

## **EARLY FUNDAMENTALISM'S LEGACY: WHAT IS IT AND WILL IT ENDURE THROUGH THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY?**<sup>1</sup>

by  
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A legacy is a gift of property, a bequest, handed down from an ancestor or predecessor. It often involves something of great value for the donor, whose expectation is that the recipient will share his appreciation for the gift by bequeathing it to others. A biblical example would be the Lord's Supper: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread" (1 Cor 11:23).<sup>3</sup> This is legacy language. Christ revealed to the Apostle Paul, and he in turn instructed the church, that Communion be a continual and enduring ordinance. All of Christendom has acknowledged this. The legacy of gospel truth also carries with it a mandate of perpetuation: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim 2:2). The "things" are the traditions, the necessary doctrines of Christian belief. From its early beginnings in the late nineteenth century the fundamentalist movement<sup>4</sup> has embraced a body of indispensable core tenets, essential verities of the Christian faith that make Christianity what it is without which Christianity is something else. They are the defining irreducible elements of the faith once delivered unto the saints by the Apostles: the triunity of the sovereign God, creation as the direct act of God, the perfect deity and humanity of the person of Christ, his virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection and second coming, the

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<sup>1</sup>This article is affectionately dedicated to Dr. Rolland McCune, my good friend, colleague, and mentor, whose life and ministry epitomize the best qualities of fundamentalism.

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<sup>3</sup>All Scripture references are from the *New American Standard Bible* (1995).

<sup>4</sup>I suggest the dates for early fundamentalism as 1876, with the beginning of the Bible conference movement, through the 1920s when fundamentalism formed organizations and strategies to oppose denominational liberalism.

absolute authority of an inerrant Bible, the utter sinfulness of man, justification by faith alone, eternal punishment in a literal hell for the unregenerate, and eternal reward in heaven for believers.<sup>5</sup> Early fundamentalists believed that in order to maintain a pure church these doctrines (and those attending them) must be truthfully proclaimed and faithfully instilled into the minds of a posterity made responsible for continuing the process.<sup>6</sup> They saw this as a divine commission and urgently pressed home the claims of a Christ whose gospel is sufficient to set sinners free from the bondage of sin. They braced themselves against the winds of blatant heresy and the subtler breezes of doctrinal compromise, refusing, as true Protestants, to succumb to the pressures of preaching an emasculated Christian message.

In addition to the essential historical fundamentals of the faith there is a set of distinguishable characteristics that have generally identified fundamentalism as a viable historical movement from its inception. I will attempt to present plausible arguments for the ones I am discussing in this article, since even those who own the name fundamentalist would disagree among themselves as to what should be included. It seems to me that in order to suggest a list of defensible features of any movement one must engage in the same discipline historically that a Bible student does exegetically—he must determine authorial intent. In other words, we must consider what the fathers of fundamentalism believed that produced their movement to begin with, and then we must ask, are their beliefs worth preserving and defending? I think they are for at least three reasons: they are a positive means of enabling fundamentalists to better advance the essentials, their defense exposes the errors of those who oppose them, and they provide a standard of authenticity for the movement.

When we look at a list of tenets, we might also ask how many items could be eliminated without compromise of identity. But this is the approach of reductionism, often practiced for the sake of acceptance or appeasement, and it is a constant temptation. We are only fooling ourselves if we think we are impervious to it. Another approach

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<sup>5</sup>There have been various lists of the fundamentals, few being limited to only five. One of the earliest listings having great significance for the movement was formulated as a fourteen-article creed at the 1878 Niagara Bible Conference. See *The Fundamentals of the Faith as Expressed in the Articles of Belief of the Niagara Bible Conference* (Chicago: Great Commission Prayer League, n.d.), and David Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1986), pp. 375–79.

<sup>6</sup>Founded as a fundamentalist institution, Bryan College has, along with many other evangelical schools, departed from this mandate as indicated by a banner at its web site: “We’re here to educate. Not indoctrinate.” This accommodates a liberal mindset which would have been rejected by early fundamentalists.

could be, if these are worthy of our movement, if they have exemplified it, if they are above all else truthful, then what can we do to retain them, even strengthening them at points where meaning or articulation is weak? These distinctive marks of fundamentalism have been and probably will continue to be refined or otherwise modified; there is, admittedly, a need for that, but I contend that fundamentalists must not disregard them if they intend to remain a legitimate force for New Testament Christianity and a potent opponent of its enemies. If a lamentably fragmented and diverse fundamentalism is to survive as a redemptive Christian movement, its adherents must not only be reminded to tenaciously maintain the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament, they must be recalled to its historical root values and distinctives.

### DEFINITION OF FUNDAMENTALISM

Before proceeding with a discussion of distinctives we might do well to define fundamentalism. The typical "outsider" view is offered by George Marsden: "A fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something.... A more precise statement of the same point is that an American fundamentalist is an evangelical who is militant in opposition to liberal theology in the churches or to changes in cultural values or mores."<sup>7</sup> The first part of this definition is often the belittling stereotype of the fundamentalist by the religious and political left. Yet there is truth in the statement; fundamentalists are angry, or more appropriately, righteously indignant, over the invasion of infidelity into Christian institutions and the attack by liberal activists on Christian values and symbols. Such an attitude highlights one of fundamentalism's distinctives—militancy, the very point that Marsden is emphasizing.

An "insider's" perspective expressing more precisely fundamentalism's essentially theological character<sup>8</sup> could be worded this way: *fundamentalism is a movement committed to belief in and affirmation of the historic biblical doctrines essential to the Christian faith and insistent on separation from all forms of apostasy and ungodliness*. Such a definition stresses a fact often overlooked: it is essentially the historic

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<sup>7</sup>George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Over the years, some historians, beginning with Ernest Sandeen and George Marsden in the 1970s and 80s, have realized that fundamentalism should be considered as more than a subculture, studied only as a sociological phenomenon in American society, but that it is "ultimately rooted in doctrinal, theological traditions and must be understood on that basis, as a theological movement" (Mark Ellingsen, *The Evangelical Movement: Growth, Impact, Controversy, Dialog* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988], p. 54).

continuation of biblical Christianity. Fundamentalism as a movement meant a resurgence of biblical apologetics, begun at Pentecost, renewed with the Protestant Reformation, and answering in the late nineteenth century to a new enemy—modernism.<sup>9</sup> Early fundamentalists were quick to affirm that their beliefs were as old as the New Testament.

Fundamentalism is primitive Christianity.... Without doubt the position of Fundamentalists is that of the New Testament Christians, and the faith they hold is the same gospel which Paul preached, which even then was a stumblingblock to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks, but proved itself the power and wisdom of God to all who believed.<sup>10</sup>

Former superintendent of Moody Bible Institute James M. Gray (1851–1935) reflected an oppositional character to the movement when he stated that “there is nothing new in Fundamentalism except, it may be, its name. It is the same old ‘offense of the cross.’”<sup>11</sup> The basic beliefs of historic fundamentalism have always been those of true Bible-believing Christians.<sup>12</sup> Yet it is also relatively new as an organized attempt to combat liberalism.<sup>13</sup> Probably its closest historical

<sup>9</sup>Gerald Lee Priest, “An Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon” (Ph.D. dissertation, Bob Jones University, 1988), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Frank Goodchild, *Twenty Questions: What, Why and How?* (n.p.: General Committee on Fundamentalism Within the Northern Baptist Convention, 1924), p. 7. See also, *Scripture Inspiration Versus Scientific Imagination: Messages Delivered at the Great Christian Fundamentals Conference at Los Angeles, California* (Los Angeles: Biola Book Room, 1922), pp. 9–10, 42.

<sup>11</sup>James M. Gray, “The Deadline of Doctrine Around the Church,” *Moody Monthly*, November 1922, p. 101. It was for this very reason Gray did not care for the term “fundamentalist.” He felt like biblical Christianity did not need a new name for what New Testament believers have historically contended for all along: “Fundamentalism is simply evangelical Christianity.”

<sup>12</sup>Well into their movement, fundamentalists were still calling attention to this fact: “The theme of the Reformation, like the cry of the fundamentalists today, was ‘back to the Bible and the Apostles,’ with no mediator between men and God except Christ. Fundamentalists are in the direct line of succession to those preaching this same message” (William Ward Ayer, Speech to the National Association of Evangelicals [April 1956], cited in Louis Gasper, *The Fundamentalist Movement, 1930–1956* [reprint of 1963 ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981], p. 3).

<sup>13</sup>One of the latest and perhaps best treatments of American liberalism is found in two volumes by Gary Dorrien, both titled, *The Making of American Liberal Theology*. The first volume is subtitled, *Imagining Progressive Religion 1805–1900* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001); the second volume is *Idealism, Realism, and Modernity 1900–1950* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2003). Older but noteworthy works are William R. Hutchison, *American Protestant Thought in the Liberal Era* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1968), and Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983). Liberals themselves, these authors would not admit the fundamentalist view that liberalism is anti-Christian. On the contrary, Dorrien defines liberal

counterpart, another movement with which fundamentalism has historical and doctrinal antecedents, is Puritanism. It is like Puritanism in its espousal of the central doctrines of Scripture, in its militant defense of those doctrines, and in its concern for holiness. Interestingly, like Puritanism, fundamentalism has had both ecclesiastically nonconformist and separatist elements.<sup>14</sup> Fundamentalism, then, is both a historic perpetuation of biblical orthodoxy and a reaction to the modern enemies of Scripture. It is an affirmation and an attitude—an affirmation of belief in absolutes and an attitude of loyalty to Christ and his Truth, which only can set men free to submissively serve their Creator (John 8:32).

Fundamentalists have also recognized that every affirmation of truth demands a corresponding repudiation of error. Hence, fundamentalism is a polemical as well as an apologetical movement. Early fundamentalists were fond of drawing analogies between their movement and the Protestant Reformation.<sup>15</sup> When Luther stood before the German Diet in Worms that spring day in 1521 and said "Nein!" to the pope and the emperor, he was attacking the Church of Rome, but he was not rebelling against God. On the contrary, he was saying an emphatic "Ja!" to God. One man was declaring that the system he rejected was not of God. The truth is of God, and the papal system was false, a pernicious betrayal of the truth. At that moment Luther was behaving as a militant fundamentalist; he was compelled by the truth of Scripture to reject any system, however pervasive, that countered God's absolute authority—the Bible. Fundamentalists saw themselves as modern day Luthers attacking another type of apostasy just as insidious<sup>16</sup> as Romanism—liberalism. Roman Catholicism perverted the

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theology quite positively as open "to the verdicts of modern intellectual inquiry, especially the natural and social sciences;...commitment to the authority of individual reason and experience;...[the] conception of Christianity as an ethical way of life;...favoring of moral concepts of atonement; and...commitment to make Christianity credible and socially relevant to modern people" (*Imagining Progressive Religion*, p. xxiii).

<sup>14</sup>Perhaps the most obvious example would be the Fundamentalist Fellowship (1920) of the Northern Baptist Convention (the puritans proper, i.e., the "stay-inners" who fought a losing battle to rid their denomination of liberals); the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (1932) were the "come-outers" who, like the British Separatists, left the denomination they considered irredeemably apostate.

<sup>15</sup>W. B. Riley viewed fundamentalism as the "new Protestantism" ("The Christian Fundamentals Movement: Its Battles, Its Achievements, Its Certain Victory," in *Scriptural Inspiration Versus Scientific Imagination*, pp. 7–11; the gospel fundamentalists preached was the message of justification by faith alone; see J. W. Lawrence, "The Failure of Modernism to Attract to Church or Win to Christ," in *ibid.*, p. 42).

<sup>16</sup>This is an apt term often used by early fundamentalists. It derives from the Latin *insidiae*, which means "ambush." According to the fundamentalists, this is

Christian faith by adding to it ecclesiastical traditions and papal pronouncements;<sup>17</sup> liberal Protestant denominations, on the other hand, denied the faith by subtraction—eliminating the supernatural. Indeed, early fundamentalists considered modernism<sup>18</sup> as “more of a bane than Romanism. Romanism has the virtue of solidarity, unity and order, but Modernism leaves nothing in its wake but lawlessness and license, every man leaning to his own understanding.”<sup>19</sup> In each case, what was left was a profane system, superficially Christian but inherently devoid of pure doctrine.<sup>20</sup> Typical of all apostates, they both rejected the righteousness of Christ and replaced it with their own. In the case of Romanism the replacement was traditionalism; for liberal Protestantism it was rationalism. Remarkably, the process of negotiating the nuptials of a marriage between Protestantism and Romanism via ecumenism requires a rationalization of tradition and a consequent distortion of biblical doctrine. For example, advocates of Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT, 1994) would have us believe that the Reformation formula “justification by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone” can be accommodated to the ECT dictum on justification by omitting “alone” simply because the former is a matter of tradition. The clever bit of rationalization is that “the formula itself is a sixteenth-century theological construct that is not found in the Bible.... ECT chose to stay with the affirmation of undisputed biblical truth.”<sup>21</sup> This suggests that Luther and the other Reformers were really

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exactly what liberals were attempting to do: ambush and hijack orthodox Christian institutions.

