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Dissertation Prospectus

**ICONIC DIGNITY:
NATURE, GRACE, AND VIRTUE IN THE THEOLOGY
OF JOHN WESLEY AND THOMAS AQUINAS**

by

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1. STATEMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

In a world now fragmented by xenophobia, commodification, ecological degradation, isolation, racial violence, and depersonalizing structural systems, *theological perspective matters*. It matters because it approaches the most important aspects of life: “the inmost nature of things, the nature of God and man, and the immutable relations between them.”¹ A theological perspective that is sufficient to ground faith, inspire hope, and guide practices of transformative love requires a substantial understanding of who God is, who we are, and the God-human relationship. But not just any theological perspective can yield a vision of human flourishing through loving, transformative fellowship with God and with our fellow-creatures.

My thesis is that a recasting of John Wesley’s theology in terms of “iconic dignity” offers a theological perspective that has the potential to focus Christian practices that foster human dignity in the face of dehumanizing social forces. As I will demonstrate, the indispensable source for that recasting is a comparative theology between John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas on the interrelated themes of nature, grace, and virtue. The theological perspective that I advance aims at holiness and happiness² through a relational participation in God’s essence of love.³ For Thomas, the underlying

¹ John Wesley, Letter “To the Author of *The Craftsman*,” (8?) July, 1745, in the bicentennial edition of *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 26, ed. Frank Baker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 149. Similarly, in an essay on John Wesley’s theological anthropology, Irwin W. Reist commented that “the role one gives to man will in no small measure determine the nature of the theology he confesses” (“John Wesley’s View of Man: A Study in Free Grace versus Free Will,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 7/1 [1972]: 25).

² The conjunction of *holiness* and *happiness* is a distinctively Wesleyan *hendiadys*. Albert C. Outler, editor of the sermons in the bicentennial edition of Wesley’s works, counted at least 54 uses of this conjunction in Wesley’s sermons alone. See Outler’s *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville: Tidings, 1975), 83-84. Recently, Rebekah L. Miles has addressed this conjunctive focus in Wesley’s ethics; for example, see her “Happiness, Holiness, and the Moral Life in John Wesley,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, eds. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 207-224.

³ In his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament* (1754), Wesley comments on 1 John 4:8 (“God is love”) that St. John is “intimating that this [love] is his [God’s] darling, his reigning attribute; the attribute that sheds an amiable glory on all his other perfections.” A few pages before this, Wesley notes that the epistle’s author “has this apparent aim, to confirm the happy and holy communion of the faithful with God and Christ, by describing the marks of that blessed state” (*ibid.*, introductory comment on 1 John). In his own idiom, Thomas Aquinas similarly asserts that love characterizes the divine will (*Summa Theologiae* I.20.1), is the proper name of the Holy Spirit (*ST* I.37.1), and is the Divine Essence itself (*ST* II-II.23.2 ad 1). Love also characterizes for Aquinas humanity’s blessed fellowship [*communicatio*

dynamic may be described as a “metaphysics of participation” in the Divine Essence.⁴ For Wesley, it is the Christian’s perfection in love through communion with God.⁵ For both, participation in love entails a supernatural transformation of one’s *habitus* wrought by grace and shaped according to Jesus Christ.⁶

Inasmuch as Christ is the very icon of God and the pattern of God’s love (*eikōn tou theou*; Col. 1:15), we are called to be his imitators. And inasmuch as we have been created in the image of God according to our nature (*imago Dei*; Gen. 1:27), we have a capacity for leading lives worthy of God (*digne Deo*; Col. 1:10). Therefore, the framework of nature, grace, and virtue in the theologies of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas yields a common “orienting concern”⁷—*iconic dignity*. Iconic dignity means that we are created to radiate divine dignity—that our worth is real yet rooted in the life and love of God, not ourselves—that this genuine capacity for God entails true human transformation through participation, not entitlement. The value of iconic dignity as an orienting concern

beatitudinis] and participation [*conversatio, participatio*] in God (ST II-II.23.1-2).

⁴ D. Stephen Long elaborates this distinctive feature of Aquinas’s theology in relation to Wesley’s in *John Wesley’s Moral Theology: The Quest for God and Goodness* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 2005), especially pp. 188-195. See also John F. Wippel’s chapter on “Metaphysics” in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, eds. Norman Kretzmann and Eleanor Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), especially pp. 93-99.

⁵ See, for example, Wesley’s *Notes* on 1 John 4:17: “by this communion with God, *is our love made perfect*.”

⁶ “Since charity surpasses the proportion of human nature,” Aquinas write, “it depends, not on any natural virtue, but on the sole grace of the Holy Ghost Who infuses charity” (ST II-II.24.3). Yet we must not forget Aquinas’s axiom that “grace does not destroy nature but perfects it” (e.g., ST I.1.8 ad 2). Accordingly, Thomas finds it “most fitting” that Christ should assume human nature to become our supreme exemplar (ST III.3.8).

For Wesley, “all the souls of men are dead in sin by *nature*,” but “this excuses none, seeing there is no man that is in a state of mere nature; there is no man, unless he has quenched the Spirit, that is wholly void of the grace of God. No man living is entirely destitute of what is vulgarly called ‘natural conscience.’ But this is not natural; it is more properly termed ‘preventing grace.’ Every man has a greater or less measure of this, which waiteth not for the call of man.... Therefore inasmuch as God works in you, you are now able to work out your own salvation. Since he worketh in you of his own good pleasure, without any merit of yours, both to will and to do, it is possible for you to fulfill all righteousness. It is possible for you to ‘love God, because he hath first loved us,’ and to ‘walk in love,’ after the pattern of our great Master” (Sermon 85, “On Working Out Our Own Salvation,” III.4-5, in *Works* 3:207-8). Wesley’s characteristic Christological description of perfection is a combination of Philippians 2:5 and 1 John 2:5—“having the mind of Christ” and “walking as he walked.” Cf. Richard P. Heitzenrater, “The *Imitatio Christi* and the Great Commandment: Virtue and Obligation in Wesley’s Ministry with the Poor,” in *The Portion of the Poor: Good News to the Poor in the Wesleyan Tradition*, ed. by M Douglas Meeks (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995), 58.

⁷ On the function and “implicit, meta-conceptual nature of an orienting concern,” including its contribution to the discussion of the importance of theological perspective, see Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 18, especially note 16.

may be further expressed by examining each term.

