

# STRAIGHTWAY

"And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him" [Mark 1:18].

## CHRISTIAN PURITIES FELLOWSHIP

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### **"The Separatist Heart of the Christian Fundamentalist"**

(Preached at the Congress of Fundamentalist, Dunn, NC)

By Dr. H. T. Spence, President of Foundations Bible College

The terms "Fundamentalist" and "Fundamentalism" have fallen on hard times in our contemporary. If one would look for the commencement of its definition change, perhaps it began when Neo-Evangelicalism, in the late 1940s, made its break from the Fundamentalist camp and became its own identify. Many who left Fundamentalism, and joined the "Neo" ranks, left with a bitter taste for their former, spiritual mother. During the 1950s and 1960s, there arose from the writings of such capitulators religious disinformation that placed the Fundamentalist in the definitive camp of negativism, bigotry, and anti-socialism the somewhat "lunatic

fringe" group of the evangelical persuasion. The quantity of this floating debris of disinformation produced a great confusion as to the true Fundamentalist legacy and purpose of existence. This confusion today dominates not only the world's perspective of Fundamentalism but also, sad to say, a good number of men within the camp of Fundamentalism itself.

#### **The Birth of Fundamentalism**

Fundamentalism, in its birth by God, was not a denomination, but a movement, trans-denominational in its influence. The beginning of any historical movement is very fluid; rather

than an organization, its beginning is more of an organism. Biblical movements are to be viewed in the light of God individually leading men. But when any genuine movement moves away from the fundamentals of its birth, the movement will deteriorate in and of itself. The "ist" will become an "ism" which tends to schism. But as long as a biblical movement keeps its founding, fundamental heart, God will honor and empower it for preservation.

The birth of Fundamentalism under the direction of God was different than it is today. One of the great injustices upon the historical view of Fundamentalism is the projection of its present condition upon its past days. It must be remembered that a movement tends to mutate and take on distinctive streams within itself that may not be a part of its birth legacy. And if the present movement knows not its history, it will never discern the mutation. Such an ignorance leads the movement to believe its present definition is that of its past one.

Historical Fundamentalism arose when European Liberalism and Modernism arrived in America. There were men, a few independent and many within denominations, who saw the subtle powers of these Bible-denying apostate systems making their way into America's colleges and universities which in return affected the pulpits. These religious systems arose in great denial of the Biblical legacy of Christianity even to the point of openly attacking the

Christian Faith. Thus, the battle was underway to take over the denominations and churches that in former days had given their allegiance to the "faith once delivered to the saints."

At this time, there were individuals within the academic institutions and in the pulpits of several churches who were moved of God to step forward and defend the Scriptures. We dare not allow the contemporary to impute upon them harsh motives such as "legalism" or "bitterness." History proves them to be "men of piety," men of "communion with God," and "students of the Word." Their writings prove their longing for Biblical purity in both doctrine and life. They became puritans within the system trying to purge their church and academic institutions from the subverting powers of Liberalism and Modernism. They clearly saw the evidence that such powers were quickly destroying the biblical legacy of their spiritual mother church or denomination. What were they to do? Stand aside and tolerate the corrupting forces of heresy blatantly infiltrating their beloved churches and divinity schools? It was in this decisive hour that Fundamentalism was born and its true heart was unveiled.

### **The Doctrine and Practice of Holiness**

Within the womb of Fundamentalism's conception and the spiritual blood of its birth the doctrine and practice of holiness is seen to be its very heart. Although

the distinctives of the view of sanctification may vary, the one crucial context in which all of God's men in history have agreed is that its root is found in the basic idea of "separation." The men, who were part of the birth of the Fundamentalist movement, believed God's people were to be holy and separated people. They were to be separated from the world, from the ever-increasing false religions of their generation, and from the practice of disobedience to the Bible. Because of their heart's desire to "practice" holiness and biblical purity, these men were naturally called to ecclesiastical purity that might demand honorable separation. This separation included both individuals and churches that did not desire to conform to the principles of God's Word.

### **The Puritan versus the Pilgrim**

My dear father, the founder of the Foundations Ministries, back in the late 1970s brought to the forefront a precious truth marked by the terms "puritan" and "pilgrim." These titles were drawn from the great historical scene of the late 1500s and early 1600s in England. When Henry VIII pulled his country away from the Church of Rome, and began the Church of England, a number of ministers strongly believed the "rags of popery" were still a part of the church through the king's "Act of Supremacy" and his view of church government. But such men were divided in their beliefs as to how to approach this spiritual tyranny. Some believed they must

do all they could to "purify" or purge the error from within the church by trying to bring about needed changes of reform. But there were others who believed it was impossible to purify an apostasy; their only response was an exodus of "separation" from the system. Those who longed for reform stayed within and became known as "Puritans." Those who believed that separation from the church was their only recourse were called "Separatists," or later, "Pilgrims."

