EVANGELICAL FUNDAMENTALISM:
An historical-theological study

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Thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Theology in the department of Ecclesiology and Systematic Theology at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

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DECEMBER 2010

Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted at any university for a degree.

Signature: ……

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Abstract

In essence this thesis attempts to answer two questions: Broadly, what is "fundamentalism," and particularly, "evangelical fundamentalism"? Ever since the terrorist attacks on the twin towers in New York on September 11, 2001, "fundamentalism" has become a synonymous term for these and any other militant Islamist attacks. Yet fundamentalism is historically an American and Protestant phenomenon.

However, because fundamentalism is not merely a Protestant phenomenon but more distinctively a "sub-species" of nineteenth century evangelicalism in America, and because one cannot historically separate fundamentalism from evangelicalism, I prefer to adopt the term "evangelical fundamentalism." Yet there is more to the term than simply defining it appropriately within a certain historical context. For example, many conservative evangelicals can neither be labeled, historically or theologically, as "fundamentalists" nor as "evangelical fundamentalists." Definitions change over time. An understanding of the movement's history—its resistance to modernity and engagement with postmodernity—will need to be examined as it opens up more questions concerning its identity and theology.

After summarizing its historical development and evolution, I emphasize the fact that a simple definition does not exist—the movement is too heterogeneous. I therefore identify and adopt a plurality of senses or perspectives to the term and to what it means to be an "evangelical fundamentalist" *today*.

Opsomming

In essensie poog hierdie tesis om twee vrae te beantwoord: Breedweg, wat is "fundamentalisme," en in die besonder, "evangeliese fundamentalisme"? Sedert die terroriste-aanval op die tweelingtorings in New York op 11 September 2001, het "fundamentalisme" 'n sinonieme term geword vir hierdie en soortgelyke militante Islamitiese aanvalle. Tog is fundamentalisme histories 'n Amerikaanse en Protestantse fenomeen/verskynsel.

Omdat fundamentalisme egter nie slegs 'n protestantse fenomeen is nie, maar meer spesifiek 'n "sub-spesie" van neëntiende eeuse evangeliekalisme of evangeliesgesindheid in Amerika, en omdat fundamentalisme en evangeliekalisme histories nie van mekaar geskei kan word nie, verkies ek om die term "evangeliese fundamentalisme" aan te neem. Daar is egter meer aan die term as om dit eenvoudig toepaslik binne 'n sekere historiese konteks te definieer. Vele evangeliesgesindes kan byvoorbeeld nie histories of teologies as "fundamentaliste" of "evangeliese fundamentaliste" geëtiketeer word nie. Definisies verander met verloop van tyd. 'n Begrip van die beweging se gekiedenis – sy weerstand teen modernisme en sy verbintenis met postmodernisme – sal ondersoek moet word aangesien dit meer vrae omtrent sy identiteit en teologie aan die lig bring.

Na 'n opsomming van sy historiese ontwikkeling en evolusie, belkemtoon ek die feit dat 'n eenvoudige definisie nie bestaan nie – die beweging is te heterogeen. Ek identifiseer en verbind daarom 'n pluraliteit/verskeidenheid van perspektiewe met die term of begrip van wat dit beteken om *vandag* 'n "evangeliese fundamentalis" te wees.

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1

Introduction: Engaging "evangelical fundamentalism"

9/11. In our generation those two digits will forever be imprinted in our minds and written in the history books. "The most spectacular fundamentalist atrocity of all was the suicide hijacking on 11 September 2001 of three airliners by Islamist militants belonging to the al-Qaeda network, whose titular head is the Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden. Nearly 3,000 people were killed when the planes crashed into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon near Washington."[1] Since then the term, "fundamentalism," has become more synonymous with these kinds of terrorist and extremist attacks. But is it appropriate to link the term to terrorism? Just what is this "fundamentalism"?

1.1 The problem of definition

Clark Pinnock, who can claim to have a "certain insider status" within fundamentalism, wrote that the movement historically "began early in the twentieth century among evangelical Protestants." But then he opines, "lately the media have adopted it to describe any orthodox religion in a struggle with secular modernity (Sikh, Muslim, Jewish, etc.)."[2] Because the media has misapplied the term to terrorist and sectarian groups within Islam and Judaism, many scholars reject the appropriateness of such a term to other religions when it originally began within Protestantism. Islamic scholar, Riffat Hassan, wrote: "I have serious objections to the use of terms such as 'fundamentalism' and 'fundamentalists' with reference to Islam and Muslims… this term is the equivalent of emotionally loaded terms such as 'extremism,' 'fanaticism,' and even 'terrorism'… Thus the term 'fundamentalist,' when used by the West with reference to Muslim leaders or groups, clearly embodies a

[1] Ruthven, *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction*, 2.
[2] Pinnock, "Defining American Fundamentalism: A Response," 40.

negative value judgment and evokes a powerful image of persons who are irrational, immoderate, and violent."[3] Likewise, Jewish scholar, Leon Wieseltier, reasons for the "impossibility of Jewish fundamentalism."[4]

However, other scholars, like Malise Ruthven, who is a renowned commentator on Islam and the Arab world, believes that the term can be applied to other religions, even if its origins lies within Protestantism. Ruthven's arguments are worth considering, and I am in full agreement with them, so I will quote them verbatim:

> The F-word [i.e., "fundamentalism"] has long since escaped from the Protestant closet in which it began its semantic career around the turn of the 20th century. The applications or meanings attached to words cannot be confined to the context in which they originate: if one limits fundamentalism to its original meaning one might as well do the same for words like 'nationalism' and 'secularization' which also appeared in the post-Enlightenment West before being attached to movements or processes in non-Western societies. Whatever technical objections there may be to using the F-word outside its original sphere, the phenomenon (or rather, the phenomena) it describes exists, although no single definition will ever be uncontested. Put at its broadest, it may be described as a religious way of being that manifests itself in a strategy by which beleaguered believers attempt to preserve their distinctive identities as individuals or groups in the face of modernity and secularization.[5]

Ruthven makes a significant observation related to his use of the following terms: "phenomena" and "modernity." Fundamentalism, originating within Protestantism, was a *phenomenon* "militantly opposed to *modernism* in the churches and to certain modern

[3] Hassan, "The Burgeoning of Islamic Fundamentalism," 153, 157.
[4] Wieseltier, "The Jewish Face of Fundamentalism," 195.
[5] Ruthven, *Fundamentalism*, 5-6.

cultural mores."[6] When Muslim terrorists blew up a carriage in the London Underground, one observer wrote: "Crucially, it allowed me to realize that whatever the motive cause was that drove these young men to kill themselves and take too many others with them, the key context where we need to look for understanding is not 'Islam,' *but the failure of traditional religion to encompass modernity*."[7] Although Protestants were not militant by committing acts of terrorism, they were militant in attitude towards modernity. Still, the point remains: Fundamentalism is a movement that confronts modernity and, therefore, the term can be applied outside its sphere of origin. Other religions, or movements and "sects" within a certain religious tradition, can exhibit, what Ludwig Wittgenstein called, "family resemblances" to Protestant fundamentalism.[8]

Although I do not want to split hairs over terminologies, I think it's important to mull over these points in order to realize that fundamentalism is not a homogenous group of believers that sign a specific creed or doctrinal statement together.

1.2 Abuse of the term within Protestantism

Nevertheless, Pinnock is of the opinion that the term "fundamentalism" has been open to abuse within Protestantism. He quotes James Barr, who Pinnock claims was a former evangelical, and who once said of the label: "Fundamentalism is a bad word: the people to whom it is applied do not like to be so called. It is often felt to be a hostile and opprobrious term, suggesting narrowness, bigotry, obscurantism and sectarianism. The people whom others call fundamentalists would generally wish to be known by another term altogether."[9] Pinnock argues that Barr is wrong when he says that fundamentalists don't like to be called by that term. In fact, originally the word was not used as a term of abuse or ridicule. In 1920

[6] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 234. Emphasis mine in *italics*.
[7] Ruthven, *Fundamentalism*, 1. Emphasis mine in *italics*.
[8] Jakobus M. Vorster identifies fundamentalism in the religions of Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism in "Analytical perspectives on religious fundamentalism," 8-11.
[9] Pinnock, "Defining American Fundamentalism," 40-1.

Curtis Lee Laws, a conservative Baptist, christened himself and other conservatives as "fundamentalists" who were ready "to do battle royal for The Fundamentals."[10] Rather, as Pinnock points out, it was the conservative evangelicals during the 1950s who didn't like to be called fundamentalists. For example, the British conservative evangelical, J. I. Packer, deplored the term in 1958 by stating: "'Fundamentalism' is said to be schismatic in spirit, and a threat to the unity of the Church; but we shall maintain that a consistent Evangelicalism is the truest Catholicity… Consistent Evangelicals are the last Christians in the world to whom they apply."[11] In fact, although Packer's book is titled *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God*, at the end of chapter two he states: "For the rest of our argument we shall abandon it [the term "fundamentalism"] and speak of Evangelicalism simply. We would plead that in future others will do the same."[12]

Richard Quebedeaux thus makes the important point: "For too long it has been the fault of mainstream ecumenical liberalism to lump together with pejorative intent all theological conservatives into the worn fundamentalist category."[13] And so Pinnock implores his readers: "It is high time to stop the practice of using the label "fundamentalist" as a word to describe believers more orthodox than oneself when one is displeased with them… Karl Barth [a neo-orthodox theologian] has even been called a fundamentalist by those who think he respects the Bible too much. It is a common experience (certainly familiar to me) to be called a fundamentalist by those to one's theological left."[14]

1.3 Why "evangelical fundamentalism"?

Pinnock, Packer, and Quebedeaux are certainly correct that not all conservative evangelicals are fundamentalists. But if one is going to study fundamentalism as a Protestant

[10] Ruthven, *Fundamentalism*, 8.
[11] Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God, 22-3.
[12] *Ibid*., 40.
[13] Quoted in Pinnock, "Defining American Fundamentalism," 41.
[14] *Ibid*., 41-2.

phenomenon, and if fundamentalism is a "sub-species" of nineteenth century evangelicalism, then one cannot separate fundamentalism from evangelicalism. Today, fundamentalism has become so infused with evangelicalism and more difficult to define without each other, that I prefer to use the term "evangelical fundamentalism." However, in my studying of the topic, I recognize that it was easier to separate and distinguish the two movements at the beginning of the twentieth century. A brief historical review should make my point clearer. The following excerpts from George Marsden, considered to be the authoritative historian of fundamentalism, support my argument:

Evangelicalism [*19th century*]

> Includes most major Protestant denominations and also newer revivalist groups including holiness and premillennialists. By end of century American evangelicalism is beginning to polarize between theological liberals and conservatives.[15]

During this time, therefore, the term "evangelical" could be referred to conservatives and liberals alike.

Fundamentalism [*1920s*]

> A generic name for a broad coalition of conservatives from major denominations and revivalists (prominently including premillennial dispensationalists) who are militantly opposed to modernism in the churches and to certain modern cultural mores. Related revivalist groups, such as from pentecostal or [*sic*] holiness churches, are also often called fundamentalists although some remain separate from major cultural and theological battles.[16]

"Evangelicals" thus referred to those conservatives who remained with the liberals in the mainstream churches and to those who separated as "fundamentalists."

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[15] See Marsden, *American Culture*, 234.
[16] *Ibid*.

New Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism [*1950s-mid1970s*]

> "New Evangelicals" (eventually just "evangelicals"), most of whom have a fundamentalist heritage, form the core of a broad coalition that draws in related theological conservatives, ranging from pentecostals to Mennonites, who emphasize positive evangelicalism, best exemplified by Billy Graham.
>
> "Fundamentalism," (technically a sub-species of evangelicalism in the 19th century sense) is used as a self-designation almost only by ecclesiastical separatists who break fellowship with Graham. Almost all are dispensational premillennialists, as are some non-separating evangelicals.[17]

Neo-evangelicals thus referred to those fundamentalists who began to distance themselves from their ecclesiastical separatist brethren. Yet they still held to the fundamentalist doctrine of absolute inerrancy.

Thus, definitions change over time. During the early 1900s, "fundamentalists" were a broad coalition of conservative evangelicals who were defending the 'fundamentals' of Christian orthodoxy against liberals. But all of that changed by the mid-1900s. "Fundamentalists" were those conservatives who had separated themselves from their denominations and formed their own churches and institutions, while other conservatives chose to remain within their denominations and thus were not "fundamentalists" per se. Even the term "evangelicalism" went through a change within a space of 50 years. At the end of the 1940s, a group of fundamentalists wanted to discard that F-word from their midst. The "new/neo-evangelicals" repudiated the separatism of their heritage and tried to reclaim intellectual prestige to their conservative evangelical theology.

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[17] *Ibid*., 235.

Even though Marsden doesn't point this out in his review of definitions, the neo-evangelicals themselves split into two camps over differences on biblical inerrancy. The "conservatives" still held onto some of their fundamentalist beliefs, while the "progressives" disregarded them. *It is, therefore, my contention that "evangelical fundamentalists" today are the theological descendants of that conservative neo-evangelical movement.*[18] However, any definition of a movement would seem terribly incomplete without studying its historical and social context, its key players, and its distinct theologies. Therefore, this thesis proceeds to recapitulate the history of evangelicalism and fundamentalism in order to arrive at a proper and adequate definition for the term "evangelical fundamentalism" *today*.

1.4 Charting the course

In my thesis I focus primarily on providing an understanding of fundamentalism as a historical phenomenon, concentrating on its historical origins of development within the North-American context while outlining the trajectory of continuity and discontinuity between fundamentalism and evangelicalism. Inevitably, such a historical inquiry opens up to theological and hermeneutical concerns, such as the doctrine of the clarity of scripture.

And so I begin my historical and theological survey of Protestant fundamentalism with the nineteenth century North American evangelical movement and the shaping of, what Alister McGrath calls, its "dark side" (i.e., fundamentalism). This latter modern movement battled against liberalism and modernism, believing it was poisoning American society and the churches—a nation that was built upon Christian principles (chapter 2).

Although fundamentalism was portrayed as an anti-modernity movement, I examine its complex relationship to modernism, which in turn gave the movement its identity and its own set of distinctives disconnected from its evangelical heritage (chapter 3).

[18] See chapter 4 wherein I discuss the rise and subsequent "fall" of neo-evangelicalism over biblical inerrancy.

Next, I examine neo-evangelicalism, new model evangelicalism, and the politicized neo-fundamentalism—movements that attempted to reform fundamentalism, away from its separatist and legalistic way of thinking and living, and to engage in a more positive light towards culture and society, shedding the "separatist" badge of older fundamentalism (chapter 4). I also focus on the neo-evangelical institution, Fuller Theological Seminary, and the subsequent division within the movement regarding the fundamentalist doctrine of absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures. This event epitomized the division within neo-evangelicalism that continues to this day: the division between "progressive" evangelicals, who revised and transformed the said doctrine (resulting in "limited inerrancy"), and the "conservative" evangelicals who refused to break away completely from their fundamentalist tradition of Scripture—the latter being today's "evangelical fundamentalists."

However, to fully develop the definition and identity of evangelical fundamentalism today, I examine its reaction to postmodernism, a movement that reacted against modernism after Western Europeans became disillusioned with it, induced by modernity's failure and the outbreak of World War II. I will specifically examine postmodern theological ideas of theory to a text and fundamentalism's reaction to it by its resurgence and modification of the doctrine of the perspicuity or clarity of Scripture, which is built upon an epistemological foundation of certainty, and which ultimately plays a crucial role in defining the movement today (chapter 5). As a case study, I turn to the evangelical fundamentalist, John MacArthur Jr, and his response to postmodernity's anti-foundationalist epistemology in his recent work, *The Truth War* (2007).

Finally, I return to the question of defining evangelical fundamentalism (chapter 6). After summarizing its historical development and evolution, I emphasize the fact that a simple definition does not exist—the movement is too heterogeneous. I therefore identify and adopt

a plurality of senses or perspectives to the term and to what it means to be an "evangelical fundamentalist." Yet, I also end up deconstructing the term itself, to "defundamentalize" fundamentalism. My point here is to demonstrate that a theological *and historical* survey of fundamentalism cannot be totally divorced from other disciplines (e.g., sociology and psychology). To do so would be to fall into the modernistic trap of dichotomy and compartmentalization. I close with constructive arguments, made by liberal scholars, which can aid post-liberal and postmodernist conversations with evangelical fundamentalists in all spheres of life.

1.5 Why this survey on engaging "evangelical fundamentalism"?

I approach this task with the question: *Is it a necessary and constructive one—to engage evangelical fundamentalism?* In my observation and experience there are certain stereotypes and caricatures of evangelical fundamentalism that need to be broken down for the "outsider" to truly appreciate the movement because it has no doubt been characterized by extreme cases of separatism and legalism. Of course, the fundamentalism of the 1920s produced certain separatists and fanatics who, today, stand with placards warning people to "turn or burn," or pharisaical ministers calling homosexuals "fags."[19] Yet there are other brands of fundamentalism which may not be so extreme but is nevertheless clouded with legalistic ways of living, such as prohibiting women from wearing trousers in church, no alcohol or smoking or rock music, divorce and remarriage forbidden, and deterring church members from studying higher education. There are many testimonies of Christians who turned to a moderate form of evangelicalism or to ultra-liberalism because of the hypocrisy and legalism within this brand of fundamentalism.[20] For example, ex-fundamentalist and

[19] For example, see the homepage of Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church: www.godhatesfags.com
[20] See Ulstein, *Growing Up Fundamentalist: Journeys in Legalism & Grace*; and Babinski, *Leaving the Fold: Testimonies of Former Fundamentalists*.

now a New Thought minister, Marlene Oaks, recalls her traumatic experience of being raised in a fundamentalist church as a young girl: "The preacher said, 'God is watching you every minute. He knows everything you do, everything you think, every unkind word. He keeps track of it forever and you will have to pay…' I felt inside, 'There is this god following me around everywhere and he wants to hurt me.' I was afraid and imagined things in the shadows at night. If you can't trust God, who or what can you trust?

Sadly, there are also others who ended up rejecting Christianity *in toto* after starting off their spiritual journey within evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Edward T. Babinski, editor of *Leaving the Fold: Testimonies of Former Fundamentalists*, recounts the disturbing evangelism tactics of the fundamentalism of his youth:

> [My evangelical teacher] plied me with gruesomely illustrated miniature Christian comic books published by the Chick tract organization, with titles such as *This Was Your Life*, *A Demon's Nightmare*, and *The Gay Blade*… As my knowledge of Christian doctrine grew, so did my fears that many of my friends and relatives were headed for eternal destruction, not to mention just about everyone I saw in person… Only I had the antidote, the magic potion, the truth that would set people *free*, even if I had to *corner them* to administer it. For instance, I handed out tracts at my mother's second wedding. I didn't think that the minister of the Reformed Church in which they were being married was saved, or that anyone in my family was.[21]

As a fundamentalist, Babinski also accepted young-earth creationism and the doctrine of absolute inerrancy of the Bible as "gospel truth." Naturally, then, when he was confronted with discrepancies in the biblical account, especially pertaining to Jesus' words regarding his (failed) immanent return (cf. Matt. 24:34), Babinski's faith crumbled: "After reading yet

[21] Babinski, "If It Wasn't for Agnosticism," 209-10.

more books on biblical criticism and the development of Christian doctrine, and after studying evolutionists' criticisms of 'scientific creationist' arguments, I became disenchanted with Christianity *in toto*, and became an agnostic with theistic leanings of the Martin Gardner variety."[22]

This is why it is necessary and constructive to work out a thorough definition and investigation of the term "evangelical fundamentalism" without confusing it with the 1920s "fundamentalism" that spawned the separatism and bigotry as provided in the above testimonies. Evangelical fundamentalism today, as I will show, finds its roots mainly in the 1950s neo-evangelical movement, particularly the conservative branch, that produced some of the most intellectual thinkers within conservative theological circles, such as J. I. Packer, Carl F. Henry, and Edward J. Carnell, including the most prominent evangelist of the twentieth century, Billy Graham. It is all too easy but irresponsible to lump all evangelicals that came out of a fundamentalist heritage into the 'cauldron pot of anti-intellectualism.' The Graham's, Henry's, and Carnell's of neo-evangelicalism were very much poles apart, theologically and intellectually, from the fundamentalistic Billy Sunday's, Bob Jones's, and John Rice's.[23]

This thesis is also necessary and constructive for the "insiders" of the movement that may not know much about their history. In my experience many evangelical fundamentalists, who may have no or limited theological training, have the mistaken notion that what they believe is simply first century Christianity, or what "the Bible sez." This kind of mind-set does tend to lead to divisions and schisms between evangelicals. Through this historical and theological survey, I hope to demonstrate to these sincere believers that history and culture shapes our beliefs and influences our interpretations of Scripture more than we would be willing to accept.

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[22] *Ibid*., 221.
[23] More will be said about these fundamentalists in chapter 2.

On a final note, my motivation for compiling this thesis results from my experience of being converted and spiritually 'reared' within evangelical fundamentalism (and my subsequent departure from it). Having had an "insider" status within the movement, I believe I have something insightful and valuable to offer those who want to know more about evangelical fundamentalism. Although I aim to give a fair description of evangelical fundamentalism, I have found that this complex movement holds the danger to display the following four elements:

(i) Separatism over dogma

Some evangelical fundamentalists separate from other Christians who do not agree with their doctrinal views. This spread of doctrinal differences range from biblical inerrancy and inspiration to eschatology. Thus, even if two self-professing Christians both believed in the "essentials" of the faith (e.g., the Trinity and deity of Christ, original sin, salvation by grace), the evangelical fundamentalist will close the door of Christian fellowship to a believer who does not agree with his view on certain "non-essential" dogmas.

(ii) Rigid doctrinaires

As can be seen from their separatist attitude over dogma, evangelical fundamentalists emphasize and prioritize the importance of doctrine over the law of love as revealed by Christ. Some have no qualms in labeling any Christian who disagrees with their list of "fundamentals" as an "apostate." They are, therefore, great faultfinders, always able to see the "speck" in their brother's eye without seeing the "log" in their own (Matt. 7:1-5).

(iii) Legalism

Although many neo-evangelicals from the 1950s, the forerunners of "evangelical fundamentalism," decried the legalism that fundamentalists were teaching, many

evangelical fundamentalists today still have legalistic tendencies. They will frown upon Christians who smoke cigarettes, drink wine with their food, or listen to rock music. Being legalistic, evangelical fundamentalist pastors and teachers also instill a sense of guilt into their congregations by consistently reminding them of their failures to live up to a standard of holiness—reminding them of their failure to use every opportunity to witness to the lost, of their failure to obey the high standards of righteousness as revealed by Jesus (especially in the Sermon on the Mount), of their failure to have "quiet time" with the Lord every morning, and of their failure to be just like Jesus.

(iv) "Either-or" mentality

Evangelical fundamentalists exercise an "either-or" mentality, especially when it concerns doctrine, believing that it expresses their commitment to the authority of Scripture. They think in terms of polarities—"black–white;" "darkness–lightness;" "God–Satan;" "saved–unsaved." Therefore, they do not make allowance for differences of interpretation on certain issues. According to them, it's not their interpretation of the Scriptures but what "what the Bible really teaches." Thus, they refuse to delineate between "essentials" and "non-essentials."

Today's evangelical fundamentalists have inherited these qualities from their predecessors: the neo-evangelicals of the 1940s who tried (with some success) to break free from the ethos of the 1920s fundamentalist movement.

