Creating A Timeless Tradition:

The Effects of Fundamentalism on the Conservative Mennonite Movement

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Revivalism and fundamentalism were significant forces that greatly influenced the life and theology of North American Mennonites during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. After World War II, the (Old) Mennonite Church began to make a significant shift away from fundamentalism. The Conservative Mennonite movement began in the 1950s in protest against the theological and sociological changes taking place in the Mennonite Church, particularly the loss of fundamentalist doctrines. This thesis traces the influences of fundamentalism as they were adopted early in the twentieth century by the Mennonite Church and came to fulfillment in the founding of the Conservative Mennonite movement.

By looking at the history of the (Old) Mennonites in North America and the development of Protestant fundamentalism, this thesis provides a theological analysis of the influence of fundamentalism on the Conservative Mennonite movement.

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Dedication

In memory of my mother, Mary (Bauman) Martin (1928-2007). Your memory continues to be a grace in my life.

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INTRODUCTION

Fundamentalism was a movement that had its roots in revivalism and came to dominance in North America in the early decades of the twentieth century. It was a reaction against modernist efforts to align Christianity with modern thought and had a wide influence on all American Protestants. George M. Marsden, a leading authority on fundamentalism, believes that it "was never a dominant force" in most Mennonite groups.[1] However, Nathan E. Yoder's recent study shows "that the Mennonite Church was in fact dominated by its own variety of fundamentalism." In his dissertation "Mennonite Fundamentalism," Yoder mentions groups of Mennonites who, under the influence of fundamentalism, withdrew from the Mennonite Church into independent congregations in the 1960s and 1970s.[2] The purpose of this thesis is to look more closely at those groups who have come to be known as the Conservative Mennonite movement,[3] to examine the depth and breadth of the influence fundamentalism has had on them.

Mennonites in the decades from the 1920s to mid-century openly promoted a type of fundamentalism that had much in common with the Protestant movement, but Mennonites went even further in emphasizing certain biblical teachings. Daniel Kauffman, the most significant leader of the Mennonite Church until the early 1940s, wrote that "the Mennonite Church is firmly committed to the Fundamentalist faith."[4] The Conservative Mennonite movement gets much of its inspiration from the teachings of Kauffman, but the Conservatives do not readily

[1] George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 4, 195 & 291.
[2] Nathan Emerson Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism: Shaping An Identity For An American Context" (Notre Dame: Ph.D. dissertation, 1999), 1 & 402.
[3] Stephen Scott, *An Introduction to Old Order and Conservative Mennonite Groups* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1996), 159.
[4] Daniel Kauffman ed., "Fundamentalism" in *Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1937), 116.

identify themselves with fundamentalism, perhaps they are not aware of any fundamentalist influences.

The decades following World War II brought about major change in the "Old" Mennonite Church.[5] Having always been a distinctive sectarian movement, this branch of the Mennonite church was moving theologically toward ecumenical dialogue and sociologically was fast losing its distinctive dress and sectarianism. A major part of this change was driven by a new theology that came from the Anabaptist historical research begun in the early twentieth century that resulted in a "recovery" of the *Anabaptist Vision*. The result of these changes brought about the decline of some important Mennonite doctrines and ordinances such as nonconformity, women's head-covering, and a hard-line stance on divorce and remarriage.

In reaction to these changes the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario was established in 1959 as a schism within the Mennonite Conference of Ontario (Mennonite Church). This was part of a scattered movement of dissatisfied congregants across North America that left the Mennonite Church beginning in the late 1950s. These groups formed distinctive plain churches that maintained nonconformity in dress and held to the seven ordinances articulated by the writings of Kauffman. Although the designation "Conservative"[6] may not be descriptively perfect, this group's aim was to maintain the teachings and standards of the Mennonite Church as they had been articulated during the Mennonite fundamentalism era. Conservatives understand themselves as faithful to the Mennonite faith, particularly to the

[5] The "Old" branch of the Mennonite church is the focus of this thesis. It was the oldest and largest branch of Mennonites in North America and was commonly known as "Mennonite Church" (MC). It was made up organizationally of numerous district conferences that came together in the Mennonite Church General Conference. Occasionally when referring to the broader Mennonite church I use the designation "Mennonite church." I also sometimes use "Conference" to refer to the Mennonite Church, but it is not to be confused with the "General Conference Mennonite Church" ("GC"). More recently these two groups (MC and GC) have merged into Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada.

[6] "Conservative" with an uppercase "C," is the designation used throughout the thesis to identify this group.

teachings of Menno Simons and the Swiss Brethren. Some of their distinctive teachings are the practice of the women's head-covering, distinctive plain dress, no use of television, a cappella congregational singing, and no toleration of divorce or remarriage.

Stephan Scott divides the Conservative Mennonites into five main categories: ultra-Conservatives, intermediate-Conservatives, moderate-Conservatives, fundamental-Conservatives and theological-Conservatives.[7] This thesis limits itself to the first three categories, for these groups had their genesis in a mutual reaction to the Mennonite Church starting in the 1950s. Because Conservatives are separatistic and have a tendency toward being schismatic, many of the churches in each category do not fellowship or interact with churches in the other categories. Even within the ultra-Conservative group there are churches that will not associate with each other.

Conservative Mennonites are suspicious of centralized organization, but within their loosely defined fellowships of churches they do have bishops who at times exert considerable power. There are numerous associations where multiple churches or church fellowships come together to support a mission agency, winter Bible school, publishing house, or to hold an annual meeting for admonition and encouragement, but nowhere is there a highly organized conference structure. Although there are variations between Conservative groups, the difference between Conservatives is one of degree rather than substance. They essentially all hold to the same core beliefs but some are much more rigid in their application and enforcement on practical issues such as dress and social activities.

Our investigation of the influence of fundamentalism on the Conservative Mennonite movement begins in chapter one with a survey of Protestant fundamentalism, highlighting the

[7] Scott, *An Introduction*, 162-3.

fundamentalist issues that are relevant to Mennonite fundamentalism and later to the Conservative movement. Fundamentalism accentuates some traditional Anabaptist-Mennonite impulses such as biblicism and separatism, and in order to understand these influences chapter two gives an overview of some of the main themes and shifts in the history of the Mennonite Church. Chapter three looks more closely at the origins and developments of beliefs and practices in Mennonite fundamentalism. The Conservative Mennonite movement was a direct descendant of this earlier movement.

The term "fundamentalism" is problematic because it is often ill defined and used pejoratively, for "virtually all scholarly interpreters after 1970 joined a reaction against Mennonite fundamentalism," understanding fundamentalism as an alien infiltration. For instance, these scholars have tended to minimize the influences of liberalism and understood the backlash to liberalism as a sign of fundamentalist overreaction. These scholars have also falsely identified fundamentalism as the sole source of an authoritative view of Scripture.[8] By the same token revivalism critiqued through the lens of modern Mennonite historiography, faults evangelical devotion as a detriment to discipleship and social engagement.

In giving attention to both fundamentalism and Mennonite history, theologically and sociologically, this thesis intends to give a more complete understanding of the various influences at work inside and outside the Mennonite Church and the Conservative Mennonite movement. Rather than relying on predominant theological issues such as premillennialism, dispensationalism, or holiness, to define fundamentalism, the underlying theological assumptions and beliefs that support those attributes will be investigated.

[8] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 2. For insight into the weakness of the "infiltration model" see Yoder, 425.

Chapter four introduces Conservative theology and identifies numerous issues related to Protestant fundamentalism. The problem in trying to define the theology of the Conservative Mennonite movement is that Conservatives are by nature anti-theology and consider theological inquiry to be a humanistic philosophy. They understand their own approach, which is founded on the Bible and the example of Christ, as encompassing all truth. For this reason they have no theologians nor have they published a systematic interpretation of their beliefs. However, they have written and published an abundance of resources for their own congregations and for evangelization. These sources clearly articulate theological beliefs on many important subjects and these documents will be analyzed and compared with fundamentalism.

To more clearly identify the influences of fundamentalism, chapter five examines in more detail the appearance and function of some important fundamentalist themes in the Conservative movement. The effort is also made to distinguish where the origins for these fundamentalist influences could also have identity with historic Mennonite thought and practice.

Many of the Conservative primary sources used here have been selected from the publications of the two earliest Conservative publishing houses. Christian Light Publications relates mainly to the moderate-Conservative churches and Rod and Staff Publications relates mainly to the ultra-Conservative groups. In the beginning of the movement these two publishing endeavors were loosely affiliated, but after the separation of ultras and moderates, their supporters and audiences became even more clearly defined. Some other material is used that was written by people who have had direct influence and involvement in the Conservative movement. Very little academic research has been done on this group, but one exception is Beth

Graybill who has done a significant amount of research on the dress of Conservative women that is enlightening and helpful.[9]

The final problem is a personal one. In doing any research there are always biases and influences, but in an effort to reduce partiality and/or to take ownership for them, I need to disclose some of my personal story. I grew up in and was active in the Conservative Mennonite movement for over thirty years, my parents having joined the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario in 1961. In 1997 I moved away from the Conservative Mennonite community with my wife and children to pursue an education. I understood this as a spiritual journey where the answers were not self-evidently clear and where I was searching for God. Several years later in one of the most emotionally difficult decisions of my life, my wife and I decided to withdraw our membership from the Conservative church I had grown up in.

In retrospect I recognize that in the carrying out of this study there may have been times when emotions overwhelmed the rational, tainting my view of the Conservative movement. I also recognize that some of my particular experiences are not normative for all Conservatives. One of the things that has helped me to understand myself in relation to other people, was completing a graduate degree in counselling. Although I have come to identify some things that were toxic about my past, I have also been grateful for some of the experiences and lessons I have learned.

In the past seven years I have continued to reflect on where I came from and where I am heading spiritually and theologically. While my theology has broadened to appreciate and

[9] Beth E. Graybill, "To Remind Us of Who We Are: Multiple Meanings of Conservative Women's Dress," in *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*, eds. Kimberly D. Schmidt, Dianne Zimmerman Umble and Steven D. Reschly (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002); Graybill, "Mennonite Women and Their Bishops in the Founding of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church," MQR Vol. 72, No. 2, April 1998; Graybill and Linda B. Arthur, "The Social Control of Women's Bodies in Two Mennonite Communities" in *Religion, Dress and the Body*, ed. Linda B. Arthur (New York: Berg, 1999; paperback reprint 2000).

incorporate ideas from many sources, this thesis is testimony to my ongoing effort to understand my roots, an exercise in sorting through and better understanding assertions of truth that used to be unquestionable. I think that my Conservative background is an asset in choosing and analyzing the sources and in being aware of the many non-written rules and beliefs that pervade the Conservative psyche. I have made an effort to be “objective” and to accurately represent the beliefs of Conservatives, however I cannot claim to be completely free of prejudice and I take ownership for where I have drawn my own conclusions or made mistakes.

CHAPTER ONE

PROTESTANT FUNDAMENTALISM

According to George Marsden, "Fundamentalism was a loose, diverse, and changing federation of co-belligerants united by their fierce opposition to modernist attempts to bring Christianity into line with modern thought." He characterizes fundamentalists by their passionate willingness "to stand up and to fight."[1] Fundamentalism was a religious reaction against the liberal-modernist influences that filtered into American Protestant churches and was awaking serious alarm by the end of the nineteenth century. This phenomenon came out of the earlier revivalist/evangelicalism and can only be understood in light of the earlier religious development.

The Birth of Revivalism

America, the "New World" of opportunities, was founded with religious freedom as its foundation. The founders were European immigrants from mainline Protestant churches and their religious ardor and faith included church and state. The intellectual theology of the seventeenth-century Calvinist Puritans along with their intense piety was combined in the "Awakening" in the eighteenth century and gave birth to "a new style of emotional intensity, personal commitment to Christ, and holy living inspired directly by German and Methodist pietism."[2] The swell of revivalist energy in the 1820s led by Charles Finney marked a new era that did not neglect intellect, but went much further in personal experiential emotionalism.[3]

[1] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4. George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 1.
[2] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 44.
[3] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 45.

Revivalism was a descendant of an even earlier phenomenon, pietism, which emerged in seventeenth century Europe following the Thirty Years' War. In reaction to the strong emphasis in Protestantism on correct doctrine, pietism placed more emphasis on personal piety centered in God's love. It tended to level the sterile boundaries between clergy and laity, promoted personal Bible study, right living, personal conversion, new birth, and an experiential theology that relied on the Holy Spirit for enlightenment and guidance. It was a movement that affected all Protestant groups including Anabaptist descendants.[4]

Many of the pietist issues resonated with Anabaptism for they both had their roots in earlier mystical traditions. For this reason Anabaptists and Mennonites read and appreciated pietist writers and it was not uncommon for them to invite itinerant pietist preachers to speak in their churches. Pietism helped to shift the focus from community to an individual relationship with God that fit well with North American individualism. Incidentally, this thinking also was part of the Dutch Mennonites move toward a radical individual spirituality that saw the church seriously decline.[5]

Pietism is important because Mennonite scholars in the twentieth century would belittle pietism, revivalism and fundamentalism for making Christianity into a personal inward religion, but at the same time they often failed to see the many ways Anabaptism resonated with it. Scholastic antagonism to pietism was established by Albrecht Ritschl in the late nineteenth century and was perpetuated by dialectical theologians such as Karl Barth in the twentieth century.[6] Robert Friedmann a major interpreter of Anabaptism, believed that pietism blunted the

[4] Samuel J. Steiner, "What Happened to the Mennonites?: Lancaster County Renewal Movements and Mennonite Fragmentation in Upper Canada" (Draft Paper, January 18, 2006), 4.
[5] Thoughts on Pietism taken from: Cornelius J. Dyck, "Pietism," in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 5:703-4; and C. Arnold Snyder, class notes, "Anabaptist Spirituality in Historical Context II: Spiritual Currents from 1600-2000," Winter, 2006. Comparative readings of Anabaptists and pietists show that they use similar language and ideas.
[6] Peter Erb, "Introduction" in Johann Arndt, *True Christianity*, trans. Peter Erb (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 1.

prophetic Anabaptist message and turned faith into an innocuous inward experience of the heart rather than a radical movement into the world.[7] Harold S. Bender, prominent Mennonite churchman and scholar, was influenced by Friedmann and came to separate inner piety from discipleship and this became a dominant theme in the late twentieth century Mennonite Church.

In the 1800s revivalism proliferated with numerous variations of Arminian and Calvinist theologies and in turn combined with a profusion of denominational emphases. The Calvinists tended to stress intellect, the importance of right doctrine, and the cognitive aspects of faith. On the other hand, more pietistic and emotionally oriented groups in America stressed both rational thinking and the emotional-experiential aspects common in the Wesleyan-Methodist tradition.[8] John Wesley taught that believers could be freed by God's grace "not only from particular sinful acts, but also from the disease of sinful motives and the 'power' of sin. This state he called 'entire sanctification.'" By contrast the Reformed-Puritan tradition viewed perfection as unattainable in this life and the Christian experience as a life of intense and constant struggle.[9]

Charles Finney synthesized these two opposing views during the mid-1800s and they were widely adopted by others, so that by 1870 holiness teaching was everywhere in America. This popularized Wesleyan-holiness teaching was further modified in England at the holiness conference and this teaching came to be known as "Keswick" holiness or teaching. The emphasis on the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" and the "second blessing" was dropped as was the holiness claim that a person can be totally without sin. Keswick teaching focused primarily "on personal experiences of joy, peace, and 'victory,' with the practical results seen in enhanced devotional life and zeal for missions."

[7] Albert S. Keim, *Harold S. Bender* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 322-3.
[8] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 44.
[9] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 74-75.

> The promise was that as long as Christ dwelt in the heart a Christian could be free from committing any known sin. There was therefore no excuse for tolerating any known vice, appetite, or sinful habit.[10]

The main tenets of Keswick teaching focused on living the victorious Christian life and taught

> that Christians could attain a life of victory over known sins by yielding or giving up self to Christ and by being Spirit filled and thus consecrated for a life of service, especially the service of witnessing to others. During the early twentieth century, Keswick teaching spread through the fundamentalist movement in America…. By the 1930s, Keswick doctrine had become more or less standard fundamentalist teaching on sanctification at places like Moody Bible Institute, Wheaton College, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Columbia Bible College.[11]

Although the name would be long forgotten, the holiness teaching perpetuated by the Keswick tradition would provide the stimulus for practical holy living to Mennonite fundamentalists and later the themes of victory over sin would resound in the revival meetings and Bible conferences of the Conservative Mennonite movement.

The American Civil War was the proving ground of evangelical Protestantism and in the minds of the North it marked the final breakthrough in the march toward Christianizing the nation. The war was the last step in a long list of accomplishments to abolish Sabbath-breaking, prostitution, alcohol, Romanism, and Freemasonry.[12] The period from the Civil War to the end of World War I was an era of evangelical fervor, "The golden age of Protestant missions." It was a time of great optimism and enthusiasm where anything was possible given proper organization. Vast networks of Protestant missions were organized and mobilized at home and abroad. In addition Bible conferences, Sunday schools, evangelistic meetings, and prayer meetings proliferated.[13]

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[10] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 96 & 78.
[11] George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 87.
[12] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 9.
[13] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 22-23.

Dwight L. Moody founder of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago was an important patriarch of fundamentalism, perhaps even the most important, and is an early example of the personal empire-building that came to dominate the American evangelical scene. These empires formed around a cluster of specialized ministries and were usually founded and controlled by one man in the style of American free enterprise. Although they had no formal association to any one denomination they tried to cultivate relationships with all evangelicals.[14] Moody is of particular interest in this study because of his direct influence on Mennonites.

Another equally important, but much less popular and very different face of fundamentalism, was J. Gresham Machen, New Testament professor at Princeton Seminary.

> Unlike more populist fundamentalists who faulted scholars for abandoning faith in the name of science, Machen charged modernists with failing to be truly scientific themselves…. Machen was convinced that a thoroughly scientific approach to history substantiated rather than undermined the tenets of orthodox Christianity.[15]

This was the scholastic side of fundamentalism and Machen did not have much patience with dispensationalist or premillennialist views common in the popular side of fundamentalism. However, his disagreement with the Presbyterian Church did see him leave and found his own institution, Westminster Theological Seminary. Machen championed both piety and scholarship as equally important facets of faith.

The influence of Machen on the Mennonite Church came through the influential leadership of Harold S. Bender. Bender studied with Machen, considered him a close friend, the best teacher he ever had, and credited him with saving him from the grip of liberalism.[16] In particular it was Machen's strong emphasis on the importance of solid historical research which

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[14] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 34.
[15] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 385-6.
[16] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 123. Besides Bender, Chester K. Lehman and Noah Oyer also studied with Machen at Princeton. Bender and Oyer taught at Goshen College and Lehman became dean at Eastern Mennonite Seminary from 1923-1956 (119). According to Yoder, they were all equally "marginal to Mennonite fundamentalism." Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 385.

was then used to guide the contemporary church, that was the inspiration for Bender's research and redefinition of Mennonitism based on the Anabaptist movement.[17]

The Birth of Fundamentalism

The one root of fundamentalism lies in the academic tradition of the Presbyterian Princeton Seminary as championed by Machen. The other root of fundamentalism lies in the millenarian movement (the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth taught in dispensationalism and premillennialism) that came to prominence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. This was not a scholastic movement, in fact much the opposite, but what it shared with the academic approach was Calvinism.[18] The originator of this movement was John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) a strong Calvinist who came to America later in his life. What millenarianism took from scholasticism was the "inerrancy" of Scripture, the belief that the Bible was accurate, reliable and precise in every detail.[19]

Millenarianism and scholasticism are two dominant aspects of fundamentalism that remained important threads throughout the decades; they re-emerged after World War II and contributed to conflicting directions in fundamentalism. They are also consequential strands for Mennonites, because they came to directly influence the two divergent movements in the Mennonite Church taking place in the 1950s; the one founded on academic historiography, the other founded on an understanding of the Bible as a book of literal truth.

[17] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 388.
[18] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4-5. Dispensationalism gets its name from the teaching that history is divided up into seven distinct eras. The final millennium is a thousand-year period of Christ's reign on earth and "pre" refers to the coming of Christ before the millennium reign.
[19] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 4-5, 46 & 51.

The prophecy conference movement, which founded the millenarian movement in America, had its genesis in close proximity of the Ontario and American Mennonite communities in the Niagara Bible Conference in 1876. These conferences spawned the Bible Conference movement and also resulted in the establishment of schools of which Moody Bible Institute was the first. In 1893 and 1894 the number of Mennonites who attended Moody "included A. D. Wenger (1867-1935), S. F. Coffman (1872-1954), Aaron Loucks (1864-1945), E. J. Berkey (1874-1945), and A. I. Yoder (1865-1932)." All these men became prominent leaders in the Mennonite Church, and some of them are of particular interest in this study because of their adoption of fundamentalism. At Moody Bible Institute, "their instructors included Reuben A. Torrey, James M. Gray, Dwight L. Moody, and Cyrus I. Scofield."[20] Bible conferences soon became a popular tradition in the Mennonite Church also, and like fundamentalism they helped to root Mennonites in premillennialist teaching.[21]

In the last four decades of the nineteenth century the Protestant churches in America tripled in members. However, a big threat was the influx of Catholic immigrants during this same period that saw their population quadruple.[22] Also, quietly infiltrating American Protestantism after the Civil War was the influence of German higher criticism, Darwinism, and Freudian psychology that was revolutionizing the thought and practice of American society. Immense social changes plus rapid secularization, especially in science and higher education, were eroding Protestantism's practical dominance. People brought up to accept unquestioningly

[20] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 145.
[21] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 235.
[22] Around 1900 there were approximately sixteen million Protestant church members and twelve million Catholic members. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 14.

the complete authority of the Bible and the sure truths of evangelical teaching found themselves living in a world where such beliefs were no longer considered intellectually acceptable.[23]

Liberals with critical methods of scholarship were questioning the historical accuracy of the Bible. They tended to "place greater emphasis on the ethical aspects of Christianity than on the acceptance of historical creedal formulations."[24] Doctrines like supernatural conversion and penal atonement were rejected, as were supernatural miracles and creation in a literal seven days. The essential goodness of humanity and the efforts of humans to "progress toward the kingdom of God through dedicated human effort" were prominent.[25] This came from the influence of evolutionist thinking. Modernists "tried to reduce Christianity down to God's universal fatherhood and man's universal brotherhood…"[26] Within a few short decades the new liberalization had helped to remove many areas of Protestant thought from society in general, and more specifically from higher education. Marsden estimates that over half of Protestant publications and around one-third of the nation's pastors were accepting some modernistic teaching.[27] It should be noted that liberalism was not a unified movement, but took various forms, "including theological liberalism, evangelical liberalism (or progressive orthodoxy), Transcendentalism, and scientific modernism."[28]

Fundamentalism emerged in full cry after World War I. Concerned about the demise of Protestant evangelical culture at the hands of scientism, Darwinism, liberal theology, Roman Catholicism, biblical criticism, and sectarian movements like Pentecostalism and Christian

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[23] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism,* 32-33.
[24] Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism: Toward a Historical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 3.
[25] C. Norman Kraus, "Introduction: What is Evangelicalism?" in *Evangelicalism and Anabaptism,* ed. C. Norman Kraus (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1979), 10.
[26] J. C. Wenger, "The Inerrancy Controversy Within Evangelicalism" in *Evangelicalism and Anabaptism,* 113.
[27] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism,* 33.
[28] Cornelius J. Dyck, "Liberalism" *Mennonite Encyclopedia,* 5:518.

Science, American evangelicals banded together to join the fight. The primary concern was to maintain America's conservative evangelical religious ethos as a pure civilization. American evangelicalism is closely tied to national pride that views Christianity as the purest religion and is evidenced by the influential and superior civilization achieved through free enterprise capitalism.

> Americans were proud of their own unique achievement since they had shown that the moral basis of national success could be maintained voluntarily without an officially established church.[29]

Fundamentalism formed across denominational boundaries as the orthodox old guard from all of the mainline Protestant churches rose to defend the faith.[30] Within a few short years conservative evangelical councils dominated to engage "in holy warfare to drive the scourge of modernism out of the church and culture."[31] World War I was a catalyst for an idealistic modernism that countered evangelicalism and this alarmed fundamentalists. It also fueled the patriotic fever of saving Germany from its superhuman theology and transformed the character of the fundamentalist movement. Before the war many proto-fundamentalists remained aloof from politics and culture because they were "skeptical of any plans concerned merely with the future of civilization."[32] But with the rise of anti-evolution zeal the Southern United States Protestant churches were brought into the fundamentalist war and propelled the movement into national prominence. The earlier fundamentalist movement had very little impact in the South until after World War I when fear of evolutionary teaching caused the South to join the fundamentalist movement en masse.

[29] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 12.
[30] Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Coalition" in *Evangelicalism and Anabaptism*, 54-55.
[31] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 141.
[32] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 6, 149 & 170.

The fundamentalism that sprang to life in the early 1920s came from complex and tangled roots deep in America's traditions of revivalism, pietism, evangelicalism, Americanism, and varieties of Protestant orthodoxy.[33] But the prevailing overarching characteristic of the movement was its militant stand and fight against what its members perceived to be the evils of liberal theology. With no membership list or central organizational structure fundamentalism is primarily a religious movement fueled by a passion to turn to the Bible alone. It is to this and some of the main components of fundamentalist theological beliefs that we now turn.

Theology of Fundamentalism

The term "fundamentalist" was coined around 1920 and brought to mind the massive attack on modernism leveled by *The Fundamentals*, a series of twelve paperback volumes that were published between 1910 and 1915. These books were written by multiple authors as a "broad defense of the faith" attacking liberalism. Conceived and promoted by a millionaire oil-man, around three million of these books were sent free of charge to every known Christian leader in the English-speaking world.[34]

It is unmistakable that at the core fundamentalism was first and foremost a theological response to modernism.[35] Christians were concerned to defend the truth of the Bible. Central to both revivalism and fundamentalism was the necessity for a personal faith rooted in Christ's salvific work on the cross.[36] It was this faith in God's redemption that was defended at all costs; however fundamentalism also came to define more and more clearly what was orthodox and

[33] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 201.
[34] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 118-121.
[35] This is the approach of Kraus, Sandeen and Marsden. See: C. Norman Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America: Its Rise and Development* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1958), 45; Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Evangelical Coalition," 55; Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism* 2-3; and Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 3.
[36] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 2.

these beliefs got mixed up with both personal and national issues. The liberalist threat to the evangelical faith was real and fundamentalists responded unanimously.

Fundamentalism had a proclivity to reduce theology to uncomplicated statements that were rigorously defended as the whole and complete truth. "Its strategy was to focus on simplified formulations of essential or fundamental doctrines, from which it derives its name."[37] At the heart of the fundamentalist perspective was a view of the Bible as the foundation of theology. The Bible was acclaimed as "the intellectual source book for theological definitions and doctrines."[38] It was accepted as a plain book that was intelligible and must be taken at its logical face value. The primacy of the Bible came out of the pietist heritage in the classical Protestant tradition of *sola scriptura*.

Scottish Common Sense Realism was the dominant American philosophy in the nineteenth century that was taught in colleges everywhere and was the cornerstone of Old School Presbyterianism founded at Princeton Seminary. It took shape in the mid-1700s and reinforced the idea that God's truth is a pure unified whole that is understandable to ordinary people. Like never before this philosophy promoted rationalistic thinking that was democratic and anti-elitist. All people in all places and in all time periods were capable of discovering "the same truths in the unchanging storehouse of Scripture." This led naturally to the promotion of precisely stated doctrinal propositions that could succinctly encapsulate truth and became a defining hallmark of fundamentalism.[39]

Although with time, reference to the specific philosophy of Common Sense got lost in the fundamentalist movement, its rationalistic simple thinking continued to permeate all of

[37] Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Coalition," 55.
[38] Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Coalition," 56.
[39] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 14-16 & 61.

fundamentalism including Mennonite fundamentalism and later the Conservative Mennonite movement. One of its prominent manifestations was its emphasis on mental assent to belief in God and the view of the Bible as a clear directive that must be believed. Fundamentalists of all stripes developed numerous doctrines and teachings that anyone with common sense could understand. Common Sense philosophy also softened the Calvinist view of human depravity with its more positive view of human knowing.[40]

Princeton scholars who promoted sound intellectual thinking, confidently appealed to rational and scientific truth to confirm Christian claims of Bible truths. The Bible, which had been the inspiration for the founding of America, was constantly asserted to be "the highest and all-sufficient source of authority."[41] Scripture, like Newtonian law, was understood as

> a perfect self-contained unity governed by exact laws which could be discovered by careful analysis and classification…. When Scripture was looked upon as the compelling perfect design of God, every detail was significant.[42]

The integrity of the Bible and an obsession with its detail became the cornerstone for all fundamentalists in the fight against liberalism.

Although the Princeton school intellectuals defined the biblical inerrancy and verbal inspiration that became the trademark of fundamentalism, the movement would later become largely anti-intellectual and sectarian. As Canadian scholar N. K. Clifford points out, the effects of common sense thinking were embedded in evangelicalism.

> The Evangelical Protestant mind has never relished complexity. Indeed its crusading genius, whether in religion or politics, has always tended toward an over-simplification of issues and the substitution of inspiration and zeal for critical analysis and serious reflection. The limitations of such a mind-set were less apparent in the relative simplicity of a rural frontier society.[43]

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[40] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 14, 16, 110 & 113.
[41] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* 16.
[42] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 57.
[43] Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 12-13.

The shift from an unsophisticated rational evangelicalism, to a dogmatic anti-intellectual and sectarian fundamentalism, was aided by revivalist holiness and came to its logical conclusion in dispensationalism. Holiness in the dispensationalist variety put the emphasis on total surrender to the overwhelming love of Jesus and to the cleansing of his Spirit, resulting in peace and victory, an enhanced devotional life, and a zeal for missions.[44] The new emphasis on a personal experience of the Holy Spirit gave evangelicals "two bases of authority for their faith; personal experience and the Bible."[45] This was important because evangelicals generally did not have a high view of church authority, while (Old) Mennonites did. However, fundamentalism would reshape the way Mennonites thought about authority.

