

# The Arminian

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## The Need for a Fresh Marriage of Word and Spirit in the Church

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Mark Horton

The history of revivals in Christianity teach us that the fresh outpouring of God upon his people have been times that have joined a reverence for the Word of God and an openness to the Holy Spirit. One without the other typically produces extremes. The Word alone is the letter that kills and usually results in some form of legalism and works righteousness. An exalted view on the intellectual abilities of men can lead to pride and a self-dependence that grieves the Spirit and causes God to withdraw his blessing.

On the other hand, an emphasis on the Spirit without a proper dependence on the Word of God has led to personal experience being the highest authority in one's life. I remember a college professor who related dealing with a person in one of his churches about her conduct. He referred her to several passages of Scripture to which she replied, "I don't care what the Bible says, this is my experience of God." That attitude leads to the church living as Israel of old when there was no king. "Everyone did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 21:25).

The Word is our authority from which we derive our doctrine and rule of practice. The Spirit is given to supernaturally change the heart of man and lead him into all truth — not truth apart from the Word but truth in subjection to the Word. God's enabling power allows one to rise to the level of the Scriptures in his day-to-day living.

The loss of this God-ordained wedding has led to much of the weakness of the twenty-first century church. The Pentecostal movement tends toward an emphasis on the Spirit to the neglect of the Word. Emotional experiences become the bedrock upon which a person builds their profession of faith. This leads to an emphasis on ecstatic utterances, healings, prophetic proclamations, casting out demons and even greater extremes such as the Toronto blessing in which people make noises similar to animals or experience "holy laughter." One who has had these experiences uses them as "proof" of God's blessing upon their life. Yet the movement is riddled with the lives of preachers who fell into sin.

In his evaluation of the "Toronto Blessing," David Pawson expressed hope that there would be a *fourth wave*, in which the Word and the Spirit would be integrated as they were in the New Testament. He wrote, "Now I fear that Word and Spirit are drifting apart again, with some seeking the Spirit but less interested in Scripture; others are returning to the Bible but shying away from direct encounters with the Spirit."

It was the words of our Lord himself who told us that in the end many would seek entrance into heaven on the basis of their many mighty works but would be rejected on the grounds of failing to do the will of God in living a holy life. A thoughtful reading and a courageous preaching of the truth as revealed in the

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Word of God would soon heal these extremes. God wants to engage our minds as well as our emotions. Doctrine is necessary and so is experience. Charles Wesley described this integration of heart and mind:

Unite the pair so long disjoined,  
Knowledge and vital piety:  
Learning and holiness combined,  
And truth and love, let all men see.

Another extreme tends to occur among Calvinists. I suspect that much of this is the result of observing the extremes that those who neglect the Word have exemplified. The cover article for the September 2006 issue of *Christianity Today* reveals that there is a revival of Calvinism among young people. Most of them have only known seeker-sensitive and charismatic churches who tended to avoid doctrine. Yet these kids are attracted to a message that offers serious answers. For too long youth ministry has been little more than fun and games, but there is a dramatic change in philosophy in youth ministry. Now John Piper advises youth pastors who have discovered an intellectual Calvinism to get permission to teach their newfound convictions — even in Wes-

leyan-Arminian churches.

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**Unless we begin to stand for something, our congregations will fall for anything.**

Yet R. C. Sproul, in *The Holiness of God*, emphasized transcendence, trauma, and

struggle, concluding with Luther's phrase which described the Christian as *simul justus et peccator* (simultaneously righteous and sinful). He made no reference to sharing in God's holiness (Heb 12:10) or being made partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). B. B. Warfield described the Calvinistic emphasis as "miserable-sinner Christianity." He wrote, "Though blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, we are still in ourselves just 'miserable sinners': 'miserable sinners' saved by grace to be sure, but 'miserable sinners' still, deserving in ourselves nothing but everlasting wrath."

Wesleyan-Arminian pastors have been schooled to soft-peddle doctrine in order to attract larger crowds. Yet they may wake up to find their crowd has gone elsewhere in order to find some content. I believe the reason Calvinism looks so good is that we have no knowledge of our own heritage. Classic Wesleyan-Arminian theology can adequately rebut the tenets of Calvinism. Yet doctrine became a dirty word and now false teachings are seeking to make

proselytes of our own converts. Unless we begin to stand for something, our congregations will fall for anything.

As is typical of human nature, our reaction to an extreme usually takes us to another one. It is truly ironic to hear an exposition on John chapter 3 and believe that one is to attain the new birth which is "of the Spirit and not the will of man" just because we read it and say we believe it. No amount of accuracy in preaching on the new birth can substitute for the transformation of the heart that must occur on an individual basis as the person interacts with God. Each one of us must be born of the Spirit. Exposition and experience must unite together to say, "Amen."

Dispensationalism teaches that the baptism of the Spirit is a "non-experiential work of the Spirit." They teach that the believer can be regenerated, indwelt, sealed and baptized by the Spirit without necessarily being conscious of the Spirit. Thus, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not an experiential, but a positional truth and the only assurance of salvation is the rational acceptance of certain propositional truths.

