

## FOUR FUNDAMENTALIST GROUPS IN AMERICA

The Catholic church had what we call a Reformation. The Reformation was when the Protestants (as we call them now) pulled out of Catholicism. The Reformation was not a spiritual revival. We have the mistaken idea that when Martin Luther pulled out of Catholicism there followed a great spiritual awakening and revival. Nothing could be further from the truth. In that day the church was associated with the state. Luther and Calvin were both trying to start another state church. Martin Luther did not believe in the separation of church and state. Neither did John Calvin.

Consider some facts about the Reformation.

### 1. The Reformation was not a spiritual revival.

**2. It was not a return to the New Testament church.** Basically, it was a hatred for Catholicism. It was not started by a desire to return to something, but by a desire to leave Catholicism. In that day there were other groups besides the reformers. For example, Zwingli's position was not the same as Calvin's, and Calvin's was not the same as Luther's. In fact, for part of their lives they were bitter enemies and never became close friends. They did have a common hatred for the Catholic church and wanted to start another state church.

**3. There was a third group of people in those days called the Anabaptists, which means rebaptizers.** The Justinian Code from which we get most of the framework of our laws had a death penalty for rebaptizing people. That was the law of the state because the state and the church were one. The Anabaptists were hated by everybody. Zwingli hated them. So did Martin Luther and John Calvin. They agreed even with the Catholics in their hatred for the Anabaptists. Luther, Calvin and Zwingli all either consented to, or encouraged the death and martyrdom of Anabaptists.

There were three groups of Anabaptists. I will not go into much detail except to list and describe them briefly.

1. One group of Anabaptists believed in building a local church according to the Word of God. The Anabaptists never believed in an invisible, universal church. They always believed in the local church. In fact, that is the one major thing that separated them, because Luther believed in the invisible church as did Calvin, Zwingli and the Catholics. This group was like our Baptists are today. They believed the Word of God was the final authority, and built their churches accordingly.

2. The second group was called the Pietists. They got their "word" from within, in a message from Heaven, or "a word of knowledge," if you please.

3. The third group of Anabaptists were so militant that they wanted to take over the government and force everybody to be Anabaptists.

In every generation we have the same basic alignment of Christian people. I want to show you the alignment of Christian people in our day. Why do *fundamentalists* not get along? Why do we not agree on so many things? There are different kinds of *fundamentalists*. The word fundamental means a group that returns to the original purpose, practice and doctrine of an institution. I am going to take fundamentalism as we know it in America and show you why it is divided.

There are three basic *fundamental* groups in America. There is an American Baptist *fundamentalism* which came from the American Baptist Convention. There is a Protestant *fundamentalism* which came from the Protestant churches or denominations. It could also be called Reformation *fundamentalism*. Then, there is a Southern Baptist fundamentalism of churches which came from the Southern Baptist Convention. These are the three groups that form the body of what we call *fundamentalism* today.

These have basic disagreements which have caused an invisible fence to come between them. That invisible fence is becoming more visible all the time. Let me show you what I mean.

## I. American Baptist *Fundamentalists*

American Baptist *fundamentalism* comes from the old American Baptist denomination which was the original Baptist denomination in America. It was originally called the Northern Baptist Convention. There are two basic groups of people in American Baptist *fundamentalism*. First, there is the General Association of Regular Baptists, or GARB. They split off of the American Baptist Convention and formed a group. Then, the Conservative Baptist Association split off of the American Baptist Convention and formed another group. Dr. Bob Ketchum was probably the most famous man in the GARB. Dr. Myron Cedarholm was probably the best known man in the Conservative Baptist Association. Both of these groups are splits from the Northern Baptist, or American Baptist Convention. Let me tell you more about these groups.

**1. They were first basically a northern movement.** You will seldom find a GARB church in the south, and you will seldom find a Conservative Baptist church in the south. Basically, these are northern groups.

**2. They pulled out mainly over doctrines.** They did not leave many of the practices of the American Baptist Convention. They did not change the church government of the American Baptist Convention.

**3. They are also more formal than the Southern Baptist fundamentalists, or those who came from the Southern Baptist Convention.**

**4. They are more highly organized than the other fundamentalist groups.**

## II. Protestant Fundamentalism

Protestant *fundamentalism* is probably the most impressive of all *fundamentalism*. These are the inter-denominational *fundamentalists*. They are Bible churches, or IFCA (*Independent Fundamental Churches of America*). They are Bible churches or have names like **Church of the Open Door, Central Church, Fellowship Church** or something similar to that. These are not bad people. They are good Christian people. They believe the Bible, but they came from the Protestant group, so they are Protestant *fundamentalists*. That is why they usually believe in the invisible church. That is also why they are not called Baptists. Let me tell you more about these Protestant *fundamentalists*.

