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WHAT IN THE WORLD IS GOING ON IN THE WORLD?

Vic Reasoner

“Where do we go from here?” Like the men of Issachar, we must understand our times and know what the church ought to do. As overseers, we must see the big picture. We have been hit with so much recently. We are currently witnessing a shocking apostasy within the church. But the battle is not over. As we march forward, we need to heed three warnings.

Avoid eschatological speculation

Whenever there is uncertainty and crisis, people automatically revert to questions about the end times. Before we can determine whether or not this is the end, we must determine what the end will look like. Dispensationalism has popularized a doom and gloom anticipation of the end. However, the early Methodists held a very different view of the end. According to the “left behind” crowd, we are closer to the end than ever before. According to historic Wesleyan-Arminian theology, we may be further from the end than we thought; and we undoubtedly have more work to do than we previously thought.

I would recommend that we disassociate the COVID pandemic from eschatology. If the Lord comes before we anticipate him, the important thing is that we be found faithful. If his coming is further out than we anticipate, all of the predictions of the last hundred years are nothing more than false warnings.

Avoid conspiracy theories

The biggest problem with conspiracy theories is that they tend to promote a dualism which implies that the devil has more power than God. If the bad guys have orchestrated the whole mess of 2020 then it almost looks like we are doomed. Every spe-

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cial interest group is attempting to spin these events to serve their agenda. But we must live by Psalm 2. The heathen do conspire, but their conspiracies are futile because God has predestined the reign of his Son. Sometimes the devil overplays his hand. While it may temporarily look like he has the upper hand, according to Scripture God is laughing at him.

Avoid fatalism

Calvinists have warped the doctrine of predestination, turning it into fatalism. This fatalism results in resignation. Wesley even observed that Calvinism tended to accept illness as God's will instead of praying for divine healing. I often hear that we are under the judgment of God. While God does judge sin, how do we explain why faithful Christians died under COVID? The Arminian

understanding of God's providence incorporates the concept of concurrence. Concurrence means that God does not necessarily cause actions, although nothing can

happen without his permission. However, concurrence does not imply divine approval.

In his *History of Christianity*, Kenneth Scott Latourette divided church history into seven segments of growth and reversal. In evaluating our 2000 years history, he concluded that Christianity has become the most potent single force in the life of mankind. He explained that Christianity has spread by pulsations of advance, retreat, and advance. Each major advance carried it further than the one before it, and each major recession has been less severe than the previous one.

And so what should our priorities be in the days ahead? We need *reformation* before we can have revival. God will not revive a disobedient and heretical church. He would only have more of the same! We must get back to the foundation of his Word.

We need to corporately *repent* for the sins of our nation, according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. We also need to *resist*. We need to acquaint ourselves with the theology of Samuel Rutherford. His classic, *Lex Rex*, written in 1644, was the theological basis of the American revolution. His theology was restated by Francis Schaeffer in *A Christian Manifesto* (1981).

The church of Jesus Christ is not under state authority. We must obey God rather than men. We need a good reason *not* to assemble together for public worship (Heb 10:25). When temporary changes need to be made due to general health concerns, that decision should be made by church and not state authorities. However, on a long-term basis we cannot have *virtual* fellowship without becoming practical gnostics who separate the human spirit and the body.

God still has the final control. Our God is able to deliver us. But whether he does or whether we go through the furnace of affliction, we must settle it now — we are not going to bow our knees to anyone except Jesus Christ — regardless of what congressional legislation passes.

God is cleaning his house (1 Pet 4:17). In due season there will come a time of reaping if we do not give up (Gal 6:9). I do not believe this temporary reversal is permanent. There are many God-fearing Christians who have not bowed their knee to Baal. May God help us to do all the good we can. Instead of merely decrying what the world has come to, we must declare what has come to this world. The kingdom of Christ is the answer.

—Dr. Reasoner is the president of the Fundamental Wesleyan Society.

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A BLOW TO THE ROOT: THE NECESSARY CONNECTION BETWEEN INERRANCY AND ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IN RECENT WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION *Part 4*

William Ury

1980-1990's The exclusion of the maximalist school

The ideological lines were drawn soon after the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was founded in 1977. We begin to see overt challenges to the “fundamentalism” entering Wesleyanism. Donald Dayton became the clearest proponent of those who had been delivered from the perceived “fundamentalist logic” that tied inerrancy to theology. He was set free, according to his own testimony, at Yale to espouse an “authentically authoritative but non-inerrantist” viewpoint. He and others then set out to remove the vestiges of inerrancy from the larger Wesleyan theological discussion starting with its leadership found in the Wesleyan Theological Society. The assessments that “fundamentalists” as a group held to a rationalized “crude” and “wooden” literalism or a “mechanical” and “uncritical” application of the letter in opposition to the Spirit come from a number of Wesleyan Theological Society scholars. While very few actual modern Wesleyan “fundamentalists” are named or sources cited, there are consistent criticisms of 19th century exegetes. A slew of articles appeared in this time period which offered a realignment of Wesley’s perspective on Scripture. Wesley’s pre-modern biblical scholarship was assailed, respectfully for the most part, from every vantage point. While the WTS never excluded the investigation of any major theological trend, it becomes more and more apparent that literary-criticism, source-criticism, form-criticism, and canonical-criticism become very important issues for deliberation. There appeared a

growing trend to claim Wesley as our theological father but not an accepted authority in biblical analysis.

Joel Green concluded that from 1981-2001 only five percent of the articles pertained substantively to a “Wesleyan approach to the Bible.” Since that assessment was made, the percentage has not improved, which is remarkable given the present state of attack on all that pertains to the loss of traditional Christian, if not Wesleyan, commitments.