The early Fundamentalists, at least those within the denominational systems, tried to earnestly purify their churches as the Puritans had. But they eventually came to an impasse that gave clear evidence the system would not change. This impasse was empowered with the fact that there was no desire in the ecclesiastical leaders for a return to the founding root of their church or denomination. Each of these Puritans, led by his own conscience before God, finally realized that he must leave the very church, the very institution, the very denomination he helped to build. The more appropriate description for these men became "pilgrims."

### **A Delay in Taking the Stand**

But candor calls upon us to acknowledge the plight of those within who were trying to purify their church. The Scriptures are clear that churches must separate all unscriptural elements from their own fellowship in order to preserve ecclesiastical purity. But one

of the problems of any Puritan movement is that it tends not to act quickly enough when these unscriptural elements begin to make their inroads into the church or organization. This was true just before the birth of Fundamentalism. Liberals made advances into the prominent positions of leadership and began introducing their polity and doctrinal policies that finally, over a process of time, became the dictates to their church. Dr. David Beale, in his book *In Pursuit of Purity* makes the observation that the first generation Fundamentalists endeavored to "preach these men out of office." But they had to do more than preach; they had to work to get these men out. Secondly, the denominational structure at this time in history "was becoming more and more centralized as the rise of big business was becoming evident in America." The pressure was being placed upon all of the ministers to become more "loyal to the denomination rather than to the Scriptures." Such men were naturally promoted to the higher positions of authority over those who desired to be more loyal to the Scriptures. Church history in this present century proves this to be true of every denomination.

If the needed stand for the Scriptures had taken place in the local church, then the denominations would have been spared the atrocity of Liberalism and Modernism. But the old ecclesiastical maxim reigned with intimidation: "Don't rock the boat." These dear and precious men, not wanting to fight with the brethren, waited in

dealing with the problems hoping such problems would be resolved on their own. Yet, they were not resolved on their own; the aggressive powers of liberalism swiftly advanced into the sacred precincts of the churches and seminaries. When the takeover was evident, there was nothing left for these dear "men of the Book" to do but make their exodus.

But to make an exodus may be easier said than done, for there are no patterns in the New Testament for leaving a church; there are only patterns for keeping a church pure. However, these "separatists," or newly appointed "pilgrims" of providence, found a pattern in the Old Testament exodus from Babylon. To these men Babylon became a symbol of religious apostasy.

### **The Rising Foe Within The Separatist Movement**

As God began to speak to these men individually, each realized there were others of the same mind and heart as theirs. The root of their spiritual legacy was the preservation of the fundamentals of the Faith. Such a heart demanded a separation from the liberalism, modernism, and worldliness that had permanently polluted their places of worship and learning. A corporate organism was born; a movement arose across America during the latter part of the nineteenth century and flourished during the first four decades of the twentieth century.

But another more deceptive and

cunning enemy began to emerge from within the camp of the Fundamentalists. This enemy was found among the disobedient brethren. Scriptures concerning rebellious and disorderly brethren became a new call for another separation. The problem here was not the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith, but the practice of the brethren. Purity of doctrine was the heart's leading in the battle against Liberalism. But purity of practice now pressed the Fundamentalists to reluctantly take another stand in separation, a stand among their own brethren. The new movement within the Fundamentalist movement was Neo-Evangelicalism. Its powerful, sweeping influence took many churches, seminaries, and pulpits into its deception. A practical eroding was taking place within the separatist movement. This "neo" movement not only plied their corrupt wares in critical places of influence but also began attacking the true Fundamentalist brethren by calling their motives "legalistic" and "anti-social." We will admit at this point that perhaps some of the early men in Fundamentalism did not have a magnificent spirit and heart in their militancy against the apostasy. However, it must likewise be acknowledged that there were men who later became NeoEvangelicals that never saw the "heart" and "spirit" of the true Fundamentalist mentors. One of the crucial realities of the Neo-Evangelical movement within Fundamentalism at that time was the forsaking of the doctrine of biblical holiness and the practice of

ecclesiastical purity.

