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ONE LOVE, TWO MARRIAGES: THANK YOU, DR. THOMAS COKE

David Martinez

On July 9, 1805, Bishop Francis Asbury wrote in his journal, “*Marriage is honorable in all – but to me it is a ceremony awful as death.*” Of course, the context of this quote reveals that Asbury was not protesting marriage per se as much as he was simply lamenting that the Methodist movement had “*lost the traveling labours of two hundred of the best men in America, or the world, by marriage and consequent location.*” Nonetheless, the mere possibility — dare I say *probability?* — of marriage being an added difficulty to ministry has instigated prolonged, permanent singleness in many ministers that conclude the kingdom’s work makes life hard enough as it is. Other ministers are secretly regretful that they ever got

married but would never admit as much for fear of how they will be perceived by their comrades. The stormy plight through the sea of ministry is full of seamen that are painfully navigating the false dichotomy of, “*should my ministry be my marriage or should my marriage be my ministry?*” Such struggles are not altogether without biblical merit. After wisely and tenderly recommending holy singleness (1 Cor. 7), the apostle Paul acknowledges the challenges marriage can pose to a person involved in ministry when he says:

But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife (vv. 32-33).

Our very own Methodist history may unintentionally add to our marital fears, particularly when recounting the human flaws of our esteemed denominational forebearer. In *Wesley on the Christian Life: The Heart Renewed in Love*, Dr. Fred Sanders puts it this way:

All of John Wesley’s friends knew that by temperament, by calling, and by position, he was equipped to be one of the great examples of consecrated singleness in the history of the church. It was obvious to all that he had an apostolic gift of spiritual fatherhood over souls.

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[But he] insisted on marrying, against the definite counsel of his spiritual advisors. So instead of an example of wise celibacy, we have in John Wesley a cautionary tale about a terrible husband, terribly mismatched to a terrible wife.

One can almost hear the sound of defeat and desperation reverberating between single ministers and those that are unhappily married: *O wretched men that we are! Who will deliver us from this body of scary information that makes marriage seemingly incompatible with ministry?! We can thank God that he has provided us with human heroes that can encourage us along the way.*

Enter Dr. Thomas Coke (1747-1814)

On April 3, 2016, I beheld an original manuscript from the pen of Dr. Thomas Coke himself. It was a short letter, but I stood before it for quite a long time as I stared at it quietly and became very contemplative. Not only was I thrilled to observe an antique letter that had traveled to America from Great Britain long after its author

and recipient lived, I was also moved by its context as much as I was by its content. It was a Sunday morning

and Dr. Coke, being the faithful minister that he was, had to preach at a certain time. His wife, Penelope, was an invalid in the latter part of her life. As a result of her failing health, she was unable to rise out of bed on time and join her husband for breakfast, thus resulting in Dr. Coke tending to himself and having breakfast on his own, a bit of a bigger deal in the 1800s. And what did he do? Accuse her of being lazy? Become frustrated? How about angrily waking her up and giving her a speech about how a *good* wife “doth not indulge herself in too much sleep, but is an early riser, before the break of day, to make provision for those who are to go abroad to work in the fields” (as he would later write in his commentary on Proverbs 31:15)? Hardly. Instead, he had his lone breakfast and then left to do the work of the Lord, but not without first leaving a note on the breakfast table for his wife, the same

note I had before me a little over two hundred years later. Here it is in its entirety:

*Lord's Day Morning,
May 4th. 1806*

*Most Beloved of my heart and soul under
God,*

I am just going to leave you for a few hours. May our most kind Friend, our most adorable Lord and Saviour, take care of you. Yes: He will. He is ours by every endearing tie; and has already delivered us out of ten thousand snares, and will continue to deliver us until death, and will bless us together to all eternity. He himself has twined our hearts together, has made us one by a series of wondrous Providences. Yes, my Penelope, you are twined round my heart. I never think of you, but I find you there, & find you in that position. O that you may, more than ever, be in the Spirit this day. And may our Lord bless me in public, & bring me back again in safety to my precious, precious & most beloved Wife.

T. Coke

How's *that* for “Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them”(Col. 3:19)? The truth is, Dr. Coke's letter is a mere glimpse into what, by all accounts, was his consistent behavior toward both his wives (Penelope died in 1811, and Dr. Coke remarried about a year later). May this serve as encouragement to anyone in ministry, married or not. Ministry and marriage are not mutually exclusive when it comes to our affections and/or commitments. “Nor can it be doubted but persons may be as holy in a married as in a single state.” The classic go-to passage for husbands is Ephesians 5:25-28, which reads:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that he might present her to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to

Ministry and marriage are not mutually exclusive.

love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

I want to point to two elements in Dr. Coke's letter that perhaps serve as evidence that the attitude and actions of this great minister were at least in line with the passage in Ephesians.

1 – Husbands, Love Your Wives

From the way Dr. Coke addresses his wife, "Most beloved of my heart and soul under God," to the way he expresses his affection, the letter is oozing with love throughout. Dear discouraged minister, loving your wife should be an easy thing for you. After all, "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Rom. 5:5), which means you can, indeed you *must*, depend on nothing less than the power of the Holy Spirit to help you love. If you are to love your very ene-

mies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use

you and persecute you (Matt. 5:44), what should you feel and how should you behave toward the very one that God has joined to you as one flesh (Mark 10:8-9)?! Your wife needs to know that she is forever precious to you. A stanza in Lena Lathrop's poem, *A Woman's Question*, puts it this way:

*Is your heart an ocean so strong and deep,
I may launch my all on its tide?
A loving woman finds heaven or hell
On the day she is made a bride.*

Dr. Coke did not hold back on his affection toward his wife. On April 5, 1805, he writes at least two letters. In one, he calls his wife "an addition to my felicity." In the other he states, "What shall I add more? I am almost too happy in the possession of my God & my Penelope. We love each other as much as, I think, two created Beings ought — I was almost going to say can."

