



# **A Critique of Christian Fundamentalism**

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# A CRITIQUE OF CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM

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Introduction  
by Pilgrim Simon (Robert Laynton)

All the essays in this collection have been published before on various blog sites and e-book sites on the web, but they have never been gathered together in this way before. They deal with key issues that are central to Christian Fundamentalism. *Christian* Fundamentalism is dealt with rather than Fundamentalism as whole, because it is Christian Fundamentalism that I am most familiar with and have most experience of. Nevertheless, certain aspects of these essays and certain principles contained within them can be applied to the wider Fundamentalist movement.

Christian fundamentalist ideology can be very powerful indeed. Once the believer accepts certain assumptions as fact, Christian fundamentalist thinking can exert an iron grip on the believer, locking them into a self-perpetuating and isolated system of thought and behaviour. Indeed, for Calvinist thinkers such as B.B. Warfield and Charles Hodge who found

their theology under threat by rationalism, scientific development and evolutionary theory – this closing of the theological/ideological circle to lock believers into a certain belief system was exactly what was intended.

Many Christians are very happy within the Christian Fundamentalist system. Of course they do not call themselves Christian Fundamentalists because this is now seen as a pejorative term with negative connotations – even though the term originated within their own ranks as a sort of ‘back to basics’ movement within the broader and more liberal protestant church. Terms come and go, but phrases such as ‘Bible believing Christian’ or ‘Born again Christian’ mean roughly the same thing. However, if doubts begin to creep in to the believer’s mind such that this theology begins to be openly, but sincerely questioned, then the believer may well find themselves subtly (or even not so subtly) threatened, excluded, isolated, ostracised, unfairly criticised, disapproved of and so on. There is the idea within Christian Fundamentalism that the ‘truth’ that they believe in is particular, exclusive and absolute. To question it is to question (and therefore doubt) God, to inquire into other religions is to ‘go after other gods’ or even to follow ‘the devil and deceitful spirits’. There is only ‘one way’ (which happens to be their way) to God. In this way, Christian Fundamentalism is ultra-orthodox.

The author takes the position that we cannot create a fixed or an adequate conception of God. The Divine is far too Transcendent to be bound by finite conceptualisations and theologies. In his view, belief systems, theologies, conceptions of the Divine and so on serve to both reveal and mask the Transcendent – they can only point to That which cannot be known. Belief systems serve to give us finite creatures of form a relative perspective of the Infinite. But as we draw near to the Formless, these forms fall away, rendered useless by the Vastness of the Absolute. So why pick on Christian Fundamentalism? It is one of a number of approaches to the Godhead, so why critique this approach?

It is the closed absoluteness of Christian Fundamentalism (and Fundamentalism generally) that makes demands for a collection of articles such as this. There is within Christian Fundamentalism an express belief that the Bible forms a now-closed inspired or God-breathed revelation from the one God. No new revelations are to be expected – the rule-book is closed and complete. There is also a certain type of literalism present

within Christian Fundamentalism: Jesus really did perform miracles and rise from the dead. God really did create the world in six literal, twenty-four hour days. Moses really did lead the Israelites through the parted waters of the Red Sea. Christian Fundamentalism constantly draws the believer back to what are perceived as literal, objective events of history. Then there is also a great emphasis on belief – on believing the right ‘key’ doctrines that often serve as ‘proof’ of one’s salvation.

The author is an ex-Christian Fundamentalist – a Calvinist – who has experienced first hand the power and grip both of the theology and the group pressures involved in Christian Fundamentalism and what happens when one leaves. Following some deep spiritual experiences *within* Christian Fundamentalism (Baptism of the Spirit, Extraordinary Witness of the Spirit), his Christian Fundamentalist theology proved especially tenacious, with the result that it took over thirty years to deconstruct these now deep-rooted spiritual beliefs and to establish new ones. It is that deconstruction that we have presented here, in a series of essays and articles that have been written between 1976 and 2011. As a result of such a compilation, there is inevitably some repetition of certain sections and passages, which I hope that the reader will bear with. However, the author has not become an atheist – he embraced secular humanism only briefly before rejecting it as inadequate – rather he retains a lively interest in and engagement with spirituality and thus, it is not his intention to dismiss Christianity. There is much within Christianity that is of value and interest – but nevertheless, key orthodox ideas have to be questioned. At the end of this collection of essays, there is an attempt to present some sort of outline Christianity in the light of the comments made throughout this collection – but it is a Christianity that is quite radically different from the mainstream orthodox Christianity handed down to us through history and particularly different from the ultra-orthodoxy of Christian Fundamentalism.