The word *iconic* reveals three interpretations of “icon”—*re-presenting* a vision of dignity, *reflecting* the God-human relationships, and *refracting* the human potential to participate with God for transformation in the world.⁸ Like a painting, an icon *re-presents something*; in this case, iconic dignity represents the Christological pattern of human flourishing. Like a mirror, an icon also *reflects something*; in this case, iconic dignity reflects our response to God’s grace and participation in God’s love. Like a prism, an icon *refracts something*; in this case, iconic dignity refracts our divinely-enabled ability to “color” our world with genuine acts of virtue infused with God’s transforming grace. The term *dignity* depicts human worth viewed in the tension between description and the prescription. Descriptively, we have been made “very good” in God’s own image (cf. Gen. 1:27, 31), “a little lower than God, and crowned...with glory and honor” (Ps. 8:5). Prescriptively, we are called to lead lives worthy of God (cf. Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:11; 3 John 6). *Iconic dignity* thus names the tri-directional interplay of nature, grace, and virtue: (1) of human nature formed according to God’s image—but never equal thereto; (2) of God’s grace empowering

⁸ An exhaustive treatment of iconicity is beyond the scope and focus of this prospectus, especially as the concept has received increasing attention in theological, philosophical, and even technological circles over the past 40 years. For the sake of delimitation, my use of *iconicity* primarily stems from the biblical language of *eikōn*, which directly informs Wesley’s and Aquinas’s theological anthropology. Where I step beyond scriptural hermeneutics, my approach is most informed by classical Eastern Orthodoxy and its modern articulations by the likes of Vladimir Lossky and Leonid Ouspensky. This Eastern-informed reading is also reflective of the overall theological postures of Wesley and Aquinas, whose indebtedness to Eastern thought has been articulated at increasingly length over the past two generations. Maddox (and Outler before him) has insightfully argued for a more-Eastern-leaning interpretation of John Wesley’s practical theology (see *Responsible Grace*). Similarly, Thomist scholarship from the last century highlights the Patristic influences on Aquinas’s theology. Furthermore, per Eastern interpretations of iconicity (especially those forged against iconoclastic tendencies in the eighth century), iconicity is inextricably bound with and indeed legitimated by Christ’s incarnation (cf. Theodor Damian, “Icons,” in *The Encyclopedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, Vol. I, ed. John Anthony McGuckin [Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011], 334-335). In this respect, Christ is the prototype of which we icons—a common point of departure for Eastern Orthodoxy, Wesley, and Aquinas.

It will be noted that I have included a handful of contemporary approaches to iconicity in my bibliography (see pp. 31-32). Many of these are contemporary Orthodox reflections on the role and theology of the icon; these inclusions are consistent with the theological direction I have signified in the preceding paragraph. But there are also primary and secondary materials on Jean-Luc Marion’s postmodern-postmetaphysical phenomenology of the idol and the icon; these are offered neither approvingly nor disapprovingly, but rather as a point of reference. Marion assists in emphasizing iconicity (and idolatry) as a *manner* of being and being seen, but his attempt to transcending metaphysical *being* is largely unhelpful due to the ways in which Wesley and Aquinas so strongly describe the Divine in terms of *being*.

human response and growth in holy love—but never merited by human nature alone; and (3) of virtues and habits worthy of “the mind of Christ”—but never isolated from their theological root.⁹

We are icons of the Divine, dignified and animated by God’s own *animus*. The dignity we radiate is due to our participation in the life and love of God, which plays out in our lives as a sort of “spiritual respiration,” which Wesley describes in the following:

God is continually breathing, as it were, upon his soul, and his soul is breathing unto God. Grace is descending into his heart, and prayer and praise ascending to heaven. And by this intercourse between God and man, this fellowship with the Father and the Son, as by a kind of spiritual respiration, the life of God in the soul is sustained: and the child of God grows up, till he comes to ‘the full measure of the stature of Christ.’¹⁰

This pattern of human flourishing in communion with God rightfully upholds our dignity as predicated upon the lavish gift of God’s grace, especially in the procession of God’s love in the form of Christ and animated in the Spirit. But the dignity that God graciously invests in humanity is not an end in itself; as icons, we return God’s gifts in the form of service and worship. To do otherwise would turn the icon into an idol.

2. POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The significance of this dissertation may thus be articulated as three potential contributions, framed as practical-theological proposals in order of importance.¹¹ First, I want to produce a body of theological reflection that challenges readers and responders with the transformational worldview of iconic dignity. Because of the central importance of this outcome, two aspects of my

⁹ Alone, a categorical analysis of nature, grace, and virtue is insufficient. It would amount to a systematic synthesis of Thomist and Wesleyan thought—academically meritorious, but lacking the theological perspective requisite for transformative practice. For that, the orienting concern of iconic dignity is necessary.

¹⁰ Wesley, Sermon 45, “The New Birth,” II.4, in *Works* 2:193. Typical of the time, Wesley’s language is gendered. By “his,” Wesley means “the Christian’s.”

¹¹ While the Introduction of my dissertation will present these three contributions/proposals, it is not until the Conclusion where they will come to fruition. This is particularly true of the third proposal, which is here presented as a tertiary concern of the dissertation. Indeed, the first proposal is the foremost contribution of this project.

dissertation serve that end. First, each of the three parts of the dissertation closes with a chapter that develops constructs of iconic dignity and the ways in which these constructs address contemporary theological and social concerns and practices. The topics for these closing chapters correspond respectively to nature, grace, and virtue, so that the discussions may emerge organically from the analyses (see outline below, pp. 17-20). These chapters demonstrate the constructive capacity of iconic dignity in Wesley and Aquinas; thus, my proposals will be generative but not exhaustive, pointing to further construction for the future.

In addition to the closing chapters of each part of the dissertation, the dissertation will close with one final chapter that assembles the implicit characteristics of iconic dignity from the analysis of nature, grace, and virtue, in order to propose a desired trajectory for theology in general and practical theology in particular. Along with Edward Farley and Randy Maddox, I argue that *theologia* itself is a thoroughly-practical discipline, but only when properly understood in broader, more-holistic terms.¹² Accordingly, the eight aspects of iconic dignity will offer a unified foundation for the three genres of constructive practices with which I will end the conclusion: stewardship, sacramentality, and hospitality. I include these practical proposals (further elaborated on pp. 11-12) under this first dissertation outcome as the fullest development of iconic dignity for Christian practice and constructive practical-theological reflection.

