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UNDERSTANDING CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM THROUGH AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM

1. The Task and the Approach

The term "Fundamentalism" is of definite Christian origin. It was coined in the early part of the twentieth century in support of a particular Christian ideology and movement within American Protestantism.

Christian Fundamentalism, meaning the concerted efforts of Christian bodies to conserve the fundamental elements of their religion, is almost as old as Christianity itself. And in this sense the New Testament is the classical and the most ancient proof of Christian fundamentalism. Of later history, official Roman Catholicism represents the highly institutionalized and hierarchically centralized form of Christian fundamentalism.

The Christian fundamentalism whose dimensions we wish to explore is of another kind. It is a form of religious fundamentalism which is not readily owned by Christians simply because of the repulsive image it has acquired in recent history.¹ It is a form of religious fundamentalism which accompanies the current phenomenal growth of the evangelical and pentecostal Christianity all over the world. It is a form of religious fundamentalism which a third world Christian group had in mind when it issued on July 19, 1989 a document which charges that "fundamentalism is being vigorously advocated in all countries through almost all Christian traditions such as Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Evangelical and Pentecostal."² It is a form of

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1. David F. Wells and J.D. Woodbridge (ed), *The Evangelicals: What they Believe, Who They are and Where They are Changing*, New York: Abingdon Press, 1975, pp. 31, 172 and 190.
 2. As reported by Ma. Elena Ang in *Maharashtra Herald*, November 1, 1989. I have not been able to get hold of this *The Road to Damascus* document.

religious fundamentalism which has several striking similarities with the Hindu and Muslim reactionary movements in India and elsewhere. It is a form of religious fundamentalism which is considered by some as the saviour, by others as the traitor, of the Christian Gospel.

Investigations into the phenomenon of this type of Christian fundamentalism leaves me convinced that it is too vast and complex a topic to be condensed into an article or a review. Several areas presented themselves for special concentration such as: Christian Fundamentalism and Third World Christianity, Christian Fundamentalism and the Modern Church Union Movements, Christian Fundamentalism and the Present Polarization within Roman Catholicism, and the Responsibility of American Evangelicalism for the Rise and Persistence of Christian Fundamentalism in the World Today.

I have chosen to approach the difficult and complex task before us through the last named topic-namely, to arrive at an understanding of the complex nature of Christian fundamentalism through acquaintance with certain aspects of north American Protestant Evangelicalism. The chief reasons for the choice of this approach are:

- a) Christian fundamentalism has been primarily nurtured on the conservative evangelical spirit of the American churches.
- b) The present outreach of Protestant (evangelical) missions, not only to the Afro-Asian continents but also to the predominantly Roman Catholic Latin American nations and the traditionally Eastern Orthodox Christians of the East European countries, serves as a vehicle for the spread of Christian fundamentalism. This is certainly true of India.³
- c) Unlike the Roman Catholic and several European Protestant churches, the evangelical bodies in north America in particular with their traditional separationist tendencies are not likely to arrest the growth of Christian fundamentalism and thus, in the opinion of some, Christian fundamentalism is likely to be a "third force" in American

3. Cf. Lionel Caplan, *Religion and Power: Essays on the Christian Community in Madras*, Madras: CLS, 1989. Chapter 4 "Fundamentalism as Counter Culture: Protestants in Urban South India."

(and world) politics and a persistent "authentic conservative tradition" among all Christians.⁴

d) The fast growing charismatic movement within Roman Catholicism shows clear signs of affinity with the conservative evangelical elements within American Protestantism.

The chosen approach calls for an extensive and intimate knowledge of the history of Christianity in general and of American theological traditions in particular. I stake no claim to the above qualifications and I am therefore fully aware of the limitations and the selective nature of the present study.

2. The North American Experience

The development of Protestantism in north America provides a valuable clue to the understanding of Christian fundamentalism as such. To situate the fundamentalist phenomenon within north American Protestantism, however, has not been an easy task for scholars in the field. These scholars continue to be in disagreement over the priority they assign to the factors involved in American Protestant fundamentalism. Some stress the theological factors and others the cultural or national factors.⁵

Are the roots of fundamentalism theological or cultural?

