justification is not a sufficient resting place in Christian conversation for Wesley. By necessity there must be a movement

toward sanctification and a full understanding of grace. Heitzenrater warns, however, that we should forget anything we have been told about grace. Instead of being understood as a means to pious living grace should be formulated so as to reveal both its passive and active components. Therefore, the grace (transforming presence) of God that is communicated to the believer through the Holy Spirit offers a transformation both in our relationship with God and one another. The opportunities for this transformation are what Wesley, and other evangelicals, termed the means of grace. And while Wesleyans have traditionally seen divine grace in terms of three movements; i.e., prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying; Heitzenrater contends that there are many movement to God's grace that should not be limited to three movements but instead be seen as infinite and multi-faceted. In chapter 4, Bishop Patrick Streiff builds upon his foundational study of John Fletcher and uncovers the ways that Fletcher influenced Wesley in his sermons. In analyzing Wesley's sermons, Streiff notes that after 1760 there occurred a shift in Wesley's emphasis. With the first three volumes of the Standard sermons there had been a focus on the beginning of salvation: sin, repentance, and the new birth. However, with volume four of the sermons in 1760, the focus changes to sanctification. Streiff maintains that both the Perfectionist controversies of the 1760s and Fletcher's understanding of the doctrine of Sanctification were looming in the mind of Wesley as he wrestled with the teaching. In distinction from traditional understandings of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, including the one I propose in my own contribution to this volume, Streiff asserts that Fletcher contributed to a shift in Wesley's thinking where the experience of sanctification should correctly be seen as an "ongoing process of love" and not rest in a "Second Blessing" *per se*. This, contends Streiff, would have benefited both the holiness preachers of the nineteenth century and the Pentecostal ones in the twentieth. In chapter 5, Philip Meadows enters into the subject of Methodists preachers and their autobiographical accounts of mission and ministry. With various accounts, from the early Methodist preachers, Meadows argues that these followers of Wesley considered themselves to be fundamentally "co-working with God." In an interesting and provocative treatment of the autobiographies, the self-understanding of the Methodist preachers is evaluated. Quite distinct from contemporary preaching styles the early Methodists often preached several times a day and were fond of interjecting their own experiences into the sermon as a key hermeneutical device. With insightful analysis, Meadows offers a glimpse into the commitment and conviction of the early Methodist preachers and the spiritual lives they extended in their witness of the gospel. Often they were disturbed about the condition of souls, including their own, and were not afraid of recording their own despair and resolve

in reaching a resting place in Christ. Furthermore, Meadows argues that the resolve demonstrated by Wesley's co-labours in mission and ministry was fleshed out in their belief of the importance of completing their task against unruly and unholy forces of spiritual warfare. On many occasions the work of a Methodist preacher caused such opposition that they were often faced with violence and death. In this turbulent ambiance, "these narratives of persecution" often ended with signs of divine providence and confirmation that their mission and ministry was a divine one. With Meadows treatment of these important documents the reader is reminded not only of the importance of evangelism and discipleship but also the validity of their pursuit in each and every generation. Deborah Madden in her essay for this volume explores the interesting but complex issue of John Wesley's knowledge of medicine and his commitment to healing. Placing Wesley's understanding of natural corruption against the background of his theology of sin, Madden explores a rich means of understanding John Wesley's concept of sin and salvation. The pride of Adam in the Garden is the beginning point in Wesley's mind, Madden correctly argues, "for all of the inconsistencies of human nature." From this departing point Madden follows John Wesley's understanding of medicine and faith as important remedies for the treatment of body and soul. Key to Madden's examination of Wesley is her treatment of the *Primitive Physic* and its popularity in the eighteenth century. Taking up Rack's metaphor of Wesley as "cultural mediator," Madden convincingly argues that the phrase is best seen in the way the *Primitive Physic* distilled the often complicated medical theories of the day and how they were beneficial for the Methodists who were interested in healing for both body and soul. Often Wesley interjected medical imagery into his sermons and Madden shows how his understandings of both natural and supernatural healing were embraced by Methodists. In Owen Davies's chapter 7 in this collection of essays, we have a splendid treatment of John Wesley's understanding of witchcraft and exorcism. For a long time it was an assumption in eighteenth-century historiography that after the emergence of mechanical philosophy that individuals living in the Enlightenment abandoned a belief in the invisible world. In his commanding analysis of the sources, Davies demonstrates how seriously Wesley viewed witchcraft and demonology and in what manner that belief became a central aspect of Methodists living in the Enlightenment. Key to this development was Wesley's editorial supervision of the *Arminian Magazine* and the popularity that it enjoyed in Methodist households but also for broader evangelical circles as well. With the *Arminian Magazine* and treatments of the cases like the Yatton possession case, there emerged "a boon in public debates about the invisible world." Certainly there were many detractors that Wesley had to defend the