In order to understand this evolution of evangelical fundamentalism in the twenty first century, and the birth of fundamentalism at the turn of the twentieth century, I begin the next chapter with the historical origin of evangelicalism.

2

Nineteenth century evangelicalism & the shaping of its "dark side"

2.1 The roots and fruits of North American evangelicalism

In tracing the historical development of evangelicalism, Mark Noll lists three earlier Christian movements from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that had a direct influence on evangelicalism.[24]

First, the Calvinistic Puritan movement in England and America laid prominence toward the authority of the Bible in matters of faith and practice, focused on Christ as the means to salvation, and emphasized the need for a personal conversion experience while opposing formal religion. This latter emphasis can be seen in the infamous work of the Puritan John Bunyan who wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678). But where the Puritans wanted to purify the church-state ties, evangelicals believed in separation. Moreover, evangelicals tended to question and shy away from formal scholarship whereas the Puritans encouraged higher education.

Second, European Pietism also led the way to the formation of evangelicalism. While agreeing with Puritanism, the pietists would point out ideas of devotion and religious duties. They laid a new emphasis on assurance of salvation, emphasizing the power of God that is available through his grace for his children to know for certain that their sins are forgiven. Therefore, they highlighted the necessity of a "personal relationship with the Lord" and would later become influential in evangelicalism's revivals/awakenings.

Third, the High Church Anglicans stressed the importance of "primitive Christianity," and attempted to follow the faith and practice of the early Church. The parents of John and Charles Wesley, the founders of Methodism and 'fathers' of the evangelical movement, were advocates of this movement, which also took great efforts to spread Christian literature

[24] Noll, "The Future of Protestantism: Evangelicalism," 426ff.

abroad. Evangelicalism would later alter these emphases by looking at the early Church in the book of Acts as a model for primitive Christianity.

Alister McGrath also adds that the Classical Reformation played an important role in the formation of evangelicalism because evangelicals then and today seek to uphold the central themes of the Reformation, such as *sola scriptura* ("Scripture alone") and *sola fide* ("faith alone").[25] However, he points out each one's differences in their respective agendas: "[The Reformation's] agenda centered on the need to reform an existing church in a settled Christian cultural context. The issue of evangelism—that is, reaching into a non-Christian context in order to gain converts—never became important for Luther or Calvin. Their horizons were dominated by the need to alter existing church structures… The Reformation did not address the issue of evangelism in the modern sense of the term, so evangelicalism is obliged to extend the agenda of the Reformation in this respect."[26]

When protests against formal religion continued in the eighteenth century, and people were looking for a "true religion of the heart," evangelicalism was born. The "fathers" of the evangelical revivals, John Wesley (1703-91), Charles Wesley (1707-88), Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), and George Whitefield (1714-70), would preach on the souls despair over sin, the redeeming power in the blood of Christ, and the assurance of salvation: all bringing much excitement to the convert's heart and mind. Soon congregations were singing hymns that described such experiences, and which contributed towards the expansion of evangelicalism. Noll cites a hymn of Charles Wesley's regarding the power of Christ's blood, which is still sung by today's evangelical churches:

> O for a thousand tongues to sing
>
> My dear Redeemer's praise!

[25] McGrath, *Evangelicalism & the Future of Christianity*, 23.
[26] *Ibid*., 24.

The glories of my God and King,

The triumphs of his grace! …

He breaks the power of cancelled sin

He sets the prisoner free;

His blood can make the foulest clean—

His blood availed for me.[27]

Fanny Crosby (1820-1915) was a prolific hymnist within evangelicalism who influenced congregations to sing about their conversion experiences, especially regarding their assurance of salvation. I well remember one of her hymns, *Blessed Assurance*, being a favorite to sing within my former evangelical Baptist church:

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine!

Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!

Heir of salvation, purchase of God

Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

An important lesson regarding these evangelical hymns comes to the fore; that is, history not only molds us but even the language we use. Many evangelicals use the following 'confessional' and praise language: "I am a fallen, *unworthy* sinner," "*washed* in the blood of Jesus," "*My* Jesus, my Savior," "Jesus is my *personal* Lord and Savior," "Jesus is *my* friend, he walks and talks with *me*," and so on. Such phrases originated during the time of the nineteenth century evangelical revivals. Today one could not imagine St Augustine or John Calvin saying, "I've accepted Jesus as my *personal* Lord and Savior."

[27] Noll, "The Future of Protestantism," 428.

Besides hymnody, new evangelical institutions also contributed to the movement's expansion. For example, in 1846 evangelical churches from Europe and North America formed an interdenominational organization, the *Evangelical Alliance*, that attempted to unite evangelicals on certain Protestant theological convictions, such as: (1) the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible; (2) the Son's incarnation, work of atonement, and his present mediatorial intercession and reign; (3) justification of sinners by faith alone; (4) immortality of the soul, resurrection of the body, judgment of the world, the eternal bliss of the righteous and eternal punishment of the wicked.

These convictions remain essential to evangelicals today. However, these Protestant convictions are not exclusively "evangelical." Nevertheless, Alister McGrath points out that there is within each Protestant conviction a *distinctive* evangelical ethos "that are regarded by evangelicals as identity-giving."[28] For example, while the Protestant Reformers regarded Scripture as central importance to the Christian's life, ethics, and spirituality, the evangelical ethos allowed for a diversity of interpretations by distinguishing between "essentials" and "non-essentials"—the latter allowing for differences over certain ecclesial and doctrinal issues, such as models of church governance and the mode of baptism, that perhaps the Reformers had yet to fully realize.

Another example concerns the person of Jesus the Christ. Again, while the Reformers and evangelicals' convictions grew on the early Church Father's belief that Jesus was "true God and true man," the evangelical distinctive was *radically* Christ-centered when compared to the Reformers. Preaching and teaching about the cross became central to the movement, that God's righteous anger against sinners was covered and shielded by the cross, that Christ's sufferings and death on the cross purchased our redemption. This (in my opinion) has led to an evangelical Christ-centered theology that brings a type of

[28] McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 56.

preeminence to the Christ at the detriment of glorifying God the Father (cf. Phil. 2:11). Most modern-day, contemporary evangelical songs of praise and worship are solely directed toward Jesus (and I sometimes wonder what happened to the Father):

> It's all about You, Jesus,
>
> And all this is for You
>
> For Your glory and Your fame…
>
> You alone are God and I surrender to Your ways[29]
>
>
> My Jesus, my Savior
>
> Lord there is none like You
>
> All of my days I want to praise
>
> The wonders of Your mighty love[30]

Besides the above two evangelical distinctives—an emphasis on the authority of the Bible and deity of Jesus Christ—McGrath lists another four. Below I have attempted to provide a summary of all six distinctives that have deeply influenced the modern evangelical movement:

The first Protestant conviction that McGrath lists is the supreme authority of Scripture as a guide for Christian doctrine and living. "The 'formal principle of the Reformation,' often summarized in the phrase *sola Scriptura* (by Scripture alone), affirmed that only those beliefs and practices that rested firmly on scriptural foundations could be regarded as binding on Christians."[31] The evangelical distinctive addressed the illumination of the Spirit

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[29] Paul Oakley, *Jesus, Lover of My Soul (It's All About You)*, 1995, Kingsway's Thankyou Music.
[30] Darlene Zschech, Hillsong publishing.
[31] McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 59.

in interpreting and appropriating Scripture. But evangelicals also made it clear that the Spirit's work of inspiration was not dictation. They made a parallel with the Incarnation: "Christ in his one person was both God and man; so Scripture is both divine and human. Just as Christ's divinity does not abrogate Christ's human nature, so the divine authorship of Scripture does not abolish its human authorship."[32] Evangelical theology also acknowledges that the authority of Scripture has both objective and subjective aspects. "For example, the historical objectivity of the death of Christ … is not dependent on its subjective appropriation."[33] At the same time, "It is determined to avoid becoming enslaved to what Alasdair MacIntyre has termed the 'Self-Images of the Age.'"[34] In other words, Scripture must transform culture but never be subservient to it otherwise the ideology of the day replaces theology. (Here McGrath echoes the early twentieth century evangelical/fundamentalist, J. Gresham Machen, who argued in his day that the Word must transform culture.[35]) As a neo-evangelical, McGrath also tries to defend the clarity and ambiguity in Scripture. Scripture is clear on the essentials of the faith (deity of Christ, original sin, salvation by grace), but where it is not clear, there is room for disagreement (e.g., diverse views on the Lord's Supper, eschatology, predestination, etc.). Another evangelical distinctive regarding Scripture is that the reading and studying of the Bible for devotion or "quiet time" is necessary for Christian living.

The second Protestant conviction is the deity of Jesus Christ who is the Savior of sinful humanity. Whereas Protestants emphasized the uniqueness of Jesus, evangelical theology was, as has been noted above, radically Christ-centered. Evangelicals believe that through the Scriptures the recipient of God's grace comes to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ because the full revelation of God's disclosure to humanity is revealed in the person of

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[32] *Ibid*., 60.
[33] *Ibid*., 61.
[34] *Ibid*., 62.
[35] See page 40 below.

Jesus. Our hope of salvation is "dependent on the identity of Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, the only Son of God, God incarnate."[36] Moreover, evangelicals emphasize the centrality of the cross: Jesus died on the cross as the perfect sacrifice to shield us from God's wrath and reconcile us to the Father. Linked with this is humanity's depravity: "Evangelicalism is insistent that it is impossible to appreciate the majesty of God, the wonder of redemption or the hopelessness of the human situation unless we fully acknowledge the devastating and destructive impact of sin."[37]

The third Protestant conviction is the lordship of the Holy Spirit. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism* speaks of the regenerating work of the Spirit "whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he [does] persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel."[38] While evangelical theology embraced this, it also gave the greatest recognition to the person and work of the Spirit through the charismatic and "Third Wave" movements. These movements "rediscovered" the gifts of the Spirit—from the Pentecostal practices of the sign gifts of prophecy, healing, and speaking in tongues, to the more "conventional" gifts of knowledge, teaching, leadership, serving, encouragement, and so on. But while evangelicals are divided over the meaning of the sign gifts of the Spirit, McGrath points out that all evangelicals agree "that a decisive enriching of personal Christian experience is possible through the work of the Spirit."[39]

The fourth Protestant conviction is the need for personal conversion. While this may sound more like an evangelical distinctive, especially when evangelists call sinners to a "personal," "relational," and "living" faith in Christ, McGrath points out that the Reformers and the Pietists always attempted to move away from a dead orthodoxy to a living one: "The

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[36] McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 66.
[37] *Ibid*., 67.
[38] Quoted in McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 68.
[39] *Ibid*., 72.

issue at stake could be described in terms of *personal appropriation of faith*. Christian faith, in the deepest meaning of the phrase, is to be thought of in *relational* and *personal*, not simply *propositional*, terms."[40] This does not mean, says McGrath, that evangelicals expect conversion to always be a dramatic "born again" experience. It could also be an ongoing process.

The fifth Protestant conviction that McGrath lists is the priority of evangelicalism. However, I would state that this conviction is exclusively an evangelical distinctive. The predominant interpretation of Matthew 28:18-20, during the time of the Reformation, was that the command to go out into the world and preach the gospel was directed only to Jesus' apostles during the first century.[41] This is why missionary work only began to flourish during the eighteenth century. Be that as it may, evangelicalism has certainly taken seriously the command to preach the gospel into the entire world because "faith comes from hearing" (Rom. 10:17).[42] And for that, it has received many criticisms from liberal and neo-orthodox theologians, particularly with the rise of the Billy Graham crusades during the 1950s. But in response to the criticisms, McGrath points out: "Evangelicalism was calling people to faith in a way that nobody else was."[43]

The sixth Protestant conviction is the importance of spiritual growth and fellowship for the Christian community. In essence, says McGrath, evangelicalism is "transdenominational."[44] In other words, it is not confined to any one denomination because it does not commit itself to a single model of the church (e.g., you can have Anglican "evangelicals," Presbyterian "evangelicals," Baptist "evangelicals," and so on). Yet evangelicals emphasize the importance of belonging to a local church for spiritual growth

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[40] *Ibid*., 73.
[41] See Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 208.
[42] Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations throughout this thesis are taken from the *New American Standard Bible*.
[43] McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 78.
[44] *Ibid*., 82.

and fellowship. And they are not opposed to tradition. Their commitment to belonging to a "community of faith" even extends to interpretation of the Scriptures within that community: "These matters are too important to be left to individuals; they are a matter for the Christian community as it reflects on its reading of Scripture, its experience of the Holy Spirit and its sense of being rooted in a long historical tradition concerned to remain faithful to the gospel."[45] Even during the Billy Graham / neo-evangelical resurgence in the 1950s, one of the leading evangelical scholars, J. I. Packer, made a similar point when he wrote: "The history of the Church's labour to understand the Bible forms a commentary on the Bible which we cannot despise or ignore without dishonouring the Holy Ghost. To treat the principle of biblical authority as a prohibition against reading and learning from the book of Church history is not an evangelical, but an anabaptist mistake, which comes from overlooking what the Bible says of the Spirit's work in the Church."[46]

In spite of these clear convictions and distinctives, evangelicalism is anything but a simplified and unified movement. Perhaps this is so because, like Protestantism, evangelicalism has no central authority, unlike the Roman Catholic Church that does (the Pope and magisterium). In discussing the "problem of identity" within Protestantism, McGrath and Marks identifies Protestantism as a *heterogeneous* (composed of different parts) movement with shared theological roots.[47] Today, evangelicalism as evolved into such a state of being. As Noll points out, "Evangelicalism is not an organized religious movement as such, but rather represents an ever-diversifying series of local churches, parachurch agencies, national and international ministries, and interlocking networks of publications, preachers and personal contacts."[48]

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[45] *Ibid*., 84.
[46] Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God*, 48.
[47] McGrath and Marks, *The Blackwell Companion to Protestantism*, 3.
[48] Noll, "The Future of Protestantism," 425.

Therefore, in my attempt to define "evangelical fundamentalism," it is pertinent not only to see how nineteenth century evangelicalism gave birth to the modern fundamentalist movement but also how fundamentalism has become so infused with evangelicalism that today the latter can rightly be referred to as a heterogeneous movement, with one of its parts being, what McGrath calls, the "dark side"[49] of evangelicalism (i.e., fundamentalism), to which I now turn.

2.2 The shaping of fundamentalism

By the mid-nineteenth century, at the height of great revivals, American Protestants were anticipating a Christian millennium. However, as George Marsden points out, what followed was the "Gilded Age" (i.e., to make something appear beautiful).[50] It seemed that Protestantism was prospering. Children were taught at an early age, in home and in school, to obey the Ten Commandments. There were numerous interdenominational mission organizations and schools. However, inwardly there were lurking major problems for Protestants who believed that America was a "Christian nation." Liberalism was a growing force within the church.[51] Some liberal scholars were accepting Darwinism and German higher criticism, which questioned the historicity of many biblical accounts.[52] There was a great influx of Catholics and Jews into North America and so Protestants had to now live with religious pluralism. Secularization of the universities took place, wherein the

[49] McGrath, *Evangelicalism*, 139.
[50] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 10.
[51] Liberal theologians adopted a 'cultural synthesis' between Christianity and modernism, science and religion. Thus, the liberals rejected a literal reading of the Bible and adopted the theory of evolution. Marsden points out three characteristics of early liberalism: "First, the progress of the Kingdom of God is identified with the progress of civilization, especially in science and morality. Second, morality has become the essence of religion and is indeed virtually equated with it. Third, the supernatural is no longer clearly separated from the natural, but rather manifests itself only in the natural" (Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 24).
[52] Higher criticism is a literary method of studying the books of the Bible, as well as comparing it with other texts of its day, in order to investigate the origin and sources of the biblical text. For example, higher critics, in studying the style, vocabulary, perspectives, and inconsistencies of the Pentateuch, found that the so-called "first five books of Moses" were in fact compiled from four different sources over a period of time (a.k.a. source criticism).

professional disciplines (e.g., economics, sociology, psychology, etc.) had become separated from religion and any influence from the Bible.

Yet while the denominations may have been accommodating liberalism, in America evangelicals were more loyal to religious figures than to their denomination.[53] One of the "stars" of nineteenth century evangelicalism was D. L. Moody who earnestly sought to save souls. "I look upon this world as a wrecked vessel," he said in his most famous remark. "God has given me a lifeboat and said to me, 'Moody, save all you can.'"[54] He left a legacy for crusade work: growth of the Sunday School and Christian service organizations; the successful attempt to ban the use of alcohol; rescue missions to the poor (e.g., Salvation Army).

The latter cause opened up social concern in a big way, especially in politics, where progressive proposals were made by Christians to help reform society. These came to be known as the "social gospel." Social gospel advocates were not opposed to the traditional style of evangelism, but they did complain that it placed too much stress on individualism—getting one to heaven and personal purity—instead of the welfare of one's neighbor.[55] For example, Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), a Baptist minister in New York and the "father" of the social gospel, had an affinity with D. L. Moody's efforts of seeing individual lives changed through the power of the Christ's resurrection. However, he also came to see the social nature of sin and the sinful social realities as being the "super-personal forces of evil." The kingdom of God motif—"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10)—was for Rauschenbusch the mission of the church:

> Christ initiated his Kingdom on earth by establishing a community of spiritual men, in inward communion with God and in outward *obedience* to him. This was the living

[53] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 17.
[54] *Ibid*., 21.
[55] *Ibid*., 29.

> germ of the Kingdom…Every such step forward, every increase in mercy, every obedience to justice, every added brightness of truth would be an extension of the reign of God in humanity, an incoming of the Kingdom of God. The more men became saturated with the thoughts of Christ the more they came to judge all actions from this point of view, the more they conformed the outward life of society to the advancing inward standard, the more would Christ be the dominant force in the world.[56]

Unfortunately, these and other evangelicals who advocated social concern would later be misrepresented and associated with liberal theology (a.k.a. '*Great Reversal*'). Social reform and revivalism were being pitted against each other. In 1912 Billy Sunday, one of the leading evangelical revivalists, complained that certain evangelicals were "trying to make a religion out of social service with Jesus Christ left out."[57]

The tendency of certain evangelicals to create this dichotomy between social concern and evangelism was due to several factors. I have identified four:

(i) Dispensational Premillennialism

This was a fairly new doctrine of the church and the end times but it grew extensively and was highly influential in evangelical churches:

> Dispensational Premillennialism implies that God has different plans for subsequent eras of humanity, (or 'dispensations'). So he has different plans for Israel and the Church. God's plans for Israel relate specifically to his promises to Abraham, David, and other Israelites; that Israel will be "physically and spiritually restored in Canaan under the Messiah's rule" … while the Church will exist in heaven as Christ's bride

[56] *Boston Collaborative Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918)," http://people.bu.edu/wwildman/bce/rauschenbusch.htm (accessed February 3, 2010).
[57] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 31.

> (Eph. 5:23; Rev. 19:7-9)… Christ will reign [for one thousand years] on David's throne in Jerusalem (Is. 2:4; 9:6-7; 42:1) so that there will be justice and peace, freedom from sickness and disease, and animals will not be hostile (Is. 11:6-9; 35:5-6).[58]

Naturally, if there would only be peace and justice during the seventh dispensation (the thousand years of Revelation 20), what need would there be to try and transform society now? According to the dispensational premillennialist, history was shaped by the cosmic struggle between God and Satan, and only during the millennium would Satan be completely bound and unable to exert any influence in society (Rev. 20:1-3). For now, however, society was growing worse. The outbreak and result of the American Civil War had contributed to such pessimism.[59] These evangelicals were enthusiastic about missionary work but only because that was one of the signs that the Church would soon be "raptured" off the face of the earth—they certainly did not believe, like their evangelical 'ancestors' of the eighteenth century who were postmillennialists, that the majority of humanity and society would be "saved."

Moreover, dispensationalists were pessimistic over the growth of the Church. For them, the Church was living in the "last days," and a great apostasy would soon occur (1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:3-4). Most of Christendom was in the grip of Roman Catholicism in any way. Interestingly, at this stage, during the early 1900s, these dispensationalists did not find it necessary to separate from their denominations in spite of the fact that they believed their churches were falling into apostasy by turning to liberalism. "Rather, most critics were content to point out that the wheat and the tares had to grow together."[60]

(ii) Holiness movements

[58] Waugh, "Dispensational Premillennialism," 11-12.
[59] Marsden, *American Culture*, 67.
[60] *Ibid*., 71.

The emergence of the nineteenth century holiness movements within evangelicalism also contributed to the dichotomy between social concern and evangelism. These holiness teachers (e.g., Reuben Torrey, A. B. Simpson, A. M. Hills, and Charles G. Trumbull) believed that they were living during the sixth dispensation of the Church Age, characterized by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to sanctify believers. However, most (if not all) of these teachings were geared toward the individual. The Wesleyan/Methodist-holiness movement taught the "second blessing" and entire sanctification of the Christian; the Reformed-holiness movement taught that sanctification was a warfare between flesh and spirit during the life of the believer; the Higher Life-holiness movement taught that the power of sin could be defeated by the Christian; and the Keswick-holiness movement taught the continual filling of the Spirit in all believers.

All of these teachings, however, were concerned with the *individual*, not the community. Social concern was a matter of the individual's choice. Although the holiness movements were characterized by an emphasis on missions, it lacked a social message. Charles Trumbull, a leading Keswick-holiness teacher, and one of the writers for *The Fundamentals* in 1914 (see below), "argued that social service programs were particularly dangerous. They included many things 'Christian in spirit,' but put fruit ahead of roots."[61]

These various holiness movements were also fraught with disagreements, debates, and theological arguments amongst themselves.[62] They were eager to engage in theological fights, and this was an attitude that would later help the fundamentalist cause against modernism. It also assisted in the birth of a new "holiness movement" that would form their own denominations: Pentecostalism.

(iii) Pentecostalism

[61] *Ibid*., 96.
[62] *Ibid*., 95.

The birth of Pentecostalism occurred in 1901 when a former Methodist minister and founder of *Bethel Bible College*, Charles Parham, was seeking a sign for the second blessing experience of 'baptism in the Spirit'. One of his students began to speak in a foreign language, and so they reached the conclusion that the evidence of being 'baptized in the Spirit' was speaking in tongues.[63] However, it was an African American preacher, William Seymour, who was instrumental in the spread of Pentecostalism. In 1906 Seymour and his congregation moved to an old shed at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, and it was here where the infamous 'Azusa Street Revivals' took place. People from all over the world began to visit these revivals to receive the second blessing experience of speaking in tongues.[64] These meetings were also characterized by the "slain in the Spirit" phenomena that is prevalent within today's charismatic churches: "After a few days Seymour's Baptist host asked the preacher to lay hands on him, fell to the floor as if unconscious and began speaking in tongues. Seven others, including Seymour, were 'struck from their chairs' the same day, receiving the same experience."[65]

Allan Anderson makes a significant comment while revealing the Pentecostal eschatological position; that is, how they viewed the movement's fulfillment in the last days and to what extent it led them to view society and evangelism: "As other Holiness gradually accepted the pneumatological center of the Keswick position, they also accepted its eschatology with its stress on the coming of a new Pentecost to usher in the return of Christ. The Pentecostals declared that this eschatological Pentecost had arrived."[66] Therefore, most of these early Pentecostals, like the Holiness teachers, accepted dispensationalism and the pessimistic outlook on society and the "social gospel." Nevertheless, because they viewed their movement as a fulfillment of God's plan in the last days through the eschatological

[63] For a Pentecostal perspective on speaking in tongues see Cockburn, *The Baptism in the Holy Spirit*.
[64] See Anderson, "The Future of Protestantism: The Rise of Pentecostalism," 443-44.
[65] *Ibid*., 444.
[66] *Ibid*., 443.

