

The clash between Liberalism and orthodox Evangelicalism during the first quarter of this century was sharper in America than in Britain. One reason for this was that American Evangelicalism had among its defenders men of a broader range of learning, deeper theological insight and greater intellectual virility than their British counterparts. Some of B. B. Warfield's polemical articles, and J. G. Machen's *Christianity and Liberalism*, for instance, crystallized the issues at stake in their broadest implications with a judicious mastery that cannot be too highly praised. A second reason was the more radical and uninhibited character of American Liberalism itself. The characteristic tenets of liberal faith in America in the early years of this century may be summarized as follows:¹

1. God's character is one of pure benevolence—benevolence, that is, without standards. All men are His children, and sin separates no one from His love. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are alike universal.

2. There is a divine spark in every man. All men, therefore, are good at heart, and need nothing more than encouragement to allow their natural goodness to express itself.

3. Jesus Christ is man's Saviour only in the sense that He is man's perfect Teacher and Example. We should regard Him simply as the first Christian, our elder brother in the world-wide family of God. He was not divine in any unique sense. He was God only in the sense that He was a perfectly God-conscious and God-guided man. He was not born of a virgin; He did not work miracles, in the sense of 'mighty works' of divine creative power; and He did not rise from the dead.

4. Just as Christ differs from other men only comparatively, not absolutely, so Christianity differs from other religions not generically, but merely as the best and highest type of religion that has yet appeared. All religions are

¹ We do not suggest that those who are opposing 'Fundamentalism' in the present debate all hold these particular views, or anything in detail like them. But we confess that we think it correct to describe their position as generically liberal for reasons which we shall give in their place in Chapter VII below.

CHAPTER II

WHAT IS 'FUNDAMENTALISM'?

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.'

LEWIS CARROLL

IN this chapter we shall look into the history of the term 'Fundamentalism'. We have used it thus far as a synonym for Evangelicalism, because, whether the critics know it or not, it is Evangelicalism that they are attacking under this name. But the title is one which most British Evangelicals have always declined. Moreover, as we have seen, it is currently used in very varied senses. 'I am yet to meet two fundamentalists who can agree on an exact definition of fundamentalism,' wrote a correspondent in *The Times*; and the same must be said of anti-fundamentalists too. Remembering these facts, we must now try to decide whether the use of the word by either side in this debate is really helpful.

ORIGINS OF THE TERM

There is no mystery as to what the term meant when it was first coined. It was the title taken by a group of American Evangelicals, of all Protestant denominations, who banded themselves together to defend their faith against liberal encroachment after the First World War. The history of early Fundamentalism has been twice written, by S. G. Cole (*The History of Fundamentalism*, New York, 1931) and N. F. Furniss (*The Fundamentalist Controversy, 1918-31*, Yale, 1954).¹ It is instructive to see how the movement began. Since it arose as a protest against the type of Liberalism then current, we must first glance at that.

¹ See also 'The Word "Fundamentalist"' by Douglas Johnson in *The Christian Graduate*, March 1955, pp. 22 ff.

forms of the same religion, just as all men are members of the same divine family. It follows, of course, that Foreign Missions should not aim to convert from one faith to another, but rather to promote a cross-fertilizing interchange whereby each religion may be enriched through the contribution of all others.

5. The Bible is not a divine record of revelation, but a human testament of religion; and Christian doctrine is not the God-given word which must create and control Christian experience. The truth is the opposite. Christian experience is directly infectious within the Christian community—it is 'caught', like mumps; and this experience creates and controls Christian doctrine, which is merely an attempt to give it verbal expression. Poetry, according to Wordsworth, consists of emotion recollected in tranquillity. Doctrine, according to Liberalism, has a precisely similar character. It is nothing more than an endeavour to put into words the content of religious feelings, impressions and intuitions. The only facts to which doctrinal statements give expression are the feelings of those who produce them. Doctrine is simply a by-product of religion. The New Testament contains the earliest attempts to express the Christian experience in words; its value lies in the fact that it is a first-hand witness to that experience. Other generations, however, must express the same experience in different words. Doctrinal formulæ, like poetic idiom, will vary from age to age and place to place, according to the variation of cultural backgrounds. The first-century theology of the New Testament cannot be normative for twentieth-century men. But this is no cause for concern, and means no loss. Doctrine is not basic or essential to any form of religion; no doctrinal statements or credal forms, therefore, are basic or essential to Christianity. In so far as there is a permanent and unchanging Christian message, it is not doctrinal, but ethical—the moral teaching of Jesus.