Pietist and premillennial-holiness traditions recognized "governments as ordained by God to restrain evil, so that politics in this respect was a means to do good."[46] Holiness teaching and its successor dispensationalism, taught in a clearer sense than had the Princeton "covenantal view of the identity of the people of God with the advance of a religious-political kingdom," that the church was a separate community from the surrounding influences that required a personal-social ethic rather than political. In other words Calvinist fundamentalists gave up a high view of culture that was fixed in Reformed theology.[47]

Holiness meant keeping oneself pure from the world and moved in the direction of disengagement and separation. Evolution, Bolshevism/communism, alcohol, card playing, shows/movies, entertainment, neckties, and fashion all became suspect in the march toward personal holiness. What these diverse concerns had in common was the threat they posed to the

[44] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 72-80 & 93-101.
[45] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 73.
[46] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 88.
[47] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 88. Also see: Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Coalition," 60-61.

evangelical faith. The holiness prohibitions resonated with Mennonite sentiments and came to be adopted as their own, but for some Mennonites the list would become even longer and more thorough. Holiness teaching was defined by a "clear distinction between law and Spirit, Old Testament and New Testament," and this led the way to accepting the clear stages of revelation taught by dispensationalism in the late nineteenth century.[48]

Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism was brought to America from England by John Darby and the influence of the Plymouth Brethren and was widely perpetuated by the notes in the Scofield Reference Bible (1909), authored by Cyrus Scofield.[49] Aside from the Mennonite men who studied under Scofield at Moody Bible Institute (see above), Scofield's dispensationalism was also offered in correspondence lessons published in 1907. According to Harold S. Bender, who began his academic career in the 1910s," there were "a considerable number of Mennonites enrolled in the Scofield correspondence course." The Mennonite Publishing House also listed Scofield's Bible in its catalogue and it was not uncommon for Mennonite pastors to use it in the pulpit, and some openly promoted it.[50]

As mentioned earlier, it was holiness teaching which taught a clear distinction between Old and New Testament and prepared the way for an even greater separation of eons in dispensationalism.[51] The principal claim of dispensationalism is the clear division of history into separate epochs, usually seven, in which God's dealing with humankind functions in different

[48] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 87-88.
[49] For a thorough historical and theological analysis of dispensationalism see: Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America*.
[50] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 236.
[51] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 1980, 88.

ways in each period.[52] The current age, often called the "church age," is a time when it is expected that only the true church will remain victorious in contrast with the mainline, apostate church and for this reason complete dissociation is required. An understanding of dispensationalism is important to this thesis for by the late 1950s fundamentalism came to be defined by separatist dispensationalists. Many of their assumptions came to play an important role in the Conservative Mennonite movement.[53]

Millennialism is

> the doctrine of a literal thousand-year reign of Christ on earth following His second coming for His saints…. The "pre" refers to the second coming of Christ as being "before" the establishment of the earthly kingdom. Postmillennialism holds that Christ will return after the kingdom of God had been realized spiritually. Amillennialism (also called nonmillennialism) holds that there will be no earthly kingdom at all and that there will be no golden age spiritually before the second coming of Christ. [54]

The amillennial view came to dominate Mennonite history after Menno Simons and the Phillips brothers purged the Anabaptist church of millennialism and for that reason Mennonites came to read "the prophecies of Christ's thousand-year reign on earth as spiritual or allegorical rather than literal."[55] This was an obvious reaction to the violent bloodshed of the apocalyptic, non-pacifist Anabaptists at Münster and thus until the late nineteenth century Mennonites did not believe in a literal thousand-year reign on earth.

The prevailing view in early twentieth century America was postmillennialism, which equated the Kingdom of God and the church, believing that by the work of the Holy Spirit, God would bring about the final redemption of society through the faithfulness of the church. Because

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[52] In the *Scofield Reference Bible*, the seven dispensations are: "Innocence (the Garden of Eden), Conscience (Adam to Noah), Human Government (Noah to Abraham), Promise (Abraham to Moses), Law (Moses to Christ), Grace (Christ through to the present to the judgment of the world), and the Kingdom or the Millennium." Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism*, 4.

[53] It is important to note that early in the twentieth century being premillennial did not presuppose being dispensationalist, but being dispensationalist definitely meant being premillennial. By the mid-century the two terms were nearly synonymous.

[54] John C. Wenger, "Chiliasm" *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 1:557.

[55] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 235.

the Kingdom of God was present, although not fully known, postmillennialists believed that they were to be actively participating in the world. Historic premillennialism on the other hand did not equate the church and the Kingdom although it understood them to be overlapping and historically related. But the premillenialist view that came to dominate after the influence of dispensationalism was much more pessimistic about the work of the Church in the world and resulted in an emphasis on the spiritualized Kingdom. Thus what took place in one's spirit was more important than what one did in the world.[56] "Premillennialists assumed such a corruption of human society that the return of Christ to institute his reign would be necessary before there could be a millennium of peace."[57] The focus was on the return of Christ rather than living the Kingdom ethic here and now.

In opposition to postmillennialism and in exaggeration of historic premillennialism, dispensationalism completely separated the Church from the Kingdom.[58] "Dispensationalists taught that the present dispensation, or the 'church age' would experience the 'ruin of the church,' or the apostasy of the major denominations." For this reason dispensationalists urged Christians to separate themselves into fellowships of true believers.[59] They despaired of any social improvement through human effort; rather they identified the kingdom of God as a future age. Paradoxically they aggressively promoted evangelicalism "as the only cultural hope."[60]

Although dispensationalists were eclectic in drawing from Protestant sources and blended various systems into their own, "the basic theological affinities of dispensationalism are Calvinist." Two strong Calvinist themes in dispensationalism are predestination and total

[56] Kraus, *Dispensationalism in America*, 104-5.
[57] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 235.
[58] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 104-5.
[59] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 37 & 241.
[60] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 149.

depravity and they are driven by a high view of God's transcendence. Jesus came to the Jews first and only after their rejection of him did it allow for Gentiles to be part of the kingdom. But the Jews were still guaranteed a place in the kingdom regardless of their response. This fits with the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. The central emphasis of dispensationalism is on God's supernatural work rather than humankind's response.[61]

> All of its emphasis was placed upon snatching individuals from hell fire. Thus its focal concern was on 'personal evangelism' that called for men and women to be 'born again,' and get ready for a future millennial kingdom which Christ would establish instead of living a kingdom style life here and now.
>
> Under the impact of such defensive and negative influences Fundamentalism tended toward a separatist-sectarian stance, an oversimplified view of the issues involved, and an exaggerated sense of its own critical importance to the preservation of true doctrine.[62]

Separation of holy and secular, good and evil, God and Satan, is predominant in dualistic dispensational rationalizations. With its emphasis on supernaturalism and its unique philosophy of history, it deliberately separates Christianity and culture, God and humankind. It is God who directs the cosmos and intervenes at will or whim in the secular world.

> There is change, brought about by a succession of divine irruptions into history, but no true historical development either within or between the various 'dispensations.' The system is an exaggerated supernaturalism, with interactions between the 'supernatural' and the 'natural' kept to the barest minimum.[63]

The result of dispensational teaching tends to lead to an "all or nothing response." Either culture is seen as an all out enemy to be put under an enforced Christian rule, or it is utterly corrupt and incapable of reform whatsoever. The only answer to social problems is a supernatural one and this will be noted later in the reaction against the social gospel. Through confession of sins and faith in a risen Christ the work of the Holy Spirit will create a new person. This comes through a crisis conversion experience at a particular moment in time.

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[61] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 59, 61-63. Also see: Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 238.
[62] Kraus, "Introduction: What is Evangelicalism?" 11.
[63] Lefferts A. Loetscher, "Foreword," in Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 8.

The dispensationalists' confidence lies in the conviction that the Holy Spirit will lead them into the fullness of truth.[64] The separation of the intellect from the supernatural means that regardless of how intelligent a person may be, it is only by true devotion that one can properly grasp truth. Dispensationalists constantly use rationalism in a common sense sort of way but shun academic critical thinking. They are suspicious of education's link to liberalism so that intellectualism and liberalism are synonymous in their minds. Thus there is an unbridgeable gulf between intellectual truth and enlightenment through the Holy Spirit.[65]

Dispensationalism fed the conviction that the Bible is self-evident and easy to understand, and must be apprehended as clear propositions.[66] It promoted supernaturalism and fundamental beliefs that "were based upon a literalistic, rational interpretation of the 'inerrant Scripture.'"[67] Inerrancy was defined by Princeton theologians who regarded the Bible as "absolutely errorless."[68] This became a central doctrine for fundamentalists, particularly dispensationalists, to support their very precise prophetic interpretations.

> Such views coincided with tendencies in American folk piety to regard the Bible as simply and purely the words of God, as though the human component in its production were purely passive, incidental, or even nonexistent.[69]

In spite of dispensationalists' claim to read the Bible literally, such as the prophecies, they paradoxically often read Old Testament history figuratively or allegorically.[70]

The many faces of fundamentalism include: common sense thinking, Keswick holiness teaching, the simplicity and clarity of the Bible, suspicion of intellectualism, the defense of doctrinal truth, the importance of a definable Christian experience, dualistic separation of good

[64] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 75.
[65] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 75.
[66] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 74.
[67] Kraus, "Introduction: What is Evangelicalism?" 10.
[68] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 37.
[69] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 112.
[70] Loetscher, "Foreword," 9.

and evil, separation from the world and social engagement. These issues were passionately argued in an aggressive and combative spirit. Many of these issues were transferred to Mennonite fundamentalism, however on all of these points the later Conservative movement would become even more firmly embedded. The attraction of dispensationalism for Mennonite fundamentalists centered on two issues: the importance of the Biblical text, and the emphasis on the pure church separate from the world.[71] By the 1960s the Conservative Mennonite movement resonated with these and other dominant themes of dispensationalism.

Fundamentalist Transitions

In its beginnings fundamentalism encompassed a broader coalition than it would after mid-century. Marsden mentions four major types of fundamentalists: separatist/dispensationalist, separatist/non-dispensationalist, non-separatist/dispensationalist, and non-separatist/non-dispensationalist.[72] Fundamentalism apparently attracted a wide variety of people who worked across these various groupings in the early decades. However, as the movement progressed, it became defined by separatist-dispensationalism.

Fundamentalism in the 1920s did not necessarily imply being separatist or dispensationalist, anti-intellectual, political extremist, or obscurantist.[73] Although fundamentalism lost its dominant public role by the late 1920s, it re-emerged in the public square after World War II stronger than ever. The decades after the war witnessed the development of fundamentalism and evangelicalism into separate movements with intertwining roots. This

[71] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 234.
[72] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 76.
[73] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism,* 10.

development led to a series of implosions that shattered the unity of the earlier coalition opposed to liberalism.

A major conflict revolved around "the two-sided question of theological purity and ecclesiastical separatism." Dispensationalists promoted separatism and were building an extensive network of publication, education, evangelistic, Bible conferences and especially Bible institutes. Their motivations centered on the effort to purify and reform the church, whereas the earlier focus had been more on saving American culture.[74] The fundamentalism that emerged after mid-century was strongly dispensationalist and sectarian.

While the earlier fundamentalists were more optimistic about the good that would come from their evangelistic efforts, the later fundamentalists, while no less evangelistic, viewed things as getting worse and worse. Their compulsive fixation on apostasy led them to apply more and more stringent categories to those with whom they would fellowship. Because things were getting progressively worse, the only hope was for the supernatural intervention of God through the second-coming of Christ who would save the world. The focus became narrowly concentrated on the effort to remain spiritually pure till this event took place. Earlier, fundamentalism was intertwined with progressivism such as the promotion of education, but after mid-century it became more narrowly focused and reactive.

A development after World War II was the movement in fundamentalism that was critical of the dispensationalist anti-intellectualism and the emphasis on ethical separation at the expense of social engagement. In part this came about because fundamentalists were becoming more affluent and educated.[75] New evangelicals, or neo-evangelicals as they are frequently called, were uncomfortable with what they considered an over-emphasis on the stereotypical sins such

[74] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 37.
[75] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 10-11.

as “smoking, drinking, dancing, card-playing, and theater attendance,” while neglecting to teach the fruits of the spirit.[76] They objected to the fundamentalist tendency to become occupied by internal debates and trivialities, and the abandonment of a Christian social reform. They criticized fundamentalism for being “too separatist (sectarian) in its ecclesiology, too individualistic in its ethics, too futuristic in its eschatology, too simplistic in its theology, and too combative in its spirit.”[77]

On the other hand, the dispensationalists reacted against human secularism and restricted themselves to preaching personal salvation. In an act of separatism they disconnected the gospel from engagement with society and social reform. Carl McIntire, a well known fundamentalist, was known to endlessly repeat the Bible passage, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate” so that it came to be widely known as “com-outerism.”[78] According to Nathan Yoder, this movement “in both Wesleyan Holiness and dispensationalist camps reinforced Mennonites’ innate awareness of the need for distinct identity.”[79] By comparison the new evangelicals believed that it was the duty of Christians to engage and transform culture as well as evangelize.[80]

Compared with the fundamentalist Bible institute model focused on a thorough indoctrination of the Bible, neo-evangelicals were determined to perpetuate the evangelical faith through intellectual scholarship that could engage the best of minds. This was more in keeping with the earlier roots of fundamentalism in the intellectualism of Princeton. Besides dropping strict dispensationalism, neo-evangelicals gave science a more positive role, introduced the need

[76] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 204.
[77] Kraus, “Introduction: What is Evangelicalism?” 13.
[78] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 64.
[79] Yoder, “Mennonite Fundamentalism,” 244.
[80] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 7 & 80.

for social concerns, and opened the debate on how to understand Scripture apart from a strict inerrancy view.[81]

Some neo-evangelicals found inspiration in the teaching of Neo-orthodoxy. Neo-orthodoxy challenged liberalism and attempted to recapture some parts of Reformation theology including an emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the importance of a personal encounter with Christ, and the authority of Scripture. However, it affirmed ecumenism and did not hold the view of Scripture as inerrant and made numerous concessions to higher criticism, thus dispensationalists rejected it as "a more subtle form of the modernist disease."[82] In fact it was because of the huge conservative defense of inerrancy in the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1910, 1916 and 1923, that inerrancy became the essential doctrine to stave off liberalism and thus the strong reaction against Neo-orthodoxy.[83]

> "Inerrancy," which was to become a code word for much of the fundamentalist movement, had a scientific quality that was related to the view of truth as directly apprehended facts. It was vital to the dispensationalists that their information be not only absolutely reliable but also precise.[84]

To dispensationalists, Neo-orthodoxy was thought to be a "wolf of modernism dressed in the clothes of the Lamb," and the World Council of Churches was considered to be a satanic conspiracy to unite all churches and the entire world under Antichrist.[85] This reaction against Neo-orthodoxy and the World Council of Churches would be picked up and echoed by Conservative Mennonites who found resonance in the tenets of dispensationalism.

During the 1950s no one had more influence among neo-evangelicals than Billy Graham. But his accommodation with the liberal Protestant Council of Churches in 1957 offended hard-line fundamentalists and this led to a sweeping division, those who stood with Graham and those

[81] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 8-9 & 162.
[82] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 101 & 112.
[83] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*. 100 & 112.
[84] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 56-57.
[85] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*. 98.

who opposed him. From the late 1950s on, the term fundamentalism came to be applied to the group opposed to Graham and the defining characteristic became separatism.[86] This sectarian and strongly dispensational group saw themselves as the "'remnant' of true believers, not to be confused with the decadent inclusivist organizations that called themselves 'churches.'"[87]

On the other side of the division, the less sectarian neo-evangelicals came to be known simply as evangelicals. But even this group was not a cohesive group, so that "by the late 1970s, no one, not even Billy Graham, could claim to stand at the center of so divided a coalition."[88] Evangelicals distinguished themselves from Neo-orthodoxy, liberalism and fundamentalism, however they borrowed from all of these movements in varying degrees.

Meanwhile in the 1950s theologians in the Mennonite Church were also beginning a process of defining theology in new terms and finding companionship and inspiration in the emerging neo-evangelicalism while also distancing themselves from fundamentalism. Some Mennonite scholars were influenced by Neo-orthodoxy and were beginning to understand the Bible narrative in its social, cultural and political context.[89] One of the major developments of this new thinking led to a growing insistence that Christian commitment was not tied so much to a supernatural conversion experience as it was to being a disciple of Christ. And more and more Christian discipleship would be defined by peace and justice action in the world.

[86] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*. 165.
[87] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 241.
[88] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 73 & 76.
[89] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 463. Gayle Gerber Koontz, "Neo-Orthodoxy," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 5:621.

CHAPTER TWO

MENNONITE TRANSITIONS

In order to understand the various influences that affected the Mennonite Church prior to the emergence of the Conservative Mennonite movement, it is essential to give an overview of the Mennonite tradition including its roots in Anabaptism. This is particularly important for this thesis, because fundamentalism and Mennonite tradition share some similar characteristics, such as a high view of Scripture and the need for separation from the world.[1] Looking at what Mennonites have lived and believed traditionally helps to show how they have made transitions through the centuries and how fundamentalism slipped into the consciousness of American Mennonites. This chapter also helps in the discussion of Conservative Mennonites in chapters four and five by situating them in their historical context. The Conservative Mennonite movement was a continuation of Mennonite fundamentalism but was a reactionary counter-movement to the Mennonite Church. Virtually every Mennonite group finds inspiration in Anabaptism and sees itself as its true representative, and Conservatives are no exception in this regard.

Although Conservatives almost completely ignore the historical, theological and sociological literature of the Mennonite Church after the mid-century point, they actively read and identify themselves with the Mennonite Church and its literature, creeds and doctrines before 1950. In fact, numerous Mennonite Church publications between 1920 and 1950 have been reprinted or promoted by Conservatives. What follows is a brief overview that tries to be true to

[1] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 4.

the complexity and diversity of the tradition. We will attempt in particular to capture the essence of the group that migrated to America and became the Mennonite Church.

From Europe to America

In its infancy in the early sixteenth century, it was not clear what Anabaptism would become. The early Anabaptist movement was a complex and widespread phenomenon across Europe that was influenced by the evangelical[2] views of Luther. According to Harold S. Bender, Mennonite historian and church leader, Mennonites descended from Zurich in an unbroken line, however by the mid-1970s others disagreed and coined the term "polygenesis" to indicate that there were several points of origin. There were at least three primary beginnings, Swiss, South German/Austrian, and North German/Dutch. By 1560 "the surviving Anabaptist traditions (the Swiss Brethren, Mennonites, and Hutterites) came to agree on most crucial interpretive issues, with only minor differences."[3]

Anabaptism was intertwined with other socio-political events and ideas such as the Peasant's War and the reaction against the degeneration of the institutional church including the immorality of clergy. The church and state were part of a comprehensive social and economic system, so that refusing to pay a tithe to the church threatened the state economic system. Mainline reformers like Luther wanted to reform the church, but saw no need to reform the state. Anabaptists on the other hand addressed not only the need for moral reform in the church, but also the need for social and economic change, such as not charging interest on borrowed money. They understood the Bible to say that

[2] "Evangelical" is used here to denote the strong appeal to the authority of the Bible. See: C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: Revised Student Edition* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1997), 32.
[3] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 5 & 9.

> all human beings stood equally before God and would have to answer to God. The social and political radicality of such an attitude was plainly evident to the political authorities. In the sixteenth century, religious dissent was also civil dissent.[4]

The Schleitheim Articles[5] under the influence of Michael Sattler were strongly separatist and nonresistant and this is the view that eventually came to represent Anabaptism.[6] However, in the early Swiss movement this did not apply uniformly to all members. There were leaders like Balthasar Hubmaier, Wilhelm Reublin and Johannes Brotli, who were not sectarian and separatist nor were they pacifist. Where Schleitheim was biblicistic and made the Bible into clear commands to be obeyed, others such as Hans Denck and Pilgram Marpeck, had a more spiritualist reading and put the emphasis on Christ's love as the guiding principle. Thus Marpeck could serve as a civil servant in a role that did not violate Scripture, as well as at times swearing an oath.[7]

Underlying the theology of the Anabaptist movement was a spirituality that was mystical and personal, a genuine encounter with and passion to follow after Christ that had much in common with the mystical monastic traditions. It was this personal internal experience that shaped theological and ecclesiological conclusions. Some Anabaptists that placed the emphasis on the Holy Spirit had little interest in externals such as church discipline or even sacraments. Taken to the extreme, some spiritualists saw no relevance in the visible church and observing the Eucharist. On the other hand Anabaptists like the Swiss Brethren and Menno Simons emphasized the "letter" of Scripture and held a more structured ecclesiology. The followers of Menno had an

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[4] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 77-78.
[5] The Schleitheim Articles was the earliest confessional statement of the Swiss Brethren that came out of a meeting in the village of Schleitheim on February 24, 1527. The first three articles, baptism, ban and Lord's Supper were commonly held by other Anabaptists, but the last four articles, attributed to Sattler's influence, were clearly founded on a withdrawal from society. Sattler and his followers believed that the return of Christ was imminent and they believed that the church should clearly distance itself from society. See: Snyder, *Anabaptist History*, 114-116. According to Snyder, the Schleitheim Articles have been overrated by modern Mennonite interpreters that read them as applying to all Anabaptists (266).
[6] Snyder, *Anabaptist History & Theology*, 109.
[7] Snyder, *Anabaptists History & Theology*, 109-10 & 268-72.

optimistic view of Anabaptism as "purely biblical" and the Bible as having answers that are "pure and simple" and "self-evidently true."[8] This position held to a strong ethic of obedience as most clearly found in the teachings of Jesus. Menno's "redemptive aim of the ban faded into the background as concern to maintain church purity assumed more and more importance."[9]

By the later half of the sixteenth century the surviving Anabaptist groups had mainly retreated into inward-focused preservation. There were at least two reasons for this. First, persecution forced the church to the edge of society, and secondly in reaction to Anabaptists like the violent Munsterites, Menno felt the need to prove that the church was a disciplined community. Both of these issues were historical problems that resulted in a specific reaction by Anabaptists, but this was not necessarily a historical inevitability. As a direct result of intense persecution Anabaptism withdrew into separatist quietness.

> Letter took priority over spirit; conformity to outer ecclesial rules of behaviour took priority over experiences of inner regeneration; visible lines of demarcation separating church from world were defined with increasing precision.[10]

The theme of radical separatism remained a general principle for Mennonites to greater or lessor degrees as they migrated to America, but in the twentieth century other new sources of separatist fever would feed this dormant theme in new ways.

Anabaptism sprang from the mystical-ascetic tradition where repentance came from a heartfelt fear of God and resulted in renunciation of the world and *Gelassenheit* (inward yieldedness to God's will). The inner rebirth was visible in outward commitment to the church community. Although a strong inner piety was part of the tradition, the concept of the church "without spot or wrinkle" became the consensus view that survived and was carried to

[8] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 416.
[9] Snyder, *Anabaptists History and Theology*, 355.
[10] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 412-13.

America.[11] So too was a theology of suffering that dominated the Anabaptist experience. True discipleship meant sacrifice and suffering and is evident in numerous Anabaptist references to baptism by water, spirit and blood.

When Mennonites first came to America they "migrated with, hosted, settled alongside, and sometimes worshipped with Lutherans, and German Quakers, German Lutherans, German Reformed, and German Schwenkfelders." And in one case Mennonites worshipped in the same house for over 100 years with Lutherans and Reformers.[12] What they had in common with many of these Protestants who had also frequently been persecuted by warring religious groups, was a quiet pietistic spirit. Clearly for some of these Mennonites separatism was not a legal requirement with clearly defined prohibitions, but rather served more as a principle that discouraged full social participation.

The American milieu put Mennonites in the odd position of being equals politically with other Protestants in a way they had never known before. In a number of localities meeting places of worship were mutually shared, and collaborative efforts to staff and operate primary schools were common. The Ontario Mennonites were no exception. John H. Bernheim, a German Evangelical Lutheran pastor "stayed with Mennonite families on numerous occasions, and preached in Mennonite meetinghouses after obtaining the approval of [bishop] Benjamin Eby."[13] It was not uncommon for early American Mennonites to vote for political parties and some took more active roles in local government.[14] This was certainly a divergence from the most separatist Anabaptists, but as we noted in Marpeck above, involvement in government was not unknown in

[11] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 390.
[12] Beulah Stauffer Hostetler, *American Mennonites and Protestant Movements*, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History No. 28 (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 31.
[13] Steiner, "What Happened to the Mennonites?" 31.
[14] Richard MacMaster, *Land Piety and Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America 1683-1790*, The Mennonite Experience in America, Vol. 1 (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985), 198-9 & 230-2.

Anabaptism either. Just how important the theme of separatism was for Anabaptist theology has not yet been clearly defined.

From Suffering to Humility

Deeply imprinted on the Mennonite comprehension was the heritage of suffering and faithfulness kept alive by the Anabaptist martyr stories in the *Martyrs Mirror* and the testimonial hymns from the *Ausbund*, the earliest Anabaptist hymnbook.[15] Many of these hymns were composed in prison and told the stories of suffering and hope in the face of death. However as the memory of suffering faded in the relative peace and prosperity of America, Mennonites needed a new means of understanding their faith. Humility became a central theme for most of the nineteenth century and it came to define salvation and Christian living.[16]

At no point has the Mennonite church been completely detached from outside influences either in its birth or during subsequent decades. In the late seventeenth century Mennonites began to drop the specifically Anabaptist hymns and began to adopt pietist hymns of the Lutherans, Reformers and Dunkers.

> By 1803 and 1804 Mennonites of the two large eastern-Pennsylvania conferences, Franconia and Lancaster, replaced the *Ausbund* with collections made up largely of newer Pietistic numbers - the first new hymnals that Anabaptists or Mennonites anywhere had compiled in 250 years.[17]

Only seventeen percent of the content of the new German hymnbooks retained the old *Ausbund* hymns.[18] A century later, hymns would go through another noticeable change with even less

[15] The *Martyr's Mirror* was written by Tieleman Jansz van Braght and published in Holland in 1660. It is a thick book of martyrdom stories of Christians up to 1500 and the stories of nonresistant Anabaptist martyrs. This book had significant impact on the Mennonites who came to America and they reprinted it in German and later in English. The *Ausbund* is the oldest hymnbook of the Anabaptists and is still in use today by the Amish groups.
[16] See: Theron Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation: Mennonites and Amish in Nineteenth-Century America*, The Mennonite Experience in America, Vol. 2 (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), 105.
[17] Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 91.
[18] Barb Draper, "The Effect of Revivalism on Worship in the (Old) Mennonite Church of Waterloo Region" (unpublished paper, 1998), Mennonite Archives of Ontario, 7-8.

Mennonite content. That change also coincided with new theological thinking and expression.

In "humility theology," as some have labeled it, true repentance required a humble heart and conversion meant that the heart was changing from pride to humility. An important corollary to humility was *Gelassenheit*, one of its meanings being yieldedness. *Gelassenheit* was a common theme in Anabaptism that had its roots in medieval mysticism and it played an important role in the Old Mennonite church.[19] Humility and *Gelassenheit* were closely connected to a third important theme, *ordnung*, which held the Mennonite church together. *Ordnung* is a principle that helped to cultivate the correct outward actions in the church community. It is not a written rule, nor can it be fully defined, for it is a community ethos that transcends rules. *Ordnung* brings together the personal inward *Gelassenheit* with the outward community of discipline and practice. The Old Order groups still identify with all of these themes to this day.[20] This contrasts with Conservative Mennonites who have built their community understanding on very different foundations.

The new birth in eighteenth and nineteenth century North America was an inner experience, but the focus was on the fruit that it produced.[21] The marks of inner change were love, compassion, and humility, which came from submission to Christ. Nineteenth century Mennonites believed in forgiveness of sins, "the gift of eternal life through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ," and had "a firm faith in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead."[22] They believed "deeply in the principle of love and nonresistance," and "refuse[d] to

[19] See: Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 152 & 366-367, regarding *Gelassenheit's* connection to mysticism and pietism.
[20] Donald Martin, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario: Gelassenheit, Discipleship, Brotherhood* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2003), 113-120 & 364-365.
[21] Dalinda Reese, "Humble Intent: A Look at Anabaptist Theology of Humility of the Nineteenth Century" (Waterloo, ON: Conrad Grebel University College, unpublished graduate paper, 2006), 9. Also see: Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 104.
[22] J[ohn] C. Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1966, reprint, Ephrata, PA: Eastern Mennonite Publications, 2003), 81.

swear an oath." However, they did not speak of conversion and being "born again" and would have had difficulty giving a clear testimony to it. Nor did they use personal holiness and sanctification language.[23]

During the nineteenth century, salvation was not identified as a clear definable moment of surrender so much as it was a continual growth of humility observable in one's speech, attitude, and conduct.[24] It required separation from the world and was visible in simplicity of clothing, meeting houses, houses, barns, funerals and every other aspect of life. These were not legalistic rules defined, written and enforced by the church, but an indispensable spirit that one submitted to. According to humility thinking, there is nothing more sinful than pride. As society continued to grow and encroach upon Mennonite communities, humility helped to maintain the boundaries. Pride came to be more and more clearly defined as lying outside the community boundaries, particularly in the Old Order communities that placed a high value on humility.[25]

Up until the end of the nineteenth century Mennonites mostly lived in rural church communities where ordained men rotated between church districts with a service once or twice a month. There was very little church organization and parishioners were often isolated because of poor transportation and communication. Sunday morning services were likewise simply structured so that whichever ordained men were present would fill in as needed. Lack of organization meant that it was not uncommon for ministers and even bishops to move from one place to another for pragmatic and personal reasons without any consultation with the church. District conferences sprouted up around North America in the larger Mennonite settlements but

[23] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 86.
[24] Joseph C. Liechty, "Humility: The Foundation of Mennonite Religious Outlook in the 1860s," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 54 (1980): no. 1:5-31.
[25] See: Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 104. "Calls to humility were often calls to obey and be subordinate to the group." As Reese, in "Humble Intent" observes, "Placing such a high premium on humility as expressed in outward appearance or in conformity opens individuals and communities to being badgered into submission by misguided or unscrupulous people in positions of authority." (17)

they had little official structure or power and consisted mainly of an annual or biannual meeting. At these meetings ordained men would discuss church problems and occasionally make resolutions regarding problem issues. But even these resolutions appear to be more of a guideline than explicit rules to be diligently enforced.

Ordained men used the Bible for general insights and guidance rather than to construct definitive doctrinal formulations. As Schlabach has noted, "They used Scriptures more as wisdom literature than for strict argument. Thus their theology was more a mosaic than a logic-tight system."[26] Sermons were preached with sincere piety and sometimes tears, but never with loud exuberance or excessive gesturing.[27] Voting, drinking alcohol, growing or using tobacco were commonly accepted within early American Mennonite communities.

For instance, bishop Benjamin Eby bought and sold whiskey, and "Mennonites at 'the Twenty' considered liquor part of the building expense when they erected their simple Mennonite meetinghouse."[28] After the temperance movement began making its impact on society, warnings about drinking at large gatherings, such as barn raisings, and drinking in taverns became more frequent. But many Mennonites resisted these restrictions correctly seeing them as new initiatives that were rooted in revivalism, not Mennonite tradition.

Likewise, while becoming heavily involved in political campaigning was reason for church discipline, many Mennonites exercised their right to vote and some took minor roles in local government. After the Civil War, Mennonites became more aware of church-state relations

[26] Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 108.
[27] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 77.
[28] Steiner, "What Happened to the Mennonites?" 32-3. Eby appears to have quit this practice after 1833 because of the influence of his Evangelical friends. Also See: Martin, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario*, 72; and: Samuel J. Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob Y. Shantz* (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press Limited, 1988), 32. As a teenager I remember visiting relatives in Pennsylvania and being shocked that they (who belonged to an Old Order group) grew tobacco. As far as I know this is still common. In my own family my maternal grandfather smoked a pipe, my paternal grandfather occasionally smoked cigars, and a family book records the proceeds of an ancestor's auction sale that lists a "still."

and some districts tried to discourage voting of any kind but it was never applied uniformly to all churches. Some Mennonite districts, like Virginia, acknowledged that voting was common and simply encouraged parishioners to "do so peaceably and quietly."[29] Voting, alcohol, and tobacco are still insignificant issues for many Old Order Mennonites and Amish who have not been influenced by revivalism; nor are they cause for church discipline if done with discretion. The Mennonites touched by revivalism would see this as proof of the degeneration in the nineteenth century, but it seems more correct to see these issues, especially alcohol and tobacco, as social traditions that had none of the modern stigma attached to them. And of course voting was not even an option until Mennonites came to America.