Second, as a Wesleyan theologian, I want to propose a fresh hermeneutical lens for Wesleyan theology by placing Wesley and Aquinas in fruitful conversation on classical and compatible themes. This comparison can potentially yield a more robust theological construction and a more life-giving guide for Christian practice. In my scholarship, I have identified at least four different

¹² See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001). See also Randy L. Maddox, "The Recovery of Theology as a Practical Discipline," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 650-672. In his article, Maddox articulates seven "desired characteristics of a truly practical theology" (pp. 665-669), which are similar to my own proposals that emerge from my treatment of iconic dignity.

models for interpreting Wesley's theology and practice since the 1930s: an Eastern-Patristic model,¹³ a Lutheran-Moravian model,¹⁴ a Calvinist-Reformed model,¹⁵ and an Anglican model.¹⁶ In these approaches, if Aquinas is mentioned (a rare occurrence), it is usually for the sake of juxtaposing Wesley's "folk theology" or "practical divinity"¹⁷ with Aquinas's "Western scholasticism." Nonetheless, the past decade has witnessed a trio of Wesleyan scholars who have sought to engage aspects of Aquinas's theology.¹⁸ These studies have largely assumed an underlying Wesleyan-Thomist frame-

¹³ Introduced by Albert C. Outler in editorial commentary (e.g., *John Wesley* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964]; and his "Introduction" to *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 1 [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984], 1-100) and essays/monographs (e.g., "Towards a Reappraisal of John Wesley as a Theologian," *Perkins School of Theology Journal* 14/2 [Winter 1961]: 5-14; *Evangelism in the Wesleyan Spirit* [Nashville: Tidings, 1971]; *Theology in the Wesleyan Spirit* [Nashville: Tidings, 1975]; "John Wesley: Folk-Theologian," *Theology Today* 34/2 [July 1977]: 150-160), this perspective has more recently been advocated by the likes of Randy Maddox (cf. *Responsible Grace*; see also "Reading Wesley as a Theologian," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 30/1 [Spring 1995]: 7-54). Broadly speaking, this approach portrays Wesley's theological emphases and influences as stemming from exposure to and reflection upon Eastern Fathers, resulting (for example) in a focus on the *process* of theological perfection.

¹⁴ Harald Lindström's *Wesley and Sanctification: A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation*, (London: Epworth Press, 1950), established a "German" reading of Wesley (echoed, but not replicated, in John Deschner's work, including *Wesley's Christology: An Interpretation* [Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985]), which Kenneth J. Collins has adopted and expanded more in a "Continental Protestant" direction (see especially his *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007]). In brief, this approach tends to place more emphasis on justification and the instantaneity of change in theological "status" (i.e., justification, sanctification, perfection, etc.). N.B. To a degree, Richard P. Heitzenrater's approach can be said to fit into this framework (cf. his popular *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 2nd ed. [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013]). However, I understand Heitzenrater's work on Lutheran-Moravian themes to be more historical than hermeneutical.

¹⁵ George Croft Cell's *The Rediscovery of John Wesley* (New York: Holt & Co., 1935) self-professedly sought to (re) align Wesley's thought with that of the Reformers—especially John Calvin (cf. Cell's "Preface"). Importantly, Cell identified "the Wesleyan ethic of life...and the exclusive orientation of its Christian ethic in the idea of divine grace, essentially and thoroughly Calvinistic" (vii).

¹⁶ All studies of John Wesley and his thought must certainly engage his unequivocal Anglican affiliation—and, to be sure, all those listed here have addressed this aspect. However, Frank Baker's *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970) remains the most thorough treatment of Wesley's complex relationship with the Church of England and how Wesley operated with distinctively Anglican categories and language.

¹⁷ Outler is attributed with the infamous ascription of John Wesley as "folk theologian." See Outler's "Preface" in *John Wesley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), iii; see also his "John Wesley: Folk-Theologian," *Theology Today* 34/2 [July 1977]: 150-160. Since then, numerous Wesleyan commentators have adopted Wesley's own language of "practical divinity" (e.g., Wesley's "Preface," §4-5, to the 1780 *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*) to describe the character of his theology, sometimes modernizing the language to "practical theology." Thus Maddox's *Responsible Grace*; Collins's *The Theology of John Wesley*; Thomas A. Langford's two-volume *Practical Divinity*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998/9); and Kenneth Wilson's *Methodist Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 39ff.

I should note that the perspective I am ultimately advocating may seem strongly Western/Catholic since it engages a doctor of the Roman Catholic Church. However, given the clear influence of Eastern/Greek theologians in Thomas's thought (especially that of St. John of Damascus and the Patristics), a singular classification of Aquinas as "western" is insufficient—perhaps just as a singular classification of Wesley as "evangelical" is insufficient.

¹⁸ See Long's *John Wesley's Moral Theology*; Edgardo Colón-Emeric's *Wesley, Aquinas, and Christian Perfection: An Ecumenical Dialogue* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009); and Kenneth Loyer's *God's Love through the Spirit: The*

work of the constitution of human nature and the operations of divine grace, but an explicit treatment thereof remains unwritten. Additionally, since the contours of nature and grace establish the parameters of a virtuous and holy life, any work in theological ethics—whether critical, constructive, comparative, ecumenical, or the like—must seriously engage Wesley’s (and Aquinas’s) theological perspectives on human nature, grace, and virtue.¹⁹ Therefore, I propose that contemporary Wesleyan theology must give more attention to Wesley’s integrated treatment of nature, grace, and virtue. In doing so, Wesleyan scholars will find themselves in dialogue with Aquinas’s theology as well as with fresh perspectives on Christian action in the world.

Finally, it would be a gross oversight to ignore the past 50 years of ecumenical dialogue between Methodists and Catholics—the theological traditions of which Wesley and Aquinas are representative figures. Since 1986, the stated goal of the dialogues has been “full communion in faith, mission and sacramental life”; however, that goal remains unfulfilled, partially due to a lack of common understanding on *faith*.²⁰ Yet, in 2006, the committee proposed a new avenue for engagement: mutual recognition for each tradition’s “saints.”²¹ My dissertation advances that methodological shift in Methodist-Catholic dialogues by providing a rich theological taproot for continued re-

Holy Spirit in Thomas Aquinas and John Wesley (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2014). While Long’s work focuses on recasting Wesley’s theology as a Thomistically-styled moral theology, Colón-Emeric and Loyer tackle the theological categories of Christian perfection and pneumatology.

¹⁹ This imperative starting-point may be demonstrated inversely in Kevin Twain Lowery’s *Salvaging Wesley’s Agenda: A New Paradigm for Wesleyan Virtue Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2008). Self-knowingly avoiding engagement with Aquinas (xiv-xv), Lowery discharges Wesley’s doctrines of (human) nature and (divine) grace, thereby excising the “theological” from Wesley’s understanding of the virtues and their practices.

²⁰ *Towards a Statement on the Church* (Nairobi, 1986), §20. I should also note that I am focused primarily on the quadrennial dialogues between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church, which began shortly after Vatican Council II. However, the United Methodist Church (one of the 80 denominations comprising the World Methodist Council) has also been in dialogue with the Catholic Church for the same amount of time.

