

The Arminian

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FIVE KEYS TO WESLEY'S SUCCESS

Steve Stanley

THE FIRST KEY: His High Regard for Scripture

Proverbs 29:18 *Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.* (NIV)

Foundations are critical to the endurance of what is built upon them. Wesley took care to build the beliefs and practices of Methodism upon the plain teachings of God's written Word. He early inculcated in them the conviction that God has spoken and that His Word has been faithfully preserved for the help, hope, and blessing of all the earth. Likewise, he regarded

the Bible as the Word of God without error. As light is without darkness, so this book was held to be the uncontaminated and completely trustworthy Word of God and not the product of mere human reasoning.

In a letter to a Mrs. Chapman from Savannah, dated March 29, 1737, he wrote: "I feed my brethren in Christ, as He giveth me power, with the pure, unmixed milk of His word. And those who are as little children receive it, *not as the word of man, but as the word of God.*"

He famously said, "Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible, there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth" [*Journal*, 24 July 1776].

The importance of his confidence in the complete trustworthiness of the Scriptures may be seen in two of its effects: his work to "spread scriptural holiness" for the conversion and discipling of humanity with the consequence of "reform[ing] the nations." These twin emphases flowed from that confidence in the truth, directives, and promises of God's Word.

He trusted that the Book of God would reliably chart the whole course of the human journey from birth to eternity: "God himself has condescended to teach the way: for this very end he came from heaven. He hath written it down in a book. O give me that book! At

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any price give me the Book of God! I have it: here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be ‘homo unius libri’ [literally, “a man of one book”].

It was with this conviction that God used John Wesley and the early Methodists to open a path to Christ and full salvation in Him to the unconverted of England.

Wesley Stories: John Wesley and Charles Simeon

Joseph Beumont Wakeley

Mr. Simeon gives an account of an interview he had with the venerable founder of Methodism a short time after Mr. Simeon was ordained. After having been introduced to him, Mr. Simeon said to Mr. Wesley: “Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian, and I have sometimes been called a Calvinist, and, therefore, I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before we begin the combat, with your permission I should like to ask you a few questions, not for impertinent curiosity, but for instruction.”

Permission was readily and kindly granted by Mr. Wesley, and Mr. Simeon proceeded to ask: “Pray, sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so dependent you would never have thought of turning to God if God had not put it into your heart?”

“Yes,” says Mr. Wesley; “I do indeed.” “And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by any thing you can do, and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?”

“Yes; solely through Christ.” “But, sir, suppose you were first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterward by your own works?” “No,” said Mr. Wesley; “I must be saved from first to last by Christ.”

“Allow, then, you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way to keep yourself by your own power?” “No.” “What then? are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as an infant in its mother’s arms?”

“Yes, altogether.” “And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto his eternal kingdom?” “Yes, I have no hope but in him.”

“Then, sir, with your leave, I will put up my dagger again, for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance. It is in substance all that I hold and as I hold it, and, therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.”

The State of Evangelical Publishing

Vic Reasoner

Four of the most important conservative Christian publishers all began as family businesses in Grand Rapids. Known as the “Netherlands Quartet,” because of their Dutch background, here is how they each began.

Kregel Publications began in 1909 when Louis Kregel started selling used theological books at his home. William B. Eerdmans began selling

“ten-cent specials” to Dutch farmers in 1910 in order to pay his way through Calvin Theological Seminary. Pat and Bernie Zondervan, who were cousins, launched their own venture in 1931 by selling used Reformed books directly, then by mail. Herman Baker, a nephew of Louis Kregel, also established a book business in 1939.

But in recent years evangelical book publishers have been bought out. In the early 1980s Zondervan bought out Revell and Francis Asbury Press. Zondervan advanced a million dollars in a book deal with John Delorean in 1985. When the book bombed, they ultimately shut down their Francis Asbury imprint as well as Revell. In 1987 Zondervan became a wholly owned subsidiary of HarperCollins.

Thomas Nelson bought out Word Publishers in 1992. In November 2011 HarperCollins also bought out Thomas Nelson. But HarperCollins is owned by the News Corporation, with Rupert Murdoch as chairman. This is the world's second largest media conglomerate.

News Corporate now controls 50% of the Christian book market.

The bottom line is that the News Corporate now controls 50% of the Christian book market. Thus, Zondervan and

Thomas Nelson exist to generate a profit for New Corp. They are going to publish whatever they think there is a market for. But Rupert Murdoch is not committed to evangelicalism, biblical reform, or genuine revival.