Ernest Sandeen, with many others, sees north American Christian fundamentalism as the

alliance between two newly-formulated nineteenth-century theologies, dispensationalism and the Princeton Theology which,

4. On "third force" see Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.* p. 142; On fundamentalism as "authentic conservative tradition" see George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925*, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 200.

5. Vividly representing these two different approaches are (among others): Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism: Toward a Historical Interpretation*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1968 (Quoted hereafter as *Origins*); Idem, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and America Millenarianism 1800-1930*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970. George M. Marsden, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above); James Baar, *Fundamentalism*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977.

though not wholly compatible, managed to maintain a united front against Modernism until about 1918.⁶

By "dispensationalism" he means a novel theological theory which was imported from England to north America in the first half of the 19th century and which divided the history of mankind into seven "dispensations" (periods of time each with its own ground rules for divine judgement) such as Innocence (The Garden of Eden), Conscience (Adam to Noah), Human Government (Noah to Abraham), Promise (Abraham to Moses), Law (Moses to Christ), Grace (Christ to the judgement of the world) and the Millennium or the thousand-year-kingdom of Christ on earth.

Dispensationalists were usually associated with premillennialism, a theological theory which postulated that Christ would return to the earth and then establish his kingdom on earth lasting for one thousand years. The "postmillennialists," however, believed that Christ would return to the earth *after* a divinely ordained thousand years of peace and justice in the world, and accepted the possibility and worked for the actuality of human progress and development in this world itself before Christ returned. The dispensationalist premillennialists by definition tended to take an intensely pessimistic view of the world's future combined with the expectations of God's imminent intervention in human history. Though the idea of millennium is as old as the New Testament Christianity, premillennialism, as Sandeen has rightly pointed out, was a recent innovation and foreign to the traditional evangelicalism of American Protestants.

Whether post or pre. millennialism, in the sense of expectation of the imminent return of the Lord, continues to be an essential ingredient of Christian fundamentalism today.

The other theology-partner in the making of American fundamentalism, according to Sandeen, was the Princeton Theology of literal inerrancy and "plenary inspiration" of the Sacred Scriptures. Sandeen is again right in pointing out that this doctrine did not exist in either Europe or America prior to its formulation by some Princeton-based theologians in the face of mortal threats in the 19th century to the authority of the Bible.⁷

6. Sandeen, *Origins*, p. 3.

7. Sandeen, "The Princeton Theology: One Source of Biblical Literalism in American Protestantism," *Church History* Vol. 31 No.3, (September 1962) pp. 307-321.

There can be no doubt about the absolute nature of the trust which the 16th century Reformation movements placed on the veracity and normativeness of the Bible. That was one main reason for the abandonment of the politically coloured label "Protestantism" in favour of "Evangelicalism," a name proudly accepted by almost all non-Roman Catholic Christianity and by Lutherans in particular.⁸ But even Martin Luther was willing to make a selective approach to the Bible and prefer to accept some portions of the Bible as more true to the "evangel" than others. For examples, he found in the epistle of James "nothing evangelical" and the Gospel of John more evangelical than the other three Gospels.⁹ He was for carving out "a canon within the canon" of the New Testament.

Even for John Calvin biblical literalism which, according to Sandeen, went into the making of American fundamentalism must have sounded new and strange, though he stood for the reliability and infallibility of the whole Bible.¹⁰ The Princeton theologians also claimed that their theory of biblical *inerrancy* (a term consciously preferred by them to the old term 'infallibility') was in perfect accord with the views of Calvin in the matter.

A heavy emphasis on the authority of the Bible, "biblicism" as it is often called, also continues to be an essential ingredient of Christian fundamentalism today.

Thus far Sandeen's interpretation is good. He is however rightly challenged when he goes on to declare that "previous studies of the sociology of Fundamentalism have proved nothing because they could never produce an adequate definition of the subject."¹¹

While admitting that no one approach (including Sandeen's) can yield an 'adequate definition' of the phenomenon, Winthrop S. Hudson is of the opinion that

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8. In India too all the nine Lutheran churches in their names retain the adjective "evangelical" such as the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church . . .
 9. Cf. John Dillenberger (ed), *Martin Luther : Selections from His Writings*, New York: Anchor Books, 1961, pp. 18-19.
 10. Cf. Martin E. Marty, *Protestantism*, New York : Image Books, 1974, pp. 163 ff.
 11. Sandeen, *Origins*, p. 25.

