The Arminian

A PUBLICATION OF THE FUNDAMENTAL WESLEYAN SOCIETY

VOLUME 36 SPRING 2018 ISSUE 1

WALLS OF HOLINESS

Vic Reasoner with David Martinez

It is not unChristian to build walls. Throughout Scripture, walls were built for separation and protection. Nehemiah was concerned that Jerusalem was vulnerable, so he returned from Babylon to rebuild the walls. When he faced opposition from their enemies, who were not citizens in Jerusalem, they finished the walls with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other hand (Nehemiah 4:15-18).

In the last chapter of the Bible the New Jerusalem also has a wall in order to keep out several unclean categories of people. John Wesley explained that the "dogs" were whoremongers and sodomites, connecting Revelation 22:15 with Deuteronomy 23:17-18.

The Bible delineates seven basic functions of civil government:

- To promote justice
- To punish criminals
- To ensure honest weights and measures
- To defend against international aggression
- To protect private property
- To quarantine general health risks
- To protect religious freedom

Godly Christians may disagree on the specifics of national security, and the First Amendment allows for such civil discourse. Certainly our politics should be informed by our theology. However, it is anachronistic to declare what John Wesley's position would be about President Donald Trump's proposed wall.

This much is for certain: Wesley abhorred lawlessness and anarchy. He would be aghast at suggestions that nations cannot control their borders. He held strongly to the rule of law. And on that basis, he even opposed American independence [see "National Sins and Miseries," Sermon #111]. His Tory political views obscured the theology of American independence, articulated by Samuel Rutherford in *Lex Rex* (1644). But one is not required to be a Tory in order to be Wesleyan. Certainly Francis Asbury, an American Methodist, lamented that the "venerable man [Wesley] ever dipped into the politics of America" [*Journal,* 19 May 1776].

THE ARMINIAN MAGAZINE

Volume 36 Spring 2018 Issue 1

ISSN 1085-2808

visit our web site at <fwponline.cc>

Last year my colleague David Martinez wrote a booklet entitled, *Unas palabras a mis hermanos indocumentados* ("A few words to my undocumented brothers"). In the second chapter he took much the same position that has already been stated. Yet I need to listen to him as a Christian brother, even though we may disagree on how to implement every detail of national security against the backdrop of a proper mix of justice and mercy.

We don't mind building bridges; we just want to regulate who's crossing!

Theologically, the most fundamental mistake in taking a position against borders is a confusion over the roles of the church and the state. The church should essentially be without borders, but every sovereign nation has the duty to protect its citizens. Dr. Adam Clarke stated:

> The rights of civil governments are widely different from those of God. Governments have their geographical limits, and their political relations and dependencies. Their jurisdiction refers to territory, and those who dwell on it: and their rights are such as are assigned, defined, and regulated by just laws and prudent enactments.
>
> The professed object of all kinds of government is the protection, support, and happiness of the people. This object is accomplished, in a less or greater degree, under every kind of government in the world.…There can be no government without laws: and laws, howsoever good in themselves, are useless if not obeyed [Sermon #36, "The Rights of God and Caesar].

This is not a cart blanche endorsement of President Trump's wall, but it is an attempt to push back against the naivety of a one-world government that disallows the legitimacy of any restrictions. Actually, Christians did not fare too well in the first century when there was a world without borders!

Those of us who travel frequently have had the unpleasant experience of been frisked, walked through metal detectors, had our suitcases rummaged by the military, had to remove articles of clothing, filled out forms, made application, paid money to enter other countries, and signed statements that we would abide by their law – all in order to minister. I would hope my government would be at least as vigilant in their attempt to weed out terrorists who enter our country hell-bent on our destruction. A common mantra now is, "Build bridges, not walls!" We don't mind building bridges; we just want to regulate who's crossing!

But in contrast, the separating wall between Jew and gentile has been broken down within the church (Eph. 2:14). The catholic church is composed of every nation, language, and ethnic group, but it is still a holy church. Every member has been blood-washed. Perverts, those involved in the occult, the sexually immoral, murderers (even in the name of Allah), idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood are on the outside. Christian citizens of America may disagree politically, but everything is not political. After all, we hold dual citizenship.

BACK TO BAXTER

Mark Horton

Richard Baxter (1615-1691) was a Puritan who held to a modified Calvinism. Presbyterians began to retreat from hyper-Calvinism due to Baxter's influence. According to Richard Watson, Baxter softened the harsher aspects of Calvinism, then attacked Arminianism in order to clear himself of any charges of heresy from the Calvinists [Theological Institutes, *2:410-422]. Yet Wesley regarded him as honest and abridged his book* A Call to the Unconverted *(1669; abridged by Wesley in 1785). Fletcher described him as pious and judicious, particularly in defending the gospel against antinomianism. While Baxter's* Treatise on Conversion *(1657) was not as popular as his* Saint's Everlasting Rest,

Mark Horton gleans from his treatise practical doctrine with which true Wesleyans can agree. Continued from "Low Expectations of Conversion" 35:1 (Spring 2017)

1. Baxter taught that conversion affects our minds. "True humility of mind is of absolute necessity to salvation." God humbles us. "Repentance signifies two things. The first is a hearty sorrow that we ever sinned. The second, a change of the mind from that sin to God." Baxter lists four changes to the mind: "Now the first thing which the Spirit of God does in the work of conversion is open men's eyes (the mind), to understand truth." John Wesley and George Whitefield referred to this as a spiritual awakening.

"The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness to him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor 2:14). "If our gospel is hidden it is hidden to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which do not believe" (2 Cor 4:34).

To reach a worldly-minded man is going to take the supernatural work of God's Spirit.

This concept to me seems to strike a devastating blow to most of the seeker sensitive ideas which seek to make the sinner feel comfortable in church. To reach a worldly-minded man is going to take the supernatural work of God's Spirit. Part of that work is to humble him by exposing the pride and deceit that had blinded him to truth. This work of conviction by God solicits a person to open his heart to receive things that were often totally repugnant to him prior to that moment of awakening.

