DBSJ 1 (Spring 1996): 9–34

THE SELF-IDENTITY OF FUNDAMENTALISM

by
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Dr. William R. Rice was trained for the ministry in the 1930s and 40s at Bob Jones University, a clearly militant fundamentalist institution, and at Grace Theological Seminary, then also an outspoken fundamentalist school. He began his pastoral ministry in the post-World War II era when fundamentalism's identity was not only self-assured but recognized outside its own confines as well. Over the years he witnessed many of his friends and former classmates leave the ranks of fundamentalism for the more congenial and inclusive camp of new evangelicalism. But his identity as a fundamentalist and that of his ministry of well over forty years were never in doubt nor questioned.

Today, fundamentalism is said to be in an identity crisis. It is allegedly trying to discover what it is. New self-definitions are being heard which say that a fundamentalist is one who is faithful to expository preaching, practices church discipline, repudiates easy believism, and is aggressive in evangelism. Or some imply that a fundamentalist is one who believes in inerrancy and does not cooperate with Roman Catholics, or is one who believes the "fundamentals" but is less militant and separatistic than formerly thought. The truth is that these are things that new evangelicals and self-proclaimed non-fundamentalists also believe and practice, leaving a distinctly *fundamentalist* self-identity completely vacuous. This all points up the fact that many are simply confused, and this includes would-be leaders as well as followers and well-wishers. Judging by some of the prevalent ambiguity, one is sometimes tempted to ask, Will the real fundamentalist please stand up?

The purpose here is to address some reasons for the present confusion, define fundamentalism as a bona fide religious movement, delineate a complex of doctrine around which the movement has rallied, and demonstrate that there are some other distinctives that make it what it is. In other words, I propose to set forth what I consider to be the real,

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historic identity markers of fundamentalism and thus to bring some sense of order out of the developing chaos on this question in certain sectors of the fundamentalist ranks.

MODERN FUNDAMENTALIST CONFUSION OVER SELF-IDENTITY

From one perspective fundamentalism may be difficult to define and identify. One has said, "The term fundamentalism has become the most elusive term on the American (and world) religious scene."[1] If referring to the theologically and historically unaware, this may be true since the term has been used to refer to a spectrum that goes all the way from Pentecostalism to the most extreme forms of Islam. Also, professing fundamentalist leaders have sometimes introduced confusion and ambiguity into the term.[2] From another standpoint, however, the term should not be ambiguous.

Dubious Justification

The grounds for the present fundamentalist confusion are tenuous at best. There is a seeming needlessness for it. For one reason, up until the 1970s fundamentalism was self-assured about its identity and direction. Historic fundamentalists rarely, if ever, quibbled over the boundary markers of their cause. As will be discussed, the most clearly observable distinctives of the movement are militancy and separatism. Separatism did become a point of controversy, and thus to some degree a question of fundamentalism's self-identity, in the 1970s when John R. Rice dogmatically rejected "second degree" separation.[3] Rice took fundamentalist separatism on a different tack, but it was Jerry Falwell who seriously challenged fundamentalism from within when he became very critical of old-line fundamentalism. Going beyond John R. Rice, with whom he identified himself, Falwell caustically attacked the separatist mentality of fundamentalism and essentially put his non-separatist, or at least his greatly modified separatist, views on notice.[4] In a similar vein, Jack Van

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[1]John Fea, "Understanding the Changing Facade of Twentieth-Century American Protestant Fundamentalism: Toward A Historical Definition," *Trinity Journal* 15 (Fall 1994), p. 181.

[2]For example, Jerry Falwell, Jack Van Impe, and Jack Hyles have each defined fundamentalism in terms of their own agendas, historical perceptions, and peculiar emphases.

[3]See his numerous articles in *The Sword of the Lord* (such as in the following issues: Sept 3, 1971; Oct 3, 1971; Mar 2, 1973; Aug 20, 1976; Sept 3, 1976; Dec 17, 1976).

[4]This was in an address to the Southwide Baptist Fellowship, Charlotte, NC, Oct 5, 1977.

Impe, a fundamentalist evangelist, tried to carve a new channel for fundamentalism,[5] though less successfully than Falwell. More recently Jack Hyles has sought to define fundamentalism in terms of the Landmarkian independent Baptist movement that came out of the Southern Baptist Convention over the last several decades.[6] The Falwell, Van Impe, and Hyles innovations brought a certain amount of confusion in some minds about the meaning and direction of the movement.

While the main fundamentalist distinctives (militancy and separatism) were challenged from within during the 1970s and 80s, there appears to be no lack of assurance among fundamentalists about their identity prior to the 1970s. The controversy and subsequent division caused by the rise of the new evangelicalism in the 1940s and 50s seemed to galvanize fundamentalist self-identity if anything. The innovations of the 1970s and 80s notwithstanding, it is still difficult to exculpate the present questioners since many of them lived through that period and thus should have sufficient historical and theological self-awareness to understand those proposals for what they were.

Another reason why it is not easy to justify the present confusion is the long history of fundamentalism's beliefs, practices, and heritage. This history has been well chronicled. There has been a veritable landslide of books, doctoral dissertations, and journal articles on fundamentalism in the last ten to fifteen years, many by non-fundamentalist but historically self-critical scholars. The traditional view, somewhat of a caricature of fundamentalism as an obscurantist and bellicose cultural reaction to modernity, has been largely disproven.[7] A "revisionist" historiography has arisen[8] that has brought the accounts of the roots and ongoings of the movement more in line with historical reality. Fundamentalists themselves have produced scholarly and well-researched

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[5]Jack Van Impe, *Heart Disease in Christ's Body* (Royal Oak, MI: Jack Van Impe Ministries, 1984). He had expressed major disagreement with historic fundamentalism in an address to the Sword of the Lord Convention in Detroit, Aug, 1977.

[6]Hyles's sermon, "Let Baptists Be Baptists," in which he delineated these views, was preached numerous times. See the critique by Pastor John K. Hutcheson, "The Arrogance and Heresy of Jack Hyles," *The Biblical Evangelist* (May 1, 1991), p. 1. Hyles also wrote an article entitled "True Fundamentalism" in *The Reclaimer* (n. d.), and this was reviewed by Andrew Sandlin in his paper, *The Biblical Editor* (Fall 1991), p. 11.

[7]Representatives of this discredited approach would be Stewart Cole, *The History of Fundamentalism* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1931) and Norman Furniss, *The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918–1931* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1954).

[8]Representatives of the revisionist approach are George Marsden, William Vance Trollinger, Mark Noll, Grant Wacker, and others. See Mark Sidwell, "The Revisionist View of Fundamentalist History," *Biblical Viewpoint* 26 (Nov 1992), and John Fea, "American Fundamentalism and Neo-Evangelicalism: A Bibliographic Survey," *Evangelical Journal* 11 (Spring 1993).

material on the history of their cause.[9] Some liberals early on in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy also wrote with a good measure of historical integrity.[10] This historical material is readily available for investigation and information today.