William Abraham, referring to the intra-traditional debate on Wesley’s view of Scripture as a “low intensity volcano,” stated that the Wesleyan theological agenda must not attempt to relate Scripture to all the other sources of truth for John Wesley. What he refers to as the canonical heritage of the Wesleyan tradition is never clearly defined. Wesley, according to Abraham, was probably confused, unclear, or just plain incompetent, on the relationship between norm and secondary sources.

2000-2008 The leadership of the minimalist school

Another clear gauntlet was thrown down when the nineteenth century holiness proponents were touted as examples of eisegetical malpractice. They are suspect for their obscurantistic view of Scripture, which can do nothing but undercut the meaningfulness of their call to be sanctified holy. One can almost get the impression from much of the literature of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* that these misguided sanctificationists were twisting Scripture into their own small interpretive matrix.

If the “minimalist” version of scriptural

veracity is accepted, that the text is true, for the most part, as affecting faith and practice, then there is really no way to get around the implications of the text regarding the call to believers to stop sinning and then subsequently to die to inbred sin. That interpretation may suffice for awhile, but in the end, for the minimalist, that hope is small.

There is reason for concern that bit by bit, portions of the Scripture that are more bla-

There are very few places in academic circles where a second definite work of grace is clearly advocated without dying the death of a thousand reservations.

tantly “problematic” will then give way to critical assessment to other passages pertaining to faith and practice which will be sidelined by claims to not being actually the word of God for our day.

Much of my academic career has come within this last period. I have participated where possible in the encouragement of sound biblical and doctrinal discourse. I have been committed to all the basic Wesleyan doctrines. My commitment to inerrancy as a Wesleyan has been applauded by most to whom I minister. Reservation is more the experience when stepping in Wesleyan academia. There are very few places in academic circles where a second definite work of grace is clearly articulated and propounded, advocated without dying the death of a thousand reservations. It is hard to believe that one’s view of Scripture can be in

line with the general tendencies of this era’s biblical criticism and at the same time be an unflinching call to a crisis experience of sanctification within the entire *ordo salutis* of Wesley and his progeny.

Recently a group of scholars has produced a work under the rather audacious title, *The Holiness Manifesto*. We should applaud every effort to do what this group has attempted. Interestingly, there is no clear statement within the book that arose from the *Manifesto* on Scripture. It does contain the expected reservations about the abuses of entire sanctification. The historical and theological foundations are primarily found in the transition figures who turned to a “redefinition” of both Scriptural authority and entire sanctification.

Even if one agrees that misperceptions can arise when the sin nature is described as something which is to be eradicated, it is still intriguing that the reader is left with the marvelous call to some sort of change, though not defined. While no biblical text is capable of offering the whole agenda of a movement, it raises the question as to where an ecumenically-minded, inclusive movement envisioned by this fine group of scholars will be able to distinctively lay down how one is entirely sanctified in language as clear as the articles they produced and what the biblical text’s relationship is to actual sanctification in this life.

—Dr. Ury is the National Ambassador for Holiness within the Salvation Army.

THE PECULIARITIES OF METHODISM *Part 2*

William Burt Pope

Between these opposite errors, as we must hold them to be, there is another against which we equally protest: that of those who make the atoning sufferings of the Redeemer an expedient to work upon the human heart by a display of the Divine attributes. With some it is the justice of God, as the moral Ruler of the universe, that is displayed: in no other manner

could the Eternal more impressively declare His righteousness in the forgiveness of human sin, than by first visiting it upon the soul of His Son, the voluntary representative of the race. With some it is the love of God which, in the person of the Son, sympathized with the misery of human sin and by the might and sorrow of self-sacrifice would win man’s soul from evil.

Now we must needs agree with both these, for the Scripture asserts both. But they are harmonized in another, and still deeper truth. These attributes, before they were displayed in the cross, were reconciled in God Himself, whose love provided the sacrifice which His justice demanded: both love and justice making the atonement an absolute necessity. If we hold any peculiarity here, it is perhaps that, while we firmly maintain this last truth, we give more full scope to the former two than most other advocates of the central doctrine permit themselves.

But it is in the administration of the finished work of Christ by the Holy Ghost that our theology stands out most distinctly. The term we use is itself conciliatory: it is not the application of redemption, which would suggest a too passive condition on the part of man; it is not the appropriation of redemption, which would make man too active and independent. It gives the Holy Spirit His honor in the work of human salvation.

We hold that the Gospel of the grace of God is literally sent to the world; and that the entire family of man partakes of the benefit of redemption. Our doctrine looks out upon the Court of the Gentiles, or the outer court, with assurance that there is already a light and in-

fluence there that prepares the way for that Gospel to all hearts. We believe that the Holy Spirit has been given as such to mankind;

not indeed as the indwelling Spirit, or even as the Comforter, but as the Spirit of conviction, sent forth from Christ to bring men back to Him. We steadfastly believe in a universal preparatory grace, the result of the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost given to Adam and his descendants, "to abide with them for ever" as the herald and forerunner of Christ. This gives to our preaching its character of catholic freeness and simple sincerity, an unreserve and alacrity and vigor which no other doctrine could inspire.

