

# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

Issue 92: America's 20th Century Evangelical Awakening

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## A New Evangelical Awakening: Did You Know?

Interesting and Little Known Facts about America's Mid Century Evangelical Resurgence

### "Mr. Evangelical"

One of the most important 20th-century shapers of modern evangelicalism was a man whose name is unknown to most evangelicals today: Harold John Ockenga (AH-ken-gay). During his lifetime Ockenga served as founder and first president of the National Association of Evangelicals; president of the American Board of the World Evangelical Fellowship; president, co-founder, and later Chairman of the Board of Fuller Theological Seminary; Chairman of the Board of CHRISTIANITY TODAY magazine; a member of the board of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association; pastor of historic Park Street Church in Boston for more than three decades; and the founding president of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. His remarkable oratorical skills and visionary speeches made him evangelicalism's most trusted voice for decades. Billy Graham, whose fame has now eclipsed his mentor, claimed that he never made a major decision in his life without first consulting Ockenga. [See *America's Hour Has Struck* for more about Ockenga.]

—contributed by Garth Rosell

### Election redirection

The New Evangelicals were determined to infuse the public square—including the political arena—with the truths of Christianity. In the midst of the 1952 presidential campaign, a group of Christians led by former Youth for Christ president Torrey Johnson held their own "campaign" on the heels of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in an attempt to spark discussion of spiritual issues. "We feel the time has come when the entire nation should pray for guidance in the coming elections," Johnson said. "We want every politician to know the real hope of America is Jesus Christ." This converted bus with its provocative question was used to promote the campaign.

### Becoming mere Christians

American evangelicals searching for an intellectually robust faith found a patron saint in the Anglican Oxford don C. S. Lewis. Lewis attracted national attention in the U.S. when the *Atlantic Monthly* published a profile of him by Chad Walsh in 1946 and *Time* featured him on their cover in 1947. His works were introduced to American students by InterVarsity Christian Fellowship workers and promoted by Billy Graham. Wheaton College professor Clyde Kilby corresponded with Lewis and did much to popularize him among evangelicals. CHRISTIANITY TODAY's first editor Carl Henry even invited Lewis to contribute to the magazine (Lewis declined). CHRISTIANITY TODAY recently named Lewis's *Mere Christianity* as one of the top three books that shaped 20th-century evangelicalism.

### What's the difference between an evangelical and a fundamentalist?

No, there is no punchline. This is a question many Americans can't answer. "Evangelical" is the more general term, referring to a movement within Protestantism that emerged during the 18th-century revivals that swept across Britain, Ireland, parts of Europe, and America.

According to historian Garth Rosell, for the last 300 years evangelicals have put the cross at the center of

their faith and have shared a commitment to the authority of the Bible, the importance of conversion, the atoning work of Christ, and the call to worldwide mission.

In the early 20th century, as Douglas Sweeney explains on page 15, evangelicals who were concerned about defending the "fundamentals" of orthodox Christian doctrine against the onslaught of liberal theology were called "fundamentalists."

But as the decades wore on, some of these evangelical-fundamentalists wanted to distance themselves from the anti-intellectual, militant, culture-shunning traits that had begun to characterize much of fundamentalism. So they recovered the use of the historic term "evangelical," calling themselves the "New Evangelicals."

This modern form of evangelicalism began, therefore, as a kind of reform movement within fundamentalism. In the beginning years (the period much of this issue covers) the terms "fundamentalist" and "evangelical" were interchangeable. But eventually, the lines of division hardened.

Today, the terms usually refer to two different groups, ultra-conservative Christians (fundamentalists) and those who take a more engaged approach to modern culture (evangelicals). Both, however, share the same family tree.

