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So You Feel You Are Saved?

David M. Battle

So you feel you are saved? This is commendable, but it is not a question about which you want to be wrong. The Apostle Paul tells the members of the Corinthian church to examine themselves to see if they are holding to the faith (2 Cor 13:5). Have you tested yourself?

Jesus describes a very sad scene at the judgment. A group of people will stand before the judge's bench and will call out to Jesus saying, "Lord, Lord." They believed that they were saved and were destined to the New Heavens and the New Earth (Matt 7:21). Many had even done miraculous works in Jesus' name, but God said to them, "Depart from me, I never knew you" (Matt 7:21, 25:41). These people felt they were saved, but they were not. What a horror to discover on Judgment Day that you were destined for hell and not heaven! If you are wise, you will take the time and examine yourself to see if you are holding to the Faith and are not destined for damnation.

So you say that you are saved! This is good, but how do you know that you are speaking the truth? Salvation is a gift from God. By what evidence do you claim that God has actually given it to you?

The evidence of salvation is not a mere affirmation of the Gospel story or the participation in some ritual like baptism or communion. Even the Devil can recount how God sent His Son to die on the cross as the payment for our sins. He is more aware of spiritual realities than we are. Others are just self-deceived. I remember hearing a young man testify that Jesus had died for his sins and then later admitted that he worshiped Gia, Mother Earth. He was a pagan who followed the spirits of this world. He was not saved. I have even dealt with an alcoholic who testified that he had responded to an altar call and that he had prayed the "sinners prayer." He even testified to a "good baptism" which was affirmed by some miraculous sign. Yet, he boldly continued a drunkard's life. He clumsily ignored Paul's warning that drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor 6:10; Gal 5:21). Both of these men claimed salvation for themselves. Sadly, both ignored the clear and repeated teachings of Scripture that neither idolaters nor drunkards will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. They are walking straight into hell while singing, "I am bound for the promised land."

May the Lord have mercy upon those who encourage such delusions.

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Friend, I do not know whether the grace of God has been applied to your soul. I know that Christ died to pay for our sins and that God sent the Holy Spirit to make us ready for His coming Kingdom. The question that we need to answer is, "Is this grace being applied to my life?" How do I test myself to see if I am holding to the Faith as commanded by Paul (2 Cor 13:5)? Am I truly saved? Or am I a delusional reprobate? You must answer these questions for yourself. No other human on this earth can answer it for you.

Not everybody can have this knowledge. Those who do not believe on the name of the Son of God have no hope for eternal life. There is no other name given among men whereby anyone can be saved (Acts 4:12), and Jesus is the only way to God (John 14:6). You must believe the message of the Gospel before you can have assurance.

Am I truly saved?

Fortunately, God has revealed to us the tests that we believers should use to examine the destination of our souls when we claim salvation. The letter of First John in the *New Testament* was written so that the believers could know that they have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

John gives *three tests* for those who believe on the Name of the Son of God by which they may know that they have eternal life. The believer must examine himself by these three tests before he can know that he has salvation.

While the tests are developed throughout the whole letter, John summarizes them 1 John 5. The *first test*, that one who professes to believe in Christ must pass, is the test of divine love. He must truly love God. The *second test* is the life of godly obedience. When a believer experiences joy in obeying God, he will naturally live the holy life. The *final test* is that the believer must believe the testimonies of God.

The Greatest Commandment is to love the Lord God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. All who are forgiven love God, for Jesus tells us that our love for God is directly linked to God's forgiveness. Jesus was once at a meal and a woman came in and anointed his feet. The host recognized the woman as an unclean sinner and in his heart disparaged Jesus' spiritual perception. Jesus knowing what the man was thinking said to him. "If a creditor had two debtors, one owing $400,000 and the other $200,000, and he forgave their debts which one would love him more?" The host answered, "I suppose the one who owed him more." Jesus agreed (Luke 7:41-43). The one who has been forgiven little will love God only a little, but the one whom God has forgiven much will love God more deeply.

John states the first sign that believers are born of God is that we love God (1 John 5:1-2). If we love God then we love those who are born of God for we cannot hate His children and love Him (1 John 2:9-10). James goes even further and describes as "dead" or "useless" a faith that does not reach out to the brethren who are in need (James 2:15-17). Furthermore, if you love someone, you want to be with them. The most basic expression of our love for God is the desire to join with His children in worship. In short, our love for God motivates us to congregate with believers in divine worship and to minister to needs of the brethren.

The less we love God the more tepid is our desire for worship and our motivation to help others. If we are indifferent to God, we will be indifferent to the congregation of believers. The greater our indifference the fewer of our sins have been forgiven. Have your sins truly been forgiven? Do you pass this test?

The second test is the extension of our love into the life of obedience or the holy life. The believer who has full assurance is motivated by his love for God to seek and achieve that which is impossible for the unsaved. John states that we know we are a child of God "when we love God and keep His commandments" which the believer will find are not grievous or burdensome (1 John 5:2-3). This is like a husband who deeply loves his wife. He will take pleasure in being with her and even being there for her during a time of difficulty. The husband who does not love his wife will find ministering to her a burden and a distraction from the things that he wants to do. When we love God, we will find that keeping His commandments are not a cumbersome yoke but a liberating application of righteousness and wisdom. John states further that the believer who obeys God out of love will find victory in the world (1 John 5:4-5) because he will overcome this world and its misguided passions: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16-17). These things will no longer be the rule or hold sway over the be-

liever's life because the love for God will stand firmly in his heart.

The second test is divine love blossoming into the holy life. Is your life guided by your love for God? Do you find pleasure in obeying God? Is your life marked by victories over sins, especially those common to you before salvation? Examine your own life to see if you pass this test.

Assurance is the privilege of the believer.

Once one affirms with his own heart and lips that Jesus paid for one's own sins and has begun to follow Jesus by obeying our Lord's commands, assurance may still be lacking. While true assurance cannot be had without first having a deep love for God and obeying His commandment, one can have these and still not have assurance. The third test is the key to assurance.

In the third test is the witness of the Spirit, which concludes the witness of God concerning His Son (1 John 5:9). On earth this witness comes by "the Spirit, the water, and the blood" (John 5:6, 8). The divine testimonies of the water and the blood reaffirm two foundational truths that one must accept in order to have eternal life. God the Father testified that Jesus was His only begotten son at the Baptism (John 1:14, 32-34). A begotten Son possesses the same essence as His Father. The witness of the blood declares with power that Jesus is the Son of God by His bodily resurrection from the dead (Rom 1:4).

These two truths are foundational to salvation and one must accept them in order to gain eternal life. Yet, salvation is not a mere intellectual affirmation of these truths. One must chose to believe them by placing one's faith in Christ. Once one believes God, repents of his rebellion against God and lives in obedient faith, God promises to save.