Spirit (Acts 2:17, 20-21), they positively viewed the progress of missions throughout the world and conversions of many people before the rapture of the Church. Therefore, the 'baptism of the Spirit' was now no longer considered only to be a blessing for holiness but also an empowerment or anointing for service:

> The *glossalalia*/tongues, which were mocked by the bystanders, constituted the fulfillment of Joel's prophesy that in the last days God would pour out his Spirit on all humanity. The result is that all categories of people would prophesy or receive prophetic revelation… The outpouring of the Spirit has marked God's end-time people as a prophetic community. The Spirit's prophetic anointing and empowerment in the Old Testament was limited, sporadic, and individual. But *this* eschatological prophetic anointing "democratizes" the Spirit, making his power available to all of God's people… He comes to deliver not only the transformational work of salvation but also the church's charismatic empowerment. This is nothing less than the divine in breaking of the kingdom of God on earth. While the kingdom awaits eschatological consummation at the *parousia*, the kingdom is also present and manifests itself in the church and its global mission on earth. That mission centers around the preaching of the gospel and the making of disciples (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15).[67]

(iv) Rise of liberalism and a modernistic culture

In 1910 the conservative evangelical coalition against liberalism and modernism were faced with a question regarding Christianity's relationship to the American culture: *"Should the movement attempt to reshape the culture and its churches from within or rather condemn them and separate itself from them?"*[68] Although the conservative evangelicals were united

[67] Hernando, "The Sign Gifts of the Spirit: Continuationism," 220, 228.
[68] Marsden, *American Culture*, 124.

in combating liberalism and modernism, there was no consensus on the issue. Evangelicals were divided by the following four views:

1. *Arno Gaebelein and I. M. Haldeman's dispensational view*: The Church should not be concerned about the present culture because the Bible teaches a great apostasy of the Church and the Rapture of all true believers before the Great Tribulation. Moreover, Jesus himself did not bother to implement social reform, neither speaking out against slavery nor war. Gaebelein went so far as to urge Christians to separate from their denominations due to the church's apostasy as manifested in liberal teachings that denied miracles and the bodily resurrection of Christ: "How dare you support men and institutions who deny your Lord? How dare you keep fellowship with the enemies of the cross of Christ?"[69]

2. *William Riley and James Gray's "democratic" view*: These men agreed with dispensationalists pertaining to the signs of the times (e.g., apostasy) but believed that the Church had a responsibility to protect society from evil and injustices. The Baptist pastor, William Riley, said: "[Christians] should see in the cities not only their sin, but also their suffering and attempt to eliminate both… They should work for democracy, elect reformers to civic office, and fight to eliminate all civic vices, especially liquor."[70] And James Gray, president of the Moody Bible Institute, acknowledged that separation from the world did not mean that Christians should separate themselves physically from its society and literature but that "we can separate ourselves from its methods, its spirits, and its aims."[71]

3. *William Jennings Bryan's "progressive" view*: Bryan was a leader in the Democratic Party until 1912. His attempts to implement moral reform were based on Christian

[69] Quoted in Marsden, *American Culture*, 127.
[70] *Ibid*., 128.
[71] Quoted in Marsden, *American Culture*, 131.

principles. He believed that Christianity should change culture by preserving traditional Christianity within the culture. Therefore, he worked together with those who differed doctrinally from him to work on social issues (such as Prohibition and race issues). Bryan was a pragmatist and defended Christianity and the inspiration of the Bible, believing that because of the positive results that the religion had on past civilizations, it was the key to reforming civilization. With an Elijah-esque challenge, he retorted to the secular humanists and atheists: "Let the atheists and the materialists produce a better Bible than ours, if they can. [Let them] use to the fully every instrumentality that is employed in modern civilization, let them embody the results of their best intelligence in a book and offer it to the world… Have they the confidence that the Prophets of Baal had in their God?"[72]

4. *J. Gresham Machen's "Reformed" view*: In contrast to Bryan, Machen emphasized that correct theology and doctrine were the key to moral reform. He believed that culture could be transformed through the Word, particularly in higher education and the universities. The culture crises (secularization), he reasoned, was rooted in the intellectual crisis. Therefore, if evangelicals tried to bypass culture and intellect, it would make the situation worse. He said, "The Church is perishing to-day through the lack of thinking, not through an excess of it."[73]

In spite of Machen's call for the "Reformed tradition" to penetrate culture, other Reformed/Calvinistic theologians were not interested to associate with the evangelical Arminian / "progressives," like William Bryan. And in spite of Machen's openness to work with the progressives, he often found himself in quarrels within his own Presbyterian denomination because of their tolerance towards liberals.[74] After the Presbyterian Church

[72] *Ibid*., 134.
[73] *Ibid*., 137.
[74] Edward J. Carnell would later accuse Machen of being a fundamentalist because of his separatist attitude. In 1959 Carnell wrote: "While Machen was a foe of the fundamentalist movement, he was a friend of the fundamentalist mentality, for he took an absolute stand on a relative issue, and the wrong issue at that…

USA suspended him from the ministry for setting up an independent Presbyterian board, Machen resigned and, a year before his death, in 1936, he formed his own denomination: the Orthodox Presbyterian Church.

While all four of these factors—dispensationalism, holiness movements, Pentecostalism, the rise of liberalism and modernism—contributed towards the dichotomy between social concern and evangelism, they were also instrumental in the birth of fundamentalism in the 1920s.

2.3 Birth of the anti-modernity, modern fundamentalist movement

At the start of the "Great War" of 1914, most Americans were in favor of peace and did not feel the urgency of entering a war that they viewed as a European conflict. However, once America entered World War 1 in 1917, there was a great sense of patriotism as some identified Americanism with Christianity. And there was a sense of unity between conservatives and liberals, who spoke of the need to "save civilization," especially in the face of (false) propaganda against Germany and in their successful campaign in bringing out the Prohibition laws in 1919. "Except for the traditionally pacifist denominations—Mennonites and Quakers—war fever and national chauvinism were the order of the day, to the point that, from some pulpits, there was a call for the total extermination of the German people in the name of God."[75] They had also linked the selling of alcohol and drunkenness to the immigration of Jews and Catholics to America.

But the war had also brought about the increase in secularization. "Sex" was no longer a swear word and the movies made the most of sex stars. Freudianism and freedom of

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Machen became so fixed on the evil of modernism that he did not see the evil of anarchy" (Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, 115).

[75] Gonzalez, *Story of Christianity*, 372-73.

expression was advocated. Advertisers sold soap as if it were an aphrodisiac. "Women smoked in public, did not always cover their knees (even in church), refused to follow the domestic examples of their mothers. Dancing, which had long been a taboo for many Protestants, now was an integral part of social acceptability in the age of the flapper."[76]

The war had also increased the divide and conflict of opinions between conservatives and liberals. The liberals viewed such secular activities with optimism, believing that it was an opportunity to create a new modern, liberal Christianity. Therefore, the post-war crisis forced conservatives and liberals to confront each other. From 1910 to 1915 conservative evangelicals from a wide coalition of denominational backgrounds published *The Fundamentals* providing defenses of fundamental evangelical doctrines.[77] It was a 12-volume set, which included a united front of 37 authors[78] from various evangelical traditions (dispensational, Reformed, holiness). The articles defended orthodox Protestant beliefs from higher criticism, liberal theology, Roman Catholicism, socialism, modern philosophy, and atheism. It also advocated a doctrine of absolute inerrancy of the Bible,[79] defended doctrinal matters (e.g., Trinity and deity of Christ) from sects (Russellism and Mormonism), and emphasized evangelism although it gave little attention to social or political concerns.[80] *The Fundamentals* were influential in forming fundamentalism, but it mainly represented a movement that was still in its infancy stages.

Before the war, premillennialists held to an anti-political stance, believing that the world was heading towards destruction. However, the war ended up politicizing them and changed their view of the nation (becoming highly patriotic). This happened because the liberals attacked the premillennialists for not being patriotic and for not safeguarding democracy

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[76] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 55-56.
[77] See Marsden, *American Culture*, 118-123.
[78] The most well-known included: A. C. Dixon, Arno C. Gaebelein, Benjamin B. Warfield, C. I. Scofield, G. Campbell Morgan, James M. Gray, James Orr, Philip Mauro, and R. A. Torrey.
[79] This doctrine is explained in more detail in chapters three and four.
[80] Ironically, two of the authors, James Orr and George Wright, who dealt with Darwinism, held to some form of theistic evolution.

from the Germans, and thus, they were a threat towards national security. The premillennialists vehemently denied that they were not patriotic, and countered that they in fact believed that German liberal theology resulted in their militarism and moral collapse. This counter response provided a significant shift in their thinking on the war—now the war was for them a godly cause to fight against modernism and the collapse of the American civilization, which they believed were to be built on Christian principles.[81] In 1919 William Riley organized the *World's Christian Fundamentals Association* (WCFA) to counter the threat of modernism. And in the major denominations and mission fields, conservatives tried to introduce legislations that forced everyone to adhere to a list of 'fundamentals.'

The fundamentalists began to attack on two fronts: (1) to remove liberals from the major conservative evangelical denominations in North America (Baptist and Presbyterian)—the Southern churches were already predominantly conservative and fundamentalist; (2) to ban the teachings of evolution from school.

(i) The attempt to remove liberals from conservative denominations

Augustus Strong (1836-1921), the leading conservative Baptist theologian and president of Rochester Theological Seminary, became convinced that liberalism was leading many Baptists to lose faith in the Bible. "Strong felt that this unbelief was connected with desire for unity with other denominations, and he judged it not simply a lapse in Baptist principles but the 'far more radical evil' of apostasy from Christ."[82] So during the period of 1920-23 the conservatives from the Northern Baptist Convention denomination organized the "Fundamentalist Fellowship" to prepare a creed, urging its views on the denomination. But in the face of criticism, this group denied any connection with William Riley's interdenominational WCFA, and, in fact, their creed did not contain a specific statement on

[81] See Marsden, *American Culture*, 143-50.
[82] *Ibid*., 166.

inerrancy or premillennialism while the WCFA did. The conservative Baptist, Curtis Lee Laws, maintained, "aggressive conservatives—conservatives who feel that it is their duty to contend for the faith—have, by common consent, been called 'fundamentalists.'"[83]

Although it was Laws himself who first coined the phrase "fundamentalist," it seemed that he now wanted to protect that name from those "disloyal" conservatives who were leaving their denominations. He even stalled proposing the Fundamentalist Fellowship's creed at the 1921 Convention. However, a year later, Riley forced the issue by proposing that all Baptists hold to the 1833 New Hampshire Confession of Faith. But his proposal was rejected in favor of a more inclusive statement compiled by a liberal pastor: "That the New Testament is the all-sufficient ground of our faith and practice, and we need no other statement."[84] This defeat led to the fundamentalist Baptists splitting irreparably. The conservatives blamed each other's strategy for their defeat to oust the liberals. This led to the militant fundamentalists, like Riley, to separate from the denomination and form their own fundamentalist Baptist union.

During the period of 1924-26, the North American Presbyterians had their own battle against liberalism. The offensive was led by J. Gresham Machen, Clarence Macartney, and William Jennings Bryan. In 1923 the General Assembly instructed the Presbytery to submit corrective actions on the liberals for the following year while re-affirming their 1910 five-point declaration of "essential doctrines," later to be known as the "five-points of fundamentalism": (1) biblical inerrancy; (2) virgin birth; (3) substitutionary atonement; (4) bodily resurrection; (5) the authenticity of miracles.[85]

Before the next Assembly, the liberal theologian, Shailer Mathews, defended liberalism as a Christian movement: (1) Modernism was not anti-Christian but an attempt to apply

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[83] Quoted in Marsden, *American Culture*, 169.
[84] Marsden, *American Culture*, 172.
[85] Fundamentalism would later substitute the fifth point (miracles) for the immanent, physical second coming of Christ; *Ibid*., 117.

Christianity to the needs of modern people as Christianity was about life, not doctrine; (2) liberals accepted Jesus as a revelation of a Savior God, not as a man made into a God; (3) tolerance led to unity, while the fundamentalist's intolerance led to divisions; (4) the five-point declaration was unconstitutional and extra-biblical.[86] With such a defense, there were numerous conservatives (e.g., Charles R. Erdman of Princeton) who took an inclusivist position in order to work at reconciliation. And at the 1925 General Assembly, they sided alongside the liberals and against the more militant conservatives (now known as "fundamentalists") to withdraw the five-point declaration. Thus, during the 1926 General Assembly, a commission urged the denomination to exercise more tolerance. Machen and other fundamentalists separated themselves from the denomination and formed their own churches and seminaries.

Both of these defeats—to oust the liberals from the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations—revealed a significant trend: *Not all conservatives were fundamentalists*. The conservatives were inclusivists who worked for reconciliation, while the fundamentalists were exclusivists who worked for separation.

(ii) The attempt to ban the teaching of evolution from schools

In the fundamentalist's battle to "save" the Bible and a Christian civilization from atheistic naturalism, it turned its attention towards the teaching of evolution in schools. Although William Jennings Bryan acknowledged that some Christians were theistic-evolutionists, he was convinced that Darwinism had alarming effects society, for example, it laid the foundation for World War I by "committing German culture to the philosophy of Nietzsche, and philosophy of materialism and brutal competition."[87] And so he, along with Riley,

[86] *Ibid*., 176-80.
[87] *Ibid*., 169.

organized anti-evolution rallies in the South. And it was Bryan who would be in the forefront of the infamous "Scopes Trial."

In July 1925 a young biology teacher, John Scopes, was brought to trial for teaching evolution in school. (Earlier that year the teaching of evolution was banned in Tennesse by the Butler Act.) His defense, headed by Clarence Darrow, initially argued that previously there was no conflict between the Bible's account of creation and the theory of evolution, that many Christians were (what would later be termed) "theistic evolutionists." When the judge refused to allow experts on this issue to testify, Darrow changed his strategy by attacking the fundamentalist's literal interpretation of the Bible and to call up Bryan, who was to aid the prosecution, to the stand. It became quite clear that Darrow wanted to expose Bryan's literal hermeneutic and limited knowledge of science and world religions. Although Darrow knew that Bryan was a Christian politician, not a theologian, he called Bryan a "Bible expert." It was all a set up. Bryan could not answer the simplest of questions: *How was Eve formed from Adam's rib, where did Cain get his wife, where did the great fish come from that could swallow Jonah whole; what would happen if the earth stopped its rotation in order for the sun to stand still?* Nor could Bryan answer any questions on the origin of ancient religions and the chronological dates of the Bible.[88]

Although Scopes was found guilty, it was a moral victory for the liberals because Darrow had successfully shown the 'anti-intellectual' image of fundamentalists and he opened up the way for agnostics and evolutionists to ridicule the Bible and Christianity. For example, H. L. Mencken of *The Baltimore Sun* called the trial a "Monkey trial," Bryan a "buffoon," and the town's inhabitants "yokels" and "morons." Creationism would never be viewed the same by the general public. But again, it must be said that the trial itself was a

[88] *Ibid*., 186-87.

set up, forced by commercial exploiters and evolutionists who were opposed to the Tennessee law.

> The Scopes Trial had its origins in a conspiracy at Fred Robinson's drugstore in Dayton. George Rappalyea, a 31-year-old transplanted New Yorker and local coal company manager, arrived at the drugstore with a copy of a paper containing an American Civil Liberties Union announcement that it was willing to offer its services to anyone challenging the new Tennessee anti-evolution statute. Rappalyea, a modernist Methodist with contempt for the new law, argued to other town leaders that a trial would be a way of putting Dayton on the map…
>
> The conspirators summoned John Scopes, a twenty-four-year old general science teacher and part-time football coach, to the drugstore. As Scopes later described the meeting, Rappalyea said, "John, we've been arguing and I said nobody could teach biology without teaching evolution." Scopes agreed. "That's right," he said, pulling a copy of Hunter's Civic Biology – the state-approved textbook – from one of the shelves of the drugstore (the store also sold school textbooks). "You've been teaching 'em this book?" Rappalyea asked. Scopes replied that while filling in for the regular biology teacher during an illness, he had assigned readings on evolution from the book for review purposes. "Then you've been violating the law," Rappalyea concluded. "Would you be willing to stand for a test case?" he asked. Scopes agreed. He later explained his decision: "the best time to scotch the snake is when it starts to wiggle." Herbert and Sue Hicks, two local attorneys and friends of Scopes, agreed to prosecute.[89]

With these two crucial defeats, some conservative evangelicals began to withdraw and separate from their denominations to set up individual churches and mission organizations.

[89] Linder, *State v. John Scopes ("The Monkey Trial")*, http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/evolut.htm

This sparked the birth of fundamentalism as *a separatist movement*. The fundamentalist movement now began to grow by expanding its structures.

First, they formed independent churches and denominations, such as the Baptist Bible Fellowship, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, and Bible Presbyterian Church. These churches offered individuals a place where everything made sense, including the Bible's teachings. It also offered friendships, potential marriage partners, and financial aid.

Second, they formed independent missions agencies. As mentioned above, Machen formed an independent missions board. Bill Bright started the well-known Campus Crusade for Christ, located on various campuses.

Third, they founded Bible colleges and institutes. In 1924 Lewis Sperry Chafer (1871-1952) founded Dallas Theological Seminary, which popularized dispensational theology. In 1926 Bob Jones, Sr. (1883-1968) founded Bob Jones University—the hub of separatist fundamentalist's theological training but also a center of controversy for its segregation policies, which included no inter-racial dating.

And finally, fundamentalists began using the technologies of the modern world to propagate their cause, in publishing and broadcasting. John R. Rice (1895-1980) established the most influential fundamentalist periodicals, *The Sword of the Lord*, attacking evolution, "humanism," and "worldliness" (i.e., dancing and watching movies).[90]

John Caputo highlights the last point—that fundamentalists embraced modern technology for their cause—when he provides the following examples:

> Fundamentalism has transplanted the advanced communications systems into its own body and, in order to tolerate the transplant, has suppressed its natural autoimmune systems, as philosopher Jacques Derrida argues… Protestant "televangelists" bounce signals off satellites circling the earth to preach the Word which some of them actually

[90] See Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 29-34.

> think implies that the world was created in six days… Fundamentalists use the latest techniques in media advertising to raise money in order to spread the word that carbon dating is a ruse, that the world is six thousand years old…, that we are all descended from Adam and Eve, that the variety of natural languages is the issue of Babel, and that political candidates who oppose the religious right are agents of Satan.[91]

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I began this chapter by tracing the historical development of evangelicalism, including its distinctives (compared with the Protestant convictions) that helped to shape its identity. I then looked at how nineteenth century evangelicalism gave birth to the modern fundamentalist movement, the "dark side" of evangelicalism. Several factors played a part in the shaping of fundamentalism.

First, social reform and revivalism being pitted against each other due to the emergence of various theological movements: Dispensationalism, holiness, Pentecostal, and the rise of liberalism and modernism—the latter factor causing evangelicals to be divided over how the movement was to engage with culture.

Second, the first World War had brought about the increase in secularization. This led to a divide and conflict of opinions between conservatives and liberals. The conservatives published *The Fundamentals* to defend, what they believed, was historic orthodoxy against liberalism, historical criticism, and Darwinism.

Third, conservative evangelicals viewed the "collapse" of the American civilization, which they believed were to be built on Christian principles, as a result of the burgeoning menace of modernism and "apostate" teachings of liberalism within the mainline

[91] Caputo, *On Religion*, 106.

denominations. During the 1920s they tried to remove the liberals and ban the teachings of evolution from school but ultimately failed.

When some conservative evangelicals began to withdraw from their denominations and made ecclesial separation a test of orthodoxy, fundamentalism was born. They began to form their own churches, mission organizations, and theological seminaries, and used modern technology to propagate their cause. I ended this chapter by listing some examples of how fundamentalists used modern technology to propagate their cause. The irony here is that it signified fundamentalism's complex but inter-related relationship to modernism. In the next chapter I explore fundamentalism's adoption of modernistic ideologies and re-interpretation of historic orthodoxy.

3

Fundamentalism's complex relationship to modernism

3.1 The "modern" anti-modernity movement

In studying fundamentalism from a sociological perspective, James Davison Hunter identifies *three options* that religious traditions were faced with when confronted by the emergence of modernism in the nineteenth century; when confronted by modernity's "rationality, its pluralism, its public/private dualism, its secularity."[92]

First, the religious group could withdraw all and any engagement from modernity. According to Hunter, "In this option there is a principled refusal to deal with the outside world beyond what is absolutely necessary for survival. The community becomes, for all practical purposes, a closed and total world, caring for its own educational, medical, commercial, and spiritual needs."[93] A classic example of such a group today would be the Amish.

Second, the religious group could decide to accommodate its traditions to the ethos of modernity. Their traditions are then conformed to the assumptions of secular society. "The most obvious illustrations of this approach are found in those religious communities where the traditions are so liberalized and desacralized that the languages of traditional faith are translated into the languages of contemporary therapy, politics, or science."[94]

Third, the religious group could resist modernity and protect its tradition and religious expressions from being weakened. Hunter maintains that fundamentalists chose this third option, and that their militant resistance toward modernity shaped its identity. Moreover, the

[92] See Hunter, "Fundamentalism in its Global Contours," 57.
[93] *Ibid*., 57-8.
[94] *Ibid*., 58.

movement's full-blown attack on modernism was fueled by their conviction that history had gone awry precisely because of the modern culture. As Hunter explains the fundamentalist's mind-set:

> God's favor for America would continue so long as its people remained true to the faith. Yet the pernicious effects of modernism—in the forms of higher criticism, evolution, the social gospel, ecumenism, and the like—threatened not only the integrity of the true faith, as they saw it, but also the very hope of the cause of Christianity in America. History was going awry, and it was up to the faithful followers of the gospel to make it right again.[95]

It is only in this light, maintains Hunter, that one can understand why fundamentalists tried to remove the liberals from the conservative denominations, why they started their own Bible colleges and institutions, and why they held anti-evolution campaigns. Yet their attack on modernity obviously did not involve physical militancy but spiritual warfare—"[a] wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12 KJV).

Therefore, as Hunter concludes, the movement derives its identity from its resistance to modernity; there would be no fundamentalism if there were no modernity.[96] Yet one can argue that the movement itself is in *essence* modern. As Nancy Ammerman explains: "When today's fundamentalists speak of tradition or orthodoxy or 'what Christians have always believed,' they are most likely referring, even if unknowingly, to ideas, images, and practices that were prevalent in the late nineteenth century. It was a period that shaped them

[95] *Ibid*., 59.
[96] *Ibid*., 58.

more than they often realize… The doctrines they emphasize as most important were the ones they had to defend against 'modernism' during that period."[97] So besides being "modern" in the sense of conveniently utilizing modern instruments for their purposes, such as technology and mass media, fundamentalism has a few other ideologies of modernity.

