

“Overview and Analysis of the Modernist-Fundamentalist Debate
and their View of Humility, Tolerance and Charity
in their Theological Method and Contextualization.”

By Dr. David Mappes

Southeastern Evangelical Theological Society Annual meeting
at the Columbia International University,
7435 Monticello Road, Columbia, SC 29203

February 24th 2023

Introduction¹

This paper will provide a historical overview and analysis of the modernist-fundamentalist debate of the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century to surface aspects of their theological method and contextualization specifically noting how each group viewed the virtues of humility, tolerance, and charity.² The presentation will provide critique of each movement while noting similar characteristics of ongoing conservative and post-conservative debate today.³

By the 1920's the liberal-fundamentalist conflict had reached a fever pitch and the social gospel was well entrenched in the religious fabric of America. Both groups had consolidated into well supported movements. Many schools and denominations were controlled by modernists (also known as liberals) during this time. The phrase *social gospel* first appeared in the late 1870's

¹ David Mappes (PhD, Dallas Theological Seminary) teaches courses in New Testament, hermeneutics, theological method, and theology at numerous schools including Liberty University, Baptist Bible Seminary (CSU), Columbia International University, Calvary University, College of Biblical Studies and is director of Nobility and Knowability Truth Ministries. See publications and various conference papers at "davidmappes.com. Dr. Mappes can be reached at david.mappes@ciu.edu. All material copyright to David Mappes, PhD (2023, all rights reserved).

² Partially adapted from "Two Sermons of Major Impact" by David Mappes, in, *Inspire: The Cedarville University Alumni Magazine* (Winter 2005), 17; "Humility and Tolerance: Exploring their Biblical, Theological, and Cultural Expression" presented by David Mappes at the Faculty Forum of Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit PA., October 25, 2010, and "The Relationship of Theological Method and Cultural Engagement: A Biblical and Theological Overview of Dating" presented by David Mappes at the Faculty Forum of Baptist Bible Seminary, Clarks Summit PA., November, 14, 2014.

For articles addressing post-conservative and related issues see the following by Mappes: "A New Kind of Christian: A Review" in *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (July-September, 2004): 289-303; "The Nobility and Knowability of Truth: Part 1" in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 12 (Spring 2009): 64-105 and "The Nobility and Knowability of Truth: Part 2" in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 13 (Fall 2009): 1-22; "Current Trends in Hermeneutics and Theology: Certainty and Simplicity," *Paraklesis* (Summer 2010), 1, 6; "What is Faith in Luke 18:1-8" *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July-September 2010), 292-306; "Love Wins by Rob Bell: A Biblical and Theological Critique," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology*, (Spring 2012) 87-121; "Prioritizing and Revising Articles of Faith," *The Baptist Bulletin* (July/ August 2016), 16-22; "Literal Interpretation and Theological Method: What Is It and How to Do It?" *Ariel Ministries*, December 2017, 18-23; "A Biblical and Theological Critique of Stanley's Irresistible: Reclaiming the New that Jesus Unleashed from the World" in the *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Winter, 2019), 8-22; 'Ev ἀρχῆ' "What Should Christian do with Andy Stanley's, Irresistible?" interview with Dr. David Mappes in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Winter, 2019), 3-7.

³ Earlier critics of the fundamentalists sought to portray the modernist-fundamentalist controversy as part of a larger societal urban-rural conflict in America while critics in the 1950's portrayed the early fundamentalists as shallow anti-intellectualists; however, neither of these earlier criticisms are widely held today. Certainly, the Fundamentalist movement did later become shallow and anti-intellectual. Significant works detailing fundamentalist-modernist controversy include, David Beale, *In Pursuit of Purity: American Fundamentalism Since 1850* (1986); John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity* (1954); George Dolla, *History of Fundamentalism in America* (1973); J. Falwell, ed. *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (1981); J. Gresham Machen, *What Is Faith?* (1925); J. D. Hunter, *American Evangelicalism* (1983); George Marsden *Reforming Fundamentalism*; George Marsden, ed, *Evangelicalism and the Modern Mind* (1980), George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and the American Culture: The Shaping of the Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (1980); Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907); Walter Rauschenbusch *Theology of the Social Gospel* (1917); E. R Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (1970); D. F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge, eds., *The Evangelicals* (1977).