The third test again requires that one believes that Jesus is the Savior from God, that one loves the Lord with all one's heart, soul, and strength, and that one is obediently overcoming this fallen world. The third test or the Witness of the Spirit is also the most difficult to explain. If you have it, you will know it. If you do not, you will not understand it. If you do not have it, go to God in prayer and implore Him to open your eyes and know that He is good.

The question here is, "How do you know that God has applied the blood of Jesus to your own soul?" You can love God, be living the holy life, and accept the first two testimonies of God and still not have assurance. Again, you cannot claim assurance if you do not love God, are not living the holy life, or reject either of the first two testimonies of God.

Even if you do have these things, you still lack one thing before you can be assured that you have salvation. In order to finally have assurance, you must have the experiential knowledge that comes from the witness of the Spirit with your spirit (1 John 5:10). The believer has full assurance of salvation when the Spirit of God witnesses with the believer's spirit that God has adopted him. The believer receives the Spirit of sonship which cries out to God saying, "Father" (Rom 8:15-17). Assurance comes at that moment when you can look over your life and you can say; "Yes, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the World" "Yes, I have a deep love and desire to please God." "Yes, God is working through me; and I find His work to be pleasing." Then at that moment you sense the Spirit of God reaching down and giving you a full embrace and whisper in your ear, "You are my beloved child" and your soul reaches out to God; crying, "Father." At that moment, you have full assurance.

If you know what I am writing about, take courage and grow deeper in your walk. Ask God to give you a deeper walk with Him, a deeper love for Him. Grow in holiness and may God give you ever more intimate assurances that you are His. May you live from faith to faith and from victory to victory.

If you do not know of what I am writing. I cannot give it to you. Only God can. Examine your life to seek what you lack. Do you truly believe the testimonies of God? Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God come in the flesh? Do you confess that you are a corrupt sinner who has no claim on God's love? Do you believe that His death paid for all your sins and transgressions? If you do not, begin reading the Bible. If you were raised in the Church read the Gospel of John. If you were not, read the Gospel of Luke and book of Romans in the *New Testament*.

Is the love for God the center of your life? Are you expressing your love by your concern and care for His children? If you are not regularly attending church, begin this Sunday. Seek a church where the Bible is expounded and avoid those where self-help,

emotions, philosophy or psychology are exalted. Be sure to seek prayerfully the guidance of the Spirit.

Are you living the holy life as the Spirit enables? Put aside every habit and worldly pleasure that keeps you from seeking God. Avoid doing harm to anyone and seek to do all the good you can. If you can say "yes" to all these questions, then go to God in prayer and ask Him to search your heart and to try you. Ask Him to reveal if there is any wicked way in yourself and to lead you in the way of everlasting life (Ps 139:23-24).

If you diligently search, the Spirit will reveal what you need. As John Wesley taught, assurance is the privilege of the believer. Every believer should have it, but no man can give it. Seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness and you will find grace.

The Acts of the Spirit, *Part 6*

Joseph D. McPherson

Conversion of Cornelius

The book of Acts portrays a step by step process by which the apostles were persuaded that God's plan of salvation through Christ was not limited to the Jewish people. In Chapter 8 we read of the Gospel being taken to the Samaritans and to the Ethiopian nobleman by Philip. Chapter 10 demonstrated the supernatural and unique way in which Peter was led to take the Gospel to certain Gentiles in Caesarea. It is here that we are introduced to *"a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band."* He is described as *"A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always."*

A question arises in our minds. In what sense are we to understand Cornelius to be a devout man? In chapter two Luke tells us that on the day of Pentecost *"there were dwelling at Jerusalem, devout men, out of every nation under heaven."* Luke is speaking of Jews yet unconverted to Christianity. Peter had not so much as begun preaching his Pentecost sermon. It was before any of the 3,000 Jews were converted and yet they were identified as *"devout men, out of every nation under heaven."* Obviously, they were not devout in the Christian sense of the word but rather in the Jewish. Likewise, when St. Luke identifies Cornelius as a devout man, we are not to conclude that he was at that time a born again Christian. The late Dr. Ralph Earle, a noted professor of Bible exposition, once stated that "to hold that Cornelius was a Christian before he met Peter is very precarious exegesis." Wesley, Fletcher, and Adam Clarke all describe Cornelius before Peter's arrival in Caesarea as a "God-fearing Gentile" or "God-fearing heathen."

Wesley says that "it is certain, in the Christian sense, Cornelius was then an unbeliever." Although he feared God as his Maker and did right according to the light he then had, "He had not [yet] faith in Christ." According to the Rev. John Fletcher, Cornelius was without sufficient faith in Christ prior to Peter's appearance, having never yet "heard the Gospel explained with precision and fidelity." Adam Clarke was convinced that though Cornelius lacked faith in Christ prior to hearing Peter's message, he was, nevertheless, a man "who was acquainted with the true God, by means of his word and laws; who respected these laws, and would not dare to offend his Maker and his Judge." We are informed that *"He saw in a vision… an angel of God" who instructed him to "Send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter… Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"* (Acts 10:3; 11:13-14).

Upon his arrival at the house of Cornelius Peter confessed a significant and personal discovery. *"I perceive of a truth,"* said he, *"that God is not a respecter of persons."* In other words, Peter was beginning to realize that God does not limit His love to one nation of people. *"But in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted by him."* As Wesley explains: "He that first reverences God, as great, wise, good; the Cause, End, and Governor of all things; and, secondly, from this awful regard to Him, not only avoids all known evil, but endeavors, according to the best light he has, to do all things well *'Is accepted of him'*—Through Christ, though he knows Him not." Fletcher observes that following Peter's statement, "none of the congregation said, 'Well, if *we are accepted*, we are already in a state of salvation, and therefore we need not 'hear words whereby we shall be saved.'" No, although they had been faithful to the prevenient grace

already afforded them, they were yet to hear words by which they should be *saved*.

Peter then enters into his message by providing Cornelius and his household with an account of Jesus' ministry. Although these Gentiles had heard news of Jesus and his miracle working, they had yet to hear the Gospel message explained and expounded to them directly. Apostles and leaders of the church were Jews and would have been extremely reluctant to preach the Gospel to Gentiles. It took a miraculous vision for Peter to be thus persuaded to evangelize those in Caesarea.

According to Luke's account, Peter briefly summarized the full message of the Gospel. He introduced Jesus as *"Lord of all"* and further described Him as having been *"anointed…with the Holy Ghost and power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him."* And although His enemies had put Him to death and hanged Him on a tree, God raised him from the dead and showed Him openly. Most importantly, Peter assured these Gentiles *"that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."*

It is important to notice the content of Peter's message. It was not a message having to do with a second work of grace. There was nothing in his message that spoke of entire sanctification or any advanced experience of holiness. Rather, his message was about Christ and the remission or forgiveness of sins. It was a very basic and elementary message, a message of introduction to the Gospel.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit has historically been identified with initial conversion.

