

FUNDAMENTALISMUS IN AMERIKA:

Den Bock zum Gärtner Machen¹

by Lorin L. Cranford

Introduction

The title is deliberately chosen to reflect the position toward this movement that I have taken for this presentation. This viewpoint has two sources: intensive research into this movement and personal experience from direct dealings with this movement as it has impacted the religious group to which I belong: the Southern Baptist Convention.

This latter aspect needs some attention at the outset of the presentation so that you can better understand my vantage point. Not long after joining the faculty of Southwestern Baptist Seminary in 1974, I found myself caught up in the growing pressure from the right-wing segment of our denomination. In the middle 70s a few individuals developed a strategy to take over control of the largest Protestant denomination in America. Through the use of political organizing tactics employed earlier in the Democratic Party and later the Republican Party, these individuals gradually won control of the national organization of Southern Baptists. The center piece of their strategy was to continuously condemn the professors in the six SBC seminaries as having corrupted the young students with 'liberalism.' In the relatively conservative South such a judgment is virtually synonymous with being banished to Hell. An example of an early broadside came in 1979 at the Pastors' Conference meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention from James Robison, at that time a prominent Southern Baptist evangelist: "Have you ever noticed how many of these instructors of higher learning look like they've been embalmed with the fluid of higher education? They . . . look like a Godforsaken corpse, pickled in intellectual skepticism. God forgive them."² Even though charge after charge against the various seminaries in general and against individual professors in particular have been proven to be groundless and usually slanderous, the flood of accusations has not diminished since their beginning in the middle 1970s.³ Thus virtually my entire professional career as a New Testament professor has been carried out facing these criticisms and efforts at dismissal.

Therefore I come as no friend of fundamentalism, but rather as one who has suffered under its arrogant dogmatism and manipulative attempts to dictate what can be taught in the classroom. The

¹The title equals: "Fundamentalism in America: Making a Gardner out of a Billy Goat." The German text of lecture was presented to the Neutestamentliche Sozietät at the University of Heidelberg on June 14, 1991. The English text was presented to the Englishes Seminar in the Soziologischen Fakultät of the University of Bonn on June 10, 1991. Subsequently, the lecture was presented to the national meeting of American professors of history at the University of North Texas in Denton, Texas. All rights reserved.©

²As quoted in Bill J. Leonard, God's Last & Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), xi.

³For a synopsis of this vicious attack see Bill Ballou et als., "A Brief History of the SBC Controversy: A Report by the Messengers from FBC, Amarillo to the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention," The First Baptist Reporter 33, no. 28 (6 July 1990), 1-5. A much more detailed accounting can be found in Leonard, God's Only Hope, especially chapter six "The Controversy: An Overview," 131-172.

question might very well surface in your minds: Why stay in a seminary facing such ungodly pressures? To be honest, I have asked myself that question numerous time over the last several years. The answer comes that I must stay as long as possible. At Southwestern Seminary there is the opportunity of teaching every twelfth Protestant theology student in North America through this one institution.⁴ In spite of all the difficulties many bright, capable young men and women have come through Southwestern over these last seventeen years that I have been a part of the faculty. Today they are in Christian service literally around the world on every continent, as pastors, missionaries, medical doctors etc. Several doctoral graduates hold strategic professorships in Baptist universities and seminaries not only in America but in several other countries as well. To abandon such an opportunity to shape positively the thinking of these young people would be to shirk a duty before God and before the Christian community that needs talented young people with open mind and a sensitivity for helping people.

What is the objective before us in treating this subject? At the heart of my purpose is to provide a general orientation into this religious movement in American Christianity. It cuts across denominational lines.⁵ Thus a new kind of ecumenism is emerging. The old condemnation of the National and World Council of Churches continues unabated. But now one finds Jerry Falwell working with Roman Catholic bishops in the antiabortion movement. A network of relationships and communication extends from leaders of para church groups such as Bill Bright of Campus Crusade to James Kennedy, the minister of one of the largest Presbyterian congregations in America.⁶ Through the National Association of Evangelicals founded in 1942, there have arisen organized efforts to influence the direction of most of the larger denomination. Sometimes with success, sometimes not from within but through a draining off of resources into these para church groups.⁷

Fundamentalism is increasingly politically active in seeking to influence American governmental policy, not only the internal domestic policy but U.S. foreign policy toward other countries. Working largely in the shadows during the Reagan administration it achieved some success. Currently the major political parties have recognized the sizable voting power that exists with this segment of the American religious community.⁸ For example, President Bush was scheduled to speak at the national meeting of Southern Baptists last week. He has followed the pattern of the Reagan administration of

⁴Southwestern is the largest seminary in North America with over 4,600 students. The average size seminary student body among ATS (Association of Theological Schools) accredited seminaries numbers less than 200.

⁵George M. Marsden, "Defining American Fundamentalism," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 22-37.

