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Strange Bedfellows: The Nazarenes and Fundamentalism

Stan Ingersol

“Every man in this body is a fundamentalist, and so far as we know there is not a modernist in the ranks of the Church of the Nazarene,” general superintendent R. T. Williams declared to the assembled delegates and visitors to his church’s Seventh General Assembly.¹ It was 1928, three years after the Scopes Trial in Tennessee, and it is doubtful that many in his audience disagreed with Williams.

Twenty-one years later, writing in *The Preachers Magazine*, Oscar Reed, a young professor of philosophy and religion, argued that fundamentalism was wholly incompatible with Wesleyan theology. Using an argument made by many others, Reed asserted that Christian fundamentalism thrives in the soil of Calvinism, and since Calvinism is antithetical to Wesleyan-Arminian theology, Wesleyans cannot be fundamentalists without betraying their most cherished theological principles.²

So were the Nazarenes of the 1920s, ‘30s, ‘40s, and beyond . . . fundamentalists or not?

The answer depends, largely, on how one assesses fundamentalism and views its function in American religion.

The year after R. T. Williams spoke, H. Richard Niebuhr framed the conflict between modernists and fundamentalists as one “between urban and rural religion.” The fundamentalists,

¹ Quadrennial Address of the Board of General Superintendents, *Journal of the Seventh General Assembly of the Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928): 58.

² Oscar F. Reed, “Definitive Statements Concerning Nine Philosophies of Religion,” *The Preacher’s Magazine* (March-April 1949): 12-13, and (May-June 1949): 11. A similar argument was used by Wes Tracy as editor of *Herald of Holiness* to answer the question “Do Nazarenes belong in the Fundamentalist camp?” Tracy responded that “Nazarene thinkers have usually made careful distinctions between themselves and Fundamentalists. Nevertheless, many Nazarenes embrace the Fundamentalist ethos.” “The Question Box,” *Herald of Holiness* (Sept. 1998): 20.

he said, “reflected not only the memories and habits of frontier faith but also the experiences of rural life.” He predicted a happy but brief life for fundamentalism, since “rural religion . . . is subject to further transition” as modernity encroaches on the countryside.³ The acerbic social critic, H. L. Mencken, was not so convinced and portrayed fundamentalists as ignorant yokels who inhabited America’s cities as well. “Heave an egg out of a Pullman window,” he declared, “and you will hit a Fundamentalist almost anywhere in the United States today. They swarm in the country towns, inflamed by their pastors . . . They are thick in the mean streets behind the gasworks. They are everywhere that learning is too heavy a burden for mortal minds.”⁴

Norman Furniss, whose prose lacks Mencken’s propensity toward sarcastic comment, examined fundamentalism far more thoroughly in *The Fundamentalist Controversy* (1954), but he, too, regarded the fundamentalists as largely uncultured.

Richard Hofstadter’s classic work, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (1962), viewed fundamentalists as deprived but argued that status, or esteem, was what they lacked and sought. “The fundamentalist mind has had the bitter experience of being routed in the field of morals and censorship, on evolution and Prohibition, and it finds itself increasingly submerged in a world in which the great and respectable media of mass communication violate its sensibilities and otherwise ignore it . . . it has been elbowed aside and made a figure of fun.” In their marginalization, fundamentalists are driven by the desire *to be* somebody, Hofstadter argued. He noted their penchant for right-wing politics.⁵ He did not mention fundamentalism in his celebrated essay, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics,” but there were important

³ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1957; reprinted from 1929 edition by Henry Holt & Company), pp. 184-186.

⁴ H. L. Mencken, “To Expose a Fool,” *The American Mercury* (October 1925): 160.

⁵ Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), p. 134.

suggestions there also. In that essay, Hofstadter identified a style of politics characteristic of groups who are motivated by their deep belief in conspiracy theories. These groups fear that others—whether Deists, Freemasons, Roman Catholics, anarchists, or communists—are out to destroy their way of life. And in related essays, Hofstadter identified fundamentalists with this style of politics, characterizing them as people with “a Manichean view of the world” who see politics in terms of an eternal struggle between absolute good versus absolute evil.⁶

Other writers on fundamentalism have eschewed interpretations of economic, educational, or social deprivation, focusing, instead, on mood or attitude.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, the renowned liberal preacher, provided a simple but useful definition of fundamentalism in his well-known sermon, “Shall the Fundamentalists Win?” Theological conservatives and fundamentalists can believe precisely the same doctrines, Fosdick stated. What separates the two is not the content of their doctrine but the basic spirit that the fundamentalist brings to it. Fundamentalism is not simply Christian orthodoxy; it is militant orthodoxy—orthodoxy on the warpath, with a glint of blood in its eye.⁷

The idea was endorsed by George Dollar of Bob Jones University. In his sympathetic treatment of his own movement, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (1973), Dollar argued that fundamentalism is “the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes.” Like Fosdick, Dollar regarded militancy as the key.