Neither does Dr. Coke show any signs of growing cold in his ability to love as a husband when he was married to his second wife years later. Of her he lovingly gushes, "I could fill a Quire

of paper with my love & praises for my very dear wife. God himself has brought her to me or me to her, by a series of wonderful providences." If you're tempted to think such romantic rhetoric should be left for the immature adolescent that has not yet grown up to take life seriously, it would be good to consider yet another fact: Dr. Coke was 57 when he first got married.

2 – Husbands, Sanctify Your Wives

Another thing that is evident in Dr. Coke's letter is how spiritually edifying it is. Frankly, it's very preachy! But can you blame the man when he was so full of God's Word? After all, didn't our Lord Jesus say that from the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Luke 6:45)? And since what's down in the well comes up in the bucket, Dr. Coke can't even be romantic with his wife without it sounding like a beautiful hybrid between a love letter and a sermon. It takes an awesome man who takes eternal matters seriously to pull this off without annoying his wife. Seriously, guys, when was the last time *you* mentioned the doctrine of providence in the middle of a love letter? Are you jealous yet? Then rise up in faith and be courageous enough to speak the Word of God to your wife! The church is in desperate need of godly men who will lead their wives into Christlikeness. However, you cannot accomplish this being spiritually lazy. Apathy is antagonistic to altruism. Since you cannot give what you do not have, a man must first fill himself so much with Christ that his wife, if she is godly indeed, could confidently say that her husband is the godliest man she knows. In a letter written on December 28, 1811, here is what Ann Coke (Dr. Coke's second wife) had to say:

For my own part, I shall esteem it an unspeakable privilege, if I can watch over the health, & contribute to the comfort of so highly esteemed, & truly laborious a servant of Christ, and his Church, as my beloved Husband is.

At the heart of the matter is this: the husband must provide for his wife not only materially but, even more importantly, spiritually. What exactly that looks like may differ in each marriage. However, a godly man takes advantage

of every single opportunity to set his wife's heart on fire for Christ, even if through a simple letter left on the breakfast table.

Perhaps the best way to end this discussion is just one more letter by Dr. Coke to his (first) wife Penelope.

*Most dear of all created Beings,
Farewell for a few hours. I shall long to
be with you again, but as I am in the way of
pure duty, God will support me & keep my
mind composed. I shall fly back to you, as it
were in the evening — O my love, I do love
you with an ardent, increasing, unabated
& never diminishing love. And it is a great
addition to my happiness that I am fully
assured that we shall be with each other &
love each other to all eternity. Adieu. Thou
sweet Friend of my Bosom, thou precious
Love of my heart under Jesus, Adieu. Unto
God's grace and mercy & protection I com-
mit thee. The Lord bless thee & keep thee.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee
& give thee peace both now & evermore.
I am most faithfully & eternally thine.
T. Coke*

One may be inclined to think that perhaps Dr. Coke loved his wives more than he loved God. Bishop Asbury seemed to have implied as much in a letter he sent Dr. Coke after the death of Penelope. However, it is a fair assessment to describe Dr. Coke's marital experience as *"one love, two marriages."* As evidenced by his life and ministry, Dr. Coke's ultimate allegiance and love

was to Jesus Christ, precisely the priority that allowed this minister to be an outstanding husband. After the death of his second wife, his earnest desire was to one day be buried next to both of his wives. In what may be considered a sad but beautifully poetic end, Dr. Coke died on his way to what would have been the fulfillment of his dream mission to Asia. While the ship journeyed through the Indian Ocean, he was found dead on the floor of his cabin on the ship. Dr. Thomas Coke was buried at sea on May 3, 1814, not beside either of his wives, but as a legendary missionary who gave his all to Jesus his Lord and King.

On April 3, 2016, a small ceremony at Mount Olivet Cemetery, in Baltimore, Maryland, commemorated a small monument to the memory of Dr. Thomas Coke. Made from the tip of the former monument that once honored several bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church (including Francis Asbury), Dr. Coke's monument now gives his legacy a permanent place in what Methodists respectfully call, *The Bishop's Lot*. Today, over 200 years after his death, may God use Dr. Thomas Coke's life to inspire both single and married ministers all over the body of Christ.

This article is lovingly dedicated to Chayri Herrera and his wife Maria, a true example of a godly marriage dedicated to the cause of Christ. May God bless the body with more humble and supportive women like Maria, and more lovingly committed family men like Chayri. *Sola Sancta Caritas!*

THE UNIVERSAL ATONEMENT IN 1 JOHN 2:2

Justin Gravatt

Throughout Christian history there has been much discussion concerning the *nature* of the atonement of Christ — its purpose, coherence, biblical basis, and so on. Subsumed in this discussion, if not at times at a periphery, has been the *scope* of the atonement. That is, *for whom did Christ die?* It is to answer the question of exactly whose sins Christ bore, whose sins were ran-

somed, and for whose sins Christ was punished in the place of. Most pertinent is the question: Is Christ the propitiation for the sins of all persons (the universal atonement position), or merely for the sins of the unconditionally elect (the limited atonement position)? In light of 1 John 2:2's teaching on the subject, a universal atonement position will be articulated and defended.