Here again we claim no monopoly. Ours is not the only confession that makes the Redeemer the "light that enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." In this we greatly rejoice: especially in the fact that the heart of modern Christendom is, in spite of every theory, becoming constantly more and more enlarged. But while we admit this, we still must remember our peculiarity. Many teach and preach a universal Gospel, which is nevertheless fettered and cramped by some secret theory of reserve in God's decrees: from the necessity of such violent compromises between theory and practice we are happily exempt. Others, and in far larger numbers, agree with us in the universality of the benefit of redemption, but carry their catholicity of spirit to a latitudinarian excess. They do not look out into the court beyond as the abode of utter darkness and death until the Spirit here and there kindles the spark of life and light. So far they speak our language, and seem to be one with our doctrine. But, alas, they go to the opposite extreme. They make the common benefits of redemption all its benefit. The voice they send out into the world is not, "Come out and be ye separate, and I will receive you!" but "Ye are all children of God through Christ, the root and life of humanity!" Thus we have to protest against both these forms also of error; the truth lying here as usual between two extremes. We insist on it that there are the preparations for life which are not life itself; that there is a veil or wall of partition between the region of preliminary grace and the inner sanctuary. We meet both errors by asserting that the preparations of the heart of man for regenerating grace are everywhere, while at the same time those influences are only the preparations for a renewal of the soul which is beyond conviction and repentance and even conversion to God.

While the penitent and believing sinner is admitted within that veil into the experience of personal salvation, he enters into the enjoyment of privileges which we, as a community, describe generally as other Christians do, but with certain peculiarities once more for which

Our theology stands out most distinctly in the administration of the finished work of Christ by the Holy Ghost.

we must earnestly plead. Like others, we regard all these privileges as one in our union with Christ, in whom we are complete; like others, we regard them as administered by the Spirit externally, and inwrought by Him within the soul: that is, we hold that they have a forensic and imputative character, as well as an inward and moral one. Perhaps our peculiarity, however, may be thus stated. We believe, and constantly maintain, that in every department of

Our theology gives prominence to the witness of the Holy Spirit as the privilege of the believer.

Christian privilege the Holy Ghost imparts to the believer the full assurance of his participation.

Moreover, we also

maintain that in every department the same Spirit bestows the perfect enjoyment of their several privileges on all who comply with His conditions. In other words, we preach the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the heart of the believer as the common prerogative; and further, the attainableness in this life of a state of entire sanctification and acceptableness in the sight of God.

But we must consider what these privileges are. They have been arranged, classified, and set in their evangelical order after a great variety of methods. For my present purpose this one may be conveniently adopted. There is, first, a circle of blessings which belong to the Mediatorial Court of Christ, where law and righteousness reign, and the Atonement is a satisfaction to justice. Its blessings are the remission of the penalty of sin, and the positive acceptance of the sinner as righteous, in Christ the ground of his righteousness. Then the scene changes, and the Court becomes the Father's house, where the Advocate is the Brother of the race, where sonship is the mercy imparted, externally in adoption, internally in regeneration. Again the scene changes, and the house expands into a holy temple, where sanctification presides, and the Judge, who is the Father, is also the God. There, Christ is the High Priest; man, no longer at the bar, or sitting at the table, is always before the altar of his consecration. These

three spheres of evangelical blessing are really one; but the phraseology pertaining to each is marked off with the most exact precision through the New Testament Scriptures. But as there is nothing peculiar here save the arrangement, I will not dwell upon this.

It is more important to justify the prominence which our theology gives to the witness of the Holy Spirit as the privilege of the believer. We give it that prominence because the Scripture gives it. Any unprejudiced reader who opens the New Testament, and studies the descriptions of Christian experience, and marks the examples living there before his eyes, must come to the conclusion that all Christian people are supposed to be assured of their personal relation to God, knowing the things they freely receive. They are in the Lord and they are conscious of it. So plain is that, that no Christian confession of faith has ever denied it; on the contrary, all make provision for it in some way or other. Methodist theology has no desire to appropriate this doctrine as its own in any sense. Yet, as I am speaking of peculiarities, some characteristic points in our teaching may be alluded to, having reference both to what we hold and what we deny.

The method of statement may vary; but you will recognize the old doctrine when I describe it as running through the entire circle of evangelical privilege. For instance, in the Court Mediatorial, where righteousness is supreme, the witness of the Holy Ghost is borne to the troubled spirit, "Thy sins be forgiven thee"; the punishment of the sinner is remitted, his person is justified and invested with all the prerogatives of righteousness. The same Spirit leads the sinner, as it were, to the feet of the Father, and becomes within him "the Spirit of adoption," witnessing that he is a child of God, not now to his spirit but with his spirit. For the blessed feeling that cried "Father" is in the Christian's own soul; it is his own if anything can be his own: while at the same time, it is the voice of the Holy Ghost within him. Then the same Spirit leads him to the altar, and in the temple seals him for God, according to that

Scripture, "In whom, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." When I say "then," I do not mean that there is any order and succession in these testimonies. They are one: to the conscience, as touching the law; with the spirit, in the Father's house; upon the whole person, in the holy temple. They agree in one: the witness of forgiveness is assurance concerning the past; the Spirit of adoption is an ever-present assurance; the

Our doctrine does not depend on any sacrament of human absolving word: it is the direct witness of the Spirit.

seal of consecration points onward to the day of redemption. But, as they agree in one, so they cannot be disjoined. The Christian who lives

in the clear light of his privilege knows that he is not under condemnation; feels a higher Spirit than his own, mingling His inspirations with the filial feeling of adoption; and is secretly conscious that the Holy Ghost is within him, the pledge of his full redemption. Much might be said as to the various relations of this three-one testimony; but I must pass to our differences with our brethren on the subject.

