



HIGH Calling

November–December 2023



IMMANUEL
God with Us

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PLEASE NOTE:

Starting in 2024, the Francis Asbury Society will publish issues of the *High Calling* on a quarterly basis.

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The *High Calling* is a publication of The Francis Asbury Society to serve as a link between FAS and its constituents, building loyalty and awareness so that the teaching and experience of Christian holiness may continue to be lived and proclaimed throughout the world.

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The Word Became Flesh and Dwelt Among Us

EACH YEAR IN the season of Advent, we celebrate how the “Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Yet it is important that we do not forget the significance of that event in the midst of its familiarity. In this issue of the *High Calling*, we explore the theology behind the Incarnation “in the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4) and its ongoing significance in our lives today.

Brian Shelton helps us understand how Jesus is the Word, who spoke our world into being and inspired the Scripture writers, as well as the Incarnation, “God with us” (Matt. 1:23). Chris Bounds explains how Jesus

could save us only by being simultaneously fully human and fully divine. Bill Kierce reminds us that Jesus is our hope for peace, light, and help and that he is worthy of our adoration and obedience. Finally, Vic Reasoner exhorts us to follow Jesus’ example of perfect love in our daily lives, being transformed into holy people through the power and influence of the Holy Spirit.

We pray you find this issue to be informative and instructional—even inspirational—in this season as we worship the One who created us, saved us, and walks with us eternally. ✎

A Theology of Inspiration

W. Brian Shelton



Dr. Brian Shelton is professor of Theology and department chair of Christian Studies & Philosophy at Asbury University. He holds a Ph.D. in historical theology centered in early Christianity.

THE ADVENT SEASON is rich with theology that is sometimes simple and sometimes complex. On one hand, the central moment is the simplicity of a baby born in a Bethlehem stable. Like the baby, a singular hope is born after generations of longing for the promise from God’s Word. A simple star in the Bethlehem sky embodies the stillness of the moment. On the other hand, this event is a pinnacle on a landscape of intricate and complex themes in biblical history. Logistics and dynamics of the Trinity providentially manage an epic moment in the wonderful plan of a loving God. Promises and signs from as early as the Garden of Eden pointed to this inaugural moment of a new covenant with fallen humanity.

The season commemorates the occasion in which “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). It realizes why God came to his creation: “I came that they may have life” (John 10:10). During Advent, Word and life converge in a way that surprisingly informs our doctrine of scripture. In fact, one may be surprised to learn that there is a powerful corollary

between Christ’s revelation in the Incarnation and his revelation in the inspiration of scripture. Noticing this corollary between the Word made flesh and the inspiration of scripture as God’s Word can help us appreciate the powerful revelation that the season commemorates.

Before the Gospel of John called Jesus “the Word,” Israel was familiar with the notion of the Word of God as an *expression of his life-giving character and authority*. Throughout biblical history, God spoke his Word as a form of revelation to his creation. These words teach, guide, declare, remind, and caution his people. From God’s first declaration, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3) when there was suddenly light, to the last declaration, “Yes, I am coming soon” (Rev. 22:20) when he pledged Christ’s return, divine speech reveals to the world an authoritative and awesome God who orders the cosmos and engages his created order. Other significant words of God remind us of the magnitude of his Word:

- “Let us make man in our image” (Gen. 1:26).
- “In the day you eat of it, you will surely die” (Gen. 2:17).
- “You shall tell Israel I AM sent you” (Ex. 3:14).
- “This is my beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17).
- “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you” (Acts 1:8).

These words of God come with divine imperative and commitment, so that

the words bring a guarantee from the mightiest God.

Jesus knew this authority of the Word when tempted in the wilderness, responding to Satan: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). The Word of God is not a vain expression or a hallow rhetoric, but an authoritative expression of divine character and will. Thus, the prophet Isaiah could declare on behalf of the Lord, “So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (55:11).

