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FIVE KEYS TO WESLEY'S SUCCESS

Steve Stanley

The Fourth Key: His Method

The dictum and directive of early Methodism and of John Wesley, was to “spread scriptural holiness throughout the land.” In the “Large Minutes” of 1763, Wesley summarized the objective and methodology by which scriptural holiness would thus spread. The objective was “to reform the nation, particularly the church.” He envisioned that the preaching of holiness would achieve results beyond those in the individual’s life, results that would revive an apathetic church and rectify issues of iniquity and

injustice in the nation. He called on his preachers to bear in mind that their business was “to save souls.” Not preaching, or entertaining, or building of buildings except as these tended toward the salvation of souls. A holy and transformed heart would bear the Heavenly Father’s concern for the bodies and souls of one’s neighbors. Thus, Methodism nearly from its inception addressed both the physical and spiritual needs of the people. Believing that the Kingdom of God is a present reality, Wesley sought to make practical present application of the teachings of Scripture and to urge his followers to do the same. Thus, among the earliest pronouncements of the “Christian Duties” of a Methodist were instructions for doing good “to the bodies” and “to the souls” “to all men.”

The modern reader will now ask, “But what of his *method*?” Ours is an age of standardization and assembly lines. We long to seize upon a plan and replicate it. Wesley’s era was less so. His was an age of craftsmen and apprentices, each one of whom – working within the parameters of their calling – would be distinguished in some measure by the distinctive ways in which they executed their craft. Therefore, Wesley, convicted that the Word of God and of Christ, our Savior enjoins us to go into the world and make disciples of the nations, concluded that the task would dictate the methodology. Only in this conviction would this straight-laced son of the Anglican Church be persuaded by friend

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George Whitefield to the extent that he “consented to become more vile” and largely abandon the church buildings to preach Christ’s glorious Good News in the fields and streets of the country. Scriptural holiness must be spread. If the people would not attend the churches, or if Christ’s messengers were prohibited from preaching in the churches, then they would have to carry the message out into “the highways and byways” until all heard.

It was so in the matter of social work, too. The strictly-observed Christian Sabbath became a

The Methodists were unafraid to innovate and adapt to accomplish the mission of saving the lost and reforming the nation.

time of both worship and training through Wesley’s early adoption of (what was then a novelty) the Sunday Schools begun by Robert Raikes. Wesley wrote, “I verily think these Sunday Schools

are one of the noblest specimens of charity which have been set on foot in England since William the Conqueror.” The schools taught the Scriptures along with “reading, writing, and arithmetic.” They enforced morality and good manners, fed nutritious meals to the children, and rewarded progress in tangible ways. They taught trade skills right alongside the catechism. Wesley’s method was rooted in real-world experience. He did not merely *pray* “thy Kingdom come,” he employed the most necessary and beneficial methods to achieve that worthy goal.

Thus, in the Methodist societies, spiritual conferencing (gathering in small groups for spiritual examination and accountability) was joined with care of the poor, the needy, the aged, and the sick. Taking Jesus’ own example, Wesley adapted his methods to the immediate situation never forgetting that the methods must be such as bring glory to God and comport to the teachings of His Word. Keeping God’s Word and will as the irreplaceable foundation

of their work, Wesley and the Methodists were unafraid to innovate and adapt to accomplish the mission of saving the lost and reforming the nation. The world was not only their parish, it became a laboratory for discovering the most fruitful means of delivering the Gospel of Jesus Christ and of holistic ministry, as well.

Wesley faced enormous opposition from people who cared more about preserving old but unproductive methods of evangelizing than about the effectiveness of the work. He was lampooned in the British press, the British stage, and British pulpits. He was held up as an object of scorn and dismissed as but one part of a fleeting religious fad. But he proved more durable than his accusers and lived to be exonerated by the fruit of thousands of converts. Not every plan of his succeeded. Not every method proved useful. Yet, his greatest genius was in living by the bedrock conviction that the Book of God was a trustworthy chart and the Holy Spirit an infallible Guide. With these the path unfolded before him as he walked in their light.

Thus, Wesley advised,

Beware, lastly, of imagining you shall obtain the end without using the means conducive to it. God *can* give the end without any means at all; but you have no reason to think he *will*. Therefore constantly and carefully use all those means which He has appointed to be the ordinary channels of His grace. Use every means which either reason or Scripture recommends, as conducive (through the free love of God in Christ) either to the obtaining or increasing any of the gifts of God. Thus expect a daily growth in that pure and holy religion which the world always did, and always will, call enthusiasm; but which to all who are saved from real enthusiasm — from merely nominal Christianity — is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, the glorious image of the Most High, righteousness and peace, a “fountain of living water, springing up into everlasting life!”

A Brief Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Virginia, Part 3

Devereux Jarratt

When the love feast was ended, the doors were opened. Many who had stayed without then came in; and beholding the anguish of some, and the rejoicing of others, were filled with astonishment, and not long after with trembling apprehensions of their own danger. Several of them prostrating themselves before God, cried aloud for mercy. And the convictions which then began in many, have terminated in a happy and lasting change.

The multitudes that attended on this occasion, returning home all alive to God, spread the flame through their respective neighborhoods, which ran from family to family: so that scarce any conversation was to be heard throughout the circuit, but concerning the things of God: either the complaining of the prisoners, groaning under the spirit of bondage unto fear; or the rejoicing of those whom the Spirit of adoption taught to cry, “Abba, Father.”

One of the doctrines, as you know, which we particularly insist upon, is that of a present salvation; a salvation not only from the guilt and power, but also from the root of sin; a cleansing from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God; a going on to perfection, which we sometimes define by loving God with all our hearts. Several who had believed were deeply sensible of their want of this. I have seen both men and women, who had long been happy in a sense of God’s pardoning love, as much convicted on account of the remains of sin in their hearts, and as much distressed for a total deliverance from them, as ever I saw any for justification.

