

# The Arminian

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## THE NEW HOLINESS

*Robert L. Brush*

Many names are used in the scriptures to identify Christians, such as “believers,” “saints,” “disciples,” and “brethren.” However, the New Testament never identifies a Christian as a sinner. The only exception which might be cited is found in 1 Timothy 1:15-16 where Paul described himself twice as a sinner. But the question is whether that was his present state or his previous identity. Verse 13 seems to settle that question. “Chief of sinners” is his “before” and not his “after” picture. In the thirty-eight other New Testament passages where Christians are described, they are never referred to as sinners.

Yet it is popular today for Christians to refer to themselves as sinners. It even sounds humble, but I am concerned that this promotes the false concept that even the best of us sin every day. Thus, sin is no “big deal” since we all sin continuously.

Perhaps this light view of sin has caused preachers to replace “repent ye” with “believe ye.” If sin is not significant, then perhaps repentance is not important. Repentance is almost a forgotten doctrine. Yet without it our “gospel” is like seed falling on stony ground. The lack of repentance is shown in the parable of the sower. The seed which sprang up quickly describes the easy believism of our day. Because our converts have never turned from their sin, under the hot sun of temptation they quickly wither and disappear.

True repentance is not a one-time feeling of contrition lasting only a few minutes. It is a way of life for the Christian. It is an attitude of unworthiness. Was it not for God’s grace we would be forever lost. Repentance is the spirit of humility that freely admits our short comings and infirmities, as well as actual sins.

If a Christian actually sins, 1 John 2:1 teaches that we should repent immediately for we have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous One. The act of true repentance and faith in such cases immediately restores us to favor with God. Christ stands ready to forgive and heal, but the wounds from these failures may take some time to heal.

While willful sin is always a possibility, it is never a necessity. The born again will continue to come short and miss the mark, but that is not the same as willful rebellion against God. I am sick of preach-

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ers confessing to their congregations what great sinners they themselves are. I am also tired of these preachers attempting to convince their congregations that they are also sinners. They often say, “We all sin,” “We are all sinners,” “We are not perfect, just forgiven.” If a lost sinner did come into many churches and heard this kind of talk, he would probably conclude that he could not get any help there.

I realize there are self-righteous Pharisees among us who pray, “I thank you Lord that I am not a sinner like others are” (Luke 18:10-14). But the solution is not to interpret that passage as meaning that even if we cheat and lie all we need to say is “I’m sorry” and all is well.

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### *The New Testament never refers to Christians as sinners.*

There are dangers on the side of legalism and on the side of lawlessness. There is danger in calling all infirmities “sin” and there is danger in labeling rebellious sin as “humanity.” To call infirmities and imperfections of human nature “sin” creates a big problem. The eagerness to do so may indicate that there are *real* sins in that person’s life. I think that the reason this language has become so popular is that if we call every action short of absolute perfection “sin,” then we are not so harsh on *real* sin.

Labeling rebellious sin as “humanity.” To call infirmities and imperfections of human nature “sin” creates a big problem. The eagerness to do so may indicate that there are *real* sins in that person’s life. I think that the reason this language has become so popular is that if we call every action short of absolute perfection “sin,” then we are not so harsh on *real* sin.

All “sin” is not the same. We all have infirmities or human imperfections which are not rebellious in their nature. David alludes to both kinds of sin in Psalm 19:12-13 when he says, “Who can understand his errors [human imperfections]? Cleanse thou me from secret faults [unknown infirmities]. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous [or rebellious] sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from great transgression [which is presumptuous sin].”

*Real* sin is rebellion against God. That is why 1 John 3:9 states that “whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” The sin mentioned in 1 John 3:4-10 is defined as the transgression of the law. This implies a deliberate rebellion against the law of God. I

once asked a Calvinist if he thought a Christian brother could so neglect the grace of God within him that he would come to hate another brother who had wronged him. He replied, “Yes,” but when I reminded him of 1 John 3:15, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life in him,” he added, “I was afraid you would ask that.”

I am aware of another case where an older holiness pastor specifically warned a younger pastor taking his church not to preach “he that is born of God sinneth not.” But this new holiness is no holiness at all since it denies the possibility of being saved from sin and sinning. Yet John wrote, “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4).

The cure for all this confusion lies first with the preacher. Have we reached the point where we cannot preach against sin any more? Do we still believe that anyone is lost? Must we cease striving against sin lest we become self-righteous? This is the *new* holiness. Since sin is not a big deal, none of us are bad enough to miss heaven. Everyone is ok.

In contrast the biblical preacher must first preach the law, then grace. The law uncovers sin and causes the guilty sinner to flee to Christ. The apostolic formula for preaching is described in Acts 26:18. As the law is preached, eyes are opened and hearts are awakened. As they repent, they are turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. Then they are justified when they receive the forgiveness of sins. They are adopted when they receive an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith. That sequence will produce *real* holiness.

True holiness fills us with the Spirit and consequently with the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Hebrews 12:14 is a frequently quoted verse. Yet the holiness mentioned there is not restricted to a second work of grace, but the Christian life lived out from newborn babies to spiritual fathers. Thus, the real Christian is characterized by holy living and not as a sinner.

