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Fundamentalism in America.

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THE perennial conflict in the Church between conservative and liberal has recently entered in America a very active phase, so much so as to attract attention from all quarters where the development of Protestant Christianity is watched with interest, whether hostile or sympathetic. There is deep disappointment with organized Christianity as a force either to stay the outbreak of a world-devastating war, to check its most brutal ferocities, or to bring about conditions of real and abiding peace under treaties supposedly adapted to this purpose by the statesmen of nominally Christian nations. Men are calling for real Christianity.

The voices of statesmen, sociologists, leaders of the world's thought, are frankly pessimistic as regards all other solutions of national and economic ills, save a moral regeneration in the spirit of Jesus. In these outspoken utterances they simply give expression to the tacit conviction of the average sober-minded man. Why, then, did Christianity not save Christendom? Why was it powerless to prevent the slow accumulation of those fatal conditions, those predatory and destructive forces which brought on the cataclysm? Why did it have no apparent effect in the clash of nationalistic hatreds? Why does it offer so little hope even now of a restoration of conditions of mutual service between wage-earners and capitalists, helpful interchange of social group with social group, nation with nation, race with race? There seems to be little disposition to deny that the true spirit of Christianity is that of peace on earth, goodwill among men. Its conception of a kingdom of God dominated by righteousness, animated by the joy of mutual service, is generally acceptable as a goal to be striven for. If, then, we are disappointed in the results attained, the fault is not with Christianity as such, but only with the fact that there is too little of it, or too much of the wrong kind.

Reasoning of this kind is doubtless responsible for the present extraordinary revival of religious interest, of which the Fundamentalist-Modernist controversy so prominent in the newspapers and magazines is only a symptom, perhaps not the most important.

The Fundamentalist lays the blame for the ineffectiveness of nominal Christianity on 'liberalism.' And if liberalism be understood in the vulgar sense of relaxation, a merely negative attitude toward problems formerly faced, solutions and obligations once accepted (perhaps mistakenly), the Fundamentalist is mainly right. He who appeals to self-determination merely to excuse his disregard of the old-time religion, letting down the bars of conscience, makes the Divine instinct of liberty an occasion to the flesh, preaching Christ as a minister of sin. The Fundamentalist sees no way to meet the present flood of moral and intellectual relaxation save to revert to the ideas, beliefs, standards of faith and practice, of former times.

There is much to justify his pessimism. Personal morality, the ethics of the family, all those principles of individual rectitude and high-minded devotion which we admire most in the true men of God of a former generation, whatever we may think of their opinions, are in as parlous a condition to-day as the ethics of international, industrial, and commercial relations. It may be the symptom of a despairing mind, but not altogether of a weak or irrational one to say: 'Civilization (so-called) is on the road to hell. This present evil world has doomed itself. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. Christianity for us means a miraculous intervention from outside, a Judge who is coming to gather the wheat into His garner and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. And the time will not be long. We are sick of your talk of "progress by evolution." We loathe your weak, self-indulgent optimism, that perverts the commandments of the Lord to its own lusts and denies the visible resurrection and judgment.'

Whoever interprets 'liberalism' in the spirit of Jesus and Paul, regarding his freedom from conventional forms as imposing obligation to a righteousness exceeding any prescription of the letter, considering liberty in Christ to imply a life in the spirit of Christ, will not lack sympathy with the aims of the Fundamentalist, even while he deploras his narrow intolerance and his hatred of Modernism

as such, regardless of its motive and spirit. Therefore the typical Modernist aims at catholicity. He would gladly row in the same boat with the Fundamentalist if the direction be agreed upon. He deplors the spirit of schism and intolerance. He is willing to restrict his own liberty if the truth of the Gospel is not curtailed. He is tolerant of everything save intolerance, willing to welcome to fellowship any man of real devotion to the common cause if it can be done without promoting 'doubtful disputations.' *Per contra*, such leaders of Fundamentalism as Professor J. G. Machen of Princeton Theological Seminary openly proclaim the belief that Christianity and liberalism are contradictory and irreconcilable in their very nature. They insist upon excluding all who depart from the standards as interpreted by themselves, or by those whom they regard as the true authorities. This separation and purging they regard as indispensable if Christianity is to be redeemed from its present weakness. Back to the Westminster Confession, back to the literal interpretation of the Bible, back to the Creeds of the first three centuries; conform or depart, is their cry. The programme is defined for the more scholarly minded of the Presbyterian communion in America in Professor Machen's recent 'Christianity and Liberalism.' Among Anglicans it seems to be represented by Dr. Chas. Harris's 'Creeds or No Creeds' (1922).

