

The Arminian

A PUBLICATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL WESLEYAN SOCIETY

VOLUME 38

FALL 2020

ISSUE 2

A FORTY-YEAR SLIP

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In 1978 Francis Schaeffer wrote that God was giving his people another opportunity to save evangelicalism from the “slippery slope” that results when biblical authority and inerrancy are abandoned. The typical response from the Wesleyan guild was to criticize Schaeffer for being a Calvinist and then rush down the path he warned against. But Proverbs 29:18 warns that where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint. Now, a generation later, I want to survey how far we have slipped.

THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE

Volume 38 SPRING 2020 Issue 2
ISSN 1085-2808

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1. We have downsized God and increased government overreach

While liberals employ process philosophy and evangelicals play with open theism, it turns out there is not much difference—God does not know the future. Process theology contends that God is affected by the world just as the world is affected by God. The result is a God who is only different from us in quantity, not quality. The result is an immanent God who is himself actually caught up in the evolutionary process. He does not superintend the world; he is a part of the world. Both God and creation are involved in an ongoing process. Open theism essentially reduces God to the attribute of love. It claims that God does not have exhaustive knowledge of the future and does not infringe upon man's free will. Thus, God reacts to our decisions, takes risks, learns, makes mistakes, and changes his mind.

At the same time God has been cut down to our size, government has grown—perhaps to fill the void. The naive voter will sell his freedom to the candidate who is the highest bidder. And the panacea of statist programs will once more fail to produce the promised golden age.

2. We have abandoned the biblical account of creation for theistic evolution

Evangelical scholars are aligning with BioLogos, instead of the Word of God, and

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their agenda to convince the church that we must embrace evolutionary theory in order to evangelize this generation. Scientific theory becomes our final authority. Now evangelical scholars concede that animals died before sin entered the world. They are claiming that the world God created was “red in tooth and claw” before the fall.

But David Hull explained that “the evolutionary process is rife with happenstance, contingency, incredible waste, death, pain, and horror. Whatever the God implied by evolutionary theory and the data of natural history may be like, He is not the Protestant God of waste not, want not. He is also not a loving God who cares about His productions. . . . He is certainly not the sort of God to whom anyone would be inclined to pray.”

Evangelical authors are also willing to concede that Adam and Eve are not historical persons. They tell us that Adam is theologically significant, even though he did not exist historically. But theological significance must be grounded in historical reality. The man

through which sin entered the world must be the father of our race, not just an abstract concept.

Romans 5:12-21

teaches that what one man got us into, the other man got us out of. If Christ is historical, Adam cannot be mythical. Furthermore, Jesus regarded the creation narrative as literal history (Matt. 19:4-6; Mark 13:19). Paul does as well in Romans 5, 1 Corinthians 15:45, and 1 Timothy 2:13-14.

3. We have lost our sexual identity

While God created two sexes, male and female, it is now claimed that gender is unattached to sex. As it is used today, the term “gender identity” refers to a person’s self-perception. We are the first generation that can medically make gender the result of sexual preference. “Transgender” is an umbrella term for all types of situations in which a person’s

perceived gender does not match his or her genetic sexual identity. “Gender dysphoria” is the term used to describe people who have a disconnect between their genetic sexual identity and what they think about themselves. Currently, Facebook acknowledges 58 different gender identities.

However, this is part of a neo-Marxist agenda promoted under the innocuous label of “social justice.” While traditional Marxism has failed to produce an economic utopia, neo-Marxism is committed to the de-stabilization of the family as part of their agenda for a cultural revolution, and we are witnessing gender anarchy. Is it any wonder that marriage has been redefined?

Liberal Methodist scholars are doing their part. A recent article in the *Methodist Review* suggests that “homosexuality was not entirely unknown among early Methodists.” In his 2017 article, “Divine Attraction Between Your Soul and Mine’ George Whitefield and Same-Sex Affection in 18th-Century Methodism,” Glen O’Brien has suggested that George Whitefield “was likely to have been same-sex attracted.”

John Sanders has an article in the Spring 2020 issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* entitled, “Methodism, the Bible, and Same-Gender Relations.” He begins with the question, “Must Christians agree with every moral command in the Bible?” His answer is that Christians have never practiced each and every teaching in the Bible. Thus “Christians have developed principled ways of setting aside particular biblical teachings when the Christian community felt that these teachings were immoral, unloving, or wrong.” Of course, Sanders has no concept of *sola Scriptura*—the final authority of God’s Word. Sadly, Wesley himself would reject most of what appears in this journal which bears his name.

4. Communism is back in style

Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels wrote their *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. When Marx wrote *Das Kapital* in 1867 he dedicated

it to Charles Darwin. According to Marx, the workers of the world were to unite and bring in a new social order. No one seemed to know what was predestined until Lenin pulled off the October Revolution in 1917. Until that time Marx was relatively unknown. However, Russia was not an industrialized nation. It was not the factory workers who united. Lenin had to develop professional agitators who worked from 1905-1917 in order to destabilize the Russian society. However, once communism had been established in Russia, the workers did go on strike voluntarily to protest communist tyranny. In order to appease them, Lenin had to temporarily restore the free market. After Stalin took over, the great famine of 1929-1934 was the result of collectivization. Then Stalin exterminated all opposition in the great terror of 1934-1939. By this time 10% of the labor force was in concentration camps.

Yet the New York Times, a former newspaper, sent Walter Duranty over in 1932. He wrote, "I have seen the future and it works." He won a Pulitzer Prize for that propaganda.

