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MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

Vic Reasoner

The Methodist Church was the last of the major denominations to be transplanted to the new world, arriving about 175 years late. Apparently Wesley was unaware of the grass-roots Methodism growing in America until he received an appeal for help in 1768. But the total headcount in 1769 was only 1160 members.

Wesley sent eight missionaries, but when the war broke out they all returned home, except for Francis Asbury. Methodism lost ten years of momentum until after the war. It was at the Christmas Conference of 1784 that the Methodists were officially organized as a church.

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But in the fifteen-year period from 1785–1790 Methodism grew from 18,000 to 57,631. By 1805 they were almost 120,000 strong. During this same period the American population increased 75%, while Methodism increased 5500%. When Asbury died in 1816, every third church member in America was a Methodist, and the Methodist Episcopal Church was the largest religious body in the nation.

Methodism flourished because it was organized, because it kept moving, and because it was basically a lay movement. The genius of its growth was its mobility. The circuit riders were able to keep pace with the westward expansion of our nation. Yet most of these circuit riders rode for twelve years or less. Nearly half died before they reached 30. In fact, the average life expectancy of a circuit rider was age 33. Their exposure to the elements gave rise to the common expression, "the weather is so bad nothing is out today but crows and Methodist preachers."

These riders were driven by their zeal to establish God's kingdom on earth. Francis Asbury wrote in 1796, "The time certainly is drawing near when universal peace shall bless the earth: when distracted Europe, superstitious Asia, blind Africa, and America shall more abundantly see the salvation of our God." In 1799 he wrote, "The coming of Christ is near, even at the door, when he will establish his kingdom. He is now sweeping the earth, to plant it with righteousness and true holiness." After forty-five years of labor, Asbury wrote in 1815, "We will not give up the cause — we will not abandon the world to infidels."

Asbury epitomized the circuit rider. In 1924 a statue depicting Asbury on his horse was dedicated by Calvin Coolidge and the president declared, "He is entitled to rank as one of the builders of our nation."

At its zenith, Methodism was the fastest growing denomination in America. It was the year 1881, when Robert Ingersoll, a famous agnostic, claimed that the church was dying. This was picked up and carried by newspapers all across America. Charles McCabe, secretary for the Methodist Extension Society, wired Ingersoll, "Dear Robert: All hail the power of Jesus' name. We are building more than one Methodist church for every day in the year and propose to make it two a day."

Since 1972 the UMC has been unwilling to make a clear biblical statement of sexual morality.

Yet since 1965 they have not reported an increase in membership, despite a merger in 1968. They are now the fastest declining church, having lost over 4.5 million or one-third of their membership since 1965. Since 1972 the UMC has been unwilling to make a clear biblical statement on sexual morality. Toward the end of his life Wesley declared,

> I am not afraid that the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe of America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out.

As a movement in Great Britain, Methodism struggled with the lawlessness of the Moravians, the fatalism of Calvinism, the deadness of Anglicanism, and the fanaticism of mysticism. The Methodist revival of the eighteenth century was based on the dedication and zeal of the Methodist circuit riders, unordained laymen, who were motivated to establish the kingdom of Christ in the new world.

But it was rendered impotent through its higher education, which first separated from the church and then influenced future generations of clergy to adopt secular philosophy and depart from Methodist doctrine. A 1967 survey found 60% of Methodist clergy disbelieving the virgin birth and 50% disbelieving the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fifty years later, institutional Methodism has been rent by the anarchy of pagans and sodomites who have placed their own agenda above that of Methodist discipline and Wesley's priority of holy living.

America needs for Methodism to become great again. In order for Methodism to become great again, it must return to its original dynamic. Wesley's stated purpose for Methodism was to "reform the nation, particularly the Church; and to spread scriptural holiness over the land."

Classic Methodism, as a revival movement, embraced

- The full inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of Scripture.
- The fall and sinfulness of man.
- The universal atonement of Christ.
- The decree of salvation to all who believe on Christ and who persevere in faith and obedience.
- Prevenient grace which enables us to obey the commands of the gospel.
- The resistability of divine grace.
- Justification by faith alone.
- Regeneration which produces victory over sin through the indwelling Spirit of God.
- The direct assurance of the Spirit to and with our spirits that we are accepted by God. This is the birthright of every believer. Wesley preached, "Let none rest in any supposed fruit of the Spirit without the witness…. This is the privilege of all the children of God and without this we can never be assured that we are his children."
- The possibility for those who are truly regenerate to fall from grace if they do not persevere in faith.