Professor Machen is quite explicit in what might have seemed a distinctively American view of the Church of Christ, were it not so closely allied to that which appears to underlie the famous decision of the British law lords transferring the endowments of the United Free Church of Scotland to a small minority who in the judges' opinion stood closer in belief to the articles drawn up a quarter of a millennium ago. Were it possible to disregard all relation to the spirit of Jesus and the first founders of the Church, and all intention on the part of the Westminster divines to make their doctrine and polity conform to this ideal, Professor Machen's view might be adopted, that a church is the exact equivalent of a political club, which formulates its platform from time to time by majority vote, putting the alternative, conform or withdraw, to the minority whenever it thinks best. The members of such an organization are unquestionably entitled to designate it 'our' church, and no objection will be raised in any quarter to those of like opinion and theory becoming members of it,

so long as it does not claim to be Christ's Church. The issue concerns the name and spirit of Christ.

It must unfortunately be admitted that the attempt to put in practice this theory of a church as a political club which constructs its own principles in accordance with the opinions of the dominant party is typically American. In the great Democracy there are probably more groups than in any other part of the world who think it practicable to define the absolute religion and organize a society to propagate it, by merely holding a convention, drafting resolutions, and appointing an executive and nominating a committee. At least there would seem to be a larger proportion of men in America than elsewhere whose political experience leads them to regard this as the proper method for redeeming the world, and themselves well fitted for the undertaking. Whether or not this be the case, America is the present scene of conflict where political methods of organization have been carried to their fullest extent among all the churches, regardless of denominational lines, in the endeavour to form a compact body of efficient and consistent Christians on a doctrinal basis, over against a much smaller group of Modernists who regard Christianity as a Religion of the Spirit, denying supremacy to external authority, whether that of a hierocracy such as Rome's, or written formulæ of creed or Scripture adopted and enforced by assemblies, associations, and conventions.

A considerable proportion of the churches, traditionally of the Congregational polity, are committed by their historic principles to toleration. This is eminently true of the Baptist body, largest of all the Protestant denominations. By virtue of this fact the Fundamentalists, in spite of elaborate preparations and the use of political machinery of the most approved type, found themselves unable at two successive annual conventions of the entire communion to carry through their plan of purgation. Even the eloquence of the political leader, Mr. William Jennings Bryan, a Presbyterian elder summoned to the aid of Baptist leaders such as Drs. Massie of Boston and Straton of New York, was unable to carry the Convention in favour of the programme of exclusion. The surprise was great, discouraging no doubt to the Fundamentalists, unexpectedly encouraging to the Modernists because of the exceptionally large proportion in the Baptist body of men of old-school theology. But the Baptist body has a great inheritance of liberty.

Roger Williams and the history of the Rhode Island churches are not yet forgotten. And beyond these is what some might call the deep-lying common sense of the Christian layman which directs his judgment in accordance with what he understands and values as the spirit of true Christian consecration. In some of the more progressive communions of this same type of polity, which are now outside the vortex of dispute in virtue of having faced the issue and settled it from ten to twenty years ago, the principle upon which the Baptist communion has acted is expressed by two far-reaching definitions: (1) The basis of Christian fellowship is the Covenant, not the Creed; (2) Creeds represent not Tests, but Testimonies — they are not shackles around the feet of the marching host, but the banners it carries overhead. On these principles co-operation is sought on the part of all men consecrated to Christian service, in the conviction that all necessary agreement in doctrine will be found in progressive application of the spirit of love and service which animated the saints of old. This 'unity of the Spirit' has been found adequate among Congregationalists outside the Baptist body. It may be expected that among Baptists also it will prevail.

The Methodists, next in numbers to the Baptist body, have a constituency of similar old-school views. But Methodists also have historic traditions of Christian liberty, toleration and moral judgment. They are likely to meet the issue in a similar spirit of sobriety and catholicity.