Methodists against but, at a more important level, there emerged in Wesley's mind an opportunity to create a rhetoric that treated such experiences seriously. And though the passion for such treatments diminished after John Wesley's death, they were not extinguished. Davies's contribution examines several nineteenth century examples of belief in the existence of witchcraft and exorcism among Methodists and though these and other instances indicate that continual belief in the supernatural was still deeply ingrained in the Methodist spirit and mind.

In chapter 8 John Wigger provides a turning point in our understanding of Methodism and provides a comparative analysis of the lives of John Wesley and Francis ("Frank") Asbury. In so doing we look to Asbury as one of the driving forces of the Methodist witness in America. Wigger, who points to different levels of similarity between the two men, focuses his treatment on Asbury and what was distinct about his life which enabled and empowered the Methodists in North America. While Wesley was highly educated and spent a good deal of time managing a proficient publishing career, Asbury never published anything outside of some letters and his own *Journal*. What became the definitive dividing mark, however, was the American Revolution. A good many of the Methodists in England condemned the Americans as schismatics. John Wesley, John Fletcher, and Charles Wesley all wrote critically about the separation of the American colonies from the authority of British rule. Charles's poetry was particularly invective when, for example, he described the patriots as "fends of hell." For Asbury's part, Wesley had made a grave mistake in delving into American politics and should have kept to his evangelical thrust of winning souls. Despite this deep divide Wigger sees a lot of spiritual similarities between the two leaders of Methodism. Both had a core understanding of the importance of personal piety, discipline, and sacrificial living. Like Wesley, Asbury gave away most of the money that he earned and saw Christ in the poor in profound and meaningful ways. Wigger's analysis of both John Wesley and Francis Asbury provides much to contemplate as the history of Methodism unfolded at the turn of the century in American history. In chapter 9, noted historian Ted A. Campbell explores Methodism in the southwestern frontier by analyzing the *Autobiography* of William Stevenson. The *Autobiography* written first in 1841 was later serialized (1858) in the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*. In a clear and determined manner Campbell shows how Methodism, represented by Stevenson, adapted to a vastly changing culture in North America. Stevenson was often confronted by various denominational cultures and responded with a decidedly open and catholic attitude. The way of salvation was not decreed before the creation of time but involved human participation in repentance, faith, and holiness. Campbell demonstrates

