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There are so many variations of Christianity with regard to its practices and creeds that the question is often asked: which is the correct one? Christians who strongly adhere to basic Scriptural pronouncements, principles and values are referred to as fundamental, conservative or evangelical believers. The characteristics of this disposition will be reviewed in terms of its relevancy to a sound faith.

Christian fundamentalism is associated with the following 32 basic principles:

**Recognition of Scriptural authority.** The Bible is recognised, in its original languages, as the literal and inerrant Word of God which was inspired by the Holy Spirit. It contains true knowledge on our salvation in Jesus Christ, and also offers a sure foundation to our Christian life in every domain:

- ◆ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work◆ (2 Tim. 3:15-17; cf. 2 Pet. 1:19-21). God is the supreme authority in the universe and His pre-eminence renders all pronouncements in His Word authoritative. If we fear God we should recognise the authority of His Word and diligently walk in its light. Divine blessings are promised to us if we do not deviate from the Word (Deut. 5:32; Isa. 66:2; Rev. 3:8). On the other hand, the judgements of God rest upon all people who turn their backs on Him, reject His authority and despise His Word.

**A literal interpretation of Scripture.** The literal, grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture is foundational to evangelical Christianity. The Lord meant what He said to particular people during a particular time. Figurative language and symbolism should be confined to passages which the Bible itself indicates to be understood in that way. The rule is: *When the plain sense of the Word makes common sense, then seek no other sense.* Even where symbols are used, they mostly have literal antitypes and should therefore not be interpreted allegorically. The beast with the seven heads, for instance, is not an abstract concept which should be interpreted allegorically but a symbolic description of a person, the Antichrist. Descriptive names are often used in the Bible to emphasise certain moral or spiritual characteristics of a person. In this way, Christ is depicted as the light of the world, the water and bread of life, the Lamb of God, etc. When people deviate from the literal interpretation of Scripture, e.g. by alleging that Israel is the church or that Jesus only metaphorically rose from the dead, they proclaim their own, subjective rendering of the Word, thereby completely changing its basic meaning.

**The rejection of spiritualization.** The apostles and the early church fathers observed the principle of *sensus plenior* (Eng. *plain meaning*) when interpreting Scripture. They accepted that Scriptures only have one, basic meaning. During later centuries, this approach was increasingly rejected. Origen (b. 185 AD) is the father of allegorical interpretation and has written several books on this subject. He was strongly influenced by the Greek philosophy of Plato and tried to synthesise philosophy and Christian dogma. He regarded the Bible as a book full of symbols and allegorical constructions, and therefore did not interpret it literally. To him, the true meaning of the Bible was to be found in the philosophical-spiritual gnosis (knowledge of spiritual mysteries) to which each believer should advance. To him, there was no possibility of a literal kingdom of Christ on earth, neither of a personal Antichrist who will rule the world for seven years prior to the coming of Christ. The allegorical interpretation of Scripture has a very dubious origin as the Bible is not interpreted by itself but viewed in terms of a philosophical approach as an abstract book with a hidden, esoteric meaning. This approach is still perpetuated in reformed theology, since the reformers as well as their successors preferred to reject the rule of *sensus plenior* in order to, among others, avoid the idea of the literal

restoration of Israel. Cell groups and care groups in churches are often encouraged to explore the multiple meanings that may be derived from Scriptures by spiritualising them. To each person, a verse may mean something quite different. In this way they rarely consider the basic, root meaning of a verse. Fundamentalists cannot accept this approach to the Bible. Different applications of the same truth are in order, but not completely different renderings of the same Scriptural pronouncements.

**The recognition of spiritual realities.** A literal form of interpretation also fully provides for the recognition of spiritual statements in the Bible. There is no truth in the claim by spiritualising theologians that only they understand the Bible spiritually while fundamentalists understand it literally, thereby denying its spiritual truths. This argument suggests that only they are spiritual and we are not. The fact is that we accept the root meaning of every verse. If the basic meaning of a particular verse is spiritual, we accept it on face value as a spiritual statement. We do not try to change Scriptures that have an obvious spiritual meaning. According to our understanding, it is not exegetical sound practice to spiritualise virtually the entire Bible, thereby robbing it of its basic meaning and thus undermining the authority of Scripture. There is no sound basis for true spirituality if you do not have an authoritative Bible.

