

Theological Equipping Class

Fundamentalism

October 3, 2021

“a fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something” (George Marsden)

What is Fundamentalism?

The story of American fundamentalism is the story of those nineteenth-century American mainstream Protestants and their heirs who arose to defend traditional evangelical doctrine in light of cultural, intellectual, and ecclesiastical change in American society and religion.
(John Fea)

Defensive

Reactionary

What is Fundamentalism Reacting To?

"militantly anti-modernist Protestant evangelicalism" (George Marsden)

What is modernism?

1. Theological liberalism

The effects of "Enlightenment"

"a God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross" (H. Richard Niebuhr)

"[liberalism] promotes a progressive ethical vision derived from the Christian message, while denying Christianity's traditional understanding of doctrine." (Bruce Shelley)

theological reductionism

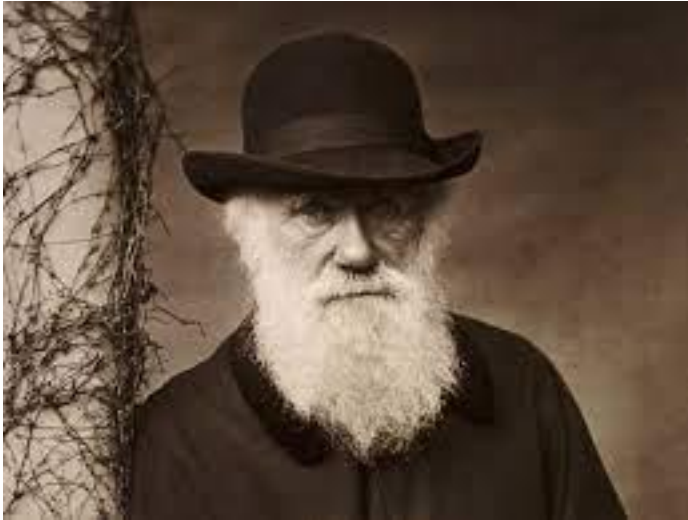
2. Evolutionary theory

1785: James Hunter

1830: Sir Charles Lyell *Principles of Geology*

1859: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (Charles Darwin)

1871: *The Descent of Man* (Darwin)



3. Cultural changes

Changing religious landscape

The Rise of Catholicism

What were the Phases of Fundamentalism?

Historian John Fea has noted 4 phases to the fundamentalist movement:

- an *irenic* phase (1893–1919)
- a *militant* phase (1920–1936)
- a *divisive* phase (1941–1960)
- a *separatist* phase (1960 to the present)

1. an *irenic* phase (1893–1919)

1893: the World Parliament of Religions came to America

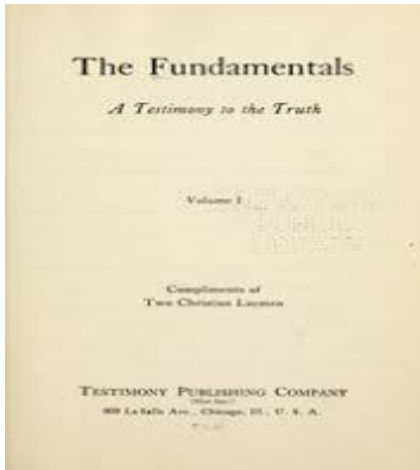
1895: Niagara Bible Conference

Five "fundamentals" for churches and seminaries to require affirmation of:

- 1. Bodily return of Christ
- 2. Inerrancy of Scripture
- 3. Resurrection of Christ

- 4. Deity and virgin birth of Christ
- 5. Substitutionary atonement

1910: "The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth."



Theological | inter-denominational cooperation

- Presbyterians like James Orr and BB Warfield wrote articles, but so did Anglicans like bishop H.C.G. Moule,
- And dispensationalists like C.I. Scofield,
- And the evangelist R.A. Torrey, and the southern Baptist scholar E.Y. Mullins
- covenantal theologians and dispensationalists, Arminians and Calvinists, paedobaptists and credobaptists.

2. a *militant* phase (1920–1936)

1920: We here and now move that a new word be adopted to describe the men among us who insist that the landmarks shall not be removed. "Conservatives" is too closely allied with reactionary forces in all walks of life. "Premillennialists" is too closely allied with a single doctrine and not sufficiently inclusive. "Landmarks" has a historical disadvantage and connotes a particular group of radical conservatives. We suggest that those who still cling to the great fundamentals and who mean to do battle royal for the great fundamentals shall be called "Fundamentalists." By that name the editor of the *Watchman-Examiner* is willing to be called. It will be understood therefore when he uses the word it will be in compliment and not in disparagement. (Curtis Lee Laws)

Dispensationalism and fundamentalism: a match made in heaven

1920: fundamentalism: "a protest against rationalistic interpretation of Christianity which seeks to discredit supernaturalism." (Curtis Lee Laws)

