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A CALL FOR WESLEYAN-ARMINIAN REFORMATION

Vincent A. Artese

As the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation approaches, there is still a need for reform in many traditions of Protestantism. But perhaps there is no Protestant tradition that is in greater need of reform than the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. The modern Wesleyan-Arminian tradition has generally lost its way. It is mostly theologically anemic and has lost sight of the great theological tradition that it has been entrusted to champion and propagate. Most within the broader Wesleyan-Arminian tradition would fall into one of two branches: the liberal branch or the holiness branch. The only thing these two very different branches have in common is that they have both departed from the theology of their supposed founders, Jacob Arminius and John Wesley. Not all who identify as Wesleyan-Arminian would fall into one of these two branches, but these two have become the most prevalent at the eve of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.

The liberal branch is mostly found within what remains of the United Methodist Church, although by no means is the entire United Methodist Church theologically liberal. Theological liberalism within Methodism found its genesis in the thought of Borden Parker Browne and a theological movement called Boston Personalism at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Mark Tooley, all official Methodist seminaries were captured by liberalism by the 1920s. Tooley writes that "By the 1960s nearly all of the clergy would have been trained in theological modernism, denying or minimizing the supernatural and personal salvation in favor of Social Gospel and therapeutic themes. A 1967 survey found 60 percent of Methodist clergy disbelieving the Virgin Birth and 50 percent disbelieving the Resurrection." The fruit of this liberal shift is having a profound impact on the United Methodist Church today. Theological liberal-

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ism has essentially led to the current crisis in the United Methodist Church and is threatening to tear it apart. According to Colin Hansen in a recent article featured on the Gospel Coalition, "When our parents were growing up the United Methodist Church had 11 million members in the United States alone. That number is now 7.2 million, and the rate of decline is picking up. In the last five years alone membership has dropped 6 percent." If the United Methodist Church continues upon this trajectory, it may cease to exist in the not-so-distant future.

The second branch is what remains of the holiness movement. The followers of this stream are found within various holiness denominations and organizations. The reality is that many groups within the holiness branch left behind the theology of John Wesley a long time ago. However, this is not true of all groups within this branch, and I have no intention of painting them all with the same brush. That being said, the understanding of sanctification prevalent in parts of the holiness branch is significantly different from the teachings of Wesley. This shift began with the teaching of Phoebe Palmer as early as the 1840s. Many of the dearly held theological beliefs of the holiness branch are, in reality, foreign to the theological thought of Wesley himself, although many of its champions are still hesitant to admit this. Much of the modern holiness branch has been shaped significantly more by the theology of Phoebe Palmer and Charles Finney than by the theology of Jacob Arminius or John Wesley. According to Charles Edwin Jones, "While the holiness movement always regarded John Wesley as its great authority, the movement owed many of its distinctive ideas and practices to Phoebe Palmer." Many of the differences between the theology of Palmer and Finney and the theology of Wesley and Arminius are in their emphases. Both Palmer and Finney emphasized a very anthropocentric view of salvation that borders on Pelagianism, whereas Wesley and Arminius emphasized a significantly more theocentric understanding of salvation that was faithful to the theological teachings of the Reformation. There was also a significant shift from the "free grace" of Wesley and early Methodist theology to "free will" in the thought of Palmer and Finney. The theological emphases of Palmer, Finney, and their theological heirs have resulted in legalism, Semi-Pelagianism, and a move away from the most critical Protestant teachings of the Reformation. It has also led its adherents a much further distance than the "hair's breadth" from Calvinism where John Wesley stood. Critical Reformation doctrines that were held, proclaimed, and defended by Wesley and Arminius such as substitutionary atonement, a high view of regeneration, imputation, and justification by faith alone have been challenged and doubted by this branch in a way that is entirely alien to the thought of both Wesley and Arminius.

The modern Wesleyan-Arminian tradition has generally lost its way

As the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation approaches, there is a desperate need of reform within the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. But this reform can only take place by returning to the theology of Wesley and Arminius themselves and expressing their theology in a way that is faithful to their writings and thought. As in the time of the Reformation, there needs to be a return to the sources. It is critical that those within the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition study the works of John Wesley and Jacob Arminius. It is also necessary that the theology of Wesley and Arminius be studied in a systematic way. I would argue that now is the best time in history to do this. New scholarship on the theology of Wesley and Arminius is more widely available now than it has been for centuries. The theological writings of scholars such as Keith D. Stanglin and Thomas H. McCall have produced works on the thought of Arminius such as *Jacob Arminius: Theologian of Grace.* Scholars like W. Stephen Gunter have translated critical works

of Arminius in fresh translations such as *Arminius and His Declaration of Sentiments.* And Wesleyan theologians Thomas C. Oden and Kenneth J. Collins have produced systematic expressions of the theology of John Wesley in a way that has never been done before. Thomas C. Oden's work, *John Wesley's Teachings,* is the single greatest systematic expression of the theology of John Wesley ever written. Kenneth J. Collins' book, *The Theology of John Wesley,* is second to none in its systematic organization of Wesley's thought. And books like *Reconsidering Arminius: Beyond the Reformed and Wesleyan Divide* serve as a collection of scholarly theological articles by scholars within the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition.