Meanwhile, God is also *the source of life*, evidenced in biblical markers related to breath, spirit, and wind. In the beginning, when creation was first getting life, the Spirit was already interfacing with it on the face of the waters (Gen. 1:2). God breathed into Adam so that he became a “living spirit” (Gen. 2:7). On the other hand, Job insists that if God took back his spirit, we would return to dust (Job 34:14). The prophet Ezekiel anticipated a day

Spirit, wind, and breath are the inspiration for life, including new life in Christ whose advent is in Bethlehem.

when God would put a new spirit within his people (Ezek. 36:26). When Jesus dialogued with Nicodemus, he declared that being born of the Spirit is as mysterious as the predictability of the wind (John 3:8). Before the Spirit comes at Pentecost to give new life to the church, Jesus breathes on his disciples, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). Spirit, wind, and breath are the inspiration for life, including new life in Christ whose advent is in Bethlehem.

This advent was to offset another advent, as Dennis Kinlaw claims in *Let’s Start with Jesus*: “Since God is the source of life and good, separation from him meant the advent of sin and death” (43). So, it should come as no surprise that just as the Word is made flesh to bring life this season, a correlation can be found in the inspiration of the Scripture—the Word of God. A marvelous word comes to us in 2 Timothy 3:16 to describe how God’s Word, the scriptures, is inspired. There, *theopneustos* means “God-breathed” to describe all scripture. The Word of

God is inspired, just as creation, Adam, a reborn soul, and the coming of the Spirit illustrate new life with the metaphor of breath. Because of this breathing of life, scripture is “profitable for reproof, for correction, for teaching, that the people of God may be fully equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Often overlooked is verse 15, “You have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” The Word of God directs us towards salvation, its original divine breath providing the very life marking our rebirth in Christ.

Furthermore, it should come as no surprise that Jesus remarks, “The words that I speak to you are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63). John Wesley recognized how life in Christ is a sort of spiritual breathing for new life in his sermon, “The Great Privilege of Those That Are Born of God”:

By this new kind of spiritual respiration, spiritual life is not only sustained, but increased day by day, together with spiritual strength, and motion, and sensation; all the sense of the soul now being awake, and capable of discerning spiritual good and evil.

The Word of God reinforces our salvation, providing the very life marking our rebirth in Christ.

Such is the wonder of God’s revelation to his people through the ages! Contained in the Word itself was a hope that the scriptures were telling the truth about God’s promise of a solution for a fallen and hopeless world. When the Word comes in flesh, the Word had anticipated it, so that Jesus’ person, mission, and teaching was not only continuous with God’s plan but also a culmination of it. In Jesus, inspiration and incarnation intersect in a profound way. This is most evident when he is called the “Word of life” (1 John 1:1). From this Word in this season, we hear the words of Jesus teaching about the salvation delivered by his journey from Bethlehem to Jerusalem: “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3).

May this Advent season find you captivated by both the simplicity and complexity of the season. May “the word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16), even as the Word of life dwelt among us ages ago. ✠

A Wesleyan Theology of Incarnation

Christopher T. Bounds



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Chris is also chair of the Francis Asbury Society Board of Directors and an FAS evangelist.

THE FATHER SAVES us from the full devastation of sin by the incarnation of his eternal Son through the Holy Spirit. In “the fullness of time” (Gal. 4:4), the Son of God assumed a human body—soul, mind, and will—through the virgin Mary, uniting in his person full divine and human natures without diminishment or change of either nature. He became fully human without ceasing to be entirely God. Thus, salvation comes through the incarnate Son.

As the theandric (literally “God-man”) one, the eternal Son is given the name “Jesus” (Matt. 1:21) and the title “Christ” (Matt. 16:16). His name points to his identity as Lord as well as to his mission—“Jesus” means “the Lord saves” and “he will save his people from their sins.” His title points to his office as messiah, the one who ushers in “the last days” of “the Spirit poured out on all flesh” (Joel 2:28), thereby restoring humanity’s fortunes, lost by our first parents in the Garden.

