

## History of the Neo Evangelical Movement

### Meaning of Evangelicalism

Evangelicalism is a term that transcends denominational and confessional boundaries. The movement “emphasizes conformity to the basic tenets of the faith and a missionary outreach of compassion and urgency.” An evangelical is therefore a person who believes and proclaims the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is a very biblical term. Like every terminology, it changes with the times.

The word is derived from the Greek noun *euangelion* translated as “glad tidings,” or “good or joyful news,” or “gospel” (from a derivative of the Middle English *godspell*, a discourse or story about God). The verb *euangelizomai* means “to announce good tidings of,” or “to proclaim as good news.” These Greek words appear nearly one hundred times in the New Testament and have passed into modern languages through the Latin equivalent *evangelium*.

Evangelicalism has a theological and a historical meaning. Theologically, evangelicalism believes in: (1) The sovereignty of God, the transcendent, personal, infinite Being who created and rules over heaven and earth; (2) Scripture as the divinely inspired record of God’s revelation, the infallible, authoritative guide for faith and practice; (3) the total depravity of man thus denying the enlightenment doctrine of man’s innate goodness; (4) God Himself provided the way out of the human dilemma by allowing His only Son, Jesus Christ, to assume the penalty and experience death on man’s behalf; (5) salvation is an act of unmerited divine grace received through faith in Christ, not through any kind of penance or good works; (6) preaching the Word of God is an important feature of evangelicalism. The vehicle of God’s Spirit is the biblical proclamation of the gospel which brings people to faith; and (7) the visible, personal return of Jesus Christ to set up His kingdom of righteousness, a new heaven and earth, one that will never end.

Therefore an evangelical is not only one who preaches the gospel of salvation but the whole Bible as all the doctrines of the Bible are good news. He is a conservative in his belief of the Scriptures. He is also a complete Christian in his obedience to God’s Word. But time changes people, and the meaning of words.

### The Issue of Definitions

As seen from the above definition, evangelicalism can encompass a whole array of denominations. This definition has become too inclusive and general to clearly distinguish what is of God and what is not of God today. The problem is one of semantics (the meaning and sense development of words). The more complex Christianity becomes, the more explaining, defining and clarifying one needs to do to portray one’s position clearly. The Christian cannot run away from this reality. Today if one calls himself a Christian, he could either be a Baptist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Pentecostalist, Charismatic or even a Roman Catholic. This broad spectrum that is found in Christendom today is a result of years of disagreements over the meaning of the Word of God, and this division is compounded by the plethora of English Bible versions flooding the Christian market today. Denominational lines are being erased on a daily basis all over the world. The advent of Charismatic and neo-evangelicalism has contributed to this scenario ever since their inception in the middle of the 20th century. These movements have literally metamorphosized the Christian scene and there is no turning back.

In the days of the apostles, the simple designation of *Christian* (cf. Acts 11:26) was sufficient to describe a true disciple of Christ. Today “a Christian” must be defined and carefully explained in order to distinguish true Christianity from false Christianity. There is no other way. This trend will not disappear but is here to last till the end of the age. The Christian must grapple with this reality and deal with it from Scriptures or he will become irrelevant or worse still be deceived. The only sure guide is the Bible. He must begin with the Word of God and continue with the Word of God and end with the Word of God. Anything less would leave the Christian open to attack and his faith put in jeopardy. The Christian is living in momentous times. It is a time known as the last of the last days.

### List of Definitions

The following is a list of the definitions and explanations of important terms pertinent to the study of the neo evangelicals.

(1) CONSERVATISM is the adherence to the Bible as the infallible Word of God. Sometimes used as a synonym for orthodoxy. This is a seldom used term today. Few people would call themselves conservatives, which is sad. The church of God needs more conservative Christians. This is still a very appropriate term to use especially in the naming of a church. This title separate and clarifies the confusion that exists in today’s churches.

(2) EVANGELICALISM is a broader and older term than *fundamentalism*. It may be used, in the technical sense, as a synonym for fundamentalism in the past but not so today. It denotes more than the “good news” of deliverance from sin through faith. This word

must include the Bible as a whole. The whole Bible is the Good News.

(3) CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICALISM: Some evangelicals believe that the term evangelicalism has been abused by the liberals. The word conservative should be added to it for clarification. This is a useful combination to apply to one's definition of one's faith as there are all brands of Christianity as mentioned above.

(4) NEO EVANGELICALISM as defined by its founder, Harold Ockenga, is this,

The new evangelicalism breaks with . . . three movements. The new evangelicalism breaks first with neo orthodoxy because it declares that it accepts the authority of the Bible. . . . He [the new evangelical] breaks with the modernist, however, in reference to his embrace of the full orthodox system of doctrine against which the modernist has accepted. He breaks with the fundamentalist on the fact that he believes that the biblical teaching, the Bible doctrine and ethics, must apply to the social scene, that there must be an application of this to society as much as there is an application of it to the individual man.

The man-centered focus is obvious here. The neo-evangelical attempts to straddle between two boats which are heading in the opposite directions. He hopes to balance the two without falling into the water. A neo-evangelical is one who befriends both sides. He says he is on the side of fundamentalism and truth when in reality he is on the side of unbelief. Jesus says man cannot serve two Masters. "Some of the things that were stated were good, but the error lay chiefly in what is not stated. This is the hallmark of New Evangelicalism, which is characterized not so much by the heresy that is preached but by the truth that is neglected in an effort to present the Bible in a more positive light." Jesus says in Matthew 6:24, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." And in Matthew 12:30, Jesus says, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad."