### **The first "Urbana"**

Mid-century evangelicals set their sights on much more than national revival. After World War II ended, a world of evangelistic opportunities opened up. One significant catalyst of missionary interest among young people was InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. A missions-minded organization since its founding in Great Britain, IVCF caught on quickly at American universities after 1939 and in 1945 merged with the American-born Student Foreign Mission Fellowship, appointing J. Christy Wilso Jr. as its missionary secretary. Against opposition from both mainline denominations and fundamentalist groups, Wilson launched the first InterVarsity student missions convention at the University of Toronto a year later. The event drew 567 students and featured such prominent speakers as Harold John Ockenga. In 1948 a second convention was held at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Ever since then, the triennial conference has become known simply as "Urbana" and now attracts some 20,000 students.

### **Broadcasting faith**

Long before the 1980s televangelists gave media preachers a bad name, evangelicals had latched on to the latest forms of mass communication and popular entertainment to attract a wide audience. In the 1920s and '30s, fundamentalists invaded the airwaves, employing the cutting-edge medium of radio to broadcast their message. The New Evangelicals followed suit in the '40s and '50s. Harold John Ockenga refused to become pastor of Park Street Church in Boston without assurance that the congregation would remain committed to its radio ministry. Billy Graham's Sunday afternoon radio show "The Hour of Decision" was not only successful to an unprecedented degree, it paved the way for his debut in the new medium of television when ABC televised Graham's New York crusade services in 1957.

### **Put your money where your heart is**

The mid-century evangelical movement could not have accomplished what it did without the financial support and public clout of Christians in the marketplace. Christian Business Men's Committees and Christian Business Women's Councils began proliferating during the 1930s and sponsored evangelistic rallies and radio programs. Much of the monetary resources for evangelicalism's burgeoning parachurch movement came from wealthy individual Christians like aluminum company president Herbert Taylor, who supported evangelistic organizations like Youth for Christ, and J. Howard Pew, whose oil fortune helped finance Fuller Seminary, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Billy Graham's first television appearances, and

numerous other organizations and evangelical endeavors.

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## From the Editor: Climbing the family tree

Jennifer Trafton

In 1969 Boston pastor and evangelical spokesperson Harold John Ockenga, evangelist Billy Graham, and philanthropist J. Howard Pew capped over a decade of fruitful collaboration with a new project: merging Gordon Divinity School and Conwell School of Theology to form Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts.

Among the young evangelical students in the very first class was my father. He vividly recalls the first chapel service in which he heard Ockenga preach as the school's inaugural president. Ockenga began by saying that he had been trained to write out a sermon first, then preach from an outline in order to avoid sounding rehearsed. But, he surmised, why not just memorize the outline? And so, with nothing but the Bible in front of him, the president launched into an articulate sermon that transfixed the new seminarians.

Two and a half decades years later, I joined my fellow Gordon-Conwell first- year students in Boston's Park Street Church, where Ockenga had once been pastor, watching the inauguration of Walter C. Kaiser Jr. as the school's third president.

Working on this issue of the magazine has felt like writing a communal autobiography. Not only does my own family have roots in the "New Evangelical" movement (led by Ockenga, Graham, and others) that transformed the American religious scene in the mid-20th century, so does the family of magazines to which ***Christian History & Biography*** belongs, Christianity Today International.

The company's flagship publication Christianity Today—which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year—was the brainchild of Billy Graham. Ockenga was chairman of the board, and the first two editors—Carl Henry and Harold Lindsell—were founding faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary in California, where Ockenga served as president in absentia. CTI's current CEO Harold Myra and president Paul Robbins were both involved in Youth for Christ, and their friendship eventually blossomed into a 29- year ministry partnership. Many CTI staff have links to organizations and educational institutions that play a role in the story we're telling in these pages.

For those of us who call ourselves evangelicals today, this story is our family album—yet we've sadly forgotten many of the faces already, along with the visions and goals that illuminated them.

As the CH&B staff have created this "family album" for you, we've benefited from the help of many people. We are especially thankful to Garth Rosell of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and to the staff of the Billy Graham Center Archives and Special Collections Library at Wheaton College.