We do not strictly link this witness with sacramental means and ordinances. There is a widespread theory of assurance which makes it dependent on priestly absolution, either with or without a new sacrament devised for the purpose. Even then there is a certain limitation in the sinner's confidence; there is a difference between the eternal penalty and the tempo-

ral, and the assurance varies accordingly. Our doctrine does not depend on any sacrament or human absolving word: it is the direct witness of the Spirit, as alone having in His power the things of Christ — the supreme and only Confessor, the supreme and only Absolver. On the other hand, our doctrine is very far from sympathizing with the mystical assurance that is quite independent of the means of grace. We hold that the sacraments are abiding pledges of the Divine grace within the Church; and that the individual believer receives his blessings through the word of promise applied to him by the Spirit who uses that word as His first ordinary instrument. There are to be found multitudes in the Christian Church who rush, as men's wont is, to the opposite extreme from that of sacramentalism. Their ambition is to hold direct communion with God; they seek, as it were, prematurely to behold Him face to face; they rise above all subordinate means; even the Bible is beneath their feet; Jacob's ladder between heaven and earth is not ethereal enough for them. Hence their assurance is always liable to the penalty of presumption. The inward light may sometimes thus arise in the soul; but that is not the ordinary manner of the Lord God with man. Our teaching sends sinners where you, Sir, sent them last night: to the Spirit with the cry on their lips, "We would see Jesus!" whose Person and work, as we then heard, are the foundation of the word of promise, which faith inwrought of the Holy Ghost, lays hold on. *-to be continued*

THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORD AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT

Vic Reasoner

In the Episcopal Address to the 1880 General Conference, the Methodist bishops regretted "that in some quarters a spirit of latitudinarian speculation has been introduced into the Church, and occasionally ministers have

claimed the right to preach doctrines which are not in harmony with our articles and standards." This liberalism was not confined to evolution, but also included rationalism and higher criticism. American Methodism, flush with

its spectacular growth, had been successful in defeating Calvinism, but after the orthodoxy of Nathan Bangs and Wilbur Fisk, they had begun to cross the line into Pelagianism and were typically employing philosophical arguments, not biblical exegesis.

Leland Scott summarized the closing decades of the nineteenth century in American Methodism.

It must be noted, however, that Methodist conservatism was seldom

Methodism was never able to clarify the respective authority of Scripture, reason, and experience.

of the militantly scholastic type, being qualified rather with Wesleyanism's characteristic catholicity of spirit

as to the details of orthodoxy. On the other hand, what might be described as the more liberal mood within American Methodism was tempered by an ultimate allegiance to the fundamentals of evangelicalism. Actually, even in the case of its more advanced theologians, American Methodism seldom succeeded in keeping fully abreast of the more radically-significant developments in philosophical, scientific, or historical thought which characterized the nineteenth century.

Scott also concluded that Methodism was never able to clarify the respective authority of Scripture, reason, and evangelical experience in its theological formulations in the nineteenth century.

Methodism's methodological demand for immediate, practical relevancy had the following effects: a certain pragmatic relevance; avoidance of radical controversy; failure to discern more profound issues.

In 1927 Calderwood predicted,

If the newer views of the Bible, a

theistic scheme of evolution, the use of scientific method in religious education, make for better spiritual results in terms of practical life, the Methodist Church is likely to accept them as soon as their actual tendency becomes clear.

As early as 1904, George Wilson wrote: "Everything fundamental to Methodism is being assailed." During the following period, Edwin Lewis, professor of theology at Drew, wrote "The Fatal Apostasy of the Modern Church" in 1933. Too much was tolerated which did not comport with Scripture in the late nineteenth century, and liberalism took over in the twentieth century — prior to World War I. Methodism sustained the characteristics of evangelical liberalism, as much as any other single Protestant group, throughout the first part of the twentieth century.

Godly men such as Burwash, Whedon, and Summers knew where they stood in their personal faith. However, they were too willing to tolerate attacks on Scripture. They were sure that an answer would be forthcoming or that if modifications were made to Scripture, it could be reconciled with the latest liberal theory. Thus, more time was requested under the assumption that science and Scripture could be reconciled in the case of an apparent contradiction. However, most were too willing to modify their interpretation of Scripture, proposing a pre-Adamic race or long "days" of creation.

At his death in 1918, Nathanael Burwash was the most influential Canadian Methodist. His lifelong goal was to defend the old Methodist traditions by utilizing the new tools of reason. Burwash explained that religious truth was obtained through seven different means: the use of the five senses, self-consciousness, pure reason apprehending necessary truth, moral intuition, aesthetic intuition, religious intuition, and spiritual consciousness. While he strongly advocated the doctrine of inner assurance, based on such texts as 1 John 4:10, this emphasis on intuition or the gift of the inner light led him to conclude that his system of

doctrine was irrefutable. Yet its weakness was that it could embrace modern skepticism intellectually while at the same time trusting in an intuitive mysticism. Wesleyan theology contends for the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, but we do so on the basis that it is promised in the New Testament.

Burwash, in fact, accepted liberal criticism of the Bible, adjusting his interpretation of the Bible to the current trends in scholarship. His

In the give and take, they did all the conceding; and in the end it did them no good.

personal faith and assurance held him secure in the doctrines of early Methodism; but the next generation, who did

not have his personal experience, rejected his theology for a more pluralistic and secular liberalism. Thus, his tolerance for a more liberal approach to theology is what transferred to the next generation, not his personal experience.

At one point Summers conceded that he could not reconcile the contemporary conflict between evolution and the Bible, but he was convinced that the truest science would be found compatible with Scriptural revelation. He later deplored the widespread inattention throughout Methodism to the very matters which had first attracted him, the Articles of Religion, the Wesleyan hymns, the discipline, the witness of the Spirit, practical doctrine, and the earnest concern for perfection in love.

According to Albert C. Knudson, the writings of such men as Raymond were “obsolete before they ever came off the press.” Borden Parker Bowne lived in the home of R. S. Foster for seven years and had many philosophical discussions with him. While Foster ran interference for Bowne as he broke new paths, Bowne was not impressed with Foster’s philosophical orientation.