A neo-evangelical is also man-centered in his theology. Situational ethics is one of the ways decisions are made. Evidence is often weighed and regarded as more important and carried more weight than the words of the Bible. Have they crossed over the line to liberalism, then? From what is observed today, after more than 50 years of development, neo-evangelicalism is likened to a spectrum. On the more conservative side, he is closer to fundamentalism because he accepts the majority of the fundamental doctrines except for the doctrine of biblical separation. The other end of the spectrum is very close to a liberalism or modernism where many doctrines of the Bible are rejected or denied (e.g., creationism is replaced with theistic evolutionism, the global flood is replaced with a local flood, a belief in the inspiration of Scriptures but not its preservation, etc).

(5) LIBERAL EVANGELICALISM is a term that is identified with the Church of England. It refers to those who are closer to conservatism, but not conservatives, and are interested in *restating* old truths to make them more acceptable and agreeable with modern thought. They are very much like the neo-evangelicals on the modernist's end of the neo-evangelical spectrum.

(6) FUNDAMENTALISM was born in the early part of the 20th century in opposition to liberalism. It strongly reemphasizes the fundamentals of historic Christianity. In addition to other doctrines which were held to be basic and fundamental, the area of conflict centered around: (a) the inerrancy infallibility, inspiration and preservation of the Scripture; (b) the deity of Christ; (c) the virgin Birth of Christ; (d) the substitutionary atonement of Christ; and (e) the physical resurrection and future bodily return of Christ. The term was used to designate the defense of these fundamentals when it was first coined and this is the true meaning of it today. Although this term has obtained a "bad" name today because of some other fundamentalist groups who commit "suicide bombings," this is still a good term to describe a true servant and child of God today. Today he is also regarded as one who believes in the perpetual and continuous existence of the perfect Bible.

(7) NEO FUNDAMENTALISM are the ones who today would belong to the more conservative side of neo-evangelicalism. Although they believe in Biblical inspiration, they deny Biblical preservation. They believe that God has given to the believers the Bible without error at the time of inspiration only, but failed or did not bother to preserve it perfectly. According to them, the Bible as we have it today is not without mistakes. The mistakes are however minor ones which they claim do not affect any Bible doctrine. Neo-Fundamentalism is also called Neo-Deism.

(8) ORTHODOXY means right or correct belief according to the strict definition of this term. It refers to that which is old and traditional. It is the opposite of heresy. It is not a biblical term but has biblical basis. "This idea is rooted in the New Testament insistence that the gospel has a specific factual and theological content (1 Corinthians 15:1 11; Gal. 1:6 9; 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim. 4:3 4 etc.), and that no fellowship can exist between those who accept the apostolic standard of Christological teaching and those who deny it (1 John 4:1 3; 2 John 7 11). This is an excellent term to use today to describe those who hold to all the doctrines of the Bible without adulteration.

(9) NEO ORTHODOXY is a concept that arose in the 20th century in reaction to the optimistic view of man which the liberals had

taken. It claims to be a return to Orthodoxy even though it is built upon a liberal view of the Bible. It is characterized by a subjective experience of man as the basis of truth. It is sometimes called Crisis Theology, Barthianism, Theology of Feeling, and Neo Supernaturalism.

(10) MODERN ORTHODOXY is fundamentalism, liberalism and neo orthodoxy all mixed-up. The followers of modern orthodoxy believe that other systems have deviated from true orthodoxy at one point or another. Modern orthodoxy is deemed by its followers as the correct expression of true orthodoxy. This system does not rest upon an infallible and inspired Bible and comes close to neo liberalism in most of its doctrinal beliefs. This seems to be the norm today in many churches even those who claim to be fundamental.

(11) LIBERALISM is “an attempt to give Christian content to the stream of man’s general non authoritative knowledge and to do so by means of a non authoritative method based on reason, experience, and history.” The extreme form of liberalism is sometimes known as MODERNISM. This is the worst of all because this movement blatantly attacks the Bible at its very core. They attack the virgin birth of Christ and His deity, and anything that is miraculous in the Bible. They also indulge in all sorts of criticisms of the Scriptures (source, form, redaction, literary, higher and lower criticisms).

(12) NEO LIBERALISM is an attempt to “preserve the values of liberalism while reinterpreting them for a new age and a new condition.” Actually, they are no better than Liberalism for they likewise attack the truths of God’s Word.

(13) CONSERVATIVE LIBERALISM is very much like neo liberalism. It is not as blatant in their denunciations of historic Christianity as the old Liberalism. They take the Bible and its authority seriously but deny its accuracy and authority. It is an attempt to cut down the old tree of liberalism and yet allowing the roots to remain. This above list of definitions of the various “isms” is necessary for the task of discerning or distinguishing between truth and error.