(i) Baconian Rationalism and Common Sense philosophy

The nineteenth century conservatives adopted Baconian Rationalism in an attempt to harmonize modern science with "facts" from the Bible. It was an understanding that "the world [was] organized by rational principles established by an all-knowing God and 'truth' as objective and available to the 'commonsense' reason of the sincere seeker."[98] The foundation of Baconian Rationalism was a philosophical school of thought known as Scottish Common Sense Realism: "Common Sense said that the human mind was so constructed that we can know the real world directly."[99] This school of thought opposed John Locke's philosophy that our knowledge of the world was more complex because of interposing "ideas." In other words, "these ideas … were the immediate objects of our thought; hence we do not apprehend external things directly, but only through ideas of them in our minds."[100] Thus, Baconian Rationalism and Common Sense philosophy, coupled with the development of the absolute inerrancy doctrine (that truth is contained in every word of the Bible), was used to combat other modernistic beliefs and ideas of that time, such as:[101]

- Kant's objection to pure reason. He pointed out that objective truth is "always filtered through subjective experiences and perceptions," therefore, we cannot know 'absolute realities.'

[97] Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 8.
[98] *Ibid.*, 9.
[99] Marsden, *American Culture*, 14.
[100] *Ibid.*, 14-5.
[101] Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 9-11.

- Darwin's evolution theory that rejected the literalness of the Genesis creation account.
- Sociologists, like Auguste Comte, who argued that religion and morality were shaped by the social order of the day.
- Higher criticism, which was a method of using critical tools to analyze literary forms and historical contexts of ancient texts, such as the Bible. This resulted in source criticism[102] and the belief that the Bible was an account of human experiences in a specific cultural context.

Therefore, the conservative evangelicals, especially from the dispensational persuasion, built upon Baconian Rationalism and the Common Sense philosophy to affirm their ability to know "the facts" directly. All they were doing, they claimed, was to gather the facts from Scripture and then classify them according to various epochs or dispensations. Marsden writes, "It was vital to the dispensationalists that their information be not only absolutely reliable but also precise. They considered the term "inerrancy" to carry this implication. Statements found in Scripture would not deviate from the exact truth. The importance of this assumption for prophetic interpretation is obvious. Precise numbers of years had to be calculated and correlated with actual historical events."[103] And so they interpreted Scripture in a strict literal sense (e.g., the 1000 years in the book of Revelation, which is a highly symbolic book, are nevertheless interpreted literally). They believed that the figures in the prophetic books were ordained by God in the same way as were the laws of nature described by Newtonian physics.

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[102] In 1878 Julius Wellhausen (and others after him) developed the *Newer Documentary Hypothesis*, claiming that the Pentateuch was compiled from four sources or documents over a long period of time. Source critics would analyze the texts in each of the books of the Pentateuch—their style, vocabulary, perspectives, inconsistencies, interruptions and repetitions/duplications—in order to identify various sources that the editors of the Old Testament later used to compile each book. See Viviano, "Source Criticism;" and Campbell and O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch*.

[103] Marsden, *American Culture*, 57.

Another group of conservative evangelicals, the neo-Calvinists led by Charles Hodge (1797-1878) from Princeton, built upon rationalism and the Common Sense philosophy in order to apply an inductive theory of doing theology—that theology is a matter of gathering all of the "objective facts" from the Bible and classifying or systematizing them into a coherent system. Rationalism and common sense were needed to do just that. For Hodge and the Princeton theologians—his son, A. A. Hodge (1823-1886), and B. B. Warfield (1851-1921)—the Bible became a storehouse for true propositions.[104] These objective facts were based on the intellect, not on feelings. Moreover, our perceptions of the external world, through our senses, were not ideas, but facts. "One should not look for the ideas behind the words; truth is contained in the words themselves."[105] And the Holy Spirit guaranteed the accuracy and inerrancy of the Bible by inspiring the authors to select the correct words (a.k.a. verbal plenary inspiration).

Nancy Ammerman also points out that the nineteenth century revivals, prophecy conferences, and Bible institutes emphasized the simplicity of Bible truths that the common man could understand. For example, the revivalist, Charles G. Finney (1792-1875), "urged preachers to avoid complicated theological arguments in favor of words directly from the Bible, expressed in plain talk understandable by ordinary folk."[106]

This modern ideology influenced conservative evangelicals, and later the twentieth century fundamentalists, to formulate a doctrine of absolute inerrancy of the Bible and to adopt an epistemology of certainty and clarity. So by the time that fundamentalism was organized and transformed in the 1920s, the doctrine of absolute inerrancy had emerged as an essential, non-negotiable dogma that was a test of true faith.

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[104] See Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism*, 15-6; Bratt, "Calvinism in North America," 56, 61; Grenz, "Nurturing the Soul, Informing the Mind," 31.
[105] Ammerman, "North American Protestant,"15.
[106] *Ibid*., 18.

(ii) Enlightenment Science

Modern day evangelical and fundamentalist views of science have been influenced by the modern European Enlightenment, when their nineteenth century forerunners adopted two categories of that period: (1) The "Moderate Enlightenment" associated with Newton dealt with ideals of order and balance; evangelicals believed that God is an orderly Lawgiver; (2) the "Didactic Enlightenment," which adopted the Scottish Common Sense thought, was committed to science and rationality; evangelicals believed that faith and reason went hand in hand.[107]

Thus, because nineteenth century evangelicalism was so intertwined with the science culture, various conservative evangelicals actually tried to harmonize Christianity with Darwinism by providing three solutions: (1) The six days of creation were not literal days but represented six eons or ages; (2) God could have intervened later in the evolutionary process to create the human soul if humans did descend from apes; (3) the idea of evolution did not logically follow that it provided a naturalistic worldview (atheism).[108] In fact, the origins of the science *vs.* religion and the evolution *vs.* Christianity conflicts did not begin with evangelicals. It actually began with opponents of Christianity, such as T. H. Huxley, who "spoke for that band of intellectual 'agnostics' (to use his new term) who were convinced that people should not be guided by beliefs they could not know with scientific certainty."[109] This was a convenient way to redefine science in order to propagate a naturalistic worldview. Along with Auguste Comte, he argued that science must be removed from having any connection with religion. "Science must be defined as the investigation of natural causes and nothing else."[110]

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[107] See Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 128.
[108] *Ibid*., 136ff.
[109] *Ibid*., 140.
[110] *Ibid*.

Therefore, in spite of claiming an evangelical heritage, most early twentieth century fundamentalists had no problem in allowing others to hold to a theistic evolution view, and some were even persuaded by it.[111] And yet, today, many conservative evangelicals and all fundamentalists are adherents of the "Creation Science" movement, which teaches that there is an absolute antithesis between evolution and biblical creationism, and that the days of Genesis are literal 24-hour days. Marsden thus asks the questions: *Why did later fundamentalism oppose all biological evolution and insist that a denial of the former was a test of faith? And why has this view grown so popular today?*[112] To the first, he answers that many who later got involved in the inerrancy debate in the mid-twentieth century strongly believed that the Bible was a kind of scientific textbook, and that a denial of the literal day view would be a denial of God's word as an accurate account of history, science, and every other field. A prominent Creation Science evangelical, Henry Morris, once stated: "If man wishes to know anything at all about Creation … his sole source of true information is that of divine revelation… This is our textbook on the science of Creation!"[113]

Marsden answers his second question by pointing out that the growth of dispensationalism is consistent with the growth of Creation Science because the former system also utilizes a strict literal view of hermeneutics, especially to the future.

3.2 "Historic orthodoxy" or "cultic orthodoxy"?

Besides the above modern ideologies—Baconian Rationalism, Common Sense philosophy, and Enlightenment Science—there is another factor that makes fundamentalism modern, and that is, to answer the question as to whether fundamentalism is truly historic orthodoxy. If not, then it is *historically* a modern movement. "The great pretense of all

[111] For example, two authors of *The Fundamentals*, Orr and Wright, including another author, B. B. Warfield, who at least tolerated it when he wrote: "evolution cannot act as a substitute for creation, but at best can supply only a theory of the method of divine providence" (Quoted in Marsden, *Understanding*, 156).
[112] *Ibid*., 156ff.
[113] *Ibid*., 158.

fundamentalists," says Hunter, "is their conviction that what they espouse and what they seek to promote is a basic, unaltered orthodoxy."[114] Hunter disagrees with such a claim, believing that orthodoxy represents a "consensus through time." Concerning orthodoxy, he adds: "Its authority and its legitimacy derive from an unfaltering continuity with truth as originally revealed—truth in its primitive and purest expression." And so he concludes, "*Fundamentalism is orthodoxy in confrontation with modernity*."[115]

Another theologian who would disagree with the fundamentalist's claim of promoting orthodoxy was one who grew up as a fundamentalist. Edward J. Carnell was the second president of Fuller Theological Seminary and would later become a key figure in evangelicalism's efforts to reform fundamentalism during the 1950s.[116] Carnell himself grew up in a legalistic, fundamentalist family. In his work, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (1959), he attacked fundamentalism by defining it as "orthodoxy gone cultic" and its ideology as being "rigid, intolerant, and doctrinaire."[117] The biggest mistake the movement made, said Carnell, was to disconnect itself from the creeds of the early Church and past traditions of Christian orthodoxy even if they were claiming to defend historic, orthodox Christianity. But as has been shown above, they were ultimately developing new doctrines (such as absolute inerrancy and the literal day view of creation) from nineteenth century modernistic ideas in order to combat "modernism!"

Many theologians and historians today would agree with Carnell's pronouncement that fundamentalism is orthodoxy gone cultic. Jaroslav Pelikan, for example, analyzes the "five-points of fundamentalism," and the movement's claim that each point is historic orthodoxy,

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[114] Hunter, "Fundamentalism in its Global Contours," 57.
[115] *Ibid*.
[116] See chapter 4.
[117] Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, 113-14.

held by the Christian church for centuries. It is worthwhile to attend to Pelikan's discussion wherein he attempts to show their differences.[118]

1st point: Inerrancy in every detail. Fundamentalists claim that "inerrancy in every detail" brings out the literal meaning of the text (e.g., six literal days of creation). The early Church creeds stated that God created the world but never took a literal meaning to the days of creation. Pelikan says, "the fundamentalist assumption that there has been a homogeneous orthodox position is seen to be mistaken."[119] For example, St. Augustine interpreted the "six days" as a symbolic expression of an instantaneous creation. In fact, orthodox Christianity has always recognized the "multiple senses" of Scripture. Pelikan concludes, "Orthodoxy was not a straight line, but a circle drawn around a variety of permissible views, excluding other views."[120]

James Hunter also shows how the doctrine of absolute inerrancy had evolved into a novel doctrine of Scripture.[121] Prior to the 1850s, American Protestants did believe in the Reformation principle of *Sola Scriptura*, that the Bible was the Christian's final authority on matters of doctrine and practice. This was their conviction, but it was also an act of reverence and loyalty to the word of God. But it was a time before biblical criticism, biology, and the social sciences questioned and challenged truth claims made by evangelicals from the Bible. Therefore, when such claims were challenged during the mid-nineteenth century, a foundation for such truth claims had to be defended. "The logic was simple: if the faithful could successfully defend the notion that the Bible was the inerrant Word of God, to be interpreted literally as such, then they would have an adequate basis for

[118] Pelikan uses the term "orthodoxy" to refer to the "mainstream of the development of Christian doctrine" since the early Church Fathers; "Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy?" 5.
[119] *Ibid*., 7.
[120] *Ibid*., 8.
[121] This will be demonstrated in chapter 4; "Lindsell vs. Beegle."

rejecting all erroneous teachings. Modernism would be repudiated and what was going wrong with Protestant history could be made right again."[122]

2nd point: Virgin birth. Pelikan tries to show that fundamentalism's emphasis on the virgin birth perpetuates a Roman Catholic pattern in its doctrine of Mary. I disagree with him on this point, although I can understand his reasoning that "if this [virgin birth] were indeed so utterly fundamental a teaching, it could be expected to appear in more places of the New Testament than the opening chapters of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke."[123] Nevertheless, if he wants to compare fundamentalism with orthodoxy, the fact is there was consensus among the early Church Fathers that Jesus was born of a virgin. The Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (AD 381) states of Jesus: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven; by the power of the Holy Spirit, he became incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."[124] And in his epistles, Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35-108) wrote of the virgin birth: "Now the Virginity of Mary, and he who was born of her, was kept in secret from the prince of this world[125] …[Jesus] truly was of the race of David according to the flesh, but the Son of God according to the will and power of God; truly born of the Virgin, and baptized by John."[126]

Fundamentalists were simply defending it from liberal theologians who denied most, if not all, miraculous accounts of the Bible, including the resurrection. The reason why conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists regarded the virgin birth as an essential doctrine was that it related to the transmission of original sin. In other words, if Jesus was born by a human father, he would have inherited original sin. Louis Berkhof, professor at Calvin College during the early 1900s, reasoned: "If Christ had been generated by man, He

[122] Hunter, "Fundamentalism in its Global Contours," 68.
[123] Pelikan, "Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy?" 19.
[124] Quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 127-8.
[125] Epistle to the Ephesians 4:10. In Hone, *The Lost Books of the Bible*.
[126] Epistle to the Smyrneans 1:4. *Ibid*.

would have been a human person, included in the covenant of works, and as such would have shared the common guilt of mankind. But now that His subject, His ego, His person, is not out of Adam, He is not in the covenant of works and is free from the guilt of sin. And being free from the guilt of sin, His human nature could also be kept free, both before and after His birth, from the pollution of sin."[127]

3rd point: Substitutionary atonement. Fundamentalists were in fact defending a substitutionary theory of the atonement that was developed by Anselm in the eleventh century; namely, the "satisfaction theory." And as Pelikan points out, fundamentalists were responding to the well known liberal theologian, Albrecht Ritschl, who explained that the satisfaction theory, "with its emphasis upon the vindictive justice of God demanding capital punishment through the crucifixion of Christ, was both an unworthy picture of the God of biblical revelation and a distortion of the true meaning of the life, teaching, and work of Jesus Christ."[128] The fact is, the early creeds never explained *how* the atonement achieved salvation. The earliest theory expressed was Irenaeus' recapitulation view, which stated that "Christ accomplishes our salvation by repeating Adam, this time with obedience rather than disobedience."[129]

4th point: Bodily resurrection of Christ. Fundamentalists defended a *physical* resurrection of Christ. Pelikan believes that they failed to adequately consider Pauline language, especially when the apostle refers to the resurrection of the body as being *spiritual* in nature: "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body… I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of

[127] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 336. When Berkhof states, "the person [i.e. Jesus] who was born was not a human person," he is not denying the Son's humanity or human nature, but rather, that Jesus was born as a "person of the Son of God" (p. 335) with a human nature untainted by original sin.
[128] Pelikan, "Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy?" 12.
[129] Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 382.

God" (1 Cor. 15:44, 50 ESV). While Pelikan makes a good point, it is still clear that most of the Gospel texts presented the resurrected Christ with a material body (Luke 24:39-43; John 20:25-27). And of course, evangelicals are not unaware of the seeming conflict with the Pauline language as is demonstrated in Millard Erickson's harmonization of the two: "Jesus was at this point resurrected, but not ascended. At the time of our resurrection our bodies will be transformed in one step. In the case of Jesus, however, the two events, resurrection and ascension, were separated rather than collapsed into one. So the body that he had at the point of resurrection was yet to undergo a more complete transformation at the point of the ascension. It was yet to become the 'spiritual body' of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15:44."[130]

Be that as it may, the question still remains whether the belief in a *physical* resurrection of Christ is orthodoxy or a modern development by evangelicals and fundamentalists. Pelikan doesn't provide any evidence to either support his claim (that it was spiritual) or counter the fundamentalist's claim (that it was physical).

5th point: Imminent, physical second coming of Christ. Fundamentalists are correct that the Bible teaches an imminent, second coming of Christ. Reading, for example, Paul's epistles one can see that the apostle really believed that some of his readers would not "fall asleep" in death: "*We* will not all sleep, but we will all be changed" (1 Cor. 15:51); "*we* who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thess. 4:15).[131] So when the apostolic teaching that Christ's return would be immanent failed to occur, the orthodox churches understood the *parousia* more in terms of Christ's *presence*, especially in the sacraments.[132]

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[130] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 777.
[131] Emphasis mine in *italics*.
[132] Pelikan, "Fundamentalism and/or Orthodoxy?" 17-18.

In his analysis of the five points of fundamentalism, Pelikan has demonstrated the movement's discontinuity with the past. Archbishop Rowan Williams has written precisely on the subject of the church's continuity and discontinuity with the past. He writes that history informs us of changes, of disruptive forces that occur, and which ultimately shapes our identity. When we study or write history we must find a balance between concern with continuity (sameness) and with discontinuity (difference). For example, when writing on the historical differences between Christianity and Judaism, the church historian, Eusebius, tried to do justice to both sameness and difference. He attempted to show *continuity* by revealing the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in the life of Christ but also revealed the *discontinuity* by claiming that later events confirmed God's judgment against the Jews. Good history thus tries to identify the strangeness (discontinuity) of the past while also trying to identify our being part of the past (continuities). Bad history on the other hand attempts to provide us with a version of the past as being the present in fancy dress (i.e., only continuities) or as a total foreign country (i.e., only discontinuities).[133]

My purpose in citing Williams' significant pointers about studying history is that fundamentalism failed to recognize its discontinuity with the past. The movement only saw continuities with the past, wearing a "fancy dress" version of orthodoxy. I conclude this section with James Hunter's acute observation on a great irony of fundamentalism's attempt to maintain continuity with the past:

> In the attempt to shore up their own beleaguered faiths, the beliefs that they so passionately defend are themselves transformed into something that may be orthodoxy in name only. In more sociological terms, the moral boundaries that long defined

[133] See Williams, *Why Study the Past?* 10-31.

> orthodox faith shift in such a way that the faith would be unrecognizable to previous generations. More simply, in the effort to defend the truth, *truth itself is transformed*.[134]

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In the last chapter I had traced the historical development of evangelicalism and the formation of its "dark side," fundamentalism. In this chapter I explored fundamentalism's complex relationship to modernism, which in turn gave the movement its identity and its own set of distinctives disconnected from its evangelical heritage. When confronted by the emergence of modernism, and in its efforts to resist modernity and protect its tradition and religious expressions from being weakened, it adopted a few ideologies of modernity: Baconian Rationalism and Common Sense philosophy, which aided in the fundamentalist's formulation of a doctrine of absolute inerrancy (i.e., the Bible is completely without any error, not only in its affirmations of faith and practice but also in its historical and scientific statements); Enlightenment Science, which aided the fundamentalist's to utilize a strict literal view of hermeneutics and thus formulate a young-earth account and literal six-days of creation in Genesis.

I then analyzed their "five-points of fundamentalism," and the movement's claim that each point is historic orthodoxy, held by the Christian church for centuries. On the contrary, I showed that there exists some evidence that at least three of the five points were re-interpretations of historic orthodoxy—a discontinuity with the past—and not a defense of it.

All of this reveals that fundamentalism was in essence a movement that was influenced and shaped by the very "enemy" that it resisted. And it only took two decades, during the 1940s, for a group of fundamentalists to realize the shortcomings of their tradition. The

[134] Hunter, "Fundamentalism in its Global Contours," 70. Emphasis mine in *italics*.

following chapter retells the fascinating stories of these “insiders” who tried to reform fundamentalism.

4

Reforming fundamentalism

4.1 Neo-evangelicalism

In spite of its growth, fundamentalism continued to be characterized by its separatist attitude, schisms over doctrine, lack of social concern, negative view of culture and the end times, and legalism. However, in the 1940s a group of fundamentalists wanted to remove the "anti-intellectual" stigma from evangelicalism and reclaim intellectual prestige to the movement. They also wanted to make a distinction between being a "fundamentalist" and an "evangelical." These neo-evangelicals (later simply designated as "evangelicals") became involved in social concern, ecumenical dialogues, and rigorous academia and apologetics.[135] Harold Ockenga recalls, from personal experience, how neo-evangelicalism came into existence:

> Neo-evangelicalism was born in 1948 in connection with a convocation address which I gave in the Civic Auditorium in Pasadena. While reaffirming the theological view of fundamentalism, this address repudiated its ecclesiology and its social theory. The ringing call for a repudiation of separatism and the summons to social involvement received a hearty response from many evangelicals. The name caught on and spokesmen such as Drs. Harold Lindsell, Carl F. H. Henry, Edward Carnell, and Gleason Archer supported this viewpoint. We had no intention of launching a movement, but found that the emphasis attracted widespread support and exercised great influence… [Neo-evangelicalism] differed from fundamentalism in its repudiation of separatism and its

[135] See Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*; and Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*.

> determination to engage itself in the theological dialogue of the day. It had a new emphasis upon the application of the gospel to the sociological, political, and economic areas of life.[136]

As background to the movement, the following is a list of the key figures of neo-evangelicalism and their efforts to reform fundamentalism:

Charles Fuller (1887-1968). Evangelist-revivalist who hosted the popular radio program, *Old Fashioned Revival Hour*, every week, which opened with the equally popular evangelical chorus: "We have heard the joyful sound, Jesus saves, Jesus saves." In 1947 Fuller, along with Harold Ockenga, founded *Fuller Theological Seminary*. The seminary's mission was to recover "Protestant Orthodoxy" and to rid itself of fundamentalism's "anti-intellectual" stigma.

Harold Ockenga (1905-1985). In 1942 he formed the *National Association of Evangelicals*—an umbrella organization of conservative evangelical denominations and individuals that promoted unity and evangelism. Unlike the "negative" fundamentalists, Ockenga and others did not want to make ecclesiastical separation a test of orthodoxy. He derided fundamentalism for its "fragmentation, segregation, separation, criticism, censoriousness, suspicion, [and] solecism."[137] He was the first president of *Fuller Theological Seminary*.

Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003). He was appointed by Ockenga as the chief editor of the newly established *Christianity Today* magazine. Henry was to make sure that the

[136] Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, 11.
[137] Quoted in Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 53.

publication gained intellectual respectability and participate in the dominant culture. Henry had criticized fundamentalist pastors for not preaching against social evils, such as racism and exploitation of labor. He, along with the other neo-evangelicals, realized that one could not have Christian missions without social concern.

Edward J. Carnell (1919-1967). Not only was he the second president of *Fuller Theological Seminary* (1954-1959) but also a highly praised apologist for the movement. He was influenced by rationalistic apologetics, believing that faith must be grounded in objective, verifiable facts, and that one could use reason to persuade an unbeliever of the truth of Christianity. He used Aristotle's *Law of Contradiction* for religious epistemology. In other words, the truth of Christianity, when compared to other world religions, can be proven through logic and rationality.

Billy Graham (b. 1918). Well-known evangelist for crusade work, Graham broke from the separatist fundamentalists when he allowed the Protestant Council of Churches, which included mainly liberal theologians and preachers, to sponsor his crusades. Graham saw the separatist attitude and actions of fundamentalists as a barrier to preaching the gospel. He also spoke out against the culture of racism and allowed racial integration in his crusades.

