

## Chapter 24

# American Fundamentalism in the New Media: Transmedia Narratives of Baptists, Evangelists, and Methodists

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### ABSTRACT

*Evangelists, conservative Protestants, are an important majority in the United States. Baptists and Methodists, alleged to be different groups of American Protestants like Evangelists, perform a number of fundamentalist activities through social media. Related groups use hypertextual, intertextual, and current narrative strategies in social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.). Therefore, in this study, Awakening Evangelism (@EvangelismDaily), Baptist News Global (@baptist\_news), and WV United Methodist (@WVUMC) who support the groups mentioned in the study (Evangelists, Baptists, and Methodists) and report USA as location's Twitter accounts' shares were examined. Hereby, how the American fundamentalism realized through new media was researched.*

### INTRODUCTION

“Fundamentalism”, which was born as a Protestant movement against the modern culture in the United States of America in the late 19th century, still remains active today. Fundamentalism, born in America in the 1920s, (Kramer, 2003, p. 67) means “radicalism”. Related fundamentalism is a fundamentalism in the field of religion. According to Rothgangel (2016, p. 253), the origins of religious fundamentalism are Christianity, and in particular, “original” religious fundamentalism can be found in the tradition of Protestantism. For example, in the Solomon Islands, there are 17% Evangelic, 19% Methodist/Presbyterian and 9% Baptist (Republic of Turkey Canberra Embassy, 2012). In contrast, fundamentalism is most strongly embraced by Baptists, Evangelists, Methodists in the U.S. Fundamentalism is also influential in politics. For example, there is intense debate about the role of Protestant Christian fundamentalism in the recent American elections (Armstrong, 2005). Fundamentalist activist campaigns in the Ameri-

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can presidential elections, especially in the 1980s, were supported by Ronald Reagan. But the period in which they have been most influential in politics has been the presidency of George W. Bush. Bush, an evangelical fundamentalist, became the most prominent and debated American President in recent years, with his “Crusade” and his involvement with fundamentalist leaders, which he proclaimed to be commissioned by God on September 11, divine mission (Albayrak, 2014). It is very clear that in the last thirty years fundamentalism has played an important role in shaping the events of the early 21st century (Ozzano, 2009, p. 127).

Although for some Christians the fundamentalist term is claimed to be derogatory; Baptists, Evangelists, and Methodists carry out effective fundamentalist activities in everyday life (Kumar, 2002, p. 19). Opportunities provided by communication technologies; Baptists, Evangelicals, Methodists are also doing fundamentalist activities through social media. Therefore, the subject of this study is to examine the social media usage of Baptists, Evangelists and Methodists. The study aimed to understand how Baptists, Evangelists, and Methodists, in particular, understand how and how often fundamentalist values and teachings are shared, within the scope of Twitter usage. For this purpose, some accounts and sharing of Baptism, Evangelism and Methodism supporters were examined in the study.

At investigation section of the study in the theoretical part; fundamentalism, radicalism phenomenon has been discussed and 3 Baptism, Evangelism and Methodism Twitter accounts, limited with study, *Awakening Evangelism* (@EvangelismDaily), *Baptist News Global* (@baptist\_news) and *WV United Methodist* (@WVUMC) were selected with a simple random sample. The posts of the accounts between the date range 01.08.2017 - 07.08.2017 again selected by simple random sampling and they been examined in the context of subject and sharing frequency. Thus, a review of a period of one week shows how American fundamentalism is realized through new media. The method of study is content analysis.

## FUNDAMENTALISM

Fundamentalism, invented to describe a movement to stand against liberal theology in the United States, was first used by a group of Christians (American Protestants) in the United States who expressed their commitment to the basic principles of Christian faith. The principles of which the Group had drawn attention were presented in the 12-volume booklet titled *The Fundamentals*, written between 1910 and 1915. Members of this group had fought to defend the foundations of Christian faith and had characterized themselves as “fundamentalists” (Schirrmacher 2013, p. 9, Albayrak, 2014, Iannaccone, 1990, Mustache, 2007, pp. 83-84).

Casanova has linked the emergence of Protestant Fundamentalism to the three breaking processes in the advent of American secularization. The first is the constitutional break-up, which was the separation of the sacred institutions from the religious institutions in the political society, by establishing a distinction between the Protestant church and the American state. The second is the process of secularization of the American education system and the withdrawal of Protestant cultural hegemony from public life. The third realized due to the exclusion of Protestant ethics and the establishment of pluralism in American civil society. Fundamentalists thought that their traditional lifestyles were taken from their hands and surrounded with urban liberal Protestants. For this reason, they established their own institutes, bible schools, printing-publishing establishments, and a cultural living space. Fundamentalists have been able to use technology in a comfortable manner and become self-sufficient capable of producing themselves in a short time (Albayrak, 2012, p. 130). In response to Protestant liberalism; conservative evangelicals,

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