(American) fundamentalism was as much the product of a cultural as a religious concern and that (American) fundamentalist sentiment also was not unrelated to the sweeping tide of hyper-patriotism which was so conspicuous a feature in the early 1920's.¹²

In support of his cultural, as distinct from Sandeen's theological, approach Hudson aptly recalls the remark of H. Richard Niebuhr that the mores and world-views stressed by the fundamentalists had more affinity to the prevalent cultures than to the New Testament Gospel itself.¹³ Confirming the above opinions is the conclusion of George M. Marsden, an incisive analyst of the American fundamentalist phenomenon, that "the working strength of fundamentalism everywhere depended greatly upon the national mood."¹⁴

The alliance of two theological trends alone does not account for the aggressiveness and separatism associated with Christian fundamentalism in the popular mind. It is its militancy which has given fundamentalism its repulsive image and which prompts the fundamentalists themselves to disown the name. Whence, from which theological and/or cultural factors, does fundamentalism derive its militancy?

Christian fundamentalism today, as found in the affluent West as well as among the impoverished third world Christian congregations, is more than millennialism and biblicism. It has certain cultural traits, which, we contend, are part of American Protestantism itself. Though Christian fundamentalism is known for the simplicity of its solutions to the complex problems of the contemporary world,¹⁵ as a movement it is representative of more than just one or two theological innovations or aberrations. In the words of Marsden,

Fundamentalism was a mosaic of divergent and sometimes contradictory traditions and tendencies that could never be totally integrated. Sometimes its advocates were backward looking and

12. Winthrop S. Hudson, *Religions in America*, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1973, p. 369.

13. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 369.

14. Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

15. Cf. *America*, September 27, 1986 Editorial: "The Spirit, the Church and Fundamentalism."

reactionary, at other times they were imaginative innovators. On some occasions they appeared militant and decisive, on others they were warm and irenic.¹⁶

So too are the Christian fundamentalists today. The "sometimes contradictory traditions and tendencies," endemic to Christian fundamentalism, can be traced back to American Protestantism in general and its revivalist tradition in particular. Sandeen remarks that not only Modernism but also fundamentalism resorted to the construction of new theories and theologies – one to accommodate Christianity within the modern faith in science and progress, and the other to conserve the traditional faith.¹⁷ By this he explicitly means:

dispensationalism and Princeton Theology (the core of fundamentalism, according to him) were marked by doctrinal innovations and emphases which must not be confused with apostolic belief, Reformation theology, or nineteenth-century evangelism.¹⁸

With regard to the distinction, implied in the above words of Sandeen, between fundamentalism and nineteenth-century evangelism, Marsden takes a broader view when he declares that he is

convinced that fundamentalism, both in its roots and its manifestations in the 1920's, was broader including not only these two most prominent movements (dispensationalism and Princeton Theology as upheld by Sandeen) but also other aspects of the revivalist-evangelical tradition in America and denominational conservatism, all of which were united as 'fundamentalism' essentially by their anti-modernist stance.¹⁹

In its roots, to borrow Marsden's expression, Christian fundamentalism was and is the continuation of the revivalist-evangelical tradition which is a characteristic feature of American Protestantism. Only revivalism can explain the strengths and weaknesses of Christian fundamentalism.²⁰

16. Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

17. Sandeen, *Origins*, p. 26.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

19. Cf. Chapter by Marsden in Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, 140 no. 7.

20. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

3. Protestant Revivalism and Christian Fundamentalism

American Protestantism represents the merger of the 18th century revivalist impulse with the earlier Puritan ideal of creating a Christian society, or a "righteous empire" as Martin E. Marty calls it, on the virgin soil of the New World. American culture in its social, economic and political aspects was shaped by what Marsden calls "the dynamics of unopposed revivalism."²¹ "The invincible persistence of the revival technique" in America from 1800 to 1860 has been pointed out by Perry Miller.²² Even after the American Civil War (1860-65), in the midst of formidable threats from several intellectual and socio-economic forces to the very survival of the Christian religion, revivalism held the fort to the very end of the 19th century, especially in the person of the businessman-turned-evangelist Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899).

