

*How Fundagelicalism Turned Scripture into Something it was Never Meant to be, How to Get it Back and Manage Any Emotional Fall Out* Ken Wilson 10.20.19

Tell some American Religious Hx with an outsize impact on culture, things that affect us all. Then offer 4 Jewish perspectives on this Jewish book to reclaim it as a means of grace. Close with 2 perspectives for managing emotional fall out.

The religious history part ... you may think you're getting stuck at a party with computer geeks talking 4-Tran and JavaScript ... and you're looking for a way to say, "I'm sorry, where's the restroom?"

But this bit of religious history, is behind our inability to deal with climate crisis, resistant and resurgent white supremacy, reason LGBTQ and women's equality is such an uphill struggle. And it's the reason many of you have **tension with your religious family**. All of it is **tied to a set of 90 essays** published 1910-15 as **The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth**

Reaction to advances in science (The Origin of Species by Charles Darwin) and the application of modern methods of historical and textual study applied to Scripture, mainly in Germany.

### **Defining cultural event: Scopes Monkey Trial 1925**

**Clarence Darrow** defending biology teacher using *Civic Biology* by George Hunter ... vs. William Jennings Bryan representing State of Tennessee which had a law against teaching evolution.

Complicated: *Civic Biology* was a monstrously racist textbook that ranked humanity in 5 categories of evolutionary development [whites at top, blacks on bottom], denounced intermarriage, advocated eugenic cleansing

***The Story of Christianity*** by David Bentley Hart, p. 323 [The inerrancy of Scripture was a "novel principle," contrary to almost all of Christian tradition, Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox]

Fundamentalism	Evangelicalism	[Fundagelicalism]
1910	1948	

Fundamentalism-Evangelicalism are one thing: Fundagelicalism last line of defense: **The Inerrancy of Scripture**

Every evangelical organization insists on it. (And this movement affects large sectors of landscape: Catholic, Mainline Protestant)

### **Warfare Metaphors Employed Liberally to Defend Inerrancy**

- The Bible Wars • The Battle for the Bible
- Defending the Bible

### **Warfare framing leads to war-time postures:**

- Fighting for Survival
- Absolute posture toward Truth (Vs. Personal Truth)
- Certainty (Anti-Ambiguity/Anti-Contradiction)
- Loyalty-Betrayal

THE BIBLE IS A JEWISH BOOK, SO HELPFUL TO LEARN FROM THE JEWISH APPROACH TO THIS JEWISH BOOK

**First, Scripture speaks with many voices.** Inerrancy: no contra-dictions in Scripture. Scripture speaks clearly with a single voice. Term for this is **univocal**. Jewish people have always understood that Scripture speaks with many voices and these voices are sometimes in conflict—and that is what makes Scripture useful for wrestling with divine mysteries. Term for this is **multi-vocal**.

Contradictory proverbs: ***Do not answer a fool according to his folly, Lest you also be like him.*** (Pr. 26: 4) ***Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes.*** (Pr. 26: 5)

Different books, conflicting perspectives: Job is a critique Proverbs and Deuteronomy. Letter of James critique of Galatians

Scripture is multi-vocal, and it's meaning is not always clear.

2 Peter refers to Paul' writings as "***difficult to understand***"

**Second, adopt the cardinal rule of the early (and still Jewish) Jesus movement.**

Jesus had one rule for interpreting Scripture (Law-Prophets)—***Love your neighbor as yourself: This is the Law and the Prophets*** (Bible) If your interpretation of Scripture impedes love of neighbor, it's wrong. This rule is offered along with several case studies of fellow rabbis-sages, interpreting Scripture in ways that impede love of neighbor, from what constitutes Sabbath violation to rulings on divorce, to honoring parents.

Luke in book of Acts, features the story of Saul, who weaponized an interpretation of Torah to harass some Jewish Jesus followers.

How important is this? In one of his letters, Paul refers to himself as “***the worst of sinners***” because he did this. His writings show no indication that he suffered from a scrupulous conscience. Harming others based on his interpretation of Torah (Bible) made him “the worst of sinners”

Paul echoes Jesus with “***Love your neighbor as yourself: this is the Law and the Prophets***” including his own warning: “***Love does no harm to the neighbor.***”

**Dick B. story:** Wednesday, thinking about his impact ... open email, to receive this [read]

**3. Keep the core insight of Scripture in focus: The God of Israel (God of Jesus) is the God of the victim, God of the oppressed.**

1971 **Bonhoeffer**, one of a very few German pastors during the ascendancy of Adolf Hitler [wannabe strongman, to aspiring autocrat whipping up crowds at his rallies, to dictator doing what he talked] It was Bonhoeffer’s Jesus who first appealed to me. Not the Jesus of the Evangelicalism I was absorbed into.

Then ordeal that launched our church. In height of that, Howard Thurman’s, ***Jesus and the Disinherited***. Scripture is written by the disinherited, for the disinherited, inspired by the Spirit who defends the disinherited.

Dawned on me: how many of the writers who shaped me were white men who never sufferer discrimination, never paid a social cost for anyone who did [Changed reading habits, started pitching]

Paul McCartney at Little Caesars, all white. Difference between **Beatles**, influenced by Rhythm & Blues, influenced by Gospel, and Afro-Cuban Rhythms .... and the original music of **Harlem Hamfats** and **T-Bone Walker**. Something is lost in translation.

Core insight of Jewish Scriptures (and the NT is written by Jewish people): **God is the God of the Oppressed**. If we don’t feel that and respond to it, missing the whole point of Scripture.

**4. Retain the right of conscientious objection.**

The Jewish people like to argue with each other. (To a Jew, argument deepens friendship, to a Gentile, it threatens friendship)

This includes the Jewish understanding of friendship with God. Abraham argued with God and prevailed. Jacobs who became Israel did too. Some of God's friends in Scripture changed God's mind. Job famously argued with God and prevailed or at least argued to a draw.

In our friendship with God we have the right of conscientious objection.

When we are reading Scripture and see something God does, or that writers of Scripture ascribe to God we are allowed to disagree. We should do that the way we would do that with a family member, a spouse. Remain open to the point of view of the other even as you state your own view. But hold your own!

Totally **Jewish, human, allowed** in our friendship with God.

## TWO PERSPECTIVES TO MANAGE THE EMOTIONAL IMPACT

### 1. **For interacting with evangelical family/friends who see things differently. Take along insights of "Family Systems Theory"**

Anxiety flows between people (not just in people). When Jesus said "***Don't be anxious, worried, afraid***"—always to a group.

Herd animals/Self-define/stay connected

Gesture: Hand to forehead. Oh my! I see things so differently! (When we're relaxed and open to each other, we can talk)

### 2. **For living with what's inside your own head, make friends with the fundagelical voice in your heads**

Lost many friends/colleagues. Result can feel insecure in what might be a new friendship. Not my normal MO. Really helped when I start thinking of that insecurity as my new little friend.

*I don't agree with you anymore. Stuff I've learned and appreciate, but you're not the boss of me. I can be compassionate toward you knowing the pressures you were under*

PLEASE JOIN: BE PART OF THE CHANGE

## REFLECTION

Ps. 118: 5: **From the straits I called to Yah,  
Yah answered me in a wide-open place.**

A **strait** is a naturally formed, narrow, typically navigable waterway that connects two larger bodies of water. Most commonly it is a channel of water that lies between two land masses. Some straits are not navigable, for example because they are too shallow, or because of an unnavigable reef or other obstacles.