Yet another reason for the tenuous nature of some of the current confusion is the fundamentalist self-identity of the early new evangelicals. In a very insightful article, Douglas Sweeney amply demonstrates the "largely fundamentalist demeanor of those who agreed to neo-evangelical unity."[11] He shows how the early new evangelicals considered themselves fundamentalists, using the term with reference to themselves until the mid to late 1950s. Events of the 1960s changed the course of the new evangelical movement so radically that some of the early founders eventually questioned the movement's evangelical credentials; nearly all of the early leaders lamented its liberalization.[12] But Harold John Ockenga said in a sermon in December, 1957, "I wish to be always classified as a Fundamentalist." In 1947 he said that "fundamentalism most nearly approximates theological truth" despite all that he felt was wrong with it.[13] In the now-famous *Christian Life* article in 1956, the conclusion was that "fundamentalism has become evangelicalism,"[14] a tacit admission that up until then the new evangelicals considered

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[9]The best from the fundamentalist perspective is David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986).

[10]Kirsopp Lake, a liberal, wrote with historical honesty in 1925 when he said, "It is a mistake, often made by educated persons who happen to have but little knowledge of historical theology, to suppose that Fundamentalism is a new and strange form of thought. It is nothing of the kind: it is the…survival of a theology which was once universally held by all Christians….The Fundamentalist may be wrong: I think that he is. But it is we who have departed from the tradition, not he, and I am sorry for the fate of anyone who tries to argue with a Fundamentalist on the basis of authority. The Bible and the *coprus theologicum* of the Church is on the Fundamentalist side" (*The Religion of Yesterday and Tomorrow* [Boston: Houghton Miflin, 1925], pp. 61–62).

[11]Douglas A. Sweeney, "Fundamentalism and the Neo-Evangelicals," *Fides et Historia* 24 (Winter/Spring 1992), p. 81.

[12]See Harold Lindsell, *The Battle For the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), pp. 139, 210, 211; and its sequel, *The Bible in the Balance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), pp. 319–320. Later he wrote, "Evangelicalism today is in a sad state of disarray. In many quarters it has ceased to be what its founding fathers intended" (*Moody* [Dec 1985], p. 113). See also Carl F. H. Henry, *Confessions of A Theologian* (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), chap. 19, and David F. Wells, *No Place For Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), especially chap. three.

[13]Harold John Ockenga, "Can Fundamentalism Win America?" *Christian Life* (June 1947), p. 13.

[14]"Is Evangelical Theology Changing?" *Christian Life* (Mar 1956), p. 17.

themselves fundamentalists. Vernon Grounds wrote in 1956 that "undeniably evangelicalism is fundamentalism, if by fundamentalism is meant a tenacious insistence upon the essential and central dogmas of historic Christianity."[15] Edward John Carnell, in his 1948 book on apologetics, spoke of it as "a defense of Fundamentalism" and as "drawing out implications for Fundamentalism."[16] Fuller Theological Seminary was founded, according to George Marsden, to "reform" fundamentalism.[17] While it is true that most of the early new evangelicals were not as separatistic as their forebears, they still had a fundamentalist self-awareness.

This is all to say that one would expect that present day fundamentalists should know who they are and should not be in too much indecision about self-identification and authenticity. If the older fundamentalists had an assured self-identity, and if the new evangelicals who were in the process of reforming fundamentalism used the title with reference to themselves for a decade and a half, there should be minimal confusion on the matter in the fundamentalist camp at the closing of the twentieth century.

Evidence of the Present Confusion

Documentable, written evidence of this matter is a little difficult to ascertain. Much of the present confusion is heard in sermons, talks, or private conversations. But one fundamentalist pastor wrote, for example, "Fundamentalism, like happiness, is different things to different people." He calls himself a "centrist" fundamentalist, which he acknowledges somewhat tongue-in-cheek is a self-fulfilling and self-validating term lacking any objective content or verification. He does conclude by saying, "I guess all of us need to determine where we stand and to determine to stand there regardless of the criticism."[18] This seems to suggest that fundamentalism is in the eye of the beholder or in the person of the

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[15]Vernon Grounds, "The Nature of Evangelicalism," *Eternity* (Feb 1956), p. 13.

[16]Edward John Carnell, *An Introduction to Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), pp. 7–8. It would be more than ten years before he would caustically say that fundamentalism had gone "cultic" and thus constituted a "peril" to orthodoxy (*The Case For Orthodox Theology* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959], p. 113), or that he would talk about "Post-Fundamentalist Faith" (*The Christian Century* [Aug 26, 1959], p. 971).

[17]George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987). The book claims to be "a narrative built around the theme of Fuller Seminary's leading role in the original new evangelical (or neo-evangelical) attempt to reform fundamentalism" (p. x).

[18]Charles R. Wood, *A Pastoral Epistle* (Dec 1994) [published by the author, pastor of the Grace Baptist Church, South Bend, IN], p. 2.

bearer. Such a subjective definition of fundamentalism, if consistently held, naturally would not foster much of a valid consensus within the fundamentalist movement. In addition, there are instances where fundamentalism is discussed without any definition at all. This is not to say that the authors have no idea of what it is, but a definition is simply not given a formal place in the treatment.[19] One may read an article or a book on fundamentalism and not know very clearly what is being handled, again yielding a definition or an idea of fundamentalism based on one's preunderstanding or prior formulation.

In March, 1995, there was held a National Leadership Conference among fundamentalists which was called specifically to address the question, "What's at the heart of fundamentalism?"[20] This query seemed to signal some kind of identity search. Given the current milieu, calls for such meetings are probably necessary if not inevitable, but they are somewhat of a window into the fundamentalist soul and sound like concerns that were settled seventy or eighty years ago.

Some Causes and Remedies

No doubt there are several factors leading to the present period of questioning. In light of the previous point, these are not actually valid, excusable reasons, but they are none-the-less observable causes that can be identified and remedied.

In some cases there was a failure to communicate adequately the fundamentalist principles and heritage. This has at least two sides. For one, many churches, schools, and other institutions have not sufficiently informed their constituencies about the history of fundamentalism. Thus many may have grown up in the fundamentalist environment ignorant of their roots. However, this would seem to be easily corrected. Fundamentalist people can be apprised of who they are by hearing illustrations of incidents in fundamentalist history, or by hearing or reading of someone's personal experiences of involvement in the cause. Many have entered fundamentalist self-awareness by being in a church where the pastor was personally at the front lines of the battle.[21] Special meet-

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[19]An example of this is Douglas R. McLachlan, *Reclaiming Authentic Fundamentalism* (Independence, MO: American Ass'n of Christian Schools, 1993). See the reviews of the book by Robert Delnay in *The Review* (Oct 1994) [published by the Independent Baptist Fellowship of North America], p. 6, and Rolland D. McCune in *The Sentinel* (Spring 1995) [published by the Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary]. Also James Singleton implied this criticism in *The Tri-City Builder* (Jan–Feb 1995) [published by the Tri-City Baptist Church, Tempe, AZ], p. 3.

[20]Promotional letter dated December 1994.