Alexander Winchell commended Whedon for being more elastic than most men who were half his age, but Whedon was unable to dissuade Winchell from advocating evolution. When Daniel Curry succeeded Whedon as the editor of the *Methodist Quarterly Review*,

he sanctioned “the free use of legitimate biblical criticism.” He also acknowledged that certain revisions in traditional doctrinal beliefs are now required.

Yet it seemed the momentum was all in one direction. These Methodist leaders wanted to keep up with the times in the name of education. In the give and take, they did all the conceding; and in the end it did them no good. They lost Methodism. The onslaught against the historic faith never let up, and the next generation considered those men to be irrelevant.

Writing *The Gospel of the Comforter* in 1897, Daniel Steele, who was a peer with the Methodist theologians just cited, complained that the doctrine of original sin, “a poison stung into humanity by the sin of Adam,” had “quite generally dropped out of our pulpits.” He warned that Methodism had relaxed her grasp upon the fundamentals of the gospel and would tumble at length into the slough of liberalism. The final chapter, “The Holy Spirit the Conservator of Orthodoxy,” was written in this compromising context I am describing. William F. Warren appreciated this emphasis by Steele, adding,

We expect to abolish infidelity only by bringing all natural men into the experience of a spiritual life, whose supernatural facts will admit of no explanation short of that given us in the supernatural Word and in the holy Catholic Church.

This led Warren to write a hymn to the Holy Ghost in 1877, which Steele quoted extensively. Ultimately, however, Warren ended up promoting a universalist religion in his *The Quest of the Perfect Religion* (1886), much like Milton S. Terry. At Boston University, Warren established the very first chair ever instituted in an American University for instruction in religions and religion in the widest possible sense.

Earlier in his career, when Warren had decided to study in Germany, he was encouraged

to study in Tubingen, the center of rationalism. This school of theology was founded by F. C. Baur, one of the pioneers in NT higher criticism. Whedon, who edited the *Methodist Quarterly Review* for over twenty years, installed Warren as the European correspondent for the *MQR*; and Warren was piping this liberalism directly to the American Methodist Church as early as 1857. Eventually, Hurst and Nash were following suit. Of course, not all of their contributions were negative and they were personally devoted to Methodism. But their agenda seemed to be to help Methodism gain clout by identifying it with “cutting-edge” German liberalism. In the end, Steele’s emphasis on the

We must have the influence of the Holy Spirit and the foundation of God’s inerrant Word.

Holy Spirit seemed reduced to a second blessing and relegated to the holiness movement. Mainstream Methodism was left to grapple with Albrecht Ritschl. Ritschl taught that religious knowledge was not based upon historical facts, but on value judgments. He ended with a system of ethical duties rather than a gospel of redemption. In 1921 Faulkner warned that Ritschl was threatening to drive Wesley out of business.

What would surface in the twentieth century would be a fighting fundamentalism which did not give due emphasis to the Holy Spirit, a holiness movement which would not give due emphasis to biblical exegesis, and the demise of the Methodist Church, which did not have enough of either.

And so the twentieth century in American Methodism began with a *Zeitgeist* of theological reconstruction which involved new departures from “the obsolescent theology of the past.” Christian teaching was reformulated in terms of evolutionary philosophy, historical criticism, and idealistic ethics. Scott concluded, “Redemptive grace was no longer the supremely unitive element in Methodism’s doctrine of man.” We must have the influence of the Holy Spirit and the foundation of God’s inerrant Word.

Yet, somehow, Pope held the line against liberalism in English Methodism for a quarter of a century. In William Burt Pope the spirit of John Wesley’s theology lived again. Pope “ruled as a sun over the day,” but with his passing “the voices of the night” began to call to each other. In particular, these “voices” were advocating biblical higher criticism, rationalism, ecumenicism, evolution, and social liberalism.

How did Pope do it? Pope translated a body of exegesis written by German anti-rationalistic critics who opposed the liberal school of Tubingen. They were categorized as Lutheran evangelicals. Perhaps Pope felt an affinity to them through Luther and his essay on saving faith. If Tubingen represented the liberal stronghold, these men comprised the conservative German stronghold. By my count, Pope translated 15 volumes of biblical commentaries and theological works from these German conservatives. He also wrote or collaborated on three of his own biblical commentaries.

Thus, before Pope ever began his own magnum opus, the three-volume *Compendium on Christian Theology*, he was armed with the best in conservative scholarship. Pope did not neglect the importance of the Holy Spirit, but his wholistic understanding was that the Holy Spirit administered the finished work of Christ — thus emphasizing both what God has done for us and what the Holy Spirit does in us.

Today evangelicalism is going down the same road that American Methodism went. While no transitional forms have been found by evolutionary scientists in over 160 years, many evangelical theologians are willing to accept evolution and “just preach the gospel,” even though they cannot agree on the gospel either. The results will be the same as the late nineteenth century when Methodism capitulated. We must have the influence of the Holy Spirit and the foundation of God’s inerrant Word.

REVIEWS

A. Philip Brown, II, "1st John, Perfect Love, and Entire Sanctification." *God's Revivalist and Bible Advocate* (March 2020) 16.

The radical holiness movement was centered at God's Bible School, which began in 1900. Without disparaging the sincere piety which was part of the GBS environment, essentially "sanctification" was defined a priori as a second definite work of grace, effected by the baptism with the Holy Spirit, and claimed presumptuously. The result was the eradication of carnality, which rendered the believer sinless.

This theology was "proven" through Bible readings in which the "reader" simply read through a list of biblical passages in which the word "sanctification" occurred. After such "overwhelming" evidence, the intelligence of anyone who did not embrace the a priori definition imposed on these proof texts was questioned.

