

The Arminian

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FIVE KEYS TO WESLEY'S SUCCESS

Steve Stanley

The Second Key: His Passion for a Godly and Useful Life

In an age distinguished for its apathy toward heart-felt religion and spiritual things, John Wesley was a man of strong spiritual desire. Long before he knew that God's grace could save a man so well that he could know it, he determined to do all that was in his power to live a life that was pleasing to God and useful to others.

While Wesley was no fanatic, neither was he indifferent about the Christian's obligation to the whole mission of God. The widely-known description of his experience of grace as having his "heart strangely warmed" could well charac-

terize his disposition toward all the will and work of God. Fueled by the passion to share the message of God's redeeming, transforming love for all, Wesley bore his fiery witness across the length and breadth of Great Britain. Said to have traveled nearly a quarter of a million miles preaching the Gospel and promoting the work of the Methodists, he was no mere armchair theologian or theoretician.

His constant urging to his preachers was, "You have nothing to do but to save souls: therefore spend and be spent in this work: and go always, not only to those who want you, but to those who want you most. It is not your business to preach so many times, merely, or to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can: to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord."

John MacArthur said in a sermon:

I read about the passion of John Wesley. His passion for the lost is really astounding. Let me give you a little of the biographical data on John Wesley. The writer [Charles L. Goodell] says, "He went out to do for England more than was done by the armies and navies of England in the whole length of his life. What courage and what toil. Ease and he had parted company. And as for money, he lived on a pittance and gave away more than \$200 thousand. Abused and maligned

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in his time, he could say I leave my reputation where I leave my soul, in the hands of God. He said to his brother, Charles, ‘When I devoted to God my ease, my time, my labor, did I exempt my reputation?’ So John Wesley on foot and horseback traveled 225,000 miles, preached 2,400 sermons and

amid misrepresentation and abuse, never knowing the delights of love at home, subject to incessant attacks of the mob, the pulpit and the press. He did not abate a jot of heart or hope until he had reached the age of 88 and ceased at once to labor and to live.”

ACROSS THIRTY YEARS: A SHORT HISTORY OF THE FUNDAMENTAL WESLEYAN SOCIETY

Vic Reasoner

In 1979 the Fundamental Wesleyan Convention was organized in Christiansburg, Virginia, under the name “Wesleyan Ministers Association.” Robert Brush was the evangelist at a camp meeting there hosted by Homer Sawyer. Elmer Long acted as chairman and Homer Sawyer was the secretary. This resolution and statement of faith was adopted and signed by Elmer Long, Vinton H. Quesenberry, James M. Shope, Joseph W. Stewart, Arnold A. Van Horn, E. Norman Brush, Donald P. Winter, Robert L. Brush, J. D. McDonald, L. W. Ruth, Kendle A. Price, D. G. Jackson, Eugene Winter, Homer D. Sawyer, Roger D. Pack, and Lloyd Terpenning.

WHEREAS there has been among second-blessing holiness churches a serious deviation from the scriptural teaching developed by John Wesley and early Methodist writers, and

WHEREAS this has led to a shallow preaching of the new birth and consequently, a confusion has developed concerning Christian experience that is quite distressing, and

WHEREAS this unscriptural teaching has led many to profess salvation without victory over the power of sin nor a direct witness of the Holy Spirit; and others to profess entire sanctification without being made perfect in love, and

WHEREAS we, a group of concerned Christian ministers, seeing a need for a fellowship that will teach and promote scriptural holiness as taught by John Wesley and the early Method-

ists, do hereby pledge our prayers and help to each other, and adopt the following Statement of Faith.

WE BELIEVE there is but one living and true God, everlasting, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons of one substance, power, and eternity — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; the Holy Ghost being one, is the same as the Spirit of God or Spirit of Christ, these being simply different expressions for the Holy Ghost (Ephesians 3:4-6; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 12:14).

WE BELIEVE in the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Scriptures; that the Scriptures are inerrant, infallible, and correct even when they speak on points of history, science and philosophy; that they are the sole and final authority in faith and practice.

WE BELIEVE that all men are born totally depraved; that they are unable to do anything acceptable to God without the help of the Holy Spirit; that all men need to be born again and that this is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The entrance into this experience is initiated by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, whereby the believer is delivered from the guilt and power of sin (1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 5:5; Titus, 3:5-7; Acts 2:38).

WE BELIEVE that there is yet in the believer the “remains of sin” even after he has been born

of the Spirit; and that he may be cleansed from this by the work of the Spirit in his heart as a second work of grace, whereby the believer is perfected in love (1 Thessalonians 5:23; Ephesians 3:19; Hebrews 6:1; 2 Corinthians 13:9; Matthew 4:48; 1 John 4:18; Romans 6:6).