How can we see conversions if we are afraid to teach the whole counsel of God and call sinful behavior what it is? When I read Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, I wonder if he was seeker sensitive. People are asleep in their sins. According to Romans 8:6-7, "The mind set on the flesh is hostile to God for it does not submit to God's law; indeed it cannot." Wesley and the early Methodists preached the law because it was through the law that God would open the eyes of men and they would feel the guilt of their sins and their need of a Savior. Once the law or the spiritual requirements of God had been elaborated, the ensuing conviction of sin prepared the way for the gospel to be shared and experienced in life following the pattern of revelation in our Bibles.

Compare that to this quote that I have seen dozens of times by many current day pastors. It is taken from *12 Cultural Trends That Church Leaders Can't Ignore But Might* by Carey Nieuwhof, who is founding pastor of Connexus Church: "The next generation feels less guilt than almost any previous generation. Are you still using guilt to motivate people? (By the way, Jesus never used guilt to motivate outsiders.)"

Yet Jesus describes the work of the Holy Spirit as coming to convict the world of guilt as to their unbelief in Jesus, righteousness, and coming judgment (John 16:811). Does not conviction produce guilt? Isn't this guilt a prerequisite of salvation and preparation for a change of mind or repentance?

Baxter continues: "The mind is changed from careless inconsiderateness to sober consideration." Part of conversion is a willingness to search into and inquire about truth where once there was indifference and unwillingness. "This is a great part of the renewing work of the Spirit to fix man's thoughts upon the truths of God and to bring man's reason to do its office (work)."

Part of the struggle we are involved in is how to gain people's attention. How do we get them to think deeply about the implications of the Scriptures concerning themselves, Christ, and eternity? Before a person can be converted they must demonstrate some level of serious inquiry as to the meaning and implications of God's message. On the day of Pentecost the listeners to Peter's rough sermon inquired, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

"The third change in the mind is from unbelief to true faith.... Men are not soundly persuaded of the infallible truth of all the Word of God till converting grace brings them to believe it." Faith in the heart is a gift of God. It is given to those who sincerely repent and sorrow over

their sins and look to Jesus as their hope of forgiveness and new life. Which leads me to ask: can a pastor or teacher be converted if they do not believe the Scriptures?

"God heals men's errors and turns them from those false conceits which they had about God and His ways, and the matters of salvation." This has been their foundation for a life of error. God destroys the old foundation and lays a new one which supports the new life given.

John Wesley approached a Moravian pastor, August Spangenberg, once he landed in Georgia. Although Wesley's life at that time would have shamed many American Christians, he knew something was amiss. Wesley asked him if he would tell him what was wrong with him. The pastor responded, "I must first ask you one or two questions. Have you the witness within yourself? Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit, that you are a child of God?"

God changes the course of men's lives when he changes their hearts.

Spangenberg noticed that Wesley, this Oxford-trained clergyman, seemed perplexed. So he asked further, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" Wesley paused and then answered, "I know he is the Savior of the world." To which Spangenberg replied, "True. But do you know he has saved you?" Wesley responded, "I hope he has died to save me." Moments later Wesley tried to make his answer more convincing, but of that effort he writes in his journal: "I fear they were vain words." What a good, wise pastor. Spangenberg's questions undermined any self-righteousness in Wesley. It forced him to look closely at his relationship to Jesus and deal with the evidence Scriptures say is true of those who are born from above.

2.Baxter taught that conversion affects our hearts.

> The heart is brought to like what it disliked and to dislike what it had liked before. It is brought to choose what it refused and to consent to that which it would not consent to. It is brought to resolve where it was either resolved on the contrary, or unresolved.

> This then is the first change that God by his renewing grace makes upon the heart – He turns it to Himself and gives it a new inclination and bias.

> Here is the true root of the difference between the hearts of the unregenerated and of the spiritual. Before a man is converted, his mind is not towards God but is set upon other things. Afterwards nothing is so dear to him.

> Worldly vanities must be forsaken.... Sinners, if you would but enter into your own hearts and see what seems best to you in all the world – what most pleases you, what you would have if you could have your choice – by this you might know the bent of your mind and whether you are indeed converted or not.

How hard it is to sell spiritual goods to a worldly soul.

> Conversion influences a man to right ends and aims. All the work of Christianity lies in intending right ends and in using right means to obtain them. The chief part of man's corruption in his natural state consists in this, that he intends wrong ends.

God changes the course of men's lives when he changes their hearts. We are often told these days that we must not judge a person's walk with God. But I am responsible as a pastor to make disciples. How will I know if I am leading them on the right path or not? How will I know what progress they are making or not? Is not the fruit of their life found in attitudes, words, and deeds; and cannot we discern over time the direction a person is traveling by observing these?

"To the true Christian, God and everlasting glory are his main end and religion is his business." Baxter seems to indicate here that we should not have to beg Christians to show up for church or to study their Bibles. It is the thing they want to do most. This is part of the change of heart produced by conversion. Is it safe to say that when people with good health and minds

miss church on a regular basis that they are likely still in an unconverted state?

> Before conversion there is nothing but grieving and striving against the Spirit and treating him like an enemy. But now how does the young convert rejoice in His presence. How loath he is to grieve him, how fearful of quenching his influence. And if the Spirit seems to be withdrawn, what sorrow does he feel.

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).

Confession of sin as a means to salvation. This seems a lost art in the American church. It is humbling to list out to God the known sins I have committed.

What about restitution? If we cannot get to heaven without following peace with all men as Hebrews tells us, shouldn't we backtrack like Zacchaeus and make things right with those we have wronged? Will they believe our lives have really changed if we do not take back what we stole, admit to our lies, or seek forgiveness from them? This might make people uncomfortable, but it will likely do much to run a sword through our pride and humble ourselves under God's mighty hand as we prove that we are bringing forth fruit unto repentance.

The promise of old was this: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). I tell my crowd these days, "Seek God until he lets you know all is well. I cannot do that for you. Only he knows the heart. You are doing business with God. The more honest you become, the more willing to do whatever is right, the sooner you will hear from Heaven."