During this time the Russian Orthodox Church was deeply divided over the color of their vestments—much like the irrelevant legalism within the conservative holiness movement—oblivious to what was really happening.

Across the twentieth century communism executed 100 million of its own citizens in a futile attempt to make the system work. China had to resort to a free market in order to stay alive, and all the while the church grows in China at an annual rate of 7%.

The Berlin Wall came down in 1989. On December 22, 1989 an open-air crowd of 150,000 in Timisora, Romania shouted, "God exists! There is a God. God is with us." Then they dropped to their knees and cited the Lord's Prayer in unison. A sign in the lawn of a church in Prague declared, "The Lamb has prevailed."

The failure of communism was the greatest debacle of the twentieth century. Apparently the only vestiges of communism that remained were found in American universities. Yet those

universities trained a generation of former hippies to subvert the social order from the inside out, and they started running for public office. A generation after communism failed, we have communists running for president of the United States thanks to Antonio Gramsci, whose theory was popularized by Saul Alinsky.

Communism has also been repackaged as liberation theology. It portrays Jesus Christ as a political revolutionary, justifies revolutionary violence, and demands that Christians participate in the liberation struggle. It twists the biblical concept of love to justify a violent revolution as a prelude to the establishment of a just society. Out of the chaos a new world order will arise. It began as a movement within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America in the 1950s-1960s. The term was coined in 1971 by Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Peruvian priest. In his book *A Theology of Liberation* Gutiérrez wrote, "The God of Exodus is the God of history and of political liberation more than he is the God of nature."

Theodore Jennings, in his *Good News to the Poor* (1990) and "What Wesleyans Can Learn from Lenin" (2007), as well as Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics* (1992), however, assure us that the early Methodist revival of the eighteenth century was really John Wesley's attempt to establish socialism in England. *Socialism*, however, is a limited form of communism in which property and wealth are controlled by the community. Its basic premise is the inherent goodness of mankind. It destroys the work ethic and encourages sloth. Its appeal is based on greed, and those who vote for socialism are voting for the highest bidder. The only way to make socialism work is to make it mandatory. Then it becomes communism, and we are no longer free. Tragically, apostate Christianity supports this agenda.

5. Hell is no longer even discussed

The evangelical church has grown quiet about hell. In 1986 a senior editor of *Christianity Today* (a former evangelical magazine) admitted, "The last sermon on hell I heard I

preached myself. And that was nearly 30 years ago." In 1979 Jon Braun wrote *Whatever Happened to Hell?* He said that in 1600 years of church history Origen was the only theologian to ever question the doctrine of eternal punishment, and Origen was anathematized by the church.

Martin Marty also observed in 1986 "the passing of hell from modern consciousness is one of the major, if still undocumented major trends." Our society lives for the moment. Rob Bell had his moment in the spotlight with the publication of his book *Love Wins* (2011), in which he

We have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel. But it will take God's power to turn things around.

advocated universalism. Bell exchanged the biblical teaching of God's covenant love for an inadequate view of sin and a sentimental view of love. C. S. Lewis explained that heaven is the habitation of those who say to God, "Thy will be done," and hell is the abode of those to whom God says, "Thy will be done." Thus, hell is the conclusion of man's insistence upon autonomy.

John Wesley wrote to William Law in 1756,

Now this much cannot be denied, that these texts speak as if there were really such a place as hell, as if there were a real fire there, and as if it would remain forever. I would then ask but one plain question: If the case is not so, why did God speak as if it was? Say you, "To affright men from sin"? What, by guile, by dissimulation, by hanging out false colors? Can you conceive the Most High dressing up a scarecrow, as we do to fright children? Far be it from Him! If there be any such fraud in the Bible, the Bible is not of God. And indeed this must be the result of all: If there be no "unquenchable fire, no everlasting burnings," there is no

dependence on those writings wherein they are so expressly asserted, nor of the eternity of heaven any more than of hell. So that if we give up the one, we must give up the other. No hell, no heaven, no revelation!

Wesley explained that to reject biblical authority because Scripture teaches the doctrine of hell creates more problems than it solves. If the Bible contains false teaching, then how can we determine when it can be trusted? Perhaps the promise of heaven is also a false incentive. If Scripture is not trustworthy on every point, it provides no assurance at any point. The good news is not that there is no hell after all, but that no one is predestined for hell.

The Spring 2020 issue of the *Wesleyan Theological Journal* contains two articles which advocate that we rethink our position on the doctrine of hell. The writers believe it is logically inconsistent to affirm a holy God and an eternal hell. The second article expresses concern that the Church of the Nazarene articles of faith end with a reference to hell. The paper is entitled, "One Hell of a Statement" and advocates a "needed" revision for the Nazarene statement of faith. Modern theologians need to discover Luther Lee, *Universalism Examined and Refuted, and the Doctrine of Endless Punishment of Such as Do Not Comply with the Conditions of the Gospel in this Life, Established* (1836). I am happy to announce that Schmul Publishing Company has just reprinted this book.

It was reported in 1990 that a Methodist bishop said, "Our trouble is that we don't believe any more that people are lost." Ironically, the United Methodist Church itself may be beyond salvation. They have debated their position on Christian sexual ethics at every general conference since 1972, but they cannot agree on whether the Bible means what it says. And so the obvious solution is to have another conference. It is generally acknowledged that the present denomination will split into four groups. Apparently these four groups will col-

lectively need four times as many bishops, and it appears that there is a good deal of political maneuvering and posturing.