and gained popularity with many of the social reformers of the day. Promoters of the social gospel sought to provide ethical and benevolent solutions to the horrible, social abuses brought about by the Civil War and the Industrial Revolution. Some within this movement sought to create a kind of *economic social reform gospel* directed towards economic inequities promoting governmental and social reform - the emphasis shifted to institutional and corporate reform. The social gospel movement was not monolithic and did not have theological boundaries or parameters, so a concise definition is difficult. However, the movement emphasized the immanence of God, an overly optimistic view of humanity, depreciated or denied individual sin and the need for personal salvation and prioritized General Revelation asserting that God reveals Himself through history.

In April of 1907, Walter Rauschenbusch (1864-1917) published one of the most influential books of that time to promote the social gospel entitled, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*. Later in 1917, Rauschenbusch sought to further solidify the social gospel movement by publishing, *A Theology of the Social Gospel*. Importantly, Rauschenbusch was deeply influenced by the liberal views of Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Albrecht Ritschl (1882-1889) and Horace Bushnell (1802-1876). Rauschenbusch embedded and popularized views of German higher criticism and theological liberalism from these scholars amongst the social reformers. Rauschenbusch is generally viewed as the father, chief founder, or chief exponent of the social gospel movement.

Views of Contextualization and the Essence of Christianity

The essential issue that fueled the modernist-fundamentalist debate during this time entailed the nature and role of doctrine in respect to contextualizing Christianity into a new, modern scientific era. Contextualization here refers to consciously communicating and imbedding the biblical message into a culture (or sub-culture) so that the meaning of the message can be properly understood by that culture.

Historical fundamentalists argued that Christian orthodoxy entailed a non-reducible doctrinal core or center hence there were fundamental, essential, primitive doctrines that could not be altered nor further reduced. If these core doctrines were altered, then Christianity would cease to be Christian. Notably, the term “fundamentalist” most likely came from or at least was popularized by 90 essays referred to as “The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth.” These twelve paperback volumes were published between 1910-15 and distributed free of charge.⁴ Lyman Stewart and his brother Milton endowed \$300,000 for the publication and distribution of these paperback volumes. In today’s vernacular, the fundamentalists believed part of being *missional* and *promoting the mission of the church* entailed preserving orthodox doctrine and truth and not just engaging and connecting to meet the social challenges of the day.

⁴ While other lists of fundamentals existed, those lists generally included the five fundamentals included in “The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth.”

These essays served as a defense of historical, classic Christianity against liberalism and were written by academic and well-trained ministry leaders such as B. B. Warfield, W. H. Griffith Thomas, H. C. G. Moule, A. T. Pierson, C. R. Erdman, J. Orr, A. C. Gaebelien and many others. The fundamentalists sought to defend five fundamentals of the Faith which were being challenged: The miracles of Christ, the virgin birth, substitutionary atonement of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ and the inspiration of Scripture. These 90 essays not only addressed the “Fundamentals of the Faith”⁵ but also addressed related topics that the modernists were denying such as the historical authenticity, literary unity, and authorship of many Canonical books, etc.

Modernists appealed to supposed new knowledge obtained through general revelation such as scientific, literary, and archeological discoveries as a lens to reinterpret and redefine the core doctrines of Christianity- this new knowledge provided the nexus for contextualization. Authors of Scripture were viewed as men having deep human insight and commitment to humanity albeit conditioned by the culture of their day.

The modernists argued for a full contextualization of Christianity into the modern culture without the need for any core, historical, non-provisional verbal doctrines that defined Christianity. The modernists insisted that knowledge through science was the final arbiter and lens to interpret and demythologize Scripture. Many reduced Christianity to an ethical system to meet the immense social challenges of the day hence the phrase, social gospel. The modernist viewed truth as constantly changing with each new generation and truth in each generation was measured by love. Jesus was viewed not as the incarnated perfect Son of God who added humanity to Himself to save humanity from their sins. Rather, Jesus was viewed more as the incarnation of the ultimate human spirit and good teacher who should be imitated.