I am raising the bar where I preach. It is true that you might not build a megachurch, but I do have people that live lives I respect. I believe that many of them know God, and they are salt and light in their network of friends. We are growing. Slow but steady. A couple have died well. Spiritual warfare is real. But so is God. Let me encourage you as a follower of Christ, Do not expect anything less than he does. *(To be continued.)*

THE SALVATION OF INFANTS

Vic Reasoner with Jerry O'Neal

"Do babies go to heaven when they die?" Recent attempts to address this question tend to ignore the Wesleyan-Arminian answer. Articles by Andrew Wilson in *Christianity Today* (November 2015) and by Alan Bandy (June 2017) both suggest that the Bible does not explicitly say whether babies go to heaven. Bandy surveys three biblical passages: Deut. 1:39, Isa. 7:15-16, and 2 Sam. 12:33. He dismisses the first two, yet believes that the account in 2 Samuel gives us hope. But he says the doctrine of an age of accountability lacks biblical support.

Augustine and Ambrose argued that since infants inherit the guilt of sin, not just the sin nature, only baptized infants would be saved. John Calvin and C. H. Spurgeon maintained that God's election could extend to infants and children, so they were already predestined for salvation. A variation of this view argues that God foreknows who will believe, so such infants are saved even if they die before they reach the age or mental capacity to do so.

Adam Harwood, *The Spiritual Condition of Infants* (Wipf & Stock, 2011) examines the subject by searching the writings of current theologians, as well as church fathers in both the Western and Eastern church. Within the Eastern church, the writings of Irenaeus, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa seem to deny that we inherit any sinful nature and thus, children are born in innocence.

Within the Western church, Tertullian stated, "Infants are innocent before God, presumably because they have performed no actions for which they would need to give an account." Cyprian, like Tertullian, believed that infants were innocent but also guilty. They were

innocent because they had not committed actual sins, but guilty due to their relationship to Adam. Infants receive God's grace through infant baptism, which deals with their guilt.

Wilson explained that the Westminster Confession of Faith affirms that some infants are elect, but it does not tell how to discriminate an elect baby from a non-elect one. Several leading evangelicals, like Albert Mohler, John MacArthur, and John Piper, believe that all infants will be saved. Infants, they claim, cannot mentally understand the nature of God and therefore are not "without excuse" like the rest of humanity (Rom. 1:20).

Ironically, these same men believe that if these same babies grow to become adults – they are not all necessarily elect. Yet they hold to an *unconditional* election that took place in the secret council of God before the earth was created!

Meanwhile, Wilson said that Orthodox theologians shake their heads in disdain, believing that if it were not for Augustine's influence on Western Christianity, we wouldn't even be asking such a question. The Eastern church as a whole has rejected Augustine's view that Adam's sin is imputed to all humans, babies included.

All of these discussions revolve around the following questions:

- Do infants inherit a sin nature from Adam?
- Are infants held guilty for Adam's original sin?
- Are infants regarded by God as innocent since they have no moral understanding of right or wrong as it relates to sinful actions?
- Are infants innocent until they come under condemnation because of their own sinful choices?
- Do infants become sinners only when they commit sinful actions?

Harwood concludes, "Infants inherit from Adam a sinful nature but not guilt. The sinful nature that infants inherit will eventually result in their becoming guilty by knowingly committing acts of sin."

None of these recent attempts take into account the historic Methodist position. We teach that the human race is implicated by Adam's sin, but personal sin is not imputed until an age of accountability is reached. The categories of personal responsibility and accountability are very important to us. In fact, passages such as Acts 17:30 seem to imply that the entire race collectively was not held to the same level of accountability until after Pentecost. In contrast to the fatalism inherent within Calvinism, we emphasize a "responsible grace" – to borrow a title from Randy Maddox. It seems that the majority position is to cling to the unconditional security of the believer and remain agnostic about the fate of infants who die. Our position is the reverse. All infants are unconditionally secure, while believers must keep the faith.

The basis for this unconditional benefit of the atonement extended to infants is deduced from the fact that God warned Adam that they would die in the day that they ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree. While they did die spiritually, meaning they were separated from God, the preservation of the race was an unconditional benefit of a future atonement.

While we were implicated by Adam's sin, so that in some sense we sinned with Adam according to Romans 5:12, the guilt of Adam's sin was not imputed to the race. As the second Adam, Jesus Christ also acted on behalf of all men. He chose life for the entire race until each person chooses for himself. Thus, all are covered by the benefits of Christ's atonement until they are awakened to the point of personal responsibility.

No person goes to hell solely for Adam's sin. The justice of God requires that children not be damned until they personally and intelligently choose to sin. Richard Watson explained:

> As to infants, they are not, indeed, born justified and regenerate … but they are all born under the "free gift," the effects of the "righteousness" of one which extended to "all men;" and this free gift

is bestowed on them in order to justification of life, the adjudging of the condemned to live.

W. B. Pope stated that even before the fall, the free gift suspended the full strength of the condemnation of that original sin, and to some degree counteracted its depravity. Jesus Christ, the Second Adam, was given to the race of mankind, as the Fountain of an Original Righteousness that avails to efface and more than efface the effects of Original Sin in the case of all those who should be his spiritual seed. Hence this primitive Gift was an objective provision for all the descendants of the first sinner, the benefits of which were to be applied to those whose faith should embrace the Savior.

No person goes to hell solely for Adam's sin.

John Fletcher taught the justification of infants, based upon Romans 5:18. He taught that all infants are saved until they sin away their justification. Therefore, universalism was a past reality, not a future possibility. According to Romans 5:18, all were implicated by the first Adam's sin and all are justified by the second Adam. Fletcher taught that if all men were not justified at birth, then some are condemned; they must be eternally reprobated in Adam, and then Calvinism would be true.