⁶Cf. Richard N. Ostling, "Evangelical Publishing and Broadcasting," in Evangelicalism and Modern America, ed. George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 46-55.

⁷George M. Marsden, Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-century Evangelicalism: 1870-1925 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), 228.

⁸For a helpful treatment of this see A. James Reichley, "Pietist Politics," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 73-98 (esp. 87-98).

carefully cultivating the support of the various fundamentalist religious groups. They make up approximately 20% of the white voting population in the U.S. With the dramatic shift of large numbers of this group from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party over the last decade, they could very possibly give the Republican Party "the national majority status it lost at the beginning of the 1930s."⁹

Thus the movement possesses enough significance to merit serious analysis from a number of perspectives -- theological, sociological, political perspectives. All these can contribute to a better understanding of this religious phenomenon in America. To be sure, in the limited time before me this evening I will not attempt an in depth analysis from each of the perspectives. Being a theologian I will concentrate on this perspective and venture only some tentative analysis from the other angles.

At this point it is important to define some terms that will surface repeatedly in the paper. In the literature regarding this movement one often hears a confusing maze of terms, often without clear definition. Let me suggest some boundaries that will be helpful.¹⁰ The term 'evangelical' in contemporary American circles is not synonymous with the term 'fundamentalist.' Prior to around 1920 the label 'evangelical' was commonly found in reference to conservative Protestantism. In the 20s and 30s 'Fundamentalism' and 'Evangelicalism' were approximately synonymous terms, at least in their historical designation of the same religious phenomenon. But beginning in the 1940s a division in conservative Protestantism developed and thus the term 'fundamentalist' came to designate the right-wing segment and the term 'evangelical' the more moderate branch. Early on the term 'neo-evangelical' was commonly employed for this moderate segment, but since the 1960s just 'evangelical' has been used. Thus today one encounters numerous groups etc. that espouse an evangelical, that is, conservative, theology, but studiously avoid the isolationist positions commonly found in fundamentalist ranks.¹¹ A clear example of this is the professional group of biblical scholars found in the Institute for Biblical Research. Several years ago this group emerged from the older Evangelical Theology Society that now manifests a much more fundamentalist orientation. From its tiny beginnings in 1970 the IBR now numbers more than 300 Fellows and continues to grow rapidly. The term 'New Christian Right' refers to the politically active segment of conservative Protestantism since the late 1970s. Most of these come from the ranks of fundamentalism, although some evangelicals have been participants in this movement as well.¹²

⁹Reichley, "Pietist Politics," 74-75.

¹⁰Robert Keith Martin, "Exegesis", 3-4; Ammerman, Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 3-6; Kathleen C. Boone, The Bible Tells Them So: The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism (Albany, NY: State University Press of New York, 1989), 7-10; Donald W. Dayton, "Some Perspectives on 'The New Christian Right'," Fides et Historia 15 (Fall-Winter, 1982): 55; Jack Keep, "Does 'Evangelical' mean 'Fundamental'," The Baptist Bulletin (May, 1979): 8; George M. Marsden, "The Evangelical Denomination," in Piety and Politics: Evangelicals and Fundamentalists Confront the World, ed. Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Cromartie (Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1987), 55-68; Richard Quebedeaux, The Worldly Evangelicals (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1978), 6-9.

¹¹For an analysis of the pivotal role in this played by Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, see George M. Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987).

¹²For an especially helpful treatment of this phenomenon see Martin, "Exegesis," 7-64. Also

Defining Characteristics of Fundamentalism¹³

What is fundamentalism?¹⁴ The answer to this question is far more difficult than may first appear. A popular definition is "one who takes the Bible literally."¹⁵ Interesting is George Marsden's definition of a fundamentalist as "an evangelical who is angry about something."¹⁶ Closely related is the insider definition of George Dollar: "Historic fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes."¹⁷

As can be quickly observed, American religious fundamentalism is a multifarious phenomenon.¹⁸ Important to understanding it are the theological issues that are central in its agenda. But fundamentalism is far more than the promotion and defense of a distinct set of religious beliefs. Equally important is the attitude and manner of the movement. Thus the socio-psychological aspects need to be explored if a clear understanding is to be achieved. Again, an investigation into the theological and socio-psychological dimensions will not suffice. Its connections to other movements, both

helpful is Richard V. Pierard, "The New Religious Right in American Politics," Evangelicalism and Modern America, ed. George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 161-174. Pierard's label 'evangelical Christian right' is basically synonymous with 'fundamentalism' used in this paper.

¹³The working definition of a social movement is that proposed by R. H. Turner and L. M. Kilian in Collective Behavior (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 308: "A social movement is a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in the society or group of which it is a part."

¹⁴See James Barr, Fundamentalism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 1-10, for a different approach to defining fundamentalism. He opts for a broad, vague definition that he proceeds to narrow in the process of the book.

