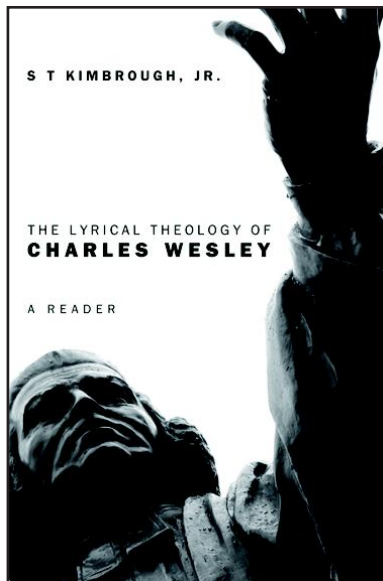




THE LYRICAL THEOLOGY OF **CHARLES WESLEY** A READER / **S T KIMBROUGH, JR.**



The theology of Charles Wesley is expressed primarily in hymns and sacred poems—that is, in a literary and liturgical form of art. Wesley’s theological concerns, as seen through his hymns and poems, include inquiries into the meaning of the church’s sacred rites, festivals, and seasons (Holy Communion, Baptism, Advent, Christmas, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost), and a host of other theological concerns, such as conversion, sanctification, perfection, holiness, grace, and love. These theological concerns are spread throughout his repertory of over 9,000 hymns and poems.

There are two primary purposes of this volume: first, to prepare the reader to read Wesley’s poetry, given the plethora of literary, theological, and societal influences on his thought and writing; and second, to bring together a collection of his hymns and sacred poems that are representative of his theological perspectives. Thereby the reader is given the opportunity to become better equipped to grasp the meaning of Wesley’s profound lyrical theology and its implications for contemporary theology and life.

ISBN 13: 978-1-60608-653-7 / 360 pp. / \$40 / paper

“S T Kimbrough, Jr. has played a prominent role in the increased study of Charles Wesley *as a theologian* in recent years. In this book Kimbrough distills several dimensions of his work to provide two very important resources: 1) an orientation for appreciating the lyrical mode of Charles Wesley’s theology, and 2) a thematic selection of exemplary texts that allows reader to explore the full range of Wesley’s theological concerns. This book will be helpful to a wide range of readers and may encourage a new generation to take up the vital task of lyrical theology.”

—RANDY L. MADDOX, William Kellon Quick Professor of Theology and Wesleyan Studies, Duke Divinity School

“Christian liturgy is a genre that transcends the category of prose because it is a transformative and performative encounter between the human and the holy. In *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader*, S T Kimbrough, Jr. provides a text that enables this holy human encounter to be discerned through the words of theologian, poet, and reformer, Charles Wesley . . . Biblical interpretation, ecclesial insight, sacramental evangelism, advocacy for the poor, and a catholic vision form the major chords of Wesley’s lyrical theology. A reader of this reader will want to join the chorus.”

—HEATHER MURRAY ELKINS, Professor of Worship, Preaching and the Arts, The Theological School, Drew University

“S T Kimbrough, Jr. has come to be known over the last four decades as a preeminent interpreter of the poetical work of Charles Wesley . . . In *The Lyrical Theology of Charles Wesley: A Reader*, he offers not only a judicious selection of Charles Wesley’s poetry, but also a set of interpretive essays that set a critical context for the reading and interpretation of this poetic corpus. He has chosen a theological outline for the collection, conforming to that of many Methodist and Wesleyan Hymnals, and this also clarifies the theological and spiritual relevance of the hymns . . . This is a well written, well edited, judicious selection of Charles Wesley texts with very helpful introductory materials. It will be a standard for decades to come.”

—TED A. CAMPBELL, Associate Professor of Church History, Perkins School of Theology

“It is often remarked, but seldom demonstrated, that Methodists learn their theology through hymns. S T Kimbrough, Jr. has given us the gift of a close reading of Charles Wesley as both a theologian and a practitioner of music, as what Kimbrough calls a ‘lyrical theologian.’ Kimbrough sees Wesley’s work as both catechetical and formative in the life of the church that sings his hymns. By giving a theological ordering to the hymns and sacred poetry, Kimbrough has greatly enhanced Methodism’s reception of its greatest hymnodist. This book will be a standard for all who study and practice Charles Wesley’s lyrical theology.”

—M. DOUGLAS MEEKS, Cal Turner Chancellor Professor of Theology and Wesleyan Studies, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

“S T Kimbrough, Jr. rescues the poetic eloquence and relevance of Charles Wesley for contemporary theological readers . . . This book will make his lyrics immediately accessible to everyone and help deepen Methodist theological and spiritual formation for seminarians, clergy persons as well as laity. After five hundred years, it is time, albeit rather belatedly, to balance his significance with his brother, John Wesley’s importance, for the spiritual movement that they both helped ground and develop, with his vivid biblical imagination and inspiring sound.”

—YOUNG-HO CHUN, Professor of Systematic Theology, Saint Paul School of Theology

“By a skillful combination of literary analysis, doctrinal exposition, and historical information S T Kimbrough, Jr. has identified a genre of ‘lyrical theology’ that finds a prime embodiment in the sacred poetry of Charles Wesley. The Wesleyan hymns in particular have for long shaped the theological memory of the Methodist movement, and their classic expression of the Christian faith as well as their fervent encouragement of the Christian life suit them also for ecumenical service.”

—GEOFFREY WAINWRIGHT, Robert Earl Cushman Professor of Christian Theology, Duke Divinity School

S T KIMBROUGH, JR. is a Research Fellow of the Center for Studies in the Wesleyan Tradition of the Divinity School of Duke University and founder of The Charles Wesley Society. He is editor of its journal *Proceedings of The Charles Wesley Society* and author/editor of several books on Charles Wesley including: *The Unpublished Poetry of Charles Wesley*, 3 vols., and *The Manuscript Journal of The Reverend Charles Wesley, M.A.*, 2 vols.