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# THE PATRISTIC INTERPRETATION OF ROMANS 7:14-25

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## Part 2, The Men Responsible for Introducing the Calvinistic Interpretation

Daniel R. Jennings

Four people from the fourth and fifth centuries, more than anyone else, seem to be connected with the push that led to Romans 7 being used to teach the necessity of sin in a believer's life. Before each of these men are examined it is important to make mention of the societal changes which were taking place during this time and their impact upon the church.

In A. D. 312 the Roman emperor Flavius Constantine converted to Christianity, and the subsequent favor that he showed toward the church inadvertently opened the doors to a flood of nominal Christians. In times past becoming a Christian had oftentimes brought with it the death penalty, but it was now favorable and to one's own advantage career-wise to become a Christian. The first Christians had understood all sin to be deadly and showed hatred for "even the garment spotted by the flesh," but with a large number of unregenerate persons joining the church for unspiritual reasons it became inevitable that people would look for a theology which would describe an unregenerate person as regenerated.

The first was Gregory of Nazianzen (circa 330-389). In 362 he presented his understanding that Romans 7 described the case of a believer who "by a long course of philosophic training, and gradual separation of the noble and enlightened part of the soul from that which is debased and yoked with darkness, or by the mercy of God, or by both together, and by a constant practice of looking upward" could overcome the desires of the flesh presented in Romans 7. This was probably more of a confused reaction to the nominal Christianity that he encountered than an attempt at justifying sinful behavior. He probably just did not know how to reconcile the strict teachings of the Scriptures with the lukewarmness that was so prevalent in the church and came to the conclusion that men start out their Christian experience in a sinful state and over time are able to achieve the righteousness that is described in the New Testament.

Following closely in Gregory's footsteps was Ambrose (circa 340-397), the bishop of Milan. As late as 379 Ambrose appears to have understood this passage from the Arminian perspective. He indicated his belief that Paul's statement "I see a law of the flesh in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity in the law of sin" was a description of something to which "We are all attached . . . but we are not all delivered" from. He then goes on to show how that Jesus is the deliverer from this life of bondage.

Eight years later he gave a very strong Arminian interpretation indicating that "when *flesh* is employed in reference to man, a sinner is meant, as in this passage: 'but I am carnal, sold into the power of sin. For I do not understand what I do, for it is not what I wish that I do, but what I hate, that I do.'" However, by 394 it is clear that he had adopted the Calvinistic interpretation noting that "Well, we who are older sin, too. In us, too, the law of this flesh wars against the law of our mind, and makes us captives of sin, so that we do what we would not."

Following Ambrose was his disciple to some extent, Augustine of Hippo (354-430). His name, more than any other, has been connected with the introduction of the Calvinistic interpretation of Romans 7 into the church. However, an analysis of his understanding of this passage will show that even he differed from the modern day Calvinistic interpretation.

By his own admission, Augustine originally believed that this passage referred to Paul *before* his salvation as a Jew striving to fulfill the Law of Moses. He wrote in *Against Two Letters of The Pelagians*, "And it had once appeared to me also that the apostle was in this argument of his describing a man under the law. But afterwards I was constrained to give up the idea."

Surprisingly, however, in giving up the traditional Christian interpretation of the first three centuries

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Augustine did not embrace the modern Calvinistic understanding of the text. Rather, he chose to embrace the understanding that Methodius had given to it over a century earlier—that it described a man who had “evil, lustful desires” that he did not want, but not “evil actions.” Augustine preached:

The Apostle therefore does what he would not: for he would not lust, and yet he lusts: therefore he does what he would not. Did that evil desire draw the subjugated Apostle to fornication and adultery? God forbid. Let no such thoughts arise into our hearts. He wrestled, he was not subjugated. But because he was unwilling even to have this against which to wrestle, therefore he said, *I do what I would not*. I would not lust, and I do lust. Therefore I do what I would not; but yet I do not consent to lust. For otherwise he would not say, *You shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*; if he himself fulfilled them.

For Augustine, this evil desire was located in the flesh and it was because of its location there,

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### **Paul never intended Romans 7 to convey the necessity of sin in the believer's life.**

which ultimately made it a part of who a man was, that the Apostle Paul referred to it as *himself* doing the thing that he did not want to do:

*I see another law*, he says, *in my members resisting the law of my mind*. And because I would not that it should resist [*my desire to do the right thing*] (for it is my flesh, it is my very self, it is a part of me): *what I would, that do I not; but the evil that I hate, that do I*; in that I lust.

For Augustine this battle with fleshly lusts was the lifelong “fight of [the] Saints” which mankind will be forced to endure so long as in this body saying “*With the mind I serve the Law of God*, by not consenting [to my fleshly desires]; *but with the flesh the law of sin*, by lusting ... I at once delight in the one, and lust in the other; but I am not conquered.”

Finally, Augustine would remind those who wished to use the Apostle's words to justify their sinful behavior that it was only the desire to sin that Paul struggled with, not the act of sinning:

I have already told you, that what the Apostle says, *With the mind I serve the Law of God*, but *with the flesh the law of sin*, is in such sort to be

taken: that you allow nothing more to the flesh, than the desires, without which it cannot be.

