

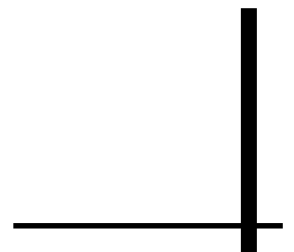
# FUNDAMENTALISM

Present

Past

Future

JAMES E. SINGLETON



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# FUNDAMENTALISM:

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PAST

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PRESENT

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FUTURE

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James E. Singleton

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**Tri-City Baptist Church**

Just before the Depression began, Dr. Singleton came into the world as the first child of an alcoholic father and a very godly Methodist mother. He grew up on the two-mile by two-mile island of Key West, Florida. He was saved at an early age and joined the Navy in World War II.

After receiving his discharge, he, with thousands of other veterans went to college. However, unlike other veterans he was answering not the call of his country, this time, but the call of his God. He enrolled at Bob Jones College and immediately sat next to men like Glenn Schunk and Phil Shuler, as his name was Singleton.

He graduated and took a five-point circuit in North Carolina for the Methodist church. Upon further study of the Word, he became a convinced Baptist. He became a member of a Southern Baptist church and received both his B. D. and Th. M. degrees from Southern Baptist schools. He pastored several SBC churches in the 50s and 60s, but increasingly became disenchanted with the liberal drift of the seminaries and missionaries as well as the inter-party politics of state meetings. Finally, based on convictions, he left his retirement and friends behind in the mid-60s and moved to Albion, MI to pastor a Conservative Baptist Church.

In a very short time he discovered that all was not well theologically in the CBA. By 1969 he saw some of the same compromises that concerned him in the SBC, in the CBA. He believed that God was leading him, at forty-two, to move with his wife, twelve-year old daughter and fifteen year old son, to Phoenix and to start an independent Baptist Church. In the summer of 1969 they arrived. He wrote into the first constitution of Tri-City Baptist Church that the church could never be a part of anything that it could be voted in or out of. He intended this church to be truly independent and Baptist, not only in name, but also in practice.

Thirty years, almost to the day, after the founding of the church, I became his successor. During our three-year transition the two of us helped to plant a church out of our church, Southeast Valley Baptist Church, Gilbert, AZ. Dr. Singleton founded Tri-City Baptist Church, literally, at four-way dirt stop between Phoenix and Mesa. Tempe, Gilbert, Mesa, Chandler, Scottsdale, and Gilbert have all grown up around the property that the Lord originally gave him and those charter members for \$10,000 an acre. Today the appraised value of the land and buildings is about nine million dollars.

In those thirty years (1969-1999), he founded Tri-City Baptist Church, Tri-City Christian Academy, Time for Tots Pre-school, International Baptist College, and International Baptist Missions. Today godly men women serve around the world that have either attended or graduated from institutions he founded.

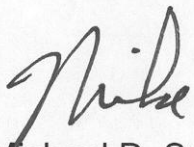
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I grew up under his ministry and after leaving for many years of further education and active duty time in the Air Force, I returned for a three-year transition to the leadership of Tri-City Baptist Church. I spent many hours listening to him preach and teach publicly as well as many private conversations. I know how much he loved God and the Scriptures. He was one of the best-read men I have ever met. He had a personal library of over 10,000 volumes. Not only had he read those books, but when you asked him a question he could walk over to a book, pull it off the shelf, and open to the page in which the question would be answered. (It was underlined, of course, because he had already thought about your question.)

He had a few topics he discussed all the time. The power of the Spirit was a favorite topic. He longed to see God truly move. Another topic was the training of young men for ministry similar in environment to their eventual ministry. Still another topic was Fundamentalism. He always wanted to know what made a fundamentalist. What was the bottom line issue for being a fundamentalist? He always wanted us to think about what would force us to separate and under what conditions would we leave a denomination. He had done it three times and he knew about the sacrifice of convictions, but he was far from a “bomb-thrower” when it came to separation. He was a student of history. He had concerns about the movement that he had given his life to further. He did not have blinders on concerning fundamentalism’s faults, but he also knew the “inside story” of other groups. He knew carnality was an equal opportunity employer. He always cautioned young men in the ministry that it is easy to despise that which is familiar and idealize that which is unknown.

He penned this booklet, “Fundamentalism: Past, Present, and Future” in 1993. Clinton had just been inaugurated and the Berlin Wall fell only a couple years before. No one had yet heard of Monica Lewinsky or blogging. E-mail was in its infancy. The good guys had won the Cold War and Dr. Singleton had some concerns and advice for a movement he truly loved, Fundamentalism.

After reading many thoughts on this site, I thought that maybe some of you would like to see what Dr. Singleton said and even some of his concerns. Sometimes when we are younger we think that we are the only person to ever wrestle with questions of separation and fidelity to Scripture. Others before us have struggled and if the Lord tarries, our children’s children will continue to struggle to find the biblical balance called for in Scripture.



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## Dedication!