<sup>17</sup>Of course, most Roman Catholic theologians would not consider the “additions” a perversion of orthodoxy but an enhancement. See Stephen Bevans, “Reaching For Fidelity: Roman Catholic Theology Today,” in *Doing Theology in Today’s World: Essays in Honor of Kenneth S. Kantzer*, ed. John D. Woodbridge and Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), esp. pp. 324–25.

<sup>18</sup>Modernism is the cultural equivalent of the more theologically-oriented term “liberalism.”

<sup>19</sup>Lawrence, “The Failure of Modernism,” pp. 44–45.

<sup>20</sup>Both liberals and conservatives were willing to admit that their religions were radically different from each other, but only the latter stated that liberalism was un-Christian (cf. Charles Clayton Morrison, “Fundamentalism and Modernism, Two Religions,” *The Christian Century*, 3 January 1924, pp. 5–6, and J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1923], p. 7). See also, W. B. Riley, *The Conflict of Christianity With Its Counterfeits* (n.p.: W. B. Riley, [1939?]), p. 134, and James Barr, *Fundamentalism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Richard John Neuhaus, “The Catholic Difference,” in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together: Toward a Common Mission*, ed. Charles Colson and Richard John Neuhaus (Dallas: Word, 1995), p. 200.

Using this kind of logic, one could argue that Unitarianism is acceptable since the word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible.

mistaken about the Roman Catholic Church. "Catholicism is actually biblical since it teaches forgiveness of sins by faith in God's grace, so there really isn't that much difference between evangelicals and devout Catholics after all. We can find common ground in the Apostles Creed and go forward together."<sup>22</sup> So much for the protest of Protestantism, a term which has become a mere convenience for many professing Christians who happen not to be Roman Catholic. The goal is to obliterate doctrinal differences or, at the least, to minimize them. Such a proposal would require a redefinition and reinterpretation of evangelical doctrine, which is exactly what so-called "edgy" (read radical) evangelicals are trying to do.<sup>23</sup> Adoption of such a proposal amounts to a betrayal of the gospel and results in a practical re-enslavement to a counterfeit, devilish system. If we use apostolic doctrine as a standard, then evangelical Roman Catholic is as much an oxymoron as evangelical liberal.

Many so-called evangelical institutions which started out professing fundamentalism are now trying to define the gospel in socially redemptive ways. Recently, Fuller Theological Seminary devoted the pages of its *News and Notes* to the question "What Is the Gospel?" Various faculty members defined it in terms of "God's concern for systems of injustice and oppression," and suggested that the traditional terms of "justification by faith" and "born again" be replaced with more culturally relevant expressions for "our day." According to president Richard Mouw, Jesus' ministry to Zacchaeus represents the "larger seeking and saving mission" of Christ who wants to deliver those held captive by an oppressive economic and political system. The practical offshoot is that we should now reach the AIDS and flood victims of Africa and China, to relieve these lost "sheep." We are never given a theological explanation of the gospel's essence as a vicarious penal atonement for hell-deserving sinners. Instead, we are told that Jesus' weeping for Lazarus extends to his grieving over war and starvation in the world. Nowhere are we given an explanation of justification by

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<sup>22</sup>See my review of *Justification by Faith Alone: Affirming the Doctrine by Which the Church and the Individual Stands or Falls*, ed. John MacArthur, et al., in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 2 (Fall 1997): 127–34. Not surprisingly, the real locus of unity for ECT is the social gospel, what Charles Colson calls "the ecumenism of the trenches," a catch-phrase holding attraction for many evangelicals ("The Common Cultural Task: The Culture War from a Protestant Perspective," in *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, pp. 30–33.) "These are the reasons for 'Evangelicals and Catholics Together.' Because, to bring God's truth about the public good into the public square and to resist the abortionists and mercy-killers, the relativists and the tyrants, Christians must stand together" (*ibid.*, p. 38).

<sup>23</sup>See Robert E. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), and Rolland D. McCune's excellent review of this work in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (Fall 2003): 131–48.

faith alone and its implications, nor what it means to be born again, nor the significance of the resurrection as a vindication of the righteousness of God in the crucifixion of his Son—all essential elements of the gospel. All we are really given is a retreaded version of the old liberal social gospel. It differs little from the version Walter Rauschenbusch promoted in the 1920s. Fuller's gospel is not just poorly defined; it is misdefined.<sup>24</sup> The challenge is whether the present generation of fundamentalists will pass an undefiled Christian message to the next generation or an elasticized, ambiguous evangel corrupted by the relativism of a post-modern culture.<sup>25</sup>

Doctrinal defection is normally a gradual process, but nevertheless a deadly one. Consider many of America's elite educational institutions<sup>26</sup> and religious denominations,<sup>27</sup> founded as nurseries of piety,

<sup>24</sup> Marianne Meye Thompson et al., *Theology, News and Notes* 51 (Spring 2004): 2–19.

<sup>25</sup> A plethora of works deplored the erosion of evangelical theology by Enlightenment rationalism and post-modern relativism have perceptively identified the basic problem as "selfism." "The doctrine of the utter otherness, or holiness, of God has been replaced by the idol of the moral self. God is slick and slack, happiness is a trade-off of private interests, worship is entertainment, and the 'church is a mall in which the religious, their pockets filled with the coinage of need, do their business'" (John D. Hannah, "Evangelicalism, Conversion, and the Gospel: Have We Sold Our Heritage for Relevance?" in *The Coming Evangelical Crisis: Current Challenges to the Authority of Scripture and the Gospel*, ed. John H. Armstrong [Chicago: Moody Press, 1996], p. 156, citing David Wells, *No Place for Truth; Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993], p. 300). Other critical sources are: James Davidson Hunter, *American Evangelicalism: Conservative Religion and the Quandary of Modernity* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1983); Michael Scott Horton, *Beyond Culture Wars* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994); Os Guinness and John Seel, eds., *No God But God: Breaking with the Idols of Our Age* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992); David S. Dockery, *The Challenge of Post-Modernism: An Evangelical Engagement* (Wheaton: Victor, 1995); Philip Graham Ryken, *My Father's World: Meditations on Christianity and Culture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2002); and Robert H. Gundry, *Jesus the Word According to John the Sectarian: A Paleofundamentalist Manifesto for Contemporary Evangelicalism, Especially Its Elites, in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). Although some solutions to the evangelical malaise provided by these authors would not be acceptable to fundamentalists, e.g., mere reformation (vs. revival), spiritual revitalization of the institutional church as equated with the kingdom (vs. separation from apostate denominations), their recall to the supremacy of God, orthodox doctrine, and vital faith is welcome.

<sup>26</sup> Marsden traces the influence of the Enlightenment on predominantly Protestant educational institutions in America leading to their secularization. "The American university system was built on a foundation of evangelical Protestant colleges.... By the 1920s the evangelical Protestantism of the old-time colleges had been effectively excluded from leading university classrooms" (*The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1994], p. 4). "Until recently Protestants and their heirs were overwhelmingly dominant in setting the standards for American universities. If these schools had a soul,...its lineage was Protestant" (idem., "The Soul of the American University: A Historical

but which are now havens of apostasy, agnosticism, and hedonism. Surrender to the inveterate enemy is always a stronger temptation when he brings a palm branch. But at stake are the crown jewels, the fundamentals, the absolute non-negotiables that are essential to biblical Christianity. To get at these, Satan would cunningly wear us down by causing us to compromise what early fundamentalists held dear—the primary marks of their movement. Loss of the fundamentals means loss of life—the death of the soul of fundamentalism. Loss of distinctives can mean distortion, a crippling and weakening of the movement, leaving it vulnerable to compromise and eventual capitulation. I suggest that the legacy of early fundamentalism is made up of at least seven marks or identifying features which set it apart as a distinguishable movement. They are not exclusive to the movement, but they are significant qualifiers of it. They are early fundamentalism's legacy to us.

### DISTINCTIVES OF FUNDAMENTALISM

We may note something of a level of importance in listing the historical marks of fundamentalism. More attention is given to the first three points, since they contribute to the definition of fundamentalism. The fourth distinctive, premillennialism, is somewhat controversial and, therefore, further explanation and evidences are necessary. The other distinctives are not essential to the movement but do serve to describe its character and early direction.

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Overview," in *The Secularization of the Academy*, ed. George M. Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], p. 10). The principle of scientific investigation replaced divine revelation as the source of knowledge and this killed the Protestant soul of the university. See also, Douglas Sloan, *Faith and Knowledge: Mainline Protestantism and American Higher Education* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) and James Tunstead Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>27</sup>While analyzing the subject of church growth using a marketing model, Roger Finke and Rodney Stark suggest that one reason mainline denominations have lost membership is because of a rejection of doctrine in favor of cultural relevance (*The Churching of America 1776–1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1992]). The authors argue repeatedly "that as denominations have modernized their doctrines and embraced temporal values, they have gone into decline" (p. 18) with "upstart" sects replacing them with a renewed emphasis on original distinctives requiring involvement and sacrifice. The oft-repeated complaint of the orthodox was that mainline denominations "had fallen into the hands of a 'self-seeking, hireling ministry, refusing to preach the whole Gospel'" (p. 168, citing Methodist bishop Richard B. Wilke, *And Are We Yet Alive?* [Nashville: Abington, 1986], p. 342). Such an analysis should give renewed hope to fundamentalists whose message requires strict commitment to biblical truth.

### **Defining Marks of Primary Importance**

The first three marks of fundamentalism—militancy, separation, and a literal interpretation of the Bible—contribute to the historical definition of fundamentalism. These traits delineate *how* fundamentalists address issues and are therefore generally methodological in nature, although doctrinal content unavoidably plays a significant role as a motivational factor in fundamentalist apologetics.<sup>28</sup> For example, when the liberal preacher deliberately tells his congregation that the virgin birth of Christ is a myth or that Jonah's seizure by a large fish was an etiological device to convey a moral lesson and not an actual miracle, the fundamentalist justifiably defends the orthodox view regarding these events on the basis of a literal hermeneutic.<sup>29</sup> He has a compelling reason to attack the liberal for advocating heresy, but he would also have grounds to deny him Christian fellowship and separate from him (Gal 1:8–9; 2 John 9–11; Rom 16:17–18).<sup>30</sup> Why? Because the liberal is being anti-Christian when he denies cardinal teachings of Christianity, in this case, the incarnation and scriptural inerrancy (1 John 2:22; 4:3). Furthermore, he is impugning the very integrity of

<sup>28</sup>While outsiders to the movement examine fundamentalism as a cultural phenomenon, historic fundamentalists themselves have insisted that doctrine is the essence of and impetus for it. A recent unpublished analysis of current fundamentalism perceptively identifies two distinct factions of the movement: cultural fundamentalists and historic fundamentalists. The former are a boisterous group who separate from and treat as enemies “those who do not see eye-to-eye with them on the external issues of culture.” These are characterized by legalism, abrasiveness, and ignorance; they “operate in an exegetical vacuum.” The historic fundamentalists, on the other hand, “view theology as the rudder which guides the ship, and are vitally interested in the doctrinal stance of the church, and if the church’s viewpoint is fully adopted by the pastor.” Historic fundamentalists are marked by seven words rife with theological content: Christ, Scripture, church, grace, holiness, separation, and love” (Dan Davey, “The Label of ‘Fundamentalism,’” an essay presented at the Conference on Biblical Belief and Balance [26–28 July 2004, Indianapolis], pp. 2, 4–5). There is evidence for such a polarity of views throughout the history of fundamentalism. One obvious example in early fundamentalism would be the contrast between the flamboyant J. Frank Norris and two contemporaries, A. C. Dixon (an older) and Robert Ketcham (a younger), who represented well the seven qualities Davey mentions (Priest, “Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon,” esp. pp. 412–14, and J. Murray Murdoch, *Portrait of Obedience: The Biography of Robert T. Ketcham* [Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1979], esp. pp. 177–87).