Lastly, it would be Jerome (circa 340-420) who would lay the final capstone on the introduction of the Calvinistic interpretation of Romans 7 into the ancient church. Jerome was a monk who is best remembered for translating and editing the Latin Vulgate. Though he is remembered for his exceptional scholarship and wealth of classical learning his testimony does not bear out the marks of a man who lived in genuine “meekness toward all men” (Titus 3:2). His entry in the Catholic Encyclopedia describes him as a man of “harsh criticisms” who possessed a “censorious spirit against authority,” “lack of good taste,” was “bitterly satirical,” “unsparingly outspoken,” who could be “scathing in sarcasm” and employed an “imprudence of language.” One of his own contemporaries described him as a man motivated by “envy” and “jealousy” who, though a distinguished Latin writer and cultivated scholar, “showed qualities of temper so disastrous that they threw into the shade his splendid achievements.”

Other writers have referred to him as a man with a “fiery temper” and a “biting tongue,” “vehement and haughty,” “harsh and impetuous,” a man whose temper was “unsanctified,” “overbearing” and “irritable,” and one who was motivated by “personal hostility” and a “vengeful spirit.”

Not surprisingly it is an individual like this who is the first recorded theologian of whom we have any record to attempt to use Romans seven to justify his personal behavior. In discussing his understanding of man's struggle with sinful desires he noted that Paul's words in Romans 7 indicated that all men (Christian and non-Christian) sin in actuality stating:

We do not what we would but what we would not; the soul desires to do one thing, the flesh is compelled to do another. If any persons are called righteous in scripture ... they are called righteous according to that righteousness mentioned in the passage I have quoted: “A just man falls seven times and rises up again,” ... Zachariah the father of John who is described as a righteous man sinned in disbelieving the message sent to him and was at once punished with dumbness. Even Job, who at the outset of his history is spoken of as perfect and upright and uncomplaining,

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is afterwards proved to be a sinner both by God's words and by his own confession.

Jerome by his own admission was a man prone to sin. In a discussion with Ctesiphon which involved Romans 7 he confessed, "Yet, to lay bare my own weakness, I know that I wish to do many things which I ought to do and *yet cannot*. For while my spirit is strong and leads me to life my flesh *is weak and draws me to death*." And his testimony, as noted above, reflects the life of a man who relied on passages like Romans seven to justify his sinfulness.

In conclusion, the Apostle Paul never intended Romans 7 to convey the idea of the necessity of sin in the believer's life. This unfortunate conclusion was arrived at during a time of moral laxness in the church and has been reinforced over the centuries by individuals who refuse to read it within the context of chapters six and eight. It will, however, serve as an encouragement to the Christian who has embraced the Arminian interpretation to know that there is no extant record of any Christian until the fourth century who saw this passage as teaching the necessity of a failed Christian experience.

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## THE ENTRANCE TO HOLINESS

Joseph D. McPherson

*"According to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5b). Concerning this mighty work of God wrought in the human heart by the new birth or regeneration, Mr. Wesley states: "It requires no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create a soul anew, but he who at first created the heavens and the earth." An early Methodist theologian by the name of W. B. Pope concurs with this view when he refers to regeneration as "the new creation of life in the soul, while it is at the same time the renewal of the original image of God." This view greatly differs from the concept too many today have of initial conversion as consisting of little more than forgiveness of sins. It certainly includes this gracious blessing but concomitant with justification is the mighty work of regeneration together with initial sanctification, adoption into the family of God and inward assurance or witness of the Spirit of our having been born anew of God through a mighty effusion of the Holy Spirit.

Just before our Lord ascended to heaven, He promised His disciples, *"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost"* (Acts 1:5). "And so are all true believers, to the end of the world" asserts Mr. Wesley. Far from standing alone in this view, the Christian Church from the time of the apostles, church fathers, reformers and early Methodists all acknowledged water baptism to be an outward symbol of the baptism of the Holy Ghost received at the moment of regeneration. Both water and

Spirit baptism were considered initiatory events experienced by new converts. The Holy Spirit was then understood as continuing His work, bringing the faithful believer to an experience of full cleansing and perfection in divine love.

In a supposed conversation with one who considered the second work of grace to be "a far greater work" than that of justification and regeneration experienced in initial conversion, Dr. Adam Clarke responds with, "No, speaking after the manner of men, justification [concomitant with regeneration] is greater than [entire] sanctification." He then explains as follows:

When thou wert a sinner, ungodly, an enemy in thy mind by wicked works, a child of the devil, an heir of hell, God pardoned thee on thy casting thy soul on the merit of the great sacrificial Offering: thy sentence was reversed, thy state was changed, thou wert put among the children, and God's Spirit witnessed with thine that thou wert his child. What a change! And what a blessing! What then is this complete sanctification? It is the cleansing of the blood that has not been cleansed; it is washing the soul of a true believer from the remains of sin; it is the making one who is already a child of God more holy, that he may be more happy, more useful in the world, and bring more glory to his heavenly Father. Great as this work is, how little, humanly speaking, is it when compared with what God has already done for thee.

In yet another statement, Clarke writes:

There is every reason to believe, and genuine experience in divine things confirms it, that in the

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act of [initial conversion], when the Spirit of God, the Spirit of holiness, is given to bear witness with our spirits that we are the children of God; all the outlines of the divine image are drawn upon the soul: and it is the work of the Holy Spirit, in our sanctification, to touch off, and fill up, all those outlines, till every feature of the divine likeness is filled up and perfected.

