

**TOWARD A MODEL OF THE ONTOLOGY OF DIVINE-HUMAN  
INDWELLING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
JOHN WESLEY AND JOHN COBB**

Name of researcher: Cory D. Wetterlin  
Name of faculty adviser: Martin F. Hanna, PhD  
Date completed: November 2017

*Problem and Purpose*

This dissertation addresses the problem of the conflicting views of the ontology of divine-human indwelling that have been manifested in the historical discussion and specifically demonstrated in the models proposed by John Wesley and John Cobb. The purpose of this research was to survey and analyze the writings of Wesley and Cobb, in order to present their models of the ontological nature of the divine-human indwelling. Their models are evaluated on the basis of their interpretations of Rom 6–8 compared with each other and representative current scholarship.

*Methodology*

The method for this research includes the following: Chapter one consists of an introduction and historical background. Chapters two and three present a survey and analysis of the writings of Wesley and Cobb, respectively, in order to describe their models of divine-human indwelling. This is done using the following three categories: ontology of God, ontology of humanity, and their understanding of an ontological nature for divine-human indwelling. In order to evaluate whether these models of divine-human indwelling are biblically adequate, chapter four compares and contrasts Wesley's and Cobb's interpretations of Rom 6–8 as a focused scriptural lens. This chapter focuses on the final category of comparison, the ontological nature of divine-human indwelling. In chapter five, following the summary and conclusions regarding Wesley's and Cobb's models, the results of the biblical comparison are used to suggest possible implications for moving towards a more biblical model for the nature of divine-human indwelling.

*Conclusions*

The specific definition of ontological indwelling for this dissertation is the interpenetration/intermingling of the divine and human beings/realities. John Wesley taught an ontological indwelling of the Holy Spirit following the classical theological tradition, in which the timeless eternal divine being/reality is united with the timeless being/reality of the human soul. The Holy Spirit is then the formal and efficient cause of transforming the human being/reality. John Cobb teaches a panentheistic ontological indwelling based on non-substantive process philosophy, which inclusively intermingles the human being/reality within the being/reality of the divine. Each human individual

---

has the opportunity to respond to the primordial creative will of God, thus being transformed by that response and becoming part of the consequential will of God.

An evaluation of Wesley's and Cobb's understandings of the ontological nature of divine-human indwelling by representative scholars using the exegetical lens of Rom 6–8 reveals some affirmations and some challenges for these two systems. The primary challenge for Wesley and Cobb is a rejection by representative scholars of ontological indwelling defined as the interpenetration/intermingling of divine and human beings/realities. This study then calls for further research to be done on other conceptions of ontological and non-ontological divine-human indwelling and on the biblical conception of divine-human indwelling.