One of the new groups states that they uphold Scriptural authority. William Abraham, who has been a major voice in their formation, however, believes that Wesley's theology of Scripture cannot be salvaged and that Wesleyans need to make a clean break with it. He rejects *sola Scriptura*, advancing the view that the Holy Spirit has equipped the church not only with a canon of Scripture but also with an abundant canonical heritage of persons, practices, and materials. With so many available sources of authority, it should not be too hard for liberals to find one with which they agree.

Logically, there can be only one ultimate authority; and I fear too many theologians think they are it.

We had better get back on solid footing. We have slipped and fallen, losing a lot of ground over the last generation. We have no reason to be ashamed of the gospel. But it will take God's power to turn things around. The opposite of revelation is deception. Unless we return to the Holy Scriptures as our touchstone and final authority, we are open to that deception. So are the generations who follow us.

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JOHN FLETCHER'S USE OF THE TERM "BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"

Joseph D. McPherson

In his "Last Check to Antinomianism," John Fletcher applied the language of "baptism of the Holy Ghost" to the work of entire sanctification (*Works*, 2:63233). Laurence Wood and Timothy L. Smith, two theologians of the present era, put much emphasis on this fact. However, to suppose that Fletcher used the expression "baptism of the Holy Spirit" exclusively with reference to the attainment of entire sanctification would be a mistake. Like other early Methodists, he plainly used the language of Spirit baptism in reference to the necessary empowerment of the Holy Spirit in

justification and regeneration.

To his disciples Jesus' promise was: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many

Fletcher plainly used the language of Spirit baptism in reference to the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in regeneration.

days hence (Acts 1:5). "And so are all true believers, to the end of the world" responded Mr. Wesley (*Explanatory Notes upon the New Testa-*

ment, 275). In many places, Fletcher demonstrates his adherence to Wesley's teaching of Spirit baptism. In his essay entitled, "Spiritual Manifestations of the Son of God," he considers being "baptized with Holy Ghost and spiritual fire," as a "blessing which can alone make a man a Christian" (*Works*, 4:287). Likewise, he shows in one of his sermon outlines the "General necessity of the baptism of the Holy Ghost" for attaining Christian conversion. The reason he gives for such a "necessity" is that "All are tainted with sin" and "must be born again" (*Works*, 4:195). Herein he assures his readers that there is the necessity of the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the accomplishment of the new birth.

In his *Equal Check*, he reminds his readers of St. Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 12:13. Although Fletcher presumes that many of the Corinthian believers had yet to experience the advanced state of entire sanctification at the time Paul wrote, he assures them that by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body ... and

have been all made to drink into one Spirit (*Works*, 2:289). Fletcher was convinced that Paul was not referring to those only who have had an advanced experience of grace but was making the point that all members, without exception, had entered the body or the invisible church by Spirit baptism. It was an initiatory event and common experience for all true believers. Fletcher declares that “This blessing, which under the Jewish dispensation was

the prerogative of prophets and prophetesses only, is [now] common to all true Christians. The four evangelists, St. Peter, our Lord and his forerunner, agree

to name it ‘the baptism of the Holy Ghost’” (*Works*, 2:49).

In “A Sermon on the New Birth,” Fletcher contrasts the difference between the reformation of a Pharisee and the regeneration of a child of God. “Some degrees of preventing grace and of reason and reflection suffice for the [reformation of the Pharisee], but nothing less can [bring about the regeneration of a child of God] than a baptism of the Holy Ghost.”

Later in the same sermon, Fletcher speaks of the new birth as a spiritual resurrection. He assures the penitent seeker of a “balm in Gilead.” Better yet, “Faith in the blood of Christ,” says he, “can not only heal the wounds of a dying soul, but raise to life one that is spiritually dead.” To the true penitent and seeker for the new birth he writes these words of encouragement: “Yes, you shall be baptized by the Holy Ghost for the remission of sins and justified freely by faith” (*Works*, 4:111115).

In his sermon outline on Acts 1:5, Fletcher applied the promise to both the unconverted and to the believer. To the unconverted he warned, “rest in no baptism, but that of the Holy Ghost and fire.” To the believer, he explained, “You want a fresh baptism, till the Holy Ghost, which is grace, fill your soul” (*Works*, 4:196).

By using the same terminology for both regeneration and entire sanctification Fletcher does differ from Wesley. He is seen as viewing the baptism of the Holy Spirit in a holistic sense. Yet Fletcher cannot be legitimately used to support the later deviation of the American holiness movement.

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ALL MEN CAN BE SAVED: PENAL SUBSTITUTION AND WESLEYAN-ARMINIAN THEOLOGY

Johnathan Arnold

An appeal for men to be saved is near to the heart of Wesleyan Methodism. W. B. Fitzgerald summarized Methodism with four “alls”:

- All need to be saved.
- All can be saved.
- All can know they are saved.
- All can be saved to the uttermost.

But what do all men need to be saved *from*? And why did Jesus need to die to save them from the same?

All Men Need to Be Saved From the Wrath of God

In Romans, the greatest treatise on “the gospel ... the power of God for salvation” (Rom. 1:16), Paul begins with a lengthy section on God’s wrath: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18).

God’s wrath is not only against our sin, as if sin is a thing separate from those who com-

mit it. Sin is the attitude or action of persons against God (Psa. 51:4); since God is personal, sin incurs his personal wrath. Sinners are the enemies of God (Rom. 5:10), and “the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies” (Nah. 1:2).