### Historical Development of Neo Evangelicalism

#### Modernism Raises its Ugly Head

#### Inroads of Falsehood

After the 16th century Reformation, the Protestant Church soon became infected by various forms of unbelief from the 17th to the 19th century. There was English Deism, French Naturalism and German Rationalism. (1) English Deism believes that God created the world and left it alone to run on its own. This belief says there are no miracles in the Bible and there is no Word of God. The Bible is the word of men since God did not interfere in the affairs of men as He has distanced Himself and left man to fend for himself. (2) French Naturalism believes that Mother Nature is the god of the universe. There is no personal God who is living and true at all. Nature is what we have and all there is to our existence. The god of the naturalist is science. Science is the determining factor of what is true and what is false. Naturalism rejects all the miracles in the Bible as science cannot prove the reality of miracles. (3) German Rationalism glorifies reason. Man is the final determinant of what is true or false. Man’s ability to reason things through inadvertently turns the Bible into a common book. Again it rejects the miracles of the Bible for man cannot explain God’s miracles if he rejects Him and His Word and works. It is this evil that has produced the deadly “science” called textual criticism.

All three of these false teachings began to make gradual inroads into the professing Church, particularly into its educational institutions. Learned men began to declare that all that claimed to be divine revelation must be squared with human reason, and that, if it was not reasonable, it was not valid.” The age of reason was the beginning of the rejection of God and His Holy Word. Man puts himself on a pedestal and starts to question the Word of God. Settled doctrines like the inspiration of God’s Holy Word were re-examined and redefined to suit man’s way of thinking. Any doctrine that is not pleasant to man must be rejected or reviewed completely. Man is now god. The Bible is his servant. He decides what is and what is not part of God’s Word. To say that there are mistakes in the Bible is part of the day to day language of the “reasonable” man. Evidence becomes the highest priority in the determining of truth.

This is the kind of arrogance and egocentric behaviour that will inevitably lead man down the road of ultimate destruction. Rationalism possesses a humanistic approach to Scripture. The rationalist criticizes the Bible and subjects it to all sorts of critical analysis so much so that the Bible is reduced to no more than the works of any ordinary and fallible man like Shakespeare. Such irreverence cannot be tolerated and must be denounced and avoided at all costs. Such attitudes must not be found in the membership of conservative churches and especially in the ranks of leadership. Every Christian must have the highest reverence for God’s Holy and perfect Word. The Word of God must be our Judge and not the other way round. Modernistic textual criticism is

precisely what it calls itself, criticizing the Biblical text and alleging that it contains mistakes.

### Doctrinal Deviation

When the authority of the Bible is undermined, its cardinal doctrines would one by one be surrendered. It is a matter of time. In order for the believer not to slide down the slippery road of destruction, he must not allow falsehood, no matter how appealing it may appear, to lull him into complacency and to surrender his fundamentals.

The doctrines that were rejected by the naturalists, modernists and liberals included (1) the full inspiration, inerrancy, infallibility and authority of the Word of God, (2) the deity of Christ Jesus Christ, (3) the virgin birth of Christ (4) the miracles of Christ were impossible, (5) the supernatural creation of the world and man, (6) the total depravity, corruption and ignorance of man, and (7) the necessity for man to be spiritual regenerated or born again.

Thus unbelief from Europe crossed the Atlantic Ocean to infect many church related Bible Colleges and theological seminaries in the United States. Many seminaries have capitulated to the errors of unbelief. They graduate hundreds of pastors who bring poisonous and deadly doctrines into churches all over America and infecting their congregations at will. Generations of hard work were neutralized by one generation of compromisers beginning with pastors who were infected with unbelieving and unbiblical doctrines. Salvation in Jesus Christ alone was at stake. The eternal destiny of the souls of people all over the world was at risk for America was the heartland of Christianity. Hundreds, if not thousands, of missionaries were sent worldwide from America since the turn of the 20th century with their "new" doctrines. This unbelief and apostasy culminated in the doctrine of Unitarianism. Unitarianism was not a total rejection of God but a redefinition of God. It is a deceptive system of thought.

A system of thought called 'Unitarianism' arose early in Europe, surfaced in England around the 1770's, and became prominent in the United States at about the same time. The rise of Unitarian unbelief is traced to the

Congregational churches of New England where the old time gospel of the Puritans had been preached, but where unbelief began to flourish. Harvard College was taken over by Christ deniers in violation of ethical principles and in definite breach of trust with those who founded the school. Old foundations established by the Pilgrim Fathers for the perpetuation and teaching of their views in theology were seized upon and appropriated to the support of opposing views. A fund given for preaching an annual lecture on the Trinity was employed for preaching an attack upon it."

These attacks began to gain much ground. And today the attacks continue to mount. There seems no stopping the downgrade of conservatism today. Conservative Christianity seems to be dying. But God always has His remnant. The Word of God to Elijah is very apt at this time. 1 Kings 19:18 says, "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him."

### Rise of Fundamentalism

#### Raising the Alarm

As the influence of modernism grew, many Bible believing saints raised the alarm to stem the tide. In dismay, they witnessed the gradual but certain deterioration of their beloved denominations and the spread of anti biblical teachings.

They wanted to go back to the basics. Toward the end of the 19th century, opponents of this modernism gathered in great Bible Conferences and spoke to large crowds from various denominations on the necessity of the fundamentals of the faith. "The messages given warned against false doctrine and exhorted people to remain true to the faith of their fathers. These Bible conferences formed rallying points for Bible believing Christians and had significant influences in combating the growth of religious liberalism."

Bible Colleges and Seminaries were founded to train their own men in the fundamentals of the faith as they saw many old Bible Colleges and Seminaries capitulate one by one to modernism. Some of them were Gordon Bible College (by A. J. Gordon), Northwestern Bible School (by the First Baptist Church in Minneapolis), Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College, etc.

