

FUNDAMENTALISM - A HISTORICAL SURVEY

J C de Smidt
VUDEC
Vista University

Abstract

Fundamentalism is a universal phenomenon which may be described from religious, sociological, political, psychological and other perspectives. The article concentrates on the phenomenon of fundamentalism in Christianity. The phenomenon has historical antecedents in the American Protestant reaction to the liberal theology of the 19th century. An increasingly secularized world provides it with the growth medium in which it flourishes. It incorporates an absolutization of especially religious and educational values such as the inerrancy of the Bible. It is an aggressive movement which opposes modernism. It attempts to transform the world through the restoration of former viewpoints.

1. Introduction

Fundamentalism [hereafter (F), also for other variants], has aroused much interest, especially since the seventies. It is very relevant today and has become a most important phenomenon on the world scene (Cohen 1990:vii; Kaplan 1992:vii).

The phenomenon is a complex of manifestations, evident to a larger or lesser extent in many spheres of life. It has various names and origins and both national and international manifestations. It does, however, also have definite and uniform themes and basic problems (Du Plessis 1987:2; Kaplan 1992:5). It manifests in various countries, religions, cultures and educational systems and in the political and scientific spheres (Du Plessis 1987:5). In this regard (F) may be classified as a universal phenomenon.

It can be described from several perspectives. From the religious viewpoint there is the (F) in Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, to name but a few instances (Barr 1984:7; Botha 1991:206; Cohen 1990:x; Du Plessis 1987:3; Loader 1980:191). Adherents of the religious (F) have various holy books or different interpretations of the same holy book, or no holy book at all (Marty & Appleby 1991:8.5). Most variations of (F) have a religious origin. According to Cohen (1990:vii) no subject can be more important than religious (F) because it impacts on all spheres of life. Barr (1984:1820) maintains that Protestant (F) is the most dangerous of all.

It may also be described from a sociological perspective. Fahrenholz (Küng & Moltmann 1992:14) asserts that (F) is *inter alia* the outcome of alienation. Social marginalization, personal isolation and the loss of *ethnic* or cultural roots, as well as that of historical continuity, lead to (F). A desire therefore develops for the security of 'eternal' values, a stable world picture and a need for leaders who know the 'right ways'. The leaders of a fundamentalist movement usually have the right to demand total subjection. (F) is then an *attempt to overcome a deep existential anxiety and a 'weariness of conflict'*. It may likewise be linked to the globalization process causing the world to become a *global village*. A demand for religious inspiration arises, together with its attendant religious and quasi-religious questions. An attempt is made to transform the world through the restoration of former viewpoints (*old-time gospel*), according to Coleman in Küng & Moltman 1992:42). (F) thus becomes an aggressive movement opposing modernity and demands that

the so-called untainted and sacral norms of the past be restored. Religious ideologies are frequently linked to a national identity (Cohen 1990:x; Küng & Moltmann 1992:14).

Fundamentalism may also be viewed from a political perspective. With their political activism, its adherents attempt to protect or liberate the community from modern social or cultural influences. To achieve these purposes the spheres of religion and education are targeted. In several parts of the world they have disturbed the political balance (Botha 1991:206; Cohen 1990:xii, 73).

From a psychological viewpoint the adherents of (F) may be regarded as separatist, extremist and fanatical. To them, the world is demoralizing, bad and evil and doomed to an apocalyptic destruction (Cohen 1990:xi). Instances of religious fanaticism coupled with violence occur continuously all over the world. This, says Kaplan (1992:vii), ... *remind(s) the informed public that fundamentalism and its ramifications are an ongoing phenomenon.*

This does not mean that all the identified characteristics of (F) always appear in the same measure in all identified groups. Fundamentalism is not, however, merely a postulation or affirmation of certain viewpoints, but the *absolutization* of such viewpoints (Du Plessis 1987:16).

Hunter (Cohen 1990:56) rightly points out that (F) has contours all over the world. It is context-bound. It is also, however, ... *a window through which one can understand much about the modern world, particularly the pressures and strains it creates for ordinary people and the ... communities of which they are part* (Cohen 1990:71).

Many experts (cf. Barr 1984:90) have, however, maintained that (F) is a product of a prescientific community and that it will disappear as science advances. This is not true. An increasingly secularized world provides the growth medium in which (F) flourishes. It is spread across social and professional classes and is not the preserve of the illiterate (Barr 1984:90). Coleman (Küng & Moltmann 1992:36) contend that (F) has become a world tendency since the seventies and has surprised sociologists. In spite of modernization and technical development (F) has grown more rapidly worldwide than the mainstream Protestant and Catholic denominations.