Generally Mennonites in this period in North America were a quiet and humble people that shunned ostentation and progressivism. What is outstanding about early American Mennonites, given later developments, is the relative freedom from a strict code of ecclesiastical rules and the formulation of doctrines that came to dominate in the twentieth century. As will be noted later, this resulted from the incorporation of modern religious rationalism and was supported by evangelicalism and revivalism. By the beginning of the twentieth century, what had been customary in early Mennonite homes came to be condemned as vices of the devil backed up by clear Scriptural proofs.

In the nineteenth century homespun Mennonite pioneers got caught in American progress that by the end of the century offered a new spiritual experience; or threatened the very foundation of Mennonitism, depending on one's perspective. Without an adequate self-understanding and with little theological knowledge, Mennonites were vulnerable to change heralded by the advancement of communication and travel. What they did have was a quiet

[29] Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 155.

confidence in God, a firm faith in the Bible, suspicion of new things, and a deep awareness of their heritage as a separate people. Because crisis conversions were still unheard of in the Mennonite Church there was not much pressure for young people to be baptized and join the church. In fact it was not uncommon for Mennonites to wait until after marriage to join the church.

By the last half of the nineteenth century the quiet humility theology that Mennonites were so comfortable with was in conflict with the new and more aggressive form of pietism, revivalism. There were those who continued to feel that humility was a solid theological basis on which to build a spiritual life, but the majority of the church made rapid changes toward embracing evangelicalism. This led to tensions in the church and eventually it brought about a major schism between progressives and Old Order groups. Understanding the nineteenth century Mennonite church is important to see just how extensive were the changes that came in the following century.[30]

From Humility to Revivalism

Already in the nineteenth century there were schisms in the Mennonite church as a result of revivalist influences. A major renewal movement swept through parts of the Ontario Mennonite community in the 1840s and again later in the 1870s when an even larger segment left the "Old" Mennonite church. Similar movements took place in other parts of the Mennonite church and in 1875 the "New" Mennonites of Ontario joined with the Reformed Mennonites of Indiana. In 1879 this group amalgamated with the Evangelical Mennonites of Pennsylvania and

[30] See: Schabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 28-32 & 95-105, about the development of humility theology in American Mennonites. Also see: Isaac R. Horst, *Close Ups of the Great Awakening* (Mt. Forest, ON: n.p., 1985) for an Old Order Mennonite perspective.

in 1883 they joined forces with the Brethren in Christ from Ohio. Each amalgamation resulted in a name change, but eventually this group became the Missionary Church (1969) with roots in many of the oldest Mennonite communities.

Another important schism in Pennsylvania led to the formation of the General Conference Mennonite Church (GC) in 1860 at West Point, Iowa. It was the advent of "New" Mennonite groups that led to the "Old" designation to mark the main Mennonite body that became the Mennonite Church.

One of the earliest innovations and influences of progressive Protestantism was the Sunday school. The most influential leader in helping to establish Mennonite Sunday schools was John F. Funk. His printing business served the Mennonite church through its numerous periodicals and publications as Funk steered the diverse and often isolated church into a new era. The *Herald of Truth* began publication in English and German in 1864, and gained a wide readership of Mennonites in America.

> [Funk] laid foundations for a mission board, promoted the concept of a General Conference, was a key figure in helping the Mennonite immigrants of the 1870's and 1880's to get established in America, and did more than any other single person to make the Mennonite Church what it is today….

Through Funk's extensive influence the Mennonite Church made monumental steps toward integration with American evangelicalism.[31]

Funk, like many Mennonites, was exposed to revivalism early in his life by attending a Welsh Baptist Sunday school when he was eight years old and as a teenager he taught in another Baptist Sunday school. His family was definitely more progressive than many. His father read widely (for that period), and his grandfather's brother and brother-in-law both served in the

[31] Wenger, *The Mennonite Church in America*, 111. Also see: Fred Lamar Kniss, "Disquiet in the Land: Conflict over Ideas and Symbols Among American Mennonite, 1870-1985" (Chicago, IL: unpublished dissertation, 1992), 103.

Pennsylvania legislature as Mennonites. At nineteen Funk enrolled in Freeland Seminary, which had been founded by New Mennonite Abraham Hunsicker in 1848. He also participated in political rallies and supported Lincoln and the Union. At age twenty-two Funk moved to the city to work for his brother-in-law in the lumber business. In Chicago he had an evangelical conversion experience and came under the influence of Dwight L. Moody, the patriarch of fundamentalism.[32]

Of his experience with Moody, Funk testifies:

> As fellow workers and Sunday-school teachers we worked together…. I must confess that in his devotion to the cause of religious labor and religious devotion, he was a very influential man, and his influence continually spurred me on to activity which through my sixty years in the Mennonite Church helped a great deal to bring about the prosperous condition in the Mennonite Church.[33]

Funk's positive self-evaluation is a telling example of the demise of the humility spirit that came through revivalism.

Because of Moody's significant influence on the Mennonite Church through Funk and numerous others, it is insightful to see what Moody taught. Marsden notes that

> the separation from the world that was demanded [by Moody] was not radically outward as in the Anabaptist tradition, but rather an inner separation marked by the outward signs of a life free from specific vices. Despite the hopeless corruption of the world, there was no demand to abandon most of the standards of the respectable American middle-class way of life. It was to these standards, in fact, that people were to be converted.[34]

Moody was not a typical fundamentalist for he opposed controversy and although he did not accept liberalism he graciously built relationships with liberal leaders with the hope for peace to prevail. He believed in premillennialism, Biblical infallibility and promoted the usual forms of

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[32] See: Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 38-44.

[33] Wenger, *The Mennonite Church in America*, 161-2. See: Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 297 & 352, fn. 9. Schlabach downplays Moody's influence on Funk and notes that Funk was 92 years old when he made the above statement. Also see: Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 38-47, who claims that "for a number of years, he [Funk] associated with the young Dwight L. Moody in mission Sunday Schools." (43) Yoder does not use the above quote of Funk's, but neither does he downplay Moody's influence on Funk.

[34] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 38.

holiness teachings that emphasized "victory over sin," but Moody was not a dispensationalist.[35] His greatest concern was "soul winning" and theological arguments were an inexcusable distraction. Moody preached the "three R's … Ruin by sin, Redemption by Christ, and Regeneration by the Holy Spirit." The most remarkable difference was his emphasis on the love of God, and an omission of preaching on hellfire and God's wrath.[36] In summary Moody comes across as a gentle and less militant fundamentalist than many and perhaps this made him more attractive to Mennonites.

The contrast between Moody and other fundamentalists is instructive, for Mennonites also seem to reflect these same differences. One Mennonite who seems to resemble the style and beliefs of Moody is Samuel F. Coffman (S. F.), an important church leader in the first half of the twentieth century in Ontario. This is in contrast to other well-known Mennonites such as A. D. Wenger who aggressively promoted the fundamentalist agenda with bold self-confidence that seems more in keeping with style of other Moody instructors such as Torrey, Gray, or Scofield. Both Coffman and Wenger had attended Moody Bible Institute, and both were premillenialist, but Wenger was decidedly more dispensationalist. Some of the complex variances in fundamentalism also found their place in the Mennonite Church.

Not all Mennonites accepted publisher and bishop John Funk's promotion of Sunday schools. Some saw them as a contradiction to "quiet humility, submissiveness, and Jesus' meek and lowly spirit" of the "old" church.[37] In many communities it was the effort, vision, courage, passion and the ability of a few, that Sunday schools were initiated and successful.[38] Mennonites relied on the experiences of their own members who had attended other Sunday schools.

[35] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 33 & 37.
[36] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 35.
[37] See: Horst, *Close Ups*, 328.
[38] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 161.

> As to methods and organization in general, it might be said that often the first teachers and officers had either attended non-Mennonite Sunday schools or served in them, and consequently they were inclined to follow contemporary methods as they knew them.[39]

For many Mennonites, however, Sunday school was seen as an outside influence, an evil that was full of worldliness and pride. They reacted to it because it was new, was not commanded in the Bible, destroyed peace and unity, was organized by lay-leaders, a human invention, and allowed women to teach, which was clearly not biblical.[40] The Sunday school leaders had a lot of influence in the church, more than had ever been held by a lay person before.

On the other hand, while Sunday schools were a relatively new influence, many Mennonites found them spiritually enriching and attended them in other churches. In fact it seems it was quite common for Mennonites to visit other churches and attend their Sunday schools. Mennonites were increasingly surrounded by Protestant influences and because they only had services in their own church once or twice a month at the most, they had free Sundays to visit other denominations.[41] Also the cultural differences between denominations were not as great as they would be later. In Berlin (Kitchener), for example, Mennonites were surrounded with German Protestant neighbors who held many cultural and religious values in common, including a mother tongue.

Mennonite Sunday schools began to be organized as early as 1840, but due to the various factors against them they did not gain permanence until more than twenty-five years later and even then there were still many Mennonites who did not adopt them. The earliest Sunday schools, such as the one started in 1841 by bishop Benjamin Eby, were primarily German language schools that used the Bible for a text. Later, Mennonites began to use Union Sunday

[39] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 169.
[40] Horst, *Close Ups*, 129.
[41] Martin, *Old Order Mennonites in Ontario*, 263; David A. Martin, "Mennonite Fundamentalism and the Hawkesville Brethren," a paper from Waterloo Historical Society, 2003, and published in WHS annual volume 91, 2004.

school material that introduced non-Mennonite themes and ideas. Ontario was the earliest and one of the most progressive Mennonite districts to adopt this new influence, but like elsewhere Sunday schools were not universally adopted until well after the Old Order schisms near the end of the century. In fact it was the implementation of Sunday schools that was one of the significant factors in finalizing the split with what became the Old Order movement.[42]

For many, trying to retain adults and youth that were attracted to other denominations outweighed the inherited dangers of Sunday schools and slowly they became more acceptable within the Mennonite Church. One of the direct influences of Sunday school was the abolition of alcohol and tobacco. In 1966 Mennonite historian, John C. Wenger (J. C.) wrote:

> In 1892 the quarterly temperance lesson in the Sunday school was instituted, which has appeared regularly ever since. Thus once a quarter it became not only possible but necessary for the church to discuss the question of the use of liquor and tobacco. Perhaps not many older members were changed in their attitudes and habits on this point, but the rising generation was indoctrinated, since Sunday-school superintendents and teachers were usually wholehearted supporters of the temperance teaching. Before Sunday schools came into the church, smoking and drinking were quite common and were scarcely objected to if done in moderation. In fact, preachers and church officials were also often addicted to these habits.[43]

Other influences in the last half of the nineteenth century were prayer meetings, protracted (revival) meetings, English preaching, singing in four parts and in English, mission work, and evening meetings.[44] All these things came from outside the Mennonite tradition and they all faced opposition and condemnation from within the church. The role of the German language is particularly noteworthy because it provided a natural barrier from most of society. Theological ideas were so imbedded in the language, literature and hymnody that to change language was to lose some parts of traditional Mennonite theology. It is hardly coincidental that

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[42] See: Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 148 & 160. For more information on Sunday schools in Ontario see: Horst, *Close Ups*, 171, and L. J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario (Mennonite Conference of Ontario*, 1935, reprint, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1986), 157-161. The dates for the Old Order schisms are: Indiana and Ohio, 1872; Ontario, 1889; Pennsylvania, 1893, Virginia, 1900. John C. Wenger, "Old Order Mennonites," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4:47.
[43] J.C, Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 175.
[44] See: Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 156-7.

with the huge theological shift taking place around the end of the century, the German language was also lost.[45]

Those who wanted to hold to the old ways and the old language opposed the changes and saw them as proud innovations "conforming to the world" that "led away from the simple and humble life which they cherished so highly." They believed that "wherever evangelism increased, worldliness increased at the same rate."[46] The progressives saw the old "humility theology" as dead and legalistic and embraced revivalism. In 1903 Mennonite evangelist M. S. Steiner sounded his opinion of the old ways.

> They believed in being 'in the world but not of the world,' and consequently drifted into the belief that the best way to do this was to have as little to do with the world as possible. This policy could be carried out without loss to the church so long as the country was new and all were given to primitive ideas, but when those days were gone, and the new era of prosperity, wealth, and education came on the churches were put to a severe test. German preaching could not be understood by children schooled in English only. Preaching services only once or twice a month and no Sunday school was not sufficient inducement to keep the young people of the church interested and engaged. Admonitions did not answer the purpose of sermons in the estimation of most people. As a result many churches went down.[47]

In the minds of men like Steiner, something had to be done. But he also warned against the extremes of some holiness-infected Mennonites.

> Others were not even satisfied with Sunday school, English preaching and evening services, but went further and conducted revivals, and tried to introduce spiritual life into the church by means of long prayers, shouting and speaking unkindly of the church.[48]

As this implies, Mennonite leaders were trying to find a middle-ground approach to the new innovations.

One of the earliest and most influential evangelists of the Mennonite Church was John S. Coffman (J. S.) who moved to Elkhart, Indiana to work for John Funk as an assistant editor of

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[45] See: Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 159, regarding language transition.
[46] Horst, *Close Ups*, 126 & 128-9.
[47] M. S. Steiner, *John S. Coffman: Mennonite Evangelist* (Spring Grove, PA: Mennonite Book and Tract Society, 1903), 32.
[48] Steiner, *John S. Coffman*, 32.

the *Herald of Truth*. What Funk had done in establishing publishing and encouraging Sunday schools, Coffman did for revivalism.[49] He felt that the innovations of Sunday school and English preaching were not enough. "We must also have series of meetings and indoctrinate our people and go to work in earnest," Coffman concluded. He envisioned a mission board and evangelists. The emphasis was on "making converts" through protracted meetings and was evidenced by public confessions, which were previously unheard of in the Mennonite Church.[50]

J. S. Coffman held meetings wherever he was called, but always tried to be sensitive to local bishops. For that reason meetings were sometimes held in homes or schools rather than in churches. He introduced the new ways into the Mennonite Church in a quiet, gentle and respectful way; he was zealous and eloquent, but not dogmatic, he was sensitive to Mennonite irritability, he spoke in such a way as to capture the attention of his audience, but he was not theatrical.[51]

The founding of the Elkhart Institute, which later became Goshen College (one of the schools of the Mennonite Church), is evidence of another area of Coffman's influence and vision. In some districts he helped to curb the more radical edges of revivalism and in other places his influence helped to pull down the traditionalist defenses of Mennonites who opposed protracted meetings.[52]

Revivalist Conclusions

In the spirit of the age Funk, Coffman, Steiner and many other Mennonite leaders were proactive in education and utilized modern conceptions of organization. They saw the many

[49] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 78.
[50] Steiner, *John S. Coffman*, 33.
[51] Steiner, *John S. Coffman*, 31-65.
[52] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 111.

needs in the Mennonite Church and were optimistic that change would happen if they applied themselves. The humble, quiet admonitions and self-deprecation of the nineteenth century gave way to a new, unapologetic and organized effort that took its ideas from optimistic revivalism. With the birth of the Mennonite Church General Conference in 1898 the stage was set for a new era of authority and influence that would reach from the Conference to district conferences and over individual churches. The first Conference moderator, Daniel Kauffman, was the man who would become the most influential organizer, policy maker and theological writer for the next three plus decades. As J. C. Wenger, Mennonite Church historian wrote in 1966,

> It was Daniel Kauffman who more than any other man put his stamp on the Old Mennonite Church in the first half of the twentieth century. Many Mennonites still prefer the doctrinal writings of "D. K.," as he was widely known, to those of the younger scholars of the church.[53]

Theologically Mennonites were thinking in new ways. Salvation was now tied to a personal experience that was measured by converts that could be tabulated and published in the church paper. This conversion also had its own acquired spiritual vocabulary that was talked about openly. No longer was it acceptable to simply live out following after Christ in a quiet and unassuming manner. The age of baptism dropped dramatically as repentant sinners responded to the gospel message. There was a shift from a baptismal commitment focused on being part of a covenant community to a greater emphasis on the individual's experience between them and God.[54]

There was new confidence to move boldly and actively into the world with a message of hope and salvation for the lost and dying. To do this well, the new progressive Mennonites placed a high value on education. Many if not all leaders in the new conference were educated more than any of the previous generation and saw education as essential for effective ministry.

[53] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 256.
[54] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 209-10.

They educated themselves and established numerous schools to educate and train workers in the church. Some, like A. D. Wenger, even returned to school after being ordained. Wenger was also renowned as a young minister for being "the best dressed man in the Church" and for his "colorful necktie."[55] This is important because it indicates the transition that took place as the church moved from emphasizing activism to developing church doctrines and clothing standards. In fact Wenger became a champion of plain clothes in the age of Mennonite fundamentalism.

In the revivalist era sermons of admonitions were no longer strong enough, rather the emphasis turned to clear teaching and preaching that was intelligent and stimulating. Young leaders prepared their thoughts into clear themes often with outlines and notes unlike the old way of unprepared sermons given as the "Spirit led." In the minds of these stimulated ministers the church could no longer afford to sit idly by as the youth departed to other churches. The answer was for the church to teach and train young people to become active in ministry.

> The slogans of work implied a self-assertion quite foreign to the older ethos of humility…. Humility might still be a Christian virtue; but the mark of the truly faithful had become aggressive activity.[56]

The new theological identity is clearly visible in a letter written by George L. Bender to his co-worker M. S. Steiner in 1894.

> Take this plain doctrine take Mennonite dress put it on a dozen of brethren and the same amount of sisters. Fill them with the Holy Ghost and a heart burning with holy fire for the salvation of souls giving them a fair education just enough so that they can preach, teach, and act intelligently, and send them out in the world to save sinners and I'll assure you that you will have the most powerful army of Christian soldiers to be found anywhere on the face of the earth.[57]

Bender and Steiner were important leaders in the Mennonite Church and were part of the Funk circle. Because of Funk's influence and the many talented men he attracted to work for him, the

[55] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 146.
[56] Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 320.
[57] Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 295.

concentration of leaders centered in Elkhart made it one of the most progressive "Old" Mennonite communities.

Revivalist influences introduced Mennonites to a new experience and to a new spiritual vocabulary that breathed life and energy into what previously had been a private and personal journey. Some modern Mennonite scholars criticize evangelicalism as individualistic and self-centered, pointing to its failure to engage issues such as ethics.[58] However it is notable that evangelicalism provided a vocabulary that engaged people to speak of their spiritual experiences in the community and thus fostered more religious dialogue than traditional humility theology ever did.

It is also important to note that evangelicalism was the force that inspired Mennonites to move into the world in ways they had never done before, such as inner city and foreign missions, publishing, and education.[59] The irony is that the expansionist and activist spirit inspired by revivalism also motivated the tendency toward separation, entrenchment, and consolidation. "Paradoxically, the two tendencies reinforced each other even as they existed in tension with on another."[60]

Historian Theron Schlabach sees the shift to revivalism as a divorce from Mennonite ethics. He argues that leaders "increasingly put conversion and redemption into one category and Mennonites' deep convictions about nonresistance and other points of practical Christian living into another." Earlier he wrote,

> [J. S.] Coffman helped bring profound change in Mennonite understandings, especially a tendency to divorce Mennonites' teachings about practical Christian living from the idea of salvation.[61]

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[58] See: Theron Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 298 & 317.
[59] During and after World War II, activity in society and interaction with other Christians was greatly increased and this also had its influence on the church.
[60] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 243.
[61] Schlabach, *Peace, Faith, Nation*, 317 & 298.

Schlabach's view fails to take revivalism seriously because of his commitment to the "Bender school" that established an idealized Anabaptist history as discipleship, non-resistance and community and denied pietist influences.[62] Contrary to Schlabach, it appears that revivalism actually strengthened Mennonite determination to live ethically, but it may have narrowed the ethical concerns to more specific issues. Revivalism gave Mennonites a new and genuine inner experience that renewed their devotion and determination to hold to Mennonite distinctives, including discipleship and non-resistance. However, Mennonite fundamentalists' fixation on outward nonconformity such as dress certainly distracted from larger ethical issues such as peace and justice to which Schlabach seems to be referring. In this way non-resistance and discipleship were given less importance, as Schlabach suggests.

What is ironic is that Bender's emphasis on discipleship made it into a shibboleth for spirituality.[63] Thus the Bender school and the Mennonite fundamentalists had one commonality, a clear understanding of spirituality as "doing." The one was busy doing peace and justice, and the other making rules of dress and conduct, but both were missing the bigger picture and the mysterious elusiveness of transcendence.

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[62] The "Bender school" has become a common way of identifying the many scholars influenced by Harold S. Bender. Bender became the most influential leader in the Mennonite Church in the 1940s and his influence was felt long after his death in the early 1960s. His legacy, particularly *The Anabaptist Vision*, helped to move the Mennonite Church from fundamentalism and is discussed more in the next chapter. The *Vision* was a presidential address given by Bender in 1943 to the American Society of Church History. It was subsequently published and widely read by Mennonites, but its greatest influence was on Mennonite academics that for several decades promoted its assumptions. More than anything else, the conclusions Bender highlighted became the core theological rallying point of the Mennonite Church for the last half of the century. In particular it was his three-part emphasis on "discipleship," "brotherhood," (church) and "a new ethic of love and nonresistance" that came to dominate. See: Bender, *The Anabaptist Vision* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1944), 20. Also see: Rodney James Sawatzky, *History and Ideology: American Mennonite Identity Definition Through History* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2005). Sawatzky's assertion is that Bender shaped Anabaptism to fit his American evangelical context and thus was more ideology than history.

[63] According to Wenger, "The Inerrancy Controversy,"154, "There seems to be a tendency, at least among a few Mennonites, to make orthopraxis more important than orthodoxy."

Revivalist Mennonites had come a long way from the quiet humility and suffering language of the previous three hundred years. But in spite of the new religious language, increased activity and a greater commonality with evangelical Protestantism, Mennonites still thought of themselves as unique. They read and used evangelical books and quoted them in their sermons and periodicals, at times they worshipped with evangelicals and some studied at evangelical schools, but the aggresso-conservatives tenaciously hung on to their Mennonite self-identity that came to be defined by distinctive ordinances and restrictions.

It was bishop Daniel Kauffman that coined the term "aggresso-conservatism" in 1915 in a presentation at the ninth annual Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities meeting. He was advocating an activism that was not worldly and a conservatism that was not dead.[64] The aggresso-conservative leaders believed that nonconformity, especially in dress, would protect them from worldliness in spite of the fact that they were moving purposefully into culture in ways like they never had before.[65]

With increasing frequency their identity was defined by distinctive doctrines formulated from fundamentalist thinking, but at the same time they were also trying to distinguish themselves from revivalism. Their doctrines supported unique distinctive outward symbols, ordinances, and restrictions, separating Mennonites from the broader evangelical movement. In these areas the fundamentalist influences are especially obvious. It was aggresso-conservatives who were influential in bringing about Mennonite fundamentalism.

The various cultural settings in which Mennonites found themselves throughout the centuries were diverse and the modifications made to their theology were at times extensive. The fact that they were able to retain a unique identity in the face of such diversity is also

[64] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 208 & 222.
[65] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 244.

confirmation of the importance they put on their historic past. One point that might be drawn from the transitions that have been traced throughout this chapter is that Mennonites have historically adapted and modified their theological views as their surroundings and perspectives have changed. These transitions are usually glossed over by Conservative Mennonites when they discuss their history, or they simply disown those forbears who do not fit their criteria.

Over the centuries Mennonites have been shaped by many outside influences, and as we will discover the Conservative Mennonite movement is no different. Although Conservatives have retained some distinctive Mennonite teachings, they have selectively borrowed from the evangelical stream to strengthen their traditional Mennonite beliefs and counter perceived weaknesses and dangers in the belief systems of Christians around them. One of the most significant shifts in the Mennonite Church was the adoption of fundamentalist propositions and this has had a lasting influence on the Conservative movement.

CHAPTER THREE

MENNONITE FUNDAMENTALISM

It is not clear where revivalism ends and fundamentalism begins in the Mennonite Church, for these two movements were intrinsically intertwined. As discussed earlier, fundamentalism grew out of revivalism in reaction to the modernist threat. With the adoption of revivalism, Mennonite Church had also opened itself to those influences. In other words the revivalist conclusions of the last chapter are the basis for the fundamentalist developments that are described in this chapter. And both the revivalist and fundamentalist theological conclusions that developed in the Mennonite Church became the theological foundation for the Conservative Mennonite movement described in the next chapter.

Parts of this chapter with its frequent references to the development and enforcement of clothing regulations may seem overly detailed, but with the advent of the Conservative movement the issue of dress and regulations came to play an ever even more dominant role. The development of fundamentalism in the Mennonite Church described in this chapter provides a frame of reference for the effects of fundamentalism in the Conservative Mennonite movement.

Adoption and Adaptation

As Protestant fundamentalist rhetoric reached a crescendo in the 1920s and as controversies and accusations flew thick and fast, Mennonite leaders got caught up in the modernist-fundamentalist debate. With dispensationalist warnings of the inevitable forces carrying entire denominations into apostasy ringing in their ears, Mennonites realized they must

do something.[1] Nowhere is this clearer than in the closing of the Mennonite Church institution, Goshen College in 1923 to purge it of liberal teachers, books and ideas. This action came from the aggresso-conservative voices in the church that were overwhelmingly concerned to maintain distinctive dress. While "none [of the Goshen faculty] were full-blown modernists," many of them had certainly absorbed modernist ideas. On the other hand the aggresso-conservatives were reductionist in their conclusions and "they tended to classify virtually any challenge to their religious authority or the church's uniform nonconformity under the rubric of modernism."[2] Both sides got caught up, to varying degrees, in the cultural forces of liberalism and fundamentalism.

"Many Mennonites who perceived the need to defend biblical authority found dispensationalism congenial." They rallied against liberal rationalism adopting a literalism that was more foreign to their traditional faith than they realized. Nor did they understand that literalism is itself a subjective endeavor.

> Dispensationalists seldom appreciated the irony of their repeatedly insisting that the Bible be read without glosses, even as they issued study materials implying their schema provided the only clear way to read.[3]

With the growing power vested in the central authority of the Mennonite Church's General Conference, leaders needed a baseline of authority to regulate the church they had organized. Fundamentalism fit with traditional Mennonite theology in some important ways. For instance the Protestant dependence on the Word of God was familiar to Mennonites, but there were some distinct differences. An important hallmark of Anabaptist reading of Scripture was a

[1] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 245-6. Reports of liberalism in European Mennonites must have also been added motivation to respond. (247)
[2] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 206-7. The conservatives wanted the college to be a training ground and exemplary force to bring in uniformity of dress that was lacking in many congregations (222).
[3] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 249, 247 & 250.

confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit to illumine the correct reading and they "believed that a true interpreter of Scripture is known by the outward witness of that interpreter's life."[4]

The emphasis on obedience and the lack of critical discussion about the Spirit's activity in the production of Scripture, led Mennonites to a weak understanding of hermeneutics.[5] While there is much to be admired about their commitment to the God of Scripture, what resulted was a literal focus on outward conformity inspired by the dispensationalist-holiness stream of fundamentalism. Under the influence of fundamentalism the reading of the Bible came to be even more narrowly understood and practiced in Mennonitism.

Whereas Mennonites had traditionally understood faith as living a Christ-life ethic, fundamentalists in the Protestant scholastic tradition defined faith as "assent to correct doctrine."[6] In the twentieth century Mennonites adopted this more technical and rational statement of Scripture's inspiration. They had always read Scripture as uniquely inspired, but now the "plenary and verbal"[7] formula made the distinct teachings like non-conformity into "fundamentals" to be enforced.[8]

In 1914 J. B. Smith "the leading Mennonite proponent for adopting Biblical inerrancy language," wrote the chapter on the Bible in *Bible Doctrine* (edited by Daniel Kauffman), and introduced Mennonites to a full-fledged argument for verbal and plenary inspiration. Smith had

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[4] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 236 & 238. C. Norman Kraus, "American Mennonites and the Bible" in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation: Anabaptist-Mennonite Perspectives*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1984), 135-8.

[5] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 246-7.

[6] See: Kraus, "American Mennonites and the Bible," 133. Kraus traces fundamentalist "infallibility" back to Augustine's idea of human depravity and shows how salvation was subsequently located in the supernatural work of God. With its high view of "orthodoxy," fundamentalism required Scripture to be "God's infallible imprimatur in every detail" (133) Also see: C. Norman Kraus, *Using Scripture in a Global Age: Framing Biblical Issues* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2006), 63.

[7] Plenary means that Scripture was complete in every respect and verbal gives the sense that there was no input from the writers. It is like the writers wrote verbatim what God told them. In other word the Bible is a direct rendition of God's actual words.

[8] See: Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 248.

adopted a premillenialist-dispensationalism from his attendance and participation in the prophecy conference movement and left this as a hallmark at the other official Mennonite Church institution, Hesston College. Like the dispensationalists of his day Smith produced charts and outlines to show the various dispensations to his Mennonite audiences as he traveled far and wide as a popular Bible conference speaker in the Mennonite Church.[9] Though not many Mennonites were full-fledged dispensationalists, they did adopt many of its underlying arguments: the futility of social improvement, the separation of the holy and secular, strong emphasis on supernaturalism, suspicion of humanistic education, clear divide between Old and New Testaments, and a literal reading of the Bible. Many of these themes would reverberate with Mennonites in the Conservative movement.

The adoption of a literal reading of Scripture did not annul the focus on the life of Christ as an ethical model to follow, but it certainly muted the earlier strength of that emphasis. The Bible had been viewed "as a guide-book for life and morals," now it was used to aggressively defend nonconformity as a doctrinal proposition on par with other doctrines.[10] Mennonites began to appeal to Scripture's authority rationally and doctrinally, and their challenge for upholding outward obedience could be proven biblically. The focus changed from living out the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount that could not be reduced to rules, to defending specific rules that required intellectual assent and obedience, and could be detailed in minutia. But it needs to be pointed out that at this early stage the majority of leaders were generally uncomfortable with the idea of

[9] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 242 & 247-248.
[10] Kraus, *Using Scripture in a Global Age*, 63. Old Order writer Donald Martin, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario*, agrees that while "plain and simple attire has long been a Mennonite tradition, … distinctive dress codes and regulations have not. Although the Conference Mennonites began this trend about 1890 and continued it for half a century, the Old Order stressed simplicity and humility." (189)

legislating and enforcing a uniform dress code.[11] That would come to full fruition in the Conservative Mennonite movement in the 1960s.

John Horsch[12] - Mennonite Fundamentalist

Revivalism in the Mennonite Church at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, aided in the accommodation of culture and even the most progressive leaders were concerned.[13] John Horsch, one of the most prolific Mennonite fundamentalist writers in the early decades of the newly organized Mennonite Church wrote, "immodesty of clothing is one of the chief enemies of true Christian spirituality." To uphold this claim he asserted that the Church must give "the needed definitions."[14] Like the fundamentalists, Horsch made his appeal making use of the prevalent feature of "common sense."