The result is that the average Christian bookstore is stocked with superficial and sometimes heretical products. Christian publishing sells \$4 billion annually. But when the pop-psychology-self-help-feel-good books, the end-times fiction, the celebrity biography, and the opportunist author trying to capitalize on current events are removed, the average Christian bookstore would be left with little besides romance novels. We have become a generation of believers who are doctrinally illiterate and historically

unaware of our roots. While the history of the Christian Church is dotted with classics from every time period, the best-seller list is dominated by a few celebrity authors.

Within the academic market, publishing is controlled by the guild. Those who seek to publish their research must submit it to peer review. The guild controls who can get published. It is a sport for these scholars to come up with some new theological twist. A rather narrow group of scholars all congratulate each other, but few have obtained the academic pedigree necessary to play this game.

Anyone who has an unpopular message or is contending for truth will probably have to resort to self-publication. It was a mistake for the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy to disband after ten years in 1987. Looking back, they did a great deal of good, but after they disbanded the liberal agenda never slept. They have so muddied the water that many people are now confused. My article "Why Inerrancy is Compatible with Evangelical Wesleyanism" has been submitted to three evangelical journals, who have all rejected it. It may be accessed online at <http://fwponline.cc/arm_extend/Inerrancy_01.pdf>

Most major Wesleyan publishers would not recognize Methodist theology if they were hit over the head with a hardbound volume of *Wesley's 52 Standard Sermons*. The current spate of Wesley studies often equates John Wesley with process philosophy, feminism, liberal theology, and an errant Bible. Thus, Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers was formed in 1991 to contend for historic Methodist doctrine.

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GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH ARMINIUS, Part 5

John S. Knox

The *Declaration of Sentiments* contains ten chapters which Arminius compiled in his defense. Last issue covered Sections 5-7.

SECTION VIII – “THE DIVINITY OF THE SON OF GOD”

Section 8 is one of the most difficult passages to examine because of its sophisticated theological arguments. In it, Arminius seeks to defend himself against attacks that he is spreading unorthodox views about the deity of Christ. In this chapter, he also attempts to prove that his detractors are using an unfair standard against him.

According to Arminius, the whole matter revolves around the interpretation of the word, *autotheon* — a Greek word meaning “very God,” “one who is truly God,” or “one who is of God of himself.” Arminius claims this word was used incorrectly by many of his fellow professors at Leyden and that it carries with it the

His goal was the transmission of a clear, traditional, orthodox understanding of the Trinity.

possibility of “two mutually conflicting errors”—Tritheism and Sabellianism. Tritheism is the heretical teaching about the Trinity that denies the unity of substance in the Divine Persons. Sabellianism is an alternative name for the Modalist form of Monarchianism. Furthermore, his criticism of its usage is based on both Scripture, the works of the Church Fathers, and orthodox doctrine established long before his time.

Regarding the confusing nature of the term, he asserts, “Yet the proceeding of the origin of one person from another (that is, of the Son from the

Father) is the only foundation that has ever been used for defending the Unity of the Divine Essence in the Trinity of Persons.” According to Arminius, *autotheon* denotes something else than that. He adds,

For, these two things, to be the Son and to be God, are at perfect agreement with each other; but to derive his essence from the Father, and, at the same time, to derive it from no one, are evidently contradictory, and mutually destructive the one of the other.

The term suggests equality to the point that the different personages are either blurred or harshly separated—a concept condemned by him and even his opponents, when it suits their agenda. Arminius unveils this prejudiced approach of his critics when he comments,

No one endeavored to vindicate me from this calumny; while great exertion was employed to frame excuses for Trelcatius, by means of a qualified interpretation of his words, though it was utterly impossible to reconcile their palliative explanations with the plain signification of his unperverted expressions. Such are the effects which the partiality of favor and the fervor of zeal can produce!

The remainder of the chapter is devoted to dissecting the understanding of the essence of God and Christ more thoroughly. His goal is the transmission of his clear, traditional, orthodox understanding of the Trinity. He has been accused of limiting the divinity of Christ because he does not like the term *autotheon*. To Arminius, however, the term itself is unorthodox and unscriptural. As such, he states, “Therefore, in no way whatever can this phrase ... be excused as a correct one, or as having been happily expressed.” As with other doctrinal matters, if it is not in Scripture, it can only

be considered conjecturally. Arminius finishes the section with a “kidney punch” of his own, insinuating that his opponents are truly hypocritical in their theological positions. In their use of *autotheon* they are the ones spreading dangerous extra-Trinitarian doctrine.