- The polar opposite possibility of Christian perfection as a maturity in Christ and a conformity to the character of Christ. Wesley declared that "this doctrine is the grand depositum which God has lodged with the people called Methodists; and for the sake of propagating this chiefly He appeared to raise us up."
- The expansion and triumph of God's kingdom through the preaching of the gospel and revival.

Yet Methodism was always more than doctrine. Methodism is a disciplined lifestyle. In a conversation with Robert Miller in 1783, Wesley was asked what must be done to keep Methodism alive when he was dead: to which he immediately answered,

> The Methodists must take heed to their doctrine, their experience, their practice, and their discipline. If they attend to their doctrines only, they will make the people antinomians; if to the experimental part of religion only, they will make them enthusiasts; if to the practical part only, they will make them Pharisees; and if they do not attend to their discipline, they will be like persons who bestow much pains in cultivating their garden, and put no fence round it, to save it from the wild boar of the forest.

The greatness of Methodism was its rediscovery of "true, old Christianity," advanced by the best methods available, be it a horse, an open field in which to preach, or internet technology and mass media. Methodism was driven by a passion to advance God's kingdom on earth, accompanied by the best system for discipleship and accountability. The Methodist Society was organized into classes in order to create accountability and effect behavioral change through the power of being connected.

If institutional Methodism is too timid to proclaim the Methodist message any longer, may God raise up a new movement, regardless of the moniker, which will declare the whole gospel to the whole world. This alone will make America great again and help us realize Wesley's vision of a Christian world.

LOW EXPECTATIONS OF CONVERSION

Mark Horton

A recent article circulated on Facebook and attributed to an author named Preston Sprinkle was entitled: "FBombs and Bikinis: What It Really Means to Be a 'Christian.'" It highlights a growing problem in American Christianity. In the article, Sprinkle was saying that new Christians might still use bad language and have a residual potty mouth. He advocated, "Bad language may take years to weed out." The bikini reference was an allusion to a youth pastor that allowed mixed bathing at youth events. These types of behavior were defended because only God can see the heart. Adequate grace in our lives would keep us from getting hung up on such small stuff. He appealed to the disciples before Pentecost as an example of people God used and termed them "thugs" and "criminals."

This kind of thinking seems most prevalent in church history when renewal is needed most. Preston Sprinkle is merely verbalizing a growing problem in the American church. As Christianity makes less and less difference in a person's life, how do we explain the lack of definitive change? Several approaches are popular. Sprinkle's message is that change takes time, so we must be patient and wait as God slowly changes people from sinners to saints. Another approach is that we are all sinners even after we are saved, so residual sin in one's life is proof that we are sinners still. Only Heaven will cure us. We must accept that the Scriptures at times present an ideal that few if any will ever achieve in this world.

After thirty years of pastoring and attempting to take the Scriptures seriously I have had

my questions. I still do. In my first church I contemplated the task of making disciples as Jesus commanded. How would I know when I have one made? If the promise of God under the new covenant is a new heart that has his law written upon it, how long does this take? If we now have the power of his Spirit within us to teach and enable us to live as Jesus did, when does this occur? The apostle John's expectations seem very high when he states, "as Jesus was in the world so are we." Is this result only for the mature believer, or is it for the beginner also? Where are the churches that expect and are producing believers that actually live like Jesus? Most I know are lamenting that there is little difference between our disciples and the world. Bill Hybels acknowledged this in his own church at Willow Creek after thirty years of ministry. A survey of his people revealed a shallowness that alarmed him. His candidness and honesty about this is to be much respected. But Hybels isn't the only one with this problem.

A genuine Christian conversion produces three main changes.

I began to read the literature of church revivals. I especially read a great deal of the early Methodists and their literature. John Wesley learned from personal experience that only certain things could produce peace in the heart and power over sin. Once he found them in his own life, he taught them and expected them of his converts. His converts discovered that God was no respecter of persons. What Wesley experienced, they did too. These high but biblical expectations were taught and honored for nearly two generations among the Methodists and produced a revival that lasted nearly eighty years. Their methods were different than ours but so were their results.