Thus, for Wesleyan-Arminians, all children are unconditionally saved, whether or not they have been baptized into the covenant. Referencing Romans 5 and 1 Timothy 4:10, Roger Olson explained,

> Arminian belief in general redemption is not universal salvation; it is universal redemption from Adam's sin. Thus, in Arminian theology all children who die before reaching the age of awakening of conscience and falling into actual sin (as opposed to inbred sin) are considered innocent by God and are taken to paradise. Among those who commit actual sins, only those who repent and believe have Christ as Savior.

There are no verbs in Romans 5:18. Normally we would supply the state of being verb. All are condemned and all are justified. But Richard Lenski argued that verse 19 contains a past tense and a future tense verb. All were condemned and all will be made righteous. Lenski then argued that no one is ever made righteous without faith. Of course, this is the whole Baptist argument against infant baptism – that the children have not exercised saving faith and that baptism is an expression of faith. Louis Berkhof, however, pointed out the logical fallacy of their position. If faith is the necessary condition of salvation, and if children cannot yet exercise faith, therefore children cannot be saved.

But the doctrine of infant justification, even without personal faith, can be substantiated.

The classic Arminian defense was made by Miner Raymond:

> The salvation of infants, then, has primary regard to a preparation for the blessedness of heaven – it may have regard to a title thereto; not all newly created beings, nor those sustaining similar relations, are by any natural right entitled to a place among holy angels and glorified saints. The salvation of infants cannot be regarded as a salvation from the peril of eternal death. They have not committed sin, the only thing that incurs such a peril. The idea that they are in danger of eternal death because of Adam's transgression is, at most, nothing more than the idea of a theoretic peril. But if it be insisted that "by the offense of one, judgment came upon all men to [a literal and actual] condemnation" we insist that from that condemnation, be it what it may, theoretic or literal, all men are saved; for "by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life," so that the condition and relations of the race in infancy differ from those of newly created beings solely in that, by the natural law of propagation, a corrupted nature is inherited. As no unclean thing or unholy person can be admitted into

> the presence of God and to the society of holy angels and glorified saints, it follows that if infants are taken to heaven some power, purifying, sanctifying their souls, must be vouchsafed unto them; the saving influence of the Holy Spirit must be, for Christ's sake, unconditionally bestowed.

Thus, all of us were once saved through the unconditional benefits of Christ's atonement, but yielding to the impulse of our sinful nature, when we consciously choose to violate the command of God, we die spiritually at that moment. This seems to be what Romans 7:9-10 describes.

Everyone was once saved through the unconditioinal benefits of Christ's atonement.

Paul Matlock asserted that Methodist doctrine stands or falls with this position: "For if all men are not justified at birth, then some are condemned; they must be eternally reprobated in Adam, and Calvinism in such case would be true." Fletcher's doctrine not only affirms the universal atonement, but the possibility of falling away. Compare his conclusions with Calvin, who wrote,

> I again ask how it is that the fall of Adam involves so many nations with their infant children in eternal death without remedy unless that it so seemed meet to God? Here the most loquacious tongues must be dumb. The decree, I admit, is dreadful; and yet it is impossible to deny that God foreknew what the end of man was to be before he made him, and foreknew, because he had so ordained by his decree.

While John Calvin and John Wesley both accepted the guilt of infants in Adam's sin, Calvin concluded, on the basis of predestination, that non-elect infants were damned. Wesley, on the other hand, concluded, on the basis of preliminary grace, that all infants were unconditionally secure until they reach the age of accountability.

All children are saved whether or not they have been baptized. Infant baptism is valid as a deliberate statement on part of the parents, but infant baptism is a separate debate. To explain it covenantally, Jesus Christ, the last Adam, fulfilled the terms of the Adamic covenant for all who do not reject him as their legal substitute. While infant baptism, therefore, is not necessary in order to save our children, it is a seal of the covenant made by the child's parents, a reminder that they are under the covenant and therefore that we should raise them properly. It is also a means of grace.

Under the Old Testament, circumcision was that sign and seal; but according to Colossians 2:12 baptism has replaced circumcision in the New Testament. Infant baptism symbolizes, but does not constitute, spiritual regeneration. Rather, it means that the child is under preliminary grace. While Wesley taught that baptism cleanses from Original Sin, Wesley was not entirely consistent on this matter. I am not convinced that his mature conclusion was that infant baptism amounts to baptismal regeneration.

The parallel passages in Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17 declare that children belong to the kingdom of heaven/God and the privileges of this kingdom belong to children. In fact, Adam Clarke pointed out that a greater part of God's kingdom literally is composed of children. And if every child is part of that kingdom, it is preposterous to suggest that they might not go to heaven if they die before reaching an age of personal accountability. There is one kingdom incorporating both heaven and earth. Thomas Summer explained,

> To such belongs the kingdom of heaven. In the Gospels this generally means the Church on earth and as all who are brought to Christ do not die in infancy, and so, as children, enter the kingdom of glory, it must here have its usual meaning; though the kingdom of glory is theirs also in prospect, until they forfeit it (if they subsequently prove unfaithful). Our Lord thus ratifies the claims of children to membership in the Church.

THE NEXT METHODISM: A THEOLOGY OF RETRIEVAL

Vincent A. Artese

There have been quite a few articles written recently concerning Next Methodism and what it might look like. As I have read through these articles and reflected on them, the burning conviction I bring to the table is that Next Methodism must be defined by a theology of retrieval. According to Gavin Ortlund, theological retrieval is defined as "the effort to draw on the church's historical theology and practice for contemporary constructive purposes." In Next Methodism, the historical theology of the Wesleyan movement must be resurrected. If not, I fear that Next Methodism will be like the last Methodism. According to Keith Stanglin, retrieval theology "is not a slavish replication of the past, whether of the first, fourth, sixteenth, or any other century. It is rather to learn from history. It is to take the best of the past and allow it to inform our faith and practice today. It means to value historical perspective." Essentially, the purpose of retrieval theology is to look back in order to look forward. I believe the Wesleyan movement in general and the United Methodist Church in particular are at a critical point in their history. In order to move forward to a brighter day it must return to the historic theology of the Wesleyan tradition.