> The headgear of the sisters … is eminently becoming to those making a profession of godliness. Probably no one would say that fashionable headgear is more becoming considered from the Christian viewpoint. Such an assertion would be absurd.[15]

Again he appeals to rational perception based on historical data.

> And it has been rightfully said that as a rule those who lay aside the bonnet do not wear plain hats, at least they do not keep them plain. Any one who may be inclined to doubt this statement should investigate conditions in the churches which a few decades ago were quite plain and have given liberty to substitute a plain hat for the bonnet.

Horsch then quotes a member from one of those churches; "Observation proves to me that the only way for a denomination to remain absolutely plain is to *adopt rules and maintain*

[11] Beside the head covering which became an ordinance, a few other clothing pieces came to be closely regulated in some districts, such as the bonnet, the necktie (mainly in Pennsylvania and Virginia), the plain coat, and the cape dress, but even these things were not completely enforced in all places.
[12] John Horsch (1867-1941) was one of the earliest historians and writers of the Mennonite Church. For a number of years he dedicated his efforts to promoting fundamentalism, but most of his life was spent researching and writing about Anabaptist-Mennonite history. See: Harold S. Bender, "John Horsch" *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 2:814.
[13] Kraus, "American Mennonites and the Bible," 147-8.
[14] John Horsch, *Worldly Conformity in Dress*, 2nd ed. (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1926), 14-15.
[15] Horsch, *Worldly Conformity in Dress*, 23-4. Horsch published numerous books attacking liberalism and defending fundamentalism.

them."[16] By rationally piecing together these various common sense observations Horsch made a powerful appeal for the head-covering and plain clothes. The use of "common sense" is something that will be discussed in the last two chapters, for it became a frequent way of understanding biblical truth.

Most of Horsch's book was based on historical observations and common sense reasoning. He almost completely ignored the biblical exegetical approach and went so far as to say "that no particular precepts are found in Scripture as to head dress and cut of clothing."[17] This changed dramatically with later Conservative Mennonites who found numerous Scriptures to prove head-coverings, clothing styles and numerous other things.

Based on his common sense observations, Horsch claimed that churches that did not uphold nonconformity also failed to keep nonresistance, non-swearing of oaths, confession of sins, and give in to worldly amusements. It is interesting to note that while he strongly argued for nonconformity he never once offered a practical guideline of what that would look like except to put great stress on the women's head dress. Guidelines and legislated rules would develop through the next four decades as aggresso-conservatives worked to bring conformity to the church. It seems that at this early stage of Mennonite fundamentalism it was not yet clear to leaders what ends the Mennonite Church would have to go to, to bring uniformity in dress.

The head covering, which had long been taken for granted as a custom in the Mennonite Church, became a Bible ordinance around the turn of he century. It is uncertain who gets the credit for inventing the ordinance of the head covering. It may have been J. S. Coffman for he was preaching the head covering as a biblical teaching based on I Corinthians 11 around 1885 (this was a completely new concept). Also in the 1891 minutes of the Indiana-Michigan

[16] Horsch, *Worldly Conformity in Dress*, 25.
[17] Horsch, *Worldly Conformity in Dress*, 27.

Conference, some argued that the cap was a "Church ordinance." Regardless, we know that after Daniel Kauffman wrote *Manual of Bible Doctrines* in 1898 citing the head-covering as an ordinance, the usage of "ordinance" became widespread. Early references to the head-covering called it a cap, but through biblical teaching the name changed to "prayer head-covering" or "devotional coverings."[18] Later in the Conservative movement, it came to have multiple meanings and names and also came to symbolize "headship," the submission of women to male authority and the authority of God.

The covering was the defining issue for Horsch "in the struggle against the encroachments of the world on the point of worldly conformity."[19] However, the way the head-covering was practiced in this period is revealing. For all of Horsch's strong words about the head-covering his daughter Elizabeth (who married Harold S. Bender) attended Goshen College and there were numerous pictures of her without a hat or head covering. Apparently at the old Goshen, "not one woman student wore a prayer veiling except at worship services."[20] According to Melvin Gingerich, "in most areas of the Mennonite Church, the cap is worn only during worship services and in times of prayer in the home."[21]

Horsch claimed that "as far back as we have any record concerning this point the Mennonite Church has insisted on the uniform head dress of the sisters."[22] This is misleading, for though Mennonite women traditionally wore a head covering of some kind, and though it had an oral history of recommendation, it was never a uniform rule that required it to be worn daily. It is interesting that although J. S. Coffman taught the covering as a biblical imperative, his wife only

[18] Melvin Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," n.p., n.d., 41.
[19] Horsch, *Worldly Conformity in Dress*, 24.
[20] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 67.
[21] "A History of Mennonite Costume," 42.
[22] Horsch, *Worldly Conformity in Dress*, 24.

wore it to church in 1889, as was the practice of the community.[23] Some if not all of the Old Order groups historically had a practice of coming to church without a covering and this carried well into the twentieth century.[24] In fact Old Order women generally still do not wear the covering as religiously today as do the Conservative groups.

Mennonite fundamentalists not only adapted fundamentalism for a Mennonite context, but Mennonites like Horsch had considerable influence on fundamentalists. Horsch's book, *Modern Religious Liberalism*, was published by fundamentalists, was endorsed by James M. Gray the president of Moody Bible Institute, and read and used as a text in fundamentalist Bible institutes and seminaries.[25] This sort of association with non-Mennonites would become anathema in the separatist Conservative movement.

Cultural assimilation and theological liberalism came to be inextricably intertwined in the aggresso-conservative mind. The threat of liberalism led some Mennonites to conclude that nonconformity to cultural adaptation was the best defense from it.[26] This would resound again and again in the pulpits of the Conservative movement as cultural assimilation and liberalism became synonymous. In the Mennonite Church no one succeeded like Daniel Kauffman in moving the new conference to embrace doctrinal propositions that would become the foundation for rules to regulate the church.

[23] Reported by J. S. Coffman's son S. F. Coffman in, Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 40-41.
[24] Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," states that "in the Franconia Conference it was customary to keep the cap in a box at church. Some churches had rows of shelves where these boxes were kept. At the end of the services the caps were placed in the boxes to remain there until the next Sunday. The cap was not worn in the home." (40)
[25] Bender, "John Horsch," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 2:814-5.
[26] Kraus, "American Mennonites and the Bible," 148-9.

Daniel Kauffman Doctrine

Like Horsch, Kauffman was clearly committed to fundamentalism. Where Horsch showed his fundamentalist ideology in frequent and unrelenting attacks on all who were suspected of liberalism, Kauffman was more diplomatic, but none the less suspicious of liberalism. He systematically clarified the Mennonite position by appealing to the Bible as the inerrant and infallible source book of doctrine as no Mennonite had ever done before. Kauffman openly embraced fundamentalism "including some unpopular tenets of faith which many so-called Fundamentalists reject."[27] Mennonite fundamentalists saw themselves as more consistent and obedient to a literal interpretation of Scripture. John L. Stauffer (J. L.), president of Eastern Mennonite School and passionate defender Mennonite fundamentalism, clearly listed all the compromises of the "so called" fundamentalists.

> They ignore other weighty teachings of the Word of God such as separation of Church and state, the nonresistance of evil, the non-swearing of oaths, the teaching of nonconformity to the world with its various applications, and their alliance with worldly organizations such as life insurance and secret societies. They also ignore the Bible teaching on the devotional headcovering, feetwashing, and the kiss of charity. To the true Christian, there are *no non-essentials*, but that is exactly what many of the distinctive Mennonite principles are called by the Fundamentalists. Mennonites are Fundamentalists as far as Fundamentalism goes, but Mennonites go further.[28]

Daniel Kauffman pioneered the most thorough "systematic" theology that Mennonites had ever seen.[29] Through these instrumental and influential writings the Mennonite Church adopted seven ordinances and numerous "restrictions." Kauffman was the first Mennonite to

[27] Kauffman, "Fundamentalism," *Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary,* 116.
[28] J. L. Stauffer, *Gospel Herald* 1938 "What Can Be Done?" p. 170ff. The recognition for this thorough list belongs in large part to Kauffman for he prudently crafted and defended each of these items in detail in the three doctrinal treatises he authored and edited.
[29] Kauffman's first book *Manual of Bible Doctrine* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Publishing Co., 1898) lists him as the author, but he acknowledges the contributions of a couple other men. The second doctrinal book, *Bible Doctrine* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1914) was by official appointment of the Mennonite Church General Conference. Kauffman was the editor and wrote seven of the forty-four chapters in this nearly seven hundred page volume. The third book, *Doctrines of the Bible* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1928) was written by twenty-one men, with Kauffman again being the editor. One of the reasons for the third volume was to remove the liberal influence of some of the earlier writers.

compile and name seven ordinances: baptism, communion, feet washing, devotional head covering, Holy kiss, anointing with oil and marriage. Previously the Mennonite Church taught two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper, but they also observed the other teachings that became ordinances with greater or lesser frequency. For instance marriage was obviously faithfully observed, but the holy kiss, anointing, feet washing or the head covering were not universally or uniformly practiced. The five "restrictions" that are listed in the 1898 publication are nonconformity, non-resistance, swearing of oaths, going to law (not taking legal action), and secret societies. In 1914 life insurance was also added.

Both ordinances and restrictions are equally important to Kauffman for they "serve as a fence to keep us on the green pasture of God's eternal word. They are *not essential to salvation*, yet they are a necessary part of the Lord's Gospel, and must be faithfully observed."[30] Though Kauffman made the effort to distance ordinances and restrictions from salvation, there was a shift by others such as Stauffer who insinuated that they were equal with or necessary for salvation by stating that there are "no non-essentials."[31] Stauffer's insistence on no non-essentials would ring true for Conservative Mennonites who would put as much or more emphasis on ordinances and restrictions as salvation and in some ways they became synonymous.

Bishop Kauffman worked valiantly to bring the Mennonite Church into a uniform code of conduct and dress. He was strongly opposed to dividing the church over the issue of dress, but he worked to influence the church to adopt uniformity to his dying day. Kauffman was an aggresso-conservative, but he was moderate compared to some of the Mennonite fundamentalists. He

[30] Emphasis added. *Manual of Bible Doctrines*, 15. In reading Kauffman I get the impression that restrictions are equal to ordinances just stated negatively.
[31] See Stauffer's quote previous page, footnote 28.

provided the doctrinal formulations that others would legalistically use to enforce the "fence." Compared to the bold and combative George R. Brunk I, A. D. Wenger, J. B. Smith, John Horsch and J. L. Stauffer, Kauffman was much more diplomatic and was often caught in his Conference roles between these men and those who were more progressive.

"Kauffman's credo stressed loyalty, nonconformity, and discipline," but his style was one of respect and toleration. Where other aggresso-conservatives wanted to rid the church of liberalism, Kauffman wanted to convert the liberals through diplomacy.[32] He refused to print some of the most polemical material of these men in the church periodical, and perhaps this among other concerns led G. R. Brunk I to start his own fundamentalist quarterly paper, *The Sword and Trumpet* in 1929.[33] The broader approach of Kauffman is also seen in the preface of the 1914, *Bible Doctrine*, where he lists influential writers and sources who are "Calvinist and Arminian, Fundamentalist and liberal, denominational and non-denominational, premillennial and nonmillennial!"[34]

At the heart of Kauffman's thinking was the belief that "the church was responsible to structure safeguards which protected the denomination from apostasy and individual members from worldliness."[35] This thinking was taken to its rational conclusion in the Conservative Mennonite movement as it developed a multitude of rules.

To shore up support for non-conformed clothing, Kauffman frequently appealed to the absolute divide between good and evil. Like dualist minded fundamentalists, there was no in-

[32] See: Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 273.
[33] Brunk was thoroughly opposed to modernism, Calvinism, eternal security, and the use of the Scofield Bible. The self-described purpose of the paper was to be "a faith-defending drift-opposing religious quarterly" and "to be an unmistakable and uncompromising expression of Mennonite Conservatism." Harold S. Bender, *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, "Sword and Trumpet" 4:677. Also see: Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 375-6.
[34] C. Norman Kraus, "Shifting Mennonite Theological Orientations," in *Anabaptist-Mennonite Identities in Ferment* eds. Leo Driedger and Leland Harder (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1990), 33.
[35] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 245.

between in anything; it was either black or white, of the church or of the world. Thus like soldiers in an army, using Kauffman's fundamentalist style analogy, Christians should be identifiable by the uniform of the church.[36] In case anybody doubted the accuracy of his interpretations, Kauffman questioned whether they even knew God. He writes, "Every properly enlightened child of God will esteem these ordinances and restrictions as a God-send, and consider it a privilege to observe them."[37] With this sort of reasoning Mennonite fundamentalists could question the spiritual authenticity of all those who dared to question or disagree with their interpretations, based on the sensible supposition that their deductions were the only logical conclusion. This common sense evaluation resonated well with the Conservative movement.

There were many that found these rational doctrinal writings completely convincing.[38] Through Kauffman's extensive influence as a writer, editor, bishop, Bible conference speaker and leader, nonconformity became the dominant doctrine.

> Of all the restrictions which God has enjoined upon His people, this [nonconformity] is by far the most important. It is based on the fact that the human family is divided into two great classes: (1) those that follow the 'lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life'– the world; (2) those that take Christ as their foundation, and allow their lives to be governed by principles of right-the body of Christ.[39]

More than any other one person, Kauffman was responsible for a systematic indoctrination of the Mennonite Church, one that would live on far beyond the revisions of the Mennonite Church in the 1960s and 1970s.

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[36] Kauffman, *Manual of Bible Doctrines*, 198-9. The use of military metaphors is very common in fundamentalist language and Mennonites used them as well. Kauffman does not explicitly describe the uniform here, but as time went on various dress regulations were increasingly enforced.
[37] Kauffman, *Manual of Bible Doctrines*, 12-13.
[38] On the wide influence of Kauffman see: Theron Schlabach, *Gospel Versus Gospel: Mission and the Mennonite Church* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1980), 111; Kraus, "Shifting Mennonite Theological Orientations," 33; Paul Martin, "Factors of Influence and Change in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario from 1900-1980" (Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, unpublished paper, 1979) 6; Myron Augsburger quoted in, Rhoda Weber Neer Brunk, ed. *All Praise Be to the Lord: Memories of George R. Brunk II* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2003), 58; Chester K. Lehman, in Alice K. Gingerich, *Life and Times of Daniel Kauffman* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1954), 28.
[39] Kauffman, *Manual of Bible Doctrines*, 186.

Sectarian separation from worldly attachments, conversion and regeneration as defined by the revivalist tradition, a strong temperance stance, appeal to logic expressed in biblical doctrine, and Keswick holiness language were all carefully crafted into a new Mennonite theology by Kauffman. Though Mennonites had for many centuries been sectarian, the influence of a precise separation from the world inspired by the holiness movement made the divide even greater, particularly in personal holiness in specific things like dress.[40] The legacy of Kauffman's doctrinal books and influence live on in the Conservative Mennonite movement through the inspiration of *Doctrines of the Bible*.

Uniform Nonconformity

The "restrictions" as defined by Kauffman became the focal point of defense against liberalism. In particular, nonconformity of dress became the defining item of what it meant to be separate from the world. With Kauffman's support and encouragement the Conference embraced doctrinal teachings, as dress standards came to be increasingly codified and enforced. Kauffman's writing stresses personal holiness and the need for clothing that expresses inner purity and humility. His focus is more on the inner, and less on the outer such as clearly defining and specifying types of clothing which others would do later.

The central importance of dress is apparent in the roughly 230 dress-related resolutions in the district and general conferences of the Mennonite Church between 1865 and 1950.[41] Though Mennonites had a long history of shunning ostentation in dress, it seems that they were not the originators of much of the theological thinking that came to dominate in attire. "In the first seventeen years (1864-1880) of the pioneer Mennonite periodical *The Herald of Truth*, of the

[40] See: Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Coalition," 60-61.
[41] Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 6.

thirteen articles on simple dress perhaps only one was written by a Mennonite author." These articles included ones taken from Free Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists, John Wesley, Adoniram Judson and Harriet Beecher Stowe.[42]

It is noteworthy that in the 1800s Mennonites were generally much more liberal than their Evangelical and Methodist neighbors in allowing such things as baseball games and dancing on the Sabbath, as well as their use of alcohol.[43] The holiness emphasis that was prevalent in the revivalist groups came from a high priority on conversion and practical holiness and this, more than the traditional Mennonite importance placed on simplicity, is what would drive the new Mennonite theological thinking in clothing.

> Although the holiness movement had introduced to Mennonites certain practices expressing separation from the world, those practices came to be understood by Mennonites as their own, separate from holiness theology.[44]

Preaching styles changed dramatically from the early American era of persecution and humility theology where Bible verses were loosely linked to highlight general themes and delivered with humble admonitions. Fundamentalist literalism now allowed preachers to clearly explicate specific scriptures that would "support and encourage uniformity of belief and practice" and were delivered with rational proofs and a rhetoric that demanded a response.[45] The inherited practice of church discipline also came to play an increasing role as a way of implementing uniform nonconformity.

One of the earliest focuses of doctrinal teaching was the head-covering and the bonnet, but it was the bonnet controversy that was the singular cause for more conference resolutions than any other issue. "It was widely feared that if the bonnets were to be surrendered, the head

[42] Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 46.
[43] Martin, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario*, 72-76.
[44] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 229.
[45] Kraus, *Using Scripture in a Global Age*, 39.

covering would be lost also."[46] As early as 1899 in the Waterloo district conference there was a resolution about the need for ordained men to admonish women who wore hats rather than the bonnet.[47]

Again in 1918 a resolution was passed in the Ontario Conference that members "favor the wearing of the bonnet by our sisters, and the regulation coat by the brethren."[48] There was a discrepancy in the application of this resolution, and this would become problematic later, for while the bonnet required compliance the regulation coat was never enforced in the Ontario Conference. It appears that the pressure for this resolution came from south of the border, for J. B. Smith and C. F. Derstine, preachers from the United States, came to Ontario in 1915 and 1918 reinforcing the challenge for women to conform to the bonnet. Smith was trying to establish a particular type of bonnet as the only proper headdress, but the Ontario Conference rejected this pressure.[49] As travel and communications improved, evangelists, bishops and conferences were able to exert their influence across the church and the need for uniformity grew.

In light of later dress codes, it is interesting to note that "because the bonnet was stylish in the period 1810-1870, Mennonites were slow to adopt it." There was never one bonnet type that became the standard when bonnets first became popular in Ontario or the Franconia conference, but "gradually the more conservative type replaced the more stylish kinds until a degree of uniformity appeared."[50]

[46] Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 38.
[47] E. Reginald Good, *Frontier Community to Urban Congregation: First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, 1813-1988* (Kitchener, ON: First Mennonite Church, 1988), 107.
[48] See: *Calendar of Appointments*. Mennonite Church of Ontario, 1918-1919, 13.
[49] Good, *Frontier Community*, 110.
[50] Also see: Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 36.

By 1924 the lack of conformity to the bonnet at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener resulted in the Ontario Conference resolving to take communion privileges from those who did not support bonnets. One of the complaints of First Mennonite women was the unfair enforcement of dress codes for women but not for men.[51] Some of the impetus for bonnet conformity came from the Mennonite Church, for as one Ontario Conference participant understood it,

> We are only a little corner of the Mennonite Church that has laid down rules and regulations for us to stand by. If we over rule the regulations of the larger body we sever ourselves from the Mennonite Church.[52]

Another Ontario participant, in a letter to Harold S. Bender, understood this to be an issue of church government and the real problem was the central power over individual congregations.[53] The issue of congregational autonomy would continue to be a matter of growing contention over the next four decades. It is noteworthy that the bonnet issue in Ontario occurred in the same era as the purge of liberalism at Goshen College. Earlier in 1922, the Ontario conference defeated a motion that was "in harmony with General Conference on the Dress Question," however a subsequent resolution on discipline, which was not as strongly worded, did pass.[54] The closing of Goshen College was an indicator that the aggresso-conservative party was in power and this was felt throughout the conference districts. In the Indiana-Michigan conference there was also a new and more aggressive action taken to regulate bonnets, regulation coats for men and forbidding of life insurance. By one estimate this led to the departure of up to one-eighth of the Indiana-Michigan conference during that decade.[55]

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[51] Good, *Frontier Community*, 113-4.
[52] Spoken by Mannasseh Fretz as taken from S. F. Coffman's personal minutes in, Good, *Frontier Community*, 119.
[53] Good, *Frontier Community*, 116.
[54] *Calendar of Appointments*. Mennonite Church of Ontario, 1922-1923.
[55] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 367-8.

In opposition to the 1924 resolution, the majority of First Mennonite left the Ontario Conference and formed Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church. As dress expectations became more clearly specified the methods of enforcing them also became more clearly defined. But in Ontario there was major resistance among leaders to mechanically enforce rules.

This brief overview of one district conference is helpful in seeing the progression of rules and their enforcement. The progression from a quiet humble people who shunned ostentation to an active church, exposed and educated in the ways of revivalism and fundamentalism, was a road that went through numerous trials in finding how to maintain the church. Major controversy would again pop up twenty years later in the Mennonite Church during World War II, but first we will look at another early development that clearly shows the absorption of fundamentalist theology into the Mennonite Church.

The "Christian Fundamentals"

An obvious indication of the reception of fundamentalism was the adoption of the "Christian Fundamentals" in 1921 at the General Conference of the Mennonite Church held in Garden City, Missouri. This statement of faith was initially drawn up by a committee, George R. Brunk I, A. D. Wenger, and J. B. Smith, and accepted by the Virginia Conference in 1919. However, not all ordained men in the General Conference were so keen for a new statement of faith. Some, like Ontario bishop S. F. Coffman, strongly disagreed with this action and urged instead that the Dordrecht Confession was sufficient.[56] Coffman was committed to biblical fundamentals, and he affirmed plain dress, but he never saw the need to take the strong stance that the more aggresso-conservatives did in applying it to the whole church.

[56] Urie A. Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels* (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1982), 49-50.

The very first article of faith in the "Fundamentals" clearly spells out the fundamentalist agenda of "plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible, … inerrant in the original writings, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice."[57] Most of the earlier Mennonite statements of faith never felt the need to address the issue of the inspiration of the Bible for they clearly accepted it as authoritative and inspired. Now with the new inerrancy formula, Mennonite Church parroted the fundamentalist concerns of a literal and historic creation account, the virgin birth of Christ, salvation by "grace through faith," the "bodily resurrection of Jesus" and his imminent return.

In Wesleyan Holiness style one article is dedicated to "separation," calling for holy living disconnected from the world. It makes a clear call to keep the church "aloof from all movements which seek the reformation of society" and stresses "the merits of the death Christ and the experience of the new birth." Practical holiness is developed further in the section "Of Restrictions," which is basically a synopsis of Kauffman's doctrinal writings. The "restrictions," nonconformity, non-resistance, non-swearing of oaths, not going to law, not participating in secret societies and life insurance, were mostly Mennonite distinctives that distinguished them from fundamentalism. Likewise the seven ordinances articulated by Kauffman were put into this official church confession of faith. Four of these ordinances, feet washing, devotional head covering, holy kiss, and anointing with oil were unique to Mennonites.

While earlier Mennonites were satisfied to work out their salvation with fear and trembling, the revived Mennonites now had an article dedicated to the assurance of salvation adopted from the Calvinist tradition. In the spirit of pessimism that was most prevalent among dispensationalists, there was one article addressing the concerns of apostasy. Inspired by

[57] All the following references and quotations are from the "Christian Fundamentals" as printed in, Howard John Loewen, *One Lord, One Church, One Hope, And One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith* (Elkart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985), 71-72.

Calvinistic "total depravity" this article mentions only the negative realities of the continual lawlessness and "departure from the faith," including the decline of true believers and the rise of false teachers. Filled with this type of teaching it is small wonder that some Mennonites could plainly see the apostatizing going around them and the degeneration of the church. Ironically the adoption of this teaching by the Mennonite Church would be used against it some four decades later as Conservatives lamented and decried the apostate decline of the church.

The seriousness with which the church should take its mandate was composed in article eleven that defined and defended the authority of the church to discipline erring members. The three articles encompassing discipline, ordinances and restrictions, together became the core mandate of the Mennonite Church for the next few decades.[58] Based on a clear understanding of the Bible, Mennonite fundamentalist leaders worked to bring uniformity to the ordinances and restrictions, but mainly the issues centered on nonconformity. Mennonites had traditionally placed a high value on the authority of the church and thus they were well equipped to instill the teachings inspired by fundamentalism.

The adoption of the "Christian Fundamentals" in 1921 and the liberal purge of Goshen College in 1923 are indicators of the aggresso-conservative influence and the adoption of fundamentalism. The revivalism instigated by J. F. Funk was in many ways accomplished by 1930, and "through the 1930s and 1940s, the magisterial sway of Daniel Kauffman's *Bible Doctrines* was nearly complete."[59] Later the Conservative movement would wholeheartedly endorse and add to the "Christian Fundamentals" things such as "uniform plain attire" and a list

[58] In 1963 a new "Confession of Faith" was instituted that showed a shift in theological thinking congruent with Harold S. Bender's growing influence in the 40s and 50s.
[59] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 326.

of evils including higher education, the ecumenical movement, wedding rings and instrumental music.

What was not so definitively spelled out in the 1921 confession, was how to apply Kauffman's teaching to the church and this was a major issue that grew with time. Where did the authority lie? Was it the local church, the district conference or the general conference? From the 1920s to the 1940s it was predominantly the general conference that seemed to hold the majority of power, but in the mid-1940s some congregations began to assert more of their own authority based on the historical Anabaptist research that was informing new theological ideas.

Nonconformity never became completely uniform throughout the Mennonite Church in the way that it would later in the Conservative movement. Some district conferences such as the Pennsylvania and Virginia conferences were more thorough in their application of nonconformity and it clearly showed. Great strides were made in convincing lay members, especially women, to dress more conservatively. This is readily apparent by an examination of many family photos from before 1900 compared to several decades later.

During the decades of 1920s to 1940s virtually all of the ministers adopted the plain coat and most of them discarded the necktie. Mennonite men had traditionally worn neckties, but it appears that the aversion to the necktie in Mennonite circles originated in Kansas from Free Methodist holiness meetings via G. R. Brunk I. For some of those converted from wearing the necktie, this piece of cloth became equal to the devil himself.[60] Even men who wore the regulation coat commonly wore neckties.[61] The total prohibition of this small article of attire continues in the Conservative Mennonite movement.

[60] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 142-3; John C. Wenger, *Separated Unto God* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1951), 84; Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 20-23.
[61] For more information on the neckties See: Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 52; and Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 76.

Women discarded their hats for church, but west of Pennsylvania and Virginia very few lay men adopted the plain coat. This resulted in criticism that there was a double standard and that women were being unfairly targeted.[62] But in spite of the transformation of the Mennonite Church to a more uniform dress code, there was a continual "worldward drift" [sic] and leaders were troubled. During World War II this concern for "drift" was pronounced. In 1941 there was a lengthy Mennonite Church General Conference resolution that recognized the need to "take some definite steps to stem the tide."[63] By the mid-1940s the aggresso-conservative majority had lost their majority influence over the Mennonite Church and a new direction was being defined.

Nonconformity Crisis

The war highlighted the vulnerability of the church when many young Mennonite men gave up nonresistance and went into combatant service. In Ontario in 1941 there were twenty-three men who did not take the conscientious objector stance and in 1943, forty-six out of one hundred and thirty-five drafted men are listed as going into active military duty.[64] In other places in the Mennonite church the statistics were even higher. This was disheartening for all leaders and a major cause for alarm. Nonresistance and nonconformity had been the central concerns for more than two decades and with the lack of commitment to nonresistance by the young men of the church, many believed that the problem was that nonconformity had not been taught and enforced enough. "Unless we keep alive a testimony on separation, nonconformity, [and] nonresistance," Oscar Burkholder direly predicted, "the seven ordinances … and the doctrines of redemption and salvation will also be lost to the church on earth."

[62] Gingerich, "A History of Mennonite Costume," 47.
[63] See: "Resolutions" *General Conference Report*. Mennonite Archives of Ontario, 1941, 4.
[64] See: "Peace Problems Committee." In *Calendar of Appointments*. Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1941-1942 and 1942-1943.

Although "mutual assistance, and ministry to the poor and needy" are also addressed, Burkholder and other leaders major concerns were continually focused on proclaiming the importance of nonresistance and nonconformity.[65] This highlights the earlier assessment that for the most aggressive Mennonite fundamentalists there was no such thing as non-essentials. Thus worldliness in dress meant rebellion against the doctrine of non-resistance and even salvation. For those like Burkholder, nonconformity and nonresistance offered a seamless continuity of truth and the loss of one or both was a loss of the entire Gospel. This all or nothing mentality was most prevalent among pessimistic dispensationalists.

In 1943 at the meeting of the General Conference, differences threatened to divide the church and a "Special" conference was called for the next year, a first in the history of the Conference.[66] The General Problems Committee felt like they had been countering "the drift" for over a decade.[67] The publications of the General Problems Committee also shed light on their specific concerns. They had recently published four pamphlets: *Worldly Amusements and Pleasures*; *Separation from the World*; *The Devotional Covering*; and *Modest Attire*. The tension in the early 1940s seems to have been not between fundamentalism and liberalism, but between those who were more strident and those who were more moderate fundamentalists. A letter in 1933 to S. F. Coffman from Sanford C. Yoder, president of Goshen College, is telling.

> As long as we can keep men at the head of our General Conference that are sensible, I think there is some hope that things will go on. However, if the organization should slip into the hands of the George Brunk - A. D. Wenger group, then conditions would become almost intolerable.[68]

The two key issues at the 1944 special conference were nonresistance and nonconformity and some of the specific problems reported were the "amusement question, the attire question,

[65] Oscar Burkholder, "Editorial," in *Church and Mission News*. March 1942, Vol. 7, No. 2.
[66] Normally they met biannually.
[67] "Report of the General Problems Committee" in *General Conference Report*. Mennonite Archives of Ontario, 1943, 51-52.
[68] Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels*, 51.

the labor union question, military service, lax morals, tobacco, and drinking."[69] But the real tension was the enforcement, or lack of it, in the area of nonconformity. The resolution of the Special conference stated in part

> that our expressed standards on the doctrine of nonconformity to the world relating to the holding of life insurance, membership in labor unions, immodest and worldly attire (including hats for sisters), the wearing of jewelry (including wedding rings), attendance at movies and theaters, be made a test of fellowship in communion and if persisted in be made a test of membership.[70]

The original resolution in 1943 had mandated that those district conferences that did not uphold the stated standards would "forfeit their place in the General Conference." But the final resolution in 1944 was less severe although it still carried a veiled threat of forfeiture. By comparison with earlier documents, the 1944 resolution was the most specific nonconformity rules ever put into General Conference policy. Judging by the response, the resolution had enough new legislation to keep the nonconformity group happy, yet was also accepted by those who clearly did not want to legislate a long list of dress related issues. Compared with the detailed lists of Conservative Mennonites, the resolution of 1944 seems rather weak.

