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WHY GEN Z SHOULDN'T STOP SAYING THE BIBLE IS INERRANT

Clayton Sidenbender

I stood at a library printer at my evangelical alma mater waiting for a 327-page dissertation to print, when a young woman asked, “What are you printing?”

“It’s a dissertation,” I replied, “about the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. Do you know what that is?”

She shook her head no. The woman may be living in accordance with the Bible’s teachings and under its authority, but as I conversed

with the woman, I discovered that the term “biblical inerrancy” was foreign to her.

Words can sometimes be fickle. Some English words have a timeless quality, but others fall by the wayside or change their meaning over time. People today use words like “true” and “trustworthy” to describe the Bible, but I’d contend those words aren’t enough to describe what the Bible is.

More Than “True,” “Authoritative,” or “Infallible”

We live in a post-truth culture that rejects absolutes, one where truth claims are instead “owned” by individuals. People speak about “my truth” or “your truth.” Generation Z in particular is immersed in this culture of relativism.

Does this mean we should discard words like “true” and “trustworthy” to describe God’s Word? Absolutely not. “True” is a biblical word (Ps. 33:4; 119:160; John 17:17). But because our culture has given new connotations to the word “true,” we must qualify it with a stronger word. What are the options?

We could opt for “authoritative.” That’s a strong word which reminds us that God gave us the Bible so we’d submit our lives to its teaching and wisdom. But how much authority can the Bible have if we can’t trust it on

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matters of science and history as well as faith and practice?

We could use the word “infallible,” which means the Bible doesn’t fail or err. Certainly there are many Christians around the world who prefer that term. But since the middle of the 20th century, the use of “infallibility” has changed in many quarters so that it only applies to matters of faith and practice. For this reason, this term also inadequately describes what the Bible is and does.

We Need the Term “Inerrancy”

We need instead to use the term “inerrancy.” While there is not a specific verse that uses the term “inerrancy,” the concept is taught explicitly throughout the Bible.

A classic verse that describes inerrancy is 2 Tim. 3:16, which states, “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teach-

A perfect, inerrant book points to a perfect Savior.

ing, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” This verse shows that

God is the ultimate author of Scripture, even though human authors wrote it. God does not override the personalities of the human authors but is able to speak error-free truth through them.

Psalms 19:7 describes the Bible as “perfect,” which in the Hebrew means blameless, whole, complete, without blemish, and lacking in nothing. To suggest that even a small error exists in Scripture is to misunderstand the meaning of the word “perfect.”

Describing the Bible as inerrant is perfectly in line with describing the character of God. Scripture says that God is true (John 3:33) and he never lies (Heb 6:18). To say that Scripture has error means that God speaks error. God does not lie, so Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).

The inerrancy of Scripture shows that it can be trusted, so we can trust God. It is not

easy to trust someone even if they have spoken an unintentional error.

Embracing “Traditional Inerrancy”

In a time when Gen Z is open to the Christian faith and buying Bibles, it is important we know how to approach the Bible. Young evangelicals are craving for truth; why should they settle for Scripture that is less than perfect?

There are well-known and respected evangelical scholars and apologists like Mike Licona, who want to replace the traditional view of inerrancy with a “flexible inerrancy.” While I admire and applaud Licona’s desire to reach the next generation and those leaving the faith, his efforts will not work without a fully inerrant Bible. How can I have any confidence in the claims of a resurrected Savior that Licona defends so well, without a totally inerrant guide to do so?

I want to live my life knowing that I live in complete submission to King Jesus. A perfect, inerrant book points to a perfect Savior. If I am going to have any confidence in the hope I have in Jesus, I am going to have to submit to the perfect Bible to guide my steps.

I ask my fellow Gen Zers to consider what is at stake if we abandon the term “inerrancy” in the traditional sense. Not only do we lose an entirely trustworthy text, but also an entirely trustworthy God in the process. For the health of my relationship with God, I will continue to stake my faith in the risen Jesus as revealed in a totally inerrant Bible.