SECTION IX – “THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN BEFORE GOD”

Arminius’ chapter on justification serves two purposes. First, it demonstrates how affable Arminius was in this controversy. Second, it reinforces Arminius’ keeping with Calvinist thought. Concerning the first point, Arminius discusses an ongoing debate between the French churches and various professors of theology.

Arminius saw this debate as an opportunity for theologians to graciously demonstrate their Christian unity.

I never durst mingle myself with the dispute, or undertake to decide it; for I thought it possible for the Professors of the same religion to hold different opinions on this point

from others of their brethren, without any breach of Christian peace or the unity of faith. Similar peaceful thoughts appear to have been indulged by both the adverse parties in this dispute; for they exercised a friendly toleration towards each other, and did not make that a reason for mutually renouncing their fraternal concord.

Arminius saw this debate as an opportunity for theologians to graciously demonstrate their Christian charity in the midst of controversy—unlike his own experience with the Supralapsarians who he concludes are hostile gentlemen “of a different judgment.” His subtle comparison effectively describes his version of the unloving and unwarranted attacks of his opponents. Arminius’ words on Reformed thought

and especially on John Calvin make this mistreatment appear even more inappropriate.

He begins this chapter with a statement of agreement. He declares,

I am not conscious to myself, of having taught or entertained any other sentiments concerning the justification of man before God, than those which are held unanimously by the Reformed and Protestant Churches, and which are in complete agreement with their expressed opinions.

Unlike some other issues of doctrine, Arminius sees little to disagree with in his opponents’ approach to this topic. Complementing this is a declaration concerning Calvin.

Yet, my opinion is not so widely different from his as to prevent me from employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things which he has delivered on this subject, in the third book of his Institutes; this I am prepared to do at any time, and to give them my full approval.

His opponents have accused him of being an enemy of the Reformed faith and of Calvinism. Arminius’ words completely reject this notion and with these words, Arminius ends the formal part of his *Declaration of Sentiments*. He has provided the Assembly that which they have requested—a statement of doctrine on various issues. He states, “Most noble and potent Lords, these are the principal articles, respecting which I have judged it necessary to declare my opinion before this August meeting, in obedience to your commands.” However, he also imparted perhaps more than they expected. He provided substantiating proof for both his Reformed views and a defense against the Supralapsarian. His Declaration is nearly over, except for one more contribution to the agenda of the Assembly.

REVIEWS

***Square Peg: Why Wesleyans Aren't Fundamentalists.* Al Truesdale, ed. Kansas City: Beacon Hill, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-8341-2793-7. 158 pages.**

The thesis of this book is that denominations in the Wesleyan tradition cannot adopt fundamentalism without forfeiting essential parts of what it means to be Wesleyan. However, in 1923 J. B. Chapman, then editor of the Nazarene *Herald of Holiness* wrote, "Of course, our sympathies are entirely with the Fundamentalists and we rejoice in their boldness for God and truth. ... May God bless and prosper all who stand up for God and His Holy Book!" ["The Victories of the Fundamentalists," *Herald of Holiness* (7 Feb 1923) 2-3].

So what is fundamentalism? Islamic terrorists are labeled "fundamentalists." The stereotype of a fundamentalist is a wild-eyed fanatic with bad breath who rants, denouncing everything he does not understand.

But the term "fundamental" refers to basic, rudimentary, foundational, or cardinal principles. Any listing of primary Wesleyan doctrines could be referred to as "fundamental" Wesleyan doctrines. For example, A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology* (1931) or Edwin Mouzon, *Fundamentals of Methodism* (1923) or Donald Haynes, *On the Threshold of Grace: Methodist Fundamentals* (2010).

Wesley wrote that the term fundamental was an ambiguous word and that there had been many warm disputes about the number of "fundamentals." Yet he referred to justification by faith as a "fundamental doctrine of the gospel." He adds the new birth as another fundamental and Christian perfection and Christlikeness as "the fundamentals of Christianity."

In their series on "Fundamental Theology," Paulist Press has a title *Fidelity without Fundamentalism* (2010). Therefore it is imperative that we define the term. J. Gresham Machen defined fundamentalism as "all those who definitely and polemically maintain a belief in supernatural Christianity as over against the Modernism of the present day."