This defense is that a proper exegetical interpretation of John's teaching is of Jesus as the propitiation for all, believers and unbelievers. This is the superior reading, compared to one that suggests the *whole world* spoken of in the passage is merely other non-Jewish believers or the remaining (unconditionally) elect around the world or at various times.

1 John 2:2 reads, "and he [Jesus] himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world*." The *prima facie* reading of this text seems unequivocal: Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of believers, many of whom John is addressing ("for our sins"); and furthermore, Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of "the whole world," meaning unbelievers to whom John is not directly writing. Succinctly put, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus

has a universal scope. Interestingly, even advocates of limited atonement admit the apparent initial support

this passage lends to the universal atonement position. The late R. C. Sproul wrote, "On the surface, this text seems to demolish limited atonement." John Murray writes, "Perhaps no text in Scripture presents more plausible support to the doctrine of universal atonement than 1 John 2:2."

For Sproul, Murray, and others, due to various theological — mostly Calvinistic — commitments and presuppositions, a universal reading of the scope of atonement in 1 John 2:2 must be disregarded even if the text seemingly demands it. This need not be the case for objective readers who start with biblical theology and only then turn to systematic theology.

As Robert Lightner notes, "One finds it hard to imagine how John could have been any clearer in stating the universal aspect of the atonement than he was in this passage." In context, the *whole world* John speaks of here is plausibly, if not entirely unambiguously, the rest of the unbelieving world. Taken together—the believers and unbelievers of whom John speaks—this verse comprises an incredibly vivid picture

demonstrating a universal atonement by Christ. He is the very atoning sacrifice for "our sins," that is, for believers to whom John is speaking; and Christ is the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the "whole world," meaning all unbelievers, the rest of humanity.

This interpretation is very likely due to the use of *kosmos* ("world") elsewhere in 1 John. If there is doubt as to what a word or phrase means in a given passage, it is hermeneutically prudent to search for how the same word or phrase is used elsewhere in the biblical data. Biblical scholars William Klein, Craig Blomberg, and Robert Hubbard write, "Since we can determine the intended meaning [of a biblical word] only from assessing the related ideas within the text, we need to check an author's use of a given word in other places in the same writing and in other works." This is even more plausible if the same author, particularly in the same book, uses the same wording multiple times. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard agree and explain, "So how the author uses words in the same book has more relevance than how that author uses the same words in other books."

What is astounding and quite helpful about 1 John is that the author uses "world" *twenty-three times* in the same letter. If the same wording connotes something similar in nearly two dozen cases, it would be exceedingly peculiar, if not outright absurd, to suggest the author uses that same wording in an entirely different way just one time, without significant evidence proving this. In what follows we can briefly look at how John uses "world" elsewhere in his first letter. Note carefully if John uses the word to speak of other *believers*, Gentile or otherwise, scattered around the globe at various times, or if he uses the word to mean *unbelievers*, forces opposed to Christianity, or even literally the whole world:

1 John 2:15-17 – "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful

The atoning sacrifice of Jesus had a universal scope

pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” Here the *world* is blatantly said to be passing away and not to be loved by those who have the Father in them. The world is comprised of lusts and pride, which are not from God. Nothing suggests the world spoken of here is the elect/chosen of God.

- 1 John 3:1b – “The world does not know us [the children of God], because it did not know him.” Here it is clear that the *world* is said not to know the children of God (mentioned in v. 1a) and also does not know God. The world, here, does not know God and thus are not believers (John 17:3).
- 1 John 3:13 – “Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you.” John writes to his fellow believers and tells them to *expect* hatred from the world, the forces opposed to God who hated him beforehand (John 15:18).
- 1 John 4:4-5 – “You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them.” The contrast given by John here is between those who are from God and his children, and those who are from the *world* who are not God’s children—they are children of the devil (John 8:44).
- 1 John 4:9 – “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through him.” John contrasts the *world* which the Son was sent to (John 1:10) to those who live through him—believers (John 3:16-17).
- 1 John 4:14 – “The Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world.” Jesus came into the *world* to save (John 1:9) and was the Lamb who took away the *world’s* sin (John 1:29), but only those who receive him become children of God (John 1:12). The world and

believers are thus not conflated. Jesus offers his bread of life to the world (John 6:33), but it must be eaten to actualize eternal life (v. 51). The Son is the Savior of the world in that he offers himself to all and saves those who believe (John 3:16-17). Thus, nothing in 1 John 4:14 suggests *world* to mean merely the elect around the world and not all unbelievers.

- 1 John 5:4-5 – “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” These verses would be quite bizarre if *world* here was spoken of in any way but in opposition to God. The faith of those born of God is said to overcome the *world*, surely speaking of those under allegiance to satanic forces.

- 1 John 5:19 – “We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in *the power of* the evil one.” This is perhaps the most unequivocal case of John’s use of *world*. In fact, one sees the exact same wording of the “whole world” used here and in 1 John 2:2. In 5:19, the contrast is between those of God and the *whole world*, which lies in the power of Satan. Without question, the *world* is spoken of in terms of unbelievers under Satan’s dominion.

Thus, nowhere is there a suggestion that the *world* or *whole world*, in the plethora of examples shown, is meant to be the (unconditionally) elect outside of John’s audience or widely dispersed believers elsewhere. Rather, the uniform meaning of the word is the entire unbelieving world under satanic forces. John consistently uses the word in an *antithetical* or *oppositional* way to the church or Christians. One need only go through the aforementioned passages and substitute “believers” or “elect” in the place of “world” to see how absurd the passages would read. For example, 1 John 5:4-5 would say, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the [elect]; and this is the victory that has overcome the [elect]—our faith. Who is

the one who overcomes the [elect], but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" Or, "We know that we [the elect] are of God, and that the [elect] lies in *the power of the evil one*" (5:19). This would be nonsensical. John is clearly contrasting the world with oppositional unbelievers with believing persons who are of God. In John's own gospel account, Jesus also consistently contrasts his followers with the *world*. For example, he says, "I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you (John 15:19b). Or in John 17:14-16, "I have given them your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but

Just as wide as sin extends, the propitiation extends also

to keep them from the evil *one*. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Believers

are not of the world, but of God. As in 1 John, those of God are constantly set against the world of unbelievers.