WE BELIEVE justification and entire sanctification are works of the Holy Spirit wrought in the heart by grace through faith.

WE BELIEVE further that this faith is a gift of God given to all who truly repent and hunger and thirst after righteousness (2 Peter 1:3; Colossians 2:12; Galatians 2:16, 20; Ephesians 2:8; Hebrews 11:1), and that this saving faith is always accompanied by the witness of the Spirit (1 John 5:10; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Romans 8:15-16; Hebrews 10:22).

WE BELIEVE that all of life is a state of probation and that there is no state of grace from which we may not fall.

WE BELIEVE in the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the judgment of all mankind at the last day; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; they that done evil unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:29).

WE BELIEVE that the Church is the sole institution that God has left upon the earth to preach and teach salvation by grace through faith to a lost world, and that we are to labor with the hope that God will answer the prayer that he taught us to pray (*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*) by the preaching of the gospel; and that the only hope of redemption of a lost world is the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Elmer Long had been discipled by A. J. Smith. I tell Dr. Smith's story in *Holy Living*, 2:623-626.

Smith wrote that he had seen four powerful revivals, but in each case the Spirit was grieved away and never returned because those who grieved the Spirit did not repent.

While Smith did not have access to all the primary Methodist writings, he did read enough and pray enough to realize the status quo holiness movement was in error. In 1947 Elmer Long stood trial for teaching that all believers had the Holy Spirit. In 1948 Smith and Long published a tract, "The Holy Spirit and the Born-Again Man." The tract was simply a compilation of what early Methodist authorities taught about the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who were regenerated.

The tract generated a backlash from those who taught that one did not receive the Holy Spirit until they received the "second blessing." Dr. Smith was forced to retract his position in 1951. However, he continued his research and in 1953 published his final work *Bible Holiness*, which we reprinted in 1997. Dr. Smith died in 1960.

However, in 1958 Zondervan reprinted the *Works of John Wesley*. Men like Norman and Robert Brush in Florida had experienced a genuine new birth. They also started reading Wesley and saw that the holiness movement had departed from Wesley's teachings. They began to preach that the new birth was accomplished through the baptism with the Holy Spirit, that it produced victory over sin, and that it was confirmed by the direct witness of the Holy Spirit. And so in 1979 they attempted to form a platform that would at least give them a hearing, if not equal time. There was a backlash from the Inter-Church Holiness Convention. We lost our first chairman when he was offered a position at Hobe Sound Bible Church if he would resign.

The next year there was a convention in Crab Orchard, West Virginia, hosted by Pastor Robert Brush. I attended that second convention and was stirred by what I heard. When I was approached by the new organization about becoming the editor of their magazine, the Home

The founders believed that if the conservative holiness movement was shown the truth they would embrace it.

are to labor with the hope that God will answer the prayer that he taught us to pray (*Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*) by the

Missions Board of my denomination advised me not to accept the position in December 1981.

I was aware that the Fundamental Wesleyan position was misunderstood and attempted to defend it in a master's thesis I wrote. I was aware that in the early 1970s there was an academic debate over some of the same issues within the Wesleyan Theological Society. While one of these scholars described the whole debate as "merely academic, of small profit, and rather boring," our men felt they had discovered what was lacking in evangelical Christianity.

I was transparent about my convictions when I was examined prior to ordination in June 1981. I was told that nothing I held would prevent me from ordination. However, when I returned to my alma mater in 1988 they would not hire me to teach because of my views. We published my thesis under the title *The Hole in the Holiness Movement* in 1991. It was attacked in the Jan/Feb 1993 issue of *The Convention Herald*, published by the Inter-Church Holiness Convention.

Marion Brown was the treasurer of another conservative holiness denomination. But he went to

Alabama to hold a revival for Robert Brush and together they read Wesley's sermons. By the end of the meeting Rev. Brown had a paradigm shift theologically and was born again. He invited Rev. Brush to come to Indiana to hold a revival at his church. On some nights Brush simply took the old Methodist standards into the pulpit and read them to the congregation. The opposition was so hot that a trial was set for Brown. Rather than endure any more controversy, Brown resigned. He started a congregation in his garage and began to fill the pulpit for a Free Methodist congregation in Eldorado, Illinois. A certain holiness denomination was in severe need of pastors and a friend suggested to their DS that he ought to contact Brown. The reply of the DS was, "He'll never pastor on my district."