Traditional American revivalism had to fight the irreligious Enlightenment to which the three doubting Thomases among the founding fathers of the American nation (Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and Thomas Cooper) had surrendered. Modern fundamentalists had to fight in modern times the same Enlightenment in the form of Biblical criticism, Biological and Social Evolutionism, Comparative-Religionism and Socialism. No wonder, therefore, several of the peculiar traits of revivalism are also found in fundamentalism. Let me list a few here.

a) Like revivalism fundamentalism too thrives on its insistence that the core of Christian life is to battle against worldliness and apostasy. Hence the strict prohibition among Christian fundamentalists of certain personal pleasures (such as smoking, drinking, gambling and cinema-viewing) the avoidance of which are looked upon as main symbols of separation from the worldly, unconverted and unsaved.

b) American revivalism grew in the same culture that produced the individualistic liberalism of American political and economic system. Like the revivalism of the past, modern fundamentalism too stands for democracy and free enterprise. Whether the "Protestant (Puritan) Ethic" contributed to the furtherance of the "Spirit of Capitalism" or not,²³ both old

21. Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

22. Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

23. Cf. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (first publication in 1904).

revivalism and new fundamentalism uphold individual "conversions" as the key to the transformation or redemption of mankind.

A student of Christian history may point out a contradiction here between Calvin's doctrine of "election" and the revivalist-fundamentalist promotion of voluntary individual "decisions." The same contradictions are there in revivalism and fundamentalism.

Another contradiction lies between the 16th century Reformation insistence on the total moral depravity of man and the Wesleyan type of revivalist faith in the perfectability of man. No wonder, it is pointed out by historians, methodists were far behind the Baptists and the Presbyterians (the two traditions intimately linked to the Calvinist theology) in espousing the cause of fundamentalism.

c) Another common trait in which revivalists and fundamentalists share is the fixed antithesis between truth and error which allows little room for doctrinal development and openness to other religions and ideologies.

Here too an inherent ambivalence bordering almost on contradiction is noticeable. While Puritanism, as the word implies, stands for fixed antithesis between truth and error, revivalism has not always shown a spirit of intolerance towards doctrinal differences among Christians. One is reminded of John Wesley's famous dictum: "Is thy heart as my heart? Then give me thy hand."²⁴

Revivalism has not been consistent in its choice between the head and the heart in the Christian message. So too has undulated the attitude of fundamentalists – head and heart, doctrinal rigidity and non-doctrinal spiritualism have had an uneasy co-existence within fundamentalism. This is but one aspect of what Carl F. Henry, a neo-evangelical as distinct from the fundamentalist, calls the "uneasy conscience of Modern Fundamentalism."²⁵

d) The fourth common trait between revivalism and fundamentalism is the ambivalence towards the social order: a theocratic (Calvinistic) tradition of subordinating the civil order to the church, and a separatist tendency to lift the individual conscience above such authority. As a

24. Quoted in Hudson *op. cit.*, p. 278.

25. Cf. Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

result, revivalism and its heir, fundamentalism, do little more than "the shining and polishing of the status quo." They are becoming, both in the West and among the younger churches of Afro-Asia, virtually "synonymous with the unmitigated complacency of traditionalism." This is true of both Roman Catholic and Protestant fundamentalism today. There is a danger of American Christianity, whatever be its present form – fundamentalism or neo-evangelicalism – becoming more and more the creature of American culture rather than its creator.²⁶

To conclude this subsection of the study, Christian fundamentalism is more than the alliance of dispensationalism and Princeton Theology. It is also old revivalism with its characteristic emphases on the avoidance of worldliness, naked individualism, antithesis between truth and error, ambivalence towards doctrine and piety, and complacency of traditionalism.

4. Varieties of Fundamentalism

The students of contemporary Christianity may wonder whether what I have described as Christian fundamentalism is not the same as the evangelicalism acknowledged and promoted by all committed Protestant Christians today.

Why call it fundamentalism? Why not simply evangelicalism? The truth of the matter is that Christian fundamentalism has almost always existed under the name of conservative evangelicalism. It has passed through so many stages and it is the coalition of so many minor and major movements within Christianity that it is well nigh impossible to give one single description of it which would correspond to its various manifestations.