Researchers maintain, however, that the majority of those who have personally experienced the values of modernity, will reject the fanaticism of (F), which is too sectarian to take over the community. Nevertheless, fundamentalism has come to stay (Cohen 1990:xi).

In this article the main area of concern is the role of (F) in Christianity and, more specifically, particular articulations within the broader spectrum, as the subject would otherwise be too comprehensive. The findings of other subject disciplines will be incorporated on a cursory basis.

In this context (F) is an ecclesiastical and theological phenomenon occurring in all churches (Deist 1989:2). It is also a term applied to a stream within Christendom and exists parallel to, and within traditional churches. Volf (Küng & Moltman 1992:97) maintains, however, that (F) ... *has almost paradoxically become one of the main ways of transmitting and incultivating the Protestant form of faith in today's world.*

According to Dumestre (1995:190), (F) is the cause of many problems in churches and schools all over the world. Its reactionary attitudes towards, *inter alia*, culture and the community traverse Christian denominations. It is therefore important that Christian teachers and ministers should realise how obstructionist (F) can be in terms of the central goals of, for instance, religious instruction. (F) may cause tension between churches and influence people to believe 'wrongly'. The impact of (F) is generally underestimated.

2. Selective labelling of fundamentalists

When the term (F) is used as a collective noun for a particular constellation of religious indices, it should be applied with care and proper nuance (Du Plessis 1987:16). The term is today used lavishly in debates on the topic, but should not, however, be overstrained to the extent of rendering its intrinsic meaning valueless (Deist 1986:26).

Initially (circa 1909), a certain group of Protestants in the USA (cf. par 3.3) referred to the *fundamentals* in both Scripture and their beliefs. This was the origin of the subsequent term (F), with which the group defended with balance and learned integrity their historical Christian convictions against modern influences.

With the passage of time the term fell into verbal misuse and acquired a very negative connotation. Pinnock (Cohen 1990:41) rightly maintains that a mainstream of ecumenical liberals had for far too long, and with intolerant and disparaging intentions, grouped all theological conservatives together under a fundamentalistic label. In theological circles, the only value the concept still has is that of a respectable canonical profanity (Deist 1986:26). When theologians wish to 'bury' an individual he is labelled a fundamentalist (compare Barr 1984:2). It is not acceptable, says Pinnock (Cohen 1990:42), that millions of believers who love their God and their Bible, should thus be reduced to shame. *No human group is without fault* (Cohen 1990:41). The term (F) still belongs within the parameters of a valid Christendom, maintains Volf (Küng & Moltmann 1992:98). One does not escape a charge of unfairness if one labels all who regard the Scriptures as authoritative and inerrant as fundamentalists.

Although many researchers are uncomfortable with the term, it has spread to other phenomena. It remains the most effective co-ordinating term by means of which to describe parallel tendencies in other religions (Marty & Appleby 1991:viii).

3. A preliminary definition of fundamentalism

Fundamentalism is a religious and intellectual system which has an enormous effect on theology (Bam 1984:9). It is primarily a 20th-century phenomenon with historical antecedents (Mary & Appleby 1991:814).

Barr (1984:1) contends that it is best to avoid a simplistic definition of (F) and to rather use its basic attributes as the point of departure for a comprehensive description of the phenomenon in all its manifestations. In this way literature may be tested as to whether it is fundamentalistic or reflects similar influences (compare Cohen 1990:vii; Du Plessis 1987:2).

In very general terms, (F) may be defined as an American Protestant reaction to the liberal theology of the 19th century. As a concept (F) had its origins in a number of Biblical conferences of conservative Protestants (Vos 1988:210) where the liberal theology was accused of undermining canonical proclamation. Some groups fell back on the thoughts and judgements of theologians and church groups of the 19th century and energetically expanded these tenets (Deist 1989:2). There was a reversion to the Biblical *fundamentals* of the Christian faith but these basic principles were rather arbitrarily interpreted (Küng & Moltmann 1992:vii), the purpose being to reflect the truth of the Bible (Barr 1984:122).

For a lengthy period of time definitions centred around the so-called five points of (F) identified at the *Presbyterian General Assembly* in the USA in 1910. The concept was only relatively recently adopted by the media and researchers who also defined it in various other terms. In Küng & Moltmann (1992:37) a sociological definition of the term is given: *In simplest terms, we define fundamentalism as a proclamation of reclaimed authority over a sacred tradition which is to be reinstated as an antidote for a society that has strayed from*

its structural moorings. (See other definitions in Küng & Moltmann 1992:3; Lawrence 1989:90). Kaplan (1992:5) defines (F) from a more general religious perspective as ...*a world view that highlights specific essential 'truths' of traditional faiths and applies them with earnestness and fervor to twentieth-century realities.*

For Du Plessis (1989:2), (F) does not exist in Christendom as a determinable organisation. Neither is it a closed system of theological thought (compare Barr 1984:341). It is characterized by a multitude of facts and phenomena which are intrinsically related to one another. This connectedness is identifiable in one way or another as a form of *absolutization*: The concept forms the communication link between the various phenomena. Du Plessis (1987:15) defines (F) as a divergent theological canonical manifestation. Its main characteristic is the inerrancy of the Bible as a historically qualified truth and reality. In the same vein Marsden (Cohen 1990:23) also refers to historical (F) as ... *the literal exposition of all the affirmations and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes.* Certain churches and organisations may, however, be indicated to be fundamentalistic by their nature or inclinations.