The founders of the Fundamental Wesleyan Convention believed that if the conservative holiness movement was shown the truth they would embrace it. They believed if they preached Methodist doctrine they could see a Methodist revival. Instead they were all ostracized.

(to be continued)

THE CELEBRATED CHURCH OF THESSALONICA Joseph D. McPherson

The New Testament church of Thessalonica as described by the Apostle Paul was a most unusual and illustrious body of believers. Adam Clarke summarizes the apostle's description:

That the church at Thessalonica was pure, upright, and faithful, as we scarcely find any reprehension in the whole epistle: the Thessalonian converts had FAITH that *worked*, a LOVE that *labored*, and a HOPE which induced them to bear afflictions *patiently* and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to Clarke, the apostle Paul acknowledges the miraculous influences of the Holy Ghost (1:5) upon the hearts of these Thessalonian believers, "in changing and re-

newing them; and by the testimony which [they had] received from him, that [they] were accepted through the Beloved, and become the adopted children of God." This same "Holy Spirit which was given [them] *left no doubt* on [their] minds, either with respect to the *general truth* of the doctrine, or the safety of [their] own state. [They] had the fullest assurance that the Gospel was true, and the fullest assurance that [they] had received the remission of sins through that Gospel; the Spirit himself bearing witness with [their] spirit, that [they were] the sons and daughters of God Almighty." No, these Thessalonian believers were not entirely sanctified, for we find Paul praying in chapter five, verse twenty-three that "*the very God of peace*

sanctify [them] wholly” [*Clarke’s Commentary*, Introduction to the Thessalonian Epistle].

Here we find the New Testament model for truly regenerated believers. Paul extols them as “*ensamples*,” explained by Clarke as “types, models, or patterns; according to which all the Churches in Macedonia and Achaia formed both their creed and their conduct.” The fame of the Thessalonians’ faith and adherence to the Gospel spread far and wide.

What a wide difference we find between the glorious description of this New Testament church and the state of Christ’s disciples while He was yet with them prior to His ascension. Speaking to His disciples, Jesus once asked, “*How is it that ye have not faith?*” (Mark 4:40). With selfish motives two of His disciples asked Jesus on another occasion: “*Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory*” (Mark 10:37). With a spirit of intolerance these disciples once spoke to Jesus saying, “*Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us*” (Luke 9:49). With a spirit of revenge, they even asked Jesus that they be permitted to call fire down from heaven in His name and consume the Samaritan villagers who refused to show them hospitality (Luke 9:54).

According to Mr. Wesley,

The faith through which we are saved [in this Holy Ghost dispensation] . . . is not barely that which the Apostles themselves had while Christ was yet upon earth; though they so believed on him as to “leave all and

follow him;” although they had then power to work miracles, to “heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of disease;” yea, they had then “power and authority over all devils;” and, which is beyond all this, were sent by their Master to “preach the kingdom of God.”

And, herein does [our saving faith] differ from that faith which the Apostles themselves had while our Lord was on earth, that it acknowledges the necessity and merit of his death, and the power of his resurrection. It acknowledges his death as the only sufficient means of redeeming man from death eternal, and his resurrection as the restoration of us all to life and immortality; inasmuch as he ‘was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification.’ Christian faith is then, not only an assent to the whole gospel of Christ but also a full reliance on the blood of Christ; a trust in the merits of his life, death, and resurrection; a recumbency upon him as our atonement and our life, as given for us, and living in us; and, in consequence hereof, a closing with him, and cleaving to him, as our ‘wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption,’ or, in one word, our salvation [*Wesley’s Works*, 5:9].

Were the Apostles saved before Pentecost? Yes, they surely were, but saved according to their inferior dispensation. The church in Thessalonica and those saved on and immediately after Pentecost are proper models of regenerated believers in this Holy Ghost dispensation.

Referring to the superior blessings of this Holy Ghost dispensation, John Fletcher reminds us of

WESLEY STORIES: John Wesley and Extemporaneous Prayer

Joseph Beumont Wakeley

Mr. Wesley not only preached, but also prayed extemporaneously. A gentleman who was horror-struck at the idea of praying without a book made him a visit, and exhorted him not to use extempore prayer, “which,” said he, “is no prayer at all, and this I will prove to a demonstration, for you cannot do two things at once — thinking how to pray and praying being two things; you cannot think and pray at once.” Mr. Wesley ingeniously turned the tables on him, and with the gentleman’s own method of reasoning showed that it was impossible to pray with a book. He replied, “May it not be proved by the self-same demonstration that praying by a form is no prayer at all; for example, you cannot do two things at once, reading and praying being two things; therefore, you cannot both read and pray at once.”

a few promises: “All shall know me from the least to the greatest: they shall be taught of God; for I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and my servants and my handmaids shall prophesy, i.e., speak the wonderful works of God.” Accordingly, says he, “This blessing, which under the Jewish dispensation was the prerogative of prophets and prophetesses only, is [now] common to all true Christians. The four evangelists and St. Peter, our Lord and his forerunner, agree to name it ‘the baptism of the Holy Ghost.’ St. Peter calls it ‘the Spirit of promise,’ Christ terms it also ‘power from on high, and the promise of the Father’” [*Works of Fletcher*, 2:49].