- To a Church which has allowed me to “practice” on them for twenty-four years;
- A staff who helps me to refine my thinking through hours of interaction;
- Pastors who have allowed me to “pick their brains”;
- To Mary, a wife who is able to do many household chores (and enjoys them, I think!) which permits me some needed time to think and write.

First Printing, 1993  
Second Printing, 1993

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# INTRODUCTION

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## FUNDAMENTALISM: Past, Present, Future

A young man, graduate of a fine fundamental Bible college and another excellent fundamental Seminary, came to me and said, “A number of us have been talking about fundamentalism. Tell us why we should not jump ship.”

Sitting with several men around a dinner table discussing fundamentalism, one man asked, “Why don’t we just find another name since this one has been tarnished?”

A professor who formerly taught in a fundamental seminary, now teaching in an institution that disdains the name fundamentalist, speaks to pastors across the country and contends that fundamentalists need a philosophic reversal. He says, “Asking a contemporary militant fundamentalist to stop being a fundamentalist in order to embrace Biblical Christianity is a tall frightening order” and contends that it necessitates a paradigm shift.

Added to these assessments and attacks from those who either have been or are still identified with historical fundamentalism are a cacophony of other voices.

The media identifies every aberrant movement as being fundamentalist, from Jim Jones to militant Muslims to the recent “wacko in Waco.”

Conservatives in the Southern Baptist Convention, while affirming their belief in the inerrancy of Scripture, will walk miles around the term “fundamentalist” in order to keep from being identified with the movement. A professor in the Southern Baptist Seminary that I attended chuckled while he said that “fundamentalists have too little fun, too much damn, and too little mental.”

Roman Catholic apologists attack fundamentalists who have been successful in converting Romanists. Over the past several decades men have attempted to define and redefine the movement. Vernon Grounds wrote a paper titled, “Correcting the Fundamentalist Corrective.” Jerry Falwell edited The Fundamentalist Phenomenon in which he attempted to carve out the nature of historic and Biblical fundamentalism over against a modern form which was termed hyper fundamentalism that was characterized by negative and pessimistic attitudes and extreme separatism and exclusivism.

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Believing that the souls of a movement that has been blessed by God for many decades is at stake, we offer this less than exhaustive study as a starting point of discussion. We approach the work with two thoughts in mind:

- First, realizing the truth of Paul's statement in I Corinthians 13:12, "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*" You do not have to convince me that I am still in the "now" and not the "then."
- Second, praying that more light than heat can be generated. Fundamentalism today is in a state of flux. Confusion is the order of the day. New alignments are taking place and new fellowships are being forged. I do not presume to have all the answers or to know the form and shape that the fundamentalism of the 1990's and then into the Twenty-first century will take. If we examine our weaknesses and correct them, fundamentalism can be a great force in the world in the years ahead. If we hopelessly fragment, our already weak voice in society will seldom be heard amid a growing secularism and burgeoning charismatic movement.

I have attempted to avoid two ditches in writing. The first is that of being unnecessarily provocative and rubbing men and movements in the wrong way. We need to learn to "*speak the truth in love.*" (Ephesians 4:15. At the same time, I have sought to avoid the ditch on the opposite side of having such a relaxing message that we do not hear or heed a trumpet call for action.

If I have erred in facts, please correct me. When my reasoning does not seem to be logical, please call it to my attention. I do not have all the answers and am open to being taught by me brethren.

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# WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

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## FUNDAMENTALISM: Past, Present, Future

To study a movement, we need to know where it came from, analyze its present condition and then attempt to see where it is going—in other words, its past, present, and future. This is the format followed in our study of fundamentalism.

Where did it come from? Misunderstanding of the true nature of fundamentalism is partially the result of confusion concerning its origin.

The eighteenth century saw the beginning of a frontal attack on Christianity called the Enlightenment. Placing human reason above Divine revelation, the movement sought to dethrone God and enthrone man. Beginning in Europe, slowly this rationalism began to spread. Until the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Christianity was riding high in the saddle in the United States. It was the “Christian Century.” Evangelicals of this period set out to make the vision of the Puritan colonists, of a “city on a hill,” a practical reality. By the middle of the century, however, Satan had turned all of his heavy artillery on the West with philosophical, scientific, and theological attacks on historic Christianity.

As the twentieth century emerged, believers in historic Christianity were alarmed by this new treatment of the old faith. They saw that in attempting to accommodate itself to modern thought that the new liberalism had “given away the country store.” In 1923, J. Gresham Machen, brilliant Greek scholar, wrote Christianity and Liberalism in which he argued that liberalism was no more Christian than Buddhism or Hinduism. A separation was needed between Biblical orthodoxy and liberalism.<sup>1</sup>

In 1910, a series of essays was compiled into 12 books called The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth. In opposition to liberalism, these booklets affirmed the inerrancy of Scripture, the virgin birth of Christ, His substitutionary death on the cross, His bodily resurrection, and imminent return to this earth.<sup>2</sup>

Fundamentalism as a movement began to take shape with a conference held in 1916 which called for a union of the orthodox forces in the churches. In response to this call, the World Christian Fundamentals Association came into being in 1919. The term “fundamentalist” seems to have been first coined by Baptist editor, Curtis Lee Laws, in an editorial in the “Watchman Examiner,” July 1, 1920.