The use of Humility, Charity, and Tolerance and Integration of Truth Claims

One major contention in this conflict entailed how truth-claims from General Revelation were validated and integrated with Special Revelation. The earlier fundamentalists insisted that Scripture was the final arbiter and they repeatedly appealed to the teaching of Scripture regarding its own nature of inspiration to validate their truth claims. They were not opposed to integrating truth from General Revelation nor were they opposed to dialog and discussion. However, they

⁵ The Scripture often identifies a basic framework of doctrinal truths and apostolic traditions referred to as “the faith” which the fundamentalists sought to preserve. The use of an article such as “the” has the intrinsic ability to identify and definitize or distinguish something as unique. When a word such as “faith” is made definite by the article “the” a writer often is emphasizing a body of objective and knowable truth (e.g., Acts 6:7; Gal 1:23; 3:23-25; Jude 3). This framework entails both doctrinal orthodoxy (correct belief) and orthopraxy (upright and godly Biblical conduct). Other terms are also used. The term traditions (2 Thess. 2:15) focuses on truth handed down from the New Testament apostles or apostolic delegates to the churches. Sound doctrine denotes a fixed body of doctrine—a fixed, orthodox confession of faith that believers receive and are responsible to preserve against heresy. Paul reminds Timothy to guard the “sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13, 14) and “sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3), which he refers to as “the truth” in 2 Timothy 4:4. Jude reminds his readers to contend for “the Faith.” Adapted from “The Nobility and Knowability of Truth: Part 1” by David Mappes in *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* 12 (Spring 2009): 64-105; “What is Faith in Luke 18:1-8” *Bibliotheca Sacra* (July-September 2010), 292-306 by David Mappes and “Prioritizing and Revising Articles of Faith,” *The Baptist Bulletin* (July/ August 2016), 16-22 by David Mappes.

insisted that discussion and dialog always start and end with the pursuit of first using Scripture when the Scripture intersected with other competing truth claims.

While some fundamentalists retreated from the culture and created a kind of anti-intellectualism, many leading fundamental scholars of the day such as Macartney, Machen, Gaebelien, and others argued for active engagement with the culture. They sought to engage this new modern knowledge through the lens of Scripture though they did so with a hermeneutical literary-certainty of the historical doctrines of Christianity.

The liberals often used the terms *humility, charity, unity, and tolerance* to support their project of contextualizing Christianity into the modern culture. Dillenberger and Welsh correctly assert that central to the liberal project of modernization was “spirit of open-mindedness, of tolerance and humility, of devotion of truth wherever it might be found [and] theological differences were insignificant [and they gave great] respect for science and the scientific method [while espousing] skepticism as to the possibility of achieving certain knowledge of ultimate reality.”⁶ They insisted that the fundamentalists accept their re-interpretation of truth and accept their open, tolerant methodology of contextualization; when the fundamentalists refused, they were accused of being arrogant, bigoted, intolerant, non-loving people who worshipped the Bible and not the God of the Bible.

In 1924 the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCA) sought to galvanize unity among its members through the Auburn Affirmation. The Auburn Affirmation sought to reverse the General Assembly declaration that every Presbyterian ordination candidate affirm the five fundamentals of the faith. The Auburn Affirmation specifically denied inerrancy of Scripture and any call for fundamental doctrinal absolutes. Rather the declaration called for unity and prompted Spirit led interpretations rather than any stated theological dogma. The document further alleged that “to believe such [fundamental] doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience [and] the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.” (Conf. XX, ii).⁷

The fundamentalists also used these terms *tolerance, unity, humility, and charity* though they used these terms very differently. As the fundamentalists evaluated and integrated truth assertions from General Revelation, they sought to evaluate all these new claims through the lens of Scripture. While core doctrines were held at a non-provisional level of literary certainty (not open to re-interpretation), the fundamentalists did not hold all doctrines at this non-provisional level. They based their literary certainty of core doctrines (often referred to as “the Faith”) upon the contextual and literary evidence in Scripture and argued that the contextual and literary evidence was adequate to removed interpretative justifiable doubt. *The fundamentalists spoke of exercising humility, charity, tolerance, etc. towards others especially in discussing non-essential doctrines to Christianity. Their use of humility, charity, tolerance then was governed by the amount of Scriptural evidence on a matter.* They generally called for humility, charity, and

⁶ John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity* (New York: Scribner’s publication, 1954), 211-16.