¹⁵Barr, Fundamentalism, 1.

¹⁶Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," 22.

¹⁷George W. Dollar, A History of Fundamentalism in America, (Greenville: Bob Jones University Press, 1973), xv. For a treatment of insider definitions see Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," 23-26.

¹⁸It is important to distinguish between American fundamentalism and its British counterpart. For a helpful analysis here see Marsden, Fundamentalism, 221-228. Several factors play an important role here: the extraordinary cultural and ethnic pluralism in America, the less pervasive American view of the religious basis of culture, the powerful influence of revivalism, the widespread American use of the Baconian tradition and Common Sense Realism, among other factors. Much more detailed is George M. Marsden, "Fundamentalism as an American Phenomenon, A Comparison with English Evangelicalism," Church History 46, 2 (June 1977): 215-232. Failure to make this distinction sufficiently clear is a major weakness of Barr's work.

historical and contemporary, form an important part of this endeavor to understand. Lastly, some exploration of the diversity within the movement is necessary.

Central Theological Issues to Fundamentalism

At the heart of the theological concern of fundamentalism is the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible.¹⁹ This is the belief that the Bible is without error in all matters of faith, history, theology, biology, or any other issue that can be discussed in its light.²⁰ As Dollar's above definition underscores, the fundamentalist sees himself as the true defender of the central role of scripture in religious belief and practice. Sometimes there is the assertion that fundamentalism is the true descendant of the Reformation principle of sola scriptura, while all others have in fact abandoned the concept by rejecting the inerrancy of scripture.²¹ The domino theory forms a vital presupposition to this mind set. It reasons as follows: once the inerrancy of the Bible is rejected, then next goes the concept of the miraculous followed by the Virgin Birth and the deity of Christ. Evolution, higher criticism, and the social gospel come to the forefront of emphasis. "The true and basic authority the inward experiences springing from reason and intuition."²²

As Marsden notes, "to a large extent, fundamentalism is a militant reaction to modern higher criticism of the Bible and to the displacement of the Bible as a central culture-forming force in American life."²³ This second aspect merits further exploration. A critical issue here supposedly reflecting the abandonment of biblical values in American life is the Supreme Court's ban on public prayer from the schools. As Richard Neuhaus states, "it is almost impossible to overestimate the degree to which the removal of prayer from the classrooms of state schools in the early 1960s triggered the beginnings of the fundamentalist insurgency."²⁴ There followed a mushrooming of fundamentalist oriented parochial schools; a long term political commitment to the reshaping of the Supreme Court toward a conservative stance along with the push for a constitutional amendment to reestablish prayer

¹⁹Barr, Fundamentalism, 1.

²⁰Leonard, God's Only Hope, 7-8.

²¹See Dollar's chapter one, "The Attack on the Bible," in History, 7-14. Interesting is his not so subtle equation of Protestant orthodoxy and fundamentalism. James D. Hunter effectively rebuts such mistaken ideology in "Fundamentalism in Its Global Contours," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 57-58. For a helpful background treatment on the historic role of sola scriptura in American culture see Nathan O. Hatch, "Sola Scriptura and Novus Ordo Seclorum," in The Bible in America, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 59-78.

²²Dollar, History, 13.

²³Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," 24.

²⁴Richard John Neuhaus, "Fundamentalism and the American Polity," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 137.

in public schools. A second critical factor signaling to fundamentalism that America had sunk to a new low morally was the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision in 1974 legalizing abortion.²⁵ Emerging as the political expression of fundamentalism was what has come to be called 'the New Christian Right.' Best known of the various organizations is Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority group founded in 1979.²⁶ Although organized political activity can be traced back as far as the Barry Goldwater presidential campaign of 1964, the campaigns of Ronald Reagan in the 1980s brought about the blossoming of this activity. The moral concerns of influential fundamentalist leaders such as Jerry Falwell, Tim LaHaye, Bill Bright, James Kennedy and others were linked up to the political organizing skills of leaders in the secular New Right such as Paul Weyrich, Howard Phillips, and Richard Viguerie.²⁷ Thus the goal has been to bring America 'back to its biblical roots,' to 'reChristianize America' as some have put it.²⁸

But it must be kept in mind that the authority of the scriptures is not the ultimate issue. Instead, it is a particular interpretation of the scriptures, which is usually equated, consciously or unconsciously, with the scriptures themselves.²⁹ As Dollar's definition illustrates, it is "the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible" that stands at the heart of the matter. Those who object to the fundamentalist interpretations of scripture are accused of denying the Bible itself.³⁰ Doctrinal conformity becomes very important; diversity of viewpoint tends to create immediate criticism and opposition. Central to the contemporary fundamentalist movement is the interpretative system labeled Dispensationalism.³¹ To be sure, not every fundamentalist is dispensationalist, but the overwhelming majority are.³² This viewpoint relates not only to a very distinct understanding about how

²⁵For helpful summation of these and other pivotal factors see Robert Keith Martin, "Exegesis or Expediency: An Analysis of the New Christian Right's Interpretation of the Relationship of the Believer and the State in Paul," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1990), 48-53.