"While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." The Holy Ghost knew the hearts of those gathered there and was poured out upon them. They were baptized in the Holy Spirit. To be sure, there are those who wish to identify Spirit baptism exclusively with a work of grace subsequent to the experience of initial conversion. And though it is true that the Holy Spirit continues His work of perfecting the believer in divine love following conversion, baptism in the Holy Spirit has historically been identified with initial conversion. This was the teaching of the Church Fathers, the Reformers and early Methodists.

It is not surprising that *"the circumcised Jewish believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles."* Nor is it surprising when the news of this episode became known back in Jerusalem that there would be those among the *"circumcision"* who would severely criticize Peter for not only entering a house of uncircumcised Gentiles but also eating with them. In defense of his actions Peter reviewed his experiences in some detail. *"When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life"* (Acts 11:18). The words, *"granted repentance unto life,"* again identify clearly initial salvation or justification and regeneration to be the experience of these Gentiles. Dr. Robert Lyon assures us that this "was most certainly the conversion of Cornelius and his incorporation into the body of Christ… It is the account of a beginning, not a second blessing." Lyon convincingly shows that there is no difference in Acts between *"receiving the Spirit"* and *"being baptized with the Spirit."* In Acts 10:47 and 11:16 "both are used," says he, "of the Cornelius experience. Acts 15:8 only confirms this, for the Spirit was *'given'* (a word not previously used) to them *'just as to us.'* Everything in these narratives requires our understanding the conversion of Cornelius as the occasion for his experience of the Spirit. Upon hearing and receiving the word, he and those with him were baptized, according to promise, in the Spirit."

This interpretation, however, is not satisfactory to some. Historically unique to the modern holiness movement is the view that these Gentiles experienced an advanced work of grace in entire sanctification because, as Peter later testified: *"God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith"* (Acts 15:8-9). But how are we to understand Peter's use of the word *"purifying"* in this context? We believe it is best to let the Apostle answer for himself. Writing in his first epistle to those whom he describes as *"newborn babes"* he declared: *"ye have purified your souls."* Such purifying he attributes in the next verse to their *"being born again"* (1 Peter 1:22-23). Nothing in the context so much as suggests their enjoying a second work of grace. Adam Clarke declares such newborn babes to be "purified in the laver of regeneration."

Although the believers in Corinth, whom the Apostle Paul also identifies as *"babes in Christ,"* were not entirely sanctified at the time he wrote, he nevertheless gave to them words of assurance in the following manner: *"And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified [in an initial sense], but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Cor 6:11). Again this same Apostle assures his readers that it is, *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost"* (Titus 3:5). There is, therefore, a cleansing or washing associated with regeneration. It is a grave mistake to suppose that the initial experience of salvation is little more than forgiveness of sins.

Although Acts 15:8-9 does not specify the level of cleansing to which Peter is referring, no early Methodist commentator associated this passage with entire sanctification. In his sermon "On Sin in Believers," Mr. Wesley assures us that the state of a newly justified believer is inexpressibly great and glorious. He is washed; he is sanctified (in an initial sense). His "heart is purified by faith; he is cleansed from the corruption that is in the world." In his sermon, "The Marks of the new Birth," he assures us that the immediate and constant fruit of this faith whereby we are born of God is power over inward and outward sin. Here again he quotes Acts 15:9 as descriptive of the new birth.

Spirit baptism is the common blessing which can alone make a man a Christian.

Early Methodist theologian, William Burt Pope, often referred to as "The Prince of Theologians" connected Acts 15:9 with 1 John 1:7, *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* He likewise quotes James 4:8, *"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded."* All three of the above passages are quoted by Pope as applying to initial sanctification in the newly regenerated believer. Alex Deasley, a more recent scholar, applied the cleansing referred to in Acts 15:9 to the surrounding context of repentance, faith, salvation and new life. Other scholars look upon the *"purification"* mentioned in Acts 15:9 as referring to *"sprinkling of the conscience by the blood of Jesus from dead works to serve the living God"* [Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, 3:522].

We are bound to conclude that all converts since the day of Pentecost experience the new birth (regeneration) by way of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. St. Paul writes the following concerning all truly regenerated believers without exception: *"by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body… and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor 12:13). The same Apostle makes it emphatically clear that since Pentecost one cannot without the Spirit be a Christian (Rom 8:9). It was under the Apostle Peter's preaching that Cornelius and his household received the Spirit for the first time.

Dr. Lyon declares that "The baptism in the Spirit, far from being the second experience and an experience subsequent to receiving the Spirit or being born of the Spirit, stands scripturally at the heart of conversion. The nature of Christian conversion, when fully appreciated, is by itself and in itself an anticipation of what we seek to find completed in the insufflations of love." He explains that, "To be made perfect in love is to come to know the natural (supernatural) consequence and corollary of conversion. Perfection in love [or entire sanctification] is the follow-up of that baptism in the Spirit which sets the believer on course."

Too often the initial work of grace in a penitent's heart is forcibly minimized in the ongoing effort to emphasize a second work of grace. Easily overlooked is the fact that justification, regeneration, initial sanctification, adoption and the Spirit's witness are all a part of true and initial conversion.

The promise Jesus gave to His followers was: *"Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost."* "And so are all true believers, to the end of the world," wrote Mr. Wesley. According to this founder of Methodism, the faith that accompanies this baptism of the Spirit is a "gift of God" and "a work of omnipotence. It requires," says he, "no less power thus to quicken a dead soul, than to raise a body that lies in the grave. It is a new creation; and none can create a soul anew, but He who at first created the heavens and the earth."

It has been said that the New Testament knows nothing of an unbaptized Christian. So it is that in the final verse of the chapter we read that Peter *"commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."* This sacrament of water baptism has long

been a scriptural and historical symbol of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Its significance as a sign, seal, pledge and means of grace is recognized by the fact that it was instituted by Christ, who alone has power to institute a proper sacrament.

We believe that the scriptural evidence surrounding the episode of Acts 10 must constrain any unbiased observer to conclude that Cornelius, together with his kinsmen and friends, experienced initial conversion or regeneration by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. As the saintly Fletcher assures us, to be "baptized with the Holy Ghost… is the common blessing which can alone make a man a Christian."