[21]It was my good fortune for fourteen years to be associated with and participate in the ministry of Dr. Richard V. Clearwaters, pastor of the Fourth Baptist Church of Minneapolis from 1940 to 1982. In a meaningful sense an heir to the legacy and labors

ings or services devoted to an issue, personality, or movement as it encroaches on a fundamentalist ministry are very educational. Inclusivist, ecumenical endeavors easily attract fundamentalist attention, and their unbiblical elements can be cause for exposure and teaching. Ecumenical evangelism is a perennial problem. Public rallies of quasi-evangelical but non-fundamentalist groups such as Promise Keepers, or even more remote stirrings such as Evangelicals and Catholics Together, have a certain effect on the fundamentalist community. These can be turned into pedagogical opportunities for conveying the history, principles, and practices of biblical fundamentalism and thereby facilitate a correct self-identity.

Sunday school or Bible Institute courses on fundamentalism, biblical separation, and related themes can be offered. Fundamentalist colleges and seminaries can develop in-depth, scholarly courses on fundamentalism, new evangelicalism, or contemporary issues, making them required subjects if necessary. At the very least a chapel series can be given on these matters, question and answer time set aside, and other such means. I have found that people in fundamentalist circles like to hear about their heritage. They are interested in names and events, and quite often want to know more about their own church's or institution's history and its involvement in the fundamentalist cause.

Obviously these educational efforts rise and fall on leadership. A benign, non-militant, pietistic pastor, for example, can hardly be expected to develop a knowledgeable fundamentalist church. Nor can one who is overly sensitive to emotions and feelings, his own and others', be very effective in this regard.

Another side to the lack of communication is the failure to provide adequate and biblical reasons why fundamentalism is correct or why a strong stand is needed on crucial issues. Some of the previous leaders may have taken too much for granted and did not spell out clearly enough the issues of the battles and why they were going in a certain direction. As a result, some of the younger heirs of the cause saw only the firm but necessary insistence of farsighted leadership and did not see the intermediate factors that went into the decision-making process. Too many who grew up in fundamentalism now regard their forebears as power-seeking ladder-climbers, empire builders, or mean-spirited old saints who have led the movement into a hopeless maze of carnality and

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of W. B. Riley of the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis with whom he was closely associated in many endeavors, Clearwaters was an acknowledged national militant fundamentalist leader. He often sprinkled his preaching with anecdotes from fundamentalist history and consistently regaled the daily coffee break time with incidents from his long experience in standing for the cause. Unfortunately, most of this valuable information went unrecorded.

ineffectiveness. The remedy here would seem to be the same as for the previous point—instruction and education by any number of creative means.

A second contributing factor to the identity crisis is the notion that fundamentalism is constantly changing, that it is a dynamic and not a static movement.[22] Obviously if the defining rubrics of a movement are always on the move and its parameters in a continuous state of flux, to whatever degree, self-identification will become very perplexing. Now in one sense fundamentalism does change, as all things do that go from one day to the next. Time itself is measured by change, and all time-space-mass phenomena partake of the transitoriness of a finite universe. Change in that sense is inevitable. But that is not the point under discussion. What appears to be meant by the dynamic or constant change in fundamentalism includes its identity markers, almost change for its own sake. This must be seriously challenged because if consistently thought out, the "fundamentals" will not be what they were in the early twentieth century, the principles and practices based on the Word of God will be relative, and fundamentalism itself will be left in a continual state of "becoming." Confusion is bound to follow. This is the logic of the case; but, while most are spared the logical results of their inconsistencies, from a biblical standpoint fundamentalism is not given to substantive change any more than biblical Christianity itself. All biblical propositions and principles are part of the "once-having-been-delivered-unto-the-saints-faith" (Jude 3, lit.). There is no progress there or much room for dynamic and creative change.

These things seem to have been forgotten by many in the present fundamentalist quest for identity. True, the religious scene is never static; Satan is very creative and innovative with his strategies. Methods of implementing the fundamentalist agenda do involve adaptation to be sure. Emphases may change as well. But the defining genius of fundamentalism should not be subject to change. It is the same as it has always been, and that ultimately goes back to the first century. There is a certain core of crucial doctrine, mainly concerning Christ and the Scriptures, along with certain identifying characteristics, chiefly having to do with militant separatism, that make fundamentalism what it is. These need to be stated and not necessarily debated. Fundamentalism's identity markers may need rediscovery on the part of some or fuller understanding on the part of others, and certainly more explication on the part of all. But their redefinition would alter the direction of the movement and compromise its genius.

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[22]This is the motif of John Fea, "Understanding the Changing Facade." See also David Burggraff, "Fundamentalism At the End of the Twentieth Century," *Calvary Baptist Theological Journal* 11 (Spring 1995), p. 29.

Before the distinguishing characteristics of fundamentalism are explored, there is need for a brief statement that fundamentalism is a distinct, identifiable movement.

FUNDAMENTALISM IS A DISTINCT MOVEMENT

David F. Wells, a new evangelical writing about the doctrinal collapse of the new evangelicalism, said that a movement must have certain ingredients: (1) A commonly held direction; (2) A common basis on which that direction is held; (3) An *esprit* that informs and motivates those who are joined in the common cause.[23] His (debatable) point is that evangelicalism has been incorrectly identified as a movement because it lacks those ingredients. On the other hand, fundamentalism does fulfill those requirements and can be seen as an identifiable historic religious movement. It has moved in a certain direction, i.e., in a biblically conservative direction whose distinctive path has by now been well documented. Its common basis is a set of biblical doctrines and beliefs, and its motivating *esprit* is essentially its militant separatism. Perhaps other characteristics of its *esprit* such as evangelism, revival, prayer, missions, or holiness could be mentioned, but these are not really the private property of fundamentalism's defining motivation.

Fundamentalism is a movement and not an attitude of belligerence, a spirit of ugliness, or a negative mentality of some sort as is sometimes depicted even by those agitating for change from within. Nor does it consist of a posture of self-aggrandizement or other self-serving attributes. While it is clearly arguable that certain fundamentalists may have exhibited those characteristics on occasion, it is also demonstrable that these do not constitute fundamentalism. Fundamentalism is intrinsically a movement and not a mood.[24]

As a distinct movement, the roots of fundamentalism go back to nineteenth century America. David Beale puts the antecedents of fundamentalism in the great urban revivals in the USA in the mid-nineteenth century.[25] Others put them in the Bible Conference movement

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[23]David F. Wells, *No Place For Truth*, p. 8.

[24]Joel A. Carpenter said it crisply, "Fundamentalism was a popular movement, not merely a mentality; it had leaders, institutions and a particular identity. Fundamentalists recognized each other as party members as it were, and distinguished themselves from the other evangelicals" ("Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism: 1929–1942," *Church History* 49 [Mar 1980], p. 64). He also said, "Fundamentalism bears all the marks of a popular religious movement which drew only part of its identity from opposition to liberal trends in the denominations" (p. 74).