**Theological conservatism.** A fundamental Christian is conservative since he is committed to interpreting and applying the message of the Bible in terms of its plain meaning. People who take the liberty of changing the basic meaning of a Scripture by way of spiritualising or allegorising it, are acting in a liberal and wilful way. They do not respect the root meaning of God's Word and decide for themselves which other meaning(s) to attach to it. There are no limits to the self-willed exegesis of liberal theologians. Many of them take literal concepts such as heaven, hell, the devil, the Antichrist, Israel and the millennial reign of Christ, and then offer explanations which differ radically from those which the Bible give. They even go as far as denying the reality of some of these concepts. As justification for their liberal presumptuousness they allege that the Bible was written in terms of an ancient worldview, when people still believed in dragons, the devil and hell. The modernist says that God's revelations in the Bible were phrased in terms of primitive superstitions and uses this argument to actually rewrite the entire Bible. God will severely punish them, as stated in the last chapter of the Bible (Rev. 22:18-19).

**The biblical doctrine of creation.** The biblical statement that God is the Creator of everything that exists is fully accepted in evangelical circles. This belief leads to utterly rejecting the theory of evolution, which is based upon the unproven hypothesis that all life originated from a unicellular organism somewhere in a big marsh. The theory of evolution comprises a clear denial of the fact that human beings have other attributes than animals. Humans are also spiritual beings who were created in the image of God, and are therefore accountable to Him for their actions. The majority of evolutionists are agnostics since they think they have scientific evidence that God did not play any part in the origin of life. They are greatly deceived because there is no solid evidence to support their theory. No proof has been found for transitional species, in terms of which the assumption of evolutionary change to higher forms of life is made. Since creation, apes are still apes and have not evolved into something else. They are not our ancestors!

**The hostile kingdom of Satan.** Fundamental Christians believe in the existence of an opposing kingdom of darkness which is controlled by Satan and his demons. The Lord has prepared the lake of fire as an everlasting place of condemnation for the devil and his angels, as well as all unsaved sinners (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:11-15). Because our first parents were deceived by Satan they became sinners; consequently, we were all born with a sinful nature (Rom. 5:12). We can only be saved from the power of Satan and the destructive effects of sin by Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7; 1

John 3:18). We must prevail over our sinful nature (Gal. 5:16-17) and also put on the full armour of God that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:10-13). Spiritual warfare is the way to achieve victory in our personal battle against Satan. We should not use this method in unbiblical efforts to evict Satan and his demons from cities, countries, continents, or even from the entire world. During this dispensation, we are living in a world which lies under the sway of the Wicked One (Gal. 1:4; 1 John 5:19). We are engaged in a struggle against evil, and this struggle will intensify while we approach the end of this dispensation.

**Dispensationalism.** A literal interpretation of the Bible commits one to a dispensational exposition of God's revealed truth. Every dispensation (or age) has its own characteristics, although it may also share certain similarities with other dispensations. In connection with dispensational distinctions it should be taken into account that statements of faith which are based upon the crucifixion of Christ in the New Testament (NT) would obviously differ from Old Testament (OT) statements of faith. It is impossible to maintain the correct perspective if one does not consider dispensational realities. When different dispensations in God's counsel for mankind are confused with one another, serious deception and false expectations may result from it. That happens when aspects of Israel's dispensation of the law in the OT are confused with the NT dispensation of grace (the church dispensation) by promoting a legalistic form of worship. Major deception also follows when the church dispensation is equated with the future dispensation of the kingdom that is Christ's reign of peace on earth which will only be established after His second coming. By not clearly distinguishing between these two dispensations, the false expectation is advanced that the devil can now be bound and stripped of his power, that Christians can now take over the world and have dominion over it by ruling as kings, and that signs and wonders can proliferate as part of their show of kingdom powers. Such people are deluded and have no understanding of biblical prophecies which describe a world that progressively deteriorates during the final stage of the church dispensation (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5).

**The restoration of Israel.** Fundamental Christians recognise the modern state of Israel because they believe in the literal fulfilment of the many biblical promises on the end-time restoration of Israel in the Promised Land (Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 31:3-10,20-21,31-39; Ezek. 11:17; 36:22-29; 37:21). Israel is currently in a process of returning to the land of their fathers (Gen. 13:14-15; 17:8; 26:3; 28:13). They have an undeniable biblical mandate to this land, which clearly implies that it cannot be denied to them neither can it be divided. The two-state solution which the US and the UN are imposing on them demands the dividing of this land into two states Israel and Palestine but this is in direct conflict with the Bible. Severe judgements of God will come upon the Gentiles who enforced the dividing of Israel (Joel 3:1-2). The Lord not only attached His name to Israel as a people (Jer. 31:1), but also to Jerusalem as their spiritual and political capital a status which it will fully enjoy during the millennium after the coming of Christ (1 Kings 9:3, 11:36; Isa. 2:1-4; Jer. 3:17).