²¹ *The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics & Methodists Reflect Further on the Church* (Seoul, 2006), §§127, 137, 157, 161. As noted Methodist ecumenist Geoffrey Wainwright elaborates, the recognition of another tradition’s saints (i.e., as exemplars of faith and models of holiness) bears ecumenical implications. “To recognize the saints of another community is in some way also to recognize their home community, and vice versa.... The prayers and witness of the saints... must surely be allowed to influence our growing mutual recognition and our progress to greater ecclesial unity on earth” (*Methodists in Dialog* [Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1995], 248-249).

lection on *faith*, especially in the context of comparative theological dialogue between “saint” John Wesley and St. Thomas Aquinas. Thus, my first proposal is to craft a common understanding of *faith* for Methodist-Catholic dialogue by using the thought of Wesley and Aquinas on nature, grace, and (especially) virtue, as a means of drawing nearer to a theology and practice of full communion.

3. METHOD/OLOGY AND SOURCES OF STUDY

Methodologically, this project is an exercise in comparative theology. According to leading comparative theologian Francis X. Clooney, S.J., “As a theological and necessarily spiritual practice (and, in my use of it, a way of reading), *comparison* is a reflective and contemplative endeavor by which we see the other in light of our own, and our own in light of the other.”²² It is telling that Clooney explicitly distinguishes comparative theology from comparative religion, theology of religions, interreligious dialogue, and interreligious theology: in doing so, he implicitly frees comparative theology from interreligious *methods* by means of emphasizing comparative *methodology*.²³ By implication, although Clooney’s work in Hindu-Christian comparison is *inter*-religious in *method*, and although there is no evidence other scholars using his version of comparative theology *intra*-religiously, his methodology strongly comports with my own *intra*-religious focus in four ways.

The first two points are interrelated. First, Clooney’s language for the groups to be compared equally varies between “traditions” than “religions,” with his definitional uses tending more

²² Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 11. See also his “A Catholic Comparativist’s View of Scriptural Reasoning in the Anglican Context,” in the *Journal of Anglican Studies* 11/2 (2013): 217-232; and his chapter “Comparative Theology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 653-669.

²³ Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 9-10. This is also evident in Clooney’s chapter “Comparative Theology,” where he eschews “sure and settled definitions” of this “vital yet still developing discipline” (654).

Also, I am here drawing a distinction between *method* and *methodology* similar to Emmanuel Y. Lartey’s in his *Pastoral Theology in an Intercultural World* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2006), 74-78. In short, a method is a tool, a precise implementation or manifestation of a methodology, which is an underlying theory or rationale of method(s). The method is a species of the genus *methodology*. Clooney’s *method* is interreligious, but his *methodology* is comparative.

toward “traditions.”²⁴ Though not explicit, this nuance creates room for my sort of inter-traditional (though intra-religious) comparison. Second, Clooney’s theological aims are consonant with the trajectory of this project. Methodologically, comparative theology seeks theological learning through an exchange of faith traditions that “is sought for the sake of fresh theological insights that are indebted to the newly encountered tradition/s as well as the home tradition.”²⁵ The theological-comparative work of this project presents iconic dignity as one such “fresh theological insight.”

Third, Clooney traces the first apparent English use of “comparative theology” back to a tract written in 1700 by James Garden on the subject. Even though Garden’s focus was *intra-religious*, Clooney finds “Garden’s comparative theology is...consonant with the constructive comparative theology I have in mind, a recognition of intellectual and spiritual possibilities that is not thwarted by the fact of differences.”²⁶ Intriguingly, not only was Wesley aware of Garden’s argument,²⁷ he approvingly republished Garden’s tract in his 1750 *Christian Library*!²⁸

Fourth, Clooney’s clear textual method not only bespeaks my own approach to a theological comparison of Wesley and Aquinas, it also resonates into my selection of source materials and limiting principles for this dissertation. My bibliography readily depicts the textual nature of this project; however, given the sheer quantity of possible primary materials, certain limiting principles are in order to maintain manageability. First, I attend to the “standard” or “canonical” works of each thinker—Wesley’s *Sermons* and *Notes*, and Aquinas’s *Summae*. Wesley’s *Journal*, letters, and doctrinal tracts and treaties will be used supplementarily, as will Aquinas’s various disputations.

²⁴ For example, see the opening pages of his essay “Comparative Theology” in *The Oxford Handbook...*, as well as the first chapter in his *Comparative Theology*.

²⁵ Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 10. Cf. Clooney, “Comparative Theology,” 653-654.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31. Of course, contemporary comparative theology has expanded to include (exclusively?) inter-religious comparison, and Clooney notes this. Still, Clooney recognizes the methodological resonances (30-32).

²⁷ Cf. Wesley, Sermon 92, “On Zeal,” II.5, in *Works* 3:313-314.

²⁸ John Wesley, *A Christian Library* (1750), XXII:243-287. This 50-volume work, which Wesley published for the Methodists, consisted of his own extracts and abridgements of works in “practical divinity” through Christianity.

Second, I give intellectual priority to those later works that are more reflective of the theologians' "mature" thoughts. Third, I draw upon secondary materials not only to help manage the material, but also to interact with the greater scholarly conversation to which I am contributing. Of note is the attention I intend to give to secondary sources, which distinguishes this dissertation from the few others that have sought to compare John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas. Primary and secondary sources are readily accessible in a variety of electronic and print media through the Boston University libraries.²⁹

Comparison of this sort necessitates a degree of theological construction. For this reason, iconic dignity becomes the lens for advancing practical constructs, and that in two ways. First, construction stemming from a focus on *iconic* dignity is located in the concluding chapter of each of the dissertation's three parts. These constructions—iconic dignity and non-human nature, iconic dignity and "social grace," and iconic dignity and virtues for today—are intended to reflect the generative potential that iconic dignity can offer as an orienting concern to the analytical treatment of nature, grace, and virtue. The conversations are exploratory and demonstrate some of the ways in which iconic dignity can address topics beyond the immediate scope of this dissertation.

