

The Arminian

A PUBLICATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL
WESLEYAN SOCIETY

VOLUME 33

SPRING – FALL 2015

ISSUE 1-2

COUNTERFEIT GRACE

Vic Reasoner

Nothing ruins the truth like stretching it. The doctrine of grace is a biblical truth, but like any other truth, it can be distorted when it is not kept in balance with other biblical truths. In the last issue of *The Arminian Magazine* we reviewed *Antinomianism: Reformed Theology's Unwelcome Guest?* In that book Mark Jones expresses his concern about Calvinism's default weakness toward lawlessness. This is reflected in Kevin DeYoung's declaration, "If people hear us talking about justification and don't almost think

that we are giving them a license to sin, we are not preaching grace strong enough." If that is the goal of modern Calvinism, they are certainly getting the job done!

Among the modern charismatic movement there is also a new distorted emphasis on grace. If the prosperity gospel is based on hyper-faith, there is a new "grace reformation" based on hyper-grace. Michael L. Brown, *Hyper-Grace* (2014) has attempted to confront this cheap grace. He wrote, "It is increasingly common to hear about worship leaders getting drunk after church services and dropping f-bombs while they boast about their 'liberty' in the Lord."

While salvation is all of grace, we know a tree by its fruits. Here is a list of tendencies flowing from the "grace reformation" that we must guard against:

- Lawlessness. Any ethical standard of holy living is denounced as legalism. Theologically, "legalism" is the attempt to earn salvation through our works. Legalism is also the excessive concern with the requirements of the law, and oftentimes it is accompanied by a spirit of censoriousness toward others. However, one of the marks of regeneration is that the Holy Spirit writes God's law in our hearts. It is not legalism for Christians to

THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE

Volume 33 Spring – Fall 2015 Issue 1-2
ISSN 1085-2808

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keep the commandments. Jesus did not come to destroy the law (Matt 5:17). Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15).

- Hyper-grace fanatics see no problem with drunkenness. David Wilkerson attempted to confront this sin in *Sipping Saints* back in 1978. More recently some charismatics have defended a homosexual lifestyle since we are saved by grace. See charismatic pastor Romell D. Weekly, *The Rebuttal: A Biblical Response Exposing the Deceptive Logic of Anti-Gay Theology* (2011).
- Modern “grace” preachers tend to manifest their freedom from the law by using profanity and vulgarity. But Ephesians 4:29 commands, “Do not let unwholesome talk come out of your mouths.” Jesus explained,

“From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” A dirty mouth is a manifestation of a dirty heart, not free grace.

Among the modern charismatic movement there is also a new distorted emphasis on grace.

- According to this doctrine sanctification is not progressive. John Crowder teaches, “We are not climbing an unseen ladder. We have already arrived.” Since sanctification is positional, one is at once as holy as he will ever be. Thus, Ryan Rufus denies that Christians still have a sinful nature. Clark Whitten writes, “You are like Him, my friend, and are in a permanent and unchangeable state of being of holiness.” Thus he concluded that the idea that we are called to grow in holiness and that we must pursue holiness is a “spiritually murderous lie.”
- The believer has been forgiven of all past, present, and future sins. Joseph Prince argues that God’s forgiveness is not given in installments.

- Thus, the Holy Spirit does not convict the believer of sin because his sins are already forgiven. They contend that 1 John 1:9 was not written to Christians, but to gnostics who had infiltrated the church. Ryan Rufus teaches, “As a new covenant born-again believer, to now go and ask forgiveness after you have sinned is a sin. It is the sin of unbelief. You don’t believe in the finished work of the cross.”

The emphasis of 1 John 1:9, however, is not on the state of the subject – whether John is addressing gnostics who do not believe they are sinners, awakened sinners who are seeking God, or believers who have fallen short. Rather, the emphasis is on the reality of sin. John is teaching that joy, assurance, and victory do not come by denying sin, as characterized in the three denials of 1:6-10, but they come when we acknowledge and confess our sin.

- These preachers like to assert that God is always in a good mood, therefore he is always pleased with us. Thus, God is portrayed as a doting grandfather who never gets bent out of shape no matter how rowdy or rude his kids get. We use the terms “good mood” or “bad mood” as synonymous with a good or bad attitude. Pagan gods and goddesses were capricious and were famous for getting in a bad mood which had to be appeased or placated through incantations and sacrifices. All of this is unworthy of the true God who is good consistently – all the time. Yet God is still good when he punishes sin. We have completely lost our concept of a holy God who is righteous in his anger at sin. Parents understand how a person can love his children and yet still be angry with them *because* of his love for them. Yet the new god has apparently taken anger-management classes and is now always in a good mood. Jonathan Edwards may not be

popular with this crowd, but someday sinners will end up in the hands of an angry God.

- Some of them have adopted universalism, which holds that everyone will ultimately be saved. This is the thesis of Philip Gulley and James Mulholland in *If Grace Is True: Why God Will Save Every Person* (2009).
- This distortion of grace tends to reject the Old Testament. Some “grace” teachers are actually critical of Bibles which contain both the Old and New Testaments, claiming that the Old Testament causes confusion. But *all* Scripture is inspired and profitable (2 Timothy 3:16).
- They describe the life of faith as effortless. Andrew Wommack wrote a book, *Effortless Change*. While Joseph Prince emphasizes “the secret to effortless success, wholeness

and victorious living,” 2 Peter 1:5 challenges us to make every effort, as does Hebrews 12:14.

Those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it.

- Although the old-fashioned Pentecostals were all Arminian, these new grace charismatics have embraced once-saved-always-saved. Joseph Prince teaches, “Because you did *nothing* to deserve His presence in your life, there is *nothing* you can do that will cause His presence to leave you.”

I am aware that the old Pentecostals had a propensity toward legalism. They got it from the holiness movement from which they sprang. But we do not compensate for one extreme by going to the opposite error.

Solomon declared that there is nothing new under the sun. Those who do not learn from his-

tory are destined to repeat it. Anyone with a working knowledge of church history will recognize these false teachings which were advocated by false teachers in other periods of history. The charismatic movement has emphasized experience instead of education and therefore what they claim is new revelation is simply old heresy in new clothes. Essentially, this new hyper-grace is ancient gnosticism. 1 John in particular was written to refute this pagan heresy which had already begun to infiltrate the early church.