What is interesting is that there was no legislation on bonnets for this had been a hotly contested issue in many places including Ontario in the preceding years. On the one side were leaders who believed that the only way forward was to become increasingly legislative and enforce the standards of the church, which some did in their own district conferences. Other leaders and districts were more comfortable with diversity and although they continually taught nonconformity and led by example they did not demand or enforce it. This is much more in keeping with the Mennonite tradition and the notable bishop S. F. Coffman was one such moderate leader. For ten years he had worked and edited a book on polity for the General

[69] "Report of the General Problems Committee" in *General Conference Report*. Mennonite Archives of Ontario, 1943, 51-52.
[70] *Report of the Special Session of the Mennonite General Conference held at Goshen College*. August 1944, Mennonite Archives of Ontario.

Conference and in the introduction one gets a glimpse of his convictions. He envisioned the polity "as a guide" not to be used as "law," and if administered with "grace and love and peace" it would build up the church.[71]

Like the Mennonite Church General Conference, the Ontario Conference also experienced a nonconformity crisis in the early 1940s.[72] C. F. Derstine, one of the most widely traveled evangelists in the Mennonite Church who had earnestly and frankly preached and written on the subject of nonconformity began to have doubts about the compatibility of evangelism and enforced clothing rules. This once again led to "laxity" at First Mennonite in Kitchener where he served as bishop after the schism in 1924.[73] Part of the problem was Derstine's greater exposure to society as pastor of an urban church.

Derstine presented another face of Mennonite fundamentalism. For though he was a dispensationalist and used the Scofield Bible, Derstine was not sectarian or overly forceful in comparison to some others. In fact he preached widely in Mennonite and other denominations, including such venues as Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, the Annual Moody Founder's Week, the People's Church in Toronto, and Church of the Open Door in Los Angeles. Derstine was also actively involved in promoting organizations like Youth for Christ and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. He knew numerous renowned men personally, such as Oswald Smith, H. A. Ironside, and Gypsy Smith; and in fact Billy Graham was once a warm-up speaker for one of Derstine's evangelistic campaigns.[74] Perhaps because of his broad involvement in the non-

[71] S. F. Coffman, "Making Proper Use of the Church Polity" in *Mennonite Church Polity: A Statement of Practices in Church Government* 2nd printing (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1952), x.
[72] The Ontario Conference had its share of connections with the General Conference. In 1943 three men from Ontario held important posts in the General Conference. Curtis C. Cressman was on the Executive Committee, and Jesse B. Martin was on the General Problems Committee, and Oscar Burkholder was on both committees.
[73] See: Good, *Frontier Community*, 126-7.
[74] Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels*, 223-48.

Mennonite world, Derstine began to conclude that nonconformity was more of a liability than an asset, particularly in evangelism.

In 1941 there was an Ontario conference exhortation to "urge our sisters to use Christian judgment and discernment" in matters of wedding dress and festivities. But the more disturbing issue centered around the old problem of women's bonnets and came with a plea for bishops to be unified in administration.[75] A "Special Ministers' and Christian Workers' Meeting" was held in April, 1943 to discuss dress regulations and a resolution was made to prepare a constitutional amendment.

When this was presented two months later at the annual meeting it met with "lively discussion" which could not be settled and a second special meeting was called for in November. Finally in this third session a constitutional amendment was approved declaring,

> We as a Conference consider the wearing of a plain bonnet as the approved head dress of our sisters and insist on a faithful compliance of the same as the continued practice of the church. We maintain that our brethren and sisters should conform to the same principle of modest apparel with the purpose to witness to the scriptural truth of simplicity and separation. We also believe that the wearing of the plain suit for brethren and the cape dress for sisters would consistently bear such testimony.[76]

Mennonite pastor Oscar Burkholder, known for his hyperbole and pervasive concern for apostasy, had declared earlier that it was a "now or never proposition" and "loving and drastic action is our only final solution if we wish to save the doctrine and its expression within the brotherhood."[77]

Although bishop Derstine apparently voted in favor of the revisions,[78] he obviously did not enforce them to the satisfaction of his peers. For in 1946 there was a grievance brought by

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[75] See: *Calendar of Appointments*. Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1941-1942. This appeal was based on the resolution of 1918 & 1924.
[76] See File: *Elmira Special Conference*. Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 9 November 1943, Mennonite Archives of Ontario.
[77] Oscar Burkholder, "The Elmira Special Conference," in *Church and Mission News*. November, 1943, Vol. 8, No. 6, p. 4. On Burkholder's use of hyperbole see: Urie Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels, 85*.

bishop Moses Roth against Derstine for marrying a couple that Roth "had refused to marry because of the bride's violation of Conference dress regulations."[79] The grievance appears to have gotten resolved, but the concern about nonconformity would continue to fester for more than a decade when Roth and a group of ordained men withdrew from the Ontario Conference and formed the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario. Although the plain suit and cape-dress were clearly encouraged, they were never legislated in Ontario. That is, not until the genesis of the Conservative movement.

The Decline of Mennonite Fundamentalism

The 1944 General Conference special session marked the beginning of the end for the fundamentalist era in the Mennonite Church and the beginning of a transition dominated by the theology inspired by *The Anabaptist Vision* composed the year before by Harold S. Bender. By the early 1940s the Anabaptist historical research of the Swiss Brethren by Bender and John Horsch had established the theological baseline for the Mennonite Church.[80] It is an irony that Horsch, the polemical fundamentalist, inadvertently aided in the demise of fundamentalism in the Mennonite Church due to his historical research that became the basis for a new theology.

By the time of the 1944 special conference the venerable Daniel Kauffman had been dead for six months. Also gone from the scene were numerous important men including A. D. Wenger, John Horsch, G. R. Brunk I, who had founded and shaped the Mennonite Church and were some of the most significant forces for a thorough fundamentalism. "Only J. B. Smith

[78] See handwritten note stating, "Vote on adopting changes of Art. XX, carried unanimously (CFD voted favouring)." *Elmira Special Conference*. Mennonite Archives of Ontario.
[79] Good, *Frontier Community*, 129.
[80] See: Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 327.

[Mennonite dispensationalist] of the original founding generation of general conference was at the special session in 1944."[81]

The shift away from fundamentalism was not an abrupt shift, but it was clearly symbolized by the installation of H. S. Bender as dean of the new Goshen College Biblical Seminary a couple of weeks after the special conference.[82] Although the conference had taken a more definitive stand against hats for women, jewelry and movies, it also introduced the new Anabaptist historical-theological views presented by J. C. Wenger on dress. Wenger's presentation aroused extraordinary interest that according to the editor of the official Mennonite Church paper, *Gospel Herald*, was an "objective analysis of Scriptural teachings and historical development."[83] One example that must have had the men sitting on the edge of their seats was a quotation from the founding father of the Conference, J. F. Funk. In 1891 he wrote a sarcastic and cheeky article in the *Herald of Truth* called "Necktie Religion" disparaging "some dude whose diminutive soul was wrapped up in his necktie" and consequently gives "up his idol" and "starts out with this patent gospel."[84] This must have been a stark reminder for these ordained men who universally wore the plain coat and no necktie of how much things had changed in fifty years.

Bender who became the most dominant leader in the 1940s cautiously and carefully crafted a new theological position, but by 1953 he could openly state that "Fundamentalism is currently the greatest danger."[85] Nonconformity continued as a significant theme in the Conference well into the 1960s, but with the next generation of leaders the emphasis was no longer focused on uniformity or enforcement of dress.

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[81] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 350.
[82] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 350.
[83] Paul Erb, "Introduction" in John C. Wenger, *Historical and Biblical Position of the Mennonite Church on Attire* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1944), 7.

In spite of the stronger than ever proclamations of the General Conference and Ontario conference, the tide of progress would not be checked. Cultural upheaval and chaos marked the decades following World War II. The threat of communism and nuclear war, the cold war, racial tensions, Vietnam anti-government demonstrations, rebellion against established social values, went hand in hand with new cultural expressions in music, entertainment, and dress. Old Order Mennonites who had maintained the cultural traditions of the nineteenth century were largely immune to these influences, but Mennonites who had adopted much from evangelicalism were more vulnerable because of their greater exposure to the prevailing culture. This came by associating with other evangelicals in missions, allowing communications such as radio and television, education, and through the experiences in social projects during and after the war.

Assimilation accelerated noticeably in the 1950s and 1960s, as leaders were progressively less willing to enforce dress standards. There still were admonitions and concerns by some, but standards were no longer being uniformly taught and enforced. In Ontario "some congregations chose to make the wearing of a covering a matter of individual conscience. In other congregations dress standards simply faded into history without much discussion.[86]

Consequently, at least in the more progressive districts, bonnets disappeared, Mennonite women began to cut their hair, wedding rings became more popular, cape dresses were discarded, and radio and television were adopted. The head covering was the last item of the distinctive Mennonite clothing that was generally discarded during the last half of the 1960s as it

[84] Wenger, *Historical and Biblical Position*, 28.
[85] See: Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 404.
[86] Marlene Epp, "Carrying the Banner of Nonconformity: Ontario Mennonite Women and the Dress Question" CGR Vol. 8, No. 3, Fall 1990, 256.

became optional.[87] There was also an increasing involvement in social, political, business and community organizations. In some of the more conservative districts these changes came much more gradually. These changes do not necessarily imply that fundamentalism was waning, but the beliefs that led to change were definitely less fundamentalist in nature; and there was certainly a growing reaction to fundamentalist suppositions in this period of transition.

At an academic level there were a couple forces at work. First, as mentioned earlier, Anabaptist historical research was beginning to be felt in the theology and the polity of the church. The influence of Bender and associates spread to the congregations through Goshen College and Seminary graduates. Bender's *Anabaptist Vision* was a new alternative to fundamentalism and liberalism. During the 1950s Bender's historical-theological views became the "voice of middle-ground Mennonite belief and practice." Even at Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia, which had long been a bastion of Mennonite fundamentalism, Bender's views became the dominant hermeneutic by 1960.[88]

Secondly, Mennonite scholars began to explore more "literary and experiential" ways of interpreting the Bible through the "inductive approach."[89] This came through neo-evangelical and Neo-orthodox influences. These new theological views were definitely less fundamentalist and sectarian in spite of the fact that Bender's historicism was informed by the "Old school" Presbyterian, J. Greshem Machen. However, while Machen removed himself from the church, Bender was aggressively holding inter-Mennonite dialogue and pulling the church together. While Machen was a separatist, Bender certainly was not.[90] Bender and associates were building

[87] Epp, "Carrying the Banner of Nonconformity," 256.
[88] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 500.
[89] Kraus, *Using Scripture in a Global Age*, 41-42.
[90] Bender had a great interest in the World Council of Churches and in 1948 when they held their first meeting in Amsterdam, Bender could not attend because an overlap with the Mennonite World Conference. He told Orie Miller his compatriot in the Mennonite Church that if he could, he would choose the World Council of Churches over the Mennonite World Conference. Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 400.

their theological beliefs through academic historical investigation and the explorations of Bender's protégés led to a new biblical hermeneutic.

Both neo-evangelicals and younger Mennonite scholars were studying Neo-orthodox theologians, but it is interesting to note that in spite of Bender's very progressive views on ecumenism, he had grave concerns about Neo-orthodoxy's "low view of inspiration, relativistic ethics, and inadequate doctrine of the church."[91] It is also interesting that "although Mennonites continued to draw from neo-evangelical sources, they preferred to attribute their criticism of fundamentalism to their reading of Anabaptism."[92]

Neo-evangelicals were fundamentalist descendants who had become less sectarian, more socially responsible, more ecumenical and placed high importance on intellectualism. They were represented by organizations and persons such as Fuller Theological Seminary, "Christianity Today," and Billy Graham. By the late 1950s, neo-evangelicalism "broke with the dispensationalist-separatist right wing of fundamentalism."[93] Evangelicalism and fundamentalism became two clearly differentiated movements. At this same time Mennonite academics were in all these points moving the same direction, away from fundamentalist sectarianism like neo-evangelicals, but one major difference was Mennonites did not envision "re-establishing America as a Christian country."[94] Coincidentally there were also those in the Mennonite Church who were becoming more and more alarmed and who had much sympathy for the bold voices of dispensationalists.

The result of Bender's emphasis on ethics, discipleship, and community, saw less importance placed on doctrinal formulations with clear applications, more autonomy deposited in

[91] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 505 & 413-4.
[92] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 410.
[93] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 9.
[94] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 70-75.

local congregations with less ecclesiastic hierarchy, and a decline of separatism. Bender was not sectarian and his work on *The Mennonite Encyclopedia* and the Mennonite World Conference helped to bring a diversity of Mennonites closer together, "securing the heritage and mediating and moderating pressures for change."[95] By comparison Mennonite fundamentalists in 1936 were critical of the Mennonite World Conference and bishop Kauffman and Horsch refused to allow Bender and Orie Miller to "announce a possible fourth world conference to be held in North America in 1940 or 1941."[96]

Bender certainly did not champion the nonconformity in dress doctrines like Daniel Kauffman, but neither did he appear to have any notion of giving up nonconformity. Bender's youthful view of Kauffman's reforms at the time of Goshen's closing, is documented by a letter to a friend.

> His suggested solutions are not solutions at all, but mere empty platitudes. When matters of discipline such as dress and life insurance become 'fundamental differences in doctrine and life,' how sadly have our Mennonite standards of value become perverted.[97]

Bender spent nearly twenty years working in the church with Kauffman and it is almost as if Bender expected that all leaders would simply give in to the most conservative voices in the way that he had most of his life. According to his biographer, Bender "had an almost compulsive need to present himself and the seminary as safe and orthodox."[98] Bender saw himself as a conservative, not a fundamentalist, and one who firmly stood against all liberalism. Ironically, while Bender introduced and promoted the autonomy of local church structures, he still exercised substantial power across the Conference organization.

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[95] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 446.
[96] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 255. Also see: *Gospel Herald*. vol. 29 September 24, 1936, p. 556-558 editorial; and John H. Mosemann, "The Proposed Fourth Mennonite World Conference" *Gospel Herald*. vol. 29 October. 15, 1936, p. 637.
[97] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 138.
[98] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 343.

The result of Bender's Anabaptist research shifted the focus from salvation as an inner spiritual rebirth experience to salvation as an ethical challenge to follow Christ. The tension between Mennonite fundamentalism and the new theology is apparent in the disagreement between the two ordained men, Edgar Metzler and C. F. Derstine in 1957.

> Derstine defined salvation as eternal life in heaven, which is offered to all who will accept it. The goal of evangelism is to free individuals from damnation by convincing them to accept salvation by inviting Jesus Christ into their hearts as personal saviour. The mission of the church is described in the New Testament Epistles, particularly those written by Paul, and consists of saving individuals from damnation.
>
> Metzler, conversely, defined salvation as personal discipleship, or following the example of Jesus Christ as individuals. The goal of evangelism is to assist persons in becoming like Jesus, by convincing them to accept Him as Lord of their lives, and the final authority on any decision that is made. The mission of the church is described in the Sermon on the Mount, and consists of building the Kingdom of God on earth.[99]

For those who held to a strict revivalist conception of salvation as an inner experience at a specific moment in history, any diminution of the salvific atonement was unacceptable and thus the new theology with its emphasis on discipleship appeared to be a departure of true faith in Christ.

The evolving theology of the Mennonite Church led to a pronounced activism as the Church began to take seriously its role in bringing justice and peace to the world. Over the next several decades no other single issue so captured the attention of Mennonite academics as peace and justice. This also became proof for Conservatives that the modernistic Mennonite Church had lost its way, for the very most important issue was an inner regeneration by the supernatural work of the Spirit.

It seems that theological revision and the discarding of outward dress standards went hand in hand in the Mennonite Church, but it is unclear which came first. As the doctrines and

[99] Good, *Frontier Community*, 135.

ordinances began to fade in importance there was less pressure to conform to specific biblical standards. And with the central theme of discipleship, lay people no longer needed to be legislated into wearing distinctive clothing. The new generation of leaders in the Mennonite Church was not interested in enforcing dress regulations. The new theology inspired by Anabaptism meant that it no longer needed the distinctive uniform dress patterns to define and defend the boundaries of the church. The influence of Daniel Kauffman was waning in a majority of the church even as a minority was looking to his writing for inspiration.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CONSERVATIVE MENNONITE MOVEMENT

The birth of the Conservative Mennonite movement was in direct reaction to the discarding of revivalist and fundamentalist propositions in the Mennonite Church. Nothing was more important to Conservatives than recovering and holding to the doctrinal rationalizations which held together the Mennonite Church in the Kauffman era. They understood themselves as

> the restitutionary movements in the (Old) Mennonite Church. That a remnant has chosen to ask for and walk in 'the old paths' there can be no mistake…. A generation of believers has been inspired to uphold the faith of the Gospel as understood by our fathers, resulting in church life as practiced by spiritual Plain People today.[1]

In their reaction to establish a church founded on clear biblical standards they went to greater lengths in legislating what it meant to be separated from the world than Mennonite fundamentalists had done. Like fundamentalists they were willing to take a stand for what they believed to be truth, and they understood it to be a fight against liberalism and apostasy of the "mainline" Mennonite Church.

The Birth of the Ontario Movement[2]

There were some in the Mennonite Church that challenged the Anabaptist historical revisions as the new authority and who supported doctrines such as inerrancy of the Bible,

[1] Jesse Neuenschwander, "Foreword" in Wenger, *Mennonite Church In America*, 7.

[2] The birth of the Ontario movement may be considered to have begun in 1956 when bishop Valentine Nafziger and a small group of members withdrew from the Riverdale Mennonite Church (Amish Mennonite Conference, later became the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference) in Millbank and formed the Bethel Conservative Mennonite Church. Bethel, along with two Ohio churches were the first to withdraw and organize what became the Conservative Mennonite Fellowship. How Nafziger and the Bethel congregation influenced those who were dissatisfied with the Mennonite Conference of Ontario is not clear, but it is interesting to note that Moses Roth and Clarence Huber were both involved in the earliest years of Bethel's existence even though they were still part of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario. See: *Bethel Conservative Mennonite Church: Forward Through Time 1956-1986* (Millbank, ON, 1986), 11 & 21.

premillennialism, the separation of church and state, the priority of a revivalist salvation experience, and were opposed to the social gospel.[3] Some of the more conservative districts were the Lancaster, Franconia and Virginia conferences, but undoubtedly there was some resistance in other districts as well, but they were apparently a minority. The majority of leadership and laity were moving away from the conclusions of fundamentalism. Some saw the changes of the 1950s and following, as a time to make up "mere cultural lag,"[4] and others saw it as a "departure from our distinctive, historic, and Biblical faith and practice." This later group of six ordained men felt so strongly that in 1959 they wrote a letter to the Ontario conference requesting the termination of their conference responsibilities.[5]

The Ontario conference had many ties to Goshen College and to Bender whose maternal grandparents lived in Ontario. In spite of the fact that many historians tend to see Ontario as a hotbed of fundamentalism, most of the influential leaders were not sectarian and dogmatic.[6] Four of the most influential leaders, S. F. Coffman, C. F. Derstine, J. B. Martin and Oscar Burkholder, all taught at Ontario Mennonite Bible School in Kitchener and acknowledged their reliance on fundamentalism. They taught premillennialism, but in non-conformity they were not nearly so sectarian or dogmatic as most of the aggresso-conservatives in the United States.[7] It seems rather that Ontario has in many ways always been more progressive in adopting new ideas, such as Sunday schools, than some other districts of the Mennonite Church. The six men who left the

[3] See: Kraus, *Using Scripture in a Global Age*, 41-2; and Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 504.
[4] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 239.
[5] *The Mennonite Conference of Ontario: Annual Report*. 1960, Floradale, ON, "Letter No. 1," 19-20. The letter is dated July 31, 1959. This group of six men included two bishops Moses Roth and Curtis Cressman, two ministers Moses Baer and Elmer Grove, and two deacons Andrew Axt and Clarence Huber. A seventh ordained man, deacon Alvin Gingerich, was not included in the letter, but resigned separately and joined with these other men.
[6] See: Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 238-239. This seems to be based on the enthusiastic teaching of premillennialism at Ontario Bible School as perpetuated by Burkholder's article, "Ontario Mennonite Bible School and Institute," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 4:66. A more balanced view of fundamentalism in the Ontario conference is; Urie Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels*.
[7] See: Urie Bender, *Four Earthen Vessels*, who gives a biography of these four men.

conference were a small percentage of the total Ontario group of ordained men. In spite of the fact that these men were the most conservative in their district, they were not as restrictive as some other men they would join with who came from other districts of the Mennonite Church.

The first and foremost issue of concern for the dissident leaders from Ontario was nonconformity. Their concerns included business and political involvement, life insurance, "immodest and ornamental attire, by both brethren and sister, as well as the ministry," jewelry, and cut hair for women. All seven ordinances as defined by Kauffman were named as wrongly modified and/or discarded. "Open" communion was being practiced by some churches, feet washing was becoming optional, prayer veiling was being discarded, the Holy Kiss was "practically non-existent," anointing by oil was seldom administered, candidates were being baptized who were not modestly attired, and divorce and remarriage was compromised. One final concern regarded changes in church office, referring to the growing practice of congregational discernment rather than using the lot for choosing a pastor, as well as the growing practice of professional, paid pastors. What is interesting is that the cape dress, radios, bonnets, education, and even television were not mentioned, for these quickly became debated topics in the Conservative Mennonite movement.[8]

The appeal to the Ontario Conference was founded on the "distinctive, historic, and Biblical faith and practice," meaning that these men were not asking for anything new. They were simply trying to maintain those standards and principles that had formerly been upheld by the church particularly in the doctrinal period popularized by the efforts of leaders such as Kauffman. They understood worldly cultural patterns to be "dominated by the enemy of the Cross of Christ." They affirmed "that Biblical principles need to find an application to every

[8] *The Mennonite Conference of Ontario: Annual Report*. 1960, Floradale, ON, "Letter No. 1," 19-20.

cultural pattern," but they charged, no longer were even the principles being upheld. This accusation was based on the Word of God, the "Scriptural position" grounded in the "the higher authority of the Word."[9] Compared with the strident commentary that would come from other Conservatives later, these men were very prudent in their criticism.

On the other side of the controversy, the Ontario Conference executive committee appealed to "the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and repent of our sins" and called on the six brethren to "repent for the sin of disunity … [and] for misrepresenting Conference." Because the men's request for church letters was "contrary to the New Testament teaching" (disunity) the Conference did not grant them.[10] In spite of the fact that the Ontario Conference had changed on numerous points of nonconformity it is interesting to note that they still held to a firm view of Scripture. Both sides were reading the same Bible and they both appealed to its authority. The Conference representatives in accordance to the new theology were understanding the Bible less literally, but were still using considerable centralized power to try to conform the dissidents in spite of a theology which put more emphasis on the local congregation.

After numerous meetings that failed to reconcile their differences, the Ontario men withdrew and founded the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario in 1959. In the early years of the Conservative movement the centralized organization of a conference structure was feared, as was congregational democracy.

> The conviction that the ministry, rather than the entire brotherhood, was responsible for decision-making, came from the experiences of these people who had come out of situations where their convictions had become the minority voice. They therefore lost confidence in the idea of God speaking through the entire brotherhood in decision-making. Voting on issues by the brotherhood was seen by some as a worldly practice.[11]

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[9] *Mennonite Conference of Ontario: Annual Report*. Floradale, ON, 1960, "Letter No. 1," 19-20.
[10] *Mennonite Conference of Ontario: Annual Report*. Floradale, ON, 1960, "Executive Statement and Recommendation" p. 20-21.
[11] Leighton Martin, "History and Formation of the Countryside Mennonite Fellowship," in *Countryside Mennonite Fellowship: 30th Anniversary 1960-1990* (Hawkesville, ON: n.p., 1990), 2-3.

According to another Conservative writer,

> If a church with a conservative leadership experienced difficulty, the executive committee of Conference could come in against the wishes of the ministry. They could vote to accept the radio, fashionable attire, jewelry, or any other practice a liberal element wanted, and the ministry could do very little to prevent it. Ironically, at times these shifts were imposed even when a majority of the congregation did not want them.[12]

Thus early in the movement the importance of local autonomous congregations emphasized "having a plural ministry consisting of Bishop, Minister and Deacon," but according to Leighton Martin, a Conservative bishop, it was "especially the Bishop, [who] was responsible for making decisions and establishing a church that is God-honouring." [sic] This allowed the bishop the opportunity "to re-establish a congregation in harmony with his personal convictions."[13] In the early years of the Ontario Conservative movement bishops were generally more autonomous allowing different practices in the various churches. However in a short time bishops discovered how difficult it could be to hold one standard when another church within their fellowship held another standard. This would cause friction.

The Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario was a direct reaction to the failure of the Mennonite Church to take a firm stand on enforcing issues of doctrine, particularly nonconformity. The appeal to the seven ordinances and many of the other concerns came out of an affinity for Kauffman's *Doctrine's of the Bible* based on clear guidelines from the Bible. Just how seriously they took Kauffman's doctrinal view is illustrated by the missionary work started in India by the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario in 1979. In their first Bible studies

[12] Virgil Schrock, in Mervin Baer, *Marching On* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers Inc., 2001), 175. Schrock is a bishop in the ultra-Conservative group. I use numerous quotes from his article because it was one of the clearest and most concise reflections I found that shows how Conservatives think about the Mennonite Church.
[13] Leighton Martin, "History and Formation," 2-3.

with the indigenous people they taught the ordinances of the church including separation and the head-covering.[14]

These Conservatives were not in conflict with the theology that the Mennonite Church had constructed in the past half a century, but rather saw themselves as the true protectors of that tradition. What they most likely did not recognize in the early 1960s was just how much further this new movement would have to go to protect it from the evils of apostasy and drift. Nor did they acknowledge the outside influences of dispensationalism and premillennialism, which were informing their thinking. During the first half of the twentieth century, premillennialism and dispensationalism were virtually synonymous in the minds of both foe and friend.[15] In particular the deep-seated ideas in dispensationalist thinking were clearly an influential force in the Conservative movement. It is interesting to point out that Conservatives have relied heavily on Daniel Kauffman's doctrinal writings, but Kauffman was amillennial and blocked efforts to enforce premillennialism as a confessional test.[16] It is for this reason that *Doctrines of the Bible* took a middle road approach in eschatology. While eschatology can sometimes be a polarizing issue within the Conservative churches it is the only major theological issue that is open to varying views.

More Dissenting Voices

By the early 1960s the voices in opposition to the Mennonite Church continued to grow as the Conservative groups alienated themselves from the church in both large and small Mennonite communities across North America. The concerns and accusations of Conservatives

[14] *And There They Preached the Gospel: An Account of the work of the Lord in India, Sponsored by the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario* (Barwick, ON: CMCO Publications, 1996), 77.
[15] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 104.
[16] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 382.

leveled at the Mennonite Church show the seriousness and the depth of their reaction to the changes taking place. It also highlighted numerous issues and areas where Conservatives were drawing inspiration from fundamentalism to counter the shift away from Mennonite fundamentalism in the Mennonite Church.

In the 1965 *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, Conservatives recognized the prevalence of apostasy in "compromising leadership," "blind denominational loyalty," "unequal yokes," "pursuit of accreditations," "ungodly philosophies," "centralization of power," and the "ecumenical movements." All of those issues indicated that the times were "perilous," and it warranted the withdrawal from all such fellowship. It also supported the eschatological conclusion that "the coming of the Lord is imminent (Matt. 24:29-31, 44)."[17]

The same confession also reprinted verbatim the "Christian Fundamentals," which had been adopted by the Mennonite Church in 1921. The "Fundamentals" were adopted by many if not all of the Conservative groups and they are commonly printed in their official church confessions of faith.[18] In affinity with Mennonite fundamentalism, the Conservative movement recognized the continued need to stand against modernism and liberalism to protect nonconformity and nonresistance. They recognized however, that

> today, some 43 years later, the Mennonite churches are facing a new crisis. That new kind of Modernism, Neo-orthodoxy, is pushing into many Mennonite institutions and publications, and liberalism is in control of many church organizations and institutions to such an extent that the keeping of the ordinances, Christian separation in civil affairs and the twin doctrines of nonconformity and nonresistance are not just threatened, but have in part actually been given up by many members who are nonetheless continued in fellowship by their churches. [19]

[17] *Mennonite Confession of Faith* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publisher, Inc., 1965; 1985), 106-7. This confession was adopted at the third "Biblical Discipleship and Fellowship Ministerial Meeting," held in Hartville, Ohio in 1965. This was one of the earliest Conservative Mennonite fellowship groups to organize.
[18] See: *Constitution and Faith and Practice of the Mennonite Fellowship Church*, First Printing 1962, revised printing 1976. These booklets were widely distributed among the early fellowship groups as they called themselves. Also see: Scott, *An Introduction*, 201.
[19] *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, 14.

Neo-orthodoxy is reminiscent of the larger fundamentalist controversy that had in the past decade taken a forefront in evangelical debates. Like the fundamentalists who reacted against the lack of inerrancy in the Neo-orthodox position, Conservatives also used the fundamentalist arguments against it.

Conservatives frequently use the theological term "sin" to categorically spell out the ills of the Mennonite Church.

> Sin was being allowed in the church. Members in good standing were attending movies, going to polls, smoking, drinking, holding membership in labor unions, organizing and operating bowling alleys, and playing on ball and bowling teams. Some members had television; some were sponsoring radio programs; some conferences were affiliating with liberal conferences that had ties to the World Council of Churches. Other interdenominational affiliations were also being pursued, especially in the mission and educational programs.[20]

From the beginning of the new movement, Conservatives soon completely separated themselves from the Mennonite Church so that none of its corrupting influences would infect their churches. Apostasy was a constant concern and thus the need for clear separation. One writer contentiously accused the Mennonite Church of doubting the new birth, identifying

> with Methodists, with the Neo-orthodoxy proponents, and with every Tom, Dick, and Harry along the way, regardless of what he believes, as long as he belongs to some church in the ecumenical movement.

He also accused the Mennonite Church of viewing the Bible as uninspired, Genesis was not accepted, theistic evolution was growing, verbal inspiration was suspect, and the holy life of separation from the world was crumbling.[21]

Like dispensationalist fundamentalists, Conservatives were convinced a definitive action was needed in the face of a degenerating society and church. Unlike their Mennonite fundamentalist forbears who managed to move the church to a more conservative stance, they felt they had no option but to divide. In fact as one early bishop put it, "In the continued

[20] Virgil Schrock, in Mervin Baer, *Marching On*, 176.
[21] *The Peril of Neo-Orthodoxy to Saving Faith* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers Inc., n.d.), 33.

development of these trends toward a Christless Protestantism we would frankly say that it would be a sin not to divide."[22] Ironically two decades later this same bishop wrote, "The work is too great and the eternal cause far too significant to allow our petty carnalities to divide us."[23] This latter reaction was a direct result of the ethos of power that frequently flows through fundamentalism along with its theological conceptions.[24] This will be discussed later when the Conservative movement splintered into numerous schisms.