With this issue we welcome Doug Johnson to the CH&B team as Design Director. Having given his creative gifts to many CTI magazines in the past, Doug currently splits his time between CH&B and our sister magazine ***Today's Christian Woman***. He brings to CH&B a penchant for "cool stuff" like forts, catapults, and steam engines, a steady sense of rhythm from his days in the Yorktown Fife & Drum Corps near Colonial Williamsburg (where he met his wife, a mandolin player), and the inexhaustible patience and tolerance for mayhem gained from being the father of eight creative children.

Luckily for Doug, we're also welcoming designer Emily LaHood, who will be giving part of her time each week to helping him design CH&B. She is an avid Trivial Pursuit player with interests in politics and World War II. Between her love for Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers and her goal to become a better bowler, she promises to keep us on our toes.

Emily worked for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship after college, and Doug attends a congregation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church—a denomination founded by Ockenga's seminary mentor, J. Gresham Machen. The family keeps growing.

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## Patron Saint Nearly Benched

Compiled by David Neff and Rebecca Golossanov

### Patron Saint Nearly Benched

Nothing stirs up English nationalism like football (in the English sense of the word). So the timing of progressive Church of England clerics couldn't have been worse when they proposed removing St. George from his role as England's patron saint just in time for World Cup fever.

Popular reaction was immensely negative—so the idea has gone nowhere. But they did have their reasons:

St. George first became popular with Brits during the Crusades when Christian armies captured Antioch from Muslim control in 1098. During the battle of Antioch, reports the *Daily Mail*, it was said that an apparition of George appeared to the Crusader army. The legend about his slaying a dragon cannot be traced any earlier than the late 1100s.

George was a Roman general and a martyr, possibly under Diocletian. But that is about all we know for sure.

His association with the Crusades and his military imagery would be off-putting to contemporary people and particularly to Great Britain's many Muslims.

Who was proposed to take George's place as patron saint?

St. Alban, the first English martyr. He was put to death about 305, also during Diocletian's reign. Alban was converted and baptized by a fugitive priest. When soldiers came looking for the priest, Alban disguised himself in the priest's cloak. Alban was killed, but he failed to save the priest, who was stoned to death a few days later.

### Mission accomplished

The history of early California is intimately bound up with church history. The 21 Catholic missions (beginning with Mission San Diego de Alcalá in 1769) were cultural, economic, and transportation hubs that also transformed the lives of the native population.

But until now, scholars who wanted to study the religious history of early California have been stymied by the difficulty of working with key primary sources: the meticulously kept sacramental registers of California's Spanish missions. The original handwritten records of 101,000 baptisms, 28,000 marriages, and 71,000 burials are fragile, and many scholars could only access them through blurry microfilms that have also deteriorated.

Now, after eight years of deciphering 18th-century handwriting and an enormous effort at data entry, the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, has launched a comprehensive database that integrates the existing records from all 21 missions. This represents the key moments in the lives of 110,000 early California residents—many of them Native Americans who settled near the missions and were Christianized by the *padres*.

Oregon State University historian Steve Hackel, the project's general editor, hopes that with the advent of the comprehensive new database, historians will produce many more studies that will help balance our reading of early American history. The Early California Population Project can be found at <http://www.huntington.org/Information/ECPPmain.htm>.

### **All's well that ends well**

A monastery built around the site of Jacob's well, where Jesus met the Samaritan woman, will finally open its doors after 100 years of struggle. On the volatile West Bank of Palestine, in Nablus, stands the almost-completed Greek Orthodox monastery that has contended with Bolsheviks, Zionist extremists, and Israeli and Palestinian governments.

Its story goes back to the early centuries of Christianity. From at least the 4th century onward, Jacob's well has been a popular destination for Christian pilgrims. Emperor Constantine was the first to build a church around the well, but by the time Crusaders arrived in the Holy Land in 1099, they found only ruins. So they built a new church, which lasted only until the region fell into the hands of the Muslim warrior Saladin in 1187.

Jacob's well went untouched (except by pilgrims) until the Greek Orthodox Church purchased the land in 1860 with hopes to return the site to Christian use. In 1908 the Russian Orthodox Church helped fund the construction of a new monastery. But the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution halted the Russian church's efforts in midstream.