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RICHARD WATSON'S ENDURING LEGACY: THEOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND MISSIONARY IMPACT ON METHODISM

Thom Cabill

Richard Watson was a British Methodist theologian who was one of the most influential figures in nineteenth-century Methodism. He was born in Lincolnshire and entered the Methodist itinerancy in 1796. Watson served as president of the conference in Britain in 1826 and secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society from 1821 to 1825. His *Theological Institutes* (1833) was influential in British Methodism and was the primary theological text of the North American Methodist ministerial course of study.

Theological Impact

Watson played a pivotal role in the development of Methodist theology. He articulated and organized his ideas coherently. His contributions significantly influenced British and North American Methodism, becoming essential to theological education in North America. This body of work provided a systematic foundation for the robust doctrinal basis of the Methodist movement. Today, many Methodist scholars continue to acknowledge the significance of his contributions; however, the breadth of his impact is often under-appreciated.

Watson's influence has been profound in Methodist seminaries and educational institutions across Britain and North America. His writings—especially *Theological Institutes*—are regarded as fundamental texts in theological education, offering a comprehensive and systematic examination of Methodist doctrine. Although the incorporation of Watson's work was widespread, it is essential to note that his concepts have shaped theological perspectives and significantly impacted numerous gener-

ations of Methodist clergy and laity. Chiles emphasizes that Watson's extensive influence and distinctive theological viewpoint established him as a significant theologian from the early period, thus meriting in-depth examination.

The lasting significance of Watson's contributions to Methodist theology is evident; his works continued to be a crucial element of academic dialogue among Methodist theologians for more than two centuries after their initial publication. The persistent relevance of Watson's theological insights highlights the wisdom and accuracy of his ideas and the vital role his work continues to play in shaping the Methodist doctrine. His focus on reconciling faith with reason and his analysis of Wesleyan-Arminian theology serve as a systematic approach to tackling doctrinal issues that provide valuable perspectives. This enriches ongoing theological discussions within the Methodist tradition and the broader Christian community. However, scholars recognize that while Watson's ideas remain influential, they must also be critically assessed due to the changing contexts in which theology operates.

Watson's reach does not stop with academic study. His works considerably influenced the preaching, teaching, and pastoral practice of many ministers of the Methodist Church. It contributes to the spiritual experience of millions of people all over the globe. The theological tradition established by Watson continues to be the foundation of Methodist thinking and teaching. His systematic theology and works provide many incentives for scholarly debate and direction to Methodist academics, the clergy, and the laity. With-

out a doubt, it can be said that his influence was enormous and remarkable in all dimensions of the Methodist movement. Along with contributions of a theological nature, Watson's influence was also felt in the establishment of the early Methodist missions.

Missionary Movement Impact

After Wesley passed, Dr. Thomas Coke was solely responsible for the global missions efforts within the early Methodist movement. As superintendent of missions, he sought funds and collected subscriptions by going door to door and preaching at Methodist churches. He had made several trips to America, where Francis Asbury served as a missionary. This continued until the leadership of a young man named Richard Watson.

Richard Watson was pivotal and multifaceted in shaping Methodist missionary work during the early nineteenth century. In his book, *Richard Watson: Theologian and Missionary Advocate*, Edward Brailsford notes that Watson rejoined his mother church, the Wesleyan Methodist Church, in 1812. At that time, there was no missionary society present. A missionary society was established the following year in Leeds, England, on October 6, 1813. Watson preached one of his first sermons, "Come from the four winds, O breath!" at this meeting. He also wrote the first letter seeking general support and helped to draw up the first organization's rules. He was elected secretary of the Wesleyan Missionary Society and served from 1821 to 1825, returning to the role in 1832.

The society's work quickly spread throughout England, creating new missionary societies in many villages. The enthusiasm soon spread to every part of Methodism. In 1815, Watson founded the Methodist Juvenile Missionary Society. In the first monthly meeting, the young men raised 8 pounds and 4 shillings; the young ladies raised 21 pounds, 12 shillings, and 9 pence. The following year, Watson wrote the first "General Report,"

where the mission field had expanded eastward to Cape Good Hope, Ceylon, Bombay, westward to Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Canada. There was a vision to extend to the West Indies and islands in the Pacific. They had 19 new missionaries who had moved from home to other countries, and new volunteers doing home-work. The income had increased from 6,000 pounds raised three years prior by Dr. Coke to 10,423 pounds, 10 shillings, and 9 pence.