It has been observed that the term “holiness” is often used in reference only to the experience of entire sanctification, when in truth the work of holiness is begun in regeneration. It was once asked: “When does inward sanctification begin? In the moment a man is justified,” answers Mr. Wesley. He also assures us “That the term sanctified, is continually applied by St. Paul, to all that were justified. That by this term alone, he rarely, if ever, means, ‘saved from all sin.’ Consequently, it is not proper to use it in that sense, without adding the word wholly, entirely, or the like.”

When the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, they were yet without hearts fully cleansed, but he nevertheless reminded them that, “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor 12:13). Thus Robert W. Lyon, a Bible teacher and Wesley scholar, assures us that “The baptism in the Spirit, far from being the second experience and an experience subsequent to receiving the Spirit or being born of the Spirit, stands scripturally at the heart of conversion.” Some within today’s holiness movement would attempt to make the experience of the original disciples (Acts 2:4) a model or pattern in our day for the doctrine of a second work of grace. “Two ob-

servations make this impossible,” writes Dr. Lyon, “(1) the model is not followed elsewhere in Acts or the early Church; (2) it fails to consider the... significance of Pentecost as the once-for-all inaugurative event which establishes the Church.”

All early Methodists and early Wesleyan Methodists together with the church Fathers and reformers were unitedly convinced of these truths. They taught a high standard with regard to the experience of initial conversion. The terms “perfect,” “perfection,” and “perfecting” are found repeatedly in the New Testament as references to a subsequent state of grace, including that of a full cleansing from all sin. Further increases in holiness are then to be sought throughout life as one lives in the Spirit. Regeneration, nevertheless, is holiness begun.

*Editorial Note: For over twenty years Joe McPherson has contributed articles to a denominational magazine which claims to be Wesleyan Methodist. The previous article was rejected by its editor because he did not find it to be scriptural, although he conceded it was Wesleyan. As you re-read the article, I believe you will find it to be both scriptural and true to Wesleyan teaching. For it to be rejected by a leader who is supposed to know and uphold Wesleyan doctrine illustrates why so much confusion exists today within the “holiness” movement. The Fundamental Wesleyan Society is offering \$100 to anyone who can demonstrate that Mr. McPherson’s use of Scripture or his citation of early Methodist doctrine are inaccurate. See our website <fwponline.cc> for more details.*

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## PENTECOST – THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

Roy D. Oosthuizen

### The Centrality of the Spirit in Christian Teaching and Experience

The doctrine and experience of the Holy Spirit is fundamental to Christianity. If we misinterpret it, we create something other than New Testament Christianity. If we remove it, Christianity exists in name only. Without the Holy Spirit we are left with an outward form of Christianity, minus the inner dynamic — the shell without the kernel.

The Holy Spirit alone makes Christ real to believers. He alone is God’s witness, God’s seal that a person’s sins are forgiven and that they indeed belong to

Christ (Rom 8:14-16). D.L. Moody once said, “You may as well try to hear without ears, or breathe without lungs, as to try to live a Christian life without the Spirit of God in your life.” Oswald Chambers was quite correct when he said that Pentecost made the disciples living examples of the Christian faith.

Jesus went so far as to say, “Many will come to me on that day and say, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’” To which He replied, “I never knew you, away from me you evil doers” (Matt 7:22-23).

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These followers assumed they belonged to Christ, but they were mistaken. What was the problem? They held to some form of Christianity which may have had prophetic and miraculous elements in it, but it had not produced real salvation. Why else would Jesus said, “*I never knew you*”? Could it be it was because they lacked the personal presence of the Holy Spirit? Jesus said concerning the Holy Spirit, “*He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you*” (John 16:13-14). They obviously did not know Christ personally through the Holy Spirit.

### **A Case of Divine Delay in Receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit**

What truly makes a person a Christian? This is a question of utmost importance, because our eternal salvation hangs upon the correct answer. Acts 8:24-25 provides us with insights into the importance of the witness of the Spirit to His work of redemption. In this account, a powerful and influential sorcerer, named Simon, along with some others, hears, believes the Gospel and undergoes water baptism in Christ’s name. Luke stresses exactly these points, “*they [all] believed; they [all] accepted the*

*Word of God; they [all] had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus*” (Acts 8:13-16). Luke also states their deficiency, “*that they might re-*

*ceive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them.*”

Even though they all appeared to have fulfilled the conditions, they lacked the Spirit. (Rom 8:9) Luke’s point is significant; *none of them were genuinely Christians at this point*. Unlike Cornelius’ group, where the Holy Spirit came on them while Peter was still preaching, this group, including Simon, believed the Gospel, repented, and was all baptized into the name of Jesus, yet Luke says the evidence of the presence of the Spirit was clearly lacking.

Yet when the same thing happens today, many Christians are quick to assure respondents of their immediate acceptance with God on the basis of a “sinner’s prayer,” as well as counsel them to rejoice in their newfound “experience” of salvation without a shred of evidence that God has either accepted their repentance, or witnessed to their sonship. You won’t get closer to “*name it and claim it*” than that! Not only is this practice unbiblical and unsound, it also creates confusion in relation to entire sanctification later on. One wonders if the “second work” for some people is not actually the moment of their birth into

the kingdom. With such confusion, how does one then explain to believers their continued conflict of wills and struggle to obey God after they were supposedly entirely sanctified?