For the genuine Modernist cannot withhold a deep sympathy from his Fundamentalist fellow-Christian, of whose real, though mistaken, devotion to the common cause he feels convinced. The Fundamentalist seeks to make the Church a living and united body of Christians who take their Gospel in earnest. For this purpose he reverts to that which he takes to be the spirit and principle of the Reformers, but which is in reality the principle of the post-Reformation dogmatists, who thought it practicable to set up over against the Roman ideal of unity through an infallible Church, uttering its unchanging oracles through councils and popes, an infallible authority of Scripture interpreted by scholars and applied by churches or conventions. In the light of present-day experience of the indefinite diversity of interpretation and the equally indefinite multiplication of sects, it seems strange that men of vision should have ever imagined the attainment of any sort of unity by such means.

Conformity by compulsion and the suppression of dissent could be carried far. The Church of Rome gave evidence of what could be accomplished by such means. But how could anything else be expected from the post-Reformation substitute for external authority than just that indefinite multiplication of sects which the opponents of the Reformation freely predicted as its certain doom? Nevertheless the Helvetic Confession and other post-Reformation documents give ample evidence of the extremes to which the theory of an infallible book, inherited from the Synagogue, could be carried.

It was certain that Protestantism could not stop at the point where it congealed after the first great eruption, in which the awakening of knowledge and democracy together had forced the more vital half of Christendom to assert the right of private judgment. The Reformers bade men renounce the tyranny of councils and popes, and seek the word of God in the Scriptures, guided by the Spirit. They expected a unity of the Spirit. They did not anticipate shipwreck for the Church on the rocks of unlimited schism; neither did they intend to withdraw their fundamental claim to the right of private judgment. In the memorable farewell discourse of him whom the Pilgrim Fathers looked to as their true father in God, they looked for 'more light to break forth from the Scriptures.' It is eminently worthy of note that these famous words of John Robinson were uttered in a context which called attention to the unfinished work of the Reformers. Winslow's report of the address relates that Robinson went on to deplore the miserable state of Christianity 'because the Reformed Churches were come to a period in religion, and would go no further than the Instruments of their Reformation. As, for example, the Lutherans, they could not be drawn to go beyond what Luther saw. For whatever part of God's will He had further imparted and revealed to Calvin, they will rather die than embrace it. And so also, saith he, you see the Calvinists. They stick where he left them; a misery much to be lamented.'

The post-Reformation dogmatists instead of advancing along the path opened by the Reformers, seeking more light from the Scriptures interpreted by the Spirit, stuck fast in the 'instruments' of their Reformation. But the awakening of historical studies in the eighteenth century made it increasingly difficult to put off the day of reckoning. Neither a return to suppression of dissent by

conciliar authority in imitation of Rome, nor the method of schism by the exclusion of progressive minorities, has availed to secure the needful unity. Division has come. The more we define and dogmatize, the more we disrupt.

The generation that endured the War is impatient of convention, of dogma, of the authority of tradition and the past. In all history there has never been a time less tolerant of such restraints. It believes in religion, because it has little hope of any other redemptive power. It believes (with some misgivings) in Christianity. But that is in spite of, and not because of, what the Church has made of Christianity. It is a generation heartily in sympathy with the motives of the Fundamentalists, but the least likely of any generation thus far known to put up with methods of dogma, schism and obscurantism.

Meantime Christ is preached, and therein we rejoice and will rejoice, even if in some cases it be of envy and strife. Fundamentalism is so named because it defines certain doctrines which it declares to be fundamental, giving them its own interpretation. They were set forth in a series of resolutions adopted by the Presbyterian General Assembly of 1910, and have been reformulated, often with further additions, by various bodies and individuals authorized only by their own assumption to speak for the Church at large. In reality the whole movement, organized as it is on the grand scale by methods of education and propaganda which extend across all denominational lines throughout the Continent, perhaps throughout the Protestant world, has but a single tenet—domination of the letter of Scripture. It has a 'quadrilateral' for polemic purposes which prescribes belief in—

- (1) The verbal accuracy and inerrancy of the Bible.
- (2) The Virgin Birth of Jesus as proof of Deity.
- (3) The efficacy of the blood atonement.
- (4) The bodily resurrection of Jesus, and His imminent, visible return to judge the world.

But these four (some expand even to fourteen) points are all one, mere deductions from the first. For if simple biblicism can be imposed, without liberty of departure in any particular from the opinion of the past, all the rest will follow.