Beyond this, the conclusion itself constitutes a second construction by attending to iconic *dignity* in direct response to modern social fragmentation in its many forms. After addressing the emergent characteristics of iconic dignity in the conclusion, I will orient iconic dignity toward three specific practices—all of which tacitly understands the *ecclesia* as the community of theological reflection and action. Consistent with the trajectory I have been establishing, the three practices emerge again from nature, grace, and virtue. From the analysis of nature, I propose *stew-*

²⁹ The libraries possess the best critical editions of Wesley's and Aquinas's works, including Aquinas's original Latin. I took it upon myself to learn ecclesiastical Latin last year in order to work with Aquinas's original text where alternative translations could prove instructive.

ardship—ecclesial involvement in ecological preservation, economic equality, and ending human trafficking. The earth and all that inhabits it are God’s, and the dignity we find therein reflects a part of God’s nature. Our responsibility as iconic stewards is to participate in God’s continual re/creation by utilizing our own iconic dignity for the sake of others. From the analysis of grace, I propose *sacramentality*—especially the ecclesial practice of Eucharist, complete with its robust economic implications.³⁰ Indeed, *sacrament* represents the very dynamic of iconic dignity, so it is no surprise that iconic dignity should call attention to regular sacramental participation, which is the very sustenance of the church for the sake of *being sacrament*—a holy icon—in the world. From the analysis of virtue, I propose *hospitality*—ecclesial havens for marginalized “others,” voices of witness against racial inequality and brutality, open fellowship with LGBTQ kin. The poignancy of this proposal can hardly be understated in the present social context of xenophobia and the violence to which it leads. Hospitality is the Christian virtue that overcomes fear-of-the-other, not through eradication but through encounter moved by love. As a practice, hospitality embodies the church’s witness against the social, physical, psychological, and spiritual abuses of people of differing races or sexual orientations. Iconic dignity thus points to the dignity of the prototypical *eikōn tou theou*, most visible in the hospitality of the Incarnation (cf. Phil. 2:5-11).

To a certain extent, my other two contributions are also theologically constructive: (1) proposing Wesley and Aquinas’s interaction on the virtue of *faith* as a conduit for advancing Methodist-Catholic dialogue; (2) developing a framework for Wesleyan theology that interacts with Aquinas on nature, grace, and virtue. In the first case, this project’s ecumenical potential does not emerge self-evidently, but instead requires assemblage borne out of the theological comparison of Wesley and Aquinas. One part of that is the work of translating Wesley and Aquinas to be able to

³⁰ The return to economic consideration through the lens of grace/sacramentality is no accident, for “grace perfects nature.” Thus, the nature/stewardship introduction of economic equality is carried into grace/sacrament.

converse with one another; another part is the work of translating Wesley and Aquinas to be able to converse with *us* in and for ecumenical dialogue. In the second case, this project's contributions to Wesleyan theology are located in the interaction between Wesley and Aquinas on theological topics that have remained largely untreated. However, this dissertation is neither an attempt to construct a standalone theology of nature, grace, and virtue, nor is it exclusively a constructed tool for ecumenical dialogue. My central focus remains my intention to draw out themes from Wesley's and Aquinas's theological treatment of nature, grace, and virtue to inform iconic dignity.

4. EVALUATION

As with all dissertations, this project involves standard evaluative components such as depth and breadth of focus, mastery of a range of primary and secondary materials, coherence (both theological and compositional-structural), and ongoing reader feedback.³¹ However, the larger value of this dissertation must be assessed in terms of its internal coherence according to the criteria of the desired outcomes, contributions, and proposals. On the one hand, the dissertation must achieve a creative and compelling hermeneutical framework for comparing Wesley and Aquinas on nature, grace, and virtue. On the other hand, the dissertation must also be able to *transcend* that framework—not by abandoning it, but rather by revealing the underlying theme of iconic dignity that is able to address situations beyond those of its historical subjects.³² At stake is a way of approaching the unity of theological thought and practice that emerges from tradition, underscores the centrality of participating in the love of God, and challenges dignity-denying situations that obscure humanity's iconic stature in God's creation. Ultimately, the dissertation must generate authentic

³¹ For example, *theological* coherence will be maintained through the readership and input from leading Wesleyan and Wesley-Aquinas scholars; *compositional-structural* coherence will be maintained through independent and non-theologically-inclined editors.

³² This observation naturally calls to mind Aquinas's axiom: grace perfects nature without destroying it.

practical proposals. To this end, I offer the eight elements of iconic dignity—always informed by Wesley and Aquinas on nature, grace, and virtue—as integral guidelines for all theological thought and practice.

5. LIMITATIONS AND PLANS FOR COMPLETION

Both limitations of this dissertation deal with situation and context. First, Wesley and Aquinas were very much the products of their historical, educational, ecclesial, socio-political, and even geographical situations. At places, those situations align. For example, although Wesley and Aquinas could be seen as “outsiders” for their practices or theological approaches,³³ both theologians would have considered themselves “conservative” with respect to doctrines, practices, and theological sources. In other words, Wesley and Aquinas largely accepted their surrounding political and ecclesiastical powers—a situation vastly different from today’s commonplace critiques of such structures. Elsewhere, those situations *diverge*. For example, their apparently different theological styles (sermons vs. *summae*) and purposes (salvation vs. *scientia*) can make comparison difficult. Additionally, the real historical chasm existing between the 13th and 18th centuries—and then to the 21st century!—means that some aspects of the dissertation are necessarily artificial.³⁴ The bottom line is that, while it may at times be difficult to produce agreement between Wesley and Aquinas on a given topic due to *their* contexts, it can be doubly-difficult to confer with that agreement today due to *our* contexts.

The second limitation deals with the ways in which my theological tradition and academic proclivities are bound to affect the nature and scope of my work. My Wesleyan-Methodist back-

³³ E.g., Wesley’s field preaching and Aquinas’s use of Aristotle.

³⁴ Literally, from the Latin meaning “artful making.” Constructive theological reflection is required to bridge the passage of centuries that have witnessed a proliferation of technologies; an aggregation of populations; global warfare, warming, and wealth; mass media and social media—to name but a few significant historical changes.

ground certainly predisposes me toward a deeper engagement with John Wesley and the Methodist tradition. Yet, as Clooney indicates, an autobiographical component is necessary to the comparative theological method.³⁵ In the process of comparison, we must notice ourselves and the traditions to which we belong, for the comparative method inherently moves *from* one's particular tradition of inquiry *into* other traditions of inquiry.³⁶ In an attempt to achieve perspectival balance, though, I may end up *over*-emphasizing Aquinas's theology and style. The caveat, then, is twofold: the dissertation could comfortably slip into Wesley's sermonic style, but without his attention to theological substance; conversely, the dissertation could equally stray into Aquinas's scholastic style, but running the risk of an ideological or sterile approach to practice. The difficulty is in achieving an artful balance between the two.

My goal is to graduate Spring 2017, meaning I have approximately 20 months to write, revise, and defend my dissertation. This plan comfortably allots 4-5 months per part and 2-4 months for the introduction and conclusion, leaving extra time for unforeseen circumstances. Finally, since I was able to steer my coursework and qualifying exams toward the general topic of this dissertation, I have already made significant progress in my research.³⁷

6. WORKING OUTLINE

In an attempt to illustrate a facet of the iconicity proposed in this dissertation, I have sought to structure the project as an icon itself. As with a religious icon, the dissertation presents a broad

³⁵ Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 16-19.