The monastery remained partially built for 80 years despite repeated attempts to continue. In 1967, the new Israeli government forbade any more work because it didn't want a Christian church on a Jewish holy site. Then in 1979, the priest-caretaker of the unfinished monastery was murdered, purportedly by Zionist extremists. But at long last, after much resistance, the Palestinians who now govern the region granted permission to complete the monastery.

The current head of the monastery, Ioustinos Mamalos, expects construction to finish by early 2007. But, as he told Reuters, "a church is like a house—it's never completely finished."

### **Give a hand to the Da Vinci fans?**

In September, Moscow's Christ the Savior cathedral allowed thousands to view the left palm of Mary Magdalene, a relic on loan from Mount Athos. The crowds were swelled by fans of *The Da Vinci Code*. Ironically, the novel promotes a version of Mary's story that contradicts the Eastern tradition represented by this relic.

### **Unfolding devotion**

Churches have long been decorated with frescoes and statuary to educate the faithful and focus their devotion. But wealthy individuals have also commissioned artworks on a smaller scale to aid their private devotions.

A new exhibit at the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., "Prayers and Portraits: Unfolding the Netherlandish Diptych," examines the beautiful 15th- and 16th-century paintings that were hinged together to be opened and closed like a book.

Although diptychs have a long history of Christian use, they enjoyed a new surge in popularity in the 15th and 16th centuries in conjunction with a movement called Devotio Moderna. Beginning in the Netherlands

and sweeping across Europe, Devotio Moderna emphasized inner faith, humility, and self-denial gained by prayer and meditation on Christ and the saints. Its most famous expression is ***The Imitation of Christ***. Many now see the movement, with its emphasis on individual faith, as a forerunner of the Catholic and Protestant reformations.

The exhibition begins November 12, 2006, and continues through February 4, 2007. For more information visit <http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/diptychinfo.shtm>.

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## O Tannenbaum, O Tannenbaum!

A brief history of the Christmas tree.

Edwin Woodruff Tait

Let them over whom the fires of hell are imminent affix to their posts laurels doomed presently to burn: to them the testimonies of darkness and the omens of their penalties are suitable. You are a light of the world, and a tree ever green. If you have renounced temples, make not your own gate a temple." Thus did the second-century theologian Tertullian condemn those Christians who celebrated the winter festivals or decorated their houses with laurel boughs in honor of the Roman emperor. The Romans decked their homes with evergreen branches during the New Year, and ancient inhabitants of northern Europe cut evergreen trees—ancient symbols of life in the midst of winter—and planted them in boxes inside. Many early Christians, like Tertullian, were hostile to such practices.

But by the early Middle Ages, a legend had begun to circulate that when Christ was born in the dead of winter every tree throughout the world miraculously shook off its ice and snow and produced new shoots of green. At the same time, Christian missionaries preaching to Germanic and Slavic peoples were taking a more lenient approach to cultural practices. These missionaries believed that the Incarnation proclaimed Christ's lordship over those natural symbols that had previously been used for the worship of pagan gods. Not only individual human beings, but cultures, symbols, and traditions could be converted.

Of course, this did not mean that the worship of pagan gods themselves was tolerated. According to one legend, the 8th-century missionary Boniface, after cutting down an oak tree sacred to the pagan god Thor (and used for human sacrifice), pointed to a nearby fir tree as a symbol of the love and mercy of God.

Not until the Renaissance are there clear records of trees being used as a symbol of Christmas—beginning in Latvia in 1510 and Strasbourg in 1521. Legend credits Martin Luther with inventing the Christmas tree, but the story has little historical basis. The most plausible theory behind the 16th-century appearance of Christmas trees links them to medieval mystery plays. These dramas began as part of the church's liturgy, but by the late Middle Ages, they were rowdy, imaginative performances dominated by laypeople and taking place in the open air. Mystery plays celebrating the Nativity were linked to the story of creation—in part because Christmas Eve was also considered the feast day of Adam and Eve. As part of the mystery play for that day, the Garden of Eden was symbolized by a "paradise tree" hung with fruit.