The contributors of this book describe fundamentalism historically as a response to modernism and secular humanism. The term was coined in 1920 and derived from

a series of booklets titled *The Fundamentals*. This series of booklets upheld:

- the inerrancy and verbal inspiration of Scripture
- the Trinity
- the virgin birth and incarnation of Christ
- original sin
- the atonement of Christ
- the resurrection of Christ
- spiritual rebirth
- bodily resurrection and eternal salvation or damnation

These fundamentalists also attacked evolution and upheld a literal reading of the Genesis account of creation. They were hostile to modern critical attempts to force evolutionary theory onto the development of the Bible. So far I am in full agreement.

However, they are also described as holding that those with whom they disagree are not true Christians. Since tolerance is the chief, if not only virtue of our society, these fundamentalists are immediately suspect. But Wesley himself distinguished between true Christianity and nominal Christianity. The real offense of fundamentalism is not necessarily their bigotry, but their belief in absolutes. However, in fairness it must be acknowledged that some fundamentalists have made absolutes out of nonessentials. Today the conservative holiness movement is infected with a dogmatic spirit of fundamentalism.

There is an ecumenical defense of fundamental Christian orthodoxy, which was the spirit of *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915). But there is also a narrow, bigoted fundamentalist attitude which denounces everyone who does not agree with them on nonessentials. Dunning seems to recognize this ambiguity on pp. 63-64.

As early as 1916 J. B. Chapman, editor of the *Herald of Holiness*, wrestled with the term "fundamentalist." He stated that Nazarenes believed in the fundamentals and then proceeded to give his list of fundamental doctrines. However, if the question is raised whether Nazarenes are Fundamentalists, using the term as a proper noun, Chap-

man answered, “Yes, with reservations.” While Chapman had reservations about certain Calvinistic tendencies among Fundamentalists, there was no reservation, however, concerning the inerrancy of Scripture.

In the September 1984 issue of *The Fundamentalist Journal* eternal security was advocated as a fundamental doctrine. But there was no such article in the original set of *The Fundamentals*. Thus, we are not contending for a term, but for fundamental Christian doctrine. Ironically, this happened to be the title of the first systematic theology written by a Nazarene.

According to Thomas Oord “fundamentalism” may refer to a “Christ vs. Culture” stance that emphasizes a premillennial notion that the saints will be raptured soon. Not all who contributed to the series of booklets entitled *The Fundamentals*, however, were premillennial. The thesis of Ernest Sandeen in *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (1970), is that the fundamentalist movement ought to be understood historically as a premillennial movement. Yet of the ninety articles contained in *The Fundamentals* only two deal specifically with the premillennial advent and both authors were considered moderate. Only about half of the American authors were premillennial. Timothy Weber has noted that the National Federation of the Fundamentalists of the Northern Baptists, organized in 1921, contained postmillennialists. Granted, the fundamentalist movement later embraced a premillennial eschatology and I would agree that the extreme form of premillennialism, known as dispensationalism, is incompatible with Wesleyan theology. I have dealt with this in my book, *The Hope of the Gospel* (1999).

There is also an attempt to link fundamentalism with Calvinism, but this is simply guilt by association. When Calvinism affirms Scriptural doctrine I will stand with them. Ironically, on p. 24 Cunningham says that fundamentalism has been articulated within a predominately Calvinist theological structure. But on p. 25 he says that Wesleyans are much more in line with Luther and Calvin than are fundamentalists. This much is certain, old-line Calvinism was certainly not premillennial.

Fundamentalism has also been linked to the King James only position. Originally this was a reaction by fundamentalists to the unwarranted deletion of the virgin birth in the Revised Standard Version’s translation of Isaiah 7:14. More recently some extremists have taken ridiculous positions on this issue. In his defense of fundamen-

talism, Kevin Bauder calls this position hyper-fundamentalism. The essence of historical fundamentalism has been a defense of biblical authority, not a biblical translation.

I also recall going to hear a famous fundamentalist preacher. If you must know, it was Jack Hyles. I disagreed with most everything he said as well as the spirit in which he said it. And so again I am not contending for a label or a stereotype. I recognize it is not enough to merely accept certain propositions or to focus on an objective mental assent to truth. Fletcher argued against this in his *Six Letters on the Spiritual Manifestation of the Son of God*. Fletcher countered the views of Robert Sandeman and John Glas with a subjective appropriation of trust in Christ. In *Six Letters*, Fletcher commends an experimental knowledge of God rather than a mere intellectual assent to God. But those propositions or fundamentals are the basis of our faith.