It is far wiser to follow the counsel of Wesley’s father to rest in nothing less than the living witness of the Holy Spirit to the new birth. We ought to counsel repentant seekers not to rest in presumption, but to wait obediently, trusting and expecting God to give the definite witness of His Spirit.

At some point in our walk with Christ there must surely be evidence that the Holy Spirit has imparted Christ’s life to us (1 Cor 3:16). The witness of God’s Spirit with our spirit that we are truly children of God is one aspect of this evidence, while the fruit of the Spirit corroborates the witness of God’s Spirit.

In this instance recorded in Acts, the witness of the Spirit was noticeably absent. Not until this group of people received the gift of the Spirit, did they possess God’s guarantee they were genuinely His children (Rom. 8:16). The moment they received the gift of the Holy Spirit their fellowship with Christ commenced and not before. The Holy Spirit endorses the fact that God’s conditions for salvation have been fully met by a repentant, obedient, believing seeker.

This point holds even though this situation was a little more complicated than normal. After they had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, Simon saw in the Apostles’ ability to impart the Holy Spirit something which would further enhance his personal status. According to Peter, his request revealed “*a heart not right before God.*” Simon’s lust for the sensational probably needed to be exposed publicly and his influence over these people broken once and for all. It is therefore possible these were some of the reasons behind the delay in the coming of the Spirit on that particular day.

### **Acts 8 is no Proof Text for “Two Works of Grace”**

To insist that this particular account in Acts illustrates “*two works of grace*” misses Luke’s point completely, namely, that it requires the Holy Spirit to make one a Christian. Only when these people were Spirit-baptized into the body of Jesus Christ did they actually become Christians in the biblical sense of the word.

Despite Simon’s response to the Gospel, Luke adds that Peter described Simon’s spiritual condition. “*You have no part or share in this ministry, because your heart is not right with God. Repent of this wickedness... you are full of bitterness and captive to sin*” (8:21-23). Simon’s response was obviously deficient.

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***It requires the Holy Spirit to make one a Christian.***

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Acts 5:32 says, “*God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him.*” If our response to the Gospel is deficient in some way, or disingenuous, might God not withhold the confirming gift of the Holy Spirit until our response fully meets His conditions? This may throw some light on the reason for some spiritual “still births.”

### **The New Birth in Relation to Entire Sanctification**

Traditionally, the American Holiness Movement has applied the phrase “baptism with the Holy Spirit” to the experience of entire sanctification. On the basis of my own examination of the New Testament and my reading over many years on this subject, I am reluctant to make this connection. I do not see these two phrases as interchangeable synonyms. As far as I

can establish, the phrase “the baptism with the Holy Spirit” relates to the new birth and not to the deeper crisis work of entire sanctification.

When explaining the Spirit’s part in entire

sanctification Wesley sometimes said it was “by the inspiration of God’s Holy Spirit,” but he actually shied away from using the terms “receiving the Holy Spirit” or “the baptism with the Holy Spirit” in relation to entire sanctification.

His reason for not connecting the phrase “baptism with the Holy Spirit” with the experience of entire sanctification is given in a letter written to Joseph Benson in 1770 where he said,

You allow the whole thing that I contend for; an entire deliverance from sin, a recovery of the whole image of God, the loving God with all our heart, soul and strength. And you believe God is able to give you this; yea, to give it to you in an instant. ... If they like to call this “receiving the Holy Ghost” they may: Only the phrase, in that sense, is not Scriptural, and not quite proper; for they all “received the Holy Ghost” when they were justified.

John Wesley consistently taught that without the witness of the Spirit, no person could lay claim to being a Christian. Paul says in Romans 8:9, “He who does not have the Spirit of Christ is none of His.” This refers to the one indispensable element in being a Christian. Therefore, I must conclude from this verse, along with the support of other evidence in the New Testament, that one becomes a Christian only

on the basis of being baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ. Here I simply concur with Scripture that the witness of the Spirit is the only guarantee given by God in the New Testament that any person is a genuine member of His kingdom. It is the assurance of salvation. How do you know you are a child of God? 1 John 3:24 and 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 concur that “*we know that He lives in us by the Spirit He gave us.*”

Receiving the Spirit in the new birth and being entirely sanctified are both the works of the Holy Spirit, but they are not to be confused with each other through the indiscriminate use of biblical terms. The new birth, which includes initial sanctification, precedes entire sanctification. Entire sanctification is the Spirit’s method of bringing the whole person completely under the whole will of God by cleaning their hearts from inherited sin. Oswald Chambers defined inherited sin as the propensity to want to do without God. Entire sanctification is experienced by fully trusting in Christ’s atonement to cleanse us from all antagonism to God (Rom 8:7). Entire sanctification usually, if not always, occurs some time *after* a person is born again.

Entire sanctification is a personal process/crisis/process by which the Holy Spirit leads us to make a choice regarding our ultimate loyalty. Will we be loyal to our own self interest or will we be loyal to Christ? Whichever of these loyalties eventually reigns supreme in our lives determines our growth in Christlikeness, our development in moral love, and our usefulness to God.