And I have been present when they believe that God answered this prayer, and bestowed this blessing upon them. I have conversed with them several times since, and have found them thoroughly devoted to God. They all testify, that they have received the gift instantaneously, and by simply faith. We have sundry witnesses of this perfect love who are above all suspicion.

It has been frequently observed, that there never was any remarkable revival of religion, but some degree of enthusiasm was mingled with it — some wildfire mixed with the sacred flame. It may be doubted whether this is not unavoidable in the nature of things. And notwithstanding all the care we have taken, this work has not been quite free from it; but it never rose to any considerable height, neither was of long continuance. Where the greatest work was — where the greatest number of souls have been convinced and converted to God, there have been the most outcries, trembling, convulsions, and all sorts of external signs. I took all the pains I could that these might be kept within bounds, that our good might not be evil spoken of.

A great part of Virginia is still in a very dark and deplorable condition. The late work has reached only seven or eight counties. Nor has it been universal even in these, but chiefly in the circuit which is regularly visited by the preachers. In this alone very many hundreds have in a few months been added to the Lord. And some are adding still. May He continue to pour out his Spirit upon us, and increase the number of the faithful every day!

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Who Are Those Assured of a Blessing at the Lord's Table?

Joseph D. McPherson

According to Mr. Wesley, everyone in the ancient church who was baptized participated in the sacrament of communion daily. From the record in Acts we are told that, "*all continued daily in the breaking of bread, and in prayer*" (Acts 2:42). Wesley nevertheless observes that in later times, "many have affirmed, that the Lord's Supper is not a converting, but a confirming ordinance." It was troubling to him to learn that it had currently "been ... taught, that none but those who are converted, who have received the Holy Ghost, who are believers in the full sense, ought to communicate."

"But," says he, "experience shows the gross falsehood of that assertion, that the Lord's Supper is not a converting ordinance. Ye are the witnesses. For many now present know, the very beginning of your conversion to God (perhaps, in some, the first deep conviction) was wrought at the Lord's Supper."

Our Lord commanded His own disciples, who were not yet recipients of that Pentecostal infusion of the Holy Spirit, "to do this 'in remembrance of' Him." "Here the precept," says Wesley, "is clear. And to these he delivered the elements with his own hands. Here is example equally indisputable."

In a sermon preached on this subject, Mr. Wesley first shows "That the Lord's Supper was ordained by God, to be a means of conveying to men either preventing, or justifying, or sanctifying grace, according to their several necessities." He secondly explains that "the persons for whom it was ordained, are all those who know and feel that they [need] the grace of God, either to restrain them from sin, or to show their sins forgiven, or to renew their souls in the image of God."

He thirdly makes clear that "inasmuch as we come to his table, not to give him anything, but to receive whatsoever he sees best for us, there is no previous preparation indispensably necessary, but a desire to receive whatsoever he pleases to give."

Last of all Mr. Wesley assures us that "no fitness is required at the time of [taking communion], but a sense of our state" or spiritual need. Supposing there be those who have a sense of utter sinfulness and helplessness, "who know [themselves just] fit for hell." Are they to be repelled from the Lord's Table? Are they to be prevented from partaking of the Lord's Supper? No, assures Mr. Wesley. They are "just fit to come to Christ, in this as well as all other ways of his appointment" or means of grace.

Wesley Stories

Joseph Beaumont Wakeley

John Wesley was once stopped by a highwayman, who demanded his money or his life. Mr. Wesley, after giving him the money, said, "Let me speak one word to you; the time may come when you will regret the course of life in which you are now engaged. Remember this, 'The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.'"

No more was said, and they parted. Many years after, as Mr. Wesley was going out of a church edifice in which he had been preaching, a stranger introduced himself, and asked Mr. Wesley if he remembered being waylaid at such a time. He said he recalled it. "I was that man," said the stranger, "and that single verse you quoted on that occasion was the means of a total change in my life and habits. I have long since been in the practice of attending the house of God and of giving attention to his word, and trust that I am a Christian."

The Theology of John Fletcher: An Expanded Review of an Exceptional Book

J. Russell Frazier, *True Christianity: The Doctrine of Dispensations in the Thought of John William Fletcher* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 297 pages. ISBN: 978-1-62032-663-3

In the opening *Preface* Russell Frazier makes an appeal for the Church to listen to voices of the past. One of these voices is John Fletcher, whom he describes as “a seminal figure among the evangelical clergy of the Church of England and in the early Methodist movement of eighteenth century.”

The purpose of this book is two-fold. The first is to examine the doctrine of dispensations as defined by Fletcher in both his published and unpublished works. Frazier finds that Fletcher had initially developed his doctrine of historical dispensations as a corrective argument “against hyper-Calvinism, whose system of divine fiat and finished salvation did not take seriously enough either the activity of God in salvation history or an individual believer’s personal progress in salvation.” Frazier understands Fletcher to express God’s manifestation to humanity by way of three progressive stages. These are identified as “the dispensations of the Father, Son and Spirit.” Occurring on a universal historical level as well as a personal level, as a believer develops in Christian faith.

Frazier shows how Fletcher’s theology of dispensations reveals a God who accommodates Himself to the human conditions of every person and culture throughout history, including the weaknesses and limitations on historical and

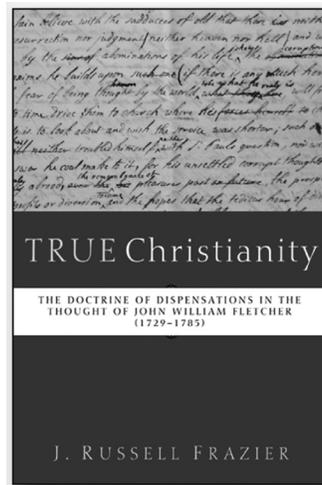
personal levels of enlightenment, making sufficient grace available to all.