Wesley taught three main changes produced by a genuine Christian conversion:

1. Peace with God as a result of the knowledge that their sins were forgiven.

2. Power over sin even in the earliest stages of conversion. The Spirit of God broke the habits and chains of sin and enabled the weak will of people to be strong to do good and resist evil.

3. The witness of the Spirit. Confidence and assurance as to where one stood with God.

Less than this could not be labeled Christian. It is true using his models of the natural man, the servant and the son of God he acknowledged progression in grace prior to conversion and in his teaching of Christian Perfection he acknowledged growth after it as well. But it was clear to me in reading his teaching and journals that what he called a Christian and what we Americans call Christians are miles apart.

Just last year I picked up another book from an author who had lived a generation before John Wesley. The book is entitled *A Treatise on Conversion* and was authored by Richard Baxter, a Puritan. I found amazing consistency between Baxter and Wesley, though the two men came from different schools of theological belief. Baxter's marks of a Christian were amazingly high, yet consistently biblical.

I will highlight some of his beliefs later in the next article. I suspect we are expecting too little of our generation and getting what we expect. Why we expect what we do is probably an issue of both our personal faith in what God says and the models we use as we go about our work. Let me give you just a brief overview of the more popular models I have been exposed to in my lifetime.

The Romans Road to Salvation. This model basically walked a person through a formula derived from the book of Romans and if the person was in agreement with it, we termed them "saved." All have sinned (3:23). While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (5:8). If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved (10:9).

The ABC's of salvation. I first heard of this one at a John Maxwell leadership seminar. I learned a lot of good things from John, but this model has some real issues. 1. Admit you are a sinner. 2. Believe Christ died for your sins. 3. Confess him as your Savior. 4. You are a Christian.

The Savior vs Lordship approach. John MacArthur took this one on in *The Gospel According to Jesus* (1988). He was in disagreement with it and

so am I. Its basic premise is that when a person gets saved they take Christ as their Savior and at a later stage acknowledge and accept him as Lord of their life. In this paradigm we are evangelized when we accept Christ as Savior and discipled when we accept him as Lord. There is no biblical precedent for this. We cannot divide the person of Christ. When we accept him we take him as both Savior and Lord. I take him in all his offices. He is my Prophet, my Priest, and my King or there is no deal.

Come Forward for Prayer. In this model the seeker is encouraged to come to a place and meet with an elder of the church for prayer. This model usually was used around an altar as the meeting place between the seeker and God. After a person came forward and prayed, they were later asked to join the church and be baptized and told they are saved.

Baptismal Regeneration. This is popular among Christian Churches, particular megachurches, and is found among Disciples of Christ as well. It is taught and assumed that the act of baptism saves a person. Immediately after baptism discipleship occurs through Bible study. Usually this study is just a transmission of facts with little or no accountability or followup in most churches.

The Seeker Sensitive approach. This paradigm attempts to design church around the felt needs and desires of the unchurched. The music, message, and programs are designed to please the unchurched "Harry" or "Sally" on the street. My perception of this is that the goal seems to be to make people comfortable, so we soften our message, lower our expectations, and seek to do away with guilt. But can we preach a message that calls for people to take up a cross and be crucified with Christ and make them comfortable? Can I design a service around a person with the natural mind that hates God and get a service God will honor?

These approaches have been widespread in America for more than fifty years, so that we are now seeing a generation of leaders who have been taught by the church to equate Christianity with the pursuit of one or more of these models. I do acknowledge that it is possible for a person to be saved in any of these models. But I would assert it is more the result of the heart of the seeker than the rightness of our models.

The problem with most of this stuff is that the church is not doing a good job reproducing Christ-followers who live out the Scriptures. Many Christians do not live or pursue a holy life, forgive those who hurt them, or seek the will of God as the best possible way to live their life. If foul language takes years to clean up, what about deep-seated addictions or the effects of dabbling in the occult? Just a cursory look over the church landscape today tells us we have real problems.