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Two movements emerged: fundamentalism and liberalism, one rooted in historic Christianity and the other a modern accommodation. The battle lines were down! One was a fundamentalist or a liberal. There was no middle ground.

Fundamentalism was a movement that cut across denominational lines. (Presbyterians, Methodists, Reformed Episcopalians, Baptists, and Congregationalists were involved in contending for the fundamentals.) It was a battle led by some of the keenest theological minds of the day (B. B. Warfield, James Orr, W. H. Griffith Thomas) who had the gift for scholarly apologetic.

It was a union that permitted divergence on doctrines such as the second coming of Christ. While affirming the fact of the personal return of Christ to earth, the movement permitted differences on details on the return of Christ.

It is interesting to note that the five points on which fundamentalists agreed did not really define the Christian faith. For example, they did not deal with the issues of the early church that called for the councils, or with the issues on the Reformation such as justification by faith. The point is that the fundamentalists were not attempting a full-orbed theology, but simply responding to shore up the wall where the enemy was attacking. Calvinists and Arminians joined together to fight a common enemy. If not allies, at least they were cobelligerents!

Nowhere in The Fundamentals is there an article on Biblical separation. The reason was simple—to state the fundamentals separated one from the liberals. Thus, thus the issue of Biblical separation was simple. The fine tuning would have to come later with the advent of additional movements.

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# How Did We Arrive At Our Present Condition?

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## FUNDAMENTALISM: Past, Present, Future

In chapter one, we looked at the history of the movement known as fundamentalism. We left it involved in a struggle for the very soul of the Christian faith. Whatever else it may have been, liberalism was not biblical and historical Christianity.

Slowly, however, the fundamentalists lost the battles in the major denominations. While some remained in the movement to continue the battle, a great host separated and formed their own fellowships, Bible institutes, and literature.

In addition to liberalism, other challenges appeared to fundamentalism. In 1919, Karl Barth (1886-1968), a Swiss theologian, published his Commentary on Romans, a volume that fell like a bombshell on the playground of liberal theologians.<sup>3</sup> Barth's attempts to cast the Christian faith in a mold and language which could be understood by contemporary man drew mixed reactions. Many accepted his thought completely. Others lauded his attack against liberalism, yet rejected him for a theology that brought him to the very precipice of universal salvation. Still others, such as theologian Cornelius Van Til, saw Barthianism as the new modernism.

Here the issue of separation became a little more difficult. The liberals rejected the doctrinal position of fundamentalism. This made the problem of separation relatively simple. The neo-orthodox retained the language of orthodox theology but reinterpreted it to produce a new religion. Many were deceived.

Beginning at the turn of the century with Charles Parham and his Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, the modern Pentecostal movement has spread to become a worldwide force in church growth. At first rejected by the mainline denominations, the movement spread into these groups in the early 1960's. Although divergent in its groups, usually Pentecostalism has had a high regard for the authority of Scripture, the Person of Christ, and salvation through His finished work on Calvary. While rejecting the movement because of its subjective tendencies and ecumenical framework, it is my contention that fundamentalism has not dealt seriously with the movement in a theological and historical framework. An exception would be the writings of O. Talmadge Spence who comes from a family long known as leaders in the historical Pentecostal

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movement. Spence sees this neo-Pentecostalism as a movement away from Scripture which leads to an ecumenism based upon human experience and emotion rather than the Word of God.<sup>4</sup>

New evangelicalism is a movement which has taken a greater toll on Biblical fundamentalism and its principles of separation than any previous movement. Beginning around 1940 there arose a second generation of fundamentalists. These new voices felt that fundamentalism had isolated itself from contemporary man and retreated intellectually into a fortress mentality with no meaningful message to modern political, sociological, and economic issues. Carl Henry wrote The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism in 1947 in which he argued that modern Western culture was collapsing because of a weak philosophical premise and that fundamentalism had failed to stem the tide because of its isolationism and extreme separatism.<sup>5</sup>

The late Harold J. Ockenga, pastor of the Park Street Church, Boston, takes credit for the coining of the phrase, “the new evangelicalism.” He says that it was born in connection with a convocation address which he gave at the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena, California, at the beginning of Fuller Theological Seminary.<sup>6</sup>

While rejecting liberalism because of its abandonment of historic Christianity and the supernatural, he also rejected neo-orthodoxy because it emphasized that the Word of God was different than the Scriptures. Finally, he rejected fundamentalism on three counts:

1. The **SOCIETAL** since he contended that fundamentalism had failed to apply the Gospel to the social problems of the day;
2. The **ECCLESIOLOGICAL** because fundamentalism was too abrasive and had unnecessarily separated from the denominations (Fuller Seminary, he predicted, would train young intellectuals to go back into the major religious denominations that had become apostate and recapture them for Christ.);
3. The **OBSCURANTIST** since he argued that fundamentalism had failed to address areas which had been troublesome to liberalism, such as Biblical infallibility and creationism.