The second purpose of the book is to address Wesleyan-Holiness proponents who misappropriate Fletcher’s theology into “their paradigm of sanctification.” He plainly asserts that “the categories of that tradition are too narrow to

conceptualize accurately the scope of Fletcher’s soteriology and pneumatology in particular.” Whereas many of Fletcher’s interpreters in the American holiness movement wish to see his treatment of the dispensation of the Son a description of an “evangelically regenerated believer and the description of the Spirit as the state of an entirely sanctified believer,” Frazier finds Fletcher’s description of the two dispensations on a personal level

as being the difference between the “almost” and the “altogether” Christian, while on universal level being a description of the difference between imperfect Christianity and perfect Christianity.

The Doctrine of Dispensations is divided into six chapters. In chapter one “The Milieu of Fletcher’s Theology,” Frazier attempts to reveal the sources of Fletcher’s theology of dispensations. He contends that most of Fletcher’s biographers are in error in attributing early Methodism as the primary source of Fletcher’s theological formation. Although Methodists



had significant influence in the formation of Fletcher's theology, especially with regard to an emphasis on "experimental religion" and a "living faith," there were other sources of formative influence, including Fletcher's native Swiss environment that "fostered personal piety," and the seven years spent in training at the Académie de Genève. Such a period of exposure to Calvinistic theology has, according to Frazier, caused some writers to erroneously assume that Fletcher was altogether a Calvinist upon his leaving Geneva.

Two reasons are found for Fletcher's ceasing his original intention to enter the ordained ministry. He had finally concluded that he "was un-

Fletcher's theology of dispensations reveals a God who accommodates Himself to the human conditions of every person and culture throughout history.

equal to such a great burden" and "disgusted by the necessity [he] should be under to subscribe to the doctrine of Predestination." In fact, he is found to have "maintained an aversion to the theology of Geneva all of his life."

Unexpected support for his theological concept of the three dispensations was found in *The Apostles Creed* and *The Nicene Creed*, both of which testify to "three degrees of faith," that of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit." Contributing influence in Fletcher's theology of dispensations was also found in his familiarity with the early Church Fathers, including Irenaeus and Augustine. Continental theologians along with Calvin proved to be a significant influence, included Amyraut and Jacob Vernet. Vernet's doctrine of accommodation was a most important influence.

After his arrival in England, Fletcher's theology was further shaped by Anglican and Methodist influences. In addition there were the Puritan influences and the writings of Richard Baxter, John Wesley, George Whitfield and John Green. The latter's view of three dispensations that included: "first, a spiritual heathen; second, a spiri-

tual Jew; third, a spiritual Christian" proved to be a concept important to the formation of Fletcher's theology of dispensations.

In Chapter two Frazier roots Fletcher's dispensational theology in his understanding of grace and nature. Frazier argues Fletcher created a "synthesis or union of the concepts." This "union arose," says Frazier, "from Fletcher's conviction that the God of nature and the God of grace is one God whose grace is demonstrated in every aspect of divine works." He sees Fletcher as one profoundly conscious of "the One whose 'name and nature is love' does not permit creation to return to the chaos toward which the trajectory of the Fall tends, but God continues to recreate the world, restoring fallen creation and the ruined race." Fletcher is seen as one who recognizes "God's love for creation [causing] grace to take precedence in divine-human relations; prevenient grace is [found to be] the keystone of [his] theological system. God's acts are chronologically prior to any human activity and essential to all human action."

Frazier sees "order and harmony" to be highly valued by Fletcher. His theological writings are viewed as "a composition of the variegations of divine revelation into an organized, harmonious whole that reflects all of history and a reflection of those variegations of revelation."

In his overview of the doctrine of dispensations, found in Chapter three, Frazier finds parallels of Fletcher's thought with federal theology. Such observation, however, was meant "to provide a structure for the discussion of Fletcher's theology of history" which includes the two historical dimensions of *ordo temporum* (an objective view of history) and *ordo salutis* (a faith history).

It is observed that Fletcher's *ordo temporum* included the concept of "two covenants; the covenant of works ... established with supralapsarian Adam alone" and the "covenant of grace, established with infralapsarian Adam on behalf of the whole human race as a redemptive accommodation to fallen humanity."

The covenant of grace unfolded in three successive ages of history: the dispensation of the Father; Son and Spirit. The dispensation of the Father began after the Fall with the promise of a Redeemer that was made to Adam and all the human race and renewed repeatedly throughout OT history. The dispensation of the Son was opened by John the Baptist, culminated with the earthly ministry of Jesus, and anticipated a more spiritual dispensation. The promise of the dispensation of the Son crystallized on the day of Pentecost when the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit; the period that began on that day awaits the promise and culmination of the second coming of Jesus.

Frazier explains that while the above “model of the dispensations focused on the theological, Trinitarian pattern of God’s salvific activity in history,” there was a “second overarching pat-

Fletcher emphasized heart knowledge without mitigating the significance of head knowledge

tern [emerging], which provides an anthropological structure that is occasionally threefold; heathen, Jews, and Christians; at other times, it is four-fold: Gentilism, Judaism, the

gospel of John the Baptist, and the perfect gospel of Christ. These differing patterns,” writes Frazier, “reveal the variegations of the activity of God in history.”

Fletcher’s “history of faith” or *ordo salutis* requires an understanding of the “most basic meaning of ‘dispensation.’ It involves,” says Frazier, “the activity of God in dispensing or distributing proportionately grace to human recipients according to their capacity to receive. Secondly, the recipients are responsible to appropriate existentially the extrinsic revelation.”

