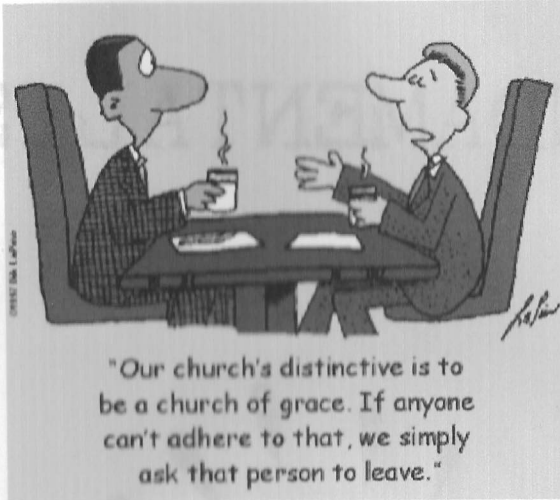


*My sojourn in*  
**FUNDAMENTALISM**



by  
***Frederick L. Pattison,***  
***A Christian!***

**“By their fruit you will recognize them.” -- Matthew 7:20**



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## Introduction

What you will find that I have written in this booklet is from **personal experience**. I was not born into a fundamentalist Christian family. In fact, my parents and grandparents on both sides of my family were **Episcopalians**. If you know anything about that denomination you know that it is normally anything but fundamentalist. I was born in Westchester County just north of New York City. My family then moved to Brooklyn where I attended grade school for a short time before moving again this time to Nassau County on Long Island. It was there where I grew up. While living on the island we attended the local Methodist Church as there were no Episcopal churches close to our home. I was confirmed in that Methodist Church.<sup>1</sup> However, that church did not fulfill my spiritual need. In some respects I view myself from early childhood as a seeker something on the order of the early preacher *Roger Williams*. As a young teenager my search led me to the local **independent fundamentalist Baptist church in our community**.<sup>2</sup>

It was while I was attending this church that I came into a **personal relationship** with Jesus Christ. It was also in this church that I became **exposed to legalistic fundamentalism**: no dancing, no consuming of alcohol in any and every form, no smoking, no card playing, no attending movies, etc. It was at this point in my life that I began witnessing for Christ. I believed that nearly everyone that I knew was headed for hell unless they came into the same understanding of what I had come to believe. I actually began preaching when I was 16 years old. After graduating from high school I attended fundamentalist, dispensational Bible colleges. While pastoring my first two congregations<sup>3</sup> I was an extremely rigid legalistic fundamentalist Christian. I was a very zealous and enthusiastic young Christian but often did not display a great deal of finesse.

<sup>1</sup> **Hillside Methodist Church** in the Herricks district of New Hyde Park, NY.

<sup>2</sup> The **New Hyde Park Baptist Church** located in New Hyde Park, NY. Whether this church has continued on this course now I do not know.

<sup>3</sup> These two congregations were **Bethel Bible Christian Church** in Garden City Park, NY and **Faith Baptist Church** in Tucson, Arizona.

It has taken a number of years to shed much of my legalistic fundamentalist mindset. In fact, certain vestiges of my past fundamentalist background continue to haunt me at times.

As you will discover in this booklet I continue to adhere to the basic fundamentals of the historic Christian faith. I prefer to refer to them as the foundational teachings rather than as the fundamentals of the faith. The term “*fundamentalist*” as used today has taken on a negative connotation. I’ve viewed anti-fundamentalist sites on the Internet and have discovered considerable misinformation, anger, bitterness and sheer hatred directed towards fundamentalist Christians on many of these sites. This is not my intent. In many respects I am very grateful for my past experiences and believe that God has granted me wisdom to move on; to mature in the Lord.

It should be noted that the fundamentalism of today is not just a set of beliefs, rather it has become a mindset; a subculture; somewhat cultic in some circles.

I am now in my twilight years of living life. I have not given up my faith in Christ. Hopefully, my faith and walk with God is closer today than it was during my zealous youthful years when I condemned nearly all who disagreed with me. I continue to be an evangelical Christian in my beliefs but have distanced myself from the commonly held fundamentalist mindset. I have since come to realize that the label one wears is incidental to the individual’s walk with God. God has a people everywhere. No, I’m not a universalist, rather I am simply a Christian who loves God, has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and believes that the bottom line of our historic biblical faith is love: love for God and love for one another. See – Matthew 22:34-40.

I offer this booklet from my personal perspective on how I believe fundamentalism has evolved into what it has become today.

*Frederick L. Pattison,  
Strawberry - 2007*

## Fundamentalism

Just as Judaism has evolved from the initial call of God to Abraham and Sarah in like manner our Christian faith has evolved. The Judaism of today is considerably different from the Judaism of the days of Moses and the prophets even as Christendom today is considerably different from that of the original apostles and the first companies of Christians during and shortly after New Testament days. The earliest believers only had the Hebrew Scriptures, i.e., *Old Testament*. After Pentecost these early disciples of our Lord worshipped in the Temple courts in Jerusalem. See – Acts 2:46. They also began meeting in one another’s homes with some continuing to meet in the local synagogues until they were expelled from them because of their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. These early Messianic believers had come into the understanding and belief that Jesus is the promised Messiah, Savior and Lord. In their gatherings these new believers prayed in the Name of Yeshua [Jesus]. They began studying the Torah and the Prophets with a new understanding of their fulfillment of the Messianic promises and prophecies. They also broke bread eating and fellowshiping together remembering the death, burial and resurrection of Christ while anticipating his return.