<sup>29</sup>By literal, fundamentalists mean normative. Not everything is to be taken as absolutely literal in the Bible. What matters is the author’s intention. For example, John did not mean to suggest that Christ was actually a lamb or a lion in Revelation 5. He meant to teach what these animals suggest—sacrifice and sovereignty, which are quite literally essential qualities of the Savior.

<sup>30</sup>For an excellent discussion of separation from false teachers, see Mark Sidwell, *The Dividing Line: Understanding and Applying Biblical Separation* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1998), pp. 41–53.

God, who intends for these miraculous events to be believed just as they are recorded. In the first instance of mythologizing the virgin birth, the liberal is denying an essential element of the Christian faith; to call it a myth is not merely to "reinterpret it," but to practically reject what is necessary to the incarnation. Both Christology and soteriology are seriously jeopardized. To deny the literalness of the Jonah miracle is to question the integrity of the biblical narrator. These are the clear implications of a liberal hermeneutic, but they do not bother the liberal because he operates from the presumption that the Bible is a product of faulty human engineering.<sup>31</sup> What is incredible is that some sentimental pietists will take greater umbrage with the fundamentalist who "questions the character" of a "fellow Christian" than with the liberal who slanders the character of God. But to reiterate the truth of the matter: the liberal by deliberately denying biblical miracles is not being a Christian. To call him Christian is a travesty.<sup>32</sup> It is as foolish as conscientiously calling a dog a cat—that we can ascribe to either ignorance or idiocy; but much more seriously, it is practically calling God a liar—that we must call an egregious blasphemy. When early fundamentalists and those speaking on behalf of the fundamentalist cause, such as J. Gresham Machen, began pointing this out, they were verbally flayed by the liberals who accused them of being unchristian and heretical.<sup>33</sup> Such is the insanity<sup>34</sup> of irrationality of the rationalists.

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<sup>31</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick was confident that "every idea in the Bible started from primitive and childlike origins" (*Modern Use of the Bible* [New York: Macmillan, 1924], p. 11). After masterfully critiquing Fosdick's gospel as a contradiction to the Bible's version of it, I. M. Haldeman (1845–1933) concludes that "Fosdick is the most dangerous teacher in the professing church" (*Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick's Book: The Modern Use of the Bible* [Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1925], p. 84). Haldeman is an excellent example of one type of fundamentalist apologetics, presuppositionalism. His argumentation is based solely on the propositional statements of divine revelation, which he assumes *a priori* to be true. Evidentialism, as derived from Scottish Common Sense Realism and promoted in Presbyterian schools in various forms, was another apologetic utilized by fundamentalists. An example of this approach is *Many Infallible Proofs: The Evidences of Christianity* (Chicago: Revell, 1886) by Arthur T. Pierson (1837–1911), one of the foremost missiologists of early fundamentalism. Interestingly, both Haldeman (Baptist) and Pierson (Presbyterian) were premillennialists.

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence observed in 1922 that "however eloquent these [false] teachers may be, however elevated their morality, they are preaching something entirely alien from what was once meant by Christianity" ("The Failure of Modernism," p. 46).

<sup>33</sup> Carl McIntire, *The Death of a Church* (Collingswood, NJ: Christian Beacon Press, 1967), pp. 143–62; Ned B. Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1987), pp. 469–92.

<sup>34</sup> This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is asserting paradoxically in 1 Cor 1:18–2:16—the natural mind is insane. It considers ridiculously foolish what is actually wise.

## Militancy

There is general consensus that militancy is a *trademark* of fundamentalism; for many it is the major distinguishing characteristic of the movement. It is combative—apologetical of the truth, polemical of error. When they began to organize a strategy to oppose modernism in the Northern Baptist Convention, fundamentalists defined themselves as those who did “battle royal for the fundamentals.”<sup>35</sup> Contending for the faith has never been an option for the fundamentalist; it has been an obligation based on biblical injunctions from Jude and elsewhere in the Bible. Militancy was a feature of biblical Christianity from the church’s very inception (cf. Acts 2:23, 36; 3:14–15, 26; 4:12, 19–20; ch. 7; 8:20–21; chs. 22–26). Fundamentalists have found security in the company of a Peter at Pentecost or a Paul at Mars Hill. Furthermore, they have not ignored their duty to rebuke other Christian leaders in the manner of Paul’s correction of Peter in Galatians 2:11–14. Fundamentalists have historically and persistently warned against the sin of sympathy with unbelief. A participant in the broader coalition of fundamentalists, Scottish hymn writer and premillennialist Horatius Bonar (1808–1889), declared in 1864,

Christianity...does not fear to speak the stern word of condemnation against error, nor to raise its voice against surrounding evils, under the pretext it is not of this world; it does not shrink from giving honest proof, lest it come under the charge of displaying an unchristian spirit. It calls sin *sin*, on whomsoever it is found, and would rather risk the accusation of being actuated by a bad spirit than not discharge an explicit duty.... The religion of both the Old and New Testaments is marked by fervent outspoken testimonies against evil. To speak smooth things in such a case may be sentimentalism, but it is not Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

Some have suggested that fundamentalism’s period of conception<sup>37</sup> was characterized by irenicism versus the combativeness of the later periods of denominational conflict.<sup>38</sup> However, the *Fundamentals: A*

<sup>35</sup>Curtis Lee Laws, “Convention Side Lights,” *Watchman-Examiner*, 1 July 1920, p. 834.

<sup>36</sup>*God’s Way of Holiness* (reprint ed., Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999), p. 114.

<sup>37</sup>I would suggest that this period covers the events of 1876 to about 1919 (from the Swampscott conference to the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association), an era characterized by the establishment of fundamentalist ministries, especially Bible conferences and Bible institutes.

<sup>38</sup>E.g., John Fea, “Understanding the Changing Facade of Twentieth-Century American Protestant Fundamentalism: Toward a Historical Definition,” *Trinity Journal* 15 (Fall 1994): 185.

*Testimony to the Truth*, a series of twelve booklets written between 1910 and 1915, were published for the very purpose of defending the faith against false teaching.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, comments by early fundamentalists portray a militant spirit against encroaching liberalism. In 1890, George Needham (1846–1902), one of the early pioneers of fundamentalism, eloquently and forcefully warned his auditors against apostasy at a Brooklyn conference on prophecy.

Perilous times have come. The Old Book is being assaulted as never before.... Instructors and infidels, doctors of divinity and defamers of divinity, professors of religion and protestors against religion, higher critics and critics for hire, are seeking to undermine the Word of God and blow up the rock on which we stand.... We, notwithstanding, believe the Old Book from cover to cover. We have no sort of sympathy with what is called the higher criticism, or any other work of darkness.... We have no need of Redactors. We believe that all Scripture is God-breathed;... We believe its prophecies, its promises, its precepts, its stories of Eve and Lot's wife, of Jonah and of the flood.... We believe in the ultimate triumph of this book. The Word of our God shall stand forever.<sup>40</sup>

A. J. Gordon (1836–1895) did not officially break with his Baptist denomination, but then it was not as yet a convention in his day. He did, however, militantly oppose liberalism. In writing against higher criticism of the Bible, he said, “Biblical criticism, so called, affords little comfort to a devout and serious minded [sic]. It seems to be a kind of laborious diversion of learned and advanced theologians. But true soldiers of the Cross have little serious respect for these carpet-knights of divinity.”<sup>41</sup> Bruce Shelley suggests that one reason Gordon did not lead a crusade against higher criticism is that he believed it would not endure: “Higher criticism seems to be carrying all before it now; but soon the rage will be over and it will be laid away among the curiosities of outworn speculation.”<sup>42</sup> Men like R. A. Torrey (1856–1928), W. B.

<sup>39</sup>Missing from later editions of the *Fundamentals* is editor A. C. Dixon’s expression of gratitude for the controversy these “little volumes” provoked. He also added a prayer request “that the Word of God may continue to ‘run and be glorified,’ that the unbelief, which in pulpit and pew has been paralyzing the Church of Christ, may be overcome, and that world-wide revival may be the result” (*The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, 12 vols. [Chicago: Testimony Publishing Company, n.d.], 5:4).

<sup>40</sup>George C. Needham, ed., *Primitive Paths in Prophecy: Prophetic Addresses Given at the Brooklyn Conference of the Baptist Society for Bible Study* (Chicago: Gospel Publication, 1890), pp. 7–8.

<sup>41</sup>Watchword 6 (February, 1884): 98, cited in Bruce Shelley, “A. J. Gordon and Biblical Criticism,” Foundations 6 (January–March, 1971): 73. A carpet knight was one dubbed at court by favor, not having won his spurs by military service in the field. Gordon probably means to convey that liberals were not true soldiers of the cross.

<sup>42</sup>Gordon, Watchword 8 (August, 1891): 197, cited in Shelley, “A. J. Gordon and

Riley (1861–1947), and A. C. Dixon (1854–1925), who represented fundamentalism in both its early and later stages, did not suddenly change their stance from peaceful to polemical; they were always vocal opponents of liberalism and other enemies of the gospel.<sup>43</sup> In the late 1800s, Dixon deplored the results of liberalism:

In ninety percent of the New England towns the large majority have no intelligent faith about anything, and do not wish to have any.... The condition seems utterly hopeless. In such places the liberal preaching of the past decades and the refined criticism of the holy Bible have enabled the people to throw off nearly all restraint of conscience, so that God is no longer loved nor feared, and human life grows cheap. I am sure of this, that wherever the pulpits of New England have been untrue to the Bible and the deity and the authority of Christ, in those places irreverence, profanity, immorality, and godlessness...exist.<sup>44</sup>

Early fundamentalists shared a sense of outrage against modernism for its ecclesiastical piracy. One reason W. B. Riley did not leave the Northern Baptist Convention until the last days of his life, was his reluctance to allow the liberals to steal what fundamentalists had built—their schools, mission agencies, and churches.<sup>45</sup> He refused to leave without a fight.<sup>46</sup>

Militants have often been caricatured as frothy windbags whose uninformed knee-jerk reactions to liberal allegations manifested an anti-intellectualism and consequent loss of credibility with “thinking” people. There is some justification for this indictment upon the lesser ranks and so-called lunatic fringe elements of fundamentalism—and they have always been around. But one only has to sample the writings of a Gordon, Brookes, Gray, Dixon, Riley, and other leading fundamentalists to realize that these men were well-read, knowledgeable, and articulate when it came to defining and defending their position. They documented what they said against the liberals, and they said it forthrightly and eloquently.<sup>47</sup> The common ploy of the liberal was either to

Biblical Criticism,” p. 75.

<sup>43</sup>Priest, “Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon,” pp. 162–63.

<sup>44</sup>Dixon sermon, “The Fruits of Liberalism in New England” (Nashville: A. C. Dixon Collection, Southern Baptist Historical Society, n.d.), pp. 1–2.

<sup>45</sup>Robert Delnay, “A History of the Baptist Bible Union,” (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1963), pp. 34–35.

<sup>46</sup>Riley, *Conflict of Christianity*, p. 136. Riley was wont to say, “While creating nothing, it [modernism] has sought to capture everything” (“Why the Baptist Bible Union,” sermon preached before the First Annual Convention of the Baptist Bible Union of America, Kansas City, MO, May 15, 1923, p. 6).

<sup>47</sup>In his *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), Mark

dismiss or demean them without answering their arguments.<sup>48</sup> The idea that militancy and scholarship are mutually exclusive is the result of a superficial pietism which is content to soft sell the gospel as a pragmatic means to happiness instead of a doctrinally potent force against evil. What is needed is the voice of a prophet declaring divine ultimatums. Down through the years, fundamentalists have raised a clarion voice against false systems of liberalism which are detrimental to Christianity: evolution, higher criticism of the Bible, neo-liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and new evangelicalism,<sup>49</sup> for example. Today, various forms of heresy are portrayed in more subtle guise,<sup>50</sup> but nevertheless

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Noll suggests that fundamentalists were incompetent (even Manichaean!) for discounting the findings of secular science in favor of a hermeneutic conditioned by Baconian common sense. By being dogmatic about their Bibles, fundamentalists lost the opportunity to engage the world in meaningful dialogue. For example, we should be open to other ways God made nature and allow that the Genesis account may be mythological. The clear implication is that if Christians begin with a dogmatic interpretation of Scripture they are closed-minded. Such "naive positivism," Noll says, is a scandal of the mind (pp. 196–208); thus, if we do not consider other options than literally-interpreted scriptural ones, we just cannot be taken seriously. Fundamentalists have rightly maintained, to the contrary, that it is a foolish mind which does not consider the Bible as a factually infallible record and as the final and sufficient arbiter of epistemology. See Rolland McCune's forthcoming book titled, *Promise Unfulfilled: The Failed Strategy of Modern Evangelicalism* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 2004), ch. 3, in which he effectively counters the charge of fundamentalist anti-intellectualism.