I suspect that the *when* of entire sanctification is as long or as short as we ourselves make it. It depends upon our willingness to allow God to fulfill His unhindered will in and through us.

### **Sealed by the Spirit**

Another way of looking at the connection between the new birth and the gift of the Holy Spirit is to examine what Paul means by describing the gift of the Holy Spirit as God’s “seal.” In Ephesians 1:13-14 Paul teaches that the Spirit is the “seal” of our redemption.

In Paul’s day, a seal was used for many purposes. It was used as a mark of authenticity or authority to letters and royal commands, or to mark or ratify a transaction or covenant. It was also used to protect books and documents from being tampered with or as proof of delegated authority and power. Seals were often used as an official mark of ownership. When Paul used the word seal, in relation to the Holy Spirit, his readers had a clear understanding that he meant to authenticate or to show ownership.

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***One becomes a Christian only on the basis of being baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ.***



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The presence or the gift of the Holy Spirit alone is God's seal or stamp confirming that your sins are forgiven, that you share in Christ's redemption; that you are a *bona fide* member of God's kingdom; that you have the assurance of salvation.

Therefore, any young Christian, despite his shortcomings, who genuinely has the witness of the Spirit, belongs to Christ as much as the oldest of saints does. John Wesley maintained that without the witness of the Spirit, no person could lay claim to being a Christian.

You might even say that the Holy Spirit is God's *receipt*. When you make a purchase, you receive a receipt as proof of the transfer of ownership of the item from the original owner to yourself.

To both parties the receipt represents proof that the required conditions have been fully met and the receipt settles the matter on both sides. This idea is supported by Romans 8:16, "*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*"

## Christianity is Christlike Living Through Trust and Dependence in the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the distinguishing mark of authentic Christianity. He produces Christlike characteristics as Galatians 5:22-25 spells out. Jesus promised His disciples He would send them "*another Counselor*" (John 14:16). The word *another* means another Spirit *just like* Christ. The Holy Spirit is a Christ-like Spirit, who reproduces a Christlike life in true believers. Holiness is nothing more, nothing less and nothing other than Christlikeness.

Being a Christian means we live our lives by faith in the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit. When Jesus described how the Christian life works, He said it's in the same way that branches growing on a grapevine exist; they simply draw their life from the vine. (John 15:4-6) Therefore the question, "*Have you received the Holy Spirit?*" (Acts 19:2) is surely tantamount to asking, "*Are you genuinely a Christian?*"

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## DOES GOD KNOW THE FUTURE?

Andy Heer

In the last couple of decades we have seen a rise of a new doctrine of God called "Open Theology." This "Open Theology," "Open Theism," or "Free-Will Theism" has been very appealing to many from the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. According to Open theology, the future is open and thus not entirely settled. This school of thought believes that God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future. This means that while God knows all possibilities, God does not know with certainty what free creatures will actually do until they act.

This view was developed after Openness theologians failed to reconcile human freedom and divine foreknowledge. Open Theology rejects the idea that these two concepts are reconcilable and as a result they reject the idea that God has exhaustive foreknowledge. If the future is truly undetermined, they say, then God cannot fully know the future because much of it is not available to be known. They claim that God has decided to limit his knowledge of the future in order to maintain human freedom as a necessary quality of a meaningful relationship.

According to Clark Pinnock, a leading proponent of Open Theology, "If choices are real and freedom significant, future decisions cannot be exhaustively known." Open theology does believe that God is all knowing. God knows all things that *can* be known or

God knows everything that may happen in the future. God knows all the possibilities, but He does not know with absolute certainty what every free creature will someday choose to do.

### What does the Bible say about God's knowledge of the future?

Those who hold to Open theology claim the Bible does not provide any clear cut answers. They see many Biblical passages which seem to indicate that God does not know the details of the future. Passages where God repents or changes His mind implies that God does not know the future exhaustively. The story of Hezekiah found in 2 Kings is given as a classic example of an open future. In 2 Kings 20:1 we read, "*In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to him and said, 'This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.'*" God seems to have decided the future of Hezekiah.

However after Hezekiah spends time in prayer, God adds fifteen years to Hezekiah's life. This passage seems to imply the future is open and not settled. If God foreknew when Hezekiah would die, God must have told Hezekiah a lie. Open Theology provides a way out for God. God changed His mind out of love.

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Many other passages are used by those who promote Open Theology, such as Genesis 18. According to Open Theology we have God on a fact-finding mission. With His limited knowledge God needs to go and see if Sodom and Gomorrah's sin matches the reports He has received.

Yet reading the passage in this manner seems to create more problems than it solves. Not only do we have a God who has limited knowledge, but now we have a God who has to walk around if He wants to get somewhere. We also get a God who needs to eat and rest as well.

There are of course many passages of Scripture which indicate God's exhaustive knowledge. When God communicates to us He uses expressions which cannot be taken literally. Sometimes God uses figures of speech and sometimes He uses straightforward statements. Our job is to study His Word and distinguish what is to be understood as a figure of speech and what is to be taken as a straightforward statement.