Another point to consider is the success of the New Calvinist movement. Reformed theology has made an incredible comeback in the evangelical church in America, and even as a Wesleyan-Arminian I am (in some ways) thankful for it. Under the influence of New Calvinism more young people have become interested in theology and doctrine than at any other time in recent history. What makes it even more incredible is that Reformed theology was not even "cool" as recently as ten years ago. The "young, restless, and reformed" have had enough of shallow theology and strange unbiblical doctrines that have been prevalent in the American evangelical church for so long. New Calvinism has led the way to reform in the American church by going back (ad fontes) to the sources of the Reformed tradition. Young people are actually reading and getting excited about Calvin, Hodge, Owen, etc. It is incredible to see how many reformed podcasts, clothing companies, publishers, conferences, parachurch ministries, church planting networks, and rap artists there are. But one voice that is largely silent in this creative burst of theological activity is the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. What makes this reality even more heartbreaking is that Wesleyan-Arminian theology has so much to offer the modern evangelical church. A few examples should suffice. Arminius's understanding of election and predestination is more biblically faithful and theologically strong than what can be found in Calvinism. Wesley's soteriology understood systematically is simply magisterial. And Wesley's teaching on perfect love (Christian perfection), properly understood, avoids the dual pitfalls of legalism and antinomianism that have tainted sanctification teaching through most of the history of theology.

As the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation approaches there is a desperate need for "Luthers" to rise up within the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. I fear that if there are none who are willing to do so, then the Wesleyan-Arminian theological tradition may be lost forever. The very tradition that God used to help birth an incredible transatlantic revival will disappear. The names of Arminius, Wesley, Fletcher, Clarke, Asbury, Watson, and Pope will be erased from history. This is a call for all Wesleyan-Arminians to pick up their theses, their hammers, and their nails. I pray we no longer turn a deaf ear to the call.

THE PEDIGREE OF YELLOW DOG SANCTIFICATION *(Part 2)*

Vic Reasoner

I have also been troubled by a testimony I read in a new book, *The Radical Holiness Movement in the Christian Tradition.* Lillian Harvey was not part of the Bible Missionary Church. In fact, she and her family ultimately could not find a church which was spiritual enough to suit them. In her quest to "die out," she eventually came to the point of renounc-

ing marriage. Yet Hebrews 13:4 declares that marriage is honorable. Here the lines between Roman celibacy and the Protestant "death route" begin to blur.

Lillian's testimony also included her struggle to jump up and down on the sidewalk, praising God in public. Because she struggled to die to the flesh, she entered "five years of darkness" which was lifted only when she became willing to testify publically on a trolley bus. During that five-year period, she remained outwardly devout and was "living in hell." For the rest of her life, she believed that if she ever disobeyed God again she might revert back to this "hell."

This is a pathetic and pathological testimony of "Christless holiness." God gave us some inhibitions and it is not a sin to observe social conventions and etiquette. But the greatest distortion concerns the nature of God. People who cower under this kind of God tend to abuse their own children. And there seems to be a high incident of child abuse and molestation within this ultraconservative subculture.

Holiness without love is legalism

The second dynamic is that popery is not restricted to the Roman church. Those who tried to minister under this distortion of holiness were told that they should be willing to suffer any deprivation for the sake of the church. The history of legalism is strewn with the wreckage of sincere men and women who put up with abuse, control, manipulation, and neglect all for the "cause of Christ." But Christ had not demanded such abuse be accepted. This was the requirement of a man-made organization.

Today, the Bible Missionary Church is but a shadow of its former self. Before his death in 1980, Huffman had precipitated two divisions within the Bible Missionary Church over his domineering leadership and "dying out" theology. Not surprisingly, he blamed the problem on "carnality."

Things came to a head once more in 1987 when the general conference cast 103 ballots to elect a general moderator. Beneath the surface, one of the lingering issues which caused disagreement was the "death route" doctrine. Still deadlocked, ultimately the general moderator was determined by board action.

It should be noted that the International Fellowship of Bible Churches was organized the following years "largely because of negative experiences with controversy and hierarchical polity." For many of these men, it was a grace awakening that caused them to leave. But the lasting influence of the Bible Missionary Church is that those who have worked through this "yellow dog holiness" doctrine intellectually tend to revert back to it in their relationships with other believers.

Let us be clear. Jesus Christ paid the full price of our salvation at the cross. We can add nothing to his finished work. Salvation is a salvation from the bondage and power of sin, but that salvation is the gracious gift of God. We cannot make ourselves holy. Paul warned in Colossians 2:21-23,

> "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!" These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

With the slogan "Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!," Paul is ridiculing such a reduction of spirituality to a graceless set of regulations. In the fourth century, Chrysostom wrote, "Mark how he makes sport of them, handle not, touch not, taste not, as though they were keeping themselves clear of some great matters."

Certainly we are to seek first the kingdom agenda of Christ, and across the centuries believers have died for their faith. We should be willing to do the same if circumstances require the ultimate sacrifice. But we do so out of love and not out of fear. We would do so because we are saved and not in a futile attempt to save ourselves. "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3).

A. W. Tozer was not afraid to tell it like it is. But one of his most astounding statements declares, "I have found God to be cordial and generous and in every way easy to live with." Unfortunately, some who claim to be his followers can be as mean as snakes.