<sup>48</sup>See my "A. C. Dixon, Chicago Liberals, and *The Fundamentals*," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 1 (Spring 1996), pp. 115–17, wherein I discuss Dixon's frustration over liberal William Rainey Harper's typically evasive responses to the Bible's infallibility. My "Examination of the Apologetical Ministry of Amzi Clarence Dixon" documents other examples. See pp. 270–82.

<sup>49</sup>One may question whether new evangelicalism belongs here, since its early leaders were theologically orthodox. But because of the inclusiveness of the movement, it has actually aided the advance of apostate liberalism. Very early in the movement, new evangelicals revealed a propensity toward a liberal ideology by their endorsement of a social agenda, departure from inerrancy, acceptance of evolutionary models, and minimization of doctrine in favor of devotion. This is well-documented in several works, e.g., George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987); Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976); Robert Lightner, *Neoevangelicalism Today* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1978); Ernest D. Pickering, *The Tragedy of Compromise: The Origin and Impact of the New Evangelicalism* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1994); and McCune, *Promise Unfulfilled*.

<sup>50</sup>Many "evangelical" heresies are simply the old ones with new names, e.g., Open Theism, a form of Pelagianism (Clark Pinnock, Greg Boyd); Man-centered soteriology, a form of Semi-Pelagianism (Charles Finney, Dave Hunt); Self-esteemism, a form of Gnosticism (Robert Schuller), Annihilationism, a form of Socinianism (Clark Pinnock, John Stott) and King James-onlyism, a relatively new heresy in response to numerous Bible versions (Peter Ruckman, Donald Waite, David Cloud), to name a few. Unfortunately, all of these heresies, to a greater or lesser degree, have had

call for the same combative exposure of their false teachings and separation from those who teach them. Liberalism in all its forms is the perennial enemy of true fundamentalists. To them, these systems represent in most cases another gospel, and are therefore deserving of exposure and condemnation (Eph 5:11; Gal 1:8–9; 2 Tim 2:16–18).

### **Separation/Holiness**

If militancy is the trademark (an identifying characteristic), separation is the *hallmark* (a stamped seal to indicate authenticity) of fundamentalism. Fundamentalists have located separation in God's transcendent and moral holiness and his insistence that his children live in correspondence with his character, "because it is written, 'YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY'" (1 Peter 1:16; cf. Lev 11:44). One may observe two kinds of separation in the fundamentalist movement from its inception which may be designated simply as *personal* (from worldliness) and *positional* (from false teachers and their systems). Fundamentalists have always taken seriously the command of 1 John 2:15—"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." The cosmos has been disordered by sin and demonic influence; the satanic world system is at enmity with God, and its members are morally depraved and spiritually deranged. Truly, the world of men is a vast spiritual insane asylum which hates God and the things of God. When the believer is regenerated and released from the bondage of sinful practices and evil thinking, he is translated into another realm, which is incongruous to the worldly realm. The believer's value system is revolutionized. Once a fool of the world he becomes a fool for Christ in the eyes of the world. He has new affections, new principles, and new motives; he is in short a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). When he salvifically repents, the believer turns from the world to the Lord Jesus Christ whom he serves with loyal devotion (1 Thess 1:9).

At the 1886 Prophetic Conference in Chicago, A. T. Pierson identified three sources of worldliness: the pit, the papacy, and paganism. He said that solemn preaching against worldly entertainment and practices characterized the Old Guard of fundamentalist Christians. This is because the fundamentalist has traditionally emphasized the holiness of

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a negative impact on fundamentalism. They are critiqued (respectively) in Bruce Ware, *Their God Is Too Small: Open Theism and the Undermining of Confidence in God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003); David M. Doran, "What Love Is This," a review article, *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (Fall 2003): 101–30; Jay Adams, *The Biblical View of Self-Esteem, Self-Love, Self-Image* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1986); Millard J. Erickson, "Is Hell Forever?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 152 (July–September 1995): 259–72; James White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust the Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1995).

God, and knows that Christ's testimony in the world is damaged by indecent behavior. George Dollar wrote in 1966,

The fundamentalists of 1875–1900 were very outspoken about the apostasy of their times and the sins from which Christians should separate. Indeed, one is surprised to find in their sermons and lectures such sharp rebukes to saints for their worldliness. They saw the world worsening as we approach the rapture. The particular sins then prevalent were named....card table, horse racing, dancing, stage plays, theater, and wine. The church was condemned for being wholly worldly and worldly holy [a phrase used by A. T. Pierson at the 1886 Prophetic Conference].... The business of the Spirit was to make him [the Christian] distinct from the unregenerate and this included his enjoyments, recreation, business, and his use of time and money.<sup>51</sup>

A. C. Dixon believed with most early fundamentalists that any amusement that would injure the body, weaken the mind, or corrupt the morals should be avoided. He also believed that Christians should abstain from any social behavior associated with an evil institution, such as dancing, the theater, novel reading, gambling, secret societies, and Sabbath-breaking (i.e., engaging in amusements or unnecessary work on Sunday). Divorce was forbidden, with adultery being the only allowable exception. One early fundamentalist opposed the theater because its "chief themes...are now, as they ever have been, the passions of men—ambition and jealousy, leading to murder; lust, leading to adultery and to death; [and] anger, leading to madness."<sup>52</sup>

Today, the video rental store, TV, and the internet have made it much easier to bring Hollywood, with all its graphic sex and violence, into the Christian home. With ease of access has come a corresponding tolerance and even acquiescence to the world's values. It is much easier to rationalize commercial movie-viewing since we have a choice of ratings and we can rely on modern technology to "sanitize" the content. PG 13 is not as good as G but better than R. Even R is not too bad if the rating reflects excessive violence but not explicit sexual content. And so the rationalization goes, and it can even affect exegesis when we begin to place so many cultural conditioners on scriptural prohibitions to the point that holiness becomes only a metaphor for "super saint-hood." It may be worthwhile to return to the sayings of the fundamentalist fathers to find out exactly how they viewed worldliness before the advent of modern media, which has given us a world of entertainment immeasurably more corrupt than theirs. Leaving the movies for music, I wonder how the early fundamentalists would view contemporary

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<sup>51</sup>"The Early Days of Fundamentalism," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123 (April–June, 1966): 123.

<sup>52</sup>Editorial, "The Theater," *Watchword*, July 1896, p. 189.

Christian music (CCM), not just the raunchy rock sounds and lyrics, understandably appalling to the Christian, but even the syrupy ditty of a seeker service that is reminiscent of a Disney film score and containing about as much Christian doctrine. Subjectivity plays such a larger role in worship than it once did. We are free; modern culture has afforded us more choices; but choices, as always, carry consequences. The past is a prickly reminder of just how much we have changed, how we have grown to tolerate what an earlier generation considered repugnant. Certainly, the early fundamentalists were not opposed to cultural change if it did not mean a surrender to moral declension or spiritual apathy; the change must be inextricably tied to immutable verities, serve divine intent, and compliment divine attributes, particularly God's holiness. For example, when A. J. Gordon assumed the pastorate of Boston's Clarendon Street Baptist Church in 1869, he immediately set out to replace professional musical performances with congregational singing, eliminate pew rentals, and demolish the sophisticated elitism of the Christian aristocracy that kept many of Boston's lower classes from the services. His motive? A free gospel graciously bestowed by a sovereign God could only honor his Son if it were free of ostentation, pharisaism, and available to all classes of people. God's concerns reflected in his Word and conscientiously considered by the fundamentalist precipitated the change.

The second type of separation for which fundamentalists have probably been misunderstood and maligned the most is positional or ecclesiastical separation.<sup>53</sup> Fundamentalism prior to 1930 was nonconformist politically but separatistic in purpose.<sup>54</sup> That is, the fundamentalists attempted via preaching and convention floor resolutions to rid their denominations of liberals, those they believed were teaching views inimical to New Testament Christianity. Fundamentalists failed in doing this. There is rarely success in casting the usurpers out by means of ecclesiastical maneuvering or imposition of creedal tests. Some believe that the rare exception is the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) since the conservative takeover and the voluntary removal

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<sup>53</sup>For an excellent definition of this type of separation, see Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation: The Struggle For a Pure Church* (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1979), p. 10.

<sup>54</sup>The very event of founding a Bible school was an act of separation. Brereton writes, "It was not uncommon for Bible school founders to have departed from their original denominations and to have remained steadfastly unaffiliated or to have joined another denomination—often a new one—that better reflected their convictions. Those who retained some form of denominational affiliation nevertheless tended to downplay the importance of such loyalties" (Virginia Liesen Brereton, *Training God's Army: The American Bible School, 1880–1940* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990], p. 40).

of most liberals to form their own coalitions. SBC leaders are even welcomed to once-closed fundamentalist venues as fellow-travelers. However, while it is commendable that the SBC has passed conservative resolutions, even to the point of recently breaking with the liberal Baptist World Alliance and recommitting its efforts to world evangelism, it should not be identified as a fundamentalist organization, for at least four reasons: (1) it embraces a form of the social gospel as evidenced in its constitution's purpose statement and in actual practice; (2) its conservative leaders have failed repeatedly to repudiate ecumenical evangelism represented by Billy Graham and Promise Keepers; on the contrary, the SBC endorses such individuals and groups; (3) liberals continue to teach undeterred in several SBC schools; removal of liberals has normally been voluntary not forced; and finally, (4) most SBC conservatives do not wish to be identified as fundamentalists because of what they consider to be aberrations in the movement, such as dispensationalism, ecclesiastical separation, and so-called second-degree separation (i.e., refusing fellowship to those professing Christians who blatantly compromise the gospel). The SBC, in its philosophy and goals, is very similar to the new evangelical movement. Indeed, one of the early founders of new evangelicalism was Baptist theologian, Carl F. H. Henry (1913–2003), a man whose memory is highly revered in SBC circles and whose ideas continue to be tremendously influential in SBC institutions. The SBC does not share the legacy of early fundamentalism.<sup>55</sup>

Although some fundamentalists remained in the mainline denominations in order to "clean them up," most recognized the futility of such an attempt and began practicing the principle of 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1 to "come out from among them" and rebuild. W. B. Riley, whose First Baptist Church of Minneapolis was Minnesota's flagship of the state convention, was reluctant to leave the Northern Baptist Convention (NBC) in the hands of the "usurpers."<sup>56</sup> But he finally made the break in 1947, the last year of his life. His cancellation of membership in the NBC was based on four reasons:

- (1) Ideological—"The Convention has gone into the hands of the modernists.... I am by unshaken conviction a fundamentalist."
- (2) Scriptural—"I count any convention that is controlled by salaried servants, undemocratic; and on that account the Northern Convention is not, to me, either Biblical nor Baptistic."

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<sup>55</sup>For further treatment of this issue with documentation, see George Houghton, "Are Conservative Southern Baptists Fundamentalists?" in *Faith Pulpit* (January–February 2004), a publication of Faith Theological Seminary. This article is available online at <http://www.faith.edu/seminary/faithpulpit/2004/janfeb04.htm>.

<sup>56</sup>Riley, *Conflict of Christianity*, pp. 135–36.

- (3) Doctrinal— “The refusal of the Foreign Board to adopt and demand the Virgin Birth of Christ as a condition of foreign mission commission... constitute [a] Unitarian triumph.”
- (4) Ethical— “The illegal and immoral withholding of the entire quota due Minnesota from money given by our people for the common cause in which our state was to share.”

Riley concluded that he would be ashamed “to die in the fellowship that seemed to me un-Biblical, and consequently un-Baptistic.”<sup>57</sup> Fundamentalists like Riley left us an unpopular inheritance in separation, but one inextricably tied to the very character of the immutable God whose judgments are just and whose righteous commands are given for his glory and our safety.