According to Loader (1980:103), the Protestant (F) places disproportionate emphasis on specific texts, problems and themes to the detriment of others. This renders useless the real fruits of a critical and scientific study of the Bible. A specified framework is created within which the entire Bible should be understood and in terms of which all other possibilities are cut adrift. This is done even where non-fundamentalistic results could also enrich the understanding of the Bible without compromising biblical orthodoxy.

Barr (1984:324) describes (F) in the nutshell as ...*a constellation of differing positions disposed around the centrality and inerrancy of the Bible.*

Pinnock (Cohen 1990:43) distinguishes two particular kinds of fundamentalist, namely the rigid hyper-fundamentalist and the more receptive fundamentalist. The former is totally separatistic *vis-a-vis* dissidents. Receptive fundamentalists distance themselves from the separatist group and are anxious to contribute to the community. Loader (1980:114) distinguishes three categories, namely:

- Uncompromising fundamentalists
- Those who do not speak out against either the fundamentalists or the critical and scientific group, but whose work is questioned by the latter while it nourishes the former
- Those who deny (F) on principle, but are none the less prepared to write in such a manner that the intentions and techniques of (F) are subtly promoted.

4. An etiology of fundamentalism

Protestant (F) can be ascribed to, *inter alia*, theological, socio-cultural and psychological factors (compare Vorster 1988:156). Three main periods can be identified in the birth and development of (F). A detailed chronology and a specification of facts are not, however, assumed.

4.1 The Reformation: 16th and 17th centuries

Various historians are of the opinion that the modern era had its inception with the Renaissance, followed by the Enlightenment and the period that followed (Grenz 1994:323). The Reformation itself was the start of a new era (Deitz 1986:27).

One of the important postulates of the Reformation with regard to the Bible was the *sola Scriptura* (only the Scripture). The Bible was the source of truth about God and his relation-

ship with mankind and the world (Deist 1989:3). The Bible was an unassailable, holy book.

The influence of the Renaissance contributed to the rational basis of the *sola Scriptura* (Deist 1989:3). Seventeenth-century theologians formulated a host of theories regarding the inspiration of the Bible. One of these was that God had prompted every word of the Bible to its writers (the theory of mechanical inspiration). This was the theory which led to (F). It was later modified by the theory of literal, verbal or graphic inspiration which accepted that, although the writers had different styles and vocabularies, their words had been supplied by God and were therefore inerrant (Deist 1989:3).

4.2 The Renaissance and the enlightened despotism (Aufklärung)

During the period that encompassed the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment, mankind was elevated to the fulcrum of reality. A host of academics and universities were responsible for a rapid escalation of knowledge. People became individuals and began expressing their opinions on topics of the day. This spirit of independent thought and awareness of self-value filtered through to the terrain of the Church and ultimately led to (F) (Deist 1986:27). A dissatisfaction with traditional responses and the anomalies thus engendered gave rise to many questions (Vorster 1988:172).

The quest for a more rationally accountable truth led to the formulation of a new view of life to which scientists, philosophers, theologians and certain schools of thought from particularly the 16th and 17th centuries, contributed. Among the best-known adherents were Bacon (1626), Comte (1857), Descartes (1696-1650), Darwin (1859), Durkheim (1917), Newton (1642-1726), *The Scottish Common Sense Realism* (17th century) and others (compare Grenz 1994:324; Küng & Moltmann 1992:6; Marty & Appleby 1991:9 & 10; Mouton & Pauw 1988:177; Vorster 1988:157).

An epistemological revolution followed. Every sphere of life was invaded by scholars under the banner of what Juergen Habermas called the 'Enlightenment project'. Human reason was applied to the unlocking of the secrets of the universe. Nature had to be controlled in her entirety to create a better world. Purity and correctness were sought in philosophical, scientific, religious and political dogma. An attempt was made ... *to stand apart from being a conditioned participant and to be able to view the world as an unconditioned observer, that is to peer at the world from the advantage point outside the flux of history* (Deist 1986:28; Grenz 1994:323). A few of the important elements which advanced (F) will be explored.