Although the Thessalonian believers had not as yet experienced the advanced state of entire

sanctification, they were nevertheless, basking in God given *faith, assurance, divine love* and “*joy of the Holy Ghost*” (1:3-6). Such is the biblical and most desired standard for regenerated believers of this day and dispensation.

Editorial Note: For over twenty years Joe McPherson has contributed articles to a denominational magazine which claims to be Wesleyan Methodist. The previous article was the third one rejected by its editor because he did not find it to be scriptural, although he conceded it was Wesleyan. As you re-read the article, I believe you will find it to be both scriptural and true to Wesleyan teaching. For it to be rejected by a leader who is supposed to know and uphold Wesleyan doctrine illustrates why so much confusion exists today within the “holiness” movement.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH ARMINIUS, Part 6

John S. Knox

The *Declaration of Sentiments* contains ten chapters which Arminius compiled in his defense. Last issue covered Sections 8-9.

SECTION X – “THE REVISION OF THE DUTCH CONFESSION AND THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM”

The last chapter of Arminius’ *Declaration of Sentiments* focuses on the possibility of the calling of a national Synod in Holland. Basically, this section elaborates on the desires of Arminius. First, it is an endorsement for a national Synod for a variety of reasons to be explained shortly. Second, it is an appeal for proper conduct to be maintained in the activities of the Synod. Third, it calls for proper and reasonable discussion, debate, and doctrinal investigation. Fourth, it pleads for Confessional simplicity and clarity.

Contrary to what his opponents may have thought, Arminius was more than eager for a national Synod to be called. He states, “It is obviously agreeable to reason as well as to equity, and quite necessary in the present posture of affairs, that such a measure should be adopted.”

Arminius does not fear the idea of a holistic examination of the doctrinal confession of the Dutch Church. It could help ease the hostile environment he observes around him. Furthermore, a Synod could control supralapsarian thought containing “far too many particulars.” It could also legitimize the idea that parts of the Bible are mysterious and above dogmatic thought. It could additionally promote an approach to theology that is not so myopic and rigid regarding doctrinal priorities.

Arminius further advises the Assembly to run the Synod reasonably and fairly.

If the Church be properly instructed in that difference which really does and always ought to exist between the word of God and all human writings, and if the Church be also rightly informed concerning that liberty which she and all Christians possess, and which they will always enjoy, to measure all human compositions by the standard rule of God’s word, she will neither distress herself on that account, nor will she be offended on perceiving all human writings brought to be proved at the touch-stone of God’s word.

This is the summation of what Arminius considers wrong with the current state of religious affairs in Holland. The inflexibility and fear of his opponents has so tainted the process that true doctrinal analysis is being stalled and hampered. The Reformed Church must be able to examine its doctrine or else contamination and calamity will sneak into the Confession. Despite this, Arminius does try to acknowledge the validity of some parts of his opponents' opinion.

Some points in the Confession are certain and do not admit of a doubt: these will never be called in question by anyone, except by heretics. Yet there are other parts of its contents which are of such a kind, as may with the most obvious utility become frequent subjects of conference and discussion between men of learning who fear God, for the purpose of reconciling them with those indubitable articles as nearly as is practicable.

Arminius is attempting to bridge the differences and to reach his opponents. He is an advocate for his understanding of Scripture and doctrine, but he is not trying to be heavy-handed about it.

In his concluding address, Arminius testifies,

For I am not of the congregation of those who wish to have dominion over the faith of another man, but am only a minister to Believers, with the design of promoting in them an increase of knowledge, truth, piety, peace and joy in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Arminius created the *Declaration of Sentiments* with this in mind. Using Scripture, Reformed thought, the Confession, his opponents' words as well as his own, Arminius sought to successfully weave a defense of his theology and actions. Examining each section carefully, one can see the difficult task he had in defending himself against the Supralapsarians. He not only had to prove that he was innocent of their charges; he also had to demonstrate the weaknesses of their arguments. Like near-sighted sailors attempting to chart the stars, he felt their descriptions of God's plan were blurry and misleading. The *Declaration* was his attempt to bring the doctrinal truths expressed in the Bible into better focus.