⁶ Compare the essay “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” with an essay following it, “Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited,” which does deal with Fundamentalists. In Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964).

⁷ Fosdick preached: “We should not identify the Fundamentalists with the conservatives. All Fundamentalists are conservatives, but not all conservatives are Fundamentalists. The best conservatives can often give lessons to the liberals in true liberality of spirit, but the Fundamentalist program is essentially illiberal and intolerant.” Specifically he identified the Fundamentalists as those whose “intention is to drive out of the evangelical churches men and women of liberal opinions.”

Louis Gasper's *The Fundamentalist Movement, 1930-1956* (1963) took a different tack by treating fundamentalism as a Christian separatist movement whose *raison d'être* rests in the distance it can gain and maintain from mainline churches. It is not just orthodoxy. To Gasper, the essence of fundamentalism is *sectarian* orthodoxy.

A similar view was adopted by Fuller Theological Seminary's E. J. Carnell—professor of apologetics, peer of Carl F. H. Henry, and leading figure in the post-war Evangelical renaissance. Carnell sought to differentiate American evangelicals from fundamentalists. He argued that fundamentalism claims to represent orthodox Christianity but actually enshrines a cultish view of it. He described the primary traits of this cultic orthodoxy: “mores and symbols of its own devising,” detachment from “the church universal,” and belligerence. By contrast, those rooted in classical Protestant Orthodoxy are “impatient with the small talk of the cult; they long for authentic conversation on historic themes” and tend to be better educated.⁸ Carnell narrowed in:

The doctrine of the church is the dividing line between fundamentalism and [classical] orthodoxy, and the line is a sharp one. Fundamentalism rests its case on a separatist view of the church. It contends that when a denomination has modernists among its clergy or missionaries, a Christian must withdraw financial support until said modernists are deposed. And if financial boycott fails, a Christian must disaffiliate forthwith; he must start a “pure witness” for the Gospel . . .

. . . Fundamentalism [has] formulated its view of the church with an eye to the interests of the cult. Fundamentalists believe they are superior because they have withdrawn from historic denominations; they imagine that they alone glorify the gospel. Since the fundamentalist is deprived of the happy security that comes from communion with the church universal, he must devise substitute securities all his own. And the handiest

⁸ Edward John Carnell, “Orthodoxy: Cultic vs. Classical,” *The Christian Century* (March 30, 1960): 377.

substitute—the one calling for the least energy and skill—is to appear better by making others appear worse. In plain language, the fundamentalist tattles, because censure implies superiority.⁹

Elmer Towns, a Jerry Falwell associate and self-avowed fundamentalist, pushed the notion of fundamentalist separatism further, noting two types of fundamentalists. “First-degree” separatists refuse to have any direct fellowship with theological liberals but will fellowship with fellow conservatives who do. “Second-degree” separatists even avoid fellowship with other conservatives if they fellowship with liberals.¹⁰ To illustrate what this means, a first degree separatist will not fellowship with the mainline church folk that Billy Graham fellowships with, but they will fellowship with Billy Graham. The second-degree fundamentalist will not even do that.

Ernest Sandeen’s scholarship marked a sharp turn toward understanding fundamentalism primarily as a theological movement. His *Roots of Fundamentalism* (1970) was quickly recognized as a seminal work. Sandeen argued that fundamentalism flowed from the confluence of two separate streams in American religious thought: the 19th century Princeton theology’s doctrine of the Bible’s inerrancy, and the growing grass-roots influence of dispensational

⁹ Ibid., p. 378. In a different article on the subject, Carnell argues that “Fundamentalism is a paradoxical position. It sees the heresy in untruth but not in unloveliness. If it has the most truth, it has the least grace, since it distrusts courtesy and diplomacy. . . . Fundamentalism is a lonely position. It has cut itself off from the general stream of culture, philosophy, and ecclesiastical tradition. This accounts, in part, for its robust pride. Since it is no longer in union with the wisdom of the ages, it has no standard by which to judge its own religious pretense. It dismisses non-fundamentalistic efforts as empty, futile, or apostate. Its tests for Christian fellowship become so severe that divisions in the Church are considered a sign of virtue. And when there are no modernists from which to withdraw, fundamentalists compensate by withdrawing from one another. . . . Status by negation must be maintained or the *raison d’être* of fundamentalism is lost.” See Edward John Carnell, “Fundamentalism,” in *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, eds. Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen (New York: Meridian Books, 1958), p. 143.