Not all Liberals went so far as this. But the views detailed above were all implicit in the liberal outlook, and some Liberals, at least, were ready to maintain them all. And, as Machen insisted, 'the true way in which to

examine a spiritual movement is in its logical relations: logic is the great dynamic, and the logical implications of any way of thinking are sooner or later certain to be worked out'. His own *Christianity and Liberalism* was a demonstration that liberal views formed a coherent system—but one which was simply not Christian. The truth is that Liberalism was a deduction from the nineteenth-century view of 'religion' as a universal human phenomenon—a view which was itself of a piece with the characteristic nineteenth-century scientific and philosophical outlook. The faith of nineteenth-century science was that every phenomenon can be exactly classified and completely explained as an instance of some universal law of cause and effect; there are no unique events. The conviction of nineteenth-century philosophy, whether empiricist or idealist, materialist, deist or pantheist, was that the idea of supernatural interruptions of the course of the natural order was unphilosophical and absurd. Both science and philosophy relied on evolutionary concepts for the explanation of all things. Liberalism was an attempt to square Christianity with these anti-supernatural axioms. The result was tersely summed up by Machen: 'The liberal attempt at reconciling Christianity with modern science has really relinquished everything distinctive of Christianity, so that what remains is, in essentials, only that same indefinite type of religious aspiration which was in the world before Christianity came on the scene . . . the apologist has really abandoned what he started out to defend.'¹ Liberalism swept away entirely the gospel of the supernatural redemption of sinners by God's sovereign grace. It reduced grace to nature, divine revelation to human reflection, faith in Christ to following His example, and receiving new life to turning over a new leaf; it turned supernatural Christianity into one more form of natural religion, a thin mixture of morals and mysticism. As Hebert rightly says: 'Religion was being substituted for God.'² It was in protest against this radical refashioning of the historic faith that 'Fundamentalism' arose.

¹ *Christianity and Liberalism*, pp. 7 f.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 78.

The name developed out of the habit of referring to the central redemptive doctrines which Liberalism rejected as 'the fundamentals'. This usage goes back to at least 1909. In that year there appeared the first of twelve small miscellany volumes devoted to the exposition and defence of evangelical Christianity, entitled *The Fundamentals*. Through the generosity of two wealthy Californians, the set was sent free to every pastor, evangelist, missionary, theological student, Sunday School superintendent, Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. secretary in the English-speaking world, so far as the addresses of these can be obtained,¹ and over three million copies were eventually circulated. Among the authors who contributed to these volumes were men of the calibre of James Orr, B. B. Warfield, Sir Robert Anderson, H. C. G. Moule, W. H. Griffith Thomas, R. A. Torrey, Dyson Hague, A. T. Pierson and G. Campbell Morgan. Many of the articles were thoroughly scholarly pieces of work, as Hebert allows in his review of them.² The series contained positive biblical expositions of the controverted 'fundamentals'—the inspiration and authority of Scripture, the deity, virgin birth, supernatural miracles, atoning death, physical resurrection and personal return of Jesus Christ, the reality of sin, salvation by faith through spiritual regeneration, the power of prayer and the duty of evangelism. With these went polemics against positions opposed to the 'fundamentals'—Romanism, Darwinism, 'higher criticism' and such cults as Christian Science, Mormonism, Spiritualism and Jehovah's Witnesses—and some impressive personal testimonies to the power of Christ.

This use of 'the fundamentals' as a conservative slogan was echoed in the Deliverance which the General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church issued in 1910, while *The Fundamentals* were in process of publication. This specified five items as 'the fundamentals of faith and of evangelical Christianity': the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture, the deity of Christ, His virgin birth and miracles, His penal death for our sins, and His physical resurrection and personal return. From that time

¹ *The Fundamentals*, I. 4.

