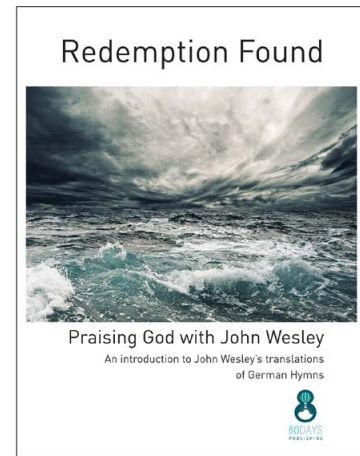


RESOURCE REVIEWS



REDEMPTION FOUND: PRAISING GOD WITH JOHN WESLEY

John M Haley

Edinburgh: 80 Days Publishing, 2021
ISBN 978-1-908500-52-6 | pp. 144, £16.50

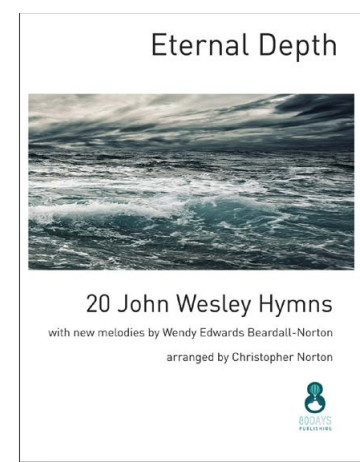
This is the first of three resources offered in a new project initiated by MET member the Revd Dr John Haley. It is an unusual look at John Wesley's thirty-three translations of German hymns, of which sadly a diminishing number are to be found in successive Methodist hymn books. The project has taken nine years to complete and comprises a detailed and scholarly examination of the sources and the way in which Wesley treated them. Many books have been written on the hymn texts of John's brother Charles, but comparatively few on John's translations, so this is a welcome treatment of the topic.

Methodists have traditionally sung great hymns like 'O God, what offering shall I give', 'Now I have found the ground wherein', and 'What shall we offer our good Lord' with little thought given to their origins, and the author's exploration of their background in Germany's Lutheran, Moravian and Reformed traditions is helpful and enlightening. Opening chapters provide a brief useful overview of John Wesley's own spiritual development, particularly the influence of the Moravians he encountered on his voyage to America and the surprising assertion that he probably produced all thirty-three of his translations while still in Georgia. Surprising, that is, on two counts: first, that he only began learning German not long before embarking for America; and, second, that all this was before his life-changing Aldersgate experience. Indeed, the German emphasis on a faith that was not formal but a heart-felt and inward experience no doubt helped to prepare Wesley for what happened back home in Aldersgate.

There follows an interesting chapter on the German hymn writers themselves, some familiar names like Gerhardt, Count Zinzendorf and Spangenberg, and others less well-known but

equally important. The longest chapter in the book examines twenty-two of Wesley's translations, giving useful biblical references for each line of their texts, analysing the way Wesley treated them and offering observations on the different tunes to which each hymn has been sung over the years.

It is this last topic which gives rise to the second component of Dr Haley's project: how to encourage modern congregations to revisit these classic texts and indeed to sing them in their worship. His book suggests familiar traditional tunes which might give them a new lease of life and, more importantly, he has published a companion volume to his book with twenty completely new tunes written specifically for these texts.

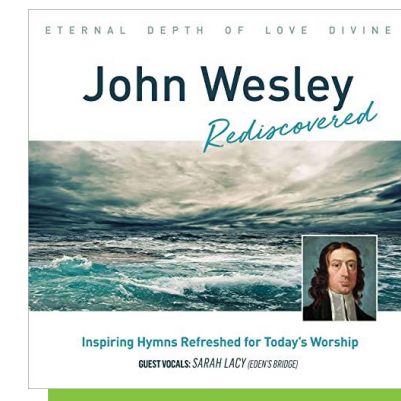


ETERNAL DEPTH: 20 JOHN WESLEY HYMNS WITH NEW MELODIES

*Wendy Edwards Beardall-Norton,
arr. Christopher Norton*

Edinburgh, 80 Days Publishing 2021
ISBN 978-1-908500-51-9 | pp. 101, £20

John Haley's email enquiry to Christopher Norton (a musician whose work appears in many contemporary hymn books) about possibly using one of his tunes in this project led eventually to an invitation to his wife, Wendy Edwards Beardall-Norton, to write the twenty new tunes found in this novel and interesting publication. She faced a challenging task, not least because many of the texts are, by nature, fairly solid in both theology and metre (thirteen of the twenty have six- or eight-line verses). To an extent, the text and metre dictate the type of melody set to it, and Wendy Edwards Beardall-Norton has produced some attractive melodies, though rather more traditional than contemporary in style. The tunes are enhanced and have been given a more contemporary feel by her husband's characteristically imaginative arrangements of her melodies.



JOHN WESLEY REDISCOVERED

(Digital music album by the London Fox Singers)

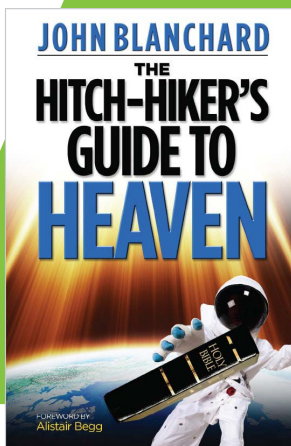
This online recording of Wendy Edwards Beardall-Norton's new settings of John Wesley's translations provides a third resource offered by John Haley's project and is freely available at <https://music.apple.com/us/album/john-wesley-rediscovered-hymns/1569056214> and other online music stores. Particularly for non-music readers, this is a good way to access these tunes, some of which are slightly reminiscent of the sort of 19th century gallery music made popular by Maddy Prior and her Carnival Band.