¹⁰ Elmer L. Towns, “Trends Among Fundamentalists,” *Christianity Today* (July 6, 1973): 12.

premillennialism. Sandeen detailed each stream's emergence. He *did not* argue that these streams completely merged, or that a true fundamentalist must exhibit both traits. In fact, the "old Princeton" theology migrated from New Jersey to Philadelphia, to be newly enshrined at Westminster Theological Seminary, where even yet it retains a pristine flavor unaffected by popular premillennialism. And other groups, such as the Churches of Christ, who would strike many people as fundamentalists, largely rejected the new premillennialism as well, at least until recently. The dispensationalist movement, on the other hand, thoroughly embraced the Princeton view of biblical inerrancy because that view bolstered its sense of authority, which dispensationalism's emphasis on predictive prophecy required. Thus a large popular following developed in American Christianity in which the two streams were blended. This large popular following included nearly all Pentecostals, a large majority of white Baptists, many black Baptists, and yes, more than a few Nazarenes and other Wesleyans. The seminal nature of Sandeen's work can be seen in subsequent studies of dispensationalism by Timothy Weber and various historians of early Pentecostalism, not to mention a new round of attention focused on the Princeton theologians.¹¹

Sandeen's work was followed shortly by George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (1980), another seminal work. Marsden brought both theological and sociological lenses to bear on the problem. He interpreted fundamentalists as religious conservatives who are profoundly conflicted by modernity. On one hand they strenuously rejected the central tenets of 20th century biology but not the medicine based on it. They decried

¹¹ For examples, see Timothy Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming* (1983); Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited* (1979), which argues that Pentecostalism emerged primarily as a millennial movement with the "gifts of the Spirit" as evidences of Christ's soon return; Mark Noll, *The Princeton Theology* (1983), a source book with a fine introduction by the editor; and Brad Longfield, *The Presbyterian Controversy* (1993).

the way others used technological advances to reach the masses but adapted the same tools to their own purposes. They benefited from rising middle-class prosperity and social change, yet were threatened by the prospect of further change. Further, he predicted that fundamentalism will always be visible in the religious landscape since social change is ongoing and always engenders reaction among religious conservatives.

Like Sandeen, Marsden's chapter on "The Holiness Movement" identified the spread of dispensational premillennialism with this movement. Yet Wesleyans barely make an appearance in this chapter. Marsden's treatment of "the Holiness Movement" focuses instead on the Keswick-holiness movement, that English import disseminated across America by D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, and others in their circle. And perhaps this is telling, for while fundamentalism made significant inroads into the life of Nazarenes and sister Wesleyan churches, the larger story of fundamentalism, ultimately, is not the central theme in their stories.

The literature on fundamentalism includes a sub-strain that deals with the fundamentalist tendency toward right-wing politics. Early works in this genre focused on fundamentalists who were on the extreme right. Ralph Lord Roy's *Apostles of Discord* (1953) examined fundamentalism's seamy side by looking at such polarizing personalities as the anti-Semitic evangelist Gerald Winrod; the reactionary Gerald L. K. Smith, publisher of the monthly *Cross and Flag*, who raged against Blacks, Jews, and the United Nations; and the anti-communist, anti-internationalist Carl McIntire, among others. Erling Jorstad's *The Politics of Doomsday* (1970) extended the story another twenty years, updating Roy's work to include Billy James Hargis, whose Christian Crusade reduced the historic faith to anti-communism, and others of his type. Roy stated clearly that "most fundamentalists . . . do not share [these] racial and religious

bigotries.”¹² Not all his readers remembered or may have believed that statement, for fundamentalist hate speech was easy to find on the nation’s radio waves during the 1950s and 1960s. And Nazarenes were not immune from it. Shortly before the Nazarene Publishing House published Carl Bangs’ *The Communist Encounter* (1963), Hargis blasted Bangs in a radio broadcast for statements Bangs made in a *Herald of Holiness* article.¹³ After Bangs’ book appeared, a group of California Nazarenes, calling themselves the Committee of Concerned Laymen, likewise attacked Bangs for not being sufficiently anti-communist and for commending the noted Christian social ethicist, John C. Bennett, whom they insinuated was a communist fellow-traveler.

Apart from the extremists, the more general conservative tendencies of fundamentalists were not studied as carefully until later, despite the fact that fundamentalism was a significant bastion of resistance to civil rights for Blacks. This changed with the growing interest in Southern religious history that emerged through Samuel S. Hill’s influence in the mid-1970s, and the development late in that decade of “the new religious-political right.” The latter became the subject of intense interest by the popular press and students of the social sciences—political scientists, historians, and sociologists alike. A large and growing literature on the political conservatism of rank and file fundamentalism has emerged since then.

My attitude toward the historiography of fundamentalism is this: each theory examines some facet of the truth, none is complete, and all tend to have some value. I find particular merit

¹² Ralph Lord Roy, *Apostles of Discord* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953), p. 27.

¹³ The attack on Bangs was the subject of Hargis’ radio broadcast of October 1, 1962. Transcript in the “National Council of Churches—Evangelism Department” File, Nazarene Archives. Photocopy also in the Carl Bangs profile folder. Among other “sins,” Bangs had quoted from *The Christian Century*, which Hargis called “the voice of religious apostasy.” Bangs’ article appeared in *Herald of Holiness* (August 22, 1962).

in Harry Emerson Fosdick's notion that fundamentalists are theological conservatives with militant (almost exclusive) attitudes, by Carnell's notion of fundamentalism as sectarian separatism, and by ongoing reflection on a model for understanding American evangelicalism advanced by Timothy Smith.