[25]David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, chap. 2.

of the last quarter of the nineteenth century.[26] Some would put the roots of fundamentalism in a cluster of persons, institutions, and events in the latter nineteenth century such as the Bible Conference movement, the Bible Institute movement, influential pastors and evangelists, and a stream of literature that arose.[27] Fea pinpointed 1893 as the start of the first phase of fundamentalism, for various reasons.[28]

Some of the early names connected with the fundamentalist movement were R. A. Torrey, John Roach Straton, Billy Sunday, A. C. Gaebelein, W. B. Riley, T. T. Shields, J. Frank Norris, and Bob Jones, Sr., to name a few. Some of the Bible Conferences of the early days were Niagara (ONT, 1876), Northfield (MA, 1880), Winona Lake (IN, 1895), Sea Cliff (NY, 1901), and Montrose (PA, 1908). Some of the Bible Institutes and Training Schools in the early part of the movement were Moody (1886), Gordon (1889), Practical Bible Training (1900), Northwestern (1902), Bible Institute of Los Angeles (1907), Northern Baptist Seminary (1913), Philadelphia School of the Bible (1916), and Bob Jones (1927). The stream of literature included *The Scofield Bible*, *The Fundamentals*, *Our Hope*, *The Watchman Examiner*, *The King's Business*, *The Sunday School Times*, and publications put out by individual fundamentalists such as *The Baptist Beacon* and *The Pilot* (W. B. Riley), *The Searchlight* (J. Frank Norris), and *The Gospel Witness* (T. T. Shields).

These tributaries all converged ultimately to give the fundamentalist movement a common direction, articulated the common biblical basis, and provided a large measure of its *esprit*. Other organizations and institutions eventually spun out of these tributaries such as the World's Christian Fundamentals Association (1919), the Baptist Bible Union (1923), and the Evangelical Theological College (1924; now Dallas Seminary), among others.

Fundamentalism is a distinct movement and as such has an honorable history and is a noble heritage. It is not just a mood or a series of passing religious fads. The doctrinal aspect or theological content of its self-identity now needs to be identified.

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[26]George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), p. 27ff.

[27]Larry D. Pettegrew, "The Niagara Bible Conference and American Fundamentalism," *Central Bible Quarterly* 19 (Winter 1976), p. 8ff. Although dealing with a later period of fundamentalist history, Joel Carpenter reflects this cluster ("Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism: 1929–1942").

[28]John Fea, "Understanding the Changing Facade," p. 184.

CRUCIAL DOCTRINE

Fundamentalism has always been defined in the main by biblical doctrine. The parameters of that doctrinal complex are the subject of some debate, especially among non-fundamentalists. Charles Colson equated fundamentalism with orthodox Christianity. "Everyone who believes in the orthodox truths about Jesus Christ—in short, every Christian—is a fundamentalist."[29] John MacArthur's parameters are a little broader but run in similar lines as Colson's. He includes doctrines that are clear in Scripture, doctrines that are forbidden to be denied, and doctrines that are essential to saving faith. These are "all summed up in the person and work of Jesus Christ."[30] While MacArthur does not explicitly call this set of doctrines "fundamentalism," the context and implications of his treatment point to that.

Neither Colson nor MacArthur wish to be identified with the fundamentalist *movement* but what they describe may well be "orthodoxy" or "evangelicalism" and would be a part of fundamentalist doctrine. The so-called fundamentals are in reality the core beliefs of orthodoxy/evangelicalism but should not be equated with fundamentalism as such. There have always been a few voices who would equate fundamentalism simply with the fundamentals.[31] But this is too broad an approach. However, the point here is that there is a certain complex of orthodox doctrine to which other distinctives must be appended to account for the phenomenon of fundamentalism.

Historically, fundamentalists have held to a certain core of biblical teaching, mainly concerning Christ and the Scriptures, with the added doctrinal distinctive of ecclesiastical separation. These, coupled with the practical distinctive of militancy, have formed the essence of fundamentalism as a movement. The purpose here is to determine this core of doctrine.

Christianity Itself Is a Doctrinal Movement

New Testament Christianity is a belief-system of divinely revealed propositions. It is a series of absolute truth claims that must be mentally appropriated, emotionally accepted, and volitionally trusted. There are popular misconceptions often heard concerning what Christianity really is. Some would say that Christianity is Jesus Christ. Others would say it is the new birth. While there is a measure of truth in each, these are ac-

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[29]Charles Colson, *The Body* (Waco, TX: Word, 1992), p. 186.

[30]John MacArthur, *Reckless Faith* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1994), p. 113.

[31]For example, Jerry Falwell, ed., *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), pp. 1–11.

tually reductionist in scope. True Christianity consists of *what the Bible says* about each of these and many more. There is "another Jesus" (2 Cor 11:4), but the way to God and eternal life is through the Christ of Scripture, the one whose coming was written "in the roll of the book" (Heb 10:7). There is also "another spirit" and "another gospel" (2 Cor 11:4) circulating under the guise of Christianity that yield all manner of subjective experiences, some even termed a new birth. But these are invalid because they do not conform to the real genius of the Christian religion which consists of the revealed truths of the New Testament.

Christianity's Fundamental Predication Is the Self-Witness of Scripture

The Christian religion is an authoritarian one. It rests on the absolute authority of the revelation of God. As with everything about God, the Bible's witness to its divine authority is self-referential; it is a self-attesting revelation in human language. One cannot delegate authority to Scripture, he can only assent to it. The Bible bears its own marks of inspiration and authority; the human options it leaves are faith or unbelief. While some have attempted to come up with external "proofs" of inspiration, the biblical pattern consistently presents only one underlying proof or evidence of divine inspiration—its own claim to have come from God via the miracle of inspiration (1 Cor 2:13; 2 Tim 3:16). This claim can only be appropriated and realized as true by an act of supernaturally endowed faith. No one has natural ability to do so; in fact, everyone is born with a native hostility to God and His revelation (1 Cor 2:14).[32]

Saving Faith Must Appropriate an Irreducible Number of Biblical Truth Claims

There is a *sina qua non* of truth that must be appropriated by faith or one will perish in hell forever. This irreducible corpus of truth or gospel tenets is sometimes known as the *kerugma*, the proclamation or preachment of the good news. While there is a tendency, even within a certain element of fundamentalism, to proclaim a somewhat reduced gospel or a "simple gospel" that is much simpler than the New Testament allows, the biblical pattern of the *kerugma* generally consists of at least four elements. They are the Bible's witness to God, sin, Christ, and faith and repentance.[33] But again, these are articles of *faith*,

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[32]One of the finest treatments of this subject is still the essay by John Murray, "The Self-Attestation of Scripture," in *The Infallible Word*, ed. Ned Stonehouse and Paul Wooley (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1946), chap. 1.

[33]See J. I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1961), pp. 57–73.

i.e., propositional revelation that must be processed correctly by the cognitive/volitional faculties of human beings, because the good news of Christianity is a belief-system.

Fundamentalism Embraces Certain Crucial Doctrines

There are certain tenets out of the broader doctrinal base of Christianity that form the hard core of historic fundamentalism. These doctrines are not the private property or sole possession of fundamentalism, but fundamentalists have held, guarded, defended, and propagated them with a tenacious militancy and separatism not found in other circles.

The founders and early leaders of fundamentalism were cognizant of the centrality of truth and because of that they gave first place to doctrine. They correctly gave priority to matters of *faith*. Doctrine determined who belonged within the ranks and doctrine was the criterion for ecclesiastical cooperation and separation. What one believed was of prime importance in these areas.