### A Literal Biblical Hermeneutic

A literal hermeneutic was the basis of fundamentalist exegesis and apologetics, and because of this, fundamentalists’ defense of truth has withstood the test of any human contradiction. Although a theological liberal, Henry C. Vedder (1853–1935) admitted in 1900 that

Baptists have been fully conscious that they had no justification for a separate existence except this loyalty to what they believed the Scriptures to teach, their conviction that the teaching of the Scriptures must be followed at all cost. But the decades of the closing century have seen a very considerable weakening among them of this conviction.... If this weakening should become general, there cannot fail to be a great denominational disintegration.<sup>58</sup>

Vedder turned out to be prophetic. After intellectually-gifted students returned from German schools to teach liberalism in America’s religious seminaries, their students began explaining away the miraculous, including a divinely-inspired Bible. Such a view, they said, is irrelevant in the face of modern science and needs to be relegated to the relic box of antiquity. Early fundamentalists, on the other hand, continued to affirm what Christians down through the centuries have claimed as essential to the faith, that the Bible is divinely inspired, absolutely authoritative for faith and practice. The hermeneutic most consistent with that view is one that assumes an accurate and trustworthy

<sup>57</sup>Cited in Beale, Appendix H, *Pursuit of Purity*, pp. 394–95. For the events surrounding Riley’s resignation from the NBC in the context of the Minnesota Baptist Convention, see William Vance Trollinger, Jr., *God’s Empire: William Bell Riley and Midwestern Fundamentalism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), pp. 133–50.

<sup>58</sup>Henry C. Vedder, “Fifty Years of Baptist History,” *Baptist Quarterly Review* 57 (October 1900): 677.

recording of the Scriptures in which words and phrases convey definite meaning. In fact, “the study of the simple faith in its literal meaning and a desire to have its message applied to students’ lives, was the essential reason” for the emergence of the early Bible conference and Bible institute movements.<sup>59</sup> Literalism, they believed, corresponds to the very nature of inscripturated revelation. If God’s Word is inspired, and therefore inerrant and infallible, it is a matter of integrity to interpret such God-breathed literature according to its obvious meaning, not some hidden esoteric connotation or some imposition on the text that is not evident from its context. Early fundamentalists did not fall prey to liberal spiritualizing and demythologizing of the Bible, which assumes errors in the original autographs. Propositional inerrant truth required that they interpret it according to the intent of its author. Current fundamentalist preachers who allegorize the Scriptures and thereby distort their meaning contradict the homiletical legacy of their fathers. This is not to say that all early fundamentalists were exegetically accurate, nor were they always mutually agreed, but they endeavored to treat the biblical text in its historical, grammatical, and theological context. They did not trust themselves to their own imaginations, but relied on the plain sense of God’s Word. At a prophetic conference at Philadelphia in 1918, the chairman, Charles L. Huston, stated what the attendees evidenced in their messages:

We are seeking to find out what the Scriptures have for us; what saith the Lord; not to fit a private or pet theory, but to learn what God hath spoken... It behooves us [therefore] to seek the illumination of God through the Spirit in His blessed Word, that we may know what He has given us; and we are here for this purpose.<sup>60</sup>

Historically, fundamentalists have predicated a literal hermeneutic on the inspired text of the original autographs. This has prevented dogmatism regarding texts that have variant readings. To have even suggested to early fundamentalists that the King James or Authorized Version (KJV), a text containing numerous translation and textual errors, was inspired in the same way as the autographs would have been ludicrous. R. A. Torrey wrote in 1918, for example,

I have said that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments *as originally given* were absolutely inerrant, and the question of course arises to

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<sup>59</sup>Larry Dean Pettegrew, “The Historical and Theological Contributions of the Niagara Bible Conference to American Fundamentalism” (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1976), p. 63; cf. pp. 86–87.

<sup>60</sup>*Light on Prophecy: A Coordinated, Constructive Teaching Being the Proceedings and Addresses at the Philadelphia Prophetic Conference May 28–30, 1818* (New York: Christian Herald, 1918), p. 11.

what extent is the Authorized Version, or the Revised Version, the inerrant Word of God. The answer is simple; they are the inerrant Word of God just to that extent that they are an accurate rendering of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given, and to all practical intents and purposes they are a thoroughly accurate rendering of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given.<sup>61</sup>

In his article for the *Fundamentals* in 1917, James M. Gray wrote,

Let it be stated further in this definitional connection, that *the record for whose inspiration we contend is the original record*—the autographs or parchments of Moses, David, Daniel, Matthew, Paul or Peter, as the case may be, and not any particular translation or translations of them whatsoever. There is no translation absolutely without error.<sup>62</sup>

A. C. Dixon insisted on what was consensual among early fundamentalists: the KJV is not inspired in the same way as the original texts. He wrote, “We believe that the inspired writers made no mistakes.... But which Testament [is inspired]? The Greek or the English? Shall we claim that the 47 men who were ordered by King James to revise the Bishop’s Bible were inspired, so that they could not make a mistake?” He stated that several improvements on the KJV text were made between 1611 and 1701. “So we see the folly of those who cry out ‘sacrilege’ whenever an attempt is made to improve upon our English Bible.... [However,] no improvement can ever be made by man or angel upon the Bible as the men, inspired of God, wrote it.”<sup>63</sup> As evidenced from the comments by Torrey, Gray, and Dixon, historic fundamentalists have believed that an accurate translation is derivatively inspired, i.e., it possesses inspiration, to the extent that it reflects the content of the original autographs. Since we do not have these, textual criticism is the necessary and legitimate means of ascertaining a facsimile of the original from a study of the various ancient manuscripts. A. T. Pierson commented in 1910,

Inspiration is affirmed, of course, only of the original documents, now no longer extant. Many mistakes may have been made by copyists, and some interpolations by officious scribes and translators are fallible. It is the part of reverent criticism to seek, by careful examination and comparison of all existing documents, to detect errors and restore as far as possible the

<sup>61</sup> *The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith* (New York: George H. Doran, 1918), pp. 36–37; cf. idem, *Is The Bible the Inerrant Word of God?* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922), p. 76.

<sup>62</sup> “The Inspiration of the Bible: Definition, Extent and Proof,” in *The Fundamentals*, 2:12–13.

<sup>63</sup> “Spare Moments with the New Version, No. 2,” *Biblical Recorder* 46 (August 31, 1881): 1.

Scriptures in their original purity.<sup>64</sup>

Early fundamentalist creeds likewise limited inspiration and inerrancy to the autographa. For example, Article I in the Niagara Creed (1878) stated that inspiration extends to “the smallest word, and inflection of a word, provided such word is found in the original manuscripts.” Article I of the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) Creed (1919) affirmed that the Bible was “inerrant in the original writings.” And finally, the Baptist Bible Union’s Confession of 1923 asserted that “THE HOLY BIBLE...as originally written...IS the very Word of God.”

These three early fundamentalist features—a militant defense of the Christian faith, separation, and a literal interpretation of the Scriptures—are essential in defining the movement. They themselves are not the fundamental doctrines of historic New Testament Christianity, but they are indispensable to the fundamentalist movement in helping to advance those tenets. Early fundamentalists believed that the essential basic elements of Christianity must be defended if preserved, and they must be interpreted and articulated in a manner consistent with the propositional character of biblical revelation. Finally, in scriptural obedience, they asserted that believers must separate from those practices and professors which are contrary to the godly life style and sound doctrine clearly taught in the Bible.

### **Distinctive Features of Appreciable Importance**

In placing what follows in historical context, I suggest that, whereas fundamentalists considered the critical doctrines of the faith as absolutely *essential* to Christianity and the preceding marks of militancy, separation, and literalness as *necessary* to defining fundamentalism, they viewed other matters as *significant* for the proper direction to their movement. For that reason all of these elements must be taken together, but in order of priority. A subordinate role does not suggest a lack of importance. Collectively, all the distinctives helped shape fundamentalism. But there are some exceptions to the traditional features discussed below. For instance, some fundamentalists were (and still are) amillennialists. But fundamentalists have been typically premillennial, for the simple reason that they believed such a view was more consistent with their entire doctrinal system. Therefore, while not essential to saving faith, or even necessary to defining the fundamentalist movement, the following marks are nevertheless appreciably important

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<sup>64</sup> *Knowing the Scriptures: Rules and Methods of Bible Study* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1910), p. 21. A recent WorldCat database search revealed nine different publishers of this work including ones in Toronto and London—a testimony to its wide popularity.

as part of the larger legacy of early fundamentalism.

### **Dispensational Premillennialism**

This is perhaps the most controversial of all the features of the fundamentalist movement. Some have questioned whether premillennialism should even be considered a mark of fundamentalism, because of so many exceptions to the “rule,” such as J. Gresham Machen<sup>65</sup> and T. T. Shields, and currently many Free Presbyterians. For instance, in a Free Presbyterian-authored theological dictionary, the entries for *Fundamentalism* and *Dispensationalism* go to great lengths to disconnect the two. Rather than simply describing dispensationalism the author attempts to discredit it as “fraught with theological error. As Reginald Kimbro argues, dispensationalists must recognize the error, admit that it continues in the system, be clear on the soteriological effects of it, and entirely repudiate it.”<sup>66</sup> Moreover, among fundamentalists who claim to be dispensationalist, there has been no consensus on an exact form of dispensational interpretation. And, of course, there were dispensationalists who were not fundamentalists and vice versa. Nevertheless, historically, most fundamentalists have been premillennialists of one kind or another—this was certainly true of the first generation of fundamentalists in the late 1800s—and most have been dispensational premillennialists since the 1920s. Perhaps more than any other single fundamentalist institution, the Bible school was the primary dispenser of this doctrine. Brereton comments that

the majority of Bible schools taught dispensationalism. In fact, omission of the doctrine at conventional religious schools was one reason for the establishment of the Gordon Missionary Training School; an early catalog announced, “considerable emphasis is given to the dispensational aspect of truth, because this line of study is so generally neglected.” So vigorous and successful were efforts to propagate dispensationalism in America that for many, premillennialism became virtually synonymous with dispensationalism. (It was not exactly synonymous, of course; all dispensationalists were premillennialists, but not all premillennialists

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<sup>65</sup>It is instructive that one reason Machen did not wish to identify himself with the fundamentalist movement per se was its premillennialism: “His [Machen’s] standards of scholarship, his distaste for brief creeds, *his rejection of chiliiasm* [emphasis mine], the absence of pietism from his makeup, and in brief his sense of commitment to the historic Calvinism of the Westminster Confession of Faith disqualified him from being classified precisely as a fundamentalist” (Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*, p. 337).

<sup>66</sup>Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 2002), pp. 135–37, 188–90. The conclusion one must draw from these comments is that most early (and even current) fundamentalists have been woefully steeped in error for which they need to repent.

were dispensationalists.) No matter how effective the vehicles for its purveyance, however, it hardly seems likely that the system would have achieved such hegemony among fundamentalists had it not carried a deep and inherent appeal.<sup>67</sup>

Dispensational fundamentalists have recognized that God has been working out his purposes throughout history in distinguishable economies which require certain responses (called stewardships) to progressive revelation. Most dispensationalists have held to seven of these economies of stewardship. Currently, the church age corresponds to the dispensation of Grace. This interpretation also requires that certain promises given to the Old Testament Israelites have yet to be fulfilled and cannot be spiritualized in application to the church without distorting God's Word. The time of this fulfillment is during the "Day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18; Jer 30:7; Joel 1:15; 2 Thess 2:2), which includes the seven year tribulation period (Rev 6–18) followed by the millennium (Rev 20:4–6), or future thousand year reign of Christ on the earth.

Fundamentalists believed in literalism in prophecy and this primarily meant that prophecies made to *Israel* were for *Israel and Israel only*. At one conference it was boldly asserted that "to substitute *church* whenever we read *Israel* in the prophets is plausible but fundamentally wrong."... The covenants were made to *Israel* and must be read and taken literally and will be fulfilled literally to those to whom (*Israel*) they were made.<sup>68</sup>

Such a view accords with what Charles Ryrie designates the *sine qua non* features of dispensationalism: (1) a fundamental difference between *Israel* and the *church*, (1) a consistent literal or normal interpretation of Scripture, and (3) the purpose of God in the world as his exaltation or glory.<sup>69</sup> Again, Brereton writes,

It [dispensationalism] *was* an interpretation of history, one which gave God the leading role. He was the 'mover' and 'doer,' not humanity. Dispensationalism, then, offered turn-of-the century evangelicals a welcome alternative to the emerging versions of history which assumed that human beings were the primary agents, and progress the dominant direction."<sup>70</sup>

One reason that premillennialism is the foremost feature of traditional dispensationalism is its emphasis on the any-moment rapture,

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<sup>67</sup> Brereton, *Training God's Army*, pp. 16, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Dollar, "The Early Days of Fundamentalism," pp. 118–19.