We must have more than an intellectual exercise at church. Our learning must be translated into living. The Holy Word becomes holy life. Here begins the rule of God in the individual's life. We cannot hope to change our culture without the power of a holy life that is the result of a union of Word and Spirit in our lives. Without the Word, we live with a religious moral relativism where we are led by our own "hunches" as to what pleases God in our varying circumstances. Without the Spirit, we are sterile exponents of a truth that still waits to be experienced. We will begin to see an impact of God on those around us when we have been given over to a life filled with the Spirit and the Word. Stephen, the first Christian martyr was "a man full of God's grace and power" (Acts 6:8) and as he preached, his opponents, "could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke" (v10).

We will never transform culture by compromising with it. Our churches have sought to be seeker sensitive and sinner friendly to the point we have lost our God-given distinctives. The power and courage we lack awaits us in the reuniting of those things that God has joined together. As long as they are apart we will be married to the spirit of our age in an anemic profession of faith that leaves our lives little different than those around us.

### Prevenient Grace

The word “prevenient” is based upon two Latin words which mean “to come before.” While this is not the way in which we normally use the word “prevenient” or “prevent,” for our purposes in this article we will use the original meaning of this word. Thus prevenient or preliminary grace refers to the operation of God’s grace before we turn to God. Implied is the concept that God’s drawing grace precedes the human response of faith. John Wesley asserted, “Natural free-will, in the present state of mankind, I do not understand: I only assert, that there is a measure of free-will *supernaturally* restored to every man, together with that *supernatural* light which ‘enlightens every man that cometh into the world.’”

This dynamic is found in such passages as: Genesis 6:3; Psalm 51:10-12; 80:3; 85:4; 119:18-20; Isaiah 65:1-2; Jeremiah 31:18-19; Zechariah 4:6; Luke 24:25; John 1:9-13; 6:44, 65; 12:32; 15:5; 16:8-11; Acts 5:31; 8:16; 9:4-18; 10:35; 11:18; 13:43; 16:14-16; 18:10, 24-6; 19:3-4; 22:16; Romans 2:4, 14; 5:6-10, 15-16; 7:16, 22; 10:8-10, 14-15; 10:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Corinthians 3:5; 6:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-8; 5:14; Philippians 2:13; Titus 2:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 4:19.

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### God's drawing grace precedes the human response of faith.

When the Methodist *Discipline* was revised in 1804, one preacher moved to strike out the word “preventing” and replace it with the word “assisting.” Thomas Coke rose to his feet, when the man finished, and asked at the top of his voice, “Where am I? In a Methodist Conference? I thought so, but have we turned Pelagians? Do we think that we can get along in our natural depravity with a little assistance, without preventing grace?” Coke insisted that the proposed change in words would ruin the Articles of Religion which assert the utter inability of anyone to do anything toward personal salvation except as God’s grace through Christ prevents. Coke declared that he would die for that word “preventing.”

This doctrine of the holy Scriptures is a very comforting and encouraging truth when properly under-

stood. It helps us to understand God’s love for sinners and helps us to understand sinners as well. In prevenient grace we see God loving, caring, and working in a sinner’s life, leading him to repentance, sometimes tenderly, sometimes strongly, more or less as he is able to hear. Through this the loving kindness of our Savior is shown!

In John Wesley’s sermon, “On Working Out Our Salvation,” he declared, “God worketh in you; therefore you *can* work: Otherwise it would be impossible. If He did not work, it would be impossible for you to work out your own salvation.”

Most church members today think if they feel religious or enjoy going to church that they are most certainly a real Christian. This, of course, is not true. Before anyone is converted to God, or born again from above, the Holy Spirit of God must move upon his heart to acknowledge his sins and turn from them. Many think of this as the new birth, but the scripture calls this repentance. Some even think one is born again before they can repent or believe the gospel. However, this is not scriptural. The scripture says, “repent and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). Repentance precedes believing the gospel. This is prevenient grace. However, this drawing is not irresistible grace. As Colin Williams has observed, Wesley “broke the chain of logical necessity by which the Calvinist doctrine of predestination seems to flow from the doctrine of original sin, by his doctrine of prevenient grace.”

Wesley wrote, “Salvation begins with what is usually termed (and very properly) *preventing grace*, including the first wish to please God, the first dawn of light concerning his will, and the first slight transient conviction of having sinned against him. All these imply some tendency toward life, some degree of salvation, the beginning of a deliverance from a blind, unfeeling heart, quite insensible of God and the things of God. Salvation is carried on by *convincing grace*, usually in the Scripture termed *repentance*, which brings a larger measure of self-knowledge, and a farther deliverance from the heart of stone.”

Jesus said, “No man can come to me, unless the Father draw Him” (John 6:44). Some of the early Meth-

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odists called this “conviction of sin” the “drawings of the Father.” This preliminary grace or prevenient grace is absolutely necessary to salvation. Many today “accept Christ” or the Christian message and skip this part, because this is the way it is presented by the preachers. “Accept Christ” is the message. Repentance and godly sorrow for sin is seldom mentioned. Consequently our churches are filled with religious sinners, whose lives are only slightly changed by the gospel.

They still lie occasionally; still become angry to the point of being out of control; curse and swear. They are, at times, dishonest, rude, and love the world. The disturbing part of all this is that Galatians 5:19-21 tells us that those who manifest the works of the flesh in their lives are not Christians and shall not

inherit the kingdom of God. Then these people are identified by sins such as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness which is sexual sins, idolatry or the love of the world,

sorcery or astrology, hatred, strife, envy or bitterness and jealousy, fits of anger, strife which stems from anger and resentment, dissension, divisions and false teachings, envy, murders (including abortion), drunkenness, reveling or orgies. They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. They are not Christians! While few commit all of these sins, we can find all of these among nominal church members.