In 1909, two businessmen in California, Lyman and Milton Stewart, sponsored the publication of a series of 12 booklets (It was republished into four volumes in 1917, and into two volumes in 1958 edited by Charles L. Feinberg) entitled **The Fundamentals**. "In large measure *The Fundamentals* was a result of the vision and drive of its major editor, a Southern Baptist, and pastor of Moody Church, Chicago, and later of Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle – Dr. A. C. Dixon." How the Lyman brothers and Dixon met was indeed by the higher hand of God. Skinner described their meeting in this way.

While serving in Chicago, Dixon sensed the pressures of the new theology and an increasing hostility towards orthodox gospel perspective. ... he began a prayer meeting for guidance in the matter. The whole concept of *The Fundamentals* grew out of a thirty-month prayer effort where Dixon met with ten others in extended intercession concerning these tensions. For two and a half years, the meetings continued in Chicago, as the group waited for some specific divine direction. ... An answer came decisively in 1909 when Dixon was unexpectedly called to minister in a series of special services in Los Angeles at the Baptist temple. He chose to reply publicly to some previously-published statements from an ultraliberal professor at the University of Chicago, who had attacked traditional Christian beliefs. Lyman Stewart ... heard him and sought an urgent interview. The Stewarts' Christian stewardship had already resulted in wide support of China missions, and in founding of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles. Lyman Stewart attended the 1894 Bible Conference on Niagara-on-the-Lake and returned fired with enthusiasm at the idea of funding a series of booklets defending the orthodox faith, to be distributed across the world as far his generosity would permit. Approaching Dixon with the offer, he told him of his own intensive prayer over many years, of his unsatisfactory search for someone who could edit such materials and supervise such an extensive project. He shared the conviction that God's leading at that point was clear. Dixon accepted at once, amazed at a proposal which he recognized to be the answer to the extended prayer of his Chicago group. Shortly thereafter he led them in forming a publications company, to which Lyman Stewart turned over \$300,000 in stocks and securities to fund the enormous proposal. Within eighteen months, the first five volumes had circled the world. Dixon edited most of them.

**The Fundamentals** contained articles written by leading conservative authors like James Orr, Griffith Thomas, Arno C. Gaebelin, James M. Gray, Benjamin B. Warfield, C. I. Scofield, etc. These articles were read by friend and foe for they were given out free of charge. More than three million copies were given out. "This monumental work not only reinstated and clearly defined conservative Christianity, but it also proved that the position was held by many." The following was taken from the preface of **The Fundamentals**.

In 1909 God moved two Christian laymen to set aside a large sum of money for issuing twelve volumes that would set forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith, and which were to be sent free to ministers of the gospel, missionaries, Sunday School superintendents, and others engaged in aggressive Christian work throughout the English speaking world. A committee of men who were known to be sound in the faith was chosen to have oversight of the publication of these volumes. Rev. Dr. A.C. Dixon was the first Executive Secretary of the Committee, and upon his departure for England Rev. Dr. Louis Meyer was appointed to take his place. Upon the death of Dr. Meyer the work of the Executive Secretary devolved upon me. We were able to bring out these twelve volumes according to the original plan. Some of the volumes were sent to 300,000 ministers and missionaries and other workers in different parts of the world.

Some of the articles included: the Deity of Christ, Biblical Inspiration, the New Birth, the Biblical Concept of Sin, The Nature of Regeneration, Justification by faith, Preach the Word, etc. The central figure in these writings was the person of Christ. With very rare exceptions, Jesus Christ occupied the preeminent place in every article contributed, regardless of the nature of the subjects treated in these twelve booklets. Very soon the name "Fundamentalist" was attached to all those who adhere to the doctrines propounded by the little booklets. Those who reject all or many of "the fundamentals" were known as "modernists" or "liberals". Sermons, booklets and full scale books began to appear from both camps defending each other's position. A full scale war had begun.

### **Steps to Stem the Tide**

By the 1920's liberals had captured many places of leadership in the old line denominations (Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, etc.). These liberals were skilled in ecclesiastical politics and very often had people of means behind them.

Initially many pastors remained in their respective denominations to stem the tide by trying to oust these liberals from their ranks. It was to no avail. The fundamentalists were out maneuvered. They began to realize that their struggle was in vain. Because of this struggle, many new organizations were formed as well as seminaries. In the ranks of the Baptists, the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches (GARBC) was formed in 1932. They in turn organized the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society (1943); and the Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society (1950).

### The Rise of Neo Evangelicalism

#### Unhappiness in the Fundamentalist Camp

The fundamentalist movement began to solidify with the growth and maturation of its schools, mission boards, church

associations, and independent organizations. As is often the case, there arose problems within the camp when some fundamentalists were unhappy with some of the beliefs and characteristics of fundamentalism. This was the beginning of the neo-evangelical shift from within. Their unhappiness with fundamentalism was not due its doctrine or theology, but to the high-handed tactics, belligerent attitude, and distasteful antics of some fundamentalist leaders. Some of these unhappy fundamentalists were younger men who had a more "scholarly" temperament.