There was some truth in all of these charges, but that will have to be addressed in another volume. Remember, however, in dealing with these issues the group that became the new evangelicals “threw the baby out with the bathwater.” As we examine that future of fundamentalism, we shall see that this is the danger with many present examinations of the weaknesses of fundamentalism.

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The philosopher of new evangelicalism was Ockenga. The popularizer became a rising young evangelist named Billy Graham. The periodical became "Christianity Today." Biblical fundamentalists repudiated new evangelicalism as a further attempt to dilute and destroy the true nature of fundamentalism. That they were correct is seen in the sad demise of Billy Graham and the tragic consequences at Fuller Seminary.

Another temptation for Biblical fundamentalism was to move into the direction of what was initially called "pseudo-fundamentalism." In The Fundamental Phenomenon, Jerry Falwell proposed a uniting of fundamentalists and evangelicals since he contended that there was little difference theologically between the two. Each was urged to get rid of its fringe element and then unite to save the nation and evangelize the world.<sup>7</sup> Falwell's fundamentalism was to be the true heir of the fundamental-liberal controversy. Falwell failed to see that the problem was not simply the fringe of new evangelicalism, but the nature of the movement itself. Robert Lightner perceptively writes that in their desire to engage in conversation with the liberals the new evangelicals were in danger of absorbing the attitudes of the liberals, and even if the first generation did not succumb to unbelief, their disciples would ultimately reject Scripture.<sup>8</sup> Pseudo-fundamentalism was termed new evangelicalism in embryonic form. When the baby was finally delivered, the truthfulness of the assertion was vindicated.

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# The Future of Fundamentalism

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## FUNDAMENTALISM: Past, Present, Future

We come now to the most difficult part of our assignment: the future of fundamentalism. (Some feel in its present form that it does not have a future.)

Many contend that there is nothing wrong with the movement except a “softening” on the part of some elements in fundamentalism who believe that the battle is over. Thus, both foundation and superstructure are sound. Others affirm that the foundation is solid, but that the superstructure needs repairing. Still others would argue that fundamentalism is flawed from the foundation up and needs a complete overhaul.

There are dangers in all three of these positions:

- The first position, which refuses to examine the movement for possible weaknesses, forgets that even healthy bodies become contaminated and need cleansing, and a failure to do so permits disease to run rampant with a resulting death. Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living. This is true of religious bodies and theological movements. Fundamentalists must take seriously the charges of their critics and not simply react to them.
- The second positions, which speaks of sound foundations and faulty superstructures, does not take into account that there is no organic connection between a foundation and a superstructure. A more apt analogy would be the relationship between a seed and fruit in which the nature of the seed produces a certain type of fruit. Are the charges of pugnaciousness, negativism, phariseeism, and others (to be considered later) merely attributes to the superstructure or do they perhaps reveal some valid weaknesses in the foundation?
- The third position, which calls for a complete overhaul of fundamentalism from stem to stern, can easily produce a new generation of new evangelicals. Sitting with a group of men some months ago discussing weaknesses in fundamentalism, I said, “I imagine that 40 or 50 years ago a group of men just like us were discussing weaknesses in fundamentalism. These men became the new evangelicals. What keeps us from doing likewise?” There was a moment of silence as the full impact of that statement began to register.

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Beginning in the 1940's, men such as Carl Henry, Edward Carnell, Bernard Ramm, Harold Ockenga, and Vernon Grounds began to examine weaknesses in fundamentalism with the intention of correcting them. In 1960, Grounds, then president of the Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary in Denver, wrote on "Correcting the Fundamentalist Corrective." His thesis was that as fundamentalism sought to correct the deficiencies in liberalism, so must fundamentalism itself be corrected. Contending that he was both a fundamentalist and an evangelical, Grounds sought to put distance between himself and new evangelicalism.<sup>9</sup>

The contention of Marsden's Reforming Fundamentalism is that at the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary in 1947, "evangelicalism" and "fundamentalism" were not considered separate entities.<sup>10</sup> Fuller, he argues, desired to be a "fundamental" institution without the stigma of Biblical separation. Alleging that the founders of Fuller were committed to classical Protestant Christianity, the American evangelical heritage and fundamentalism, Marsden concludes that the early founders of the Seminary did not want to repudiate fundamentalism, but simply to "reform" it—hence, the name of the name of the book. The sad spectacle of Fuller at the present time is outlined by former Fuller vice-president and professor, Harold Lindsell, who makes a case for serious theological aberrations at the institution in his two books, The Battle for the Bible<sup>11</sup> and The Bible in the Balance<sup>12</sup>.

Realizing the accommodating and compromising positions into which all attempts to analyze and reform fundamentalism have drifted, we approach the task with some fear. At the same time, we realize that any movement that stays healthy must undergo examination to determine the presence of disease and must continually keep reforming.

We now examine some areas in which charges have been made concerning fundamentalism. Our examination, however, must ask whether these weaknesses are simply part of the makeup of fundamentalism, or are caused by the fact that even regenerate people have sinful natures.