We see in Scripture many examples where God hides His face (Psalm 13:1); or has arms (Isa 53:1) and intestines (Isa 63:15). When we read passages like these we understand this is finite man speaking of an infinite Father with the limitations of words. The same can certainly be said of God's knowledge when we read Scriptures that use figures of speech like: God remembers (Gen 6:6, Exod 32:12-14); God repents (Gen 9:15, Exod 6:5); or that God forgets (Psalm 9:18, 13:1; Jer 23:39).

What is the big deal? Why can't Christians have different opinions on what or how much God's knows? The bottom line is ideas and beliefs have consequences. How can we really trust and accept the promises of Scripture if we have a God who does not know the future exhaustively? Thomas Oden said, "The fantasy that God is ignorant of the future is a heresy that must be rejected on scriptural grounds." It may be impossible for us to get our mind around the attributes of God. Is that really a problem? Isaiah 55:8-9 says pretty clearly that there are some things we cannot comprehend about God.

We know God does not contradict Himself. We know God is Holy because He has told us so. Yet we witness evil in this world that Holy God created. This is a problem for us to understand, but is it really a problem (Psalm 139:6; Eccl 3:11)?

### **Openness and Wesleyan-Arminian Theology**

There is no question that Open Theology is not the position of historic Wesleyan Arminianism. Thomas Noble concluded

that Pinnock's view is different from ours. "The immanence of God within the time-space creation is emphasized at the expense of his transcendence. God is not fully transcendent over time since he cannot know the future."

Classical Arminian theology has historically affirmed God's exhaustive foreknowledge of the future. While Open Theology is an attempt to reject Calvinistic determinism, both Open Theology and Calvinism have tied predestination and foreknowledge together. It seems for Open Theology to reject predestination one must also reject foreknowledge as well.

John Wesley, in his sermon "On Predestination," argued that the foreknowledge of God is the first point to be addressed in considering God's whole work in salvation. Wesley said that, "God *foreknew* those in every nation who would believe," and that, "In a word, God, looking on all ages, from the creation to the consummation, as a moment, and seeing at once whatever is in the hearts of all children of men, knows every one that does or does not believe, in every age or nation."

For Wesley this did not create a conflict between human moral freedom and divine foreknowledge. He affirmed that though God knew the future, he did not determine it. Wesley believed that we must not think that things are because God knows them; rather, God knows them because they are. Wesley said, "I now know the sun shines. Yet the sun does not shine because I know it: but I know it because he shines. My knowledge *supposes* the sun to shine, but does not in any wise *cause* it. In like manner God knows that man sins; for he knows all things. Yet we do not sin because he knows it: but he knows it because we sin. And his knowledge *supposes* our sin, but does not in any wise cause it."

Calvinism conflates foreknowledge with predestination, claiming that God foreknows the future because He has predetermined it. Wesley, like Arminius, saw God's divine foreknowledge as the ground of his predetermination to save those who believe and damn those who do not believe. Open Theology is a denial, not a development of historic Arminian theology. For that matter Open Theology is a denial of the historic position of the church. Open Theology seems to want to remove the mystery or the paradox of human freedom and divine foreknowledge, but in this attempt to limit God's knowledge they have created bigger problems and a smaller God.

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## **REVIEWS**

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**Dinesh D'Souza, *What's So Great about Christianity* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2009). ISBN: 9781596985179**

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D'Souza does an admirable job of answering so important a question. Few people have answered this question better. What he does is to review history and correct the revisionism that has

been occurring in our time. He traces history from the cross through the dark ages, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Reformation to the present. He cites many of the struggles as

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the Church engaged the immoral cultures and nations with which it came in contact. He points out that though the church paid a price in many cases, the victory was always won. His view of Church history is positive and certainly supports the optimistic power of the Gospel of Christ. This optimism is often lacking in today's evangelical and fundamentalist literature. He also discusses the atheists of our age who are critical of the Gospel and our Christ, and who condemn the Church. If you want to know more about the "four horsemen" of atheism, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Bennett, Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, D'Souza would be a good place to start.

These atheists are the new enemy of the Church who are trying to get many pagan customs, such as infanticide, restored within our society. He also points out that they are encouraging the sexual revolution which has been racking the Western culture for years. What is the basis for their atheism and immorality? The answer is evolutionary theory, which has now been

debunked. D'Souza does an excellent job on their atheistic nonsense and faith in evolution. In the process, he shows that history has been littered with many false ideas which the Church conquered. Still, he makes it clear that atheism is an enemy of epic strength. He points out that in reality, it is a battle of philosophy and not science. While D'Souza is unnecessarily broad in his acceptance of possibilities regarding creation, and as such is not a young-earth creationist, he is a worthwhile resource and a friend of the faith.

This book is a must for pastors who do not have time to do deep research on the impact of the Church on human history and society. As far as history is concerned, it was the Gospel light of Christ that made the difference, and not science or human philosophy. He does a very thoughtful job, provides ample research, and his style is easy to understand and follow.

—Dennis Hartman

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**Samuel M. Powell, *Discovering Our Christian Faith* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2008).  
ISBN: 978-0-8341-2354-0**

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This may well be the best introduction to theology from a Wesleyan perspective. Powell's writing is simple, yet profound. He emphasizes theology as worship, not merely as a philosophical exercise. Each chapter includes a Wesley hymn that expresses the theme of the chapter. In this introduction to theology, Powell rarely quotes secondary sources. His theology is post-modern and relational, but not process theology. The result is a consensus theology based on scriptural authority.