Paul is unambiguous regarding this: “You are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed” (Rom. 2:5); “for those who are

self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury (Rom. 2:8). The

greatest threat to sinful man is not death, hell, or the grave; it is not “the cosmic powers over this present darkness” (Eph. 6:12); it is the wrath of God (Heb. 10:31).

Early Methodist preaching was characterized by the warning, “Flee from the wrath to come!” God’s wrath was “in the DNA of the Wesleyan revival.” In fact, Methodists were asked at every class meeting, “Do you desire to flee from the wrath to come, and to be saved from your sins?”

Sinners need refuge from the wrath of God against them. Jesus saves from sin, not merely because sin causes brokenness and disorder, but because it incurs God’s righteous anger. Salvation is the work by which Jesus “delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 5:10).

Whatever else the death of Jesus accomplished, it must address the need for all men to be saved *from the wrath of God*.

All Men Can Be Saved Through Christ’s Penal Substitutionary Atonement

The principal problem of God’s wrath in Romans 1 and 2 is answered by the divine solution of Christ’s propitiatory death in Romans 3: “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a *propitiation by his blood*, to be received by faith” (Rom. 3:24-25).

Jesus “had to be made like his brothers in every respect ... to *make propitiation* for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:17). “He is the *propitiation* for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). “In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the *propitiation* for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

“Propitiation (*hilasmos, hilasterion*) refers to an appeasing or placating of divine anger against unrighteousness. That is propitious which renders one favorably disposed toward another who has been previously alienated” (*Lexham Bible Dictionary*). God’s wrath was indelibly against us,

Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev’ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

God’s wrath includes his punitive justice. Because God is just, sin provokes him to wrath, which is stored up and poured out in the punishment of sin. Jesus was punished in our place, bearing the wrath of God on our behalf, so that God could forgive us without compromising his justice.

Sinners are under God’s curse, “for it is written, ‘Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them’” (Gal. 3:10). To have the Lord “bless you” is to “have his face shine upon you” (Num. 6:24); to have the Lord curse you is to have his face of displeasure set against you—that is, to be under God’s wrath. Galatians 3:13 explains, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.’” It is not merely the death that brings us salvation; it is a particular kind of death: a cursed death.

Christ “was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities,” and “the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6), for “it was the will of the LORD to crush him” (Isa. 53:10). Wesley comments on verse 11, “he shall satisfy the justice of God, by

bearing the punishment due to their sins" (emphasis added). Jesus's death did not *only* conquer the forces of evil; it satisfied the demands of God's justice which were against us. His atonement did not *only* preserve God's government; it satisfied the personal wrath of the Governor. Christ did not *only* stand in as our substitute to demonstrate the love of God or the seriousness of sin; he paid the *penalty* of the law on our behalf. In other words, his substitution was *penal*.

Penal substitution became deeply meaningful to me through a biblical-theological study of the cup of the Lord's wrath (see Psalm 60:3; Psa. 75:8; Isa. 51:17; Isa. 51:22; Jer. 25:15; Obadiah 16; Rev. 14:10). While tracing the "cup" image through Scripture, I inevitably came to Gethsemane, where Jesus "fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me'" (Matt. 26:39). Christ did not sweat tears of blood over fear of death; he trembled at the thought of "the cup of the wine of the fury of [God's] wrath" (Rev. 16:19), and the dreadful experience that ensured: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Unless Jesus drank the cup of the Lord's wrath in my place, I am without comfort in life and in death.

Christ's violent death is not cosmic child abuse—the Son being victimized by the Father's wrath. Rather, it is God assuming human nature to bear his own wrath. W. B. Pope says it well: "The Son does not propitiate an anger in the Father that He does not Himself share." Christ willingly absorbed God's wrath in his human nature, in no way disrupting the unity of the Trinity. Francis Turretin proposes that we should view this as

God suspending for a little while the favorable presence of grace and the influx of consolation and happiness that he might be able to suffer all the punishment due to us (as to the withdrawal of vision, not as a dissolution of union; as to the want of the sense of divine love, intercepted by the sense of the divine wrath and vengeance resting

upon him, not as to a real privation or extinction of it.)

Jesus did truly bear God's wrath, paying the penalty for our sins so that all men can be saved.

Penal Substitution and Historic Wesleyan-Arminianism

Some mistakenly think that the penal substitutionary theory of atonement is a distinctly Calvinistic teaching, while others intentionally distance themselves from the doctrine because it is held by Reformed theologians. But Wesley would condemn this instinct; he asks, "Does not the truth of the gospel lie very near both to Calvinism and Antinomianism?" and answers, "Indeed it does; as it were, within a hair's breadth. So that, because we do not quite agree either with one or the other, *it is altogether foolish and sinful to run from them as far as we can*" (emphasis mine).

It is a gaffe to say that penal substitution is incompatible with Wesleyan-Arminianism, since Wesley, Arminius, and the greatest Wesleyan-Arminian theologians subscribed to the doctrine.

Wesley held to penal substitution. Penal substitution is a prolific theme in Wesley's *Explanatory Notes Upon the Bible*. For example, on Romans 3:26 he wrote: "The attribute of justice must be preserved inviolate. And inviolate it is preserved, *if there was a real infliction of punishment on our Saviour.*" On 1 Peter 2:24: "[He] himself bore our sins in his body on the tree—That is, the *punishment due them.*" On Colossians 1:14: "The voluntary passion of our Lord *appeased the Father's wrath*, obtained pardon and acceptance for us." On 1 Corinthians 5:21: "[we] must have been *consumed by the divine justice*, had not this atonement been made for our sins." Penal substitution was at the heart of his gospel preaching: "God will not inflict on that sinner what he deserved to suffer, because the Son of his love hath suffered for him."