Take, for example, the following verdict of Harold Ockenga, the advocate of "Neo-evangelicalism":

The new evangelicalism embraces the full orthodoxy of fundamentalism, but manifests a social consciousness and responsibility which was strangely absent from fundamentalism.²⁷

26. Cf. Wade Clark Roof, "The New Fundamentalism: Rebirth of Political Religion in America" in Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe (ed), *Prophetic Religions and Politics: Religion and Political Order*, New York: Paragon House, 1986, pp. 18 – 34; Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 371 ff; Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

27. Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

This verdict may not be acceptable to all the critics of fundamentalism because there was a particular phase of fundamentalism when, together with orthodoxy, social consciousness and responsibility were very much alive and vibrant in it. It was at the same time a fundamentalist form of Protestantism.

In this subsection of the study I propose to outline the several forms of Christian fundamentalism which are not always chronologically differentiated and which may therefore overlap and even coexist in the same person. My aim in doing so is to help the readers recognize the historico-theological antecedents of several of the current manifestations of Christian fundamentalism today.

Four such forms may be christened as follows: Proto-fundamentalism, Early Fundamentalism, Militant Fundamentalism and Latter-day Fundamentalism.

a) Proto-Fundamentalism

No words are expressive enough to describe adequately the impact of the devastating blow the modern world inflicted on Protestant Christianity in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. For a Christianity whose professed single source of authority was the Bible it was indeed too much to take. This was particularly true of American evangelicalism.

The attack came simultaneously from several quarters: Biological and social evolutionism of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, Biblical Criticism from Germany, the study of comparative religions leading to the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893 (in which Swami Vivekananda represented Hinduism), the socio-psychological interpretation of the religious phenomenon made popular by E.D. Starbuck and William James, the popular atheism of Robert Ingersoll and Walt Whitman, the industrial and the consequent social unrest generated by prolonged strikes in the USA by labour organizations, the economic polarization stemming from the rapid urbanization of the American people, and the like.

Under the circumstances it was but natural that committed Christians turned conservative and set out to uphold certain "fundamental teachings" of Christianity. Influenced by the newly imported theory of dispensationalist premillennialism, the annual Bible Conferences centered around

a Niagra group starting from 1868 did issue periodically lists of such "fundamental truths" on which, according to them, true Christianity subsisted. The lists however were neither uniform nor consistent. Fundamentalism as such had not yet emerged.

The truths usually listed as 'fundamental' were: inerrant verbal inspiration of the Bible, Virgin Birth, Resurrection, total depravity of man, substitutionary atonement and premillennial Second Coming.

The period from 1860 to 1900 may be regarded as the preparatory stage when, in its bid to counter the easy accommodation liberal Protestantism was making with scientific Modernism, American evangelicalism, almost as a whole, was willing to assume a fundamentalist posture. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church its own kind of fundamentalism could be firmly established by one single papal decree – Pope Leo XIII's letter "Testem Benevolentiae" (1899) condemning "Americanism," a heresy supporting Catholic liberalism whose advocates were thought to be cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop John Ireland and Bishop John J. Keane.²⁸ In the absence of such centralized authority, the excesses of Protestant liberalism could be countered only by an evangelicalism with certain fundamentalist trends. We call this Proto-fundamentalism.

It turned the hitherto prevalent postmillennialism into premillennialism.²⁹ While the latter whipped up an all-consuming fervour for missionary expansion, as evidenced by the birth in 1886 of the Student Volunteer Movement with its slogan "Evangelization of the World in our Generation," tolerance (except of course anti-Roman Catholicism) and social concern still remained the hallmarks of this proto-fundamentalism. It was the period of the formation of John R. Mott the ecumenical pioneer and Josiah Strong the advocate of the Social Gospel, both very much under the influence of Moody.

Moody himself, whom Marsden has no hesitation in calling the "principal progenitor of fundamentalism"³⁰ was, inconsistently perhaps, devoid of such traits of fundamentalism as pessimistic view of human nature and religious intolerance. Commenting on Acts 17:30 (God

28. Cf. Hudson, *op. cit.*, pp. 247–259; J.T. Ellis, *American Catholicism*, Image Books, 1965, pp. 112–117.

29. Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

“commendeth all men to repent”) he insisted that this left no room for innate depravity, predestined election and human inability.³¹ To a question as to Jesus’ expectation of his disciples’ attitude towards error, he replied:

Christ’s teaching was always constructive . . . let us hold truth, but by all means let us hold it in love, and not with a theological club.³²