4.2.1 Theories of Descartes and Bacon

The French philosopher Descartes, with his views on the clarity and comprehensibility of ideas, laid the foundation of nationalism (Grenz 1994:324; Mouton & Pauw 1988:178). It was under his influence that Bacon formulated his theory of *veracitas nativiae*. This view accepts that nature is an open book and that all her secrets may be unlocked by means of the faculty of pure reason. Bacon's plea for inductivism and empiricism embraces the need for mankind's thinking to be cleansed of various idols (dogmas, superstitions and prejudices), which prevent the clear reception and impression of sensory data. This approach was similar to the theory of *tabula rasa* and was regarded as the sole means by which inerrant truths could be acquired. Both Descartes and Bacon believed that scientifically inerrant truths could only arise from inerrant religious convictions (on *Foundationalism*: See Mouton & Pauw 1988:179). Bacon also employed religious metaphors for his theory. He believed that God had created human reason with an intrinsic ability to reflect the world in accurate

terms. Reason was sufficient to portray the world of the universe in intelligible terms (Mouton & Pauw 1988:178; compare Ammerman, in Marty & Appleby 1991:9; Marty, in Küng & Moltmann 1992:6). Both Descartes and Bacon aimed at the acquisition of knowledge which could be guaranteed by divine authority (Mouton & Pauw 1988:180). Bacon's philosophy would subsequently play an important role in the formulation of (F).

4.2.2 Scottish common sense realism

This philosophy decisively influenced American theological thought during the first half of the 19th century and would later initiate fundamentalist standpoints. The epistemological status of mankind was again elevated and the human reason and instincts were placed at the fulcrum of the search for truth (compare Ammerman, in Marty & Appleby 1991:16; Marty in Küng & Moltmann 1992:6; Vorster 1988:156-7).

The Scottish Common Sense Realism originated in Scotland. It promulgated an epistemological status of real objects by means of sensory perceptions. Truth was identifiable ... *objects can objectively be observed and facts exist independently of the observer's mind. What senses perceive, is a thing, an object, a fact, not an idea of a thing, object of fact.* (For a further definition see Vorster 1988:156-159.)

4.2.3 Socio-cultural changes

The Reformation and the Enlightenment caused a transformation of the socio-cultural scene. (For an excellent and logical exposition see Ammerman in Marty & Appleby 1991:8-15.) A few of the most characteristic phenomena in this regard will now be discussed with reference to their contribution to (F).

Among the most important factors to cause turbulence in the theological field were, *inter alia*, the modernistic viewpoints of Darwin (1809 - 1882) with his theory of evolution. Even *homo sapiens* was regarded as a product of natural selection and not of a single act of creation (Marty & Appleby 1991:10; Vorster 1988:160). With the Aufklärung the sociology and politics of the world were also transformed. Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991: 10) demonstrates that new democratic governments and new sociological thought ... *began to challenge the assumption the traditional social forms reflected and followed the divine order of reality.* Comte (1857) held that the age of religion was over. Mankind's reason was able to control nature and the community. Durkheim (1917) contended that social forces formed individual behavioural patterns and that the gods people worshipped were projections of their need for identity. The science of psycho-analysis propounded, *inter alia*, that man's subconscious struggle was not between God and Satan, but between the *id* and the *superego*. Personality was not shaped by God, but by the traumas and interactions in the life of a young child. The basic premises of traditional Christian orthodoxy were thus opposed (Marty & Appleby 1991:10, 11).

4.3 - Princeton theological seminary (1812)

It was inevitable that this spirit of independent thought and the realisation of individual value would also affect the Church (Deist 1986:27). Theologians were compelled to pay attention to certain of the *fundamentals* which were current in contemporary theology. One of these *fundamentals* was the epistemological privilege of the Bible. This view lent the Bible the status of an extraordinary source of objective knowledge (Vorster 1988:155).

The genetic context of (F), which was built on this Biblical privilege, had its origin in the Princeton Theological Seminary, which was established by the Presbyterian Church in 1812 (Vorster 1988:159). Its first professor, A Alexander (1772 - 1851), defended the

fundamentalistic and authoritarian character of the Bible. Everything contained in the Bible was, according to him, in accord with scientifically verifiable fact. Science could discover nothing that was contradictory to the Bible. The reader led by the Spirit and the scientist correctly led by his reason would arrive at the same conclusions (compare Küng & Moltmann 1992:6, Marty & Appleby 1991:15).