1 John gives three marks of the new birth: there is the propositional mark regarding what we believe about Christ, there is the relational mark regarding who we love, and there is the behavioral mark that we keep the commandments of God.

Wesley declared, “My ground is the Bible. Yea, I am a Bible-bigot.” He was a “man of one book.” If you claim to have a better way, Wesley demanded, “Show me it is so by plain proof of Scripture.” His sermons constantly appealed to the Scriptures — the law and the testimony. He described the Bible as the one, “the only standard of truth.” “Nay, if there be any mistakes in the Bible there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book, it did not come from the God of truth.” “‘All Scripture is given by inspiration of God’ (consequently, all Scripture is infallibly true).”

In an email from Thomas Oord to Andy Heer, Oord stated that he considered the Bible the primary resource among others. But he also held that the experience of a transformed life was the proof of the gospel, not logic or argumentation. And I would agree that a transformed life is the best argument for the gospel. But Oord went on to say that “the experience of transformation confirms the salvific purpose of the Bible.” Here he is veering into the limited inerrancy view of Rob Staples that the Bible is only inerrant regarding matters of salvation. Oord continued, “And in addition to the other three legs of the quadrilateral illuminating and applying scriptural truth,

they also play a key role in the evaluation and interpretive methods. And these roles, from most Wesleyan perspectives, levy against the belief that the Bible is inerrant in all ways.”

Tradition, experience, and reason are the “three legs” which confirm scriptural authority.

But Oord’s conclusion that the Bible is not inerrant does not follow. Everything is not existential. There must be an absolute point of reference. Modern hermeneutics has, in some instances, placed so much emphasis on “reader-response” that they deny the Bible has anything to say to us propositionally.

Yet the contributors of this book assure me that words like “infallibility” and “inerrancy” do not represent well how we Wesleyans think about Scripture. However, in 1894 D. G. W. Ellis submitted an article to *The Quarterly Review of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South* in which he advised ministers who reject the infallibility of God’s Word to promptly resign. “Those who deny the inerrancy of the original writings of these sacred books admitted into the canon of scripture must do so, I think, because they are not willing to believe in the supernatural.”

Ellis went on to chastize T. H. Huxley, who called himself “Darwin’s Bulldog,” for rejecting Genesis 1. Ellis declared, “The account of the creation given in the first chapter of Genesis requires less credulity on the part of those that believe it than is necessary to the acceptance of the speculations of scientists.”

It is significant that this article comes over twenty-five years before the term “fundamentalist” was coined. Ellis was defending historic Methodist doctrine, connecting plenary inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy, while rejecting evolutionary theory in the realm of science and biblical criticism.

Yet these modern “Wesleyans” claim it really does not matter if Moses wrote the Pentateuch or whether Isaiah wrote the entire book of Isaiah. Jesus Christ is the real truth of Scripture. Thus Dunning declared that although there may be minor errors in the biblical text, truth is God’s saving purpose embodied in Christ (p. 66).

But if Jesus Christ believed Moses wrote the Pentateuch and that Isaiah wrote Isaiah, then the trustworthiness of Jesus Christ is under question.

There are thirteen passages in the Gospels where Jesus upholds the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (for example: Luke 16:31; Mark 10:5; John 5:46). Jesus also quoted from “both parts” of the book of Isaiah and attributed both parts of Isaiah. John 12:39-41 and Mark 7:6-7 cited the first half and Luke 4:17-19 cites from the “second” Isaiah.

By the time I got to chapter 3, it appeared that the chief reason why Wesleyans cannot be fundamentalists is that fundamentalism rejects evolutionary theory. While the modern intelligent design movement is in the process of burying the remains of evolutionary theory, these philosophers are running to jump aboard the train just as it is grinding to a halt. They exemplify what Paul described in Romans 1:22.

The arguments are simplistic. They ask the question, while God certainly knew the processes of creation, what sense would it make to explain all that to people who had no scientific frame of reference in which to understand it? The answer is revelation. God is revealing truth to us that we would not otherwise know. While he accommodated his revelation to the limitations of our vocabulary and while it is quite possible that those human messengers who were used in the process of inspiration may not have fully understood the message, the truth is that what God spoke is the most accurate historical and scientific account of creation that we will ever have. The claim that the Old Testament picture of the universe is prescientific and therefore must be reinterpreted in the light of modern scientific theory makes biblical revelation inferior to modern scientific theory. Israel did not borrow this worldview from their surrounding neighbors. The distorted record of their surrounding neighbors is testimony to a universal revelation of God through nature and through inspiration that was eventually suppressed.