²⁶Two other significant groups also emerging in 1979 include Christian Voice, founded by Robert Grant and Richard Zone, and Religious Roundtable, founded by Ed McAteer.

²⁷Martin, "Exegesis," 24-27. Interestingly, Viguerie and Weyrich are Roman Catholics and Phillips is Jewish.

²⁸See James M. Dunn, "Fundamentalism and the American Polity: A Response," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 143-150. For a helpful alternative perspective on America as a 'biblical' nation between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War see Mark A. Noll, "The Image of the United States as a Biblical Nation, 1776-1865," in The Bible in America, ed. Nathan O. Hatch and Mark A. Noll (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 39-58.

²⁹Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," 24.

³⁰Barr, Fundamentalism, 1.

³¹For a very important analysis of this in American twentieth century religious history, see Timothy P. Weber, Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1982, enlarged edition, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Corporation, 1983).

³²The major exception to this is the radical Christian Reconstructionist movement that is Post-

the world will come to an end with the return of Christ. It also employs a strict, rationalistic hermeneutic to scripture interpretation.³³

Regarding basic doctrinal positions, contemporary fundamentalists still adhere to the so called Five Points statement of doctrine in the fundamentalist creed set forth in the older fundamentalism at the beginning of this century.³⁴ These are insistence upon universal Christian acceptance of the Inerrancy of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, his Virgin Birth, the Substitutionary Atonement of Christ, and his physical Resurrection and bodily Return to earth. Although most, if not all, these topics additionally characterize Christian orthodoxy, the distinctive twist given by fundamentalism clearly sets them apart from mainstream American Christianity, as Jaroslav Pelikan has ably shown.³⁵ For example, Christian orthodoxy, as expressed in the Niceno -Constantinopolitan Creed, asserts regarding creation: "We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all visible and of all invisible beings." Nothing is said concerning the mode and time-table of that creation. Fundamentalism, on the other hand, tends to insist on a literal six twenty-four hour day creation understanding, on the mistaken assumption that this view has been the orthodox Christian position down through the centuries.³⁶

Further expansion of the theological issues for fundamentalism certainly could be done, but suffice it to say, that for contemporary fundamentalism, orthodoxy means the adoption of a distinct set of Christian beliefs with inerrancy of scripture at the head of the list. The best way to arrive at those beliefs is through the hermeneutical system of dispensationalism. Those who are true followers of Jesus Christ will agree with this stance. This theological perspective must take full advantage of political and other means to revitalize America religiously and morally. This entails both individual renewal as well as the legislative alteration of public policy. Only then can the American way of life return to its 'Christian root' and avoid further deterioration and eventual destruction.

millennial in its eschatology. See Martin, "Exegesis," 95-108, for helpful summation.

³³This rationalistic orientation can be traced back to the dominance of Scottish Common Sense Realism on American society from the late 1700s until well into this century. Cf. Marsden, Fundamentalism, 14-21.

³⁴Jaroslav Pelikan, "Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy? Toward an Understanding of the Fundamentalist Phenomenon," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 3-21.

³⁵Pelikan, "Fundamentalism," 6-21.

³⁶Ibid., 6-8.

Socio-Psychological Traits of Fundamentalism

When such a theological profile of fundamentalism is grasped, the question naturally follows: What drives such people toward these goal? Sufficiently to endure ridicule and fierce opposition? In American circles the label Fundamentalist is tantamount to being labeled a mindless bigot.³⁷ At the beginning of this century, and before, the term normally connoted something positive, but beginning with the 1920s the label 'fundamentalist' increasingly assumed negative tones. To be sure, the label is largely an outsider established pejorative label, but in insider circles may take pride in the label, contrary to James Barr's assessment.³⁸

Such individuals manifest in varying degrees a set of common traits in addition to their theological stances. These traits comprise an important dimension of fundamentalism.

Militancy for their cause

Marsden's definition of a fundamentalist as someone "who is angry about something" is pivotal to understanding the fundamentalist mind set.³⁹ "Central to being a fundamentalist is perceiving oneself to be in the midst of religious war. Fundamentalists are particularly fond of the metaphors of warfare. The universe is divided between the forces of light and darkness. Spiritually enlightened Christians can tell who the enemy is. In such war, there can be no compromise."⁴⁰ Truth must be defended at all costs; arousing anger at perceived dangers to truth is seen as the best means of building a wall of defense around it⁴¹

This militancy stems largely from their dispensationalist belief system, which generates a crusading mentality. Issues tend to be reduced down to simple black and white alternatives. Coupled with this is a fervent belief that their movement has "been raised up by God to preserve the evangelical foundations of American civilization."⁴² The vehicle of the crusade has been revivalism, that is, the holding of extensive religious meetings lasting up to two weeks or more of daily services. The evangelist preaches highly emotional sermons targeted to motivate the hearers to a public confession

³⁷Cf. Clark H. Pinnock, "Defining American Fundamentalism: A Response," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 40-42; Barr, Fundamentalism, 2; Daniel B. Stevick, Beyond Fundamentalism (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1964), 45-46.