Alexander was succeeded by Hodge (1877:1878). According to Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:15) and Marty (Küng & Moltmann 1992:6), Hodge applied Baconian inductivism and *Scottish Common Sense Realism* to the study of the Bible. The Bible was regarded as a repository of facts. The theologian, like the scientist, starts with facts. *Common Sense Realism* accepts that these facts are embodied in the words of the Bible. Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:15) cites: *One should not look for the ideas behind the words; truth is contained in the words themselves, words whose meanings are true and changeless, words that have the power to change lives.* This resulted in certain theologians becoming very confident about their grip on truth. Their assumption was that God, as a God of love and truth, would reveal himself in a form comprehensible to ordinary people and their senses, as He had done in the canonical writings. Among the most important *fundamentals*, according to Marty (Küng & Moltmann 1992:6) were ... *to reintroduce absolutes and the authoritative Word on the theological scene* (compare Vorster 1988:159). Hodge also rejected the German method of exegesis.

Warfield (1851 - 1921) succeeded Hodge. Influenced by, *inter alia*, the *Common Sense Realism*, he maintained that the Bible was inerrant, authoritative and objective. The Bible was inspired and therefore embodied the truth.

Warfield was succeeded by Machen (1881 - 1937), who later founded the Westminster Theological Seminary because he regarded Princeton as having become too modernistic (Botha 1991:206; Marty & Appleby 1991:15).

And so (F) came into being in the field of the Biblical Sciences in reaction to the modernism of the 18th and 19th centuries which was regarded as a threat and as irreconcilable with Christian views. The Bible was seen as inerrant.

4.4 Twentieth century contribution to fundamentalism

When the scientific 'eye' of the 19th and 20th centuries was focused on the Biblical Sciences, reactions were divergent, says Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:11).

At the turn of the century, German scholars compared the genesis of the Bible with those of other ancient texts. Its literary forms and historical contexts were analysed by, *inter alia*, Wellhausen (1844 - 1918). Exegesis and Scriptural criticism had become synonymous. The message of certain theologians was that the Bible was not the inerrant Word of God or even the historical document it purported to be. The Bible was declared errant (Marty & Appleby 1991:12; Vorster 1988:160 - 161).

Factors such as industrialization, immigration and urbanization contributed to the emergence of new religious traditions, attitudes and values in the USA. The fact that Protestantism became an unofficial state religion can be ascribed to the religious pluralism of the time. Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:12) writes: *These challenges from science, from society and from the new biblical studies warranted responses by the theologians and church leaders of the time.*

Certain theologians attempted to address the ethical crisis caused, *inter alia*, by urbanization and poverty by means of the *Social Gospel* (compare Marty & Appleby 1991:12; Vos 1988:212). The tenet of millennialism formulated by Joachim Fiore in the 12th century was thus articulated (De Smidt 1993:85). By living righteously amidst these

circumstances of crisis, a realm of peace lasting a thousand years could be anticipated (compare Marty & Appleby 1991:13).

Running parallel with this was an intention to apply new interpretations to old dogmas. The stories of creation and other wonders and those of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus were not interpreted literally but allegorically, mythologically or symbolically. With science as the source of all truth, religious principles or dogmas had to be rendered acceptable to modern thought.

New religions appeared on the American scene and religious pluralism deepened. Among these were the Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons. Millennialism, dispensationalism and the rapture were very prominent. According to Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:13) these theories were closely related to the social and religious transformation of the time. ...*Concern with the coming divine kingdom - in this world and in the next - was the driving force ... All adopted some new version of the millennialism as their response to the challenges of this age* (Marty & Appleby 1991:13). Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:13) considered Pentecostalism*the most dramatic religious innovation of the day*. The emphasis was on the power of the Holy Spirit, ecstatic worship, healing, speaking in tongues, etc. This phenomenon also accommodated various fundamentalists. Each of these religious phenomena may be interpreted as a response to the religious and social chaos of the late 19th century.

4.5 A developing ideology of fundamentalism

A host of theologians intensely debated factors like evolution, biblical catechism, religious pluralism, the possible errancy of the Bible and the new ethical problem. For many, modernism became the umbrella term for all these phenomena and was regarded as a form of rebellion against the God of Christianity (Vorster 1988:161). The sciences were categorized as godless.

Other theologians followed the 'liberal' approach to Biblical Science. There were thus clearly two directions or approaches (Deist 1986:32). The first may be seen as theologically progressive or innovative and the second as theologically regressive and restorative in terms of their confession of faith with particular reference to the inerrancy of the Bible (compare Ammerman in Marty & Appleby 1991:14).

A number of conservative Christians rejected the possibility that the Bible could contain historical faults, contradictions and the like. Literal inerrancy of the Bible was advocated (Deist 1986:31). They refused to abandon or exchange their own view of the world, which had been based on their understanding of the Bible, for a religio-scientific one. They declined to incorporate modern science into their faith (Labuschagne 1977:31).