### Birth of New Evangelicalism

It is difficult to determine when the new evangelical movement began. **The phrase "new evangelicalism" was first coined in an address at a convention at Fuller Theological Seminary in 1948.** But the new evangelical approach began earlier than this, though after this public declaration, the dissatisfaction with fundamentalism became more vocal. Neo-evangelicalism was actually an outgrowth of fundamentalism and its controversy with liberalism. It was an honest attempt to remain true to historic Bible revealed Christianity but at the same time avoid any polemics with the liberal. This was the early desire of those who were unhappy with the polemics that they found within fundamentalism. They no longer wish to be identified or associated with it. When the dissatisfaction first became apparent, Carl Henry and others saw no necessity to change the name.

There is no necessity for abandonment of the Fundamentalist fort, on such secondary grounds, nor moving to an obscure neo Fundamentalist position, or to so called conservatism as differentiated from Fundamentalism; there's already too much terminological confusion, and one always runs the danger of being identified with the liberal Fundamentalists who emphasize only the fundamentals of liberalism, and the further danger of encouraging a willingness to be misunderstood."

The man who first coined the phrase "THE NEW EVANGELICALISM" was Harold John Ockenga. He expressed his personal dissatisfaction with fundamentalism by summarizing its deficiencies in three major areas: attitude, strategy, and results. According to Ockenga, (1) the attitude of the fundamentalists was wrong because of an unwarranted suspicion of all who did not hold to its doctrines and practices. This suspicion was a result of the personal and ecclesiastical persecution which the fundamentalist had suffered because of his stand for the truth. This fear was real. In some biblical separatist churches where members were not taught the whole counsel of God the tendency was to believe that all other churches that did not practise or believe the same way they did were deemed not to be of God. The fundamentalists made themselves the yardstick of right and wrong and not the Bible. This attitude has turned away many Christians as well as many unbelievers.

It needs to be commented that Christ's attitude was definitely not like this. This kind of egocentric attitude reflects the pharisaical attitude that the Lord condemns. Christians who practise the doctrine of biblical separation are most prone to fall into this sin. They must guard against such tendencies consciously and practice self-examination regularly in order to remain on track. The Christian should not go out of his way to invite persecution, but neither should he avoid it if he is called to suffer for the sake of Christ. The apostle Paul escaped in a basket when he needed to and he faced persecution squarely without flinching when he had to.

Ockenga also believed that (2) the strategy of the fundamentalist is wrong in that he believes that one can have a pure church on a local and denominational level. Ockenga argued that this pure church concept was wrongly based upon 2Corinthians 6:17 18: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

It must be said that Ockenga might have met some fundamentalists who have been extreme in their fundamentalism, but it was incorrect of him to say or imply that all fundamentalists were like that. A proper exegesis of 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 would reveal that it is not a teaching about a perfect church. The practice of biblical separation deals with every known sin in the church and in the personal lives of the believer. The intent is not to make a perfect church for that would be impossible while the church is on earth. As long as sin exists, there is no way a perfect church can become a reality. The only way for perfection in a church would be after glorification when this earthen vessel is replaced by the glorified and spiritual and powerful body promised to every Christian by the Lord. When that day comes, the sinful nature of man would be eradicated forever, and it will only be then that the Church would be perfect. The practice of biblical separation presumes the imperfection of the church. Separation and is part of the process of sanctification that God requires of every biblical church. Ockenga's perception of fundamentalism is skewed by his erroneous understanding of the doctrine of biblical separation.

According to Ockenga's observation, the fundamentalists were not getting (3) the results because they have lost every ecclesiastical battle in the historical scene for the past fifty years. The mission fields of the world have also suffered because of the wrong emphasis of the fundamentalist. Although fundamentalism stresses on the preaching of the gospel, it is not advancing with its theology and seems unable to address the social problems of the day.

Ockenga and neo-evangelicals need to understand that God's Great Commission to the Church is to save the soul, and not society. The Church is not called to do social work. The Church's impact on society would be through the quiet Christian influence of individual believers in society, rather than through a grand ecclesiastical strategy. For example, a Christian may be a social worker and do it as his calling and profession. By his testimony and sharing of the gospel his colleagues and those he comes into contact with, some might hear the gospel and be saved. It must be emphasised that the role of the church is spiritual and not physical.

On an ad hoc basis, perhaps the church can occasionally render some social aid like providing food plus a gospel tract to certain poverty-stricken countries. Christians can also help by sending food and clothing to third world countries where a gospel station is already established. But these are to be seen as secondary to the preaching of the gospel. The church has limited resources, and to channel such God-given resources to save the body instead of the soul, without a gospel emphasis, is to fail in the Great Commission. The social gospel preached by the liberals is one such distorted gospel that has done great damage to the cause of Christ.

### Throwing out the Baby with the Bath Water

Unfortunately, instead of rejecting the bad tactics and correcting the wrong attitudes of some of the fundamentalists and maintaining the faith of Scripture, "fundamentalists" like Carl Henry "threw the bath water out with the baby." This was the sad reality of what happened at the beginning of neo-evangelicalism. The intention might have been good but the premise and practice were wrong because they were not according to Holy Scripture.