*“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42) NKJV*

The gatherings of these early believers became what we know today as “churches” or “ekkllesias.” Gentiles in increasing numbers began flocking to this Message that we call “the Gospel” [evangel], i.e., *the Good News of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.* See – Ephesians 2:8-9.

As they assembled together, usually in each other’s homes, they praised God, offered thanksgiving, prayed, worshipped and broke bread (eating together). They also studied the Hebrew Scriptures. Keep in mind that this was before the New Testament had been written and compiled. Various writings in letter form began circulating among these companies of believers. Many of these letters now make up what we call the

**New Testament.** With the passing of time and the rapidly growing number of believers some of these gatherings began being held in other facilities in addition to homes. Eventually, when persecution subsided, separate structures were erected enabling larger numbers of believers to assemble with the **house church concept** diminishing although it is once again **growing rapidly** throughout the world. I believe that there is a place for both house gatherings as well as gatherings in specially dedicated structures.

Questions were being raised as to what place the **Jewish observances and practices should have.** *Were the followers of Messiah obligated to continue these practices and observances?* A division was brewing which eventually came about. **Some believed** that it was necessary to **continue** being Jews, hence observing the practices, ceremonies, and festivals of Judaism whereas other followers of Christ believed that this **was not** necessary. A **Council** of the leaders of the church was held in Jerusalem to which **the Apostle Paul and Barnabas** attended and presented their case as to why they believed the new Gentile disciples of Messiah **were not obligated** to continue the Jewish practices. We read of this meeting in **Acts chapter 15.** The result of this council meeting was that **Gentile believers were not Jews, did not become Jews,** hence were **not obligated** to continue Jewish practices, observances, rituals, etc. History reveals that those Messianic believers who continued to cling to their Judaism were known as **Nazarenes.**<sup>4</sup> Those followers who **rejected** the continuance of Jewish practices became known as **Christians.**<sup>5</sup> Eventually the Jewish party of Messianic believers were absorbed into the larger body of believers thus for the most part **losing their Jewish identity.** I believe that it is unfortunate that few Christians today know and appreciate **our spiritual roots** in Judaism. I have material dealing with this subject. I also am available to offer seminars on this subject to any group.

With the rapid growth of the churches there rose a need for compiling statements of belief. There were understandings un-

<sup>4</sup> No relationship to the modern holiness Church of the Nazarene sect.

<sup>5</sup> See - Acts 11:25-26.

der the New Covenant that **varied** from traditional Judaism. These new followers of the Messiah came into a **clearer understanding** of belief in such basic or foundational teachings as **the Trinity, the deity of Christ, his sacrificial atoning death, bodily resurrection, etc.** Keep in mind that these **earliest** followers of the Messiah **did not have** a completed written New Testament.

**As the churches grew** the body of belief that the majority of Christians accepted further developed and was finer tuned for clarity. An example of this was the doctrine<sup>6</sup> of **the Trinity [Trinity] of the Godhead.** We Christians believe that the one true, living, eternal God is **revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Three Persons, yet One God.** As the **basic teachings** of the Christian Faith became better known through the **writings** of the New Testament and **the early Church Fathers** what we know and accept as Christian doctrine was put into writing as exemplified by **the ancient creeds.**<sup>7</sup> This developing of Christian belief as **distinct** from Judaism came to be known as **'orthodoxy.'**<sup>8</sup>

By far the **majority of Christendom** held the basic body of orthodox belief up **until comparatively recent times.** Orthodox belief held that **the Bible is authoritative.** This was in fact **the chief cornerstone belief of the Protestant Reformers** of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The **Roman and Eastern churches** had come to believe that **tradition and dogma,** determined by the hierarchy, were **equal in authority** with the Scriptures **whereas Protestantism and the more radical Anabaptists believed** that the Bible **alone is the final authority** in matters relating to belief, faith and practice. Through the centuries **the majority of Christendom** did not question the deity of Jesus Christ, his virgin birth, sinless life, literal miracles, atoning sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection from the dead. However, this all **began to change** toward the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and into the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This **questioning** of orthodox belief became **the breeding ground for Christian fundamentalism.**

<sup>6</sup> The word "doctrine" means "teaching."

<sup>7</sup> Especially the Apostles' and Nicene creeds.

<sup>8</sup> The word 'orthodox' means: right, straight or correct teaching.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and now into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, various forces both *inside* Christendom as well as *outside*, have **joined together** to challenge, question, and deny **basic biblical Christian beliefs**. *Charles Darwin* and his evolutionary hypothesis seem to have been a major point at which **the bedrock tenets** of the historic Christian faith began to be questioned. I am one of those people who **continues** to believe that **God *is* Creator**. In this matter I do not get caught up on the "**how**" God accomplished the work of creation. Questioning the validity of holy Scripture has gained such momentum that it now appears unstoppable. **Higher criticism**, fostered by a number of so-called European scholars who analyzed the Bible from a literary and historical point of view, began **questioning the veracity** of the Bible. As **secularism** began devastating Europe **an increasing number of theologians** attempted to make the Christian Faith more compatible with contemporary trends. This resulted early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with a **division** among Christians as to whether the Bible was and is what it claims to be. Or is the Bible just another book; maybe a great book, maybe even the best book, but nevertheless a book containing an admixture of truth with errors, misinformation, false teachings, etc? **Prior** to this **the Bible** was considered God's written revelation to humankind. This all changed. Questioning **the Reformed position on the authority** of the Bible and questioning **basic biblical teaching** came into vogue. Many seminaries and theologians grabbed hold of this teaching resulting in many pastors of the churches questioning **the tenets** of orthodoxy including the authority of Scripture. Considerable **controversy** resulted. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century **spawned** what became known as **the controversy between Fundamentalism and Modernism**. Nearly every major Protestant denomination<sup>9</sup> was affected by **this controversy** with seminary professors, pastors, theologians, etc. taking one side or the other. It was during this time that **the terms 'fundamentalism' and 'fundamentalist'** in conjunction with a group of Christians came to be used.