Since fundamentalism has as perhaps its main historical tributary the Bible Conference movement, it is instructive to observe the articles of faith of the Niagara Bible Conference, the first on the American continent. The 1878 Confession of Faith listed fourteen articles.[34] They were:

1. The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures in the original manuscripts.
2. The trinity.
3. The creation of man, the fall into sin, and total depravity.
4. The universal transmission of spiritual death from Adam.
5. The necessity of the new birth.
6. Redemption by the blood of Christ.
7. Salvation by faith alone in Jesus Christ.
8. The assurance of salvation.
9. The centrality of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.
10. The true church made up of genuine believers.
11. The personality of the Holy Spirit.
12. The believer's call to a holy life.
13. The souls of believers go immediately to be with Christ at death.
14. The premillennial second coming of Christ.

The 1910 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church drew up a

[34]See David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, appendix A, pp. 375–79. For a comprehensive work on the origins, beliefs, history, and contributions of the Niagara Bible Conference, see Larry D. Pettegrew, "The Historical and Theological Contributions of the Niagara Bible Conference to American Fundamentalism" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976).

five-point doctrinal statement of truths that were considered crucial and essential.[35] These became the historic "five fundamentals" of Presbyterian fundamentalism.

1. The inerrancy of the original manuscripts of Scripture.
2. The virgin birth of Christ.
3. The vicarious atonement of Christ.
4. The bodily resurrection of Christ.
5. The reality of biblical miracles.

The Confession of Faith of the Baptist Bible Union, drawn up on May 15, 1923, in conference in Kansas City, MO, had eighteen articles along the same lines as above.[36] Its main difference with other statements was the inclusion of articles on Satan, justification, repentance and faith, the eternal difference between the righteous and the wicked, and civil government.

Fundamentalism's historic doctrinal core concerned principally the Scriptures, Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation. Other doctrines were sometimes included for specific endeavors or institutions. There were certain essential doctrines that were simply understood but not stated, such as the genuine humanity of Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, or the imputation of Adamic guilt. Thus an exact number of "official" fundamentalist doctrines would be impossible to ascertain, for there was none. The consensus was general; the parameters were generally understood. Fundamentalism thus has a nucleus of crucial doctrines or biblical teachings that are clear and unambiguous. These do not of themselves comprise the full doctrinal identity of the movement, but a denial of any of them calls into serious question any claim to be a fundamentalist.

FUNDAMENTALISM HAS THE DISTINCTIVE OF MILITANCY

Militancy has been a defining characteristic of fundamentalism from the beginning. On that there is near unanimity of opinion. George Dollar made militancy an aspect of the definition of fundamentalism, saying that fundamentalism consists in part of "the militant exposure of all non-biblical expositions and affirmations and attitudes."[37] Larry Pettegrew similarly said that "fundamentalism is a militant attitude that exposes the non-biblical exposition of the basic doctrines."[38] David

[35]David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, p. 149.

[36]Published by the Baptist Bible Union, n.d.

[37]George W. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism in America*, p. xv.

[38]Larry D. Pettegrew, "Will the Real Fundamentalist Please Stand Up?" *Central*

Beale likewise consistently stressed militancy as one of the trademarks of fundamentalism.[39]

Non-fundamentalists also have been able to recognize this distinctive of the fundamentalist movement. John Fea, no fundamentalist himself, calls the "second phase" of fundamentalism (1919–1940) "militant fundamentalism." (He called the first phase "irenic fundamentalism" [1893–1919]).[40] George Marsden used the term "fundamentalist" (that of the 1920s to the 1940s) to mean one who was "theologically traditional, a believer in the fundamentals of evangelical Christianity, and willing to take a militant stand against modernism."[41] Elsewhere he noted the same militant anti-modernism as a characteristic of the 1920s fundamentalism.[42] Mark Noll, a thoroughgoing new evangelical, observed that a "militant defense of the faith" was one characteristic among others that could be found in the somewhat amorphous fundamentalism prior to World War I.[43]

Both self-confessed fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists alike recognize militancy as a mark of fundamentalism's identity. Evidently, militancy is not all that difficult to define and see.

The Nature of Fundamentalist Militancy

George Houghton writes concerning militancy:

> What exactly is militancy, anyway? One dictionary says it is to be "engaged in warfare or combat…aggressively active (as in a cause)." It springs from one's values, is expressed as an attitude, and results in certain behavior. One's values are those things in which one strongly believes. They are what one believes to be fundamentally important and true. From this comes an attitude which is unwilling to tolerate any divergence from these fundamentally important truths and which seeks to defend them. It results in behavior which speaks up when these truths are attacked or diluted and which refuses to cooperate with any activity which would minimize their importance. The term is a military one and carries the idea of defending what one believes to be true.[44]

Testimony (Fall 1982) [published by the Central Baptist Theological Seminary of Minneapolis].

[39]David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, pp. 10, 18, 268.

[40]John Fea, "Understanding the Changing Facade," p. 184.

[41]George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, p. 10.

[42]George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 4.

[43]Mark A. Noll, *Between Faith and Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1986), p. 38.

[44]George Houghton, "The Matter of Militancy," *Faith Pulpit* (May 1994).

Fundamentalist militancy originally had a very anti-modernist expression because modernism was the focal point of the battle.[45] This spirit has continued to the present although the deviancies of the 1920s and 30s are not currently the principal focus of fundamentalism's aggressive defense. In the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, it was new evangelicalism against which fundamentalism's militancy was especially deployed. By somewhat common consent, new evangelicalism peaked and began to decline in the 1970s[46] and thus as a movement has been less aggressively attacked and exposed than before by fundamentalists. In the 1970s and 80s the so-called pseudo-fundamentalism of the Jerry Falwell making was of pressing concern. Recent objects of fundamentalist militancy have been resurgent new evangelical spin-offs such as Promise Keepers, the psychological self-movement and its undermining of a sufficient Bible, Evangelicals and Catholics Together, the teachings of Charles Swindoll on "free grace," the inclusivism of John MacArthur, Tim Lee, and others, and, in some cases, the non-militant, soft underbelly of professing fundamentalism itself.

Fundamentalist militancy has as its base and starting point the doctrines of the Bible, especially the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation. Militancy and separatism are in tandem. A practice of one necessitates the other; a decline in one reflects a decline in the other. Militancy is simply being aggressive and combative about the faith, especially the nucleus of crucial doctrine, including the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation in its two-fold structure of separation from the apostasy and from disobedient brethren.

Militancy is not to be confused with having a domineering personality nor with mere belligerence for its own sake. It has to do with aggressive adherence to principle rather than the possession of a certain type of personality. Non-militancy cannot be excused on the basis of having a reticent personality. Everyone is militant about certain things. Those who decry fundamentalist militancy are saying more about what they consider worth defending than about their personalities. Forceful personalities rise to the fore and are entrusted with leadership somewhat naturally. A retiring type of personality may not have the fortitude to lead the battles for the faith, but he can at least stand with and support those who do. It is observable that those who deprecate or minimize militancy are usually quite militant about non-militancy, as oxymoronic

[45]The early new evangelicals were also anti-modernist at least in an intellectual sense. See Douglas A. Sweeney, "Fundamentalism and Neo-Evangelicalism," p. 89.

