We can test ourselves for humility. True humility can be seen by our yieldedness to the Lord. The humble Christian will do anything for the Lord, even to the point of dying for Christ (Php 2:3-8). Furthermore he considers every other Christian to be more important to the church than he himself (Php 2:3). Like his Lord, the Christian who “thinks low of himself” will lay aside his own rights and liberties to help the elect be saved and grow in Christ (Php 2:3-4). Paul said it this way: “I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain salvation by grace through faith in Christ Jesus and with it, eternal glory” (2Ti 2:10). Humility is also seen in the way we treat weaker brethren (Mt 18:1-14). The humble Christian will love, respect and nurture those who are young in the Lord. He will carefully avoid putting any kind of stumbling block in their way (vv 5-14). He will associate with those of lower social and economic standing without partiality (Ro 12:16; Jas 2:1-9). He is willing to sacrifice financially without complaint. Our churches, our families, and we ourselves are suffering horrible wounds because of our lack of Christlikeness. It would be well for us to prayerfully consider the NT passages about humility, asking the Lord to “search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Ps 139:23-24). May God give us all Christlike humility.

John Wesley's Arminianism and Anti-Calvinism: Omission to Calvinism: Murray explains Wesley's main theological objection to Calvinism:

How could a belief that God has elected some to salvation, and decreed the reprobation of all others, be consistent with the love that has commanded the good news to be proclaimed to every creature? If only the salvation of the elect is certain, then God must have predestined all others to damnation. "Predestinarin" belief therefore had to be a threat to evangelical Christianity; he was sure it would imperil the work of evangelizing the masses so wonderfully begun. . . . So Calvinism, as Wesley misunderstood it, meant no proclamation of the love of God for all men. . . . Wesley saw his friend [Whitefield] as an inconsistent Calvinist, and that because he did not fit his perception of what a Calvinist had to be (Murray 59-61).

Wesley also objected to Calvinism because he thought that it necessarily led directly to antinomianism. Original Sin and Prevenient Grace: Wesley affirmed man’s “total corruption” in agreement with Calvin but sharply departed from Reformed theology by affirming prevenient grace and man’s free will. Wesley believed that as a result of Adam’s fall, man is spiritually sick. His depravity is debilitating, yet he is able to contribute to his salvation (i.e., cooperate with God, who initiates the process) because prevenient grace counteracts his debilitating depravity. God did not impute Adam’s sin to all mankind; rather, all men are born with a corrupt nature without guilt. Prevenient grace, which is a distinguishing mark of Wesleyan Arminianism, refers to a universal, non-regenerative, and non-effectual work of God that equally enables all men to respond to God in faith. Arminians base Scriptural arguments for universal prevenient grace primarily in church history. This month we continue by examining Wesley's distinctive theology.

Wesley was not a systematic theologian, nor did he write anything resembling a systematic theology. Controversy shaped his theology, and his theology “underwent a number of changes and variations” (Murray, Wesley and M. Who Followed, 76). Ian Murray notes, “He popularized a school of Christian thought which in some respects is distinct from any previous tradition of teaching that claimed Scripture as its source” (42) His preaching centered on what he called “the three grand scriptural doctrines—original sin, justification by faith, and holiness consequent thereon” (Heitzenrater, “Wesley, John” in Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals, ed. Larsen, 714). What follows focuses on the two aspects of Wesley’s theology that most distinguish him from other evangelicals and that are the most controversial among conservative evangelicals.

Controversy shaped John Wesley’s theology.
ine believers can totally and finally fall away from the faith and may not persevere in the faith to the end and be eternally saved (cf. Lk 13:14; Col 1:29; 2 Tim 2:5; Heb 6:4-6; 1 Pet 1:10). Arminians may have assurance of their present salvation but never of their final salvation.

**John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection.** Why Wesley Taught It: Wesley taught that Christians can experience “Christian perfection.” This is the most distinctive feature of Wesleyanism, and for Wesley, “the opinion rested quite as much upon alleged experiences as upon any interpretation of Scripture” (Murray, 47).