An Example of Wesleyan Apologetics

Wayne Wilson

John Wesley gave a very cogent *apologia* for the God-breathed character of Holy Writ that rides on the tail of the famous trilemma argument of C. S. Lewis. Even with the current resurgence of the discipline of apologetics within Christian culture, it is quite unfortunate that it has still been missed by contemporary theologians, no doubt because John Wesley is usually known as a preacher not an apologist. But while Wesley will forever be immortalized for his apostolic character in Britain and the revival fires that it sparked globally (the BBC ranks him at #50 among the "Greatest Britons"), let us not forget that he still maintained the very practical, not to mention theological uses of Reason. That's why we have maxims from him like: *"the plain, Scriptural, Rational way"*and *"Religion and Reason joined."*

The astute Wesley was never one to disparage the proper uses of Reason, especially for Christian Apologetics. He published for his ministers and itinerants the famous *"A Compendium of Natural Philosophy, or, A Survey of the Wisdom of God in the Creation,"* consisting of five solid volumes.

This essay shall attempt resuscitating one example of Wesleyan Apologetics. We shall quote the passage in full below for its historical and poetical value. The reason why the two arguments of Lewis and Wesley are so similar is because both Christ and Scripture are known as the *"logos."* In Greek *logos* can have this selected range of meanings: reason, speech, logic, mind, way, thought, explanation, principle, or word.

The Bible is the Word of God and Jesus is the Word of God. We say that the Bible is the inspired reason of written revelation and Jesus is the incarnate reason of walking revelation. Origen reasoned: *"He is called the Logos because He takes away from us all that is foolish and makes us truly rational."* All of this immediately calls to mind John's foundation for this theology: *"In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God."*

Let's now examine Wesley's logic in *A Clear and Concise Demonstration of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures:*

> *There are four grand and powerful arguments which strongly induce us to believe that the Bible must be from God, viz., miracles, prophecy, the goodness of the doctrine, and the moral character of the penmen. All the miracles flow from divine power, all the prophecies flow from divine understanding, the goodness of the doctrine flow from divine goodness, and the moral character of the penmen flow from divine holiness.*
>
> *Thus Christianity is built upon four grand pillars, viz. the power, understanding, goodness, and holiness of God. Divine power is the source of the miracles, Divine understanding of all the prophecies, divine goodness of the goodness of the doctrine, and divine holiness, of the moral character of the penmen.*
>
> *I beg your leave in order to propose a short, clear, and strong argument to prove the divine inspiration of the holy Scriptures.*
>
> *The Bible must be the invention of either good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.*
>
> *1. It could not be the invention either of good men or angels; for they neither would nor could make a book and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, "Thus saith the Lord," when it was their own invention.*
>
> *2. It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their own souls to hell for all eternity.*

3. Therefore, I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by divine inspiration.
[*Works*, 11:484].

So the Bible is either from something good or bad. If from good, it's either from something imperfect or perfect. These are the only practically plausible options. The trilemma thus emerges: The Bible could theoretically come from three sources: Good, Bad, or God. Again, these are the only viable alternatives (except for the technicality mentioned below). That being the case, we know for certain that it must be one of the three.

Good (disciples):

Perhaps great men wrote it? At first glance, you would think this to be an eminently reasonable selection. But they said or did at least three things that would count against this. Please note here that we are speaking of these mere men writing these things alone as the *primary efficient causes* (i.e., without God).

So why not? Because: 1) They said that God said it, 2) They wrote many embarrassing things about themselves, 3) They died for this belief.

These three facts count against it being written alone by great men. Why? 1) Because great men usually don't lie and certainly don't lie about things like this. If they said that they didn't write it, but that God wrote it — then they must not have written it, if they truly are "great." 2) If they were liars, they wouldn't have penned so many embarrassing blunders and shameful mistakes about their lives. 3) If they were liars, then why did they die for this lie? We know from history that thirteen out of fourteen (I'm including Judas Iscariot the Traitor, St. Matthias the Chosen, and St. Paul the First Theologian in the mix) of Jesus' original Apostles were martyred (or killed) *because* of this belief. If it wasn't true, why didn't they confess to it?

Good, bad, mad, or God?

Only St. John the Loving Prophet wasn't martyred. Yet he was tortured and banished. If these great men (or even sly devils) were really just making the whole thing up, then they would be the dumbest pranksters in the history of the world. To fabricate a practical joke is a possibility. To die for it is insanity.

So, this option of "great men" writing it on their own is so improbable as to appear to the average man of common sense as literally impossible.

Bad (deceivers):

Perhaps evil men wrote it? But what was their motive? Evil men always have a motive to fake something good. But the penman got nothing. In fact (as was said above), they were all killed for this deceptive ploy. Evil men might be evil, but they're not dumb. In fact, they're usually very smart. So, when they were caught for treason, they could have simply recanted — which was what the opposition party wanted anyway.

But why would evil men write a book that forbids them to do exactly what they're doing? Why not write a book that approves it, or at least doesn't condemn it, or maybe doesn't mention it at all? And this book says they should also be humble, gentle, honest, meek, forgiving, full of peace and truth? And condemns them to hell? These objections all severely discount the bad men theory.

Mad (demoniacs):

Perhaps delusional men wrote it? Although this option was not technically considered by Wesley, it was by Lewis. Yet I'm sure Wesley would voice his technical approval. It can be viewed as a subheading of "Bad" or separately like the "Lunatic" alternative from Lewis. Either way, the same result eventuates.

This "lunatic theory" simply does not fit the facts. They were psychologically whole. No one ever even accused them of being crazy, even though many at that time thought they were wrong. Their letters, hymns, creeds, sermons, prayers, discourses, apologias, virtue, not to mention their patient martyrdoms, all give us more than ample evidence of their beautiful love and sophisticated intelligence.

Plus, they couldn't have attracted so many followers if they were literally suffering from insanity in a true medical sense. Can you really rationally imagine that the most popular religion in the history of the world was *founded* by a bunch of loonies? Can you imagine that the biggest religion in the history of the world is *followed* by a bunch of dunces who believe the loonies? This is truly nothing but un-reason and un-reason is truly nothing.

So this *"insane in the membrane"* theory is actually a little "insane" in the membrane itself. If skepticism

postulates further that the Devil did it *through* their delusions, we say no. For what benefit would the devil get out of "tricking" man to believe in his arch enemy, the True God?

Indeed the biblical record said of them that they *"turned the world upside down."* Christianity is the biggest and most sublime religion on earth. It stretches the imagination beyond the breaking point to say that it could have started from a rag tag bunch of deceivers and demoniacs.