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<sup>9</sup> Such Protestant denominations as the Methodists, Presbyterians, Northern now known as the American Baptists, Disciples of Christ, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, etc. were affected by this controversy.

Today there is **considerable confusion** when these terms are used. **What do they really mean?** In the news media we read and hear of fundamentalist **Christians**, fundamentalist **Muslims**, fundamentalist **Hindus**, fundamentalist **Mormon polygamists**, fundamentalist **Jews**, fundamentalist **Buddhists**, etc. Some denominations are labeled today, by the news media and some other Christians, as fundamentalists. These usually include **the Southern Baptists, Missouri and Wisconsin Synod Lutherans**, various **Pentecostalist churches** and a number of other Christian groups. Technically speaking not every person or church affiliated with groups that are labeled fundamentalist fully fit into this category. **The Religious Right** is a product of a number of fundamentalists, evangelicals and charismatics who are actively seeking to accomplish an **agenda** that appears to me to be **a clear violation** of the biblical premise of the separation of Church and State. The term '**fundamentalist**' often gives the impression that it is a **monolithic force** in the world with the same purposes, goals, values and beliefs. However, this is not necessarily always the case. There are **wide variations** among the fundamentalist and militant forces within each world religion although in certain respects there are some similarities. **Militancy** to one degree or another among fundamentalists of the various religions seems to go hand-in-hand as does **separatism**. Various forms of **legalism** are often a by-product of fundamentalism.

**My main concern** is how fundamentalism relates to our Christian Faith. In **my youthful days** of zeal and enthusiasm I was a die-heart fundamentalist of the legalistic-separatist variety. I was associated with a group of churches known as **the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC)**. This group of churches had originally split from what was known as the **Northern Baptist Convention** now known as the **American Baptist Churches (ABC)**. For a time I attended the **Baptist Bible Seminary** which is a GARBC approved school. In an effort to be what I perceived as biblical my early preaching was to a large degree legalistic. I hate to admit it but at times my messages and stands were largely lacking in Christlike love. I guess that I was what some would refer to as a "**fundy**" in the sense of promoting a zealous faith

but **lacking** in godly wisdom and **short on** Christian love. Through the years God has been maturing me.

Originally to be dubbed a fundamentalist had a **different connotation** from what it has developed into today. The term has for the most part **lost its original meaning** and **has become** a term of embarrassment to many Christians like myself who **continue to hold** to biblical authority and **the basic tenets** of the **historic faith**. Though I continue to embrace these basic tenets, I **now distance myself** from much of the fundamentalist mindset as it has developed and manifests itself today.

### The Birth of Fundamentalism

Christian fundamentalism is largely a twentieth century phenomenon although its roots go back to "The Great Awakening" during the frontier days of our country. It was the time of brush arbor meetings led by preachers and would-be preachers who were mostly Methodists and Baptists. Many of these preachers had great zeal and enthusiasm but frequently little else. A lot of them *were not* equipped with substance to adequately minister the Christian message. Some of these preachers "**claimed**" that they had **direct contact** with God. Conversions, some genuine while others were the result of sheer emotionalism, and baptisms proliferated throughout the frontier during that time. How many of those conversions were 'real' must be **left with God**. Because of what appeared to be shallow there was **reaction** to what was happening. Some of this reaction was good while some created more confusion. **High-powered emotionalism** was the order of the day. Many people got 'religion' and got 'saved' **over-and-over again!** It was probably during this time that the so-called "sinner's prayer"<sup>10</sup> became widely used resulting in an easy believism which remains with us today. Whenever an evangelist or new preacher came on the scene many of **the same people** became his converts. These statements are not meant to discredit every preacher of that day. Many of them were greatly used by God as they sought to share the Good News of the Grace of God.

<sup>10</sup> This ministry offers a booklet "An Evangelical Deception" on this subject.

Upon entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century battle lines were drawn among Protestants. **Fundamentalism is largely an American movement**. Contrary to what many fundamentalists would like us to believe this movement **does not** trace its roots to the apostles nor even to the early churches. In some respects it was a **reaction** as to what was happening in Europe because of German higher criticism. In 1910 **Lyman Steward**, who was a wealthy oil man from southern California commissioned a group of writers and teachers to produce what became known as "**The Fundamentals**". These were written to **help combat** what was happening within some of the seminaries, denominations and local churches. A group of Christian leaders, seeking to defend **the trustworthiness** of the Scripture and **the basic teachings** of historic Christian belief, began raising their voices. They **objected** to what they viewed happening within Christendom. A series of articles under the title, "**The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth**" in 1912-15 were published. This series of articles had **64 writers** from the United States and England who came from various denominations. This **series** of writings outlining fundamental or basic beliefs were sent, free of charge, to over three million pastors, missionaries and seminary students. The articles contained in this series **defended** the inspiration and authority of the Bible, **the orthodox doctrines** of the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the atoning substitutionary sacrifice, the bodily resurrection, Christ's ascension back into heaven, the promise of the literal return of Christ at a future time, the personality of the Holy Spirit, as well as a host of other biblical teaching. It was **the intent** of the writers of this series to **aid Christians** in their grasp and understanding of **established historic Christian belief**. Originally it appears that there was *no desire* to promote separatism or extreme militancy which rapidly became **the watchword** of fundamentalism. The emphasis was **originally on recovery** of the historic biblical truths of the faith as necessary and believable for modern times. Unfortunately **this mindset changed** to what fundamentalism has become in our day.