Proto-fundamentalism was hardly distinguishable from evangelicalism though it represented a hardening of the traditional pre-critical view that God had communicated to the world in a definitive manner certain fundamental truths through the Christian religion.

b) Early Fundamentalism

To this stage belongs the publication and free distribution of twelve booklets (“volumes”) with the common title *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth* (1910–15). These booklets represent three developments in American evangelicalism: decline in the popularity of revival campaigns in the northern half of the USA already from the latter part of Moody’s life; the takeover of the fundamentalist movement by premillennial elements represented by Moody’s successors like A.C. Dixon and R.A. Torrey; and the open support of wealthy businessmen for the cause of fundamentalism.³³ Starting with the two oil barons of Los Angeles, Lyman and Milton Stewart, who financed the publication and free distribution of *the Fundamentals*, American capitalism came over to support the cause of fundamentalism.

At this stage, roughly from 1900 to the end of World War I, Christian fundamentalism, as represented by these twelve booklets, showed itself hesitant and unsure of its next step.

The name “Fundamentalism” had not yet been coined – that came in 1920. Fundamentalism had not yet been made synonymous with patriotism – that was to happen after the experience of World War I. In fact, more than one-fourth of the contributors to these booklets were from

31. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

32. Cf. Marsden, *op. cit.*, pp. 43–44.

33. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

outside America. As Marsden points out, the trenches had not yet been dug deep for the coming fundamentalist battle.³⁴

This "Early Fundamentalism," as represented by these booklets, was marked by tolerance towards theological differences among the evangelicals. The article on "The Coming of Christ" in Volume XI is very moderate in tone and bestows sympathetic consideration on the postmillennial views of some of the fundamentalist theologians.³⁵ The article on "The Church and Socialism" goes so far as to declare:

there can be no doubt that capital is often cruel, that at times it depends upon injustice and tyranny and frequently exploits the helpless and produces misery and distress . . . some (capitalists) are quite comfortable under what they regard as orthodox preaching, even though they know their wealth has come from the watering of stocks and from wrecking railroads and from grinding the faces of the poor.³⁶

Similarly, on the relationship between Science and Sacred Scripture there is a rare spirit of openness, to the extent of including among the great Christian men of science James McCosh (1811-94) who was once condemned for his espousal of evolutionism which in his opinion "contained a large body of important truths."³⁷ In the same way, Biblical Criticism as a help towards the understanding of the Word of God was welcomed in the article on "Holy Scripture and Modern Negations."³⁸

Most significantly indicative of the mood of Early Fundamentalism was the invitation of Robert E. Speer to write on "Foreign Missions or World-wide Evangelism." Speer, a disciple of Moody along with J.R. Mott and Sherwood Eddy, advocated the democratic and humanitarian dimensions of the missionary work. In the article under consideration he sounds very 'unfundamentalistic' when he disapproves of the "overcoloured, distorted accounts of those who see only the good of Christendom and only the evils of heathenism," and he approves of the

34. Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

35. *The Fundamentals : A Testimony to the Truth*, Chicago : Testimony Publishing Company, n.d. Vol. XI pp. 96-98.

36. *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, pp. 114, 118.

37. *Ibid.*, Vol. IX pp. 23-24 (also Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 267).

38. *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, p. 33.

observation of Adolf Harnack (the liberal theologian almost hated by the fundamentalists) on the unity of human beings as brothers and sisters under one Father.³⁹ The significance of the inclusion of Speer's views in the *Fundamentals* will be all the more impressive when we hear later in this study the great fundamentalist J. Gresham Machen and some present-day opponents of the "Bread for the World" organization deny the non-Christians the right to be called children of God.

All things considered, what we call Early Fundamentalism exuded a spirit which was totally absent in the period after World War I.

c) Militant Fundamentalism

It is this phase of Christian fundamentalism which the present-day advocates of fundamentalism would like not to be reminded of. It is also this phase of fundamentalism which secular writers and news reporters have in mind when they refer to the monster of fundamentalism in religions.⁴⁰

Among the factors that contributed to the growth of fundamentalist theological militancy among American Protestants after World War I two may be mentioned here. One is the more aggressive and radical form which liberal Protestantism was continuing to develop. The other is the mood of intolerance towards dissenters, coupled with hyperpatriotism and anti-German feelings. In 1918 Billy Sunday, the successor to Moody, in his prayer before the USA House of Representatives, referred to the Germans as a "great pack of wolfish Huns whose fangs drip with blood and gore."⁴¹ As Paul Carter has pointed out, "fundamentalism may have been not so much one of the causes of that wartime and postwar intolerance, as has so often been assumed, as it was one of its victims."⁴²

In 1919 was founded the World Christian Fundamentals Association in Philadelphia. In 1920 Curtis Lee Laws, the editor of *The Watchman-*

39. *Ibid*, Vol. XII, pp. 69-71.

