

# Are You A Baptist or Just A Fundamentalist?

As you read the book of Acts, if you approach it with reconstructed ideas then you will leave the book with a conditioned response. Let me illustrate it this way, if I study American history from Protestant eyes then American history doesn't contain any persecution of Christians in the colonies because the protestants weren't persecuted but rather they were the ones doing the persecution. Only until I study American history through Baptist eyes do I understand that there were only three colonies where strong persecution against Baptists did not exist; Rhode Island, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Just as my understanding of history is determined by the perspective I study it from, so my understanding of the book of Acts is also going to be determined from my perspective. I know most people say that all they need to read the book of Acts is the Holy Spirit. I know that without the Holy Spirit's guidance and help the Word of God becomes a text book with no life-giving, life-changing power, but because we model ourselves after Fundamental Protestants instead of Bible Believing Baptists we put an emphasis on what the Protestants claims to be the most important thing. We need to understand our heritage and how our Baptist heritage has been over-run by Fundamentalism.

Pastor Jim Altar wrote in his book "Why Baptist":

The Evangelical Alliance was formed in late 1800's to fight the wave of liberalism and higher criticism that was coming to America from Germany. From this Union of Protestants came the Fundamentalist movement. From the Fundamentalist movement (which at its beginning was expressly protestant) came the Union revivals and the large city campaigns that we have heard about with D. L. Moody, R. A. Torrey, Billy Sunday, J. Wilbur Chapman and H. A. Ironside. The Baptists who joined in the Union revivals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, dropped their distinctives to run with the Protestants all for the sake of "souls". As time went on not only were our Baptist distinctives lost but we started modeling ourselves after the Protestants because after all they had the bigger crowds. Now when we look back on the Union revivals and meetings and the churches of those days and we feel we are imitating old time fundamentalism and we are but at the same time we are seeing a watering down of Baptists and what we stood for and the reality of the matter is we are imitating fundamentalism but not our Baptist pattern. Baptists have an Ancient Baptist heritage that goes back 1800 years before fundamentalism. This is very important to understand so you can see where our present "perspective" comes from and why in many cases we interpret the Bible as protestants instead of Bible believing Baptists.

From union crusade evangelism in the late 1800's to the modern church-growth methodology of today, every possible doctrinal and theological subtlety has served to diminish local church principles. Jesus charged the local church with the responsibility to "preach the gospel to every creature." This institution would be visible, physical, organized, empowered and carefully disciplined – God's only vehicle of expression in our time. But instead of trusting God's plan and pattern, religious empire-builders have found it expedient to ignore biblical, ecclesiastical principles in order to "reach people." As a result, the most common charge against those who sound the alarm in opposition to compromise is "they are ant-mission... they think they are the only Christians... they are against soul winning." Once this charge is leveled, courage is lost and the advocates for right principles flee, cringing in the shadows.

Unfortunately, even well-meaning, independent Baptist churches will often embrace the kinds of flaccid practices that lead to full-scale apostasy. Though still "conservative" in style, the lack of connection to our awareness of our historical and theological roots will eventually destroy our churches. James R. Beller has illustrated this repeatedly in his works. He quotes Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn who said, "To destroy a people you must first sever their roots." Such destruction is exactly what has happened to the independent Baptist. He has been cut off from his actual forebears (John Clarke, Obadiah Holmes, Thomas Gould, John Gano, Shubal Stearns, Samuel Harriss, Thomas Armitage, J.R. Graves, etc.) and has taken up with Calvin, Luther, Moody, Chapman, Morgan, Sunday, Jones and others. When you leave Baptist

principles, you leave the New Testament pattern for local church faith and practice! At this point, a Fundamentalist will have nothing but style-preferences and time to keep him and his ministry from apostasy.

Men like Thomas Armitage and J. R. Graves opposed unionism, warning that such accommodations would weaken the true church. At the same time, the woeful plague of German Rationalism and Higher Criticism was drawing American seminaries into Modernism. Such union work as personified in the Evangelical Alliance was tainted by the kind of Liberalism that Baptist principles are supposed to prevent, and precisely why the astute Baptists of that day never took up causes with such Congregational campaigners as E. P. Hammond and D. L. Moody.

Here is where it gets a little rough. Most understand the Fundamentalist to be of a completely different ecclesiastical substance than the Evangelical; when actually, they have the same heritage. At one time the terms referred to the same people. During the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, thousands of people, struggling with Modernism, left their denominations to form separate churches; however, most remained in order to clean up their institutions. As is always the case, the liberal majority eventually won the battle of numbers against the Fundamentalist minority, and separation was inevitable. The conflict is in this fact: even in a separatist position, the historic Fundamentalist was a Protestant child who wanted to separate over as little as possible.