## **A Danger within Any Movement**

In every Biblical movement there is always the inevitable tendency for a variety of factions to eventually emerge. There is the faction of the mixed multitude that attaches itself to the movement. There are also the individuals who personally leave the movement's legacy. And then there are those who make shipwreck their Faith and thus begin to redesign the movement in accordance to their heart's change. When this trinity of factions surfaces, and begins to erode the heart of the Fundamentalist movement, the term Fundamentalist changes in definition. The fundamentals no longer make the Fundamentalist, the organism becomes an organization, and the Fundamentalist becomes Fundamentalism. Thus the organization becomes more important than the fundamentals themselves. When such a transition is made, purity of practice is lessened in importance. The movement itself becomes a system of greater importance than its original heart. It affects everything: the personal life, the music, education, and the lifestyle in standards of dress and living. The reality of such a transition to take place in Fundamentalism destroys the heart of holiness, which is separation; and results in both the heart and the movement being redefined.

Is Fundamentalism coming to another hour of this concern in its history? Are we to see another change to rise within the camp?

## Warnings at This Time in Our History

In II Timothy 2:15-23 the apostle Paul presents six guardian truths that become appropriate warnings to us as Fundamentalists in this season of the movement's history.

The first warning found in verse 15 is the call for "study." Intellectualism has become a formidable enemy of the Truth in our generation. It is imperative for every Fundamentalist minister to give himself to study and especially the study of God's Word. Honorable scholarship is needed among us in order to "rightly divide the word of truth" before our generation. But there is a danger to be heeded in this matter of study. It must be remembered that the Neo-Evangelical movement began within Fundamentalism under the guise of scholarship with the intention to dialogue with the Liberals rather than to reprove their error and heresy. The Neo crowd also believed intellectualism should be the manner of dealing with Neo-Orthodoxy. But this became the downfall of many seminaries. Why is it that by the time a student enters graduate school, the spiritual heart of the student is lost? Why is it that he allows the intellect to become the king of his life as well as the singular weapon on the spiritual battlefield? In such cases Faith takes a backseat, as scholarship becomes the "unfallen hero." This is a necessary warning in the ever-increasing battle about the English translations and the KJV controversy. This controversy

will never be settled by scholarship, for no original manuscript is in the hands of anyone. One must yield to providence and the sovereign working of God in his-tory. We do not even accept the Canon listing because some council decreed it to be so. It is God alone Who testifies to His Canon of Scripture; man simply acknowledges it. So, when doubts arise, we must not allow the incapability of the mind to destroy that form of reason higher than logic: **faith** alone in God's Word.

The second warning, found in verse 16, calls us to "shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase unto more ungodliness." The word shun means to turn one's self about for the purpose of avoiding something. We must not profane those truths that are hallowed by God; we must not "unconsecrate" them with our talk. Levity and joking have a way of destroying the conviction of truth. Reverence is truly a requisite to knowing God. Such profane and vain talk will "increase," or "beat out the path," to more ungodliness. The private conversations between factions tend to increase evil surmisings. It is one thing to deal with the problems of Fundamentalism and another thing to spend our lives in just talking about them. To be consumed with talk, without much speech concerning the Lord, does not lead to edification. My earthly father has often said, "You cannot build a life on what is wrong but you must build it on what is right." There is the danger of overthrowing the Faith by making the battle more important than the Faith.

A third warning, found in verse 19, tells us that the “foundation of God standeth sure” or firm. This seal or inscription in the foundation stone has a two-fold truth to mark itself. The first truth guarantees the security of God’s people: “the Lord knoweth them that are his.” But the other truth guarantees the purity of God’s people: “let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” These two truths must be seen together. Purity of God’s people is part of their security. We must “depart” or stand off from iniquity. This is an unsung truth in our churches amidst our cry for security.

A fourth warning is presented in verse 21: “If a man therefore purge himself from these...” The word purge means to avoid defilement from one in order to keep one’s self pure. We are to separate from communion and fellowship with “these” or vessels of dishonor. If we ever become afraid to break off from certain companions, due to intimidation by others, we will effectually soften our stand. Such a purging is most proper for we cannot trust our own hearts in the softening up to wrong; the wrong will defile us.

The fifth warning, found in verse 22, calls us to “flee” some things. This word is in the present imperative tense calling us to “continue running” from some things. We are told in Scripture to resist the devil. But sin is also dangerous. As Joseph of old, we must take to our heels and run from youthful lusts. Other passages call upon us to

flee fornication, idolatry, and the love of money.

The final warning, found in verse 23, pleads with us to “avoid,” or refuse, or decline in some things. The Fundamentalist must take his stand for truth and right, but there are some questions he must avoid. Uninstructed and undisciplined questions will beget quarrels. Certain people tend to feed on strife. Often questions arise because of a refusal to subject to the will of God, thus bringing about unneeded contentions.