that Stevenson's work was "infused with a consistent confidence that God was at work in the events of his life, revealed in a variety of religious experiences and in occasional miraculous occurrences." This is fleshed out in a variety of ways but finds its ultimate resting place in the cherished doctrine of "Entire Sanctification." Campbell's treatment of Stevenson's work suggests that the Methodists of the nineteenth century fleshed out their existence in the new frontier in ways that the John Wesley would not have understood or appreciated. In chapter 10 my own contribution to this volume seeks to unravel the historical link between eighteenth-century Methodism (British) and twentieth-century Pentecostalism (American). Drawing on David Hempton's suggestion from his *Methodism: Empire of Spirit* that the unique inheritors of Methodists in the Enlightenment is not contemporary Methodism but the Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians of the modern world, I note that just as Methodism grew at a phenomenal rate in the nineteenth-century so has the assortment of Pentecostal families seen profound growth in the modern world. What is significant about Hempton's thesis is that both Methodist and Pentecostal growth was predicated on points of "abandonment" by their predecessors. Issues like mobility, empowerment of women, organizational acumen, and the interfacing of religion and politics all proved to be advantageous to one while detrimental to the other. I begin to uncover this social dynamic by considering how both Methodists and Pentecostals have made "room for the Spirit." Building upon my previous work that discusses John Wesley's development of a "rhetoric of the supernatural" as a self-identifying mark of Methodists living in the eighteenth century, I note too how strong a "supernatural consciousness" is to the mission and ministry of Pentecostals in the modern world. Digging deeper into the fabric of both of these renewing movements I explore the idea of a "Second Blessing" and how members of the Holiness movement, mainly Pentecostals and Charismatics, have firmly held on to this teaching in the modern world. Despite its obvious treatment in various denominations it has been Pentecostals that have given it creative expression in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. My treatment here stands in a different light than the one present by Patrick Streiff in his excellent essay in this collection. I look at it fundamentally as a meaningful experience that is encouraged and inculcated in the spiritual life of votaries. Then my essay looks in a broader fashion at the "supernatural rhetoric" of both Methodists and Pentecostals and what that meant for their respective religious "identities."

With the next two chapters Peter B. Nockles and Martin Welling take us back to Methodism and its relationship with the Church of England in the nineteenth century. In chapter 11 Nockles considers the evangelical category of "revivalism" and applies it to the Tractarian movement. Building on

Yngve Brilioth's *Anglican Revival: Studies in the Oxford Movement*, Nockles asserts that the Tractarians have fundamentally been overlooked in the history of revivalism because of the erroneous thesis of the "undermining of the Protestant credentials of the Church of England." To get beyond the polemics between Tractarians and Evangelicals, Nockles plays out the affinities of the two movements with precision and insight. For example, it is pointed out that not only did the Evangelicals find certain *Tracts for the Times* very appealing, for example Number Nine, "The Gospel a Law of Liberty," but indeed it was designed to be so from the Tractarian point of view. In laying the levels of similarity between Evangelism and Tractarianism, all without eschewing their differences, Nockles has opened the door for a fresh evaluation of Methodism as it moved into a wider audience in the nineteenth century. His analysis provides ample evidence that the Oxford Movement was not only an intellectual movement but a spiritual revival in its own right. With chapter 12, readers of this volume are offered a mapping of Methodist reactions to Anglo-Catholicism in Victorian and Edwardian England by Martin Wellings. After a brief but important historical development of Methodism in nineteenth-century England, Wellings draws out the important distinctions between Tractarians and Methodists surrounding the theme of ritualism. From the Methodist side of things there was grave concern over "Puseyism" and criticism of their ministry by the Tractarians. This contributed in small and large ways to the Methodist ethos of seeing Anglo-Catholicism as a fundamental distortion of the Christian faith, especially with their perception that their theological opponents had distorted their cherished belief in justification by faith. After discussing four specific Methodist responses to ritualism, Wellings contends that the Methodist and Anglo-Catholic positions still remain strained today and this tension provides us with a fundamental ecumenical lesson on the problems of polemical discourse.

With a final summary of Henry D. Rack's work, Clive D. Field has provided a bibliography of Dr Rack's published work for chapter 13. It is not an exhaustive bibliography since Rack has published over two hundred book reviews but it does include his major publications along with less lengthy ones too. For those interested not only in Professor Rack's work but the importance and significance of Methodism, Field's chapter will serve as an important reference.

In conclusion, I want to thank all the contributors of this volume. Their continual patience has been exhibited with my perpetual observations, questions, and clarifications of their essays. In the end, it is our hope that the work presented here would offer an appreciation to Henry D. Rack for his scholarship and friendship. It is also offered with a spirit of being helpful to both those in the academy and the church.