[46]Harold Lindsell, "Evangelicalism's Golden Age," *Moody* (Dec 1985), pp. 113–114. Harold O. J. Brown, "Evangelicalism in America," *Dialog* (vol. 24, no. 3), pp. 188–92. David F. Wells, *No Place For Truth*., p. 127ff. Millard J. Erickson, *The Evangelical Heart and Mind* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), p. 191ff.

as that may seem. Their writings and comments against militant fundamentalists are often classic demonstrations of the militancy they otherwise profess to disdain.

The Decline In Fundamentalist Militancy

In the last decade or so there has been a noticeable decline in fundamentalist militancy. Questions are being raised as to what constitutes militancy anyway. Some propose the need to explore and define militancy very precisely. This all seems highly anachronistic given the role of militancy in fundamentalism from the start. There are several reasons one could give to explain this general loss of militancy and aggressiveness in the movement.

The Influence of the General Culture. There is a disdain for militancy on almost any subject today. The 1960s brought a revolt against absolutes in nearly every realm. Personal preferences and value-options are all considered *equal* in today's mentality, creating a contempt for the aggressive prosecution of any idea or agenda, at least that of a conservative stripe. Evangelical scholarship loathes dogmatism no matter what the evidence for a position. This attitude eventually trickles down into the fundamentalist environment. A helpful corrective can be found in the example of Paul and Barnabas and their difference of opinion over John Mark (Acts 15:36–41). This was anything but an affirming, irenic, nonconfrontational form of meekness often argued for today. Also in a militant vein, Paul opposed Peter "to his face" for his duplicity before the Gentiles, and he did it "before them all" (Gal 2:11–14). There was no smorgasbord of equal opinion in either of these incidents.

Dissatisfaction With Past Leadership. Certain fundamentalists have felt insulted by some of the unwise statements and misguided zeal of some other fundamentalists in the heat of battle. Thus they feel that to be militant is to be pugnacious, ugly, or careless with the truth. In turn they may propose a "militant meekness" or a "militancy for the meekness of Christ."[47] Sermons on "gentleness," for example, carry an overload of innuendo if not plain statement against fundamentalist militancy which for some conjures up a resurrection of the "J. Frank Norris syndrome." In point of fact, however, militancy and gentleness are compatible. There is no real dichotomy between them. True, "the servant of the Lord must…be gentle" (2 Tim 2:24; cf. 1 Thess 2:7; Titus 3:2), and "the wisdom from above is gentle" (Jas 3:17). But one need not be harsh or strident to be militant.

Pietism. Pietism is "a recurring tendency within Christian history to

[47]Douglas R. McLachlan, *Reclaiming Authentic Fundamentalism,* p. 140.

emphasize more the practicalities of Christian life and less the formal structures of theology or church order."[48] Its practical legacy in evangelical and fundamentalist circles includes the promotion of an emotional approach to controversial issues, a failure to observe long range effects and wider implications in the interests of immediate sensitivity to feelings and friendships, a tendency to opt for a warm-hearted "blessing" rather than face the cold reality of an issue, and a counsel of "let's pray about it" or an attempt to "put out a fleece" when decisive obedience is mandated. Pietistic people feel that militancy and aggressiveness in defending the faith and combating an issue are simply unspiritual.

There has always been a stratum of pietism in fundamentalism inherited principally from the Keswick and higher/deeper life movements that influenced its early formation. But the tension between militancy and spirituality is a false one as Jesus demonstrated when He cleansed the temple (John 2:14–16) and when He denounced the Pharisees in some of the most blistering language ever uttered (Matt 23). It must not be forgotten that Jesus of Nazareth was holy and harmless (Heb 7:26), the very incarnation of gentleness and love. Yet He was militant. "Servant leadership" does not necessitate a piously benign attitude toward error or toward individuals who hold and propagate error or who are tolerant of those who do.

Ambiguity Over the Meaning of Fundamentalism. The current search for self-identity among certain fundamentalists betrays a general lack of clarity about the genius of the movement itself. One cannot be militant about a cause that lacks specific content.[49] There may be some discernible reasons for this lack of clarity, as indicated earlier, but part of the aftermath of such a lack is a loss of aggressiveness or an inability to press the battle.

Lack of Strong Convictions. There has been a decline within fundamentalism of feelings of strong conviction about the content and direction of the movement. Perhaps the disdain for dogmatism in the general culture is partly to blame. It is also to be acknowledged that some influential fundamentalists have taken strong stands on the wrong issues, or have taken the right position in the wrong spirit. Furthermore, the biblical bases and rationale for some of these occasions may have been poorly thought out or simply not even there.[50] As a result there was a loss of

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[48] *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, s.v. "Pietism," by Mark A. Noll, p. 855.

[49] David M. Doran, "In Defense of Militancy," *Sentinel* (Spring 1995). The same article appeared with some modification in *Frontline Magazine* (vol. 5, no. 5, 1995), pp. 24–25.

[50] Ibid.

confidence in some cases or at least a disappointment that significantly eroded enthusiasm for the fundamentalist cause. Militancy for any cause must be backed by strong convictions and wholehearted dedication in order to be effective. The younger heirs of fundamentalism are especially sensitive to the doctrinal and exegetical foundations for the positions and directions taken by their leaders and forebears. This is healthy and good, but it rightfully imposes a heavy responsibility on leadership. It does not take a whole lot of discernment to distinguish between preaching the Word of God with conviction and preaching a conviction about the Word of God. The two are not always synonymous. At any rate, militancy for the cause of fundamentalism diminishes as the certainty about the cause recedes.

Ignorance and Naiveté. There is a feeling among some professing fundamentalists that the religious environment today is short on issues, personalities, and movements against which a fundamentalist must be militant. The idea is that we live in a less hostile environment and therefore the concept of militancy must be rethought.[51] This appears to be a naive understanding of the present milieu, or worse, an ignorance of what is really pressing in on the fundamentalist community. This attitude naturally leads to a less militant approach.

The remedies for these causes would seem to be self-evident. The relativism of the general culture must be rejected in favor of the dogmatic absolutism of the teaching of Scripture and the examples of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, and others. Past leadership must be judged by the same criteria, noting that the sins of some do not invalidate the need for militancy nor do they characterize the Cause itself. The pietistic dichotomy between spirituality and militancy must be exposed as false and unwarranted. Ambiguity over the meaning of fundamentalism can easily be offset by presenting the clear case for historic fundamentalism. Lack of convictions can only be replaced by feelings of strong dedication as one understands the Cause and gets involved in the fight. Ignorance and naiveté about the present religious scene are remedied by looking at the current scenario through biblical and historical eyes.