² *Op. cit.*, pp. 17 ff.

on, it seems to have become habitual for American Evangelicals to refer to these articles as 'the fundamentals' simply. The General Assembly's list was adopted, with minor variations and additions, as the doctrinal platform of later 'fundamentalist' organizations, of which the first was the still surviving World Christian Fundamentals Association, formed in 1919. In 1920, a group of evangelical delegates to the Northern Baptist Convention held a preliminary meeting among themselves to re-state, reaffirm and re-emphasize the fundamentals of our New Testament faith; whereupon an editorial in the Baptist *Watchman-Examiner* coined the title 'Fundamentalists' to denote 'those who mean to do battle royal for the fundamentals'. The word was at once taken up by both sides as a title for the defenders of the historic Christian position. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* is thus right when it defines 'Fundamentalism' as: 'maintenance, in opposition to modernism, of traditional orthodox beliefs such as the inerrancy of Scripture and literal acceptance of the creeds as fundamentals of protestant Christianity.' This is what the term originally meant, and this is what the large number of American Evangelicals who still use it to describe their position mean by it today.

'FUNDAMENTALISM' AN OBJECTIONABLE TERM

Are British Evangelicals, then, 'Fundamentalists'? In the defined sense, they are; nor need they hesitate to admit it. It is no discredit to Christian men to be committed to the defence of 'the fundamentals'. But British Evangelicals are not 'Fundamentalists' in any of the other senses that have been put on the word. Nor have they ever adopted the name, or asked to be called by it; and sometimes they have explicitly rejected it. There are good reasons why they should continue to do so. To persons ignorant of the American debate about 'the fundamentals' (as most Englishmen are) the word can convey no obvious meaning. Its misuse in recent discussion makes it doubly unsuitable as a title. And there are three further reasons why British Evangelicals find it objectionable.

1. In the first place, it is a word that combines the vaguest conceptual meaning with the strongest emotional flavour. 'Fundamentalist' has long been a term of ecclesiastical abuse, a theological swear-word; and the important thing about a swear-word, of course, is not what it means but the feelings it expresses. It seems as discourteous as it is confusing to refer to Evangelicals as 'fundamentalists' and so invoke against them all the contemptuous overtones that have gathered round the title. 'Give a dog a bad name—and hang it' is a time-honoured maxim in controversy—even, one fears, in theological controversy. And what happens once the 'bad name' has caught on is always the same: as its derogatory flavour grows stronger, it is used more and more widely and loosely as a general term of abuse, till it has lost all value as a meaningful description of anything.

This is the unchanging law of the vocabulary of insult. The history of some of the 'bad names' given to Evangelicals of other days yields instructive examples of it. 'Puritan', for instance, began as a rude name for Elizabethan Evangelicals who sought a more radical reformation and greater 'purity' in the worship and organization of the English Church. However, Thomas Fuller tells us, 'profane mouths quickly improved the nickname, there-with on every occasion to abuse pious people'.¹ Then, in the 1620s, the Laudian Arminians capitalized on its derogatory flavour when they drew attention from their own theological novelties by christening their opponents, the defenders of historic Anglican Calvinism, 'doctrinal Puritans'. Later, the word came to be thrown about in political and social contexts; any man of strict moral principles might be stigmatized by it; and 'puritanical' remains a potent insult to this day. As the word grew more derogatory, it was used more indiscriminately, and its original meaning fell wholly out of sight.

A similar example of the same thing is provided by the history of the word 'Methodist' in the eighteenth century. This title was first coined in 1730 as a sneering comment on the disciplined and methodical piety of John Wesley's

¹ *Church History of Britain*, 1837 ed., II, p. 474.

Oxford Holy Club. Then, it was applied generally to the members of Wesley's Societies. Thomas Scott tells us that by the end of the century 'Methodist, as a stigma of reproach... first applied to Mr. Wesley, Mr. Whitefield and their followers', had come to be a regular jibe against Anglican Evangelicals of all sorts ('all persons... who preach or profess the doctrines of the reformation, as expressed in the articles and liturgy of our church'). Scott goes on to illustrate by his own testimony how the psychology of prejudice operated against those to whom the word was applied. This is his description of his own attitude to 'Methodists' in the early years of his ministry: 'I joined in the prevailing sentiment; held them in sovereign contempt; spoke of them with derision; declaimed against them from the pulpit, as persons full of bigotry, enthusiasm and spiritual pride; laid heavy things to their charge; and endeavoured to prove the doctrine which I supposed them to hold (for I had never read their books) to be dishonourable to God and destructive to morality.'¹ Scott was so sure that it was a bad thing to be a Methodist that he did not take the trouble to enquire first-hand what Methodists really believed, but swallowed without hesitation all that was popularly said to their discredit. The anatomy of prejudice does not change. Put 'Fundamentalists' for 'Methodists', and one cannot help suspecting that Scott's confession is a cap that would fit some heads today.