⁷ <https://www.pcahistory.org/documents/auburntext.html>, Accessed, January 5, 2023.

tolerance in discerning the meaning of Scripture when Scripture was the sole interpretive context or when addressing non-essential doctrinal issues.

Perhaps the two most famous and insightful sermons of the fundamentalist-liberal controversies were entitled, “Shall the Fundamentalist Win?” preached in May of 1922 by Harry Emerson Fosdick (a noted liberal spokesman and pastor raised in a Bible believing home, 1878-1969)⁸ and the respondent “Shall Unbelief Win?” by Clarence E. Macartney (1879-1957)⁹ who was an ordained, conservative Presbyterian Minister.

During this time-period many newspapers published parts of famous sermons, so these sermons were widely read. A layman named Ivy Lee published “Shall the Fundamentalist Win?” under a different title as, “The New Knowledge and the Christian Faith” in both *The Christian Century* and *The Christian Work* and he sent 130,000 copies of the sermon to ministers and friends throughout the nation. There is debate if Fosdick gave permission for this sermon to be initially published. Apparently, later in life Fosdick did admit he gave permission for the publication. There is also debate and conjecture where Ivy Lee obtained the money to reprint and distribute the sermon. Some scholars believe that John D. Rockefeller, Jr. provided the funds.

Fosdick had hoped to build a bridge between liberal churches and conservative churches through his sermon. He continually cited new discoveries in science and literature as products of modernism, which he argued should be used as a lens to reinterpret Scripture so the church could be affective and relevant in the modern anti-supernatural era.¹⁰

Fosdick and other modernist were convinced the church’s historic and certain position on essential verbal doctrinal matters of truth was just a matter of 1st century contextualization. He argued that the authors of Scripture reflected the views of supernaturalism of their time-period so the 1st century church could be relevant. He and other modernists asserted doctrines in Scripture such as the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, the return of Christ and at times the resurrection of Christ were just products of 1st century contextualization for a supernatural era and could be altered. According to Fosdick and other modernists, the New Testament authors’ insights were obscured and veiled behind ancient mythological and cultural baggage.

Interpretation and transference into the modern age required demythologization since the modern age denied much of the supernatural events described in the Biblical accounts. Fosdick argued that insights and knowledge from his modern age must be used to re-interpret Scripture and separate the myth from the true insights that Scripture authors possessed. Fosdick’s sermon

⁸ Fosdick graduated from Colgate College in Hampton New York (1900) and Union Theological Seminary in New York (1904) and had over 40 publications; his brother Raymond Fosdick was a key administrator of philanthropy for John D Rockefeller.

⁹ Macartney attended several colleges and eventually graduated from the University of Wisconsin in Madison Wisconsin (1901) and after briefly attending Harvard and Yale he graduated from Princeton Theological Seminary (1905) and had over 40 publications.

¹⁰ See “Two Sermons of Major Impact” by David Mappes, in, *Inspire: The Cedarville University Alumni Magazine* (Winter 2005), 17.

reveals he, like other modernists denied that any fundamental or primitive doctrinal truth existed at a textual, verbal, indisputable, non-provisional level.

Fosdick's major hermeneutical presumption centered on intelligibility (defined by modernism and its anti-supernaturalism) and practicality (defined by addressing the social issues of his day). He writes, "Two questions today face every proposition and custom of religion: first, is it intelligently defensible; second, does it contribute to man's abundant life?"¹¹ He operated from a classic liberal-rationalized hermeneutic advocating the New Testament was written in imagery limited to 1st century human centeredness and this imagery was mythological (myth understood as stories embedded in culture).

Fosdick portrayed himself and other moderates as open-minded, tolerant, intellectual inquirers, who promoted true Christian fellowship as he and his followers contextualized the gospel into the modern culture. As Fosdick preached this sermon, he equated the historical foundational doctrines advocated by the fundamentalists as *opinions* and removed any doctrinal centering of Christianity:

It is interesting to note where the Fundamentalists are driving in their stakes to mark out the deadline of doctrine around the church, across which no one is to pass except on terms of agreement. They insist that we must all believe in the historicity of certain special miracles, preeminently the virgin birth of our Lord; that we must believe in a special theory of inspiration . . . that we must believe in a special theory of the Atonement—that the blood of our Lord, shed in a substitutionary death, placates an alienated Deity and makes possible welcome for the returning sinner; and that we must believe in the second coming of our Lord If a man is a genuine liberal, his primary protest is not against holding these opinions, although he may well protest against their being considered the fundamentals of Christianity The question is—Has anybody a right to deny the Christian name to those who differ with him on such points and to shut against them the doors of the Christian fellowship?¹²