While not all Conservatives would be so bold in their proclamations of degeneration in the Mennonite Church, the sentiments are certainly pervasive. Given the dire downward spiral of the apostate Mennonite Church, Conservatives could see no other option than separation and this they did thoroughly, even much more thoroughly in many instances than the Old Order groups who had separated from the Mennonite Church more than six decades earlier.

Lester Bauman, a Conservative historian,[25] identifies fundamentalism as moderating "the worldward [sic] slide of the progressive Mennonite conferences for about a generation [1920-1950] but did not stop it altogether."[26] Similarly, an influential ultra-Conservative bishop Mervin Baer writes, "the old modernism of the 1920s and the 1930s was too extreme to be widely accepted in the Mennonite Church at that time." But both of these men conspiratorially believed that the sneaky old modernism was not weeded out "and that a remnant of the seed of the serpent was allowed place and position in the church." Baer, in typical hyperbolic terms, saw this as a

[22] Mervin Baer, *Scriptural Unity* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers Inc., n.d.), 4.
[23] Mervin Baer, *Marching On*, 150.
[24] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 384. Yoder points to this problem in Mennonite fundamentalism.
[25] Bauman is not a "historian" in the academic sense. There are no educated historic scholars that I am aware of anywhere in the Conservative movement. However, some Conservatives take a great interest in history and do a significant amount of reading and studying on their own. Self-educated Conservative historians generally are admittedly selectively in their reading so as not to get too much wrong information. Bauman is a non-ordained ultra-Conservative and has written a number of books for Rod and Staff Publishers.
[26] Lester Bauman, *The Little Flock* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, Inc., 1999), 104. "Worldward slide/drift" was a common description in Mennonite fundamentalism and is used frequently by Conservatives. In a footnote Bauman notes that fundamentalism provided "the background for the emergence of the Conservative Mennonite movements."

"cub" that had evolved into a "monster."[27] This language and attitude is pervasive among the most separatist-minded fundamentalists and is used to varying degrees in the Conservative movement. Like dispensationalists who disavowed the legitimacy of the mainline churches, Conservatives remain separate "from the mainstream of the highly organized structure of the nominal church," the Mennonite Church.[28]

In their confrontation with the Mennonite Church, Conservatives understood their mission as

> the call of God to this generation to repent and return to Him. We believe that a failure to respond now will spell complete apostasy. We believe that God is not primarily concerned about the intactness [sic] of the organizational status quo of this or any group, but is first and always interested in our obedience to truth and freedom from sin.[29]

In a clear reference to the apostasy of the Mennonite Church, Conservatives made a lengthy statement in one of their earliest confessions.

> To the student of Mennonite history, similar trends are continually apparent among various Mennonite churches. If we only compare ourselves among ourselves, and not by the standards of the Scripture, if we only admonish in vague and general terms and do not lift up a standard in our churches by a clearly defined confession of faith, then we too will drift away from our moorings and be wrecked on the rocks of worldliness. The current of the world flows downhill, and always pushes against a high and holy standard.[30]

Based on a clear understanding of the Scriptural commands Conservatives felt that

> it did not take much discernment to know that the Mennonite Church was drifting toward the world on a course set by men in the institutions of higher learning, within the mission programs, in the Mission Publishing House, and in Conference leadership positions.[31]

One of the failures that Conservatives saw in the Mennonite Church was the focus on bringing peace and justice to the world.

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[27] Baer, *Marching On*, 21. Baer was a significant leader in the Conservative movement and was a promoter of more conservative ways that led to the split between the ultra and the moderate groups.
[28] This is a clear reference to the Mennonite Church. Baer, *Marching On*, 137.
[29] Baer, *Marching On*, 47.
[30] *Mennonite Confession of Faith*, 12.
[31] Virgil Schrock, in Mervin Baer, *Marching On*, 175.

> The Christian's objective is not world peace but personal peace through surrender and obedience to God. Trying to convince everyone to live together in peace is a fruitless effort because of the sinfulness of man.

The most important truth is for people to get saved through the proclamation of the Gospel to the lost; "and when they become saved, the benefit is infinitely greater than that from any social betterment of unbelievers."[32]

Modern humanistic thinking was seen as another liberal invasion that pervaded the Mennonite Church and threatened the old views.

> Conference sessions also began to include more and more concessions to modern thinking. Study committees were appointed who found innovative ways to interpret the Scriptures so that those who wanted accommodation with the world could find Conference approval, even though simple faith and obedience to the Scriptures had always forbidden the new and bold advances.[33]

A major concern to Conservatives was the degeneration of "simple truth" that came about through generational laxity.

> Not only are the children and youth surrounded by influences which tend to keep them or take them from the truth, but we their elders likewise are constantly under pressure to lower our convictions and standards. Temptations, tests, trials, adversities, and especially the many winds of doctrine constantly beset us. Thus many parents have lost their appreciation for some of the plain, simple Biblical practices they once held dear and practiced faithfully. In many cases their children have grown up and have adopted other practices and standards, and the undiscerning [sic] parents, having accepted such change as 'progress' have followed suit. Many ministers no longer believe, teach and practice the aforementioned simple truths of the Word, as they once did, which has also made a tremendous contribution to the unsettled, unstable, unsure condition of older Christians. Today many 'pillars' in the church no longer are pillars, because they do not know what to believe, do not know assuredly what the Lord requires. Today the foundation for True Faith and Scriptural Obedience is being undermined. The "Thus saith the Lord" and "Nevertheless what saith the Scripture?", and "What doth the Lord require of thee?" no longer rule the pulpit and press. But these eternally fixed commands of the unchanging God, are being replaced by the more convenient, relative (unfixed) opinions and doctrines of unfaithful men. Truth is still to be mined where it always was, but the crust of debris and rubbish that has accumulated on top makes the digging and finding more difficult, and the spiritual slumber so characteristic of these last days has robbed many of the initiative to dig for themselves and to "know" and "do" what the Scriptures say.[34]

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[32] David Null, *Introduction to Mennonite Doctrine and Practice* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers Inc., 2004), 58 & 65.
[33] Virgil Schrock, in Mervin Baer, *Marching On*, 176.
[34] Aquilla E. Riehl, *Functions and Objectives of Rod and Staff Publishers* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, 1965), 7-8.

This lengthy quotation taken from an early Conservative publication, helps to explain how Conservatives understood the demise of the Mennonite Church, and also shows their passion for the "plain, simple Biblical practices" founded on the "simple truths of the Word." It also stresses the view of Scripture as "eternally fixed commands" that must be taught and enforced so that there is "Scriptural Obedience." Nowhere is this more clearly displayed than in the education of children. The birth of the Conservative Mennonite movement came at a time when many fundamentalists were removing their children from the public school systems because of its increasing secularization and evil influences like evolution, dancing and immodest clothing. Conservatives quickly founded private schools and a Christian curriculum to teach and train their children. Much of this was a direct reaction against what they observed to be happening in the Mennonite Church.

> The decline in the churches in the past decades has been largely due to the downfall of Scriptural authority and maintaining of proper church order.
>
> A good illustration of this is in the area of child training. When the parents fail to exercise proper discipline in the home, the child immediately seeks to find the limits of parental authority. We have seen many parents becoming slaves to their children rather than demanding strict obedience to every command of the parent…. Consequently, to lose our grip on our churches is to lose our power to lead our churches in the direction ordained by God.[35]

The importance of child rearing and keeping a "grip" on the church led to a proliferation of books and preaching on the subject in the Conservative movement. One of the most insidious modernistic ideas was considered to be the psychology-induced backlash against spanking.

> The cruel, atheistic theories of allowing the child to express its will, instead of breaking it, are bringing upon us a world of rebellion and resultant unrest and confusion. It is Satan's last thrust-mass rebellion against God's authority. Will the Mennonite Church continue to play into his hands by preparing their children for the work of the antichrist in these closing scenes of time? Faithful correction with the rod will "deliver his soul from hell."[36]

[35] Baer, *Marching On*, 131-2.
[36] Paul M. Landis, *The Responsibility of Parents in Teaching and Training Their Children* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, n.d.), 15.

The tone of this writer and the reference to the apocalypse are typical of dispensationalism. Certainly not all Conservatives are so eager to enforce spankings of their children, but for all of them it is a biblical imperative founded on Bible truth. And for all Conservatives, raising a child is an obligation to thoroughly indoctrinate their children "in the way of truth." The opinion that "our children are one of the largest mission fields" is frequently expressed. This means even changing math workbook exercises that mention things like fairs and movies to "exercises that deal with how far to the annual meeting, how much for missions, and how the principle of stewardship apply in the handling of finances."[37]

Based on "Bible truth" Conservatives can easily observe the immodest and non-conformed dress of the Mennonite Church members, and report that "they do not maintain … a Scriptural position on this One Cardinal Doctrine of the Word, and that is Non-Conformity in Apparel and Outer Adornment, and are therein and thereby unScriptural."[38]

This section exposes the many issues Conservatives had with the Mennonite Church and it articulates the need for plain truth based on a clear reading of the Bible, separatism, supernatural rebirth, obedience and discipline. The first three issues are directly linked with fundamentalist ideology, and obedience and discipline are reinforced by the principles established by the first three. On all these main themes Conservatives sound like some of the most strident Mennonite fundamentalists. The belief in "simple faith and obedience" is the logic that demands loyalty and obedience to the teachings spelled out by the church. It is an easy conclusion for Conservatives to determine that those who do not follow the clear commands of the Bible, as they understand them, are not taking the Bible seriously.

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[37] John Coblentz, Merna Shank, et. al. *Proclaiming God's Truth: 25 Years at Christian Light Publications 1969-1994* (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications Inc., 1994), 45 & 128. Also see: Riehl, *Functions and Objectives*, 13.
[38] Riehl, *Functions and Objectives*, 16.

> If professing Christian churches believed the doctrines and obeyed the commands found within the covers of their Bibles, they would not long remain on the course of apostasy they now follow.[39]

Conservatives, like fundamentalists, frequently use hyperbolic and strident language to warn of the pervasive danger of apostasy in ecumenism, education, liberalism, evolution, modern philosophies and the apostate/nominal church, including the Mennonite Church and other churches. In dispensationalist, eschatological terms, Conservatives indicate their prevailing belief in the universal movement away from truth that verifies the imminent return of the Lord.

It is in the Conservatives' interpretation of the Bible, their steadfast stance on separatism, chronic suspicion and reaction to "apostasy," commitment to holiness teaching, and use of common sense reasoning that the influence of fundamentalism is observable.

Reclaiming Nonconformity

From the onset Conservatives were very pragmatic in their approach to developing rules and teachings that would counter all of the weaknesses that they experienced in the Mennonite Church. They fully accepted the doctrinal precepts of Mennonite fundamentalism including the seven ordinances and all of the restrictions. They also adopted and reprinted dozens of books and articles published by the Mennonite Church that promoted and upheld Mennonite fundamentalist doctrines. At first it appears that the goal was simply to reinstate the practice of the church of the former three decades, but it was not long before Conservatives felt they needed to add to the rules that had been put in place in an earlier era by the Mennonite Church.

By comparison with the Anabaptist historical theology of the Bender school based on intellectual inquiry, Conservative Mennonites were consciously anti-intellectual. They shunned

[39] Lester Bauman, *Thy Word is Truth: The Inspiration and Formation of the Scriptures* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers Inc., 2005), 20.

intellectual pursuits and put all of their efforts into simple practical explanations based on the Bible. This was a direct reaction to the emphasis on education in Mennonite institutions and the fact that even the fundamentalist leaning colleges, Eastern Mennonite College in Virginia and Hesston College in Kansas, had abandoned biblical indoctrination for more academic pursuits after the 1950s. Conservatives correctly understood that many of the changes in the Mennonite Church had come from the influences of the Mennonite academics.[40]

> Many leaders of the new generation were educated in the Mennonite institutions of higher learning and had learned to trust human reasoning rather than biblical truth taught by the Holy Spirit. In the home churches, many came to sympathize with their view and trust them. These men, lacking in simple faith and obedience, believed that the Mennonite Church needed to be led to influence their world and nation with more than the Bible. They determined that the world needed to be helped to peace through social betterment, and to plenty through advice, food, and clothes. Through the mission programs and material organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee, they worked with Protestant and liberal Mennonite organizations in the field.[41]

The suspicion of "human reasoning" rather than "biblical truth taught by the Holy Spirit" resonates with dispensationalist disdain for intellectualism. "Simple faith" and "obedience" are constantly used to express the idea that the most important thing is complete trust in the clear commands of the Bible, substantiated by obedient actions. It was this belief, that Christianity was fundamentally about practical living, which propelled the movement and saw a huge output of practical teaching. Besides the corrupting influence of intellectual pursuits, the other major contributor to the degeneration in the Mennonite Church, according to some Conservatives, was the radio that "exposed homes to the world" and "presented a constant pressure toward conformity to the world."[42] However not all Conservative churches prohibit the use of the radio.

As Scott has noted, the Conservative Mennonites' aim is total Christian consistency and they

[40] I am arguing here as previously, that the influence of Bender and other Mennonite scholars was one of the major causes in changing the theological thinking of the Mennonite Church.
[41] Virgil Schrock, in Mervin Baer, *Marching On*, 171.
[42] Virgil Schrock, in Mervin Baer, *Marching On*, 173.

> meticulously and articulately address every conceivable area of doctrine and practice in their effort to follow the full counsel of God…. Although they believe there are true Christians in other denominations, conservative Mennonites are generally convinced that no other religious group comes closer to the true biblical faith than they do.[43]

Confidence in the central truth of their teachings reaches both ways so Conservatives can write that "most Mennonites today range from being traditional and not very spiritually-minded to being tolerant, broad-minded, and spiritually careless."[44] In contrast they understand themselves as following the faith of the Mennonite tradition and being spiritual. Because of their total assurance founded on the Bible, some of them condescendingly judge Old Order groups seeing them as

> willing to conform to an outward standard but who, too often, were lacking in spiritual life. These members were often materialistic and shallow-minded about spiritual things and cared little for the things of God.
>
> This group pulled themselves into a shell and ignored the Bible commands to reach out to the world around them. They became ingrown and self-centered….

In spite of his harsh judgment this writer goes on to suggest that within this group there was always "an undertone … a deep desire to serve God – that has mostly been lacking in the liberal conferences, except during the Fundamentalist period."[45] It is probable that the positive this writer sees in the Old Order group is reference to those who were moving from the Old Order into the Conservative churches. The fact that fundamentalism is mentioned as a positive, is one of the rare explicit statements illustrating the connection between Conservatives and fundamentalism. More commonly, there is no awareness of the major shifts in the Mennonite Church at the turn of the century. Conservative Mennonite history is seen as a pristine continuous lineage from early Anabaptism that is consistent in thought and practice with their own views.

[43] Scott, *An Introduction*, 199.
[44] Null, *Introduction to Mennonite Doctrine*, 9-10.
[45] Bauman, *The Little Flock*, 100.

The need for nonconformity and restrictions to uphold them is something that was argued for constantly by Mennonite fundamentalists and carried over into the Conservative movement. One Conservative writer quotes the renowned Mennonite fundamentalist writer John Horsch.

> The claim to stand for the simple life and for nonconformity to the world has a real meaning only where definite restrictions are observed, and transgression is made an occasion for discipline. In the absence of such restrictions it is impossible for a church to handle this question according to scriptural requirements.[46]

Even where there is no strong biblical command on a particular issue Conservatives counsel the need for moderation and for tradition. Tradition, meaning the way things are done, is seen as a moderating and unifying force that should not be changed unless there is something better to replace it.[47] Although Conservatives frequently defer to "the way things have always been done," they do not promote historical research. Conservatives sometimes have a confident view of themselves as

> Christians who obey the entire Gospel…. We are willing to be different because we are serious about getting to heaven…. We are different because we love Jesus. He gave his life for us, and we want to live our lives for Him. He has a right to tell us what to do in every area…. We are different because we believe the Bible – every word of it…. We are also different because we believe it is wrong for those who profess to be Christians to live in sin . . . the Bible teaches that we must continue to make a conscientious and sincere effort to walk with God every day…. Our church has compiled a list of expressions of how a Christian can realistically express Biblical Christianity in the twentieth century…. When you look at us, we hope it will make you think of God and help you to see Jesus as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world…. So if you are serious about getting to heaven, come and worship with us.[48]

Central to Conservative ecclesiology is the belief that God "has a right to tell us what to do in every area" and thus the church is required to compile lists of obligations, interpreting clearly the dictates of the Bible for its members. Following after Christ means following the clear

[46] John Horsch, quoted by Lloyd Hartzler, *Personal Appearance in the Light of God's Word* (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications, 1972), 8.
[47] Bauman, *Thy Word is Truth*, 145. This importance of tradition may have some relationship to the Old Order tradition of *Ordnung*.
[48] Scott, *An Introduction*, 199, quoting from a Rod and Staff Publishers tract entitled, "People Call Us Mennonites."

commands of Scripture down to every little detail. It also requires "present[ing] men with plain, simple, whole truth, and nothing but the truth…"[49]

From the beginning of the movement Conservatives soon adopted new more stringent rules for the church to follow. The Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, a schism of the Lancaster Conference, not only specified a "plain cape dress," but further stipulated "without trimming," "mid-calf length skirt," "three quarter length or longer sleeves," "not … transparent" and "shall be subdued modest colors." Hosiery was required in black "and of a serviceable weight" and dress shoes were required in black "and shall not follow the unhealthful [sic] and sensual designs of the world." The acceptable standard for the men was "the regulation coat, plain hat, and black footwear," and a ban on neckties. Among a lengthy list of worldly pleasures, which are clearly restricted, are fairs, parades, and circuses. Also the use of radio is off limits and even the dangers of daily papers and magazines are warned against. So that there can be no doubt it is clearly stated that all of the restrictions are "considered the minimum standard."[50]

Many of these restrictions had already been addressed in the Lancaster Conference, but what was new was the way they were now uniformly enforced. For example, men's clothing was not as highly regulated in the Lancaster Conference as women's and many of the men did not wear the "plain coat," a clerical-like collared coat that is buttoned from collar to waist.[51] By comparison, every male member of the Conservative Eastern Mennonite Church is required to wear the plain coat. In 1993 the constitution also specified the required thickness of stockings ("30 denier") and for the head-covering "the front piece being at least one and one-half inches

[49] Riehl, *Functions and Objectives*, 9.
[50] *Statement of Christian Doctrine and Rules and Discipline of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church and Related Areas* (Lebanon, PA, 1968).
[51] H. Jean Hess, "Addressing One Another on the Changing Demands of Culture and Economy: The Mennonite Church Doctrine of Nonconformity, 1930-1959" (Goshen, IN: Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Masters thesis, 2004), accessed online July 18, 2007 at www.mcusa-archives.org/jhorsh/jhorsh2004/hess_title.htm

wide." Likewise, by the 1994 handbook of Eastern Mennonite's official winter Bible school, women were required to wear the head-covering to bed.[52] Conservatives like Mennonite fundamentalists endeavored to bring about nonconformity by uniformity. However in their desire to be altogether consistent, which is their highest goal, they put even more energy into developing practical rules than their forebears ever did.

Increasing Enforcement

Even in the more lenient or moderate Conservative churches, as worldliness and nonconformity insidiously crept into some practices, leaders would feel the need to legislate new rules. With time the Conservative church went much farther than had Mennonite fundamentalism in uniform thoroughness, defining and encoding dozens of issues legislating far more than the Mennonite Church ever had.

For instance when head-covering sizes began to decrease, one church instituted a one-inch minimum requirement for the front piece on the head-covering. To curb the decline of dressing up for church in the summer men were required and monitored for having their top buttons closed; this was on top of the expectation that their shirts would be long-sleeved and not rolled up beyond the elbows. Hair for men was also a problem and thus side-burns were only allowed to be mid-ear and hair needed to be neatly tapered at the back and sides.

Weddings became a major issue as couples slowly challenged the way things had been done previously and introduced new ideas. This led to a list of restrictions on such things as the color of the bride's shoes and the length of time it takes for the processional. Premarital

[52] Graybill, "To Remind Us of Who We Are," 64-65. The winter Bible schools tend to be even more restrictive than most of the sponsoring churches. When my sisters went to winter Bible school in the early 1970s they were required to wear bonnets and the men had to be able to get a ketchup bottle down their pant-leg to prove their pants were not too form fitting.

counseling meant going over the rules and making sure that the wedding would be done "decently and in order," in keeping with the church's practice. Similarly youth social events were guarded to protect the decay of the church standard. The central concern and constant buzzword was consistency, meaning not changing or deviating from the traditional customs too quickly and thus any new practice or idea required ministerial sanction.[53]

These practical issues and many more were preached frequently with entire sermons dedicated to "keeping the faith" as they were often summarily addressed. The twice yearly "preparatory service," which was generally held a couple of weeks before communion, was a time for the bishop to sermonize on the dangers facing the church (mainly nonconformity) and it was then required for all members to give public testimony to "peace with God, the church, and my fellowmen." Such a testimony meant a personal affirmation that the individual was in harmony with the church and would make an effort to support the whole program of the church including all restrictions. The rules of the church are

> a test of a person's surrender to God and the church [and] only those who commit themselves to the discipline of the church are privileged to take Communion. This is an effort to keep sin and self out of the church. The way is then open to attract penitent people into the fellowship of believers."[54]

In the ultra-Conservative churches the teachings address even more stringent pragmatic issues that need to be challenged to keep the church pure and the approach often becomes even more strident. With a strong emphasis on separation and a good dose of common sense and godly intuition an ultra-conservative bishop can judge that

[53] These are personal examples taken from my years at Countryside Mennonite Fellowship Church in Hawkesville, Ontario. Not all these issues may necessarily be put in the constitution of the church, but written or orally given, these restrictions were to be taken seriously. Even if a bishop did not personally believe in some of these prohibitions, he would normally enforce them to keep other vocal members pacified.

[54] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership* (Ephrata, PA: Eastern Mennonite Publications, 1984, fifth printing 2000), 115.

> when the girls have a big blob of hair down over their ears, and make sure that their ears are covered, supposedly to make them look nicer, there is something wrong with our idea of separation. Anything that is done on the basis of pride is bypassing God's principles of separation. A teenager in our circles who has hair growing on his neck about as thick as my thumb is not separation minded, and his father and preacher are losing the concept fast.[55]

By jumping from the issue - hair over the ears - to separation, ordained men effectively convince their audience that the issue is based on biblical grounds. There is no need of an elaborate hermeneutic or of complicated exegesis of the text; common sense simply verifies the obvious factuality of such a statement. To question such logical reasoning is seen as highly unreasonable or outright rebellion against the leaders and the church. On the issue of hair it is also common to judge that "when the hair become prominent, we can usually conclude that submission of heart is lacking."[56] With such reasoning they have two biblical reasons to condemn a woman who does not have her hair pulled tightly back underneath the head-covering, lack of separation and lack of submission.

All Conservatives believe that "God's Word gives principles for godly conduct in society, for order in the Christian home, and for the organization, structure, and purity of the church." And they are confident that "these distinctive beliefs and teachings are based on specific teachings in the Bible, not on ideas of an individual or on extra-Biblical writings."[57] Because non-conformity and dress regulations are founded on the Word of God they become synonymous with the Bible. The way Conservatives equate the Bible and dress regulations is characteristic of the dispensationalist's penchant to do the same, so that orthodoxy can be judged based on the Christian's acceptance or rejection of the established dress standard or

[55] Baer, *Marching On*, 160. The irony here is that wanting to look nice is not acceptable in separatist thinking, yet in many other places Conservatives emphasize how beautiful plainness is. This type of plain teaching is frequently preached in Conservative churches covering many practical issues related to dress.
[56] *Instructions for Christian Living*, 92. Also see: Merle Ruth, *The Significance of the Christian Woman's Veiling* (Rod and Staff Publishers Inc., 1980), 20.
[57] David Null, *Introduction to Mennonite Doctrine*, 9.

dispensationalist claims.[58] With this uncomplicated approach Conservatives declare that "the Bible promotes a distinctive, uniform garb for the people of God."[59] And to bolster that claim they paradoxically assert, "nothing that cannot meet the standards of the Word should be discarded immediately."[60]

In addition to the assumed biblical mandate for non-conformed dress, there are also multiple other meanings that support and promote its enforcement. Plain dress, especially for women, expresses anti-fashion values, gender distinctions, performs as a sacred symbol, reflects emotional security, expresses submission and helps to maintain a unified church, is a witness to the world, promotes harmony and virtuous behavior, protects from harm, and is "simply" beautiful.[61]

In support of non-conformed attire, the Eastern Pennsylvania Church declares that "someone calculated that the subject of dress is mentioned over 1400 times in the entire Bible." Because critical thinking is something to be shunned and because such a claim is premised on simple reason they feel no need to substantiate their sources with a reference. Thus they sincerely conclude that such a claim confirms God's major concern for the way they dress and means taking the teaching on dress seriously.[62] Another writer associates the traditional Mennonite "cape dress" as a descendant of the Greek garment derived from the Greek word, translated "apparel," in 1 Timothy 2:9 which had a second piece of cloth over a woman's body to hide her shape. A major reason for this distinctive dress is to be a "consistent witness to the world," for it is reasoned "the ungodly desperately need this testimony as a reminder of God and holy living,

[58] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 57.
[59] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 66.
[60] Baer, *Marching On*, 134.
[61] Graybill, "To Remind Us of Who We Are," 53-77; *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 65-66 & 90.
[62] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 65.

as well as a rebuke and an example."[63] With indisputable intelligent observation some believe that

> clothes never stop talking about you; if they are immodest and fashionable, they argue that your heart is vain, hard, wayward … if your clothes are modest and plain, they speak of a heart set to win God's blessings, a citizenship in heaven, and a love of God's Word.[64]

Similarly, based on never having heard of a plain sister being molested, the belief of supernatural protection is spread.[65] This interpretation is also sometimes supported by I Corinthians 11:10, "For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels" (KJV).

In an effort to maintain the biblical mandate of nonconformity Conservatives all teach the importance of developing nonconformity in children at a young age. Because clothes show what is in the heart, even so "adornment of children's clothes expresses pride in the heart of the parents." By the same token because clothes are a constant witness to others, even non-Christians, they bring "an obligation to behave in Christian manner and only go to appropriate places."[66] Beth Graybill, who has researched dress patterns of women in the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, observes how "uniform clothing enlists all onlookers as 'norm enforcers.'" As one woman expressed, "If I find myself going over the speed limit and oh! I remember that I have a covering on, you know [laughs], what, what are they going to think of Christ?"[67] In Graybill's study proper attire can have many positive roles, so that the church with its rules are seen by some women like Jean as

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[63] Hartzler, *Personal Appearance*, 14-15.
[64] William McGrath quoted by Karen M. Johnson, *Christian Modesty in the 20th Century* (distributed by, Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers Inc., 1993), 15. A note about referencing William McGrath is in order because although he has long associated with the Beachy Amish-Mennonite group, he was part of the early Conservative movement in Hartville, Ohio, and continued to be a dynamic and influential speaker in Conservative churches for many years. McGrath is an ordained man and has been active in publishing, evangelism and foreign missions.
[65] See: Johnson, *Christian Modesty*; Graybill, "Mennonite Women and Their Bishops," 279; Graybill, "To Remind Us of Who We Are," 64; William McGrath, *A Biblical and Historical Review of the Christian Woman's Veiling* (East Rochester, OH: Amish Mennonite Publications, 1986), 12-13 & 26.
[66] Johnson, *Christian Modesty*, 13 & 43. Also see: Graybill, "To Remind Us of Who We Are," 66; and Hartzler, *Personal Appearance*, 12.
[67] Graybill, "To Remind Us of Who We Are," 66.

> a lush, green garden with a fence around it. And I like that fence." In her analogy, church bishops serve as guardians of that fence, shoring up the boundaries to protect the flock inside. To give an example, women in my study noted that the following dress infractions would result in bishop censure: hemming a dress too short, putting a large collar on a dress, adding extra trim or wide ruffle to the sleeves, or top stitching with contrasting thread. While seemingly minor to an outsider, these clear limits provide a woman the emotional comfort of knowing when she has strayed and when she is living as her God commands.[68]

Outward appearance is a manifestation of what is in the heart and compliance with the church rules on attire is an expression of an inner attitude of surrender to the church and to God.

> Because objective evaluation of a person's commitment to the faith is impossible, symbolic forms of self-expression are closely monitored. Visual cues are analyzed for signs of conformity to group standards.[69]

Ultimately the lack of dress compliance, or lack of compliance on any rule for that matter, indicates that a person is in defiance of the church and has moved away from God.[70] In case anyone might get the wrong impression, Conservatives clearly teach that "rules and regulations are not seen as a means of salvation nor a guarantee of spirituality, but a way of giving guidance and help to Christians."[71] Nor do they intend in any way for rules to be the most important focus. Rather the central point is the "'all things' of the true message of Jesus Christ."[72] The energy which Conservatives put into preserving a unified standard reflects a desire to present a clear testimony of Christ to the world and the relinquishment of individual ideas is the sacrifice they willingly pay for unity, witness and purity.[73] In many ways clothes serve like a perpetual communion remembrance. Clothes and communion are both a sacred symbol with no

[68] Graybill, "Mennonite Women and Their Bishops," 270.
[69] Graybill and Arthur, "The Social Control of Women's Bodies," 21.
[70] See: Graybill and Arthur, "The Social Control of Women's Bodies," 26; *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 65.
[71] Scott, *An Introduction*, 204.
[72] Baer, *Marching On*, 135-6.
[73] Scott, *An Introduction*, 204.

merit on their own, nor do they bestow salvation on the participant, but they clearly express what is in the heart, symbolize and strengthen unity, and remind one of God.[74]

This section highlights the creative hermeneutic that Conservatives have developed over time. In many ways it rivals the innovations of dispensationalism with its simple self-evident logic and firm arguments based on the biblical text. A huge amount of time and effort go into creating ways to support and promote the teaching on nonconformity. A brief survey of the literature from the Mennonite Church up to the late 1950s compared to the literature spawned by the Conservative movement on the same subject shows that Conservatives adopted the biblical approach used by Mennonite fundamentalists including common sense rationalizations. However, the extent to which Conservatives take their practical rules far exceeds what was established or practiced in the Mennonite Church.[75] The moderate groups would be closest in practice to the earlier Mennonite fundamentalists, but as illustrated the Conservatives have moved beyond even the most adamant Mennonite fundamentalists in their elaboration and administration of regulations.

The common sense approach used by Conservatives does not allow for intellectual inquiry or debate. People who dare to question even those traditions that are not clear biblical restrictions, like closing top buttons or segregated seating, are not taken seriously. In many instances people are silenced with psychological shame techniques; wrong questions, feelings and emotions are squelched rather than invited. This is so systemic that many Conservatives do not even recognize it. Because the Bible is so clear there is very little need to question, and

[74] As far as I know Conservatives have never made this analogy between clothes and communion. But there are important similarities as mentioned here. The main correlation between clothes and communion is that by wearing the wrong clothing blocks one from communion.

[75] The amount of literature produced by Conservatives to promote and support their ideas is very large indeed and I have only been able to give a small sampling of the overall material. An interesting study would be to take one issue like the head-covering and trace its development in the Mennonite Church and Conservative movement.

questions are quickly correlated with questioning the authority of the Bible and/or leaders. While aggresso-conservatives certainly set the stage for Conservative theology, the systematic thoroughness in which Conservatives addressed every danger went beyond what any of the most avid fundamentalist Mennonites were ever inclined to.

