

# Carl McIntire and the Politicization of American Fundamentalism: A Historical Analysis



## Fighting Fundamentalist: Carl McIntire and the Politicization of American Fundamentalism

by Victoria Hallerman

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In the annals of American religious history, the figure of Carl McIntire stands out as a towering and influential force. A firebrand preacher, charismatic leader, and shrewd political strategist, McIntire played a pivotal role in the politicization of American Fundamentalism during the 20th century. His imprint on the religious and political landscape of the United States remains significant even today.



### **Early Life and Beliefs**

Carl McIntire was born in Mediapolis, Iowa, in 1906. Raised in a devout Presbyterian home, he developed a deep passion for the Bible and a conservative understanding of Christian doctrine. After graduating from Princeton University and Westminster Theological Seminary, McIntire began his ministry in Collingswood, New Jersey, where he founded the Bible Presbyterian Church in 1933.

McIntire's theological views adhered strictly to the doctrines of Biblical inerrancy, premillennialism, and dispensationalism. He believed that the Bible was the infallible word of God and that Jesus Christ would return to

establish a literal and physical kingdom on earth. His sermons were characterized by a fiery rhetoric and a strong emphasis on personal morality and social conservatism.

## **Political Activism**

It was in the realm of politics that Carl McIntire made his most significant impact. Deeply concerned about the perceived moral decay and secularization of American society, he entered the political arena in the 1950s as a vocal critic of communism, liberalism, and the Supreme Court's rulings on issues such as school prayer and abortion.

In 1958, McIntire founded the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), an organization that sought to unite conservative Protestant denominations and mobilize a political base against what he saw as the encroachment of secularism. The ACCC became a powerful force in conservative Christian circles, providing a platform for McIntire's political campaigns.

On the Hot Seat

## Rev. Carl McIntire

- "I stand for righteousness which is an obligation of every Christian in all our affairs — personal, family, political, international."
- "It is opposed to anything which restricts or limits the responsibility of the individual."
- "You can't have a free society without free men, and since surely the ethical standards of the scripture is formed upon the fact that they must be changed."
- "The problem we face—the whole race issue — is a matter basically of human attitudes."
- "MER has done more than any one factor in this whole area in being the pillar of broad understanding and Christian doctrine to the hearts of blacks and white alike."
- "Well, the liberals in the church world are those who are willing to introduce into the churches these foreign doctrines which are in conflict or contradiction to the creeds of the church."



The logo of the American Council of Christian Churches.

### **The Christian Beacon**

McIntire's political activism was closely intertwined with his control of the media. In 1950, he launched the Christian Beacon, a weekly newspaper that became a mouthpiece for his conservative views and a vehicle for his political campaigns. The Christian Beacon reached a wide audience and played a crucial role in shaping the opinions of conservative Christians across the country.

Through the Christian Beacon, McIntire attacked his perceived enemies with unrelenting zeal. He denounced the National Council of Churches as a "Communist front," criticized President John F. Kennedy as an appeaser to communism, and campaigned against the Equal Rights Amendment and other progressive policies.

## McIntire's Legacy

Carl McIntire died in 2002 at the age of 95. His legacy remains complex and controversial. His supporters hailed him as a fearless defender of Christian values and a bulwark against secularism. His critics, on the other hand, accused him of fueling religious intolerance, promoting division, and undermining American democracy.

McIntire's influence on American Fundamentalism cannot be overstated. He helped to mobilize conservative Christians into a powerful political force, laying the groundwork for the rise of the Religious Right in the late 20th century. His campaigns against liberalism, communism, and secularism shaped the discourse of evangelical Christians for decades.

Carl McIntire's story is a fascinating chapter in the history of American religion and politics. His unwavering conservatism, his shrewd political instincts, and his ability to harness the power of media made him a pivotal figure in the politicization of American Fundamentalism. His legacy continues to shape the religious and political landscape of the United States today.



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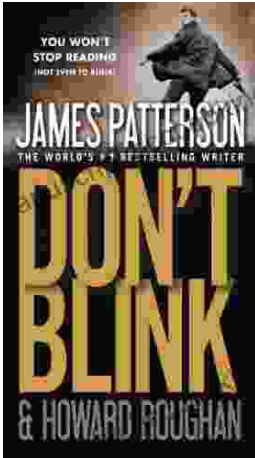
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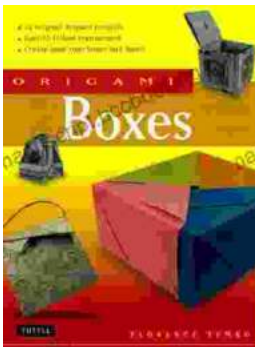
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