JESUS CHRIST IS FULLY DIVINE

Jesus saves us through his deity. First, as fully divine, Jesus has the power to refashion humanity. Only God can create; therefore, only God can recreate. Our redemption requires both spiritual and physical resurrection, a reconstitution of humanity so powerful, it is equal to the act of creation itself (2 Cor. 5:17). If Jesus is not God, then he is unable to do what is necessary to make us fully alive again:¹ He must revive and restore the image of God in humanity and raise our mortal bodies from death to incorruptibility. He must overcome every consequence of sin. No human or creature, regardless of goodness, resources, or gifts, has such power. Because Jesus is God, we can be confident of his power to transform us in nature and person.

1 Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 8.4–9.3.

Second, Jesus makes the radical claim to have authority to forgive sins (Luke 5:24). This can only be true if he is God. Not only does Christ forgive humanity for the ways we have broken our relationship with God but also he extends forgiveness for the sins we commit against each other. Jesus' absolution of sin is so sweeping, so comprehensive, it demands authority only God exercises. As theologian T. F. Torrence states:

If you cut the bond of being between Jesus Christ and God, then you relegate Jesus Christ entirely to the sphere of creaturely being, in which case his word of forgiveness is merely the word of one creature to another, which may express a kindly sentiment but actually does nothing. . . . But if Jesus Christ really is the Son of God incarnate, if he is one with the very Being of God, then his word of forgiveness on earth is the very Word of God Almighty, a word with ultimate validity, backed up by the power and being of God himself.²

Finally, as truly God, Jesus makes his atoning sacrifice on the cross efficacious for all (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). Without his deity to energize atonement, the gift of his sinless humanity on the cross has limited benefit, if any. His spotless humanity alone is not able to expiate for all sin and for every sinner. Because the one crucified is the eternal Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity, the sacrifice made covers all.³ We can live in assurance of the full benefits of Christ's atoning work, regardless of who we are or what we have done in life.

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JESUS CHRIST IS FULLY HUMAN

Jesus' divine nature is not enough to save us from sin. He must also be fully human. It was a human being, Adam, who led us into the present state of sin

and only another human can lead us out (Rom. 5:12–20). First, through full assumption of human nature, Christ makes possible the restoration and healing of our embodied souls. The Apostle Paul teaches that the ultimate redemption of our physical bodies is made possible through Jesus taking his human body through death and resurrection. His physical body redeems our bodies from death. We will be bodily resurrected and made incorruptible, because Jesus experienced an incorruptible bodily resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12–22).

Our greatest problem, however, is not with our bodies, but with our soul: our fallen human desires, mind, and will. This is what led to the original sin in the Garden and what plagues the heirs of Adam and Eve. The soul must be healed of its corruption. Christ, therefore, assumed a human soul to redeem every aspect of humanity. Through assumption of a human heart and mind, Christ redeems our human desires and will. He restores the image of God in us, enabling us to experience once again rightly ordered love for God, neighbor, and creation. Our souls are redeemed through his human soul so that in this life we can experience the transformation of desire and the empowerment of will to walk in loving obedience with God.⁴

Second, as fully human, Jesus became the second Adam (Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:45, 47), living a life of obedience and submission to the Father, succeeding where the first Adam failed. Christ lived a life of perfect faith and confidence in God as he grew and developed as a human being, culminating in the surrender of his life in crucifixion. The entirety of his human life was salvific, not just his work in death and resurrection. His human life paves the way for us to live like him.⁵

Because of the fall of humanity's first parents, we are born into Adam, with its deleterious consequences. We come into life with a bent or propensity to rebellion, disobedience, and sin. Through regeneration and entire sanctification, the hold of the first Adam is broken, and we are united with the second Adam with his salutatory benefits. We can walk in obedience to God, a life defined by the love of God and neighbor, through union with Christ in his humanity. Because Jesus walked by "faith, hope, and love" (1 Cor. 13:13) as the second Adam, we can as well in him.