³⁶ Clooney, "A Catholic Comparativist's View..." 218.

³⁷ Specifically, I have gone through a majority of Wesley's *Sermons, Appeals...*, and *Doctrine of Original Sin*, as well as Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*. Of the materials *about* Wesley, I have had the greatest exposure to Maddox's works, but have also studied Collins, Heitzenrater, Colón-Emeric, Williams, Deschner, Wynkoop, Cobb, Lodahl, Long, Runyon, Rack, Outler, Lowery, Marquardt, *et al.* I am currently proceeding through the standard "early works" in Wesleyan theology: Lindstrom, Lee, and Cell. My work with secondary sources for Aquinas is less, though I have read great portions of Davies, Kerr, and Garrigou-Lagrange, as well as Nieuwenhove and Wawrykow.

picture through multiple details, yet neither the details nor the overall picture properly represents the icon's full significance. In order to "understand" an icon, one must encounter *that to which the icon points*. Likewise, my dissertation offers details (nature, grace, and virtue) to present a broad picture (Wesley and Aquinas fruitfully compared) which is then transcended in order to signify a truth (iconic dignity).

The introduction of the dissertation seeks to draw in the reader from the commonly-observed world, paralleling (for example) an icon's visual presentation of a holy figure. From a brief diagnosis of the present social situation, I then move to the "big picture"—the figures, terms, and issues of the dissertation. The three-part analysis of nature, grace, and virtue in Wesley and Aquinas mimics a viewer's "long gaze" of an icon's specific shapes and contours. Throughout the long gaze, a viewer is likely to catch glimpses of the signified truth (i.e., the closing chapter of each part), though the icon has yet to be comprehended in full. Rather, the conclusion of the dissertation imitates a fuller iconic "comprehension"—epiphanic, transcendent truth wrought through the process of the long gaze. The overall structure suggests a movement that is more inductive than deductive. Consequently, some of my proposals for theological practice are embedded throughout Parts I, II, and III, allowing both the fullness of iconic dignity and the interconnectedness of the practices to emerge in the conclusion.

The introduction and conclusion are estimated at 40-50 pages apiece. The analyses of nature, grace, and virtue (Parts I, II, and III) are estimated at 80-120 pages apiece, with each chapter running 20-25 pages. The whole dissertation is estimated to run 350-450 pages.

* * * * *

Introduction. The introduction recognizes a modern world marked by fragmentation, out of which the perceived need is a theological perspective able to advance "iconic dignity" informed by a constructive theological comparison of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas. After justifying why Aquinas and Wesley ought to be considered, I present an overview of the parameters of the comparison—the three related themes of nature, grace, and virtue—and how the comparison reveals

an orienting concern of iconic dignity. Of significance is the argument that Wesley and Aquinas jointly illuminate the *telos* of theological inquiry and practice: a transformation of total worldview through God's gracious enablement to humans issuing in a life of virtue. The introduction closes with the desired outcomes of the project (proposals) and its methodology.

- a. Theological perspective in an age of fragmentation—the stakes
- b. Aquinas and Wesley
 - i. Contextual background and historical location of Wesley and Aquinas
 - ii. *Why* these figures are worthy dialogue partners
 - iii. *How* these figures are worthy dialogue partners: Nature, Grace, and Virtue
- c. Iconic dignity introduced
- d. The three desired outcomes
- e. Theological method—comparative and constructive

I. Nature. The comparison begins with Wesley's and Aquinas's views of human nature—their theological anthropologies. Both theologians ground human nature in being made in the image of God (“iconicity”), and from this follows a consideration of the problem of sin, the constitution of human actions, sociality, and theological anthropology's implications for both grace and virtue (“dignity”). Since the iconic dignity of human nature entails both gift and responsibility, the closing chapter presents a constructive Wesleyan-Thomist vision of humanity as stewards of “Nature” as a whole.

1. Theological Anthropology in Wesley and Aquinas
 - a. Wesley and Aquinas on God and Nature
 - i. God as Creator
 - ii. God as author and paradigm of perfection
 - iii. Natural theology in Wesley and Aquinas?
 - b. Humanity created in the *imago Dei*
 - i. Wesley's threefold “image of God”
 - ii. Aquinas's threefold “good of human nature”
 - iii. The *imago Dei* as the source of anthropological constitution
 - c. Volition (will)
 - d. Intellection (reason)
 - e. Affection (emotion)
 - f. Inspiration (soul)
2. The Constitution of Human Actions
 - a. What is “moral”?—free-will, knowledge, ability, etc.
 - b. “Good” human action
 - c. “Bad” human action: *sin*, both actual and original—consequent upon the *imago Dei*
3. The Social Aspect of Humanity
 - a. Interdependency and interrelatedness of Creation and humanity—*imago Trinitatis*
 - b. Communal constitution of human perfection
 - c. Habituation as a social construct
 - i. Wesley and the Methodist societies
 - ii. Aquinas and the Dominican order
4. Iconic Dignity and Non-Human Nature

- a. Wesley and Aquinas on the natural order of Creation
- b. New Creation as a multivalent theme in Aquinas and Wesley
- c. Other-creaturely perfection
- d. Ecological implications of iconic dignity—e.g., Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si*

II. Grace. “Grace perfects nature without destroying it,” says Aquinas, and it stands to reason that the treatment of grace unfolds according to the contours of the theological anthropology already established. My objective is to compare Wesleyan grace with Thomistic grace, which develops according to an “initiative-response” dynamic. Carrying forward the orienting concern of iconic dignity and the findings from the comparison on nature, the discussion includes consideration of Wesley’s and Aquinas’s soteriologies as expressions of their understandings of grace—including *grace* as a response to *nature*. After addressing Wesley and Aquinas on the Church and its sacraments (means of grace), I close with a chapter proposing iconic dignity as a way of conceiving “social grace” and the role of the Church as a means of (prevenient) grace.

