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The Siege-Mentality of Pseudo-Fundamentalism

by Daniel R. Mitchell

The rich and illustrious history of Fundamentalism dates back to the first century of the church, and has been variously known as "Apostolic," "Orthodox," "Reformed," "New Testament," and even "Evangelical." Recognized by its distinctive theological features—commitment to the Bible as its absolute authority, the deity and Virgin Birth of Christ, the substitutionary Atonement, the bodily Resurrection, and the certain return of the Lord from heaven to establish His kingdom on earth—the Fundamentalist impulse also identified itself by a spirit of unanimity with all who are truly born again.

Conversely, Fundamentalists separated themselves from their enemies, quickly labeling as heretics those whose doctrine differed from that received from the apostles. They removed from fellowship any whose attitudes brought division in the body.

This paradigmatic pattern tells us how to identify fundamental Christians. Problems arise when we neglect one or the other. If we forget doctrine, fellowship becomes superficial. If we forget love, doctrine becomes pharisaical.

Unfortunately, we have examples of both of these errors in the twentieth century. On the one hand Liberals love to do good works, but profoundly lack sound doctrine. Machen referred to this group as not of essential Christianity. He was right.

On the other hand, pseudo-Fundamentalists, like the Ephesian church (Rev. 2:1-7), have the right doctrine, but no love. Like the Pharisees of the New Testament, they love the Book of God, but not the God of the Book. Jesus reserved His sharpest criticism for this group. If He visited earth again today, He certainly would say to these Pharisees, "Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Pseudo-Fundamentalists craft their doctrines and rules carefully. They build

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massive walls of separation around themselves and take great pride in standing "all alone," besieged by wickedness from without and compromise from within. They set themselves as the ultimate standard of orthodoxy and stand prepared to cross swords with any who attempt to breach the walls.

The apostle Paul observes: "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). Few who make comment on these words really notice their context. They occur at the conclusion of a sharp rebuke against the divisive spirit of the Corinthian Christians, who erred by following men and not Christ. They established their own criteria of authentic Christianity and then imposed these upon the whole church as though the Word of God were their exclusive property (1 Cor. 14:36). Pseudo-Fundamentalists, unlike Jesus' disciples, are not known for their love, but for their hate. By this we discern that their words do not come from God's Spirit.

The siege-mentality of pseudo-Fundamentalism exposes it as counterfeit. Man-made walls, bondage, and fear give power to Satan (John 8:44). How tragic for even one soul to be isolated in hate and religious prejudice. How sad the pathetic faces of Christians captured by spiritual slave-traders and chained to the oars that propel their vessels to distant shores. Many will never know freedom, because they will never know the truth

that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17).

Authentic, fundamental Christianity does not hide behind walls of fear, but advances to the front lines and engages the enemy head on. We "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear" (Rom. 8:15).

Our local newspaper recently carried the story of two people who lived in the same city and owned identical cars. They happened to park at the same shopping center at the same time. One came out and accidentally got in the wrong car. Coincidentally, his key fit! He drove around, picked up his wife at the door, and headed home, never realizing he had the wrong car. Then his wife noticed someone else's glasses on the dash, strange things in the glove compartment, and so forth. She exclaimed to her husband, "We're in the wrong car!" Right! When they returned the car, they found the police already on the scene investigating a "stolen" vehicle.

Similarly, many Christians find themselves in churches that purport to be Christian—even "fundamental." But as they look about, certain things just do not ring true. The spectacles of fear lie on the dash. Chains of hate hide in the glove compartment—sure signs of being in the "wrong car."

What should we do? We must take the whole armor of God, and in His might command that the walls be broken down, and walk through into the light of a new day. Fundamental Christianity, strong and robust as ever, must not succumb to these modern-day Pharisees who find contentment only when they effectively mute God's church.

Let them count their losses. We will count our victories. Let them polish their halos. We will work the fields. Let them show us their doctrine without love, their faith without works. We have no time for such silly luxuries. We must reach out to the hungry in Africa, the lonely in the cities, the oppressed in distant lands, the lost souls in . . . ■