Wesley Stories

Joseph D. McPherson

The following account from Mr. Wesley's Journal is dated March 17, 1746. It highlights the kind of inconveniences and discomforts Mr. Wesley endured while riding some 250,000 miles on horseback throughout his long life of ministry. More importantly, this incident shares a view of the simple trust Mr. Wesley had in the God who had thrust him out into so great a work.

I took my leave of Newcastle, and set out with Mr. Downes and Mr. Shepherd. But when we came to Smeaton, Mr. Downes was so ill, that he could go no further. When Mr. Shepherd and I left Smeaton, my horse was so exceeding lame that I was afraid I must have lain by too. We could not discern what it was that was amiss, and yet he would scarce set his foot to the ground. By riding thus seven miles, I was thoroughly tired, and my head ached more than it had done for some months. (What I here aver is the naked fact; let every man account for it as he sees good.) I then thought, "Cannot God heal either man or beast, by any means, or without any?" Immediately my weariness and headache ceased, and my horse's lameness in the same instant. Nor did he halt any more either that day or the next. A very odd accident this also!

THE LAW AND GOSPEL AS EXPLAINED BY JOHN WESLEY

Edited by *Joseph D. McPherson*

Mr. Wesley wrote thirteen discourses "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount." By these he has greatly expanded understanding of our Lord's teachings. In the opening pages of Sermon 25, Wesley provides suitable explanation of the relationship the moral law has with the gospel of this New Testament dispensation. In the following we wish to share Wesley's insight by way of a simulated interview. Questions will be asked of Mr. Wesley as though he were present with us. His answers will then follow as found in this sermon.

Question: When Jesus says: "Think not I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill," how are we to understand our Lord's view of the ceremonial law? Was it not a part of his mission and intention to annul or abolish this part of the law?

Wesley: *The ritual or ceremonial law delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve, and utterly abolish. To this bear all the apostles witness: not only Barnabas and Paul, who vehemently withstood those who taught that Christians "ought to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5); not only St. Peter, who termed the insisting on this, on the observance of the ritual law, as "tempting God, and putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers, (saith he) nor we, were able to bear;" but "all the apostles, elders, and brethren, being assembled with one accord" (v 22), declared, that to command them to keep this law, was to "subvert their souls;" and that "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to them, to lay no such burden upon them." This "handwriting of ordinances our Lord did blot out, take away, and nail to his cross" (v 28).*

Question: What part of the law did he not take away? What law is in continuance which we are all obliged to observe?

Wesley: *The moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, he did not take away. It was not the design of his coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which "stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven." The moral stands on an entirely different foundation from the ceremonial or ritual law, which was only designed for a temporary restraint upon a disobedient and stiffnecked people; whereas this was from the beginning of the world, being "written not on tables of stone," but on the hearts of all the children of men when they came out of the hands of the Creator. And however the letters once wrote by the finger of God are now in a great measure defaced by sin, yet can they not wholly be blotted out, while we have any consciousness of good and evil. Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.*

Question: When Jesus assures us that he came "not to destroy, but to fulfill," how are we to understand the meaning of his fulfilling the law?

Wesley: *Some have conceived our Lord to mean, I am come to fulfill this by my entire and perfect obedience to it. And it cannot be doubted but he did, in this sense, fulfill every part of it. But this does not appear to be what he intends here, being foreign to the scope of his present discourse. Without question, his meaning in this place is (consistently with all that goes before and follows after): I am come to establish it in its fullness, in spite of all the glosses of men: I am come to place*

in a full and clear view whatsoever was dark or obscure therein; I am come to declare the true and full import of every part of it; to show the length and breadth, the entire extent of every commandment contained therein, and the height and depth, the inconceivable purity and spirituality of it in all its branches.

And this our Lord has abundantly performed in the preceding and subsequent parts of the discourse before us, in which he has not introduced a new religion into the world, but the same which was from the beginning: a religion the substance of which is, without question, "as old as the creation," being coeval with man, and having proceeded from God at the very time when "man became a living soul." (The substance, I say; for some circumstances of it now relate to man as a fallen creature); a religion witnessed to both by the law and by the prophets in all succeeding generations. Yet was it never so fully explained, nor so thoroughly understood till the great Author of it himself condescended to give mankind this authentic comment on all the essential branches of it; at the same time declaring it should never be changed, but remain in force to the end of the world.