In the 1970s, Smith argued that American evangelicalism should be understood as a mosaic. Evangelicalism is not monolithic but embraces a wide range of different theological communities that often think quite different thoughts from one another. Reformed evangelicals do not think or always act like Wesleyan ones. Mennonite evangelicals differ in thought and ethics from Baptist evangelicals. Each religious community occupies a different place in the economy of American evangelicalism. Each is a different piece of theological stone within a larger picture. One must look at the whole picture, and one must also look at the parts.

After feedback and further reflection, Smith shifted his model. He recognized that American evangelicalism is not static but in a state of constant flux. Each of the distinct theological communities under the Evangelical tent is also in flux—shifting, turning, changing. As the pieces shift, so does the total picture. In light of this reflection, Smith retired the notion of an Evangelical mosaic and began speaking, instead, of the Evangelical kaleidoscope—the colorful picture that changes every second.¹⁴

The helpful notion of the Evangelical kaleidoscope can influence our notions of fundamentalism. If we grasp that there are a variety of ways a person or a community can be Evangelical, then it is no big leap to conclude that there also exist a variety of ways that they can be fundamentalist. And not all modes of fundamentalism should be regarded as alien to our tradition. Indeed, we can understand one type of Wesleyan fundamentalism as a commitment to

¹⁴ Timothy L. Smith, "The Evangelical Kaleidoscope and the Call to Christian Unity." *Christian Scholar's Review* 15 (1986): 125-140.

the central doctrines of grace and holiness of the Wesleyan tradition, but coupled to a perspective shaped by disdain toward modernism or some aspect of it, such as modern science. Other forms of Wesleyan fundamentalism may be based on rigid legalism, or even around the form of arid apologetic Wesleyan theology that John Allan Knight dubbed “holiness scholasticism,” or even as a marriage of two or more of these. These are stances one may dislike, that can be challenged as incompatible with the radical optimism of grace that is central to a Wesleyan understanding of life, grace, and faith. They can be critiqued as a violation of the Wesleyan ideal that holds together “those two so long disjoined, knowledge and vital piety.” There they are, nonetheless.

I remember vividly a question that was asked when defending my doctoral dissertation many years ago. The examination was over a study of Mary Lee Cagle, the staunchest advocate of women’s ordination and ministry in the early Church of the Nazarene. I was asked about her attitude toward fundamentalism and replied that she undoubtedly considered herself one. Eyebrows were immediately raised all around the table. An examiner then stated that Cagle was in the ironic position of championing women in ministry, but simultaneously identified with the very impulse that later choked it. I denied that conclusion and have thought about the conversation often since then. Mary Lee Cagle, like most of the Wesleyan women preachers of her generation, regarded herself as a fundamentalist and would not accept the notion, popular today, that “fundamentalist inroads” into Nazarene life precipitated the significant decline of women in her denomination’s ministry after 1935. She almost certainly would say that if the church forgot the Biblical basis for women in ministry, then it was because the church neglected its ongoing exegetical task and failed to meet its catechetical obligations, thus allowing doctrines of the ministry that were generated out of other exegetical-theological traditions to fill the void.

But as for her, Cagle's own fundamentalism merely strengthened her determination to show that the basis of her ministry was grounded firmly and irrevocably in the Christian Scriptures.

One can view the first wave of American fundamentalism as a phase in the history of American evangelicalism that deeply tinged all the pieces in the Evangelical kaleidoscope. Among theological conservatives, there were few corners where fundamentalism did not penetrate in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. The Southern Baptist Convention suffered more than one split at the hands of those who thought the denomination not nearly conservative enough. Pentecostals largely viewed themselves as fundamentalists at this time. Conservative Lutherans became more so. And as R. T. Williams said, "Every man in this body is a fundamentalist, and so far as we know there is not a modernist in the ranks of the Church of the Nazarene." And while it was not literally true that "every man" present was a fundamentalist—H. Orton Wiley, for instance, was very present and very clearly not one, nor were others present for the speech—still the seepage of fundamentalism was evident all around. It was, in fact, knee deep.

The story of Evangelical Christianity's emergence from fundamentalism has been told many times. It is partly a story of joint effort across denominational lines symbolized by the founding of *Christianity Today* and the National Association of Evangelicals as harbingers of a new style of post-fundamentalist evangelicalism.

But it is equally the case that each denomination affected by fundamentalism later backed away from it by its own methods, each devising its own strategy for releasing fundamentalism's grip.