J. I. Packer (b. 1926). One of the major British counterparts of the American "neo-evangelicals." In 1957 Packer wrote *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God* (Eerdmans). In it he tried to demonstrate the major differences between "fundamentalism" and "evangelicalism," and why the neo-evangelicals preferred to drop the term "fundamentalism": "Evangelicalism at its best has shown itself to be a much richer thing than this Fundamentalism which we have been describing: intellectually virile, church-

centered in its outlook, vigorous in social and political enterprise and a cultural force of great power… The final reason why Evangelicals decline to be called 'Fundamentalists' is that the term is modern. Its meaning derives from a modern controversy…"[138]

4.2 Fuller Theological Seminary and the divide over inerrancy

Although the neo-evangelicals deplored ecclesial separation, it is interesting to note that most of the original faculty members of Fuller had backgrounds of being fundamentalist separatists. The faculty that Ockenga initially employed were Harold Lindsell, Wilbur M. Smith, Carl Henry, and Everett F. Harrison, shortly afterwards joined by Edward Carnell, Charles J. Woodbridge, Gleason Archer, and George Ladd. Smith was previously a teacher at the Moody Bible Institute. He had been friends with Machen and was part of his independent Presbyterian missions board, which had been suspended by the Presbyterian Church USA. Woodbridge was a defrocked Presbyterian minister for supporting Machen's separatism. And Harrison was also a "Machen protégé."[139] Ockenga himself had followed Machen in separating from Princeton Seminary and formed Westminster Seminary. This is pointed out by the fundamentalist John E. Ashbrook whose father, William Ashbrook, wrote a scathing attack on neo-evangelicalism in 1958 called *The New Neutralism*—titled as such because of the movement's "compromise" on separatism and "pride" to gain intellectual status and recognition by the world. The younger Ashbrook explained his father's reasons for rejecting Ockenga's neo-evangelical movement in his sequel *The New Neutralism II*:

> [First,] new evangelicalism determined to reject Biblical separation. Secondly, new evangelicalism determined to find acceptance by the world. Thirdly, new evangelicalism determined to add the social gospel to the Scriptural gospel… Separation is God's

[138] Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God*, 34, 38.
[139] Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 52.

> prescription for treating the disease of apostasy. It is not ours to repudiate, for it is a divine command, not a human idea. The doctrine of separatism gets its name from 2 Corinthians 6:17, 18. The same doctrine is taught in passages such as Ephesians 5:11 which says, "*And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*" It is the theme of II John, culminating in verses 10 and 11. It is taught throughout the Scriptures, but it is very plain in passages such as I Kings 13, II Chronicles 19:2, Romans 16:17. II Thessalonians 3:6 and I Timothy 6:3-5… Satan is a joiner. God's key word in regard to unbelief is separate. Satan's key word is cooperate. Satan is always seeking an amalgam of belief and unbelief. The joining of social action causes by new evangelicals has been a magnificent strategy to produce cooperation with liberalism. Remember that Satan's ultimate strategy is to produce the one-world church of the end time.[140]

It is therefore ironic that these "fundamentalists" turned neo-evangelicals within Fuller, who repudiated separatism, should later become embroiled in their own battle and separate from their colleagues. But the issue of dispute within Fuller was anything but peripheral. One of the other main purposes of Fuller was to defend the fundamentalist's doctrine of absolute inerrancy, as recounted by Lindsell:

> Charles Fuller wanted a place where men like his own son [Dan Fuller] could receive excellent theological education. He and the founding fathers, including the founding faculty, were of one mind with respect to the Scriptures. It was agreed from the inception of the school that through the seminary curriculum the faculty would provide the finest theological defense of biblical infallibility or inerrancy. It was agreed in addition that the faculty would publish joint works that would present to the world the

[140] Ashbrook, "Separatism, Acceptance and the Social Gospel," par. 9, 11, 13, 20-1, 52, 62.

> best of evangelical scholarship on inerrancy at a time when there was a dearth of such scholarship and when there were few learned works promoting biblical inerrancy.[141]

During Carnell's presidency, the faculty drew up Fuller Seminary's statement of faith, which included the following statement on inerrancy: "The books which form the canon of the Old and New Testaments as originally given are plenary inspired and free from all error in the whole and in the part. These books constitute the written Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice."[142] Analyzing this statement, Lindsell wrote: "The statement on the Scriptures was as strong as any ancient or contemporary statement could be. The phrase "free from all error in the whole and in the part" could only mean that all of the Bible and every part of it is free from error. Thus, the statement declared that the Bible is free from errors in matters of fact, science, history, and chronology, as well as in matters having to do with salvation."[143] Moreover, every faculty member was obliged to sign this statement of faith at the beginning of each academic year, and if not, he would voluntarily leave the seminary.

However, by the end of Carnell's presidency, in 1959, this statement on inerrancy would result in internal strife and tension among the faculty members. In fact, Carnell himself, without any intention on his part, became the "instigator." As Dorrien points out: "His closing years were filled with irony, for at the critical turn in the seminary's history, Carnell was the figure most responsible for making it the object of controversy."[144] His years were filled with irony because Carnell still held to absolute inerrancy and yet, as we shall see, he tried to accommodate this fundamentalist doctrine with apparent contradictions and errors in the Bible. This agitated some of his fellow colleagues.

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[141] Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 106-7.
[142] *Ibid.*, 107.
[143] *Ibid.*
[144] Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 95.

It all began when Carnell questioned the rationalistic certainty of his apologetics. Perhaps this happened after he had attacked the subjectivity of Kierkegaard's theology, and without realizing it, saw some truth in his work. First, Carnell was disturbed that Scripture never presented anything in a coherent philosophical system. He thus came to believe that Scripture addresses the whole person, not just the intellect. Secondly, he was more so disturbed by the cold rationalism of Clarkian rationality, and opened up to the fact that Christianity was a religion of the heart, which cannot be identified with rationality. Truth must reach the heart, not just the mind.[145] He had also attacked fundamentalism's preoccupation with doctrine, arguing that sinners are justified by faith, not by doctrine. In his presidential speech, "he emphasized the primacy of the law of love in Christian living and Christian higher education."[146] Woodbridge and Smith fumed that Carnell did not include in his speech any mention of the seminary's educational mission. Henry and Lindsell would join them, believing that Carnell's tone watered down their evangelical fundamentalist heritage. "Carnell later recalled that his confrontations with Smith, Woodbridge, Henry, and Lindsell gave him a lump in his stomach 'that didn't leave the entire time I was president.'"[147] David Hubbard, Carnell's successor, later recalled that when Carnell made love a touchstone of Christian apologetics, "it was as if the seminary was being basically changed in their eyes."[148]

More specifically, it was Carnell's views on biblical inspiration and inerrancy in his work, *The Case for Orthodox Theology* (1959), which would open up a 'can of worms' for the "post-fundamentalists" who still believed in absolute inerrancy. Says Dorrien, "it was Carnell's fate to become the chief symbol of the contradictions in Fuller Seminary

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[145] *Ibid.*, 71-5.
[146] *Ibid.*, 77.
[147] *Ibid.*
[148] Quoted in Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 77.

evangelicalism. He redefined inerrancy to accommodate the existence of biblical errors while insisting on a priori grounds that scripture contains no historical errors."[149]

When it came to biblical *inspiration*, Carnell was influenced by the work of Scottish theologian, James Orr, who held to a dynamic view of inspiration: that the purpose of inspiration was to bring people to Christ and to live godly lives, not to answer epistemological questions. And when it came to *inerrancy*, Carnell embraced Henry Smith's view that inerrancy sometimes involves an accurate account of erroneous statements (for example, the sayings of Job's three "friends"): "Whether orthodoxy realized it or not, it was really saying that inspiration, at times, ensures no more than an infallible account of error."[150] Moreover, Carnell would later admit that the Bible contained "troublesome passages" that could not always be attributed to scribal error.[151] For example, the writer of Chronicles often exaggerated figures as seen from the parallel accounts in the books of Samuel;[152] Stephen's figures in Acts 7:6-16 were incorrect;[153] 2 Samuel 21:19 says that Elhanan, not David, killed Goliath. Thus, Dorrien maintains that Carnell expressed an accommodationist view of inerrancy that "Scripture contains errors, but teaches none."[154] In other words, the intended teachings of Scripture were infallible, while the unintended ones may contain errors. However, Carnell referred to Orr's admission of historical errors as "perilous:"

> Even if it could be shown that the Chronicles are not entirely compatible with other Old Testament histories, the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy would *not* be demolished. Orthodoxy would simply shift its conception of the thing signified. Just as the inspired

[149] *Ibid.*, 95.
[150] Carnell, *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, 102-3.
[151] Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 88.
[152] For example, 2 Samuel 8:4 cf. 1 Chronicles 18:4; and 2 Samuel 10:18 cf. 1 Chronicles 19:18.
[153] For an analysis and attempted solution by an evangelical-fundamentalist to the problems in Stephen's speech, see Hoehner, "The Duration of the Egyptian Bondage," 306-16.
[154] Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 114.

> author of Job gives an infallible account of what Eliphaz said, so the inspired author of Chronicles gives an infallible account of what was said in the public registers and genealogical lists. At first blush this may seem like a very desperate expedient, but it actually implies no more than a strained use of procedures already at work in orthodoxy. If Hodge and Warfield had honored this as a possibility, they might have avoided their lofty disregard for the inductive difficulties. And if Orr had done likewise, he might have avoided his perilous admission of historical errors in Scripture.[155]

Carnell's view of inerrancy and criticism of fundamentalism brought upon him many counterattacks by the fundamentalists, including some of his own colleagues. For example, Woodbridge attacked Carnell's character and faith; Smith argued that Carnell wanted to gain respect from the modernists; and Ockenga chided him for forgetting that their real enemy was the modernist.[156]

In reality, the faculty at Fuller was divided into two factions over the issue of inerrancy, and Carnell, along with Everett Harrison, had tried to put forward a "middle" position between these two group's arguments on inerrancy. On the one side were the "conservatives"—Woodbridge, Smith, Lindsell, Archer—who held to absolute inerrancy and wanted every faculty member to sign the seminary's statement of faith in good conscience or face expulsion. On the other side were the "progressives"—Dan Fuller, Paul Jewett, William LaSor, Ladd—who wanted the seminary to adopt a revised statement regarding inerrancy. Dan Fuller—the only "progressive" with a job security at the seminary because of his father's position—had confronted Ockenga that the present creed on inerrancy was indefensible. He said, "Dr. Ockenga, there are errors which cannot be explained by the original autographs. It is simply not historically feasible to say that these

[155] Carnell, *Orthodox Theology*, 111.
[156] Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 94.

errors would disappear if we had the autographs."[157] Yet Carnell was still committed to Fuller's confession that the biblical autographs were "free from all error in the whole and in the part," and therefore, ended up on the side of the conservatives. But by 1960 he had resigned from the presidency due to health problems, and his influence on the outcome of the battle waned. Dan Fuller and the other "progressives" were pushing for a *limited* inerrancy view of Scripture, or what was known then as the "infallible-teaching model," similar to Orr's position.

> "Inerrancy" makes sense only as a claim about the revelational teaching of scripture, Fuller urged. It refers only to those things that bring one to a saving relationship with Christ. With regard to incidental matters, pertaining to history or geography, for example, it is plainly evident that God accommodated himself to the imperfect standards of ancient times in speaking his Word to the world. The Bible contains numerous incidental errors, as any attentive reader must recognize, Fuller maintained. The crucial matter is not the existence of these errors but rather that they do not hinder God's revelational purpose in inspiring the biblical writers. Scripture is infallible in all that it affirms about matters of faith.[158]

Carl Henry rejected this accommodationist view of inerrancy, believing that if the Scriptures contained one error on historical or geographical details, then who was to say that it might not contain doctrinal errors?[159] Yet, as a neo-evangelical, Henry refused to be drawn into the fundamentalist camp—those who insisted that belief in the doctrine of inerrancy was a test

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[157] *Ibid.*, 97.
[158] *Ibid.*
[159] *Ibid.*, 114-5.

of orthodoxy. On the other hand, Lindsell maintained that one could not call oneself an "evangelical" for abandoning absolute inerrancy.[160]

After Carnell resigned, he remained the seminary's apologetics teacher and even taught the doctrine of Scripture, mainly to protect Jewett (the Systematic Theology lecturer) from the fundamentalists, as Jewett did not believe in absolute inerrancy. After Ockenga declined to become the full-time president of the seminary, due to other commitments, Charles Fuller named David Hubbard as the new president. This was a 'deathblow' for the conservatives because they knew Hubbard did not hold to absolute inerrancy and had even co-written a survey of the Old Testament that included historical-critical methods. In 1962 the conservatives and progressives came head to head at a faculty and Board of Trustees retreat, which some called "Black Saturday." Lindsell recounts the events:

> It assumed dimensions that called for a definitive decision with regard to the statement about Scripture as "free from all error in the whole and in the part." Hubbard at that point could have made it clear that if he came as president, he would stand for the inerrancy of Scripture and would carry through on it administratively, removing any faculty members and securing in advance the resignation of any trustees who did not believe in it. He failed to do so… From the discussions there could be no doubt that a number of the members of the faculty and board did not believe in an inerrant Scripture… On the Monday following Black Saturday the stenographers began the work of transcribing the records of all that had been said at the retreat. Before they had finished their work, I received a letter from Charles Fuller. In it he wrote, "I think it is best to take the written records of the discussion concerning inspiration and keep them under my personal supervision for a time since the president at the end of the discussion expressed a desire that the discussion be kept within the Seminary family…"[161]

[160] *Ibid.*, 118.
[161] Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 110.

After Hubbard was appointed president and the progressives continued to sign the unchanged statement of faith on inerrancy, the conservatives began to tend their resignations. Woodbridge had already left before "Black Saturday;" Smith resigned in 1963; Lindsell followed suit the next year, and Archer left in 1965. Even after Carnell's and Charles Fuller's death in 1967 and 1968 respectively, the progressives still did not change the inerrancy statement. Eventually, in the early 70s, the seminary's new statement on the doctrine of Scripture read: "Scripture is an essential part and trustworthy record of this divine disclosure. All the books of the Old and New Testaments, given by divine inspiration, are the written Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice."[162] Lindsell critiqued this new statement, revealing how the seminary had adopted a limited inerrancy view of Scripture—limited to matters of faith and practice, not history or science:

> The key to an understanding of the new viewpoint is to be found in the words that the books of the Old and New Testaments "are the written Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice." It is where the word *infallible* is placed that makes the difference. Had the statement said that the Books of the Old and New Testaments "are the infallible Word of God, the only rule of faith and practice," it would have repeated in different words what the first statement of faith had said. But what the new statement does is this: it limits infallibility to matters of faith and practice… Scripture that does not involve matters of faith and practice is not infallible.[163]

[162] *Ibid*., 116.
[163] *Ibid*.

4.3 Lindsell vs. Beegle

During the same time that Fuller Seminary was changing its view on inerrancy, a respected Wesleyan theologian, Dewey M. Beegle (*b*. 1919), published *The Inspiration of Scripture* (1963), which was later revised and called *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility* (1973). In this work, Beegle rejected absolute inerrancy and instead favored limited inerrancy. Then, in 1976, Harold Lindsell (1913-1998) published *The Battle for the Bible* wherein he argued that the limited inerrancy view had led to concessions in matters of faith and practice and, of course, he cited his previous place of employment, Fuller Seminary, as an example. In it he critiqued Beegle's work, but Lindsell showed that he was also "out for the kill": "Beegle has an evangelical background, but his commitment to the fallibility of the Bible has become a passion for him, and he wants to share this insight and to convince everyone he can that the Bible is indeed errant. Even a most casual reading of the book shows that Beegle is out for the kill… [but] it could be said that his own emotions and sense of mission so dominate him that he is incapable of clear thinking."[164] Lindsell then attacked Beegle's position with some harsh words: "[Beegle] has wandered into a wasteland filled with quicksand from which there is no escaping. Having scrapped inerrancy, he has fallen into this quicksand, a fate that could not have befallen him had he stayed with inerrancy and followed through on its implications."[165]

Three years later, Beegle would revise and expand *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility*. He must have had in mind Lindsell's *Battle for the Bible* because he indirectly counters a lot of Lindsell's arguments. Maybe it was testimony to Beegle's character and integrity that he refused to be drawn into a slinging match with Lindsell because he didn't even mention Lindsell or quote from *The Battle for the Bible*. However, in a 1995 publication of testimonies of former fundamentalists (three years before Lindsell's death), Beegle recounts

[164] *Ibid*., 170-1.
[165] *Ibid*., 181.

a meeting he had with Lindsell before either of their controversial books were published—both men had been appointed by Harper & Brothers to work on a RSV study Bible:

> Exman [senior editor] requested Lindsell to meet with me for discussion of the notes I had prepared. On 16 January 1961 we met for seven hours in our apartment at Biblical Seminary. As we worked through the material in the first chapters of Genesis it became evident that he was no biblical scholar. I asked him where he had gotten his material. He explained that he had asked Gleason Archer to write some notes for him. I remarked that it seemed odd to quote such a large block of material without giving credit to the source, then I noted that he should have asked William LaSor, his other Old Testament colleague, to help him because he was an up-to-date, mediating type scholar… [Lindsell] showed uneasiness while working on the Harper Study Bible, but as the shift to a moderate stance occurred at Fuller Theological Seminary, he became very agitated.[166]

And so the two battles commenced: Beegle argued that the doctrine of inerrancy was a modern invention. He quoted A. G. Hebert who wrote, "The inerrancy of the Bible, as it is understood today, is a new doctrine, and the modern fundamentalist is asserting something that no previous age has understood in anything like the modern sense."[167] Of course, Lindsell rejected such a notion. Instead, he claimed, it had been taught since the early church fathers and right up to the Reformation. To prove his claim, Lindsell had to make a direct link between *inspiration* of the biblical authors and *inerrancy* (or infallibility) of what they wrote down. And he did exactly this in *The Battle for the Bible*, especially when he wrote: "Inspiration involved infallibility from start to finish. God the Holy Spirit by nature cannot lie or be the author of untruth. If the Scripture is inspired at all it must be infallible. If

[166] Beegle, "Journey to Freedom," 75, 77.
[167] Quoted in Beegle, *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility*, 255.

any part of it is not infallible, then that part cannot be inspired. If inspiration allows for the possibility of error then inspiration ceases to be inspiration."[168]

By this time, Lindsell and the other conservatives had sought to identify the church's traditional view of inspiration as "verbal plenary inspiration." This view stated that every word in the Bible was chosen under the supervision of God, and thus, was inerrant: "The verbal theory insists that the influence of the Holy Spirit extends beyond the direction of thoughts to the selection of words used to convey the message. The work of the Holy Spirit is so intense that each word is the exact word wich God wants used at that point to express the message. Ordinarly, great care is taken to insist that this is not dication, however."[169]

Lindsell then surveyed the church father's and reformer's writings to show that they had indeed propogated a view of infallability "as I have defined it."[170] But in the second edition of *Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility* (1979), Beegle would reject and attempt to disprove any notion that the church fathers and reformers held to a verbal plenary view of inspiration.

When writing on the early church fathers, Lindsell begins, "When we look at infallibility in church history, one fact stands out in sharp focus. The dogma of biblical inerrancy never was an acute issue in the church until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The early church faced numerous controversies, none of which had to do with the question we are discussing here."[171] Lindsell then lists some of these controversies, such as the Arian and Trinitarian disagreements; the dual natures of Christ; and the Pelagian-Augustinian dispute over the nature of man and sin. But, maintains Lindsell, the church throughout history, apart from a few exceptions, never considered the issue of infallibility an important one because it was never denied until the nineteenth century.

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[168] Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 31.
[169] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 207.
[170] Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 41.
[171] *Ibid*.

Lindsell quotes Justin Martyr (c. 100-65) who wrote, "When you hear the words of the prophets spoken as though in their own persons, you are not to think that they are uttered by the inspired men themselves, but by the Divine Word who moves them."[172] However, Beegle cites the rest of Martyr's statement to show that it does *not* support the verbal plenary view of inspiration: "For they do not present to you artful discourses … but use with simplicity the words and expressions which offer themselves, and declare to you whatever the Holy Ghost, who descended upon them, chose to teach them through them to those who are desirous to learn the true religion."[173] This, says Beegle, is the *dynamic* view of inspiration; in other words, "the inspired person has the extraordinary help of the Holy Spirit without violating his individuality and personality."[174] Or to put it even more simply: God inspired the thoughts, not the choice of words, of the biblical writers. As Erickson explains: "The dynamic theory emphasizes the combination of divine and human elements in the process of inspiration and of the writing of the Bible. The work of the Spirit of God is in directing the writer to the thoughts or concepts he should have, and allowing the writer's own distinctive personality to come into play in the choice of words and expressions. Thus, the person writing will give expression to the divinely directed thoughts in a way that is uniquely characteristic of him."[175]

Lindsell quotes Irenaeus (ca. 125-200) who wrote that the biblical authors "were filled with perfect knowledge on every subject… for they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit."[176] Again, Beegle dismisses the claim that Irenaeus held to verbal plenary inspiration. He asks: "But how can this be when he believed in the inspiration of the Septuagint?"[177]

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[172] *Ibid*., 48.
[173] Beegle, *Scripture,* 132.
[174] *Ibid*., 125.
[175] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 207.
[176] Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 49.
[177] Beegle, *Scripture*, 133.

Regarding the early church father, Tertullian (ca. 160-220), Lindsell quotes from George Duncan Barry's book, *The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture*, which study's the early church's views on inspiration. Regarding Tertullian's view on inspiration, Barry says: "Tertullian did not hesitate to say that the very phrases of Holy Scripture are the result of Inspiration; and that the foresight of the Holy Spirit cut away the ground from heretics. This is verbal inspiration in its most naked form."[178] Beegle responds: "[Tertullian] did not hesitate … to call the Scriptures the 'writings of God' or the 'words of God.' Yet this general use of language should not be pushed too far. Furthermore, since Scripture (as defined by Tertullian) meant a Latin translation of the Bible, one cannot actually attribute the present-day interpretation of verbal plenary inspiration to him either."[179]

And finally, regarding Origen (c. 185-254), Lindsell's source states categorically that the early church father had accepted verbal plenary inspiration because of his following words: "The sacred volumes are fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, and there is no passage either in the Law or the Gospel, or the writings of an Apostle, which does not proceed from the inspired source of Divine Truth… every letter, how strange so ever, which stands written in the Oracles of God does its work."[180] Yet, as Beegle pointed out, the "strange letters" that Origen referred to were the discrepancies in the New Testament Greek manuscripts. Origen, however, overcame these through his allegorical interpretation, as he had reasoned: "If a man carefully examines the Gospels with discrepancies of the narrative in view, … bewilderment will fall upon him, and either, abandoning all attempt to give the Gospels their real authority, he will arbitrarily adhere to one of them, not having courage to reject entirely his faith in our Lord; or else he must accept the four with the admission that their

[178] Quoted in Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 50.
[179] Beegle, *Scripture*, 134.
[180] Quoted in Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 51.

truth lies not in their outward and visible features."[181] Therefore, Origen did not hold to a verbal plenary view of inspiration.

Lindsell then quotes Augustine who wrote: "[Christ's] members gave out the knowledge which they had received *through the dictation of the Head*; whatever he willed us to read concerning His own words and acts, He bade them write, as *though they were His own very words*."[182] Also, both Lindsell and Beegle quote the following remarks in a letter Augustine had written to Jerome: "For, I admit to your charity that it is from those books alone of the Scriptures, which are called canonical, that I have learned to pay them such honor and respect as to believe most firmly that not one of their authors has erred in writing anything at all."[183] It seems clear that Augustine held to inerrancy, but Beegle was still not convinced that Augustine's statements could be attributed to a modern-day theory of inerrancy and inspiration. He reasons: "This quotation appears to be a clear reference to the inerrancy of the original writings, but such an interpretation fails to recognize that Augustine read Scripture in a Latin translation made from the Septuagint. This fact, in conjunction with Augustine's belief in the inspiration of the Septuagint, makes it difficult to read back into Augustine's declaration the modern interpretation of verbal plenary inspiration. This conclusion is supported by the fact that those who believe in the inerrancy of the original writings have sided with Jerome in rejecting Augustine's view of the Septuagint while at the same time holding to Augustine's formulation of inspiration."[184]

Lindsell maintains that because the infallibility of the Scriptures was not in dispute within the Church, Luther did not write a developed thesis on the matter. But Lindsell does provide a number of quotations where Luther states that the Scriptures cannot err. The Reformer also once stated that he refused to side with "those rash men who in the case of a

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[181] Quoted in Beegle, *Scripture*, 135.
[182] Quoted in Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 53.
[183] Beegle, *Scripture*, 137.
[184] *Ibid*.