FUNDAMENTALISM HAS THE DISTINCTIVE OF ECCLESIASTICAL SEPARATION

Another vital facet of the self-identity of fundamentalism is the doctrine and practice of ecclesiastical separation. It is at once both the most maligned and/or misunderstood distinctive of fundamentalism and probably the most defining one. Fundamentalism and separatism walk

[51]See Doran's account of one such claim made in his hearing. Ibid.

in lock step. James Singleton said correctly, "Without an authentic separation there can be no authentic fundamentalism."[52]

Various Types of Religious Separation

Civil. One of the Baptist distinctives is the separation of church and state, the separation of organized religion from the organized civil state. One may envision a scenario of the state over the church as in some totalitarian and/or authoritarian governments. In some cases the church is over the state as in the old Holy Roman Empire or in certain present day Islamic countries. There may be a configuration of the church alongside the state in some kind of ecclesiastical and civil parity as in certain European countries. Or one may have a free church in a free state as in our own republic. The latter is the ideal separation of church and state and a rendering to Caesar those things that are his and a rendering to God that which is His (Matt 22:21).

Personal. This has to do with the individual believer and his personal relationship to the "world." The world in the biblical sense is that organized system that is in opposition to God. It is the transient though ever present arrangement of things—the "now," the cosmos. Its god is the devil (2 Cor 4:4), and it is structured by autonomous man and his "I'm worth it" philosophy. A biblical Christian will separate from the world (1 John 2:15; Rom 12:2).

Ecclesiastical. Ecclesiastical separation takes place on the organizational level where religious groups and leaders interact. Broadly speaking, it is the refusal to collaborate with, or a withdrawal of cooperation from, an ecclesiastical organization or religious leader that deviates from the Word of God in doctrine and practice. This is the distinctive form of fundamentalist separation.

The Separatistic Nature of Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism has always been "separatistic" at heart and in principle. One may rightfully distinguish between non-conformist fundamentalism (pre-1930) and separatist fundamentalism (post-1930).[53] Beale notes that "the separatist position did not solidify as a distinct, militant movement until the 1930s."[54] This is true but it seems that even the non-conformists were at heart separatistic. They attempted to purge their denominations and institutions of unbelief, i.e., they tried to

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[52]James E. Singleton, *The Tri-City Baptist Builder* (Jan–Feb 1995), p. 2.

[53]David O. Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, p. 5.

[54]Ibid.

separate the liberals from their midst. When that did not prove successful, they separated themselves from the liberals in a more formal practice of ecclesiastical separation.

The Doctrine of Ecclesiastical Separation

The Basis. Ecclesiastical separation is more than a stance of anti-modernism. The new evangelicals also were against modernism. The National Association of Evangelicals, for example, began (in 1942) with an anti-liberal spirit, and continued it for some time. But those evangelicals were not separatists as such.[55] At best they had only a very low degree or thin veneer of separation that within a decade or less had been compromised in the interests of scholarly dialogue and ecumenical evangelism. The new evangelicals had a fundamentalist doctrinal core but repudiated the fundamentalist distinctive of ecclesiastical separation in favor of denominational infiltration.[56] Fundamentalists were both aggressive anti-modernists and ecclesiastical separatists.

The biblical doctrine of ecclesiastical separation is grounded firmly in the character of God Himself; it is an expression of His eternal holiness. Holiness in Scripture means an apartness or separation from that which is common or profane. God's holiness is His apartness from all that is morally unclean, a holiness of moral purity. In some sense holiness qualifies or regulates His other moral attributes. It characterizes His "name" (Matt 6:5). Thus God has a constitutional reaction against anything that contradicts His holiness. Therefore He demands that His people be like Him in character and conduct (Matt 5:48; Rom 12:1; 1 John 2:1). Separatism arises out of God's intrinsic being.[57]

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[55]John Fea, "Understanding the Changing Facade," p. 189.

[56]Harold John Ockenga's news release of Dec 8, 1957, said clearly, "The new evangelicalism has changed its strategy from one of separation to one of infiltration." One of the points in the ground-breaking *Christian Life* article (March 1956) was "a growing willingness of evangelical theologians to converse with liberal theologians" (p. 19). In the same article Vernon Grounds said idealistically, "An evangelical can be organizationally separated from all Christ-denying fellowship and yet profitably engage in an exchange of ideas with men who are not evangelicals" (p. 19). While this may be formally true on a theoretical level, in practice the dialogue technique was disastrous for evangelicalism. And the infiltration principle was a total failure. Carl Henry said that the mainline denominations are now "irrelevant" ("Know Your Roots: Evangelicalism Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow" [Videocassette by the Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1991]).

[57]Fred Moritz, "*Be Ye Holy": The Call To Christian Separation* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994), chap. 1. See also Rolland D. McCune, "An Inside Look At Ecclesiastical Separation" (Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, pamphlet, n.d.), pp. 6–7.

The Components. There are two components to ecclesiastical separation. The first is organizational separation from the apostasy. Early fundamentalists were sometimes slow to implement ecclesiastical separation in a more formal sense, hence Beale's distinction between non-conformist and separatist fundamentalism. Ecclesiastical separatism in the sense of withdrawal of all organizational cooperation with the apostasy began in about 1930. Prior to that there were numerous efforts of "separation from within," which were efforts to eliminate the apostate or unorthodox elements from a denomination, institution, or agency. Often those attempts took on a "loyal opposition" stance.[58] Sometimes friendships and retirement funds deterred a more forthright separation from a liberal institution.[59] W. B. Riley thought that God would use the fundamentalists to clean up the Northern Baptist Convention and give them triumph over the forces of darkness at last.[60] He also felt that to leave the denomination was to abandon the many orthodox missionaries and evangelists still in the Convention.[61] While a few struggled with the issue, the biblical and logical fundamentalist doctrine of ecclesiastical separation was being practiced by many others who were withdrawing from their liberal surroundings and were forming around strong leaders new schools, associations, mission agencies, and other institutions.

Some of the biblical considerations or grounds demanding this aspect of ecclesiastical separation are:

False doctrine (1 Tim 6:3–5; 2 Tim 2:16–21; Rev 2:14–16)
Divisiveness caused by false teaching (Rom 16:17–18)
Error concerning the person of Christ (1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 10–11)
Unequal alliances (2 Cor 6:14–18)
A "gospel" different from the grace of God (Gal 1:8–10; 2 Cor 11:4)

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[58]Many within the Fundamentalist Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention had this motivating principle, including its first president, J. C. Massee. See William Vance Trollinger, *God's Empire* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), p. 59. See also Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity*, pp. 180, 216.

[59]Dr. R. V. Clearwaters often made this point in my hearing either from the pulpit, in the classroom, or in the hallway. He spoke from personal knowledge, having been a fundamentalist leader against modernism in the Northern Baptist Convention, having served in Convention local churches and in leadership in the Iowa Baptist Convention and the Minnesota Baptist Convention, having been graduated from the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, having served on the school's board of trustees, and having been given an honorary doctorate by the Seminary. He used to say wryly that he "made a heave offering" of his M and M Fund (a Convention-held retirement account for ministers and missionaries) when he separated from the Convention.

[60]Trollinger says this of Riley who stayed in the Northern Baptist Convention virtually until his deathbed when he withdrew on a personal basis (ibid., pp. 44, 60–61).

[61]Ibid., p. 61.

Organized apostasy (Rev 18:4. While this refers to the tribulation period, the principle is clear.)