The heeding of these warnings could become a protection to the “heart” of the Fundamentalist. A strong militancy is needed but with a magnificent and wise spirit.

### **An Exodus Made From The System**

I was a young man in my early twenties when my father and I, in the early 1970s, left the Pentecostal denominational system. It was clear to me that the apostasy had devoured that system. Ecclesiastical leaders were railroading their policies without consciousness of principle. Biblical separation had been discarded while prosperity and worldliness filled their lives. The music of Ralph Carmichael and Bill Gaither had become the trademarks of the choirs and special music. And the early allegiance to the Scriptures was being undermined by the visions, voices, and new revelations of the up-and-coming charlatans of the denominations.

There was no recourse of action for me then; I had to make the exodus as my father was doing. The re-fusal of such an action would drive me into the vortex of the apostasy that was claiming ownership of the religious system. When such a system finally becomes apostate, there is no remedy but judgment. To continue as a hopeful Puritan when apostasy had staked its claim on the system would be spiritual suicide.

When we made the exodus, my father had the dear friendship of the Bob Jones family. Their message and lives drew his heart to the Fundamentalist movement (for he had believed in the fundamentals of the Christian Faith all of his life as did his father). Dr. Bob Jones, Jr. especially was an encouragement to him. My father had been saved under the preaching of Dr. Jones, and therefore there was a natural attraction of his heart to this man of example. Dear Dr. Bob Jones, III was also an encouragement to him during these days. As for my young ministerial life the Fundamentalist movement was new to my heart. But I immediately found a kindred spirit through the preaching of such men as Dr. Jones Sr. (through recorded sermons), Dr. Jones, Jr., Dr. Jones, III, Dr. Ian Paisley, and Dr. Rod Bell. These were men of strength in their preaching; their stand was sure and their pulpit call was as my father's. The apostasy was dealt with in their preaching with a good spirit.

My initial literary acquaintance to the Fundamentalist movement came through the writings of George

Dollar. Dr. Dollar gave the following definition of Fundamentalism: "Historical Fundamentalism is the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-Biblical affirmations and attitudes." Although I gained much information through his writings, I never found the "heart" of the Fundamentalist there. The cold, mechanical facts were present, but the search for the "spirit" and "heart" of the movement I had joined was fruitless. It was not until Dr. David Beale's book entitled, *In Pursuit of Purity* made its debut at the World Congress in 1986 that I saw the true heart of this movement's legacy. Dr. Beale gave a fuller, more honorable definition of the Fundamentalist; he revealed its heart and spirit. He stated the following:

"Ideally, a Christian Fundamentalist is one who desires to reach out in love and compassion to people, he believes and defends the whole Bible as the absolute, inerrant and authoritative Word of God, and stands committed to the doctrine and practice of holiness. It is not even a mere literal exposition of the Bible. The essence of Fundamentalism goes much deeper than that. It is the unqualified acceptance of and obedience to the Scriptures."

The founding "heart" of the Fundamentalist movement was seen in this statement. This was another kindred truth to me, for my father had written a book back in the early 1960s entitled *The Quest for Christian Purity*. He wrote it as a



spiritual legacy for my sister and myself. Christian Purity has always been at the heart of his preaching and teaching; therefore, my own soul responded with joy to this acknowledgment of Fundamentalism. I still rejoice in this fact today.

### **A Postscript Call**

To every movement ordained by God in history there is a "heart" to be found. The heart must be the motivational pulse of all the beliefs of that movement. When that heart grows weak and anemic, the movement fluctuates in its appointed course of providence. When the heart dies, the movement is no longer biblically sane and it is no longer spiritually effectual for God's Kingdom. The living, Holy Spirit led organism then becomes a humanly driven organization.

In this year AD 2000, it would be most honorable to spiritually reassess the present course of the movement God has greatly used late in the history of His Church. Is the heart of the movement still among us as Fundamentalists? Where do our loyalties lie? May God find our greatest loyalty in Christ and His Word. Then, from that superlative loyalty, may we recapture the "heart" of the Fundamentalist movement that is found in the precious fundamentalists of the Christian Faith. But that heart includes a steadfast desire for doctrinal and practical holiness of separation. This is what makes a Fundamentalist.

## **FOUNDATIONS BIBLE COLLEGE & SEMINARY JANUARY SCHEDULE**

### **January**

- 4th - Faculty/Staff Meeting
- 5th - Opening of School
- 5th-7th - Special Evening Services
- 8th - Men's Prayer Breakfast
- 8th - Foundations Youth Night
- 30th - Vesper Service

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