³⁸Barr, Fundamentalism, 2; Pinnock, "Defining Fundamentalism," 40-42.

³⁹Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," 22.

⁴⁰Ibid., 24.

⁴¹Hunter, "Fundamentalism," 63-65. This trait is shared by fundamentalist movements outside Protestant Christianity as Hunter demonstrates.

⁴²Joel A. Carpenter, "From Fundamentalism to the New Evangelical Coalition," in Evangelicalism and Modern America, ed. George M. Marsden (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 10.

of belief in Christ at the end of the service. At least once there is a sermon condemning modernity and liberalism, along with those denominations and preachers who 'have fallen prey' to these evil forces. The latest in mass media techniques, such as newspaper, radio, and TV advertising, are frequently employed in order to create maximum public awareness of the revival meeting.

Separation from Outsiders

Closely linked to the polar thinking inherent to the warfare imagery is the call to separateness.⁴³ The world denying mentality behind this call stems from a variety of sources. The uncertainties and frustrations of modern living foster this attitude. The retreat into a religious world of absolutes and certainty appeals to many. Given the turbulence of the last several decades the security offered by fundamentalism has attracted many Americans. The perceived corruption of Christianity by others generates a withdrawal posture in order to protect 'pure' Christianity. Often coupled with this is the fostering of deep, close fellowship within the fundamentalist community. These traits surfaced in Nancy Ammerman's recent sociological analysis of a fundamentalist community in the Deep South.⁴⁴

This withdrawal mentality has a historical origin also. "By the 1930s, when it became painfully clear that reform from within could not prevent the spread of modernism in major northern denominations, more and more fundamentalists began to make separation from America's major denominations an article of faith."⁴⁵ Consequently, there emerged numerous nondenominational Bible schools and seminaries designed to provide 'unpolluted' training for young men who would preserve the belief systems of fundamentalism. Some of these schools have had a major influence. Numbered among these in the would be Dallas Theological Seminary in Texas, Biola College and Talbot Seminary in California, and Bob Jones University in South Carolina.⁴⁶ Also several new denominational groups gradually came into being. In Baptist ranks there were numerous split-off groups from either the American Baptist Convention, such as the Conservative Baptist Convention or from the Southern Baptist Convention, such as the World Baptist Fellowship established by J. Frank Norris.⁴⁷ The demand to separate from perceived 'liberal groups' has been a central tenant in these movements.

⁴³"A *zealous separateness* from the outside world seems to be the most consistent and striking characteristic of the fundamentalist community." Mortimer Ostow, "The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A Psychological Perspective," in The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 107. The early history in the 1930s and 40s is effectively summarized by Carpenter, "From Fundamentalism," 4-9. Helpful in analyzing this mentality of separateness during this earlier period is Stevick, Beyond Fundamentalism, 203-223. For an analysis drawing distinctions among fundamentalists between levels of emphasis on separation see Marsden, "Defining Fundamentalism," 28-29.

⁴⁴See Ammerman, Bible Believers.

⁴⁵Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, 7.

⁴⁶For an interesting ranking of numerous such schools and mission boards from a hard line fundamentalist perspective, see Dollar, Fundamentalism, 283-289.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 85-90.

The paradox here is the recent political activism of fundamentalist groups. The emergence of the New Christian Right in the 1970s represents a radical shift in orientation away from historic fundamentalism.⁴⁸ Two historical events gave encouragement to this: the 1976 bicentennial celebration that evoked new fears of the loss of America's religious heritage, and the election of Jimmy Carter to the U.S. presidency. Added to this was the growing political influence of the secular New Right and its enlistment of Christian leaders in its cause. Also very significant was the rise of television evangelists with massive nationwide audiences. Although the older generation of TV evangelists like Rex Humbard and Oral Roberts usually steered clear of politics, the younger generation of Jerry Falwell, James Robison, Jim Bakker, and Pat Robertson were all too willing to inject their political observations into their preaching. These TV personalities quickly became a unifying factor giving a national sense of identity to fundamentalism. They were expert fund-raisers and thus generated millions of dollars to fundamentalist political and religious causes.