We know they are not true Christians, but there is another group who fear God, and yet are not truly born again either. They are sincere and at least try to be Christians. They live in the seventh chapter of Romans. “When I would do good, evil is present with me” (Rom 7:21). Romans 7 is not the true Christian experience, but a person “under conviction,” trying to overcome sin.

Many popular Bible teachers, who have the power to do much harm or much good, say this is the true Christian experience, but they are sadly mistaken and do much harm by taking this position. The man in Romans 7 is living out the life of one influenced by prevenient grace, “the grace that goes before the new birth.”

We can see many changes in a sinner’s life before he receives saving faith and the new birth. When the Spirit moves upon a sinner, convincing him of sin,

his first reaction is to reform his life. He begins to attend church and in many ways change his life style. Some go to great lengths in reformation before the new birth experience; others not quite so far. One may even attend church regularly, pay his tithe, “amen” the preacher, pray daily, read the Scripture daily, pray with sinners, enjoy good preaching and singing, and yet be short of the new birth. Thus we see the importance of understanding this part of the “working of the Spirit,” lest we think we have arrived when we have not. The new birth is accompanied by a more or less constant assurance of sins forgiven and victory over sin. When we properly understand this, it keeps us from despair. We know that God loves us even when we discover we are short of the new birth. This does not mean we are hypocrites or insincere, but that we mistakenly thought we were born again when we were not. Some have upon acknowledging this, confessed it and passed immediately into true saving faith and the new birth. To face this honestly will help us to locate ourselves. In order to set our spiritual goals, it is helpful to know where we are now. Our goal should be a constant assurance of the forgiveness of sins and victory over sin.

Surely there are sincere, honest people who think they are born again, but at best are only awakened. They do not have any assurance and frequently lapse into sin and think their need is the second work of grace or sanctification, when the need is to be truly born of the Spirit. Knowing and understanding this makes us more loving and understanding of others who have not yet arrived. We see them as souls seeking after God, that perhaps they might feel after Him and find Him. A minister especially needs this understanding that he might properly lead his people into the real experience of the new birth.

Romans 8 reveals the condition of one who is born again. He walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. This chapter also reveals to us that he who does not have the Spirit is none of His. My concern and purpose is to help awaken those who think they are saved and are instructed that they are truly Christians when the truth is they have only been awakened to the fact that they are sinners and need to be saved, like the man in Romans 7. They are sincere, but keep falling into sin of various kinds from time to time. Usually the same sin over and over, not knowing there is deliverance from sin through Christ.

I have been around church folk all my life. I was born and raised in the strictest sect of the Pharisees. I

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have become convinced the problem among even good people is they do not go on to the new birth, but stop short thinking that being religious is good enough. Consequently they fall into the same sins over and over. They are content to live and die in this condition, not knowing there is a better way. Yes, my friend, there is deliverance from the sinning and repenting of Romans 7. You can receive the Spirit

and the result will be that the fruit of the Spirit follows. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. They that are Christ's and have His Spirit, have crucified the flesh with its affection and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25).

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## JEWISH FEASTS and the PLAN of GOD

Vic Reasoner

All Jewish males were required to appear before the Lord in Jerusalem for three major feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Exod 23:14-17; 34:18-23; Deut 16:16). However, Leviticus 23 deals with the Sabbath and five feasts. In his reference Bible, Scofield listed seven great religious feasts, but Passover and Unleavened Bread were one seven-day feast. The feast of Firstfruits and the feast of Weeks were one and the same (Exod 34:22).

Two feasts came in the Spring, which was the beginning of the Jewish sacred calendar and the day of their Exodus. The month in which these feasts occurred was first called "Abib," which meant "spouting" or "green ears." Three feasts came in the Fall, which was the beginning of the Jewish civil year. After Rosh Hashanah, "The head of the year" which was ushered

in by trumpets, came the Day of Atonement.

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### *The feast of trumpets symbolizes a future harvest of souls.*

In general, Scofield attempted to divide these feasts around the first and second advents of

Christ, making the last three future. He interpreted trumpets as the regathering of Israel, the day of Atonement as the salvation of Israel, and tabernacles as the millennium. But unless we accept dispensationalism's dual plan of salvation, a universal atonement has already been made at the cross. Since the Day of Atonement fell between trumpets and tabernacle in the Jewish calendar, this means trumpets is associated with Christ's *first* advent. This leaves only the ingathering of tabernacles yet to be fulfilled.

Albert Edersheim connected the feast of tabernacles with Revelation 7:9-10 and said it is the only type in the Old Testament which has not yet been fulfilled. He connected the feast of tabernacles with the lat-

ter-day glory described in Zechariah 14:16-21, which describes the conversion of all nations. Solomon's temple and the descent of the Shechinah glory of God occurred during this feast (1 Kings 8; 2 Chron 7). Every year during this feast the high priest poured a vessel of water from the Pool of Siloam over the temple altar, praying for continued rain and blessing. It was the last day of this feast that Jesus prophesied in John 7:37-39 that rivers of living water would flow after the Holy Spirit was given. Only through the drawing of this Spirit will an innumerable host finally be gathered.

