

We Are Fundamentalists, and Not Ashamed!

I am a fundamentalist. There is no need to apologize about that. A fundamentalist is not someone who only believes in a certain few points of Scripture and Christian orthodoxy; he or she is a person who believes in all the Scripture and the full counsel of God (II Timothy 3:16). The reason fundamentalist became a term in modernity is because near the turn of the last century a group of Bible believers, such as G. Gresham Machen from Princeton saw higher criticism take the high handed liberal approach to interpreting Scripture and Christian doctrine. Machen's departure from Princeton and the fight for the Presbyterian branch of orthodoxy was continued at Westminster Theological Seminary. Fellows of the same spiritual "DNA" with Machen would be, Dr. David "Dick" Wilson and Donald Gray Barnhouse. Among the Methodists who saw the dramatic departure and sought to do something about it in the early part of the 20th Century would be Bob Schuller (not to be confused with Robert Schuller). This Californian Methodist pastor was so alarmed at the trend toward liberalism, that they nick-named him "Fighting Bob Schuler" as he fought for the faith. I personally knew his son Phil and the fight still lives on in him. An Alabama preacher who started out as a "boy wonder" among the Methodists was Bob Jones, Sr. Dr. Jones was a close friend of Billy Sunday and together they worked the United States like a couple of plow-boys turning up revival soil wherever they preached. Among the Baptists at the same time, Dr. George W. Truett and Dr. Robert G. Lee helped champion the cause of not only fundamentalism, but pre-millennialism which preached the imminent return of Jesus Christ. These men served as presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention and felt a strong sense of loyalty to the machinery. There were a group of these Baptists who wanted to take it a step further, namely Dr. J. Frank Norris, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Ft. Worth, Texas and Dr. John R. Rice of Dallas. Dr. Norris was responsible for bringing the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from incubation at Baylor in Waco, to a stronghold of Southern Baptist orthodoxy in Ft. Worth. Dr. Rice, a Baylor graduate and very popular Southern Baptist evangelist, came to the same conclusion of Dr. Norris that staying with the Southern Baptists was like re-arranging furniture on the deck of the sinking Titanic. From these roots my own father, likewise a Texan Baptist, heavily influenced by Dr. George Truett, resigned his position as Youth Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, determined to be free of the convention mold. Dad was followed by W. A. Criswell, then an up-coming young preacher who went on to become a three term president of the Southern Baptist Convention. I must say, parenthetically, that the modern resurgence of fundamentalism amongst the Southern Baptists under the leadership of men like Paige Patterson, Adrian Rogers, and Judge Paul Pressler is a witness to the strength of Baptist Fundamentalism.

Even though there were denominational differences, Billy Sunday, a Presbyterian, Bob Jones, a Methodist, and John R. Rice, a Baptist got along very well because they were "fundamentalists." A fundamentalist is a person who believes in the fundamentals of the faith such as, the Blood Atonement, verbal inspiration of Scriptures (the Bible is the word of God); salvation by grace, holiness, and miracles.

Many today do not realize how important this movement was and how desperately important it is today. If we go into the not too distant past to the outbreak of World War II, we can get a very clear glimpse of this importance. The higher criticism that brought in liberalism had quite a following in Germany. Fredrich Nietche, the son and grandson of Protestant ministers criticized religion. In *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, he proclaimed, "God is dead." He meant that religion, in his time, had lost its meaningfulness and power over people and could no longer serve as the foundation for moral values. According to The World Book Encyclopedia, "He (Nietche) believed the time had come for people to critically examine their traditional values and the origins of these values." Please compare this last statement to this paragraph from The Encyclopedia Britannica, "The third period of theological liberalism, Modernism, from the mid-19th century through the 1920's was marked by the discovery of the significance of historical time and an emphasis upon the notion of progress. The decisive events

stimulating these interests were the industrial revolution and the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859)." So under the preaching of people like Harry Emerson Fosdick in the United States, the teaching of Thomas Huxley in England, and Ernst Troeltsch in Germany an evil paradigm began to develop. You take evolution as taught by Darwin, i.e. "survival of the fittest" along with questioning the absolutes of the Christian faith, you have trouble brewing. A rejected choirboy from a Lutheran church who used to be so tenderhearted, he would cry over a hurt sparrow, would later write *Mien Komp* and began a hate movement fueled by his twisted mind drunk on liberal theological and philosophical modernism that pervaded in the days of pre-Nazi Germany. The doctrine that says theology must be culturally relevant which is married to evolution, justifies in a twisted mind the attempted eradication of the Jewish people orchestrated by Adolf Hitler. To fail to see this correlation is to be not only spiritually inept, but also to be unaware of world history.

Standing in the way of Hitler and Nazism was the fundamentalist Christian. He was one who rejected the super race, understanding that "*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). He was the one who believed in prayer. During World War II we had record-breaking attendances in American churches. The fundamentalist belief is what brought the Pilgrims from Europe, held us together when we were coming apart in the Civil War, and gave us victory in two world wars.

Today more than ever we need a strong fundamentalist's witness of the saving power of Jesus Christ. Fundamentalists are not the fanatics that need to be "curbed"; they are the faithful who need to be heeded. If the present legal infanticide through abortion is to be ended then a return to the faith is needed! If immorality not only portrayed in our entertainment, but lived out in our citizenry is to be abated, then a return to our faith must become a reality!

Let us not entertain the thoughts that fundamentalism in Christianity is a deterrent to happiness, but rather understand that true old fashioned ideals as those espoused by the basic tenants of our faith are a harbinger to the greatest happiness an individual can pursue.

- Pastor Pope -

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