In a reaction against the liberal science-directed approach the Niagara Convention of 1895 issued a statement summarizing the so-called 'five points of fundamentalism'. (These are later mentioned under basic assumptions.) This was a result of a number of Biblical conferences held by conservative Protestants (Vos 1988:212).

Between the years 1909 - 1915 a series of 29 monographs, bound into twelve books and entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony of the Truth* was published in the USA. In these the *fundamentals* of faith, including the inerrancy of the Bible, the virgin birth and the godliness and resurrection of Jesus were defended against the 'liberalism' and 'modernism' of the time (compare Barr 1984:2; Volf, in Küng & Moltmann 1992:98; Vorster 1988:161). Various groups of conservative Christians such as those favouring the Princeton approach, the millennialists (particularly the premillennialists), revival movements, Puritans, pietists, evangelical movements, Baptists, reformists, etc., set aside

minor differences and formed a loose unofficial coalition which is today known as (F). They were thus named in 1920 by the Editor of *The Watchman - Examiner*, C.L. Laws. Their exclusive aim was to check the modern onslaught, especially with regard to criticism of the Bible (Kaplan 1992:16; Vorster 1988:161). The *Scofield Reference Bible*, a dispensational, premillennialist commentary, played a prominent role in this movement. It was published in 1909 by Scofield.

The name *fundamentalism* and its teachings spread worldwide. In 1949 it became a factor in the newly established Christian community of Korea. Alternative terms of usage occurred everywhere, such as *extreme fundamentalism*, *strict fundamentalism*, *obscurantism*, *puritanism* and *sectarian perfectionism*. In Asia, the term *conservatism* was preferred. Other terms such as *biblicism*, *Methodism*, *pietism* were also used to describe the phenomenon. In 1948 there was dissatisfaction with the weak front presented by (F) against political and ecclesiastical *liberalism*, and terms such as *neo-evangelicalism* and *neo-orthodoxy* came into use. In South Africa the term (F) is most widely employed (Du Plessis 1987:3).

4.6 Contemporary fundamentalism

According to Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:8) and Collins (Richardson & Bowden 1991:223) contemporary (F) can be related to the theological developments of the 19th century mentioned above. The movement developed both within and alongside the traditional Christian churches of the day. The teachings of (F) and its images and practices reflect, probably even on a subconscious level, 19th-century influences. Fundamentalist thought on the truth reflects the standpoints of the 19th century. Traditional music in fundamentalist churches is cast in the mould of the music of the late 19th century. Adaptation, fundamentalists contend, is nothing less than heretical. And what remains when erstwhile biblical truths come under suspicion?

Although many groups place great emphasis to the literal interpretation of the Scriptures and a morally 'ascetic' life, the fact remains that *...each also signalled a significant departure from the past, claiming some new truth as its revelation... They would take the materials of that nineteenth-century social and religious world and create a new synthesis of tradition that would carry them well into the next century* (Ammerman, in Marty & Appleby 1991:14). Collins (Richardson & Bowden 1991:223) likewise mentions that contemporary (F) *... shores with [its] forbears an apologetic mode of theology reflecting a historicist notion of truth as well as an insistence on the fundamentals ...*

Scholars with (F) viewpoints are, *inter alia*, Moody (19th century), Torrey (1965), Hal Lindsey (1970), Hubert Armstrong (1985), Kenneth Copeland (1995), Oral Roberts (1994) and even Billy Graham. Among the well-known publications that reflect fundamentalist standpoints are *Bibliotheca Sacra*, *Evangelical Quarterly*, *Christianity Today* and the publications of *Inter-varsity Press* and *Fuller Theological Seminary* (compare Barr 1984:xx; Richardson & Bowden 1991:223).

Fundamentalism gained a fast hold in South Africa via adventist, pentecostal and other groups. Various reformists studied under the erstwhile Princeton theologians and their fundamentalist contemporaries in the Netherlands in the first two decades of the 20th century (compare Deist 1986:35; Loader 1980:103). In South Africa the Totius model exerted considerable influence on theologians.

Contemporary (F) reflects both continuity and discontinuity with reference to the 19th century phenomenon, but it has nevertheless come to stay.

5. Fundamentalism as a reactionist phenomenon against Modernism

5.1 Historical modernism

Modernism is a term used with specific reference to a development which took place in the USA in the 19th century (Botha 1991:226). Vorster (1988:159) calls modernism a denominator for the opposing 'other' in 19th-century American culture. ...*Essentially it refers to the conscious adaptation of religious ideas and practices to a developing culture* (Vorster 1988:159). It has become an umbrella term embracing everything from Darwinism, evolutionism to idealism and later, in the 20th century, Nazism, Marxism, communism and materialism.