For variety, the same doctrine could be "proven" from typology. George McLaughlin could preach second blessing holiness from two humps on a camel. My first pastor, Dr. C. E. Cowen remarked that it was providential that McLaughlin died before he could proceed past Romans in his commentaries. Unfortunately, William B. Godbey, another GBS commentator, provided an eccentric commentary on the entire New Testament.

Their emphasis on Pentecost as the second blessing paved the way for Pentecostalism. William Seymour and A. J. Tomlinson, early Pentecostal leaders, both attended GBS. They never seemed to realize that the metaphor of baptism is initiation, not Christian maturity.

John Wesley provided a much more adequate hermeneutic in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (1766). By examining the New Testament examples, prayers, promises, and commands, Wesley demonstrated that God's will for every believer is to bring to completion that which began in regeneration. The code word *sanctification* is not utilized, since it refers to initial sanctification unless it is qualified. However, a more difficult word, *perfection*, does convey a sense of completeness, as Phil Brown explained in his column in *God's Revivalist* for March 2020 ["1st John, Perfect Love, and Entire Sanctification," p. 16].

The debate over "perfection" goes clear back to the ancient Greek philosophers. Plato contended that God alone was absolutely perfect, while Aristotle defined per-

fection as that which accomplishes the purpose for which it was created. Actually, they were both right! But Jesus commanded perfection in Matthew 5:48. John Wesley helped the church understand that we are "perfect" when we love God with our whole heart and our neighbor as ourselves.

Yet it is concerning that Phil does not recognize the 1 John passages on perfect love (2:5, 4:12-18) as defining this Christian perfection. He stated, "Everyone who knows God has been perfected in love." While Phil declared his unwavering support for entire sanctification, he does not define whether he affirms the GBS model or the historic Wesleyan model.

According to Romans 5:1-5, God's love is poured into the heart of everyone who is regenerate, but 1 John teaches that this new birth must be completed, so that everything contrary to that love is expelled. The Moravian leader, Count Zinzendorf, declared that the moment one is justified, he is also entirely sanctified. He said, "From that time he is neither more nor less holy, even unto death." John Wesley debated with Zinzendorf, arguing that every believer increased in love and therefore in holiness, appealing to 1 John 2:12-14.

In his comments on his favorite book of the Bible, Wesley explained

A natural man has neither fear nor love
One that is awakened, fear without love
A babe in Christ, love and fear,
A father in Christ, love without fear.

This paradigm provides a biblical model for discipleship. In contrast, Scripture never commands the believer to receive or be baptized with the Holy Spirit, since that occurred at the new birth. Nor can entire sanctification be reduced to consecration without implying sanctification by human works. Thus, it is more biblical (and Wesleyan) to teach that every believer needs to be perfected in love. Wesleyan theology is often described as a pessimism concerning human nature but an optimism concerning divine grace. Thus, we believe it is possible to be made perfect in love in this life. —*Vic Reasoner*

**Luther Lee, *Universalism Examined and Refuted and the Doctrine of the Endless Punishment of such as do not Comply with the Conditions of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Established.* 1836. Reprint. Schmull Publishing Company, 2020.
ISBN 978-0-88019-630-7 365 pages**

The Author

It was a June day in 1839 in Kingston, Toronto, the Canadian Methodists being then in General Conference, that representatives of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States entered as official delegates from that American body. A reporter, John Carroll, made special note of two of the American delegates and recorded his impressions for posterity. One of the delegates was a large man of impressive bearing and appearance; the other suffered greatly by comparison:

[He was] much smaller, and far from being noticeable at first sight. A slight, ungraceful man was he, with high shoulders, short neck, and enormously high shirt-collar, which made it appear much shorter. He was “out-mouthed” withal; that is, his upper front teeth were so large and prominent, that they could not be covered by his lips. His garments were not tastefully made or put on, and his ordinary movements were not easy.

The President, presuming the larger, dignified man to be the chief of the American delegates, called upon him (future bishop, Jesse T. Peck) to address the assembly who, rising, gave place instead to the less-impressive, ruffled envoy. This man, “the least likely of all to say anything worthy [of] the occasion, [when] accosted by the President, rose and stepped into the aisle, and ‘stretched forth his hand.’”

He seemed to have grown a head taller in an instant; and although all stared at him at first with surprise, no sooner had he pronounced the word “Sir,” with a clear, ringing, authoritative voice, than everyone was hushed into expectation—nor was expectation disappointed. “What elocution flowed,” it is impossible for me to describe. Suffice it to say, all were thrilled and inspirited. No man ever excelled him in the

power of a short, impromptu address. His was not a verbose, wordy eloquence. The eloquence was much more in thoughts than in words, of which latter he was sparing. But the words were eloquent also: though short and sharp, they were word-pictures in themselves.

Later called upon to address the conference ordination service, his exhortation “literally glittered and blazed from end to end. The people forgot [the] decorum due to the place and the occasion, and broke out into loud applause.” This untidily-attired man whose physical features led many to assume an inferior intellect, but whose utterances and blazing logic turned and captivated his skeptical audience, was the author whose work here passes in review.

Luther Lee possessed a strength of character such that, when led to understand the plight of the enslaved, he immediately committed himself to the then unpopular work of seeking their emancipation. His abolitionist convictions cost him positions of preference and power within the Methodist Episcopal Church. To dissuade Lee from pursuing his abolitionist convictions and assisting in the founding of the antislavery Wesleyan Methodist Connection, the Preacher’s Meeting of Boston designated one of their number to write the following to Lee: “If your principles and convictions of right will allow you to do so, I know what I say when I tell you that you shall have any position in the Church you desire if you will come out and wield your vigorous pen against secession.”