Mystery plays were banned in many places in the 16th century. It may be that people set up "paradise trees" in their homes to compensate for the public celebration they could no longer enjoy. The earliest Christmas trees (or evergreen branches) used in homes were referred to as "paradises." They were often hung with round pastry wafers symbolizing the Eucharist, which developed into the cookie ornaments decorating German Christmas trees today. Our first detailed description of such a tree dates from 1605.

The custom gained popularity throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, against the protests of some clergy. Lutheran minister Johann von Dannhauer, for instance, complained (like Tertullian) that the symbol distracted people from the true evergreen tree, Jesus Christ. But this did not stop many churches from setting up Christmas trees inside the sanctuary. Alongside the tree often stood wooden

"pyramids"—stacks of shelves bearing candles, sometimes one for each family member. Eventually these pyramids of candles were placed on the tree.

The Christmas tree only became common in the English-speaking world in the 19th century, popularized in England by Queen Victoria and introduced in America by German-speaking immigrants. Today, Christmas trees serve as a bridge between the Christian meaning of the holiday and its often empty secular expressions.

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## "America's Hour Has Struck"

As the 20th century reached its midpoint, visionary Boston preacher Harold John Ockenga helped launch a "new era in evangelical Christianity."

Garth M. Rosell

In April 7, 1942, Harold John Ockenga stood to address the 150 delegates who had assembled at the Hotel Coronado in St. Louis, Missouri, to launch the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action (NAE). "Gentlemen," observed the dashing young pastor from Park Street Church in Boston, "we are gathered here today to consider momentous questions" and perhaps to even "arrive at decisions" that "will affect the whole future course of evangelical Christianity in America."

"Evangelical Christianity has suffered nothing but a series of defeats for decades," Ockenga lamented. The "terrible octopus of liberalism" had "spread itself throughout our Protestant Church, dominating innumerable organizations, pulpits, and publications, as well as seminaries and other schools." The "poison" of "materialism" is "spoiling the testimony and message of the majority of our young preachers today." The "floods of iniquity" are pouring over America "in a tidal wave of drunkenness, immorality, corruption, dishonesty, and utter atheism."

Look around you, Ockenga suggested to the delegates. What you will see are Christians who are "defeated, reticent, retiring and seemingly in despair." If ever evangelicals needed "some organ to speak for the evangelical interests, to represent men who, like myself, are 'lone wolves' in the church," it is certainly today. But such defeat and despair, he assured the delegates, were no longer necessary. "Can such an organization" as they had been discussing "be launched here which will be the vanguard of the movement? I answer unqualifiedly, it can."

"Are we in earnest?" he asked. "Are we teachable? ... Are we clean? ... Are we willing to dissolve any organizational connection which we may have in order that we, as a group, may adequately represent evangelical Christianity to this nation? If we are," he concluded, then "the day has dawned and the hour has struck inaugurating a new era in evangelical Christianity."

## A giant among giants

For many of the weary warriors of the bitter fundamentalist-modernist battles, Ockenga's challenge must have come as a breath of fresh air. Rather than a continuation of the fundamentalists' strategy of withdrawal, here was a challenge to reengage the culture and its institutions. Instead of retreat, here was a call to advance the gospel throughout the world. In place of discouragement and fear, here was a new hope for spiritual power and refreshment. Rather than endless argumentation and division, here at last was the possibility of united evangelical action.

Ockenga's stirring address became a kind of manifesto for the resurgent evangelicalism that came to dominate much of 20th-century religious life. Rooted in the rich soil of the 18th-century evangelical awakenings, this "New Evangelicalism," as Ockenga later called it, sought to join together Christians of many denominations in the spread of biblical Christianity throughout the world. United by a shared authority (the Bible), a shared experience (conversion), a shared conviction (that salvation is to be found only in the atoning work of Christ), and a shared mission (worldwide evangelization), these New Evangelicals set out to recapture the culture for Christ.