<sup>69</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 44–47.

<sup>70</sup> *Training God's Army*, p. 20.

which is the immediate translation of the church to be with Christ. This view usually places the rapture prior to the tribulation period (pre-tribulationism). For many Christians, then, the rapture is the great climactic event of the church age, referred to in Scripture as the *blessed hope* (Titus 2:13). Indeed, one of the driving forces behind early fundamentalism which helped give impetus and direction to the movement was its stress on the imminent return of Christ to gather his church out of a corrupt world.<sup>71</sup> This was the recurring theme of the early prophetic and Bible conference movement, and was made popular by printed materials, such as W. E. Blackstone's *Jesus Is Coming* (1878). A disciple of Presbyterian fundamentalist James Brookes, Blackstone wrote this work as a ninety-five page handbook to the study of prophecy. The second edition of 1886 has been hailed as "probably the most widely distributed and influential American millenarian tract of the nineteenth century."<sup>72</sup> Added incentive to pursue this teaching was given by D. L. Moody, in many respects the progenitor<sup>73</sup> of fundamentalism: "When this truth of the Lord's second coming really takes hold of a man the world loses its grip on him.... His heart is free when he looks for the blessed appearing and kingdom of the Lord."<sup>74</sup> In 1878, evangelical leaders issued a call for a three-day conference in New York City to reaffirm the fundamentals of the faith. This was the first of five such conferences which highlighted the any moment bodily return of Christ.

Dear Brethren in Christ: When from any cause some vital doctrine of God's Word has fallen into neglect or suffered contradiction and reproach, it becomes the serious duty of those who hold it, not only strongly and constantly to reaffirm it, but to seek by all means in their

<sup>71</sup>For examples of the preponderance of this doctrine from a Canadian perspective, see Walter Unger, "'Earnestly Contending For the Faith': The Role of the Niagara Bible Conference in the Emergence of American Fundamentalism, 1875–1900" (Ph.D. dissertation, Simon Fraser University, 1981), pp. 156–208.

<sup>72</sup>Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800–1930* (reprint of 1970 ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978), p. 191. By 1927, *Jesus Is Coming* had been printed in 36 different languages and over 840,000 copies had been distributed (Unger, "Earnestly Contending," p. 293).

<sup>73</sup>Marsden makes a good case for this view: "He [Moody] also taught premillennialism. Influential new forms of each of...[his] teachings were also promoted through closely related movements organized in America by some of Moody's closest friends and younger lieutenants, including Reuben Torrey, James M. Gray, C. I. Scofield, William J. Erdman, George Needham, A. C. Dixon, and A. J. Gordon. These movements and these men...had a great deal to do with shaping fundamentalism" (*Fundamentalism and American Culture* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980] p. 37).

<sup>74</sup>Cited by A. T. Pierson in *Prophetic Studies of the International Prophetic Conference*, ed. George C. Needham (Chicago: Revell, 1886), p. 31.

power to bring back the Lord's people to its apprehension and acceptance. The precious doctrine of Christ's second personal appearing has,...long lain under such neglect and misapprehension. In the Word of God we find it holding a most conspicuous place.... So vital, indeed, is this truth represented to be that the denial of it is pointed out as one of the conspicuous signs of the apostasy of the last days.... we can not be insensible to the fact that there has been a sad decline in our times from the clear, vivid, ardent faith of the early church in regard to this doctrine.<sup>75</sup>

Later, in 1918, fundamentalist pastor Mark Matthews (1867–1940) declared why this doctrine is so important: it not only gives hope but stability to the church.

The premillennial return of our Lord Jesus Christ is the stabilizing doctrine of the Bible. It produces watchfulness (Matt. 24:42–44). It assures sobriety, seriousness and piety (1 Thess. 5:2–6). It presents consolation, hope and joy (1 Thess. 4:14–18, inclusive). In Titus 2:13 we are taught that, “looking for that blessed hope,” we are to grow in grace.<sup>76</sup>

When posttribulationism contributed to a division resulting in the demise of the old Niagara Bible Conference (1883–1897), leading pretribulational fundamentalists responded. The Sea Cliff, New Jersey Conference, begun in 1901, under the leadership of Arno C. Gaebelein (1861–1945) and C. I. Scofield (1843–1921), and the production in 1909 of the Scofield Reference Bible (often called the textbook of early fundamentalism) were deliberate attempts to revive the Niagara Conference doctrine of the “blessed hope” of the imminent return of Christ *for* his saints versus the later coming *with* the saints.<sup>77</sup> In combating the Millerite adventist notion of setting a specific date for Christ’s return, fundamentalists affirmed the biblical view that “this second coming of the Lord Jesus... may occur at any moment; yet the precise day and hour thereof is unknown to man, and known only to God.”<sup>78</sup> Premillennialism had gained such prominence as the millennial view of fundamentalism that Wheaton College President Charles Blanchard, when drafting the WCFA confession in 1919, included it

<sup>75</sup>Nathaniel West, ed., *Second Coming of Christ: Premillennial Essays on the Prophetic Conference, Held in the Church of the Holy Trinity, New York City, With an Appendix of Critical Testimonies* (reprint of 1879 ed., Minneapolis: Bryant Baptist Publications, 1981), p. 11.

<sup>76</sup>“The Doctrine of Our Lord’s Return,” in *Light on Prophecy*, p. 66.

<sup>77</sup>For information on these events see Gaebelein, “Story of the Scofield Reference Bible: Part IV—Remarkable Providential Leadings and the Beginning of a New Testimony,” *Moody Monthly*, January 1943, pp. 277–79, and Pettegrew, “Niagara Bible Conference,” pp. 162–210.

<sup>78</sup>West, *Premillennial Essays*, p. 8; Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again: A History of the End Times* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 91–93, 102–04.

as article seven: "We believe in 'that blessed hope,' the personal, premillennial and imminent return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." One reason for the creation of the Baptist Bible Union in 1923, according to Riley, was "to prepare ourselves and the church for Christ's soon coming."<sup>79</sup>

As we have repeatedly noted, fundamentalists have traditionally embraced a literal hermeneutic. Dispensationalism is a natural product of this biblical view, and premillennialism is perfectly compatible with it. When premillennialism has been disallowed or otherwise compromised, doctrinal confusion seems to be the result. One example of this was the dismissal of premillennialism from the Baptist Bible Union Confession of 1923 in order to accommodate Canadian amillennial Baptists under the leadership of T. T. Shields.<sup>80</sup> This was a clear departure from earlier fundamentalist confessions which typically included a statement on premillennialism. One reason that Baptists have come to dominate the fundamentalist movement is acceptance of dispensational premillennialism as complimentary to their belief system. George Marsden, writing of the period 1920–21, states,

The Presbyterians [which had earlier dominated the prophecy movement in America] had some intellectual affinities to dispensationalism, but the Baptists had a broader set of interests in common with the prophetic movement. The Baptist movements themselves had formed in reaction against ecclesiastical establishments. Thus, like the dispensationalists, their traditions emphasized individual salvation, the right of conscience against ecclesiastical authority and the local congregation against centralized power, separation of church and state, and the New Testament in preference to the Old.<sup>81</sup>

Walter Unger reminds us that another reason for dispensational premillennialism's appeal was its inherent resistance to liberalism. "The Fundamentalists would ask: Who ever heard of a dispensational, premillennial liberal? The obvious answer was: No one!"<sup>82</sup> Whether or not this can be consistently defended, "the conclusion drawn was that if an individual or a school or a denomination adhered closely to a dispensational and premillennial theology, this would provide the strongest possible defense against the dilution of orthodox theology or defection to liberal theology."<sup>83</sup> It is no accident that new evangelicals, who from the beginning of their movement in the 1950s repudiated

<sup>79</sup>"Why the Baptist Bible Union," p. 16.

<sup>80</sup>Delnay, "History of the Baptist Bible Union," pp. 51–52, 56.

<sup>81</sup>*Fundamentalism and American Culture*, p. 165.

<sup>82</sup>Unger, "Earnestly Contending," p. 295.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

dispensationalism in favor of a quasi-covenant theology and an evidentialist epistemology, made themselves vulnerable to an errantist view of Scripture.<sup>84</sup>

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, dispensationalism (including premillennialism), with its coherent explanation of how God works throughout biblical history endeared fundamentalism to the common Christian. D. G. Hart writes, "What was particularly appealing about dispensationalism was that for all its complexity, it seemed to return the Bible to the people and its meaning to the book's plain sense."<sup>85</sup> It fit quite well with the Reformational doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture. Added to this was the disfavor of many with postmillennialism in the aftermath of World War I. "What made the war particularly significant for evangelicals," Hart continues, "was its apparent confirmation of dispensationalist interpretation."<sup>86</sup> The war served to corroborate in the minds of many a pessimistic view of society, that it would only morally worsen in the last days, and that indeed perilous times were upon us (2 Tim 3:1–13). But this pessimism about society not only made fundamentalists distrustful of human institutions as remedies for man's problems, it challenged them to hope for divine intervention by means of evangelism and revival.<sup>87</sup> One of the most popular songs of the late 1800s and early 1900s was "Rescue the Perishing" by Fanny Crosby. "Duty demands it" in view of the depravity of man, the shortness of life, and Christ's imminent return. Yet human endeavor, unless sanctified for the Master's use, was fruitless, "because history was proving...again that men and women were sinful, their efforts to improve society were [idealistic and] utopian, and any lasting solution to human suffering or immorality was impossible without God's immediate and drastic work of grace."<sup>88</sup>

### **Powerful Preaching**

The outstanding leaders of fundamentalism were first and

<sup>84</sup>Rolland McCune documents this in three articles in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal*: "The Formation of the New Evangelicalism (Part Two): Historical Beginnings" 4 (Fall 1999): 109, 119–20; "The New Evangelicalism and Apologetics," 6 (Fall 2001): 109–15; and "The New Evangelicalism: Evaluations and Prospects," 8 (Fall 2003): 93, 98, 135ff.

<sup>85</sup>D. G. Hart, *The Old-Time Religion in Modern America: Evangelical Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), pp. 35

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., pp. 36–38. See also Ellingsen, *Evangelical Movement*, pp. 63–66 for other reasons dispensational premillennialism had an appeal for many evangelicals.

<sup>87</sup>"A Call for a Bible Conference on the Return of Our Lord," in *Light on Prophecy*, pp. 7–8.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

foremost great pulpiteers. Many of their published works were simply popular sermons they had frequently preached in conferences and local church pulpits. Early fundamentalists expressed great confidence in the absolute integrity of the Word of God coupled with powerful preaching as the means of making converts who would in turn produce strong fundamentalist churches.<sup>89</sup> With eloquence of speech and forceful personality, they could sway vast audiences to Christian commitment. One critical observer who heard speakers James H. Brookes, Nathaniel West, A. J. Gordon, A. T. Pierson, William G. Moorehead, Leander W. Munhall, Henry M. Parsons, C. I. Scofield, J. Wilbur Chapman, and others, commented that they

were preachers of great persuasive power. The writer, who heard them often at Northfield [Bible Conference], would be the first to acknowledge their earnestness and power. Their system of belief was definite and final, supported by battalions of proof texts, masterly marshaled and validated as they believed by divine revelation.... Their positive preaching suited the temper of those whom they taught. Few groping experimentalists could match them for power over an audience<sup>90</sup>

These men believed that doctrinally informative pulpits and Bible conference platforms would be the divine means of preventing a liberal takeover of the denominations. They hoped that their denunciation of apostasy and outspoken defense of the faith would awaken the nation to the evils of modernism, and that by raising up an army of saints committed to the fundamentals, liberals would be forced out of their denominational camp. Many longed for another revival reminiscent of the first Great Awakening that would bring new vitality to the churches and put to silence the skeptics of orthodoxy.

Fundamentalist preaching in the early days of the movement was, generally speaking, both expository and evangelistic. The expositional character of preaching can be attributed to the principles of a dispensational premillennial hermeneutic. A. J. Gordon testified that "the value of the premillennial scheme of interpretation lies in this—that it gives attention to 'dispensational truth,' as it is called. It finds a map of the ages in the Scripture, and studies to locate doctrine, as well as to comprehend it, and to determine its relation to the great whole."<sup>91</sup> D. L.