**Continued reformation.** Serious Christians should be involved with an ongoing process of bringing the theology and practices of their church or house assembly in line with God's Word. Bible study as well as research resources should be used to gain a deeper insight into the Word, followed by actions to implement the new knowledge. Care should be taken not to perpetuate unbiblical convictions and creeds which may have survived for a long time as church traditions, but have never been seriously investigated or challenged. Many of the reformed churches are guilty of this, and neglect to critically examine the serious errors which their church fathers have embedded in their creeds. In this way, even completely unbiblical, Roman uses and tenets have sneaked into the church of the Reformation and

survived to this day. Instead of a true reformation which is a movement back to biblical principles and standards, many churches are involved with an unbiblical reformation in which the remaining evangelical beliefs in the church are uprooted and rejected. In South Africa, there is a *New Reformation* of this type, which is responsible for extensive theological destruction. This is not a *reformation* to bring the church closer to the Bible, but a *deformation* aimed at destroying the church's foundations of faith. New reformers maintain that the *master-story* of Christianity is based upon the limited and often erroneous insights of the church fathers and the authors of Bible books. Through modern research, which amounts to nothing more than postmodern deconstruction and misplaced *academic reflection* they are constructing a *historical Jesus* who was not born from a virgin, who is not God, whose death on the cross has no redemptive significance, and who did not rise bodily from the grave. This *research* is done in pursuance of the *Jesus Seminar* in the US. To them all, the Bible is not God's inerrant Word, but religious opinions and speculation by primitive thinkers. They also equate Christianity with the non-Christian religions. This process of religious deformation should be rejected and countered by a true reformation.

**Biblical Christology.** Fundamental Christians believe in the full revelation of Jesus Christ in the Bible, and proclaim it accordingly. There must be absolute clarity on His eternal self-existence, His role in the creation of the world, the equal position which he occupies as God the Son in the Trinity, together with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, His virgin birth during His incarnation, the full significance of His atoning death on the cross, His bodily resurrection from the dead, His ascension, His functions as Prophet, High Priest and King, as well as His revelation as King of Israel *and* the whole world at His second coming. Then He will rule the world in His millennial reign of peace from the throne of David in Jerusalem. His attributes should also, in a dispensational context, be correctly understood. In the church dispensation, the emphasis is on the crucified Christ who is rejected by the world, on His High Priestly role to intercede for us at the Father's throne, and also on the special way in which He guides His disciples through the Holy Spirit, and empowers them for their commission to evangelise the world. During the millennium He will physically be on earth. Then, the emphasis will be on His role as King, and every knee will bow before Him.

**Uniqueness of the Christian faith.** In our relationship with the outside world we should take a strong stand on the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Nobody can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). *Nor* is salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). No credibility whatsoever can be given to the non-Christian religions; neither can ecumenical ties be forged with them. Brotherly relations cannot even be maintained with nominal Christian churches that do not have a clear confession of salvation based upon the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

**Evangelical doctrine of salvation.** The Bible clearly says that the condition for salvation is repentance and the receiving of Jesus Christ in faith as our Saviour (John 1:12; Acts 16:31). Through His death on the cross, Jesus Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (Acts 17:30; 1 John 2:2). A sinner should express his faith in the crucified Lord Jesus, who, through His resurrection, also conquered death and the grave and ever lives to make intercession for us. No person can be declared justified on any other grounds, e.g. on his good works, or his baptism and confirmation (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). There is no biblical basis for the common reformed view that the Lord has chosen certain people for salvation before the foundation of the world, and that their predestination is confirmed by the covenant baptism of infants. This is the Roman-Catholic doctrine of baptismal regeneration. The Bible plainly and repeatedly confirms that God wants to

save all people (John 3:16; Acts 17:30; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9). The door of grace is open to everybody, and each person must decide whether he or she wants to enter in.