Fletcher’s theology of salvation history is viewed as occurring at two levels: Frazier calls attention to “a macro or universal level, which entails the divine effort to redeem humanity, and a micro or personal level in which the doc-

trine of dispensation functions as an order of salvation. The micro scheme,” says he, “reflects the macro scheme.”

Frazier quotes John Knight who believed that “Fletcher was convinced that the spiritual pilgrimage of individual men in each of the dispensations is a recapitulation or microcosm of the way God is working in all history.” Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations, as viewed overall by Frazier, “reflects both the progressive nature of God’s revelation in the history of humanity and the progressive nature of God’s restoration of individual human beings in the image of God with the goal of Christian perfection.”

Fletcher’s *Six Letters on the Spiritual Manifestation of the Son of God* was an important effort in his ongoing treatment of the doctrine of dispensations. It was therein that he strongly stressed the experimental aspect of true and living faith. Put another way, it was an asserted effort to combat the teaching which held that “faith was not subjective appropriation of trust in Christ but an objective, mental assent to the gospel.”

It was interestingly pointed out that “prior to the advent of Christ ... God revealed the divine nature to OT characters [including the patriarchs] by condescending to their natural senses, not their spiritual senses.” In this latter dispensation, spiritual senses are awakened by the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. Frazier asserts that “Fletcher emphasized heart knowledge in this treatise without mitigating the significance of head knowledge.”

Two patterns of dispensational thought is brought to the reader’s attention. Not only did Fletcher give recognition to the Trinitarian pattern which recognized a theological structure of history, but provided a second pattern providing an anthropological structure of history. As Frazier explains, “The former unfolds chronologically in the dispensations of the Father, Son,

and Spirit; the anthropological structure portrays the dispensation of heathens, the dispensation of Jews, and the dispensation of Christians.”

In chapter four, “The Dispensation of the Father,” Frazier examines Fletcher’s belief in a general redemption in contrast to the Calvinist teaching of a particular predestination. He was, in his polemic debates, obliged to answer the questions: “What is the fate of the heathen? Is salvation possible for those who have never heard of Christ?” Fletcher viewed the love of God as essential to His nature, whereas “Calvinists view divine love as an expression of God’s will, which results in the doctrine of particular predestination.” To Fletcher, “God’s love is not discriminating, but universal in its scope. Because the love of God is all embracing, the grace of God extends to all.”

Fletcher’s views of original sin are not found to be greatly different than those of the Calvinists. Their “understanding of the extent of the atonement” were, however, widely different. While

Because the love of God is all embracing, the grace of God extends to all.

Fletcher’s opponents claimed a “doctrine of limited atonement,” he embraced “a general redemption of universal extent of the atonement.” Since Fletcher was convinced that “‘Christ tasted death for every man,’ there is undoubtedly a gospel for every man, even for those who perish by rejecting it.” Frazier notices that Fletcher “emphasized the continuity and the differences between the dispensations. While light in any dispensation is always the light of Christ, it does not shine with the same intensity in all periods of history.” By illustration, “The dispensation of the heathen is compared to the dawning light; the dispensation of Judaism is compared to the morning light, and the dispensation of Christianity is compared to the meridian light.” Accordingly to his line of thought, this “light dawns progressively in history.”

Interestingly, “not only does Fletcher compare and contrast the objective periods of history, but also the subjective experiences of the individuals under those dispensations.” By close study of the Scriptures Fletcher was able to show that “the very heathens are not without some light and grace to work suitably to their dispensation.”

Frazier continues to share Fletcher’s views concerning the nature of the faith and added conditions necessary for the salvation of heathen believers. He then observes that “The dispensation of the Father was frequently divided into two dispensations: the dispensation of the heathen and the dispensation of the Jews.” Earlier in this work, Frazier brings to our attention the use Fletcher makes of the parable of the talents. He or she who has been nourished in a Christian environment are given “five talents [of grace], the Jew two, and the heathen one.” An expanded explanation of Fletcher’s doctrine of grace is shared by Frazier as follows:

Grace, by its very nature, considers its recipients (or objects) and is, thus, dispensed according to the capacity of humanity to receive. There is a certain order to dispensing; creative grace, justifying grace and sanctifying grace. While God is partial in love to the degree that God dispenses grace in different measures, God is impartial in judgment. “God does not reap where he has not sown,” is the scriptural dictum that Fletcher quoted frequently to support his point. The law of the harvest is applicable. God does not anticipate the same results in every dispensation because God has not dispensed grace in the same measure in every dispensation. However, God has dispensed enough grace in every dispensation to anticipate from all human beings a measure of faith and works appropriate to their respective dispensations. Thus, God, in Fletcher’s mind, judges all people impartially, using the same standard of judgment. God is impartial in judgment because God holds all humans to the same standard of judgment, and God is partial in love because God dispenses benefits differently in the various

dispensations of salvation history. Thus, Fletcher vindicated the early Methodist concept of the essential nature of God as holy-love.

Frazier's discussion of Fletcher's dispensation of the Father shifts in the fifth chapter to that of the Son. This advanced dispensation "comprised the era that began with the miraculous conception of Christ and ended with his ascension." The principal source for the content of this revelation is found in the four Gospels. "Fletcher," says Frazier, "argued that the gospel could not be confined to an explicit knowledge of the atoning work of Christ because the disciples prior to Pentecost did not have that knowledge. An explicit knowledge of the atoning

The pre-Pentecost disciples were considered by both Wesley and Fletcher as being clean before God but were not yet born again.

work of Christ 'is the prerogative of the Christian Gospel advancing toward perfection.'"

In the discussion of John the Baptist's relation to Christ, Fletcher

is quoted as saying that "The least true Christian believer has a more perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ, of His redemption and kingdom, than John the Baptist had, who died before the full manifestation of the gospel." Another way of stating this truth is to say that "The righteousness of regenerated Christian believers was greater than the righteousness attained under the legal dispensation because 'the law maketh nothing perfect.'"