Macartney responded to Fosdick in a sermon of his own though he argued from the context of Scripture. He believed that the Scripture possessed necessary clarity and a type of self-witness of its own nature to adjudicate and when necessary, counter these new truth assertions from modernism. His sermon reveals a form of doctrinal taxonomy and theological stratification entailing a distinction between 1st order objective doctrinal truths and secondary theological synthesis - he distinguished the essential vs. the non-essential doctrines of Christianity based upon the literary, contextual evidence in Scripture.¹³

¹¹ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Adventurous Religion: And Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926) 18.

¹² Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" *Sermons in American History: Select Issues in the American Pulpit 1630-1976*, ed., Dewitte Holland (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 340-341.

¹³ See "How to Think about and Practice Theology," *The Journal of Ministry and Theology* (Spring 2014), 65-85 by Mappes for further discussion of doctrinal taxonomy and theological stratification.

His sermon also reveals modernists' allegations against conservatives. He writes, "The greatest need of the church to-day is a *few men of ability and faith* [emphasis mine] who are not afraid of being called 'bigots,' 'narrow,' 'mediaeval' in their religious thought."¹⁴ When referring to "a few men of ability," Macartney is calling for Biblically trained individuals to contend for "the Faith" using their biblical expertise and when referring to "a few men of faith" he is referring to those who not only possess biblical literacy but also who by faith are embracing biblical truth for which they contend. Macartney is calling for fundamentalists to "Contend for the faith" without being contentious.

When referring to the debate between the modernists and fundamentalists, Macartney presented the modernists call for unity and humility at the expense of truth and doctrine:

Whatever the Church is to do or not to do [according to the modernists], it is not to defend the faith, it is not to point out the errors and inconsistencies of those who stand as the interpreters of Christianity. This amazing agreement would have struck the Christian believer of almost any age in Church history, save our own, as a very extraordinary one . . . one of the greatest contributions that a man can make to the success of the Gospel is to contend earnestly and intelligently and in a Christian spirit, but nevertheless, **CONTEND**, for the faith.¹⁵

Macartney's sermon reveals that he, like other historical fundamentalists, believed that the Scripture provided a kind of objective literary criteria which both defined and confined Christianity by Scriptural, doctrinal absolutes. He concludes his sermon by stating that Fosdick's modernism "is slowly secularizing the Church, and if permitted to go unchecked and unchallenged, will ere long produce in our churches a new kind of Christianity, a Christianity of opinions and principles and good purposes, but Christianity without worship, without God, and without Jesus Christ."¹⁶

In his sermon, Fosdick pled for an *intellectually hospitable, tolerant, liberty-loving church*. However, as he concludes his sermon, he himself appears intolerant and not so hospitable:

I do not even know in this congregation whether anybody has been tempted to be a Fundamentalist. Never in this church have I caught one accent of intolerance. God keep us always so and ever increasing areas of the Christian fellowship; intellectually hospitable, open-minded, liberty-loving, fair, tolerant . . .¹⁷

¹⁴ Clarence E Macartney, "Shall Unbelief Win?" *Sermons in American History: Select Issues in the American Pulpit 1630-1976*, ed., Dewitte Holland (Nasville: Abingdon Press, 1971), 350.

¹⁵ Ibid, 351.

¹⁶ Ibid, 364.

¹⁷ Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" *Sermons in American History*, 348.

Interestingly, Fosdick believed he needed to decode and demythologize such important doctrines as the atonement, the deity of Christ, the second return of Christ, and others, though he did not feel the need to decode or demythologize the notions of humility or tolerance or love but rather appealed directly to Scripture to promote his own views. Additionally, he rarely if ever differentiates how he knew what portions of Scripture needed to be demythologized and what portions did not.