A number of Christian leaders concerned as to what they viewed happening in their churches and denominations held a conference known as **the Niagara Falls Bible Conference**. This Bible Conference had been in operation since 1878. **Its**

purpose was to **define** those beliefs which they deemed were **fundamental or basic to Christian belief**. It was from this conference that the movement gained momentum. The group was led by Baptist editor **Curtis Lee Laws** calling themselves "**fundamentalists**." This label stuck. It appears that **the term fundamentalist originally meant:**

*"Belief in the basic teachings or doctrines of the Christian Faith that had come originally from the apostles, the ancient creeds, the Protestant Reformers, and the historic Confessions of Faith."*

Not all of those leaders who held the fundamentals liked the term "**fundamentalist**." One such leader was **J. Gresham Machen** who refused to wear this label. *Machen* was a Princeton Seminary professor who sought to keep his Northern Presbyterian denomination from falling into unbelief and denial of historic faith. *Machen* studied at John Hopkins, Princeton and spent time abroad at the Universities of Marburg and Gottingen. He eventually created division within the Northern Presbyterians forming his own denomination which became known as **the Orthodox Presbyterian Church**. Unfortunately this small sect today is **at the forefront** of a modern movement actively **seeking** to place a Christian government in power in our nation. A government such as this would **restore the laws** that were spelled out for the ancient Jews **under the Old Covenant**. This movement is referred to as "**Reconstruction**" among many fundamentalist-type Calvinists while Charismatics refer to it as "**Kingdom Now**" theology. Whatever its label I am of the opinion that it is **heretical** and very **dangerous** to freedom and to the biblical teaching that we refer to as the separation of Church and State.

### The Fundamentalist Road

In the 1930s, fundamentalism began to forsake its original premise. Originally it was largely a belief system seeking to preserve basic Christian belief. **Fundamentalism has since become a militant mindset**. It has taken on a negative, mean-spirited fighting separatist spirit. Fundamentalists have a tendency to **create** confusion and division within their denominations and churches. False slander, vicious accusations, un-

godly and un-Christlike attitudes and behaviors are **often displayed** to the detriment of Christian love and unity. **Militant separatists** led by such men as *Bob Jones, Sr.*, *Carl McIntire* and *J. Frank Norris* frequently tore into anyone who disagreed with them on the slightest matter. They **often** had trouble even getting along with each other. They **claimed** to be **defenders of the faith**. Yet, the faith that they sought to defend was more often than not at odds with **the simplicity of New Testament Christian Faith**. I have come to realize that fundamentalism and New Testament Faith **are not always synonymous**. It is my desire to simply be a **Christian without** displaying a fighting, mean-spirited, angry, militant fundamentalist mindset who appears to be out to destroy rather than to **build-up** the Body of Christ. It should be noted that originally many associated with fundamentalism stressed **evangelism and Christlike living** rather than the strong emphasis today that tends to focus on political and assorted side issues.

From its earliest roots the fundamentalist movement that **evolved pooh-poohed social concerns** which our Lord emphasized during his ministry while on earth as recounted in the four Gospels. With its **extreme form of dispensational theology** fundamentalism has been able to conveniently **dismiss** the message of Jesus in such passages as the Sermon on the Mount<sup>11</sup>. **Extreme dispensationalism claims** that our Lord's teachings are for another age or dispensation not applicable to Christians today. Fundamentalism has largely **spawned** a religion that is largely **lacking** in Christlike love. A religion filled with legalism creating a cold, dead, stern, austere orthodoxy. There is little more spiritually deadening than this kind of religion. **Concerns over the environment, health and human rights issues, peace, welfare, and the plight of the poor** that went hand-in-hand with the practices of Christians who took the Bible seriously in the past **were and continue to be side-stepped** by many, if not most, fundamentalist Christians today.

**Before the days of the Civil Rights Movement** it was largely fundamentalist-type Christianity who were the strongest

<sup>11</sup> Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount is recorded in Matthew chapters 5 through 7.

defenders of the infamous Jim Crow laws. Some fundamentalist preachers were KKK members. As barriers between the races began breaking down it was **often the fundamentalist-type churches that kept** those bars up. During the days of the Civil Rights marches **some** of the fundamentalist churches in the south posted **armed guards** at their doors to prevent any **African-Americans** from entering their sanctuaries . . . as if any right-thinking black Christian would even want to enter through the doors of such an institution. Many of the leaders of **godless segregation** invoked their view of what they said was **"the old-time religion"**. The infamous **Curse on Ham teaching, totally taken out of its biblical context,** proliferated in fundamentalist circles.

As a fundamentalist Christian during the fifties I **vehemently opposed racism.** While in high school I stood squarely against the racism that I found existing among many of my white classmates. My first congregation was made up largely of African-American Christians who accepted me as their pastor. I continue to have a **special spot** in my heart for this congregation. While shepherding this congregation the pastor of my home church gave me a telephone call one day to inform me that what I was doing was wrong, against the Bible and that if our small **inter-racial** congregation would build, the building would probably be burned down. Needless to say I never had further contact with this **"so-called"** man of God.

