

### **Evangelical vs. Fundamentalist**

In recent years, the terms “Evangelical” and “Fundamentalist” have often been used synonymously to describe certain Christians, but they are not the same.

Historian George Marsden wrote that, “a Fundamentalist is an Evangelical who is angry about something.” He added on a more serious note that the late Rev. Jerry Falwell used to use it as a quick definition for reporters.

The five fundamentals of the faith are the deity of Christ, the Virgin Birth of Christ, the blood atonement, the inerrancy of the Scriptures, and Christ’s bodily resurrection.

Evangelicals and Fundamentalists do not represent denominations or religions unto themselves but "religious movements" within Christianity. These movements have subgroups, debate, disagreement and dissension within their ranks as with any other movement.

To understand the differences between the terms, one must examine the history of each movement. In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, some conservative Christians felt a growing sense of alarm about the effects of modernism and secularism on American society. This movement came to be known as Fundamentalism, and its strict adherence to biblical doctrine has repeatedly placed it in conflict with the culture.

Fundamentalists are not just religious conservatives, they are conservatives who are willing to take a stand and to fight -- not only in religion, but in education, politics and the arts.

In the early 1940s, the split grew between Evangelicals and Fundamentalists over how to apply the "fundamentals" of faith to the modern world.

“In 1941, Rev. Carl McIntire founded the American Council of Christian Churches, an extreme group that favored separatism from hostile cultural forces,” according to The Beliefnet Guide to Evangelical Christianity. “Some went so far as to refuse contact with anyone who did interact with the culture. Not all ‘Fundamentalists’ ... felt this way, however.”

The late Dr. Kenneth Kantzer, a theologian, educator and journalist, said that for many Evangelicals who had considered themselves "Fundamentalists" -- in that they still believe in the fundamentals of the faith -- the term became "an embarrassment instead of a badge of honor."

Evangelicals like Dr. Kantzer did not reject every idea set forth by modernists simply because they were "modern." They did not fear cultural involvement or conflicting viewpoints; they were deeply committed to social action and justice. These Evangelicals wanted to engage the culture where the Fundamentalists rejected it.