But central to this shift from isolation to political activity was the perceived moral decline of America that had resulted from an increasing secularism. 'Secular Humanism' became the number one treat to the future of America in the minds of these leaders.⁴⁹ It had to be stopped, and the most immediate, effective way to do it was through the legislative process. Godly Christian politicians must be elected at all levels of government who would use their power and influence to turn America around.⁵⁰

Yet this political involvement represents to some fundamentalists a foray into questionable territory. The far right-wing side of fundamentalism represented by Billy James Hargis and Carl McIntire has refused to get involved and has condemned Falwell and others for their involvement. The failure of the Pat Robertson presidential campaign in 1988 has raised doubts in the minds of

⁴⁸David Saperstein, "Fundamentalist Involvement in the Political Scene: Analysis and Response," The Fundamentalist Phenomenon, ed. Norman J. Cohen (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 214-229; Reichley, "Pietist Politics," 83-98. Two important sociological explanations of the sudden rise of the NCR include (1) the status politics theory by Lipset and Raab, Crawford and Motite; (2) lifestyle or symbolic politics by Wald, Conover, Lorentzen, Wuthnow et als. Of the two the latter seems to offer the better explanation. What is at stake is not the recovery of lost personal status, but the prestige of the lifestyle. The NCR is then a counter mythology doing battle with other contending mythologies over "the meaning of America's story." Secular humanism and liberal Christianity represent the two major competing mythologies. The battle is over symbols and symbol production, because whoever can produce the dominant symbols will be able to create an alternative world. Three crucial symbols and means of symbol making are television, the schools, and the family. Martin, "Exegesis," 47-58.

⁴⁹For a very important critique of the inaccuracies of the contention of 'secular humanism' standing behind society's ills see Steve Bruce, The Rise and Fall of the New Christian Right: Conservative Protestant Politics in America, 1978-1988 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 183-189. Also helpful is Pierard, "New Religious Right," 173. Several authors gave this idea a sense of legitimacy: Francis Schaeffer, How Should We Then Live?; Tim LaHaye, The Battle for the Mind; Homer Duncan, Secular Humanism; James Hitchcock, What Is Secular Humanism.

⁵⁰See Saperstein, "Fundamentalist Involvement," 218-219. For example note the resolution passed by the Minnesota Republican county caucuses in 1984: "We will support only 'born-again Christians who hold traditional values.'"

some about the wisdom of heavy political activity. Yet if one attends local Republican Party meetings in various parts of the U.S. the continuing impact of the NCR is still clearly evident.

Gravitation toward Charismatic Leadership

Several other traits also exist in the fundamentalist mentality, but a quick word about one final trait needs to be said. The fundamentalist movement from the 1920s onward has reflected a strong inclination to be focused in strong charismatic personalities.⁵¹ Interesting in this vein is George Dollar's treatment of early fundamentalist leaders in chapter seven entitled "The Prima Donnas of Fundamentalism."⁵² The rise of TV evangelists such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and others has only served to foster this tendency toward elevating the authority role of the religious leader.

This has continued in spite of the downfall of some of these such as Jim Bakker. Among the fundamentalist Baptist groups in particular one finds several large congregations whose regular Sunday morning worship attendance numbers in the thousands in each congregation.⁵³ The so-called 'super church' has become a role model that young seminarians are encouraged to strive for once they complete their theological education and enter into local parish ministry. Curiously enough the dispensationalist theology of the movement is a major encouragement to this centralization of authority in the pastor. He becomes the ultimate spokesman who best knows how to correctly interpret the scriptures from this hermeneutic. This works fine until there are differences among the various pastoral authorities, and deep differences frequently surface. The frequent result is further division and splitting off into new churches or groups. Near my last pastorate before coming the Southwestern Seminary in 1974, there were two fundamentalist Baptist churches on opposite sides of the same block, but they so despised one another that no contact existed between them.

Diversity within Fundamentalism

It would be a major mistake to assume that the fundamentalist movement in America is a unified force.⁵⁴ The tendency toward divisiveness coupled with the crusading mentality has historically produced internal divisions in large numbers.⁵⁵ The most notable example of this is with Baptist cir-

⁵¹By charismatic I mean the traditional sense of the word, as a persuasive personality, rather than the identification with 'speaking in tongues' as in found in modern Pentecostal groups.

⁵²Dollar, Fundamentalism, 105-143. In this chapter he eulogizes T.T. Shields, William Bell Riley, John Roach Straton, and J. Frank Norris.

⁵³Ibid., 277-278.

⁵⁴For a detailed accounting of this tendency up through the early 1970s see Barr, Fundamentalism, chapter seven "Variations and Conflicts," 187-234. He lists five areas that serve as the basis of internal division: (1) Calvinism and Arminianism, (2) Millennialism, (3) Pentecostalism and the like, (4) Modern translations of the Bible, and (5) Neo-orthodoxy, biblical theology and the new conservatives.