40. Cf. *Hindu March* 27, 1990, "Fundamentalism rearing its head in South Yemen"; *Hindu* February 5, 1990 reporting on the firm stand of the governor-designate of Rajasthan against 'Fundamentalism.'

41. Marsden; *op. cit.*, p. 142.

42. *Ibid*, p. 207.

Examiner coined the Word "Fundamentalists" to designate those "who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals." This belligerent mood was responsible for the numerous divisions that took place in the 1920's within the American churches and the heresy-hunt that was unleashed on teachers of theology. This mood was also not unrelated to the rabid anti-Roman Catholicism of the recently revived Ku Klux Klan in the 1920's.⁴³

The ablest spokesman of the militant fundamentalism was J. Gresham Machen who in protest against liberalism left Princeton in 1929 and founded his own fundamentalist seminary and the orthodox Presbyterian church. In his *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923) he has stated the fundamentalist case with rare clarity and cogency. Let me rapidly list here below some of his theological standpoints:

a) "Passion for light" is the need of the hour. Modern hostility to doctrine is to be condemned because "doctrine was the very basis of his (Paul's) life." "Christianity for Paul was not only a life, but also a doctrine, and logically the doctrine came first." "If christianity is to be made independent of doctrine, then Paulinism must be removed from Christianity root and branch" (pp. 18, 21, 23, 26)⁴⁴

b) "Jesus was a theist, and rational theism is at the basis of Christianity." "Creed is not a mere expression of Christian experience but on the contrary it is a setting forth of those facts upon which experience is based." Christianity is not mere emotionalism, but tested rationalism (pp. 57, 19)

c) The universal fatherhood of God which according to the liberals forms the "essence of Christianity" (Harnack) is not to be found in the teachings of Jesus at all. God's fatherhood is only in relationship with the redeemed. Fatherhood with regard to non-Christians would dampen the zeal for missions (pp. 59,60, 61, 158)

d) The greatest sin of the modern age is its loss of the sense of sin and its "supreme confidence in human goodness" (pp. 64-65)

43. *Ibid*, pp. 189-191.

44. The numbers within the brackets refer to the pages in J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934 edition.

e) The Roman church is preferable to liberalism on account of the former's fundamentalist stand with regard to the Scriptures and "the great early creeds." (p. 52)

Finally, the belligerent mood of this phase of fundamentalism egged the political leaders on to bring about anti-evolution legislations in the Southern States. This led to the notorious "Monkey Trial" at Dayton, Tennessee in the summer of 1925 at which the State won the case against John Scopes, a local school teacher, who went against the State law by teaching evolution in his classroom. But "the obscurantism, violent language and smear tactics" exhibited by the militant fundamentalists on the occasion "so alienated public opinion generally that there was little prospect that the fundamentalists would gain control of any major Protestant denomination."⁴⁵

d) The Latter-Day Fundamentalism

Humiliated by the "Monkey Trial" of 1925 fundamentalism went almost into hiding. It however refused to give up the fight and die. It kept on complaining that "nine out of ten dollars, if not ninety-nine out of every hundred of them were given by fundamentalists and filched by modernists."⁴⁶ The ethos and spirit of fundamentalism was carried forward into public life by the National Association of Evangelicals which was founded in 1942 ostensibly to counteract the ultra-fundamentalism of the American Council of Churches inaugurated in the previous year.

The fundamentalist spirit within American evangelicalism attempted to oppose the formation of the UNO and the UNESCO on the plea that the latter may lead to "universal atheism."⁴⁷ The mounting public anxiety during the Korean conflict and the Red-hunt of the McCarthy era paved the way for the gradual re-emergence of what Marsden calls "the Latter-Day Fundamentalism"⁴⁸ in the person of Billy Graham, initially the chosen successor of William B. Riley, the head of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association, to the Presidency of the fundamentalist North-western Schools in Minneapolis. Associated with all the

45. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 370.