An example of his belief and encouragement for God's kingdom work is found in a letter to Jabez Bunting. He writes the following about the work in Ceylon.

I congratulate you on the latest news from Ceylon. God seems very evidently to own that Mission. A circumstance so encouraging as the conversion of the Priest Sikarras has not, to the best of my recollection, occurred at so early a period in the experience of any other mission to the East.

Once, Sir Alexander Johnson, the chief judge of Ceylon, spoke at City Road with two converted Buddhist priests. News like this continued to come in from the mission work, which positively impacted the growing support of the Methodist Mission Society. The Methodist mission societies started growing, and the income for the work of global missions has increased. Donations came from other denominations, including some from people of the Church of England. This encouragement led Watson to dream even more about reaching the lost for Christ, wanting to plant mission work in Syria, Armenia, and Jerusalem. *-to be continued in the next issue*

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THE FIVE POINTS OF ARMINIANISM - PART 5:

PREVENIENT AND RESISTIBLE GRACE

Vinicius Couto

In a comparison between Calvin's *Institutes* and Arminius' *Works*, we can see that the French reformer uses the term *corruption* about 159 times while the Dutch theologian uses it approximately 149. However, it is interesting how many times they refer to *grace* (and its correlates *gracious*, *graciously*). Calvin used this set of words around 901 times, while Arminius did so around 1967.

There are many texts in which Arminius places such emphasis on God's grace. However, due to the space of this essay, we will not be able to address his ideas exhaustively. Therefore, we will briefly analyze what he thought about this in his *Declaration of Sentiments*, in the *Letter to Hippolytus A. Collibus*, and in his *Private Disputation* #70.

One of Arminius' most important texts is the *Declaration on Sentiments*. Here, the theologian from Oudewater begins by defining what grace is, stating that it is the "free affection" by which God reaches out to the lost sinner — since he cannot make this journey on his own — through the atoning sacrifice of Christ and works salvation, applying justification and adoption.

He also conceptualizes it as a divine infusion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit "both

God's grace is the beginning, continuation, and consummation of all good.

in the understanding, and in the will, and in the human affections," so as to enable the fallen

human being, now in contact with grace, to think, will, and do good things. Finally, Arminius adds the characteristic of "permanent assistance" to grace, denoting the path of sanctification for the already regenerated

individual. It is in this context that Arminius comes to the conclusion that God's grace is "the beginning, continuation, and consummation of all good."

By highlighting that God's grace is the beginning, continuation and consummation of all good, Arminius goes through the entire path of salvation (*via salutis*), confirming the centrality of grace (which we can call *charicentrism*) in his theology, despite any centrality in the human being (anthropocentrism).

The Augustinian language of grace as being prevenient and cooperating draws our attention: "Even when already regenerated, man cannot think, desire or do any good, nor resist any temptation to evil, without this prevenient [*praeveniente*], stimulating [*excitante*], following [*sequente*] and cooperating [*cooperante*] grace." The Remonstrants said the same thing in the 1610 document, stating that, "without this preceding or prevenient grace — which is stimulating, impelling and cooperating," it is impossible for the human being to perform any good spiritual work.

Arminius and the Remonstrants reproduce Augustine in the stages of grace, when they mention prevenient and cooperating grace; the first of these concerns the prior awakening operated by God in human souls, which encourages them to respond to God's grace, in addition to emphasizing the divine initiative in the *via salutis*, since original sin has made human beings spiritually incapable; the second Augustinian stage teaches the cooperation of the human will (now freed and awakened) to cooperate with God's will.

In his work "Nature and Grace," Augustine explains a little of this dynamic: "Of course we

also do [good spiritual works], but cooperating with the work of the one who precedes us by his mercy,” so that “He precedes us so that we may be healed, and accompanies us so that we may continue to be healthy; he precedes us in calling us and accompanies us to glory; he precedes us so that we may lead a holy life and accompanies us so that we may always live with him, because without him we can do nothing (John 15:5).” It is possible to perceive similarities in Arminius’ language, which repeats Augustinian terms on grace. Arminius was very familiar with this work of Augustine (cf. his *A Dissertation of the true and genuine sense of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans*, in which he cites it several times).