Many conservative evangelicals began to associate the destructive character of the German war machine with the destructive nature of liberal theology upon traditional orthodoxy. The result was a belligerent mentality that would spread from the military campaigns of Europe to the ecclesiastical confrontations of the 1920s. America was engaged in a world war, and the attitude and vocabulary associated with that war was transferred to the churches. (John Fea)

J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937) – from Princeton to Westminster

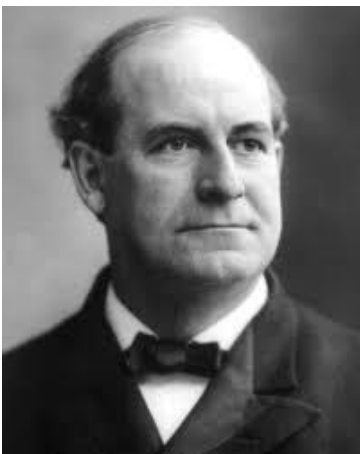


"Christianity and Liberalism" in 1923

1925: Butler Acts and Scopes Trial

George William Hunter's *Civic Biology*.

William Jennings Bryan



"preserve the rights of common citizens against the imperialism of the elite and the values of traditional America against the encroaching naturalism of an alien moral system." (Mark Noll)

Bryan vs. Clarence Darrow

Won the battle, but lost the war

Inherit the Wind

Opposition to Fundamentalism: the Empire Strikes Back

Baptist Minister Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969)



Shall the Fundamentalists Win? "Christianity did not need the intolerance of the fundamentalists but rather the tolerance of diverse belief practiced by enlightened modernists." (Mark Noll)

modernism or theological liberalism was the only way to "to be both an intelligent modern and a serious Christian" (Fosdick)

University of Chicago professor Shailer Mathews (1863-1941).



"The world needs new control and nature and society and is told that the Bible is verbally inerrant. It needs a means of composing class strife, and is told to believe in the substitutionary atonement...It needs faith in the divine presence in human affairs and is told it must accept the virgin birth of Jesus Christ." (Mathews)

fundamentalists, modernists, and inclusivists (theological moderates who preferred peaceful coexistence to militant theological battle).

modernists gained control of most denominational hierarchies and seminaries.

Reaction: conservatives (fundamentalists) start their own

Denominational schism: Orthodoxy Presbyterian Church and Bible Presbyterian Church

Prohibition was "the austere weapon of a pack of bluenosed Puritans who found life a joyless thing and were determined that no one else should be allowed to distill a drop of pleasure from it." (Shelley)

3. a *divisive* phase (1941–1960)

"a fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something."

September 1941: the American Council of Christian Churches (A.C.C.C.) was founded for the purpose of continuing the anti-modernist campaign. Other fundamentalists realized that the struggles of the previous decade had marred the name fundamentalism forever and that any organizational unity among religious conservatives in the future would have to be based on a more open-minded "positive" approach toward modernism. This group was responsible for the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals (N.A.E.) in April of 1942.

Carl Henry

Fuller Theological Seminary

Christianity Today

Three camps: modernists (liberals), fundamentalists, evangelicals

The Billy Graham test

4. a *separatist* phase (1960 to the present)

"I'll tell you what an evangelical is: it's someone who says to a liberal, 'I'll call you a Christian if you call me a scholar.'" (Bob Jones)

fundamentalism begins to be defined not primarily by what it is for (historic orthodoxy, for example), but what it is against.

Billy Graham in particular, evangelicalism in general, and "worldly amusements" such as playing cards, dancing, going to movies, and alcohol.

What is "worldly"?

Pensacola Christian College

- What music can you listen to? "Whether or not the lyrics are Christian, music in the style of contemporary Christian, country, jazz, rock, rap, R&B, or pop is prohibited and may not be in a student's possession or used on or off campus."
 - What movies can you watch? When visiting homes off campus, students may watch movies rated G or PG; however, ratings of PG-13, R, or X are prohibited.
 - What about interaction with the opposite sex? Gendered stairs and elevators
- How can you spot a fundamentalist?
 1. KJV only



2. They tend to be dispensational.
3. They tend to define themselves by what they are against. Driven by fear and anger rather than love.
4. Abusive leadership.

What are the Pros of the Fundamentalist Movement?

- the fundamentalists stood firm for truth.
- generally inter-denominational.
- passionate for missions and evangelism.

What are the Cons of the Fundamentalist Movement?

- separatism and siege mentality
- bitterness and pessimism
- Legalism and a very guilt-centered view of sanctification rather than an emphasis on the gospel and grace.
- Theological reductionism
- anti-intellectualism

What are the Lasting Effects of Fundamentalism?

1. The fragmentation of Protestantism. As historian Martin Marty says, "what had come of the conflict of the twenties was a deeply, permanently divided Protestantism..."
2. The erosion of cultural influence.
3. A distortion of Christian self-understanding.