A Brief Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Virginia Devereux Jarratt

This letter was given by Jarratt to Thomas Rankin, who gave it to Francis Asbury to be sent to John Wesley. Two editions were printed in London in 1778 and 1779. It is also located in the Journal of Francis Asbury, 1:207-224.

Notice that Jarratt faithfully ministered for thirteen years before he saw revival. Notice the doctrines he emphasized, the small groups which were organized, the emphasis on prayer, and the spirit of cooperation. It is also instructive that the revival built momentum slowly as its influence widened. This account may provide the best model for ministry in our day. Jarratt's account will be continued in the next issue of The Arminian Magazine.

That you may have a full view of the whole, I

shall go back as far as my first settlement in this parish. August 29, 1763, I was chosen rector of Bath, in the county of Dinwiddie, in Virginia. Ignorance of the things of God, profaneness, and irreligion, then prevailed among all ranks and degrees. So that I doubt if even the form of godliness was to be found in any one family of this large and populous parish. I was a stranger to the people: my doctrines were quite new to them; and were neither preached nor believed by any other clergyman, so far as I could learn, throughout the province.

My first work was, to explain the depravity of our nature; our fall in Adam, and all the evils consequent thereon; the impossibility of being delivered from them by anything which we could do, and the necessity of a living faith, in order to our obtaining help from God. While I

continued to insist upon these truths, and on the absolute necessity of being born again, no small outcry was raised against this way, as well as against him that taught it. But by the help of God, I continued to witness the same both to small and great.

The common people, however, frequented the church more constantly, and in larger numbers than usual. Some were affected at times, so as to drop a tear. But still, for a year or more, I perceived no lasting effect, only a few were not altogether so profane as before. I could discover no heart-felt convictions of sin, no deep or lasting impression of their lost estate. Indeed I have reason to believe that some have been a good deal alarmed at times. But they were shy of speaking to me (thinking it would be presumption) till their convictions wore off.

But in the year 1765, the power of God was more sensibly felt by a few. These were constrained to apply to me, and inquire, "What they must do to be saved?" And now I began to preach abroad, as well as in private houses;

We have had a time of refreshing indeed: a revival of religion.

and to meet little companies in the evenings, and converse freely on divine things. I believe some were this year converted to God, and

thenceforth the work of God slowly went on.

The next year I became acquainted with Mr. McRoberts, rector of a neighboring parish; and we joined hand in hand in the great work. He labored much therein; and not in vain. A remarkable power attended his preaching, and many were truly converted to God, not only in his parish, but in other parts where he was called to labor.

In the years 1770 and 1771, we had a more considerable outpouring of the Spirit, at a place in my parish called White Oak. It was here first I formed the people into a society, that they might assist and strengthen each other. The good effects of this were soon apparent. Convictions were deep and lasting: not only knowledge, but faith, and love, and holiness continually increased.

In the year 1772, the revival was more considerable, and extended itself in some places, for fifty or sixty miles round. It increased still more in the following year, and several sinners were truly converted to God. In spring,

1774, it was more remarkable than ever. The word preached was attended with such energy, that many were pierced to the heart. Tears fell plentifully from the eyes of the hearers, and some were constrained to cry out. A good number were gathered in this year, both in my parish and in many of the neighboring counties. I formed several societies out of those which were convinced or converted; and I found it a happy means of building up those that had believed, and preventing the rest from losing their convictions.

In the counties of Sussex and Brunswick, the work, from the year 1773, was chiefly carried on by the labors of the people called Methodists. The first of them who appeared in these parts was. Mr. Robert Williams, who, you know, was a plain, artless, [untiring] preacher of the gospel: he was greatly blessed in detecting the hypocrite, razing false foundations, and stirring believers up to press after a present salvation from the remains of sin. He came to my house in the month of March, in the year 1773. The next year others of his brethren came, who gathered many societies both in this neighborhood, and in other places, as far as North Carolina. They now began to ride the circuit, and to take care of the societies already formed, which was rendered a happy means, both of deepening and spreading the work of God.

