

## STUDY PACK 7

### MODERNISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM

“NO SOONER had Christ established His Church on earth than Satan set out to corrupt it. He raised up false ministers (2 Cor. 11:13) \_\_\_\_\_ (Gal. 1:6-9) and thus produce \_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 13:25) Such activity immediately raises some very important questions: What are the marks of the true church of Christ? To what extent is sound doctrine necessary to a true church? When has an ecclesiastical body departed from the faith? If such departure is evident, what should be done by those who seek to preserve the truth?

The impression is sometimes received that such questions, and the inevitable conflicts which surround their debate, are confined to the so-called “fundamentalist-modernist controversy” of the twentieth century, and that “separatism” (renunciation of fellowship with apostates) is largely a contemporary phenomenon spawned by over-zealous fundamentalists. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Conflicts over \_\_\_\_\_ have rocked the church down through the centuries. Every age has had those who were concerned about the church’s departure from scriptural truth, and who have sought to perpetuate by one means or another churches \_\_\_\_\_.

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~~ Ernest Pickering, *Biblical Separation*, p. 11 ~~

#### I. THE RISE OF MODERNISM IN BAPTIST CIRCLES

The earliest challenges of modernism to the Baptist movement had little success: however, the issues of modernism arose over and over again in Baptist colleges. Soon, three distinct movements developed.

Those who clearly held to the \_\_\_\_\_ faith and who insisted that these truths \_\_\_\_\_ were called \_\_\_\_\_.

The doctrines that they considered “fundamental” were the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the Trinity, the virgin birth, the atonement, Christ’s bodily resurrection, and the Second Coming. Many early Baptist Fundamentalists also emphasized pre-millennialism.

Baptist Fundamentalists all believed that modernists had the right to teach as they pleased (religious liberty), but they rejected their right to do so in Baptist schools. They believed that Baptist conventions and other organizations should adopt \_\_\_\_\_ covering the fundamentals of the Christian faith and the Baptist distinctives and expel modernists.

The second group was \_\_\_\_\_ themselves.

The modernists plainly felt that Scripture was not authoritative and, consequently claimed that the Baptist doctrines of soul liberty and the priesthood of all believers gave them the right to teach anything they pleased and still be considered good Baptists.

A third group called themselves " \_\_\_\_\_ "

They believed in the basic fundamentals, but they were opposed to the idea of a doctrinal statement being used as a basis for fellowship. They believed that where truth and error co-exist, truth would always triumph. They also felt that maintaining political unity within their organizations was more important than maintaining doctrinal purity.

Battle lines were drawn. From 1910 to 1915, a series of books were written to make clear the fundamentals. This battle was also being fought among the Methodists, Presbyterians Lutherans, and Episcopalians, as well as the Baptists. Baptist Fundamentalists were led by prominent pastors of large churches like William Bell Riley, I. M. Haldeman, John R. Straton, and T. T. Shields. Within the Northern Baptist convention, the battle raged. Battles took place for control of missionary organizations, colleges, and seminaries.

The great question faced by the Fundamentalists was how long they should struggle for establishment of a strong doctrinal position before giving up and withdrawing from their respective conventions. This question never received a final answer.

The first church to leave a convention in protest of modernism appears to be the Wealthy Street Baptist Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan in 1909. This church left the Northern Baptist Convention because there was no clear doctrinal position for their colleges. The question is still being debated and \_\_\_\_\_ there are still churches leaving their respective denominations in protest over the influence of modernism.

The great battles for control did not seem to go the way of the Fundamentalists. The Southern Baptist Convention did adopt a clear doctrinal statement in 1925, but it was also made clear that no provisions \_\_\_\_\_ would be put into practice. This did create a more conservative atmosphere within the Southern Baptist Convention than the other large conventions. It did not end the battle over modernism, however, for many modernists clearly stayed active within the Southern Baptist Convention. The other conventions did not adopt any creed, and individual churches continue to leave conventions to this day.

Fundamentalists formed the Baptist Bible Union under the leadership of T. T. Shields, and its expressed purpose was to battle modernism on all fronts. The Union sponsored the beginning of a new seminary and provided a forum for fundamental Baptists. For several years, the Baptist Bible Union made it possible for fundamental Baptists from several different conventions to work together against modernists.

Finally, the Northern Baptist Convention went to court to stop Dr. Ford Porter's church, the First Baptist Church of Princeton, Indiana, from leaving the Convention in protest over modernism. When this strategy failed, and the rights of the church \_\_\_\_\_, the stage was set for massive withdrawals from the major conventions.

## II. THE GENERAL ASSOCIATION OF REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCHES

In 1933, over 50 churches left the Northern Baptist Convention and formed the General Association of Regular Baptist Church (commonly known as the GARBC). Robert Ketcham became a strong leader within the GARBC. His influence led the GARBC to two very important decisions. First, the new organization would not be in the form of a convention, but in the form of \_\_\_\_\_. This would make it more difficult for any central or state organization to interfere with the independence of member churches.

Secondly, no church would be allowed to maintain membership in both the Northern Baptist Convention and the GARBC. This was done to maintain a clear philosophy of separation in the new fellowship. Several colleges were approved, and several mission agencies formed. The GARBC continued to grow as each year more churches left the convention.

## III. J. FRANK NORRIS AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

It is impossible to discuss the rise of Baptist Fundamentalism without discussing J. Frank Norris. Norris was a tremendous preacher, brilliant organizer, and a very colorful spokesman against modernism. He was an outstanding church builder, and \_\_\_\_\_ influenced a generation of preachers. He thrived on controversy, and he was engaged in notable controversies with Roman Catholicism, the liquor traffic, evolutionists, both the moderate and the modernist crowd in the Southern Baptist Convention, and with several other Fundamentalist leaders.

He was charged with both arson and murder in the courts, but was acquitted of all charges.

Norris began a very strong and open battle with the Southern Baptist Convention in general, and the state convention in Texas in particular. Such prominent Southern Baptist church-builders as George W. Truett and L. R. Scarborough answered the attacks by Norris. Eventually, Norris was expelled from the national and state conventions. He devoted the rest of his life to battling the Convention and its modernistic influences. Whenever the Southern Baptists held their national convention, Norris rented a large auditorium and held meetings in the same city. He preached against the Convention, and he usually drew larger crowds than the Convention did!

Norris applied for admission for his church to the GARBC and was refused, so he formed the World Baptist Fellowship. Soon, many churches left the Southern Baptist Convention

to join this new fundamental Baptist fellowship. In 1934, Norris was pastor of the church with the largest attendance of any in the United States. This was the First Baptist Church of Fort Worth, Texas. He also accepted the pastorate of the Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, even though they were 1,300 miles apart! Within three years Temple Baptist was the second largest church in the country. This was an absolutely unique accomplishment for any church-builder. In addition to pastoring the two largest churches in the nation, Norris then started the Bible Baptist Seminary at his church in Fort Worth.

Norris was involved in many battles with his fellow fundamental Baptists. He was responsible for very serious attacks on John R. Rice, a leader among independent Baptists, Robert Ketcham, leader of the GARBC, and G. Beauchamp Vick, his successor at Temple Baptist in Detroit. (Vick was also one of the founders of the Baptist Bible Fellowship.) All three men stated that their controversies with Norris were the greatest spiritual battles they ever faced.

Finally, in 1950, many of the leaders of the World Baptist Fellowship broke with Norris and formed the Baptist Bible Fellowship. This organization became strongly identified with aggressive church-building. It runs or approves several colleges and maintains its own mission board. The Baptist Bible Fellowship quickly became the largest organization of fundamental Baptists in the world.