The articles and essays in this collection deal with the fundamentalist idea of absolute truth, the Christian Fundamentalist system and the people that subscribe to it. The foundation of Christian Fundamentalism is looked at – the idea that the Bible is a closed revelatory book which is without major error or contradiction. A whole series of questions relating to spiritual and moral authority in the church are explored. The founding figure in Christianity, Jesus Christ is looked at in order to explore what Jesus really seemed to teach and how orthodox ideas were developed

and established around him as the central figure of the faith. Since the thought of the Apostle Paul makes up most of the New Testament, we explore where he obtained his ideas. There are also brief articles on the nature of belief, why leaving fundamentalism can be so hard and a look at groups sects and cults. There is also an exploration on what a 21<sup>st</sup> century might look like and the testimony/spiritual biography of the author.

Pilgrim Simon Feb 2012

## **ABSOLUTE TRUTH: FUNDAMENTALISM AND GOD**

In discussing fundamentalism in this essay I am referring particularly to Christian fundamentalism and that from a Calvinist perspective. Even so, some of the concepts and ideas put forward here will apply to any religious fundamentalist system and so those from systems other than Christianity may be able to apply such ideas to their own framework.

Christian fundamentalism is considered to be a conservative movement – not necessarily politically, but in terms of seeking to conserve or preserve the traditional doctrines and practices of the group. In fact the more theology-based fundamentalists may even be described as ultra-conservative. Christian fundamentalists claim a line right back to the Apostles and disciples of Christ seeing themselves as preservers and inheritors of the truths which they declared. As far as they are concerned, these truths were laid down by the Apostles in the gospels and book of Acts of the Apostles and particularly by the Apostle Paul in his various letters that make up most of the New Testament of the Bible. These writings are seen by many fundamentalists as the inspired Word of God, because fundamentalists consider that God in the Person of the Holy Spirit breathed as it were these ideas, insights or revelations into these writers, withholding the effects of sin and transgression such that in their original form at least, these writings are inerrant: that is they contain no mistakes or errors. God is Perfect, has inspired these writers, withheld the corrupting effects of sin and so therefore these writings are without error. Since then, there have been through time, in one place or another, those who have conserved and maintained the purity of the teachings that these writings contain. For Protestant fundamentalists, these truths became obscured and hidden under the Roman Catholic system, which, they say, over time, became distorted and corrupt, especially by late

medieval times. Nevertheless, these truths were brought back to the forefront at the reformation in Europe in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Religious leaders such as Martin Luther, John Calvin and others led a protest movement against what they saw as the mistakes and corruptions of the church, reforming the church so that it was based upon the Bible or Scripture alone instead of on the dictates of the Pope. Furthermore Scripture was made available to everyone by translating it into the language of the people, instead of keeping it in obscure Latin which was only understood by educated priests. So fundamentalists particularly trace their history back to this period. They will speak of the Puritans, of the heroes of the faith such as Wycliffe, Tyndale, John Knox, the Covenanters and others. These and their successors such as Hodge, Warfield, Spurgeon, Howell Harris, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitfield, Lloyd-Jones and many others are all seen as 'sound' teachers – that is they adhere to and conserve this line and tradition of teaching, refusing to compromise it in the face of 'unsound' liberals and academics within the church and unbelievers outside of it.

It is in these kinds of ways that 'sound' teaching becomes elevated: such teachings are seen as the inspired, inerrant teachings of God under the light of which every idea and practice of the believer and church is examined. From the Apostle Paul to the protestant reformers and beyond, leaders began to set out and define systematically the teachings contained in the inspired writings. After some divisions and errors within the early church in the first centuries after Christ and after some debate amongst church leaders, the writings were closed so that no other writings could be added to them. Some writings were included in the canon, some, such as the Gospel of Philip and Shepherd of Hermas, were excluded. It should be noted that the actual principles on which these decisions were made can now be seen as weak and even spurious, such that with the extra knowledge and analysis that we have benefit of today concerning these writings, some of the letters now included in the New Testament would have to be excluded on the basis of this new evidence. Nevertheless, a canon or rule of faith was defined and bordered by this set of writings and with it, an orthodoxy and orthopraxy – one belief and one practice for the church. The ideas of heresy and apostasy were put forward: failure to conform to the canon, or conversely, the suggesting alternative or new concepts concerning God which contradicted the canon or which were simply were not present in it, meant that a person holding such views was an outcast and could even suffer the penalty of

death for holding such contrary ideas to those of this set of writings and the teachings they proclaimed. Indeed, some religious leaders made it their business to enforce conformity, demanding the burning of writings that were contrary to those of the canon, such as the Gnostic gospels. In this way, as they saw it, they thoroughly purged the church of impurity and corruption. Even so we should note that Protestant leaders such as Calvin, Luther and later Wesley, all excluded some of the books that we have in our New Testament. We can also note that the Roman Catholic Church included a set of books known as the Apocrypha, whilst Protestants rejected them.