**Sensitivity to the working of the Holy Spirit.** The most important ministries of the Holy Spirit are related to the conviction of sin, regeneration, empowering, teaching and comforting. Gifts such as the speaking in tongues were only meant for the transitional period, when the new dispensation of the church of Christ among all nations was established. Through this sign, the Lord indicated that the gospel message was to be preached to all nations and linguistic groups. This statement has clearly been made during the first century, and nobody has a biblical right to keep on praying for the gift of tongues. In the promise of Pentecost the Lord Jesus only mentioned the power of the Holy Spirit ♦ not the gifts of speaking in tongues and of healing (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). We should have great sensitivity to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and heed it, also when He convicts us of sin, because He never enforces Himself upon people. He can easily be grieved (Eph. 4:30), which means that such believers act outside the will of God. We should also be cautious not to ascribe strange manifestations on the physical and mental levels to the work of the Holy Spirit, such as *slaying in the Spirit*. This phenomenon usually leads to trances and bizarre, drunken behaviour such as uncontrolled laughter, disconnected speech and the making of animal noises. When testing these strange manifestations in the light of Scripture (1 John 4:1) they are clearly proved to be unauthentic and in conflict with a fundamental interpretation of Scripture.

**Freedom of the human will.** God gave to humans a free will, so they can decide for themselves between good and evil. He wants voluntary love from us, which means we must take a free decision to repent and to worship and love Him after being convicted by the Holy Spirit. The doctrine of predestination is unbiblical since it teaches that God manipulates all people in a predetermined way to act according to His will. The Lord Jesus refutes this doctrine when He says, ♦Let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires [or wishes], let him take the water of life freely♦ (Rev. 22:17). He also said that He wanted to gather the inhabitants of Jerusalem to Himself, but they were not willing (Matt. 23:37). The fact that people can act in conflict with God♦s will and grieve His Spirit, in no way undermines the sovereignty of God. He Himself has taken a sovereign decision to give people a free will so they can decide of their own volition who they want to serve (cf. Jos. 24:15; 2 Cor. 5:20). The Lord has foreknowledge on who will be reconciled to Him and then chooses (or appoints) them to holiness and fruitful service. That means that He appoints them in His kingdom and determines the nature of their service.

**Biblical doctrine on sin.** Man has been created in the image of God, but due to the Fall he died spiritually and acquired a perverted nature with immoral inclinations. All his actions and thoughts that are at variance with the divine nature of God are described as sin. The law convicted Israel of sin in the OT, and the Holy Spirit convicts people in the present dispensation of sin in accordance with Scriptural norms and pronouncements. God wants to restore His divine nature in people♦s lives, and for this to happen, repentance, regeneration and sanctification are needed. His call to Israel in the OT, *and* to all believers in the NT, is the same: ♦Be holy, for I am holy♦ (Lev. 11:44; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). Since the Fall up to this day, the definition of sin did not change, since it includes all forms of behaviour which are in conflict with God♦s unchanging, holy nature. Human values can never become the norm for sin, as they are determined subjectively by people who are in most cases still dominated by their uncrucified, sinful nature. The Bible alone is our measure to determine the nature of sin. If the Bible says that homosexuality is sin (Rom. 1:26-27), it will forever remain a sin because God did not create people in that way. The Bible often discusses sin, among others, as the fruit of the flesh which is

the sinful nature of human beings. ♦The wages of sin is death♦ (Rom. 6:23), so we urgently need to be saved from our sins by Jesus Christ (Matt 1:21).

**Biblical principles and culturally determined practices.** Biblical principles for human behaviour never change, but culturally determined ways in which expression is given to these principles may vary from culture to culture and from time to time. In the first century, women had to cover their heads when worshipping the Lord, as an indication that they subject themselves to the authority of their husbands. Today, the wearing of a hat is not in the least regarded as a symbol of accepting authority; therefore, this principle should be honoured in other ways. Men have to greet one another heartily. During the first century, they did this by kissing one another (1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Thess. 5:26). Today, there are other ways of greeting one another heartily! Clothing has also changed. The principle is that we should be well dressed. In the first century, men did not wear jackets and suits but long garments. We have completely different ways of dressing ourselves properly. But we should always remain committed to honour biblical principles in our own culture.

