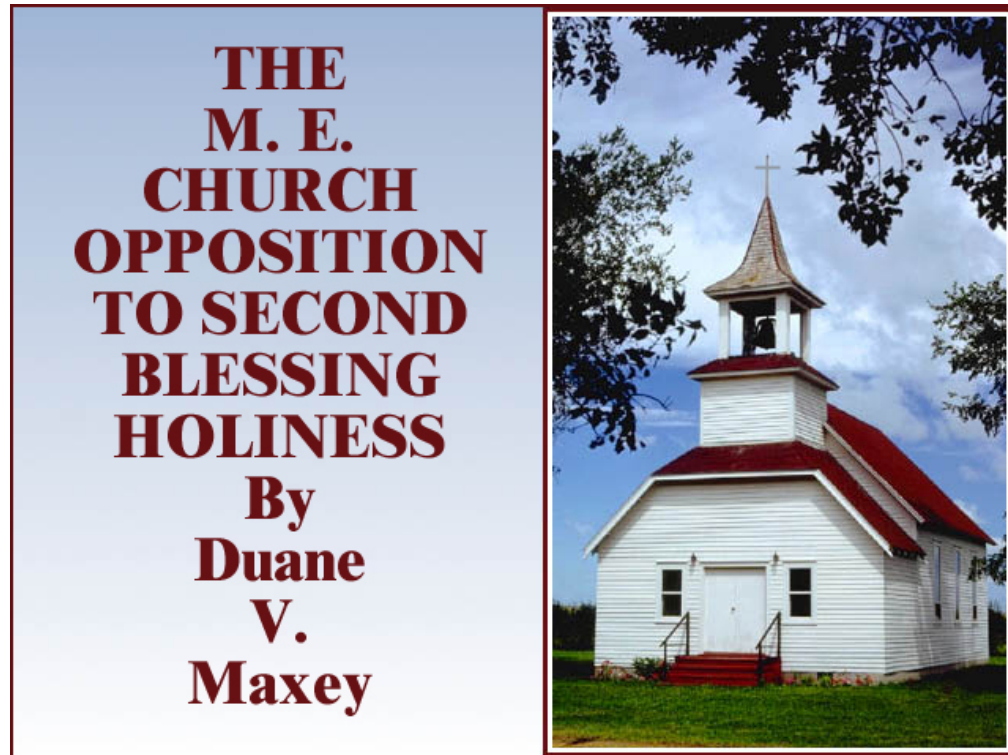


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THE M. E. CHURCH OPPOSITION TO SECOND BLESSING HOLINESS
Written and Digitized By Duane V. Maxey



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Following the death of Bishop Asbury, during the middle to late 1800s men came into high offices in the Methodist Episcopal Church who did not have the experience of Entire Sanctification and who, in heart therefore, opposed the teaching. However, knowing that "The Second Blessing" had been one of the foundational doctrines of the Wesleys and Methodism, some opponents of the Holiness Movement were somewhat reluctant to state in print what they really thought: viz., that there is no second work of grace, and that if one ever really did attain unto Christian Perfection in this life it had to be by a gradual growth in grace.

Therefore, they were equivocal in at least their written statements on the subject. Reading after such, sometimes one has to "read between the lines" to discern their opposition to teaching and preaching Second Blessing Holiness, but if you read perceptively it can be seen.

One way that Horace M. Du Bose and other Methodist writers and leaders expressed their opposition to the message of Second Blessing Holiness was by insinuating that it minimized the New Birth. In his 1906 biography, "Life and Memories of Rev. J. D. Barbee, Doctor of Divinity" (pages 42-45) Du Bose describes Barbee's opposition to the preaching of Christian Perfection as a second work of grace thus:

"The new birth was ever to him the clearest and surest of doctrines, for he read the record not only in the written Word -- which he held to be absolute -- but also he read it from the fleshly tablets of his own heart. The clear witness of the Spirit which he received in his conversion put his faith beyond doubt or the possibility of perversion. To be born again was, with him, to rise and live in newness of life, to be put in the way of attaining and perfecting that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. He was, during all his ministry, justly impatient of any teaching which minimized or gave a secondary importance to the doctrine of regeneration.