With the advent and onslaught of the Age of Reason, modern science and thinkers such as Charles Darwin, these traditional ideas came under increasing scrutiny and stronger and stronger challenges. As a result, the Fundamentalist's approach to Scripture and thus the teaching contained within it, hardened and became less flexible. Certain doctrines, such as for example a literal six-day creation period and/or a young earth theory, whereby through calculating dates in the Bible, the earth was said to have been created between 6,000 and 10,000 B.C., became 'badges' of identification – 'markers' of a 'true believer' holding steadfastly to and conserving the traditions of truth held to by previous generations of born-again believers.

What this systematic, ultra-conservative orthodoxy does is, amongst other things, define and conceptualise God for believer and it does so in a way that is unquestionable. This literature is the Word of Infallible, Perfect God, written by men inspired by God in such a way that all corrupting influence which would give rise to false and mistaken ideas about God is restrained. To question this teaching therefore is to question God. To doubt it, is to doubt God. To suggest alternative or contradictory ideas to those of Scripture is to fall into error, to be self-deceived or deceived by the devil, or to oppose God.

It is recognised by fundamentalists that there are different interpretations and different degrees of emphasis on different passages of Scripture and that these in turn lead to different practices. Thus we have Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians and so on all within the protestant fundamentalist banner. This is accepted and tolerated so long as the main principles, plainly understood verses and truths of the Scripture are agreed upon.



But what the Fundamentalist has done is to elevate these writings and the ideas and concepts that they contain to an Absolute level and it is this that is one of their mistakes. Let me give an illustration. Christians call God the 'Father' – 'Our father who art in heaven...' Yet if the point is pressed, many fundamentalists will agree that God is not male and certainly not female (since fundamentalism is male orientated and patriarchal). They will acknowledge that the term 'Father' is a metaphor for a God that cannot be defined by gender: a God that transcends gender. Nevertheless, the word 'Father' is useful for describing the relationship that the believer has with God, for the way God deals with humanity. It engenders the whole Christian theology of the only begotten Son – Jesus Christ, as well as the Apostle Paul's approach whereby believers are thought of as adopted as sons of God and heirs, by reason of adoption, to the promises. But when it comes down to it, fundamentalists do not see God as a literal 'Father' or even as 'Male', but rather use the term in this 'useful metaphor' way. Fundamentalists are not always as literal in their interpretations as is usually made out. Many fundamentalists with regard to the creation account in Genesis take a similar approach. Because of the advances of science, instead of being inflexibly defensive, many fundamentalist believers find the literal interpretation too difficult to maintain, so they will talk about the six days of creation not in terms of literal twenty-four hour days but in terms of 'figurative days', that is periods of unspecified length symbolically described as 'days'. As long as the main principles and ideas of the fundamentalist faith are not compromised, such ideas may again be tolerated.

Unfortunately, the Scriptures do lend themselves to a literal interpretation. The books of the Bible are full of history – the reigns of kings, court intrigues, conquests and battles, heroic leaders, defeat and conquest, a human named Jesus living at a time of Roman occupation, claiming to be the Son of God, performing miracles as evidence, being put to death and being resurrected after three days. These fundamentalists take literally. They are quite averse to the pre-reformation approach of analogous interpretation. Thus, medieval Dominican Friar Meister Eckhart may consider the verse 'Jesus went into a house' and elaborate a doctrine concerning the mystical presence of Christ in the heart, whereby the house symbolises the Interior Castle, or heart of a person which is the proper dwelling place of Christ. For fundamentalists, Jesus just went into a house. They simply argue that using this kind of analogous

interpretation can lead to any doctrine that you care to construct – that you can believe anything. So fundamentalists differentiate between scripture passages: some are historical, some biographical, some are parables, some are symbolic and metaphorical, some are concerned with practical behaviour or conduct, and some are doctrinal, though as we have seen with Genesis, some literal sounding verses may be interpreted figuratively for convenience. Either way, the Scriptures and the main teaching inherent within them are elevated to an absolute degree: Scripture and the concepts and ideas it portrays are the Final Authority for faith and conduct. The believer may be reminded of the watchwords of the reformers: ‘Sola Scriptura!’ – Scripture alone!