Question: Can it be supposed that some parts of the moral law which include the Ten Commandments might reasonably be altered, modified, or omitted to make suitable adjustment to our enlightened time and dispensation?

Wesley: *"For verily I say unto you" (a solemn preface, which denotes both the importance and certainty of what is spoken), "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled."*

"One Jot" — it is literally, not one iota, *not the most inconsiderable vowel; "or one tittle," one corner, or point of a consonant. It is a proverbial expression, which signifies that no one commandment contained in the moral law, nor the least part of any one, however inconsiderable it might seem, should ever be disannulled.*

"Shall in no wise pass from the law." The double negative, here used, strengthens the sense, so as to admit of no contradiction: And the word parel- the (shall pass), *it may be observed, is not barely* future, *declaring what* will *be; but has likewise the force of an* imperative, *ordering what* shall *be. It is a word of authority, expressing the sovereign will and power of him that spake, of him whose word is the law of heaven and earth, and stands fast for ever and ever.*

Question: If the law has been fulfilled by Christ, should we not assume that it is to pass in order that the gospel be established in its place?

Wesley: "*One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass till heaven and earth pass;" or as it is expressed immediately after, "till all" (or rather* all things) *"be fulfilled," till the consummation of all things. Here is therefore no room for that poor evasion, (with which some have delighted themselves greatly) that "no part of the law was to pass away till* all the law *was fulfilled; but it has been fulfilled by Christ, and therefore now must pass, for the gospel to be established." Not so; the word "all" does not mean all the law, but all things in the universe; as neither has the term "fulfilled" any reference to the law, but to all things in heaven and earth.*

From all this we may learn that there is no contrariety at all between the law and the gospel; that there is no need for the law to pass away in order to the establishing the gospel. Indeed neither of them supersedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel. If they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law: if as promises, of the gospel. Thus, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law; when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel — the gospel being no other than the commands of the law proposed by way of promise. Accordingly, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises.

THE PEDIGREE OF YELLOW DOG SANCTIFICATION

Vic Reasoner

In the third century, Antony became the leader of "the greatest organized quest for perfection in history." This movement became monasticism and it emphasized renunciation of the world. Drawing from the asceticism of the pagan Stoic and Cynic philosophers, monasticism emphasized chastity, temperance, detachment, resignation, and martyrdom. Ascetic spirituality used the kenosis passage of Philippians 2:7 as a model for self denial. Over time this emptying of one's self was codified into celibacy, poverty, and obedience to the pope.

But historic monasticism cannot be dismissed by Protestants, since it predated the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodoxy. Error has a way of being recycled and adapted. Within the modern holiness movement another strain of monasticism developed.

First, however, was the rise of Methodism in the 18th century. John Wesley believed that God had raised up the Methodists to spread scriptural holiness across the land. Never before within Protestantism had holy living been made the central doctrine.

Wesley was keenly aware of trends and movements across church history. Without attempting to describe Wesley's full-blown theology of Christian perfection, his emphasis was both biblical and reasonable. Wesley avoided fanaticism and emphasized moderation. His doctrine of perfection never implied Plato's absolute perfection. Rather it was Aristotle's utilitarian perfection which held that an object is perfect when it performs the function for which it was created. In our case, it is a perfection of love. We are to love God with our total being and our neighbor as ourselves. God looks at our motive, not our performance. When we act out of love, he imputes perfection to those actions. For Wesley, a Stoic and a Christian were very different.

Salvation from beginning to end is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit

For the purposes of this analysis, it needs to be emphasized that Wesley taught salvation from beginning to end was the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. Wesleyan theology deals with preliminary grace, justifying grace, and perfecting grace — but it is all grace. We cannot make ourselves holy through our works. Deliverance from sin was provided through the atonement of Christ and is to be received by faith. And Wesley argued that if our complete sanctification is by faith, we should expect it every moment. He preached, "Believe that he is not only able, but willing to do it now! Not when you come to die; not at any distant time; not tomorrow, but today. He will then enable you to believe, it is done, according to his word."

