

A Fundamental of Methodism

by Daniel Steele

Daniel Steele defends the fundamental of Christian perfection in Methodist doctrine, emphasizing its importance for the mission and glory of Methodism.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, Romans 6:6, 2 Corinthians 7:1, Ephesians 4:13, Philippians 3:12, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:16, 1 John 1:8

Topics: "Christian Perfection", "Wesleyan Theology"

Description

Daniel Steele emphasizes the importance of upholding essential Christian truths, even if it means engaging in controversy to defend the fundamentals of Methodist doctrine related to sin and salvation. He highlights the Arminian belief in the possibility of living without sin and eradicating original sin in this life, as taught by Wesley. Steele echoes the sentiments of Methodist theologians like President Warren and John McClintock in emphasizing the core principle of Wesleyan theology, centered on Christian perfection and perfect love. He challenges the notion that Christian perfection in the present life is not a fundamental of Methodism, asserting that it is a defining aspect that sets Methodism apart from other creeds.

Transcript

I AM not a polemic. I naturally shrink from controversy. Unfavorable criticism is to me distasteful, doubly so when the object criticised is the production of a friend, a brother minister of the same Conference and colaborer in the same school of theology. But I have thought and taught that essential Christian truth lies nearer to the loyal heart than any human friendship. I cannot see fundamentals subverted without an unmistakable and emphatic public protest. What are fundamentals in Methodist doctrine?

Those which relate to sin and salvation. I am an Arminian. James Arminius, whose tomb I visited in Bâsel, announced seven principles as basal in his theology. This is the seventh as arranged by Episcopus: "It is possible for a regenerate man to live without sin." Wesley expressly taught, in addition, that it is possible for the propensity to sin, called original sin, to be eradicated in this life. Is this a fundamental in Wesleyan theology? Passing by the accredited standard theologies of Watson, Pope, Raymond, and Miley, who give an affirmative answer, I cite the words of our own President Warren's Introduction to Systematic Theology: Methodism in respect to its inmost spirit and essence is a viewing of Christianity from the standpoint of Christian perfection or perfect love, the formal principle of Wesley's theology.

Since the warm Irish heart ceased to beat that dwelt in the bosom of the scholarly President of Drew Theological Seminary, John McClintock, I have regarded it not only as a duty but a sacred privilege to

voice the closing words of his centenary sermon in 1866 in New York city: Knowing exactly what I say, and taking the full responsibility of it, I repeat, we are the only Church in history, from the apostles' time till now, that has put forth as its very elemental thought the great pervading idea of the whole Book of God from the beginning to the end -- the holiness of the human soul, heart, mind, and will. . . .

It may be called fanaticism; but, dear friends, this is our mission. If we keep to that, the next century is ours; if we keep to that, the triumphs of the next century shall throw those of the past into the shade. . . . There is our mission; there is our glory; there is our power; and there shall be the ground of our triumph! God keep us true! I could not have inquired of two more analytic and encyclopedic Methodist minds for "the inmost essence" and "elemental thought " which differences Methodism from all other creeds.

You must discredit these men if you deny that Christian perfection in the present life is a fundamental of Methodism. You may discredit me, but you will not, you dare not, discredit these honored names as "holiness cranks." The book which I review to-day openly antagonizes and repeatedly repudiates this fundamental and teaches that entire deliverance from depravity cannot be in this world nor in the next till the glorification of soul and body at the second advent.

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