Turning to the subject of Fletcher's thoughts on baptism, Frazier reminds us that "The seal of the covenant of peculiarity of the dispensation of the Son is water baptism." He then explains that "Fletcher made a distinction between John's baptism and Christ's baptism. ... The baptism of John the Baptist was an earlier dispensation and should not be confused with either Christian baptism or the baptism of Christ." Frazier further explains that in the thinking of Fletcher,

"John did not baptize in the trinitarian formula, but made disciples 'for himself calling people to repentance & the forgiveness of sins.' Like John's ministry, the baptism of John must decrease in order that the baptism of Christ might increase."

Fletcher's views of baptism is summarized by Frazier as being "one baptism with 'two branches.'" Baptism of water, and the baptism of the Spirit are essentially one. "Water baptism is," according to Fletcher, "an outward sign that points to the inward grace of a death unto sin."

Frazier concludes Fletcher's views of the dispensation of the Son and those believers who are thus classified by describing their faith as "principally eternal. The rite of water baptism is [said to be] the seal of the covenant of peculiarity, but does not automatically result in the evangelical regeneration of believers. At this stage, believers under the dispensation of the Son are justified, but not spiritually regenerated and have an intermittent assurance of their faith and a measure of the Spirit."

In the final chapter, "The Dispensation of the Spirit," Fletcher is said to classify "the pre-Pentecost disciples under the dispensation of the Son because of their limited knowledge of the atoning work of Christ. Another category of believers under the dispensation of the Son was the nominal Christian." Evangelical (or spiritual regeneration) always required a baptism of the Holy Spirit for its attainment.

One of Fletcher's descriptions of one enjoying the privilege afforded by the dispensation of the Son was that of "a true believer, who loves God above all persons and things, and rejoices in the expiation and pardon of his sins, which he has now received in Christ by a living faith." Regeneration, however, could only be brought about and "completed" by "the baptism of the Holy Spirit." The pre-Pentecost disciples were considered by both Wesley and Fletcher as being "'clean' before God (i.e. justified), but were

not yet born again.” Frazier concludes that “both Fletcher and Wesley held that one becomes a true Christian” by a baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Fletcher is shown to see a profound “difference between human attempts at self-reform and the spiritual transformation that is accomplished by baptism of the Holy Ghost.” This he illustrated by showing “the difference that exists between the reformation of a Pharisee and the Regeneration of a Child of God: some degree of prevenient grace, or reason, and of reflection is sufficient for the first,” writes Fletcher, “but nothing less than the baptism of the Holy Spirit and a real participation in the death and resurrection of Jesus will affect the second.” As a means of encouraging true penitents, he was want to exclaim: “Yes, you will also be baptized

Frazier has disarmed those within the American holiness movement who wish to force Fletcher into a support of their peculiar views.

of the Holy Spirit for the remission of sins, & justified freely by faith, you will have peace with God by our Lord Jesus Christ & you will rejoice in God your Savior with a joy unspeakable and full of

glory.” Frazier concludes that as far as Fletcher was concerned, “Baptism of the Spirit alone could suffice for the remission of sins and the justification of the believer.”

As a part of his discussion of the Spirit’s dispensation, Frazier addresses some of the misunderstanding and misappropriation of Fletcher’s teaching. More specifically, “In *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism*, [Lawrence] Wood argues that Fletcher held to an inextricable connection or unequivocal link between the doctrine of the baptism of the Spirit and entire sanctification and that he persuaded John Wesley to adopt such a view.” In response Frazier claims that “Wood’s argument for a functional equivalency in Fletcher’s thought confuses an accurate understanding of the dynamic and breadth of the doctrine of the baptism with the

Spirit.” By further explanation, Frazier points out that “The early Fletcher held that baptisms (plural) of the Spirit make one a Christian and continue the process of sanctification whose goal is the perfection of the believer in love. Thus, baptism of the Spirit is the means to the end, perfect love, and the means should not be conflated with the end.” According to Frazier’s understanding of Fletcher’s view, “the phrase, ‘baptism of the Spirit,’ was not inextricably linked to Christian perfection.” In fact Frazier most conclusively asserts that “Fletcher’s theology does not accord with the Holiness scholars who assert the pre-Pentecost apostles were ‘real Christians’ who were entirely sanctified on the day of Pentecost. Consistent with Wesley’s theology, Fletcher’s doctrine of dispensations viewed the pre-Pentecost disciples as almost (or imperfect) Christians whose faith was preparatory to the full Christian dispensation.”

Fletcher had much to say of Christian perfection. According to Frazier he “conceived of different degrees of perfection that correspond with the various dispensations of divine grace. In the Last Check, the degrees of perfection are stated as follows: gentile’s perfection, the Jew’s perfection, the perfection of infant Christianity, the perfection of adult [or], perfect Christianity, the perfection of disembodied spirits, and the complete perfection of glorified saints.”

In conclusion, J. Russell Frazier has shared in this volume a most comprehensive and copious study of John Fletcher’s theology of dispensations. His research is proven to be far reaching. Beyond a thorough recapping of truth found in Fletcher’s published works, great time and effort has been invested in an international search of unpublished material. A much fuller knowledge and understanding of the theology of the Vicar of Madeley, which for too long has been buried, is now brought to light. Where full attention is hereby given to Frazier’s study, little basis will be found for the opposing of Fletcher’s theology to that of Wesley’s. Little differences are to be observed. We find, in fact,

that Frazier has disarmed those within the American holiness movement who wish to force Fletcher into a support of their peculiar views that are variously dissimilar to the teachings of Wesley.