I earnestly recommended it to my societies, to pray much for the prosperity of Zion, and for a larger outpouring of the Spirit of God. They did so; and not in vain. We have had a time of refreshing indeed: a revival of religion, as great as perhaps ever was known, in country places, in so short a time. It began in the latter end of the year 1775: but was more considerable in January, 1776, the beginning of the present year. It broke out nearly at the same time, at three places, not far from each other. Two of these places are in my parish; the other in Amelia county — which had for many years been notorious for carelessness, profaneness, and immoralities of all kinds. Gaming, swearing, drunkenness, and the like, were their delight, while things sacred were their scorn and contempt. However, some time last year one of my parish (now a local preacher) appointed some meetings among them, and after a while induced a small number to join in society. And though few, if any of them were then believers, yet this was a means of preparing the way of the Lord.

REVIEWS

Keith D. Stranglin and Thomas H. McCall, *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. 240 pages. ISBN: 978-0-19-975567-7

This is the ultimate introduction to Arminius. Apparently the authors have read everything ever written about Arminius, both pro and con. They have produced a thorough summary of the theology of Arminius, working from original sources and interacting with modern literature. While some sections tend to get heavy, there is always a good summary.

Their goal was to produce a counterpart to the classic biography of Arminius by Carl Bangs. However, while Bangs' work was primarily historical, this work is primarily theological. The authors dismiss the distortion that Arminius was Pelagian or semi-Pelagian. Arminius upheld total inability agreeing with the Reformed position and taught that faith is God's first gift of grace. The authors also address the claim that Arminius was a Calvinist who merely rejected predestination. Arminius dealt with several important theological issues. His real break with Calvinism began over the interpretation of Romans 7. He believed that a regenerate person can no longer be described as "enslaved to sin."

Arminius was primarily a pastor and did not write as much as either Luther or Calvin. He wrote from a pastoral concern — even if his writing was academic. They conclude that Arminius wrestled with divine sovereignty and human freedom without sacrificing either on the altar of the other.

Not only did Arminius seek to reconcile divine sovereignty and human freedom, but he was also concerned with the glory and goodness of God. God is not the author of sin. The predominate Calvinism of his day taught that God caused the fall and Arminius concluded this was the "highest blasphemy." Arminius held the core conviction that God is love and that no "secret will" could teach otherwise. The command of God to repent and believe cannot conflict with the decree of God. God cannot simultaneously command all people to believe and withhold the grace necessary for belief to the reprobate. Does God call the reprobate to believe in a gospel that was never intended for them? Arminius objected that such a doctrine imputes hypocrisy to God.

Influenced by Thomas Aquinas, Arminius held that God was the supreme or highest good and is in fact goodness itself. Arminius felt it was almost unthinkable and nearly blasphemous that God would so providentially order and govern the universe that it would, by divine design, result in ultimate destruction and ruin. The justice of God does not permit him to destine to eternal death a rational creature who has never sinned. Yet supralapsarianism holds that *before* creation God foreordained certain individuals to everlasting life and others to eternal destruction. Unless eternal perdition is somehow defined as good, the supralapsarian position holds that God decreed something for evil. In order to demonstrate his justice and mercy, God would have to do something that is neither just nor merciful. Arminius concluded that alternative systems within Calvinism, such as infralapsarianism, also fail to avoid the conclusion that God is the author of sin.

Arminius started with biblical authority. He upheld divine foreknowledge. By utilizing the theology of Molina regarding divine middle knowledge, Arminius affirms foreknowledge without determinism. In his omniscience, God knows all that exists and he also knows all that will be. Middle knowledge means that God knows the result of any contingent event under any hypothetical set of circumstances without necessarily determining that outcome. Arminius explained, "A thing does not happen because it has been foreknown or predicted, but it is foreknown or predicted because it is about to be." Thus, Arminius held to what is now termed libertarian freedom — a real choice between genuine alternatives, unconstrained by necessity, and therefore incompatible with determinism.

Arminius shows from Scripture that the grace of God may be resisted (Matt 23:37; Luke 7:30; Acts 7:51; 2 Cor 6:1; Heb 12:15). Arminius explained that God's antecedent will may be resisted, but his consequent will to save penitent believers and to reject impenitent unbelievers cannot be resisted. The debate at this point can be simplified by these two questions: Do we believe because we

are elect? or Are we elect because we believe? Arminianism holds that divine election is conditional. However, Arminius did not exalt free will. He stressed free grace. His emphasis was on the freed will.

The atonement is sufficient for all, but efficient only for those who believe the gospel.

Satisfaction for sins is not the same as the remission of sins. Faith is not a work of righteousness, but an active reception of the merits of Christ's atonement. Saving faith is produced by the Holy Spirit, whom Arminius calls the "author of faith."