5.2 Historical fundamentalism's reaction to historical modernism

The American society in the period prior to 1860 can be described as mechanical. Both the physical and metaphysical aspects of reality existed in a harmonious unity (ontological-dualistic) and there was almost no knowledge of philosophy nor any form of philosophical activity. Only the *Scottish Common Sense Realism* and Baconianism exerted a measure of influence. The sciences were taxonomical (Vorster 1988:160).

From 1869 these theories were threatened by, *inter alia*, Darwin, Kant, Hegel, the philosophy of idealism and criticism of the Bible. These exponents of modernism were ... *experienced by conservative Christians as a threat to the existence of Christianity* (Vorster 1988:161).

The cultural crisis had transcended to a metaphysical level and the struggle against modernism was interpreted as one against evil itself (Vorster 1988:161). The *Chicago Statement on Hermeneutics* was in a certain sense the culmination of the fundamentalist reaction. (Botha 1991:206)

Fundamentalism had in essence become a phenomenon of reaction against modernism. Without modernism there can be no (F). There is no such thing as premodern (F) (Botha 1991:206; Lawrence 1989:2; Vorster 1988:159).

5.3 Contemporary modernism

The world we are living in today is a modern, market-directed world. There is a labour market, a capital market, a food market, a medicine market, a marriage market and markets for religions and symbols (Küng & Moltmann 1992:IX). This world is characterized by equality and freedom.

'Modern' has become a code word for, *inter alia*, rationality, pluralism, cosmopolitanism, progressivism, secularization and liberalism (Küng & Moltmann 1993:40, 110). Modern cultures are in favour of secular rationality, religious tolerance and individualism (Marty & Appleby 1991:VII). Modern concepts have been introduced into traditional religions with a corresponding adjustment of dogmas (Cohen 1990:56; Kaplan 1992:13).

To be modern is ... *to be part of a universe in which all that is solid melts into air* (Lawrence 1989:1).

Ammerman (Marty & Appleby 1991:185, 186, 194) regards the *Social Gospel* and the questioning of the uniqueness of Christianity as two manifestations of modernism.

Non-fundamentalistic Christians attempt to view the modern world and the many facets of mankind's need for religiosity in a critical but credible and reasonable manner (Dumestre 1995:195).

5.4 Contemporary reaction of fundamentalism against modernism

Contemporary (F) is characterized by a fierce reaction to both *modernity* (the elements of which the modern world is composed) and *modernism* (an ideological reformation of the

human being) (Lawrence 1989:27), caustically referred to as *Westoxication*. Contemporary fundamentalists hold the view that modernism has led to the destruction of human values, moral decay, the destruction of family structures, pornography, abortion and the emancipation of the woman (Kaplan 1992:9). Modernity is therefore rejected.

Coleman (Küng & Moltmann 1992:38) contends that the fundamentalists regard it as their mission to call mankind back to the lost religious traditions of a previous era. They over-emphasize certain qualities of the previous era and attach, according to Hunter (Cohen 1990:56), a sacral quality to history, sacral history being God's way of communicating with mankind. Instead of interpreting contemporary culture in the light of faith, they attempt to redefine the direction and goals of history in accordance with their *fundamentals* (Dumestre 1995:193). A desirable future, and ultimately a millennialistic future, is presented. The world must be changed and their task, says Hunter (Cohen 1990:59), is ... *to make history right again*. Various strategies are implemented in this process, the most essential of which is the proclamation of the *sola Scriptura* principle. They identify symbols, groups or individuals who have led mankind away from the idealized past and arm themselves selectively with dogmas and practices which are constantly repeated.

Dumestre (1995:193) and Marty & Appleby (1991:818 et seq) also distinguish the following other fundamentalist strategies:

- *Scandalization* — Regarded by outsiders as violent or extraordinary religious behaviour. The emphasis is on the extraordinary in the shape of miracles, demonstrations, etc. (compare Dumestre 1995:195; Marty & Appleby 1991:818).
- *Acquisition of absolute authority* — People find consolation in leaders who can state unequivocally whether a matter is absolutely right or wrong. This is regarded as the ideal (Dumestre 1995:195 - 196).
- *The desire to rule* — There is a need to obtain power over others. Eschatology (particularly millennialistic expectations) and justified militancy are employed towards the attainment of the ideal (Dumestre 1995:196). Metaphors associated with war and violence are sometimes used (Cohen 1990:62).
- *Privatized religiosity* — The emphasis here is on the exclusivity of religion. ...*The 'us against them' stance galvanises the fundamentalist community* (Dumestre 1995:196).

The goal of (F) is, above all, religious imperialism, a religious state and proselytization (Küng & Moltmann 1992:11).