This book is highly recommended as a help to all who desire, not only a full and thorough understanding of Fletcher's theology in terms of his doctrine of dispensations and accommodation, but a better understanding

also of early Methodist teachings concerning the way of salvation.

-Joseph D. McPherson

You may order this book directly from the author <jrussellfrazier@gmail.com> Russ is part of the Fundamental Wesleyan Society and has made this special offer of \$26 plus \$4 for shipping and handling to stateside addresses for Arminian readers through the end of July 2014.

REVIEWS

Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Teachings: Ethics and Society* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014). 329 pages. ISBN: 978-0-310-58718-7

The purpose of Oden's four-volume set, *John Wesley's Teachings*, was to survey and analyze the whole range of Wesley's teachings. In Oden's earlier work, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity* (1994) he did not deal with Wesley's ethics. While Oden makes a compelling case that Wesley was a systematic theologian, Oden has little to work with in compiling a systematic Wesleyan ethic. Oden argues that Wesley should be listed among the major ethical thinkers of the eighteenth century. A stronger case could be made that the Methodist revival produced social reform. Wesley does not address many of the great ethical issues of our day, but does supply some overarching principles. His emphasis, however, is on internal character and not on governmental policy.

In volume 4, Oden surveys the ethical holiness of John Wesley. Methodism is more than a doctrine; it is a lifestyle. Faith is the starting point for evangelical ethics. In the section on social holiness he describes the Methodist practice of small group accountability. This was Wesley's major contribution to ethics.

The second section deals with economic ethics. Here Wesley advocated a work ethic and self denial. He taught an avoidance of debt and extravagance. He preached generosity and charity. He taught modesty in dress because extravagance robs from the poor. Thus, Wesley emphasized simplicity in dress as a means to an end. The later American holiness movement made dress standards the mark (or at least the uniform) of belonging to the holiness movement.

Wesley did address the evils of gambling, alcoholism, prostitution, and slavery. He is famous for his advice on the use of money, but when it comes to time management his main advice is to get up early.

When we come to Oden's third section, political ethics, he has less relevant Wesley material. Wesley followed the conservative, nonjurist political views of his mother and felt the American Revolutionary War was unnecessary. I am more in sympathy with the political views of Samuel Wesley who supported William of Orange in his overthrow of James II because he had broken faith with the English citizens. John Wesley was simply wrong in his predictions that the American revolution would result in the disaster of the French anarchy. The French Enlightenment was rebellion against God. The American revolution was rebellion against George III. While Wesley was horrified at the civil disobedience manifested at the Boston Tea Party, I am also in sympathy with the modern Tea Party movement. Wesley attributes the American revolution to pride which took over after the First Great Awakening waned. Many historians however, see the First Great Awakening as the foundation for the war for independence.

In Wesley's *Christian Library*, the bulk of Volume 16 is letters written by Samuel Rutherford. However, Wesley seems to have taken no notice of Rutherford's great treatise, *Lex Rex*, written in 1644 which was the theological basis for the American revolution. Oden makes a valiant effort to salvage something from Wesley's Toryism, but

he does not have much to work with. There is no discussion of the ethics of just war.

While I am a proponent of Wesley's theology, when it comes to politics I agree with Francis Asbury in his review of Wesley's *A Calm Address to our American Colonies*, "I am truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America. My desire is to live in love and peace with all men; to do them no harm, but all the good I can. However, it discovers Mr. Wesley's conscientious attachment to the government under which he lived. Had he been a subject of America, no doubt but he would have been as zealous an advocate of the American cause. But some inconsiderate persons have taken occasion to censure the Methodists in America, on ac-

count of Mr. Wesley's political sentiments" [*Journal*, 19 March 1776].

The final section of this volume is labeled theological ethics. Here Oden devotes over a hundred pages to a re-statement of Wesley's thirteen discourses on the Sermon on the Mount. While the Sermon on the Mount is the major Christian statement on ethics, Oden adds little to Wesley's exposition.

The final chapter of this book is a helpful overview of Wesley's systematic theology on law and grace. While Oden is faithful in his representation of Wesley, there is little in this volume that addresses the great moral and ethical questions with which the Church wrestles today.

-Vic Reasoner

Fred Sanders, *Wesley on the Christian Life: The Heart Renewed in Love*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013. 262 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4335-1564-4..

Since the purpose of this series is to present the wisdom of great teachers on the Christian life, one would expect a common emphasis on such themes as grace, faith, hope, and love. Sanders does not ignore Wesley's Arminianism, but tends to downplay it. He presents a winsome portrait of Wesley as a legitimate evangelical. This is a good introduction to Wesley for Calvinists who have written Wesley off.

Crossway tends to print Calvinistic material. They have launched a series on theologians of the Christian life. One of the editors of this series is Justin Taylor, who is vice-president of book publishing at Crossway and a leader in the neo-Reformed movement.

Nearly all of the theologians covered in this series are Calvinists: John Calvin, John Owens, B. B. Warfield, and Francis Schaeffer. And yet this series also includes *Wesley on the Christian Life*, written by Fred Sanders, a Wesleyan who teaches at Biola University. As a graduate student from 1983-1987 in Biola's school of theology, I found no appreciation of Wesleyan-Arminianism.

Sanders himself admits to a high tolerance of Calvinism. He does not seem to have a good grasp of preliminary grace and the awakened state. But he may be excused since his topic is the Christian and not the pre-Christian life. How-

ever, I do not think he deals adequately with the Methodist emphasis on the direct assurance of the Holy Spirit.

According to Sanders, Wesley initially rejected the doctrine of imputed righteousness but was persuaded by James Hervey, a member of the original Holy Club, to embrace it. History will not bear this out. While Wesley made a conciliatory statement regarding the deceased Hervey in his sermon, "The Lord Our Righteousness," Wesley also published *A Treatise on Justification* by John Goodwin at the same time. In the preface to Goodwin he set the record straight concerning his disagreement with Hervey's theology.