A young man came to see me some months ago. He was concerned about what seemed to be pugnaciousness in fundamentalism. I suggested that he read Carl Henry's Confessions of a Theologian and Marsden's Reforming Fundamentalism, and then come back and talk to me. When he returned, he agreed that this type of infighting is not simply true of fundamentalism, but is characteristic of a sinful and selfish nature within us and is true of all movements. This obviously does not excuse the trait, but puts it in proper perspective as endemic to all religious movements.

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These charges will be examined here briefly and dealt with at length in other writings.

## Unnecessary Fragmentation

The charge is true. Beginning as a movement that had to separate from an apostate liberalism, fundamentalists never developed a systematized separation that set the parameters for division. The tendency has been to forget that the Bible says as much (perhaps more) about unity as separation. Some of the passages dealing with separation in the Bible (There is a great need for a thorough exegetical study of these passages.) were twisted to apply to anyone who did not hold my position on anything.

A careful study must be made of the bounds of Christian liberty with the realization that although possessing an infallible Bible we do not have an infallible hermeneutic. The Holy Spirit reminds us through the Apostle Paul that “. . . *now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known*” (I Corinthians 13:12). A constant reminder that we are in the “now” and not the “then” is always in order!

Paul deals with Christian liberty in I Corinthians 8-10 by setting forth principles. His conclusion is that sometimes a certain action is right and sometimes it is wrong. That may not suffice for the person who wants every matter settled in terms of black and white. It takes some spiritual maturity and a thought process in order to apply principles to various situations. Obviously, this is not a brief for “situation ethics,” in which plain statements in the Bible concerning matters such as adultery are “situationalized” and thus justified. Adultery is always wrong. Matters such as eating meat offered to idols in pagan temples must be dealt with, however, in given context. Sometimes we eat; sometimes we do not.

In Romans 14, Paul deals with the matter of “weak” and “strong” brethren. Often we spend so much time arguing over who falls into the “strong” camp (The answer is obvious: it is I!) that we miss the point that both strong and weak should learn to live together.

Forgetting this, we sometimes unnecessarily splinter and then our splinters have splinters which have splinters and so on *ad infinitum, ad nauseam*.

Our strength is our weakness. Our separation keeps us from a policy of inclusivism with apostate and compromising situations, but in our independence we forget the need for interdependence in the larger body of Christ. The result is difficulty in coordinating efforts to promote the work of the Lord.

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To keep from apostasy, we must continually emphasize the fundamentals of the faith. What distinguishes us from movements such as liberalism that are not Christian?

To keep from new evangelicalism, we must systematize our doctrine of Biblical separation. New evangelicals basically are not liberal in their theology. They accept the authority of the Bible, the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, salvation by grace through faith, and the physical resurrection of Christ. Their failure is to delineate a separation that prevents these doctrines from being diluted and eventually destroyed. An ecumenical evangelism that preaches the fundamentals from the pulpit, but which allows a variety of religious views to sponsor the campaign and to appear on the platform must be rejected. Here we begin to see some of the deficiencies in the contention that the foundation is sound, but that the superstructure needs strengthening. The difference in fundamentalists and new evangelicals is not in the five fundamentals of the faith, but in a well-defined and practiced doctrine of Biblical separation. A faulty doctrine of separation in the foundation produces some of the weaknesses in the superstructure, such as pugnaciousness, phariseeism, and unnecessary division. This being true, changes in the superstructure will not be made until there is a Biblical understanding of the doctrine of separation (which is part of the foundation). Scriptures concerning the doctrine of separation must be carefully exegeted and not be made to apply to anything that we want them to cover. Essential matters over which we must separate must be delineated. Issues over which sincere and dedicated Christians differ, and yet which do not call for a break in fellowship, must be set forth.

To keep from unnecessary fragmentation, we must see the balance in scripture between unity and separation. By nature we tend to veer off into one of these two extremes. A legitimate charge against fundamentalism is a tendency to extreme separation. A legitimate criticism against new evangelicalism is a tendency to be too accommodating.

The balance cannot be done in the flesh. Human nature may bear one of these burdens, but for the fine blend between the two, it takes the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit of Almighty God. Only a high degree of spirituality keeps us humble and pure at the same time. A pseudo-spirituality will not maintain the balance. Among the myriad of problems that Paul addressed in the church at Corinth was a basic problem: the nature of true spirituality. Their pseudo-spirituality caused them in pride to divide over personalities and have an exalted opinion of their own intellectual abilities.

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In Isaiah 52:14, the prophet of God looked down the hallway of time and said, “As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.” Prophetically, he saw the marred body of Christ. When Christ came He was hung on a cross and His body marred. But the body of Christ is still marred today. Our lack of unity hangs Him like a naked spectacle before the world. Do the wounds in the body of Christ cause us to weep? They should!