It is disappointing to see the contributors of this book trot out the old tired claim that the Hebrew word *yom* can mean an indeterminate period of time. *Yom*, the word for “day” can be used figuratively, but whenever it is qualified by a number, it always means a twenty-four hour period. *Yom* occurs 1704 times in the Old Testament and most of its uses refer to the normal cycle of daily earth time, unless the context compels otherwise.

In the Pentateuch, in 119 cases where *yom* is used with a numerical adjective, it always means a literal day. This is

also true of 357 instances outside the Pentateuch. All 608 uses of the plural “days” are literal.

It is true that the sun was not created until the fourth day, but apparently the first three days were of the same length in anticipation of the first solar day. The phrase “evening and morning” occurs over a hundred times in the Old Testament, always with reference to a 24-hour day. The fourth commandment is based on the presupposition that the six days are all 24 hour periods (see Exodus 20:11). While God is still resting, the point is that we have a Sabbath, one day in seven, which is based on his creative week.

If H. Orton Wiley claimed that the first three chapters of Genesis were poetic, then he was wrong. Milton S. Terry wrote, “Any satisfactory interpretation of Genesis must be preceded by a determination of the class of literature to which it belongs.” And then he said, “every thorough Hebrew scholar knows that in all the Old Testament there is not a more simple, straightforward prose narrative than this first chapter of Genesis” [*Hermeneutics* (1883), 548].

While the theory of evolution has never been proven and while most Americans reject it, apparently we fundamentalists are an embarrassment to the “Wesleyan” philosophes. In their recent book *The Anointed* (2011) Randall J. Stephens and Karl W. Giberson, both professors at Eastern Nazarene University, joined forces with atheists to form the Darwin lobby. In so doing, they seek favor with mainstream academia and have betrayed their holiness heritage of separation from the world. See also their *New York Times* op-ed at http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/18/opinion/the-evangelical-rejection-of-reason.html?_r=1

I am reminded of the words of Thomas Oden, “The most maligned and mutilated and demeaned are believers who

bear the unfair epithet of ‘fundamentalist,’ like the Jews who wore the Star of David on their clothes in Nazi Germany” [*Requiem*, 135].

But evolution was the most damnable doctrine of the twentieth century, giving rise to both Nazism and communism. Until recently, I have never heard anyone try to make a case for the compatibility of Wesleyanism and evolution. You might as well try to convince me that God is in the process of becoming what he is not, that the Bible contains mistakes, that Adam and Eve were not historical persons, or that sexual orientation is not a spiritual issue. While these positions may describe the state of Nazarene theology, it certainly is not what Wesley taught. If that makes me a fundamentalist then I will wear the badge with honor.

It is misleading and dishonest to claim to represent Wesleyan theology and then create the kind of confusion this book fosters. Why not just be forthright and declare that this is Nazarene theology? If the subtitle of this book was “Why Nazarenes No Longer Want to be Identified as Fundamentalists,” I would not have bothered to review it. But when they presume to speak for all Wesleyans, I plead with the philosophes who have hijacked the modern “Wesleyan” movement, either return to Wesley or discontinue using his name. His preaching brought revival. Your teaching is producing skepticism, uncertainty, and I fear will lead to apostasy. In his notes on Romans 10:17 Wesley said, “Faith, indeed, ordinarily cometh by hearing; even by hearing the word of God.” If faith is based upon God’s Word and the trustworthiness of that Word has been undermined, how then can we exercise faith for salvation? It seems to me that you are guarding the wrong door. It looks like we need a revival of Wesleyan fundamentalism.

—Vic Reasoner

Thomas E. Bergler. *The Juvenilization of American Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012. 281 pages. ISBN 978-0-8028-6684-1

Bergler’s book became the main topic of discussion in the June issue of *Christianity Today*. His research is impeccable. He stays well to his topic to the point of pure tedium. Yet, the massive substance of research that he presents is well worth it. Bergler does not subscribe to a conspiracy, but to facts of demonstrable history. He contends that the Church, in an effort to reach the youth of the 1930s through the 70s more or less jumped the track.

They tried to counter the communism threat, the cold war, and failing Church attendance, and the result is what he calls the “Juvenilization of the American Church.”

