

Introduction

- Historically, a Fundamentalist was a Christian who held to the five *fundamentals* outlined in the 1910s.
- The Fundamentals were a reaction against the religious liberalism that began in the 1850s and beyond.
 - Julius Welhausen is *the father of religious liberalism*.
 - Religious liberalism is the worldview that values *rationalism* over *revelation* and is sometimes called *German rationalism* or *Higher Criticism* (a term which is chiefly associated with a critique of the text of Scripture, but is only used of religious liberals).
- Religious liberalism and historic liberalism are completely different.
 - Historic liberalism advocated the *liberty* of individuals.
 - Progressive Liberalism is the liberalism today, and it is almost polar opposites of historic liberalism and advocates the role of the State in the protection of equalities (rather than a minimal role of the state in the protection of basic liberties).
 - The USA was built on historic liberal principles: the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.
 - The “liberal arts” were the *liberating arts* of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, music, grammar, rhetoric, and logic.
 - Religious liberalism is not directly associated with the liberal movements above (though is almost exclusively associated with progressivism).
- The five fundamentals:
 - The inspiration of Scripture (The Bible is God’s Word)
 - The virgin birth of Jesus Christ
 - The substitutionary death of Jesus Christ
 - The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ
 - The historic reality of the miracles of Scripture.

The Current Problem

- In the 1940s the *Evangelical* movement arose as a *softer, gentler fundamentalism*.
- Today, evangelicalism is in crisis. It is quickly becoming either:
 - Neo-Calvinistic – a.k.a. “young, restless, and reformed” (YRR). This movement emphasizes social action for the capturing of a society for Christ. The founder of Neo-Calvinism, Abraham Kuyper, said, “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’”
 - Pragmatic – a.k.a. “the church growth movement.” It will do “whatever it takes” to see more people in the pew.
- And both versions of evangelical theology are quickly becoming almost completely progressive socially, as seen in their social, racial, and economic “justice” focus.
- The biggest part of the problem: *you can scarcely find an evangelical that does not hold to the five points of fundamentalism*.
- If fundamentalism can clarify the differences between an evangelical and a fundamentalist, it can then attract evangelicals who will be fleeing the collapse of evangelicalism in the coming years.
- There are four fundamental adjustments that fundamentalists can make to help welcome evangelicals.

Adjustment #1: Strengthening the Anti-Ecumenical Argument.

A fundamentalist is against ecumenicism, but hasn't explained why.

- The *ecumenical* movement is *churches working together to fulfill the church's mission*.
- On the surface, this sounds wonderful, natural, and pragmatic. It also seems to have a fantastic "curb appeal," based on the many "unity" Scriptures in the Bible.
- Fundamentalist Christians are the ONLY Christians who have rejected ecumenical involvement.

Some History

- From the 1966 minutes of the Southern Baptist Convention: *William C. Huddleston (Ark.) protested the seating of the messengers of the First Baptist Church, Russellville, Arkansas, and moved that they be denied official seats in the Convention because this church has departed from the traditional practice of "regular Baptist" churches by officially adopting a doctrinal statement which advocates the practice of open communion and the acceptance of alien immersion.*
 - While the motion was ruled out of order, it shows the *non-ecumenical* nature of the convention at that time.
- At that same meeting, the convention adopted a resolution stating, *"While the majority of our people are not ecumenically-minded in a structural and organizational sense, nevertheless, we rejoice with others in the present-day signs of a growing spirit of respect and goodwill among many religious bodies. We believe that it is the will of Christ that all who believe on him should be of one accord in spirit."*
- The resolution showed that-
 - The SBC, though evangelical, was "not ecumenically-minded" in the majority.
 - The SBC was laying groundwork for an ecumenical future.

Why ecumenicalism doesn't work and shouldn't be embraced

- It ignores history, which is always an ill-fated path.
 - Ignoring church history is no more profitable than ignoring secular or political history.
- It ignores doctrine, which is exactly the opposite of what a church should want to do.
 - Churches of all varieties used to teach their members the unique doctrines of that church.
 - Ecumenical movements offset such teaching (and the rise of ecumenicism is perhaps the reason such doctrinal dialogue no longer exists in most churches).
- It lessens the value of the local congregation and its work.
 - It promotes the idea that the local congregation is not equipped to reach its community for Christ (that it must partner with other churches of differing doctrine in order to carry out its mission).
- It creates confusion among believers and unbelievers.
 - Believers hear and see things that are not condoned in their local church, while the event itself is condoned by their local church.
 - Unbelievers have no idea what the Christian message is (other than *love*, which is about the only thing that can be proclaimed at such events).

Recommendation

- Fundamentalists should strengthen their teaching on the doctrine of separation, which forbids alliances with believers of differing doctrine on issues in which involve the Gospel, discipleship of believers, and worship of our Lord. These issues should be handled individually and/or within the local church.
- Fundamentalists should help evangelicals see the futility and fruitlessness of their ecumenical efforts.