Bible difficulty are not afraid to say that Scripture is evidently wrong, I conclude the matter with a humble confession of my ignorance, for it is only the Holy Ghost who knows and understands everything."[185] When it came to Calvin, Lindsell wrote that the Reformer accepted all parts of the Scripture as being infallible. He then quotes Edward Dowey Jr. who said of Calvin that when he "does admit an undeniable error of grammar or of fact, without exception he attributes it to copyists, never to the inspired writer. There is no hint anywhere in Calvin's writings that the original text contained any flaws at all."[186]

Beegle acknowledges that both Luther and Calvin believed that Scripture, as a whole, derived from God and was the inspired, written word of God. But he also points out that both Reformers contented for the reality of man's process and part in the writing of Scripture. For example, Luther called the book of James "an epistle of straw" because it hardly mentioned Jesus Christ. On Calvin, Beegle comments: "One of the most conspicuous examples of Calvin's paradoxical handling of Scripture is found in The Book of Jeremiah. He comments on 1:2 that even though verse 1 refers to 'the words of Jeremiah,' God is really the author of Jeremiah's words. Yet in commenting on Jeremiah's bitter complaint against God (20:14-18), Calvin contends that a blind, insane impulse caused Jeremiah to utter these ungrateful, inconsiderate words which are directed against man as well as God. Was God the author of these impious words?"[187]

I suppose it is still open to debate whether the verbal plenary theory of inspiration was a modern invention. Certainly, Beegle had successfully shown how evangelicals could still maintain a high view of the authority and inspiration of Scripture without the doctrine of absolute inerrancy. These "progressives" had successfully "created" a new evangelicalism

[185] Quoted in Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 57.
[186] Quoted in Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible*, 59.
[187] Beegle, *Scripture*, 140-1.

that was even further distant from its fundamentalist roots. Also, they opened up a way for a new spirituality within evangelicalism.

4.4 New model evangelicalism

It had become clear that by the 1960s the neo-evangelical establishment and institutions were dominated by Calvinistic doctrinaires—those who believed that evangelicalism needed intellectual prestige, not the emotionalism of Arminian revivalists. And yet, as Methodist scholar, William J. Abraham, pointed out: the two major problems with conservative evangelicalism, as represented by scholars like Lindsell and Henry, was that there was a spiritual bankruptcy to it where the Spirit was absent and where the Bible was turned into a storehouse of facts instead of a life-giving word inspired by the Spirit; and second, the evangelical emphasis on absolute inerrancy grew out of a "dictation" view of inspiration—now called "verbal plenary"—and an obsession with epistemology. Looking to a Wesleyan tradition as a better form of evangelicalism, Abraham taught: (1) The believer who is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who inspired the word, witnesses the truth to them; (2) A doctrine of spiritual renewal, and not a preoccupation with correct doctrine and inerrancy, should be the foundation of evangelicalism; (3) The infallibility doctrine that is needed is an infallible sufficiency for salvation.[188]

Clark H. Pinnock (*b.* 1937), an ex-Calvinist and fundamentalist, would later open up the Arminian turn within this "new model evangelicalism." He emphasized beliefs that focused on God's grace and love. For example, that the grace of God abounds to all of humanity, and in God's relationship to everyone, family metaphors—not the Anselm-esque courtroom images of justification and redemption—should be utilized. Upholding classical Arminianism, Pinnock taught that God desires to save all people and provides grace for the

[188] Dorrien, *Evangelical Theology*, 159-63.

salvation of all people. (His theology differed from classical Arminianism by arguing that God does not have exhaustive foreknowledge of the future—a.k.a. "open theology"—for if he did, our actions would not be free but determined.)

There are four other new model interpretations that are not necessarily connected to classical Arminianism: (1) General revelation is often redemptive, especially for the unevangelized; (2) prevenient grace is operative in other religions (inclusivism); (3) there is the possibility of after-death conversions; (4) hell as annihilation.[189]

But neo-evangelicalism, because of its engagement with society and culture, had also opened up the way for another group of fundamentalists with a dispensationalist background (led by Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority) to enter the arena of American politics.

4.5 Neo-fundamentalism

After the American Revolution, there were two views on the relationship between religion and politics: (1) Those who saw religion as being tribal and divisive, and thus kept religion separate from politics; (2) Those who saw religion that could contribute towards the moral upliftment of the nation through Christian ethical principles. By the late 1800s, the Republican conservative party had a strong support from evangelical puritans, while the Democratic progressive party had a strong support from Catholics and liberals. When secularization began to make progress in the early twentieth century, the Republicans tried to tone down the evangelical image by supporting the social gospel efforts so that by the 1960s both parties were very much alike with no significant differences.[190]

As has been noted in chapter 2, the fundamentalists believed that society was too corrupt to be redeemed, and their pietistic background led them to be more concerned over the spiritual welfare of the individual. "[But] mainstream America, abetted by an increasingly

[189] *Ibid.*, 173-82.
[190] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 87-91.

centralized media, remained unaware of what Jerry Fallwell would call the 'sleeping giant' in its midst, the giant itself became progressively alarmed and annoyed at the encroachments of permissiveness and the growing assertiveness of mainstream secular culture."[191] During the 1960s sexual revolution, with the rise of divorce, pornography, drugs, gay rights, women's lib, the outlaw of prayer in schools, and legalization of abortion, the evangelicals, charismatics, and fundamentalists decided to enter the political arena to "Christianize" America. They began to believe that the American nation would become "lost" if they didn't stand up for their biblical ideas and principles. Of course, the First Amendment of the United States Constitution had built a dividing wall of separation between church and state. But Malise Ruthven points out how fundamentalists had used the 'wall of separation' for their own benefit in trying to curb secular humanism from its influence in American society:

> A landmark Supreme Court decision in 1961 extended to secular humanism (non-believers) the legal protection accorded to followers of religious faiths. Ironically, this is the decision which fundamentalists now use in order to argue that secular humanism qualifies as a religion, for example when values associated with it appear in school curricula. They argue mischievously that it should be curbed by the state in order to maintain the 'wall of separation'. American fundamentalists are therefore constrained by the pluralistic religious culture in which they must operate. Rather than forming a religious party aimed at taking over the government, they lobby for power and influence with the Republican Party.[192]

In 1979 a strict ecclesiastical separatist/fundamentalist, Jerry Falwell (1933-2007), formed the Moral Majority movement that wanted to bring fundamentalists back into the center of

[191] Ruthven, *Fundamentalism*, 16.
[192] *Ibid*., 17.

American life through political action. This religious coalition of fundamentalists, with a right wing political agenda, brought back a nineteenth century heritage to the Republican Party. The difference was that they were no longer anti-Catholic—Falwell worked with Catholics and Mormons—but now anti-communist and pro-traditional family issues. (The Democratic Party remained pluralistic and morally inclusivistic.) In fact, one could say that the Moral Majority itself became a "pluralistic" political organization, working together with others who would have been considered religious "enemies." As Ammerman points out:

> The abortion issue … united fundamentalists and other religious conservatives who had otherwise shunned each other as doctrinal inferiors or heretics. Catholics especially, long seen as allies of the Antichrist by many fundamentalists, were embraced by those active in the pro-life movement. Other issues brought together other unlikely coalitions: feminists joined the fight against pornography; Mormons were active in fighting the ERA; Jews of course were partners in supporting Israel. Falwell was adamant that such partnerships were essential, boldly asserting that the Moral Majority was committed to "pluralism."[193]

Although Falwell tried to immobilize fundamentalists into the political arena, there were other ecclesial separatists who, true to form, severely criticized Falwell for his "unholy" alliances. For example, the fundamentalist, Bob Jones, called Falwell a "pseudofundamentalist"[194] and "the most dangerous man in America."[195] This was understandable since fundamentalism gained its identity by its separation from religious denominations and American polity. As Ammerman points out: "These were people who

[193] Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 46.
[194] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 76.
[195] Ammerman, "North American Protestant,"46.

had condemned Billy Graham for cooperating with Lutherans and Episcopalians; they could hardly be expected now to embrace cooperation with Catholics and Mormons."[196] Falwell responded by repeating nineteenth century evangelical revivalist attitudes: that America, as God's chosen nation, had a special role in spreading the gospel: "Only by godly leadership can America be put back on a divine course. God will give national healing if men and women will pray and meet God's conditions."[197]

The Moral Majority supported Reagan's success and also promoted America's policy in support of the nation of Israel. They did this because, being dispensationalists, they believed that Israel had still a major part to play in God's program for the future (i.e., during a seven year Great Tribulation period, etc.). Marsden points out that this belief is immensely popular in America, attested to the fact that one of the best-selling books in America during the 70s was *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Hal Lindsay), promoting dispensationalism and its views of the Middle East.[198]

During the Reagan administration, a number of right-wing fundamentalists in the Republican Party were offered key posts at secondary and tertiary levels.[199] Ammerman believes, however, that Falwell, with the help of the media, would take far too much credit from any conservative political victory.[200] One of their genuine victories was to turn the Southern Baptist denomination into a fundamentalist one when they appealed to a Texas judge who declared that the denomination's constitutional structure, headed by the convention president, had the right to change policies. The fundamentalists garnered support for a conservative president in Adrian Rogers who began "an unbroken string of

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[196] *Ibid*.
[197] Quoted in Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 46.
[198] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 77.
[199] Reichley, "Pietist Politics," 90.
[200] Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 44.

fundamentalist victories."[201] These politicized fundamentalists were also influential in starting home-schools.

Today, politicized fundamentalists have gained more "victories": "Legislative successes at state level have included the reinstitution of daily prayers in some public schools, equal time rules for the teaching of evolution and creationism, or 'intelligent design' … and the overturning by a dozen or more states of the 1973 Supreme Court Roe v. Wade judgment repealing state bans on abortion. At the local level, fundamentalists have lobbied for the banning of books deemed irreligious from public school libraries or curricula."[202]

This political "New Right" group within fundamentalism contained, what George Marsden correctly suggested, "preachers of paradox." He lists a number of paradoxes: First, these fundamentalists were dispensational and ecclesiastical separatists but got actively involved in politics. Second, evangelicals and fundamentalists benefited from the 1960s youth uprising (with the Jesus movements) but also spoke out against the counter-culture of the day that was moving towards postmodernism. And finally, the "New Right" leaders like Jerry Falwell were fundamentalists who insisted on doctrinal purity and yet in a sense were ecumenical, working with Catholics, Jews, and Mormons on the political front.

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This chapter has analyzed the "insiders" of fundamentalism and their attempts to reform the movement. The neo-evangelicals tried to regain intellectual prestige in higher education and to engage with modern society and culture, shedding the "separatist" badge of older fundamentalism. I focused on the neo-evangelical institution, Fuller Theological Seminary, and the subsequent division within the movement regarding the fundamentalist doctrine of

[201] *Ibid.*, 49.
[202] Ruthven, *Fundamentalism*, 17.

absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures, especially the internal strife and tension among the faculty members. This historical event epitomized the division within neo-evangelicalism that continues to this day: the division between "progressive" evangelicals, who revised and transformed the said doctrine (resulting in "limited inerrancy"), and the "conservative" evangelicals who refused to break away completely from their fundamentalist tradition of Scripture. This is why I also gave attention to the dialogue and debate between Lindsell and Beegle from two of their groundbreaking works, with the latter arguing that the doctrine of inerrancy, as well as the verbal plenary inspiration theory, were modern inventions. And finally, I briefly summarized the emergence of "new model evangelicals" and "neo-fundamentalists" who opened the way for a new spirituality and involvement with politics respectively.

Thus far, this historical and theological study and engagement with fundamentalism and its stepchild, neo-evangelicalism, is working its way towards a definition of "evangelical fundamentalism." A fuller picture of this engagement assists in an understanding of what I wrote in the introduction regarding such a definition: "Evangelical fundamentalists today are the theological descendants of that conservative neo-evangelical movement."[203] The definition and identity of evangelical fundamentalism today, however, has to be more developed and complete than this, otherwise the engagement shuts itself off from the recent past developments not only within evangelicalism but also outside its closed circle, in its surrounding theological, philosophical, and sociological environments. Evangelical fundamentalism has been shaped by its encounter with postmodernism as much as "older" fundamentalism was shaped by its encounter with modernism.

[203] See page 15.

5

Evangelical fundamentalism's conversation with postmodern hermeneutical challenges

5.1 Modifying the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture

In previous chapters I demonstrated how the Presbyterian/ Princeton schools of thought (Charles Hodge) and dispensational premillennialism had influenced the conservative evangelicals to develop a doctrine of absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures. And as I had pointed out in chapter three ("Fundamentalism's complex relationship to modernism"), one of the factors as to why dispensationalism grew so rapidly was because it was built upon Baconian Realism and the Common Sense philosophy that affirmed the ability to know "the facts" directly. This 'foundation' or theological method was a key defense in combating liberalism. It also prevented any claims of ambiguity or obscurity in the reading of the biblical text. Therefore, in relation to inerrancy, they had also brought to the fore Martin Luther's doctrines of the priesthood of all believers and the perspicuity of Scripture: "The Bible is a plain book. It is intelligible by the people. And they have the right and are bound to read and interpret it for themselves; so that their faith may rest on the testimony of the Scriptures, and not that of the Church."[204] "These teachers held that the Bible was absolutely reliable and precise in matters of fact, that its meanings were plain, and that whenever possible it should be taken literally."[205]

Moreover, in my introduction, I had noted that definitions change over time. In the same way, it is equally true that developing a certain doctrine changes over time due to the

[204] Quoted in Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 111.
[205] Marsden, *American Culture*, 51.

diverse historical and social contexts. Therefore, as James Callahan points out, although the doctrine of perspicuity did not begin with Luther, what Protestantism did with perspicuity "is somewhat unique in that the subject becomes more prominent in its own right inasmuch as the appeal to Scripture's clarity becomes more apologetic."[206] Perspicuity became more prominent during the Reformation when Luther questioned the Church's teachings, and he would define perspicuity in terms of the "priesthood of all believers."

Then, during the twentieth century fundamentalist and neo-evangelical movements, the development of perspicuity became even more unique and prominent when they defended the absolute inerrancy of Scripture. In 1976 Harold Lindsell wrote, "Those who advocate inerrancy take the Bible in its plain [clear] and obvious sense."[207] In Norman Geisler's 1980 work, *Inerrancy*, one of the contributors, Walter Kaiser Jr., defined perspicuity as follows: "The principle of perspicuity means simply that the Bible is sufficiently clear in and of itself for believers to understand it."[208]

The neo-evangelical apologist, and former faculty member of Old Testament at Fuller Theological Seminary, Gleason Archer (1916-2004), made numerous recommendations in arguing for the clarity of Scripture and in dealing with Bible difficulties.[209] First, before dealing with Bible difficulties, we must choose between accepting the Bible as the inerrant word of God or that it is an imperfect record. Belief in the former leads the reader to confidence that it is authoritative and trustworthy, treating it with respect, considering biblical problems with patience and humility. Second, we must study the context of the problematic verse (what is written before and after, even the whole book if necessary). Third, following Martin Luther's argument, Archer says that we must compare Scripture

[206] Callahan, *The Clarity of Scripture*, 159.
[207] Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*, 37.
[208] Kaiser, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," 128.
[209] See Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 15-17.

with Scripture, especially other Scriptures that deal with the same subject matter.[210] Fourth, an interpretation of Scripture is not valid unless the reader has exercised careful exegesis, "that is, on wholehearted commitment to determining what the ancient author meant by the words he used." This is accomplished alongside a study of the original words (Hebrew and Greek) and idiomatic phrases (figurative or literal). Fifth, we must employ historical harmonization, that is, "all the testimonies of the various witnesses are to be taken as trustworthy reports of what was said and done in their presence, even though they may heave viewed the transaction from a slightly different perspective. When we sort them out, line them up, and put them together, we gain a fuller understanding of the event than we would obtain from any one testimony taken individually." Sixth, we must consult commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and concordances to aid us in our understanding of Scripture. Finally, Archer points out that we must bear in mind that there are only minor errors in the Bible that occurred by copyists during its transmission. Theses errors are mainly numerical.

In short, the nature of the neo-evangelical's argument was that if there were any problems in the text it was not due to errors in the Bible but rather misinterpretations made by fallible readers.[211] However, the brief history of the divide between evangelicals aptly demonstrated that not all Scripture was easily understood, especially in light of modern science and higher criticism. More crucially, the evangelicals soon found out that an infallible or inerrant book could not prevent various interpretations. Not even an appeal to

[210] In his debate with Erasmus, Luther granted that there were some passages in Scripture that were difficult to understand and which remain obscure. However, he argued that this was *not* due to God's transcendence or to the Scriptures themselves but due to "our ignorance of their vocabulary and grammar." The obscure passages or words, said Luther, must be interpreted in light of the clearer ones. At this point Luther is hesitant to label any parts of Scripture "obscure" because as he is concerned if there is any obscurity, it lies with the reader and not with the text. To bolster his argument, he uses an analogy of the word as a "lamp shining in the dark place" (2 Pet. 1:19): "If part of this lamp does not shine, it will be a part of the dark place rather than of the lamp itself." Quoted in Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 146-7.
[211] See Geisler and Howe, *When Critics Ask*, 30.

rationalism would result in rational people accepting the "popular" or traditional interpretation over and against all others.

Today, the definition of the perspicuity of Scripture has been modified by evangelical fundamentalists in light of postmodern theologies and contemporary biblical hermeneutics that deny the clarity of Scripture, although the clarity of Scripture is not even mentioned in a recent work compiled by postmodern or "post-conservative" evangelicals (e.g., the late Stanley Grenz) who attempt to "explore in depth the meaning of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture."[212] Rather, postmodernism's challenge to perspicuity lies in the works of literary and hermeneutical theorists (Jacques Derrida, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur), as well as philosophers of language (J. L. Austin, Ludwig Wittgenstein).

Somewhat influenced by postmodernism, evangelical author, James Callahan, offers a contemporary (and new) statement on clarity by defining Scripture's clarity as "how Christians account for the union of text, reader and reading."[213] Interestingly, in the very next sentence, Callahan is at variance with the past evangelical definition of Walter Kaiser's—that clarity refers to the Bible being "clear in and of itself"—when he writes: "It is not simply that the text is clear by itself, but that the (Christian) reader makes use of the text in a way that both presumes and argues that Scripture is clear itself." The conservative evangelical, Mark D. Thompson (*b.* 1959), notes that Callahan's definition is "even less explicitly theological" than another contemporary, Kevin Vanhoozer.[214] Thompson's definition is: "The clarity of Scripture is that quality of the biblical text that, as God's communicative act, ensures its meaning is accessible to all who come to it in faith."[215] Thompson's 2006 publication, *A Clear and Present Word*, in my opinion, is the finest

[212] See Bacote et al., *Evangelicals & Scripture*.
[213] Callahan, *Clarity of Scripture*, 19.
[214] Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 170.
[215] *Ibid.*, 169-70.

evangelical fundamentalist work in articulating Scripture's clarity, while engaging with the hermeneutical challenges of postmodernism.

5.2 Postmodern challenges on hermeneutics, language, and the hope of religion

Before I provide a summary and analysis of Thompson's argument, I will first engage with David Tracy's hermeneutic of plurality and ambiguity within conversation—a method that has a definite postmodern flavor.[216]

(i) On hermeneutics

David Tracy (*b*. 1939) writes that any act of interpreting involves three "realities".[217] The first involves the text to be interpreted. To avoid pure subjectivity one must first begin with the text or phenomenon, rather than the interpreter or reader. The second reality involves someone interpreting that text. A text can never be "autonomous" or "pure" to the reader. We try to understand it with a certain presupposition and with all of our experiences and traditions that we bring to the text: "No individual reader is any more autonomous than the classic text is."[218] Finally, the third reality involves an interaction between the first two realities. This process of interaction is through conversation. David Tracy defines a good interpreter as a "risk taker" because "to understand is to interpret. To interpret is to converse… Conversation in its primary form is an exploration of possibilities in the search for truth. In following the track of any question, we must allow for difference and otherness.

[216] I am aware that Tracy distances himself from being named a "postmodernist." He has concluded in the preface of one of his works: "On this reading, therefore, the attempts of moderns, antimoderns, and postmoderns alike to name our present are not finally successful" (*On Naming the Present*, 18). However, his hermeneutic of plurality and ambiguity is found within postmodern studies—a "radical plurality disclosed in post-modern studies of language" (*Plurality and Ambiguity*, ix). Tracy's hermeneutic of plurality and ambiguity is precisely what evangelical fundamentalists are opposing *in postmodern theology*.
[217] Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 10.
[218] *Ibid*., 16.

At the same time, as the question takes over, we notice that to attend to the other as other, the different as different, is also to understand the different *as* possible."[219]

Regarding this interaction of conversation by seeing the "other" as "possible," Tracy says that it leads us to recognize "similarities-in-difference" or to use the language of "disclosure-concealment" (Heidegger). Such language is to challenge claims of certainty and full comprehension of the ancient text. "We can never possess absolute certainty."[220]

A good interpretation, concludes Tracy, is a hermeneutic that involves "Relative adequacy": relative to the disclosure-concealment of the text, relative to the skills and attentiveness of the interpreter, and relative to the kind of conversation possible for the interpreter in his culture and time. And I would add, relative to the experiences of the interpreter, and relative to his attempts to make his claim coherent. And this is when "argument" (used in a positive sense) sets in. When the interpreter has made a claim and uses formal arguments to analyze all claims to consistency. Arguments are necessary to make the conversation move forward. And then, when there are no further questions, one has found himself in "relative adequacy."

Nevertheless, historical critical methods and literary critical methods bring "interruptions" to the model of conversation: Regarding the former, it matters to us what actually happened in history. It is irresponsible, says Tracy, if Christians, for example, do not care whether Jesus actually lived or was raised from the dead. We can and should agree on a basic outline of the message of Jesus, but it is still very difficult to make clear his understanding of what he said (e.g., Matt. 5:17-19). Historical critical methods have shown that certainty is no more. But, says, Tracy, "relative adequacy for all interpretations remains an ideal worth striving for."[221]

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[219] *Ibid.*, 20.
[220] *Ibid.*, 22.
[221] *Ibid.*, 39.

Traditional methods of interpretation believed that one could know the author's intention for writing a text. But with the advent of literacy critical methods, all certainty of that is no more. For example, the social conditions of the day are embedded in all the texts; studying a single word still has to fit in with the overall context; language itself is a matter of codes—form and content cannot be separated; there exists difficulty in translating to another language; there exists methods of genre and style criticism.