What It Is Not: Edward Panosian explains,

For Wesley, Christian perfection is not sinless perfection. Sin, to him, is defined narrowly as a voluntary transgression of a known law. . . . It is not infallibility, nor perfection in knowledge, nor freedom from ignorance, nor freedom from mistakes concerning things not essential to salvation, nor freedom from bodily infirmities, nor freedom from errors of judgment or action, nor freedom from temptation. . . . It is not a final state or condition which it is impossible to lose nor which is incapable of increase (in Sidwell, Faith of Our Fathers, 140).

What It Is: According to Wesley, God promised “salvation from all willful sin” before physical death. Wesley called this “Christian perfection,” “perfect love” (1 John 4:18), “entire sanctification,” and “full salvation,” and he described it as “holiness,” “a purity of intention, dedicating all the life to God,” and “loving God with all our heart and serving him with all our strength.” Panosian explains,

In summary, love is the keynote of Wesley’s doctrine of Christian perfection: perfect love toward God and man. Its by-product is the complete exclusion of conscious sin. It happens in a moment as a gift of God in response to faith and is maintained by humble dependence on Him (126).

Jonathan R. Pratt explains,

John Wesley’s main contribution to sanctification teaching is his separation of justification from sanctification, both of which are to be received in separate acts of faith. Wesley describes this sanctification as “entire sanctification” or “perfection.” The experience of receiving this type of sanctification has five specific elements: 1) it is instantaneous; 2) it is distinctly subsequent to justification; 3) it is only [sic] received by those who seek for it; 4) it defines sin as “conscious, deliberate acts”; and 5) it may be lost (Pratt, "Dispensational Sanctification: A Mismenor," DBTS Journal 7 [Fall 2002], 102).

Its Consequences: To his credit Wesley never claimed to have attained Christian perfection, but he did claim to know many people who did. He also realized how readily people could abuse the doctrine. Nevertheless, Wesley is the father of numerous people and movements that separate justification and sanctification: Charles Finney and Asa Mahan; Phoebe Palmer; the Higher Life movement; the Keswick (Victorious Life) movement; Chaferian or Dallas Seminary theology; and the Pentecostal and charismatic movements.

Conclusion: John Wesley’s Legacy.

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**Putting on the Humility of Christ**

Colossians 3:12

Steven Owen

"B"lessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Mt 5:6). In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells us that true happiness (‘blessed’) comes to those who regularly experience a powerful craving (the Greek behind ‘hun-ger, thirst’) to be like Jesus Christ (‘righteousness’). That powerful craving will be satisfied. And Colossians 3 & 4 prescribes for the Christian the process of becoming Christlike. As we have seen in previous issues of Sidel, after putting off the garments of sin, the Christian is to begin by putting on the Christlike garments of compassion and kindness. Let’s now consider the next step to Christlikeness: putting on the humility of Christ.

We first need to understand what humility is. The Greek word here translated ‘humility’ apparently was coined by the Holy Spirit. It is not found in any extra-Biblical Greek literature before the second century. *Tapeivophrosune* is a compound word comprised of the word *tapeino* (‘lowly’) and *phrosune* (“to think”). It means “to think low of oneself.” The Roman word did not value the Christian virtue of humility; therefore *tapeino* (“lowly”) was always used in a contemptuous way. This word was used to describe a slave or something that had little or no value. In the NT “lowly” is used to describe people of meager financial means (Jas 1.9) or social standing (Ro 12.16). Humility, then, is to consider oneself to be of low standing.

But how low should we think of ourselves? After all, our culture (and many false teachers) tells us that our problems are caused by low self-esteem. Our culture, like all cultures, is Satanicly influenced (Eph 2.2). Each one of us has been thoroughly influenced by it. Therefore we need to carefully consider the example of Scripture to fully appreciate how God wants us to think about ourselves. The greatest example of humility is the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:6-7 informs us that “although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant.” Please note that this verse says that Jesus Christ is fully God. The expression “form of God” does not mean that He was like God in outward form. God is a Spirit (Lk 24:53) and He cannot have a body. Jesus was fully God’s man, and He emptied Himself of His earthly form.

Putting on the humility of Christ is the Lord Jesus Christ. In Colossians 3.12, after putting off the garments of sin, the Christian is to begin by putting on the Christlike garments of compassion and kindness. Let’s now consider the next step to Christlikeness: putting on the humility of Christ.

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