5. The Nature and Dynamic of Grace
 - a. Wesley’s three types of grace; Aquinas’ six types of grace
 - b. Divine initiative, human response
 - i. The role of prevenient grace in Wesley—*vs.* Aquinas’s “optimism of nature”?
 - ii. Connection with theological anthropology
 - c. Operation and cooperation: the dynamics of grace for Wesley and Aquinas
 - d. Situating Wesley and Aquinas on grace and response—theological alternatives?
6. Soteriology
 - a. What does “salvation” mean for Wesley and Aquinas?
 - b. Wesley’s “clear” *via salutis*—soteriology as Wesley’s chief theological concern?
 - c. Aquinas’ “hidden” soteriology—morality as Aquinas’ chief theological concern?
 - d. Providence, predestination, and perseverance
 - e. Holy Spirit as the agent of perfection through presence (operative and cooperative)
7. Means of Grace
 - a. Grace rooted in Christ, the *eikōn tou theou*
 - b. Ecclesiology: Church as *locus gratiae*?
 - i. Wesley’s ecclesiology—absent?
 - ii. Aquinas’s ecclesiology—absent?
 - c. Instituted means of grace and the sacraments
 - d. Prudential means of grace, “sacramentals,” and generating means of grace
8. Iconic Dignity and “Social Grace”
 - a. The Church as a *graced* icon—iconic dignity and the “body of Christ”
 - b. Social grace *vs.* social holiness *vs.* social justice
 - c. Iconic dignity and the Church as iconic means of (prevenient) grace

III. Virtue. The comparison of Wesley and Aquinas concludes with an analysis of virtue. This begins with a common understanding of Aristotelian moral thought, especially his *eudaimonian* teleology. However, both theologians transcend the pre-Christian tradition of virtue by relating virtue and grace through the lens of Christ—which is to say, by means of rooting human dignity in our iconic reflection of the Divine. Without abandoning the moral and intellectual virtues, Wesley and Aquinas characteristically present the theological virtues (faith, hope, and most especially love) as

the fullest realization of holy happiness in fellowship with God. The overall trajectory thus moves from our *capacity* for this glorious goal (“nature”), through the *gift* of God in enabling and actualizing our attainment thereto (“grace”), to our *responsibility* toward realizing that end (“virtue”). The closing chapter constructively extends to our imitation of God’s generativity by proposing authentically Wesleyan and Thomist virtues for Christian practice today. Authenticity is gauged by attending to the orienting concern of iconic dignity.

9. An Overview of Virtue for Aquinas and Wesley
 - a. Aristotelian foundation for Wesley and Aquinas
 - b. Habituation and the virtues
 - i. Human disposition in Wesley and Aquinas—a reprise of human/moral action
 - ii. Means of habituation and means of grace
 - c. Teleological structure (theological *source* and *aim*)—emblematic of iconic dignity
 - d. Exemplarity and the virtues
10. Christ and Virtue
 - a. The Christological character and content of the virtues
 - b. “The mind of Christ” and “walking as Jesus walked”
 - c. The relationship between *virtue* and *grace* through Christology—Christ’s grace conferred through the Spirit to conform us to Christ
11. Catalogue(s) of the Virtues
 - a. An *ordo virtutis* in Wesley and Aquinas?
 - b. The moral and intellectual virtues
 - c. The theological virtues
 - d. Gifts and beatitudes
 - i. The gifts of the Spirit vs. gratuitous graces
 - ii. The Sermon on the Mount (Beatitudes)—*locus moralis* for Wesley and Aquinas
12. Iconic Dignity and Virtues for Today
 - a. Are the classical/Greek moral and intellectual virtues applicable today?—Additions, subtractions, modifications, etc.?
 - b. Wesleyan-Thomist resources for discerning “virtues for today”
 - c. Contemporary virtues that uphold iconic dignity

Conclusion. Having analyzed the common framework of nature, grace, and virtue in the theologies of Wesley and Aquinas (“the long gaze”), the conclusion aims to transcend the analytical in order to “comprehend” the orientation of iconic dignity. First, I recapitulate the dissertation’s findings, now presenting the desired outcomes from the introduction as proposals for theological practice. Second, I specifically address my comparative work to the Methodist-Catholic dialogue as a possibility for seeking convergence on “faith.” Third is a constructive reflection on the emergent characteristics of iconic dignity which comprise the practical-theological perspective so desperately needed in today’s society. In closing, I use iconic dignity to return to nature, grace, and virtue to generate constructive proposals for future practical-theological work in the areas of stewardship, sacramentality, and hospitality.

- a. Desired outcomes and proposals
 - i. Summary of findings on nature, grace, and virtue: fresh hermeneutical perspective for Wesleyan theological studies, yielding an orienting concern of iconic dignity

- ii. Prospects of Thomist-Wesleyan comparison for Methodist-Catholic dialogues—possible convergence on “faith” for Methodists and Catholics due to the Wesleyan-Thomist comparison of the virtue of faith
- b. Iconic dignity’s emergent characteristics
 - i. Emergent characteristics
 - 1. Participatory
 - 2. Relational
 - 3. Reflexive
 - 4. Dynamic
 - 5. Transformative
 - 6. Virtuous
 - 7. Practical
 - 8. Loving
 - ii. Parallels to Maddox’s seven “desired aspects in a practical theology”
- c. Iconic dignity’s constructive proposals for future practical-theological work
 - i. Nature and Stewardship
 - ii. Grace and Sacramentality
 - iii. Virtue and Hospitality
 - iv. “Explanatory power”—understood as an alternative theological perspective *and* as a transformative theological perspective alternative *and* transformative theological perspective

7. WORKING BIBLIOGRAPHY

The materials for this dissertation include both primary and secondary sources pertaining to the theologies of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas with respect to human nature, grace, and virtue.³⁸ Due to Aquinas’s literary style, locating pertinent material is fairly straightforward: he organizes his theological reflection according to categories and subjects. Therefore, the secondary materials for Aquinas are intended to represent a variety of Thomistic voices since the resurgence of Thomism (late 19th century) and to help guide and interpret the primary material. Wesley’s theological writings differ significantly from Aquinas’s in style, so the task of “making Wesley speak on a subject” is far more difficult. Secondary Wesleyan materials thus provide a variety of Wesleyan interpretations while also functioning as research apparatuses for locating more obscure references from Wesley’s works.

³⁸ The Methodist-Catholic dialogues listed below are, properly speaking, “primary sources”—though my use of them is more in service of a secondary purpose of my dissertation. Since a desired outcome is the use of this dissertation as a resource in the future of that dialogue, conversant familiarity with these sources is indispensable.

In addition to providing theologically interpretive frameworks, the secondary sources below function in four additional ways. (1) Biographical and/or historical materials help to contextualize Wesley and Aquinas, which offers a rich interpretive lens into why these theologians position themselves as they do. (2) Older, more “dated” secondary materials serve as a foundation from which contemporary scholars have operated, meaning a familiarity with classical interpretations is indispensable. (3) A few of the secondary materials attempt a similar conversation between Wesley and Aquinas. These sources are intended to aid in the critical, comparative, and constructive tasks of my dissertation. (4) A final grouping of secondary materials provides disciplinary background and reflects the ways in which this dissertation has grown out of my course work and exams in practical theology.