- It was Marcion, in the second century, who first rejected the Old Testament.
- The heresy of universalism can be traced back as far as Origen, who believed that even the devil might be saved eventually. His teachings were condemned by the Church in the 6th century. Thus, the current teaching is not a “new grace reformation.”
- The old name for lawlessness is “antinomianism.” The early Methodists, especially John Fletcher, cut it no slack in his *Checks to Antinomianism*.
- John Wesley explained,

In the meantime what we are afraid of is this: lest any should use the phrase, “the righteousness of Christ,” or, “the righteousness of Christ is ‘imputed to me,’” as a cover for his unrighteousness. We have known this done a thousand times. A man has been reproved, suppose for drunkenness. “Oh,” said he, “I pretend to no righteousness of *my own*: Christ is *my righteousness*.” Another has been told, that “the extortioner, the unjust, shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” He replies with all assurance, “I am unjust in myself, but I have a spotless righteousness in Christ.” And thus,

though a man be as far from the practice as from the tempers of a Christian, though he neither has the mind which was in Christ nor in any respect walks as he walked, yet he has armor of proof against all conviction, in what he calls the “righteousness of Christ” [“The Lord our Righteousness,” Sermon #20, 2.1, 12, 19].

- John Wesley debated Zinzendorf on September 3, 1741, on his position which denied any growth in grace. Other than Zinzendorf, no other theology has ever held this proposition until the modern hyper-grace advocates “discovered” it.
- Wesley declared, “I cannot find anything in the Bible of the remission of sins past, present and to come.” The “scandal of pre-forgiveness” among Protestants is not much different than the medieval Catholic sale of indulgences.
- Wesley broke with the Moravians over “quietism” or “stillness.” This passive mysti-

cism counseled those who desired God’s blessing to give up the public means of grace. They were not even to pray or to read the Scriptures, nor to attempt to do any good works. Today this is peddled as “effortless” faith. Jesus taught in Matthew 11:12 that faith is “violent.” When compared with the parallel passage in Luke 16:16, I interpret this as a positive action. The violence which Jesus described is: aggressive agonizing, desperate determination, earnestness, fervency, intensity, perseverance, persistency, zeal. The one word which does *not* describe it is “effortless.”

According to Titus 2:11-14 true grace teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age. Those who practice hyper-grace, whether Calvinistic or charismatic, will not be found ready when our God and Savior Jesus Christ returns.

Wesley Stories

Joseph Beaumont Wakeley

Many of the Wesley family were unfortunate in their marriage, and John was among the number. When about fifty years of age Mr. Wesley married a Mrs. Mary Vazeille. She was a widow, intelligent and wealthy. She seemed very religious, and appeared to be admirably adapted to make him an excellent wife. However, she was not what she appeared to be, and he was greatly disappointed. After having caused him twenty years of disquietude she suddenly left, never intending to return. Finding this was her determination, Mr. Wesley wrote in his Journal, 23 January 1771, “I did not forsake her, I did not dismiss her, I will not recall her.”

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Scriptural Holiness in History

Joseph D. McPherson

While in the midst of delivering his message on a certain occasion, a former missionary was extolling the teachings of Mr. Wesley and the positive results he himself had witnessed by the teaching and preaching of the same Scriptural truth. A certain minister interrupted by standing and audibly making claim that we, in our present day, had made improvements on Wesley's teachings. The missionary responded by asking, "Have you, sir, caught the fish that Mr. Wesley caught?" The minister immediately sat down, ending the unexpected confrontation. "Mr.

"All Scripture must be understood by the same Spirit whereby it was written."
—Kempis

Wesley's theology must not have been all that inferior to yours," replied the missionary, "if he caught the fish you haven't."

It has, indeed, been supposed by some that Scriptural holiness as generally taught within the present holiness movement is a marked improvement over all teaching of this subject in former times. For these it is believed that none since the time of the apostles has provided a full and adequate teaching of entire sanctification until the time of modern holiness writings. Put another way, leaders of the modern holiness movement are seen as having a more accurate and scriptural view of entire sanctification than any theologian or Christian movement throughout church history, including the Church Fathers. They would leave us with the conviction that only in modern times has a more perfect understanding of entire sanctification been rendered, almost as if by special revelation in

what they consider to be this more enlightened dispensation.

To such Mr. Wesley has an answer. "Can we," says he, "believe that God left his whole church so ignorant of the Scriptures till yesterday? And if He was pleased to reveal the [true] sense of it now, to whom may we suppose He would reveal it?" He then quotes Kempis who stated that "All Scripture must be understood by the same Spirit whereby it was written." He then quotes Christ Jesus who said, "Them that are meek will he guide in judgment, and them that are gentle will He learn his way." [*Works*, 12:464]

Unlike leaders and founders of the modern holiness movement, Wesley did not sever his teachings from historic Christianity. In one of his letters he wrote, "My father did not die unacquainted with the faith of the Gospel, of the primitive Christians, or of our first Reformers; the same which, by the grace of God, I preach, and which is just as new as Christianity" [*Works* 12:100]. Those who are familiar with Wesley's background know him to have been well schooled in the Scriptures, soundly acquainted with diverse theological persuasions, conversant with the writings of the Church Fathers and preeminent divines of Christian history. His teachings on subjects of holiness, entire sanctification and perfect love were, according to him, far from new. Rather, they were a reemphasis of true and lasting Christian themes found in the old religion of the Bible with witnesses throughout church history.

True it is that some of his detractors sought occasion against him. They thought they had found what they sought in his teaching of Christian perfection. “This is Mr. Wesley’s doctrine!” they cried. “He preaches perfection!” He readily admitted that he did, yet he contended that it was not his doctrine any more than it was the doctrine of Jesus Christ, St. Paul, St. James, St. Peter, and St. John, and “everyone who preaches the pure and the whole gospel. I tell you, as plain as I can speak, where and when I found this. I found it in the oracles of God, in the Old and New Testament” [*Works*, 11:444].

The doctrine of Scriptural holiness as taught and preached by Mr. Wesley and other early Methodist leaders is fully reliable and in perfect accord with the New Testament.

Wesley, as previously mentioned, had not only a command of Scriptural understanding, but was also well acquainted with the writings of the Church Fathers. Of those Fathers who lived and wrote in the first three

centuries, he unapologetically claimed that they were “the most authentic commentators on Scripture, as being both nearest the fountain, and eminently endued with that Spirit by whom all Scripture was given” [*Works*, 10:484].