Another very interesting text is his *Letter to Hippolytus A. Collibus*. In the passage that deals with the relationship between grace and free will, he begins by mentioning that “free will is incapable of initiating or perfecting any true and spiritual good without grace.”

Arminius demonstrates that this grace can be resisted.

He was interested in making clear his difference in relation to Pelagianism.

For this reason, he added that “this grace is simply and absolutely necessary for the enlightenment of the mind, the due ordering of interests and opinions, and the inclination of the will towards what is good.”

In this speech, Arminius is recognizing that without divine grace it is impossible for the natural man (i.e., unregenerate) to understand the things of God autonomously, as if he had an inherent light. Such an individual needs the illumination of the Spirit, which is a work of grace that “operates in the mind, opinions, and will; that infuses the mind with good thoughts; inspires good desires to actions, and causes the will to put into action good thoughts and good desires.”

Once again, Arminius demonstrates his *charicentrism*, declaring that divine grace is not only prevenient, coming before, but “ac-

company[s] and follows” the life of the regenerate, enabling him to live a life of holiness. We can recognize a sanctifying grace in Arminius’ thought, which “urges, assists, works what we will, and cooperates so that we do not will in vain. It prevents temptations, assists and grants succor in the midst of temptations, sustains man against the flesh, the world and Satan, and, in this great conflict, grants victory to the human being.”

In his speech, Arminius seems to endorse the Pauline dynamic of Philippians 2:13, which channels the encouragement for Christians to develop salvation/sanctification, so that the very action of God’s grace is what provides the conditions for such work to be carried out continually, since no human being would be capable of developing it autonomously. Thus, Paul attests that God, through his sanctifying grace, ἐνεργέν (energizes, encourages, impels) both the θέλειν (desire, intent, will) and the ἐνεργέν (execution, action, practice, work).

Since God is the one most interested in the sanctification of the faithful, he provides the necessary capacitation and impulse for such work of holiness to be carried out, connecting an evangelical synergistic or conditional monergist dynamism, between the divine impulse and the human responsibility to develop sanctification. In this sense, neither God acts unconditionally, whether or not practicing Christian morality in the place of the individual, nor is the human being left unassisted or does not initiate the spiritual work per se, since he does not have free will.

Arminius discusses this dynamic in his *Private Disputation #70*, entitled *On Obedience to the Commandments of God in General*. It is basically a discussion of sanctification. How can an individual, now regenerated, obey the will of God? If his will has been freed by divine grace, can he do it alone? Arminius understands that it is not, because “the special grace and cooperation of God are necessary

for the accomplishment of complete, true, and sincere obedience, even of the inner man, of the opinions of the heart, and in a lawful manner.”

This special divine grace is what “incites, impels, and encourages to obedience, physically instigates the understanding and inclination of man, so that he cannot be otherwise affected by his perception.” We can say that prevenient grace, both in its soteriological action, before the person surrenders to the lordship of Christ, and in its sanctifying action, inciting the believer to obedience, is irresistible in its initial stage. For this reason, the human being cannot have his perception different from that revealed especially by God.

However, in the next stage, recalling what John Wesley called convincing grace and sanctifying grace, Arminius demonstrates that this grace can be resisted, because “still it does not effect or produce consent, except morally, that is, by the mode of persuasion, and by the intervention of the free will of man.” It is like the Pauline language previously analyzed: the sanctifying grace of God impels, energizes the perfect will in the human being, but does not oblige or coerce the individual to practice it.

Arminius continues: “However, this special collaboration or assistance of grace, which is also called ‘collaborating and accompanying grace,’ does not differ, either in type or in efficacy, from that instigating and moving grace, which is called preventive and operative, but

is the same grace continued.” In other words, he is not referring to different types of grace. Grace is one. However, it has different stages; and the adjectives are to help us better understand the dynamics of grace.