Professor Charles R Erdman (1866–1960) who taught at Princeton Theological Seminary illustrates how some early fundamentalists differentiated 1st order (or fundamental) doctrines from other less clear doctrines which required more theological syntheses. His article in 1915 entitled “The Coming of Christ” demonstrates the importance of church history and theological taxonomy in their theological method. Most importantly, he allows the full canon of Scripture to validate the basis for his interpretative certainty. He addresses the second coming of Christ as an essential or fundamental doctrine marked by historical creeds, hymns and most importantly, *clearness, emphasis, and prominence in the Scripture*. Erdman’s comments regarding the *clearness, emphasis and prominence in the Scripture* help illustrate the historical fundamentalists hermeneutical process and theological method. Erdman writes:

The return of Christ is a *fundamental doctrine* of the Christian faith. It is embodied in hymns of hope; it forms the climax of the creeds; it is the sublime motive for evangelistic and missionary activity; and daily it is voiced in the inspired prayer: "Even so: Come, Lord Jesus." It is peculiarly a *Scriptural doctrine*. It is not, on the one hand, a dream of ignorant fanatics, nor, on the other, a creation of speculative theologians; but it is a truth divinely revealed, and recorded in the Bible with marked *clearness, emphasis and prominence* [emphasis mine]. Like the other great truths of revelation, it is a *controverted doctrine*. The essential fact is held universally by all who admit the authority of Scripture; but as to certain incidental, although important, elements of the teaching, there is difference of opinion among even the most careful and reverent students. Any consideration of the theme demands, therefore, *modesty, humility, and abundant charity* [emphasis mine].¹⁸

Erdman differentiates between the doctrinal, objective fact of the second coming of Christ as held by all who admit the authority of the Scripture while calling for *modesty, humility, and abundant charity* in relation to the incidental albeit important elements surrounding the second coming of Christ. This doctrinal taxonomy allowed Presbyterian fundamentalists, Baptist fundamentalists, Anglican fundamentalists, and non-denominational fundamentalists to work together in promoting the fundamentals of the gospel truth. As he concludes his booklet and discusses these incidental events surrounding the coming of Christ, he writes:

This is therefore a time, not for unkindly criticism of fellow Christians, but for friendly conference; not for disputing over divergent views, but for united action; not for dogmatic assertion of prophetic programs, but for the humble acknowledgment that "we know in part"¹⁹

¹⁸ Charles R Erdman, “The Coming of Christ,” revised and edited by Gerald B Stanton in *The Fundamentals for Today*, ed. Charles L Feinberg (Grand Rapids MI, 1958), 637.

The call for *modesty, humility and abundant charity* by the historical fundamentalists was governed by the amount of Scriptural testimony given to a particular doctrinal truth. The greater amount of Scriptural testimony described as *clearness, emphasis, and prominence in the Scripture*, the greater their commitment to the Scriptural teaching and to their contending for that truth. They allowed the Scriptural evidence to adjudicate their sense of humility and modesty in theological constructs and theological advocacy.

Howard Crosby's (1826-1891) article, entitled, "Preach the Word" reveals a fascinating allegation by the modernist against the fundamentalists using Scripture as a lens to critique all forms of knowledge. His comments here reveal how the early fundamentalists allowed God's self-disclosure of Himself in Special Revelation (i.e., the Scripture) to serve as the final authority. He writes,

It is a favorite charge of the advocates of this looseness [modernism] that we are worshipping a Book. 'Bibliolatry' is the formidable word that they cast at us; But we worship no book. We do worship God who sent the Book, and it is no true worship of God that slights the Book which He gives. If we honor God, we shall honor the Word He has sent . . ."²⁰

One example of integration between General and Special Revelation occurs in an article written in 1910 by A. W. Pitzer. In his brief article entitled, "The Wisdom of the World" he posits there is no real conflict between Christianity and science. He argues for an integrated approach to truth from general and special revelation while allowing the Scripture to serve as the final arbiter of the integrated whole:

The Christian does not look with dismay upon these researches into Nature, these discoveries of Science; on the contrary, he hails with joy each new discovery as affording additional evidence of the wisdom, power, and goodness of God. Full well does he know that the facts written on the rock-leaves beneath, the star depths above, and the pages of Inspiration, when properly understood and interpreted, will be found to be in exact and perfect accord, showing forth the glory of the Infinite Writer of them all. There is no controversy between the man of faith and the man of wisdom, provided each one acts in his proper sphere. There is not, and never has been, any real conflict between Religion and Science. There may be conflicts between interpretations of Scripture and interpretations of the facts of Nature; but what God has written in His Word never conflicts with what God has written in His creation We have the right to demand of the Wisdom of this World by what authority it asserts that there is nothing above and apart from Nature, nothing in all the boundless universe except matter and force. Why shall we give up all that man holds dear at the bidding of the Wisdom of this World

¹⁹ Charles R Erdman, "The Coming of Christ," in *The Fundamentals for Today*, 645.

