

American Council of Christian Churches
70th Annual Convention, October 18–20, 2011
Bible Evangelical Methodist Church, Lancaster, PA
“Resolution on the Multi-Denominational Heritage of Biblical
Fundamentalism”

With his prayer for the Ephesian believers, the apostle Paul addressed the One “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:15). It is in this name, Holy Father, that those who have been given to Christ are to be kept as one, even as they are sanctified in the truth (John 17:11). Whereas denominational labels within the spectrum of Protestantism correctly identify important details of differing convictions, basic agreement regarding the “weightier matters of the law” has bound these traditions together as a common echo of the first century Church’s apostolic faith (Matt. 23:23).

As a clearly identifiable movement, Biblical fundamentalism is not yet 150 years old. In its earliest phases, it gave voice to the foundational doctrines taught in the Bible and did so without reference to any particular denominational perspective. The earliest conferences, beginning in 1876 at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada, focused on that which various denominational groups held in common. It was the heritage, they argued, that had come down through the generations from the ministry of the apostles of Christ. As J. Gresham Machen observed, the movement was not the latest of a series of new “isms” but the restatement of the historic Christian faith.

Thus, there were Presbyterians and Methodists as well as Baptists from various fellowships that led the call for a return to the fundamentals of the faith. The latter part of the 19th century was a time of religious upheaval. The rapid acceptance of Charles Darwin’s ideas following the publication of his *Origin of Species* in 1859 together with the effects of German rationalism in theology produced a severe challenge to those who insisted on maintaining the orthodox doctrines taught in the Word of God.

Biblical fundamentalism was from its inception a movement to reassert the weighty matters of Holy Scripture in the face of the tidal wave of skepticism. Thus, Biblical fundamentalists, whatever their denominational distinctiveness and convictions, agreed to stand together on, among other things, the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, the creation of man by God’s direct act, the historicity of Adam’s fall into sin with all its theological consequences, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, His deity, the blood atonement of Jesus Christ for sinners, His bodily resurrection on the

third day, His ascension bodily into Heaven, and the certainty of His second coming.

Biblical fundamentalists also emphasized that it was necessary for sinners to be born again in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven, and that those who were converted to Christ would demonstrate that transformation through an increasing holiness of life in this world. Recognizing that, on less-weighty aspects of Biblical teaching, those who held to Biblical authority at times disagreed, Biblical fundamentalists resolved that they would emphasize the weighty matters on which they all agreed, and they would not consent to using their lesser disagreements as tests of Christian fellowship within the parameters of obedient orthodoxy. In regard to these issues, they resolved to respect the ability of brethren to disagree without surrendering their own denominational convictions or experiencing the condemnation of others.

In 1941, the American Council of Christian Churches was formed as an explicitly multi-denominational organization with a clear doctrinal statement that represented a vivid understanding of the foundations of Biblical fundamentalism. In spite of various attacks launched against the ACCC over the last 70 years, the organization has remained true to its founding purpose. It exalts the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only hope for the salvation of sinners. It exposes the work of theological apostasy, such as that of the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. It rebukes the work of those who seek accommodation with promoters of that apostasy. And it expounds the Holy Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

Therefore, the delegates to the 70th annual convention of the American Council of Christian Churches, meeting October 18-20, 2011 at the Bible Evangelical Methodist Church of Lancaster, PA, resolve with gladness to value and to maintain the multi-denominational character of the Council, as the Lord enables, and to promote in every obedient way possible the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We resolve to respect each other in the highest expression of Christian love and brotherhood and to stand with each other against every devilish device as we contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 3).



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