The only way that Next Methodism could be truly Wesleyan is for it to recover its lost theological tradition. Historically, Methodists have not been strong defenders or advocates of their own theological heritage. It is doubtful that many who identify as Wesleyan today have read much of John Wesley or have ever heard of Jacob Arminius, John Fletcher, Adam Clarke, Joseph Benson, Richard Watson, W. B. Pope, or Thomas O. Summers. Fred Sanders observes in an interview with the Gospel Coalition, "It's just not all that obvious that there is any such thing as Wesleyan theology. I say that as somebody who loves systematic theology, who really enjoys reading treatises on doctrine. The Wesleyan tradition just isn't famous for its systematic theologians."

Fred Sanders brings up a good point that is worth serious consideration. Many people don't even know there is such a thing as Wesleyan theology. My question is whether the Wesleyan tradition is not famous for its systematic theologians because of the theologians themselves or because those who have been entrusted to promote Wesleyan theology have not been faithful to their calling. I would argue it is the latter. The largest Methodist publishing houses, Abingdon and Cokesbury, don't even publish any of the great Methodist theologians. If you search for their names on their websites, no results appear. Instead, if you currently visit their sites you will see how they are promoting a book containing the daily devotions of Hillary Clinton and *The Shack*. Neither publishing house promotes much of anything in regards to Wesleyan theology.

I long to see a day that the *Theological Institutes* of Richard Watson are published again, along with the *Compendium of Christian Theology* by William Burt Pope and the commentaries of Adam Clarke and Joseph Benson. It is so easy to buy Calvin, Hodge, Bavinck, Van Til, or Berkhof. No such publishing of any Methodist theological works are even available. Wesleyans who are serious about studying the works of their historic theologians are forced to find scanned copies of old books available for free on the Internet. It is discouraging and sad that Wesleyans have no publishing companies that are faithful to their theological heritage such as Crossway and Banner of Truth are to the Reformed tradition.

It is Reformed thinkers that dominate the theologians list. This is because they have been promoted over and over again by generations of

Reformed Christians; whereas generations of Wesleyans have largely forgotten their theologians. The domination of Reformed theologians is especially seen today in the New Calvinist movement. Publishing giants such as Crossway and Banner of Truth exist because Calvinists enjoy reading about Calvinist theology. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of those within the Wesleyan tradition at large. Those within the New Calvinist movement read Calvinist theologians, they talk about Calvinist theologians, they podcast about Calvinist theologians, and they wear t-shirts with Calvinist theologians on them. If young Wesleyans want to read the theology of Methodist theologians, they are not even available to purchase.

New Calvinists have successfully cornered the market in theology over the last decade. No other Protestant tradition even comes close. Their theology has spread through podcasts (Reformed Pubcast, Theocast, Doctrine and Devotion, etc.), clothing companies (Missional Wear), publishing houses (Crossway, Banner of Truth, etc.), blogs, collectives (the Reformed Pub), conferences; Para church ministries (TGC, Desiring God, etc.), church planting networks (Acts 29), documentaries (Calvinist is coming out this year), music (particularly rap), and social networking sites. Wesleyans have been mostly silent in the face of this creative explosion of theological activity. For example, Calvinist theology courses abound on iTunes University; you won't find any Wesleyan theology courses available. Search in the iTunes app store. If you search for Jonathan Edwards you could find an app that contains his complete works for free and a Jonathan Edwards theological studies app. You won't find anything like that available for John Wesley. It is also difficult to find podcasts from a Wesleyan-Arminian perspective, although some have arisen recently. The message this communicates is that if you are actually interested in theology, then you should consider becoming a Calvinist, because Wesleyan theology is rare if it even exists at all. For people like Fred Sanders, who professes to love systematic theology and who really enjoys reading treatises on doctrine, the Wesleyan theological tradition is a tough sell.

The Wesleyan theological tradition has not done a good job of resisting the liberal impulse.

Another point Sanders makes in the interview is that the Wesleyan theological tradition has not done a good job of resisting the liberal impulse. The quickest way to fall into theological liberalism is to forget the theology your tradition was founded on. This is another factor that has led to the sharp decline of Wesleyan denominations (particularly the United Methodist Church). The quickest way to kill a denomination is a liberalization of both its seminaries and pulpits. According to a recent article by the *Washington Post,* liberal churches continue to die and conservative churches thrive. The article states, "Mainline Protestant churches are in trouble: A 2015 report by the Pew Research Center found that these congregations, once a mainstay of American religion, are now shrinking by about 1 million members annually."

The United Methodist Church is perhaps declining the fastest out of all the mainline Protestant churches. According to Collin Hansen, in a recent article from 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 nothing changes in the United Methodist Church, it may not exist much longer. One may wonder how long it will take for people to realize there must be a serious reformation in the United Methodist Church. Only time will tell. I also pray that other Wesleyan denominations, such as the Wesleyan Church and the Nazarene Church, do not follow the example of the United Methodist Church. Once again, only time will tell.

Hansen goes on to describe where these former United Methodists are going. "Every evangelical group I've known since 2000 has been stocked with former United Methodists. And

every story is the same. To find their Aldersgate experience of love for God who justifies sinners, they had to leave the United Methodist Church. To hear preaching that stirs the mind and affections with unshakable confidence in the Word of God, they had to leave the United Methodist Church. To find theology that would steel them to stand with Jesus and not be swept away by theological fads, they had to leave the United Methodist Church." They are going to churches that preach the gospel, believe in the authority of the Word of God, and hold to a robust, historic theology. The tragedy is that these factors defined historic Methodism! Historic Methodism preached the gospel of love for God who justifies sinners, believed in the authority of the Word of God, and held to a robust, historic theology. But sadly those days are mostly confined to the past.

The next Methodist must begin with looking back in order to look forward.

Even after considering all of this, I still have hope for Next Methodism; but I believe it must begin with looking back in order to look forward. Retrieval theology has brought much revitalization and resurgence to the New Calvinist movement, and it would be foolish for Wesleyans to continue overlooking this phenomena. The New Calvinist movement fascinates evangelical millennials like myself. If Wesleyan groups ignore its successes and strategies, then it is clear that they have no vision for the future, are not interested in reaching younger people, and would rather settle for what they have left of older generations that occupy their pews.