At this resistible stage, grace can be “called ‘cooperating’ or ‘concomitant’” only because of the collaboration of man’s will, since “the operative and preventive grace produced in man’s will.” Furthermore, “this collaboration is not denied to the one to whom the instigating grace is applied, unless man offers resistance to the grace that instigates him.”

Arminius, therefore, discusses the central dynamic of God’s grace before regeneration, during the call to salvation, and after the effectuation of salvation, in a soteriological path (*via salutis*) in which the protagonism is of God’s grace and never of human action or freedom. Thus, it is more coherent, in this dynamic, to speak of *freed will* [by grace], rather than *free will*, since any decision made by the human being in the process of salvation can only be carried out through grace. Thus, we conclude our brief approach by stating that Arminius’ theology is far from being anthropocentric; actually, it is *charicentric*, that is, centered on the grace of God.

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FURTHER UP AND FURTHER IN

William Sillings

“Further up and further in” is the title of a chapter in Book 7 of the *Chronicles of Narnia*. If you’re familiar with Book 7 of the *Chronicles*, you know it is called “The Last Battle.” And as you would suspect, it’s about what happens when Aslan, the Great Emperor from Over the Sea, returns to Narnia to de-

stroy evil and reward good. As you might also expect, further up and further in is what happens *after* destruction and all the heroes and heroines of all Narnian history reach Aslan’s How (our heaven). It is surrounded by a high wall, and there is only one way in — sound familiar at all? But once the latest arrivals from

Book 7 enter the gate, they find this true Narnia to be bigger on the inside than it is on the outside.

Numbers of times through the chapter, one of the characters will exclaim, “Further Up and Further In! Don’t Stop.” And the farther they run or fly, the more true Narnia grows from one reality to the next, and so on.

Who would have thought that a pipe smoking English don could have been thought of as at least one of the greatest theological thinkers in the twentieth century? And who would ever have thought that such a man could teach us about Christianity in ways never before taught — even to children?

The thing is, when you read the *Chronicles of Narnia* for the first time, maybe as a child, you think of it as a great tale that should be

told over and over again. But the older you get and the more times you read the *Chronicles*, you will see how Lewis

has piqued your interest and your heart with Christian reference after Christian reference, and type after type.

I was in my thirties the first time I even heard of the books, and once I began with “The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe,” I was mesmerized by the types and shadows. When I got to the “Voyage of the Dawn Treader,” and I heard Reepicheep the talking mouse yell from the sea, “It’s sweet, it’s sweet!” I wept with joy. And when his mouse-sized coracle stands on edge and heads down out of sight toward Aslan’s land, I felt myself transfixed and challenged.

Now, some of you won’t like *Chronicles of Narnia* because there are mentions of witchcraft and spells and the like. Fortunately for me, this message is not about *Chronicles of Narnia*, it’s about Someone in our world who was born in a stable, and we have found that stable to be big enough for all who want to

enter there to kneel at the feet of the infant lamb-roaring lion of the One Person in all of human history who was able to make a sacrifice for our sins and help us to enter into our own heaven someday.

And it’s about some other things in our lives that are bigger on the inside than they appear on the outside, and it’s those items that I want to challenge you to go “further up and further in” while you still have opportunity.

Go further up and further in to God the Trinity — Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I don’t know about you, but I often tend to subconsciously act like our God has our own kinds of limitations. But He does not. One night, as I lay out under the stars on a blanket on top of the mountain called “Cline Top” near Rifle, Colorado, I could see the Milky Way from horizon to horizon. As a way to see what Dr. Hicks would answer, I said, “They say the Milky Way is made up of billions of stars. Do you think it’s true?”

To my surprise, he didn’t say a word. He just handed me a 7x50 binocular. I took a look, and the sight was breathtaking — as you who know have known for years. Now, I’ve done some more research on astronomy (not astrology), and the farther I look, the more breathtaking the view.

About all the billions of galaxies which we are told exist today, Genesis 1:16 says, “He made the stars also.” Apparently it wasn’t a very big job for him. He made the earth, the moon and the sun. Oh, and he also made the stars. No biggie.