⁵⁵It is instructive to have some sense of the numbers of people involved. A 1979 Gallup survey

cles where the 1920s movement of J. Frank Norris has repeatedly split itself into several different denominational groups. On a broader basis, the failure of Pat Robertson's presidential campaign to unite fundamentalists behind him underscores the deep diversity existing in this movement.⁵⁶

This diversity has been variously described. Important to keep in view is the situation of the last decade in contrast to earlier patterns. Fundamentalism is a constantly evolving religious phenomenon. Its vulnerability to the influence of charismatic leaders serves to generate philosophical and theological turns, first one direction, then another. Perhaps no greater stimulus toward greater openness to outsiders has come than that generated through the New Christian Right political activity. At the same time it has served to further polarize the fundamentalist community.

Dollar uses an insider standard of loyalty to the perceived basis of fundamentalism in order to divide the fundamentalist camp into three groups.⁵⁷ Thus there are (1) militant fundamentalists, whom he considers alone to be true fundamentalists; (2) moderate fundamentalists; and (3) modified fundamentalists. Militant fundamentalists are defined as one "who interprets the Bible literally and also exposes all affirmations and attitudes not found in the Word of God."⁵⁸ The moderate fundamentalists are defined as anyone "who accepts all the affirmations or doctrines of the Bible but refuses to expose error, those who espouse error, wrong attitudes, questionable habits, and defections from Bible discipline."⁵⁹ The third group are those who have surrendered to the New Evangelicalism, but have not been sufficiently honest to publicly announce their abandonment of genuine fundamentalism.⁶⁰

More instructive is Clark Pinnock's twofold division of the contemporary movement into either (1) strict or (2) open fundamentalism.⁶¹ Again the criterion of distinction is the degree of separateness advocated by each group. Dollar's first two groups would basically fall under Pinnock's strict fundamentalist label. His open fundamentalist relates to Dollar's modified label, but is perceived positively rather than negatively. This is primarily because Pinnock's own spiritual pilgrimage has taken him from a strict position to the left side of the open group.⁶² Two major traits of openness include greater concern for higher education and the place of the intellect in Christianity,⁶³ and a willingness

estimated the number of "evangelicals" at 44 million. Christianity Today XXIII (December 21, 1979): 1671. In contrast, Dollar estimated in 1973 some thirteen thousand churches gladly accepting the label "Fundamentalist" averaging 350 members. Thus he assumes the existence of approximately four million fundamentalists. Dollar, History, 248, 282.

⁵⁶Reichley, "Pietist Politics," 96-98.

⁵⁷Dollar, History, 282-298.

⁵⁸Ibid., 283.

⁵⁹Ibid., 284.

⁶⁰Ibid., 285.

⁶¹Pinnock, "Defining Fundamentalism," 42-47.

⁶²Ibid., 3-40.

⁶³The older caricature of fundamentalists as anti-higher education is far less accurate in today's situation. Cf. chapter three in Harvey Cox, Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theol-

to be self-critical. Pinnock is much more sympathetic here than most. The concern for higher education among the open fundamentalists still is more oriented toward indoctrination than genuine education that encourages individual pursuit of the truth. My personal observation of fundamentalists has not demonstrated much of a tendency to be self-critical; critical of others yes, but a humble admission of mistakes and failures, very rarely. But it must be acknowledged that among some there is an individual movement from the far-right toward a position that is not easy to distinguish from contemporary Evangelicalism. Such a movement is virtually inevitable when one begins a dialogue with a variety of outsiders. The positive benefit of the NCR lies precisely here. Jerry Falwell has come into contact with a wide variety of differing viewpoints not only politically but theologically through the Moral Majority. And though I find most of his positions personally repugnant, at least he has modified his stance away from anti-Catholicism, anti-Semitism, and racism.⁶⁴

Conclusion

What about the future of this movement? I'm no prophet or "son of a prophet"⁶⁵ but where angels fear to tread professors rush in. Let me venture some tentative assessments.

Fundamentalism needs bad times in order to thrive. It fuels itself through sharp criticism of decay and decline in American society, both politically and religiously. Whenever there is economic difficulty and/or certain moral issues such as school prayer and abortion that can be manipulated to create public sentiment, then fundamentalism has much greater appeal. With decline and rapid change in society comes social unease and uncertainty about the future. Fundamentalism plays on these fears in order to gain support for its causes.

This was a major factor in the rise in popularity of fundamentalism during the Reagan administration. The issues of school prayer and abortion began attracting concern in large segments of the American population. The negativism in American self-image produced by the Vietnam war era was exactly what fundamentalism needed in order to generate a crusade to 'save America' and 'restore it to its earlier grandeur.' Along came a charismatic politician closely linked to the political New Right who at least expressed sympathy for the religious and moral concerns of fundamentalism. Thus, for example, Falwell in early political speeches in behalf of Reagan exalted him to the position of savior of America, much like the Deutsche Christen did Hitler in the 1930s. Beginning in the 1960s most of the mainline Protestant denominations began a sharp decrease in membership and participation in church life.⁶⁶ At the same time evangelical and fundamentalist congregations and groups experienced explosive growth. The religious orientation of American Protestantism began moving toward a much more conservative position as numerous evangelical and fundamentalist groups reached memberships

ogy (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984).