"Some twenty years ago, or less, a recrudescence* of the old controversy about Christian perfection and the processes of sanctification began to vex the Church. Dr. Barbee was then in the ripeness of his mental strength, and was one of the most influential personalities in the Church. He at once set himself in opposition to the vagaries of this movement, opposing them with characteristic vigor and distinctness of utterance. He believed unreservedly in the sanctification taught in and demanded by the Scriptures, and it was his zeal for the scriptural doctrine that led him to take so decided a stand against those who, through erroneous and misguided interpretations, perverted it.* A sermon preached by him on this subject before the Florida Conference so greatly impressed that body that a formal request was made for its publication in permanent form. The printed discourse was widely circulated, and it is probable that nothing of its compass contributed more to the rest and settlement of the Church's mind in that time of theological distress. The day may come again, should history repeat itself, when it will be of use to another generation of Methodists."

In the above, Du Bose characterizes a revival of the teaching of Second Blessing Holiness as a "recrudescence" -- which words means "a new break out." Thus, he characterizes a revival of Second Blessing Holiness in quite the same way one would describe a "break out" of some noxious and virulent disease -- like a threatening epidemic that must be stopped! Also, Du Bose says that Barbee opposed teachers of Second Blessing Holiness because they "perverted" the true message of sanctification! In fact, it was Barbee and Du Bose, along with all of the rest of their ilk who were "perverting" the message of sanctification! But below,

let's continue with Du Bose's description of Barbee's opposition to Entire Sanctification as a Second, Definite Work of Grace.

"Personal experiences are not the sources from which doctrines are to, be drawn. The inerrant Word alone is the repository of religious truth, and what is not contained therein, or cannot be clearly proven therefrom, is not to be required as a matter of belief.* But if there be a double testimony of the living Word and the living spirit of the believer, his confidence is not to be shaken. The man of whom we write was fortified in this confidence and remained steadfast to the end. In the light of his boyhood experience he walked, as it grew more and more unto the perfect day. His theology, as his experience, was singularly clear and orthodox at every point, and yet his tolerance and charity for the opinions of others were genuinely catholic. He entered into the universal fellowship of those who believe."

So, we can see from the above that both Barbee and Du Bose thought that the message of Entire Sanctification as a Second, Definite Work of Grace COULD NOT BE PROVEN CLEARLY FROM THE WORD OF GOD! -- when, in fact, this doctrine CAN BE PROVEN CLEARLY FROM THE WORD! -- but in order to see it one's mind must not be clouded with carnal prejudice against that truth.

In his writings, Du Bose betrays that neither he nor Barbee experienced the Mighty Baptism of the Holiness Ghost! A man with a know-so, definite experience of grace cannot be confounded by the high-browed, carnal writings of men who base their opinions only upon their prejudiced interpretations of the Bible. Such men are erudite, but erroneous -- logical, but left of the mark -- and if they be Doctors of Divinity, they need a Second Dose of Salvation from the the One and Only, True Doctor of Divinity, DOCTOR JESUS!

Those who are genuinely born again KNOW that the Bible teaches it. Likewise, those of have experienced the fiery Baptism of the Holy Ghost as a second work of grace KNOW that the Bible teaches it. The problem with many who oppose Second Blessing Holiness, even today, is:-- they have never come under the deep conviction of the Spirit that there IS such a work of grace and that they MUST have it in order to see God -- or, they have come under such conviction but have never sought until THE FIRE FELL!

Heaven-sent, Holy Ghost conviction of the need for this Second Work of Grace in this life will open the eyes of every honest Christian to the fact that it IS BIBLICAL and UTTERLY IMPERATIVE! Then, when the heart has been cleansed and purged by the fiery Baptism of the Holy Ghost, the reality of the Second Blessing can be seen in every book of the Bible -- from Genesis to Revelation!