All of these methods, theories, and explanations can aid in our understanding and conversation with the text, "but none of them can replace the conversation itself."[222]

(ii) On language

Positivism and Romanticism claimed that language comes after the fact of discovery and cognition. Language was an "instrument" through which we understood reality. Postmodernists criticism of this theory is that reality never comes to us in "pure data or facts," but in interpretations, even within science. For example, deconstructionism (Derrida) taught that our knowledge of reality is intrinsically linked to our use of language. Our language affects our consciousness, knowledge, and reality. Derrida's rhetoric was: "the 'abyss of indeterminacy' that *is* our situation, the text outside of which nothing exists."[223]

Tracy argues for a model of 'language as discourse,' which involves conversing with each other, without ignoring the study of linguistic complexities that are involved in language. It recognizes our pluralities of interpretation and to affirm the reality of difference. The question at the end of the day is: "How can we decide on the most relatively adequate one for responsible action?"[224]

Tracy again points out, what postmodernists have emphasized, that history shapes us. Language and history are bound together (terms like "right" and "left" or "gay"). But

[222] *Ibid.*, 46.
[223] *Ibid.*, 59.
[224] *Ibid.*, 65.

history is also an interruption, an interruption of "radical evils." The ancient text does not appear to us without the plural and ambiguous effects of history. For example, we have to understand the patriarchal society that the text was written in—much different to the kind of society we live in today. We also find it an honor, as Christians, to claim God's chosen nation, the Israelites, as our predecessors. But we cannot forget what the Israelites did to the Canaanites in the name of God. Therefore, Tracy actually uses the word "ambiguity," in regard to history, to describe the strange mixture of good and radical evil of our history. Ignoring this ambiguity would result in taking a literal, and somewhat an ahistorical, interpretation of the biblical account, which is characteristic of a modernist reading by both fundamentalists *and liberals*. The liberal scholar, John Shelby Spong, writes:

> I was repelled by the arrogance of the biblical claims made on the land of others in the name of the God of Israel. The Hebrews in the thirteenth century before this common era were, from the Canaanite perspective, a marauding band of looters, killers, and destroyers, but they saw themselves as a people of destiny, as those whose national vested interest was, in fact, the will of God… There is always a danger in believing that you and your people are somehow God's specially chosen. The obvious corollary is that your enemies are God's specifically "unchosen," and very soon they are thought of as God's rejected… This chauvinistic nationalism reached the force of law in the Torah by the suggestion that Hebrews not take the health risks that aliens must endure, and that these risks can be used for profit by Hebrews in dealing with foreigners. For the Torah says, "You shall not eat anything that dies of itself. You may give it to the alien who is within your towns that he may eat it or you may sell it to a foreigner" (Deut 14:21).[225]

[225] Spong, *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, 19-20.

And so Spong concludes: "Time after time the things this God was thought to have commanded became repulsive to me. If all of these things were part of a Bible that had to be believed as the literal word of God, I found that increasingly I could not give myself in worship to such a deity."[226]

In dealing with the ambiguities of history, Tracy says that we must develop pluralistic strategies of resistance and hope, which he deals with in his final chapter.

(iii) On the hope of religion

Tracy believes that the hope of religion is to resist modernistic theories that claim certainty, including reductionist methods and our hidden presuppositions. Instead, interpreters need to claim relative adequacy. Yet at the same time, as believers, we do claim that the Ultimate Reality (God) has revealed itself to us within the ambiguities of history and plurality of interpretations and that we posit ways of moving from self-centeredness to Reality-centeredness.

Tracy, like most postmodernists, holds to pluralism but points out that a pluralistic attitude is not one of passivism. Instead, it is one of learning from anyone and making a stand after critical assessment: "Does anyone really wish that Luther, instead of simply stating, 'Here I stand; I can do no other,' had added, 'But if it really bothers you, I will move'?"[227] The hope of religion also requires inter-faith dialogue that involves "authentic analogical language": A univocal language where all is the same and an equivocal language where all is different. He acknowledges that this is a rare achievement because it is trying to show that there are real differences but also similarities to what the religions already know.[228]

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[226] *Ibid*., 20.
[227] Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity*, 91.
[228] For example, some Christians have found that the different language of the Buddhist teaching that we must stop clinging to false securities and desires is similar to St Paul's teachings on "self-emptying" oneself.

Although there is no release from conflicts of interpretation, Tracy concludes that the real hope of religion is conversation, a hope that is grounded in freedom and enlightenment, and in a trust in the Ultimate Reality (God).

I now return to Mark Thompson and his conversation with the hermeneutic of ambiguity that threaten the evangelical fundamentalist's theological framework of clarity, and its theological foundation of certainty. I will then refer to John MacArthur as a case study of evangelical fundamentalism's argument against ambiguity.

5.3 Mark Thompson's conversation with postmodern hermeneutics

(i) Challenges of biblical hermeneutics

Mark Thompson identifies five challenges brought about by contemporary hermeneutics that needs to be taken seriously. Regarding the first challenge, Thompson interestingly makes the same argument as David Tracy; that is, the content and form of Scripture are inseparable in our hermeneutical task of understanding and conversing with the text.[229] He identifies three forms of Scripture: (1) Hans Frei gave rise and prominence to the form of Scripture known as the Narrative structure, in which "meaning arises from an interaction of character and plot";[230] (2) to be responsive to the variety of biblical genres—historical, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, epistle, apocalyptic—which ultimately points us to the way in which the text should be read and heard; (3) Canonicity. Each part of a text is located within a specific whole. There is a trajectory from the first book of the Bible until the last. Also, both Testaments assist each other in interpreting certain passages, especially prophetic ones.

The second challenge of contemporary hermeneutics, Thompson states, is that Scripture is more than a text of reference that describes reality. It also involves speech-acts:

[229] Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 121.
[230] *Ibid*., 122.

commands, warnings, promises, and emotions. J. L. Austin (1911-1960) developed a philosophical "speech-act" theory that demonstrated the complexity of language as action, and which has been used by postmodern biblical interpreters.[231]

The third challenge deals with the myth of absolute objectivity. Our reading takes place within a certain context, our context, with all of our presuppositions, traditions, theological backgrounds, experiences, and culture. It was Heidegger who said that we come to the text with presuppositions shaped by our experiences.[232] Thompson accepts this but adds: "God's word might not be far from us, but it always confronts us as a word *outside* us, God's address of us rather than simply the echo of our own perspectives and cultural preoccupations. Seen in this light, the strangeness of the Bible is in fact part of its clarity rather than an obstacle to be overcome."[233]

The fourth challenge points to the significant gains brought about by higher criticism and historical critical methods have brought about significant gains. We now know more about the world behind the text than we did before. The historical critical method can be beneficial in order to know the historical and social context of the author and his associations, experiences, and influences, it is important to understand the social-historical context of the author, as well as the author's rhetoric and language. Negatively, historical-critical scholarship has tended to ignore Scriptures own testimony of its authority, and thus treating it like "any other book."

Finally, an appeal to the clarity of Scripture can lead to the misuse of Scripture because in the past authoritative interpretations has led to wars, especially within church history.

In spite of these hermeneutical challenges, Thompson believes that the clarity of Scripture need not be compromised because it does not depend on the skills of an interpreter.

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[231] See Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism & Fundamentalism*, 114-17, 22-26.
[232] See Smit, *Neem, Lees!* 68.
[233] Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 128.

(ii) Union of text, reader, and reading

God's presence is in the reading of Scripture. It was a means of God's grace as it stood in his own absence, mediating his saving presence.[234] The authority of God's word is intrinsic not extrinsic to the Bible. Like salvation, the knowledge of God cannot be achieved; it is a gift. Prayer is an important factor in our approach to the biblical text. During the Middle Ages, the monasteries—the center of all learning and education—adopted a specific tradition of reading known as the *lectio divia* (divine reading). The goal of this reading was the illumination of Scripture and shaping of the soul towards meditation, contemplation, and discipleship.[235] There is a uniqueness of the biblical text; it's not just another text as historical critics claim. There is uniqueness even between author and reader.

While we mustn't neglect the historical, literary, and social methods, including principles of biblical interpretation, in studying the Bible, the *soteriological aspect* must remain the priority in our reading of the Scriptures (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15).

> The Bible functions within the divine economy of salvation. It presents the promise of God that generates saving faith in God. Its exposition of the human condition, its illustration of that condition within its history of Israel and the early church, and above all its testimony to Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen one, all serve this end. It is the sovereign desire of the living God to make himself known and to restore to himself those who, through their own rebellion, have separated themselves from him.[236]

Second, we mustn't neglect the *ecclesiological aspect* of our reading of Scripture. The Church's setting is the inaugurated *eschaton* (1 Cor. 10:11), so eschatology provides the

[234] See Work, *Living and Active*, 166-7.
[235] Smit, *Neem, Lees!* 25.
[236] Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 136.

context for an ecclesiology of Scripture. Before Christ ascends to his Father, he promises his disciples that his presence will abide with them forever, yet paradoxically, the age of the Church is characterized by his physical absence. Telford Work points out that Christ's promise of presence is not face-to face, but a *mediated* presence. He is mediated through the Scriptures, the Lord's Supper, and the traditions of the Church.[237]

Finally, Thompson also refers to the *ethical aspect* of our reading of Scripture, which involves respect for the author as well as attention toward what he has written. He totally disagrees with the reader practicing a 'hermeneutics of suspicion', deeming it to be "incompatible with faith in the goodness of God."[238] First, a hermeneutic of suspicion involves self-critique and analysis of one's own interpretations and traditions in the understanding process, and secondly, a critique of the biblical texts that have also been affected by certain ideologies and traditions. This hermeneutic therefore aimed to break away these presuppositions before the text before it could be useful to us today.

(iii) Human language adequate for the clarity of Scripture

It has been argued that because the words contained in the Bible are human words, even if attributed to the words of God, such words are "inherently inadequate, open to mishearing and misinterpretation, prone to distortion and deception."[239] However, even if language and vocabulary are shaped by humans, it finds its origin in God who first spoke at creation:

> As our being itself is derived from God (we exist because he exists), and as our knowledge is an analogue of his knowledge (we know because he knows), so, too, our capacity for language and other forms of communication is derivative of his. We speak because God speaks, because is a speaking God; that is his nature and so, derivatively, it

[237] Work, *Living and Active*, 221-2.
[238] Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 140.
[239] *Ibid*., 66.

> is ours… we must be insistent that human language is not ultimately human invention, but God's gift, a gift reflective of his own capacities as the Giver… Our language is not innately ambiguous. Human language does not inherently veil and confuse as it seeks to communicate and disclose meaning. (Gaffin 66, 69)

Gaffin continues that if language distorts or veils meaning, it is due to our sin, our misuse and abuse of language.

Kevin Vanhoozer also believes that there exists clarity in language because it is a gift from God. The obscurity lies in human depravity (sinfulness).[240] For example, the clarity of language is expounded in certain biblical texts such as Ezekiel 3:4-7:

> Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them. For you are not being sent to a people unintelligible speech or difficult language, but to the house of Israel, nor to many peoples of unintelligible speech or difficult language, whose words you cannot understand. But I have sent you to them who should listen to you; yet the house of Israel will not be willing to listen to you, since they are not willing to listen to Me. Surely the whole house of Israel is stubborn and obstinate.

Here God states that the barrier is a refusal to listen and not due to "unintelligible speech" or "difficult language."

5.4 Theological framework for evangelical fundamentalism's affirmation of the clarity of Scripture

Thompson's theological framework for the clarity of Scripture begins with five observations about Christian theology.[241] First, Christian theology is talk about God—*theos* and *logos*.

[240] Callahan, *The Clarity of Scripture*, 31.

Second, talk about God is essentially Trinitarian: "It arises from a recognition that Jesus and his history are not something extrinsic to God. He is the eternal Son who was incarnate to make the Father known and who 'through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God'".[242] Third, talk about God is made possible because of God's prior decision to be known. Fourth, we can only talk about God if it conforms to his self-revelation—the person and work of the Christ being the focal point, but which can only be located in the Scriptures. Finally, talk about God takes place in the presence of God and in the eyes of the world: "God accompanies his own word, bringing about the appropriate human response to that word… We do not speak of God in his absence or behind his back… Christian theology has a public face; it is not the private language of a secret wisdom."[243]

Talk about God also relates to the gospel—a message that involves the speech and voice of God. Transfiguration, "to hear the voice of Jesus is genuinely to hear the voice of God"[244]. In both testaments of the Bible, God's presence is known through words—an effective medium for building up a personal and intimate relationship with him.[245] In fact, the word of God becomes embodied in the person of Jesus the Christ: He is the Word made flesh (John 1:14).

With the above theological framework, and facing up to the postmodern hermeneutical challenges, the evangelical fundamentalist is able to develop a more constructive argument for the clarity of Scripture:

(i) Scripture's own testimony about its clarity

Thompson's theological approach regarding the Scripture's own testimony regarding its clarity is to center on the person, work, and words of Jesus Christ. He begins by delving into

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[241] See Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 49ff.
[242] *Ibid*., 50.
[243] *Ibid*., 53-4.
[244] *Ibid*., 62.
[245] *Ibid*., 63.

Jesus' quotation of Old Testament texts to make sense of his person and work—not so much to bring out their meaning, but rather, their significance. For instance, when the Pharisees complained that Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners, the Christ responded by quoting from Hosea 6:6 when he says, "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice'" (Matt. 9:13). Although Jesus says that they must go and learn what that texts means, Thompson believes that it wasn't that the Old Testament text was so obscure or unfamiliar to the Pharisees that they failed to grasp its meaning, but rather, they were unwilling to modify their attitude and behavior because of their prejudice. Thompson does, however, acknowledge that meaning and significance are not always entirely separable.[246]

(ii) The nature of God and the clarity of Scripture

What kind of God would want to make himself known and yet communicate a message in words and writing that instead of disclosing clarity of his will leaves us in an "abyss of indeterminacy," ambiguity, and obscurity? "God's dealings with his people generate confidence rather than confusion. God does not delight in tormenting his children with the promise of understanding forever held just out of reach. He desires to be known and he will be known."[247]

This argument became evident to me when I engaged in a conversation with one who held to the clarity of Scripture:

> *Michael*: I am uncomfortable with the premise of certain religious groups that they "only have the Truth." For me, it really boils down to interpretation and finding an adequate one—relative to our interpretive skills, reasonings, experience, and history—

[246] *Ibid*., 86.
[247] *Ibid*., 135.

which in and of itself would be an "interruption" to the claim that your religious organizations interpretation of a particular text or topic is what the Bible really teaches. History and our experiences shapes us in more ways that we could imagine or be willing to admit.

Raphael:[248] I certainly agree with you that we are shaped by both our past experiences and circumstances to a greater degree that most of us are aware. At the same time, I believe that to say that we are entirely at the mercy of the winds which blow from behind us, from our past, presupposes the absence, or perhaps inefficacy, of conscious and logical thought—something which I find difficult to accept. We are all endowed by our heavenly father with a marvelous capacity to reason, each in his own way and time. At the same time, I don't think it would be logical (or fair) of God to make the truth of His word so inaccessible and esoteric that it is impossible for the common, honest-hearted seeker to find (Prov. 2:1-5).

Michael: There are some of Christ's teachings that are not so clear. For example, What did he mean when he said that we cannot be his disciple if we don't hater our father, mother, brother, or sister (Luke 14:26)? What did he mean when he said that he came not to "abolish but to full [the law]," and that we are not to break "the least of these commandments" (Matt. 5:17-19)? Does that mean that I cannot eat calamari (Lev. 11:10-11)? How could Jesus dismiss in public his mother and brothers (Matt. 12:46-50)? Wasn't he showing disrespect?

I'm not asking these questions to find the answers. My point is: What do we *do* when we read these verses? Maybe we speak about them to our fellow believers. Maybe we turn to a Bible commentary. And so whoever or whatever we turn to, we are demonstrating that the Bible isn't always as clear as would like tit to be. In the

[248] Not the person's real name.

evangelical faith we turn to our pastors and teachers (cf. Eph. 4:11-12). In your faith, you turn to the organization and the articles they publish (cf. Acts 15:1-2). And so it comes down to conscience. Am I fully convinced in my own mind that this interpretation is correct, *or closer to the truth*, in light of our fallibility and that at present our knowledge is partial (1 Cor. 13:12)?

Raphael: I suppose you might well argue that the scriptural evidence on which I base my belief was largely presented to me from one source—i.e. the organization—and in that you would be correct. At the same time, I believe that the Bible stands on its own merits and that God *has* made an accurate understanding of His word possible to all who truly seek for it. I believe that it would be contrary to His justice to expect us to follow direction too difficult for even 'the least' of humankind to be able to comprehend. Did Christ speak ambiguously? Why does Paul say that it is God's will that all sorts of men should "….." (1 Tim. 2:4)

I agree with you that we often turn to exegetical authorities to help us to understand the Bible. But more importantly, can we not rely on God himself for guidance? Can we not gain insight and understanding with the aid of the Holy Spirit? We know it is God's will that we understand His word. I cannot believe that He will fail to help us do so if we are sincere in our request and put forth the effort to do so (Luke 11:13). He has promised that those who seek shall find, and that if we "grope" for him, he will let himself be found by us (Matt. 7:7-11; Acts 17:26-27). I believe that there is a truth and that we can find answers and clarity in what may initially seem obscure.

(iii) Clarity does not mean simplicity

The doctrine of the clarity of Scripture is not the teaching that every passage in the Bible is simple to understand or that the meaning is obvious. Thompson admits, "Clarity is not the same as uniform simplicity or even transparency. In some cases the clear meaning of a

passage is hard won." However, he later argues that the clear meaning of a passage is hard won "often because of factors that have little to do with a problem in the text itself."[249]

James Callahan, an evangelical author on the clarity of Scripture, takes a different approach than Thompson. That clarity is evidently not simplistic is because it is a "confession." Perspicuity is neither an objective quality of Scripture before any kind of investigation nor is it a subjective result of interpretation. It is therefore neither "simply clear" nor "simply obscure."[250]

Yet, objectors to the evangelical's "confession" of *claritas scripturae* still maintain that "the Bible in general requires an externally validated, authoritative interpretation,"[251] and they turn to three main proof texts. Below is Thompson's answer to them:

1. *Mark 4:10-12*. The problem is not with any kind of ambiguity with the text but rather the spiritual condition of the hearers. "It is no companion to a naïve universalism. The clarity of Scripture does not guarantee that all who read will truly grasp its meaning."[252] He then cites John 3:19—"men loved the darkness rather than the Light"—even though this verse, along with the preceding one, is contrasting believers with unbelievers. Therefore, Thompson doesn't answer the fact that believers disagree among themselves and have different understandings of a certain texts.
2. *Acts 8:30-31*. This passage is mainly used by religious groups that believe an external, authoritative interpretation is needed (e.g., The Watch Tower organization). Here Thompson moves away from Charles Hodge's view that the clarity of Scripture

[249] Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 102.
[250] Callahan, *Clarity of Scripture*, 25.
[251] Thompson, *A Clear and Present Word*, 102.
[252] *Ibid*., 104.

involves "the right of private judgment."[253] He recognizes the importance of the corporate dimension of reading the Bible, of reading and hearing God's word in the midst of the communion of believers. Naturally, the Reformers were concerned that an ecclesial authority may impose an authorized interpretation on the text, as the Roman Catholic Church had done, yet this did not deter the Reformers from quoting extensively from the Church Father's to bring out the meaning of the texts. After all, God has clearly given the Church teachers to enable the congregations to understand his word (Eph. 4:11-12). Many evangelicals today recognize that the church is the proper context of reading Scripture. Yet, it was not that the Isaiah text was obscure but rather difficult for one (and everyone during that time) who lived during the Old Covenant and needed guidance by the apostles and deacons to understand the covenant in light of the New Covenant (cf. Acts 19 John the Baptist followers).[254]

3. *2 Peter 3:14-16*. First, Peter had previously written that the Scriptures are a 'lamp shining in a dark place' (1:19). Second, he says that "some"—not all—things Paul writes is difficult to understand. Third, Peter is highlighting the need for diligence because there are certain men who have twisted the Scriptures for self-interest. For Thompson, therefore, diligence and attention does not refute the clarity of Scripture.[255]

(iv) Implications for denying the clarity of Scripture

Denying *claritas* leads to a lack of confidence in the relevancy of the Bible today and prevents one from reading the Bible or to persevere in reading it. The otherness of the biblical text is replaced by the idea that it is just another text amid historical particularities and the world of antiquity. Those who deny *claritas* have questioned scriptural statements

[253] *Ibid*., 105.
[254] *Ibid*., 106.
[255] *Ibid*., 108.

regarding ethical issues such as gender relationships (especially in the church context), homosexuality, and the sanctity of the unborn life. The real problem, for Thompson, is not that the text does not mean what it seems to mean, but rather, "the challenge the Bible presents to today's ideological commitments"[256]—one of these commitments being pluralism and inter-faith dialogue. Therefore, many people, even within the church, believe that the 'exclusive' claims of texts like John 14:6 and Acts 4:12 are oppressive and scandalous texts. Perhaps the underlying motive for not believing in *claritas*: It is not that these texts are obscure but offensive.

5.5 A case study: John MacArthur's argument against ambiguity

If evangelical fundamentalists have built a theological framework to affirm the clarity of Scripture, they have built it upon an epistemological foundation of certainty. One can read this in Thompson's work on the clarity of Scripture: "With the word of God there is certainty and that certainty entails clarity."[257] I suppose it is all too easy to hold Baconian Realism and the Common Sense philosophy responsible for fundamentalism's modernistic theological methods and epistemological foundation, but by applying an inductive theory of doing theology— gathering all of the "objective facts" from the Bible and classifying or systematizing them into a coherent system—the Scriptures became for the fundamentalist's the unchallengeable and unquestionable foundation on which to build their truth claims (foundationalism). In their opposition to liberalism, the nineteenth century conservative evangelicals, such as Charles Hodge, taught that one could obtain *a priori* knowledge (i.e., knowledge that is known independently from our experience). And just as the age of modernism was influential in the development of the doctrine of inerrancy, so the current

[256] *Ibid.*, 161.
[257] *Ibid.*, 101.

postmodern age has led evangelical fundamentalists to define more clearly an epistemology of certainty (and clarity of the Scriptures).

After World War II and the Holocaust had shattered humanity's optimism in human progress and reason, postmodernism came to define a worldview that embraced subjectivity, relativism, and ambiguity, as opposed to concepts such as objectivity, absolutism, and certainty. In the context of postmodern theology, there is no unchallenging foundation upon which to build truth claims: "We always find ourselves beginning with a set of beliefs, assumptions, ways of looking at the world."[258] So an inseparable and interrelated three-fold source for theology, said Stanley Grenz (1950-2005), is Scripture, tradition, and culture.[259]

Besides Grenz, one of the leading proponents of a postmodern, evangelical theology is Brian D. McLaren (*b*. 1956)—a pastor and author who was also voted as one of the "25 Most Influential Evangelicals in America" in *Time* magazine (2005). McLaren is one of the leading voices in the Emergent Church movement:

> According to McLaren, the emergent (or emerging) conservation sprung up over ten years ago when a number of young leaders, most of them evangelical, came together to discuss their struggles, issues, questions, challenges, and discoveries – many of them relating to a shift from modern colonial faith to a postmodern and postcolonial faith. Similar conversations were springing up among mainline Protestants and other Christians, with Catholics being the most recent faith group to participate.[260]

For McLaren, there is no epistemological foundation. Instead, faith is to be compared metaphorically to a spider's web that has several anchor points: spiritual experiences, influential leaders and institutions, biblical passages, and so on. McLaren laments the

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[258] Placher, *Essentials of Christian Theology*, 19.
[259] *Ibid*., 33.
[260] *Catholics Join Emerging Church Conversation*, http://www.christiantoday.com/article/catholics.join.emerging.church.conversation/22770.htm

modernistic approach to the Bible, where conservatives treat it like an "encyclopaedia" or "answer book" and liberals like an object under forensic scientific analysis, "reducing the text to something explainable by our preconceptions."[261] We ought to rather allow the Bible to read us. In other words, "trusting God to use it to pose questions to us *about* us."[262]

One of the fiercest critics of Brian McLaren and his post-evangelical stance is the evangelical fundamentalist, John MacArthur Jr (*b*. 1939), pastor of the neo-calvinist Grace Community Church and acknowledged by *Christianity Today* as one of the most influential evangelical preachers of his time. MacArthur also founded The Master's Seminary—a conservative evangelical institution that affirms absolute inerrancy of the Bible and dispensationalism. In agreement with the ethos of fundamentalism as described by Martin Marty—the militant attitude of "fighting for" the 'Ultimate Truth' and "fighting against" any insider who appears to be too moderate[263]—MacArthur released his aptly titled work, *The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception* (2007). (One is reminded equally of Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible*.) MacArthur fights *for* Truth and certainty *against* postmodern thinking as embodied in the Emerging Church movement while targeting McLaren. He believes that a war is being waged against the truth. "So if you are a believer, get into the battle. Fight for the truth."[264] In fact, it is a sin *not* to fight against the "enemies of truth."[265]

With simplistic fashion MacArthur identifies the main characteristic of postmodern thinking as "*the rejection of every expression of certainty*."[266] And the resources he uses for winning the war are typified by the fundamentalist attitude: ad hominen attacks and misrepresentaitons. For MacArthur, postmodernism expresses "worldly unbelief,"

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[261] Brian D. McLaren, *A New Kind of Christian* MP3 CD (Hovel Audio, Inc., 2005).
[262] *Ibid*., emphasis mine in *italics*.
[263] See Marty and Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ix-x.
[264] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, 51.
[265] *Ibid*., xxiv.
[266] *Ibid*., 12.