The question of the canon does not seem to be raised. It seems to be taken for granted (along with much else) that the Westminster divines had

infallible authority to decide in favour of the books of the Authorized Version rather than those of the Douay Bible. Also that the choice made by various churches of the early centuries was superseded by Divine authority in the Damascine Council of 382, which is the first to draw up a list of writings constituting a New Testament of the same content as our own.

It naturally seems incredible to the reading public that a crusade should be begun in communities reasonably intelligent, to force the Protestant Churches, born in the spirit of liberty and enlightenment, into such grooves of narrow reaction. It is, of course, impossible that the effort should succeed in its main object, though the disruption which is the immediate aim may prove difficult to avert. Perhaps we have not yet reached the complete *reductio ad absurdum* of unity by schism, progress by intolerance, peace and love by dogmatic denunciation. The unity of the Spirit may be farther off than we hoped. But no other unity is practicable. And the struggle will not be all loss. There is real devotion on both sides, and where this is the case true religion must be the gainer in the end.

It requires no small infusion of the spirit of Christ, as described and exemplified by Paul, to put up with accusations of dishonesty on the part of those who maintain that they alone are true followers of our Master. Perhaps it is well for Modernists of the Episcopal communion to resent an official imputation of this kind and demand the withdrawal of the charge of its substantiation by formal trial, an issue which is now before the bishops. It is still harder to bear imputations which have no authority behind them, put forth by irresponsible agitators with the support of huge mass-meetings in terms such as the following, adopted by the self-styled 'International Bible Students' Association Convention' at Los Angeles, August 25, 1923, and disseminated through the country on a sheet headed 'Proclamation! A Warning to all Christians':

Selfish and ambitious men, loving earthly honour and glory more than the approval of God, have brought in (to the Church of Christ) false doctrines destructive of faith in God and His Word. As a result there now exist in the various denominational Churches two general classes, to wit:

First, Those who pretend to be Christians,

but do not believe in the Bible as God's inspired Word of Truth, who repudiate the doctrines of the fall of man and his redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ, which class is made up of apostate clergymen and the 'principal of their flocks,' who are worldly men of strong financial and political influence, which class exercises the controlling influence and power in the denominational organizations ; and

Second, That great multitude of peoples who claim to be Christians and who hold and believe the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The reader will not require further definition of 'the fundamental doctrines of Christianity' as here specified, and may be spared the pages of vituperation and denunciation which follow, specifying under seven heads the crimes of the 'apostates,' who have 'used the name Christian as a cloak to hide their unrighteousness,' have 'sanctified war,' have 'with selfish design invaded the schools, colleges, seminaries and universities with their God-dishonouring doctrines of higher criticism and evolution,' and taught and practised inhumanity and oppression of the poor.

Amazing statistics have been published of the enormous numbers that have rallied to this propaganda, and it is self-evident that the more the Christian religion can be simplified into concrete forms identified with a miraculous book of reference, whose contents are condensed into conventional propositions having the divine sanction of a large majority in a convention (*vox populi, vox Dei*), the wider will be its appeal to those who find the right of private judgment too burdensome for themselves, and regard it as dangerous for others. This class is still enormously preponderant. Even had the Churches maintained those standards of religious education which characterized New England and laid the foundations of its great universities, that the people might not be exposed to 'the perils of an illiterate ministry,' it would have been difficult enough to establish the freedom of the Reformation by means of that enlightenment of the people without which no kind of freedom can withstand the onslaught of the demagogue, least of all religious freedom.

But popular education in America has been secularized. The Bible has been excluded from the schools through the mutual jealousy of the sects.

The Sunday schools have struggled heroically with the flood of ignorance, but these were a pitiful substitute for home training. Conformity to the 'instruments' of the various Protestant sects was given higher value in the selection of preachers and pastors than capacity to lead forward in the 'light and truth' that should have broken forth from the Scriptures. The seminaries under the same mistaken zeal broke away from the universities to place themselves under sectarian standards. Fundamentalism sends forth from its 'institutes' preachers supposedly qualified by the simple method of quoting from the infallible Book. A hundred graduates of this training are produced for one of the schools of real learning. What occasion have we for surprise at the triumph of bigotry and credulity? Why should democracy in the Church run any other course than in the State, when there is no development of the people in the capacity to think for themselves?