More of Du Bose's opposition to Second Blessing Holiness can be seen in his "History of Methodism 1881-1916" (pages 89-91). In these pages, he wrongly states John Wesley's views on the subject and his somewhat veiled, but seething

hostility toward Entire Sanctification as a Second Work of Grace in this life are apparent. I have taken the liberty to divide his lengthy paragraphs:

"The so-called 'Holiness' question, a controversy which has its roots in the doctrines and experience of Wesleyanism, came to a point of unusual development about the middle years of this quadrennium. Mr. Wesley taught the doctrine of Christian perfection -- that is, the ripening of Christian motive and experience into the measure of the 'perfect man in Christ Jesus.' He urged this attainment as a privilege and duty and as being necessarily deducible from the teachings of the New Testament; but when it came to dealing with the psychic and subjective aspects of the experience, he found himself oscillating between conclusions varying with the different stages of his own inquiry.

"It is true also that he matured his more personal and exceptional theological views slowly, working from stage to stage, until his vision was cloudless and complete. It seems certain that, while he taught both the doctrine of entire sanctification and Christian perfection as goals of the regenerate life and that he also taught this attainment both through dynamic changes wrought of the Spirit and through stages of growth, he did not for himself set down any record of absolute attainment. Also in dealing with the doctrine of 'inbred' or 'remaining' sin, which is determinative of the 'theory' of sanctification, he has left to his spiritual followers the psychic difficulties which he himself encountered and which, in fact, are to be accepted as the common heritage of those who attain through faith.

"No two experiences can ever be exactly the same or be expressed in identical terms. The vast majority of Methodists have generally accepted this as a rule to guide them in their relations to this great matter. But from time to time there have been formed groups, sometimes of the best and most spiritual, who have adopted the view that there is a 'second cleansing,' distinct and dissimilar from regeneration and experimentally necessary to Christian character. In this presupposition is grounded the teaching, generally so stated, that regeneration removes the guilt of sin from the life, but does not cleanse the heart of its pollution.

"At the high tide of the 'Holiness' movement this doctrine had permeated several of the Annual Conferences. In some of these had been formed associations, distinct from the general fellowship, for the promotion of that view. It was not denied that in many, perhaps in most, instances the teachers of this view and their adherents were not only zealous, but quite sincere; but the propaganda was none the less divisive and disturbing.

"Much good came of the agitation through the inquiries which it excited into fundamental matters of belief and experience; but in the subsidence, which was inevitable, it left many discouraged, some embittered, and caused not a few to walk in the paths of other fellowships. It is worth while, however, to consider that such by-results come of all agitations in which truth and righteousness are involved. This movement was symptomatic of an unrest and a deeper inquiry in the hearts of the

men and women of all Churches, and especially those of the Wesleyan family. Beyond a doubt it served a purpose in calling attention, and that in terms of life, to the fact that holiness attained through sanctification and realized in life is not only a doctrine of Methodism, but is the doctrine which explains its presence amongst the Churches of Christendom.

"The bishops in their Pastoral Address for 1891 (which we may here anticipate) thus referred to this agitation, which had perhaps then reached its culmination:

" 'The privilege of believers to attain unto the state of entire sanctification, or perfect love, and to abide therein is a well-known teaching of Methodism. Witnesses to this experience have never been wanting in our Church, though few in comparison with the whole membership. Among them have been men and women of beautiful consistency and seraphic ardor, jewels of the Church. Let the doctrine still be proclaimed and the experience still be testified. But there has sprung up among us a party with 'holiness' as a watchword; they have holiness associations, holiness meetings, holiness preachers, holiness evangelists, and holiness property. Religious experience is represented as if it consists of only two steps, the first step out of condemnation into peace and the next step into Christian perfection. The effect is to disparage the new birth and all stages of spiritual growth from the blade to the full corn in the ear, if there be not professed perfect holiness. Such Scriptural terms as 'saints,' 'sanctified,' 'pure in heart,' 'holy,' 'dead to sin,' 'filled with the Spirit,' and 'made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,' are restricted to the few who have reached the height of perfect purity and love and improperly denied to the body of believers; and not only to those who are new or weak in the faith, but also to mature Christians who by walking with God in blessed fellowship and by patient continuance in well-doing, ever increasing in the knowledge of God, and being fruitful in every good work, adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour in all things, and are pillars in the Church. We do not question the sincerity and zeal of these brethren; we desire the Church to profit by their earnest preaching and godly example; but we deplore their teaching and methods in so far as they claim a monopoly of the experience, practice, and advocacy of holiness and separate themselves from the body of ministers and disciples.' "