**Antithetic worldview.** The biblical way of thinking is strongly antithetic since we are taught to think in opposites. Fundamental Christians should always be able to distinguish between light and darkness, righteousness and sin, nice and ugly, good and evil, truth and lies. To be able to do that they need spiritual and moral guidelines which can be applied to every situation to arrive at the correct decisions and forms of behaviour as prescribed in the Bible. In the emerging new world order, and also in the New Age Movement, there is a paradigm shift towards synthetic thinking. It is holistic in nature and leads to convergence and the unifying of all things. Boundaries are no longer drawn as they disturb the mutual unity of all things. The emphasis is now on the building of bridges of reconciliation and unity. All religions, for instance, should join hands in terms of the synthetic idea that we all worship the same God. In the same way, all cultures and ideologies should converge in order to replace the existing diversity by an all-encompassing unity. This premise is diametrically opposed to the biblical thought pattern of conceptual thinking. God clearly divided light from darkness, so we cannot be unequally yoked together with unbelievers who practise religions that originate from the kingdom of darkness (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

**A defensive (apologetic) disposition.** The message and demands of the Bible are in opposition to a depraved and sinful world. For this reason, we as Christians should shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation (Phil. 2:15) while fighting the good fight of faith (1 Tim. 6:12). We are the salt of a corrupt earth and the light of a dark world (Matt. 5:13-16). It is obvious that we should defend the Lord, His Word, our faith and a Christian way of living against attacks from a hostile world. False teachers who have deviated from the truth of the Word, also incessantly question and discredit the Bible and its doctrines. Paul says, ♦Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine♦ (2 Tim. 4:2-3). We are appointed to the defence of the gospel (Phil. 1:17). In the true sense of the word, we should be Protestants who keep on protesting against all forms of doctrinal deception and corrupt practices.

**Rejection of positive thinking.** The antithetic way of thinking which is entertained by fundamental Christians commits them to give full recognition to the existence of negative, sinful thoughts and works. We should be discerning Christians who are able to identify and resist evil things, particularly religious deception. A sinner should be called a sinner, despite the fact that it is a negative label. Likewise, God's judgements upon sinners should be proclaimed together with the solution to this problem. However, liberal churches, as well as the ecumenical movement, regard fundamental Christians as a big threat to their programme of promoting unity with

Roman Catholics and the non-Christian religions, and present us in a negative way as intolerant and intent on sowing seeds of conflict and discord. In so doing, we pose a threat to their efforts of becoming conformed to the world. From our position, we reject their humanistic-driven positive thinking because they are deceived and unable to discern between good and evil.

**Conformity to Christ.** It should be our highest aim to be conformed to the life of the Lord Jesus: ♦He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked♦ (1 John 2:6). The Lord Jesus did not live for Himself but for others: ♦Whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave ♦ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many♦ (Matt. 20:27-28). We should be servants of the Lord Jesus who proclaim the message of His saving grace to all people. We should do things which have value for eternity, and not be busy accumulating perishable, earthly treasures. We should also be prepared to suffer if necessary, after the example of Christ (1 Pet. 2:21). We should not be followers of other people, including the church fathers, unless they, themselves were dedicated followers of Christ, like Paul (1 Cor. 11:1).

**Upholding a biblical order of authority.** God occupies supreme authority in the universe. He appointed Christ as head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Elders and deacons are appointed in the church under the authority of Christ. They are all men (1 Tim. 3:2-4). Women are not allowed to rule over men or to teach them from the Word of God, and can consequently not become pastors. Because of the demands of apologetic preaching, which includes the rebuking and disciplining of members, this responsibility should remain in the hands of men. It is humiliating to a man to be disciplined and rebuked by a woman. Paul says, ♦I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man♦ (1 Tim. 2:12). However, women are free and often very able to teach other women and children, and also to offer adult Bible classes in which there is no ruling element. The same order of authority applies to human societies, as the Lord instituted families under the headship of men: ♦For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church♦ (Eph. 5:23).

**Cultural diversity.** The Lord has determined boundaries between nations and cultural groups, and He expects us to honour them (Acts 17:26). That is a continuation of the confusion of tongues which occurred during the building of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:5-8). It was wrong in the eyes of the Lord that the Babylonians were building a world state with only one official language, so He gave every group their own language. They consequently dispersed and each settled in their own territory under their own government. This was the beginning of different cultural groups among the nations. The recognition of cultural diversity is the only basis for healthy relations among nations. In our commission to evangelise the world we are sent to every tribe and tongue and people so that each group should (preferably) be evangelised in their own language. In the end-time, under the instigation of Satan, the Antichrist and the false prophet, a world empire will be established with only one government, one religion and one economic system (Rev. 13:1-18). The emerging new world order expressed itself in favour of a system of global control. That will be a serious infringement of God's order of independent and self-determining nations, and for that reason the Lord Jesus will, at His second coming, destroy the evil lifestyle, holistic social order and satanic empire of the Antichrist.