Lee was next offered positions and pulpits in other denominations; but, as he said, “I was a Methodist, and I knew I was a Methodist from the deep and honest convictions of my heart.” A casualty of his courage and conviction, many friends failed and numbers of formerly loyal associates faded from the scene, not willing to bear the hard trial through which Methodist abolitionists passed. Nevertheless, Lee’s Christ-conformed life built for him a principled reputation and a hearing be-

fore the wider public that outlasted the opposition and aspersions of his antagonists.

As a lad of nine or ten years of age, I first read the account of Lee's speech before the Canadian Methodist General Conference while lying on the carpeted floor of my father's study. My father's study walls, from ceiling to floor, burgeoned with his ministerial library. Those volumes included the treasures of early Methodism and Wesleyan Methodism, the antislavery church co-founded by Lee. Stirred by the account above, I have had an ever-increasing and deepening admiration for Lee's skillful labors in the interests of the Gospel, the enslaved, and "true Wesleyanism."

The temptation to continue a recitation of Lee's life-events is strong, but must be resisted for the sake of brevity. The purpose at hand is the review of Lee's book on Universalism and the biblical doctrine of the eternal punishment of those who "do not comply with the conditions of the Gospel in this life." What is more, the excellent "Foreword" by Dr. Paul L. Kaufman, together with Kaufman's own definitive biographical work, *Logical Lee and the Methodist War Against Slavery* (Scarecrow Press, 2000), are the best contemporary resources on Lee's courageous life.

The Background

The Second Great Awakening, (for which various scholars provide different dates, roughly from the 1790s through the final years of the Antebellum American period), differed from the strongly Calvinistic First Great Awakening (~1730-1750). The recent growth of American Methodism strongly influenced this second great moving of God's Spirit across the nation. Methodism's message was a message of free grace for "whosoever will," rather than "whosoever is predestined by God's unalterable decree." Methodist preachers seemed to follow every road, trail, and footpath to the doorsteps of city-dwellers and settlers alike. Theirs was a message of holiness and Christian perfection. The Methodist message challenged the complacent to think more seriously about their relationships, especially their relationships with God and with their neighbor. Religious topics became commonplace in many settings where there was scarcely any mention of spiritual things only a few years before. Soon, non-Methodist ministers began adopting the language (although, not always the theology) of the Methodist preachers and circuit-riders.

An elevated level of religious conversation merged with a biblically illiterate populace and created a spiritually dangerous atmosphere. Theological notions spun by people imbued with those most American of all concepts – that one person's religious opinion was as good as his neighbor's, and that truth could be determined by its apparent popularity – meant it was not long before old heresies revived and new ones were born to prey upon unsuspecting souls. As a Methodist preacher charged with the responsibility of leading his flock safely past soul-ensnaring errors, Lee suddenly found himself an apologist and defender of biblical theology almost by default. He found Universalism was contrary to the *"fundamental truth of our holy religion,"* and that it spawned a damning *"irreligious tendency"* on the part of those who embraced it. As he wrote in his "Introduction" to this book:

The writer of the following pages, probably, would never have conceived the design of becoming an author on one of the most important subjects that ever engaged the human intellect, had not a train of circumstances compelled him to enter the ranks of the disputers of this world, or abandon what he deemed to be *fundamental truth in our holy religion,* to the wreckless [sic] assaults of its enemies. It is true he had from the earliest period of his Christian experience, and especially from the commencement of his public ministry, marked the irreligious tendency of the sentiments against which these pages are directed; yet he would most probably, have deplored the evil, and looked for it to be removed by some more able hand, rather than to have opposed his own efforts to an error which carries with it the full force of the natural inclinations of the unrenewed heart of fallen man, had not the votaries of the error, grown bold through neglect, challenged him to public combat, under circumstances which left him but one alternative, either to give up the truth as indefensible, or *"earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints."* (emphasis added)

A more underrated champion probably never took the field since David went against Goliath and his brothers, and with a similar result. He stood faithful

in the ensuing conflict, whether debating in the public lyceum, answering his challengers in the columns of the public newspapers to which they had retreated, or even in their own periodicals . . . until they there finally ceased to prolong the fight with so skillful a defender of God's Word. Lee concluded his "Introduction" by declaring his ultimate ambition: *"that writer and reader may be guided into all truth."*

The Book

A book first produced in 1836 necessarily contains some indications of the language forms of its original era. Some books, employing the flowery patterns of speech in vogue in the mid-1800s, have passed the time of their usefulness to any but scholars in particular fields. Flowery language was a pronounced feature of those decades (think of Edward Everett's two-hour oration at the consecration of the battlefield at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania as compared to Abraham Lincoln's terse two-minute "Gettysburg Address"). Nevertheless, in a manner not unlike Lincoln's style, Lee's prose flows in readable, easy-to-comprehend phrases and structures of logic. The text feels fresh, not outdated, vitally connected to the present debate over universalism. His very arguments are roadmaps of the truth Lee expounded, building from the crux of the question at issue, on to the fundamental answer in Scripture, sometimes adding the testimony of Church Fathers, and facts from the world of nature.

Commencing with the topic of humanity as originally created, that is, in righteousness and right relationship with God (Chapter One), Lee traces our First Parents' Fall into sin and the sad consequences extending from that fall to the present (Chapter Two). He establishes the human need for atonement and rightly locates that atonement in the saving work of Christ, alone (Chapter Three). Of these things God made no secret, sending the patriarchs, prophets, and priests; and, last of all, sending His own Son to offer Himself for the salvation of the world (Chapter Four). Had universalism been a mere theological "toy" to be bandied about as an exercise in "what-if-ism," or a harmless theory with inconsequential implications, it is doubtful whether we should have ever heard from Lee on this matter. But Lee knew that the eternal destiny of precious souls (and Gospel truth, itself) were in the balance. "Salvation is

found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). To reject God's one appointed means of salvation is to doom one's own soul and to face the consequences of one's sin without atonement or Savior.