Another source of hope for me is a small resurgence of scholarship and enthusiasm for Wesleyan theology. When Thomas C. Oden published his four volume *John Wesley's Teachings* back in 2014 it was a dream come true for those interested in Wesleyan theology. In terms of works of Wesleyan theology nothing rivals it. Interestingly enough, Zondervan published it and not Abingdon. Also, the works of Kenneth J. Collins, such as *The Theology of John Wesley,* along with his earlier works, are excellent. It was also pretty incredible that Crossway allowed a volume of the *Theologians on the Christian Life* series to be about John Wesley authored by Fred Sanders. It is called *Wesley on the Christian Life: The Heart Renewed in Love.* I suppose if most Methodists are not interested in publishing books about the theology of John Wesley it is encouraging to know that at least some Calvinists are willing to do so. Other lesser-known publishers are also coming out with works on Wesleyan theology, such as Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers, Pickwick Publications, and Cascade Books. Both Pickwick Publications and Cascade Books are part of Wipf & Stock Publishers.

Fundamental Wesleyan Publishers recently published Vic Reasoner's magisterial *A Wesleyan Theology of Holy Living for the 21st Century.* Pickwick publications recently came out with an excellent book titled *From Faith to Faith: John Wesley's Covenant Theology and the Way of Salvation* by Stanley J. Rodes and Cascade Books published *Anticipating Heaven Below: Optimism of Grace from Wesley to the Pentecostals* by Henry H. Knight III. It is exciting to see that these lesser-known publishing companies are willing to publish serious works of Wesleyan theology.

I long to see a day that there would be a publishing company of the caliber of Crossway devoted entirely to publishing works of Wesleyan theology. It is clear that Abingdon and Cokesbury, as they continue to move further and further to the theological left, will never be this publisher. There is an opportunity for another publishing company to step into this vacuum, but even this would be impossible if there is not a widespread embracing of a theology of retrieval by Wesleyans. We also can't forget Seedbed. Their John Wesley Collection publishing effort is exciting, and they recently published an excellent book titled, *The Rise of Theological Liberalism and the Decline of American Methodism* by James V. Heidinger II. Seedbed does publish some material on Wesleyan theology, although I would like to see them become more devoted to publishing works specifically focused on historic Wesleyan theology in the coming years.

In the articles and discussions taking place regarding Next Methodism we should seriously consider the importance of a theology of retrieval for the Wesleyan tradition. If this is not done, then the next Methodism will end up like the last Methodism. A return to the theology of the founders of Methodism is critical for any renewal movement within Wesleyan denominations or groups. If this does not take place, the theological tradition that Wesleyans have been called to preserve and promote will be lost forever. We must look back in order to look forward.

CALVINISTIC ASSUMPTIONS *(Part 3)*

Gil VanOrder, Jr.

Assumption # 3: Calvinists assume that if man can choose his eternal destiny then he has partially saved himself and, as a result, cannot avoid becoming proud of himself for doing so.

Recognizing my need as one who is sinful and lost does not mean I have partially saved myself. Nor have I done anything to save myself by recognizing that only Christ can save me from my situation. Putting my faith in Christ only means that I have met a condition necessary for salvation to take place. My faith is not part of the process itself. It is like the alcoholic who finally admits he/she has a problem. This, in itself, does nothing to change the alcoholic's situation; but it is necessary before any recovery steps can be undertaken.

Imagine a man falls off a cliff and lands on a ledge with no way to climb back up. Another person comes along and lowers a rope to the man stranded on the ledge. The man on the ledge must put faith in the rescuer and his rope when he grabs it and hangs on in order to be saved. If he is brought to safety, does the man claim that it was his faith that saved him? What if the rope broke or the would-be rescuer didn't have the strength to pull the weight of the stranded man or the rope slipped out of the rescuer's hands or he deliberately let go of the rope? The man on the ledge would be lost. The man's faith is the same in all these situations, but in all but one case it is misplaced. He does not need a different (more powerful) faith in order to be saved. Faith must be placed in the right place, in a real rescuer (Savior) and his rope (the atonement) and not in a false one. So, it is not faith that saves the stranded hiker even though he must have faith in order for his rescue to take place. Faith itself saves no one, but it is required (is a precondition) for rescue (salvation).

John 5:58 tells the story of the man at the pool of Bethesda who had an infirmity for thirty-eight years and, by his own admission, could do nothing to heal himself (v. 7). Christ asks him, "Do you want to get well?" Assuming the man said yes, is he therefore due some credit for his healing? Even though the man chose to accept Christ's offer for healing, no one (including the man himself) would say the man partially healed himself. How is it that a man who requests healing for his body deserves no credit for the healing, but a man who requests salvation for his soul does?

I have never met a Christian who was proud of himself/herself for accepting God's gift of salvation. Christians are only grateful they did. More importantly, the Bible does not teach that pride must follow a decision to believe. Romans 3:28 says, "A person is justified by faith." Verse 27 reads, "Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith." The law that requires faith excludes boasting, but it does not exclude faith. No, the verse says faith is required. Was the prodigal son proud of himself for returning to the father? Or did the son come in great humility realizing what a fool he had been?

The idea that pride is inevitable if one chooses to trust in Jesus is an assumption that has been perpetrated by Calvinists with absolutely no experiential or biblical evidence. The idea exists only in the minds of Calvinists (placed there by other Calvinists).

James V. Heidinger II. *The Rise of Theological Liberalism and the Decline of American Methodism.* Seedbed, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-62824-402-1

Heidinger's thesis is that the era of the early 1900s was a critical period in which Methodism experienced major doctrinal transition, revision, defection, and denial of her doctrinal heritage. During this period Edwin Lewis, professor of theology at Drew, wrote "The Fatal Apostasy of the Modern Church" in 1933. Another voice raised in protest was John Alfred Faulkner, professor of church history at Drew. However, as early as 1904, George Wilson wrote: "Everything fundamental to Methodism is being assailed."

