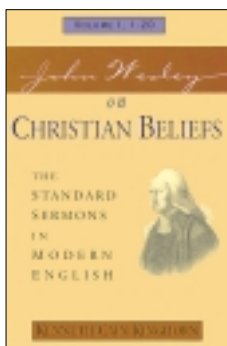


A MORE READABLE

Mr. Wesley

John Wesley on Christian Beliefs: The Standard Sermons in Modern English, Vol. 1, 1-20 by Kenneth Cain Kinghorn. (Abingdon Press, available March 2002. 0-687-052963 \$28.00.)



Although John Wesley was active in many roles, he defined himself chiefly as a preacher. His superior skills as an Oxford don, linguist, logician, historian, patristic scholar, author, and ecclesiastical administrator were undisputed. He believed, however, that his main mission was to preach. As a young man, he wrote, “As my tongue is a devot-

ed thing, I hope . . . to use it only as such, that all who hear me may know of a truth, the words I speak are not mine, but His that sent me.” Indeed, both his tongue and pen were “devoted things.”

In part, Wesley derived his belief in the importance of preaching from reading the book of Acts and the history of the early church. Commenting on the leaders of the New Testament Christian community, he observed, “In the first Church, the primary business of apostles, evangelists, and bishops was to preach the word of God.” Wesley made that business his own. We find in his journal frequent references to God’s anointing his proclamation of the Bible. He wrote, “Preaching we have always found to be accompanied with power, and to have the blessing of God following it.” Often, we read in his journal, “God himself made the application,” “God speaking to their hearts,” and “God spoke to the

hearts of many.” He wrote, “I do indeed *live* by preaching!”

Although Wesley wrote in a variety of literary forms, his sermons provide the best means for understanding his mind and spirit. He intended it that way. Wesley poured his best efforts into his preaching, and his published sermons constitute the best expression of his theology.

Despite Wesley’s clarity in his own time, many people today do not find it easy to comprehend his sermons. The problem does not lie in their content, but in the changes that have occurred in the English language during the past 300 years. The aim of this transcription of John Wesley’s *Standard Sermons* is to make them understandable to modern ears, by bringing them into “another age and atmosphere.” Why is the eighteenth-century text of Wesley’s sermons difficult for today’s readers to understand?

(continued on p. 28)

The Almost Christian

Wesley’s Original

Now, whosoever has this faith, which “purifies the heart” (by the power of God, who dwelleth therein) from pride, anger, desire, “from all unrighteousness,” from “all filthiness of flesh and spirit,” which fills it with love stronger than death, both to God and to all mankind; love that doeth the works of God, glorying to spend and to be spent for all men, and that endureth with joy, not only the reproach of Christ, the being mocked, despised, and hated of all men, but whatsoever the wisdom of God permits the malice of men or devils to inflict; whosoever has this faith, thus working by love, is not almost only, but altogether, a Christian.

Transcription

On the basis of unwavering faith, whoever believes in the full sufficiency of Christ is an Altogether Christian. This faith, resulting from God’s power within us, cleanses our hearts from pride, anger, lusts, all unrighteousness, and “every defilement of body and spirit.” God’s inner presence is stronger than death, filling our hearts with love for him and for all people. The heart obeys God and is happy to spend and to be spent for others. With joy, this kind of trust patiently bears the world’s censure against Christ. It endures being mocked, disdained, and hated. It accepts whatever God’s providence permits, whether from malicious people or from demons. Those who have this faith that works by love are more than Almost Christians. They are Altogether Christians.

Vocabulary

The following list illustrates how the meanings of some words have changed since Wesley's day:

<u>Wesley's Words</u>	<u>Today's Meaning</u>
analogy of faith	evangelical system of belief
to be careful	to worry
disinterested	impartial
ejaculation	exclamation
end	goal or purpose
vulgar	common or popular
want	need or lack

This transcription casts Wesley's words into their modern equivalents, modernizes such words as *hath* and *knoweth*, and, where appropriate, transcribes the generic word *man* with the use of appropriate substitutes.

Use of Scripture

Consciously and unconsciously, Wesley used biblical imagery in everything he said and wrote. One who is not thoroughly familiar with the Bible can sometimes miss his meaning. I have identified Wesley's biblical quotations, echoes, and allusions, by placing the references in parentheses at the end of the appropriate sentences and have also changed Wesley's Hebrew and Greek biblical citations into modern English.

Grammar, syntax, spelling, punctuation, and style have been modernized, while seeking to preserve Wesley's meaning.

The Enduring Value of Wesley's Sermons

John Wesley used his profound knowledge of the Bible, his classical education, and his intuitive theological ability to write sermons that open our minds and spirits to God's truth. Through messages that clarify the biblical revelation, his sermons continue their ministry into our time.

Excerpted and adapted from the introduction.
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Talking About Belief Matters!

This book's primary goal is to remind us that what we believe does indeed matter. Its second purpose is to explain the doctrinal standards of The United Methodist Church—in other words, the matters of our belief. Yrigoyen describes and exposites the four official Doctrinal Standards of The United Methodist Church in the following order: Explanatory Notes, Sermons, Articles of Religion, and Confession of Faith. Also includes a study guide, a glossary, and suggestions for further reading.
CZ1-0687090830. Paper, \$9.00

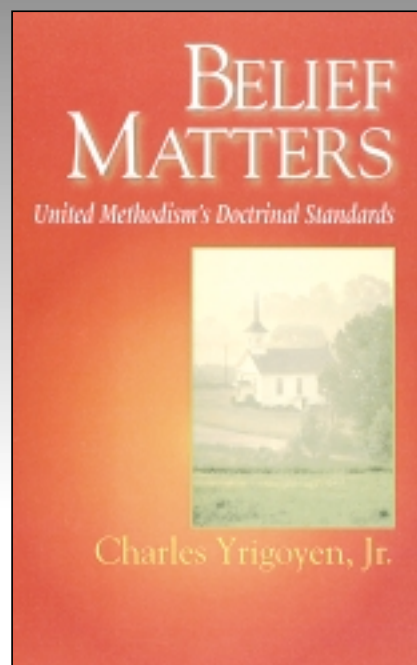
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