God (Deity):

Perhaps God wrote it? So in conclusion, what is now a quadrilemma rounds off our choices as: Good, bad, mad, or God. If the disciples, deceivers, or delusionaries did not write it, then the only logical option left is Divine. This apologia for the Bible is so simple that some might even say it's too simple — deceptively simple. But C. S. Lewis is quite apropos here:

> *Do you think I'm trying to cast a spell? Perhaps I am. But remember your fairy tales… Spells are used for breaking enchantments as well as inducing them. And you and I have need of the strongest spell that can be found to wake us from the evil enchantment of worldliness which has been laid upon us for nearly a lifetime!*

Apologetics is not a philosophical magic trick. Just because it's simple, doesn't mean it's invalid. The simple Truth always wins the day. The Scriptures are sure. The Bible (logos) has won because Reason (logos) has won. And Reason has won because God (logos) has won. This three-fold "logos-ical" connection is like the cornerstone, architecture and capstone of a building; or the introduction, body, and conclusion of a letter; or the mind, hand, and writings on a page. Hence, the Scriptures weren't, aren't, and won't ever be in real doubt. This is the heart pulse of all orthodox apologetics and even more so for Wesleyan Apologetics.

Getting Acquainted with Arminius, *Part 1*

John S. Knox

On October 30, 1608, Jacobus Arminius presented his *Declaration of Sentiments* to the assembly of the States of Holland and West Friesland in the Binnenhof in the Hague. Having trained in Geneva under John Calvin's successor, Theodore Beza, and having further studied and honed his theology at the University of Leyden, Arminius thoroughly presented his theological views both orally and in written form. He spoke in his native Dutch language to an assembly of his peers and religious authorities with the hopes of avoiding a theological rift in Holland while at the same time removing a long-standing conflict with the supralapsarian faction warring against him. They taught that God decreed election and reprobation prior to the creation of mankind. Thus, the reprobate are damned before sin ever entered the world. The other Calvinist position was termed *infralapsarianism* and they held that God predestined the elect and reprobate *after* the Fall. Thus, the debate was whether God was glorified in creation or in judgment.

Declaration of Sentiments is a sophisticated, passionate appeal to reason, scripture, and community. With each chapter, Arminius not only seeks to demonstrate the error of the attacks on him, but also to point out how and why reconciliation can take place through a careful examination of various precepts of Christian thought. *A Declaration of the Sentiments of Arminius* contains ten chapters demonstrating the author's understanding of the predestination of humanity, the providence of God, the freedom of human will, the grace of God, the perseverance of Christians and their assurance of salvation, the possibility of perfection and holiness in the life of the believer, Jesus Christ's divine nature and his part in the justification of humanity before God, and finally, Arminius' own suggested revision of the Dutch confession and Heidelberg Catechism. With each chapter, Arminius carefully builds a defense of both his own Christian character and his biblical interpretation by pointing out what he considers to be important errors of hypocritical judgment and shallow hermeneutics in his adversaries.

The chief goal of this exposition will be to analyze Arminius' defense of himself and his theology in his *Declaration of Sentiments* against a high Calvinist understanding of theology. In *The Story of Christian Theology*, Roger Olsen remarks, "Without doubt or debate, Arminius is one of the most unfairly neglected and grossly misunderstood theologians in the story of Christian theology."

Like the Catholics before them, the Supralapsarians had so rigidly formulated what it meant to be a Christian that all other interpretations were deemed totally unacceptable. Concerning this harsh judgment placed on Arminius and his followers, Justo Gonzalez remarks, "But the main purpose of the gathering [Synod of Dort] was the condemnation of Arminianism, necessary in order to end the strife that was dividing the Netherlands and to secure the support of other Reformed churches."

Arminius observed that several Dutch church leaders claimed to be pure Calvinists when, in fact, they often went far beyond Calvin in their conclusions. They also presented interpretations that were based more on logic and reason than on Scripture. Arminius argued that Supralapsarianism was found neither in early Church creeds, nor in the confessional statements of the Reformed and Protestant Churches.

His goals were reconciliation and a healthy understanding of the plan of God.

In Geneva, Arminius became well versed in the high Calvinist ways of Beza and his fellow Supralapsarians. Despite their "indoctrination" of the young scholar, Arminius nevertheless found much of Beza's conclusions on Calvinist thought and doctrine to be spurious and unacceptable. This eventually would cause a great deal of consternation on the part of the advocates of high Calvinism, but it did not keep Arminius from obtaining a ministerial position.

In 1587, Arminius moved to Amsterdam and began the protocol of meetings, oral examinations, and trial-preaching necessary before becoming ordained as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church. Despite some tense moments, Arminius was finally admitted as minister of the Church in Amsterdam in 1588.

Immediately after beginning his official position, he was called upon to contest and disprove the "liberal" views of theologian Dirck Koornhert. Koornhert was a lay theologian who first had been secretary of State and then later worked on a Dutch translation of Erasmus' Latin New Testament. He also had publicly challenged the rigid Supralapsarian understanding of predestination and promoted a more tolerant, humanist understanding of doctrine. Arminius' superiors hoped he would champion the views of Beza; instead, he ended up agreeing with Koornhert's interpretation of Scripture at least concerning predestination.

Arminius was accused of several heresies, from Pelagianism to Arianism to Socinianism, a Reformation-era heresy that denied Christ's deity, substitutionary atonement, and God's foreknowledge and foreordination. According to his critics, Arminius was Pelagian because of his disagreement with the irresistibility of the Holy Spirit and was Socinian because he doubted that God would elect anyone to damnation.

Drawing upon his personal talent for scholarship, Arminius employed reason and authority to defend his positions. Furthermore, he put a low priority on the doctrinal statements of his theological peers that seemed beyond scriptural confirmation because, as maintained by A. W. Harrison,

> All his theology was Biblical. He allowed no rival authority in the realm of faith. The views of the fathers and the decrees of the Church Councils were important; the fundamental axioms and intuitions of the human mind were very potent; but at the best their authority was secondary, while that of the Scriptures was all in all.

With the devastating outbreak of the Plague in 1602 and the deaths of two professors, Arminius had an opportunity thrust upon him to teach at the University of Leyden. Despite being invited by the board of governors at the University to apply, four men also employed there (Gomarus, Cuchlinus, Plancius, Hommius) fought against his joining the faculty at Leyden. Fortunately for Arminius, the governors of the University felt that Gomarus and his fellow objectors had little proof for substantiating their concerns. Once Arminius had acceptably answered all their questions without giving them suitable reasons for rejection, they concluded to ask him to accept the professorship at Leyden. This bothered his critics immensely and only initiated further attacks against him.

In 1603, Arminius had his first official debate with Franciscus Gomarus at The Hague. Gomarus again accused him of Pelagianism and of being pro-Catholic, allegations against which Arminius once more successfully defended himself. This would be the beginning of a long and bitter struggle between the two men and their respective theological positions, culminating in creation of the *Declaration of Sentiments* in 1608.