Methodist theologians, starting with John Wesley, have consistently rejected the teaching that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers. Wesley always held that faith is imputed to us for righteousness, but Wesley always asserted that what God imputes he also imparts. While God does impute our faith in the atoning work of Christ to us as righteousness, he does not transfer to our account the obedience of Christ in lieu of future personal righteousness. Faith cannot be reduced to the righteousness of Christ which the elect passively have imputed to their account as evidence of their regeneration.

But Sanders does argue for heart religion. And I think he puts up a very good apology for Christian perfection. He

is also effective in his chapter on the Catholic spirit in which he argues against the old latitudinarian and the modern ecumenical brand of unity. But he is also against the narrow bigotry which has sometimes prevailed between Calvinists and Arminians. Sanders even describes himself as a Wesleyan who loves Calvin.

I am excited that Sanders has discovered William Burt

Pope and that appreciation comes through in this book. I am thankful that Sanders had been able to get past the liberalism within modern Methodist theology and introduce John Wesley to many who do not know the difference between the man and the modern United Methodist Church.

-Vic Reasoner

Donald E. Chittick, *The Puzzle of Ancient Man*. 3rd edition. Newberg, OR: Creation Compass, 2006. 274 pages. ISBN 978- 0-9640978-3-4

Years ago the only other contemporary friends of Creation science of any consequence were the paranormal cults. Many of their leaders and writers were and are highly educated people who had objections to some of the evolutionary nonsense based on the appearance of things called OOPArt. This term means Out Of Place Artifacts. That is there is a host of unexplainable artifacts from the past that did not fit well with their scheme of evolution. This included fossils in rock layers that were not supposed to be there and also strange objects that looked like airplanes among hundreds of other strange discoveries. The list of OOPArt keeps growing as new discoveries continue to be made. Therefore the evolution scientists either ignored them, or trash them by questioning their discovery methods. Among the paranormal obsession was their belief in visitations from space, or in short, UFO's. This was and still is their main solution to many of the OOPArt discoveries which are very real, but totally mystifying to the evolutionary paradigm.

Chittick carefully lays his ground work in the first several chapters prior to tackling some of the OOPArt discoveries. In his first chapters he gives a beautiful layout of the Bible story of Creation. His view of the scripture and the garden seems orthodox. There he builds the picture of what man could have been if he had not fallen. His presentation of Adam, Eve, and later their family is one of easy brilliance. But because of sin, the God given abilities became corrupted. God then judged the earth by a global flood. In it, all life perished except for Noah and his family.

It is from this perspective that he leads the reader into a respectable compact OOPArt history lesson. His contention is that Noah and his sons brought with them certain

technology experience from the pre-flood civilization. And in that technology many of the questions that the evolutionists ignored, and the paranormal wildy speculates about are answered. Their pre flood skills in arts, metal, masonry, and other such technologies would be used to build new post flood civilizations around the world. It is at this point that he very carefully weaves into the tapestry of scripture OOPArt.

He focuses mainly on Ham's decedents to do this. For example he states that Egypt is known as the land of Ham. Therein he does a beautiful job of discussing the pyramids and the possible theories and technologies of their construction. Another descendant of Ham is Nimrod. Here he discusses the Tower of Babel, but only briefly does he speak to its construction. He points out how these ancient people used pre-flood technology to navigate the seven seas as well as discusses the mysterious Minoan civilization. Chapter by chapter he reviews some of the most interesting discoveries in both Central and South America. He even includes man's possible adventures in air travel. He stimulates an interesting connection of astrology with many of the ancient buildings, stone structures and pyramids around the world. All of this is conveniently put into a Biblical frame work.

At the end of the book, he has two appendices. They give the most beneficial information pertaining to the philosophy of evolution. For example the Eve DNA study is an interesting case in the area concerning our human origin/creation as it relates to time. It makes much better sense then Hutton's arrogant and impossible false theory of uniformitarianism. This and other points are essential information for Christians to consider in the epic conflict with evolution and their millions of years syndrome.

From the standpoint of OOPArt, the insight he brings is more sensible and true than that of the paranormal or the evolutionists' denial. It is a thoughtful consideration of the facts as he sees them. The pictures are delightful, too. His only weakness, if there is any at all, is the fact that there is so much out there that it is hard to figure out what to cover. For example, I was hoping he would cover

some of the interesting OOPArt discoveries here in North America. Nevertheless, Dr. Chittick provides the pastor or layman who doesn't know much about OOPArt, with a dandy place to start without the nonsense of the paranormal UFO visits. It is clearly a Bible-based study of OOPArt.

-Dennis Hartman

John A. Vickers, ed. *The Letters of Dr. Thomas Coke* (Nashville: Kingswood, 2013). 787 pages. ISBN: 978-1-4267-5771-6

Although John Wesley ministered in the Georgia colony in 1735, he returned home two years later and never returned. He was unaware of any Methodists in America until 1768, but Methodist laymen had planted Methodism in America at least as early as 1766. In 1769 Wesley sent his first "missionaries" to America and sent a total of eight men prior to the Revolutionary War. All of them returned to England except Francis Asbury.

After the war, in September 1784, John Wesley ordained Dr. Thomas Coke as a "superintendent" and sent him to the new world. As Wesley saw Coke off near Bristol, along with Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, his final words were "Offer them Christ."

"Superintendent" was Wesley's translation of the Greek word *episcopos*. Coke was then authorized to also set apart Francis Asbury as the other American superintendent at the Christmas Conference of 1784 where the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was organized independent from the Church of England. Wesley was appalled, however, when Coke and Asbury took the title of bishop. Almost four years later Wesley wrote to Asbury, "How can you allow yourself to be called Bishop?" However, Wesley acted in the capacity of a bishop himself. The American church did not recognize his authority to ordain a bishop and elected Coke and Asbury as bishops.