And when I read those words, I will never forget that our God is much bigger than we humans give him credit for. What are you facing today that you think is too big for God? Remember this, “God said, Let there be, and there was whatever he said.” And you will know you have not gone far enough with God yet. Further up and further in! God is greater on the inside than you think he is on the outside. The creator and the sustainer of the ends

Some things in our lives are bigger on the inside than they appear on the outside.

of the earth with nothing but a word.

Go further up and further into his Word. We take a Bible like this one and we say, "This is the Word of the Lord," and the people respond, "Thanks be to God." And we *ought* to say "Thanks be to God" and we *ought* to go further up and further into the book of God, because the more we do, the larger the book becomes. I do not mean that it begins to grow in physical size. No, but it grows in spiritual power and size in our puny little views, and the Word transforms our minds and conforms us more and more into the image of his Son, the Word who was in the beginning, and the Word who was with God and the Word who was God and the Word by whom all things were created and without him was not anything made that has been made (John 1:1-2).

God spoke this Word in the form of a man. The Word became flesh and tabernacled among us for a while. He was born in a

substitute inn room in Bethlehem of Judea. His room was perhaps the kind of room you

would give to your least favored servant, not one you would intentionally give to the King of the universe. He was empty of glory and powerless in physique and in the form of a man-child. He could not help himself, and his parental pair may have been among the poorest of the poor after taxes were paid. We don't know for sure.

This Word was God's finest Word, and because God wanted to tell His story to people who have trouble hearing God speak in normal voice, He had some people who *could* hear what he said to write it down. Not that they understood what he said, but that they heard him speak. And they wrote it down for us who follow.

And because he had it written, he's had it published more than any other story has ever been published. He has used it to convince,

convict, challenge and convert men and women, boys and girls, beginning nearly 4,000 years ago, and even more plainly over the past two millennia.

Because of its content, its significance, its transforming power, and its continued truthfulness, no matter how often sinners have tried to destroy it, you will find that this book is bigger, much bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. I've studied this book for more than fifty years professionally, and I am one of the least of the least of students of this book, but I know I will never run out of subjects to ponder, and byways to wonder from its pages. This book contains the greatest story *ever* told, and it still thrills my soul with its stories of its main character, Jesus Christ our Lord. So, further up, and further in! You haven't gone far enough yet.

And go further up and further into Christian maturity. Further up and further in, you haven't gone far enough yet. Don't stop now! Further up and further in. Find the inside bigger than the outside.

Do not be fooled or discouraged with the limitations of maturity. After all, the earth is covered with dirt. Jesus was covered with dark skin. And the Bible is covered with black and red ink. The cover may be worn, until it is falling apart. But it's still bigger on the inside than it is on the outside. And as someone has said, "A Bible with a worn out cover is usually owned by someone whose life isn't."

In a Word, this is what we're about — things that are bigger on the inside than they are on the outside. And no matter how high we climb, no matter how far into them we look and follow, we will never exhaust any of them. To God be all the glory.

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You haven't gone far enough yet.

REVIEWS

John A. D'Elia, *A Place at the Table: George Eldon Ladd and the Rehabilitation of Evangelical Scholarship in America*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

Ladd's early writing pushed back against dispensationalism. His first major book, *Critical Questions about the Kingdom of God* (1952) argued that the kingdom was a present reign as well as a future realm. He pushed back against a "postponed" kingdom. He saw the kingdom of God as the dynamic rule or reign of Christ in history, to be completed in the future with his premillennial return.

As early as 1956, Ladd wrote to John Walvoord that he was deeply grieved that Walvoord believed "a man cannot be a fundamentalist unless he is a dispensationalist." During the 1950s Christian colleges were split over this issue of a pretribulation rapture.

His second book, *The Blessed Hope* (1956), challenged a pretribulation rapture. I was introduced to Ladd by my pastor, Omar Lee, who held to a mid-trib rapture. This was the first break of light I had in my rejection of dispensationalism. However, Ladd advocated historic premillennialism, which rejected dispensationalism. I am not sure how thoroughly my pastor processed all of Ladd, but I bought Ladd's books on his recommendation.