Having thus established a biblical baseline, Lee laid out the Universalists' arguments and refuted their claims (the succeeding chapters). In Chapter Five, Lee introduces the major schools of Universalistic thought and commences the refutation of their errors. Among the errors addressed are the beliefs that those who die without the salvation offered in and through Christ alone will either suffer temporary punishment leading to eventual repentance and salvation *after* the hour of death, or such unregenerate souls will simply cease to exist (annihilation) – propositions that are alien to Scripture.

A thing worthy of special remark is the absence of name-dropping throughout the text. Except for citing the authors of reference works, the illustrative practices and beliefs of nations and ethnic groupings, or specific Universalist teachers and their contrary arguments, Lee is careful to direct the attention of the reader to the biblical foundation of his arguments and to the logical principles derived therefrom. Although he was a devout Methodist whose life and ministry evidenced the finest theological convictions of John Wesley, Lee never makes reference to him. His answer to Universalism is not a sectarian exercise; Lee's constant concern is for the reader to know and obey the Word and will of God.

Concluding Thoughts

Interestingly, a survey of these subjects as represented on Christian websites across the Internet reveals a tsunami of revived Universalism, even within the ranks of John Wesley's theological family. The need for this book is urgent and timely. "Fundamental truth" is, once more, under attack.

As Lee repeatedly points out, universalism, with its false promise that eventually everyone will be saved, has the power to deceive and damn. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:13b), "God from the beginning chose you for salvation *through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth . . .*" Lee's conclusions regarding the heresy of Universalism and its fallacious arguments against the doctrine of endless

punishment align with both Scripture and John Wesley's New Testament commentary:

And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting (Matt. 25:46) — “Either therefore the punishment is strictly eternal, or the reward is not: the very same expression being applied to the former as to the latter. The Judge will speak first to the righteous, in the audience of the wicked. The wicked shall then go away into everlasting fire, in the view of the righteous. Thus, the damned shall see nothing of the everlasting life;

but the just will see the punishment of the ungodly. It is not only particularly observable here,

1. That the punishment lasts as long as the reward; but,

2. That this punishment is so far from ceasing at the end of the world, that it does not begin till then.”

—*Steve Stanley resides in Easley, SC and is completing his PhD studies at Dallas Baptist University.*

Dr. James Brown and Dr. Eddie Beaver also collaborated with Steve on this review.

Steve Gregg, *Empire of the Risen Son: There Is Another King and All the King's Men.* Xulon Press, 2020. Volume 1 ISBN 978-1-63221-332-8 393 pages. Volume 2 ISBN 978-1-63221-708-0 439 pages.

Last Fall a good friend of mine told me about these two books. He was a personal friend of Gregg and knew the books were forthcoming. Amazon sells both the paperback version and the Kindle version. I bought the Kindle and began reading. Several things stood out to me from the start:

1. Steve Gregg is a good writer. He has a good way with words and ideas that make for interesting reading.

2. He holds the Scriptures as the absolute authority in life. His love and respect for the Word of God is evident on nearly every page. In a day when so many in the Church view the Scriptures as skewed, outdated by modern technology, or written from false motives, you will find none of that in Gregg's two books.

3. He has an amazing gift of inductive and deductive reasoning. Gifts have to be combined with work to develop. Gregg has been a diligent worker and his insights into Scripture are tremendous. I found myself making notes and highlighting often in these books.

In volume one he lays out his understanding that God is at work building an empire or kingdom. I was reminiscent of Milton's *Paradise Lost and Restored* as I read Gregg. His contention that God started a new kingdom in the life and ministry of Jesus is not a new one with me. But the priority Jesus placed on his own ministry in light of establishing a kingdom was reveal-

ing. His gospel was, “a gospel of the kingdom.” Gregg looks at Jesus' interchangeable use of “the kingdom of God” and the, “kingdom of heaven,” as references to the same concept. I believe he makes a solid case for this.

Gregg looks at the popular interpretations of, “the kingdom,” in Christendom and makes a compelling case that the kingdom is here and now on earth as well as in heaven. In contrast to premillennial views that see the world as a lost cause and Jesus coming to rescue Christians from it, Gregg believes that Jesus will likely not return the second time until his kingdom in a grand degree is set up on earth through the service and love of his people. That in itself is a shocking idea for many although I first encountered it in Dr. Reasoner's, *The Hope of the Gospel*. But Gregg and Reasoner make a compelling case from the Scriptures that their interpretation stands better with the entire scope of Scripture than premillennialism.

In the second volume Gregg lays out a plan of discipleship for the Church in light of the kingdom motif. It is intensely practical and powerful. I read these two books with great delight and thankfulness for Gregg's work. True Wesleyans who understand Wesley's view of eschatology will appreciate Gregg's work. While Gregg makes no claim to be Wesleyan he is solidly in line with the eschatology of the early Methodist. Why does this

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matter? As Vic Reasoner observed to me nearly 20 years ago, “The early Methodist believed the gospel could not fail and would change the world and it did. From our earliest days we have been told no matter what we do this earth is a lost cause and only a few will be saved. Our actions have followed our faith and we have nearly lost the world. We need a better understanding.” It is the difference between pessimism and optimism in our work which flows from our beliefs. “As your faith, so be it unto you.” Gregg makes a good case for a better and more biblical way.

—*Mark Horton. Mark pastors in Nicholasville, KY and serves as the treasurer for the FWS.*

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