Harold Paul Sloan networked with other concerned Methodist pastors to confront this trend at the General Conference of 1920. He partnered with a Methodist bishop who won his confidence and later betrayed him. Ten years later Sloan concluded, "The Board of Bishops is dominated by a desire to avoid division." And Heidinger concluded, "There seems to be an unwritten understanding among our bishops that doctrinal oversight and correction is not a part of the Episcopal task." According to Riley Case, by 1920 liberalism controlled Methodism.

This book reveals that the Methodist bishops have been selling out the church for at least a hundred years. And conservatives within the UMC have been attempting to defend Methodist doctrine for a hundred years. While they are holding their breath, awaiting the bishops to fix their church, if past performance is any indication of future trends, the bishops will do nothing.

Heidinger was president of Good News from 1981-2009. Good News was founded in 1967 to push back against this liberalism. There is also a confessing movement. Now there is a more conservative Methodist fellowship which is forming, The Wesleyan Covenant Association.

While I appreciate all that these groups have attempted across the last hundred years, they have been outmaneuvered. I finished Heidinger's book with more questions than answers.

1. Why would William Abraham be invited to write his foreword? Abraham is critical of the doctrines of revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy. See his "The Future of Scripture: In Search of a Theology of Scripture," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 46:1 (Spring 2011).

2. I suspect that many who have gotten on the more conservative bandwagons have done so on pragmatic grounds – especially the failure to uphold Methodist discipline and the decline in numbers. While they are more conservative than their counterparts, their conservatism is relative and is in reaction to certain unpopular trends. In other words, they are less conservative than they purport to be. While they may unite over certain egregious excesses, a movement can never solidify unless they agree on what they do believe.

3. Heidinger has seven appendices containing affirmations, declarations, and confessions which have been drafted by the conservative reform movement in the UMC from 1975-1994. They are all good, yet none of them affirm that the Bible is without error. They are taking a conservative position by merely stating that the Bible is inspired and authoritative. They like to affirm the "primacy of Scripture," but I wonder whether this is a declaration from the church that they have awarded Scripture this position or a recognition that biblical authority comes before church structure. However, the four most recent "conservative" statements do not even address the authority of Scripture. Any reform movement which is not biblically based will ultimately fall short.

4. Heidinger went out of his way to dissociate these conservative reform movements from "fundamentalism" (pp. 10; 20; 104). According to Heidinger, by the turn of the century Methodism was weary with theological dispute; and this was primarily due to the rise of the holiness movement. According to Peters, the result of the holiness movement out of Methodism was that "theology was in bad odor." Thus, Methodism did not want to get sucked into the fundamentalist controversy of the 1920s. Yet this fear of being labeled "fundamentalist" has basically neutralized the conservative element in the UMC for a hundred years.

These conservatives prefer to be called "evangelicals," "traditionalists," or even "essentialists." I was interested that this term "essentialist" was popular among conservative Methodists who did not want to be labeled "fundamentalists" (pp. 20; 36; 41). Yet the concept of "essential" doctrines is exactly what I mean by "fundamental" doctrines. In the end, no term will satisfy our critics; and for too long they have used pejorative terms to manipulate us. Let us not forget that the term "methodist" itself originated as a pejorative term.

It appears to me that the conservative movement within the UMC today is too timid and polite to take a fully biblical stand. They have been outmaneuvered for a hundred years, and I think they will continue to fragment over time because they are simply reacting to what they oppose. When they come to formulating what they do stand for, they will end up disagreeing among themselves.

And so we are watching the collapse of humanism in our world, but the religious right is defunct. We are watching the collapse of liberal Methodism, but the Methodist conservatives will not succeed because their reformation is not radical enough. Ironically, the best prototype we can imitate is early Methodism itself!

-Vic Reasoner

Vinson Synan and Daniel Woods. *Fire Baptized: The Many Lives and Works of Benjamin Hardin Irwin: A Biography and a Reader.* Emeth Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-60947-115-6

Synan's block-busting book *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement* was first published in 1971, but he conceded that he did not know the rest of the Irwin story until Daniel Woods, one of his doctoral students, discovered the missing links.

Here is the Irwin story in a nutshell: Irwin began his religious career in 1879 as a Primitive Baptist, identifying with the most radical branch, the "Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists." They taught double predestination – that God predestines everything whether good or evil.

Irwin practiced law and then moved his membership to First Baptist Church in the American Baptist Convention. He applied for ministerial credentials but was rejected, probably because his first child was born the same year he was married – 1876. However, he served as pastor for another Baptist congregation for eight years. He was "sanctified" in 1891 and joined the Wesleyan Methodist Church. For four years he was a holiness evangelist. As a student of Wesleyan literature, he misread John Fletcher's statement about the possibility of multiple baptism.

In 1895 he experienced his baptism of fire. He desired a deeper experience after sanctification and interpreted Matthew 3:11 as referencing two separate experiences. He immediately began to preach the baptism of fire, barnstorming across the US. The holiness movement was very slow to condemn this teaching, but by 1898 Irwin organized the Fire-Baptized Holiness Association. They preached against eating pork, catfish, and oysters and men were banned from wearing neckties. They largely avoided medical doctors and medicine, relying on divine healing. Their ministers also carried scissors, and when a convert requested it, they would clip his whiskers for him.

As early as 1895 Irwin was also referring to a baptism of dynamite, based primarily on the exegesis of W. B. Godbey. Later he added a fifth blessing, the baptism of lyddite. Then there was the baptism of oxydite and the baptism of selenite. Obviously, the emphasis was on more power instead of being more like Christ.

Although he was General Overseer, a position he held for life according to the Fire-Baptized constitution, he took long absences; and during 1900 it was discovered that he had returned to his old habits of drinking, smoking, and womanizing – even while preaching the strictest holiness code.

His debacle was publicized by H. C. Morrison in the *Pentecostal Herald.* Upon later reflecting, his assistant and replacement, Joseph H. King wrote that Irwin had been living a double life for many years. King wrote that "he would go from the pulpit to wallow with prostitutes the rest of the night. During that time he was preaching fiercely against wearing neckties, eating pork, and drinking coffee."