H. Orton Wiley's actions at the 1928 General Assembly demonstrate this. The move was on to introduce the notion of inerrancy into the church's Article of Faith on Scripture. Wiley had

spent several years researching and writing the work that would be published eventually as his 3-volume *Christian Theology*. Alert to the issues, and oriented to an Anglo-Methodist understanding of scripture, he guided the General Assembly to amend the statement carefully. The revised article on Scripture adopted by the Nazarenes in 1928 read: “We believe in the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures by which we understand the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, inerrantly revealing the will of God concerning us in all things necessary to our salvation; so that whatever is not contained therein is not to be enjoined as an article of faith.”¹⁵ Like the Church of England’s corresponding article on Scripture, which John Wesley and early British Methodists had been weaned on, and the corresponding article in American Methodism, with which Bresee, Reynolds, and other key Nazarene leaders were familiar, the revised Nazarene article on Scripture in 1928 emphasized the church’s confession that Scripture is a reliable and trustworthy witness to salvation, while avoiding fundamentalism’s more extreme emphasis. Wiley had succeeded in preventing the urge to tinker from allowing it to drift over into the Princeton notion of the total inerrancy of scripture, with its attendant problems.¹⁶ By contrast, the Wesleyan Methodist Church went the opposite way in 1951, adopting the strictest view of inerrancy and creating a striking theological

¹⁵ “Articles of Religion” in *Encyclopedia of World Methodism*, Vol. 1 (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 1974) provides the Anglican and Methodist creeds laid out in parallel fashion. See pp. 147-148 for the articles on Scripture. Church of the Nazarene, *Manual*, (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1928), p. 22.

¹⁶ Paul M. Bassett’s fine study of this is in “The Theological Identity of the North American Holiness Movement: Its Understanding of the Nature and Role of the Bible,” in Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, eds. *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 72-108. Also see Bassett’s “The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement” *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 13 (Spring 1978): 65-91.

difference between it and its closest sister denominations—the Nazarenes and the Free Methodists.¹⁷

Nevertheless, in the conflict between fundamentalists and modernists, Nazarene sympathies were clearly on fundamentalism's side and against religious skepticism, the higher critics of the Bible, the Darwinists, and the liberal Protestant theologies. Indeed, there is abundant evidence that Nazarenes regarded liberal Protestantism as the unwelcome accommodation of Christianity to distinctly anti-Christian assumptions. And in its opposition to theological modernism, the Church of the Nazarene underwent a fundamentalist phase, as did other evangelical denominations.

Thus critical questions emerged as fundamentalism's conflict with modernism grew sharper. How extensively would fundamentalism alter the Nazarene self-understanding? Nazarenes had developed a distinct theological identity early in their history, blending Wesleyan ideas of grace, faith, and holiness, American Methodist ideas of polity, and several assumptions of the believer's church tradition. Would that unique identity remain intact as the fundamentalist crusade developed, or would it be lost, swallowed up by a growing affinity with a newer and broader 20th century movement whose spirit and purposes were quite different from those of the Wesleyan-holiness movement, which had birthed the Nazarenes?

The issue can be drawn even more clearly by considering the nature of movements. Movements share certain features, whether religious or social in nature. They are not bred by consensus; they are born of dissent. Lawrence Goodwyn's history of the populist movement of

¹⁷ Ira Ford McLeister and Roy Stephen Nicholson, *Conscience and Commitment: The History of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America* (Marion, Indiana: The Wesley Press, 1976), pp. 226-227. Stephen Paine, president of Houghton College, was the primary leader of this change. See Wayne E. Caldwell, ed., *Reformers and Revivalists: The History of the Wesleyan Church* (Indianapolis: The Wesley Press, 1992), p. 330.

the late 19th century is a helpful place to start for understanding their character. In *The Populist Moment*, Goodwyn argues that any new movement begins because people analyze a particular set of conditions. That analysis must seem cogent, at least to some of the people affected. Spokesmen who believe the analysis must be recruited, or else the analysis goes nowhere. The spokesmen spread the ideas of the movement and recruit new believers. Since the establishment controls the press, a movement must generate its own publishing enterprise. Tracts, booklets, broadsheets and periodicals produced by the movement press assist in recruitment and help the movement consolidate its gains. Meetings and conventions rally the faithful and energize them. Goodwyn stresses the vital significance of a movement maintaining its focus. His thesis, highly provocative, is that populism began as an agrarian revolt that achieved nearly all the basic steps but failed to mature as a political movement when populists began sharing their platforms with the advocates of the free silver campaign. This muddled the agrarian message, altered populism's objectives, and led to the movement's rapid demise.¹⁸

Goodwyn's conclusion regarding populism's failure is still debated, but his understanding of a movement's stages are helpful. The Wesleyan-holiness movement established its own analysis of mainline Protestantism, particularly Methodism. Movement leaders diagnosed the problem as declension within Methodism as they witnessed the erosion of loyalties to the class meeting and other mechanisms designed to foster Christian holiness. In response they generated a reform movement that sought to recover Wesley's emphasis on Christian perfection. They offered spiritual solutions to what they regarded as growing spiritual laxity and doctrinal confusion over the theology of holiness. (It is important to note that those

