

America's Declining Fundamentalism - A Critical Review

by
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**Based on George Marsden's book:
Reforming Fundamentalism
Tracing the radical changes at
Fuller Theological Seminary**

Marsden has already written a more general history of Fundamentalism in the United States, showing its influence on the American culture. In this study he traces the origins, progress, and decline of Fuller Theological Seminary as an orthodox Fundamentalist Bible college, which originally embraced the Bible as the inerrant Word of God, but whose leading faculty members now say that the Bible isn't reliable in certain areas. It is a sad and tragic demise of a college that once stood for the "infallible Word of God", even if its faculty members did not understand that word fully, since they tended to embrace the anti-Biblical schema of Arminianism.

Marsden might object to what I have written here. He says the faculty at Fuller mostly regarded themselves as Calvinists, but Paul Rees denied the perseverance of the saints, and taught that a born again Christian could fall from grace and finally be lost. As Toplady says in his marvellous verse:

If Thou hast my discharge procured
And fully in my room endured
The whole of wrath Divine:
Payment God cannot twice demand
First at my bleeding Surety's hand
And then again at mine.

Marsden also tells us that the Fuller statement of faith did not "talk about election, limited atonement, irresistible grace or even the perseverance of the saints". What is more, the faculty differed strongly among themselves over these good old Bible doctrines.

Can anyone imagine a Bible college which embraced Calvinism neglecting to include the famous Five Points in its statement of faith? Never. Fuller was not Calvinistic, but Arminian, with Fundamentalist Evangelical views when it was originally founded. In that respect it epitomised most of the American Bible colleges, who seem to manifest great hostility to those

Calvinism.
It is surely a terrible indictment of any college set up to teach the Bible and Church history, that its faculty would discriminate against students who embrace the same Gospel as Augustine of Hippo, Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Knox, etc. Yet this is what has seemed to happen to many of the famous colleges in the United States. Places like Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Union Theological Seminary, and Andover etc., were originally set up by men who firmly embraced those doctrines called Calvinism, and saw the Bible as God's holy inerrant word, totally reliable even to jots and tittles. To them "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost", as Peter says. (II Pet. 1: 21).

As soon as these colleges began to depart from the Word of God as inerrant, they began to decline as centres of Christian education, and ended up teaching the most abominable heresies. Fuller Seminary is now apparently following in the steps of those famous American colleges.

The Bible alone offers an explanation for the things that have happened to its faculty members. Like Eve in the Garden of Eden, they have listened to the serpent saying, "Hath God said?" casting doubt upon the good Word of God. Instead of them being strong in faith and saying, "Yea, God **hath** said", I consider they began to manifest what the Bible calls an "evil heart of unbelief", and so began their departure from the Word of God Who speaks to us in His inscripturated Word.

It had all been so different when Fuller was first formed. Marsden tells us "they aspired to re-direct American theological scholarship, win the respect of the academic world, and even re-make the Western mind. These were noble aspirations; but one might wonder if the confessing Christians who originally founded Fuller did not crave a sort of academic respectability and acceptance, rather than a "well done thou good and faithful servant" from the mouth of the Lord Christ.

Personally I have no quarrel with brethren who seek academic qualifications so as to increase their knowledge of theology, Church history, and philosophy. We don't need to be like the Fundamentalist preacher in America who said without a blush:

I ain't got no learnin' and never had none...Glory be to the Lamb! Some folks work their hands off'n to the elbows to give their young-uns education, and all they do is send their young-uns to hell. I ain't let no newspaper in my cabin for nigh unto a year since the Lord bathed me in His blood.

His attitude reminds me of the Fundamentalist preacher I heard in Glasgow, saying he had no idea what was happening in the world, since he left it years ago. Should we be proud of our ignorance? I think not. Paul was not ignorant of the world view of the thinkers of his day. He sat at the feet of Gamaliel, which must have had great weight amongst the people of his day, else why would he have said it, and made mention of this famous teacher of the law of Moses? Paul's epistles show us his intimate acquaintance with the salient points of the Greek philosophy, as he refutes it with a few well chosen words.