Some dispensationalists, such as Malcolm Biernes, have claimed the feast of trumpets symbolized the rapture of the Church, tying 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 with Rosh Hashanah, while the feast of tabernacles symbolized the millennium. It was also on this basis that Edgar Whisenant predicted the rapture for September, 1988, then September, 1989. However, these passages describe the resurrection, not a secret rapture some seven years before the return of Christ.

The feast of trumpets is incorporated in Revelation 8-9, announcing the establishment of Christ's kingdom and millennial reign at his *first* advent. Thus, the feast of trumpets does not symbolize a gathering out or rapture, but the feast of tabernacles does symbolize an ingathering or harvest of souls.

Actually all three major feasts centered around harvest. On the day after Passover a sheaf of barley was brought to the priest and held up or waved before the Lord as an act of gratitude. Until this act was completed the harvest could not begin. Seven weeks later, firstfruits was the wheat harvest. Enough wheat was now ripe that two loaves of bread were brought before the Lord and waved in thanksgiving. It was called *firstfruits* because it occurred in the Spring

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and there was more to come. The third feast came in the fall when *everything* had been harvested. For seven days they brought burnt offerings, grain offerings, sacrifices, drink offerings, and free will offerings. They were promised if they kept covenant that they would still be eating from last year's harvest when they would have to make room for the new harvest (Lev 26:10). Palm branches were waved before the Lord. Each family built what could be described as a booth, a tabernacle, or brush arbor and lived in it during this time. The significance of this construction was that God tabernacled among them. He had promised to walk among them and that he would be their God and they would be his people (Lev 26:11-12). It is God's plan that this great ingathering and indwelling will happen on a world scale, not for a week but for a thousand years.

When we turn to Revelation 7:1-8 we have here depicted the firstfruits which were gathered at Pentecost (compare to 14:4). But John moves from the beginning of the church to the end of the church, or

from Spring to Fall, and 7:9-17 depict the feast of ingathering or harvest.

The feast of trumpets is incorporated in Revelation 8-9, announcing the establishment of Christ's kingdom and millennial reign at his *first* advent. Notice the last trumpet does not sound until 11:15 and it proclaims a past, not future event. Thus, the seventh trumpet of Revelation does not correspond to the last trumpet which Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15:52 or the trumpet of 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Therefore, the feast of trumpets does not symbolize a gathering out or rapture, but the feast of tabernacles does symbolize an ingathering or harvest of souls. A proper understanding of the great plan of God, as typified in the Jewish calendar, is that atonement has been made (Passover), the Spirit has been given (Pentecost), and we live in anticipation of world revival (Tabernacles).

[Excepted from *A Fundamental Wesleyan Commentary on Revelation*, pp. 273-275].

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## BENSON ON JUSTIFICATION and CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

Joseph Benson

### THE LIBERTY of the JUSTIFIED

In the common course of reading, I have been looking over Mr. Wesley's former Journals again, and as I proceeded I could scarcely avoid drawing the conclusion, that many of us have departed in doctrine and experience from the faith to which Mr. Wesley and others then bore their testimony. Have we not, to

leave room for a second blessing, set justification too low, by allowing that a person may be justified from all things, who has neither

the witness nor fruits of the Spirit, neither peace, sensible peace with God, nor power over inward sin? Or if we affirm that all must have these at first, as evidences and fruits of justification; do we not allow many to think they are in a justified state, who are now, and have been for many years, as truly devoid of these, as if they had never received them? And if so, do we not mislead our hearers and cry, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace?" There is no peace to the earthly, sensual, and devilish; to the proud, the

passionate, the covetous; to the carnally-minded, the lovers of the world, the unholy. And if we encourage such, directly or indirectly, to believe that they are justified, and of course children of God; do we not encourage them to believe that without holiness they may see the Lord? For certain it is, he that is a child of God hath everlasting life. If, therefore, I teach that a man may be justified, and yet carnal, unholy, and unrenewed, I teach that a man may be carnal, unholy, and unrenewed, and yet dwell with God. I doubt not that there is weak, as well as strong faith, and that a man is made a babe in Christ before he is a young man or father; but I ask, whether any are properly and savingly Christ's who have not crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts? Whether they are so in Christ, as to be free from condemnation, who walk after the flesh, not after the Spirit; who are not new creatures; the Spirit of life from Christ Jesus having not made them free from the law of sin and death? Hath not Jesus assured us, if he shall make us free, we shall be free indeed? Hath not St. Paul confirmed his Master's declaration, affirming, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty?" And hath

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*Have we not set justification too low?*

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not St. John borne the same testimony, in declaring, "He that is born of God overcometh the world, and does not commit sin?" And in the mouth of these three witnesses, is it not established, that it is a greater thing than many imagine to be truly justified, and made the children of God?" [Letter from Joseph Benson to John Pawson, 27 April 1780; James MacDonald, *Memoirs of the Rev. Joseph Benson* (New York: N. Bangs & T. Mason, 1923), p. 81].

