

American Council of Christian Churches  
72nd Annual Convention, October 22–24, 2013  
Hardingville Bible Church, Monroeville, New Jersey  
“Resolution on the Danger of Neo-fundamentalism (revised)”<sup>1</sup>

Neo-fundamentalism, at times also labeled *pseudo-fundamentalism*, is a danger that our fundamentalist fathers warned us about a generation ago in response to the publication of the book, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon*,<sup>2</sup> and the political movement of the Moral Majority led by Rev. Jerry Falwell. Even secular news outlets perceived what was happening. *Time* magazine reported, “Falwell is leading a church movement increasingly known as the New Fundamentalism. It seeks to shed the reputation for bigotry and cultural narrowness without giving an inch on the Bible issues. Falwell wants to build spiritual alliances with as many of the moderate Evangelicals as possible.”<sup>3</sup>

*The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* describes a “new phase” of fundamentalism that began in the 1970’s and 1980’s, which “tended to blur the distinction between fundamentalist and evangelical.”<sup>4</sup> David Beale, a church historian, identified those engaged in this effort to blur this distinction as “that evangelical, conservative, religious sector which desires to retain the name ‘Fundamentalism’ while repudiating its essential, unifying characteristic—the full doctrine and practice of ecclesiastical purity (holiness).”<sup>5</sup> One author critical of Falwell’s new approach said simply, “He has chosen the name of Fundamentalism and the path of New Evangelicalism.”<sup>6</sup>

Our fathers discerned some key attributes of neo-fundamentalism, beginning with its misrepresentation of fundamentalism. The neo-fundamentalist considered anyone who conforms to orthodox doctrine a fundamentalist, in spite of his neglect of militant separatist convictions, in an effort to build a coalition of fundamentalists and evangelicals. The neo-fundamentalist often criticized the fundamentalist for a lack of love and unity, while seeking to discredit him with labels such as *hyper-fundamentalist* and *secondary separation*. The neo-fundamentalist believed that the definition of fundamentalism is something that ought to change from generation to generation.

When the apostle Paul bade farewell to the Ephesian elders, he warned them to take heed both to themselves as a group of pastors and to the flock of God as those purchased with the Lord’s own blood (Acts 20:28). Part of the responsibility of this warning was the painful understanding that men would arise from their own number who would speak perverse things and draw away disciples after them (v. 30). Although the danger of neo-fundamentalism is a painful reality of

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<sup>1</sup> This resolution is a revision of the resolution with the same title approved by the Executive Committee at the Spring 2013 meeting in New Boston, NH. This revision is prepared with appreciation for Dr. Kevin Bauder’s recent clarifications published since then regarding his contribution to the Zondervan *Four Views* book.

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Falwell, Ed Dobson, and Ed Hindson, *The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981).

<sup>3</sup> Richard N. Ostling, “Religion: Jerry Falwell’s Crusade,” *Time*, 2 September 1985.

<sup>4</sup> 2nd ed., s.v. “Fundamentalism,” by C. T. McIntire.

<sup>5</sup> *Fundamentalism and Its Foes: Recent and Current Trends in Religion* (Greenville, SC; Bob Jones University, 1987), 17.

<sup>6</sup> John Ashbrook, *An Analysis by a Fundamentalist of Falwell’s Book The Fundamentalist Phenomenon* (Greenville, SC: International Committee for the Propagation and Defense of Biblical Fundamentalism, 1982), 12.

spiritual warfare that hits close to home among men we have loved and admired, Paul's warning calls us to be faithful in spite of the pain and sorrow we feel as we cite these concerns.

The neo-fundamentalist call to the convergence of fundamentalists and evangelicals rang loud and clear from the Zondervan publication *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), a book promoted by the managers of the Sharper Iron website. The neo-fundamentalist tolerance for men who neglect or repudiate separatist convictions has spread to the campuses of former citadels of fundamentalism, like Calvary Baptist Theological Seminary in Lansdale, PA (scheduled to cease academic operations at the end of the 2013-14 academic year) and Northland International University in Dunbar, WI. We are deeply grieved by these developments.

Therefore, the American Council of Christian Churches, at its annual convention, October 22-24, 2013, at Hardingville Bible Church, Monroeville, NJ, resolves to be faithful to the responsibility of Christ's under-shepherds, "to take heed to themselves and to the flock of God," fully aware that it is from among ourselves that men may arise speaking perverse things and drawing others after them. We determine to humbly and lovingly warn one another and all professing fundamentalists of the serious error of neo-fundamentalism as our fathers did for their day, and we exhort our brothers to repentance and to a full embrace of militant separatist convictions, so that God, whose blood was shed to purchase His flock and who called us to be faithful overseers of it, might be obeyed fully and thoroughly pleased.



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