Arminius held to penal substitution. Ar-

minius taught that Jesus “paid the price of redemption for sins by suffering *the punishment due to them*,” insisting that “the rigour of inflexible justice was declared, which could not pardon sin, even to the interceding Son, *except the penalty were fully paid.*” In Arminian Theology, Roger E. Olson busts the myth that all Arminians believe in the governmental theory of atonement and insists that Arminius’s position was clear:

Is it possible to consider the government theory the Arminian doctrine of the atonement when it was foreign to Arminius’ own thought? That would be like calling something the Calvinist doctrine when Calvin clearly and explicitly taught an alternative view. Critics who claim that Arminianism includes the governmental theory should read Arminius. William Witt is correct that Arminius accepted and embraced a variation of the Anselmic satisfaction theory not very different, if at all, from the Reformed penal substitution theory. For Arminius, Christ’s death was the substitutionary, expiatory, and propitiatory sacrifice for sins that perfectly fulfilled the law and established a new covenant of faith.

It is historic Wesleyan-Arminian theology to insist that Christ’s death was in our place (substitutionary), paid the penalty for our sins (penal), satisfied the wrath of God (propitiatory), and took away our sins (expiatory).

The greatest Wesleyan-Arminian theologians held to penal substitution. William Burt Pope, who is recognized as “the greatest doctrinal theologian ever to take up the task of teaching Christian theology from the point of view of the Wesleyan revival movement” and “one of the most reputable thinkers in the Arminian family,” writes,

Our Savior’s sacrifice on the cross ... is no less than satisfaction, provided by divine love, of the claims of divine

justice upon transgression: which may be viewed, on the one hand, as an expiation of the punishment due to the guilt of human sin: and, on the other, as a propitiation of the divine displeasure, which is thus shown to be consistent with infinite goodwill to the sinners of mankind. But the expiation of guilt and the propitiation of wrath are one and the same effect of the atonement. Both suppose the existence of sin and the wrath of God against it.

Adam Clarke’s comments on Isaiah 53:6 are soul-stirring:

[Jesus] was the subject on which all the rays collected on the focal point fell. These fiery rays, which should have fallen on all mankind, diverged from Divine justice to the east, west, north, and south, were deflected from them, and converged in him. So the Lord hath caused to meet in Him the punishment due to the iniquities of ALL.

Methodist theologian Richard Watson defined Christ’s atonement as “the satisfaction offered to divine justice by the death of Christ for the sins of mankind.”

Christ’s penal substitutionary atonement was celebrated by early Methodists through the hymns of Charles Wesley:

For what you have done His blood must atone:
The Father hath punished for you his dear son,
The Lord, in the day Of his anger, did lay Your sins on the Lamb, and he bore them away.

A Propitiation for the Whole World

It is thoroughly Wesleyan-Arminian to insist that Christ’s death was for all men. In 1 John 2:2, the universal scope and propitiatory nature of the atonement are indissolubly unit-

ed: “He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2).

Some have insisted, however, that if Christ paid the penalty for our sins and satisfied the wrath of God that was against us, then all men *shall* be saved (universalism). Would it not be double jeopardy for God to punish us for sins that have already been paid for? Is not penal substitution, in fact, more consistent with the Calvinist doctrine of limited atonement, which says that Christ only paid for the sins of the elect? By no means.

Christ’s penal substitutionary atonement is unlimited in its scope, but its full application

is conditioned on union with Christ through faith. After all, it is said of the elect that they “were by nature children of

wrath, like the rest of mankind” (Eph. 2:3); if the atonement was unconditionally applied in full, how could any elect person be under God’s wrath at any point after Christ’s death?

As Wesleyan theologian Fred Sanders convincingly argues, the distinction between redemption accomplished (the work of the Son) and redemption applied (the work of the Spirit) allows us to celebrate the universal note in Scripture without falling into universalism. “Christ lives out a perfect human life of obedience and submission to God,” writes Sanders, “subjects human nature in his own person to the righteous wrath of God, and is raised from the dead to live a renewed human life in indissoluble union with God” (emphasis added). Christ’s universal atonement for human nature (accomplished objectively for all) is then applied to human persons by the Spirit (applied subjectively to each).

Some of the Wesleyan Arminians who have denied penal substitution have done so (at least in part) in an attempt to distance themselves from Calvinism. Other atonement theories, however, cannot stand alone; they do not adequately answer the question of how the

wrath of God is satisfied. In his Wesleyan-Arminian *Systematic Theology*, Thomas Summers challenges John Miley’s formulation of the governmental view, which states that “real as the divine displeasure is against sin and against sinners, atonement is made, not in its personal satisfaction, but in fulfillment of the rectoral office of justice.” Summers responds:

It would be well if Dr. Miley could definitely tell us what is his conception of displeasure against sin and sinners in such a being as the unchanging and holy God. Is it appeased without a consideration? Is it a mere temporary affection, an ebullition of personal feeling, that, after the analogy of human wrath, will burn itself out and gradually die away if let alone?

God’s personal wrath must be satisfied, and only penal substitution supplies an adequate explanation. Penal substitution by itself cannot provide a complete account of how the cross works (that is, it needs to be integrated with other atonement theories); however, it provides a robust, biblical solution to the primary Wesleyan concern that all men need to be saved from the wrath of God.

Because of Christ’s penal substitutionary atonement, *all men can be saved*. We rejoice with Paul:

Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation (Rom. 5:911).