Observers on all hands do not deny the significant differences in the teachings of second blessing holiness arising from within the modern holiness movement since the days of early Methodism. What is most alarming, however, is the fact that these “differences,” by and large, are found to be *new*. “But,” writes Wesley, “whatever doctrine is *new* must be *wrong*; for

the *old* religion is the only *true one*; and no doctrine can be right, unless it is the very same ‘which was from the beginning’” [“On Sin in Believers,” 3.9]. Mr. Wesley is not alone in this assertion. Theologians have long adhered to the rule that anything new in doctrinal teaching is to be discarded.

In summary we must be mindful of the fact that the doctrine of Scriptural holiness as taught and preached by Mr. Wesley and other early Methodist leaders is fully reliable and in perfect accord with the New Testament, the earliest of Church Fathers and historical divines of reliable orthodoxy up and through the eighteenth century. Again, Wesley did not cut himself off from history. He was able to effectively synthesize all that had been taught in the Scriptures and church history concerning the subject of holiness. Sadly, with the adding of new teachings to this subject, the modern holiness movement cannot claim such scriptural and historical authority. There are aspects of their teaching that were never known before the nineteenth century.

The Wesleyan revival has long been considered exceptional for its length of endurance, its bringing about a moral revolution in society and the gathering of a host of followers effectively and safely swept into the Kingdom. Much of this success can be attributed to the scriptural truth as it was preached and taught by early Wesleyan Methodism. The New Testament underscores the importance of teachers in the Church. All who are in earnest to save their souls must choose their teachers. Let us choose wisely.

Does God Need a Facelift?

Open Season on God

Chuck Goddard

The classical view of God's foreknowledge has been embraced by Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant traditions for centuries. Historically Christians have found deep assurance in the presupposition that God's intellectual capabilities are infinite. The term theologians have used to describe this attribute of God is omniscience. Scholars generally agree that divine foreknowledge means God knows the past, present, and future exhaustively with equal and infinite clarity. This belief in God's foreknowledge has sustained and comforted Christians for generations.

Recently, however, an old idea has been resuscitated to challenge divine foreknowledge and it is now called Open Theism. Succinctly stated, Open Theism denies that God possesses exhaustive foreknowledge of future events. Proponents of Open Theology want to change the historical position of the Church on these core questions:

Open Theism denies that God possesses exhaustive foreknowledge of future events.

“What does God know?” and “When does He know it?” Open Theism gained momentum in the 1990s following the

release of *The Openness of God: a Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, by Clark Pinnock [InterVarsity Press, 1994]. Almost immediately more Evangelical theologians joined Pinnock in this quest to redefine the nature of God. For them, the traditional position of a sovereign, omniscient being portrays God as too coercive and controlling for

our sophisticated iPhone world. It is their contention that the doctrine of God that was hammered out over the first five centuries of the Early Church is inadequate, old and wrinkled. The doctrine of God's foreknowledge needs a makeover. And the adjustments needed are so pronounced this problem cannot be fixed with a simple application of wrinkle cream. God needs a facelift – a radical facelift.

Advocates of Open Theism believe the answer to the outdated historical doctrine of God can be summarized with the following core statements: First, God is open or receptive to what creatures do. This means God does not unilaterally determine the course of events in the universe. Theologian John Sanders writes that God bestowed a measure of autonomy upon the world. And while Sanders will quickly concede that freedom of choice may not apply to all creatures, he asserts it most certainly applies to humans on earth. Since we have autonomy, he avers, we have freedom to act and make choices completely outside of the realm of God's foreknowledge. Sanders contends that our freedom to choose is so radically unpredictable that God has no idea what we are going to do until we initiate an act or a choice [*The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence*, InterVarsity Press, 1998]. Thus God is held hostage by uncertainty until He knows what we are going to do.

Open Theology also identifies God's love as a controlling theological motif. If God's love is His preeminent essence and nature, then divine

sovereignty is antithetical to His love. How can a loving God exercise absolute power over the universe? They believe such unbridled authority is too coercive and controlling. In other words, divine sovereignty by definition violates both God's love and man's free will. A third characteristic of Open Theists is they deny God possesses meticulous providence. Instead, God reacts to the "moves" we make. According to them, the future is at least partly open. At a minimum this means that Open Theology withholds from God the ability to know what we are going

Open Theology is not new. It is an old idea dressed in a new suit of clothes.

to do prior to our actions.

Finally, they believe this fresh interpretation of the nature of God

bestows upon us the crown jewel of what it means to be human: libertarian freedom. The Open Theist believes that we are free to make choices that may be against our nature. For instance, our desire may be to sin, but we can choose not to sin. Open Theology believes this ability to choose cannot be swayed or influenced by external influences – not even divine influence. Since we possess libertarian free-will, God cannot be held responsible for the existence of sin and evil. God is off the hook. After all, how can we blame God for the actions of humanity if He doesn't have fore-knowledge of their actions?

Open Theology is not new. It is an old idea dressed in a new suit of clothes. Some of the core tenets promoted by Open Theists were expressed by Socinus in the 16th Century. Church history identifies him as a heretic whom Wesley opposed. Like Wesley, we must recognize that alterations to the doctrine of God, no matter how insignificant they may appear, can

have profound ramifications upon the entire matrix of one's belief system. All credible theologians believe that the doctrine of God is the fountainhead from which all other truth flows. Yet some professors, such as Nazarene theologians Thomas Oord and Michael Lodahl, enthusiastically promote Open theology. One does not have to be an astute church historian to know that this modern reinterpretation of the Doctrine of God is antithetical to centuries of Christian tradition. It is also in direct conflict with the doctrinal statement found in the *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* [COTN]. For over one hundred years the doctrinal statement on the nature of God has remained essentially unchanged. It reads,

We believe in one eternally existent, infinite God, Sovereign of the Universe. That He only is God, holy in nature, character and purpose, creative and administrative. That He, as God, is Triune in essential being, revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Oord and Lodahl see themselves as theological innovators who are removing ancient barriers that have made God inaccessible and unattractive to our secular and scientific culture. The typical advocate of Open Theology wants to redefine the "omni doctrines." Although the terms omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient have been used for centuries to describe God, some contemporary Nazarene theologians would like to alter (if not eliminate) these historical doctrines. It is their opinion that these doctrines are out of touch with modern times. They want to redefine God by insisting the controlling interpretive category of God's nature is love. They also believe God experiences others in some way analogous to how creatures experience others. They believe both creatures and

God are relational beings, which means, that both God and creatures are affected by others in give-and-take relationships. They present a God who takes calculated risks because God is not all-controlling. They see the future as open and undetermined; not predetermined or fully known by God. Regarding the future, they believe God can only know what is knowable. They assert the future is not knowable to God. God's expectations about the future are partly

Alterations to the doctrine of God can have profound ramifications upon the entire matrix of one's belief system.

dependent upon creaturely actions. Finally, although God is everlasting, God experiences time in a way analogous to how creatures experience time.