By the time Ockenga's address at the Hotel Coronado had ended, it was apparent to virtually everyone in the room that the evangelical movement had found a new leader. His election as the first president of the NAE thrust him almost immediately into national prominence. During the 13 months between the St. Louis Convention in April 1942 and the Chicago Constitutional Convention in May 1943, Ockenga traveled thousands of miles, crisscrossed the country, and carried on an extensive correspondence on behalf of the fledgling organization. He remained until his death in 1985 one of the most recognized leaders of a burgeoning and increasingly worldwide movement.

"He was a giant among giants," observed Billy Graham in describing his old friend. "Nobody outside of my family influenced me more than he did."

### **Called to preach**

Few would have imagined that the son born to Herman and Angie Ockenga during the summer of 1905 would grow up to be "a giant among giants." Yet Harold John (as he was known during those early years in Chicago) and his four sisters were blessed with a loving family and especially a godly and praying mother. Angie Ockenga became the dominant influence in his spiritual development.

At age 11, Harold John gave his life to Christ at an old-fashioned Methodist camp meeting. But he continued to struggle spiritually throughout the next six years. Sensing his inner turmoil, Alice Pfafman, a Methodist youth leader, invited Harold to attend a youth conference in Galesburg, Illinois. There, following a sermon that challenged listeners to "pour out our lives" as an act of worship to God, three important events in Harold John's life took place: He received assurance of his own salvation. He experienced what Wesleyans call the "second blessing—an experience of sanctification. And he was called by God to be a preacher of the Word.

Since he had long dreamed of becoming a trial lawyer, he decided to tell no one about his intention to enter the ministry until after his graduation from university. By late February, however, he could stand it no longer. "It was a warm day," he later recalled, "and taking golf clubs to have an afternoon in the park I stopped by [Alice Pfafman's] house just long enough to say, 'Mrs. Pfafman—you are right. God is calling me to the ministry and I have decided to respond.' With some expression of joy which I do not recall she thanked the Lord and I left for the best game of golf I have ever played in winter or summer."

Alice immediately telephoned Angie Ockenga to pass along the news. "Thank God," his mother responded, "I dedicated him to the ministry before he was born."

### **The gifted orator from Illinois**

Ockenga entered Taylor University in 1923 and soon established himself as an outstanding student and a recognized campus leader. Where he shone most brightly, however, was in front of an audience. His remarkable oratorical skills impressed faculty and students alike and won him numerous awards as well as the nickname "the gifted orator from Illinois." But his deepest satisfaction came from the proclamation of God's Word. "I have a fire in my bones to preach," he wrote in a letter to a friend. As part of Taylor's "Gospel Teams," he preached over 400 times in churches across America by the time he graduated.

Upon graduation from Taylor, Harold traveled east to begin his theological training at Princeton Theological Seminary. He loved Princeton's beautiful campus and was challenged by the brilliance of its faculty. Professor J. Gresham Machen became especially important in shaping Harold's thinking. Although Ockenga already "knew the Bible from A to Z," as his mother phrased it, he discovered in Machen a mature and gifted scholar who stretched his mind and expanded his intellectual world.

Ockenga would have liked to complete his studies at Princeton, but the wrenching battles of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy had caused deep divisions within its faculty and student body. By

1929, at the start of his senior year, it had become apparent that he had no choice but to withdraw from Princeton and join Dr. Machen and other evangelical faculty and students in the newly established Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

After completing his theological studies at Westminster in 1930, he began full-time work as a pastor, first at the Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh and then at the 950-member Point Breeze Presbyterian Church. Then, in 1936, he received a call to historic Park Street Church in Boston, a ministry that was to continue for 33 years. Under his leadership, Park Street not only flourished and grew, but its ministry spread literally around the globe. "This single congregation of 2200," Ockenga wrote in 1959, "is building a greater church, one composed of people who are black and yellow and brown and white in skin and drawn from 50 nations on five continents and the islands of the sea through the preaching of its 120 missionaries on whose labors the sun never sets."