Finally, and intimately related to the last point: John teaches that Christ in his

humanity has given us a pattern of how to live (1 John 2:6). Too often, we think that we sin because we are human. Jesus, however, reminds us of what it is to be fully human, what it is to be in the image of God in the created order: free from sin and filled with perfect love. We sin, not because we are human, but because we are less than human. It is because Jesus is fully human that we have the perfect example of what it is to be fully human.

JESUS CHRIST IMPARTS KNOWLEDGE AND BESTOWS GLORY

The incarnation of the eternal Son of God, the reality of the theandric One, points us to two last truths. First, Jesus Christ provides the fullest knowledge of God in this life (1 John 1:1–2). You want to know who God is and what God is like? Look to the "Word made flesh" (John 1:14). Through the Incarnation, the eternal Son participates in the fullest and most effective form of human communication—embodied person-to-person communication.⁶ It was not enough for God to speak in an audible voice and be heard at different times in biblical history. It was not enough for God to give us a written word. God engaged with us in embodied person-to-person communication. As human beings, the highest form of communication takes place in the physical presence of another human being. In Jesus Christ, God incarnate, we have the highest revelation of God—the truest and most complete form of human communication. This is why we always read the Scripture and judge all Christian teaching according to the "Word made flesh."

Second, the incarnate Son conveys further glory upon humanity. The Scriptures make clear our dignity: humanity was created to be like God (Gen. 1:26–27). The Psalmist teaches that God has "crowned" us with "glory and honor" (Ps. 8:5–6). Jesus affirms that as human beings we are "gods, sons of the Most High" (John 10:35). Humanity, as such, has dignity and value unlike any other part of creation. Humanity is given even greater glory through the Incarnation. Through Jesus Christ, human nature has been irrevocably joined with the divine. Even now, into eternity, the Son is fully human. He has therefore exalted and glorified that nature and shows the respect, love, and mercy that God has for humanity. No other created being can make this claim. As Christians we value all human life, not only as bearers of the

2 Thomas Forsyth Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ*, 58.

3 Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1.5, 25; 2.6–7.

4 Gregory Nazianzus, *Epistle 101*.

5 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.18.1; 4.6.2; 5.21.1.

6 Athanasius, *On the Incarnation of the Word*, 8.4–9.3.

divine image but also because human nature has been united with the divine.

CONCLUSION

The Church confesses that Jesus Christ is the incarnate, eternal Son of God. As the Second Person of the Trinity, he is fully God; as the son of Mary, he is fully human. Through both natures united in his divine person, we have full salvation, a full word from God in present life, and a full dignity unlike any other part of creation. Thanks be to God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ✠

The Hope that Jesus Brings

Bill Kierce



Rev. Bill Kierce is president of the Francis Asbury Society. He is a passionate and persuasive communicator who is committed to the message of Scriptural holiness, believing that a life fully surrendered to Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit results in purity of heart and power for ministry.

ONE OF MY favorite Christmas carols is “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” written by poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In 1860, Longfellow was at the height of his success, but the nation was in a dark place. Abraham Lincoln had been elected president, and the Civil War had erupted. For the poet, it was even worse. His wife died in a tragic fire, and he was so severely burned that he could not attend her funeral. On his first Christmas without her he wrote, “How inexpressibly sad are the holidays.” The subsequent year, his son was wounded as a soldier in the Union army. He wrote in his journal, “A merry Christmas say the children, but that is no more for me.”

Therefore, in 1863, Longfellow planned no entry in his journal. However, he awakened on Christmas morn to the bells playing outside his bedroom window. It stirred a longing deep within him to step out of the darkness of his soul; so, he wrote: “I heard the bells on Christmas day; their old, familiar, carols play. And wild and sweet their words repeat, of peace on earth, good will to men.”