Although Christian theology for centuries has defined God as being all-powerful, all-knowing, and unchanging, an element within the theological community of the Nazarene Church insists that these are outdated beliefs. Some COTN theologians reject a sovereign God whose omnipotence knows no rival. To grant God the right to exercise such raw and unbridled power (they believe) gives God a license to be coercive and tyrannical.

In other words, the classical view of divine sovereignty is incompatible with a God whose nature is defined in terms of supreme love. Nazarene advocates of Openness prefer to envision the God of Scripture as one who "shares" His power with us. Lodahl writes, "The God we call omnipotent does not exercise all power; if indeed power has been shared with us." He continues, "This is far more than a matter of quantity, of divvying up power; rather, it may be more accurate to say that the very nature of

divine power is *empowerment of the other*" [*The Story of God*, 60]. With this one statement Lodahl erases centuries of Christian tradition and gives God a radical facelift!

The doctrinal adjustments necessary to accommodate the Open Theology matrix do not end with limiting God's power, however. The COTN Open Theist typically believes that the classical God (who is perceived to know the future exhaustively) is better viewed as having limited knowledge of the future too.

In an article entitled *The Emergence of Open Theology*, Oord contends that if God's primary characteristic is love, then the following assertions about God are true. God cannot know the future. The future is partly open. God takes calculated risks because love is not willing to be controlling of another. God's expectations about the future are partly dependent upon creaturely actions. God experiences time in the same way we do. God experiences others in the same way we experience others.

Oord also believes the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* [out of nothing] must be rejected. Ignoring the fact that this has been a belief of the Church for centuries, in spite of the fact the history is full of great minds who embraced this doctrine that God created the universe out of nothing, Oord claims that the Scriptures do not support such a doctrine. How did all the theological giants of Church history miss what is so obvious to Oord? Oord believes that it should be easily evident to all that the classical view of creation is coercive and violates the principle of divine love.

Open Theism is also a welcomed alternative to the doctrinal disagreements the typical Arminian has with Calvinism. COTN Open Theists believe that if God has constrained foreknow-

ledge (rather than exhaustive foreknowledge) then He cannot be held responsible for the existence of evil in the world. Thus, we really do have freedom of choice.

Advocates of Openness also postulate that if human beings are truly autonomous, they can make decisions and exercise their wills without any input from God. And if God truly doesn't

know (in advance of one's choice) what they will do, then God cannot be held responsible for the deeds and actions of humans. The theological payoff for the Open Theist is two-fold: God cannot be held responsible for the presence (and existence) of evil in the world and humans are totally free. Both of these payoffs provide Arminian solutions to the Calvinistic alternative, but at what expense?

Stops Along the Way to Christ-Likeness

J. Oliver Jones

In 2011 George Barna published a book titled *Maximum Faith*. In it he maps the ten "stops" along the path toward what he calls "wholeness." Here are the results of American adults in their "faith journey." The percentages shown below next to each stop indicate the number of people in America, out of every 100 people, who have not yet progressed to the next stop. In his analysis of the same research, J. D. Walt noted that 89% of the population never progress beyond stop 4. In his words, we need to get on with the second half of salvation.

Stop 1. Has ignorance of the concept or existence of sin. 1%

This simply means that there is only one person in every one hundred persons who have no understanding or concept of sin.

Stop 2. Is aware of and indifferent to sin. 16%

This means that there are sixteen people in every one hundred people who understand what sin is but they are indifferent to sin in their lives. They never progress to the third stop.

Stop 3. Is concerned about the implications of personal sin. 39%

Thirty-nine of every one hundred persons are concerned about sin and its possible implications in their lives, but they never do anything about it – they never progress to the fourth stop.

Stop 4. Confesses sins and asks Jesus Christ to be their Savior. 9%

Nine of every one hundred persons confess their sins and ask Jesus to be their Savior, but then they never go any further. There is no real change in their personal lives or practices. Some of these are not truly born-again, some who are may eventually fall away, and some will make several "trips to the altar" but never experience any real change in their lives.

Stop 5. Makes a commitment to faith activities. 24%

Twenty-four of every one hundred Americans become involved in what Barna calls "faith practices" such as Church attendance, Bible studies, community outreach activities, etc. In other words there is some real change in life practices. Many remain in this state throughout their lives and never go on to a deeper commitment and relationship with Christ.

Stop 6. Experiences a prolonged period of spiritual discontent. 6%

Six of every one hundred people in America reach a point in their Christian walk where they become spiritually discontent with just faith activities. They desire a closer and more intimate relationship with God, but do not pursue it with their whole heart. They remain discontent, but continue to seek fulfillment in Christian activities. They convince themselves there is nothing more until this life ends and heaven is obtained.

Stop 7. Experiences personal brokenness. 3%

Three of every one hundred persons in America reach a point of brokenness before God. They

This place of wholeness is what Wesleyans would call the place of Perfect Love.

acknowledge there is more than what they have experienced. They know it is possible to live in a closer relationship with God. They

understand there are things they must sacrifice or lay aside to acquire this closer walk. But for one reason or another they do not feel they can turn loose of whatever it is that holds them. They never “surrender all” or “die to self.” Those at this stop are good, godly people. They are most likely church leaders, teachers, perhaps even pastors. But they choose to cling to whatever it is that prevents them from total surrender.

Stop 8. Chooses to surrender and submit fully to God: Radical Dependence. 1%

For every one hundred people in America there is one that makes it to this stop. This person does surrender completely to the purpose and

will of God. He or she becomes radically dependent upon God. This person may make what seems to others foolish choices in order to do whatever it is they believe God would have them to do. His or her faith is fixed on the promises and faithfulness of God, not on one’s own abilities. Regardless of personal circumstances, this person’s testimony would be centered on God’s goodness.