The *Declaration* is not especially long (originally 70 pages), nor is it overly verbose. As such, Arminius had a very clear purpose in creating it. It was written first as a defense against high Calvinist attacks and second as a message of biblical truth according to Arminius. Standing before a mixed assembly of advocates, friends, hostile and fearful lords, theologians, and ministers, Arminius sought not only to defend himself against his attackers, but hoped also to enlighten and calm his peers and judges, alike. He was not merely attempting to vanquish his enemies; he also hoped to save them from theological misconceptions that he considered to be "in contradiction either to the Word of God, or the Confession of the Belgic Churches." Thus, in his presentation, he devotes ten chapters toward this pursuit of clear, biblically sound thinking.

Arminius begins his treatise with an explanation of his presence before the assembly. It is in these few pages that the reader encounters his expressed frustration and his account of the suffering that he has experienced in the years leading up to what Carl Bangs calls the Dutch "inquisition." He recounts the attacks against him, both overt and surreptitious, as well as the manipulation of facts and numerous personal petty challenges made by his colleagues—all unjust and unnecessary in his opinion.

He pleas for fairness from his judges as to whether or not he has actually perverted the truth of Scripture and doctrine. He assures them that he will accept their punishment if they reject his *Declaration of Sentiments* and the theological understandings it presents. However, he also hopes they will acquit him and come to his aid if they find his beliefs in keeping with the Confession and the Bible.

As mentioned earlier, one of the biggest complaints from Gomarus and his Supralapsarian Amsterdam camp was that Arminius had rejected God's doctrine of predestination of both saint and sinner as taught by Calvin. Arminius had long struggled against the doctrine of supralapsarianism. He knew it was the cornerstone of his opponents' argument against him and was their "primary item of contention."

Arminius does not skirt the issue of predestination nor does he avoid the controversial topics tossed at him earlier by Gomarus in their debates. Instead, he confidently and carefully presents his views on predestination, first elaborating his supralapsarian opponents' arguments which are "both false and impertinent, and at an utter disagreement with each other." Then, when he has finished critically challenging their supralapsarian suppositions, Arminius presents his own views, calling on Scripture, the Confession, and logic for support. He perceives the misjudgments of his opponents to be an extreme distortion of interpretation, manifested by their making doctrinal decisions not explicitly found or supported in Scripture.

Arminius concludes his *Declaration of Sentiments* with an acknowledgment of submission to the assembly's authority and power. The heart of this statement is his reiteration that his goals have always been the reconciliation with his brothers in Christ and the promotion of a healthy understanding of the plan of God.

John Wesley's Views of Spirit Baptism Accurately Reflect New Testament Teaching

Joseph D. McPherson

Frustration is sometimes expressed by various ones in the holiness movement, who lament what they feel to be an inadequate emphasis given to the baptism of the Holy Spirit within the overall teachings of Mr. Wesley and early Methodists. Dr. Herbert McGonigle, among others, bemoans not only the lack of prominence given by Wesley to the baptism of the Holy Spirit but his refusal also to make it synonymous with entire sanctification.

Dr. Mildred Bangs Wynkoop, however, comes to the defense of the founder of Methodism by stating that "Wesley's rejection of the use of the term baptism in relation to entire sanctification was not a rejection of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in every step in Christian life, nor a defective view of sanctification… Wesley," she continues, "simply did not find Scriptural warrant or theological necessity for making that identification."

Interestingly enough, Mr. Wesley, in his lifetime, is not found to have received criticism for giving insufficient emphasis to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, a partial defense of himself against today's critics might be found in his description of "The Character of a Methodist." Therein he assures his readers that neither he nor his Methodists "affect to use any particular expressions of Scripture more frequently than others, unless they are such as are more frequently used by the inspired writers themselves." In other words, Wesley made it a practice to give greatest emphasis to that which the Scriptures gave most attention and less emphasis to those terms and issues found less often in Holy Writ.

Keeping in mind Wesley's efforts to maintain a balance of Scriptural emphasis in his teaching and preaching, the attentive reader of the New Testament will find very little reference to the baptism of the Holy Spirit beyond Luke's accounts recorded in the Book of Acts. Rather, we find the epistles full of instruction for the perfecting of believers and various helps in their advancement of inward and outward holiness of life. One never finds *believers* commanded nor even exhorted to seek a baptism of the Spirit.

To the Corinthian believers, who cannot be said to have yet experienced entire sanctification at the time he wrote, Paul assuredly states: *"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body... and have been all made to drink into one Spirit"* (1 Cor 12:13). He here refers to Spirit baptism as an initiatory event wherein the believer finds entrance into the true Church and kingdom of heaven by Spiritual birth or regeneration. In response to Jesus' promise to his disciples that they should *"be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence,"* Mr. Wesley says, "And so are all true believers, to the end of the world." Here we see the founder of Methodism in full accordance with the above statement of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

Both water and Spirit baptism are initiatory events.

Having received the Spirit in their initial experience of the new birth or regeneration, St. Paul does exhort the Ephesian converts to be always *"filled with the Spirit"* (Eph 5:18).

Although such terms as "sanctify" and "sanctification" are more often found in the epistles, they should not necessarily be considered synonymous in meaning with a second work of grace. Mr. Wesley observes that "the term *sanctified* is continually applied by St. Paul to all that were justified. That by this term alone, he rarely, if ever, means 'saved from all sin.' That, consequently, it is not proper to use it in that sense, without adding the word *wholly, entirely*, or the like."

We read in Acts 8, that after Philip's initial efforts in the evangelization of the Samaritans, the apostles in Jerusalem sent two of their number to Samaria to complete what was spiritually lacking. The Samaritans had *"heard the word of God"* and were *"baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,"* but had not yet *"received the Holy Ghost."* It was with a sense of urgency that Peter and John were sent to pray and lay hands on them with the result that they promptly received [or were baptized with] the Holy Ghost.

Again, we read in the opening verses of Acts 19 that St. Paul found a dozen Ephesians who had previously submitted to John's baptism of repentance but had as yet little knowledge of a believer's privileges of enjoying the inward presence of the Holy Ghost. Again, without hesitation but with a sense of urgency, St. Paul baptized with water these men in the name of the Lord Jesus and then laid hands upon them with the result that *"the Holy Ghost came on them."*

It is important to observe both the urgency and swiftness by which the apostles, Peter, John and Paul rendered themselves as God's instruments in the baptism of the Samaritans and Ephesians by the Holy Spirit. Given the fact that most would not judge the Corinthian believers to be entirely sanctified at the time Paul wrote to them; and given the fact that St. Paul had spent eighteen months with the Corinthian church prior to writing his two epistles, can it be supposed that he had never prayed and laid hands upon them during that entire year and a half for their receiving of a baptism in the Holy Ghost?