**The recognition of biological identity.** Apart from cultural identity, the Lord also determined the basic, personal identity of every individual as male or female (Gen. 1:27). The purpose of this was that heterosexual males and females would contract marriages which are the basic social units for procreation, the raising of children, education, enculturation, and the maintenance of authority in society. God definitely did not create genderless people who do not really know whether they are male or female

(homosexuals, or gays). People become like that because of learned behaviour and not inherited behaviour. There are no people with gay genes in them. Sodomy is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord, as such people deny their Creator by their behaviour. Some of them even blame God for their perverted sexual orientation. There is deliverance from this sinful inclination (1 Cor. 6:10-11), and there are many testimonies of former gays who now maintain normal, heterosexual relations. Sodomy should not be condoned or justified as it is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Tim. 1:10; cf. Rom. 1:24-27). The establishment of gay congregations, as well as the appointment of gay pastors, are further evidence that biblical fundamentalism is rejected by deceived people, thereby destroying the foundations of the Christian faith and Christian societies (cf. Ps. 2:2-3; 11:3).

**No compromise.** The Lord Jesus gave us a sure faith and clear rules for living. He didn't come to compromise. All people are born in sin and are called, by faith in the Lord Jesus, to make a clear transition from the darkness of sin into the marvellous light of His kingdom (1 Pet. 2:9). He expects of us, by repentance, to make a clean break with our sinful past. The rich young ruler was not prepared to give up his earthly possessions and form of godliness in order to become a true follower of Jesus. The cost was too high. He wanted the best from two worlds by trying to serve God and Mammon. When he turned around, the Lord Jesus did not call him back to compromise by convincing him to only abandon half of his possessions in an effort to win him as a disciple. That does not mean that rich people should part with all their possession to become Christians. But they should dedicate themselves and all their material wealth to God then they will be stewards in the cause of the Lord, who will not find it hard to make substantial contributions to the advancement of His kingdom on earth.

**Christian morality, values and practices.** A fundamental Christian is a person to whom a Christian way of living is the only acceptable form of existence. He exerts himself to ensure a Christian constitution and government, Christian education, and the observance of Christian norms in society. There were times, particularly during the great revivals of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Christian reforms were characteristic of most nations in Europe and North America also nations of European origin in other parts of the world. Afterwards, secularism and humanism again got the upper hand, and these societies gradually started to lose their Christian character. That placed bigger pressure and more responsibilities on Christian families to persevere on the right way and give Christian education to their children. People who do not seriously consider the Bible, easily abandon this way of living and accept a postmodern orientation, which is inherently post-Christian.

**Strangers and pilgrims.** In spite of the positive reforms in many countries during the great revivals, human history is predominantly characterised by godless and sinful societies in which there is no appreciation for fundamental biblical truths. On the most, a form of godliness will be tolerated but without strict principles and rules. In the end-time, conservative Christian principles are increasingly abandoned (1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1-5). The consequence of this falling away is that true Christians are strangers and pilgrims in a world that lies in the sway of the Wicked One (1 John 5:19; 1 Pet. 2:11). We have to accept this reality, as well as the opposition and persecution which come upon evangelical believers. The kingdom of God will definitely not be established on earth now, as Christ will only be revealed as King of kings at His second coming. He will then destroy the powers of the Antichrist (Rev. 19:19-21) and have Satan bound and incarcerated in the bottomless pit (Rev. 20:1-3). Only then, a government of righteousness and peace will be established for the whole world (Isa. 2:2-4; Jer. 3:17; Zech. 8:20-22). In that future kingdom, we will not be rejected disciples (John 15:18-19) but kings who will be co-rulers with Jesus Christ (Rev. 5:9-10;

20:4).