But truly holy people are gracious people. Holiness without love is legalism. Love without holiness is antinomianism. We must insist on "holy love." Mildred Wynkoop said that love takes the harshness out of holiness.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE THREAT OF ISLAM FOR WORLD DOMINATION

David Martinez

Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, told his disciples that the Jews would soon manifest their utter hatred toward them and "put [them] out of the synagogues." In the same verse, he says something that is very telling in terms of what religious hatred can do to a person's ethic, particularly when love is not at the center of one's religion. "The time is coming," he says, "that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2). Can it be that a person can be so darkened in his or her understanding that he or she would believe that the way of the sword is a better way to proselytize? I believe such is the lamentable case with the religion of Islam. Islam is a religion of world domination by way of the sword. To understand the dangers of Islam if it were to attain the world domination it so desires, one must at least be briefly acquainted with its origin.

The Origins of Islam

In *The Mainstream of Civilization,* the authors point out one of the great challenges to understanding Islam's origin and history. Unlike Christianity, "Islam emerged from a largely illiterate society. There is no body of Arabic literature that we can turn to in search of the seminal ideas of Islam." Notwithstanding, some things may be known about Islam's past. Mohammed, the man who represents the human role in inventing Islam (the primary origin is neither human nor divine), was born in Mecca around 570. Around 610, Mohammed began to claim that Allah was giving him revelations about his divine will. Contrary to what Mohammed anticipated, those in Mecca were not open to his new teaching, much of which was an amalgamation of Christianity and Judaism among other things. As a result of this, Mohammed ran away to Medina, a journey that Muslims commemorate and call "the hegira." While in Medina, Mohammed gained a following and developed a community over several years, one that submitted to his rules and regulations. Eventually, Mohammed traveled back to Mecca and was refused entrance. After striking a deal with the leaders of Mecca, Mohammed returned to Medina to continue working on gaining power, popularity, and a huge following. Eventually, when Mohammed returned to Mecca in 629, he was a military leader who was too powerful and had too large a following. He was able to conquer Mecca.

Within the details of this history, one can find at least two major reasons why Islamic global domination would be a serious threat.

First: Islam's Intolerance Toward Those who Disagree

John Wesley (1703-1791), the great revivalist from the eighteenth century who shook the world with his powerful ministry, was open to the idea of people disagreeing with him. Perhaps one of his greatest sermons reflecting his flexibility and openness was his sermon entitled "Catholic Spirit." In it, Mr. Wesley expounds on his ideology that we should all "think and let think." The sermon stands as a monument to Christian tolerance. "Every wise man therefore will allow others the same liberty of thinking which he desires they should allow him," says Mr. Wesley in sermon thirty-nine, "and will no more insist on their embracing his opinions than he would have them to insist on his embracing theirs." Yet Mr. Wesley was no doctrinal latitudinarian; he did make clear what he thought was wrong in other Christian theological traditions (e.g., Calvinism). However, in terms of his ethic of love, Wesley never believed in violence or forced religion. Yet this is not the case with Islam. In his sermon sixty-three, "The General Spread of the Gospel," Wesley has some stinging, albeit true, words to say about Islam:

> A little, and but a little, above the heathens in religion are the Mahometans. But how far and wide has this miserable delusion spread over the face of the earth! Insomuch that the Mahometans are considerably more in number (as six to five) than Christians. And by all the accounts which have any presence to authenticity these are also in general as utter strangers to all true religion as their fourfooted brethren. As void of mercy as lions and tigers, as much given up to brutal lusts as bulls or goats; so that they are in truth a disgrace to human nature, and a plague to all that are under their iron yoke.

Such words may be somewhat humorous, but unfortunately they are accurate. All around the world, people are losing their lives to Islam. What many call "Islamic extremism" should be called "Mere Islam" since it has always been a religion of violence and bloodshed. Mohammed was not a preacher of peace and love; he was a vicious military leader.

Second: Islam's Immorality

While Islam has some features within its doctrines that might reflect virtue, it also contains some immoral teaching. Christ tells his followers to love their enemies; Islam teaches its followers to destroy infidels, which are all unbelievers. Thankfully, many Muslims live a happy inconsistency in which they are able to be very kind to their neighbors. Every religion is plagued with members that are not all that faithful to their own doctrines and Islam is no exception. However, what would happen if every Muslim were to take up the sword and do as the Koran commands?

In *The Mainstream of Civilization,* the authors point out that it wasn't too long after Mohammed had arrived in Medina that he "and his followers began attacking caravans going to and coming from Mecca, and by 628 the attacks had evolved into a routine war of attrition." How can this be reconciled with morality? Additionally, though Mohammed may have put "limits" on polygamy, his limit was "four wives at one time." Divorce was freely allowed, and one could replace one wife with another so long as she was legally divorced.

Through the global spread of Islam, what would happen to the treatment of women? What would happen to marriage? What would happen to Christians around the world, those who are currently suffering under the brutal beheadings practiced by Isis? One can only imagine the sea of innocent blood that would be shed as a result of the progress and success of Islam.