Stop 9. Enjoys a profound intimacy with and love for God. 0.5%

This stop represents one-half of one percent of people in America. That means only one person in every two hundred people reaches this place of loving God with all their heart. This is a person who, just as Moses, might be called a *friend of God*. Or as with David it might be said that this person is *a man after God’s own heart*. It would be apparent to all that this person walks consistently and intimately with God.

Stop10. Experiences a profound compassion and love for humanity. 0.5%

It might seem odd that this is the final stop. But if you really think about it, the only way we can ever love another person with a God type of love is to first fully experience that love relationship with God. Again, only one person in every two hundred people ever reaches this place.

I believe this place of *wholeness* which Barna speaks of is what Wesleyans would call the place of *Perfect Love* or *Christian Perfection*. And while it may indeed be a very difficult journey to this place, Barna in his survey believes there are indeed some who achieve *Perfect Love* toward God and toward their fellow man. So, just as the Bible encourages us, we should be

pressing toward that mark, that place of loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. I believe we need

to teach people the possibility and then to help those willing in the process.

REVIEWS

Thomas Jay Oord and Sherri Walker, editors. *Nazarenes Exploring Evolution*. Lexington, KY: SacraSage Press, 2013. 376 pages. ISBN: 978-1937498412

The word “heresy” not only means no longer being wrong; it practically means being clear-headed and courageous. The word “orthodoxy” not only no longer means being right; it practically means being wrong.

Nazarenes Exploring Evolution (NEE) could be accompanied by a subtitle, “The merger of Neo-Wesleyanism and Biologos.” The work is a compilation of 62 brief chapters by various members of the Church of the Nazarene (COTN). While degrees of conviction vary, the authors all embrace the truth of the neo-Darwinian synthesis. And as such they speak with one voice in endorsing the compatibility of evolution and traditional Christianity in general and Wesleyan-holiness theology in particular.

The verb “embrace” is used here because readers of NEE will soon realize that all contributors have made peace with some form of what we might call “hard Darwinism” or transpeciation; vs “soft Darwinism,” or what is often labeled micro-evolution (e.g. mere variation within finches). The point is there no pretense of *exploring*. In whatever areas the essayists may differ, such are inconsequential to their unified “clear-headed and courageous” apologia for evolutionary creationism. No dissenting voices will be heard in this collection (e.g. Dr. Paul Madtes). In fact, not a single reference is made to scholarly works that seriously challenge the theses of NEE [e.g. *Should Christians Embrace Evolution?*, ed. Norman Nevin; *Coming to Grips with Genesis*, eds. Mortenson and Ury]. Unfortunately, Stephen Meyer’s

phenomenal book, *Darwin’s Doubt*, came out just a few months before NEE. Meyer’s work is a sure antidote for anyone over-enamored by NEE. A list of suggested resources will be forthcoming in part two of this review.

I have many close friends in COTN; those who are holding true to holiness, biblical authority, and will unbendingly side with solid exegesis in the face of all the moral waffling in our world. Having said that, theological trendwatchers of higher education know that in recent years some citadels of COTN have drifted to the left theologically. Some years ago at a global COTN conference, General Superintendent Jerry Porter shared his conviction that the denomination was in “theological crisis.”

Such “liberal creep” with its attendant higher critical approach has resulted in a depreciating dismissal of inerrancy, which in turn has steadily led to a handling of the creation and flood narratives that Wesley would scarcely recognize.

One of NEE’s editors, Tom Oord, is widely known for his liberal proclivities. While his resume is impressive and his influence wide, to peruse any of his many publications is to encounter an undisguised promotion of things like open theism, theistic evolution, as well as a disparaging of classic inerrancy. Oord believes the original autographs contain many mistakes of fact and irreconcilable contradictions. What separates Oord from others (like the acerbic pen of Karl Giberson) is his gentle tone. He models a love and persona that I wish all combatants on controversial issues would adopt. [NB:

On June 26, NNU trustees terminated Dr. Oord's position, as the bulge under the carpet had become too large to ignore any longer].

But accommodationism is nothing new. The predictions of Machen, Schaeffer, Lindsell et al, are coming truer than they could have imagined. The last decade has seen many prominent Christian thinkers in academia who have pleaded with their constituents to "accommodate emerging scientific conclusions about the origins of man." Alistar McGrath, Denis Alexander, Bruce Waltke, Karl Giberson, Denis Lamoureux, Tremper Longman, Peter Enns, and Tim Keller are just a few.

Writing on the constant leftward pull in academia in general, R.C. Sproul's words warrant inclusion here:

We have seen countless examples of universities, colleges, and seminaries chartered with a strong commitment to orthodox Christianity, only to erode [into apostasy]." Sproul suggests one key factor seducing such thinkers into conformity is a desire to be intellectually recognized in the academic world; and the other side of the coin being a slavish genuflection to the latest trends in academia. This 'treason of the intellectuals' (often insecure Christian professors who are desperate to be accepted by their peers) results not just in a personal flight from orthodoxy, but in "dragging the colleges, seminaries, and ultimately the churches with them. It is a weighty price to pay for academic recognition.

Where COTN currently fits on the slippery slope – or even if it on it – will be hotly contested. But NEE serves as *exhibit A* that a huge shift has occurred.

Readers of *The Arminian* who plough through NEE, will agree that a standard review would be quiet challenging; each segment of the 373-page tome bearing enough concerns and fallacies to merit individual critique. And since only a full book-length response could suffice, my comments must remain of a very general nature and limited to ten brief points.

1) It is no minor point that the book (which is actually just the tail of a larger project) was funded by the prominent Templeton-funded organization, Biologos, whose raison d'être is to promote the view that God-directed evolution. If you haven't heard of Biologos please see <http://biologos.org/about> and peruse the organization's credo. Keen discernment will be needed to detect the structured ambiguity in Biologos' creed. As with all aberrant teaching through Church history, Biologos exhibits masterful dexterity in sounding and appearing orthodox. Listen carefully, and you'll hear echoes of the Wistar Institute, Spong, Borg, and Crossan. Note tenets #9 and #10 of Biologos in particular. These perfectly capture the viewpoint which NEE authors hold; namely, believing that a god-ordained process of evolution best explains the diversity and interrelation of all life; the creator providentially achieving his purposes via a Darwinian means, with humans on the same biological continuum with all life – sharing a common ancestry with beasts.