¹⁸ Lawrence Goodwyn, *The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America* (Oxford, London, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978). *The Populist Moment* is a 342-page abridgement of a more comprehensive work, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (1976).

who opposed Wesleyan-holiness theology were also evangelicals, not liberals. Methodism's debate over holiness was a debate among evangelical Methodists.) Its critique of creeping formalism and the culture bred by growing middle-class prosperity was developed before Darwin and before the higher critics of the Bible. The holiness movement used evangelists as its spokesmen, and developed a press that was independent of the Methodist officials. Two generations of leadership successfully kept it within the fold of mainline Methodism, but the movement's third generation became radically diverse and with that diversity came the rise of the holiness churches. As the movement fractured, the holiness churches that emerged viewed themselves as faithful to the original ideals of the movement and as new Methodist churches. In a fundamental way, the Church of the Nazarene was a product of the Wesleyan-holiness movement and one expression of its ideals.

Fundamentalism analyzed the religious problem much differently and generated its own answer. Its foe was "liberalism," a theme underscored by J. Gresham Machen's classic battle text, *Christianity and Liberalism*. The Princeton theologians even regarded holiness theology as a Pelagian highway and thus part of the liberal problem. The evangelists who functioned as the primary spokesmen of the fundamentalist movement were not merely indifferent to the primary concerns of evangelical Wesleyans but antagonistic to holiness thought. And the fundamentalist press generally was unreceptive to holiness thought. To be sure, there are places where the complaints of the holiness movement and fundamentalism appeared to intersect. For instance, the prevailing notion in dispensational theology was that the popular churches were apostate and fallen; such a charge could be linked to the holiness complaint that the established churches were formal and cold. The complaints appear similar but actually are not the same.

Nevertheless, grassroots Nazarene laity and pastors often responded positively to fundamentalist appeals. Nazarene theologians, however, perceived a danger in the church identifying too closely with the new movement. The primary literature of the fundamentalist cause was written by Calvinists, who wove their basic theology into their attacks on Modernism. Fundamentalism's intellectual giant was J. Gresham Machen, originally of Princeton and later of Westminster Theological Seminary. Machen and his Presbyterian colleagues skewered Wesleyan-Arminian theology as adeptly as they did Modernist ideas. Nazarene theologians were intent, then, on preventing Reformed theology from taking root in the church through fundamentalism's guise.

A. M. Hills's sharp attack on the *Scofield Reference Bible* in the denominational paper is one example of this. A friend had noted that the Scofield Bible "has gained a large circulation, and is used extensively by our own people, both by preachers and people." Hills lamented this situation, since the work was "saturated and soaked and dripping with Calvinism and opposition to holiness." Likewise H. Orton Wiley published articles in the church paper and in *The Preacher's Magazine* intended to blunt fundamentalism's influence. But his most sustained argument was made when the first volume of *Christian Theology* appeared in 1940. As Paul Bassett convincingly shows, Wiley penned an illuminating passage that discussed "three unworthy Monarchs" that had "scepters falsely thrust into their hands" at different points in Church history. These false authorities include tradition and reason, but he identified the third as the Bible itself. There is a danger, Wiley noted, when appeals to the Bible lapse into a "bibliolatry" that elevates the written word of Scripture to a place of supremacy over the Living Word of Christ. Wiley was writing explicitly about the second period in Protestant theology, often dubbed "the Scholastic period," which followed the Reformation and was marked by

theological rigidity, the drawing of clear lines of demarcation between contending Lutheran and Reformed theologies, and denunciations of those outside the bounds of one's own "orthodoxy." In contrast, Wiley emphasized the subordination of the Written Word to the Personal Word, which is Christ, noting that "the original source of the Christian knowledge of God must ever be, the Lord Jesus Christ." Bassett notes that "Wiley's discerning readers" understood that Protestant Scholasticism's era, and the "false Monarch" of bibliolatry that characterized it, were parallels to the fundamentalist era of Wiley's day.¹⁹

The spread of dispensational premillennialism was a leading factor in the fundamentalist crusade. The primary Nazarene theologians resisted dispensational theology but approached the issue with different styles and intensity. Teachers of Nazarene theology were honor-bound to stress that the Church of the Nazarene took no stand on behalf of one millennial theory or another. Wiley deflected questions regarding his personal convictions about eschatology, and *Christian Theology* dispassionately surveyed the various viewpoints. Assessments of Wiley's own eschatology differ. Some perceive that Wiley was "most influenced by . . . a premillennialism [that is] carefully qualified and nuanced," while others assert that "nearly everybody was wrong, according to Wiley, on eschatology." He was amused by his students' curiosity about his position and by their difficulty in discerning it. Hills, on the other hand, deflected nothing. He was an ardent post-millennialist and staunch critic of dispensationalism. That outspokenness played a role when he stepped aside as president of two holiness colleges, and at Pasadena College some students were greatly annoyed that he frequently voiced