It appears to me that fundamentalist Christians often are **their worst enemy.** They tend to be **suspicious** of one another. Fundamentalist schools and churches continue to **fuss and feud and divide.** Amongst themselves they have continued to set up standards for fellowship which often exclude those fellow Christians who have even minor differences on less important issues. They tend to **major on minors.**

*Whatever happened to seeking to fulfill the prayer of our Lord for unity as recorded in John chapter 17?*

Through the years **fundamentalist militancy** has developed. Many fundamentalists pride themselves in being what they refer to as **"fighting fundamentalists!"** Wow! I wonder

**"What does the Prince of Peace think of this?"** My impression of many fundamentalist Christians is that they are angry, harsh, narrow, legalistic, unhappy with life, at times vicious, accusatory of anyone and everyone who differs from them on one iota. I could go on-and-on. I need to say that I do not hate or dislike fundamentalist Christians. Doctrinally, but not politically, **I am one with them.** I only **detest some** of the present day fundamentalist **shenanigans** especially in the Movement's political realm, in **areas of social justice** and their **quick condemning** any and all who disagree with them to hell. My heart goes out to them that they, too, may find the joy and peace of Christ that I have found in **my liberation** from a rigid, legalistic, judgmental, militant fundamentalism.

### **Are Pentecostals Fundamentalists?**

Whether Pentecostals are fundamentalists or not is a difficult question to answer. Strictly speaking Pentecostal Christians place a far greater emphasis upon **experiential** Christianity where fundamentalists place the emphasis on **doctrinal** Christianity. Fundamentalists emphasize what they deem as **"correct"** doctrine. Most fundamentalists are strong advocates of **separatism** from any and all Christians who differ from them one iota in understanding or interpretation in doctrinal matters. This means that many **fundamentalists** are **at odds** with each other to the point of refusing fellowship with their own kind. Whereas **Pentecostals and Charismatics usually do not** place a strong emphasis on **doctrine** as do fundamentalist Christians. Unfortunately there are some teachings **infiltrating** various Pentecostal and Charismatic groups that I personally **do not** accept as being in accord with the historic biblical faith. Some Pentecostals, like fundamentalists, have a tendency to be legalistic and judgmental.

It should be noted that **both** the Pentecostal and the Fundamentalist movements experienced phenomenal growth during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and now into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This growth has been most pronounced in the third world countries but is also happening on a smaller scale in our country as **mainline churches** continue their downward plunge as they **compromise the tenets** of the historic biblical Christian faith.



## The Legalistic Approach

Many fundamentalists today continue to hold a narrow and legalist approach to the faith. **Prohibitions** against what is often viewed as “**worldly behavior**” are common. However, some young fundamentalists today appear to be **easing up** on some of the old, outdated legalism of their forebears. Many others are exiting the ranks of the fundamentalist fold. Unfortunately many of these folk have been so burned and disillusioned by fundamentalism that they walk away from all forms of Christianity. This is unfortunate and indeed tragic.

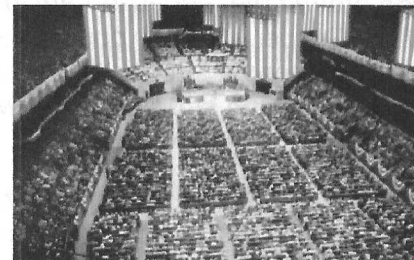
Fundamentalist Christians are usually quick to label all **mainline churches** as false, apostate and of the Antichrist. Many fundamentalists are convinced that Pentecostals are satanic. These fundamentalists **view** certain gifts of the Holy Spirit, when evidenced in Pentecostal or Charismatic churches, as demonic. Fundamentalists are also vocal in their condemnation of the more moderate evangelical congregations, even those evangelical churches that are somewhat fundamentalist in their own approach to the faith.

It's somewhat difficult to define what and who is a fundamentalist today as there is **no** single movement. Though many theological conservatives are considered fundamentalists by those who are theological liberals, yet **this is not** always true. Some groups may be in a sense fundamentalist, but in other respects **do not** fit into a strict fundamentalist mode. Some evangelical groups that are labeled fundamentalist by others may be true only in a broad sense. They **do not** belong to what we label the “**Fundamentalist Movement**”. i.e., *mindset*.

## Billy Graham a Special Target

Through the years the world famous evangelist **Billy Graham** has become a major target of fundamentalist vehemence. Many fundamentalist Christians view Graham as an enemy of the faith. **On the internet** there are a number of fundamentalist sites that appear to take delight in **lambasting Graham**. It's not so much what he says and preaches that causes these fundamentalists their displeasure with him rather it is **the fact** that he recognizes that there are followers of Christ scattered **throughout** the wide spectrum of Christendom including the

Roman Church. **God has a people everywhere!** I admire Mr. Graham in that he refuses to respond to his fundamentalist critics but seeks to maintain a Christlike attitude toward them. Unfortunately **his son Franklin** does not always appear to follow the example of his evangelist father. **Billy Graham recognizes** that there is a **wide range** of theological belief and understanding and just **so long as Christ is not denied**, he can work with others who may differ with him personally but who recognize and acknowledge **the deity** of Jesus Christ. I had the privilege of working in **the 1957 New York Graham Crusade** in Madison Square Garden as a young preacher in my twenties. During that crusade there were **groups of fundamentalists who**



(Picture above of Crusade in NYC)

**nightly picketed the meetings.** At that time in my life I was shepherding Bethel Church on Long Island and though I was a fundamentalist myself I **did not** oppose Graham but was one of the Graham Crusade workers.