There is no need to quote other examples; the point is clear. The verdict of history is that the use of vague prejudicial labels (and the more they are the one, the more they are the other) rules out the very possibility of charitable and constructive discussion. The interests of truth and love seem to demand that such labels be rigorously eschewed.

2. A further reason why British Evangelicals avoid calling themselves 'Fundamentalists' is that the name suggests Evangelicalism at something less than its best. American Fundamentalism did not in every respect adorn its doctrine. We honour the original Fundamentalists for their zeal to defend and spread their evangelical faith, but at a

¹ *The Force of Truth*, n.d., pp. 22 f.

generation's distance from them we can see serious limitations in the witness which they made. They were, by and large, outclassed by their opponents in learning and ability. Their original strategy had been directed towards regaining control of the established denominations, but they soon had to abandon all hope of that. As time went by, Fundamentalism withdrew more and more into the shell provided by its own inter-denominational organizations. Partly in self-defence, the movement developed a pronounced anti-intellectual bias; it grew distrustful of scholarship, sceptical as to the value of reasoning in matters of religion and truculent in its attitude towards the argument of its opponents. Something less than intellectual integrity appeared in its readiness to support a good cause with a bad argument. Its apologetics were makeshift, piecemeal and often unprincipled and unsound. Its adventures in the field of the natural sciences, especially with reference to evolution, were most unfortunate. Here, where the Fundamentalists' confidence was greatest, their competence was least, and their performance brought ridicule and discredit on themselves. Generally, Fundamentalism lacked theological energy and concern for Christian learning. It grew intellectually barren. Culture became suspect. The responsibilities of the Christian social witness were left to the purveyors of the 'social gospel', and Fundamentalism turned it upon itself, limiting its interests to evangelism and the cultivation of personal religion. Neglecting Christian history, Fundamentalism lost touch with the past and left itself at the mercy of the present; the movement lacked depth and stability, and showed itself unduly susceptible to eccentric influences originating from its own ranks. The fundamentalist episode has not been a happy chapter in the history of Evangelicalism. The verdict of a modern American evangelical scholar, N. B. Stonehouse, on the movement as a whole is discerning and just: 'To the extent that fundamentalists were stressing the doctrines of the sovereignty of God as Creator and Ruler of the universe, the infallibility of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ and the reality of His incarnation, the supernaturalism of sal-

vation, and the certainty of the coming consummation, they were simply defending historic Christianity. In this sense the fundamentalist-modernist controversy was but a phase of an age-long struggle. . . .

On the other hand, though many modern critics are blameworthy for failing to distinguish within fundamentalism between the solid core of Biblical Christianity and certain excrescences, fundamentalists have often contributed to the judgment that it is essentially a religious novelty. The emergence of new emphases and the lack of others, the presence at times of a zeal not according to knowledge and the frequent absence of historical perspective and the appreciation of scholarship, have influenced this evaluation. . . . Oftentimes pietistic and perfectionist vagaries have come to be accepted as the hallmark of fundamentalism. And a one-sided other-worldliness, often associated with a dogmatic commitment to a futuristic chiliasm, has come to be widely regarded as essential to fundamentalist orthodoxy.¹

We must not judge the original Fundamentalists too harshly. Their resources of scholarship were certainly limited, but their desire to defend the evangelical faith against a militant and aggressive Liberalism was equally certainly right. It was better to fight clumsily than not to fight at all. However, there is no doubt that their Evangelicalism was narrowed and impoverished by their controversial entanglements. Their Fundamentalism was Evangelicalism of a kind, but of a somewhat starved and stunted kind—shrivelled, coarsened and in part deformed under the strain of battle. To be true to its own nature as Evangelicalism, this fundamentalist tradition needs to be broadened, reformed and refined by the Word of God which it defends. It is the distinctive mark of Evangelicalism to keep itself loyal to Christ by constantly measuring, correcting and developing its faith and life by

¹ J. Gresham Machen: *A Biographical Memoir*, pp. 336 f. For a fuller discussion of Fundamentalism by an evangelical theologian, leading to similar conclusions, see Carl F. H. Henry, *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology*, especially Chapter II (Eerdmans, 1957).

the standard of the Word of God. And Evangelicalism at its best has shown itself to be a much richer thing than this Fundamentalism which we have been describing: intellectually virile, church-centred in its outlook, vigorous in social and political enterprise and a cultural force of great power. The careers and achievements of such men as John Calvin, John Owen, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and Abraham Kuyper reflect something of the breadth of Evangelicalism when it is true to itself.