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Wesley Stories

Joseph Beaumont Wakeley

Peter Böhler is a name revered by Methodists throughout the world. His honored name is inseparably blended with the early history of John Wesley and his brother Charles.

Soon after John Wesley's return from America he became acquainted with this distinguished Moravian minister, from whom he learned the way of God more perfectly. Their acquaintance formed a new era in his spiritual history. Mr. Wesley was blending philosophy with the simple doctrines of the gospel. Böhler said to him, "My brother, my brother, that philosophy of yours must be purged away."

The 17th of February, 1737, Mr. Böhler accompanied John and Charles Wesley to Oxford, where their character and engagements soon provoked the mirth of the godless students. The reproach the young Wesleys had formerly endured was revived, and even when they walked through the squares of the college they were mocked and laughed at. Upon one of these occasions, Mr. Böhler perceived John Wesley was troubled at it chiefly for his sake, said with a smile, "My brother, it does not even stick to our clothes."

John Wesley at one time thought of desisting from preaching because he who had not faith himself could not preach to others, and he consulted Böhler. He told him not to relinquish his work. "But what can I preach?" said Mr. Wesley. The reply was, "Preach faith, till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach faith."

Peter Böhler thus describes the brothers: "I traveled with John and Charles Wesley from London to Oxford. The elder brother, John, is a good-natured man. He knew he did not believe on the Savior, and was willing to be taught. His brother is much distressed in his mind, but does not know he shall begin to be acquainted with the Savior. Our mode of believing is so easy to Englishmen they cannot reconcile themselves to it. If it was a little more artful they would much sooner find their way into it.... Of faith in Jesus they have no other idea than the generality of people have. They justify themselves; therefore they always take it for granted that they believe already, and would prove their faith by their works, and thus plague and torment themselves, so that they are at heart very miserable."

Böhler had a number relate their experience in the presence of John Wesley, and he was thunder-struck at these narrations. After listening to the testimonies, Wesley had a private interview with Böhler, and declared he was satisfied of what he had said of faith, and he would question no more about it; he was clearly convinced of the want of it. He inquired, "How can I help myself, and obtain such faith. I am a man who have not sinned so grossly as other people." Böhler replied that it was sin enough that he did not believe on the Savior. Böhler prayed for him, and called upon the bleeding name of the Savior to have compassion on this sinner. While he explained to him the way of faith Wesley wept "bitterly and heartily." His intercourse with Böhler was eminently instructive and encouraging, and by this means, to use his own language, on March 5, "I was clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we are saved."

Wakeley (1809-1875), a Methodist minister, compiled his "Anecdotes of the Wesleys" in 1870.

THE PECULIARITIES OF METHODISM

William Burt Pope

Dr. Pope is regarded as the greatest Methodist theologian. He lived from 1822-1903. Eldon Dale Dunlap wrote that Pope "ruled as a sun over the day," but with his passing "the voices of the night began to call to each other. These voices were advocating biblical higher criticism, rationalism, ecumenicism, evolution, and social liberalism.

On June 9, 1873 Dr. Pope addressed the Irish Wesleyan Methodist Conference and his address was published as a 22-page pamphlet. This address was regarded by Dunlap as a more insightful penetration into the distinctives of Wesleyan theology than anything previously known. It has not yet been basically surpassed.

Pope upheld the final authority of Scripture as the basis of doctrine. Therefore, he rejected the dual authority of the Roman Catholic Church. He also declared that Methodists were not Montanists. That was a reference to a second century charismatic sect which claimed extra-biblical revelation.

This lecture will be published in its entirety in The Arminian Magazine. In this first installment, Dr. Pope declared that Wesleyan theology is catholic, not sectarian. Pope contended that truth had never been lost because the Holy Spirit is the conservator of orthodoxy. Therefore, Methodism was not a restorationist movement. He presented Methodism as an instrument used by the Holy Spirit to teach historic Christianity. Methodism did not present new ideas, but was characterized by a new motivation. Their evangelical preaching centered on grace, the Holy Spirit, and sanctification.

While John Wesley declared that Methodism had been raised up "to spread scriptural holiness," the doctrine of holiness is not a free-standing doctrine. Unless it is supported by a biblical foundation which includes the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the doctrines of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the doctrines of mankind, sin, atonement, salvation, and the church — the doctrine of sanctification will be warped.

According to Dr. Pope, the greatest distinctive of Methodism was its emphasis on the administration of the finished work of Christ by the Holy Spirit. Thus, Christianity is both a doctrinal position and a personal experience emphasizing objectively what God has done for us and subjectively what the Holy Spirit does in us.

Mr. President,

It is needless that I should occupy time with formal greetings. Our mutual introductions may be supposed by this time to be already over, whether as it respects the Conference now assembled, or the congregation gathered with us. Suppressing, therefore, much of a mere personal nature that it would be very pleasant to say, I will proceed to discharge the more difficult duty which you, Sir, in harmony with my own inclination, have authoritatively

committed to me, and express a few thoughts which have been engrossing my mind on our common relations in Methodism, as based upon our common relation to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we regard as the real Founder of Methodism.