In an article appearing in USA TODAY about Mr. Graham the article stated that “*he deliberately **avoids** being associated with **the religious right** at a time when many conservative Christians are flexing their political muscle, trying to shape America from the schoolyard to the Supreme Court.*”

The article went on to reveal that Graham “*wasn't invited to speak at 'Justice Sunday,' the April 24 [2005] event sponsored by the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family. That program, simulcast on nationwide TV from a Louisville church, featured religious-right leaders blasting Democrats' plans to block President Bush's federal judiciary nominees, a move they called a 'filibuster against people of faith.'*”

Whatever you think of President Bush's nominees I become concerned when Christian leaders advocate political positions publicly. **I take the Anabaptist position of complete and total separation of churches from the political realm.** Partisan politics, whether Democrat or Republican, court churches

for its own benefit. Unfortunately, many fundamentalist and other **conservative Christians** buy into **this deception** as do many **theological liberals** who are at the other end of the political spectrum.

The USA TODAY article then stated, "Today, as many fundamentalists and traditionalists refuse to share podiums with people who don't share their exact vision of salvation." Mr. Graham stated, "There are a lot of groups that feel a little bit strange around me, because I am inclusive. . . Evangelism is when the Gospel, which is good news, is preached or presented to all people," he says, When his soft, low voice shades deeper and stronger at the word "all," it recalls the deep trumpet tones of his prime."

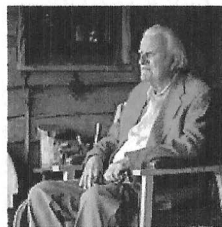
Graham was asked whether he believes that God has forsaken America. His response, according to this article, was a fast and firm: "**Nooooo!**"

*"The Lord said, 'I will never forsake you.' No matter how sinful we are, how bad we are, God loves us. At least from my [Graham] point of view, I believe he sent his Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us because he loves us and he doesn't have any termination to that love."*

I had not originally intended to spend so much time as I have discussing Billy Graham in this booklet. However, I do believe that rather than criticizing this brother he needs our love, support and prayers especially in his declining years. **I do not always agree with all of the positions of this brother.** I believe that he presents an "**easy believism**" emphasis in his quest for "**decisions**" for Christ **without** emphasizing the Lordship of Christ. Yet, I praise God for raising him to declare Christ to the world.



(Graham as a young preacher on the left, Graham at home in North Carolina at age 86 on the right)



## The Republican god

In fundamentalist circles it would appear that God, if not actually a Republican the **GOP**. The of government and the rest of the world the true stance of **President George**



can, at least favors United States, its form its attempt to police is often lifted-up as Christianity. **W. Bush claims**, that our nation is "**the good against the evil.**" The fundamentalist approach is increasingly a "**God and Country**" attitude and the Christian who dares question this approach is quickly branded "**liberal**", **un-American**, and/or **un-Christian**. Many fundamentalist churches promote a **hyper-patriotism** in which they seem to believe that the United States can do no wrong. This frightens me. **American flags** are featured prominently in their places of assembling. Their mega-churches often feature elaborate Independence, Memorial, and Veterans Day activities. You may ask "**What's wrong with having the American flag in churches?**" God **is not** into nationalism. The Christians in **Nazi Germany** at first saw nothing wrong in allowing **Hitler's borrowed Hindu emblem, the swastika** in the form of the new Nazi German flag from appearing in their sanctuaries. Only later did their nation come under **the domination** of the evil Nazi regime. *Could this happen in enlightened America?* **Time will tell.** I believe that it's **dangerous** to mix nationalism with our Christian faith.

As I compile this booklet our nation is engaged in war. The United States appears to believe that it has been called **to police** the rest of the world. I know full well what I am about to say will probably offend some. However, I need to say what I need to say whether it is accepted or not. During the sixties our nation was involved in a bloody and I believe needless conflict in **Vietnam**. During this time fundamentalist churches were often gung hoe to "**kill**" those commies.

*"When young people being drafted to fight this war-without-a-plan balked, fundamentalism allied itself, as it had during the McCarthy witch hunts, with America the Righteous. The*

American flag was regularly saluted in worship services. To protest the war was to protest America and to reject God.”<sup>12</sup>

Personally, I see very little difference in the war that our alleged “born-again” president has seen fit to lead our nation into than the Vietnam conflict. I view **both wars** as hopeless, needless and out-of-step with our real **Commanded-in-Chief, Jesus who is the Prince of Peace.**

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the late fundamentalist Baptist preacher **Jerry Falwell** began his **Moral Majority**. Through his TV ministry, school and literature he and his cohorts sought to marshal fellow fundamentalists to his pseudo-political/ religious cause causing **renewed fervor** among many fundamentalists throughout the nation. Numerous fundamentalist leaders have been on center stage in **their quest** to influence the political scene of the nation. Unfortunately many of these voices have been **causing confusion and divisiveness** within the Body of Christ. Some of these individuals have influenced and have literally taken over much of the **Evangelical Movement** as well. In jest some have referred to the Republican Party – **the GOP** as “God’s Own Party.”



**When will these Christians realize that God is neither a Republican nor a Democrat? God is not even an American nor is the American flag flown at God’s throne! God alone is “King of kings and Lord of lords.”**

On the positive side it appears that an increasing number of theological conservative Christians are seeing the danger in aligning the faith of Christ with a political party. It is vital that the people of God pray for those in authority while at the same time keep their hands off of pushing sectarian agendas.



