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Who Are the “Real”
Pseudo-Fundamentalists?

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FUNDAMENTALISM TODAY



by Ed Dobson and Ed Hindson

Who Are the "Real" Pseudo-Fundamentalists?

Ecclasiastical labels are invented by men to categorize people and groups. A survey of church advertisements reveals much about a church's attitude toward labels. In New Testament times the early believers were simply called Christians. However, the term *Christian* has been diluted over the centuries. In the quest for absolute identity, a lot of additives have been created to supposedly better define the term *Christian*. Churches are known by their denominational labels: Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and so forth. Some Baptists, for example, are further defined as "Independent Fundamental Baptists." Others are known as "Premillennial Independent Baptists." And still others are defined as "Bible-believing, soulwinning, Freewill Baptists," and so on. One advertisement recently identified a church as part of the "King James Only Cult!" One wonders how many other additives will be developed: separatist, pro-life, anti-pornography, pro-simple lifestyle, anti-simple lifestyle...ad infinitum.

Defining Fundamentalism

Originally the term *Fundamentalist* referred to someone who believed the "fundamentals" of the Christian faith. The label came from the publication of a series of volumes known as *The Fundamentals*. These were a collection of articles written by a wide range of scholars defending traditional Christian orthodoxy against the critical attacks of theological Liberalism and Modernism. In the early twentieth century the sides were clearly drawn among Protestants. One was either a Fundamentalist or a Modernist. However, by the 1940s, the conservative movement began to fragment into several splinters. Over the years a variety of additives were produced: Evangelical, neo-Evangelical, moderate, militant, modified, and now *pseudo-Fundamentalist*. While no one claims the term, certain Fundamentalists use it as a label of disdain for others who call themselves Fundamentalists but who disagree on some issues. Thus, this label is used only by those who consider themselves to be the only true Fundamentalists.

Pseudo: A Biblical Perspective

A Christian's final authority in all matters of faith and practice is the Bible. All human "additives" to Christianity must be judged by the clear teaching of Scripture. *Pseudo* is a

Greek word that occurs a number of times through the New Testament. Before calling anyone a pseudo it must be ascertained that he warrants such a description.

The verb from which pseudo comes is the verb *pseudomai*. It means "to deceive, to cheat, to show oneself deceitful, to lie, or to speak deliberate falsehoods" (Thayer, p. 675-676).

All human "additives" to Christianity must be judged by the clear teaching of Scripture.

The noun *pseudos*, which means a "lie, or a conscious and intentional falsehood" (Thayer, p. 676), also occurs frequently in Scripture. A pseudo is then a person who makes a deliberate, conscious, and intentional effort to lie, cheat, or deceive others.

The New Testament identified those who are psuedos. The Antichrist is described as one "whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders" (2 Thess. 2:9). This word is also used to describe the activities of Ananias and Sapphira. Peter spoke to Ananias and said, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" (Acts 5:3). The term is used to describe those who have rejected God and in so doing have "changed the truth of God into a lie" (Rom. 1:25).

What is clear from the teaching of Scripture is that psuedos are false Christians. They represent the spirit and message of Antichrist. In fact, the apostle John clearly identifies their ultimate destination when he states that "all liars [*pseudēs*in], shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8).

Those Fundamentalists who are calling other fellow Fundamentalists "pseudo-Fundamentalists" are certainly not implying that these psuedos are heretics whose ultimate destiny is the lake of fire. Consequently, they are not utilizing the term within a biblical framework. From a biblical perspective, a pseudo-Fundamentalist is someone who denies the essential

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doctrines of Christianity. He is not a Christian at all. So we are compelled to search beyond the biblical intent of their label. However, in our journey beyond the objective Word of God, we must remember we are entering the subjective views of man, and this is dangerous territory in which to claim absolute authority.

Pseudo: A Historical Perspective

Nearly all historians agree that the Fundamentalist movement received its name from the publication of a series of volumes called *The Fundamentals* in 1909. These were written to "set forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith." People who subscribed to these essential Christian doctrines were known as Fundamentalists. They were clearly distinguished from Modernists, who sought to accommodate the Scriptures to the great cultural changes of the early twentieth-century world.

In resisting the rising influence of Liberalism and Modernism, these early Fundamentalists identified five essential doctrines that were basic (fundamental) to the Christian faith. They argued that anything less than these fundamentals was not another form of Christianity, but was not Christian at all. These fundamentals were the very doctrines Liberalism was attacking: the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture; the deity of Christ and His Virgin Birth; the substitutionary atonement of Christ; His literal Resurrection from the dead; and His literal Second Coming.

From a historical perspective, Fundamentalism is a doctrinal movement committed to the essential doctrines of the Christian faith. In this context, a pseudo-Fundamentalist is then one who *subtracts from* or *adds to* these fundamentals. Liberal ministers who claim to believe the Bible but deny its infallibility are in essence pseudo-Fundamentalists. They believe in Jesus but not His deity and Virgin Birth. They believe He died as a moral influence and a victim of His circumstances, but not as a substitute for man's sin. They believe in a spiritual resurrection of Christ, but not a literal resurrection. On the one hand, they talk piously of God and the Bible, but on the other hand, they deny the essential doctrines of Christianity. They have reduced Christianity to secularism in religious terminology. They deny the very foundational truths of Scripture. Theirs is not a genuine Christianity; it is, rather, a pseudo religion.

There are those within the Fundamentalist movement who want to add their own beliefs and practices to the five fundamentals.

A pseudo-Fundamentalist is not only one who denies the fundamentals, he is also one who adds to the fundamentals. The men who contributed to *The Fundamentals* had widely diverse backgrounds. They were united by their common commitment to the basics ("fundamentals") of the Christian faith. In their defense of the faith they refused to be divided over denominational distinctives or personal biases. Since

that early coalition, the situation has dramatically changed. There are those within the Fundamentalist movement who want to add their own beliefs and practices to the five fundamentals. Their list continually expands until it eventually excludes everyone who disagrees with any position they represent. The issue is no longer a commitment to the five fundamentals but rather allegiance to what they claim are the 7 fundamentals, the 10 fundamentals, the 20 fundamentals, the 50 fundamentals, and so on.

Theirs is a distortion of the historical meaning of Fundamentalism. Webster defines pseudo as "not corresponding to reality." The reality of history is that anyone who subscribes in faith and practice to the fundamentals is a Fundamentalist. Anyone who demands more than this is denying the historical roots of the movement. They are the real pseudo-Fundamentalists.

Conclusion

Who are the "real" pseudo-Fundamentalists? From a biblical perspective they are those who deny the basic doctrines of Christianity and who have "changed the truth of God into a lie" (Rom. 1:25). From a historical perspective, they are those who have added their personal preferences to the fundamentals and have demanded allegiance to every jot and tittle of their law. They do not represent the historical position of Fundamentalism and in that sense are pseudo-Fundamentalists.

Most of the processed food we consume is saturated with preservatives and additives. Medical research indicates that some additives are hazardous to one's health and can even cause cancer. Within Fundamentalism are those who want to saturate the movement with their own brand of additives. Their insistence that everyone else accept their additives is dangerous to the health of the movement and, unrestrained, may produce a cancer that will destroy its life and vitality. Perhaps the time has come to perform major surgery in order to deal with the cancer. □

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