Apostasy, Authority and Schism

Like dispensationalists, Conservative frequently and loudly sound the warning against the stealthy evil of apostasy.

> Apostasy is also a very real threat to us today. All around us are individuals, congregations, and church groups drifting from 'the faith.' When one's love for Christ and the Word grows cold, his love for the world increases. The terrible end of this process is "blackness for ever."[76]

Apostasy is seen as even more subtle than persecution. The new Mennonite persecution in America is not physical, but it is directed at the mind. This persecution is even more deceptive than the old way of attacking the body.[77] There will be a growing increase of Satan's power and the rise of the decadent and apostate church.[78] They firmly believe that the natural tendency of humans is to drift toward complacency and to be absorbed by the world.[79] Such a view leads to the scrutiny of everything.

Nonconformity is a comprehensive safety net that Conservatives developed to protect against apostasy. For instance the head-covering is the "strength and solidarity to the whole structure" of nonconformity. Thus "when once this practice falls by the way, it is only a matter of time until every other mark of Christian nonconformity becomes extinct."[80] By this logic the size and style of the covering, the type and color of material used, the way the hair is combed,

[76] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 100.
[77] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 99-100.
[78] Coblentz, Shenk, et al. *Proclaiming God's Truth*, 120.
[79] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 99-100.
[80] Ruth, *The Significance of the Christian Woman's Veiling*, 5.

are all safeguards to protect the wearing of the head-covering. And because the women look to the men as their spiritual leaders it is imperative for the men to also promote nonconformity in practical ways. This requires long sleeved shirts, closing all buttons for worship or otherwise, wearing a plain-suit, combing and styling hair in a certain ways, and for some groups not wearing T-shirts.

While Conservatives may agree that not all these restrictions are directly required by the Bible, they see them as a direct link to the safety net of nonconformity. If any of the restrictions are loosened the fear is always that nonconformity is in decline, so that if top buttons are not enforced then the next thing will also be challenged and like a row of tumbling dominos the ordinance of the head-covering is threatened.[81] To be on the safe side it then makes sense to keep adding rules rather than relinquishing them. This exhaustive approach reaches into every part of the Conservative life, the home, the church, and the school. Not all Conservative churches are continually adding rules, but this has been the general direction of the movement overall. The fragility of unity and faithfulness requires great vigilance.

> Apostasy starts with a stubborn person who finds it impossible to conform to the body of Christ. If we fail to deal with that person, we failed our calling, and the limits will constantly have to be changed to accommodate the disobedient person. One disobedient person soon gathers more.[82]

The flow of authority is one of the important structures and enforcers of unity and uniformity in the church. At the top of the structure is Jesus who

> was lifted up to a position of authority that includes being "head over all things to the church." Every disciple of Jesus must individually hear Jesus' authoritative call to deny himself, to hate his own life, and to forsake all that he has. That absolute submission of each disciple is the groundwork for the absolute obedience of the church.[83]

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[81] This is similar to the thinking of Mennonite fundamentalist Oscar Burkholder above, when he predicted that the loss of nonconformity and nonresistance would lead to the loss of the seven ordinances and the doctrines of redemption and salvation.
[82] Baer, *Marching On*, 133.
[83] John Coblentz, *The Upward Call: Studies in Christian Discipleship* (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications Inc., 1997), 29.

After Jesus, or God, the church is the next level of authority. Within the church, men have authority over women, and finally parents have authority over children. To make things run smoothly in this multi-tiered authority structure, submission is an essential quality. And "true self-denying obedience is the prime requisite for spiritual life."[84] Because God is the author of authority, "to resist those in authority is equivalent to resisting God."[85]

Because rules are considered minimum requirements, even the smallest non-compliance with any rule or restriction of the church can be understood as rebellion and may need to be confronted by a concerned ordained "brother." This is likewise based on the domino theory where not confronting one small sin will lead to larger and larger offenses. Small deviations are simply confronted and failing members are asked to amend their ways, but if a person is not compliant this is seen as a serious offense that threatens the stability of the church. Expelling a member from the church is generally an end result that only comes after much time and effort has been made to correct the individual.[86]

Conservatives do not advocate blind obedience to all persons in authority, but neither do they consider the possibility that sometimes authority becomes toxic. While hundreds of sermons are preached about submission to parents and church authorities there is no mention of how to determine when such authority is out of order. This sometimes leaves children and church members at the mercy of unscrupulous actions by people who have power, both inside and outside the church, and has caused untold emotional pain and damage. Also many questions and matters are clearly not open for discussion, such as a clear policy on sexual abuse.

[84] Baer, *Scriptural Unity*, 4.
[85] Coblentz, *The Upward Call*, 120.
[86] Scott, *An Introduction*, 204.

As Nathan Yoder has pointed out, Mennonite fundamentalism evolved into a personality bigger than its promoters. "This ethos had a power of its own which imposed itself for good or ill upon other individuals."[87] One such example was G. R. Brunk I who wrote, "We have a closed policy as to all the Bible teaches, all that the Church rules that does not militate against the word - all that a Bishop rules in the interests of spiritual welfare." Yoder observes, "Such candor lay bare the reality that power exercised in the name of the church could actually be rooted in personal charisma or godliness, conviction or opinion."[88] This ethos inherent in fundamentalism also carried over into the Conservative Mennonite movement.

While all early Conservatives promoted a clear standard of practice for the church, they did not uniformly agree on what issues should be legislated, for their experiences were as varied as the districts of the Conference they came out of. In the first decade these differences were not a major problem, but it was not long before there was upheaval in the Conservative Mennonite movement and the differences became pronounced. Some of the churches allowed musical instruments in the home and did not require men to wear the plain coat or women to wear a cape dress. Within the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario for instance, bishop Moses Roth enforced the cape dress while his co-bishop Curtis Cressman did not. Having spent most of their years in the Ontario conference where these types of differences were common, they were apparently comfortable with this diversity. However, the cross-border connections that quickly developed in the Conservative movement revealed some deep differences and this became problematic.

During the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a growing concern in numerous Conservative churches to uphold an even more uniform and plain standard than had been

[87] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 384.
[88] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 255.

previously experienced. Some of the bishops in the United States were enforcing prohibition of the radio and more rigid dress standards and in turn were agitating other leaders to do likewise.[89] Other leaders were uncomfortable with the greater inflexibility and were concerned about legalism. In Ontario,

> A few of the ministers made an appeal to hold to the present position and focus more on encouraging our people to accept each other in spite of varying convictions resulting from different backgrounds and experiences, rather than asking them to accept the positions of the majority in the nonconference movement. By some this was interpreted as liberalism, and tension developed within the ministry.[90]

The more completely the fundamentalist suppositions about absolute truth and the clarity of the Bible to prescribe clear applications are accepted, the more rigid and divisive they become, as when they are applied systematically to dress. In a growing escalation of words and emotions, the 1970's resulted in two major divisions in the Conservative movement creating what Scott has labeled "ultra-Conservatives" and "moderate-Conservatives."[91] The Mid-Atlantic Mennonite Fellowship and Midwest Mennonite Fellowship became part of the "moderate" movement while the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church and the Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario became part of the ultra-Conservative wing.

The ultra-Conservatives pushed for more central authority to apply proper administration, seeing this as necessary to bring about the needed changes in the church.[92] Although moderates retained more congregational autonomy, they too discovered that at times it took increasing pressure and developing more rules to retain nonconformity, but generally coercion is subtler in this group than in the ultra-Conservative groups. The tendency to divide is particularly prevalent

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[89] Scott, *An Introduction*, 182.
[90] Martin, "History and Formation," 5-6.
[91] Scott, *An Introduction*, 162. As mentioned earlier even these individual groupings are not one cohesive group, but break down into finer categories that may or may not associate with each other. I remember well the emotional tension during and after the split in Ontario. I was around nine years old at the time, and it was pretty confusing to understand why there was so much tension.
[92] See: Baer, *Marching On*, 137; Martin, "History and Formation," 5-6.

in the most conservative groups, and they have experienced many more schisms. Although the issues that cause division would probably seem insignificant to an outsider, Conservatives take these differences very seriously frequently cutting all ties with the churches they divide from.

This parallels what was already discussed about the fundamentalist movement as it came to be equated more and more with sectarianism and dispensationalism.[93] Fundamentalists and Conservatives tend to understand themselves as the remnant of the true church and equate their distinctive beliefs with true biblical obedience. In the Conservative movement "the beard, size of covering, color of cars, type of coat or hat, and plain colors or checks or flowers in dress materials have all come into focus in a belabored attempt to come to a Biblical position."[94] In spite of this bishop's acknowledgment of "much grief and sorrow," the problem is pinned on "individualism or promotion of ideas that cause schism by minority in-groups who are unwilling to accept the Scriptural consensus of the group as a whole."[95]

Earlier when this bishop was part of the minority group of dissenters in the Mennonite Church he felt the only option was division, but now as a majority leader he denounced the minority groups as promoting "petty carnalities."[96] Although he acknowledged discord as a major problem, nowhere does his theology appear to have changed to make sense of the new data, rather it seems to have cemented his resolve that there is only one right way, that of his majority position. His list of "sound principles" for a "sound church," like fundamentalism, placed at the top "accepting the Bible as the only authority for life and conduct." It also listed "clean communion," "Scriptural church government" and "Scriptural separation and radical

[93] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*. 165.
[94] Baer, *Marching On*, 141-2.
[95] Baer, *Marching On*, 81.
[96] See: Baer, *Scriptural Unity*, 150.

discipleship."[97] Conservatives and fundamentalists put a high degree of emphasis on their reading of Scripture, which becomes the foundation for everything else.

The ethos of fundamentalism champions "truth" at all costs and in self-fulfilling prophecy the majority gives in to apostasy and the minority continues to divide into separatist enclaves. While liberals were consolidating and searching for mutuality, the fundamentalists were staking out and defending their absolute truth claims. Because truth is seen as a commodity to be protected and defended at all costs fundamentalists are willing to stake almost everything on their claims, including dividing over what appears from the outside as minutia.

In the beginning, the Conservative movement was a reaction to the declining importance of fundamentalist propositions in the Mennonite Church. More than anything else Conservatives were determined to preserve the standards established in the era of Mennonite fundamentalism and one of the primary areas of concern was nonconformity. The movement away from fundamentalism in the Mennonite Church and the reaction by Conservatives to separate themselves from what they identified as apostasy mirrors what was happening in North American evangelicalism. Conservatives, to be true to their convictions, saw no other way than to clearly differentiate themselves from any identification with those in the Mennonite Church who compromised true biblical obedience.

With time the desire to clearly define issues such as nonconformity into clear rules to be obeyed and enforced, led the stricter leaders to set even greater prohibitions to protect what they understood to be the integrity of the church. During the Mennonite fundamentalist era the Mennonite Church had a diversity of theological opinions and practices that were expressed. But as the Conservative movement progressed diversity became less and less acceptable and

[97] Baer, *Marching On*, 154-5.

ultimately it divided into distinct sub-groups with clear affinities and boundaries. All Conservative groups eventually added more rules as a method of preventing “drift” from the standards of the church.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EFFECTS OF FUNDAMENTALISM

The previous chapter gave an overview of some of the developments in the theological thought and practice of the Conservative Mennonite movement. This exposed numerous issues and similarities between Conservative Mennonites and fundamentalism, and indicates the many ways in which Conservative beliefs have been adopted from fundamentalism. To further clarify those issues of fundamentalism that have resonance with traditional Mennonite belief and practice, such as a high view of Scripture and the need for separation, we will compare Conservatives to several earlier segments of the Mennonite Church. These comparisons help to not only differentiate how Conservatives have changed from the streams of Mennonite tradition, but also how they have adopted and used the suppositions of fundamentalism to define themselves and their beliefs.

In many ways Conservatives went beyond the fundamentalist integration of their Mennonite predecessors and this also becomes clearer when comparing them with other Mennonite and fundamentalist groups. Some of the most pervasive influences of fundamentalism in the Conservative movement are the view of the Bible as a clear book of propositions that are easily understood, the broad application of common sense, and the need for separation and holiness. Focusing on these fundamentalist issues more closely reveals how they shape or relate to other fundamentalist principles.

Conservatives and Mennonite Fundamentalism

As we have seen, from the very beginning of the Conservative movement there was a complete acceptance of the fundamentalist suppositions as inherited from Mennonite fundamentalism that led to doctrinal constructions, simple obedience to clear biblical commands, and a strong emphasis on practical nonconformity issues. This is evident in the wide reception given to the 1921 "Christian Fundamentals," and numerous reprints of Mennonite fundamentalist writers. The eighteen articles of the "Fundamentals" define much more precisely how the church is to conduct itself than did the Schleitheim confession. It also embraced the inerrant and infallible reading of Scripture that was the foundation of the fundamentalist movement.

What Conservatives did not adopt from Mennonite fundamentalism was the positive respect and desire for learning and education. In comparison to the many Mennonite fundamentalist leaders who promoted the importance of education, quite a few being teachers, many Conservative leaders and laity do not even complete high-school. This however is another indicator of a type of fundamentalist influence; earlier fundamentalism was not necessarily anti-intellectual, but it evolved in this direction after the 1950s. Early Mennonite fundamentalists were influenced by, and were part of, the progressive spirit of their age. But dispensationalists and Conservatives reacted against the social upheaval of the post World War II years by clearly distancing themselves from its influences: its schools, music, culture, movies, and general moral decay as they saw it. In many ways Conservatives have isolated themselves even more from the intellectual world than have evangelical dispensationalists, for there are numerous fundamentalist colleges and universities whereas Conservatives have no accredited schools. They also go much further than many fundamentalists in their separation from the world in practical issues such as nonconformity.

Like dispensationalists who shun areas of study that do not support their particular world-view, the small minority of Conservatives who do go on to university tend to go into practical helping professions such as medical studies; there are only a rare few who have taken theological studies. They do not shun knowledge so much as separate themselves from any modern thought that might dilute their particular theological and biblical views. Although Conservatives are devout Bible readers and know Bible facts more than many Christians, there are no academic Bible scholars among them and nobody who is proficient in biblical languages. In the minds of Conservatives, obeying the Bible is the most important thing.

Conservatives shun academic pursuits in the area of higher criticism and modern philosophical thought. Unlike the neo-evangelicals who determined to spread the evangelical faith through intellectual engagement, fundamentalists simply shun or attack philosophies that do not fit their paradigm. They do not feel any need to engage theories that clearly do not agree with their "proven" biblical beliefs. They also frequently remove their children from the public school systems and opt to educate them with safe curriculum and teachers. Some Conservatives are known to use curriculum from fundamentalist organizations such as A.C.E. (Accelerated Christian Education), BJU Press (Bob Jones University Press) and A Beka Book (affiliated with Pensacola Christian College). All of these organizations, like Rod and Staff Publications and Christian Light Publications, teach the Bible as the foundation of all learning and all truth. And they feed the growing industry of home schooling with material founded on Scripture.[1]

Conservatives, like Mennonite fundamentalists, accepted many of the essential propositions of separatist dispensationalism that came to define fundamentalism in this later period. As in Mennonite fundamentalism, the dispensationalist theory of distinct separate epochs,

[1] See: www.abeka.com; www.bju.edu; www.aceminstries.com; www.clp.org Rod and Staff Publications do not have a website, probably due to their religious beliefs.

from which it received its name, was never applied rigorously to the entire Conservative movement. Some rejected its teachings, correctly seeing its Calvinist influences.[2] However the idea of God dealing with humanity in different ways in different ages as taught in dispensationalism is still common in Conservative thought, as the following citation from Lester Bauman demonstrates.

> The Bible records a progression of revelation. In each period, God revealed Himself to man a little more clearly than before.
>
> The first period stretched from Adam to Moses…. The second period of revelation began with Moses…. The Old Testament prophets bridged the gap in revelation between Moses and the New Testament…. The next period of revelation began when Jesus came to earth as a man…. [Finally] the teachings of the apostles concluded God's revelation to man on earth….
>
> God closed the period of revelation for all time when the New Testament was finished. Inspired revelation, in the Bible sense, is complete. The Holy Spirit will aid the Christian and the church in making proper application of Bible principles. But the Holy Spirit will not add new revelation in principle to that which is given in the Bible. [3]

One part of the dispensationalist teaching that is universally accepted is the clear divide between the Old and New Testaments. In fact the word "dispensation" is frequently used to identify the shift from the Old to New Testament, although many of the younger generation are likely not even aware that dispensationalism is also a theological belief system.

In solidarity with the essential teachings of dispensationalism, Conservatives spoke out against Neo-orthodoxy, social improvement, ecumenism, rampant rebellion, pervasive apostasy, and evolution. In polemic and apocalyptic tones Conservative Mennonite leaders rallied the church to rise up and separate from the apostate church into secure separatist enclaves where sin would be abolished and Christ would reign supreme. The writings of William McGrath, who was influential in teaching, writing and preaching, further substantiates this view of Conservatives.[4] In a highly polemical tract he attacks apostate ecumenism and promotes separatism. In particular

[2] Personal observation taken from sermons by Leighton Martin, bishop of Countryside Mennonite Fellowship. Of particular concern was the eternal security teaching as related to the view of the Jewish nation.
[3] Bauman, *Thy Word is Truth*, 23-26.
[4] Regarding McGrath, see chapter four, footnote 64.

his teaching sounds like a page from the "com-outerism" of Carl McIntire, the popular fundamentalist mentioned earlier.[5]

> Will you follow 'loyally' to the end, to the World Council of Churches, to communion with those who favor socializing and unionizing between the churches, and finally to Rome? Or will you dare to take your stand and come out from among them to serve your Lord? We beseech you to seek out a sound fellowship, sound Bible schools, a sound publishing work, and support only sound missions and relief services![6]

According to the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, the challenge to "'come out from among them' is the supreme call of the Scriptures."[7] Clear demarcation from all interactions with outsiders is what came to define the Conservative movement and the com-outerism passage in II Corinthians 6:17-18 is a popular and frequently quoted theme. To see how this compared to the earlier shifts in the Mennonite Church we need to briefly summarize the earlier movement.

The shift among North American Mennonites from nineteenth century quietism to twentieth century activism is captured well by Mennonite Church historian, J. C. Wenger.

> Mennonites awoke to a new concept of Christianity, a new vision of the Gospel, a fresh understanding of the church, and of the Christian life, and a new self-understanding as Christians. Christianity was transformed for them into an active force for evangelization of the world and the building of the kingdom of God, instead of being merely a quiescent, passive, conserving system that it had seemed to be…. Christ began to be the center of things, and His Gospel, His truth, and His commission, with their liberating and vitalizing power, began to be the great things in life, instead of the customs and traditions of the past. It was a new spiritual and intellectual atmosphere.[8]

Evangelicalism spawned countless new ways of doing and being church for Mennonites and it also led to threats of losing their unique identity. Fundamentalism offered safeguards to the threat of losing the uniqueness of Mennonitism to American evangelicalism. Using

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[5] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 64.
[6] William McGrath, *Ecumenical Floodtide Overtakes the (Old) Mennonite Church* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, n.d.), 22-23. A less strident view against ecumenism is found in Curtis C. Cressman, "1957 World Conference Report" in *Calendar of Appointments* Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1958-1959, 20-22.
[7] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 62.
[8] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 181.

fundamentalist biblical methods, Mennonites created nonconformity into a monolithic biblical mandate.

> Aggresso-conservatives understood nonconformity, particularly in dress, to protect them from insidious worldliness even as they moved purposefully into more involvement with their surrounding culture.[9]

For Mennonite fundamentalists "donning the regulation garb celebrated confidence in the progressive impulses at work throughout the awakening."[10] Thus their distinctive clothes and regulations helped them to move into more active engagement with the larger world outside of the Mennonite communities.

By comparison the Conservative Mennonite enforcement of plain clothes is an indication of their withdrawal from the apostate church and a sign of their allegiance to separatism and biblicism. Clothing regulations serve to mark and preserve the boundaries of the church and help keep out all those who did not uphold the true standards of nonconformity. The non-conformed clothes do not help Conservatives move more boldly into the world, as it did the Mennonite fundamentalists, but they do believe in the ability of their clothes to be a clear witness to outsiders. The earlier Mennonites, with their non-conformed clothes, dared to go places and to be involved with other denominations and this was after centuries of being the quiet in the land. The Conservatives did not drop the revivalist innovations such as missions, Sunday school, revival meetings, prayer meetings, and Bible conferences to return to the quietism of the Old Orders. Rather all of the revivalist devices were now promoted as tools in the service of separatism and biblicism. They moved toward disengagement from any worldly involvement so that anyone who did not fully support their views on nonconformity was suspect and kept at bay.

[9] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 244.
[10] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 211.

The Conservatives' most important field of evangelism became their own children, and everything else, including evangelism, was done with an eye on jealously guarding the "established tradition." The degree to which Conservatives separate and protect their children is revealing of their view of culture. One writer scathingly warns, "the public school in its entire impact is pagan and God-ignoring. Its goal is to prepare citizens for this world, not the world to come."[11] Children are to be protected from all evil outside influences. A Conservative writer sensibly points out that "we do not give a child dynamite or a dangerous weapon." He then rhetorically asks, "Why should we expose it to such in our public school systems, on the radio, TV, in many books and magazines, in evil associates in the neighborhood or in the family relationships?"[12] The clear message is the danger of all cultural influences.

Conservatives view social improvement and assistance as counter-productive to the supernatural conversion experience.

> Only the power of the Gospel will penetrate to the root of man's need. And if the church becomes involved in community or national reformation attempts, she will lose her power to snatch souls from the grasp of sin.[13]

This is why many Conservatives stay away from working with community projects or with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), the mission/social agency of the Mennonite Church. The internalization of the Conservative movement can be seen as a direct reaction to the more active social engagement of the Mennonite Church, in the same way as dispensationalists distanced themselves from neo-evangelicals.

[11] Harlan Martin, *God's Standard* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, n.d.), 9.
[12] Landis, *The Responsibility of Parents*, 5-6.
[13] Lloyd Hartzler, *The Christian and The State*, (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications Inc., 1993), 5-6.

Conservatives and Old Order Mennonites

The Old Order Mennonite church is the closest living example of the nineteenth century Mennonite tradition. Comparing Conservatives with Old Orders is another way of seeing how Conservatives have created a distinct variety of Mennonite tradition. While it is correct to speak of the traditional historic Mennonite Church as sectarian, Conservatives and Old Order[14] Mennonites have become even more vigilant about protecting themselves from outside influences. Both of these schisms of the Mennonite Church were reactions against modernizing changes and at the core they were driven by theological convictions and thus boundaries needed to be clearly established and defended. For Old Orders humility was the principle that defined and helped to protect the church. Conservatives on the other hand relied on the biblical-doctrinal propositions of Daniel Kauffman and built a safety net of rules to thwart change.

In some ways Conservatives are even more sectarian than their Old Order cousins. Because they want to stay clear of the corrosive influence of the Mennonite Church they have their own mission organizations, and are much less likely to support the work of MCC than the Old Order groups are.[15] The Conservative churches thus went further in severing their ties with the Mennonite Church than did the Old Order groups. In the effort to remain pure, some Conservative churches teach that "close friendships should be developed only with those who are a part of a Scriptural church." They even warn of the danger of being friends with members in the church that are "rebellious."[16]

[14] I include in Old Order groups the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference and other similar groups in the United States. Although these groups drive cars and allow some modern conveniences that the stricter Old Order groups do not allow, they have been relatively untouched by the effects of revivalism.
[15] According to Rick Cober Bauman program director for MCC Ontario the Old Order groups (at least in Ontario) provide disproportionately more than their share to MCC (Bauman in conversation with Sarah Bowman who was my informant). My own recollections of Conservative support of MCC are denunciations of its liberalism. There may be some support by Conservatives who support the work, but they are in the minority.
[16] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 63.

While some Conservative groups take a stand against any involvement in community organizations, it is not unheard of for a few Old Orders to get involved in selected community organizations. As well, Old Orders are far more likely to vote in government elections than Conservatives are. Both Old Orders and Conservatives prefer to live in the country and few of them live in towns; for any of them to live in the city is rare.[17]

It also appears that Conservatives tend to be more "rule" oriented than Old Orders. Whereas the authority in Old Order communities is embedded in the *ordnung*[18] of the community, authority in the Conservative churches is anchored in doctrinal teachings that are taught and enforced by leaders. Conservatives are confident in their clear proclamations and rules based on the Bible. Old Orders are less inclined to proving or defending the letter of the law, and are more likely to appeal to the spiritual ethos of humility rooted in community. They are not as likely to categorically support their definitions as the only way, but rather see them as faithful traditions that will continue to guide them and for that reason alone are worthy to be perpetuated.

It is not uncommon for Old Orders to allow their children to attend public schools, and in their private schools they sometimes hire teachers who come from outside of their churches. In fact the longtime Ontario parochial school supervisor James Bauman, was a member of a Plymouth Brethren church.[19] Conservatives by contrast jealously guard against outside influences, especially those that affect their children, and they mostly provide their own schools and are unlikely to hire a schoolteacher from a church that is significantly more liberal. The

[17] Actually in more recent years there has been a move by a few Conservatives to move into the city to live and work in an intentional mission effort.
[18] See page 39.
[19] Martin, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario*, 302.

stress and emphasis on clothes and the frequency with which they are preached about also appears to be more common in the Conservative churches.[20]

Because Conservatives are more influenced by modernist thought than Old Orders, they are highly suspicious of anything that is not readily provable based on common sense observation. Old Orders tend to be more open to such things as alternative medicine and therapies. Conservatives, influenced by fundamentalist writers and speakers, have in the past been known to denounce some of these things as evil and sinful. Satanic ritual abuse and other similar theories that abounded in the 1970s and 1980s came out of the fundamentalist movement and certainly had some supporters in the Conservative movement.[21] The moderate-Conservatives who allow the radio may be more susceptible to direct fundamentalist influences because some of them are avid listeners of well known dispensationalist preachers. Conservatives have a tendency to see unexplainable phenomenon as satanic. For instance with a selective reading of science they are more likely to see hypnosis as satanic control rather than a psychological phenomenon. There seems to be more room for mystery and the mystical in Old Order minds than in the rational modern minds of Conservatives.

Old Orders rely on humility and *ordnung* to maintain boundaries, Conservatives base their standards on the Bible. To question the Old Order practice is to question the community. But openly questioning Conservative "doctrine" is not only insubordination to the leaders in authority, but also directly to the Bible and God. Old Orders do not appear to read the Bible as a divine rule-book with clearly spelled out directives, nor do they hold to seven ordinances. While

[20] Many of my comments and observations on Old Orders come from dialogue with Sarah Bowman, who spent most of her life in the Old Order church and more recently left the church and is currently pursuing graduate studies in theology.

[21] I remember a host of these things that would be preached from the pulpit, particularly by visiting evangelists, or at youth meetings, from those who were clearly more influenced by premillennial pessimism than my amillennial bishop Leighton Martin.

they read it as a simple book they do not apply to it the same kind of rational, literal precision that Conservatives commonly do. This literal understanding of the Bible gives all fundamentalists a high degree of certainty in their beliefs and in this regard Conservatives are no exception.

The gulf between traditional Mennonite theology and Conservative views is clearly seen in the soteriology of Old Orders and Conservatives. Both of them place little importance on the formal study of theology, but Old Orders do not subscribe to the "plan of salvation." They believe instead that what is required is to "'do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God' (Micah 6:8)." According to one Old Order writer,

> To declare, "I'm saved" was far too bold for the Old Order, but they definitely believed in having a living hope in Christ their Saviour…. However the emphasis of Old Order Mennonitism is not "I am saved," but I am an "unprofitable servant" of Christ (Luke 17:10).[22]

This was the traditional Mennonite view before the onset of revivalist suppositions.

> The revival movement stressed the importance of a personal religious crisis experience that resulted in a sure knowledge of one's salvation in Christ. This individualism was a new emphasis for the Mennonite church, which believed that salvation was worked out within a community of faith. This new emphasis on personal experience was attractive for those who saw a lack of spiritual life in the "old" Mennonite church.

In fact to early American Mennonites,

> Extemporaneous prayer by lay persons in a congregation was not yet widely accepted. It struck some as spiritually arrogant. Indeed Mennonites of the era still made use of prayer books like *Die Ernsthafte Christenpflicht*, [The Prayerbook of the Ernest Christian] of which an edition was published in Berlin as early as 1846.[23]

"Born again" language was not used in nineteenth century Mennonitism, rather images of the "blood of Christ" and themes like "repentance" and "amendment of life" were common. This, along with good works produced through the fruits of the spirit, was the path to salvation.[24]

[22] Martin, *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario*, 189 & 226.
[23] Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer*, 119-20.
[24] Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer*, 129-30.

The Old Orders retained the spirit of Anabaptist *Gelassenheit*, but it became more aligned with yieldedness to the community than the mystical soul struggle with God.[25]

In contrast to the humble Mennonites of the nineteenth century, the awakened Conservative Mennonites boldly proclaim a specific salvation experience as the cornerstone of the Christian life.

> First and foremost, you must have salvation through Jesus, the Savior-God. You must be born-again. Without this salvation that Jesus has provided, you will go to a real burning hell.[26]

It is unthinkable to Conservatives that one would not be born-again in a specific experiential encounter with Christ. This is so clear in their reading of the Bible and so completely assumed in their thinking that many of them are convinced that the Old Order "hope" is hopeless. In other words some Conservatives consider the Old Orders as hopelessly lost based on their lack of a clear salvation experience. Some Conservatives also understand Old Orders to be legalistically fixated on following tradition. The salvation experience is the foundation of the Christian life for Conservatives and fundamentalists.[27] Where the Old Orders cling to "hope" as defined through the centuries of the Mennonite church, the Conservative movement adopted the "assurance of salvation" as an important part of the Christian life.[28]

By comparing Conservatives with Old Orders it is obvious that Conservatives borrowed extensively, not from traditional Mennonitism, but from fundamentalism. The Old Orders did not borrow from evangelicalism and fundamentalism, however it appears they too have been

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[25] From classnotes, Arnold Snyder, "Anabaptist Spirituality in Historical Context II: Spiritual Currents from 1600-2000," Winter 2006.
[26] Johnson, "Christian Modesty in the 20th Century," 5-6. Also see: Null, *Introduction to Mennonite Doctrine and Practice*, 13; and Baer, *Marching On*, 157.
[27] Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Coalition," 55. Also see: Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 2, 4 & 5.
[28] See: John R. Mumaw, *Assurance of Salvation* (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications Inc., 1989). This is a revised (first chapter was added) reprint of an earlier publication, 1950 by Herald Press. Mumaw was president of Eastern Mennonite College and Seminary from 1948-1965.

affected by it in some ways.[29] While Mennonites have traditionally been sectarian, as are Old Orders and Conservatives, the way that Conservatives spell out and define separation is clearly influenced by the most sectarian fundamentalists, the dispensationalists.