<sup>12</sup> A quote from page 17 of the Preface of the book, *Growing Up Fundamentalist* by Stefan Ulstein, published by Inter-Varsity.

## King James Version Only!!

Although not all their use of the English James Version an do. Some fundamentalists declare that all other English are of Satan. Many are convinced that every other translation of the Bible is out to destroy the Christian Faith. Across the USA there can be found scores of fundamentalist churches boasting that they are “**King James Version Only**” churches. There are numerous web sites toting the premise that the King James Version of the Bible is the most accurate of all translations **in spite** of the fact that **evidence** proves otherwise.



To tie oneself to the **KJV** just **does not** make much sense to me. The newer translations with their current vernacular are far **easier to read and understand** by the non-believer as well as by children and youth. **These translations** are also **more accurate** as they incorporate manuscripts that have been discovered that were **unknown and unavailable** to the **KJV** translators. I still continue to love and appreciate the poetic beauty of the **KJV**. In my personal Bible study, teaching, preaching and writing I **use other translations** in addition to the **KJV**. I especially enjoy the **TNIV (Today’s New International Version)**. This is a de-gendered and revised edition of the **NIV**.

## If Not a Fundamentalist, What then?

We are told that today **fundamentalists** make up about **20 percent** of the American population. Most of these are law-abiding citizens but it is estimated that a small minority of the population belong to assorted **fringe churches** and operate a kind of **low-level terrorism** such as **advocating attacks** on abortion clinics, holding **unspoken forms** of racism and anti-Semitism, are part of militant militia movements, etc. Many of these folks appear to be



obsessed with **various conspiracy theories** claiming that the Jews, liberals, homosexuals, feminists, etc. are out to control our nation and ultimately the world. **Conspiracy theories** are nearly always **forms of paranoia**.

The news media and the general population often portray all Christians who accept the basics of **the historic biblical faith** as legalistic fundamentalists. **This is very unfair**. Whether a group is fundamentalist or theologically liberal, **there are extremists** to be aware of in each group. Rather than referring to myself as a fundamentalist Christian, though I **adhere to the basic fundamentals of the faith**, I prefer to be simply known as a Christian who continues to adhere to **the foundational teachings** of historic Christianity. Though I **am an evangelical, not a theological liberal in my doctrinal stands**, I believe that it is **vital** that I maintain a **Christlike spirit** in my relationship toward **other Christians** regardless of their theological premise. I believe and accept the Bible as God's divinely inspired written Word, hence I seek to be **obedient** to biblical truth. I seek to **avoid** being constantly negative and on the defensive. **Romans 12:17-21** exhorts us as to how we are to relate to others, even those who would oppose us. As I noted earlier **God is neither** Republican nor Democrat. God is not white nor is God an American. God is **neither** a liberal or a conservative as we define these terms. **God is God! God alone is sovereign. God reigns and rules and I am part of the kingdom of God. Why must we human beings continually seek to pigeon-hole God?** As to who is part of God's kingdom I choose to leave entirely up to God without making judgments.

As a Christian holding to **the foundational tenets** of the New Testament faith I **part company** with the **"God and Country" posture** of fundamentalism. While I **love my country and appreciate** the freedoms of our nation, I cannot overlook the fact that Christianity is bound up with no secular national system, but instead is a worldwide faith, i.e. *catholic*.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> The word "**catholic**" in this sense simply means **universal**. It is not referring to any particular church, sect or denomination. I have a booklet titled, **"Catholic, But Not Roman!"** You may obtain this from Strawberry Views.

**No secular country** has had a corner on God's truth or God's blessing other than **ancient Israel**. I am fearful of those fundamentalist religious leaders and their **"Religious Right"** who seek to **make** the United States a "Christian nation" where its adherents would **compel** people to accept Christianity as they define or interpret it or suffer the consequences that its leadership would impose upon dissidents. As disciples of Christ we must **keep before us** the fact that **the primary work** of the Church is to love, worship and adore the Triune God and to win non-believers to Christ.

Unfortunately fundamentalists and many Charismatics give the impression that **true Christianity** started with them or with their pastor who started their local church and maintains the church as his/her special domain [kingdom]. As a student of Church history I fear that these Christians have little understanding and appreciation of the struggles and circumstances which marked the founding of the various denominations. **Ask the average fundamentalist or Charismatic** who Peter Waldo, Jan Huss, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, Archbishop Cranmer, Menno Simons, John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, and countless others were and what they did for the faith and you will probably get a **blank stare** from them. Not only do the majority of them not know the heritage of our Christian faith, but it appears to me that most of them could care less. How tragic! Many fundamentalists sing, **"Give me that old-time religion"** but I'm not really sure just what is meant by this.

- **Does it mean the religion of frontier days?**
- **Or the religion that resulted from the Reformation.**
- **Or the faith of the apostles?**

### **What About Evangelicals?**

The term '**evangelical**' is a good term, however today it is changing and subject to **considerable diversity**. There are many under **the umbrella** of calling themselves evangelicals who are in reality fundamentalists **too reticent** to use that description of their positions. Others use the evangelical term loosely not fully understanding its roots and implications. We are told that when the Protestant Reformer **Martin Luther** was

gaining a following in Germany he encouraged his followers to be known as evangelicals. However, this did not happen. His followers became known as **Lutherans** contrary to their founder's wish. Many Lutherans to this day continue to be known as evangelical Lutherans. Many of the early **Anabaptists** desired to be known as evangelicals, however **their enemies** dubbed them Anabaptist or re-baptizers.