When the first Christmas arrived “in the fullness of time,” as the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 4:4 (ESV), Israel was in a dark place. For hundreds of years, chaos had reigned. Amid this darkness and uncertainty, a pregnant teenage girl and her fiancé made a tortuous journey more

than seventy miles from their hometown of Nazareth to the village of Bethlehem. They were without a place to stay when the time for her delivery came. But it wasn’t just her time. It was God’s time. It was Israel’s time. It was the world’s time. It was our time. It was the fullness of time, the fulfillment of a promise made seven hundred years earlier by the prophet Isaiah to a nation languishing in sin and idolatry yet longing for something more. “The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call him Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14 NIV).

Isaiah’s prophecy is the earliest birth announcement ever made. For five hundred years since the return of the Jews to their homeland and the rebuilding of their synagogues, this announcement was read nearly every Sabbath in anticipation of Messiah’s birth. To a people in despair, it brought hope. And looking back on that starlit night, when the time fully came—when angels heralded Jesus’ birth to shepherds in nearby fields, who made their way to bow their knee in a cave to a baby named *Immanuel*—it brought hope to a world still filled with despair. When we bow our knees to worship Jesus the Christ, he gives us hope, as well.

HOPE FOR PEACE IN THE CHAOS OF LIFE

Has anyone figured out why Christmas arrives at the most chaotic time each year? As much as we resolve each new year to simplify our lives, the calendar concludes in chaos. Yet we make it so. We can hear the voice of Jesus calling our own names in Luke 10:41–42, “You are worried about and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one” (NIV). A psychologist friend told me once that therapists’ offices are filled in January due to the effects of Christmas more than any other reason.

The Huffington Post recently published an article about fear in America. It contrasted childhood and adults in illustrating the universality of fear at every age and stage of life. Children fear doctors; adults fear doctor bills. Children fear bad dreams; adults fear unfulfilled dreams. Children fear people they don’t know; adults fear being known. The article states that 35 percent of Americans sleep less than what is required for physical and emotional well-being. And it is well documented that anxiety is an epidemic among America’s youth and young adults.

Isaiah’s promise of the Messiah in Isaiah 9:6 (NIV) and our experience of

Jesus’ provision of full salvation brings peace to troubled lives: “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given . . . He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” There is indeed hope for peace in the chaos of life.

HOPE FOR LIGHT IN OUR DARKEST TIMES

Darkness is one of our greatest fears. In 2016, I experienced a giant retinal tear after routine cataract surgery. I immediately lost sight in one eye. Multiple surgeries and a silicon oil bubble restored partial sight to the eye. Other surgeries have resulted in scar tissue over both of my retinas. I am one more significant event away from legal blindness. Yet, almost miraculously, my eyes have adjusted to darkness—and so have my fears. It does mean at times, however, that I cannot recognize people I know until they are close enough in proximity for distortion to give way to clarity.

The Apostle John proclaims hope in describing Jesus as “the light of all mankind” (John 1:4 NIV). Sadly, Jesus came to the world he created and by many he was not recognized (John 1:11). Today Jesus is often not recognized by a world too self-absorbed and too busy attempting to find what only the Savior can provide.

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Some years ago, a California family decided to push back the boredom of one Christmas afternoon by going caroling. Randomly selecting a neighborhood not far away the family’s home, they went from house to house. Approaching one house they were greeted anxiously by a woman who announced she didn’t have time to listen: “The dishwasher and air conditioner are broken, and I have guests coming in two hours. If you really want to sing for me, please come back next year.” So, Bing Crosby and his kids moved on to the next house.

This year, may we all see the Light of the world and welcome him into our homes and into our lives.

HOPE FOR HELP IN A WORLD OF IDOLS

In the world of the Old Testament and even today, idols are trinkets or talismans made to honor self-appointed deities who can be manipulated by human ritual to perform on our behalf. Idolatry is the human solution to our need for significance and control. At the time of Jesus' lowly birth, Caesar Augustus ruled the world and Herod was called *The Great*. Human flesh will always seek to become its own god. This inevitable tendency of fallen humanity was established in the Garden of Eden when Satan tempted Adam and his wife: "For God knows that when you eat of [the forbidden fruit], your eyes will be opened and you will be like God" (Gen. 3:5 NIV).