But regardless of the title, for twenty years after Wesley's death Coke single-handedly supervised overseas missions using his own private funds and raising funds from non-Methodist sources. In all Coke made nine trips to North America between 1784-1805. He traveled extensively between New England and Georgia by horseback. He presided over many conferences and edited

several editions of the Book of Discipline. Along with Asbury, he paid two visits to our first president, George Washington and although he retained his British citizenship, was invited to preach before Congress.

In 1786 Dr. Coke published his appeal for international missions entitled *Plan of the Society for the Establishment of Missions among the Heathens*. This appeal predates William Carey's more famous manifesto, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* which was published eight years later.

In 1786, Coke also sailed for Nova Scotia but he never made it. Instead his ship was blown off course and landed in Antigua. To his surprise he discovered 1500 Methodists already on the island. So the two missionaries designated for Canada were re-commissioned to St. Vincent and St. Kitts. After his return to London, Coke saw to it that more missionaries were sent to Dominica, Barbados, Nevis, Tortola, and Jamaica.

Although Coke planned to settle in the new world, he was elected president of the British Conference and did not leave the British Isles until 1814 when he departed for Sri Lanka and instead landed in heaven. This year marks the 200th anniversary of his death and burial at sea.

Although the dedication and vision of Dr. Coke is not well known, we can thank a modern scholar, John A. Vickers who has devoted a lifetime to the research of Dr. Coke. In 1969 Vickers published the authoritative biography, in 2005 he reprinted the critical journal, and in 2013 published the critical letters of Thomas Coke.

-Vic Reasoner

James Merrick and Stephen M. Garrett, eds. *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013. 326 pages. ISBN: 978-0-310-33136-0

Historically all evangelicals have affirmed the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Since the Bible was fully inspired by God, by definition it could not contain error. Thus, Richard Watson the great Methodist theologian, wrote in 1830:

Plenary inspiration consisted in this, that they were kept from all lapses of memory, or inadequate conceptions, even on these [historical] subjects; and on all others the degree of communication and influence, both as to doctrine, facts, and the terms in which they were to be recorded for the edification of the Church, was proportioned to the necessity of the case, but so that the whole was authenticated or dictated by the Holy Spirit, with so full an influence, that it became truth without mixture of error.

But the philosophes found a way to affirm plenary inspiration and deny biblical inerrancy. So at a later point in history it became necessary to add the word “infallible.” But the philosophes eventually decided that they could affirm that the Bible was infallible and yet contained error. So the word “inerrant” was appropriated. Now it too has come under attack. But this time the attack is coming from those who claim to be evangelical. Thus, the term “evangelical” is almost devoid of any real meaning.

This book reflects the latest attempt at mental gymnastics by creative scholars who want to have it both ways. Only Mohler comes out clearly for the inerrancy of Scripture. His bottom line is that “When the Bible speaks, God speaks.” While he acknowledges that the battle never goes away, yet he only traces the battle for the Bible over the last generation. I believe I have demonstrated in my book, *The Importance of Inerrancy*, that early Methodism held to the same position.

The real disappointment of *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* is that the editors abandon an attempt at objectivity and argue against inerrancy in their introduction and conclusion. They appear to be offended by the Gundry-Geisler controversy within the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS). In 1980 Robert Gundry ad-

vocated that a doctrine of biblical inerrancy should allow for creative editing by the human authors of Scripture to the extent of fictional embellishment and unhistorical fabrication in order to accommodate their theological agenda. Of course, we would not know when this was the case in Matthew’s gospel unless we possessed Gundry’s commentary. However, the editors of *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* lament the fact that Norman Geisler called Gundry’s hand on this duplicity, and he was forced to resign from the ETS in 1983. Yet membership in the ETS has always been contingent upon affirmation that “the Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.” “I fail to see that Gundry was a martyr cut down by the swashbuckling sword of fundamentalism. However, all of this may have gained extra points with the general editor, Stanley Gundry, who is the brother of Robert Gundry.

If a definition of inerrancy can be stretched to include Gundry’s views, then the term “evangelical” can also be stretched to embrace homosexuality. And that explains how confused “evangelicals” are today with such stalwart spokespersons as Joel Olsteen.

In an interview Mohler said, “Also, I fault several of my co-authors for failing actually to deal with what the book was supposed to be about, and that is the Chicago Statement [on biblical inerrancy]. Some of them, quite cleverly, avoided actually dealing with some of the issues that the book was supposed to be about.” Thus, this book tends to muddy the waters.

There is a battle for the Bible, and it started when Satan questioned God’s Word in Genesis 3:1-4. The real question remains whether Scripture is the objective standard by which all truth claims are tested or whether we must rely on some philosophe to tell us when the Bible is trustworthy. Infallibility is an inescapable concept. Where the Bible is rejected as infallible, it is always replaced by some modern philosophe who thinks he is infallible.

-Vic Reasoner

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Joseph D. McPherson, “Historical Support for Early Methodist Views of Water and Spirit Baptism,” *The Asbury Journal* 68:2 (2003): 28-56.

This paper explores the historical theological positions regarding water and Spirit Baptism in early Methodism and how these views diverged in the American Holiness Movement. Early Methodist teaching was more in line with Church history in associating water baptism with

the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. American Holiness teaching reduced the importance of water baptism to a symbolic act of repentance with a later outpouring of the Holy Spirit leading to entire sanctification. Access it at <http://place.asburyseminary.edu/asburyjournal/vol68/iss2/4/>

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*a founding member of the Fundamental Wesleyan Society and pastor
for over fifty years in the Carolinas*

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