The question we have to ask is: Are such forms absolute? Are such ideas and concepts Ultimate? I suggest that they are not and we see a clue why in the approach by fundamentalists themselves to the Divine Name ‘Father’. The concept, attribute, Name, quality, characteristic, relationship of ‘Father’ is not Absolute because God transcends gender – God is neither Male nor Female and therefore not ‘Father’. I suggest that there is a higher view of the Divine than that which is encompassed and bordered by conceptual ideas and forms, whoever may advocate them – Christian, Jew or Muslim. God is transcendent of the concepts and formulations of ‘Father’, ‘Creator’, ‘Love’, ‘Judge’ and so on. These are all limited, finite, relational terms but God as Absolute is Infinite, Transcendent and Unique. God alone is Real – God alone has Self-sufficient existence – all else is dependent upon God. The Absolute is transcendent of these limited forms, names and designations. They are in fact just useful metaphors that stand between us as creatures of form and the Formless, Infinite Absolute God. We stand in relation to God and these are relational terms that reveal aspects and facets of an Absolute that we cannot comprehend or encompass with forms, ideas and concepts. God transcends any philosophy or theology.

One mistake that fundamentalists fall into then is to elevate the language and conceptual ideas of Scripture to the level of Absolute – such that these main ideas must be conserved and defended at all costs. The attention of the fundamentalist is taken away from Absolute God and instead directed to relative level of Scripture and scriptural ideas which are then falsely elevated to the level of Absolute. This focus on form and concept actually distracts the attention away from the Absolute Transcendent Divine. The eyes of the fundamentalist are often not on God,

but on conformity to and agreement with a set of conceptual forms which fall short of Absolute God.

This means then that forms are Ultimately transcended, or to put it another way, as we draw close to Transcendent God in experience, these concepts and forms of the Divine may fall away and be rendered useless – inadequate to express and encompass the Vastness of the Absolute. Systems of theology and doctrine are not the Absolute but rather occupy a relational middle ground – they are useful as far as they go. In turn this means that we can be more open and tolerant of other religious systems, rather than seeking to defend our own conceptions of the Divine at all costs. This does not mean that different religious systems or schools can be merged. Though Ultimately they all point to Absolute God, yet these systems and their concepts exist in relation and thus exclude as well as enclose. What becomes important for the individual is internal consistency and coherence – an integrity and good fit of concepts whilst at the same time recognising their middle status in transcendence.

## **AN OUTLINE CRITIQUE THE CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALIST SYSTEM**

This study is only an overview, in order to get something of the flavour of the major criticisms and observations concerning fundamentalist theology, the fundamentalist system and the fundamentalist believer. Having spent twenty-five years in a Calvinist fundamentalist environment I support most of the following observations. The arguments are only briefly presented here since it is not the purpose of this study to examine at large the structure of fundamentalism. I present the observations rather as a context for this study of the Calvinist's approach to spiritual gifts. Those who wish to examine the arguments and observations more fully should refer to the books listed at the end of this chapter for further reading.

### **FUNDAMENTALIST THEOLOGY**

What sort of theology is created by a system that depends upon the inerrancy of Scripture? Fundamentalists do indeed have a theology but: -

a) It is a fossilised theology based on 18th Century revivals and the conservation of 19th Century Calvinism. But, because of discoveries and insights gained since these times, changes have taken place as regards the approach to Scripture by scholars. The reformers were not aware of these discoveries, and created an integrated system of theology which at the time was appropriate and made sense. But WE are aware of these discoveries of literature, archaeology and science. If then we still hold to certain of the reformers views, we are DIFFERENT from them, because we have knowledge that they did not possess. (1). It is like us holding to the notion that the earth is flat or that that sun goes round the earth. At one time, these seemed plausible, but new evidence has caused us to

abandon or modify these ideas. If the reformers were sincere seekers after truth, I am certain that they would reappraise and modify some of their views in the light of subsequent discoveries.

