

FUNDAMENTALISM

Definition (from the Oxford English Dictionary):

fundamentalism -- A religious movement, which orig. became active among various Protestant bodies in the United States after the war of 1914-1918, based on strict adherence to certain tenets (e.g. the literal inerrancy of Scripture) held to be fundamental to the Christian faith; the beliefs of this movement; opp. *liberalism* and *modernism*.

Usage (from the Oxford English Dictionary):

1925 K. Lake. The most energetic ... group, but the least well educated, is the Fundamentalist. The Fundamentalists have zeal, but it is certainly not according to knowledge.

1926 H.F. Osborn. The fundamentalist movement ... sought to re-establish the Biblical literalism of the time of Cromwell, Milton, and the Puritans.

Times 1955. 'Fundamentalism' ... appears to have been used first in connexion with the (American) Northern Baptist Convention of 1920 to describe the more conservative delegates who desired 'to restate, reaffirm, and re-emphasize the fundamentals of our New Testament faith'. Now 'fundamentalism' ... appears to describe the bigoted rejection of all Biblical criticism, a mechanical view of inspiration and an excessively literalist interpretation of scripture.

Examples of fundamentalism at its worst:

John Hagee: "Armageddon, the world's most natural battlefield, will be bathed in blood. The Bible has predicted it, down to the length of the battlefield. Mark my words, this battle of unsurpassed carnage is not a fable, it is a fact -- and every tick of the clock brings us closer to it.

The crowning event of this battle occurs when the Antichrist, who believes he can defeat God Almighty, will gather his forces to face a heavenly army led by the Messiah Himself." (Partly based on Rev. 19:20.)

Baily Smith (quoted in 1980, when he was SBC President): "God Almighty does not hear the prayer of a Jew."

Tim LaHaye (author of the *Left Behind* series): argues along with Hagee and others that the rapture will certainly occur before the tribulation, and that other fundamentalists who believe the rapture will occur during or after the tribulation are gravely in error.

An example of fundamentalism at its best:

Billy Graham (considered a fundamentalist by many, but despised by most "true" fundamentalists, such as the SBC): see daily newspaper.

Beliefs and actions of extreme religious fundamentalism (includes selected groups of Protestants, Muslims, Catholics, Mormons, Jews, and others):

1. Beliefs are based on divine and revealed texts, which are considered perfect and cannot be questioned.
2. Beliefs are elaborate and detailed, constructed by selectively interpreting divine texts.
3. Beliefs are often at variance with common sense, reason, logic, and science.
4. The group includes a single living individual with special privileged relationship to God, unlike anyone else's relationship or status.
5. Members must adhere strictly to all details of doctrine.
6. Members reject all other religions and belief systems, including ones similar to their own.
7. Members are intolerant of anyone outside the group, with different beliefs.
8. Extreme and hateful actions are justified by the group's beliefs.
9. Members are smug, self-satisfied, self-righteous, and egotistical, about their beliefs and their group.

Final prayer (from the 1979 Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, page 840):

For the Diversity of Races and Cultures

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*