He focuses on four major groups. He studies a major black Baptist denomination, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church as representative of main-line Protestantism, and the Youth of Christ (YFC) move-

ment. This reviewer can personally verify what Bergler says happened in Methodist youth program and YFC. With extreme skill he traces their weaknesses, failures and successes in their effort. But in the end, it is the YFC organization which wins the gold star. He also points out that without YFC, American Christianity might be in worse shape today. This conclusion I generally agree with. However, the main problem was that YFC began to move away from Bible teaching and much of the traditional attitudes of the church to achieve their objective.

YFC began doing market research more or less to see how to attract and keep youth enthused about their programs. It slowly became what draws crowds and what would keep their attention. Basically Bergler says they dumbed down the gospel and opened the door to consumer-driven Christianity. There was nothing too sacred, except certain moral values, that could not be sacrificed to attract the American youth. Music began to sound like what was popular among the youth of that time. The beat, drums, speakers and the rock music itself, did not matter. The same can be said about many other things that the youth accepted. According to him the result became “me.” It became about how “I” feel.

Many believe in God, but they began to keep him in the background. He is there only if they need him. He goes on to cite how several mega churches have capitalized on these new attitudes which have been driving worship and all other aspects of contemporary Christianity. Basically this “juvenilization” manifests itself as spiritual immaturity. They do not know doctrine nor how to explain general concepts of the faith. It is about how they “feel,” or how “I” see it. How one feels is important, but when feelings have no foundation, it is a catastrophe in the making.

In the final chapter he discusses the lamentable results. He makes several very important observations. The following statement is one of those observations which is curious. Listen to this, “American Christianity is ‘therapeutic’ in that, ... we believe that God and religion are valuable because they help us *feel better* about our problems.”

I am sure that this could be taken in a different way, but it can apply even to popular teachings. For example in early Methodism feelings and knowing were two differ-

ent things. You prayed until you knew your sins were forgiven and you were a child of God. We called this concept “praying through.” However, once he was “through” the joy of salvation broke all over the new convert and those around him. Point is that the new convert knew that he was a child of God and the rejoicing started because of his adoption into the family of God. However, in the juvenilization process, feeling and emotions become central to faith.

Today in most churches, a seeker prays a sinner’s prayer or takes a walk down the Romans Road or a mere hand shake to affirm salvation. Such a simple act in most Churches does the trick. If we contrast the contemporary lack luster conversion experience to the terminology of “believers baptism” and “*help us feel*” it becomes apparent. Almost everyone can’t wait for the new convert to have the same “thrill” or “experience” that they had when baptized. With “believers baptism” it is always the thrill they receive to be baptized like Jesus! Yet no one has ever shown us the passage that says we ought to be baptized like Jesus.

The same expressions are also used with the gift of tongues. These examples well could illustrate what Bergler is saying. To argue against “believers Baptism” or tongues seems to threaten what faith people profess. The mature “know so” experience that early Methodism embraced is now kaput. We have been juvenilized and thrilled with lesser experiences.

As you can see from the above example, this book has the potential to provoke much thought and discussion about contemporary Christianity and doctrine. It will no doubt be one of the most exhilarating publications in our time, bar none. His only real weakness is his suggestions on how to correct the problem. He brings solutions to the table that could help, but all too many times they will depend on pastors and teachers who themselves have bought into the “juvenilization.” But could this “juvenilization” include many people who are not saved but are seeking a thrill or experience in religion? Interestingly, this idea receives scant consideration. Herein he too is a victim of “juvenilization” in a generation that only wants to hear positive things. Nevertheless, what Bergler presents demands attention and an honest discussion of all pastors who take their calling seriously.

-Dennis Hartman

Vic Reasoner. *A Wesleyan Theology of Holy Living for the 21st Century*. Evansville, IN: Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-976003-2-4.

Today, teachers, speakers and writers are advised to “Put the cookies on a lower shelf.” Accessibility of knowledge by a semi-literate public is stressed in this current generation. Publishers want books and articles with a sixth-grade or lower reading level. This may be called the “dumbed-down generation.”

Making the product of our studies available and understandable to the man or woman on the street or in the pew is important. But drawing on the analogy of the advice above, what are we giving them? Is it solid and nutritious? Or is it junk food—unbalanced, over-processed, and filled with empty calories or harmful substances? When it comes to Christian doctrine and its application, this is more than important—it is vital. We should be putting the undefiled Bread of Life in the hands of those who depend on us. What ingredients and recipes are we using?

