

# Experience Colored and Shaped by Theory

by Daniel Steele

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*The author argues that every man's experience is colored and shaped by his theory, but provides examples of individuals who have experienced entire sanctification contrary to their theory.*

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:5, Philippians 1:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 4:15

**Topics:** "Entire Sanctification", "Theological Perspectives"

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## Description

Daniel Steele discusses the misconception that one's testimony is solely shaped by their theological beliefs, highlighting examples of individuals from Calvinistic backgrounds who have testified to Wesleyan experiences of entire sanctification, contrary to their doctrinal theories. He emphasizes the prevalence of such experiences not only in Methodism but also in other denominations like the Church of England and among those holding different theological views. Steele points out instances where Methodist preachers, like Dr. Francis Hodgson, found complete deliverance from sin despite initially holding beliefs contrary to their experiences, encouraging others to seek full salvation regardless of their theological speculations.

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## Transcript

IN his difficult work of invalidating testimony to instantaneous and entire inward purification our author says: "It is the simple truth that every man's experience, and hence his testimony, is colored and shaped by his theory. He puts his profession in the particular form that his special doctrine tells him it ought to be put in." If this is "the simple truth," then it must follow that no man with a Calvinistic theory will ever testify to a Wesleyan experience. This is contrary to the facts in numerous instances, such as Drs. Finney and Mahan and the host of Oberlin witnesses in a past generation.

In thousands of devout Presbyterian homes you will find a devotional library of uniformly bound volumes, among which is the Life of James Brainerd Taylor, who while a student in the Princeton School of Theology had an experience of entire sanctification so confirmatory of the Wesleyan theory that his biographers expurgated his written testimony so as to eliminate the most striking Methodist features. There have been many such instances in the past, and there are now in Calvinistic churches, Dutch Reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Congregationalist, ministers, deacons, ruling elders, and a host of members who, in the face of more or less opposition, persist in a Wesleyan testimony.

There are also in Arminian churches many so-called gradualists who, contrary to their piecemeal theory of entire purification, have experienced in their great spiritual hunger a sudden and glorious deliverance from the evil still remaining in them.

These experiences, contrary to theory, abound in Methodism. and in the Church of England, in which were Miss Havergal and Admiral Fishbourne, besides many others. In addition to these are the testimonies of some who held the so-called Zinzendorf theory of entire sanctification in the new birth. A notable instance is that of Dr. Francis Hodgson, who was tried about sixty years ago by his Conference for this heresy, and was permitted to continue to preach only after he had promised to abstain from disseminating this error.

Later in life, at a national camp meeting, he publicly came forward as a seeker, and found the blessed experience of full salvation, contrary to his life-long theory. The New York Conference, which tried him, at the same session requested Dr. George Peck to write a refutation of this error. Thus originated Peck's Christian Perfection, which was for a long time in the course of Conference studies. These instances of Methodists entirely sanctified contrary to their theories not only prove the author's statement untrue, that experience in every case is shaped by theory, but they afford encouragement to other Methodist preachers who have gone astray in their speculations to ask for complete deliverance from the plague of their own hearts.

You know, my brethren, that we have a "high priest taken from among men . . . who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way."

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