All in all, this is a project to be welcomed. It may not be of interest to those who do not share the author's interest in traditional Methodist hymnody in general, and John Wesley's translations in particular; but for those who do, this is a valuable resource and a useful addition to the existing limited corpus of work on the contribution to hymnody by John (rather than Charles) Wesley. His research provides a valuable contribution to the topic quite apart from the new music provided in the companion ring-bound volume and the online recording.

It remains to be seen how far Wendy Edwards Beardall-Norton's music will achieve Dr Haley's aim of encouraging modern Methodist (and other) congregations to read, and better still, to sing John Wesley's translations. As the author freely acknowledges, many of them have been dormant and unused for a long time now, but his effort to revive them is to be commended and deserves to succeed.

Reviewed by the Revd Brian Hoare who is a retired Methodist minister, former Cliff College New Testament Tutor and former Connexional Secretary for Evangelism in the Methodist Church Home Mission Division. He was President of the Methodist Conference from 1995-96 and was Chair of Headway (the predecessor to MET). He is also a prolific author and composer of over sixty hymns and songs.





THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO HEAVEN

John Blanchard

Darlington, England: EP Books, 2013
ISBN 978-0-85234-938-0 | pp. 297, £10.99

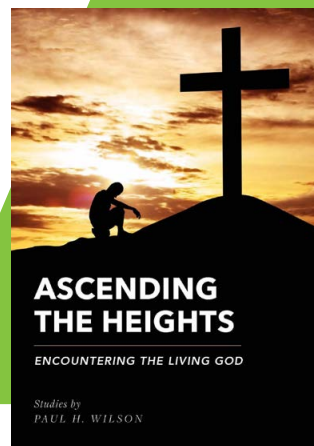
I hadn't really gone in to buy a book but to chat with our Christian bookshop manager. It was the title of this book that caught my eye, plus I've read books by John Blanchard before. I haven't been disappointed!

Solidly based in scripture and illustrated with real life stories, humour and John's insight into the Bible, I found this book to be both inspiring and challenging.

As more people are considering their eternal destiny, owing in part to the current pandemic, it is also a book for our time - maybe not for unbelievers but for all of us who are looking for the bigger picture. There is so much misunderstanding about heaven, where it is, what it is and what to expect. Grounded in Scripture, this book takes us on a journey helping us to long for that time when the invisible becomes visible, the unknowable knowable, and the unimaginable a reality. John unwraps Revelation, taking in the bride and the city, considers conquest and crowns, unimaginable certainties, time and motion, onwards and upwards.

It truly is an exciting read and one that brings clarity to the whole subject of our eternal destiny. It is a book full of hope that looks constantly to Jesus and his work of salvation. A recommended read.

Reviewed by Linda (aka Lou) Ashford, who is a former Prayer Secretary and Vice-Chair of MET. She is married to Mike and they have two grown up sons. They moved from south-west London to north Wiltshire in 2015 - a stunning location which affords easy access to dog walking in the Cotswolds. Lou helps with her local branch of CAP and enjoys leading Bible studies.



ASCENDING THE HEIGHTS

Paul Wilson

Moorleys on behalf of MET, 2021
ISBN 978-0-86071-866-6 | pp. 36, £6

September 25, 2021 saw the return, after a year's absence, of WORD, the annual teaching day held in collaboration between MET and The King's Cross Church, Doncaster. Having attended, I was thrilled when I realised that the Revd Paul Wilson had published a book based on the teaching.

In his introduction, Paul sets out his direction: 'The study follows Peter on his roller-coaster experience of being Jesus' disciple', echoed in the book's subtitle, 'Encountering the Living God'. Each of the chapters concludes with a series of questions for further consideration, either in individual study or as a group.

Paul bases his chapters on Mark's Gospel. In the first, he challenges us to embed the Sabbath principle into our own busy lives: to find time to rest and to spend time with God, both on a weekly and a daily basis. Paul then opens up the Lord's Prayer phrase by phrase.

The overriding theme of the second chapter is the holiness of God as revealed at the Transfiguration, and the exposure of our sin through the law and the prophets. Paul concludes the chapter with an extended discourse on the need for holiness. He reminds us that a commitment to prayer and to scriptural holiness is fundamental to MET.

In the third chapter, Paul focuses even more on the experience of Peter, from the nadir of his denial to the peak of his restoration. He writes of the necessity of allowing the Holy Spirit to apply God's Word to ourselves, and of the need for repentance, for holiness and for insistence on the uniqueness of the way of salvation.

The book is very firmly rooted in 2021, with its references to a world emerging from the pandemic and the summer of sporting activity we have enjoyed. However its lessons, like the gospel message itself, are timeless and universally relevant.

Reviewed by Lynn Petersen who is Vice-Chair for MET and a lay worker at The King's Cross Church in the Doncaster Circuit, where she has been managing the church's community project, The Junction, for the last seven years. Her heart is to see people coming to faith and growing and maturing in their discipleship.