²⁰ Howard Crosby's "Preach the Word," *The Fundamentals for Today*, 419-20.

whose highest, and best, and latest revelation is "a grave without a resurrection, and a universe without a God."²¹

James Orr's article, "Science and Christian Faith" advocates a balanced integration of special and general revelation through careful examination of both spheres of truth. He advocates looking for inconsistencies either in interpretations of Scripture or inconsistencies in scientific conclusions when apparent disagreement surfaces; he writes, "this alleged conflict of Christianity with science should be carefully probed, and that it should be seen where exactly the truth lies..."²² Orr later asserts that "mistakes are often made on both sides—on the side of science in affirming contrariety of the Bible with scientific results where none really exists ... [and] on the side of believers in demanding that the Bible be taken as a text-book of the newest scientific discoveries, and trying by forced methods to read these into them."²³ Pitzer and other historical fundamentalists allowed the authority of Scripture to function as a final arbiter to critique the anti-supernatural assumptions and sentiments the modernists were imposing upon the Scripture while still respecting general revelation.

As the fundamentalist-modernist debate intensified, the fundamentalists and modernists separated. In some cases, the fundamentalists were driven out of the modernist churches and schools while in other cases fundamentalists actively separated from the modernist churches and schools to start new churches and new schools. Many of the early fundamentalists were Biblical scholars who were well trained in logic, history, philosophy, theology, Greek, Hebrew, etc. and could easily debate the modernist scholars. However, later generations of fundamentalist pastors were not as well trained since so many colleges embraced modernism and those colleges were not welcoming to the fundamentalists. The fundamentalist movement began to be overshadowed and eventually dominated by anti-intellectualism including depreciation of higher-education, *ad hominem* arguments, strong militant personalities, and a spirit of rancor dominated the movement. In contending for *the Faith*, many became contentious about *the Faith* and matters outside *the Faith*.

Additionally, the later fundamentalists drifted from a balanced taxonomy of doctrine. They began to over-emphasize systematized theology rather than the Biblical doctrines derived from exegesis that initially formed systematized theology. In some cases, their systemized theology was popularized by strong personalities through colloquial, popular phrases lacking quality exegesis. They broadened "the Faith" over which the early fundamentalists separated to include their entire system of theology. A kind of social fundamentalism evolved where the idea of "separation" became the defining mark of the movement rather than doctrinal fidelity over which the historical fundamentalists separated - it was during this time when fundamentalism lost its

²¹ A. W. Pitzer, "The Wisdom of this World," *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth, Vol. IV* (The Bible Institute of Los Angeles, CA, 1917), 41-43.

²² *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth, Volume IV*, Compliments of Two Christian Laymen. Testimony Publishing Company (Chicago, IL., 1910), 93.

²³ *Ibid.*, 97.

historical moorings and became identified with anti-intellectualism, divisiveness, and loss of social conscience.

Personal Summary Comments

In today's climate almost every aspect of Christianity is challenged. Believers should maintain a balanced theological method and prayerful mindset as they defend *the Faith* and engage a hostile culture with the gospel. Theological Method here is simply the interpretative process starting with exegesis to determine the meaning and application of the Scriptures. A correct Theological Method is necessary to bring the full voice of Scripture to a subject since the Scripture is progressively revealed and no one topic is fully addressed by any one author in any one-time era.

As Christ-followers, we are all called to pursue God's truth humbly and responsibly as presented by the Biblical authors as our final guide and standard for life. The goal of interpretation is to discern the intention of the human author by examining what the biblical author affirms in the historical, contextual, and textual parameters of his writing. In both our theological method and contextualization, we should not simply identify with views of previous generations, nor should we conform to the culture's agenda. Our theologizing should be driven by strong exegesis, our systemized theology should be framed within a balanced taxonomy, and our ministry should emphasize the gospel by demonstrating the love and truth of Christianity.