In fact, even beyond John's writings, the word *world* in the New Testament virtually never means other believers, or the elect, or the church. After surveying a number of lexicons, Norman Douty writes, "But amid all the divisions and sub-divisions listed, the word [*kosmos - world*] is never said to denote the 'elect.' These lexicons know nothing of such a use of *kosmos* in the New Testament." For example, in Joseph Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon*, *kosmos* is cited in 1 John 2:2 under "*the inhabitants of the earth, men, the human race*." In the *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, *kosmos* is listed as either meaning the entire universe, all mankind, or mankind as alienated from God. Nothing is mentioned about merely the elect. G. Abbott-Smith in his lexicon also defines *kosmos* as either the world at large, or the ungodly in particular.

Furthermore, this contrast between believers and the world/unbelievers fits perfectly with the common motif in 1 John of diametrical oppositions. For example, John speaks of *light* versus *darkness* (1 John 1:5-7, 2:9-11), *love* versus *hate* (2:9-10, 3:13-15, 4:20), *truth* versus *lies* (2:4,

2:21, 4:6), and then of *believers* versus the *world* (*unbelievers*), and so on.

This reading is made all the more likely given that John clarifies that Christ is the propitiation for the *whole* world. This Greek word means all, whole, or completely. John, as if predicting possible confusion, makes the point as clear as he can when he says the "whole world" is the scope of the atoning sacrifice. Just as the *whole world* is in the power of Satan (1 John 5:19), as all the kingdoms are in his possession (Luke 4:5-7) and he is the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4), so to Christ is the propitiation for the *whole world* (1 John 2:2), both for believers and unbelievers. With the whole world in Satan's power, all persons are born as enemies of God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21) and children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). With the whole world as objects of Christ's propitiation (1 John 2:2), all persons are able to respond due to God's universal love for the world (John 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:4).

Old Testament uses of "the whole world" further confirm this understanding of *whole*. In the Septuagint, Proverbs 17:6b reads, "The faithful has the whole world full of wealth; but the faithless not even a farthing." The faithless have not even a farthing—the least possible amount, virtually nothing. This is compared to the faithful, who have the *whole world* of wealth. The contrast is between the least possible amount and everything, the whole world. If the limited atonement advocate is to defend his position, the burden of proof is, therefore, on him to provide evidence as to why this one example in 1 John 2:2 is the sole exception of John's undeviating meaning of *world*. The universal atonement position has the distinct advantage of taking the word as it is used numerous other times in the same book and from the same author and also how it is used most often elsewhere in the New Testament. Thus, based on this Johannine evidence, one can correctly conclude that Christ truly is the propitiation—the atoning sacrifice—for all, both believers and unbelievers, providing reconciliation for all, effective by faith. As John Wesley writes, "Just as wide as sin extends, the propitiation extends also."

WHAT ASSURANCE HAVE WE THAT REGENERATION IS EXPERIENCED BY THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST?

Joseph D. McPherson

For an answer to this most important inquiry we shall search the testimony of Scripture, the testimony of early church fathers, the testimony of Reformers, and the testimony of early Methodist leaders.

The Testimony of Scripture

According to Romans 8:9, all true members of Christ's church have the Spirit of Christ. For we are assured that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [in this Holy Spirit dispensation], he is none of his." The question may then be asked, "How is one to come into possession of this Spirit of Christ?" In his first letter to the Corinthian church the apostle Paul provides the answer. While making reference to the various members who make up the body of Christ's church he assures us that "by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body ... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). There is no distinction made here between members who are but babes in the faith and those who have attained advanced experiences of grace. All true members of Christ's body—the church—have been *baptized* into that body by the divine energy of the Holy Spirit. It is through baptism of the Holy Spirit that one is "born again" or spiritually regenerated.

While Jesus was yet in the presence of his disciples, he informed them that while the Spirit presently "dwelleth with you," the time would come when the Spirit "shall be in you" (John 14:17b). He let them know that it was "expedient" for them that he "go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John 16:7). Christ's promise of sending them the Comforter or Holy Spirit was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Only by this inward experience of the Holy Spirit can regeneration be received.

After Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost,

anxious hearts were asking, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'" (Acts 2:38). Three thousand followed Peter's instructions and became recipients of the Holy Spirit by way of repentance and that faith exercised in the sacrament of baptism. Their baptism by water was not only a required means but an external symbol of their baptism internally with the Holy Spirit.

It is to be understood that baptism by water alone without the necessary ingredients of repentance and faith accompanying the rite will not lead to a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Though the Samaritans to whom Philip ministered accepted well his message and the miracles he performed, their conversion was not complete before the coming of Peter and John, who prayed that they might receive the Holy Spirit. It is to be observed that their receiving the Spirit under the ministry of Peter and John was their first. Notice that the word "receive" in this context meant that they were baptized with the Holy Ghost after the apostles' prayers and laying on of hands. The same word "receive" was used by Peter on the day of Pentecost when promising the gift of the Holy Spirit to those who would repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

To Saul of Tarsus, Ananias provided clear instructions by which this penitent would become a true convert and be possessed of the Holy Spirit: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins (plural), calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). This was Saul's first reception of the Holy Spirit, and he received it in regenerating power.