Fundamentalists are not opposed to modernism in all respects. In a certain sense they are modern, but not modernists (Lawrence 1989:IX). Their criticisms are selective and at times they even promote modernism (Küng & Moltmann 1992:40). They have a symbolic relation to modernism in that they employ politics (theopolitically), sources of cultural production (school, newspapers, radio and TV) and other modern techniques to achieve their goals (Küng & Moltmann 1992:111); Marty & Appleby 1991: VII). Fundamentalism is therefore as modern as the culture it opposes (Dumestre 1995:194).

As long as human suffering and uncertainty exist (compare catastrophes of the order of Chernobyl and intrigues in the Third World) and the impression that 'something is wrong' remains prevalent, (F) will find an echo in many souls (Kaplan 1992:13; Küng & Moltmann 1992:113). It will remain a way of explaining world circumstances and of obtaining stability.

In its extreme form, however, modernism remains a challenge for Christianity. The true modernist believes that religion will disappear in its entirety, that mankind will be free from

the slavery of religious dogmatism and illuminated by social progression and the sciences (Dumestre 1995:195). The struggle is therefore not limited to (F).

Those who are fundamentalists ... *[preserve] in a desperate way a trust in the earth and time which is being ideologically and technologically destroyed by modernity* (Küng & Moltmann 1992:110).

6. Conclusion

Fundamentalism is a highly important and relevant universal phenomenon. It embodies an absolutization of especially religious and educational standpoints. It attempts to transform the world *via* the restoration of erstwhile values. It has developed into an aggressive bulwark against modernism in all its manifestations, but employs the technological benefits of the modern society to advance its cause.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ammerman, NT 1991. North American Protestant Fundamentalism. In: Marty, ME & Appleby, RS (eds) *Fundamentalisms observed*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Armstrong, H 1985. Who or what is the Prophetic Beast? *The Good News of the World Tomorrow*. Oct-Nov, 3-6, 2-22.
- Barr, J 1984. *Fundamentalism*. London: SCM Press Ltd.
- Botha, J 1991. Waarheidsteorieë en interpretasie. *Koers*, 56(2): 185-215.
- Cohen, NJ (ed) 1900. *The fundamentalist phenomenon*. A view from within; A response from without. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.
- Collins, RF 1991. Fundamentalism. In: Richard, A & Bowden, J (eds) *A new dictionary of Christian theology*. London: SCM Press.
- Deist, F 1986. *Kan ons die Bybel dan nog glo?* Pretoria: JL van Schaik.
- Deist, F 1989. Fundamentalisme - 'n Gereformeerde beoordeling. *Theologia Evangelica*, xii (2): 2-8.
- De Smidt, JC 1993. Chiliasm: An escape from the present into an extra-Biblical apocalyptic imagination. *Scriptura*, 45:79-95.
- Dumestre, MJ 1995. Postfundamentalism and the Christian intentional learning community. *Religious Education*, 90(2):190-206.
- Du Plessis, PJ 1987. Fundamentalisme - Ja of nee? *Scriptura*, 20:1-32.
- Grenz, SJ 1994. Postmodernism and the future of evangelical theology: Star Trek and the next generation. *Evangelical review of theology*, 18:322-334.
- Kaplan, L (ed.) 1992. *Fundamentalism in comparative perspective*. Massachusetts: The University Press.
- Küng, H & Moltmann, J (eds) 1992. *Fundamentalism as an ecumenical challenge*. London: SCM Press.
- Labuschagne, CJ 1977. *Wat zegt de bijbel in GODS naam?* Nieuwe bijbeluitleg en modern godsgehoof. Gravenhage: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum.
- Lawrence, BB 1989. *The fundamentalist revolt against the modern age*. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers.
- Lindsey, H 1970. *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.
- Loader, JA 1980. Ortodokse fundamentalisme en die gebruik van die Ou Testament in Suid-Afrika. *Hervormde teologiese studies*, 35 (1&2): 101-118.
- Marty, ME & Appleby, RS (eds) *Fundamentalisms observed*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mouton, J & Pauw, JC 1988. Foundationalism and fundamentalism: A critique. In: Mouton, J (ed) *Paradigms and progress in theology*. HSRC Studies in Research Methodology. Pretoria: HSRC, pp 176-186.
- Torrey, RA 1965. *Getting the gold out of the Word of God*. Westwood, NJ: Revell.
- Vorster, JN 1988. The use of Scripture in fundamentalism. In: Mouton, J (ed.) *Paradigms and progress in theology*. HSRC Studies in Research Methodology. Pretoria: HSRC, pp 155-175.
- Vos, CJA 1988. Skrifgesag en prediking. *Skrif en Kerk*, 9(2):210-221.