## Anti-Intellectualism

Here is another charge often made against fundamentalism. In Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology, Carl Henry sets forth his dissatisfactions with fundamentalism. Among these were the emphases on the fundamentals to the neglect of the great creeds of the historic churches, a belittling of the intellect, the neglect of a world-and-life view, and the failure to produce scholarly books, relying on theological classics of other days.<sup>13</sup> Henry believed that the new evangelicalism would rectify these omissions in the fundamentals. The sad implantation of Henry’s thesis, however, is seen in the charge of Harold Lindsell, former faculty member at Fuller, who alleges in his book The Battle for the Bible, that doctrinally, Fuller has moved from the principle of inerrancy of Scripture to a view that allows for partial errancy in non-revelational parts. He argues that the gap between inspiration and inerrancy progressively widens in new evangelical thought.<sup>14</sup>

A root failure of fundamentalism, according to the new evangelicals, was its anti-intellectualism, but Lightner rightfully points out that “perhaps this criticism comes because the fundamentalists do not adhere to the pseudo-intellectualism of the hour.” He continues by affirming, “all too often intellectualism is made to be synonymous with agreement.”<sup>15</sup> The fact that fundamentalists do not accept some modern critical views of the Bible does not necessarily mean that they are ignorant of the criticisms or unable to refute them. All too often the new evangelicals succumbed to “the pride of the intellect” and capitulated to a liberal position for the purpose of appearing scholarly and intellectual.

Reacting to this, however, some fundamentalists have responded to the intellectual and scientific problems of the Bible with “the pride of ignorance.” Witness the current aversion to “hermeneutics” in some fundamental Bible colleges. Hermeneutics is simply the science of interpreting the Bible. It is the way by which we identify the principles that enable us to determine exactly what the Scripture says and what it means. Contrary to popular trends in fundamentalism, the Scriptures do not mean what any well-meaning preacher or evangelist wants them to say. The so-called crop of “motivational preachers” in fundamentalism

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today often take scriptures out of their context and culture and fail to apply “the analogy of faith” (The interpretation of any verse in Scripture must be in agreement with all that God has to say on that subject.) in order to make a point. Fundamentalists need to return to a faithful exposition of the Word of God rather than opt for an almost contentless “motivational” style of preaching and then complain that they are losing their people to new evangelicals who feed their people with the truths of Scripture.<sup>16</sup>

Our anti-intellectual bias is revealed by our tongue-in-cheek references made to men who went to “cemeteries, I mean seminaries.” All too often the theologians of fundamentalism have been high school or Bible college graduates who formulate and propagate “official” doctrines for fundamentalism through their pulpit ministries or college papers.

Perhaps fundamentalists could avoid some of the stigma of anti-intellectualism if they allowed those gifted in evangelism to hold great campaigns and those with abilities in church growth to build large churches, but allowed professors in Bible colleges and seminaries, men who have paid the price of painstaking study, not only of Scripture in the English but also in the original languages, and who have delved into historical, Biblical, and systematic theology, to give guidance in doctrinal formulations of the movement.

On the other side, however, it must be admitted even by new evangelicals that the desire of Ockenga and others to make orthodoxy respectable in academic circles, though producing scholars who could defend the faith on intellectual grounds, has been less than successful. What leaders in the movement that became new evangelicalism forgot was that the reason for the rejection of the strong orthodox message of the Bible was not simply a method a method of presentation, but because of the content. The Apostle Paul was an intellectual, yet most of the religious leaders in his day rejected the gospel message which he proclaimed. The preaching of the cross is always offensive to the unregenerate, no matter how eloquently preached or logically presented. Realizing this, Paul wrote I Corinthians 2:1 in which he affirmed that he “. . . *came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God.*”

Can fundamentalists steer a course between the twin dangers of “pride of intellect” and “pride of ignorance”? The future of the movement as a vital force in the world is dependent on it!

## Legalism

Often this is equated with having rules and standards. What is legalism according to the Bible? It is the addition of human righteousness in order to attain either

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justification or sanctification. Scripture affirms that since man has no righteousness of his own (Isaiah 64:6) salvation cannot be solely predicated on human merit (Titus 3:5), but must be solely predicated on the alien righteousness of Christ imputed to the sinner (II Corinthians 5:21). While we see this clearly in relationship to justification, we have a more difficult time when it relates to sanctification. In writing to the Galatians, Paul asks whether they had received the Spirit by their works, or the law, or by faith. The answer is obvious. But then he says, *“Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?”* (Galatians 3:3)

They had forgotten that we are sanctified in exactly the same way that we are justified. In neither case is it by human works, but by the grace of God administered by the Holy Spirit of God. Justification sees us accepted in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6) with a change in masters, and then the Holy Spirit delivers from the bondage of sin. In neither case is it produced by the efforts of men. Failing to realize this, we produce first-class Pharisees who thank God that they are not like others!

Paul warns of two dangers in Galatians. In 5:1 he reminds us of our freedom in Christ and tells us not to get entangled again in a yoke of bondage, but in verse 13 we are warned not to use our liberty to give an occasion to the flesh to operate.

Again, the balance is fine. Rules and regulations do not produce spiritual Christians, but rather birth Pharisees who boast of their attainments. But grace teaches us *“. . . that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:12).