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Plain Account of Christian Perfection (v. 13)

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Dublin	1976	<i>The Dublin Report</i>
Honolulu	1981	<i>Toward an Agreed Statement on the Holy Spirit</i>
Nairobi	1986	<i>Towards a Statement on the Church</i>
Singapore	1991	<i>The Apostolic Tradition</i>
Rio de Janeiro	1996	<i>The Word of Life: A Statement on Revelation and Faith</i>
Brighton	2001	<i>Speaking the Truth in Love: Teaching Authority among Catholics and Methodists</i>
Seoul	2006	<i>The Grace Given You in Christ: Catholics & Methodists Reflect Further on the Church</i>
Durban	2010	<i>Synthesis: Together in Holiness—40 Years of Methodist and Roman Catholic Dialogue</i>
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8. APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS

Beatitudo, eudaimonia, happiness. Aquinas uses the Latin *beatitudo* for the Greek *eudaimonia*, both of which meagerly translate to “happiness.” This concept is the ultimate goal (*telos*) of humans, since it engages the human soul in its rational capacities—capacities that distinguishes humans from other animals. John Wesley adopts this kind of “eudaimonianism,” but with an added twist: he links “happiness” with “holiness,” less as a qualification than as an explication.

Comparative theology. “*Comparative theology*—*comparative* and *theological* beginning to end—marks acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions. This learning is sought for the sake of fresh theological insights that are indebted to the newly encountered tradition/s as well as the home tradition” (Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 10). For a broader treatment of this term, see above, pp. 9-11.

Grace. The unmerited, universally-available gift of God’s presence, pardon, and perfection. Grace is *prevenient*, “coming before” any human action; it initiates the restoration of Christian salvation by making us respond-able to God’s further work. Grace is *operative*, rendering us “righteous” through justification, which God works *in* us. Grace is *co-operative*, bringing us to perfection through sanctification, which God works *with* us.

Habitus. A disposition of character particular to a human, being both cognitive and affectional. A *habitus* is not a static quality of a person, but is instead formable through frequent practices—hence, the process of “habituation.” When morally “bad” practices come to shape a person’s *habitus*, the person is said to be “vicious.” Contrarily, when morally “good” practices come to characterize a person, that person is said to be “virtuous.”

Iconic dignity. See above, pp. 2-5.

Nature. Here understood primarily as human nature in general and theological anthropology in particular, this term names the object of the theological approach to what constitutes a human as a human. In other words, (human) nature describes the faculties and attributes (physical, cognitive, affective, spiritual) without which a person would be unrecognizably “human”—a different species, as it were. More broadly, it can describe the whole order of Creation.

Virtue/s. A virtue is the perfection of a power—an operative *habitus*—that always tends toward what is good, and which results in action. Virtues are classically divided into three categories: intellectual, moral (cardinal), and theological. For Aristotle, INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES correspond to the rational aspect of the human soul. He enumerates five such virtues in his *Nicomachean Ethics*: understanding (*nous/intellectus*), theoretical wisdom (*epistēmē/scientia*), wisdom (*sophia/sapientia*), technical wisdom (*technē/ars*), and practical wisdom (*phronēsis/prudentia*). Aquinas adopts Aristotle’s list of intellectual virtues, but further categorizes the first three as “speculatively-intellectual virtues” and the last two as “practically-intellectual virtues.” Aquinas also follows Aristotle (and Plato) in enumerating four MORAL (CARDINAL) VIRTUES, which correspond to the human soul: temperance (*temperantia*) is the proper exercise of the appetites; courage (*fortitudo*) is the proper exercise of the emotions; practical wisdom (*prudentia*) is the proper exercise of the reason; justice (*justitia*) is the outcome of the proper balance of the other three moral virtues. However, for both Wesley and Aquinas, the THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES of faith (*fides*), hope (*spes*), and love (*caritas*) are necessary for humans to reach their *supernatural* end, which is fellowship with God in holy love. For Aquinas, the theological virtues unite the mind to God, the intellectual virtues perfect the intellect, and the moral virtues perfect the will.

Thomas Aquinas shares with other medieval scholastic writers a profound preoccupation with authoritative texts. Thomas has worked out his theology in dialogue with the writings of others, and his own compositions skillfully engage a wide variety of texts. The importance of authorities, patent on every page, is stressed by Thomas in the opening question of the *Summa Theologiae*, in the article in which he describes the place of argument in sacred doctrine; in the second response of that article (I 1, 8 ad 2), he has specified the relative weight that should be accorded to each kind of authority Thomas Aquinas sought to reconcile Aristotle's Formal Logic with the Catholic interpretation of the Bible. Aquinas used thousands of formal, logical syllogisms to answer more than 300 Questions of Christian dogma. Whether one agrees with his interpretation of the Bible is secondary – the most interesting aspect for Philosophy is his vast tapestry of Logical Syllogisms which adhere in every respect to the rules given by Aristotle back in 350 BC. His theology of the Eucharist is considered by both Protestants and eastern Christians too rationalistic an attempt to explain what the former o. Continue Reading. The short answer is that he adapted the philosophy of Aristotle to the demands and interests of the medieval Catholic Church. Iconic dignity: nature, grace, and virtue in the theologies. Of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas Gregory P. Van Buskirk. Boston University School of Theology, 2019 Major Professor: Mary Elizabeth Moore, Dean and Professor of Theology and Education. ABSTRACT This study argues that a comparison of human nature, divine grace, and theo-logical virtue in the theologies of John Wesley and Thomas Aquinas provides resources for constructing iconic dignity as a vital theological perspective. Iconic dignity names a radiant-yet-reflected human worth rooted in the image of God, whose grace empowers response Throughout his writings, Thomas Aquinas exhibited a remarkable stability of thought. However, in some areas such as his theology of grace, his thought underwent titanic developments. In this book, Justin M. Anderson traces both those developments in grace and their causes. After introducing the various meanings of virtue Aquinas utilized, including 'virtue in its fullest sense' and various forms of 'qualified virtue', he explores the historical context that conditioned that account. Through a close analysis of his writings, Anderson unearths Aquinas's own discoveries and analyses that would pr Aquinas: Philosophical Theology. In addition to his moral philosophy, Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) is well-known for his theological writings. He is arguably the most eminent philosophical theologian ever to have lived. To this day, it is difficult to find someone whose work rivals Aquinas's in breadth and influence. Although his work is not limited to illuminating Christian doctrine, virtually all of what he wrote is shaped by his theology. From this perspective, philosophical reasoning can be (to use a common phrase) a tool in the service of theology. An adequate understanding of Aquinas's philosophical theology requires that we first consider the twofold manner whereby we come to know God: reason and sacred teaching.