

Fundamentalism – Militant vs. Passive

WHEN considering the subject of the fundamentals, or fundamentalism, it would do well for one to have an understanding of the terms. Webster's New World Dictionary defines fundamental thusly, "Of or forming a foundation or basis; basic, essential." And fundamentalism as, "Orthodox religious beliefs based on a literal interpretation of the Bible and regarded as fundamental to Christian faith." Funk & Wagnalls defines fundamental as, "Relating to or constituting a foundation; indispensable; basal." Fundamentalism is defined as: (1) The belief that all statements made in the Bible are literally true. (2) In the United States, a movement among Protestants holding that such belief is essential to Christian faith."

In recent years fundamentalism and the fundamental movement have increasingly come under attack from those outside of Christianity. Among those are the news media, Norman Lear and his People for the American Way (PAW), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), National Organization of Women (NOW), Fundamentalists Anonymous - the list is almost endless. Opposition to the Word of God and all it teaches is to be expected by those outside of Christ, the unsaved - "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the Lord is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it." (Jer. 6:10) Again, any Christian who has been taught the Word of God is well aware that such attitude and treatment is to be expected from the unsaved crowd, for as our Saviour taught in John 15:18-20, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also."

Within Christianity there are those, though saved, who have not obeyed the Scriptural command to separate themselves from the world. In making reference to the world, two areas are in mind - {1} The physical world we live in and all of its allurements {2} The religious world and its ecumenical involvement.

The Physical World: Once a lost sinner has received Christ as personal Saviour, that person needs to learn how to live for the Saviour in such a way that will bring honour and glory to His name. In Romans 12:2 the writer says, "And be not conformed to the world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..." The word "conformed" here means to be fashioned - primarily outwardly. The word "world" literally means age. Next we have "transformed" and it means to change to another form; the obligation being to undergo a complete change which, under the power of God, will find expression in character and conduct. This outward change originates from within by the "renewing" of the "mind." "Renewing" means renovation, and "mind" refers to the soul, the whole man. This includes the mind, with its thoughts; the imagination, so untamed naturally; the sensibilities or "feelings"; the "tastes", or natural preferences; and the "memory" which must be cleansed of all unclean sinful recollections.

People need to be taught that as Christians, we are not to be conformed to this world (age) which is so rampant with sin and immorality. Pastors need to be identifying worldly entertainment and teaching their people what is wrong with it. Included in all of this worldly entertainment we have unwholesome movies (many "fundamental" preachers cannot preach against unwholesome Hollywood movies because they themselves "rent" Hollywood via the VCR), dances, bingo (in some places called beano) - in or out of church it is still a form of gambling, TV soap operas and shows like Jenny Jones, Oprah, Jay Leno, and about ninety-five percent of the rest of TV. Mixed bathing, Country & Western music, the various styles of Rock music and the so-called Christian rock, men with their long hair and earrings; women with hair cut short like a "normal" man, skimpy and often suggestive and

revealing skirts and dresses, as well as their pants must also be included in this list of worldly identification. This is only a partial list and is given to help make a point.

Many excuses may be offered for clinging to the ways of the world; none of which are valid when considered in light of God's Word. Some of these excuses may be: "Everyone else is doing it." "I can't just turn my back on my friends." "It's too difficult to stand up." "It's not all that bad." "By not separating from the ways of the world but staying in it, I'll have more opportunities to share the Gospel and win people to Christ." The fact of the matter is, no matter what the excuse, **Christians still have the inherent responsibility to obey God's commands**, and He has commanded that, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (I John 2:15)

Someone has said that people don't behave right because that don't believe right. The reason they don't believe right may be because they have not been taught right from the pulpit, and instruction from the **pulpit** is not limited to **preaching**, but also includes **practice**.

The Religious World: In the religious world we are thinking of churches, denominations, organizations, movements, and individuals.

The year was 1947 when the term "New Evangelicalism" was coined by Harold John Ockenga, who at the time was Pastor of Park Street Church in Boston, Massachusetts. This is when the phrase was coined, but the practice began in the Garden of Eden. The essence of New Evangelicalism is one of infiltration rather than separation - a willingness to be tolerant of those who hold views that differ from, and stand in contrast to the Bible, THE final authority on faith and practice, and seek to dialogue with the former. This is a direct violation of the eternal Word! Even though the term was new at the time it was coined, certainly the method was not, for there have always been those who would compromise the Word of God. So, then, Christianity is saturated with those who have compromised on worldly and ecclesiastical separation. A failure to recognize and comprehend the **Biblical doctrine** of separation and the philosophy of New Evangelicalism will result in a departure from Bible truth.

