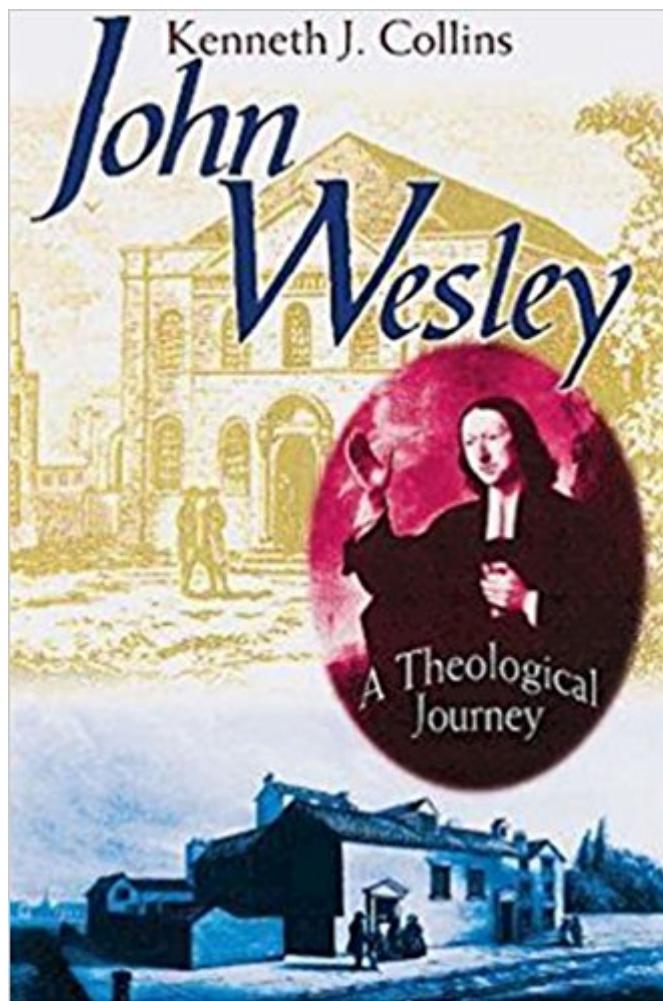


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# John Wesley: A Theological Journey



## **Synopsis**

John Wesley: A Theological Journey has been nominated for a Wesleyan Theological Society Book Award. Abingdon Press would like to congratulate Kenneth Collins on this honor. John Wesley remains a seminal figure, not only for "the people called Methodist, " but also within the larger Protestant tradition. Understanding his theology is a requirement for understanding the development of the Western Christian tradition in the modern period. In recent years much work has been done to grasp the intricacies of Wesley's theology. However, most of this work has been thematic in organization, studying Wesley's thought according to a topical or systematic outline. The weakness of this approach, argues Kenneth J. Collins, is that it fails to demonstrate the evolution and changes of Wesley's theology. What is called for is a historical presentation--one that examines the development of Wesley's theology across the span of his long and eventful theological career. Collins thus provides a chronological presentation of the development of Wesley's theology. Drawing on an extensive examination of the primary sources, and demonstrating an intimate knowledge of the different contexts and social locations in which Wesley's theology took place, John Wesley: A Theological Journey will be necessary reading for anyone wishing to understand the broad scope of the Methodist leader's theological development and contribution.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Kenneth J. Collins is Professor of Historical Theology and Wesley Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore Kentucky, and an elder in the Kentucky Conference of The United Methodist

Church. He also teaches at the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary in Estonia, and is a member of the Wesleyan Theological Society, Wesley Historical Society, and Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality. He is the author of *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley*, *The Scripture Way of Salvation: The Heart of John Wesley's Theology*, co-editor of *Conversion in the Wesleyan Tradition*, and *John Wesley: A Theological Journey*.

Very thoroughly written and impactful insight! A wonderful journey into the life of this awesome man! It really helped me to better understand the destination from whence AME Zion was birthed and how Wesley shaped the rise of Christianity through his own struggles! It also reveals the importance of not just talking the talk, but walking it, and Wesley's compassion and zeal for the Word of God is both exhilarating and resourceful. I learned that no matter the obstacles, perseverance will cause one to prevail, but recognizing we cannot fight this battle alone. Unity is vital to succeed in spreading the gospel to all people.

This book is a thorough and well-written summary of Wesley's theological journey. I knew very little about Wesley's thought, life, and theological ideas going in, and now I feel like I have a good grasp on the man and his beliefs and where he stands in the Christian theological tradition. Collins mostly writes the book in a chronological style so you can see the advancement of Wesley's ideas over time. Some views are revised, some are restated, others are amplified. The book uses letters, journals, and sermons of Wesley liberally as well as letters or statements by others about him. I do not agree with some of Wesley's doctrines - I won't go into that here - and was angered at the man at times for these differences, but as I read, I grew in admiration of his fervent mind, his passion for righteousness, and his incredible work rate over 60 years of ministry! Because it is thorough, the book can seem a bit repetitive at times. There are lots of additional comments in footnotes, so as a result, if you fully dive in, it can be a long read (270 pages main body + 50+ pages of footnotes. But if you are interested in the man and how he linked up Protestant Reformation developments with the "holiness" movement of Pentecostalism and other charismatic spin-offs, this really is a great read.

Many Christians of varying backgrounds are familiar with parts of John Wesley's story. Perhaps the most famous of all, though, was when Wesley experienced a "heart-warming" experience in May 1738. Yet, how did the founder of Methodism get there? John Wesley was brought up in a devout Christian home. His mother Susanna played an invaluable role in his spiritual development (including after he'd become a university student). Wesley's clerical father Samuel, surprisingly,

discouraged his own son from taking a ministerial track in life. For some reason, though, Samuel Wesley changed his mind, thus freeing his son to pursue God's call. The effect of classical works Wesley read or heard read as a young man, from Thomas a Kempis to Puritan writers, can additionally not be overestimated in his early spiritual development. This work covers a number of other significant details about John Wesley's life (e.g. his refusing communion to an ex-girlfriend, his sometimes clumsy efforts at engaging those who disagreed with him, his inspiring words to William Wilberforce, his gift for organization, etc.). Further, it touches on how he developed doctrines such as Christian perfection. In this realm, the author is perhaps most helpful by showing, in great detail, how Wesley struggled with assurance and compassionately accepted others whose spiritual growth process differed from his own. Even if you're not a Methodist or fond of the Arminian persuasion, you're certain to find great treasure here. John Wesley's tireless energy for the Gospel, passion for lost souls, and love for the masses (especially the poor) should be imitated by all who take the name of "Christian". Though John Wesley never reached the spiritual mountaintop that he envisioned, a tale such as this cannot help but give encouragement to biblically-centered believers today.

good book

This book by Collins is an approach that I have not read before. He took the history of John Wesley and plugged in the theological insights and problems that Wesley was wrestling with at that period of time. It is a very helpful and inciteful book. Wish I had written it, but the historical is beyond me. The combination of historical insight and theological insight is rare and Collins has found a way to present it that is also readable and helpful. Good job! J. Robert Ewbank author "John Wesley, Natural Man, and the 'Isms'"

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