The Inevitability of Christ's Eternal Kingdom

Though I have briefly explored the seriousness of the threat of Islam's global domination, I must disclose that I have been exploring this hypothetically, which is the only way I may explore this without being interrupted by the victorious gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though Muslims all around the world try their very best to have global religious domination, they are in for a rude awakening. "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision" as he declares, "I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion" (Psalm 2:4, 6). That King is Jesus and "to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7:14). In the immortal words of Richard Watson, in "Ezekiel's Vision of the Dry Bones":

> Will [the Gospel] ever lose its power? Never, if the promise of God "standeth for evermore." If the dagons of Greece and Rome could not stand before the ark, but "fell and were broken," neither shall the gods of China and Hindostan. If we worship Thor and Woden no longer; if, in these islands, the light has penetrated the gloom of druidical forests, and put to shame the abominations of our forefathers, the crude mythology of Africa and the Southern Isles shall not resist its penetrating beams and consuming energy. "The world cannot withstand its ancient conqueror." Once conquered, it already trembles before the second attack. "The arm of God is awake;" that arm which of old shook the gates of hell, and bowed down the pillars of the throne of Satan.

Like the Muslims, we also want to see religious domination around the world. Like the Muslims, we also are at holy war. Like the Muslims, we also want everyone to believe what we believe. Like the Muslims, we also desire to see a different kingdom on earth. The difference? We have already seen how the global narrative will end, victory is a guarantee, and best of all *God is with us*.

THE LAW AND GOSPEL AS EXPLAINED BY JOHN WESLEY *(Part 2)*

Edited by *Joseph D. McPherson*

Question: How are we to view the relationship of the law with the gospel?

Wesley: *There is … the closest connection that can be conceived, between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to, the gospel; on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbor, to be meek, humble, or holy: We feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that "with man this is impossible:" But we see a promise of God, to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek, and holy: We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith; and "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us," through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

We may yet farther observe, that every command in holy writ is only a covered promise. For by that solemn declaration, "This is the covenant I will make after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws in your minds, and write them in your hearts," God hath engaged to give whatsoever he commands. Does he command us then to

"pray without ceasing?" to "rejoice evermore?" to be "holy as He is holy?" It is enough: He will work in us this very thing: It shall be unto us according to his word.

Question: Is it not possible that there may be those in this more enlightened time who, being favored with peculiar and divine revelation demonstrate a necessity for some distinctive and accommodating changes in the moral law?

Wesley: *We cannot be at a loss what to think of those who, in all ages of the Church, have undertaken to change or supersede some commands of God, as they professed, by the peculiar direction of his Spirit. Christ has here given us an infallible rule, whereby to judge of all such pretensions. Christianity, as it includes the whole moral law of God both by way of injunction and of promise, if we will hear him is designed of God to be the last of all his dispensations. There is no other to come after this. This is to endure till the consummation of all things. Of consequence, all such new revelations are of Satan, and not of God; and all pretenses to another more perfect dispensation fall to the ground of course. "Heaven and earth shall pass away;" but this word "shall not pass away."*

There is not another dispensation to come after this.

Question: Why are we to take seriously the Master's promises to those who, on the one hand, consider obedience to his commandments lightly and relatively inconsequential and those on the other hand who do and faithfully teach them?

Wesley: *"Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."*

Question: Is it of any consequence if we endeavor to bypass the preaching of the law, seeing that it brings much unpopular censure upon us?

Wesley: *Who, what are they, that make the preaching of the law a character of reproach? Do they not see on whom the reproach must fall, — on whose head it must light at last? Whosoever on this ground despiseth us, despiseth Him that sent us. For did ever any man preach the law like Him, even when he came not to condemn but to save the world; when he came purposely to "bring life and immortality to light through the gospel?" Can any preach the law more expressly, more rigorously, than Christ does in these words? And who is he that shall amend them? Who is he that shall instruct the Son of God how to preach? Who will teach him a better way of delivering the message which he hath received of the Father?*

Question: When our Lord uses the term "these commandments," what all is he including in such language, and how serious are the consequences of breaking so much as one of them?

Wesley: *"These commandments," we may observe, is a term used by our Lord as an equivalent with the law, or the law and the Prophets, — which is the same thing, seeing the Prophets added nothing to the law, but only declared, explained, or enforced it, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

"Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments," especially if it be done willfully or presumptuously: — One; — for "he that keepeth the whole law, and" thus "offends in one point, is guilty of all;" the wrath of God abideth on him, as surely as if he had broken every one. So that no allowance is made for one darling lust; no reserve for one idol; no excuse for refraining from all besides, and only giving way to one bosom sin. What God demands is, an entire obedience; we are to have an eye to all his commandments; otherwise we lose all the labor we take in keeping some, and our poor souls for ever and ever.

Question: What is Christ's attitude toward those who consider some commandments to be less significant and less demanding of our obedience?

Wesley: *"One of these least," or one of the least of these commandments: — Here is another excuse cut off, whereby many, who cannot deceive God, miserably deceive their own souls. "This sin," saith the sinner, "is it not a little one? Will not the Lord spare me in this thing? Surely he will not be extreme to mark this, since I do not offend in the*

greater matters of the law." Vain hope! Speaking after the manner of men, we may term these great, and those little, commandments; but, in reality, they are not so. If we use propriety of speech, there is no such thing as a little sin; every sin being a transgression of the holy and perfect law, and an affront on the great Majesty of heaven.

Question: Jesus warns not only against breaking what might be considered by some to be the "least of the commandments" but extends that warning also to those who teach others to break them. Who and by what means are the breaking of God's commandments too often taught, and what are the inevitable consequences of such evil teaching?