2) The book carries an almost "dear diary" flavor, with most participants recounting a chrysalis-like shedding of their cloistered fundamentalist past; breaking free to see the light with acceptance of hard Darwinism. The getaway was usually and allegedly brought on by higher education, mostly at COTN institutions, where the likes of Drs. Michael Lohdahl, Darrel Falk, and Karl Giberson helped so many to see that the assured results of Science and higher criticism trumps a natural reading of the creation and flood accounts. And thus, as we've come to expect time and time again, NEE collectively equates *science* with evolutionary theory, meaning de facto that all those who tend to take the creation narrative at face value must reject contemporary science.

3) We are told that the fundamentalist view of origins allegedly sets up an "either/or scenario;" it's either the Bible and a childlike faith, or science. This (false) dichotomy is reinforced throughout NEE. The Bible, we are told, is fine to learn of God's nature and plan of sal-

vation, but not for understanding the physical world (143); the Christian part of my world doesn't find a seamless concord with the biological part of my world (147). We are implored to move away from a crass literalism and submit to a scientifically informed exegesis; piety must conform to the dictates of academic integrity or the current hemorrhaging of church membership will continue.

Non-conformists are depicted as fearful, suspicious, resistant while theistic evolutionists in COTN are seen as brave, and have joined "the agents of light and truth (233-34). Such is the condescending flavor throughout NEE. Creationists' explanations are seen as outdated, convoluted and contrived ... grasping for straws while strong evidence in support evolution is rapidly mounting (250). Those who continue to side with a face-value reading of the first 11 chapters of Genesis are demeaned for believing that finished products popped into existence. NEE contributors however, are thrilled with a Creator who "interacts" with His creation.

4) NEE laments that many young people have left the denomination/Church because the later is perceived as out of touch with science. Thus, a key motive behind NEE is to remove needless barriers to the Gospel. At face value this goal is admirable, and I too want to show how science and a robust Christian faith are compatible. But to the extent that NEE has spawned additional hurdles, any victory is Pyrrhic at best. For example, when exegesis becomes meaningless, preaching suffers, compromise sets in, and the new face of God is little different than that of the Deist.

And where would the process stop? Apologists for homosexuality, for example, employ a hermeneutical method

that mirrors that of the theistic evolutionist's. The real irony here is that many people have left the Nazarene church because of its compromise on Genesis and related areas. The current reader of course would relish hearing NEE specify exactly at what point they would not follow academic consensus?

Again, we're told numerous times that it's a wooden-headed, stifling crass literalism of Genesis that's off-putting; so many eventually leaving to breathe the fresh air of Darwinian truth. But NEE's assertions here only sway those who aren't aware of conflicting data. Esteemed theologian, Colin Brown, for example writes, "By far the most potent single factor to undermine popular belief in the existence of God in modern times is the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin."

English journalist, Newman Watts, in compiling the volume, *Britain Without God*, was impressed by two things; "One was the tremendous amount of literature available, and the other was the fact that every attack on the Christian faith made today has, as its basis, the doctrine of evolution."

Michael Denton adds, "Today it is perhaps the Darwinian view of nature more than any other that is responsible for the agnostic and skeptical outlook of the twentieth century." And Huston Smith agrees that "more cases of loss of religious faith are to be traced to the theory of evolution ... than to anything else." So, how again is it that Darwinism is drawing people to Church?

(to be continued)

-Thane Ury

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Kenneth J. Collins and Jason E. Vickers, eds. *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey*. Abingdon, 2013. 608 pages. ISBN: 978-1426742316

There have been five annotated editions of John Wesley's standard sermons. Nathaniel Burwash, a Canadian Methodist leader, produced the first such edition in 1881. William P. Harrison worked from the Burwash edition to produce a similar work for Southern Methodists in 1886. Later, Edward Sugden, an Australian, produced a third edition in 1921. It was marred by certain criticisms of Wesley in light of modern psychology and evolutionary theory.

With the completion of the Bicentennial Edition of the sermons of Wesley by Albert Outler in 1987, this has become the new standard for Wesley studies. However, Outler's introductions were primarily historical. The other introductions were primarily theological. Thus, in 1996 my father-in-law, Robert L. Brush, and I gleaned the best from the three previous editions and published them in *The Wesley Workbook*, along with other helpful introductory material. And Dr. Collins wrote the Fore-

word. However, our book did not contain the actual sermons.

In 1991 an anthology of fifty of Wesley's sermons was produced by Outler and Heitzenrater, separate from the Bicentennial Edition of Wesley's Works. Sermons were placed in chronological order.

Now in 2013, Collins and Vickers have provided a fifth option. The text is from the critical edition by Outler, but the introductory notes are by Collins and Vickers. Their one-page introduction to each sermon is both historical and theological. They have arranged Wesley's sermons in a systematic order, reflecting a Wesleyan order of salvation. This edition also supplements the basic fifty-two standard sermons with eight additional sermons by Wesley which serve to provide a more complete overview of Wesley's theology. If you do not have a copy of Wesley's basic sermons, this is the edition to buy.

-Vic Reasoner

Barry W. Hamilton, *The Role of Richard Watson's Theological Institutes in the Development of Methodism After John Wesley*. Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2014. 415 pages ISBN: 978-0-7734-0072-6

This is not a biography on Richard Watson nor is it a summary of his systematic theology. Rather it is an overview of the period following Wesley's death and an analysis of what motivated Watson to write the first Methodist systematic theology.

Watson himself was converted from Calvinism and his theology became the standard textbook for the next fifty years. And the Methodist theologians who followed Watson, such as Samuel Wakefield and Thomas Ralston, were heavily influenced by Watson.

While there is no substitute for reading the primary material, often we read it without understanding the context in which it was written. While I have read Watson's *Institutes*, I confess that I did not know most of what Hamilton has uncovered.

After the death of John Wesley the attacks on Methodism resumed. Faced with empty pews and waning influence, the cry of the Anglican clergy was that the church is in danger. They believed they were threatened by Methodism. Actually their real danger was from deism and ratio-

nalism. The doctrine of the Trinity was especially under attack.