*The following essay by Benson was published in The Arminian Magazine the following year. At this time John Wesley was still the editor, although Benson would become the editor from 1803-1821. Benson*

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**No bounds can be set to the love of God. Those who love him with all their heart may have their vessel enlarged, so as to contain more love.**

*used the terms "fill," "receive," and "baptize" interchangeably with reference to salvation and entire sanctification. Kenneth Collins believes the phrase "animal nature," as used in this essay refers to the carnal nature.*

*While, on the one hand, Benson uses the word "extirpate" which means to eradicate or root out, Benson seems to understand this eradication as a moment-by-moment deliverance which must be maintained through watchfulness.*

### THOUGHTS on PERFECTION

I have long thought of offering a few Remarks on a certain subject; but from a conviction of my ignorance, and want of experience in such deep things of God, I have deferred my design till now: and I should probably have deferred it longer, had not the many instances of misconduct in the Professors of Christian-Perfection convinced me, that it was highly necessary some farther steps should be taken, to prevent such abuse of one of the most precious doctrines of the Gospel.

How these abuses might gradually prevail, even in persons who had experienced a high degree of grace, is easy to conceive. The Enemy might first tempt them to look at their great attainments: and this, not with a view to lay them low, under a sense of their great unworthiness, and inflame their gratitude to Him who had done so much for them; but to excite self-complacency in them. They might then yield to the temptation, and grieve the holy Spirit of God. If they did, his light would be obscured, and his comforts withdrawn. Now this should have alarmed them: but being confi-

dent that all sin was rooted out of their hearts, they were not alarmed; but rather sunk into a lukewarm and indolent state. Hence, *false peace*, and its inseparable attendant, *unwatchfulness*. The Spirit of God being now more grieved than before, withdraws his sacred influences. Thus being stripped of their strength, they became weak as other men, and open to every temptation. They were then led captive by the Devil at his will, and fell into outward sin.

Now, if it was in some such way, that several, for whom God had done such great things, have fallen; if they gave way, first to Pride, next to Unwatchfulness, and then to Lukewarmness and Indolence, till, being again forsaken of God, they were capable of committing Uncleanness with greediness; it will not be difficult to point out what steps ought to be taken, in order to prevent this deplorable evil.

And first, granting, as we certainly must, if we believe the Bible, that the Lord Jesus was manifested to *take away our sin, all our sins*, and to *destroy the works of the devil*; and allowing *Christian-Perfection* to imply an *extirpation* of all sin; it is necessary, in order to prevent those who experience it from being puffed up, to inform them in what sense sin is, and in what sense it is not rooted out. To inform them, that though they are now freed from every sinful temper, word and work; from every desire and pursuit contrary to the love of God; yet, first, their thoughts and affections, dispositions, and actions cannot bear to be examined by the strict justice of God. Second, That being still in the body, the seat of various animal appetites and passions, which we cannot lay aside till death, they have still their animal nature, (as well as the devil and the world) to guard against. And that therefore, thirdly, The whole of that deliverance from sin, depends on the constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost; who if they grieve, so that he withdraw from them, their animal nature, (to say nothing of the devil and the world) will again prevail; and they will find all their corruptions, re-enter.

Now as the first of these observations lays a deep foundation for Humility, so do the two following for Watchfulness; for as He has great reason to be *humble*, who is every day coming short of the glory of God, even of his glorious likeness, and perfect will; so has He great need to *watch* continually, who is not only surrounded with enemies from *without*, but has an animal nature *within*; whose appetites and passions have been, and, when not restrained by grace, will ever be sources of much sin and misery in the world. And if I mistake not, the following particulars

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will strike at the root of Lukewarmness and Indolence, so incident to those who think they have attained, and will lay a foundation equally firm for fervency of spirit and diligence in action; for hungering and thirsting after Righteousness, and for laboring for the meat that endureth to eternal life, as though we had hitherto attained nothing.

Granting, secondly, As we certainly must, that the Lord hath promised to *circumcise our heart, so that we shall love him with all our heart*: ought not those who experience it, to be continually taught, that *no bounds* can be set to the love of God; but that those who love him with *all their heart*, may have their vessel still enlarged, so as to contain *more love*; and that those who love Him *perfectly*, may love him *more perfectly* still? Thus will the flame of holy Desire be kept alive in their soul; and, not withstanding all they have received, they will still be able to say,

A point my good, a drop my store,  
Eager I ask, and pant for more.

Again, thirdly, Granting it is the will of God that we should be *perfect* Christians, having in us all the mind of Christ, and walking as he also walked; ought not those who profess this Perfection, to be put in mind, that God hath predestinated them to be conformed, *entirely conformed*, to the image of his Son; so as to be *perfect images* of Jesus Christ, even as He is the *perfect* and *express image* of his Father; to represent the Lord Jesus to the world, even as He represents the Father to the Church? That as all the Perfections of the indwelling God-head shine forth with effulgent brightness through the man Christ Jesus, so all the graces that adorned his humanity may appear conspicuously in their temper and conduct: discovering to all, that they have not only *Christ in them* the hope of glory, but are arrived at the measure of the stature of his fullness, being *perfect men* in Him? And ought they not therefore to be assured that they still need to adopt the Apostle's words, "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfected," inasmuch as they have not attained as great a degree of humility, meekness, love, etc. as dwelt in the Son of God, and

are not yet as *complete in the whole will of God*, and as *perfect, and entire, lacking nothing*, as he was; much less are they *entirely holy, as he that hath called them is holy*; and *perfect as their Father in heaven is perfect*: and that therefore having not yet arrived at the mark set before them, they have as much need as ever to forget the things behind, and press on to the things before, till being matured in grace, they are fit to receive the prize of their high calling?