Wesley: *In some sense it may be said, that whosoever openly breaks any commandment teaches others to do the same; for example speaks, and many times louder than precept. In this sense, it is apparent, every open drunkard is a teacher of drunkenness; every Sabbathbreaker is constantly teaching his neighbor to profane the day of the Lord. But this is not all: An habitual breaker of the law is seldom content to stop here; he generally teaches other men to do so too, by word as well as example; especially when he hardens his neck, and hateth to be reproved. Such a sinner soon commences an advocate for sin; he defends what he is resolved not to forsake; he excuses the sin which he will not leave, and thus directly teaches every sin which he commits.*

They really believe that they honor Christ by overthrowing his law and that they magnify his office while they are destroying his doctrine.

"He shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;" — that is, shall have no part therein. He is a stranger to the kingdom of heaven which is on earth; he hath no portion in that inheritance; no share of that "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Nor, by consequence, can he have any part in the glory which shall be revealed.

But if those who even thus break, and teach others to break, "one of the least of these commandments, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven," shall have no part in the kingdom of Christ and of God; if even these shall be cast into "outer darkness, where is wailing and gnashing of teeth;" then where will they appear, whom our Lord chiefly and primarily intends in these words, — they who, bearing the character of Teachers sent from God, do nevertheless themselves break his commandments; yea, and openly teach others so to do; being corrupt both in life and doctrine?

These are of several sorts. Of the first sort are they who live in some willful, habitual sin. Now, if an ordinary sinner teaches by his example, how much more a sinful Minister, — even if he does not attempt to defend, excuse, or extenuate his sin! If he does, he is a murderer indeed; yea, the murderer general of his congregation. He peoples the regions of death. He is the choicest instrument of the prince of darkness. When he goes hence, "hell from beneath is moved to meet him at his coming." Nor can he sink into the bottomless pit, without dragging a multitude after him.

Next to these are the goodnatured, good sort of men; who live an easy, harmless life, neither troubling themselves with outward sin, nor with inward holiness; men who are remarkable neither one way nor the other, neither for religion nor irreligious; who are very regular both in public and private, but do not pretend to be any stricter than their neighbors. A Minister of this kind breaks not one or a few only of the least commandments of God; but all the great and weighty branches of his law which relate to the power of godliness, and all that require us to "pass the time of our sojourning in fear," to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," to have our "loins always girt, and our lights burning," to "strive," or agonize, "to enter in at the strait gate." And he teaches men so, by the whole form of his life, and the general tenor of his preaching, which uniformly tends to soothe those in their pleasing dream who imagine themselves Christians and are not; to persuade all who attend upon his ministry to sleep on and take their rest. No marvel, therefore, if both he, and they that follow him, wake together in everlasting burnings!

But above all these, in the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ, are they who openly and explicitly "judge the law" itself, and "speak evil of the law;" who teach men to break (lusai, to

dissolve, to loose, to untie, the obligation of) not one only, whether of the least, or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke; who teach, without any cover, in so many words, — "What did our Lord do with the law? He abolished it. There is but one duty, which is that of believing. All commands are unfit for our times. From any demand of the law, no man is obliged now to go one step, or give away one farthing, to eat or omit one morsel." This is, indeed, carrying matters with a high hand; this is withstanding our Lord to the face, and telling him that he understood not how to deliver the message on which he was sent. O Lord, lay not this sin to their charge! Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!

The most surprising of all the circumstances that attend this strong delusion, is, that they who are given up to it, really believe that they honor Christ by overthrowing his law, and that they are magnifying his office, while they are destroying his doctrine! Yea, they honor him just as Judas did, when he said, "Hail, Master! and kissed him." And he may as justly say to every one of them, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" It is no other than betraying him with a kiss, to talk of his blood, and take away his crown; to set light by any part of his law, under pretense of advancing his gospel. Nor, indeed, can any one escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such a manner as either directly or indirectly tends to set aside any branch of obedience; who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in anywise, the least of the commandments of God.

Question: If obedience to the commandments is to be so meticulously observed and enforced, as stated by our Lord, what kind of faith must we have that can possibly complement and harmonize with such adherence to the moral law?

Wesley: *It is impossible, indeed, to have too high an esteem for "the faith of God's elect." And we must all declare, "By grace ye are saved through faith; not of works, lest any man should boast." We must cry aloud to every penitent sinner, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But, at the same time, we must take care to let all men know, we esteem no faith but that which worketh by love; and that we are not saved by faith, unless so far as we are delivered from the power as well as the guilt of sin. And when we say, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved;" we do not mean, "Believe, and thou shalt step from sin to heaven, without any holiness coming between; faith supplying the place of holiness;" but, "Believe, and thou shalt be holy; believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt have peace and power together: Thou shalt have power from Him in whom thou believest, to trample sin under thy feet; power to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and to serve him with all thy strength: Thou shalt have power, 'by patient continuance in well doing, to seek for glory, and honor, and immortality;' thou shalt both do and teach all the commandments of God, from the least even to the greatest: Thou shalt teach them by thy life as well as thy words, and so 'be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'"*

CALVINISTIC ASSUMPTIONS *(Part 2)*

Gil VanOrder, Jr.