Wesley recognized that many people go for years before they get serious about their walk with God, but if our sanctification is ever entire, it must be received by a simple act of faith in the cleansing of the blood of Christ. Paul asks the Galatian church, "Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?" (Gal. 3:3). Obedience to God's commandments is the result of salvation, but it can never be the condition for salvation.

I once heard a man preach three steps to entire sanctification. He taught that we must rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in everything. Of course, those are the results of being made perfect in love but not the requirements.

If all our thoughts and all our actions are tainted by sin, then it is absurd to teach that we can sanctify ourselves through self denial. Where is the cross? Why does Scripture teach that the blood cleanses, if we can clean up our act through self discipline? The ugly truth, confirmed by history, is that those who have attempted to make themselves holy have often become proud of their superior state. Thomas Merton wrote that a man "can spend forty or fifty or sixty years in

the monastery and still have a bad temper." Protestants are not exempt from this tendency, even if they never entered a monastery. The dynamics are the same whether the subject is Roman Catholic or Protestant.

This brings us to our case study within the Bible Missionary Church. The American holiness movement claimed John Wesley as their theological father, but substituted the theology of Charles Finney and Phoebe Palmer. This resulted in an imbalance which emphasized a second blessing experience above the ethical priority of living a holy life. Wesleyan theology taught initial, entire, progressive, and final sanctification. The holiness movement conflated this to a "second blessing" experience which became the ticket to heaven.

The error of radical holiness teaching is its appropriation of Gnosticism.

The holiness movement morphed into a spectrum of emphases. Phoebe Palmer's name-it-and-claim-it sanctification replaced faith with presumption. But at the far right the radical holiness movement replaced faith with works. Notice Wesley's priority of reasonableness has now been replaced by radical extremism. A kind of one-upmanship has developed in which each preacher is more spiritual than the previous one by pushing self denial and consecration to logical absurdities.

In his classic book, *Your God Is Too Small* (1952), J. B. Phillips wrote, "If they were completely honest, many people would have to admit that God is to them an almost entirely negative force in their lives." But he continued, "There must be compensations in the worship of such a god." He identifies one compensation as "the comforting idea of being 'something special.'"

> Worshippers of the negative god often comfort themselves by feeling that what is good enough for "the world" is not good enough for them: the chosen, the unique. Even though this means a life denuded of the beauties of art, of normal pleasures and recreation, a life cramped in all normal means of expression—that is a small price to pay for being the separate, the unique.

I am relying on the accounts of those who at the box factory in Nampa, Idaho in 1955 where the Bible Missionary Church began. They say it was a genuine move of God. I have no reason to doubt their testimony. Everyone within this denomination did not agree on every issue, but over time an emphasis on "death route holiness" developed. "Death route holiness" emphasized the necessity to die to the world and to the flesh in order to become holy. Historically, theologians of various stripes have taught mortification, but this "death route" theology is an aberration.

Radical holiness preachers were sometimes described as "bone scrapers." They zeroed in on "carnality." In doing so they presented "carnality" as a substance which had to be eradicated. Ironically, the Bible never uses the term "carnality." The concept comes from Gnostic or dualistic philosophy which teaches that which is physical is evil. Nor does Scripture describe Christians as "carnal" in an unqualified sense. In fact Romans 8:8 declares that those who are carnal cannot please God. Yet the following verse explains that the regenerate are no longer in the flesh or carnal, but in the Spirit. And verse 5 says that those who are saved please God because they have set their mind on that which the Spirit desires.

Romans 8:13 teaches that these believers are to constantly put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit. This is a present-tense command. It is to become a way of life for believers to kill temptation and sinful desires. This is the equivalent of Galatians 5:16, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh."

But this mortification must be done through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is not a condition which must be met in order to receive the Holy Spirit. Rather, it is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within the Christian.

The "death route," however, required a seeker to empty himself of sin in order to receive the Holy Spirit. This self renunciation resulted in a denial of our personality. God never requires us to die to self. We do, however, need deliverance from self-centeredness.

Wesley taught that love of self was not a sin, but an indisputable duty. Mildred Wynkoop explained, "The personality is the self. Remove the self and no personality remains."