¹⁹ Hills, "The Scofield Reference Bible Examined for the Nazarenes," *Herald of Holiness* (September 10, 1932), p. 3. Wiley, *Christian Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 140-143. Paul M. Bassett, "The Fundamentalist Leavening of the Holiness Movement," *Wesleyan Theological Journal* (Spring 1978), pp. 65-67. Wiley's M.A. thesis was a study of the prologue to John's Gospel, and "Logos" doctrine remained an important element in his thinking.

opposition to premillennialism. At one point he was sternly warned by president A.O. Henricks to tone down his rhetoric or lose his position. When an early draft of his *Fundamental Christian Theology* circulated in the 1910s, he was advised that it would need to say something positive about premillennialism before it could be used as a Nazarene text. When the book appeared some fifteen years later, it included a brief section by J. B. Chapman setting forth the positive argument for premillennialism, thus meeting the earlier objection. Olive Winchester likewise rejected the premillennialism that was spreading within the church. She was an amillennialist and interpreted The Revelation not as predictions of the future but as a coded record of events that had occurred in the biblical writer's own lifetime, most likely during Nero's rule, she thought. The growth of dispensational premillennialism at the grassroots and its rejection by the church's theological specialists was a small wedge, but over time this difference fostered a growing sense of alienation and suspicion between grassroots Nazarenes and the church's trained theologians.²⁰

Despite Williams' claim that "every man in this body is a fundamentalist," many features associated with fundamentalism were being resisted in the name of Wesleyan doctrinal clarity. Wiley's emphasis on preserving an Anglo-Methodist view of the "sufficiency of Scripture," Hills' opposition to the Scofield Bible, and the resistance of all three of the church's major pre-war theologians to the exclusiveness of dispensational premillennialism contributed to the church's post-war flexibility to back away from the fundamentalist mentality.

²⁰ Harold E. Raser, "Views on Last Things," in H. Ray Dunning, ed., *The Second Coming: A Wesleyan Approach to the Doctrine of Last Things* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1995), p. 185. Carl Bangs, *Our Roots of Belief: A Biblical and Faithful Theology* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1981), p. 72. Ross Price, "Dr. Wiley—Eminent Theologian," p. 3, a clipping in the H. Orton Wiley profile folder, H. Orton Wiley Collection, Nazarene Archives. Ronald B. Kirkemo, *For Zion's Sake: A History of Pasadena/Point Loma College* (San Diego: Point Loma Press, 1992), p. 93. A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, Abridged Edition, (Pasadena: C. J. Kinne, 1932), pp. 550-571. Chapman's contribution is on pp. 550-555. Ross Price, "Some Data on Miss Olive Winchester," pp. 7-8, in the Olive Winchester profile folder, Olive Winchester Collection, Nazarene Archives.

Fundamentalism is hardly dead today. The Evangelical renaissance that followed World War II was designed to move American evangelicals away from fundamentalism's negativity and exclusivity and toward a new critical orthodoxy. Fundamentalists initially decried this move as a betrayal of biblical Christianity, but a subsequent generation has tried to woo evangelicals back into fundamentalist modes of thought. Like their earlier predecessor, today's neo-fundamentalist movements threaten the theological integrity of evangelical denominations by seeking to supplant a Christian organization's founding vision with new ones of the fundamentalists' own devising.

One reincarnation of fundamentalism has a political face—the religious-political right. The religious-political right threatens to alter the traditional identities of religious communities by leading them to develop new identities drawn from political culture. In this case, reactionary political beliefs function as hermeneutical lenses, and insights from political life, rather than those drawn from the Bible itself, become “controlling insights” that determine how one reads, understands, and responds to the Christian scriptures. If we apply Fosdick's principle that the difference between conservatives and fundamentalists is the spirit that they bring, then the problem is not that theologically conservative people are also politically conservative; it is the militant conviction that conservative politics are the true legitimate politics of an earnest Christian, and the application of political litmus tests as standards for measuring spirituality or Christian orthodoxy of another person or religious group. The deep irony is that avatars of the religious-political right threaten the Christian faith with the very thing they so often decry—the danger of reductionism; in their case, reducing the faith to a form of mere culture Christianity.

Another way in which Christian fundamentalism is being reincarnated is through new one-issue organizations. These organizations have developed solely to project a single fundamentalist doctrine into as many venues as possible.

The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood is a prime example. It exists for the sole purpose of striking one note and doing so over and over again. That single note is the assertion of a divinely-sanctioned and scripturally-mandated subordination of women to men in the family and church. The CBMW's officers and advisory board are a "who's who" of Lutheran and Reformed fundamentalist leaders. Its stand on the ordination of women is directly contrary to the historic stand of the Church of the Nazarene and the majority of Wesleyan-holiness denominations. The CBMW has its own text-books: Wayne Grudem and John Piper's *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (1991) and Grudem's *Biblical Foundations for Manhood & Womanhood* (2000). It has local chapters organized in various churches. It has its own Website and distributes bundles of pamphlets, booklets, and handouts. CBMW is not concerned with baptismal theology, Christian perfection, or worship wars. It only wants its single message to penetrate as many different congregations and denominations as possible, including your local church, and if that fails then a church near you. And there are pastors and laity in the Wesleyan tradition who have heard CBMW's siren call and followed it, just as others followed Bill Gothard's teachings on female subordination a generation ago.