2. Calvinists assume humans do not participate in their own salvation. God alone decides who will be saved.

Are we to assume that Rahab the harlot had nothing to do with her salvation when Jericho fell? If so, the Scriptures are very misleading, because they indicate she was spared due to her faith. Did Joshua and Caleb have nothing to do with the fact they alone entered the promised land? Or did God select them for reasons known only to him? Again, the Bible leads us to believe they were allowed to enter the promised land because they alone had faith God could defeat the giants.

Consider the Old Testament story which most closely represents how salvation works

– the Passover (Exodus 12). The Israelites were told they had to put lamb's blood on the doorposts of their home if they were to avoid having their firstborn destroyed. The wording of the passage would cause one to believe the choice was up to each individual household. Only those who believed in the power of the blood put the blood over their doorpost, and only they were the ones spared. Are we to assume that God had already decided who would be spared and that their faith in the lamb's blood was irrelevant? Did their decision to trust God determine their fate or was the whole thing monergistic? If so, why does the story indicate otherwise?

Are we to assume God was less than honest when he told the Israelites the only ones who would be healed were those who looked to the serpent lifted up in the wilderness? Or did God predetermine who would look up, so exercising faith really wasn't their decision? Even though it was only those who looked up that were healed, must we assume they had nothing to do with who were chosen to be healed? Must we assume all this because humans do not determine their own salvation according to Calvinism?

Jesus healed everyone who had faith to come to him for healing.

Moving to the New Testament, Calvinists must assume that Jesus did not mean it when he told the woman with the issue of blood, "your faith has healed you" (Matt. 9:22).

When a blind man shouted to Jesus with the words, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," Jesus asked the man, "What do you want me to do for you?" (Mark 10:51). The blind man said "Lord, that I might receive my sight." Jesus then said to him, "Go, your faith has healed you," and immediately he received his sight. Do Calvinists assume Jesus didn't really mean the man's faith determined his fate since humans are incapable of such things?

After the four men let the man sick of the palsy down through the roof to Jesus, Mark 2:5 tells us: "When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.'" Any unbiased reading of this story would lead one to believe that the man's sins were forgiven as a result of human faith. I'm sure that is what the men heard Jesus say. Wasn't Jesus moved to both heal and forgive based on the faith he witnessed?

In at least one case, Jesus even asked the seekers about their faith before he healed them. Matthew 9:28-29 records Jesus asking two blind men who sought him for healing, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said, "Yes, Lord." Then Jesus touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." It certainly appears from the wording that it was their faith to which Jesus responded.

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus healed everyone who sought him for healing from all manner of sickness and disease. Matthew 4:23-24 tells us, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demonpossessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them."

Jesus could have selected just a few out of the crowds (the elect) and ignored all the others, but he didn't. Likewise, he could have waved his hand and healed everyone on the planet. But he didn't do that either. What Jesus did was heal everyone who had faith to come to him for healing. He rejected no one. Nor was it ever a case of irresistible grace. No one was ever healed who had no desire to be healed. The choice was always in the hand of the one seeking healing. Looking at Jesus (God in the flesh), one comes away with the belief that man has the choice to accept or reject God's gifts.

PROFANITY IS A DESTROYER!

Peter Migner

When I was growing up as a young man the first foul language I was exposed to was sexual vulgarity in middle school. I would never speak the words I heard among my school and neighborhood friends at home and I certainly do not ever recall my parents using those words in their conversation or anger. The worst words I recall my parents use were the words damn and hell (abbreviation for condemnation to hell). When I heard those words they were never used in the context of speaking about God and spiritual matters. When I asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins, and received the Lord as my personal Savior I discovered how foul-mouthed I actually was and how I needed to change my word choices. This was not something anyone had to teach me as the Lord taught me the next day. But it took me weeks to train my thinking to stop using those words.

There are really only three categories of vulgar and profane language that mankind will ever use. I will share that a little later, but no matter what language in the world you speak there are only three categories of cursing, profanity and vulgarity that humanity uses in the futility of their thinking.

The Bible was written in Hebrew (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament). In the Old Testament one of the commands of God to Moses was to not take the Lord God's name in vain. The Jews regarded God's name so holy that not only did they avoid using his name even in context, they also dropped vowels from his name so as not to say it exactly as it is. Because of that we have the name Jehovah as part of his original name.

A Jewish rabbi named Daniel Lapin notes that the Hebrew language is derived from God and God's Word and there are actually no Hebrew curse words in the language. He says if a present day Hebrew speaking Jew wants to curse he has to borrow words from other languages like Arabic. It is interesting that the third command in Exodus 20 is that we are not to misuse the name of the Lord. So why is that? When I am in a group of people and I hear someone invoke my name "for Pete's sake" I turn my head because I hear my name. In the Old Testament, names had meanings and people lived up to their names. In the New Testament, Jesus said that our yes was to be *yes* and our no was to be *no*. We are not to bear false witness, for our words have meanings and definitions and they invoke power. Matthew 12:24 says that the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. Psalms 34:13 says, "Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking evil."

Recently I was talking with missionaries from a French-speaking country. Somehow we got discussing words and their meanings. No matter what the language or the sound of the words, there are just three areas we invoke profanity, vulgarity and cursing. You see as humans we communicate with our words. We may act innocent of the words we choose, or we may truly be ignorant; but basically most people know what they are saying when they curse. The more words we know, the better we can communicate. The Bible says that we speak from the heart and that death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat of its fruits (Proverbs 18:21).