In Eastern mysticism, however, pantheism teaches a perfection which results in the loss of self identity. William Burt Pope, generally regarded as the prince of Wesleyan theologians, objected to this Hindi perfection which seeks nirvana in which we are absorbed into the divine. This pagan philosophy, however, was baptized into Christianity through the teaching of theosis or deification.

In contrast, biblical perfection teaches that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. When Isaiah had a revelation of God, it did not result in the loss of his ego. Instead, Isaiah was conscious that he was unclean. God purged his sin but did not destroy his self identity.

Thus, we must distinguish between self and sin. It is not a sin to be human. This fundamental error of Gnosticism meant that Jesus Christ could not actually become fully human. But he was through the incarnation, and John says anyone who denies the humanity of Christ is antichrist. The error of radical holiness teaching was their appropriation of this historical heresy, without knowing the history of heresy.

We must also distinguish between consecration and sanctification. There are no unsurrendered Christians. However, in Romans 12:12 Paul calls upon Christians to make a deeper surrender. But this appeal to yield to the progressive realization of God's purpose for us is based upon reason. Paul said it is the logical thing to do. It is logical because God is good and can be trusted. But it becomes a struggle when God is perceived as stern and hard to please.

God does not bypass our minds and require some radical self effacement. Our submission does not make us holy. We are not transformed by self denial. The result of transformation is Christ-likeness, and that transformation is the work of the Holy Spirit. The picture of a mature, Christ-like believer is captured in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

But the most influential Bible Missionary evangelist, H. B. Huffman, popularized the doctrine of dying like an old "yeller" dog as the way to entire sanctification. The implication is that if an old, mangy, yeller dog can crawl under the front porch and die unnoticed and unappreciated, so we must also die to relationships, reputation, and possessions.

But we are not dogs! We are created in the image and likeness of God. Christian perfection is better understood as healing and wholeness, rather than brokenness and self effacement. It is salvation to the uttermost based upon the possibilities of grace. It is abundant life, not emotional suicide. It is unbroken fellowship with God, not dysfunctional bondage. Sanctification is not a demeaning experience, it is a restorative process.

The result of this dog theology, however, is that it allows those who have "paid the price" and "died like an old yeller dog" to treat their fellow man like dogs. Stories circulate about their board meetings, which were reported to be knock-down-drag-out confrontations — worse than a barroom brawl.

In my attempt to grasp this emphasis, I contacted a man of God who served Jesus as a pastor within the context of the Bible Missionary Church. Several years ago we talked for an hour as he described their doctrine of a "Christ-less holiness." Recently, I expressed my concerns about this emphasis and he replied,

> It sounds to me like you are on to that yellow-dog-business. This is what I finally came to. Holiness (so called) that is not Christ-centered is nothing more nor less than religious humanism. Some (sad to say) teach making restitutions as a way to undo sin rather than trusting Jesus to forgive sins. They teach salvation by keeping the law with the power of Pentecost. These are the same ones that have replaced John 3:16 with 1 John 1:7. Nobody ever got saved by walking in the light; nobody ever got sanctified by walking in the light; Jesus does it by grace (unmerited) through faith.

to be continued

REVIEWS

A MONSTROUS INVERSION: Review of *Nazarenes Exploring Evolution,* Part Four

It's truly amazing that in nearly 400 pages of "exploring evolution," nary a peep is heard from the 60+ authors of evolution's corrosive influence on theology. Instead, evolution with it's extinctions and our common ancestry with brutes "honors" God. Not one mention is made of any weaknesses in current evolutionary thought. Not a single mention is made of all the mistakes and retractions made in the last century in the name of evolutionary dogma. And unless I overlooked something in my few sweeps through the volume, I don't recall any reference to actual scientific evidence for the neoDarwinian synthesis; no paradigm confirming data that YEC and Intelligent Design are allegedly denying.

NEE sets out to give COTN a rationale for embracing evolutionary creationism, assuring the reader that matters of faith and practice are unscathed, and biblical authority is not impacted. But sifting through the mountain of mere assertions, this reviewer was struck by the truly low view of Scripture that some (not all) NEE authors seem to have, and equally bowled over by the complete confidence most have in the main rubrics of modern evolutionary thought. Absent is any rigorous scriptural argument.