When ministering in the house of Cornelius, the message delivered was one of introduction to the gospel. There was no mention of an advanced

work of grace to be sought. Peter was simply introducing to them *Christ and the remission of sins* when upon those in attendance the Holy Spirit fell. There is no record of a former reception of the Holy Spirit experienced by these Gentiles.

Finally, we read of Paul's meeting the twelve at Ephesus who, though they had been baptized "unto John's baptism," confessed that they "had not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Their being identified as "disciples" can only mean that they were followers of evangelical truth as far as they had been instructed at that time. After Paul had baptized them in the name of Lord Jesus and "had laid his hands upon them the Holy Ghost came upon them" in

Regeneration is wrought by baptism in the Holy Spirit

regenerating power (Acts 19:1-7).

These early accounts of baptism in the Holy Spirit make

no mention of entire sanctification or Christian perfection. In the light of Romans 8:9 and 1 Corinthians 12:13 they must be considered historical accounts of initial conversion.

Some today would doubtlessly suggest that the baptism of the Holy Spirit would have been the most natural and effective answer to the spiritual problems of the Corinthian church. Surprisingly, Paul never once suggests this to be an answer. Rather, he repeatedly reminds them that they were "in Christ Jesus" and that "God's Spirit dwells in [them]." Therefore, Spirit baptism was already a past experience in [them] (1 Cor. 1:30; 3:16, 23; 6:11, 19; 12:13 and 2 Cor. 13:5). Both of Paul's epistles to the Corinthians are full of directives designed for the correction and instruction of believers in practical matters of holy living. Before he closed his second letter, however, he expresses a wish that they might "become perfect" (2 Cor. 13:9).

Near the end of his first letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul prays that "the God of peace himself sanctify [them] completely." If, according to the teaching of some, we are to understand this entire sanctification to be attained only by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we could wonder why Paul did not instruct these Thessalonian believers to seek the baptism of the Holy

Spirit. Surprisingly, however, in no part of his two letters to these Thessalonian believers does he mention their need of being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The description he gives of these believers in chapter one of his first letter provides sufficient evidence of their having already been recipients of such Spirit baptism.

The Galatian church had its share of spiritual deficiencies and would not be considered a body of believers who were entirely sanctified. Nevertheless, we do not find Paul urging them to seek a baptism of the Spirit. Rather he reminds them that they had once "begun by the Spirit" (Gal. 3:3).

It must be observed that in none of the New Testament epistles, whether written by Paul, Peter, James, Jude, or John do we find believers urged and instructed to seek a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Rather, we find them being admonished to "go on to perfection." The repeatedly used terms of "perfect," "perfecting," and "perfected" refer to a work of grace beyond that of Spirit baptism. While the baptism of the Holy Spirit is productive of regeneration and initial sanctification, God's work of perfection in divine love follows a believer's entrance into the body of Christ through Spirit baptism. Christian perfection in divine love completes the work of sanctification that was begun at the time of the soul's regeneration.

The Testimony of Early Church Fathers

Early church fathers are found in full agreement and support of this truth that regeneration is wrought by baptism in the Holy Spirit. Chrysostom assures us that "Anyone who is baptized with the Holy Spirit is the one referred to as born again through water and the Holy Spirit." Augustine states that "We are saved by hope in the regenerative work of the Spirit in baptism." And Ambrose writes: "For who is he that is baptized with the Holy Spirit but he who is born again through water and the Holy Spirit?" While Christian perfection is happily found to be taught by various church fathers, repeated assurances in their writings convince us that without noticeable exception, regeneration or the

new birth was to them accomplished through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

The Testimony of the Reformers

Martin Luther and John Calvin, leading instruments of the Reformation, lend their support to the truth that the Holy Spirit's baptism is necessary for accomplishing the new birth or regeneration. Luther, in his comments on Titus 3:5, is referring to baptism of the Holy Spirit when he says, "Paul terms baptism not a bodily cleansing, but a 'washing of regeneration.'" "This washing, this regeneration, makes new creatures."

In his comments on Titus 3:5, John Calvin says, "Paul, while he speaks directly about the Holy Spirit, at the same time alludes to baptism. It is therefore the Spirit of God who regenerates us, and makes us new creatures; but because his grace is invisible, and hidden, a visible symbol of it is beheld in baptism." These historical figures of church history reflect the teaching of Reformers generally. They were assured that the outward washing of baptism was but a visible symbol of Spirit baptism by which regeneration was accomplished.

The Testimony of Early Methodist Leaders

It is most interesting to note that Wesley and other leaders of early Methodism did not sever themselves from historical Christian orthodoxy as have some in our present day. Acts 1:5 records Jesus' promise to his disciples when he said, "For John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Wesley responds: "And so are all true believers, to the end of the world." It is historically proven that the founder of Methodism never altered this conviction of his throughout life.

In his sermon on "Salvation by Faith" he makes it known that "The faith through which we are saved [in this Holy Ghost dispensation] ... is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to 'leave all and follow him;' although they had then power

to work miracles, to 'heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;' yea, they had then 'power and authority over all devils;' and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to 'preach the kingdom of God.'"

The question was once raised in class: "Were the disciples saved before Pentecost?" "Yes," was my answer. "They were saved in accordance with their inferior dispensation. But we would not equate their saving experience with those who have been regenerated in this present Holy Spirit dispensation."