Public cursing and vulgarity began to be released through TV and the airwaves back in the 1960s. Prior to that, what the public heard was clean and wholesome speech for the most part. Today our entire nation is being polluted with sick talk and language on every corner, but the biggest tragedy is that it has slid into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We even have pastors in our generation who drop profane words for shock value and use sexual slang as common speech. Even the smallest children who are not even mature enough to do the things they speak of use such words

commonly. We as the church of Jesus Christ need to turn around our nation and make our nation holy again.

Those who are reading this know that we are not redeemed by rules or laws, but yet rules and laws are to be written on the tablets of our hearts when we receive the Holy Spirit. Paul was writing to the believers in Ephesus when he noted how they were to put off the old self and put on the new self. In Ephesians 4:17 Paul says that we are not to live like the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking. I have heard people make up words that sound like curse words as if that is better. How we think is how we talk, and how we talk is what our thinking heart is made of. Watch a dozen movies a month with vulgarity and cursing and you increase your probability to think and talk like that. When I first became a Christian, my pastor taught us that we should turn off our TVs or walk out of a movie that took God's name in vain or used vulgar language. Why has the church lowered the standard on speech and language?

We need to turn around our nation and make it holy again.

There are three areas of profanity in life that are to be private, honorable and protected. When we use words or substitute words similar to words associated with these three areas in defaming ways then we are speaking with the futility of our minds. The first area is when we speak of sexuality among men or women or in mixed company where we mock, belittle or berate others or speak of such sexual acts that dishonor the marriage bed. When we tear down another human being with sexual language we are succumbing to the futile thinking of the godless. When we speak of any of the sexual parts of the human anatomy in such a way to dishonor it, make humor of it, or use slang about it, we are profaning what God created and intended to be private between a male and a female. Sexuality is to be sacred, holy, beautiful and respectable. The words we use in our conversations matter in all relationships. How we talk in business, in friendships and in marriage determines success and failure. If you curse daily and then go to a job interview and intentionally try not to curse, your mind will struggle with proper replacement words and will reflect in your ability to communicate quickly and promptly. God wants you to start thinking and talking like he thinks and talks. James asks, "Who can tame the tongue?" Man can't, but God can because with God all things are possible. Read Paul's admonishment in Ephesians 4:29, but read the whole paragraph. We are to be different and to even think differently than those lost souls in our world.

The second category of profanity is vulgarizing bathroom talk. When we use words and slang in any language that reflects the things we do in the bathroom by way of excrement we miss the mark of how God intends us to communicate with one another. Urine and feces have been hijacked into all kinds of slang and vulgar terms to express other experiences and frustrations of life that have nothing to do with such. It might be a figure of speech to some, but it is vulgar and rude and futile thinking.

Last of all, but certainly not least, is the taking of the names of God in vain. He is holy, and all his names are holy. When we use God's names as an expression of shock, excitement, surprise or fear when we are not actually calling upon him, then we are cursing against heaven, breaking a covenantal commandment and diminishing our reputation among men.

Eternity is real and so is God, heaven, hell and the final judgment. As an example, when we say things like "Oh my God!" we may not mean what we say, but we said it as a vain expression. We do these types of things for a variety of reasons – being lazy, conforming to others, lack of vocabulary or lacking control of our emotions. Only God can and will condemn a soul or a devil to a place of torment. If we really wanted God to condemn someone then we obviously do not understand the character of God.

A few weeks ago I was in a small café in Watkinsville, Georgia. I was having a cup of coffee and reading and studying. People came and left and then I was the only customer in the room. At that point a man came in from outside. He obviously had been eating on the porch. He came in and started cursing at the owner about his meal. He used sexual foul language repeatedly and loudly about his bad experience with his hamburger. He did not care that a customer was there and even said that he did not care that I was there. He really lacked words to express his anger and he did not stop for around four minutes. He insulted the owner, and even when he was offered a refund he kept at it with vulgar, obscene language. Within a few minutes the owner was crying and the customer was apologizing and refusing to take his refund. It was really bad, but this stuff happens all the time across our nation in public as no other generation ever has had to endure. We are reaping as a nation fifty years of increased vulgarity in our media and entertainment. This man's language and behavior was coming from his futile thinking in his mind. While this was going on I was praying. Before he left the restaurant he was apologizing over and over, yet the damage was done and the owner kept saying "please leave." No money or apology was turning that experience around quickly. Public shame will only be restored as believers raise the bar, resist the flood of obscenities flooding our modern times and pray to make a verbal difference.

So how does vulgarity, profanity and cursing defeat you? If you use language like this, you are separating yourself from future success, your fellow man and God. If you talk like this at home you will talk like this in public. Even though this type of language is more culturally acceptable today than it's ever been, that does not mean everyone is like this. When we use bad language and words we reveal our shallow, futile thinking and our ungodly character. God created our minds and hearts to reflect him and give him glory, and when we allow ourselves to speak to each other and express our hearts with slang and vulgar words and phrases we will limit our potential among men and God.

Our words create a path of destruction or success for our days. Words are our tools. The more tools you have in your tool chest the better job you can do in life with others. When we allow ourselves to be exposed to words in media, movies and literature that the preceding generation never tolerated, we will pay the price sooner or later. When we allow our children to be entertained by movies that should make us blush versus laugh we need to review our standards. It's time for the people of God to raise the standard of our thinking to a level like unto our God. The bedroom talk should stay in the bedroom; and bathroom language, when necessary, should be decent and in context. Our words at all times should be honoring to our fellow man and our God.