The Wesleyan doctrines of grace, faith, and holiness were at the core of the early Nazarene movement, but so, too, was the notion of an "apostolic ministry" in which the gifts and graces, not the gender, of applicants for ordination and ministry were evaluated. The ministry of women was not simply an "add on" to prevailing doctrines of the ministry in late 19th and early

20th century Protestantism. Rather, it was a different doctrine of the ministry altogether.²¹

CMBW, however, invites Nazarenes to abandon such exegetical, hermeneutical, and theological positions that were central to the vision of the Nazarene founders and substitute its doctrine of the ministry for the Church of the Nazarene's own.

Likewise, the Creation Science Institute exists to project one fundamentalist idea into as many venues as possible. Its unequivocal emphasis on a literal "six-day creation" is warmly embraced by some religious conservatives as an affirmation of "the old-time religion." Yet Creation Science is anything but that. In the late 1970s, Timothy Smith had a standard lecture on the Texas school-book controversy of that day. In it, he demonstrated that six-day creationism had long been rejected not only as a mark of evangelical orthodoxy but also as a mark of knowledgeable fundamentalism. As Smith observed, the "day-age" theory and "the gap theory" were two different ways that fundamentalists had reconciled Genesis and modern geology—and done so by abandoning six-day literalism. Ronald Numbers has now documented this in far greater detail, showing the roots of the Creation Science Institute's thinking in Seventh-Day Adventism, its subsequent appropriation by a few committed fundamentalists, and the carefully calibrated campaign to inject those ideas into the mainstream of late-20th century fundamentalism, evangelicalism, and American politics.²² While there are numerous instances of Nazarene evangelists and preachers preaching six day literalism, that viewpoint clearly was not taught as a standard by the denomination in its early years. In 1931, *The Young People's Journal*, a denominational publication for high school youth, published a series on science and

²¹ See, for instance, Stan Ingersol, "Your Daughters Shall Prophesy," *Holiness Today* (March 2000): 5-7.

²² Smith's lecture was one of five delivered at Nazarene Theological Seminary in a January 1979 inter-term course. His lecture on the emerging battle over classroom science texts was titled: "The Old-Time Religion?" Also see Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists: The Evolution of Scientific Creationism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

religion written by Olive Winchester. In the second essay in the series, Winchester described three scientific theories on the origins of the universe, identifying her own view as the “planetismal theory,” which held that the observable universe developed as gravitational forces caused matter to coalesce over long eons of time. Nazarene theologian A. M. Hills embraced the identical view when he discussed the Christian doctrine of creation in his 2-vol *Fundamental Christian Theology*. While neither believed in biological evolution, Winchester and Hills embraced cosmic and geological evolution without compunction. H. Orton Wiley likewise believed in an ancient earth and saw numerous parallels between the Genesis account of creation and the discoveries of modern science. The Creation Science Institute and its acolytes suggest that anything less than six-day literalism is compromise with the spirit of the age, yet these examples from early Nazarene history demonstrate otherwise.²³

As the Creation Science Institute’s influence is exerted in evangelical denominations, evangelicals would be wise to question what, exactly, CSI asks of them. It asks evangelicals to reject notions of an ancient cosmos and an ancient earth and retreat from the perspectives that dominated the Evangelical renaissance of the post-World War II era, when Carl F. H. Henry, Bernard Ramm, Timothy Smith, and a generation of respected evangelical leaders tried to move religious conservatives away from fundamentalism. These leaders regarded fundamentalism as contracted, pessimistic, and completely inadequate for meeting the challenges Protestantism would face in the modern world. Their very complaint was that early 20th-century fundamentalism had distorted orthodox Protestantism. The Creation Science Institute, however, regards the giants of post-war evangelicalism as misguided and bids evangelicals to follow its

²³ *Young People’s Journal* (January 1931): 3-4, (May 1931): 3-4, (June 1931): 4, and other issues in passim. A. M. Hills, *Fundamental Christian Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 263-279. H. Orton Wiley, *Christian Theology*, Vol. 1, pp. 454-458, 462-466

lesser light. Even more, it bids Nazarenes to reject the perspectives of their own denomination's first generation of theologians and accept an obscurantism that is not neither native to it nor wise.

The Church of the Nazarene formed in the century in which fundamentalism took shape as a movement. Both have grown up together. At times Nazarenes have even chosen to be bedfellows to fundamentalism. But the Nazarenes were the product of a very different set of theological ideas; their spiritual life the expression of a different essential quality. If they are wise, those are truths they will never forget.