We have paved the way for a dictatorship of the proletariat in matters of religion by the failure to provide real religious education. Of the little that passed as such a discouraging proportion was mere propaganda of the 'instruments.' It sometimes aimed to suppress the exercise of private judgment rather than to cultivate it. This failure, combined with the secularization of public education and the cessation of home training, has laid the entire field of religion open to the fanatic and the charlatan. If disruption comes it will be followed by its logical corollary, progressive schism and division. Inside there will be, 'Wee-frees' within 'Wee-frees'; outside there will be a disgusted non-Christian world driven farther and farther into bald secularity. The enemies of the Church will have ground for the reproach: They have sown the wind, they are reaping the whirlwind.

But there is good reason to hope that disruption will not come, or that if it does the disruptionists when they have swarmed by themselves will be found after all a *quantité négligeable*. The remedy is dreaded. It has been put off too long because it inevitably involves further diversity of belief. The laity must know all the facts, and be trusted and trained to think for themselves. There is no way out but the way through; for reaction to authority (whether an autocracy of prelate or proletariat) is not a way out. There must be more individual thinking, and therefore even greater diversity of belief; for who ever thought for himself without.

differing from others? Diversity of belief will be fatal to uniformity, fatal to schemes of unification by exclusion, imposition of tests, suppression of dissent; but by no means incompatible with the Unity of the Spirit.

Toward such a unity, expressed in consecrated lives, expressed (so far as words suffice to give it expression) in prayers and pledges of devotion to the Kingdom of God and the sanctification of His name, unity made real and effective by and in proportion to the needs of humanity, Christendom is really progressing. The very ardour of the many, which gives all of real strength that it possesses to the present organized propaganda of schism and disruption, is kindled at this flame. The religious

fanatic and charlatan knows how to play upon it and turn it to his own ends. But as Lincoln had faith in the ultimate good sense of the common man, so we must have faith in the common man's sense of the spirit of Christ. He cannot remain long persuaded that it is a spirit of intolerance, bitterness, and strife, any more than he can remain long persuaded that it is a spirit of self-indulgence and indifference to human suffering, cruelty, and vice. A unity of service will be found, binding together those who are of the Spirit, after the little systems have had their day and ceased to be. They that are of that spirit are finding one another even now; yes, even when (for the time being) some of them have been swept into the camp of intolerance and schism.

The Spirit of Expiation.

BY THE REVEREND ALBERT D. BELDEN, B.D., WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA.

THERE are few sentences in the New Testament so strange and so profound as the record preserved by St. Mark (14³⁴), 'Jesus began to fear,' or, as a later translation has it, 'Jesus began to be full of terror and distress.' The record presents an ultimatum to the reader. Either it describes the defeat and collapse of Jesus, or else it introduces us to the true character of His triumph. There have not been lacking Christian teachers who have suggested that a Christ filled with fear and tasting the bitterness of real failure is more acceptable to the human soul than a Christ who retained victory in the midst of seeming defeat. But the idea commends itself much more to the sophisticated mind of the theologian than it does to the average soul faced by the practical emergencies of life. A defeated and terror-stricken Christ is scarcely inspiring enough to be the Saviour of the common man.

The assumption that in the Garden of Gethsemane the courage of Jesus broke down, is one that is denied by all the other facts of the case. This is the man whose fearless preaching provoked the Pharisees to fury. This is the man who was brave enough to be absolutely honest, both with the mob and with the rulers. This is the man who could sleep through a tempest on the Galilean sea, 'asleep upon a pillow.' This is the man who, knowing the

probable result, set His face steadfastly to go towards Jerusalem. This is the man who, when His friend Lazarus died, wept aloud, but when He Himself was scourged uttered no sound. This is the man who for a year or more has steadily envisaged the very tragedy in which He is now involved, has indeed repeatedly chosen it and prophesied it. This is the man who, when at last the soldiers arrive, makes sure that they shall not arrest one of His disciples by mistake, but steps out of the shadows, saying with superb courage, 'I am he.'

Is it conceivable that, with such preparation of soul, with such an unbroken record of courage, the fear of death is adequate to explain His condition at this point? What was it, then, that could visit fear, and such fear, terror and distress even upon the soul of Jesus? There can be only one reply. Jesus, by His sublime sympathy, through the majesty and solemnity of His own interpretation of His Cross, is launching Himself here into the shame and horror that accompany the conviction of sin. And He is doing so in a degree of intensity and pain, and upon a scale of sympathy that we can only dimly apprehend. He is here *seeking in spirit the souls of those arrayed against Him*, surveying their sin, and Himself taking the position of scape-