On the first page he states that he and his publisher stand within the Wesleyan tradition of Protestant Christianity. Later he elaborates, "Protestants differed from the medieval Church in seeing only the Bible as the product of the Spirit's inspiration. Creeds, customs, and theologians, they argued, were human and therefore, unlike the Bible, liable to error. The Bible, being inspired, fully, accurately, and without error reveals the will of God."

Is this a statement defining what the Word does without necessarily defining what the Bible is? While Powell was attempting to make a consensus statement concerning the inspiration of Scripture, I asked him what he meant by "revealing the will of God" since no professional Church of the Nazarene biblical scholar or theologian affirms full inerrancy. Did he restrict the will of God to matters of salvation only? He replied,

The Bible is true in everything it affirms, even in its affirmations about the natural world, but that it views things and

events according to their relation to God. So the Bible makes some affirmations about the natural world that differs from the conclusions of the scientist, but those affirmations are still true because the biblical writers are portraying things, not according to their relation to natural laws but instead according to their relation to God... I can't convince myself that the Bible is a reliable source of scientific knowledge about the world... At the same time, I am far from making scientific knowledge the measure of revelation and biblical interpretation. It's important to recognize the limitations of scientific knowledge.

I am concerned that such a view might create separate categories of truth. Thus, the Bible is true when it speaks of salvation, but not necessarily of history or science. The doctrines of creation cannot be divorced from the gospel of Jesus Christ since the teachings of Genesis are foundational to the gospel.

However, in fairness to the author his text does not delve into such issues. It is a positive statement of doctrine, regardless of any intellectual reservations with which the author may have been wrestling. He wrote, "As I tried to emphasize in my book, the most important thing is the faith that accords with godliness. History shows that godly people can disagree on important issues, while still holding to the faith that works through love."

—Vic Reasoner

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**Terry Mortenson and Thane H. Ury, eds. *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 2008). ISBN: 978-0-89051-548-8**

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Fourteen scholars argue in favor of a six-day creation, global flood, and young earth. Genesis 1-11 is defended as literal history. As the book points out, Wesley had the same view of Genesis as the Reformed scholars. In his two-volume *Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation* (1763), Wesley stated his belief that the various rock strata were “doubtless formed by the general Deluge.” He believed that the creation account was, along with the rest of Scripture, “void of any material error.” Concerning the age of the earth, Wesley said the Scripture was the only book in the world that gives us any account of the whole series of God’s dispensations toward man from creation for four thousand years.

While the 1820 conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church recommended that colleges be established under Methodist auspices and conference control, it was not until after the Civil War that these colleges expanded to university status. By 1880 the Methodist Church had forty-four colleges and universities, eleven seminaries, and 130 secondary schools — all under the Board of Education. But they sent their best and brightest to Germany to study under Julius Wellhausen and other higher critics. Inevitably they brought back to their institutions in America academic credibility and liberal poison.

By 1905 there was a struggle to free Vanderbilt University from church control. This struggle continued for ten years and went all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court. Ultimately the church lost control of the institutions which trained its clergy and the result was that these Methodist universities very quickly adopted liberal Enlightenment philosophy, along with the belief that the Bible can be explained in evolutionary terms.

After the turn of the century, Charles H. Fowler, a Methodist bishop said, “It may seem a severe thing for a Methodist bishop, and one who has been president of one of our largest universities to say, but nevertheless I believe it to be true that the schools and universities of the Methodist Episcopal Church belong more to the devil to-day than they do to our Church.”

And so the more conservative Nazarenes and Wesleyans withdrew to form their own Bible institutes and colleges. Eventually, they gained academic status and became universities. Today most of them teach the same liberalism as the mainline institutions from which they left. I doubt any of them will acknowledge this book in a positive light, but not all scholars are liberal and neither are all Wesleyans. Thank you, Dr. Ury, professor at United Wesleyan Graduate Institute in Hong Kong, for co-editing this volume!

—Vic Reasoner

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**Lloyd B. Hildebrand, 2012: *Is This the End?* (Alachua, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2009). ISBN: 978-0882709659**

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Jesus Christ said that no man knew the day nor the hour of his return (Matt 24:36). While that declaration should be sufficient to prevent speculation, opportunists have always capitalized on our desire to know. And so if we cannot determine the end from divine revelation, we can always go to pagan superstition. In other words, if God won’t tell us — we will ask the devil. The problem is that as the “father of lies” he is hardly reliable.

I protest the thesis of this book — that we can predict the timing of our Lord’s return by resorting to occult knowledge. We cannot determine biblical eschatology by consulting to the Mayan calendar, Inca shamans, Aztec lore, the Chinese I

Ching, Cherokee and Hopi Indian superstition, Merlin the Magician, the extrabiblical prophecies of Mother Shipton and Nostradamus, the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, nor the prophecies of Islam.

As Christians we have a more sure word of prophecy (2 Peter 1:19). We have sufficient revelation, but God has not seen fit to satisfy our curiosity. This book is a vain attempt to satisfy carnal curiosity and will only succeed in fostering more confusion within a church which used to hold to the Reformation doctrine of *sola scriptura*.