The word "evangel" is simply another way of saying, "gospel." The evangel or Gospel is of the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is the Message that our world needs to hear and heed: ***Christ died for our sins, he was buried, he rose bodily from the grave, ascended to the Father in heaven and will one day return; that he alone is Lord!*** This is the full, authentic, only gospel-evangel. This is the bottom line of authentic Christianity. **See – Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-5; Galatians 1:6-9.**

### **Moderation is the Key**

As a disciple of Jesus Christ I am convinced that **moderation is the key** to the unity that Christ so earnestly prayed that his followers would experience and actively promote. **With moderation** must come **agape**, the highest aspect of love for God and for neighbor. I **grieve** that our fundamentalist Christian brothers and sisters appear to be so intent on **majoring on minor issues** and debating that the Body of Christ continues to be **divided** beyond repair. We need to **major** on basic foundational truths of the New Testament **allowing freedom** to others in their understanding and interpretation of doctrines that do not deny with **the tenets** of the historic biblical faith.

I like the ancient maxim ascribed to *Saint Augustine* and used by the Moravians and other Christians groups which aptly states:

**In Essentials – Unity,  
In Non-essentials – Freedom,  
In Everything – Love!**

As a follower of Christ, who now distances himself from fundamentalism as a mindset and movement, I've discovered that people such as myself are often subject to the ungodly, un-

Christlike wrath and judgment of some fundamentalists who view people like me as traitors. A person who rejects **the rigid fundamentalist mindset** brings accusations of being apostate, having never really been "**saved**" or not an authentic Christian, as well as being a betrayer of the Faith. Many fundamentalists appear to be **confused** as to what and who a Christian is. A Christian **is not** one who dots their i's and crosses their t's in the exact same manner. Rather, **a Christian is** one who has a **personal relationship** with God through Jesus Christ. It is sadly true that **fundamentalism alienates** many people. Because of its' extremely **negative and exclusive attitudes** everyone outside of its definition of Christianity is **doomed to hell.**

I'm somewhat leery of those Christians who "**claim**" to have **all of the answers**. They appear to believe that **they know everything** about everything by virtue of who or what they are. Some fundamentalists teach that the **Roman Catholic Church** is "**the whore of Babylon**" mentioned in the Book of Revelation believing that **the pope will be the Antichrist**. Whether this will be so or not I simply do not know. However, I do know that if we stop and listen there are or have been **many fundamentalist popes** as their teachings and words are **elevated** to near infallibility by their followers. Few fundamentalists really read the Scriptures for themselves. **They nearly always buy into the "party line."** *Whatever happened to the Reformation principle of soul competency?*

In spite of the accusations that may be hurled at me for rejecting a rigid legalistic fundamentalism, I am just as much of a disciple of Christ as I was when I first came into a personal relationship with him. I **have not abandoned** the faith of the apostles, though I'm not so sure about the faith that is portrayed by many fundamentalists. I am a Christian who believes and **firmly holds to the basic fundamentals** of the historic Christian faith but **I am not a part** of what has become known as **the Fundamentalist Movement**. I **continue** to accept the Bible as God's divine revelation to humankind. **The Bible is my authority** in matters relating to **faith, doctrine and practice**. I hold firmly to the **precepts and basic tenets** of the historic biblical Faith. . .**so where does that place me?** You need to judge for yourself. My theologically conservative

friends often consider me a “liberal” whereas my theologically liberal friends regard me as a **fundamentalist**. I guess I need to **simply** be me, a **disciple and follower** of Jesus Christ, part of the elect of God.

Contrary to what some more rabid fundamentalist Christians think and have in writing me off I have not gone off into apostasy nor have I abandoned the historic biblical faith “*that was once for all entrusted to the saints*” (Jude 3b). In fact, I continue “*to contend for the faith.*” Where I differ with my fundamentalist friends is that in contending for the faith, as set forth by the original apostles, I seek to do this **contending** in love rather than with a **vicious spirit** that often characterizes some followers of Christ. I am convinced that **love** is the greatest weapon that God has given to the Body of Christ.

In this material I have sought to share some of my personal journey as a believer and disciple of Jesus Christ.

***Am I now headed for hell because of my forsaking the fundamentalist movement?***

No, absolutely NO!!

I have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. I claim **my assurance** upon this promise,

***“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*** (Romans 8:1)

As a believer, one who has experienced the new birth, I am “in” Christ therefore I face no condemnation.

I also like what the apostle Peter wrote on this subject,

***“Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”*** (1 Peter 2:10)

I am as much if not somewhat more of a dedicated disciple of Jesus Christ now than I have ever been in my life. I’ve been

able to shed much of the useless baggage, the legalistic and narrow approach to life as well as the bitter, critical, harsh judgmental spirit that seems to be the lot of so many fundamentalist Christians. I love the Lord and it is my desire to continue to live for him and to serve him until that blessed day when he calls up to be with him for eternity.

## May we hear from you?

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HC 1, Box 1529

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Email – [strawberryviews@mypayson.com](mailto:strawberryviews@mypayson.com)

Web Site – [www.strawberryviews.com](http://www.strawberryviews.com)

### A Postscript

In this booklet there is one area that I did not touch upon. When writing this material it did not occur to me that there might be some readers who would be interested in knowing that in addition to whom I am as a Christian who has been a fundamentalist I am also a Christian gay man. Fundamentalist Christians are especially condemning of those of us who are not into their concept of who and what is a Christian. This ministry has considerable material dealing with being Christian and being gay.