## Isolationism

The contention is that fundamentalism has retreated from society and makes little impact upon the cultural scene in its emphasis on separation. There is more than a measure of truth here. While liberalism capitulated to the culture, fundamentalism sometimes retreated from culture in an attempt to protect the faith. One of the charges made by the new evangelicals against fundamentalism was a lack of social consciousness. In battling liberalism in the denominations and because of defective views of premillennialism (After all, “you don’t polish brass on a sinking ship.”), fundamentalists rightly rejected the social gospel but also tended to reject the social implications and ramifications of the gospel. They threw the “baby (a social conscience) away with the bath water” (the faulty theology of the liberals). Fundamentalists will fail in their responsibilities to society if they simply apply their theology to matters such as pants on women, smoking, movies, etc., and neglect a fundamentalist theological approach to the great social problems of

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the day, such as war and peace, the nuclear arena, overpopulation, discrimination and racism, liberation and justice for the for the oppressed masses of the world, and a host of other problems that need to be addressed from the viewpoint of a fundamentalist apologetic. To quote Christ, “*these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone*” (Matthew 23:23). Both sets of problems need to be addressed.

Since even the opponents of fundamentalism had to agree that the movement was a revival of primitive and apostolic Christianity, what must the movement do to become a great force for Christ in the world?

The Old Testament prophets had a passion for social righteousness. The prophet Amos lashed out against the social sins of his day. Fundamentalists have sometimes feared that an emphasis on social action would lead to a loss of evangelistic fervor, but history proves that this does not necessarily follow. John Wesley was both preacher and prophet of social righteousness, contending against the evil of an inhumane prison system and slavery. Timothy L. Smith in his groundbreaking Revivalism and Social Reform argues that in the mid-1800’s the evangelists were the leaders in social reform. Fundamentalism has correct views of God, man, and the world, but needs to work out the implications of its theology for a comprehensive world-and-life view.<sup>17</sup>

The real problem facing fundamentalism (and new evangelicalism for that matter) is the nature of true spirituality. The new evangelicals castigated the fundamentalists for their social withdrawal and challenged them to renew their influence in the public realm. The new evangelicals were to take up this banner. An ensuing 45 years reveals that neither new evangelicalism nor fundamentalism have had significant impact on a deteriorating culture.

The new evangelicals contended that the fundamentalists were unnecessarily divisive and schismatic. Yet Carl Henry would lament in 1973, in his book Evangelicals In Search of Identity, about the “multiplied internal disagreements” among American evangelicals.<sup>18</sup>

As Karl Barth, toward the end of his life, tried to stem the radicalism of Paul Tillich which his neo-orthodoxy had spawned, so Harold Ockenga, in his Forward to Lindsell’s book, The Battle for the Bible, laments the “young” or “worldly” evangelicals to which new evangelicalism had given rise.<sup>19</sup>

So, new evangelicalism has failed in the very areas in which it charges fundamentalism with being deficient—failure to make any significant impact on the social arena and an internal divisiveness. In addition, it created the climate for a

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radical “left wing” new evangelicalism. As fundamentalists grapple with some of the problems that the movement faces today, it must be careful that it does not produce a “new” new evangelicalism. In fundamentalism today there is a rising group of young men who see (at least think they see) some weaknesses in the movement. Some of these have left the movement, feeling that the correction of the problems is impossible. Others have decided to remain in the movement to correct the deficiencies, if possible. Armed with a confident mentality and usually possessing more impressive academic credentials than the older fundamentalists, they have set out to correct flaws in the movement. While commendable, remember that the last time a group set out to perform this function they became the group known today as the new evangelicals.

To avoid drifting into new evangelicalism, while at the same time producing a fundamentalism that can impact society, we need to grapple with the nature of authentic spirituality in a humble manner, realizing that there can be no authentic fundamentalism that does not emanate from a genuine spirituality. The basic flaw in the church at Corinth, which produced the many problems, was a pseudo-spirituality which created unnecessary divisiveness, immorality, a pharisaical spirit, divisions over personality, and a lack of tolerance for practices of fellow believers in areas where Christian liberty should be practiced.

True spirituality will avoid the attitude that sees spirituality as nothing more than abstinence from worldly habits on the negative side and involvement in the activities and programs of the church on the positive side. An authentic spirituality refuses to permit spirituality to be reduced to a legalism that defines spirituality by a few simple rules. It involves conformity to the image of Christ (Romans 8:29) in which the very life of God manifests itself in human form in a life lived out in the world. (A full volume is needed here.)

True spirituality will avoid unnecessary fragmentation as we realize that Christianity is corporate as well as individual, and that maintaining spiritual unity in the body of Christ is equally important with separating from apostasy and disobedient brethren.

True spirituality will send people into the culture to give a positive affirmation to the life of Christ rather than withdrawal from those who are not part of the Christian subculture. It sees its true witness to the validity of the claims of Christ as lived out in a pagan culture rather than withdrawing into a fortress and shooting at the enemy on the outside.

True spirituality wrestles with both its orthodoxy (doctrine) and orthopraxy (practice). It will endeavor to “. . .*walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are*

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*called*” (Ephesians 4:1). The word translated “worthy” is one from which we get our word “axiom.” The idea is that of weight. In the first three chapters of the book of Ephesians, Paul tells us our position in Christ. Now he begins to tell us that we should weigh as much in our practice as in our position.