Once more: Allowing, what (I think) neither Reason nor scripture forbids us to allow, that God *may*, and that he often *does, instantaneously* so baptize a soul with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as to purify it from all dross, and refine it like gold, so that it is *renewed in love*, in *pure* and *perfect* love, as it never was before; yet ought not those who have experienced this, to be repeatedly told, 1. That there is a further, and still further renewal to be experienced *day by day*, 2 Cor 4:16. As long as we are in the body, even a gradual growing up into Christ our living Head in all things, till we are filled with the fullness of God: and 2. That they have got *in them* this power from on high, that they may fulfil the will of God in *all good works*: that they are filled with this sap of grace, in order to this grand end, that they may bring forth *outward fruit*; and therefore, 3. That they ought chiefly to judge of their state by their fruitfulness, by their obedience to the whole will of God, by their improvement of their time and talents for God, by doing, as they have opportunity, all possible good unto all men, unto their bodies and souls, and by thrusting as many good works into every hour as they possibly can. And if their outward holiness, as well as the internal love from whence it springs, is to be included (as it certainly is) in the notion of Christian Perfection, who dares say he has fully attained? Who, in the evening, upon a review of the whole day, will not see he might have filled up his time better in one respect or another? Might have managed *this* conversation, done *this* work, employed *this* hour to greater purpose; and above all, that he might have been more full of *zeal for the glory of God and the good of mankind*: and might have labored still more for the advancement of the one and the other? [*The Arminian Magazine* 4 (May 1781): 549-553].

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## REVIEWS

-all reviews by Vic Reasoner

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### ***Jesus in Beijing, David Aikman (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2003), 344 pages.***

Having read *The Heavenly Man* about Brother Yun, I am now fascinated to get the larger perspective in *Jesus in Beijing*. Written by retired *Time* magazine correspondent, David Aikman, who has been in and out of China since the 1970s, this book documents how the Gospel has come to China in three major waves over a period of nearly 1400 years.

The Gospel first came to China in A. D. 635, but it had all but disappeared by the end of the fourteenth century. The record of a large Christian community from this era was carved on a stone tablet which had been hidden in the ground for over 800 years, until its discovery in 1623. By the time of its discovery the Gospel had returned. Yet by the nineteenth century it



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seemed possible that Christianity was again in danger of vanishing.

It was not until 1807 that Protestant missionaries first arrived in China. And yet Robert Morrison only won ten converts in twenty-seven years. While the Gospel message in the 1800s was then preached in a purer form than was understood by the first two movements, a heretical new movement was also spawned, the Society of God -Worshippers. Hudson Taylor arrived in 1866. While God used the China Inland Mission, there were several anti-foreign backlashes, including the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

By 1926 there were 8,325 Protestant missionaries in China, the most ever. Yet by 1949 Mao Zedong and the communists had forced out all foreign missionaries, leaving approximately three million Chinese Catholics and three-quarters of a million Protestants. Then there was the terrible persecution of the Church during the Cultural Revolution. The Red Guard attempted to eradicate all religion from China. The West feared that the Church in China had died and we did not know until the late 1970s what really happened.

In 1977 *Christianity Today* published an article entitled "Where Have All the Churches Gone?" A priest who had left China twenty-eight years earlier returned and reported that he saw no signs that the Chinese had any interest in religion. He looked for Catholic churches and found they had been turned into civic centers, schools, and stores.

Yet what actually has happened was that the Chinese church has grown to about 80 million believers. China is now one of the leading Christian nations in the world and yet the Chinese government officially is still atheistic. Yet the Church has an annual growth rate of 7%. They have had at least 3000 conversions every day for 40 years. In a sense Pentecost has been repeated daily for a generation. Aikman wrote in 2003 that Christians are everywhere and have even infiltrated the highest levels of government. No longer is Christianity a foreign religion. It reaches deep into Chinese culture and society and has grown "at a staggering speed since 1979." "China is in the process of becoming Christianized." It is projected that within three decades Christians will constitute 20-30% of China's population. It is estimated that there are now 1000 underground seminaries in China which are training the next generation of leaders. But as recently as twenty-five years ago it appeared that the third wave of evangelism might also vanish.

Instead the Church in China has grown in spite of one failure and reversal after another. While we can today rejoice in the growth of Christianity in China, why did a sovereign God take 1400 years to do what he could have done in a day? Why did it take so long for this seed to produce a harvest? Why did he allow his Church to suffer repeatedly and so many of his preach-

ers to be martyred? And how many of these heroes languished and died in prison never knowing the glory of God that would one day come to China? It all seems like such a waste. However, in God's economy nothing is ever lost. It all appears to be such an inefficient plan, but the very process of conveying the message of salvation through human preachers seems foolish (1 Cor 1:21). God does not really owe us an answer, but we do owe him our faithfulness. Yet "persecution is the growing pain of the church. It is good for the church." Pastor Samuel Lamb testifies, "The more persecution, the more the church grows." In 1999 he asked the government to arrest him again. Chinese church leaders worry, "If things are too open it is not good. Under hardship the Chinese church will be healthy. I am concerned that some day when things are totally open there will be corruption." They also worry about the egotistical, affluent lifestyle of American churches. And so God, through persecution, has kept his Chinese Church pure and prepared to carry the Gospel to the rest of the world.