Jesus once made the following statement: "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has risen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11). In his *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament*, Mr. Wesley follows with an explanation borrowed from the writings of an "ancient author," St. Isidore of Pelusium, an Egyptian monastic who died no later than 449. This also demonstrates that Wesley's views were in line with historic Christianity. In contrast, the American holiness movement is seriously deficient in historical continuity.

One perfect in the law, as John was, is inferior to one who is "baptized into the death of Christ." For this is the kingdom of heaven, even "to be buried with Christ," and to be "raised up together with him." John was greater than all who had been then born of women; but he was cut off before the kingdom of heaven was given. [He seems to mean, that righteousness, peace and joy which constitutes the present, inward kingdom of heaven.] He was blameless as to that "righteousness which is by the law;" but he fell short of those who are perfected by the Spirit which is in Christ. Whosoever therefore is "least in the kingdom of heaven," by Christian regeneration, is greater than any who has attained only the righteousness of the law, because "the law maketh nothing perfect."

We see that Wesley clearly understood that the great work of regeneration in a believer's

heart was made possible only after the promised coming of the kingdom of heaven, the inauguration of which was on the day of Pentecost. John Fletcher, Adam Clarke, Richard Watson, Joseph Benson, Luther Lee, and W. B. Pope differed not with Wesley and historical Christianity concerning this truth. All were convinced that nothing less than the baptism of the Holy Spirit was necessary to produce the mighty work of regeneration in a believer's heart. For brevity's sake we shall quote but three of these early Methodist leaders.

Some have been under the impression that Fletcher's use of the language of baptism with the Spirit was confined to references of a second work of grace. The honest reader, however, will find reference to "baptism with the Spirit" numerous times in Mr. Fletcher's writings while discussing justification and regeneration. To cite

The American holiness movement is seriously deficient in historical continuity

but one example, he is found encouraging earnest seekers for the new birth, by exclaiming, "Yes, you shall be baptized by

the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins, and justified freely by faith."

Luther Lee was an American Methodist who with Orange Scott became co-founders of The Wesleyan Methodist Connection, a group that separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1843. Although issues of abolition and church government gave rise to this separation, Luther Lee, a well-known professor of theology, never turned from the fundamental doctrines of early Methodism, even though he was a witness to the rise of the American holiness movement. In his theological work published in 1893, titled *Elements of Theology*, he makes a solid connection between baptism of the Holy Spirit and regeneration of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost following Peter's sermon. He identifies the "gift of the Holy Spirit" with that "internal baptism in its heart-renewing influence." In other words, he sees the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by Peter to be, in reality, a promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Lee assures his readers that "Baptism is a sign or symbol of the

purification of the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is an outward visible sign of an internal washing." "Purification," says he, "is always associated with baptism." There is purification in regeneration as well as in entire sanctification. Such purification or initial sanctification cleanses from guilt, condemnation, and the stains or defilement produced by all committed sins of the past, as Christ explained in Mark 7:18-23.

William Burt Pope (1822-1903) has been considered the "prince of Methodist theologians." In his *A Compendium of Christian Theology*, he reminds his readers that regeneration "is the Divine begetting of the filial life of Christ in us." He identifies "Baptism ... as the sacrament of the new birth, or rather of the soul's entrance into Christ [which] gives regeneration both a special name and special character. The baptism with the Holy Ghost is one of its definitions." He was fully persuaded that the New Testament taught regeneration to be experienced only by the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Like Luther Lee, he lived to see the rise of the modern holiness movement and was not without his warnings concerning some of its new and unscriptural teachings. At one point in his writings he makes reference to Paul's question in Acts 19.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? means Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed? In other words, entire consecration is the stronger energy of a Spirit already in the regenerate, not a Spirit to be sent down from on high. The kingdom of God is already within, if we would let it come to perfection. Neither SINCE in this passage, nor the AFTER in after that ye believed, has anything corresponding in the original Greek. This teaching tends to diminish the value of regeneration, which is itself a life hid with Christ in God.

Pope thus makes the point in statements above that a new convert has initially received or through Christ been baptized in the Holy Spirit and that the experience of Christian perfection

does not require an added “Pentecostal visitation [of the Holy Spirit] superadded to the state of conversion.” The same Holy Spirit that has taken up his residence in the heart of the newly regenerated soul is to be allowed to continue his work of entirely sanctifying and perfecting ministry.

Robert Lyon assures us that “The baptism of the Spirit, far from being a second experience and an experience subsequent to receiving the Spirit or being born of the Spirit, stands scripturally at the heart of conversion.”

The nature of Christian conversion, when fully appreciated, is by itself and in itself an anticipation of what we seek to find completed in the insufflations of love. To be made perfect in love is to come to know the natural (supernatural) consequences and corollary of conversion. Perfection in love is the follow-up of that baptism in the Spirit which sets the believer on course.

A working thesis would be set forth as follows: According to Scripture, conversion is itself a radically transforming experience which involves a breaking of the bondage of sin, a dying to self and the realization of a new righteousness. In receiving Christ, the powerful and creative Word of God is engrafted and the Spirit is received as promised, in full measure. There is a new beginning in every respect (2 Cor. 5:17). In our conversion the Holy One touches down and his nature invades our privacy. We

are brought out from under the tyranny of darkness into the domain of filial love (Col. 1:13). In short, conversion biblical style is a truly sanctifying experience in its impact and in its ramifications. All imperatives to Christians to cease from sin and to be holy flow from this understanding of the dynamic of biblical conversion.

In speaking of conversion as a “truly sanctifying experience” care must be taken not to take that to mean it is the “entirely sanctifying experience.” The experience of entire sanctification is biblically speaking the normal follow through of conversion when the latter is adequately perceived.