**1. They look like Protestants, in the same way that Protestants look like Catholics.** If you go to a Lutheran church next Sunday, you will have a hard time discerning whether it is Catholic or Lutheran. They are Protestant. If you go to the Episcopalian church, you will have a hard time discerning whether it is Catholic or Episcopalian. I am not being critical. I am being factual. Lutheran preachers wear robes because they came out of Catholicism, but did not change everything. Why does a Presbyterian sprinkle babies? When they came out of Catholicism, that was not an issue. So they still in some ways look like the mother.

**2. They came from Reformation people.**

**3. From them we get the doctrine of the invisible church.**

**4. Basically, they are the result of the union revivals that were so popular many years ago in America.** Many churches would go together for a revival campaign. From these revivals came people who were genuinely born again, but did not know anything about Baptist churches, Baptist policy, Baptist programs, or Baptist doctrine. These people started Bible churches, or inter-denominational churches. They are good fundamental people. They include men like H.A. Ironside, R.A. Torrey, Dwight L. Moody, and Bob Jones. D.L. Moody was not a Baptist. He was a Congregationalist. Although he was a great preacher, he never belonged to the New Testament church.

H.A. Ironside did not pastor a New Testament Baptist church. He pastored a church that came from Protestantism. These men deserve our admiration. They did not know anything else. They wanted something that was not Presbyterian, Reformed, Methodist, Episcopalian, or Lutheran. They wanted something that believed the Bible, so they came from their Protestant denominations and started inter-denominationalism. They had a second Reformation.

**5. This was largely a northern movement.** They are a little more in the south than the GARB or the Conservative Baptists, but basically it was a northern movement.

**6. It was also more formal.** Individuals who came out of the Presbyterian church to start independent churches would obviously be more formal than those who came out of Baptist churches to start other Baptist churches.

**7. These are good people, but they did not build New Testament churches.** New Testament churches must have pastors and deacons. They must believe in New Testament doctrine. Billy Sunday did not belong to the New Testament church because he belonged to a church that came from Protestantism. Billy Sunday was a Protestant. The same fundamental people who supported Billy Sunday's meetings went back to their formal services on Sunday mornings. New Testament churches did not come from Catholicism. They came from Jesus when He started the New Testament church Himself.

I am not criticizing these people, but they did not build New Testament churches. They promoted the invisible church doctrine in addition to the local church doctrine. The only group of people in the history of Christianity that has promoted the local church doctrine has been Baptists.

### **III. Southern Baptist Fundamentalism**

These are the groups that came out of the Southern Baptist Convention. There are some great leaders at Southern Baptist *fundamentalism*. I am talking about men like J. Frank Norris, who started what is now the Baptist Bible Fellowship; Dr. Lee Roberson, who was basically responsible for the Southwide Baptist Fellowship; and Dr. G.B. Vick, who became famous by perpetuating the ministry that Dr. Norris started.

**1. This is where the action has been in *fundamentalism*.** These people are part of the big circle of fundamentalism, but we have some basic disagreements. There have been some invisible fences between us that are now rising up and becoming more visible. We did not build those fences. They started saying that we are shallow and too evangelistic. They started accusing us of promoting easy-believism. We have no choice but to say that they are wrong. They criticize us because of our excitement and our informality. The action in fundamentalism in this generation has come from Southern Baptist fundamentalists, that is, those who left the Southern Baptist Convention and those they have influenced.

**2. The main issue of difference is on the matter of separation.** The GARB and the American Baptists divided basically over doctrine. When Dr. J. Frank Norris pulled out of the Southern Baptist Convention, most Southern Baptist preachers believed that the Bible was the Word of God. The Bible was not issue in those days. It was an ecclesiastical issue, a type of worship issue, and a separation issue. They pulled out over mixed bathing being wrong. They pulled out over social drinking being wrong. They pulled out over teaching evolution. They pulled out over matters of separation, and matters of type of worship.

Consequently, the hottest group in America over the last forty years consists of those that pulled out of the Southern Baptist Convention.

That forms the entire circumference of what we call *fundamentalism*. If you wonder why *fundamentalists* do not get along, it is because we are not all the same type of *fundamentalists*. When some American Baptist *fundamentalists* visit First Baptist Church in Hammond, they may think that we are too wild. That is because they still have some American Baptist left in them. They think we should have committees to run everything in the church. They are *fundamentalists* in the sense that they became fed up with what they were in, but, they did not come out totally. They rebelled only against the things that irritated them.