Look at Moses the law giver. Folk might imagine that a man who sat tending sheep on the backside of the desert of the Sinai peninsula for forty years could not have had much formal education; but in Acts 7: 22 we are instructed that he was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and deed". One study I read said "the book of Genesis", written by Moses, is a total refutation of the world-view of his day, which was based on evolutionary philosophy. It is not some new scientific discovery. It is

an ancient Egyptian taught by the Egyptians, Chaldeans, and the Greeks.) So education is not wrong in itself. We should not counter education; but **wrong** education.

Wycliffe, Tyndale, Luther, Calvin, Beza, etc., were all of them educated men, and God was pleased to use them to reform His Church. The instrument of that Reformation was the old despised Bible, which was expounded to the peoples of Europe. It was His own inerrant word God was pleased to bless.

When old Princeton went into decline with the passing away of the Hodges and the rise of modernistic theology, Calvinism began to be rejected in the American churches. Before very many years went by, theistic evolution was being taught by many a pulpit, as they wrested the Scriptures into conformity to the latest fashion in thought in a vain attempt to appear educated. Henry Morris says that Fundamentalists had no answer against the theory of evolutionary uniformitarianism, except to proclaim the Bible, which they did not understand since they were preaching Arminianism, and God did not bless it with the unction of the Holy Ghost. Why should He? It was not His Word they were proclaiming; but the free will gospel of Arminianism.

Fundamentalists began to retreat into their churches, and let evil grow up round about them. Disciplines like economics, law, journalism, government both local and national were largely destitute of Christian influence because Fundamentalists and Evangelicals saw such things as worldly, and were reluctant to involve themselves in them. I know that Paul says, "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this world"; but what does the servant of the Lord mean when he says these words? He is surely not saying that we should remove ourselves from the world like monks. Jesus prayed not that we should be taken out of the world; but that His Father would preserve us from the evil in it. We are the salt of the earth, and if the salt is no longer acting to stop corruption spreading, it is useless and fit only to be cast out.

Once the clergymen in the more established churches began to reject the Word of God as infallible, they began to reject the special creation of Adam and Eve, and the transmission of a sinful nature from those our first parents, the fearful account of the destruction of the old world under the waters of the Flood for their sinfulness, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, etc. It was a general apostasy from the Christian revelation, because as the Lord Jesus said, "If ye believe not Moses and the prophets, how shall ye believe my words-" If the Bible is not accurate when it tells us about our origins, why should it be deemed reliable when it tells us of Jesus Christ the only Redeemer of God's elect, of the Blood of the everlasting covenant which atones for the sins of God's elect, of heaven, and of hell?

The Bible teaches us that when men and women receive not the love of the truth, God judicially blinds them by sending strong delusions:

2Th 2:11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

Thus, in the United States witchcraft arose, along with spiritism, and occultism, and Marxism. Along with science falsely so-called, the apostate churches began to propagate dry morality and the social gospel. Preachers who should have been ambassadors for God, carrying His word to a sinful world, began to act as well-paid social workers. Calvinism being rejected, they now taught the doctrine of the natural man: Arminianism. Men and women

became lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. Crime statistics soared as wicked men and women cast off the restraints that religion had formerly imposed upon them. The preachers peddled guilt, and not the Gospel of peace.

Rousas Rushdoony in his stimulating study, *"The Politics of Guilt and Pity"*, tells us of one Fundamentalist preacher, Donald Barnhouse: At a large Christian conference held in California, this man actually told the congregation of assembled Christians: "You're dung, nothing but dung". As Rushdoony put it so well:

"According to the Scriptures, these people were God's children by adoption in Jesus Christ. Barnhouse's preaching had as its goal, not a clear conscience before God in Christ, but a burdened conscience and a submissive man before (a) priest."