The neo-evangelicals wanted to put the word "fundamentalism" into cold storage "until it begins to have a universal meaning for all who use it. ... one needs only a reminder to be convinced that if the term *fundamentalism* is to be in cold storage until it begins to acquire the same meaning for all who use it, it will no doubt freeze to death." The death of a "term" is not too serious a problem compared to the likelihood of discarding it and thus the disappearance of the theological implications associated with that term. That was exactly what happened. As matter of fact, the neo-evangelicals did not simply reject "fundamentalism" as a name, they rejected the entire faith system and ethos that was associated with it. It was a wrong road that neo-evangelicals tread upon from the very start. The final destination cannot be right when the starting point is wrong. Unless they turn around and re-attach the fundamentals of the faith to themselves, beginning with the doctrine of biblical separation, the neo-evangelicals will not end well. They will slowly but surely become more and more like the liberals and modernists whom they say they are trying to transform into evangelicals. But they will fail and have failed. The method is not according to God's Holy Word for God requires separation not infiltration.

This was the comment made by the leader of the Anglican Church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, The Asian tsunami disaster should make all Christians question the existence of God, Dr Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, writes in The Telegraph today.

In a deeply personal and candid article, he says "it would be wrong" if faith were not "upset" by the catastrophe which has already claimed more than 150,000 lives.

Prayer, he admits, provides no "magical solutions" and most of the stock Christian answers to human suffering do not "go very far in helping us, one week on, with the intolerable grief and devastation in front of us".

Dr Williams, who, as head of the Church of England, represents 70 million Anglicans around the world, writes: "Every single random, accidental death is something that should upset a faith bound up in comfort and ready answers. Faced with the paralysing magnitude of a disaster like this, we naturally feel more deeply outraged - and also more deeply helpless."

He adds: "The question, 'How can you believe in a God who permits suffering on this scale?' is therefore very much around at the moment, and it would be surprising if it weren't - indeed it would be wrong if it weren't."

How far gone is today's Christianity when the leader of one of the oldest and largest Christian churches can question the existence of God. The Anglican denomination which was once evangelical has no doubt turned liberal. The only reason is due to non-separation and compromise. The neo-evangelical doctrine of compromise infiltrates into the hearts and minds of individuals who may belong to any denomination. The doctrine of separation cannot be replaced by infiltration without destructive consequences.

The neo-evangelical phenomenon is the result of a new generation of young fundamentalists who have been trained in Bible colleges and seminaries that attack the Word of God. Pickering made this observation,

Some younger fundamentalist scholars, in search of academic prestige, enrolled for graduate work at citadels of unbelief, where along with their PhD's, they received generous doses of anti biblical theology not all of which they were able to slough off. Their thinking was coloured by that to which they had been exposed, and they began to become restless with the "old timē faith of their fathers.

## Rise and Fall of the Singapore BP Movement

The Presbyterians fought their own battles within the Presbyterian Church of USA. This was led by J. Gresham Machen who was a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. He, together with his followers, was also unable to stem the overwhelming tide of liberalism and he separated himself and formed a new seminary (Westminster Theological Seminary) and a new missions board (Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions). Carl McIntire who was Machen's disciple later formed Faith Theological Seminary and a new denomination called Bible-Presbyterianism to further the cause of conservative and fundamental Christianity.

As a result of the conflict between fundamentalism and liberalism many new denominations and seminaries and Bible Colleges were born. A host of independent mission boards sprang up and became sending agencies for Bible believing missionaries who refused to go out under liberal denominational boards." One of such denominations was the Bible-Presbyterian Movement which started in the USA, but soon spread to all over the world, and especially to Singapore. This is the story of the Bible Presbyterian Church in Singapore.

### The American Scene (The Split in the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.)

In the year 1936, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. split because of liberalism and ecumenism. This did not happen over night. The events which led to this split began on 26 December, 1923. In that year a committee of 149 Presbyterian clergymen met in Auburn, New York to issue an "Affirmation". The "Affirmation" asserted that (1) *the General Assembly was wrong to require all ministerial candidates to hold to the five fundamentals which are the inerrancy of the original manuscripts of Scriptures, Christ's virgin birth, His vicarious atonement, His bodily resurrection, and the reality of miracles as recorded in the Scriptures;* (2) *neither the Bible nor the historic creeds taught inerrancy;* (3) *tenets such as Christ's virgin birth, vicarious atonement, bodily resurrection, and miracles were theories;* (4) *the General Assembly had unconstitutionally declared belief in these doctrines as essential for licensing, ordination, or good standing in the church;* (5) *the General Assembly had no right to bind Presbyterians to any "essential and necessary" doctrines unless the presbyteries themselves so voted.*

*By 1926, eight foreign missionaries had signed the Auburn Affirmation and five of the fifteen ordained officials of the denomination's Board of Foreign Missions were Affirmationists. In 1932, William Hocking, Chairman of the Commission to look into Missions Work, wrote a book called Re-Thinking Missions. In it, he advocated uniting Christianity with Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism in a common front against the enemy of materialism.*

*This downward slide brought about a confrontation between the conservatives and the liberals. So in 1933, Gresham Machen exposed a number of the liberal missionaries in his debate with Robert Speer, Chairman of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Stanford states historically that,*

*Dr. Machen and others were also fighting from the inside during the early 1930s. It was then that he especially concentrated his attack upon the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions which was sending Modernist missionaries to the fields. His most widely known and critical encounter involved the modernistic Pearl S. Buck, whom the Board sent to China in 1933.*

*Dr. Ken Taylor's Tyndale House has just published a large 536-page volume entitled The Story Bible. Many American children will be subjected to this material authored by the late and liberal Pearl S. Buck.*

