

*The Rise and Fall of the American Christian Empire?*  
Study Guide Week Two: The Rise of Christian Fundamentalism  
Pastor Dixon – April 2024

### **Overview**

The Civil War profoundly shook America's soul, badly damaging the optimism and sense of providence that had been evident in its self-consciousness for generations. Add to this spiritual crisis major social and scientific transformations, and you can understand why many people were feeling anxious. One influential response to all of this is what we now call fundamentalism. So powerful a force was fundamentalism that it largely reduced American Christianity from a diverse patchwork of denominational, regional, ethnic, racial, and theological expressions to a binary--fundamentalism versus liberalism. This tremendous force generated activity (institution building, missionary enterprises) and reactivity (a resounding "no!" to "progress" of all sorts).

### **Key Quotes**

"What we must have is a higher type of Christianity in this country."

"I have never known the Spirit of God to work where the Lord's people were divided."  
-Dwight L. Moody

"I don't think about things I don't think about!"

"Do you think about things you do think about?"

-Exchange between William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow during the Scopes Trial, 1925

### **For Further Reflection:**

Does your faith make you more anxious and defensive, or calmer and more confident? Do you feel that the world is getting worse, getting better, or staying roughly the same?

### **For Further Study:**

Heath W. Carter and Laura Rominger Porter, eds., *Turning Points in the History of American Evangelicalism* (2017)--especially chapters 6 and 7 "The Civil War and the Making of a Conservative American Evangelicalism" by Luke Harlow and "The Rise of Fundamentalism" by George Marsden

Joel A. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (1997)