In order to gain a "place at the table" for evangelical scholars, Ladd delved deeply into liberal theologians later in his career — especially Rudolf Bultmann. While his peers were busy criticizing Bultmann, Ladd defended him by saying that he was asking the right questions even if he was not giving the right answers.

In his attempt to gain respectability, Ladd adopted the historical-critical method with regard to the Scriptures, although this liberal method rejects *a priori* the possibility of miracles. Ladd attempted to use this methodology against itself in order to rebut liberal conclusions; but once the premise is accepted, the Bible has already been reduced to a mere human literary work. Thus his attempt to protect certain conservative positions was dismissed by liberals as too conservative,

while his writing was also dismissed by conservatives as too liberal.

To the degree that higher criticism as source criticism, form criticism, and redaction criticism is based on anti-supernatural evolutionary assumptions, Bible-believing scholars cannot employ them to interpret Scripture without adopting its premises. One cannot affirm the final authority of Scripture and at the same time contradict its claims.

Ladd also embraced the two views of history put forth by Bultmann. This journey began with Oscar Cullmann's concept of *Heilsgeschichte* (redemption history). Martin Kähler also distinguished between *historie* (the facts of history) and *Geschichte* (the meaning of history). I think it is significant that the average German-speaking layman did not make such subtle distinctions.

Bultmann, however, rejected a historic resurrection of Jesus Christ in time and space because it cannot be proven by modern scientific methods. He affirmed the resurrection of Christ metaphysically as something the faithful experience. However, this "resurrection" is not the basis of faith but the object of faith.

In a 1962 article, Ladd accepts the liberal assumptions that "what constituted proofs of Jesus' resurrection to his disciples cannot be considered historical proofs by the modern scholar." Yet Ladd insists that the resurrection "happened in history, at a datable time and in a designated place." Here Ladd is trying to create a third position which is academically acceptable as well as sensitive to the evangelical doctrine. He acknowledges his agreement with the conservative evangelical view and with Barth.

The result was that he was never able to produce a magnum opus that was universally accepted.

However, his attempt was *Jesus and the Kingdom* (1964). He later declared this was a "fool's dream" and

that he had failed. At 55 he thought his career was over (although he died at 71). His concept of the kingdom as “already but not yet,” as a means to advance his own agenda, had become “not now and not ever.”

Ladd was raised with a sense of inferiority that he never overcame. While he advocated a view of the kingdom in which the future broke into the present, his biographer said Ladd never experienced that personally. “So much of Ladd’s theological position rested on an understanding of God as actor in human events, but he experienced little of that intervention in his own life” (pp. 165-166). The author went on to say that if some aspects of the kingdom were present now and the rest were reserved for later, then it was relatively easy for Ladd to avoid his current issues in the hope that they would be resolved in the future life.

Early in his academic career he began denouncing the low state of evangelical scholarship. It was his life’s work to write something that would be acclaimed across the theological spectrum. When that did not

happen, Ladd turned to alcohol. He struggled with major depression, emotional instability, bitterness, and public drunkenness. This became a public relations headache for Fuller Theological Seminary where Ladd taught for thirty years.

The author had custody of Ladd’s papers, including copies of his correspondence. Additionally, his own interviews also reveal some “womanizing” tendencies of Ladd’s. This is all handled with discretion, but is not avoided. Yet it is all explained psychologically.

While some early fundamentalist preaching lacked polish and much of dispensationalism was not based on inductive Bible study, unregenerate theologians will never acknowledge Scripture as their final authority. While Ladd sought a place at their table, A. J. Smith recognized that we will always be speckled birds to them. While we should strive for academic excellence, we must not compromise our faith in the attempt to gain academic recognition. —*Vic Reasoner*

“Reconstructing a Spirit-led Movement,” Madeline C. Henners in *Reconstructing Methodism: Crucial Issues Facing the Global Methodist Church*, Matt O’Reilly, ed. Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Press, 2024. pp. 55-76

Henners begins by asserting the reason we are not seeing anything like the book of Acts in our congregations is that we have adopted a practical deist and cessationist view. Deists deny supernatural revelation. Cessationists affirm supernatural revelation but deny supernatural intervention.