## **The New Evangelicalism**

The lessons Harold John Ockenga learned from his mother, throughout his student years, and in his early ministry helped to shape both the priorities and direction of his own life and those of the New Evangelical movement itself. His deep Wesleyan roots, for example, not only gave him a lifelong passion for justice, holiness, humanitarian aid, revival, and world missions, but they also provided a bridge whereby thousands of Pentecostal, charismatic, and holiness believers could become part of the NAE.

His years of academic study taught him the central importance of education and helped to give the "life of the mind" an honored place within the movement. His years of pastoral ministry not only convinced him of the importance of preaching the Word and building the church, but they also placed the renewal of the church and the training of pastoral leadership squarely at the center of the evangelical agenda. His teachers and mentors not only planted in him a deep love for the Bible, for Christian history, and for the historic creeds and confessions of the church, but they also persuaded him that evangelicalism must give itself to the recovery, defense, and proclamation of historic orthodoxy.

"Do not be content," J. Gresham Machen had charged Ockenga at his ordination service, "with a superficial study of this Holy Book," but always "keep your contact with the grand central tradition of the church of Jesus Christ."

What came to be known as the New Evangelicalism was, at its core, an effort to reestablish biblical Christianity in response to what many believed to be the growing influence of "modernism" and "neo-orthodoxy" on the left, and the increasing militancy and anti-intellectualism of "fundamentalism" on the right. Of special concern was fundamentalism's cultural withdrawal. Consequently, the New Evangelicals committed themselves to reengage the very institutions that so many within the old fundamentalist movement had felt compelled to abandon.

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence," the Dutch theologian and statesman Abraham Kuyper had once declared, "over which Christ, who is Sovereign over **all**, does not cry: 'Mine!'" Echoing precisely the same sentiment, Ockenga and a growing circle of New Evangelical friends called upon their followers to penetrate every arena of human existence with the transformative power of God's truth.

"We have a need of new life from Christ in our nation," Ockenga declared in his presidential address to the NAE in 1943, and "that need first of all is intellectual." Unless "the Church can produce some thinkers who will lead us in positive channels our spiral of degradation will continue downward."

Furthermore, Ockenga continued, "there is great need in the field of statesmanship." Where are the political leaders "in high places of our nation," he asked, with "a knowledge of and regard to the principles of the Word of God?" The need is "even more evident in the business world," he continued,

where models of Christian integrity have become such a rarity.

Most of all, he concluded, "there must be a new power in personal life. Unless the message of salvation which we hold to be the cardinal center of our Christian faith really does save individuals from sin, from sinful habits, from dishonesty, impurity and avarice, unless it keeps them in the midst of temptation, what good is it?" What the church needs most at the present time and in the future "is *saints*, great Christians—Christ-loving men and women."

### **Heaven-sent revival**

Before such a vision could become reality, Ockenga was convinced, there had to be a great revival—"I am talking now about a heaven-sent, Holy Ghost revival," he said, "given in the sovereignty of God with no human explanation for it whatsoever." Since his arrival in Boston in 1936, Ockenga had been praying and working for such a revival. He had preached revival services on a regular basis and brought well-known evangelists to Park Street each year. He had even helped to plan an anniversary celebration of George Whitefield's remarkable ministry in New England in the mid-18th century. Yet none of these efforts had produced the results he longed for.

Encouraged by Allan Emery Jr. a business leader and a member of Park Street, Ockenga invited a 31-year-old preacher named Billy Graham to speak at a New Year's Eve youth rally in Boston's 6000-seat Mechanics Hall. Addressing the crowd to announce the dawn of 1950, Ockenga told the audience they were standing at a crucial "turning point" in Christian history. In the face of enormous national and international problems, "millions of Americans believe an old-fashioned spiritual revival could preserve our God-given freedoms and way of life." America must therefore fall upon its knees in repentance and prayer.