⁶⁴Reichley, "Pietist Politics," 98.

⁶⁵In the manner of declaration by the prophet Amos to Amaziah in 7:14.

⁶⁶For example, the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. has lost about one third of its members during this time. For an insightful assessment of this predicament see John C. Long, "Presbyterians: A New Look at an Old Church," *Progressions* 2, no. 1 (January 1990): 1-3. This same issue contains several other articles dealing with this decline in membership.

either as large as, or often much larger than, most of the mainline groups.

Another factor needing consideration is the socioeconomic composition of contemporary fundamentalism in comparison to older fundamentalism. Historically, fundamentalism has gained its greatest support among rural Americans and urban blue-collar workers. This socioeconomic orientation has given a very distinct stamp to the movement from the 20s through the 50s. But at least among Southern Baptist fundamentalists there is another orientation: the modern baby-boomers or yuppie class.⁶⁷

Most all the so called SBC super churches of fundamentalist orientation are located in very affluent sections of cities in the South and Southwest. Here one typically finds a religious viewpoint that seeks to 'conserve' the fundamentals, but also give justification to a very materialistic lifestyle. This socioeconomic background gives rise to the relatively new openness that one finds in the Open Fundamentalist group. Many of these individuals are well educated for their careers; they deal with a variety of differing viewpoints in the workplace; they share many of the same material values as their affluent neighbors with other religious backgrounds. Although often raised in mainline church groups, for them principles of choice and pluralism are accepted as a part of the scheme of things.⁶⁸ Nancy Ammerman's sociological analysis of fundamentalism treated the more traditional socioeconomic orientation.⁶⁹ What is needed now is a similar analysis of the yuppie fundamentalist in the super church. Such a study would uncover several important differences to the more traditional profile of a fundamentalist.

What about future prospects of fundamentalism? Will it continue to be a growing influence religiously and politically? An answer to these concerns is difficult. It depends to a large extent on whether the necessary socioeconomic conditions continue to exist in American society. The inherent divisiveness of fundamentalism historically has severely limited its ability to sustain a long term impact on American society. Once the external factors fueling a crusading mentality diminish or disappear, its surface level unity likewise crumbles and the paralysis of internal bickering sets in. Such is beginning already within the Southern Baptist Convention. Once the so called moderate segment decided to bow out of the fight, the internal dissension among the various fundamentalist factions has risen sharply.⁷⁰

Yet, it would be a gross mistake to dismiss fundamentalism as having no future. The fact that this mentality has captured control of the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church in the 1970s and now the Southern Baptist Convention strongly suggests a high level of influence over these groups that can be sustained for quite some time to come. Additionally, there are growing fundamentalist movements among Methodists, Presbyterians and Anglicans currently. Among these various denominational groups fundamentalism is overwhelmingly of the open variety, and thus continues to find appeal in certain middle income segments of American society. Especially in the South and Southwestern parts of the country this mentality is particularly attractive, since there is a historic tendency toward conservatism here.

⁶⁷For a brief overview of this phenomenon in general see Kenneth A. Briggs, "Baby Boomers: Boom or Bust for the Churches?," Progressions 2, no. 1 (January 1990): 4-7.

⁶⁸Ammerman, Bible Believers.

⁶⁹Ammerman, Bible Believers.

⁷⁰Cf. "With drop in attendance, quieter SBC expected," SBC Today 9, no 10 (17 May 1991): 2.

Politically, fundamentalism's future is more shaky. Steve Bruce is correct in his assessment that "the power and influence of the movement [NCR] have been greatly exaggerated."⁷¹ Not one major legislative objective of this movement has been achieved thus far. But one has to acknowledge that through coalitions with other groups a trend toward prohibiting abortions certainly exists presently. The successive appointment of conservative justices to the Supreme Court during the two presidential administrations is beginning to impact American society by making it more conservative. As James Reichley concludes, the move toward openness and willingness to enter into coalitions with others certainly makes fundamentalism a formidable influence in American politics, but this same orientation has tended to tone down their radically and draw them more into the mainstream of American life.⁷²

American fundamentalism in its varying forms will continue to be a influential force religiously and politically for quite some time to come. Can the billy goat really become a gardner? Only as he becomes more mainstream will his destructive tendencies be turned into more productive directions. But, he will still be a billy goat, no matter how well trained or groomed.

⁷¹Steve Bruce, NCR, 182.

⁷²James Reichley, "Pietist Politics," 98; Saperstein, "Fundamentalist Involvement," 227-228.

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