Unlike New Evangelicalism, Fundamentalism has sought to remain true to the Word of God. Many there are who claim to be fundamentalists by saying that they have received Christ as personal Saviour. They say that they believe in the cardinal doctrines of the Word - One God manifested in the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; the Deity of Christ; the incarnation of Christ by the virgin Mary who was conceived of by the Holy Spirit; His death on the Cross, burial and bodily resurrection; that salvation is by faith alone in the shed blood of Christ; that the Bible is God's inspired, inerrant and complete Word. They may even go so far as to say that the unsaved person is totally depraved, spiritually dead, and that the believing sinner is eternally secure in Christ. Now all of this is a Bible truth and for one to be a fundamentalist it must be believed. What sets the fundamentalist apart from the New Evangelical is the Biblical doctrine of separation. This is a major Bible doctrine that has been relegated to that of a minor by many. To do so is wrong! Here again, many within the fundamentalist ranks are aware of this.

In the Book of Jude we have the warning against corrupt teachers and doctrinal heresies. Reading in Jude 3 we have, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." The Greek word for "exhort" is PARAKALEO and means primarily, to call to a person; denotes to admonish, exhort, to urge one to pursue some course of conduct (always prospective looking to the future, in contrast to the meaning of comfort, which is retrospective having to do with trial experienced). "Contend" in the Greek is EPAGONIZOMAI and means: "to struggle for; signifies to contend about a thing, as a combatant." Within fundamentalism we have militant fundamentalists who are doing just what Jude says to do. The militant

fundamentalist takes a strong stand for what the Bible says, without compromising. He will expose movements, organizations, and individuals who operate outside of Biblical limitations. He will also identify those who are sympathetic with the aforementioned. The militant fundamentalist will expound **and** expose. We realize of course that this must be done with the right spirit, and in the power of The Spirit.

An extremely dangerous area is to become passive, and we have those within the ranks of fundamentalism who have done just that. While these people may love the Lord, they have failed to obey His Word by sacrificing Bible truth for love and unity. The passive fundamentalist may teach and preach separation from worldly entertainment and customs, however, he remains silent on ecclesiastical separation and even at times goes so far as to refer to a militant fundamentalist as a mudslinger. Those who do the above are, without knowing it, showing the early signs of becoming a New Evangelical. Certainly, no one takes any delight in exposing movements, organizations and individuals, some of which may be (or were) friends of the one doing the exposing; however, this is a must if the saints are to be able to avoid getting drawn into any of this. Many years ago Billy Graham was scheduled to conduct a crusade in Portland, Maine. A certain Pastor climbed into his pulpit and expounded the reasons why he could not participate in, or cooperate with mass evangelism - at no point did this Pastor mention Billy Graham by name. This writer was in the congregation that day, and about a week later while speaking with someone who also attended that service, this party said that her family had no idea of whom the Pastor was speaking. This same Pastor has denounced militant fundamentalists by referring to them as mudslingers. Christians are being drawn into the New Evangelical, ecumenical, charismatic, and Promise Keepers movements because pastors and Bible teachers are not doing their homework and then informing their congregations who these are - **by name, before their flock becomes contaminated!**

When fundamentalists become passive, which generally begins in the pulpit, it's not long before the entire church becomes passive also. The end result is a New Evangelical church, not necessarily by intent, but by default. The Scriptures very clearly teach that we are engaged in a war, not against flesh and blood, but against Satan and his followers (Eph. 6:12). In any war it is an absolute must for the soldier to be able to clearly identify the enemy and to know his tactics, and to remain alert. A failure to know this information and to remain alert all too often has caused needless casualties on the battlefield. Anytime we stray from the truths of God's Word, and that includes the Biblical doctrine of separation; when we fail to expound and expose, then we are playing into the devil's hands, and there will be needless casualties. The Bible commands that we contend for the faith; we have our marching orders directly from God. To be passive requires nothing, but to contend for the faith requires a conscious effort. As we do contend for the faith, let's do it with the right spirit and in the power of The Spirit, showing forth the love of God to a lost and dying world - **without compromising!**

~Richard A. Ciarrocca