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<sup>89</sup>Ralph G. Turnbull, *A History of Preaching*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), 3:115.

<sup>90</sup>Gaius Glenn Atkins, *Religion in Our Times* (New York: Round Table Press, 1932), p. 225, cited in Pettegrew, "Niagara Bible Conference," p. 92.

<sup>91</sup>Quoted in Turnbull, *History of Preaching*, 3:116. *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (1888) by C. I. Scofield was immensely popular in aiding preachers to interpret the Scriptures dispensationally. See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, pp. 59–62.

Moody provided the impetus and the model for much evangelistic preaching with his simple message of "Ruin by sin, Redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Ghost."<sup>92</sup>

A striking feature of early fundamentalist preaching is its heightened sense of urgency in directly appealing to the listener. Of course, the absence of a microphone in the early days of the movement placed great demands on the oratorical abilities of the preacher, particularly in a large auditorium. And many fundamentalists occupied pulpits in some of the largest churches in the country. Booming voices enhanced the dynamic of the gospel message. Fundamentalist preachers were lovers of souls who longed to see great throngs come to Christ in what they hoped would be another awakening which would sweep the land and sweep out the liberals in its wake. Fairly typical of early fundamentalist preaching are the following excerpts from another pioneer in the movement, Howard Crosby (1826–1891). Happily, his message provides us the double example of not only what to preach—the Word of God, but how to preach it—with courage and conviction:

This Old and New Testament is one revelation of God—one Bible—one unerring rule of faith. God has not given us a doubtful and deceitful light for our path. He has not given us a bundle of truth and fable tied up together. He has not left us to our weak and discordant reason, and thus made revelation superfluous. He has given His people a "sure word of prophecy" as the only reasonable guide for our weak reason and our sinful nature; and on this sure Word is His Church built. The doctrines of grace have neither human origin nor human support. They are altogether Divine, and are received only by the soul that becomes partaker of the Divine nature. To go, therefore, to human philosophy or to man's inner consciousness for their confirmation or explanation, is to go to the sentenced criminal to understand the excellences of criminal law.... It is the Word of God, and, as such, we shall not allow, for a moment, the speculations, imaginings, and guesses of men, ever so learned, to weigh a feather's weight against it.

Now, it is this holy Word, thus spotless and thus powerful for righteousness and comfort that the Christian preacher is to preach. He is not to draw from the wells of human philosophy, but from the stream that flows directly from the throne of God. He is to tell the people what God has said.... IN THUS LIMITING HIMSELF TO THE PREACHING OF GOD'S WORD, THE PREACHER IS NOT CIRCUMSCRIBING HIS POWER, BUT ENLARGING IT. By the jealous use of that Word alone he will accomplish far more for the kingdom of Christ and the salvation of men than by mixing human expedients with the Word.

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<sup>92</sup>Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, p. 35 and esp. p. 37, where Marsden draws the connection between Moody and those fundamentalist leaders who followed him—the "men...[who] had a great deal to do with shaping fundamentalism."

Human expedients are very specious and attractive, and, alas! Many preachers betake themselves to them. They think they will attract the multitude and fill up the pews...and so they may, but these are the objects for which the Lord sent out His heralds. Success is not to be reckoned by full houses and popular applause, but by convicted and converted hearts, and by the strengthening of the faith and piety of God's people. A holier life, a more pronounced separation from the world, a stainless integrity in business pursuits, a Christly devotion to the interests of others, a more thorough knowledge of the Word—these are the true signs of success which the preacher may justly seek, even though he wear homespun and his people meet in a barn. These are the glorious results which the consecrated soul will pray for, and in them he will rejoice with a purer, holier joy than that which comes from numbers, wealth, or popular admiration.

Crosby then warns against preaching science from the pulpit instead of the Word of God and concludes with a timely admonition:

It is as preachers depart from that Word that their preaching becomes barren and fruitless. The Divine Spirit will only accompany the Divine Word. His mighty power will act only in His own way and by His own means. The Word is supernatural, and woe to the preacher who leaves the supernatural for the natural; who sets aside the sword of the Spirit to use in its stead a blade of his own tempering!<sup>93</sup>

Understandably, the content of early fundamentalist preaching focused on those doctrines which were under modernist attack. It is true that many sermons were issue-oriented, exposing the errors of evolution, higher criticism, and the more popular cults of the day, such as Christian Science and Mormonism. But even these messages, of necessity, were doctrinally based. Millard Erickson and James Heflin remind us that historically it has been on the battlefield of doctrine that the great wars for biblical truth have been fought. Whether in the Nicene Council, the Augustinian/Pelagian dispute, or the Protestant Reformation, vital Christian doctrine was at stake—the deity of Christ, the sinfulness of man, and saving faith apart from works. What is said about these epochal events in church history can also be said about the Fundamentalist/Modernist controversy of the 1920s: the church has been seriously concerned “because it has sensed that very crucial questions about its nature, message, and mission were at stake. If it came out on the wrong side of...these issues, its very essence and existence might be imperiled.”<sup>94</sup> This was the sense of urgency that drove

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<sup>93</sup>Howard Crosby, “Preach the Word,” in *The Fundamentals*, 8:102–09. This admonition is especially relevant for those tempted to utilize entertainment and seeker service techniques to draw a crowd.

<sup>94</sup>Millard J. Erickson and James L. Heflin, *Old Wine in New Wineskins: Doctrinal Preaching in a Changing World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1997), pp. 22–23.

fundamentalist preachers to their knees in the study and to their Bibles in the pulpit; they realized that the truth mattered for the life of the church.

If fundamentalism is to remain a viable dynamic movement for the cause of Christ in the twenty-first century may we not dogmatically assert on the basis of Romans 10:14–15 and 1 Corinthians 2:1–5 that what is needed are Bible expositors such as Howard Crosby who fear only the face of God, exalt Christ as the only way of salvation, hesitate not to confront the forces of evil in the power of the Spirit, and declare with holy boldness and deep compassion the whole counsel of God? It is not a matter of copying the older rhetorical style; expression needs to be relevant, but the crux of the matter is in the persuasive application of the Word of Truth. Such dynamic preaching from consecrated preachers is the legacy of early fundamentalism; it needs to be preserved in the practice of it!

### **Evangelism and Foreign Missions**

Early fundamentalists considered their churches as the primary institutions for doctrinal dissemination and accountability, with local assemblies being the principal senders of missionaries and Christian workers. Impetus for the faith missions movement can be found in the early Bible conferences, such as Niagara, “where A. T. Pierson, editor of the *Missionary Review of the World*, and J. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission urged their listeners to pledge support to foreign missions.”<sup>95</sup> Likewise, the Bible institutes, often the product of church-related Bible studies, were created for the purpose of training missionaries and vocational Christian workers as well as providing practical instruction for potential soul winners and church planters. The pages of early fundamentalist periodicals, such as the *Truth*, *Watchword*, *Moody Monthly*, *King's Business*, *Sunday School Times*, and the *Watchman-Examiner*, were devoted to mission news and recruitment.

Driven by a literal dispensational interpretation of the Bible, local church pastors and institute workers challenged young Christians to aggressively win their cities and neighborhoods to the Savior before it was “too late.” The so-called faith principle was inculcated into the minds of church members as an incentive to sacrificially give of their time, talents, and income for the spread of the gospel. Bible colleges and mission agencies often operated on shoe-string budgets in the early days, but were driven to obey the Great Commission to enlist Christian recruits who would forsake all earthly concerns for the pursuit of lost souls. Following the example of campaign evangelists Moody and Sunday, many ventured out from the churches as itinerant evangelists

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<sup>95</sup>Beal, *In Pursuit of Purity*, p. 30.

exposing personal and national sin and calling for revival in a spiritually destitute land. Consequently, their sermons, accompanied by soul-stirring hymns, became earnest calls for personal consecration and selfless service.<sup>96</sup> However, liberal seminaries began competing for foreign turf by sending out missionaries who often supplanted the fruitful work established by pioneer conservative missionaries like Hudson Taylor, his successor D. E. Hoste, and others.

One of the major concerns that precipitated convention floor battles among both the Baptists and Presbyterians was modernism on the foreign mission field. In the 1920s, fundamentalist leaders A. C. Dixon, R. A. Torrey, W. H. Griffith Thomas, and Charles Trumbull made visits to China and returned with alarming reports of the inroads of modernism into Christian schools and churches. These men were hopeful that solid doctrinal preaching would offset liberal influence. Dixon requested that Edgar Y. Mullins of Southern Seminary “go, and...do great service for the Master. Rationalistic ‘modernism’ is playing havoc among the missionaries in China, and I am sure that your messages will do much to confirm the faith of believers and throw bulwarks against the inroads of unbelief.”<sup>97</sup> Griffith Thomas’s exposé *Modernism in China* (1921) served to awaken the fundamentalist community to the division that existed between them and the liberals: “I soon found to be true what I had learned long before I left America, that missionaries were already divided into two camps, those who favored critical views and those who were strongly conservative.”<sup>98</sup> Even the creation of fundamentalist organizations, such as the field-based Bible Union of China (1920), could not deter liberal influence. By 1930, realizing the futility of rescuing denominational foreign missions from the liberals, fundamentalists began sponsoring their own separatistic mission agencies, many of which still continue today as part of their evangelistic legacy, such as Baptist Mid Missions (1920, associated with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches) and

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<sup>96</sup>An interesting rhetorical analysis of gospel hymns in nineteenth century America reveals a premillennial hope of heavenly comfort in the “New Jerusalem” as the final solution to the dilemmas of a disintegrating doomed world. In portraying the gospel such metaphors as the shepherd and a stormy sea and lifeboat are used with an accent on salvation—a departure from the “worm” motif of Isaac Watts to the rescued “wanderer” theme of Crosby, Sankey, and Bliss. Examples of the latter would be “Once For All,” “Sweet By and By,” “What a Friend We Have In Jesus,” and “Rescue the Perishing” (Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism* [Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978], pp. 20–49, and Unger, “Earnestly Contending for the Faith,” p. 230).

<sup>97</sup>Dixon letter to Mullins, 25 November 1921, Mullins Papers, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>98</sup>*Modernism in China* (Philadelphia: Sunday School Times, 1921), p. 4.

the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions (1933, affiliated with the International Council of Christian Churches).

### Distrust of Secular Education

Fundamentalists could not trust the once religiously conservative institutions of America to produce spiritually qualified preachers and missionaries as they had done during the colonial era. These institutions had not only lost their missionary impulse, they had lost the faith. In 1917, William Bell Riley, founder of Northwestern Bible School in 1902, argued that it was "probably past dispute that there are not three English-speaking schools in the entire Northland, belonging to any of the greater denominations...that are without an infection of that infidelity known as 'Modernism.'"<sup>99</sup> The chief culprit and "public enemy number one" was evolution. Darwinism became the focus of attack once it began infiltrating the public schools of America. Coupled with Deweyism, biological evolution only further secularized education, contributing to the dissolution of moral values in America.<sup>100</sup> The frame of reference in the average college classroom was godless; the sourcing of knowledge, humanistic.<sup>101</sup> Added to this dilemma was the wide-spread theological apostasy in denominational academia, making it necessary for fundamentalists to seek Bible-based educational alternatives; hence, the emergence of the Bible institute movement, followed by Bible colleges, seminaries, and by mid-20th century, Christian day schools. The common denominator in all of these institutions was a Bible-centered curriculum. The underlying motive in founding them was personal and hence quite crucial: the potential spiritual shipwreck of young people caught in the downdraft of religious skepticism. The reaction was both predictable and imperative for fundamentalists. R. A. Torrey, in explaining the purpose of BIOLA in an article for the school's paper, wrote, "But God in His wisdom, foreseeing and foreknowing the present day apostasy of the professing

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<sup>99</sup>Cited in William C. Ringenber, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), p. 159.

<sup>100</sup>The writings of fundamentalists, such as William Jennings Bryan, kept the public informed and warned about the moral dangers of evolution. For examples, see my article, "William Jennings Bryan and the Scopes Trial: A Fundamentalist Perspective," in *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 4 (Fall 1999): 51–83.