46. Cf. Walter Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., p. 31.

47. Wells and Woodbridge, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

48. Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

US Presidents since Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953–61), Billy Graham's evangelical fundamentalism appealed to the ultra-conservative elements of the American population by its condemnation of deficit spending, "give-away foreign-aid programmes," immorality in high places, the influence of "big labour" (not big business) the infiltration of the "left wing" into schools and churches.⁴⁹

The same fundamentalist version of Christianity is being echoed by a group of West German theologians who oppose contribution to the "Bread for the World" organisation on the ground that it promotes this-worldly theology and such unbiblical concepts as the universal fatherhood of all mankind irrespective of religious affiliation.⁵⁰ Another 'televangelist' with a zeal to reduce the political to the religious is the American Jerry Falwell. He has no hesitation in declaring that "ownership of property is biblical. Competition in business is biblical. Ambitious and successful business management is clearly outlined as a part of God's plan for His people."⁵¹

One is reminded here of the biography of Jesus by Bruce Barton called *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925) which for two years during the phase of militant fundamentalism headed the non-fiction list of best-selling books in the USA. Jesus was therein presented as a master salesman who forged twelve ordinary men into the best management team of all time.⁵²

Jerry Falwell brings out the cultural components of Christian fundamentalism when he declares: "For America to stay free we must come back to the only principles that God can honour: the dignity of life, the traditional family, decency, morality and so on."⁵³

On moral issues such as abortion a strong fundamentalist *Moral Morality* or *Religious Right* is being built up today. Ethical fundamentalism is bringing down the traditional walls between the churches – Catholics and Protestants are being united on moral issues:

49. Hudson, *op. cit.*, 384.

50. Cf. Gnana Robinson, *First World Fundamentalism Frustrates the Poor*, Madurai: TTS Publications, 1987.

51. Roof, *art. cit.*, p. 23.

52. Hudson, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

53. Quoted in Harvey Cox, *Religion in the Secular City: Toward A Postmodern Theology*, New York: A Touchstone Book, 1984, p. 29.

Doctrinal fundamentalism is being replaced by ethical fundamentalism. Will it survive? Yes, seems to say the Second International Congress on World Evangelization at Manila in July 1989 in which over 3000 participants from about 170 countries participated. Though couched here and there in phrases borrowed from the World Council of Churches documents, the "Manila Manifesto" in its twenty-one Affirmations and their official "elaborations" betray certain basic tendencies of the Christian fundamentalism of the early twentieth century.⁵⁴

5. Conclusion : Answer to Hindu Fundamentalism?

Christian fundamentalism is more than the alliance of two or more academic and abstract theologies.

It is a coalition of several, often mutually contradictory, tendencies: biblical literalism, premillennialism, puritanism together with subservience to Western culture, separatism together with denominational conservatism, individualism and avoidance of small individual pleasures, doctrinal rigidity and non-doctrinal spiritualism, preference for the traditional social order, anti-evolutionism, courtship with big business, exclusivism with regard to other living faiths and ideologies, anti-socialism, anti-communism, anti-ecumenism, denial of the universal fatherhood of God, rational theism together with anti-intellectualism, political conservatism to promote Western imperialism, deification of competition and free enterprise, lack of social consciousness, opposition to all forms of liberation theologies

If all these tendencies are promoted in varying degrees by Christian fundamentalism in third world countries like India, it is because they were all part of the making and development of modern Christian fundamentalism as it emerged out of the American conservative evangelicalism.

Every modern nation, as social scientists point out, has experienced "religiously defined traumas and contests arising out of the transition to modernity."⁵⁵ Hindu fundamentalism in India is an expression of such trauma and contest, as was the case with Christian fundamentalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But the question is: Is Christian fundamentalism with its American evangelical overtones the answer to Hindu fundamentalism? Why then are new Christian groups, deeply influenced by the dominant theological and cultural traditions of American evangelical revivalism, springing up all over India?

54. Text in *Ecumenical Press Service*, 89, 08, 39 (August 1989)

55. Cf. Marsden, *op. cit.*, p. 227.