Arminius defined the elect as a believer who perseveres. But while everyone who is elect is a believer, not every believer is elect. Arminius believed in the possibility of apostasy for a true believer. As long as they remain believers they cannot lose salvation. But certain sins are inconsistent with saving faith. A true believer can apostatize either by rejecting the faith or by committing sins out of a malicious heart that is inconsistent with saving faith. Arminius is clear that some who fall away can be brought back, while others cannot be restored. While Arminius denies the possibility of apostasy in the English translation of his *Declaration of Sentiments*, the authors claim this is an unfortunate addition into the text that is not substantiated in either the Dutch original or the Latin translation.

It should be noted that most of the writings of Arminius was in Latin. The only major text in Dutch was *Declaration of Sentiments*. Stephen Gunter has recently published a new translation of the *Declaration*, along with an introduction and commentary (Baylor University Press, 2012). This is the first translation done directly from Dutch to English.

While the Arminian does not have assurance of final salvation, he does have present assurance. As a pastor, Arminius was very concerned with those in his congregation who lacked assurance. The Calvinistic doctrines of God's secret will, temporary faith, and unconditional reprobation left many in despair. Arminius argued for the assurance of the believer based on the gift of faith, the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Holy Spirit struggling against sin, and the desire to engage in good works. But he was equally concerned about a careless or carnal security. The personal motto of Arminius was, "A good conscience is paradise."

Arminius died before the Synod of Dordt. While his followers were invited only as accused defendants and were ultimately dismissed as false teachers, removed from their ministries, and expelled from the country, the Arminians won the intellectual battle. Alvin Plantinga, the Calvinistic philosopher, believes the synod was mistaken in their evaluation of Arminianism.

While there are those who avoid the hard questions with the silly answer that they are "Calminians," the authors conclude that there is no middle ground between resistible and irresistible grace, conditional and unconditional predestination, and between God's saving intention for creation and his use of it as a means for destruction.

In a sense, this work could be called the New Perspective on Arminius. In my opinion this book should be declared "the book of the year for 2012." It is a wonderful analysis of a truly great theologian. And I am happy to report that Dr. Stanglin is working on a new critical edition of the works of Arminius. It will have a fresh translation alongside the original Latin and/or Dutch.

—Vic Reasoner

**Jonathan Sarfati, *The Greatest Hoax on Earth? Refuting Dawkins on Evolution*.
Atlanta: Creation Book, 2010. 333 pages. ISBN: 978-0-949906-73-1.**

When I first entered the ministry in 1973, I could count most of the main creation scientists on both hands. I could name them all. Today it is different. Creation Science has produced a host of young and old alike who now teach, lecture, write, and experiment in an effort to thwart the greatest deception of all time, evolution. Within this wholesome mix you will find the author of this book, Dr. Sarfati. What makes this book important

and unique is the fact that he takes on one of the most out-spoken apologists and disciple of the religion of Darwin, Dr. Richard Dawkins.

The book is a mere 333 pages long. It is a book that is not easily digested. The reader needs to come to it with a basic understanding of science, and a desire and thirst to dig deeper into the particulars. It is not designed for an

easy read. Because of the subject material he seems to be forced to use scientific terms that the average layman and pastor may not know. While this is so, he does illustrate many of the terms in ways that can be assimilated by the readers. If a person determines to read this work, he will be richly rewarded. It is a gold mine that is copious in both science and philosophy.

Many pastors are looking for more illustrations of how evolution is wrong. All too many books that are against the religion of evolution seem to recapitulate the same old illustrations. Dr. Saftati does not. As a matter of fact, many times he adds new material to the debate that most pastors have not heard. Also he unitizes a simple bullet list in some of his discussions to show a host of problems that evolution is having with particular discoveries.

While it is impossible to take on Dawkins in all his silly notions and nonsensical logic, Dr. Saftati certainly seems to sniff out the most critical arguments of this antagonist.

He also gives advice to those who like to engage others on this theme. This advice would be helpful for pastors as they live among the lost and deal with their members. For example he says if someone says “‘There is no truth’ — this would mean that *this* sentence itself is not true.” Many times as we witness and discuss science with people they use this expression to side-step the issue. “‘We can never know for certain’ — so how could we know

that for certain” he asks? Allow me to indulge you with one more of his examples. “There are no moral absolutes, so we ought to be tolerant of other people’s morals — but ‘ought’ implies a moral absolute that toleration is good.” He calls such reasoning the principle of *reductio ad absurdum*, i.e., showing that a premise is false by demonstrating that it implies an absurd conclusion.” This is but a tip of the old iceberg of the kind of help that a pastor may gain from his work.