b) The older theologies required a thoroughly worked out system, with interdependent parts carefully stated and worked out in detail, such as the Westminster Confession of faith. Many groups within modern fundamentalism, including Charismatic groups, merely pick out parts of these systems and have no concept of interrelatedness. Rather, adherence to vital, nodal points is required as tests of orthodoxy. (2). But the claim that the theology is orthodox must be questioned when the holistic, systematic interrelatedness of earlier systems is abandoned. It would have been unthinkable at the time of the composition of the Westminster Confession to merely extract certain features and leave others. Rather, the whole works together. (3). But in much fundamentalism, elements of doctrine are conserved in such a way as they have to be affirmed, even though that doctrine may not play a great role in the life of the believer, such as for example, the virgin birth of Christ. One of the functions of this doctrine is to act as a sign of the correct conservatism of the believer. This process is called formalisation.

c) Claims of orthodoxy are emphasised by fundamentalists, who trace a line of thought back to the reformation and to the early church fathers. But claims of orthodoxy must again be questioned. As with documents like the Westminster Confession, only certain parts of the theology of these people are selected. Augustine's emphasis on justification by faith for example. But other, more Catholic ideas adopted by Augustine are ignored. So when appeals are made to certain historical figures, there is a selection of ideas and doctrine, such that some aspects are emphasised and others ignored. Similarly, they may appeal a line from Athanasius and his doctrine of the incarnation and the trinity, but ignore the integrated ideas that went with it, including the priesthood, liturgy and vestments. For similar reasons, there is a break with orthodoxy when using documents like the Westminster Confession, but not only because of selective use of passages and loss of integration. There is also a different purpose. This document was drawn up to be imposed upon every person in England and Scotland by the state, but it is not used in that way by fundamentalists today. Not only is its integrated approach ignored but it is used for a different purpose than that for which it was intended.

d) It is inactive. There is no new work for theologians to do other than conservation of ideas brought out in the reformation, revivals and nineteenth century, and their reiteration. There is no progression of theology other than a reframing of it for today's world. Thus: -

e) There is no challenge to the institutions, assumptions and traditions of fundamentalism except within it's main framework of belief. Forms of church service may be changed, so that choruses are sung as well as hymns, or something similar; methods of evangelism may vary, but basic assumptions about the nature and interpretation of Scripture are not addressed. In this sense it is totally complacent and lacks self-criticism. (4)

f) Because of it's views on the authority and inspiration of Scripture, and the belief that it's interpretation is correct, preserving a long line of pure Christian thought and doctrine against the error, corruption and heresy of liberal and Roman Catholic thinkers, it has no conception of a catholic community of theological thinkers in discussion. It insists that the one question of theology is Scripture authority. (5). There is little understanding of what non-conservative theologians think and no incentive to find out. (6)

g) As regards the Lord Jesus Christ, whilst fundamentalists acknowledge that Christ is both God and man, the emphasis falls heavily on the God-ward side. He is God walking about and teaching in a man's body. Any approach that starts out seeing Jesus as a man falls under suspicion from fundamentalists and tends to be rejected, or qualified with a stronger assertion that He is God. (7). Jesus becomes more like God giving out eternally correct information through a human mouth rather than a God/man speaking under the conditions of his time and situation... he is made into a superhuman and inhuman person. (8). One of the effects of this is to infer the downgrading of the suffering, pain and anguish of Jesus.

h) With regard to Pentecostalism and the Charismatic movement, there is a shift of emphasis, away from orthodoxy, intellectualism and absolute doctrinal correctness, with the coldness and formality that these imply, towards a personal experience of God. (9). There is in fact the potential for conflicts with Scripture via the 'inspired gifts' of tongues, prophecy and so on, but since there is less emphasis on the intellectual side of Scripture and the formulation of a systematic theology, such

conflicts, unless very obvious, may not be noticed. Also, grading takes place, where the Scripture is seen as pre-eminent over displays of gifts in terms of authority.

i) The introduction of New Translations may force ecumenicity on fundamentalists, especially with loss of the A.V.; There is greater awareness of contradictions between sources of Biblical documents. Thus, there is a contradiction in dates as regards the Israelites time in Egypt before the Exodus between Paul quoting the Septuagint in Galatians 3 v 17 and the references in the Hebrew Old Testament, the Masoretic text. (Genesis 12 v 4, 21 v 5, 25 v 26, 47 v 9). Differences between source documents and the exact rendering of words force openness to alternative interpretations to the protestant evangelical one.