*By 1936 the Presbyterian denomination's wrath came down upon Dr. Machen and the others who stood with him against Modernism. They were summarily put to trial and defrocked. These men had already made up their minds to resign, although Dr. Machen himself was opposed to the principle of separation. His theory was that as long as the Liberals were not in actual control, as long as the credal basis was intact, the evangelical believer should remain within his own denomination and work to keep it sound. But when the Liberals usurped control of his denomination, while slyly leaving the creed unchanged, there was nothing to do but separate.*

*Over fifty years ago Ruth Paxson commented: "There is a pseudo-union in Christendom today that is tantamount to dishonoring disloyalty. Its slogan is, 'For the sake of peace we must have union even at the cost of truth.' It bids the Fundamentalist sit silently while the Modernist seeks and secures control of the machinery of the church both at home and abroad. If he protests he is accused of being unloving and divisive" (**Life on the Highest Plane**, p 237).*

*No house cleansing was achieved nor was compromise disallowed. That same year Machen formed the Independent Board of Foreign Missions.*

*From 1934 to 1936, Machen, Carl McIntire and J. Oliver Buswell, together with seven other Bible believing pastors were placed on trial. They were defrocked by the General Assembly in 1936. In that same year, they formed the Presbyterian Church of America but had to rename it to Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) because the Presbyterian Church in U.S.A. wanted to sue them over the similarity of names.*

*In the year 1937, Machen, the founder of OPC died. That same year, Carl McIntire, J. Oliver Buswell and Allan MacRae came out*

of the OPC and founded the Bible Presbyterian Church of America and Faith Theological Seminary. Timothy Tow testifies,

*When Dr J Gresham Machen was called home January 1, 1937 the struggle for the Faith fell upon Carl McIntire like Chiang Kai-Shek (Father of the Chinese Republic), and McIntire like Chiang Kai-shek, Sun's disciple and successor. To the Bible-Presbyterians of Singapore, McIntire is our American Root.*

*Three major issues caused the Split in the OPC. (1) An Affiliation Issue: Should OPC continue with an Independent Board of Foreign Missions which cooperates with non Presbyterians? The OPC said No. McIntire and company said Yes. (2) A Moral Issue: Should the denomination officially recommend total abstinence from intoxicating beverages to all its members? The OPC said No. McIntire and company said Yes. (3) A Doctrinal Issue: The Bible Presbyterians were exclusively premillennialists who were pro-Israel in their eschatology, whereas the OPC was made up of both amillennialists and premillennialists (but anti-Israel).*

Two of the three doctrinal issues which gave rise to the birth of Bible Presbyterianism (B-P) were *Biblical Separation* and *Premillennialism*. These continue to be the pillars on which the B-P church must stand if it intends to remain true to the original ideals on which it was founded.

### The Singapore Scene

In 1847 an English missionary named William Chalmers Burns left England for Hong Kong. He first set foot on Chinese soil in Amoy in 1851. Five years later he went to Swatow with Hudson Taylor and that was how Christianity reached the Tow family. Together with other emigrants, the Tow family came to the Straits Settlement which was then called British Malaya. In 1881, Rev J. A. B. Cook from the English Presbyterian Mission came to Singapore and Malaya. He founded many local churches one of which was Life Church at Princep Street (1883). "All the founding members of Life Church and our B P Church movement have originated from Princep Street."

In 1935 Dr. John Sung's revival meetings changed the heart of a young man, Timothy Tow who yielded his life to the Lord for His service. Eleven years later, after the Second World War, in 1946, Timothy Tow obeyed God's call and left for China to study theology under Dr Chia Yu ming in Nanking He was there for one year. In 1947 Timothy Tow transferred to Faith Theological Seminary, U.S.A. By the providence of God, Timothy Tow learned God's Word at Faith Theological Seminary under Carl McIntire, J. Oliver Buswell and Allan MacRae. What was Faith Theological Seminary like?

The founders of the Bible Presbyterian Church realized that the principal source of the apostasy of many old-line denominations was the defection of theological seminaries. In the summer of 1937, men of God, led by Dr Carl McIntire, formed a new seminary which should be honouring to the Lord in its doctrine and position – witness to the faith once for all delivered to the saints, ever exalting the infallible Word of God as the only rule of faith and practice. God gave these men Faith, and classes began that fall with twenty-six students, all of whom were college graduates. Thus was founded Faith Theological Seminary, an institution which seeks to combine the highest scholarship with constant emphasis on vital spiritual life. In 1953, when the Seminary found it necessary to expand its facilities, God made it possible for the famous Widener Estate, 920 Spring Avenue, Pennsylvania, to become the home of Faith Theological Seminary. The buildings and grounds are ideally suited for the needs of a theological seminary. Under the leadership of Dr Allan A. MacRae, recognized Old Testament scholar, and a consecrated faculty, students at faith receive personal attention, as they are taught the Word of God and as they carefully examine critical views of the Scriptures – "that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

In 1950 Timothy Tow completed his training and returned to Singapore to pastor Life Church, Prinsep Street, in the English service. That same year, the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) held its Second Plenary Congress in Geneva, Switzerland. Timothy Tow went there with Quek Kiok Chiang and it was in the city of John Calvin that Timothy Tow was ordained by the Philadelphia Presbytery with J. Oliver Buswell as the Moderator. On their return to Singapore, and having imbibed the spirit of the Twentieth Century Reformation and Bible Presbyterianism, Rev Timothy Tow launched the Life Church English Service at 5.30 p.m. on October 1950 at 144 Prinsep Street, Singapore.