Separation of church and state, and separation from the world are traditional Mennonite ideas that have a long history. Anabaptists survived by literally withdrawing from public life. The enduring North American Mennonite tradition came out of these tightly structured communities whose identity was defined with clear demarcation from the outside.[30] But in the twentieth century dispensationalist sentiments helped to reinforce the concept of "world" and the negative view of society. In tune with the influences of this movement Conservative Mennonites segregated themselves into insulated communities focused on keeping out the world. The championing of peace and justice in the Mennonite Church sounded suspiciously like the social gospel to Conservatives. Conservatives more clearly and consistently remain aloof from society at large than the tradition that became the Mennonite Church ever did.

Fundamentalism helped Conservatives form solid biblical answers to justify solutions such as separatism. Dispensationalism with its deliberate detachment of Christianity from its environment, was the paradigm for Conservatives who view the outside world "with pity, suspicion and moral disgust; [and] it provides a common enemy against which conservative Mennonites can unite and reaffirm moral superiority."[31]

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[29] This needs more study. Martin, *Old Order Mennonites*, mentions some of the encounters with fundamentalism that the Ontario Old Order church has had over the years. One Old Order bishop, Jesse Bauman, eventually left the Old Order church in 1939, but his dispensationalist influence lived on in some people. Martin also mentions how the Old Order communities have embraced abolition of alcohol and tobacco and this seems like a clear result of fundamentalist influence.

[30] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 409.

[31] Graybill and Arthur, "The Social Control of Women's Bodies," 21. Also see: Loetscher, in Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 7.

Conservatives and Anabaptists

From the beginning of the Anabaptist movement there has always been a strong emphasis on the Bible as the Word of God and the true guide for life. Anabaptists desired to live out the biblical message and placed a high value on following after Christ based on their plain reading of the New Testament. The Bible was understood as clear and unmistakably true and the challenge was to follow its commands in obedience. The Anabaptists were clearly biblicists, and this high regard for the Bible was handed down through the centuries. With the influence of Menno the Bible came to be even more clearly defined in particular teachings.

Early in the Anabaptist movement spirituality was not as clearly structured as it became under Menno. Particularly for the more spiritualist Anabaptists, the love of Christ was the most important theme, even more important than clear biblical commands or prohibitions. The Swiss Brethren influenced by Menno came to stress the "letter" of Scripture and they more clearly articulated what it meant to be the church. Pilgram Marpeck was one moderate spiritualist who placed a high value on following the spirit rather than following the letter of the Bible, while at the same time still retaining a high regard for clear direction in the Bible. However, the surviving tradition was characterized by the priority of the letter of Scripture over the spirit.[32]

As American Mennonites began to research their Anabaptist roots, they came to see how Mennonites had lost some important elements of Anabaptism and it also helped them to see how they had been influenced by other traditions. In the 1940s scholar Robert Friedmann came to believe that Mennonites had wrongly identified the fundamentalist view of Scripture as equivalent with Anabaptism. For instance they adopted the "theology of salvation 'by faith alone,'" and this led to more emphasis on "a faith to be believed than a faith to be lived."

[32] Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology*, 416.

> Anabaptism has no explicit theology, mainly because it is an existential and not a theological Christianity, where witnessing comes before arguing. Anabaptists have a church of order and not so much a church of doctrines. They understood their order as a restitution of the eternal order of God's kingdom – as far as this is possible for frail human beings. The presupposition to this is the earnest attempt at forsaking sin and keeping the great covenant of baptism. They knew very well that no man is without sin, hence everyone is in need of Christ's atonement for the human race. But they were at least striving after self-discipline and overcoming their natural frailness by the means of 'order.' To them it was beyond doubt that no final salvation is attainable without a condition of the mind where the brother, the neighbor, matters, and where love becomes a central concern. [33]

Conservatives appear to be decidedly more theological than existential with their explicit doctrinal based paradigms. Nor do they understand themselves as the "restitution of the eternal order of God's kingdom." And in relation to sin, Conservatives tend to have very high expectations of how a person should live out the Christian life.

The first step of salvation for Conservatives is a faith commitment, and faith is defined as a volitional act of repentance, a willed turning from evil. For Anabaptists the fear of God was the first step toward salvation which required genuine humility and resulted in "unceasing prayer to God for grace."[34] Anabaptists expected that such a step would lead to "visible fruit," an outward evidence of an inner change. Conservatives, like Anabaptists, believe that faith is to be lived outwardly, but where Anabaptists adhere to the life of Christ and his commandments as the rule to follow, Conservatives clearly define what following Christ means in very practical terms. Anabaptists followed four explicit commands of Christ:

> the command to "believe and be baptised", the command to observe "fraternal admonition", the command to celebrate the Supper of remembrance, and the command (and example) to wash one another's feet.[35]

For Conservatives, there are seven ordinances and numerous restrictions and then there are the rules of the church which define exactly how the ordinances and restrictions are to be observed.

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[33] Robert Friedmann "Anabaptism & Protestantism" MQR Jan 1950, 24:12-24. See: 17 & 24.
[34] C. Arnold Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps of Christ: The Anabaptist Tradition* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 33.
[35] Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps*, 86.

In comparison to the explicit theologically constituted rules of the Conservative churches, Anabaptists employed more of a broad spiritual ideal. The use of the ban for Anabaptists was motivated by a hope to "maintain the integrity between the Spirit of Christ, born within, and the life of Christ that was to be lived in the world."[36] For Conservatives, not following the explicit rules, even the ones that are not immediately tied to salvation, can lead to correction and eventually church censorship if there is no change.

For Anabaptists "the Bible, … is primarily not a theological book but a book of life…. They found also very concrete commandments, advice, calls, to go and try the new life."[37] Conservatives on the other hand emphasize that "it is not wrong to read the Bible for inspiration, but true Christians will also recognize the divine authority of God in the commands of the Bible."[38] According to this same Conservative writer, what is most important is "obedience to Bible truth at any cost. This was the Anabaptist vision and the vision of every Scriptural church that has ever existed, including the church of the apostolic times."[39]

The Conservative call to obedience is defined by the rules and doctrines formulated by the church through the inspiration of fundamentalists who understood the Bible as clear theological facts. But Conservatives at times go beyond the direct biblical commands in generating rules that are alleged to stabilize and bring order to the church and these rules are treated in the same way as direct biblical commands. The Anabaptist view of the Bible seems to be more like the Old Order ethos of humility and *Gelassenheit*, an essence to be imitated and lived. Although Anabaptists understood the Bible to be authoritative and required obedience, they did not view it as a book that had all of the answers that were obviously present so all that

[36] Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps*, 90.
[37] Robert Friedmann "Anabaptism & Protestantism" MQR Jan 1950, 24:16-18.
[38] Bauman, *Thy Word is Truth*, 18 & 146 – 7.
[39] Bauman, *The Little Flock*, 102.

was necessary was obedience. One difference between Anabaptist and Conservative obedience seems to be the detailed and highly defined biblical doctrines that Conservatives extracted from Scripture whereas the Anabaptists emphasized the life and example of Christ.

What Conservatives tend to forget is that Anabaptists were not dying for wearing the head-covering or for their nonconformity stance on dress. While Anabaptists were interrogated about their observance of the Lord's Supper, Conservative women are frequently questioned about their head-coverings. A major difference between the Anabaptist and fundamentalist understanding of the Bible is the way fundamentalism tends to view it as a source book from which to formulate rational doctrines.[40] To explain their beliefs and counter false accusations, Anabaptists wove together Bible verses; their "prison testimonies are often little more than patchwork quilts of biblical references stitched together."[41]

By accepting the rational fundamentalist clarity of the Bible, Conservatives make false claims to be like the Anabaptists in their essential commitment to live out the Bible in practical ways. But rational doctrinal systems, such as those formulated by Daniel Kauffman, came to overshadow the Anabaptist desire to follow singularly after the example of Christ in loving obedience. The desire to follow the ethic of Jesus and to love God and neighbor as oneself, is not nearly so dominant in Conservative Mennonite thought as is the passion to clearly set rules and boundaries that will protect the church from apostasy. The love of biblicistic prohibition, not the spirit of love in action, is the guiding Conservative principle.

Paul Peachy is correct in his view that equating the biblicism of the Anabaptists with the fundamentalist understanding of the Bible has been the cause for significant confusion and wrong thinking among modern Mennonites. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the

[40] Kraus, "Evangelicalism: The Great Coalition," 55.
[41] Snyder, *Following in the Footsteps*, 118.

Conservative Mennonite movement who adopted this view from Mennonite fundamentalists. Peachy further points out that "a pessimistic view of world culture and the demand for a Christian separation from it is clearly a major Anabaptist tenet."[42] Interestingly though, early Anabaptists did not develop a comprehensive theology of separation based on the Bible, as did Conservatives. For example, taking his cue from dispensationalism, Baer writes, "From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible is a book of separation. It is God's plan to separate man from sin. It is God's plan to call men to separation and purity of life."[43] By protesting the corruption of the church early Anabaptists were inevitably also challenging the authority of the state; their desire for equality in the church also insinuated more equality in the state. Because of their protestations, Anabaptists became separated from society and were castigated as criminals. Conservatives on the other hand removed themselves from the corrupt and apostate culture and based it on Scriptural command.

The authority of Scripture to define doctrine and practice is the cornerstone of Conservative thought and they take seriously the responsibility to clearly teach and administer specific scriptural principles.[44] A frequent verbalized ideal is that the Bible holds all the answers. As one Conservative put it, "the parents use the Bible as the guide for their home, rather than modern philosophies on marriage roles and child rearing."[45] It is not uncommon for Conservatives to read fundamentalist authors who are opposed to such things as psychology based on this understanding of the Bible. Fundamentalists developed a quasi-psychology, that

[42] Paul Peachy, "The Modern Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision," in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision; A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, 333 & 334.
[43] Baer, *Marching On*, 159.
[44] Scott, *An Introduction*, 203.
[45] Null, *Introduction to Mennonite Doctrine and Practice*, 83.

relies on biblical strategies with Bible verses and Bible principles, for helping people.[46] This was in reaction to psychology with its "pagan suppositions that man is simply another animal, deterministically oriented by genes and chromosomes."[47]

Because the Bible is read at face value the English words become very important and it is not uncommon for fundamentalists and Conservatives alike to promote the King James Version as the most ideal biblical translation, and some even see it as the only suitable version. This coincides with the dispensationalist penchant to understand the Bible in its literal English meaning. The divisive issue of Bible versions happened with the release of the Revised Standard Version in the early 1950s, when Carl McIntire launched and all-out attack against it.

Conservatives read the Bible non-historically and frequently the Bible and God are referred to as timeless and unchangeable.[48] One long-departed deacon is still well remembered for his repetitious use of "Jesus Christ – the same yesterday, today, and forever."[49] Conservative references to timelessness are common and it does not only apply to the Bible and Christ, but transfers to all the teachings of the church and helps to discourage change. Even newer theological formulations such as those attached to nonconformity are tied to timelessness in spite of their relative newness.

The rules and regulations of the Conservative Mennonite movement are founded on the understanding that "the Scriptures are plain and must be obeyed."[50] This authoritative statement

[46] One of the earliest pioneers in this field was Jay E. Adams, who developed what he called "Nouthetic Counseling." Adams was the Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and wrote *Competent to Counsel*, in 1970. This has spawned a huge Christian counseling industry. See: www.nanc.org the website of the National Association of Nouthetic Counselors. The word "Nouthetic" come from the Greek word "noutheto" a word that the apostle Paul uses frequently meaning admonish, instruct or correct.
[47] Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1973), xi.
[48] Graybill, "Mennonite Women and Their Bishops," 269. This also coincides with my own experiences.
[49] Clare Gingerich, "Heidleburg Mennonite Church 1960-1969" in *Countryside Mennonite Fellowship*, 8.
[50] Baer, *Marching On*, 47.

flows through everything Conservatives teach and practice. Their view of the Bible as clear commands reveals the extent to which they wholeheartedly accept the rationalistic claims espoused most vociferously by fundamentalists. In a clear affinity with fundamentalists, Conservatives boldly declare,

> We believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Every word of the Bible is inspired. In other words, the Bible came from God on a word-by-word basis…. God was involved in the production of the entire Bible. The Bible does not merely contain the Word of God; it is the Word of God.[51]

Although Conservatives universally adopted the "Christian Fundamentals," which uses fundamentalist language of "plenary and verbal inspiration" and "inerrant," these more technical words are rarely used. However their essence is accepted and thus "a grammatical examination of the words of the English translation," leads to "an acceptance of their literal meaning."[52] What many Conservatives fail to understand is that any reading of the Bible is done with presuppositions instilled by cultural forces. Like dispensationalists they believe that "there could be no doubt of its [Scripture's] meaning if it were only admitted that language means literally what it says."[53] In fact the teachings of Conservatives are so clear in the Bible that

> present-day Christians have no excuse for not practicing these doctrines. They are found clearly enough to be understood in nearly all English Bibles commonly used for teaching and worship. Christians today are apostatizing because they are rejecting the Word of God and ignoring its plain teachings, not because of the Bible version they use.[54]

Being "Scripturally sound" is the base line for the Conservative church and this is what supports every practical application.[55] While Conservatives can legitimately trace a part of their lineage to the Anabaptist movement, the way they practically prescribe and enforce their "biblical" teachings has more in common with fundamentalism than with Anabaptism.

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[51] Bauman, *Thy Word is Truth*, 12.
[52] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 75.
[53] Kraus, *Dispensationalism*, 74.
[54] Bauman, *Thy Word is Truth*, 132.
[55] Coblentz, Shenk, et al., *Proclaiming God's Truth*, 125.

Holiness, Common Sense, and Other Influences

Two influences that have been pointed to throughout this discussion, but that have not been looked at in detail, are the themes of common sense thinking and holiness. Fundamentalists adopted the Keswick doctrine, which dropped the more radical holiness approach including the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the second blessing, and the claim that a person could be totally free of sin. The main emphasis is on attaining a victorious Christian life free of known sins, and so mediates between the divergent views of nature's complete depravity (Calvinism) and being totally free of sin (Wesleyan Holiness). By the 1930s this was a fairly standard teaching in fundamentalist institutions and churches.[56]

John Coblentz, a well-known speaker and author in moderate-Conservative circles, espouses this doctrine when he writes,

> Following Christ takes precedence over everything else now. He dies to his possessions, his friends, his reputation, and his own life. The former identity is reckoned dead – counted as in fact to be dead. Living for self is viewed as the old life; living for Christ is the new life.[57]

The key in this holiness spirituality is total yieldedness to the Spirit. By yielding to the Holy Spirit, one can move from being a carnal Christian to a spiritual Christian.

Conservatives are cautious about the work of the Holy Spirit and the wrong manifestations that are allegedly done in the name of the Spirit. However they hold a place for the Spirit to lead to the "holiness of God which calls us to a life of righteousness [and] forbids any unrighteousness."[58] As this statement suggests, on a spectrum between Calvin and Wesleyan

[56] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 78; Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 87.
[57] John Coblentz, *The Victorious Life* (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publishers Inc., 1992), 12. Coblentz, an ordained minister, is widely known throughout the moderate-Conservative churches as a prolific writer for Christian Light Publications, a regular teacher at Maranatha Bible School, and a compelling speaker on issues of practical Christian living and discipleship.
[58] John Coblentz, *Are Written Standards for the Church?* (Harrisonburg, VA: Christian Light Publications Inc., 1990), 10.

Holiness, Conservatives are closer to the Wesleyan view, for they have little place for sin in the life of the Christian.

> Holiness means separation from all that is unholy. Any compromise denies the very essence of the purpose of Christ coming into the world. Christ came into the world to save men from sin and the power of sin.[59]

Conservatives tend to emphasize consecration and a holy life and the presumption is that sin is not an issue in a victorious Christian. Sin is something that is pervasive and active in the world or in compromising Christians, but once a person is re-born it is assumed that sin no longer needs to be wrestled with; what is needed is to be fully surrendered to Christ. Not surprisingly, in Conservative churches sin is clearly spelled out and when one is free of the obvious vices of sin, it is assumed that one is free of sin. This fits with the American ideal "of sin as a voluntary act of will."[60] Like the Keswick teaching, Conservatives do not hold to sinlessness, but they do believe that they "must be living a holy life in the Lord Jesus Christ." This requires "a daily crucifixion experience."[61]

A major influence of holiness teaching was spread through the prolific writing of gospel songs "filled with themes of total surrender and being overwhelmed by the love of Jesus and the cleansing tide of his Spirit…. The power for Christian service was seen as the result of total consecration to Christ."[62] Mennonites lost their specifically Anabaptist hymns in the early nineteenth century, adopting pietist hymns, and one hundred years later Mennonite hymnbooks went through another transformation when they went from German to English.

> The publication of the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal* in 1902 furthered the type of piety which might be described as somewhat Methodistic. Many of the songs in this hymnal were experience-centered, testifying of the joys of salvation, rather than hymns of praise and adoration addressed to God or Christ.[63]

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[59] Baer, *Marching On*, 64-65.
[60] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 73.
[61] *The Peril of Neo-Orthodoxy*, 26.
[62] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 75-77.
[63] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 183.

"Where the German hymns assume that salvation is a process, these [English] songs regard salvation as an event that happens to a person, but the individual must make a decision to have it happen."[64] The personal testimonies of highly sentimentalized hymns with their simple lyrics found much resonance with the Conservative's experience of holiness and salvation. It is interesting that in the late 1960s, the Mennonite Church was retrieving some of the older weightier chorales while the Conservatives were singing the gospel songs reminiscent of the earlier fundamentalist era.[65]

The holiness teaching that was so much a part of fundamentalism reinforced the Conservative's "innate awareness of the need for distinct identity" as it had for Mennonite fundamentalists.[66] Holiness reinforces the need for clear separation from all that is unholy. It encourages a distinct clarity between law and Spirit and this aligns with the high demand for separatism so embedded in dispensationalism. The result of this separatism on Conservatives has already been discussed. In the Conservative movement holiness is connected to all of the teachings of the church and it is readily observable who follows the teachings or not. Fundamentalists clearly led the march against the evils of drinking, smoking and dancing. The progressive Mennonites adopted the holiness restrictions and added to them, and Conservatives have become even more restrictive in these things. The need for holiness for Conservatives means one has to be continually on guard against "the fashions of the world, the fads of the world, the music of the world, [and] the entertainment of the world."[67]

[64] Draper, "The Effect of Revivalism," 34.
[65] Wenger, *Mennonite Church in America*, 183.
[66] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 244.
[67] Coblentz, *The Victorious Life*, 22.

Common Sense philosophy is an old American tradition that was formed in the mid-eighteenth century. Birthed out of the Enlightenment, it provided a foundation for making scientific sense of a complex world. This thinking has an optimistic view of the human ability to know truth. And truth is a commodity attained in "the highest and all-sufficient source of authority," the Bible.[68] "Bible truth" is an oft-repeated theme in the Conservative movement and the ability to know such truth is founded on common sense. All members have direct access to truth contained in the Bible and are expected to regularly read it. When truth is objectified, Bible reading has a clear cause and effect, so that ceasing to read the Bible leads to things going wrong and when it is resumed things go well. Thus when someone is discouraged or spiritually weak in Conservative groups a common reaction is to question their level of private "devotions." A frequent axiom thoroughly indoctrinated already in junior Sunday school is "read your Bible and pray everyday."[69]

All of Conservative thought is permeated and supported with the philosophy of common sense particularly in its apprehension of the Bible, and this in turn generates an assurance for or against a host of issues including apostasy, separation, holiness, clothing rules, eschatology, and doctrinal formulations. For example, earlier we observed the multiple meanings Conservatives have given to plain dress beyond the direct biblical mandates. Common sense recognizes that "if a man is drowning and is able to swim halfway to the shore, he will still drown." And it illustrates how "halfway measures to combat encroachment against Scriptural principles can be the most deceiving."[70] The next step is to apply plain thinking to the Scriptural principles so that everyone knows what is required for a holy life. In regards to head-coverings, ultra-

[68] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 14-16.
[69] Lorne McDowell, *The Abundant Life* (Barwick, ON: CMCO Publications, 2001), 123.
[70] Baer, Marching On, 115.

Conservatives understand that "the Lord's covering will not fit properly on the devil's hairdo," and that "godly, veiled women repel both demons and adulterers."[71] A clear reading of the Bible in regards to authority leads to the common sense comprehension that "when two people ride a horse, one must sit in front and guide the horse. God has decided that the man shall take this lead in the home, in the church, and in society."[72]

Mennonite fundamentalists placed a high value on acquiring truth, and writers such as John Horsch would often use simple illustrations to prove Bible truths. Likewise Hartzler, a moderate-Conservative argues that "content necessitates form." Using the example of an oak tree, he makes the point that the bark protects what is inside. Or conversely "if for some other reason the tree dies, the bark will begin to peel and the tree becomes more and more 'undressed.'" Underlying Hartzler's view is the belief that "the creator … instituted form in nature, and likewise commanded it in the apparel of His called-out people." Like Horsch, Hartzler also appeals to history to make his point quoting a 1568 Anabaptist as decreeing that "brethren and sisters shall stay by the present form of our regulation concerning apparel, and make nothing for pride's sake."[73] With common sense Conservatives are frequently able to observe by the outward appearance of a person what is on the inside.

It is interesting to note that while all Conservatives argue for uniformity, they do not all uniformly agree on what is uniform. In fact it seems the more confidence they have in their particular biblical interpretations about what practical applications are needed, the more likely they cannot agree. This was apparent in the schisms mentioned earlier. The irony is that Conservatives believe that "where the body of Jesus is indeed functioning as a Spirit-led body,

[71] Ruth, *The Significance of the Christian Woman's Veiling*, 20; and McGrath, *A Biblical and Historical Review*, 12.
[72] *Instructions for Christian Living and Church Membership*, 92.
[73] Hartzler, *Personal Appearance*, 13. Hartzler does not reference his Anabaptist quotation, but it comes from the Strassburg Confession.

where in other words there is devotion to Jesus, … there surely will be a measure of uniformity in practice."[74]

Holiness and common sense have deep roots in American culture and came to be distinctly defined in fundamentalism. For fundamentalists and Conservatives the common sense approach to the Bible led to clear definitions including the need for holiness defined by separatism. The defining point of common sense is its view of truth as a simple and fully comprehensible commodity. Thus all problems come to have ready Bible answers and apostasy and sin are clearly definable. Obviously Conservatives developed many different practices than fundamentalists, but it was the same inspirational foundation of common sense that fueled the passions of fundamentalists and Conservatives to define their beliefs in rational and observable systems of belief and practice.

[74] Coblentz, *Are Written Standards for the Church?* 12.

CONCLUSION

The Conservative Mennonite movement has been greatly shaped by fundamentalism. Their forbears, the early twentieth century Mennonites borrowed extensively from the various streams of the fundamentalist movement. They went from Mennonite traditionalism to revivalism and fundamentalism, and so were influenced by dispensationalism and premillennialism, Princeton theology, and holiness teaching. According to Yoder, these Mennonites "merit the label fundamentalist for their explicit effort to bring permanence to doctrine and practice, their overt rejection of historicism, and their commitment to applying these understandings to the life of the church."[1]

The aggresso-conservatives in the Mennonite Church introduced a "thoroughgoing codification of Mennonite belief and practice," and they used the considerable powers of the conference structure to bring about uniform conformity. They were "critical of tradition and clearly progressive in their agenda, they nevertheless claimed to be regaining a past faithfulness which had been lost."[2] When Mennonite fundamentalism began to falter and new leaders began to promote new ways of thinking, the fundamentalist beliefs did not die. Ironically when the new leaders inspired by Anabaptist historicism began to push their agenda throughout the Church in the same way that the fundamentalists had done four decades earlier, some rose up in protest. The doctrinaire practices of the Mennonite Church had been vigorously promoted by the aggresso-conservatives, but now with the anti-historicism of fundamentalism, it became unacceptable to promote new ways of thinking.

[1] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 3.
[2] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 222.

For those who had become thoroughly imbibed with the essence of fundamentalism, the new theology was an obvious threat. As Yoder points out,

> Children who grew up assuming that legislating uniform dress had long been part of the Mennonite tradition and that considering change was heresy were denied the opportunity to apply to their own context the vitality which the awakening had for their parents.[3]

This supposed strength of fundamentalism which buttresses against change, by rejecting historicism and promoting the timelessness of its teachings, is often its own undoing. The assumption that new generations will find the same meaning in prescribed clothing rules and the assertion that those rules are firmly anchored in Scripture, are sometimes less than plausible to a later generation. A new generation that begins to find truth and life that no longer fit within the categories of the fundamentalist suppositions are either repressed or feel the only option is to flee the system that seems focused on perpetuating its teachings.

The Conservative movement has rejected historicism and promoted what it labels a timeless and seamless continuity of truth wrapped up in a systemic practical theology based on the "clear teaching of the Bible." This was adopted from Mennonite fundamentalism without the full realization that what was being promoted was not a pure Mennonite tradition, so much as it "was a restatement of Anabaptist-rooted themes with the inevitable transformation which occurs when a tradition is translated for a contemporary context."[4]

The understanding of the Bible as a precise and clear entity was birthed in the fundamentalist reaction to liberalism. It was an oversimplification of the orthodox position, but it resonated with Mennonite's belief of God's ability to speak to each person through the written Word. Influenced by fundamentalist voices Conservatives wrongly identify the Bible as a plain and simple book of facts. Similarly common sense thinking which was a product of the

[3] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 399.
[4] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 3

Enlightenment and perpetuated by fundamentalists when newer philosophies were threatening Protestant views of the world, is the other main tenet of Conservative thought. Through the use of common sense the Bible is understood as a book where the most important thing is to obey it because its commands are easy to understand. This too is a gross oversimplification of what Anabaptists understood or how traditional Mennonites lived through the centuries. Common sense and the simple view of the Bible, are solid enough evidence of fundamentalist influence, but they also lead naturally to importation of even more ideas from fundamentalism.

Other than the clear division of epochs taught in dispensationalism, some of its important beliefs are the total depravity of humans, the futility of social improvement, the separation of the holy from the secular, a strong emphasis on supernaturalism, the belief that all things are getting worse, and the gulf between the true church and the nominal church. On all these accounts Conservatives sound like dispensationalists. It is noteworthy that although Conservatives universally condemn Calvinistic teachings, they have been more influenced by Calvin than they realize. As was observed in chapter three, Mennonite fundamentalism's adoption of the "Christian Fundamentals" captured the Calvinist ideas of assurance of salvation and "total depravity." Daniel Kauffman also borrowed from Calvinist theologians. These two important sources for Conservatives continue to influence their theology.

Regarding the depravity of humankind John Coblentz writes:

> The shift away from God plunged the heart of man into darkness. Man is still able to think, but only what his natural ears can hear, and reasons according to his natural powers only. In this darkened state, he believes he understands many things, but he understands only within the limitations of his own observation and reason.[5]

Thus it takes a supernatural action for humanity to hear God and to know God. This limits God to working through supernatural acts rather than through nature, because nature is completely

[5] Coblentz, *The Upward Call*, 59.

distorted. Coblentz's statement insinuates that there is no useful intellectual ability outside of God's intervention. All of humanity's "natural" thinking is perverted and suspect. This is a common thought in Conservative thinking and dispensationalism.

By dividing the supernatural from nature, Conservatives see no sense in nurturing or caring for nature, except where God clearly commands it. Thus like dispensationalists, Conservatives are not as concerned with improving the material world as they are convinced that the only way for the world to improve is by getting people "saved" through a conversion experience. For a Conservative Mennonite farmer, taking good care of the soil is a prudent financial choice not a spiritual act of worship to the creator God who placed the earth in the care of human beings. Conservatives also clearly differentiate between nominal Christians and true Christians.

> Many today claim to be Christians who have little understanding of what it means actually to follow Jesus. They want to share the benefits of Christianity, want to claim the promises of the Bible, want to go to heaven when they die, but live the majority of their lives without regard to Christ.[6]

The Conservative movement was born as a reaction against the organizational structure of the Mennonite Church, influenced by the dispensationalist belief that "the true church can never be an organization but must remain a spiritual fellowship of individual Christians."[7]

It is hardly surprising that Conservatives sound like dispensationalists in so many ways, for in the Mennonite Church these influences were already common. As fundamentalism diminished in the Mennonite Church, those who identified with the fundamentalist suppositions rose up in alarm and separated themselves from the apostate church like the dispensationalists were doing in reaction to neo-evangelicalism. It is no mere coincidence that Conservatives sound

[6] Coblentz, *The Upward Call*, 3.
[7] Sandeen, *The Origins of Fundamentalism*, 6.

like dispensationalists, rather it is a sound indication of just how thoroughly they have adopted the fundamentalist mentality. Like the Mennonite fundamentalist J. L. Stauffer, who faulted fundamentalists for ignoring the "weighty teachings of the Word of God" unique to Mennonites, Conservatives still hold to all the teachings espoused by Mennonites in the fundamentalist era. However, Conservatives are even more meticulously and thoroughly committed to those issues than the most dedicated Mennonite fundamentalists ever were.

Nathan Yoder in a clear reference to the Conservative Mennonite movement alleges that "during the 1960s and 1970s significant numbers of Mennonite fundamentalists organized new conferences into which they withdrew."[8] This thesis has demonstrated the numerous ways that those fundamentalist separatists have preserved and propagated the distinctive Mennonite teachings fixed in Mennonite fundamentalism. But Conservatives have unmistakably relied on the dispensationalist suppositions to bolster the teachings of Mennonite fundamentalism. Conservative Mennonites do not need the label of fundamentalist applied to them in order for the pervasive influence of fundamentalism to be seen. Nor do they need a dispensationalist tag to identify their constant reliance on dispensationalist teachings, which they use to wrap up their biblical claims from which they have preserved timeless truths. The Conservative Mennonite movement is in every way as fundamentalist as was Mennonite fundamentalism, but it goes beyond its predecessor in its adoption of the dispensationalist propositions, particularly in separatism.

In 1920 a young H. S. Bender wrote to J. L. Stauffer, "It seems to me, Brother Stauffer, that one of the greatest hindrances from a closed system of thinking such as you and your associates hold is that it prevents the possibility of progress and acquiring new truth."[9] These two

[8] Yoder, "Mennonite Fundamentalism," 402.
[9] Keim, *Harold S. Bender*, 106.

men had two very different perspectives, yet they spent their entire lives dedicated to the same denomination. Today there is no room in the Conservative Mennonite movement to espouse a view such as Harold Bender expressed in 1920.

The irony is that though fundamentalism is non-historical, it is itself a historical phenomenon trapped in cultural history. The problem with fundamentalism is the way it clearly defines God and the Bible reducing it to easily understood truths. The use of Scripture "in a mechanical, closed-ended and authoritarian manner" misses the real literal meaning of the Gospel writers. By taking the words of the Bible "literally," fundamentalists miss out on the mystery and transcendence of its message.[10]

The many faces of fundamentalism, common sense, a non-historical view of the Bible as timeless truths, dispensationalism, Keswick holiness teaching, and premillennialism have all have left their indelible mark on the Conservative Mennonite movement. Conservatives have created a "timeless tradition" out of undeniably time-bound cultural influences.

[10] Richard Rohr, *Jesus' Plan For a New World: The Sermon On the Mount* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Press, 1996), viii-ix.

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