## THE CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICAL SYSTEM

Having looked at problems with the foundation of fundamentalism on the idea of infallible Scripture, and having looked at some broad aspects of the theology it creates, I want to expand on some of the facets and criteria for this group as follows:

Contrary to many views fundamentalism does not rest:  
in simplism.  
in concreteness of approach.  
or in intolerance of ambiguity. (10)

1) The fundamentalist system consists of themes of separation and alienation of believers from the surrounding world, from modern theology and from modern Bible study methods. Anything perceived as threatening to the fundamentalist ideology is to be avoided and/or criticised. In mentioning to certain fundamentalists that I was reading 'Fundamentalism' by James Barr, which is critical of fundamentalism, I was reminded by them that this was 'dangerous'. The fundamentalist position often consists in a depreciation of whatever is exterior to the Bible in their interpretation.

2) There is in fundamentalism a characterisation of the believer as chosen by God in His sovereignty, and that those who do not share this believer's worldview are not really true Christians. Fundamentalism tends to argue that fundamentalism is the one true faith, and those who

embrace other Christian systems are false Christians. But, this basis of faith in Scripture alone is not sufficiently coherent to maintain one interpretation or faith. Other fundamentalist groups also hold to inerrancy and singleness of Scripture, such as the Christadelphians. The authority of fundamentalism fails to prevent the emergence and growth of numerous and violent contradictions within its own scheme. This is because of the vagueness and gaps present in Scripture and the variety of traditions brought to its interpretation.

3) There is fundamentalism an emphasis away from benefits and rewards in this life, and towards the life to come, when God will judge all things and complete fairness will be introduced. Thus tolerance of dissatisfaction, compliance to the status quo and lack of criticism is engendered. It is accepted that some things are not fair now, but rather than change them, an appeal to a better life to come with humble acceptance of one's lot now is made.

4) There is a negative characterisation of the individual person apart from their condition as a believer. This may serve to confirm the beliefs of those who have low self esteem that their self estimation is right, and that the gospel message is true by reason of its accurate diagnosis of their person. Sin is a valuable intellectual resource to fundamentalism, without it, it could not get anywhere, yet fundamentalists do not have a deeper or fuller awareness of sin than other aspects of Christianity. (11).

5) The conservative approach accepts older views, though it is selective. It seeks to preserve rather than rebuild, though within Charismatic groups there are progressive elements. The Charismatic influence is by no means limited to protestant fundamentalism; it is to be found in Roman Catholicism and liberal theological groups.

6) There is today, within fundamentalism, no social gospel. One reason that there is no interest in social action is because of eschatology... the doctrine of the last things. There is an expectation of things getting worse as we enter the last days before Christ's return. Fundamentalism has departed from its forebears in this respect. (12)

7) There is an anti clericism, such that theological scholars and academics are often not recognised, and ordinary laymen with little or no theological training may get up and speak on the Bible. The qualities



looked for by fundamentalists are conformity to fundamentalist practice, an accurate repetition of fundamentalist theology, and an absence of any scandal or overt sin such as continual thieving or overt sexual immorality. Academic qualities, if not conforming to fundamentalist ideas, are simply liberal and wrong as far as the fundamentalist is concerned.

### THE MAINTENANCE OF THE INFLUENCE OF CONSERVATIVE EVANGELICALISM

How does the fundamentalist system maintain its influence? Many people like or want to believe that there is, somewhere, some book that is absolutely true and correct, and in European and American culture, that book is likely to be the Bible. But, does the Bible distinguish itself from this non-religious appetite for belief in a true book, or does it pander to those emotions? (13) We have seen that the approach to Scripture is worked out by and for the conservative position. It does not give reasons to the non conservative why Biblical inspiration should be essential, apart from a claim that the Bible says so, which is a proof only for those who already hold the fundamentalist position. It forms a tight circle around existing believers... they can escape only at the cost of a deep and traumatic shattering of their entire religious outlook. (14)

Furthermore, Conservatism is often not content to preach the gospel as a message of salvation. Rather, it may use the gospel as a weapon to attack man, undermine his security, overcome him and force him into submission to the conservative way of thinking. (15). The person who accepts such a faith soon finds that he has to live within a conservative evangelical community which also holds as essential a whole lot of other things and the personal dynamics of the group are used to enforce conformity with these opinions. (16). Conservatives present a benign persona of the Bible and of themselves as conservative evangelicals rather than fundamentalists, i.e., extremists. But there is a real danger of unbalanced and/or superficial teaching, within a system that we have already found psychologically binding.

There is also a depreciation of the world... (there is none good but God). That which is outside fundamentalism is presented as wrong, unhealthy, displeasing to God, e.t.c.. This is done partly by emphasising 'conversion' which distinguishes between 'real' and 'nominal' Christians,

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