"skepticism," "proud rebellion."[267] "Advocating ambiguity," says MacArthur, "is a sinful way of nurturing unbelief."[268] In fact, "the contemporary refusal to regard any truth as sure and certain is the worst kind of infidelity."[269] He even goes so far as to link the denial of absolute truth to immorality by citing John 3:19 and interpreting that passage to mean that men reject truth ("light") for moral, not intellectual, reasons![270] Therefore, he judges the motives of contemporary Christian's hearts: "[They] are determined to get the world to *like* them—and of course in the process they also want to have as much fun as possible."[271]

(i) MacArthur against culture and rejection of the strangeness of the past

MacArthur opines that the evangelical movement "has been acting for a long time as if our *main* duty is just to keep in step with the fads of worldly culture in order to gain the approval of each succeeding generation… Evangelicalism is blithely drifting more and more into postmodern ways of thinking about truth, imagining that this is the way to 'reach' the culture. Consequently, Christians are less and less willing to fight for the truth."[272] Later, in writing about Paul's sound rebuke to "false teachers, he writes in a modernistic dichotomy fashion that "Scripture has always been contrary to worldly culture. We need to allow Scripture to rebuke and correct the spirit of our age, and never visa versa."[273]

Like the fundamentalists of old, MacArthur's Baptist and dispensational traditions reject a constructive engagement with the present culture. This seems to be fed by an imbalance concerning the continuity-discontinuity trajectory of the past, for he regards evangelicalism and its distinctives as basic, historic Christianity: "Since the Protestant Reformation, the term has historically been used to signify a particular strain of conservative Protestantism in

[267] *Ibid.*, 24.
[268] *Ibid.*, xi.
[269] *Ibid.*, xvi.
[270] *Ibid.*, 8.
[271] *Ibid.*, xiv.
[272] *Ibid.*, 47-48.
[273] *Ibid.*, 95.

which a handful of key gospel doctrines are regarded as absolutely essential to authentic Christianity. These nonnegotiable evangelical distinctives include the doctrine of justification by faith, the principle of substitutionary atonement, and the absolute and perfect sufficiency of Scripture."[274] Earlier he writes that postmodern evangelicalism is a departure from "biblical and historic Christianity."[275]

However, as I pointed out in chapter 2, these evangelical distinctives were shaped within a certain historical setting and culture. The "basic and historic Christianity" MacArthur defends originates out of nineteenth century conservative evangelicalism and later fundamentalism. And as I pointed out in chapter three when citing Rowan Williams' cogent remarks about history, fundamentalism only saw continuities with the past, wearing a "fancy dress" version of orthodoxy. To continue with Williams' remarks, the Archbishop points out that when we study or write on history we must find a balance between concern with continuity and with discontinuity. This need to find a balance can be seen in the argument between Anglican scholar Creighton who justified certain wrong actions of the past by contextualizing it (i.e., they were just "men of their times"), while Catholic historian Acton believed that such an attitude would produce moral relativism.[276] The main point Williams is making is that we cannot treat the past as a total "foreign country"—there has to be a sense of continuity. At the same time, however, we can't treat the past as if it is the present—there has to be a sense of strangeness or difference.

This same point is brought out in Brian McLaren's chapter on the Bible. Here McLaren confronts the "foreign" passages in the Bible where God allegedly commands the Israelites to massacre the Canaanite men, women, and children. The main problem for McLaren, however, is not the biblical narratives but our modernistic assumptions and interpretations of it. He tries to reclaim the Bible as narrative—a story that "just because it recounts (by

[274] *Ibid.*, 46-47.
[275] *Ibid.*, xxii.
[276] Williams, *Why Study the Past?* 10-11.

standards of accuracy acceptable to its original audience) what happened, that doesn't mean it tells what should always happen or even what should have happened."[277] He continues:

> We must begin with a recognition of how violent the world of the ancient Middle East was. The violence of Jews entering Canaan in 1400 BC was not extraordinary; it was typical of their day. And so we ask: In that context was God commanding the people to do, not what was ideal or ethically desirable for all time, but what was necessary to survive in that world at that point? Was there a viable alternative at the time for a group of wandering, homeless, liberated slaves seeking a homeland? In other words, assuming history is real and not a simulation, not a chess game in which God plays both sides, not a video game moving to the pressure of God's thumbs on a controller—if God is going to enter into a relationship with people, then God has to work with them as they are in their individual and cultural moral development. And back in those days, that meant that any group of people, if they were to survive, had to fight.[278]

(ii) MacArthur's determinate interpretation

Interestingly, MacArthur does exactly what McLaren has warned against; that is, to assume that history is like a chess game in which God plays both sides. For MacArthur, the meaning of Scripture and "anything else"—therefore, history as well—has been determined and fixed by God. An interpreter is to discern that determined fixed meaning through proper interpretation: "Truth and meaning are not determined by our intuition, experience, or desire. The true meaning of Scripture—or anything else, for that matter—has already been determined and fixed by the mind of God. The task of an interpreter is to discern that meaning. And proper interpretation must precede application."[279]

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[277] McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy*, 185.
[278] *Ibid*., 186.
[279] MacArthur, *The Truth War*, xxi.

In his work, *Engaging Scripture*, Stephen Fowl describes but also points out the shortcomings of holding to such a determinate interpretation. Obviously such a model of biblical interpretation seeks to uncover the meaning of a particular biblical text so that matters of doctrine and practice are determined by interpretation. But while it seeks wholeness and clarity, it brings about closure, and therefore, stops interpretation. As Fowl asks, "Why should something like the author's intention count as the meaning of the text?"[280] Also, it puts modern Christians "in an awkward relationship to the Old Testament"[281]—such as Psalm 137 which pronounces a blessing on anyone who dashes the heads of Babylonian babies against the rocks). Therefore, there has to be a plurality of meanings of a text even if one tries to hold to a strict literal sense.

Moreover, the central argument of MacArthur's theological model of determinate interpretation is that our practices are shaped by our interpretations. This can be seen in his statement: "proper interpretation must precede application." This argument runs counter to Fowl's theological model of *underdetermined* interpretation, which is the key in his work. Underdetermined interpretation avoids using a theory of meaning to determine interpretation. He says, "I wish to argue that theological convictions, ecclesial practices, and communal and social concerns should *shape and be shaped by* biblical interpretation."[282] It is an interpretation that interacts with the text and our theological and moral concerns in our specific context.

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The aim of this chapter was to show how evangelical fundamentalism has been shaped through its encounter with and reaction to postmodern theological ideas of theory to a text,

[280] Fowl, *Engaging Scripture*, 35.
[281] *Ibid.*, 36.
[282] *Ibid.*, 60.

including its encounter with postmodern epistemology. I began by demonstrating how definitions change over time—specifically the evangelical doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture due to the rise of postmodern theologies and contemporary biblical hermeneutics that challenged the clarity of Scripture (and any other text). After attending to and conversing with David Tracy's hermeneutic of plurality and ambiguity, I summarized and analyzed Mark Thompson's engagement with the postmodern argument against the clarity of Scripture and his modification of the said doctrine; first, by attending to Thompson's identification of five challenges brought about by contemporary hermeneutics within our postmodern situation; and second, the evangelical fundamentalist's theological framework for the clarity of Scripture beginning with five observations about Christian theology.

Finally, I pointed out that evangelical fundamentalists have built a theological framework to affirm the clarity of Scripture by building upon an epistemological foundation of certainty. As a case study, I turned to the evangelical fundamentalist John MacArthur Jr's response to postmodernist's anti-foundationalist epistemology through his recent work, *The Truth War*. This work revealed evangelical fundamentalism's continuing embodiment of a counter-culture attitude and rejection of the strangeness of the past when re-writing history by adopting a theological model of determinate interpretation that dates back to modernity's structuralism and positivism.

This examination of evangelical fundamentalism's reaction to postmodern challenges and its resurgence of the doctrine of the perspicuity or clarity of Scripture plays a crucial role in defining the movement today. Therefore, in the final concluding chapter, I will return to the question of defining evangelical fundamentalism.

6

Once again: What is evangelical fundamentalism?

To summarize the historical development of evangelical fundamentalism, and to return to the question of defining evangelical fundamentalism, I began by tracing the historical development of evangelicalism and the shaping of its identity through its distinctives—the supreme authority of Scripture, especially its clarity on the essentials of the faith; a radical Christ-centered theological framework and praxis, an emphasis on the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit's work and the need for personal conversion; and the importance of belonging to a local church for spiritual growth and fellowship.

Fundamentalists, on the other hand, were evangelicals who, while holding to all of the above tenets, were characterized by their own set of distinctives—separatism from mainline denominations, schisms over doctrine, lack of social concern, negative view of the end times, a lack of engagement with culture, and legalism. These traits were sourced from and influenced by various nineteenth century theological movements—dispensationalism, holiness, Pentecostal, and the rise of liberalism and a modernistic, secular society that embraced Darwinism and a naturalistic worldview.

However, while these fundamentalists were anti-modernists, they embraced ideologies of modernity—Baconian Rationalism, Common Sense philosophy, and Enlightenment Science—in order to 'protect' their conviction that that what they were propagating was historic, orthodox Christianity. Yet their complex relationship with modernity had ultimately aided them in a novice doctrine of absolute inerrancy (and a verbal inspiration theory) of the Bible, as well as adopting a strict literal hermeneutic that led to a young earth creation view.

In true Protestant fashion, the fundamentalist movement gave way to insiders who saw the necessity for the church to engage with culture and society. These neo-evangelicals tried to regain intellectual prestige in higher education, and thus, founded Fuller Theological Seminary. But again in true Protestant fashion, with no ecclesial authority, neo-evangelicalism would fragment over divisions concerning the inerrancy issue. The "progressives" wanted to reform and revise the doctrine of inerrancy while the "conservatives" defended their fundamentalist tradition.

With the rise of postmodernism and its impact in theology and philosophy, the conservative evangelicals modified and brought to the fore the doctrine of the perspicuity of Scripture in the wake of postmodernity's anti-foundationalist epistemology that challenged the fundamentalist's foundation of certainty. Their engagement with postmodern hermeneutical, literary, and epistemological challenges brought about a positive conversation without ignoring these challenges. Yet at the same time, other conservatives revived a fundamentalist mentality of "fighting against." These conservative evangelicals, descendants of the neo-evangelicals, are today's "evangelical fundamentalists."

6.1 Defining evangelical fundamentalism as a heterogeneous movement

However, "evangelical fundamentalism," as a movement today cannot be put into a 'neat box'—it is simply too heterogeneous. For example, an evangelical fundamentalist may have a negative view of culture and the end times but is still engaged in social concern. Or an evangelical fundamentalist may hold to absolute inerrancy but not believe in a young-earth creationist view (which is propagated by Creation Science).

Nevertheless, if we adopt a plurality of senses or perspectives to the term, a more cogent definition can be made. I have identified five different perspectives to what it means to be an "evangelical-fundamentalist" today:

(i) Historical perspective

From an historical perspective, one can note that evangelicals who create a dichotomy between social concern and evangelism, who believe that society and church are declining into immorality and apostasy (and thus emphasize the spirituality of the individual instead of the church community), and who engage in fierce disagreements and debates over theological issues amongst themselves, can rightly be called "evangelical fundamentalists." This latter characteristic—of separating themselves from evangelicals who differ with them over certain theological issues—is a common trait of evangelical fundamentalists today. In my book, *Preserving Evangelical Unity*, I highlighted several of their divisive traits: (1) Viewing unity as uniformity; (2) broadening orthodox doctrine by their unwillingness to discern between the "essentials and non-essentials" of the Christian faith; (3) believing that the Holy Spirit illumines their minds to understand everything written in the Bible.[283]

(ii) Doctrinal perspective

As can be seen from their separatist attitude and actions, evangelical fundamentalists emphasize and prioritize the importance of doctrine over the law of love as revealed by Christ. Some have no qualms in labeling any Christian who disagrees with their list of fundamentals a "heretic" or "apostate."

Regarding specific doctrines, an evangelical who holds to absolute inerrancy and supports the Creation Science movement—which teaches young earth creationism and a literal 24-hour day creation within a period of six literal days—is an "evangelical fundamentalist." Also, evangelical fundamentalists would argue that their views of the physical resurrection of Jesus and the satisfaction theory of the atonement are really historic

[283] See Meiring, *Preserving Evangelical Unity*, 3-10.

orthodoxy. The doctrine of absolute inerrancy, they would say, is also essential and *non-negotiable* to wearing the "evangelical" badge.

(iii) An outlook perspective

Edward Carnell defined modern fundamentalism not so much a theological movement as a *mentality*: "The mentality of fundamentalism is dominated by ideological thinking. Ideological thinking is rigid, intolerant, and doctrinaire; it sees principles everywhere, and all principles come in clear tones of black and white…"[284] Today, evangelical fundamentalists continue with this mentality. They also instill a sense of guilt into their followers by consistently reminding them of their failures to live up to a standard of holiness; for example, reminding them of their failure to use every opportunity to witness to the lost, of their failure to obey the high standards of righteousness as revealed by Jesus (esp. in the Sermon on the Mount), of their failure to have "quiet time" with the Lord every morning, and of their failure to be just like Jesus.

(iv) "Negative ethic" perspective

Carnell also wrote about the fundamentalist's "negative ethic" during his time—no smoking, dancing, or playing cards—that diverts attention from grosser sins, such as anger, gossip, idleness, schism, and pride. He continues, "An anxiety for negative status betrays fundamentalism into glaring hypocrisy. For example, a fundamentalist is very certain smoking is sinful, for smoking harms the body and it is habit-forming. Yet, reasonably equivalent objections can be raised against excessive coffee drinking. The nerves may be upset of a stomach ulcer induced, and the practice is habit-forming. But the fundamentalist

[284] Carnell, *Orthodox Theology*, 114.

conveniently ignores this parallel."[285] Carnell provides other examples of fundamentalists confusing courtesy with compromise, and thus, failing to exercise gentleness and showing consideration toward all men and women (cf. Titus 3:2).[286]

Although evangelical fundamentalists today no longer apply the "negative ethic" toward dancing and card playing, they refuse to drink wine with their food, regard rock music as a tool of Satan and long hair on teenage boys as a sign of rebellion, and they believe that depression is self-inflicted.

(v) Political perspective

From a political perspective, an evangelical fundamentalist belongs to the "New Christian Right" that attempts to Christianize their respective nation. Today there are a number of evangelicals who are part of the Reconstruction movement, which aims to bring all areas of life (public, civil, education, etc.) under God's rule, based on biblical principles.[287]

6.2 Deconstructing evangelical fundamentalism

But—"and there is always a but, deconstruction is a matter of buts"[288]—the five different perspectives as to the meaning of "evangelical fundamentalism" is not complete. As a former "insider-turned-outsider," my analysis has been mainly an historical-theological inquiry, while the "insider" may define the veracity of evangelical-fundamentalist theology on biblical grounds—the continuity of historic orthodoxy. Yet if I hold true to Jacques Derrida's deconstructionism, I must acknowledge that I cannot remain settled in my definition and interpretation of evangelical fundamentalism. John Caputo says, "Deconstruction is rather the thought, if it is a thought, of an absolute heterogeneity that

[285] *Ibid.*, 120.
[286] *Ibid.*, 121.
[287] See Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 49-54.
[288] Caputo, *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, 94.

unsettles all the assurances of the same within which we comfortably ensconce ourselves."[289]

Along with Derrida's view of fundamentalist religion, I may run the risk of stretching fundamentalism out on the psychologist's couch and reducing it to a psychoanalyst's report. But if words have multiple signs, and if I could "demythologize" fundamentalism, or better yet "defundamentalize" fundamentalism, the movement may well represent "the return of the repressed"[290]—and I would add, the regressed. Mortimer Ostow contributed a chapter to *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* titled, "A Psychological Perspective."[291] In it he stated that the fundamentalist's need to view Scripture as being inerrant, certain, and clear "suggests a reluctance to tolerate doubt, uncertainty, and ambiguity."[292] They cannot tolerate *doubt* because that would bring their convictions into question. Hence, they would be more militant against their own number who deviate from their beliefs than with unbelievers or individuals in other religious groups. They cannot tolerate *ambiguity* or uncertainty because the world seems dangerously chaotic. Hence, conversion to their faith offers escape from a life of uncertainty, anxiety, depression, or misfortune, and an invitation for support and reassurance from a like-minded community. Therefore, the fundamentalists of old and evangelical fundamentalists of today think in terms of polarities—righteousness and wickedness, God and Satan, light and darkness, saved and unsaved, and so on.

Ostow believes that this fundamentalist "syndrome" can be accounted for by studying a psychodynamic mechanism called "the death/destruction-rebirth framework." First, in this framework the death or destruction component involves the fundamentalist "destroying" his surrounding world of uncertainty and plurality by *separating* himself from it. The outside world is the world of Satan, darkness, and wickedness, especially within the religious sphere

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[289] *Ibid*., 5.
[290] *Ibid*., 152.
[291] Here I am demonstrating the necessity of interdisciplinary studies whenever we approach a particular theme or subject.
[292] Ostow, "The Fundamentalist Phenomenon: A Psychological Perspective," 101.

where there exists a plurality of interpretations of the Bible, variant translations, and relativistic doctrines that "threaten the absolute system in which he believes."[293]

Second, the rebirth component (which is an illusionary state of being) involves the fundamentalist receiving comfort and reassurance by *belonging* to a religious group of like-minded believers, believing that proper worship and behavior "will secure for them the protection of Providence," although they are ultimately submitting passively to the authority of their leaders or organization.[294] The world will also experience a "rebirth" when in the end the wicked will be destroyed and their community alone, along with their beliefs, will stand and be saved.

And finally, Ostow concludes that the fundamentalist's attitude is that of the "undifferentiated" child "who fears to acknowledge the inevitability of separation, disappointment, and pain; in short, reality."[295] For him the fundamentalist's state of mind regresses to that of a child who seeks his returning mother: "The messiah and the group itself represent the returning mother."[296]

So instead of dismissing fundamentalism as a mindless religion or sheer nonsense, how should we engage with evangelical fundamentalists?

6.3 A constructive engagement with evangelical fundamentalism

In the second part of Norman J. Cohen's work, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*, four liberal scholars take up the task as to how they, and liberalism in general, should respond to the fundamentalist phenomenon. Although their essays center on responding to fundamentalism within American polity, their arguments are constructive for post-liberal

[293] *Ibid*., 108.
[294] *Ibid*., 117.
[295] *Ibid*., 113.
[296] *Ibid*.

and postmodernist conversations with evangelical fundamentalists in all spheres of life: social, ecclesial, and doctrinal—not only in politics.

First, Donald Shriver Jr. believes that liberals have their own "fundamentalism" if one means by it one's "basic convictions about what makes human life 'human'."[297] For liberals, the fundamental truth concerns the freedom of God that Karl Barth taught so often: "The freedom to learn, to change our minds, to discover the new truth, is basic for us; it is basic in our very *theology*, if our finite freedom to change our mind is grounded in our obligation to respect God's freedom to effect the change."[298] If this is so, then Shriver is saying that evangelical fundamentalists should also be included and heard in theological circles. There must be an attitude of inclusiveness.

Second, David Saperstein focuses on interaction between the mainstream religious communities and the religious right of fundamentalists when the latter raises legitimate issues in politics. He writes, "By [liberals] addressing legitimate issues [the religious right] raise, mainstream groups can begin to work together with the right in a manner that can build trust and understanding."[299] Likewise, our engagement with evangelical fundamentalists can be constructive if we allow them to be heard and understood.

Third, Eugene Borowitz's essay focuses on the positives of religious liberalism. He mainly answers the fundamentalist's argument that liberalism turns God's revelation "into mere growth and self-determination," thereby destroying Christian faith in stable moral values.[300] His defence is a necessary component of any constructive engagement between two parties. In other words, evangelical fundamentalism also needs to allow theological postmodernists to be heard and understood. Returning to Borowitz's defence, he says that he knows no liberal that advocates moral anarchy. In fact, had traditional religions not abused

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[297] Shriver Jr., "From Island to Continent: Is There Room in American Politcs for Both Fundamentalists and Their Enemies?" 203.
[298] *Ibid.*, 204.
[299] Saperstein, "Fundamentalist Involvement in the Political Scene: Analysis and Response," 227.
[300] Borowitz, "The Enduring Truth of Religious Liberalism," 231.

their power of authority, liberalism would not have been around.[301] He also states that liberals affirm religious pluralism because they affirm the right of the individual to seek a better approach to God due to our limited comprehension of God.[302]

Finally, Preston Williams believes that if liberals and fundamentalists commit themselves fully to love God and their neighbor, there will be greater toleration over doctrinal differences: "Cooperation with fundamentalists may be difficult, but it is not impossible or undesirable. It can be prepared for, and accomplished, if we rid ourselves of our notions of superiority and set aside our stereotypes of these religious adversaries. We must approach fundamentalists with love and with openness…"[303] Conversing in love, says Williams, may "aid each other to see their cultural attachments and to undertake the task of distinguishing between the relative and the absolute."[304] And he believes that there will be more openness for dialogue between fundamentalists and liberals if we recognize that our sinful natures and the errors of our communities allows our scriptural interpretations and methods—the fundamentalist's inerrancy doctrine and the liberal's historical-critical methods—to go "astray," in the sense that neither can guarantee the truth of Scripture.[305]

To conclude, Nancy Ammerman states that fundamentalism is likely to remain a force in North American culture because of their appealing ideology of certainty and clarity, providing "a haven where life makes sense."[306] (And I must note that evangelical fundamentalism will also remain a force in Africa, especially here, in South Africa.) Yet fundamentalism can also become confusing, even threatening, to the outsider—as well as to the insider who wants to leave the movement. Therefore, in this thesis I have attempted to

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[301] *Ibid*., 233-4.
[302] *Ibid*., 236.
[303] Williams, "The Religious Challenge of Fundamentalism," 251.
[304] *Ibid*., 255.
[305] *Ibid*., 258.
[306] Ammerman, "North American Protestant," 55.

define and investigate the origin and evolution of “evangelical fundamentalism” through an historical-theological analysis of the movement. Any religious movement today finds its identity *primarily in history*.

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