And so Watson produced an apology for Methodists which defined Methodism as apostolic Christianity. He upholds an Athanasian Trinitarianism. While he never used the terms Methodist or Wesleyan in the *Institutes*, he demonstrated that Methodism was in line with moderate Anglicanism, following Richard Hooker. At that point in history, “latitudinarianism” was a low church position which believed that human reason when combined with the illumination of the Holy Spirit was a sufficient guide for determining doctrinal truth.

Hamilton explained, “If Watson had elevated Wesley to a place of prominence in the *Institutes*, Methodism’s enemies would have redoubled their efforts to discredit the movement.” By quoting these sources, instead of Wesley and Fletcher, “After their publication, no one could attack Methodism without simultaneously threatening the doctrines of the Established Church.” Watson produced a type of Protestant scholasticism in which propositional truth was the central concern.

Richard Watson was foremost a preacher. He left the Methodists for eleven years to serve in the Methodist New Connection. It was at the urging of Jabez Bunting that Watson returned to the main Methodist body. Hamilton suggests that Watson may have also written for self-vindication, feeling that he had made a mistake.

Second-generation British Methodists in general, and Bunting in particular, resisted democracy within the main body. Every Methodist sympathetic with democratic reform was eradicated from Methodism. They wanted to establish Methodism as loyal Tories, not as radical republicans. They feared that if they adopted a more democratic polity this could result in democratically determined theology.

Against this backdrop, Adam Clarke had an inflated view of human reason. While this did not lead him per-

sonally into error, he did take the position that the term “Son of God” applies to Jesus Christ *after* the Incarnation. Fearful that this interpretation would open the door to Socinianism and rationalism, Watson wrote *Remarks on the Eternal Sonship of Christ; and the Use of Reason in Matters of Revelation: Suggested by Several Passages in Dr. Adam Clarke’s Commentary on the New Testament* in 1818.

Watson insisted that revelation must supercede reason. Hamilton devotes an entire chapter to explain this controversy. By 1827 the Methodist Conference passed a resolution requiring every candidate for ordination to affirm the eternal sonship of Jesus Christ. Probably at the insistence of Bunting, Watson wrote his theology since the Methodists could not afford a seminary at the time. While Clarke was not heretical in his position, the Methodist leadership was fearful that his emphasis on reason would open the door to liberalism. And some Methodist preachers did adopt heretical positions, as Hamilton documents.

Watson provided a collection of evidence that God has given a revelation, an exhaustive exposition of the doctrines of Scripture, a Protestant theology of the sacraments, and an extensive section on the doctrine of the church which upheld the pastoral office as a stronghold of spiritual supervision.

In 2010 Dr. Hamilton wrote me,

I have been working on a monograph that examines Watson’s *Institutes* for more than seven years. I am determined to give Watson an honored remembrance as Methodism’s first and greatest systematic theologian, still unsurpassed. Richard Watson appears to be the most overlooked, neglected Methodist theologian in historical studies. It took me several years of research to figure out the strategic importance of Watson’s contributions, and they are indeed monumental. Methodism owes a great deal to Mr. Watson, far more than

current Wesleyan scholarship thinks. I have the impression that many Wesleyan scholars today are not interested in Mr. Watson and his *Institutes*. They call them “boring” and “scholastic.” Of course Watson’s contemporaries pointed out the need for judicious editing in their reviews. But Watson was trying to create a course of study for Wesleyan ministers who did their library research on horseback. He was also seriously ill and in tremendous pain before his untimely death at age 51.

Mr. Watson fully deserved his final resting place beside Mr. Wesley, in spite of his enemies who found fault with this. My forthcoming book aims to restore Mr. Watson to an honored remembrance, the “Chrysostom of Wesleyan Methodism.”

While I would complain that his index is inadequate, I want to congratulate Dr. Hamilton on this groundbreaking achievement.

-Vic Reasoner

Pike, John and Rebecca (Producers). *Creation Explorers: Tracking the Flood* [DVD]. Pike Pictures, 2014. 65 minutes <http://www.creationexplorers.com>

WOW! Fantastic! One of a kind. And much, much more. This production is no doubt, hands down, the most outstanding Creation DVD ever produced on flood geology. There are some real reasons for such kudos. Let me explain.

The script for this production was written by a young high school or early college age lady. The script was clearly laid out and it progressed smoothly. She was also the producer along with her father and her sister. And the time from start to finish of this production took six years. Research, planning, filming, writing, editing, and the young people themselves, all deserve a five-star rating, and every reward the movie industry has to offer. Of course being Christian only counts in glory.

The geology that they show cased is in our back yard so to speak. It is located in the areas of western Montana, northern Idaho, eastern Washington, and on into the eighty mile long Columbia River Gorge. The event was the great Missoula Flood which occurred a few hundred years or less after the Ice Age. The lake behind that dam was as large as two of our Great Lakes. The flood broke through a dam of ice. This water poured through eastern Washington finally forcing its way through the Columbia River Gorge on its way to the ocean. Estimates have this flood traveling at between 60 to 80 mph, and several

hundred feet deep for about two weeks. It was a hundred or so years before this catastrophic event was discovered that the idea of gradualism or better know as uniformitarianism began to control scientific thought.

It is a fast moving video. The DVD progresses beautifully by comparing the land features with that of Monument Valley, Canyonlands, the Grand Canyon, and other such places around the world. This team of young aspiring scientists went to some of the above places and filmed their own footage rather than getting something canned. These locations contrasted nicely with the geology that was left behind by the Missoula flood. And after viewing this in its context one only wonders why gradualism still has any force at all in the study of geology.

They also included many creation scientists. Among them is my favorite Mike Oard. Mr. Oard just recently completed an outstanding DVD about the same flood too. Still another whom I greatly admire Dr. Steve Austin, of Mt St. Helen fame and his discoveries there, was also interviewed several times. Had they only interviewed these two creation scientists along with their format, it would still have been just as awesome.

As their ship, Creation Explore CRV-1, cruised up the river they stopped at many different locations and showed the geology of the gorge up close. These young

ambitious scientists took their cameras with them as they climbed and explored the scars this flood left behind and its dramatic impact on that gorge.