Wesley held that the Bible was "the only standard for truth," adding, "My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible bigot. I follow it in all things, both great and small." Conservatives who hold to a special creation viewpoint might also be described as "Bible bigots"; but in this age of untiring capitulation to modernity, such is a backhanded compliment. We won't be shamed into compromise any more than theistic evolutionists will be shamed into orthodoxy. NEE tries to offer us Genesis without tears but only ends up giving us tears without Genesis. By being too accommodational and trendy in recent decades, COTN will have no easy task extricating itself from the present quagmire. In surrendering at such a foundational level as Genesis we are on a very slippery slope—the authority of the Second Adam [John 5:46-47] wobbles, the perspicuity of Scripture is dimmed, a sustainable exegetical method is wanting, and the fall will never rise above a "poetic construct." How can a strong evangelical voice be maintained on the vital issues of our day if we become apologists for a worldview that has shipwrecked the faith of so many in the past? How exactly do we place our faith in Christ without, as one writer put it, "having faith in what Christ had faith in"?

BioLogos is stealth syncretism, an "evangelical Trojan horse" of a different color, according to Phil Johnson. Since Biologos funded NEE, it is perhaps not too unfair to think that Johnson's words directed at Biologos are for the most part descriptive of NEE also. He writes:

> In every conflict that pits contemporary "scientific" skepticism against the historic faith of the church, BioLogos has defended the skeptical point of view. BioLogos's contributors consistently give preference to modern ideology over biblical revelation. Although the BioLogos PR machine relentlessly portrays the organization as equally committed to science and the Scriptures (and there's a lot of talk about "bridge-building" and reconciliation), the drift of the organization is decidedly just one way.

All NEE contributors come across as very sincere. I don't doubt that every brother and sister is very nice. But niceness does not mean a free pass on theological scrutiny and accountability. Real eighteen and nineteen-year-old kids are sitting in their classes.

Convictions don't erode overnight. Princeton Theological Seminary's path to liberalism can be traced to when it's staunchest apologists were too accommodating to evolutionary philosophy. Oswald Skov wrote that as Darwin's theory gained traction, the church "put up a storm of protest for a while, but by 1900 the liberals had made it acceptable. A failure to plug this hole caused the dam of conservative theology to burst with a flood of all kinds of denials of biblical truth."

The tragedy of once-Christian institutions forgetting why they were even founded is a familiar one. James Burtchaell's *The Dying of the Light,* and George Marsden's *The Soul of the American University* plot how former Christian schools have slouched toward modernity. The common denominator in all these shifts from conservative theology to full-blown secularism is the halfway house of liberal theology. A denomination comfortable with open theism, errancy, and full-throated Darwinism should not be surprised when the transgender, polygamist, annihilationist, and "double belonging" chickens eventually come home to roost.

Dr. Ury's entire review is available at http://fwponline.cc/arm_extend/000025.pdf

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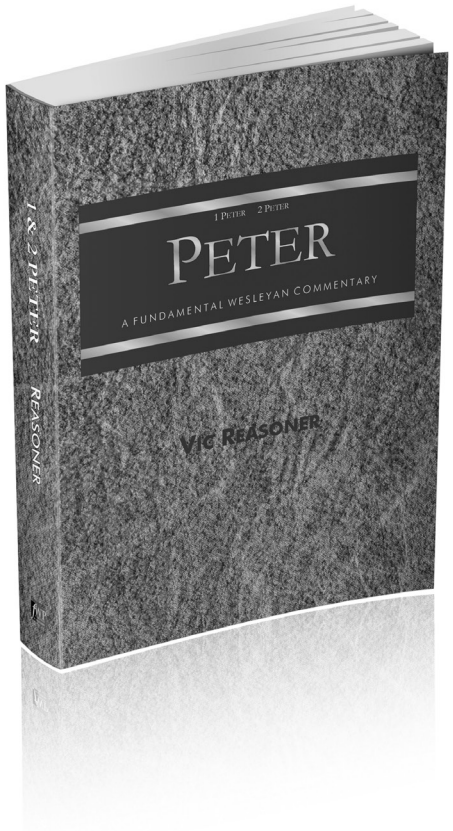

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