The second component of ecclesiastical separation is organizational separation from disobedient brethren. This form of separatism came to the fore when the non-separatist new evangelicals broke away from fundamentalism in the 1940s and 50s. However, separation from disobedient brethren was being practiced in the early 1930s already. When the Baptist Bible Union was succeeded by the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches in 1932, one of the requirements for membership in the new group was a severance of all fellowship from liberalism and from those who were tolerant of it. This set the GARBC apart from the Fundamentalist Fellowship within the Northern Baptist Convention and the mentality that later formed the Conservative Baptist movement.

Ecumenical evangelism as practiced especially by Billy Graham eventually forced the separation issue, and by the time of the 1957 New York Crusade, the fundamentalist and new evangelical camps were irreconcilable.[62] As it was in the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, fundamentalists were again presented with conflict, only this time from fellow believers and churchmen, those from within the ranks of professing fundamentalism itself. And again they maintained the distinctive of ecclesiastical separation, in this case from new evangelical brethren.

Some, such as John R. Rice, took an ambivalent stance by separating from modernists but decrying "secondary separation" and refusing to separate from fellow brethren who loved the Lord and won souls to Christ.[63] Many of this persuasion more or less went off to themselves and dropped out of the mainstream of fundamentalism. Remnants of that mentality, however, continue to renew the controversy, especially among the younger heirs of fundamentalism, some of whom openly disavow "secondary separation." Andrew Sandlin contends that "it is not legitimate to extrapolate from Paul's express statements [in 2 Thess 3:7–12] to some sort of amorphous principle to justify an academic practice of separation."[64] By this he means that the only subject here is lazy Christians and not Christians in general who disobey apostolic teaching and principles in the Word of God. This effectively relieves almost everyone today from looking too closely at a brother's doctrine and practice, especially since "laziness" easily can become an ambiguous, amorphous rubric in itself. This kind of hermeneutic (used by the same au-

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[62]Farley P. Butler, Jr., "Billy Graham and the End of Evangelical Unity" (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Florida, 1976), pp. 191–94.

[63]See his articles in *The Sword of the Lord* noted in footnote 3.

[64]Andrew Sandlin, "Some Thoughts on Secondary Separation," *Target* (Aug 1994), p. 9.

thor on other separation passages) specifically exempts new evangelicals as objects of ecclesiastical separation.[65] Exactly to whom Paul's strictures may apply today is not altogether clear.

"Secondary separation" may not be the best of expressions but it is one that has been used for quite some time. A newer term, "familial separation," has arisen lately to designate separation from disobedient brethren. However, while more innocuous as a term than secondary separation, it appears at times to lack specific organizational or ecclesiastical content. It could be taken to mean little more than local church discipline without any broader application to ecclesiastical or organizational levels.[66]

Ecclesiastical separation from erring brethren is based principally on 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15. Note several things about the passage. (1) The *problem* was the brother's disobedience to divine revelation in apostolic preaching and teaching (vv. 6, 14). Its *manifestation* was idleness or laziness (v. 6). Many confuse the problem with its local, first century manifestation.[67] The brother in view here had the example of Paul's work ethic (vv. 7–9), specific apostolic instruction (v. 10; cf. 2:15), and divine revelation in Paul's previous letter (1 Thess 4:11–12; 5:14). (2) The directive was to separate from this person (v. 6, "withdraw;" v. 14, "have no company with him"). It was authoritative (v. 6, "we command you") and affectionate (v. 6, "brethren"). (3) Separation was to be based on a pattern of disobedience (v. 6, "leads an unruly life;" v. 14, "does not obey our instruction." Both verbs are in the present tense.). (4) Local church discipline is a minimum understanding. But such apostolic directives and examples were warnings to other assemblies and leaders as well so that they would not collaborate with the disobedient brethren (e.g., 1 Tim 1:18–20). That is, the command to separate took on an organizational and ecclesiastical function that transcended the local church being addressed. Ecclesiastical separation from disobedient Christians is in principle the same as local church discipline of disobedient Christians. There is no real dichotomy.

Putting this in a more modern flesh and blood context, the category of erring brethren includes leaders or institutions who compromise some aspect of the core doctrines, or who cooperate with ecumenism/inclusivism in its various forms, or who are tolerant of those

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[65] Ibid., p. 13.

[66] Douglas R. McLachlan, *Reclaiming Authentic Fundamentalism*, pp. 125–37. He treats familial separation as something different from ecclesiastical separation, leaving some doubt that familial separation can actually be organizational in application. "Functional severance" is the explanation given for the term familial separation (p. 132), but the whole point seems to be set in distinction from ecclesiastical separation.

[67] As does Sandlin, "Some Thoughts on Secondary Separation," p. 13.

who tolerate compromise, or who are immoral or otherwise disqualified for religious leadership.

CONCLUSION

It would appear that fundamentalism still retains its original biblical and historic identity markers. These have not changed. Only the religious and cultural milieu has changed. The impact of the relativism of the 1960s has had a trickle-down effect on certain aspects of the fundamentalist movement, causing some now to begin a new search for self-identity and to come to a somewhat revisionist and reductionist idea of fundamentalism's content and history. This in turn has dictated certain proposals of change and course corrections for the movement and thus for the prospects of its future as well.

There will always be a remnant of historic fundamentalists despite the changes and calls for "relevancy" that seem to be increasing. And it seems outwardly, at least, that that remnant decreases in size and influence in proportion to the calls from within and without to tone down on militancy and separatism in favor of a fundamentalism more palatable to current tastes. The present cultural setting wants a non-confrontational, affirming, need-meeting, and positive message from the church, if it wants to hear the church at all; what one calls "hot tub religion."[68] Fundamentalists are not immune from the temptation to be drawn in that direction and to tone down, or at least pronounce less clearly, their historic distinctives in the interests of gaining a larger hearing. There are calls from within the general new evangelical community for "reforging" a biblical identity[69] or "revisioning" evangelical theology.[70] Some of these are cogent remedies for the evangelical malaise; some are not. Other observers are apparently pessimistically uncertain about the whole future of evangelicalism.[71] Similar assessments were made of fundamentalism in the 1940s and 50s and again in the 1970s. These came from within its own ranks. We now can see that this attitude of "reforming" fundamentalism was actually alien and detrimental to the real genius of the movement. Thus one wonders if the present uncertainty about the self-identity of fundamentalism and the proposals for

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[68]J. I. Packer, *Hot Tub Religion* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1988), chap. 4. While Packer is anything but a fundamentalist, he has diagnosed correctly much of the present religious scene.

[69]John Seel, *The Evangelical Forfeit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), chap. 5.

[70]Stanley J. Grenz, *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

[71]David F. Wells, *No Place For Truth*, and its sequel, *God In the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), chaps. 8, 9.

its restructuring are signs of a deterioration that has already taken place in some influential minds.

Fundamentalism may be defined as a religious movement committed to a certain core of biblical, orthodox, and historic doctrine, mainly concerning the Bible and Jesus Christ, a movement that is particularly distinguished by the doctrine and practice of ecclesiastical separation along with an aggressive affirmation and defense of those doctrines and a militant exposure of non-biblical expressions and practices.