As said before, he also lists hosts of discoveries that we rarely hear about that finds evolution badly wanting. In his section on the survival of DNA, he bullet-lists many examples of things that should have no DNA in them if they were billions or millions of years old. Yet they have DNA in them which translates to a far younger age of the earth.

Finally, like the works of Dr. Reasoner, his footnotes are as rich as the main text of his book. There too, you will find an explosion of information. One dandy thing that he does do, is cross reference a lot of his material with CMI’s (Creation Ministry International) web site as well as other Creationist sites. This book will prove to be a valuable resource for most pastors. The material is up to date, and in it Dawkins has met his Waterloo.

—Dennis Hartman

Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley’s Teachings*. Vol. 1 “God and Providence.” Vol. 2 “Christ and Salvation.” Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 240 pages. ISBN: 978-0-310-32815-5 and 319 pages. 978-0-310-49267-2.

Just when the guild scholars claim that everything that can be said about Wesley has already been said, Oden makes the claim that “nothing like this text-by-text review of the content of Wesley’s teaching exists in Wesley studies.”

In these two volumes Oden has quadrupled the material in his 1994 work, *John Wesley’s Scriptural Christianity*. Oden’s purpose is to demonstrate that Wesley was a systematic theologian. Thus, he arranges Wesley’s writings in systematic order and demonstrates an internal consistency across sixty years.

The first attempt at such an arrangement was *Wesleyana*, first published in 1825 and reprinted by Allegheny Publications in 1979. *Wesleyana* is simply a cut-and-paste arrangement of Wesley’s sermons.

The second attempt at such an arrangement was Burtner and Chiles, *A Compend of Wesley’s Theology* (1954). In this volume the editors draw from all of Wesley’s major writings.

Yet Oden’s work is the first real attempt to restate or paraphrase Wesley’s writings. It is not a cut-and-paste job nor it is an attempt to reinterpret Wesley through the author’s own paradigm. Oden works from the primary sources, not the secondary literature.

Oden observes that there is no precedent in Wesley for process theology. Wesley believed in divine revelation, supported by apostolic tradition, reason, and experience. Yet this is balanced by a section on what reason cannot do. And Scripture functions as a correction to experience. Oden sees the Wesleyan tradition as a modern ex-

ample of his own theological methodology, in which he works from a patristic consensus.

Oden also summarizes Wesley's view on the inspiration of Scripture. "In classic Christian reasoning, supposed 'mistakes' in the Bible are misreadings or errors of the reader." By the Spirit the apostles were guided to testify and empowered to attest accurately. The Holy Spirit guarantees the transmission and efficacy of the written Word. "If the Spirit is truly God, the Spirit-led written Word is surely the Word of God." The Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead would not deliver to us a defective written Word.

While the guild theologians have been paranoid that this view is "Calvinistic," Oden documents that Wesley built on a strong Calvinistic heritage. We cannot dismiss a doctrine just because it is Calvinistic. Yet Oden also summarizes Wesley's objections to double predestination in a withering analysis.

According to Oden, few liberal Protestants have ever heard a sermon on original sin, yet for Wesley a high doctrine of original sin is the premise and companion of a high doctrine of grace. Anyone who labels Wesley a Pelagian or semi-Pelagian has not taken into account Wesley's only full-length theological treatise — almost three hundred pages on the doctrine of original sin. Wesley deals with the doctrine exegetically, historically, philosophically sociologically, and experientially.

Preliminary grace is not natural human ability. Oden devotes an entire chapter to an analysis of the stages of grace: the natural man, the legal man, and the evangelical

man. Those who are born again are enabled not to sin, yet they are not unconditionally protected from falling. "So long as one is living by faith, one is not committing sin." Oden sees the witness of the Spirit as a quintessential Wesleyan doctrine.

Wesleyan theology cannot be reduced to his doctrine of sanctification. Nor can his doctrine of sanctification be dismissed. Oden gives an adequate summary of perfecting grace.

The doctrine of ecclesiology is not treated in systematic order, since it is the subject of volume three of *John Wesley's Teachings*.

In his chapters on eschatology, Oden tends to avoid modern debates. But he is correct in introducing Wesley's views with a summary of Wesley's sermon, "The General Spread of the Gospel." Wesley expected the power of the Gospel to transform the world. After the general resurrection and final judgment, there is a new creation which corresponds to the new creation of the resurrected life of Christian believers.

"Whatever path modern Wesleyans have taken, Wesley himself held fast to the clear preaching of Jesus concerning a real hell more horrible than our worst imaginings."

These first two volumes are a fresh and faithful account of Wesley's theology. And they are the best introduction to his theology. Get them both!

—Vic Reasoner

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