**Perseverance.** One of the strongest characteristics of an evangelical Christian is perseverance in his Christian life. When the road becomes steep and the progress difficult, when friends ignore you and family members turn their backs on you, you should remain unwavering in your commitment to the Lord Jesus. ♦For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end♦ (Heb. 3:14; see also 3:6,13). Don♦t allow disappointments or opposition to force you off the right course: ♦If indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel♦ (Col. 1:23; cf. 1 Tim. 1:19). Persevere in following and serving the Lord (Luke 8:15; 21:19). We know that the Lord will never leave nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5), but the possibility always exists that we may become unfaithful towards Him. Jesus said, ♦Abide in Me, and I in you♦ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered♦ (John 15:4,6). How does that happen? People first grow cold in their love for Jesus, and ultimately many of them leave their first love (Rev. 2:4-5). Peter says that there are those who fall away from their own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked (2 Pet. 3:17). Faith, obedience and discipline are needed in our spiritual lives. Paul said, ♦I discipline my body and bring it into subjection♦ (1 Cor. 9:27).

**A biblical future expectation.** It is evident that somebody who keeps the Word of God and does not deny the Lord Jesus (Rev. 3:8) will be strongly focussed on the second coming of Christ. He will know that this world is not our home because the Lord is preparing for us a city which has foundations, eternally in heaven (John 14:2-3; Heb. 11:10). This expectation keeps us from getting bogged down in a small world of materialism and own interests. Paul says, ♦If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men♦ (1 Cor. 15:19; NIV). We should love and serve Christ with a view to the eternal interests of His heavenly kingdom. The day when the Lord Jesus takes the true believers away by means of the rapture we will leave this corrupt world to be with Christ forever (1 Thess. 4:16-17). This is what we are living for and we are daily looking forward to it. We expect the heavenly Bridegroom any moment. The Bible describes an evil servant as one who lost his expectation of the soon coming of Christ. He says in his heart, ♦My Master is delaying His coming♦ (Matt. 24:48), and then becomes arrogant and indulges in sin.

**Accountability to God.** Man should guard against becoming his own god who sits on the throne of his heart. We were created by God and are called to become conformable to the image of His Son. For this reason, we are accountable to Him for what we have done with our lives. All unsaved people are living in a state of rebellion towards God and will appear before the great white throne where they will be condemned to the eternal lake of fire because of their sins (Rev. 20:11-15). Christians will appear before the judgement seat of Christ where they will receive rewards for their service to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:10; Luke 19:15-17). On that day it will be evident that many of them were not filled with the Holy Spirit, and consequently did not bear fruit that befits repentance. When their works are tested by fire they will burn like wood, hay and straw: ♦If anyone♦s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire♦ (1 Cor. 3:15). Prepare yourself for this appointment and make sure that you do not appear before the Lord empty-handed.

**Fundamentalism and radicalism.** Christian fundamentalism should in no way be confused with radical actions or violent behaviour. Although we have a faith and principles which differ radically from that of the world, we do not use radical or violent means to promote it: ♦Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord♦ (Zech. 4:6). We don♦t demonstrate in the streets, we don♦t threaten people and never take up arms offensively against others ♦ only defensively when it is absolutely necessary. As a small minority group we are not in a position to make demands. We

can only, in a civilised way, make requests to society and government in which we motivate our case well. A wrong image is often portrayed of fundamental Christians, for instance, to liken them with fundamental Muslims. The latter group is, as far as the Bible is concerned, not occupied with the truth and they also justify violence by waging a *jihad* against Israel and Christianity. The Koran often calls them to become engaged with such a war. In this dispensation, Christians are never called to make war, so we refrain from radical actions. We belong to a heavenly kingdom which cannot be defended by military means ♦ only by the word of our testimony. We are called upon to proclaim the saving grace of Jesus Christ to all people, also to the enemies of Christianity, whose minds have been blinded by the god of this age (2 Cor. 4:4).

**Persecution.** The gospel of Jesus Christ was never meant to make us acceptable to the world, but actually prepares us to be rejected, hated and persecuted by the world (John 15:18-20; Acts 14:22). We know that we won't take over the world during this dispensation. Wherever the gospel is correctly proclaimed without lowering its standard and mixing it with sensational kingdom promises, only a minority of people will be saved (Luke 13:23-24; Matt. 7:14). It is in our best interest to stick to the full truth of God's Word ♦ that means to be fundamental, evangelical believers ♦ and to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3).

Always remember that a fundamental Christian's life is built upon the foundation, Jesus Christ: ♦ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ ♦ (1 Cor. 3:11). If our lives have been built upon this firm rock we will never falter when the storms of life are unleashed against us. The sureness of this Rock, the certainty of our trust in Him, and the unchangeable nature of His Word offer us a hopeful future in His everlasting heavenly kingdom. The Lord Jesus said, ♦ Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away ♦ (Luke 21:33).