They also had aboard their adventure ship a small Piper J3 Cub. They used that to get aloft to show the formidable impact that the two week Missoula flood had on carving the gorge into a wider channel. This neat little plan was used at other points along the way. Included were many aerial photographs and videos. It was the use of

these that showed the power of what water can do. And this flood had all the elements it need to recreate the landscape in eastern Washington. As a matter of fact, for being young and inexperienced in the art of movie making, this group of young enterprising scientists mastered the ability of bringing out the beauty of God's creation perfectly in this DVD. Their video photography is second to none.

-Dennis Hartman

Clark H. Pinnock and John D. Wagner, eds. *Grace for All: The Arminian Dynamics of Salvation*. Eugene, OR: Resource, 2015. 352 pages. ISBN: 978-1498200127.

Over the past few years we have seen a resurgence in Calvinism. Much of this can be pointed to the number of Calvinistic books that have been on the market – from John Piper to John MacArthur. The number of books that promote a Calvinistic worldview has caused an uprise in the number of new Calvinists. The response among Arminians has been slow but is starting to gain some speed. Arminian publications are coming available and those who wrestle with the theology of Calvinism will no doubt have questions and will want answers.

For that, I am thankful for the recent publication of the book *Grace For All*. Edited by John Wagner and formally by the late Clark Pinnock, the book seeks to build a case for an Arminian understanding of salvation. With theological topics ranging from the doctrine of election to the doctrine of the atonement, the book seeks to bring together various Arminian theologians of multiple backgrounds to set up an Arminian view of the doctrine of salvation.

The book opens with the God-centered theology of Arminianism written by Roger Olson. Olson's own book, *Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities* was one of the recent books on Arminianism. This chapter focuses on the reality that Arminianism is not "Pelagian"

theology or "man-centered" as so many Calvinists like to state. Using the works of Arminius, Olson builds his case that Arminianism is in fact very much focused on God. From beginning to end, the doctrine of salvation in Arminianism makes God our center and our focus. Salvation belongs to the Lord (Jonah 2:9) and this is true of biblical Arminianism.

Vernon Grounds' chapter on God's universal salvific grace follows. The chapter focuses on the will of God to save the world as contrasted to Calvinism wherein God only desires to save the elect that He chose. The chapter reveals that the very heart of God is to save people. This is a point that all Christians agree on but Arminianism goes further by stating that God's heart is not just to save the lost sinner but He has actually provided for their salvation with the death of His Son.

One of my favorite chapters in this book was by Glen Shellrude. The chapter focuses on problematic readings of the New Testament if read through a Calvinist sense. Shellrude shows the inconsistency in the Calvinist view of divine determinism if in fact divine determinism is true. The chapter wrestles with the concept of free will as opposed to the compatibilistic view brought forth by Calvinist theologians. In essence, do people have a free

choice with regard to sin or righteousness? The Arminian understanding is yes. The Calvinist answer is no. Calvinists argue that people make free choices only so far as their nature is determined by God so that a person chooses based on their nature which is sinful. Yet if God is sovereign in the Calvinist sense, then He has determined whatsoever comes to pass and even the sinful choices of men.

The mystery is how is God not guilty of sin since He cannot sin nor does He tempt to sin (James 1:12-15)? Arminians answer by pointing to the Scriptures and holding firmly the concept of prevenient grace where God works in the heart of man to do His will. God has given mankind free will yet He still exercises control over His creation. Thus while men freely killed Jesus, God willed it so yet He did not cause them to sin but rather He allowed the sin foreknowing it would take place based on their free will decisions (Acts 2:22-23). The divine determinism of Calvinism is not necessary when we understand the biblical concept of God's prevenient grace.

The book also features chapters dealing with the intent and extent of the atonement (Robert Picirilli), conditional election (Jack Cottrell), and deals with predestination passages in both the Old and New Testament. J. Matthew Pinson has a chapter on Jacobus Arminius from a "reformed Arminian" perspective in which he argues that Arminius is in line with the Reformers and their views.

Vic Reasoner's chapter on John Wesley's doctrines on the theology of grace focuses on what Wesley taught concerning not just Calvinism but why he rejected it. Dr. Reasoner then shows the grace-centered nature of Wesley's theology by focusing on three main doctrines

emphasized by Wesley regarding salvation. First, Wesley taught preliminary grace. The biblical concept of prevenient grace kept Wesley from being Pelagian in his theology. Wesley emphasized that prevenient grace is a temporary condition and not a permanent one. God draws sinners to Himself by His grace. The Spirit of God works in the hearts of sinners to draw them to salvation (John 16:8-11). Because of the nature of our depravity, mankind does not choose freely to follow Christ and obey the gospel. Instead, our "free" will is free only to sin apart from the grace of God. Secondly, Wesley taught justifying grace wherein God saves the sinner who meets the condition that He has stated and that is faith (Mark 16:16). This work is not coercive but can be resisted (Acts 7:51). Wesley emphasized that we are justified through faith and not unto faith (Rom 5:1). This saving faith in the work of Jesus Christ assures us of our salvation (Rom 8:14-16). Lastly, Wesley emphasized perfecting grace. This teaching of Wesley has been largely misunderstood as Reasoner points out. Wesley wasn't teaching "sinless perfection" but rather an "ongoing life of wholeness." Even Calvinists have praised Wesley for his emphasis here on sanctification. The fact is that God has promised to save us from sin and its power and has given us promises of Christian perfection (2 Cor 7:1). Wesley himself did not use the term "sinless perfection" but instead "perfect love" where the believer loves God perfectly (1 Thess 5:16-18).

I must say that this book is a welcomed addition to books on Arminianism. I appreciated that the editors focused not just on Arminian theology but also showed how it contrasts to Calvinism. The Calvinist exegesis is shown to be faulty based on the Calvinist presuppositions. There is much to learn from here in this book and I am thankful to God for it.

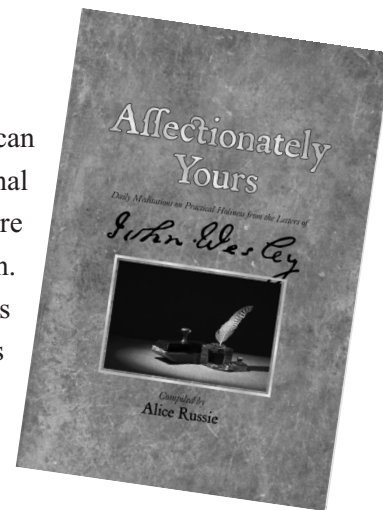
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