

American Council of Christian Churches
70th Annual Convention, October 18-20, 2011
Bible Evangelical Methodist Church, Lancaster, PA
“Resolution on Instances of Abuse within Professed Fundamentalism”

The corruption of Christian movements and organizations is a danger illustrated throughout the history of Christ’s Church. The record of heresies, scandals, greed, immorality, abuse, egomania and multiple other sins remind all to “be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8).

Lest we who are separatists be guilty of “straining at a gnat” and “swallowing a camel” (Matt. 23:24), or of seeking to remove a mote from another’s eye when a beam blinds our own (Matt. 7:3-5), or lest we be guilty of closing our ears to distressed victims, and of affirming evil by silence, we acknowledge with grief, revulsion, and unmitigated denunciation abuse that has been revealed within some professedly fundamentalist churches and ministries.

For example, confirmed reports of severe corporal punishment cite an instance of beating and bruising children, the failure to report to authorities bruises found on children as a result of abuse in their homes, and a flaunting of corporal discipline, evidenced in such practices as giving a souvenir paddle to ministry visitors.

The same ministry context involving this shaming of children included humiliation before their peers and forcing them to wear garments of the opposite sex as a punishment for inappropriate performance. Such would doubtless be condemned as a wicked perversion if a child opted of his own volition to dress in this manner, yet for the purpose of shaming, this ministry demanded this conduct of children.

We are horrified and sickened by reports of sexual abuse wherever they occur. Pedophilia, rape of minors, homosexuality, and incest are among the loathsome actions reported in professedly fundamentalist ministries. Lacking vocabulary that expresses the outrage we embody, we yet condemn these hideous, shocking perversions with the strongest indignation. We lament and decry such abominations within any community of faith, but most of all within professedly fundamentalist bodies.

Although we readily recognize the severe difficulty faithfulness in this area often requires, we further decry what appears at times to be a mishandling, an ignoring, a failure to report to civil authorities, or even a covering of these abuses in various ministries. While hastening to expose the sins of some, those who are guilty of sins of equal scandal have their deeds go unreported. And in cases where prominent clergy have been indiscreet or worse, some ministries have refused to address those transgressions.

The glorious heritage of Christ’s Church is badly stained when such abuse occurs, and more so when those responsible to deal with the abuse fail to address it. The result is that those who reject our message feel free to challenge our genuineness. But far worse, these scandals reproach the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving His enemies an opportunity to blaspheme (2 Sam. 12:14)!

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 that any guilty of the aforementioned sins be rebuked, that they be called upon to repent, to repudiate these practices, and, where criminal offenses have occurred, to submit to civil authorities in order to pay their debt to society. And be it further resolved that we call upon Bible-believing churches everywhere to raise their voices in condemnation of these atrocities.



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