REVIEWS

Homosexuality Gone Mainstream

The largest and most in-depth biblical study of homosexuality from a conservative position is *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon, 2001 by Robert Gagnon, 522 pages). He pointed out that both idolatry and homosexuality are denials of natural revelation. In their vertical relationship with God, Gentiles ignore the truth about God and pursue idolatry, which is an absurd course of action. In their horizontal relationship with each other, Gentiles ignore the truth about the complementary nature of male and female and pursue

the absurd course of action of having sexual intercourse with members of the same gender.

More recently, Rosaria Champagne Butterfield wrote *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert* (Crown & Covenant, 2012). She was a tenured professor at Syracuse University and her specialty was Queer Theory. She describes her conversion from her identity as a lesbian to one who lives for Christ and Christ alone as a train wreck. The local Methodist pastor told her that since God made her a lesbian that he did not require her to surrender that lifestyle to become a Christian. But as an English major, she had read the Bible enough to know that "there are no such marks of postmodern 'both/and' in the Bible." Today she is healed and she says her life is the proof. "Today, I don't recognize myself in the pictures from my life as a lesbian." She is married to the pastor of a Reformed Presbyterian Church.

She said that since all major US universities had Christian roots, too many Christians thought they could rest in Christian tradition, not Christian relevance. Today feminism has a better reputation on all these university campuses than does Christianity, and the church does not know how to dialogue with the university culture. Our biggest barrier to this culture is our religious pride and what the author calls "club Christianity."

Yet this powerful transformation is ultimately overshadowed by her apology for the Reformed Presbyterian Church and their "regulative principle of worship" doctrine which sets them apart as singing a capella and only the psalms — not any man-made hymns. The first chapter, twenty-nine pages long, is still worth the price of the book.

Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church (Zondervan, 2016). The editor admits that such a volume would not have been possible "ten or even five years ago. Until recently, there was only one view of homosexuality within evangelicalism." The editor then introduces four scholars, all of whom "maintain a high view of Scripture." Yet two affirm homosexuality, and one of the two who hold to the "traditional" view identifies himself as a "gay Christian." How about that for balance?

William Loader is widely regarded as the foremost scholar on sexuality in ancient Judaism and Christianity. His editor introduces him as maintaining a "high view of Scripture" and his writings are published by "evangelical" publishers. Loader fervently believes that we must take the Bible seriously and that the Bible prohibits all forms of same-sex relations. But he argues for an affirming view of same-sex relations on the basis of advancements in biology, anthropology, sociology, and other fields related to sexuality and gender. Therefore, he affirms the sanctity of faithful, monogamous, same-sex relations in spite of what Scripture teaches.

In 1999 Kenneth Grider presented a paper at the Wesleyan Theological Society meeting entitled, "Wesleyans and Homosexuality." In *A Wesleyan-Holiness Theology* (1994) he wrote,

> Even homosexuality, as a tendency, will not always be extirpated when we are converted or when we are sanctified wholly.... It cannot be a characteristic of carnality, else all persons would experience it. When carnality is extirpated, therefore, homosexuality as a tendency might or might not be corrected.

At the Wesleyan Theological Society meeting at Albury Theological Seminary over March 3-4, 2017, Keegan Osinski presented, "Queering Wesley, Queering the Church: Toward an Ecclesial Circumcision of the Heart." She presented a queer feminist reading of Wesley's sermon, "The Circumcision of the Heart" from the perspective of the LGBG+ community. She concluded,

> If Kierkegaard identified holiness as purity of the heart, that is to will one thing, we might say that Wesley identifies holiness as circumcision of the heart, to will queer things. Inasmuch as circumcision of the heart is queer, holiness is queer, and we can read Wesley's understanding of holiness as urging us toward a love as expansive as God's in Christ.

Sadly, we are living in a time when uncleanness is advocated as holiness and sanctification is unrelated to sexual orientation. – ***Vic Reasoner***

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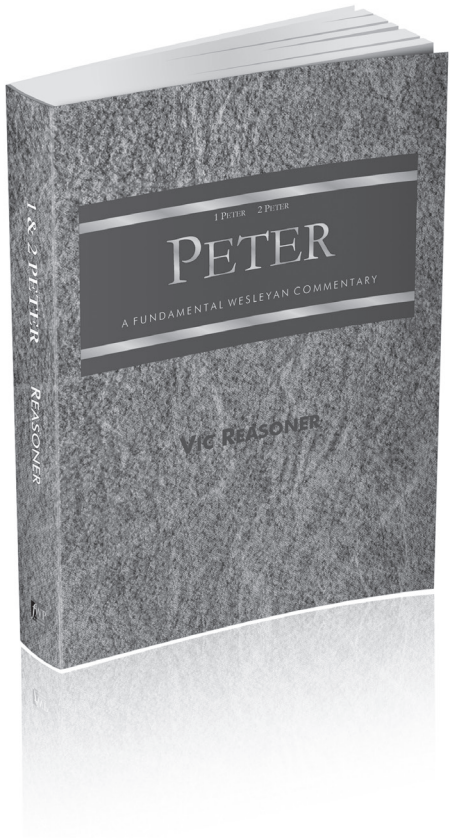

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