The term Methodism is one that has grown to be very large and suggestive. It means much more now than when it was the watchword of contempt poured upon those who were counted a body of religious fanatics. It has taken its place in the vocabulary of the Christian church. It has become the designation of one of the most widely diffused forms of modern Christianity; of one whose ramifications bid fair to pervade the world. Like the holy law of which it is the herald, it proclaims the glory of God through all the earth; there is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard. Its missionaries encounter almost every kind of heathenism; it is diffusing its leaven through almost every form of corrupt Christianity; it is silently impressing its influence, acknowledged or unacknowledged, upon all the uncorrupt churches of Christendom; whilst, as an independent system, it is laying its firm foundations in every soil. You have, Sir, given us a luminous summary of the numerical statistics of the several branches of Methodism, in relation to the other denominations of the Christian world. But you have, at the same time, forbidden us to dwell with complacency on this view of the subject. It is not on numbers, or ubiquity, or aggressive zeal, that we lay stress; these notes of commendation might be pleaded by religious bodies that have no other ground of rejoicing. We do well to consider, on such an occasion as this, the character of those peculiarities which may be fairly regarded as the secret of our extension and influence throughout the world. To some of them I propose to address myself this evening.

It will not be thought presumptuous on my part if I speak on this subject as a representative of the theology of Methodism. That theology is the living energy of the entire community; not an after-thought, as many seem to sup-

pose, engrafted on a system that owed its existence only to religious emotion. Its doctrine is, and always has been, compact, systematic, and complete; embracing the Catholic verities of the Christian faith, but exhibiting in certain departments a stamp that marks it as unique among the confessions of Christendom. Its ministers and people, in England and Ireland and everywhere, account their theology the richest heritage of their traditions, and know well how to defend it, even as it is their glory to preach it. Not that Methodism has received a new dispensation of the Christian faith. We are not modern Montanists, deeming ourselves the peculiar instruments of the Holy Ghost, who has seen fit to impart to us a new Pentecostal manifestation of truth. We have not founded any Catholic and Apostolic Church, charged with the mission of reviving doctrines and usages lost through long intervening ages. We do not believe that any cardinal doctrines have ever been lost; and as to the miraculous gifts and effusions of the Holy Ghost which glorified the first days, we believe that, like the sheet which Peter saw, they served their purpose for a season, and were taken up again into heaven. We do not claim to have added a solitary tenet to the Christian confession; or to have revived one practice which would otherwise have been forgotten. We claim only to be among those who firmly and tenaciously hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints, giving special prominence to some aspects of it which have been too much hidden from the eyes of men. No doubt these special points are of great importance, and in a certain sense stamp a character upon our doctrine. But we do not regard these points as constituting our theological prerogative; we think that we are only the instruments used by the Holy Spirit to teach our brethren around us what their own principles should dispose them to accept. Meanwhile, it is our rejoicing that, as to the whole compass of the Christian faith, we are one with the general confession of evangelical Christendom.

Before referring to any particular doctrine, it is right that I should mention the fidelity our community has exhibited towards the Scriptures of Revelation. Speaking broadly, there is nothing here that is peculiar to us. The formularies of other churches are faithful on this point; and we are peculiar, if at all, simply in this, that by the grace of God we are, as a Christian body, faithful to our own confessions. We note with sorrow the growth of tendencies in the churches around us which insidiously, but surely, sap the foundations of the Word of God. There are some who go far towards the Roman error, which mars a sound definition of inspiration by enlarging the Bible beyond the Spirit's limits, and by giving a concurrent endowment of inspiration to the living church, represented by one man; thus introducing two voices, one of which may neutralize, contradict, and violate the other. Others, in the opposite direction, are taking away the authority of Scripture, by exalting very highly a certain abstraction of the Divine voice in the Bible, but leaving it utterly uncertain where to find it. We may regard it as one of our peculiarities, that throughout our whole communion—I speak now for ourselves in this United Kingdom—and throughout the thousands of our ministry, there is one unanimous and unhesitating declaration of confidence in the supreme authority of the Scriptures as the standard of faith, the directory of morals, and the charter of Christian privilege and hope. Whilst many in all communities are surrendering principle after principle, making concession after concession, until there seems to be nothing left to fight for, we appear to have the peculiarity of requiring all who guard and teach the Christian doctrine among us to utter on this subject an unfaltering confession. We are not glad to have to number this among our differences.

Referring now to those specific doctrinal points which are my subject, I have first to indicate that there is a wide round of doctrine in which we have no peculiarities; holding as we do the confessions of the church, as held in British Christendom. At the same time, there

are slight shades of difference almost everywhere, in what may be called Redemptional Theology. These are the result of the fact that Methodism is *sui generis* and unique. This is not the time for dwelling on the origin of this system; that would be another topic; I shall adhere to my one subject. Suffice that such as it is in our hands to defend and propagate, it is itself and no other. It is not bound to any articles or confessions, though generally faithful to those of the church out of which it sprang. It is Arminian in general, though not limited by those superficial views in which Arminianism has receded too far from its antagonist. It is opposed to Calvinism in many respects, though grateful to that system for some elements of doctrine, for which Christianity is much indebted to it. In short, it allows great latitude everywhere, save in those doctrines which have been by all men held fundamental.

It is in the mediatorial work of our Lord and Savior that we have the fundamental subject of Christian theology. Here we maintain the doctrine that is common to all evangelical confessions, so far as concerns the propitiation for human sin in the vicarious sacrifice of the incarnate Son of God. The definitions on this subject that are given in the best formularies we

also hold. But, as we are dwelling upon our peculiarities, we may find some important shades of distinction here. For instance, marking the relations of the systems around us, there are two from which we widely differ. The one is that of those who hold the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, but limit it in its sovereign and sole efficacy to the original sin of the race, washed away in baptism through the application of the Savior's merits. For all subsequent transgressions, man's own satisfaction must be added to the Savior's merit. Moreover, the one eternal offering is continued on altars which man has raised and not God; in a tabernacle which God has not pitched but man. On the other side, there is the error of those who limit the great propitiation in another manner. They make the oblation of Christ an offering in the stead of the individual objects of electing love, in whose place the Redeemer stands, satisfying every demand of justice and law from them alone, and as individuals. In opposition to these, we maintain that the Savior assumed the place of mankind; that it was the sin of the race laid upon Him that He voluntarily bore in His own body to the cross; and that His death was the reconciliation of the world as such to God.