There are some in the present holiness movement who unashamedly claim that their theological views are an improvement over those of Wesley and early Methodism. By such an assertion they knowingly or unknowingly claim to hold truth never known by the apostolic fathers or other authorities in church history. We must finally conclude, therefore, that the unique teachings of the American holiness movement comprise new theology. This forces us to apply a standing rule in theological study that asserts anything new or unique in theology cannot be true theology and must therefore be discarded. “Whatever doctrine is new,” says Wesley, “must be wrong; for the old religion is the only true one; and no doctrine can be right, unless it is the very same ‘which was from the beginning.’”

CALVINISTIC ASSUMPTIONS, Part 5

Gil VanOder

Assumption #5

If Christ died for all, but all are not saved, then Christ is not a real savior but merely a potential one.

Calvinists believe in a limited atonement because they assume God designed it to be effectual only for the elect. Thus, Christ is not the world's Savior because the non-elect are

not saved. This sounds logical until you realize there is a difference between the provision of the atonement and the application of the atonement. In other words, Christ's death provided salvation for the whole world, but only those individuals who accept Christ's atonement for their sins benefit from it. Like the blood of the Passover lamb, the blood of Christ is available to all, but

only those who apply the blood for themselves are saved. Christ is the true Savior of the world (John 4:42), but unless we are willing to accept him for who he is (the Savior), his death does not save us. He is still the world's Savior, however, even if few accept him as such.

The Bible also calls Jesus the "*King of kings*" (e.g., 1 Tim. 6:15). Does the fact most people do not bow down to him or recognize him as such make him only a potential king? No, if not a single person accepted him as king, he would still be the King of kings. Jesus is not a potential anything. He is King of kings and Lord of lords and Savior of the world regardless of who people may believe he is. John tells us Jesus "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9 KJV). Christ is the light for *every man* born and not just for the elect. In the very next verse, however, John points

out that "the world knew him not" (v. 10). If the world didn't recognize Jesus as the Light, does that mean Jesus isn't really the Light but

is only a potential light? If so, verse ten is making a false statement, because it says that Jesus is the Light that lights everyone born whether they recognize him as such or not. Isn't Jesus still the Word (John 1:1) even if "his own received him not?" (v. 11). Yes, Jesus is everything the Bible tells us he is, even if some do not accept him as the Light, the Word, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, or the Savior of the world.

The Bible tells us that Christ died for sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). That includes everyone, unless only the elect are sinners. You cannot find a single Scripture that claims Christ died for some sinners but not all. Romans 5:6 states that Christ died for the ungodly. Again, unless the elect are the only ones who are ungodly, then Christ died for all of mankind, including the non-elect. In addition, the Bible tells us that God is "the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe" (1 Tim. 4:10). Notice that believers are only one portion of those God is the Savior of and not the sum total. God is also the Savior of

non-believers, even if they refuse to accept him as such. Hebrews 2:9 reads, "Jesus should taste death for everyone." It does not say, "Jesus should taste death for everyone who is of the elect." 1 John 2:2 declares that Jesus Christ is "the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." Christ atoned for the elects' sins as well as the whole world's sins. Christ's atonement is unlimited.

R. C. Sproul argued that "If Christ died for everyone's sins, then no one should go to hell. If the payment for sin was made on the cross for everyone, then no further payment should be required. No law court allows payment to be exacted twice for the same crime, and God will not do that either. If God accepts payment of one person's moral debt from another, will he then exact payment of the same debt later by the person himself? The answer is obviously no."

The answer is obviously "no" only if the person accepts the payment from the other person and presents it to the judge. If the guilty person refuses the other person's offer, the guilty person remains responsible for the payment. The guilty person must decide who will pay for his/her crime (sin). The judge doesn't choose who pays. The judge decides if the person who stands before the court is guilty, but who pays for the crime is left up to the one who committed the crime. The guilty person goes unpunished only by accepting the other person's offer.

Imagine you had a neighbor who was starving. So, you kill one of your lambs and give it to him to eat. Then imagine that he refuses to eat the lamb and dies of starvation as a result. Does the fact that both he and the lamb died mean the lamb was not killed for your neighbor? No, the lamb died for your neighbor, but the neighbor also died because he refused to appropriate the lamb that died for him. In the same way, Christ died for everyone (including our neighbors); but unless our neighbors accept him for themselves, his death doesn't absolve them of their sins.

The Scriptures proclaim Christ to be the Savior of the world. Belief in a limited atonement, therefore, is an assumption based on faulty logic rather than the Word of God.

You cannot find a single Scripture that claims Christ died for some sinners but not all

THE OPTIMISTIC VIEW OF GRACE FOR WESLEY

Vinicius Couto

Romans 8:29 is a text that has already generated many animosities in the history of the church. The text has been interpreted, for the most part by Calvinists, as referring to the predestination of the people who will be saved. Wesley, however, saw another perspective in this text. For him, the predestination of this text does not refer to private redemption, but to what I call “teleological predestination,” that is, the result that God wants to achieve with the redeemed. In this case, Paul is pointing to the result or purpose that God wants from a Christian.

Dunning explained that Wesley “repeatedly points out that the end (*telos*) that God is seeking to produce in our lives is a renewal of the divine image” and concluded that, “thus Wesley defines the essence of the Christian life as the divine activity of renewing human persons in the image of God.” Outler testified, “The recovery of the defaced *Image of God* is the axial theme of Wesley’s soteriology.”