While Henners does not say so, the basis for this worldview is old-school liberalism based on Enlightenment philosophy. It seems that modern Methodism wants to retain liberal scholarship but expect a different result. Her solution is to take a leap of faith and embrace charismatic phenomenon without affirming biblical authority. Yet divine inspiration was the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in conveying revelation without error.

And so she misrepresents John Wesley as charismatic. Wesley recorded many observations that he did not necessarily endorse. Of course, the term charisma is found in Scripture but not necessarily the emphasis

of the charismatic renewal which began in 1960. Wesley’s distinctive concern was always more on the fruit of the Spirit. Rob Staples declared that Wesleyans believe in spiritual gifts. “Thus we, too, are charismatics. But we are charismatics *who do not speak in unknown tongues.*”

Henners quotes from Wesley’s sermon, “The More Excellent Way.” She quotes the second paragraph of this sermon, which makes Wesley sound charismatic. But in the very next paragraph he emphasizes the ordinary gifts as opposed to the extraordinary gift. For Wesley, the more excellent way was Christian perfection. He preached:

If you are seeking anything but more love you are looking wide of the mark, you are getting out of the royal way. When others ask, “Have you received this or that blessing?” if they mean anything but more love, they are

leading you out of the way and putting you on a false scent.

Henners references the research of Daniel Jennings in *The Supernatural Occurrences of John Wesley* (2005; 2012). A review of this book appeared in the Spring 2006 issue of *The Arminian Magazine*. Jennings said, “The Wesley I discovered in my research was a man who fell between dead liberalism which denies all miracles and Charismatic emotionalism which accepts anything that seems miraculous as being real. He was simply a man who believed that God had always worked miracles.” Jennings documents the fact that Wesley never spoke in tongues nor did he teach that tongues were the evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In fact, Jennings includes a helpful chapter summarizing Wesley’s teaching which equated the baptism with the Spirit with regeneration.

Henners also quotes a statement from Rimi Xhemajli’s book *The Supernatural and the Circuit Riders* (2021) that sounds in line with charismatic phenomena, but what this book demonstrates is that Methodism emphasized supernatural conversion. Yes, there were accounts of those who were slain in the Spirit. In the next paragraph Xhemajli concluded that supernatural manifestations were “orchestrated for a divine purpose: principally, to cause empirical demonstration of the existence of God and, ultimately, to make it possible for people to experience conversion.” He also noted that Methodist circuit riders did not focus on speaking in tongues.

In a letter dated May 10, 1739, Wesley recorded, “While we were praying at a Society here, the power of God (so I call it) came so mightily among us that one, and another, and another fell down as thunderstruck. In that hour many that were in deep anguish of spirit

were all filled with peace and joy. Ten persons, till then in sin, doubt, and fear, found such a change that sin had no more dominion over them; and, instead of the spirit of fear, they are now filled with that of love and joy and a sound mind.”

Henners referenced Peter Cartwright, who described the ministry of circuit riders in which “sinners wept, quaked, and trembled, and saints shouted aloud for joy.” The result was that many were “born into the kingdom of God.” Yet in the next paragraph Cartwright recorded that a self-deluded Mormon claimed to have the gift of tongues. The Mormons claimed that Methodists were right as far as they went, but they had stopped short.

Supernatural phenomenon occurred within early Methodism but was never induced or prescribed. I rejoice in Henner’s physical healing. I too have been healed. However, her husband’s testimony of deliverance, which included speaking in tongues, is merely descriptive not prescriptive.

Dr. Henner closes her chapter with a list of recommended books and ministries. Most are charismatic, third wave, or “apostles.” Yet Patrick Dixon observed that during the “Toronto Blessing” “some began to seek a sign rather than an inner work of grace.”

Everything must be tested against the final authority of Scripture. I would recommend Wesley Duewel, *The Holy Spirit and Tongues* (1974) as a more Wesleyan holiness understanding. And don’t forget to read John Wesley himself, not just edited excerpts. He believed that everything should be done “decently and in order.” Hopefully the next Methodism will be rebuilt on the biblical foundation that Wesley laid. —*Vic Reasoner*

Dr. Reasoner is the general editor of Fundamental Wesleyan Publications.



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