In particular, it is important to insist that obscurantism in all its forms is wholly out of keeping with true Evangelicalism. The Evangelical is not afraid of facts, for he knows that all facts are God's facts; nor is he afraid of thinking, for he knows that all truth is God's truth, and right reason cannot endanger sound faith. He is called to love God with all his mind; and part of what this means is that, when confronted by those who, on professedly rational grounds, take exception to historic Christianity, he must set himself not merely to deplore or denounce them, but to out-think them. It is not his business to argue men into faith, for that cannot be done; but it is his business to demonstrate the intellectual adequacy of the biblical faith and the comparative inadequacy of its rivals, and to show the invalidity of the criticisms that are brought against it. This he seeks to do, not from any motive of intellectual self-justification, but for the glory of God and of His gospel. A confident intellectualism expressive of robust faith in God, whose Word is truth, is part of the historic evangelical tradition. If present-day Evangelicals fall short of this, they are false to their own principles and heritage.¹

Few men of recent years have so vigorously expressed their belief in the rational superiority of Evangelicalism over its modern rivals as the late J. G. Machen, who died in 1937. Machen was, in Furniss' phrase, 'a strange bedfellow for most Fundamentalists'² by reason of the purity of his Evangelicalism at this point. Liberalism, then as now, affirmed that to maintain evangelical orthodoxy in

¹ See also Chapters V and VI.

² *The Fundamentalist Controversy*, 1918-31, pp. 127 f.

the twentieth century was intellectually retrograde and, in effect, dishonest. Machen's reply was that it was in fact the liberal position that was open to this kind of criticism. Liberal thinking, he maintained, is really superficial, and can be shown to be so; and the true remedy against Liberalism is for men to think, not less (as some Fundamentalists seemed to suppose) but more—more deeply, more vigorously, more clearly and more critically.¹ Paradoxically, but, we believe, correctly, Machen analysed the basic cause of the present eclipse of Evangelicalism as the radically anti-intellectual outlook of the twentieth century. The very quantity of books to read and facts to master with which the twentieth-century man is confronted encourages him to think broadly and superficially about much, but hinders him from thinking deeply and thoroughly about anything. Some words which Machen wrote on this subject in 1925 seem so apt today that we quote them at length:

'It is a great mistake . . . to suppose that we who are called "conservatives" hold desperately to certain beliefs merely because they are old, and are opposed to the discovery of new facts. On the contrary, we welcome new discoveries with all our hearts, and we believe that our cause will come to its rights again only when youth throws off its present intellectual lethargy, refuses to go thoughtlessly with the anti-intellectual current of the age, and recovers some genuine independence of mind. In one sense, indeed, we are traditionalists. . . . But on the whole, in view of the conditions that now exist, it would perhaps be more correct to call us "radicals" than to call us "conservatives" We are seeking in particular to arouse youth from its present uncritical repetition of current phrases into some genuine examination of the basis of life; and we believe that Christianity flourishes not in the darkness, but in the light. A revival of the Christian religion, we believe, will deliver mankind from its present bondage. Such a revival will not be the work of man, but the work

¹ Machen himself showed how this might be done in two masterly critical studies, *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (1921) and *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (1930).

of the Spirit of God. But one of the means which the Spirit will use, we believe, is an awakening of the intellect. . . . The new Reformation, in other words, will be accompanied by a new Renaissance; and the last thing in the world that we desire to do is to discourage originality or independence of mind.¹

Machen, with his robust Christian intellectualism, his demand for a scholarly apologetic, and his strong churchmanship, did not like being called a 'Fundamentalist'. In truth, as Dr. Stonehouse points out, 'judged by various criteria adopted by friend and foe, he was not a fundamentalist at all'.² He saw Fundamentalism as a debased Evangelicalism which at point after point was at variance with that for which he stood. British Evangelicals do not like to be called 'Fundamentalists' either, and for a similar reason.