The English Service of Life Church, Prinsep Street, in those days (December 1952 to February 1953) was linked to the Chinese Presbyterian Synod, which in turn was linked to the Malayan Christian Council (MCC), a branch of the World Council of Churches (WCC) which was opposed by the ICCC. Rev. Timothy Tow, Elder Quek Kiok Chiang (now Rev Quek Kiok Chiang), and Deacon C. T. Hsu (Rev C. T. Hsu who has since been called home to glory) drafted a resolution against joining the MCC which was presented to the synod. The resolution charged the MCC for being part of WCC which promoted modernistic ecumenism. The final battle was fought in Muar, a small town in Malaysia, at the Trinity Presbyterian Church in 1955. "Of course the battle was lost against the usual phalanx of modernist missionaries and subservient national pastors. In the same month according to the "Life Church Weekly Chronicler," the English service of Life Church, Prinsep Street, decided to become fully constituted as a separate church, and to sever connections with the Synod on account of modernism. The Bible-Presbyterian Church movement of

Singapore was thus born in January 1955.

After returning from Faith Theological Seminary in May 1959 with the degree of Master of Sacred Theology, Rev Timothy Tow on September 6 of the same year felt the burden to start a Bible College. "Theological training of our consecrated young people was our Church's emphasis as a most effective means of extending God's Kingdom."

A year later, on September 19 1960, the Far Eastern Bible College (FEBC) was founded. In July 1961, the interest in the proposed FEBC was so strong that Rev Timothy Tow was asked to offer two hours of lectures every week. "This evening Bible Class ... was carried on through one academic year until the College formally opened in Sept 17th 1962." The Bible College is the life line of the Bible-Presbyterian movement. Without the Bible College, there is no place to train young men who are prepared to surrender their lives to serve the Lord. Many young men have gone overseas for theological training and returned contaminated, either in doctrine or in ethics. Much money had been spent to train these young men but have been wasted because of their compromise and their undiscerning heart. One of them brought back the philosophy of "more money more preach, less money less preach, and no money no preach." What a great betrayal of trust from so-called servants of God who make merchandise of their calling and make the belly their god. This is indeed a fulfillment of Philippians 3:18-19. Proper biblical training of young men for the ministry cannot be underestimated by God's people today. They are the life-blood of our young people and children.

On October 14, 1962, Life B P Church held its last service at Prinsep Street. It was a Farewell Service of sweet remembrance. On February 16, 1963, the new church building at 9-A Gilstead Road was dedicated for God's Service and unto His glory.

This was the beginning of the B P Church in Singapore. By the grace and mercy of the Almighty God, it has been fighting God's battle these past 54 years (1950-2004). There are many fruits born out of the labour of our founding fathers. They have fought hard and true according to the convictions God had placed in their hearts. The present generation of B-P leaders cannot afford to be ignorant of their roots. To forget our roots is to open ourselves to compromise and danger. We not only put our foundation of our faith in jeopardy, but also that of our children. We must cherish and uphold the founding principles of the B P Church. The reason is not because of sentiments but because of conviction. The conviction is that these foundational doctrines are based squarely on Holy Scriptures.

Fifty-four years have come and gone and sadly the B-P scene has changed tremendously. The year 1988 saw the dissolution of the B-P Synod of Singapore. It was the beginning of fragmentation. Some B-P churches, though bearing the same name, have become neo-evangelical in their belief and practices. This is seen in their use of the modern Bible versions such as the New International Version. The pastors of some of these B-P churches also encourage their members to join the Varsity Christian Fellowship, Campus Crusade for Christ and the Navigators knowing full well that these parachurch organizations are part of the ecumenical movement. Mother church—Life B-P Church—suffered the greatest demise in a "rebellion" led by the two assistant pastors together with most of the deacons and some of the elders who had, by stealth and worldly wisdom, ousted their founding pastor. This is the ungrateful cut of spiritual children whom every parent dreads and prays would never happen. But sadly it happened in the year 2003. The founder of the B-P Movement of Singapore was summarily "kicked out" of the church that the Lord used him to found and pastor for 53 years. Such a travesty of justice in the church must surely open the eyes of every Christian to the fact that the last of the last days are upon us. The words of the apostle Paul to young Timothy aptly describe the age and times of today. 2 Timothy 3:1-7,

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Rev Timothy Tow together with some elders started the True Life B-P Church and was registered by the Government as an independent entity in the year 2004.

The men who have touched the Lord's anointed will receive their just reward as spoken of in Proverbs 11:31, "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner." Rev Timothy Tow is indeed the Lord's anointed whom God had raised up to found the B-P movement in Singapore. What happened to Life B-P Church is a lesson every Christian must take to heart. God has not promised any church or Bible College, or any ministry, immunity from the attacks of the evil one. In fact the Bible predicted that these attacks would come. An institution that desires to do the work and will of God must be prepared for persecution both from without and within. Every generation is duty bound to fight the good fight of faith till the Lord returns. There is no let up or retirement in the battle of the Lord. If the Lord should tarry, the next generation must be equipped not so much with a big bank account or a nice church building but with the same orthodox and fundamental faith that has been

passed down through the ages, and that includes the fundamental doctrine that the Word of God is pure and perfect and has no mistakes at all. The Lord not only breathed out His Word, but also kept it pure (perfectly) throughout the ages.