Regeneration begins a process of restoring the image of God in man, since “God will thus ‘renew us in the spirit of our mind,’ and ‘create us anew’ in the image of God.” Salvation is a gracious act operated upon by God, taking the now Christian to a transforming *modus vivendi* arising from the transformation experienced. It is a living, shaping faith that reaches not only the regenerate but is a free and universal grace that wishes to change society.

Wesley’s transformational vision was a good response to the prevailing philosophy of his time, the Enlightenment, which taught autonomous progressivism for social issues. Theologians who surrendered to the Enlightenment began to defend deism, an idea that God created all things and that he does not intervene in earthly matters, and it is therefore up to men to change the world, striving for a more just and egalitarian society.

Wesley did not surrender to this deistic progressive spirit. On the contrary, he repeatedly criticized this autonomy professed by the Illuminists and rejected the positions that were contrary to

the Christian faith. However, he also understood that progress was needed, such as the inclusion of the poor, better working conditions, more humanity in relation to the incarcerated, elevating public health issues, and abolishing slavery.

The church has a prophetic mission. It is a task to denounce the sin of the authorities who allow themselves to be seduced by the thirst for power and money and the spiritual, social, and moral decadence of the people. The prophet is the one who points the finger and represents the Creator on earth. Christians are not to be silent in the face of the evil, corruption, and sinfulness. We need to be a nuisance to those who are reveling in injustice. We need to be, wisely, a finger that touches the open wound, always aiming for it to be closed. The prophetic role of the church should not be confused with a pessimistic and murmuring worldview, which is always complaining about everything and that only serves to find defects. The prophetic role needs to aim at transformation, otherwise it will be no more than an accuser who adds effort to Satan in his kingdom of opposition to the Creator. Therefore, Cheryl Sanders’ threefold placement regarding the prophetic mission of the church is interesting because it encompasses accountability, compassion, and empathy.

Scripture shows the need for *accountability* by saying that “He that oppreseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor” (Proverbs 14:31). Men like Elijah, Micaiah, and John the Baptist denounced the injustices and atrocities of various kinds (spiritual, moral, social, etc.) of the authorities of their times.

Scripture also demonstrates that *compassion* is necessary: “He that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he” (Proverbs 14:21b). “To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” is considered by James as characteristics of the true religion (James 1:27). When we are concerned with these issues, people outside the evangelical

world see transformational behavior and glorify the heavenly Father (Matt. 5:16). For Wesley, “this can not be done until we have given our hearts to God and love our neighbor as ourselves.”

Empathy, in turn, is nothing more than putting yourself in the other’s place, that is, of identifying yourself intellectually or affectively with an idea or person. Jesus said, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Matt. 7:12). Many injustices occur, *a priori*, due to the sinful depravity that the human race inherited from Adam. However, in the second instance, many people do not take this counsel of Jesus into account. As an example, we can mention the rulers (and even religious

leaders) who enjoy luxurious lodging, holidays in places that can be considered wonders of the world, and exorbitant salaries, without

putting themselves in the place of the poor that hardly has where to live and sometimes not even what to eat.

The prophetic mission in John Wesley’s ministry can be seen through his teleological understanding of the restoration of the image of God and of the role of the Christian in the kingdom of God. His perspective of the kingdom of God was not limited to something future and millenarian, but it covered the present moment. This is because this kingdom has an inner aspect (Mark 4:26), being present in the heart of every true believer (Luke 17:21) and therefore of a double nature: inner (in the heart of believers) and with its apex in glory (cf. John 3:3). In the case of the earthly aspect, Wesley understands that there is God’s intervention, for the kingdom can not be understood as something merely existential, as do liberation theologians and many theologians of the Integral Mission (Matt. 20.1). However, the kingdom of God also has a future reality, that is, it involves eternal salvation (Mark 10.24). This aspect is also important because the existentialists end up devaluing eternity with Christ, reducing salvation to social issues.

Thus, the Wesleyan view of the optimism of grace for the redeemed generated their responsibility in the active and present participation in the kingdom of God. That is why Wesley said in a prayer that “All [Christians]... may seek, in their several stations, to right the oppressed, to comfort the afflicted, to provide for the poor and needy, and to relieve all those that are in any misery.” Wesley understood from the parable of the sheep and goats that every true Christian must do works of mercy (Matt. 25:35-46) and that every natural talent can be used in the service of the kingdom of God, as long as it is accompanied by the knowledge of the Scriptures and a fervent spirit (Acts 18:24).

The holistic thinking of Wesley challenges the scholars and the church people to reflect on the transformational practice that the gospel proposes. It is a theology that intends to approach the human being in its totality, starting from the assumption that the image of God lost and obfuscated is restored to the glory of God. In this sense, it is perceived that the quarrels of the virtual and academic world regarding the soteriological debates of the Calvinist and Arminian schools are no more than a medieval perspective; for although there are significant differences in the two traditions, convergences need to be more valued in favor of a more relevant productivity in the kingdom of God, where we can act together as ministers of reconciliation.

Finally, it was concluded that Wesley’s theology is indeed responsible because his teleological vision of restoring the image of God leads to a transformational practice in which the Christian is an agent of the kingdom of God who plays his part in the prophetic ministry. This Christian does not act with his arms crossed and his lips complaining. Instead, sanctification (Christian perfection) is another key element so that this individual does not become static or parasitic, for such sanctity consists in loving God and neighbor as oneself, making the praxis of sanctification not an element abstract, but practical, legitimately transformational. It follows, therefore, that the prophetic mission of the church in John Wesley’s holistic thinking unfolds into a relational, reconciling, and transformational praxis.

The Wesleyan view of the optimism of grace generated active and present participation in the kingdom of God.

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