It would not be right to leave this point without a frank acknowledgment that Evangelicals in this country have on occasion reproduced some of those features of 'Fundamentalism' which Machen most regretted—distrust of reason, shoddy apologetics, cultural barrenness, eccentric individualism, indifference to churchmanship. The conflict with a self-confident Liberalism had similar effects on both sides of the Atlantic. British Evangelicals also have been heard sneering at 'the critics', making a virtue of theological ignorance, belittling scholarship and opposing 'reason' to 'simple faith' in such a way as to suggest that the purest version of Christianity is that which takes least thought to grasp. Here, also, fear has on occasion masqueraded as faith. One reason why Evangelicals are regarded by some as obscurantist is that, in fact, they sometimes are. The fault is real; we shall do well to humble ourselves because of it.

On the other hand, however, it would equally not be right to leave this point without emphasizing once more that the fundamentalist rejection of Liberalism expressed, not a mere natural human reluctance to abandon an old thing, but a God-given spiritual insight into the character

¹ *What is Faith?*, pp. 17 f.

² *J. Gresham Machen: A Biographical Memoir*, p. 337.

of the new thing. Liberalism maintained that modern literary and historical criticism had exploded the doctrine of an infallible Bible, modern science had made it impossible to believe in the supernatural as Scripture presents it, modern comparative study of religions had shown that Christianity, after all, was not unique, and modern philosophy required the dismissal of such basic biblical concepts as original sin, the wrath of God and expiatory sacrifice, as primitive superstitions. Against each of these positions sensitive Christian consciences protested, as they always will. Each position involves a denial of the apostolic gospel; and therefore Christian consciences sense at once that they are false, even before it is clear what in detail is wrong with them. John spoke of the Christian's God-given capacity to discern denials of the gospel for what they are when he wrote: 'Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things' (1 Jn. ii. 20; cf. verses 26, 27).¹ God's Spirit will not witness to a repudiation of God's Word or a perversion of Christ's gospel. Those Evangelicals who reacted against Liberalism so violently as to repudiate the use of reason in religion altogether were certainly wrong; the antidote for bad reasoning is not no reasoning, but better reasoning. But in that they did react, they were just as certainly right. A sound spiritual instinct guided them, and we should thank God for the tenacity with which they held their ground.

For it required tenacity on their part. In their day, Liberalism was dominant; the evolutionary outlook of which it was a product was well-nigh universal, and the nineteenth-century faith that mankind was progressing towards perfection, in religion as in all else, was still unchallenged. From that point of view, it was harder then to hold to the biblical faith than it is now. The events of the past thirty years have shaken evolutionary optimism to its foundation. The supernaturalism of the Bible does not now seem such an anachronism as does the evolutionary outlook which once claimed to supersede it. The thought of divine wrath and judgment is less incredible after

¹ The RV margin and ASV read 'and ye all know', perhaps rightly; but this does not affect our point.

two world wars. The idea that man is so radically bad that only a divine Saviour can help him no longer seems self-evidently absurd. Liberalism itself is not dead; but the older form of it is largely extinct, and the trend of modern theology, on the whole, is back towards the historic faith rather than away from it. Evangelical faith today does not involve such a complete break with the prevalent mood of the Church as it did in the complacent days when Fundamentalism arose. We honour Fundamentalism for its witness at a time when a militant Liberalism threatened to sweep the historic faith away. But we honour it best, not by perpetuating its weaknesses, but by frankly acknowledging them and taking pains to avoid them. The way for us to show gratitude to God for the courageous battle which the Fundamentalists fought is by seeking to reopen the richer vein of the Evangelicalism which they laboured to defend. And therefore we prefer to call ourselves 'Evangelicals' rather than 'Fundamentalists'.

3. The final reason why Evangelicals decline to be called 'Fundamentalists' is that the term is modern. Its meaning derives from a modern controversy, and its very formation suggests that what it describes is just one 'ism' among the many that our age has bred. But Evangelicalism is precisely not that. It is, we maintain, the oldest version of Christianity; theologically regarded, it is just apostolic Christianity itself. Ideally, the Evangelical would choose no title for himself but 'Christian'. He holds that he alone is entitled to call his faith 'Christian' without qualification. If, however, he must use a further label to differentiate himself from other groups within the Church, he accepts 'Evangelical' as being the historically established term for his position, and one which by its very form bears witness to his belief that, of all forms of Christianity, this alone is loyal to the nature and content of the Evangel. It is common today to prefix 'conservative' to the traditional title in order to mark off Evangelicalism of the older sort from the so-called 'liberal evangelical' position. But if the term 'Evangelicalism' be given its historic meaning—fidelity to the doctrinal content of the gospel—then 'liberal Evangelicalism' is a contradiction in terms, and

the movement which goes by that name should be called 'pietistic Liberalism', or something of the sort. Logically, 'conservative' is superfluous; 'Evangelical' says all that is meant.