After this revelation in 1900, Irwin left his wife, returned to the practice of law, and married a second wife – without ever bothering to divorce his first wife!

But when the Azusa Street "revival" broke out in 1906, he showed up. He then went to Salem, Oregon and attended a Pentecostal service under Florence Crawford, where he spoke in tongues. Later, when he met up with Charles Parham, he made it clear that tongues were in reality what he had been seeking all along.

In 1910 Irwin abandoned his second wife for a younger woman. His second wife said that he was definitely immoral and was unfaithful during their entire marriage. Again he left the ministry to become an attorney, and in 1913 he returned to his Primitive Baptist roots. During his final years he preached that "everything was predestined, both good and evil." At the time of his death he was the pastor of the headquarters church for the Primitive Baptists.

Synan struggled with Irwin's "character flaws" and even speculated that he sought all of his power experiences in an attempt to overcome his besetting sins. "But nothing ever worked." In his conclusion, Irwin asked, "Was he ever sincere? Was he an opportunist who shamelessly used his spectacular gifts to deceive his followers while leading a double life? Did his followers receive genuine spiritual experiences in spite of the unworthiness of the preacher?"

Irwin finally appeals to Article 26 of the Church of England, "On the Unworthiness of Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacraments." Of course, this was John Wesley's answer to the Methodist who did not want to attend Anglican services.

But Pentecostals, originally called the Apostolic Faith movement, were come-outers. They believed themselves to be more spiritual than their dead counterparts. Yet in the foreword, the general superintendent and presiding bishop of the International Pentecostal Holiness Church acknowledged Irwin as one of their founders and said they decided to add Irwin's picture to their wall of past general superintendents despite his moral failures. But that excuse adds nothing to their attitude of spiritual superiority.

I find it curious that this book is part of "The Asbury Theological Seminary Series in World Christian Revitalization Movements." Yet the biography gives no compelling evidence that Irwin was ever born again or revitalized anything. Certainly Irwin cut a wide swath and had a lasting influence. Synan even demonstrates that Irwin's movement was the culture into which Oral Roberts was born. But Synan concludes that, based on the number of pentecostals worldwide, Irwin was "a prominent American religious figure despite his flaws and shortcomings."

Many Pentecostals today are sincerely trying to serve God. In some parts of the world, to be Pentecostal simply implies a belief in the operation of the gifts of the Spirit and hence a place for lay ministry. In fact the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life found in 2006 that 49% of all "Pentecostals"never speak in tongues. Yet if we speak the truth in love, we must also acknowledge that these same "character flaws" persist among many of the contemporary Pentecostal televangelists. Part of my thesis in *Holy Living* was to demonstrate *no* direct theological connection between Methodism and Pentecostalism. Methodism had to first be distorted by the holiness movement before we could have Pentecostalism. To quote Mr. Wesley:

> There is nothing higher in religion; there is, in effect, nothing else; if you look for anything but more love, you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way. And when you are asking others, "Have you received this or that blessing?" if you mean anything but love, you mean wrong; you are leading them out of the way, and putting them upon a false scent. Settle it then in your heart, that from the moment God has saved you from all sin, you are to aim at nothing more but more of that love described in the thirteenth of the Corinthians.

If we could ask what it means to "lead them out of the way, putting them upon a false scent," B. H. Irwin serves as exhibit A and nothing more. ***-Vic Reasoner***

Scot McKnight. *The King Jesus Gospel: The Original Good News Revisited.* Zondervan, 2011. ISBN: 978-0310531456

Few would argue that we have a problem in American Christianity. Studies illustrate that there is little evidence for a difference in behavior from those who claim to be Christian and those who make no such claim. We see more and more mega Churches in our communities, but Christianity has less and less impact on our culture

The Arminian Magazine
541 Broughton St.
Orangeburg, SC 29115

and society. We seem to be producing consumers of religious goods and services but not disciples of Jesus whose lives are radically transformed by Jesus.

Scot McKnight has written a short and non-technical book which is very accessible for pastors and laymen alike. He argues that perhaps the problem is in the message we are communicating. The message of salvation and grace that is so often preached and taught today has no connection with discipleship and spiritual transformation. He makes the case that the gospel of King Jesus and of his Kingdom-now is "the power of God that brings salvation/deliverance."

McKnight, an excellent New Testament scholar, examines the Gospels to find the gospel proclaimed by Jesus. He further examines the sermons of Acts to discover the gospel that was proclaimed as well as the gospel Peter and Paul proclaimed in their writings.

McKnight begins with what he calls, "The Big Question." What is the Gospel? He writes "I suddenly realized that Paul's 'gospel' was the Story of Jesus completing Israel's Story, and the reason the early Christians called Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John 'The Gospel according to' Matthew and Mark and Luke and John was because they knew each of those Gospels told that very same Story."

Too many churches and preachers are proclaiming a gospel that is only interested in getting people in either membership or a decision. When membership or decision become the destination, we should not be surprised that spiritual transformation and discipleship are not very often traveled today.

McKnight makes the case that a gospel culture, by contrast, is focused on getting people to become participants in the Story of Jesus, living as citizens of the Kingdom of God. Certainly, one must be saved into this Story. This makes salvation more than merely escape from hell to heaven but entry into God's kingdom, which encompasses the present life and life beyond this life.

From a Wesleyan perspective, this definition of the gospel strengthens the biblical foundation for our hallmark emphasis on sanctification. Understanding the gospel as the Story of Jesus as Messiah and King should lead people to follow a path of sanctification and discipleship. This transformation and sanctification will not only impact individuals but also families and entire cultures as we take serious the mission given to us by King Jesus.

-Andy Heer

Mark Your Calendar!

Fundamental Wesleyan Fall Retreat

September 25-27, 2018

Including a session with Ben Witherington III

on the campus of

Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky

For information, contact Mark Horton - mhorton8@aol.com or David Martinez - mart.david84@gmail.com