In *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey declared that the 200 million troops of Revelation 9:16 were Red Chinese soldiers who would fight at Armageddon. This conjecture was based on nothing other than the fact that in 1965 China boasted of an army of 200 million. Forty years later the reality is that there is an army of Chinese Christians marching back to Jerusalem with the goal of converting the Muslim world to Christ. Their goal is 100,000 missionaries, double the current total of American Catholic and Protestant missionaries working overseas.

The postmillennial world view is a long-term vision for the success of the Gospel. In contrast, dispensationalism is myopic. According to this near-sighted view the terminal generation was alive in 1948. Despite all its revisions, dispensationalism is running out of time. But time is on the side of postmillennialism.

We pray for revival, but revival is simply the acceleration of normal kingdom growth. While it is right to pray for the extraordinary work of the Spirit, we should not despise the quiet but steady yeast that permeates this world (Matt 13:33). Whether or not we ever live to see world revival, we should not be moved from our calling. We should always give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because we know that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor 15:58). When the Apostle Peter wrote that with the Lord a day is like a thousand years (2 Peter 3:8), he was not giving historicists a formula with which to calculate the date of the return of Christ. Rather he was encouraging us, though we are finite creatures and cannot see the big picture, that God inhabits eternity and his truth is marching on. That truth endures to all generations (Psalm 100:5; 145:4).

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Dispensationalism can win the argument that the world is growing worse and worse only if they are allowed to argue from a small enough time frame. But the postmillennialist can win every argument from history if he uses a big enough time

spectrum. The fact is that the Church cannot die. End of discussion. Let us not become weary in doing good (Gal 6:9). Let's get back to work!

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### ***The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount, Gershom Gorenberg (New York: Oxford, 2000), 275 pages.***

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A thirty-five acre plot of ground in Jerusalem's southeast corner in the most contested piece of real estate in the world. Although nothing remains except the western retaining wall built outside the old temple, some Jews believe they must rebuild their temple on that site. While most Jews are not committed, some have already created the garments of the priest, along with his utensils, as well as to breed the perfect red heifer (Numbers 19), whose ashes are necessary to purify the priesthood so that they can resume offering sacrifices. Unfortunately, they are now blinded to the fact that Jesus is our high priest. According to Hebrews 9:11 he is the high priest over good things that are already here. He has already completed the one-for-all sacrifice.

Some Christians have shown more interest and have put up more money on the project than have the Jews. The *Left Behind* crowd believe that this temple must be rebuilt and some claim there will be two more temples. They hold that halfway into a future tribulation a future Antichrist will then desecrate it, that this will lead to a Jewish holocaust, and then Jesus will return to reign in this rebuilt temple. It is ironic that they believe this rebuilt temple will lead to a Jewish bloodbath, yet their motive to rebuild it is their love for the Jewish people.

The Muslims also claim the same real estate as their third holiest shrine, the site where Muhammad ascended to heaven. Currently their mosque also shares the site. They believe their Koran prophecies that a Jewish Antichrist will arise, but Christ will return as a Muslim prophet and help the Muslims defeat the Jews.

All three groups misunderstand the plan of God. Yet there is tremendous tension as both Jew and Muslim share the same holy site, expecting God to come and vindicate them. Among Christian fanatics, there have been numerous attempts to pump money

into the situation in order to facilitate the plan of God. Some extremists, including one group from Denver, seem impatient with God and attempt to help him get his plan moving by attempting to blow up or burn down the Muslim mosque. Among Muslims there is hostility toward the wealthy Jews who they believe control the world and toward America for siding with the Jews.

And so, to some degree, the three major world religions continue to engender prejudice and hatred, all in the name of God. Religion and the Bible are used to perpetrate concepts and actions which are nonbiblical. Each group has its share of fanatics, who take matters in their own hands in order to advance the cause of God, as they understand it. And some have taken things a step further. A *terrorist* is a fanatic who is willing to use violence in order to help God accomplish his plan.

Within every religion there are those who would kill for their cause, forgetting that God wants us to forgive not kill. In every religion there are those who teach hatred for those with whom they disagree, but God wants us to love, not hate, even our enemies. In every religion there are those who attempt to prove their dedication to God by how strict they live, but God is looking for those who live by faith. God's great plan has nothing to do with a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. Instead it is to exalt his name, uphold his word, establish the kingdom of his Son, and sanctify his people. In terms of the new covenant there is no temple at all (Rev 21:22). According to 2 Corinthians 6:16, true believers are the temple of God and that temple is filled by the Holy Spirit (Eph 2:21-22). The Spirit, as living water, is to flow from the Church into the whole world (Ezek 47). Therefore, God's plan must be prayed down. It does not involve blowing anything up. The kingdom advances through holiness, not terrorists.

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## **Methodist Quotes**

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### **John Wesley:**

Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergy or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven upon earth [*Letter* from John Wesley to Alexander Matwher, 6 August 1777].

### **Adam Clarke:**

No man ever taught me the doctrine I embraced; I received it singly by reading the Bible. From that alone I saw that justification by faith, the witness of the Spirit, and the sanctification of the heart were all attainable. These I saw as clearly as I do now; and from them I have never swerved. I often read the

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Bible on my knees. When I came to a passage I did not fully understand, I said, "Lord, here is thy book; it is given for the salvation of man; it can be no salvation to him unless he understand it; thou has the key of this text, unlock it to me;" and praying thus I generally received such light as was satisfactory to myself [J. W. Etheridge, *The Life of Adam Clarke, LL. D.* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1858), p. 358].