When the Evangelical identifies his faith with apostolic Christianity, he does not mean that he regards as important, or wishes to ignore, the theological legacy of the past nineteen centuries of the Church's life. He recognizes that, through the guiding activity of the Holy Spirit who indwells the Church to lead it into truth, there has been a legitimate and necessary advance in elucidating the contents and plumbing the depths of the revelation which God once for all delivered to the saints and deposited in the Scriptures. The Evangelical will value the work of the Fathers in defining the doctrines of the Trinity and incarnation, of Anselm and the Reformers in drawing out the doctrine of atonement, of Luther in expounding justification by faith, of Calvin and the Puritans in tracing out the work of the Holy Spirit, and of all others, past and present, who have contributed to the Church's doctrinal heritage. He will acknowledge also that the Church now sees further into the political and social implications of the gospel than it did at the beginning, having been repeatedly forced to re-examine these implications as society has grown more complex. But he insists that this whole process of growth in understanding, which still goes on, must be controlled and judged by that very Word of God which it seeks to elucidate, so as to ensure that it serves simply to display, and not in any way to alter, the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. And it is here, he thinks, that the various sorts of 'Catholicism', on the one hand, and of liberal Protestantism, on the other, are found wanting. In the course of the development which produced them, they have to a greater or less degree become something other than Christianity. They are the eccentricities and novelties, while Evangelicalism alone stands in the true line of Christian development.

The predominance of Liberalism during the past half-century has led to the present paradoxical state of affairs—that Evangelicalism, which is really old, is now so un-

familiar that men treat it as more of a novelty than what is really new. Our critics suppose that what they call 'Fundamentalism' is something as new as its name. But it is not. Nor was sixteenth-century Protestantism, nor seventeenth-century Puritanism, nor eighteenth-century Methodism. These names denote simply particular aspects and episodes of the continuing history of evangelical Christianity—Christianity according to Jesus Christ and His apostles. 'Fundamentalism' is a recent chapter in that history, now closing, if not already closed. The chapter ends, but the history goes on. The idea that the present-day evangelical movement is essentially a novelty in the Church is a complete illusion; and it is a vital part of the present-day defence of Evangelicalism to destroy that illusion. But for Evangelicals to accept a new name—whether 'Fundamentalism' or any other—could only serve to foster it. Therefore they decline new names. They prefer to call attention to their spiritual ancestry and the claim which they make for their faith by adhering to the historic title for it.

Of another 'ism' much discussed in the Church today, Canon Roger Lloyd has written: 'The introduction of the word . . . has been the signal for clear thinking to fly out of the window. . . . All words must be dubious when you have laboriously to explain what you do not mean by them. It might be a good idea to give them up for Lent.' This is exactly what we would say of 'Fundamentalism'. The word is prejudicial, ambiguous, explosive and in every way unhelpful to discussion. It does not clarify; it merely confuses. It is only in use today because critics of Evangelicalism have dragged it up. For the rest of our argument we shall abandon it, and speak of Evangelicalism simply. We would plead that in future others will do the same.

CHAPTER III

AUTHORITY

My conscience is subject to the Word of God.

MARTIN LUTHER

The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God.

WESTMINSTER CONFSSION, I. IV

THE PROBLEM STATED

WE have said already that one odd feature of this controversy is that the real question, or group of questions, that lies at its heart has not yet been raised. The real question concerns the principle of authority. But anti-fundamentalists fail to see this. Hence, instead of recognizing and discussing the difference that exists here, we find them glossing over it with equivocal formulæ. Hebert, for instance, more than once affirms the authority of God's word, of the gospel, of Christ, in terms which Evangelicals would use. But his book shows that he does not mean them in an evangelical sense. Yet he seems quite unaware that there is any difference of view at this point, and supposes that disagreement begins only over principles of biblical interpretation. This is typical of those who write and speak against Evangelicalism today. What they say reveals that, in the strict sense of the phrase, many of them do not know what they are talking about.

In the following chapters we address ourselves to this situation. Our aim is to clarify the neglected issues. We shall try to formulate the question of authority, specify the difference of the contending groups about it, and justify our claim that it is central in the present dispute. We shall expound the evangelical view, and work out its