The marvel of grace is that while flesh seeks to become God, "God became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14 NIV). Eugene Peterson put it well in *The Message* paraphrase of John 1:14, God "moved into the neighborhood." This is *Immanuel*, which means

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"God with us" (Matt. 1:23). It is He who condescends to walk with us, live with us, suffer with us, and eat with us, providing his own body as our Communion Bread. Charles Wesley put transcendent words to the desire of our holy God to share the intimacy of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with broken humanity: "Veiled in flesh the Godhead see, hail the incarnate deity; pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus our Immanuel."

In the nineteenth century, Søren Kierkegaard wrote a short story that beautifully describes God's desire for a relationship with humanity, one that is based upon responsive love. In *The King and the Maiden*, Kierkegaard introduces his readers to a powerful king who ruled a vast domain. One knows not how or why, but the king falls deeply in love with a peasant woman in a faraway village. Despite her squalid living conditions and tattered rags, he sees beauty in her and wants her to become his bride. Therefore, the king devises a plan to fulfill his desire for her.

He will simply issue a decree that she become his wife. But as the king ponders his plan, he realizes that love cannot be considered true if it is not offered by choice. He wants a bride who will love him and not simply obey him.

So, the king decides to bring her to the palace and shower her with gifts. Surely, she will count the ways that life in the king's court is to be preferred over her current existence and she will voluntarily accept his proposal of marriage. But the king knows that he will always wonder, "Does she love me, or does she love what I can provide for her?"

Determined that no one but this woman can satisfy the deepest desires of his soul, the king makes an unthinkable choice. He abdicates the throne and moves to the far reaches of his kingdom to win her love. The king replaces his royal robes with a peasant's cloak and lives and works in the girl's village. Risking her inattention and even rejection, he walks beside her and over time reveals his desire for a relationship with her. Eventually, she responds to his affection, and they are married.

As we sing "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" this Christmastide, may we bow our knees in submission to a God who cannot be manipulated and who demands trust from us, recognizing him as the only dependable source of help or hope. He has demonstrated Holy Love by living among us and dying for us. Thus, he is worthy of our adoration and obedience. ✨

Incarnational Sanctification: Moving from Theory to Practice Vic Reasoner



Dr. Vic Reasoner is director of the Francis Asbury Institute for the Francis Asbury Society. A pastor for 44 years, Vic has led ministerial associations, camp meetings, and college administration. He has been involved in writing, editing, and/or publishing more than 42 books.

THE INCARNATION WAS a unique historic event in which God became human. However, the Incarnation also serves as a useful model of the sanctified life. Discussions of holiness can become abstract and theoretical, and people wonder how they can know they are sanctified. In the incarnate Jesus, abstract theory becomes tangible.

Over the centuries, people have attempted many ways of measuring holi-

ness. To measure our holiness in terms of what we avoid invariably creates the distortion of legalism, a danger in which many have fallen. Others gauge their sanctification in terms of commitment, but some of the most devoted people in the whole world are committed to their own advancement, even if that commitment is clothed in religious garb. For still other people, their testimony to a deeper life is a vague rationalization that was required to get a job in a holiness ministry. It is no wonder many sincere people become frustrated because they do not know how to translate theory to practice.

Jesus himself is our paradigm of holiness. He fleshes out what the holy life looks like. However, we must avoid the danger of cherry-picking statements or actions of Jesus so that we can then use them to justify our own excesses. For example, some of us may find great encouragement in reading about when Jesus entered the temple and cleaned house. We are willing to enter the temple on a daily basis so long as we can bring our own whip. Yes, the holy Christ did enter the temple to upset the status quo at the beginning of his public ministry (John 2:13–16) and again at the close of his public ministry (Matt. 21:12–13). However, Jesus had great respect for the house of God. He grew up in the synagogue. He was dedicated in the temple at the age of twelve. As a man he also taught and healed in the temple.