Some today would doubtlessly suggest that the baptism of the Holy Spirit would have been the most natural and effective answer to the spiritual problems of the Corinthians. Surprisingly, Paul never once suggests this to be an answer. Rather, he repeatedly reminds them that they were *"in Christ Jesus"* and that the *"Spirit of God"* presently *"dwelt in them"* (1 Cor 1:30; 3:16, 23; 6:11, 19; 12:13 and 2 Cor 13:5). Both of Paul's epistles to the Corinthians are full of

directives designed for the correction and instruction of believers in practical matters of holy living. Before he closes his second letter, however, he expresses a wish for their *"perfection"* (2 Cor 13:9, 11).

Near the end of his first letter to the Thessalonian church, Paul prays that *"the very God of peace sanctify [them] wholly"* (1 Thess. 5:23). Surprisingly, however, in no part of his two letters to these Thessalonian believers does he mention the need of being baptized in Holy Spirit.

The Galatian church had its share of spiritual deficiencies and would not be considered a body of believers who were entirely sanctified. Nevertheless, we do not find Paul urging them to seek a baptism of the Spirit. Rather he reminds them that they had once *"received the Spirit"* and at an earlier time had *"begun in the Spirit."*

In none of the New Testament epistles, whether written by Paul, Peter, James or John do we find believers urged to seek a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Why should it then be thought that Mr. Wesley was somehow flawed when limiting his use of the term, baptism of the Holy Spirit?

We conclude that the problem arises when making the assumption that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is always synonymous with a second work of grace in entire sanctification. Neither the New Testament nor Mr. Wesley made such an assumption. Rather, we find that both water baptism and Spirit baptism are initiatory events — water baptism being an outward symbol of the inward work of Spirit baptism and the very entrance into the Church and body of believers. It was not only Wesley who held this view but also the Church Fathers, Reformers and all early Methodists.

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

REVIEWS

A Problem with Recent Treatments of the Doctrine of Predestination

***Dictionary of Everyday Theology and Culture*. Bruce Demarest and Keith Mathews, eds. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010. ISBN: 978-1600061929**

Peter Thuesen, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0195174274

The doctrine of predestination has been one of the most contentiously debated theological topics through much of church history. Today, it continues to incite lively discussion in both academic and local church contexts.

Unfortunately, with the recent resurgence of Reformed theology in the American context, attempts to bolster the doctrine by grounding it in consensual Christian thought have led to erroneous statements about the doctrine. In the recently released *Dictionary of Everyday Theology*, Bruce Demarest makes the claim that "Most Christians believe that according to God's wisdom and pleasure, he in eternity past sovereignly chose from among all of fallen humanity yet to be created the ones he willed to be saved by grace. The rest he left to suffer the just punishment of their sins… The saved are the objects of God's decretive or unconditional will, while the lost are the objects of his permissive or conditional will."

This "single predestination" view of what "most Christians believe" becomes outlandish when one realizes that Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy make up the largest bulk of Christians in the world today and neither one of these traditions holds to such a view. Furthermore, one could make the argument that this is not even the major position on predestination in Protestantism today. When Reformed scholars, like Demarest, make bold claims like this, they mislead their audience about the acceptance of this doctrine within the larger church.

These types of overstatements are happening in other areas of scholarship. Attempts to ground the doctrine in historical consensus have led to unfortunate misinterpretations. In his book, *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine*, Peter Thuesen, associate professor at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, provides an excellent

treatment of the doctrine of predestination in the American context. However, in describing the doctrine's early historical background, Thuesen clearly articulates Demarest's position on predestination as the consensual view of the Western Church after Augustine.

Specifically, when discussing Augustine's views on God's grace, Thuesen presents Augustine's teaching on predestination, particularly on the elect, as the "more or less official" position in the West. He leads readers to believe that Augustinian teaching on election is standard "orthodoxy" in the Western church until the late medieval period.

While Reformed views on predestination would benefit from this type of historical validation, the evidence speaks strongly to the contrary. Careful research shows that the Western church did not endorse Augustine's doctrine of election. Instead, the church navigated between the extremes of both Pelagianism *and* Augustinianism.

A quick survey of scholarly treatments addressing the fifth and sixth centuries of the church quickly reveals this point. Jaroslav Pelikan in *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine: Volume 1 The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* makes clear that the church's official condemnation of Pelagianism did not entail an unconditional endorsement of Augustine's teaching. While the Western church accepted Augustine's anti-Pelagian doctrine of grace, it was "shorn of its predestinarian elements." The "official teaching of Latin Christianity" rejected Augustine's "particular and idiosyncratic theory" of predestination.

Thomas Oden, in his attempt to state Christianity's consensus on the issue of election in *The Transforming Power of Grace*, argues that the Western church located the doctrine of predestination in divine foreknowledge, rather than in an act of God's sovereign will before creation. God's knowledge of a Christian's exercise of "faith" and an unbeliever's "recalcitrance" does not "determine either" response.

Similarly, Gerald Bray, a Reformed theologian, in his work on the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament, Vol. VI, Romans*, teaches that the early church Fathers as a whole did not follow Augustine's interpretation of predestination in Romans 9. Instead, they saw passages like "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated" as an example of God's foreknowledge and assessment of what these two brothers would do later in life. The Fathers were careful to clarify that God was not the "unilateral" cause of love and hatred here. The Fathers who come after Augustine, as a whole, dismissed his predestinarian reading of this text.

Christopher Hall, in *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers*, admits that the church saw Augustine's teaching on sin and its effect upon the human will as much closer to the truth than Pelagius's view. However, the Church's embrace of grace's necessity for repentance and faith did not "necessitate the Church to accept all of Augustine's soteriology," such as his extreme teaching on predestination.

Likewise, J.N.D. Kelley, in *Early Christian Doctrines*, recognizes the triumph of Augustinian theology in the West. However, he qualifies this by saying that Augustine's teaching on "the irresistibility of grace and his severe interpretation of predestination were tacitly dropped." He argues that the Western church in the end would embrace a Semi-Augustinian theology, one with a synergistic understanding of salvation, but with priority given to God's grace in all.

In conclusion, while recent treatments of the doctrine of predestination have made a Reformed perspective look like the dominant view in Christianity and the consensus of the early church in the West, such proponents suffer from historical and ecclesial myopia.

– G. B. McClanahan and Christopher Bounds

***Baptism: Three Views*. David F. Wright, ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009. ISBN 978-0830838561**

First there was the book *Understanding Four Views on Baptism*, published by Zondervan. Now *Baptism: Three Views* by InterVarsity Press. In each book one would think that here would be a good discussion on modes of baptism. However, such is not the case. IVP dropped their candy if that was really their objective and frankly according to their title it should have been a major part of it. In each case those who we thought would have given a spirited chase on modes, caved by running to the defense of infant baptism. In both books our reformed brethren have chosen to defend infant baptism rather than their traditional, capable and biblical defense of sprinkling and pouring. While IVP allowed each to go their way concerning this subject, surely one would have thought that the Presbyterian would have spent some time and depth in rejecting the dogmatic mantra of "believers baptism" by the Baptists.