<sup>101</sup>Fundamentalists were not anti-intellectual; they were anti-pseudo-science (unverifiable theories and assumptions). They were not seekers after some elusive culturally conditioned truth; they had discovered the truth and found it to be truly liberating and unchangeable. "This striking confidence in the efficacy of ideas explains why they regarded education as critically important; it also suggests why they fought so vigorously and vocally for control of denominational schools and lamented so bitterly their losses" (Brereton, *Training God's Army*, p. 34).

church, has provided...a method of meeting the emergency—a simple, practical, time-honored method. He has ordained the Bible Schools.”<sup>102</sup>

The fundamentalist commitment to biblical instruction is a characteristic feature of early fundamentalism and its legacy is perhaps most evident in maintaining a strong evangelical current in American society which has prevented culture’s complete abandonment to secularism. One of the most heated and vicious criticisms vented against the fundamentalist is that he “presumes” to believe that Bible instruction provides the answers to human moral and spiritual needs, and that the answers are normally profoundly simple. However, the simple wisdom of the gospel is still foolishness to the Greek and a stumbling block to the Jew. The Bible-centered approach to education, and indeed to all of life, is arguably fundamentalism’s greatest legacy to the twenty-first century.

### CONCLUSION: REFINEMENT AND RETENTION

Can one disclaim any of these distinctives and still be a fundamentalist? It depends on which ones. I would think that to reject biblical holiness, for example, would place in jeopardy one’s own Christian profession let alone his adherence to fundamentalism. However, one could argue that a Christian should believe the fundamentals but not militantly. Another could be an amillennialist or a postmillennialist and claim some historical precedent. But I doubt that such persons would be consistent fundamentalists. They might be wearing the uniform, but would be out of step with the majority of the troops who have marched down the halls of history. What’s more, they would be in danger of veering off, as many have in the past, to start their own brand of para-military. However, refinements are necessary to any system; fundamentalism is no exception. Some changes can benefit a movement further by actually enhancing the original values; others can be detrimental, causing significant damage to it. These issues are obvious points of debate.

I would suggest that several changes have actually improved the fundamentalist legacy. First of all, revisions to Darbyite and Scofieldian dispensationalism have been made over the years; these include an amending of the absolutist (even eternal) dichotomy between Israel and the Church, a departure from the “period of time” to a stewardship economy motif, and a correction of the “salvation by works” view as suggested in the Scofield Reference Bible.<sup>103</sup> Second,

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<sup>102</sup>“Why a Bible Institute?” *King’s Business*, October 1919, pp. 898–99.

<sup>103</sup>For a discussion of this issue, see Harold Lindsell’s review of the New Scofield Reference Bible (“Changes in the Scofield Reference Bible,” *Christianity Today*, 14

renewed emphasis in fundamentalist seminaries on expositional preaching has also fostered the double benefit of furthering a biblical knowledge anchored to propositional truth and encouraging a presuppositionalist rather than an evidentialist system of biblical interpretation. This approach has permitted biblical revelation to stand on its own merits as self-authenticating, which, in turn, best serves the historic fundamental of the absolute authority of Scripture. Third, a derivative of a presuppositional view of revelation is the repudiation of the day-age and gap theories to account for geological formations and fossil data. Fundamentalists have recognized that the truth claims of Scripture need not be accommodated to the theories of modern science. Long days or gaps to explain cataclysmic and so-called developmental geological changes in creation are as unnecessary as they are unwarranted.<sup>104</sup>

In my view, other changes have taken place which have tarnished the legacy and weakened the fundamentalist movement. For example, some evangelicals have been willing to embrace the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, calling themselves "classical fundamentalists," but have disavowed separation. This was true of the new evangelicals led by Harold Ockenga, Carl Henry, and others. Today, the issue of secondary separation is the battlefield. This is separation from an erring brother based on 2 Thessalonians 3. The debate centers on whether this should be a necessary mark of fundamentalism, since first generation fundamentalists did not practice so-called "second degree" separation. However, if one looks closely enough, he will find that early fundamentalist leaders did indeed separate from brethren they deemed disorderly or divisive. One of the principal reasons A. C. Dixon left the Baptist Bible Union in 1925 was because of the blatantly divisive practices of one of its leaders, J. Frank Norris. One of the problems of secondary separation is knowing from whom and when to separate. But to glibly suggest that second degree separation should not be practiced at all overlooks clear scriptural teaching on the matter and opens the door to compromise with error. Billy Graham would be a case in point. His cooperation with liberals and Roman Catholics and promotion of ecumenical evangelism are notorious. To overlook such compromise for the "sake of the gospel" is to disdain God's commandments regarding a pure gospel testimony. One test that fundamentalists have used to determine whether or not to separate

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April 1967, pp. 31–32).

<sup>104</sup>A helpful refutation of the gap theory of Genesis 1 is available in Weston Fields, *Unformed and Unfilled* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1978). For an excellent rebuttal to the day age theory or the progressive creationism view, see Robert V. McCabe, "A Defense of Literal Days in the Creation Week," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 5 (Fall 2000): 97–123.

regards the promotion of doctrinal error. In the case of Graham and evangelicals like him who are contributing to the apostasy by their acceptance of doctrinal deviants, fundamentalists have warned them about such practices. When that has failed, they have separated from them. To do otherwise is to assent to their error, which, of course, must be clearly identified by scriptural precept or principle. Separation should not be simply a matter of personal opinion but of scriptural obedience. The Grahams of Christendom have underscored the importance of not only practicing militant separation against liberals and other apostates but those who advance the cause of apostasy by their cooperation with it. I would suggest an emphasis on secondary separation is not a violation of early fundamentalism, but a necessary application of the doctrine of holiness they taught. But some fundamentalists have grown weary of the fight, and have virtually conceded their cause to the enemies of truth by their silence.

A so-called refinement, which has proved quite divisive, involves dispensationalism. Some fundamental dispensationalists sincerely believe they are strengthening their cause by seeking rapprochement with covenant theology. The result is a hybrid they call progressive dispensationalism.<sup>105</sup> But has this change really enabled dispensationalists to remain true to the legacy of early fundamentalism? By suggesting that the Davidic kingdom is already here (but not yet!) and by spiritualizing Old Testament texts (especially prophecy) to include the church "in the scope and meaning of those texts,"<sup>106</sup> progressive dispensationalists have conceded a theological tradition clearly distinguishable from covenant overtones.<sup>107</sup> One of the principal advantages of dispensationalism is its ability to harmonize Scripture around the unifying theme of God's providential and revelatory activity in history, thereby

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<sup>105</sup> Among those promoting this view are Robert L. Saucy (*The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993]), and Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock (*Progressive Dispensationalism* [Wheaton: BridgePoint, 1993]). For critical analyses of progressive dispensationalism, see Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), ch. 9; Robert L. Thomas, *Evangelical Hermeneutics: The New Versus the Old* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), ch. 12; and Stephen J. Nichols, "The Dispensational View of the Davidic Kingdom: A Response to Progressive Dispensationalism," *The Masters Seminary Journal* 7 (Fall 1996): 213–39.

<sup>106</sup> This approach is called "complementary hermeneutics." For an excellent critique of this type of interpretation in the context of discussing the new covenant, see R. Bruce Compton, "Dispensationalism, the Church, and the New Covenant," *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* 8 (Fall 2003): 8, 40–47.

<sup>107</sup> See Renald E. Showers, *There Really Is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1990) for an examination of the fundamental disagreements between covenant and dispensational theology.

simplifying biblical interpretation. True, God reveals himself progressively to man in very specific identifiable ways, but progressive dispensationalism seems only to have created a hermeneutical conundrum by positing a partial fulfillment to the church of prophecies exclusive to Israel, and perhaps most seriously, by abandoning a literal univocal meaning for a *sensus plenior* hodgepodge of multiple meanings. This view creates a problem of authorial intent, suggesting that the biblical author said one thing, but that God may mean something else at some other time; this destroys the unitary authorship of Scripture and makes it subject to man's postulates rather than the dictum, "It can never mean what it never meant."

Another unfortunate departure from early fundamentalism's legacy is the habit in some circles of "Calvin bashing." Refuting the TULIP seems to be a favorite pastime of some extremist pulpits and web sites. Normally, this practice results from either a misconception or rejection of Calvinist soteriology which can be traced back to Charles G. Finney's new measures theology.<sup>108</sup> However, many early fundamentalists were Calvinistic and yet were intensely evangelistic.<sup>109</sup> But the myth that Calvinism and evangelism are inevitable opposites still persists, much to the discredit of historic fundamentalism.<sup>110</sup> Coincidentally, the anti-Calvinist mentality often embraces another aberration: the King James-only position, discussed earlier. This view has become so pervasive in fundamentalism that it is perhaps the most divisive issue in the history of the movement. Concerned fundamentalist theologians and pastors have been offering correctives but leading proponents of KJV-onlyism have remained unconvinced and obdurate.<sup>111</sup>

Other weaknesses characterizing some factions of fundamentalism

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<sup>108</sup>For an excellent critical analysis of Finney's theology and methodology, see Jay E. Smith, "Theology of Charles Finney: A System of Self-Reformation," *Trinity Journal* 13 (Spring 1992): 61–93. For Finney's overall negative impact on evangelism, one may consult Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750–1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994). Many fundamentalists who are "results oriented" are still unwilling to accept the fact that Finney was a theological heretic. However, one need only compare Finney's own writings with Scripture for proof of this.

<sup>109</sup>Ellingsen, *Evangelical Movement*, pp. 60–64.

<sup>110</sup>The latest work contributing to the confusion is Dave Hunt, *What Love Is This? Calvinism's Misrepresentation of God* (Sisters, OR: Loyal Publishing, 2002).

<sup>111</sup>For well-reasoned critiques of the KJV-only position written by historic fundamentalists, see Roy E. Beacham and Kevin T. Bauder, eds., *One Bible Only? Examining Exclusive Claims for the King James Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001); James B. Williams, ed., *From the Mind of God to the Mind of Man: A Layman's Guide to How We Got Our Bible* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 1999); and James B. Williams and Randolph Shaylor, eds., *God's Word in Our Hands: The Bible Preserved for Us* (Greenville, SC: Ambassador-Emerald, 2003).

embody a study in extremes, none of which is *characteristic* of early fundamentalism. One extreme is the unfortunate distortion of militancy as a siege mentality that sees the church as only a fortress to be maintained; this produces an unhealthy and unbiblical isolationism, a kind of Protestant monasticism. This mindset is usually adversarial—“the world of men is my enemy.” It breeds distrust of “everyone but us” and is possessively defensive. It relegates fellowship to the immediate body and neglects the larger body of Christ. It is separation in the extreme. While it is scripturally true that Christians are to occupy until the Lord’s return, this injunction does not mean we squat and wait no more than we swat at everything that does not suit us. We are to reach out into the world evangelistically without becoming tainted by the world, which is not an easy task (has it ever been?). Befriending the lost in this world need not translate into befriending worldliness, and this brings us to another extreme more and more fundamentalist churches are resorting to: adopting the methods of the world in order to win the world. We are in danger of forsaking our fundamentalist heritage for cultural relevance. We need to remember that what we win others with is what we win them to. Carnal methods cheapen the message and are unworthy of our heritage. But we are to extend fellowship to other believers serving Christ and enable their ministries as we have opportunity, realizing that we are fellow workers together. And all the while we must be vigilant in keeping our methods as well as our message orthodox and unsullied.

One final extreme does not seem to be that at all. I am referring to a reactionary attitude to the overly belligerent types who “shoot first and ask questions later.” Some fundamentalists counsel less fight and even less bite against the enemies of orthodoxy. While understandably concerned over irrational and often unsubstantiated attacks by extremists, the “kinder gentler” approach often reveals a soft underbelly impotent to combat ungodliness. Fundamentalism is sometimes deserving of the critique “heat without light,” but an opposite danger is the failure to shine the light of God’s unalterable truth on the forces of darkness that would consume us. Letting our light shine effectively requires both wisdom and courage.

Will the core beliefs and distinctive marks of historic fundamentalism endure? Only as loyal members of the movement take the initiative to maintain vigilance in guarding them, and diligence in propagating them will the next generation of potential fundamentalists take them seriously. Many younger Christians, however, really do not “buy into” some of them and have either jumped the fundamentalist ship or have refused to board her altogether. One reason for defections from fundamentalism may be the inability of the older generation to clearly articulate their historic distinctives with intelligence and passion. Implementing systematic instruction of these distinctives in the home and the church with commitment to their truthfulness and

reliance on scriptural guidance and divine grace, are keys to their acceptance and perpetuation. The rich legacy that early fundamentalism has left the church is worth the effort.