In *A Wesleyan Theology of Holy Living for the 21st Century*, Vic Reasoner examines the ingredients and recipes of the doctrine of holiness as they come from the Bible and as they have been prepared through two millennia. From ingredients to the end product, this is an essential guide for the “bakers” and the “servers.” Regarding his own experience, Dr. Reasoner says, “I came to a crisis where I had to decide whether I would preach the Word or what I had heard” [p. 13]. This work is the product of his quest to preach holiness as it comes from God’s Word. His two-volume study is organized into three parts: *Biblical Theology*, *Historical Theology* and *Practical Theology*. It has 794 pages of text, 1598 footnotes, an eighty-page bibliography, and an index of Scripture references.

Regarding the place of holiness (sanctification) in Christian doctrine, the text begins with a quote from Nazarene theologian Mildred Wynkoop:

“Sanctification” cannot stand alone in theology. It cannot be lifted up out of the complex of theological doctrines to be separated from them. The interlocking relationships of all Christian doctrines are integral to the life and meaning of every other one” [p. 16].

Throughout *Biblical Theology*, Dr. Reasoner includes John Wesley’s handling of the biblical texts. And in *Historical Theology*, John Wesley’s writings, especially *Christian Perfection*, hold a central place. Two questions are addressed along the way: “How biblical was John Wesley’s teaching on holy living?” and “How ‘Wesleyan’ is today’s teaching of the ‘Wesleyan’ doctrine of holiness?” Vic Reasoner shows us that John Wesley endeavored to be as biblical as possible in his teaching and practice, but the Wesleyan Holiness of succeeding generations has strayed from both Wesley and the Bible. He uncovers both the need and the justification for a corrective.

A corrective is provided in Part III, *Practical Theology*. For those not ready (or inclined) to wade through systematic theology or to follow in detail the historical development of doctrine, this concluding section may be read first. In fact, Dr. Reasoner even encourages readers to do so. A college education is not necessary to read and understand the final chapter. For ministerial students this is extremely important, since they must make the doctrine of holy living understandable to the person in the pew.

A Wesleyan Theology of Holy Living for the 21st Century meets a critical need of the church today in knowing how “to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age” (Titus 2:12). It is not hard to foresee this becoming a standard reference on holiness.

-Wesley G. Vaughn

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**Thomas H. McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, and Why It Matters*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2012.
ISBN: 978-0-8308-3958-2. 171 pages.**

Tom McCall raises appropriate questions about the “broken Trinity” interpretation of Matthew 27:45-46 and Mark 15:34. Was this a cry of dereliction? Did the Father abandon the Son? Was the Trinity broken?

While this is a popular contemporary interpretation, McCall demonstrates that this was not the traditional interpretation. Jesus was not cursed, nor did he become sin. If Christ were a sinner, then he himself would need salvation. Despite the popular claim that Jesus was the greatest sinner, in him was no sin at all. Thus, the better interpretation of 2 Corinthians 5:21 is that Christ became a sin offering.

Since the Father is father in the sense that he eternally generates the Son, if the Father rejected the Son he would not longer be the Father. Roger Nicole said, “There can never be a division in the Godhead.” Adam Clarke wrote, “Nor could he be forsaken of God, in whom dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” How could God withdraw from God? Thomas Oden wrote, “His cry from the cross did not imply a literal abandonment of the Son by the Father.”

While Psalm 22 opens with the haunting words in question, it moves to affirmations of hope and faith. By v 24 we find a strong affirmation that God has not despised the suffering of the afflicted one. The union of Christ with humanity was unbroken and his relationship with the Father was also unbroken. McCall argues that the Son’s relationship to the Father matters for our hope in

the gospel. The unbroken work of the triune God is the hope for the brokenness of humanity.

This discussion becomes a starting point in which McCall evaluates other doctrines in light of the doctrine of the unbroken Trinity. He argues that the Trinity is for us. McCall does not discount the wrath of God against our sin. But God’s holy love moved him to offer Christ as an atoning sacrifice for our sin. Thus, we cannot conceive of a breach in the Trinity between the wrath of the Father and the love of the Son. Nor is it accurate to declare that God killed his son.

The victory of the cross implies more than a legal justification. It provides a real sanctification. The will of the Father, the provision of the Son, and the continuing work of the Holy Spirit are an unbroken dynamic providing the believer real victory. Thus, McCall argues over six pages that Romans 7 does not describe Christian experience.

In the conclusion McCall celebrates the life of the best man he ever knew — his own father. God took him as a kid without a chance in life and liberated him from the bondage of sin

Now his son reflects on that life theologically. The triune God is radically against sin but radically for the sinner. It is because the actions of the Trinity are always undivided that we can live and die in victory.

-Vic Reasoner