The modern-day Arminian priest inculcates guilt. This enables him to manipulate those stricken in heart and milk them like the old tulchan calf was used to get the mother cow to release her milk in old Scotland. Guilty people will pay lots of cash to get rid of their guilt feelings. Religion then becomes just another business, and the clergy become hustlers who dominate ignorant folk through the proclamation of guilt. One sees this in the Romanist Church throughout the ages. It is Mystery Babylon the Mother of Harlots with her daughter churches all peddling religion and guilt.

The Fundamentalists in Fuller who set out with the noble aspiration of redirecting American theological scholarship, were over-come by the deceits of that scholarship. Instead of them remaking the Western mind, Modernism remade their minds. At a discussion held in Fuller by faculty members, Charles Fuller's son, back from Europe where he had been studying Karl Barth, came right out and said that the Bible was not reliable in certain areas. A stenographic record was made of this discussion, and Charles Fuller later got hold of it and locked it up in his safe. Those faculty members who still subscribed to God's word as inerrant were denied access to this tell-tale document by Fuller himself. As far as he was concerned, the matter was now closed. It appears to me as if Fuller was acting like Eli the high priest in Israel, who covered up for the way his sons had departed from the Word of the Lord.

Fuller saw that his son's doctrinal stance could hurt his radio programme: "The Old Fashioned Revival Hour", and perhaps move folk who had been giving Fuller donations to stop supporting apostasy in academic dress. But we should love God more than our sons and daughters. His Word is to be honoured, rather than a son who departs from its precepts in unbelief.

In the end a power struggle took place in Fuller between those who still held that the Bible is inerrant, and those who did not. The Fundamentalists lost this struggle and were slowly edged out of the faculty to make way for the proponents of Modernism. Fuller is now going

view in eschatology. They saw the end of the world. No longer was the Pope the Antichrist, as was taught by the Reformers and Puritans. Evangelicals like Billy Graham (a great supporter of Fuller Seminary) fraternise freely with Catholic leaders whose church had bathed the world in the blood of faithful Protestants in past history (and Protestants still suffer similarly in Latin America today). He had them sit up on the platform with him at his giant evangelical rallies, in places of honour. Graham even accepted an Honorary degree from a Jesuit university in the USA. Can anyone imagine *them* capping the likes of Luther, Calvin, etc., ? In fact, one Jesuit actually said that there was no difference between the message proclaimed by Billy Graham and what was taught at their seminary.

Fundamentalists are seen today in the Visible Church of the USA as intolerant, polemical, separatist, anti-intellectual, just plain ignorant. But as Jim Packer shows in his fine study, "Fundamentalism and the Word of God", they at least have a pedigree that stretches back into the history of the Church, as men who have remained faithful to the infallible Word of God inscripturated. They have even shed their life's blood in the defence of that word of God. Yet Billy Graham said: "The one badge of Christian discipleship is not orthodoxy but love". Whilst Carl Henry said, "The real bankruptcy of Fundamentalism has resulted from harsh temperament, a spirit of lovelessness and strife".

When we look into the Bible we see the apostle Paul being moved by the Holy Ghost to write in **Galatians 1: 8-9**:

...though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which ye have received, let him be accursed.

Whilst John the Apostle of love answers men like Billy Graham by saying in **II John 10**:

If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house.

Thus, where Billy Graham says orthodoxy is not the main point, the apostles of Christ say it is, and pronounce a curse upon those who depart from it, and say we should not even allow them over our door step. Those who depart from the infallible Bible are walking in the darkness, and there is no light in them. Fuller Theological Seminary has commenced to walk that path, which can only lead to them ending up like all the other once formerly orthodox Bible colleges in the United States who departed from the Word of God.

In closing, Daniel Fuller, the son of Charles, now embraces the A-millennial schema, in opposition to his father's Premillennialist views. One wonders exactly why? The same Scriptures *he* says are not totally reliable can hardly be quoted in support of the A-millennial schema. How does *he* know the Scriptures he quotes are accurate? When once we deny the inerrant Bible we erect a doctrine of despair in its stead. A doctrine of uncertainty, not knowing if it is true.