### **Joseph Benson:**

*Sanctify you wholly* — That is, may he carry on and complete the work of purification and renovation begun in your regeneration, redeeming you *from all iniquity*, Titus 2:14; cleansing you *from all filthiness of flesh and spirit*, 2 Corinthians 7:1; stamping you with his whole image, and rendering you *a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing*, but made holy toward God, dedicated to and employed in his service, and *without blame* in the whole of your conduct toward men [*The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with Critical, Explanatory, and Practical Notes* (1811-1818; Rpt. New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1856), 5:402].

### **William Burt Pope:**

*The following paragraphs have been drawn, with only minor editing from William Burt Pope, "Methodist Doctrine," in Wesley Memorial Volume, James Osgood Andrew Clark, ed. (New York: Phillips & Hunt, 1880), pp. 183-187. Clark was the presiding elder of the South Georgia Conference from 1875-1894. During this time he also served as the general agent for the project to raise money to build Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in Savannah. One of his fund raising projects was the Wesley Memorial Volume, a book composed of articles about John Wesley, written by prominent Methodists. Pope contributed the chapter which surveyed Methodist doctrine.*

The most eminent component of Methodist doctrine is its unfaltering assertion of the believer's privilege to be delivered from indwelling sin in the present life. The one element in the Methodist doctrine which may be called distinctive is the article that the work of the Spirit in sanctifying believers from sin is to be complete in this state of probation. This is the hope it sees set before us in the Gospel and therefore, it presses this upon the pursuit and attainment of all who are in Christ. The suppression and destruction of indwelling sin is the one point where its aim is beyond the general aim. A long chain of ecclesiastical testimonies bear witness that a high doctrine of Christian perfection has been taught in all ages, and in many communities, coming in some instances within a hair's breadth of this, but shrinking back from the last expression of the truth. The best of the ascetics and mystics of ancient and modern times both taught and exemplified a high standard of purifica-

tion from sin, inner illumination, and supernatural union with God, but whether from misconceived humility or lack of the highest triumph of faith, they invariably reserved the secret residue of evil as necessary to human discipline. This last fetter Methodism will not reserve. Its doctrine pursues the alien and the enemy into its most interior stronghold, and destroys it there, so that the temple of God in the human spirit shall not only be emptied of sin, but swept from every trace that it had been there, and garnished with all the graces of the divine image.

Methodism reads and fearlessly interprets all those clauses in the charter of grace which speak of the destruction of the body of sin, of putting off the old man, of crucifying the flesh unto death, of an entire sanctification of man's whole nature, of a preservation in faultlessness, of a perfect love casting out fear, of being purified as Christ is pure, and of the love of God perfected in the human soul. Redemption from the flesh spiritually understood, is not made synonymous or simultaneous with redemption from the flesh physically interpreted. No sin can pass the threshold of life to be purged through the intermediate fires of discipline and there is no provision in heaven for the destruction of evil. Death itself cannot take the office of the atoning blood and the purifying Spirit. Therefore, it follows that the final stroke must be in the present life. The atonement is not more certainly a finished work than the application of it by the Holy Spirit. There must be a sacred moment of final deliverance from what God sees as sin in the soul. This is Christian perfection — a word when used, is always guarded by its necessary adjectives of Christian, evangelical, and relative.

Methodism began to announce this high and most sacred possibility of the Christian life very early. It has continued the testimony until now, altogether apart from the vouchers of living witnesses. Its principle has been that God's Word must be true and his standard the right one, however the lives of the saints may halt behind it.

Some forms of the doctrine assert what cannot be maintained by the warrant of the Bible. The "second blessing" is sometimes confounded with the first, as if an entire consecration to God, which is only the perfect beginning were an entire sanctification from all sin. The effusion of divine love in the soul is sometimes mistaken for that "perfected love" of which it is only the earnest. First John gives the most explicit assurance that there is set before the aspiration of the saint a perfected and finished operation of divine love, the triumph of which is the extinction of sin and fear. But it is observable, that before the last testimony to live in man as perfected, we have three testimonies to the gradual operation of the love of God in us, which carry it into the three departments of the covenant of grace.

First is that of law. "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected" (1 John 2:5). Perfected love is the fulfilling of the righteousness of the law and its triumph is bound up with our habitual obedience in all things.

Second is that of sonship. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). Universal, boundless, self-sacrificing charity is the condition as well as the goal of perfected love.

Third is that of consecration. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein in our love made perfect" (1 John 4:16-17). Abstraction from all created desire and

supreme union with God is also both the condition and the crown of perfected love.

Notwithstanding every drawback, it still remains that the testimony borne for a century to the highest privileges of the Christian covenant is the glory of Methodist theology. It has stimulated the religious life of countless multitudes. It has kept before the eyes of the people formed by it the one supreme thought, that Christianity is a religion which has only one goal, whether in the Church or in the individual — the destruction of sin. And we believe the day is coming when the Church of God upon earth will have given to it an enlarged heart to receive this doctrine in all its depth and fullness.

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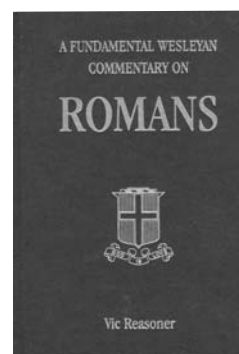
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