How else can you explain Presbyterians, Episcopians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Lutherans, Christian Reformed and Baptists unified in the same group or fellowship? A lot of important things would have to be overlooked. Because of our Fundamental heritage that has overtaken our Baptist heritage we have always been taught that this was alright because they were separated like we were back then and there wasn't really a difference between us and them. I guess if everyone is compromising to come together then they are all a lot alike. Take Douglas A. Sweeney's explanation of where the Fundamentalist surge originated. About the Protestant struggle to purify the denominations he said, "By the early 1910's they formed a massive, cross-denominational movement for reform based on a common acclamation of the "fundamental" or cardinal doctrines of Christianity." (Douglas A. Sweeney, "Who Were The Fundamentalists?" *Christian History and Biography Magazine*, Issue 92, Fall 2006: 15.)

The very word "fundamental" should indicate an attempt to unite with as many as possible without absolutely denying the faith. A firm Baptist would see such efforts as tantamount to compromise.

Seeneey further illustrates the nature of ecumenical union by indicatinig that the early Fundamentalists (A. C. Dixon, R. A. Torrey, etc.) "rallied people from different Protestant traditions to a least common-denominator flag of orthodoxy." Baptists would play a role in this union, as men like A. J. Gordon entered the fray, proving the point of the strenuous Baptists like Graves and Armitage: if you drift from New Testament principles, your denominational entanglements will place your beliefs in jeopardy. A Baptist who is in the "fight for the fundamentals" should have never been in such a compromising position. His principles should have prevented any compromise with Protestant Evangelicals (Moody, Torrey, Morgan, etc.).

A Fundamentalist only holds to 5 fundamentals:

- 1) Inerrancy
- 2) Virgin Birth
- 3) Substitutional Atonement
- 4) Bodily Resurrection
- 5) Authenticity of miracles or the Second coming of Christ

This list of the Fundamentals are the so-called five Fundamentals, identified by the 1910 **General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church**.

A Bible Believing Baptist holds to many more Bible principles along with the basic Fundamentals:

- 1) The Bible is our Sole Authority
- 2) Autonomy of the Local Church

- 3) Priesthood of the Believer
- 4) Two Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper
- 5) Individual Soul Liberty
- 6) Saved, Baptized, Church Membership
- 7) Two Offices: Pastor and Deacon
- 8) Separation of Church and State
- 9) Inerrancy
- 10) Virgin birth
- 11) Substitutional Atonement,
- 12) Bodily resurrection
- 13) Authenticity of miracles or the Second coming of Christ

The results of these entanglements due to severed roots and a forgotten heritage were schools such as Moody Bible Institute, Bob Jones College, Wheaton College and Dallas Theological Seminary. None of these new schools were Baptist. They were formed with the Evangelical Alliance in mind. Their testimony was E. P. Hammond, D. L. Moody, Sam Jones, J. Wilbur Chapman, Billy Sunday and Bob Jones. When Bible believing Baptist pastors sent their young preachers to be trained, they sent them to non-denominational schools which had the Evangelical Alliance as their testimony and heritage.

It is not enough to be conservative. It is not enough to be committed to the fundamentals. It is not enough to be militant in one's stand against Modernism. This much should be expected. It is essential to the future of the cause of Christ that the principles of the New Testament church, as delivered to us by the Lord of the church, be honored in our faith and practice; and uniting with baby-sprinkling Reformers allows no such honor. This would preclude any entanglement with Protestantism – even really conservative Protestants from other countries. One notable Fundamentalist Baptist pastor said, "I am a Fundamentalist before I am a Baptist." This sad reality is usually clear by a person's associations, preaching and methodology.

The term "Fundamentalist" implies that a person is on the militant, conservative side of a "movement" or group. Baptists have no such affiliation if they are true to their principles. Baptists are "called out" and autonomous. The term Fundamentalist became a reference to the militant, separatist wing of Evangelicalism when other evangelicals refused to distance themselves from Modernists. In time, the two terms (Fundamentalist and Evangelical) began to refer to two different groups. The reality that these two terms were once referring to the same group of people is evidenced by the fact that Bob Jones, Sr. and John R. Rice were among the earliest members of the National Association of Evangelicals. At that time at least, they did not view the term "evangelical" as being objectionable.

The problem lies with the fact that a Protestant Fundamentalist is still absolutely wrong on the doctrine of the church. They are still the group that once persecuted the Baptists. They have a totally different eschatology or prophetic interpretation. When their post-millennialism is married to their ecclesiology, the material of the covenant Reformers are the what emerges. These men were as severe toward our forebears as any papist. The result is the substance of a church-state "theocracy," which is only steps away from forfeiting the liberty for which men like Hubmaeir, Blaurock and Wightman died.