-to be continued

A BLOW TO THE ROOT: THE NECESSARY CONNECTION BETWEEN INERRANCY AND ENTIRE SANCTIFICATION IN RECENT WESLEYAN THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION *Part 3*

William Ury

1975-1985: The arrival of the “minimalist” school

In 1973 Paul Bassett produced the first article in the *WTJ* to use the term “conservative Wesleyan theology” in a distinctly pejorative sense. He defined that group by the emphasis on instantaneous sanctification. Thus, began of

a well-rehearsed litany of criticism of Wesleyans who succumbed, according to their critics, to fundamentalistic methodology. They were “trapped” and “saddled” with non-Wesleyan views on Scripture and Christology. They were accused of subordinating the Eternal Word to the written Word in this reading. Intriguingly, not one specific source was mentioned in the

entire article. What freedom that allows! There was not one article in the *WTJ* preceding this from the “conservatives” which discounted the dynamic of the Holy Spirit in affirming the truth of the Word in the actual experience of any who would believe in sanctifying grace. All they do is point to Jesus. The only difference was the conservatives put scriptural authority before experience and the “liberal Wesleyan theology” advocated a neo-orthodox authority of the Scripture based on experience.

Bassett, and those who followed his lead, admitted that Wesley does sound as if he believed the authority of Scripture was imposed upon the Bible instead of based dynamically upon experience. But they softened Wesley’s statements by contrasting them to his doctrine of the Spirit and prevenient grace which precedes any latent inerrantist feel in Wesley, according to Bassett. Apparently, to believe in the inerrancy of the original manuscripts is to buy into the entire theological project of other sectors of Protestantism. The conservatives are just too dense to see it. They need to be enlightened.

Biblical authority became the most volatile in American evangelical circles. The contention of this period was heightened by *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell. The resultant need for a relatively consensual statement in the face of almost a total capitulation to higher criticism was the statement produced on inerrancy by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in 1978.

Rob Staples sounded condescending in his attempts to show how methodologically Wesleyan thought can critically incorporate Tillich’s correlation and Whitehead’s process, if those confounded inerrantists would get their heads out of the sand and break free from the “bloodletting.”

As one looks at the interchange within Wesleyan circles regarding inerrancy, it is evident that the maximalists were simply affirming what was the most cogent and inclusive concept at the time. What was being offered

in its place was not an acceptable doctrine of Scripture and they knew what that would mean for the major doctrine of their tradition. A sobering inquiry would be to ask where the holiness movement would be today without those initial “fundamentalistic” barriers erected by people who paid a dear price for their commitments.

The discernible logic of the minimalist school is that any viewpoint that is close to an inerrant Scripture is automatically viewed with suspicion because of its fundamentalistic leanings. The bifurcation between the words of the text and the Holy Spirit was made, they propose, during the early twentieth century battle against the modernists. The argument followed that the shift to Reformed categories placed the emphasis on the text and not the evidence of Spirit-enabled experience in the heart of the believer. Since that debate largely surrounded Calvinistic scholars the term “inerrancy” became then the lightning rod for the debate. Wesleyans, we are told, never would have agreed with that scholastically narrowed view of the text which is too closely tied to an apologetic that radically denies the more important “inner testimony of the Holy Spirit.”

While the maximalists readily agree with the importance of experience that is totally informed by the Holy Spirit, they are equally impressed to affirm the corresponding objective nature of revelation. Eldon Fuhrman quoted Cell’s comment that Wesley emphasized “a theocentric doctrine of Christian experience.” He referred to Umphrey Lee’s interpretation that Wesley’s experiential theology was “always subject to the regulative control of the Bible.” So, Fuhrman concluded that for Wesleyans truth is both “propositional and personal.” However, the critics maintained the claim that the moral guidelines of Scripture on holiness are more important.

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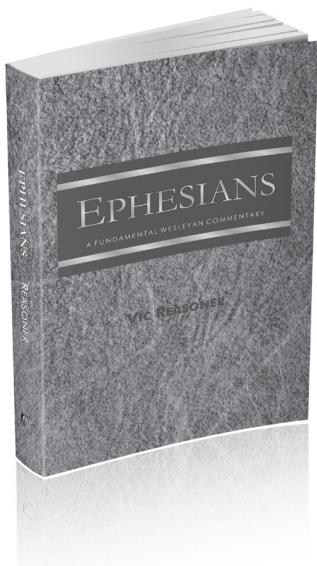
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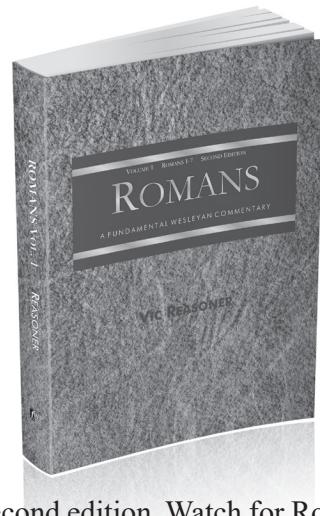


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