Anyone with an honest heart and an experiential knowledge of Second Blessing Holiness can easily see that the above statement is a "Slam" against those in the M. E. Church who had and advocated the experience. Furthermore, it equates "growing in grace" with "going into Heart Holiness" -- an absurd comparison. Du Bose goes on to say:

"As time passes it becomes increasingly apparent that the generally sincere spirit of the Church concerning all its doctrines, and that of holiness in particular, is a guarantee of future faithfulness and fraternal understanding. After many years of controversy, the defenders of different theories of Christian perfection see themselves not so far apart as they thought concerning the central truth, holiness

itself; and the hope is strong that the old contest may not recur, but that the 'love which casteth out fear' may control throughout."

Obviously Du Bose sees "Holiness Itself" as the central point about which Methodists were to agree -- NOT the WAY TO BE MADE HOLY. He sees "growing into the experience of holiness" to be equally valid with the Scriptural commands to "go into it." Agreeing that Christians should be holy is one thing. Insisting that they must be sanctified wholly via a radical, second work of grace is quite another!

Du Bose states that at the 1866 Conference, "The bishops sent out an address exhorting the Church to a consideration of the doctrine of 'perfect love.' The membership was urged to 'go on to this perfection of sanctifying grace.' The old Wesleyan doctrines were being preached in their purity. No glosses had been invoked to soften their terms."

Perhaps the bishops were not glossing the terms of holiness then, but certainly Horace M. Du Bose was glossing and confusing the terms relative to Scriptural Holiness later. And by the year 1898 bishop Keener, in resigning as bishop, declared that "The New Birth is the keystone of Wesleyan doctrine" -- NOT "Holiness unto the Lord" via a second, definite work of grace.

The year 1898 seems to have been a year when a special effort was made to squelch the Holiness Movement within the Methodist Church. On pages 125-126 of Horace M. Du Bose's "History of Methodism 1881-1916," he makes it clear that between 1894-1898 at least Southern Methodism considered holiness evangelism to be an "invasion" by some who were "incompetent" and "divisive" -- zealots who needed to be repelled by the "remedy" of "a strong rule" against them:

"The question of evangelism had become acute during the quadrennium preceding this session [1894-98]. Unauthorized evangelism had greatly increased in connection with the "holiness" agitation, to which attention has already been called. 'The signal success of a few evangelists of burning zeal, effective speech, and skill in leadership' had led a multitude of less competent and sometimes quite incompetent men to enter the revivalistic field. The results were generally confusing, not seldom exhibiting a schismatic and divisive spirit. A remedy was sought. The bishops recommended a strong rule against the invasion of parishes by unauthorized evangelists. Legislation looking to this end was introduced, but the famous statute known as 'Paragraph 301, meant to strengthen the hands of the pastor against such invasion, was not enacted until 1898."

The carpers and harpers against The Second Blessing finally had their way. Holiness men like P. F. Bresee and many others were shoved out the door, or given such a cold shoulder that it was made plain that they were no longer welcome in the church begun of God under John and Charles Wesley.

If it be called to my attention that the history from which I gathered the above is a Methodist Episcopal Church, South history, and not a history of the M. E. Church, North, my reply is: there is ample evidence that both factions of the M. E. Church drifted away from the teachings of John Wesley on the Second Work of Grace during the middle to late 1800s.

Those in both factions of the M. E. Church during this time carped about those who held special holiness meetings and gatherings. But the fact was, these meetings were a direct result of the hostile environment within the Methodist Church against both the doctrine and experience of Entire Sanctification as a Second Work of Grace. Holiness meetings were held apart from the M. E. Church because there was a great dearth of holiness preaching within said Church, and because such preaching and such meetings within said Church were largely unwelcome.

While some pockets of True Holiness preaching remained in the M. E. Church after the turn of the 19th to the 20th Century, to a large extent Methodism had succeeded in extirpating True Holiness doctrine and preachers out the door by this time. And, to the same extent that this occurred, of course God's genuine, sanctifying presence and power was forever driven away from Methodism as well. Selah.

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THE END