## Pastor's School Fundamentalists

Today, there is another group of *fundamentalists* quietly becoming the largest group in the nation. I call this group the Pastor's School fundamentalists. Without anybody planning or organizing a thing, God raised up the Pastor's School at the First Baptist Church of Hammond. Its annual meeting is larger than the Baptist Bible Fellowship annual convention. The Southwide Baptist Fellowship does not have as many preachers as Pastors' School has every year. Preachers from all over this country who want to do something for God have come to a Pastors' School and have had their lives and ministries transformed.

In addition to that, the First Baptist Church Youth Conference draws the largest group of fundamental young people of any youth conference in the nation. Other of these groups have copied and have not attracted a fraction of the young people. Without any effort to organize, God has raised up this movement.

Let me make several observations.

**1. Groups one and two are very much alike.** The American Baptist Fundamentalists and the Protestant Fundamentalists are very similar to each other.

**2. Group two provides most of the schools.** Consider the schools which came from group one. Cedarville, Maranatha, and Pillsbury are schools that came from the group that came from the American Baptists. Now, consider the schools that came from the Protestant fundamentalists such as Wheaton, Moody, Pensacola, and Bob Jones University. That is the group that has been educating our Baptist preachers. I have nothing against a plumber, a cabinet maker, a lawyer, an accountant, or a doctor being trained by those schools, but I think a Baptist preacher ought to go to a Baptist school. That is why so many Baptist preachers do not know Baptist doctrines. Group three has allowed group two to train their preachers, and group two has trained them to believe in the invisible church. Group three is not the same as it used to be because we have gone to group two to get our training for our preachers.

I have some dear friends in groups one and two. I am not criticizing them. I am merely giving you the history of the *fundamentalist* movement.

Consider the schools in group three. Baptist Bible College was probably the best when it started. When Tennessee Temple came along, it was probably the best. Today, Hyles-Anderson is known to be the best school for training Baptist preachers. I thank God for the new Baptist colleges which are coming on the scene. Dr. Bob Gray has one in Longview, Texas. Dr. Jim Vineyard has one in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I am glad for these other Baptist colleges because I believe that group three must rain its own.

**3. Another thing that has hurt group three is that group two has basically provided all of the literature.** When you provide somebody literature, you have a tremendous influence on them. The AWANA Clubs are an example of this. There were good clubs which came from group two. They ought to be used in group two churches, but we have put them in our group three churches. The AWANAS came from churches that were very formal and less evangelistic.

Most of the Christian school books come from Pensacola and Bob Jones. They are good books. There is nothing wrong with them. I am just simply showing you that the Protestant *fundamentalists* have provided most of the literature for the Southern Baptist *fundamentalists*, yet the Southern Baptists *fundamentalists* are the ones that have been red-hot. Why is that the case? Because the guy that is red-hot does not want to take time to write a commentary. Most of the literature being used in the group three churches is being provided by the people in group two. We simply are not providing our own.

**4. There has always been an unseen wall that we have not allowed to divide us.** Those of us in group three have not said much about the more formal services of group one and group two. But, in recent days, groups one and two have begun attacking group three. As a result, those of us in group three are going to need to defend those things which we believe to be important. We must defend altar calls. We must defend the old-time religion, because groups one and two are basically going back to their origin of formal worship services. In order to preserve what we have had through these years those of us in group three are going to have to stand for what we have had. They are shooting at us, and we have no recourse but to defend our position.

What about the *new evangelicals*? They are the soft part of each of the three groups. They are compromising part of all three groups. The GARB has deteriorated some. The deteriorated crowd are *new evangelicals*. The CBA has deteriorated some. The deteriorated portion are the *new evangelicals*. The Southern Baptists *fundamentalists* have deteriorated some, and they have some *new evangelicals*.

When a church in group three calls a pastor from group one, there is a catastrophe ahead. As long as we stay apart, we can get along. I happen to think that we are as smart as they are. We have become such a melting pot that the average church does not realize that there is a difference. There are some good men in group one, but let them be good in their own group. They are in their element. There are some good men in group two, but they will teach our people that the local church is one church and the invisible church is another. They also will have their formal worship services. I am not against group two, but let them stay in group two. Let us continue to be group three.

I am not going to spend my life fighting groups one and two because I admire them in some ways. I will keep admiring them as long as they do not try to influence group three, because group three is the hope of the nation.