On the other hand, the more sensitive among us may struggle to process the righteous anger of Jesus, gravitating to a depiction of Jesus as "Milquetoast." Perhaps these dear souls grew up under bombastic holiness preaching. J. B. Phillips wrote that some people who were forced to be "loving" were never free to love. He concluded that Jesus was love in action.

Mildred Wynkoop was such a person. She grew up in a second-generation 1930s Nazarene context, where Christian experience had been replaced by a predictable theological formula. Mildred remembered seekers at the altar being surrounded by people shouting "pray loud," "lift your head," and "are you willing to be a missionary?" She wrote, "If I could count the number of times I have poured tears on some worn altar rail seeking for holiness, I would be ashamed of it." Yet she observed that no one ever followed up with her to find out how she was doing spiritually.

For several years she continued to go forward, each time seeking that which she already professed. She had a page in her Bible on which she entered the dates and

places that she went to the altar to seek entire sanctification. She wanted to be able to testify the day she was sanctified, but she had so many entries that she could never decide which one of them to use at any given time. She had forty entries in her Bible when she finally tore that page out.

During this struggle, she contracted tuberculosis, which broke her health. Forced to relocate for treatment of her infirmity, Mildred began to attend a church with a different faith tradition, one which disciplined her and helped her regain her faith.

At the age of 44, she went back to school for graduate studies, culminating with a doctorate of theology in 1955. Her life's work was an attempt to answer the practical problems arising from the tension between the doctrine and life of holiness. The result of that process is *A Theology of Love*, published in 1972. Her interpretation of John Wesley's doctrine of holiness has come under fierce criticism from some critics who saw her as a corrupting influence within the holiness tradition. However, in this seminal work, Mildred Wynkoop explains how to put abstract theory into everyday practice.

Mildred is neither the first nor will she be the last Christian to struggle with holy living. Even after we have been born again, every Christian is still out of alignment with God's purpose for our lives. Imitation, even of Christ, is not enough; we must be transformed, which is the work of the Holy Spirit. One temperament needs to be more serious, while the opposite personality needs to lighten up and trust God. While the one temperament needs to release control, growing in patience, kindness, and gentleness, the opposite temperament needs more faith-

fulness and self-control. The holy life is more than resignation, but it is also more than confrontation.

In each case, the Holy Spirit brings balance to life. Without changing who we are, God will help us reach his full potential for us through the transforming power of his Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not work the same way in each case, but deals with us as individuals. Wesley explained:

God's usual method is one thing, but his sovereign pleasure is another. He has wise reasons both for hastening and retarding his work. Sometimes he comes suddenly and unexpected; and sometimes, not till we have looked for him.

However, we tend to present a one-size-fits-all description of holiness that is often based on ourselves as the norm.

Early in the ministry of D. L. Moody, he was told, "It remains to be seen what God will do with a man who gives himself up wholly to Him." Moody said in reply, "Well, I will be that man." However, there are hundreds of thousands of individuals who have wholly given themselves over to God, as Moody did. So, it does *not* remain to be seen what God can do with a person wholly devoted to God. Still, these dedicated people do not all have the same gifts and abilities.

It is falsely implied that if we did what Moody did, God would give us the evangelistic success he gave Moody. It does not follow that God wants to make all who are sanctified like Moody. Part of seeking after a pure heart may involve dying to the desire to be as successful as was Moody. We must determine to serve God

wholly, whether or not we ever become a great evangelist.

Samuel Chadwick warned, "God does not make every Spirit-filled man a Moody." Not all who are entirely sanctified will look like Moody, and the world has repeatedly seen individuals who were wholly given up to God and his kingdom. Yet, according to John Wesley, such people may exhibit a thousand nameless defects. They are not absolutely perfect, yet they love God with their whole heart and their neighbor as themselves. Their lives exemplify holiness.