True separation must spring from genuine spirituality and that only comes from learning the principles of true godliness. The apostle Paul commended the believers at Thessalonica for they “. . .*turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God*” (I Thessalonians 1:9).

Fundamentalism needs its writings on the nature of apostasy and compromise in books such as John Ashbrook’s New Neutralism II<sup>20</sup> in which he updates his father’s book on new evangelicalism and exposes the gray of compromise. Without this emphasis, the current generation of young fundamentalists who seek to correct the movement will fare no better than Vernon Grounds when he sought to “Correct the Fundamentalist Corrective.” The current emphasis on expositional preaching must realize that exposure is as necessary as exposition. Verse-by-verse exposition of the Word of God without application of truths to the present battles will not stem the tide of apostasy. Part of the foment in fundamentalism may not be because of real or perceived weaknesses in the movement, but because a new generation has lost the “fire in their bellies” to earnestly contend for the faith.

At the same time, we need the voices who will point out practices in fundamentalism that are not compatible with genuine spirituality.

Only with this fine balance will we be able to restore fundamentalism without creating a “new” generation of new evangelicals.

This is a time for self-examination. This is a time to think. This is a time for humility. This is a time for genuine spirituality. This is a time to articulate our views and interact with those who are concerned about preserving the best in a movement which God has so mightily used in standing against the tide of a growing apostasy. To that end, this volume is dedicated.

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<sup>1</sup>J. Gresham Machen, Christianity and Liberalism (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1923).

<sup>2</sup>Charles L. Feinberg, Editor, The Fundamentals for Today (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1958).

<sup>3</sup>Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans (Translated by Edwyn C. Hoskyns, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932).

<sup>4</sup>O. Talmadge Spence, Charismaticism: Awakening or Apostasy? (Greenville, South Carolina: Bob Jones University Press, 1978). Also, Pentecostalism: Purity or Peril? (Greenville, South Carolina: Unusual Publications, 1989).

<sup>5</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974).

<sup>6</sup>Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), Foreword.

<sup>7</sup>Jerry Falwell, Ed., The Fundamentalist Phenomenon (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1981), p. 222.

<sup>8</sup>Robert P. Lightner, Neoevangelicalism Today (Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press, 1965), pp. 137-165.

<sup>9</sup>Vernon Grounds, "Correcting the Fundamentalist Corrective," a mimeographed paper published as part of "Seminary Study Series," nd.

<sup>10</sup>George M. Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987).

<sup>11</sup>Lindsell, Battle for the Bible

<sup>12</sup>Harold Lindsell, The Bible in the Balance (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979).

<sup>13</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 32-47.

<sup>14</sup>Lindsell, Battle for the Bible, pp. 106-121.

<sup>15</sup>Robert P. Lightner, New Evangelicalism Today (Schaumburg, Illinois: Regular Baptist Press), p. 51.

<sup>16</sup>Too much fundamental preaching today follows the "allegorical method" in which the interpretation of Scripture is made to yield a meaning other than the literal or surface or historical meaning. Philo used this technique and applied it to the Pentateuch in an attempt to shift its meaning from the literal to philosophical meanings. In an allegorical interpretation of Scripture, Paul, writing under Divine inspiration, says in Galatians 4:21-25 that Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants, bondage and freedom. But there are few cases of this in Scripture. The Protestant Reformers rejected this allegorical interpretation, and perhaps fundamentalists should also. Every fundamentalist preacher could, with profit, read D. A. Carson, Exegetical Fallacies (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984). It is interesting that fundamentalists condemn those who are postmillennial and amillennial for using this allegorical method when interpreting prophecy when many fundamentalists use it for everything but prophecy!

<sup>17</sup>Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism and Social Reform (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957).

<sup>18</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, Evangelicals in Search of Identity (Waco, Texas: Word, 1976), p. 22.

<sup>19</sup>Lindsell, Battle for the Bible, Forward.

<sup>20</sup>John E. Ashbrook, New Neutralism II (Mentor, Ohio: Here I Stand Books, 1992).

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That fundamentalism has changed in the last few years is obvious. Change is neutral. It is neither inherently good nor bad. So the question is: are the changes in fundamentalism positive or negative? Will they strengthen the movement, that in its purest form is rooted in apostolic doctrine, or will they weaken and dilute it to such a degree that out of the ashes a new group must arise to carry the banner of historic fundamentalism?

The argument of the author is that if weaknesses are examined and properly corrected, fundamentalism can be a great force in the world in the years ahead. Without this, an already weak voice in society will seldom be heard.

Some say that nothing needs to be changed in fundamentalism. Others argue that the foundation is sound, but that the superstructure needs repair. Still others believe that weaknesses in the foundation have caused the flaws in the superstructure. These three views are examined.

Charges often made against fundamentalists are detailed, and, if valid, corrective measures are suggested. Finally, the nature of true spirituality is set forth as the basis of any authentic fundamentalism.

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