The Presbyterian, Sinclair Ferguson, spends few of his lines on immersion and runs to advance baby baptism. The Baptist brother, Bruce Ware, drowns infant baptism with the standard fundamental twisted Baptist logic of "believers baptism." He

uses the Baptist logic that one should not be baptized until they are saved and infants are incapable of knowing how to be saved. Sighting the scripture with a dogmatic air that has become the standard for the immersionists, he sets the poor Presbyterian on his heels. The third writer is Anthony Lane, who prides himself as a "middle of the roader" at least as it concerns infant baptism. At times his persuasion on baptism borders on baptismal regeneration. Nevertheless, he comes to a competent defense of the Presbyterian concerning infant baptism.

Lane does a good job of summarizing the early church fathers on infant baptism which is the basis for his position. His review of the fathers on this subject is, as far as I am concerned, very reasonable. In his response, Ware appeals to scripture only as the sole authority on the subject of baptism. This means for Ware that "believers baptism," immersion, is the only baptism taught in the scriptures. However, Lane responds by pointing out that even this vaunted Baptist also enjoyed using extra Biblical material when it suited his need. All is not lost for Fergusion because he does a great job in his explanation of the covenant theory as it relates to infant baptism. It is a sensible and Biblical presentation.

One cannot really criticize these writers too much, however. After all, the introduction pours cold water on a really heated debate by saying, "Baptism — its subjects, its relation to faith, its meaning and its mode of application — is a topic that the experienced have learned to sidestep to preserve the peace." Sadly, what is not said is that currently the mode aspect of this discussion has been settled by the leaders of fundamentalist and evangelical movements, the Baptists. There is no better proof of this accusation than what Ware says to Lane after his neat over view of the church fathers concerning infant baptism, "one cannot help but puzzle over his subsequent wandering off and away from the Baptist trail, as one sees in it the New Testament." The Baptists won this debate years ago more by default, due to the gross apostasy of our main line denominations in the early twentieth century and their subsequent lack of interest in this particular subject.

As in Zondervan's book on baptism, this book only seals in the minds of the readers that mode is no longer an issue. Immersion with its minimal proof has won the day in the absence of a contemporary debate. One dare not to oppose this fiendish position of baptism. Evidently, our Reformed and Presbyterian brothers would rather advance their Calvinism, infant baptism, and pure contempt for the Arminians than to take on the "water god" when the opportunity is given.

– Dennis Hartman

180: Stories of People Who Changed their Lives by Changing Their Minds, Bruce Nuffer, ed. (Kansas City: The House Studio, 2010). ISBN 978-834125124

The book "180" by the House Studios (a new publishing arm of the Church of the Nazarene) is a recent publication being promoted to Nazarene pastors. The book is made up of 34 easy to read short testimonies of how men and women of various backgrounds and Christian heritages changed their minds and perspectives and became more tolerant. The stories seldom quote scripture and none of the stories seemed to reflect the Holy Spirit's conviction of heart, but rather the change of mind from life impacting moments. The book was something I would never expect to read from a "Christian Holiness Publishing House." The reader will find testimonies of people changing their own minds on various topics, but nothing reflecting a move of God in the writers' hearts leading to a life of holiness.

This is the type of book that will create damage among younger growing Christians as it really gives validity to humanistic thinking, heretical understanding of the fundamentals of the faith. Tolerance, evolution, hell and celibacy are embraced in this book as they would not have been a generation ago. Tolerance is lifted high as a virtue. Evolution is embraced as an acceptable value which one can have and maintain as a Christian. Hell is liberalized and narrowed as to who might actually go there. Celibacy and the Catholic Church are lifted to a place of favor as one writer shares growing up protestant and becoming celibate on the way to the priesthood. The validity of Scripture and moral absolutes are questioned and even denied. Doubt is recognized as a gift and open-mindedness and inclusiveness as a healthy viewpoint to hold. Not every story is controversial or doctrinally heretical, but the ones that are ruin the book for its full impact.

Where are the stories of people who were changed 180 degrees from darkness to light? Where are the inspirational stories of lives God touched in a radical way? I believe the Nazarene Church should be encouraging readers to pursue holiness of heart rather than confusion of the mind. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace. Most of these stories and opinions are very confused – the inevitable result of denying the authority of Scripture. This was a most unfruitful book and left me dismayed at the direction of the publishing house that published this book.

– Peter S. Migner

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Wesley: A Heart Transformed Can Change the World. 117 minutes. Foundery Pictures, 2009, released July 2010 on DVD.

This is the first full feature movie on the life of Wesley since "John Wesley" (1954). This adequate, but disjointed life of Wesley has been hailed by more than just Methodists. Several veteran actors such as June Lockhart and Kevin McCarthy make this production a step up from most amateurish "church" films. The production and acting are impressive for a religious film. However, the poorly done fire scene early on in the movie sets a low expectation of what is to follow.

I could follow the plot early on, but I would imagine that the flashbacks to the childhood rescue from a house fire would be confusing to those who do not know the story of Wesley. An unnecessary and inordinate amount of time was also spent on Wesley's failed courtship with Sophy Hopkey.

Upon Wesley's return to England, he described his failures twice in his journal. I have noticed that movies of Wesley always use a modified statement "that I went to America to convert others, but was never myself converted." I have always wondered why people pass up his pithy statement of "I went to America to convert the Indians; but oh who shall convert me?" I believe the later offers no room for literary improvement, plus it exemplifies the spiritual desperation of Wesley to its fullest! The portrayal of his Aldersgate experience in this DVD was mundane. It lacked the passion and emotional element that would have impacted the viewer positively. I believe that this was the missed opportunity in the film.

Doctrinally, they did a great job of showing Wesley's struggle with legalism, and the Church of England's opposition to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith. In this, the writers were accurate in placing more emphasis on Wesley's doctrine of justification by faith than his doctrine of Christian perfection. Wesley was locked out of more Churches for his grace message than his perfection doctrine.

On the negative side, the movie certainly dwells in the 20th and 21st century debate on Wesley. They overplay the idea of a Wesleyan Quadrilateral, which was not a large part of Wesley's emphasis or ministry. An unnecessary pandering to modern Evangelicalism fails to show that Wesley saw conversion as more of a beginning than an end, and therefore, misses the full Wesleyan message.

I highly recommend this movie along with an open mind, and an open copy of Wesley's Journal!

– Jeff Paton

Plan to attend our Winter Conference, January 26-28, 2011 on the campus of Southern Methodist College in Orangeburg, SC

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