

Fundamental Features of Christianity

Fundamentals are a vital concern for whatever the project or enterprise. Without a firm foundation, any endeavor is eventually doomed to failure. Fundamentals are the things that undergird something, the foundation on which that thing rests. The Christian system has certain fundamental things that underlie it. These are necessary fundamentals. Here are some suggestions concerning those essential parts.

Conversion. Conversion indicates a change. Change is what the “new birth” is all about (John 3:3). Jesus said, “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” That conversion is a change of the whole man—a change of his intellect, brought about by faith; a change of his will, brought about by repentance; and a change of his relationship, brought about by baptism. This fundamental change brings one “into” Christ, or into a new relationship with Him. “Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are made new (II Corinthians 5:17). “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” Jesus said (Matthew 18:3). Conversion is fundamental to Christianity; it’s what makes one a Christian in the first place.

Conviction. Conviction issues in two different directions: it may be the equivalent of faith, or it may be what is produced by the knowledge of being found guilty. First of all, it’s being convinced, fully persuaded. That’s faith. Conviction is faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please Him,” we are told in Hebrews 11:6. We must be fully convinced that God is, and that He rewards those who diligently seek after Him. Faith is an essential part of Christianity; it is the bedrock foundation on which the entire system rests.

But conviction can turn in another direction as well. It may mean one who is convicted by the law, one who is guilty of a crime, as charged by a judge or jury. Man has to realize his lost condition before he will turn to God. The people on Pentecost were “pricked in their hearts” (Acts 2:37) before they said, “men and brethren, what shall we do?” One of the purposes of the word of God is to identify sin for what it is, and cause men to repent. “Godly sorrow worketh repentance (II Corinthians 6:10). Sorrow for sin comes as a result of a realization that one is not approved of God because of that sin. In either case—whether it is understood as faith, or being found guilty—conviction is a fundamental part of Christianity.

Consecration. To consecrate something is to set it apart, to make it sacred. In the case of Christianity, consecration is an indispensable part of service to God. As we have seen already, the Christian must be a new creature, one who has been born again. Once that is accomplished, he then must consecrate himself to God through His Son, Jesus Christ. “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed,” we are told, “by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:1-2). Notice that one must renew his mind in order to be consecrated to God. He must have a new focus, new desires, a new attitude toward the world, all of which has to do with his being set apart or consecrated to God. “Set your affection on things above, not on things of the world” (Colossians 3:2), is another way of saying, “be consecrated to God rather than the world.”

Consummation. Consummation is bringing one’s life to a suitable end or conclusion. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” says Paul (Philippians 2:12). You have to work it out yourself; and you have to work it all the way out to the end, or as Peter says, “Give diligence to make your calling and elections sure (II Peter 1:10). Consummation, for our purposes, means to bring your sanctified life to a good conclusion. “Gird up the loins of your mind, and be sober,” says Peter (I Peter 1:13), “and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Live your life here in such a way that when it is concluded you will hear the commendation, “well done good and faithful servant...” Life is a miserable failure if it doesn’t, by the grace of God, culminate in a heavenly abode.

Fundamentals. They’re necessary to who and what we are. Let us not become so enamored with where we are that we forget where we’re going.

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