We tend to present a one-size-fits-all description of holiness that is often based on ourselves as the norm

Harold William Perkins wrote that this full development and full assurance comes to different people in a variety of religious experiences and in some measure according to their temperaments. Writing in 1892, Charles W. Rishell explained that

there is not a fixed, definite standard, no one line which all must cross alike in order to the experience of perfect love. Since perfect love is consistent with many mistakes and imperfections, and since these are not identical in any two individuals, there is no absolute standard. The ideal of one may be far higher than that of another.

[Yet] Both are conscious of hating sin and loving righteousness. Both are conscious of having entirely consecrated themselves to God. Both are conscious of having been set free from the bondage of sin. Both are conscious of a blessedness and purity never before experienced. Both will have perfect confidence toward God as long as they remain in this state.

Rather than live in bondage by comparing ourselves to others or even excusing ourselves by contrasting ourselves with others, there is freedom in seeking to become like Christ. His life provides the perfect demonstration of holiness. His atonement provides the only deliverance from our sinful nature. His Spirit provides the only power to live a holy life. We cannot go wrong so long as we are seeking to become more like him in obedience to his Holy Spirit. ✠

The Asbury Outpouring 2023 Bundle

Outpouring and Taken by Surprise



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In his recent book *Taken by Surprise: The Asbury Revival of 2023*, Mark R. Elliott dives into the what, when, and how behind the revival that took place at Asbury University in February 2023, a revival that may very well be the first of its kind in our digital era.

Outpouring explores religious revivals and awakenings, reflecting on God's pursuit of human persons in light of Scripture and classical Christian doctrine. Inspired by their participation in the Asbury Outpouring, the authors bear witness to the ancient conviction that theology, prayer, and praise belong together.

Together, these books provide a framework in which to understand how and why God sometimes enters our world in a way that powerfully transforms our lives.

To Africa with Love (color reprint)

James Foulkes



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Working in a hospital far from modern conveniences, Foulkes provided medical care for thousands of Africans and mission families in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). From his miraculous escape from a herd of stampeding elephants to winning souls for Christ, the bush doc affirms that God is faithful and good. Written with long-time friend Joe Lacy, *To Africa with Love* delightfully captures the enduring love affair of a man with a country and the Lord who makes all things possible. (Available on Amazon)

When Morning Gilds the Skies

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\$24.95 (Paperback; 404 pages)

Dr. Oswalt provides a daily look into the Scriptures—sometimes from the Old Testament, sometimes from the New Testament. Each day, he applies the truth of that passage to our daily lives, and he cuts right to the heart of the issue. Read this book each day, and you will find 365 nuggets of biblical truth that bring the Scripture passages to life in our culture and our daily activities. —Mark D. Taylor, Chairman of the Board, Tyndale House Ministries

Teaching Them to Obey Everything

Charlie Fiskeaux

Go... make disciples... baptizing... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.
(Matthew 28:18–20 NIV)

JESUS' COMMISSION TO his followers included commands not only to go, make disciples, and baptize but also to teach. Sometimes, we focus on going and baptizing because these efforts can produce results more rapidly but fail to follow through with teaching, which is often a lengthier process in making disciples.

Several ministries of the Francis Asbury Society directly relate to “teaching them to obey everything” (e.g., Bible studies, conferences, and evangelism). All these efforts are centered around the biblical message of perfect love, which is the central thrust of Scriptural holiness.

Your support empowers this ministry to continue teaching and proclaiming the full gospel that transforms persons to love as God loves. In this season of Thanksgiving, thank you for supporting the Francis Asbury Society through your prayers and gifts. Your support makes a difference and empowers our ministries. Details for various methods of giving to the ministries of the Francis Asbury Society are available on our website: www.francisasburysociety.com/support. ✨

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