The overwhelming response to the New Year's service made the event front-page news. New England, reported the *Boston Herald*, was "on the verge of a great sweeping revival such as it has not seen since the days of Jonathan Edwards." Indeed, in the next few years, there were reports of revivals throughout Boston, across America, and around the globe. "I believe that 1950 will go down into history as the year of the heaven-sent revival," Ockenga later reflected. "America's hour has struck."

The Boston Revival cemented a lifelong friendship between Ockenga and Graham. It also marked the beginning of a powerful new coalition of movements, regions, and networks of friends that would literally reshape the religious landscape in America and throughout the world.

### **Brother against brother**

The grand vision that Ockenga presented to the NAE delegates at the Hotel Coronado in 1942 was never fully realized. The bitter battles between fundamentalism and modernism that had dominated much of American religious life during the early decades of the 20th century had separated much of the evangelical community from its rich heritage. Many of Ockenga's contemporaries were ready to join hands with likeminded believers, but fragmentation and distrust threatened to thwart any attempt at united evangelical action.

While Ockenga remained firmly committed to theological purity, he remained equally passionate about the need for evangelical unity. "Cooperation without compromise," became a byword for the NAE. But many of Ockenga's fundamentalist colleagues remained convinced that the New Evangelicals were abandoning purity in their quest for unity. A college friend wrote, "How it grieves me, Harold, to see you giving way here a little and there a little to policies that will be the ruination of our country. ... Combination is weakness! Separatism is Power! in the sight of God."

Perhaps the most pointed criticisms of Ockenga and the NAE were voiced by Carl McIntire, his old friend,

Westminster classmate, and founder in 1941 of the rival American Council of Christian Churches. Practicing a stricter form of separatism than the NAE, the ACCC restricted membership to those who agreed to separate completely from the "modernist" mainline denominations. The rift with McIntire was never fully repaired, and it deeply grieved Ockenga throughout his lifetime.

Consequently, the movement that had been launched with such optimism and hope in the "golden age" of the 1940s and early '50s became increasingly marred by deepening rifts within the family. Evangelist Merv Rosell sadly recalled "the gradual, insidious division (for one cause or another) which set 'brother against brother' until I found in each city two opposing camps of my own friends."

In addition to the widening divide between the New Evangelicals and the fundamentalists, weaknesses within the movement were becoming more and more apparent. Few evangelicals seemed ready to "roll up their sleeves" and do the hard work necessary to achieve the goal of reclaiming the culture for Christ.

Instead of pouring their considerable energies and resources into reenergizing mainline denominations, universities, halls of government, and the like, many evangelicals chose rather to strengthen or construct organizations within their own subculture. Even as it prospered and spread, evangelicalism continued to be plagued, as Ken Kantzer lamented in a 1983 *Christianity Today* editorial, by "cultural conformity," a profound "suspicion of social action," an unwillingness "to carry our faith to the marketplace," and an appalling "doctrinal and ethical ignorance."

Despite its obvious shortcomings and divisions, however, 20th-century evangelicalism continued to thrive not only in America but throughout the world. "The Christian vision of the future now seems increasingly to belong to evangelicalism," wrote theologian Alister McGrath in 1995. Yet McGrath warned that the movement should never take its successes for granted. Expressing sentiments that Ockenga would have endorsed completely, he concluded, "Evangelicalism stands under the judgment of God, as a movement to which much has been given and from which much is demanded."

### **The passing of a giant**

Early in 1985, knowing that he was dying of cancer, Harold John Ockenga requested the elders of Park Street to gather at his home, pray for him, and anoint him with oil.

The elders began to express their deep personal affection and gratitude for the ministry God had given him. "Just think of all the things that God has done through you," they reminded him. God had allowed him to minister to millions of people, to be president of Fuller Theological Seminary and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, to be one of the founders of the NAE and the whole evangelical movement, and to be one of the people who helped to give Billy Graham his start.

Although Ockenga was too weak to respond, none of the comments seemed to be bringing him the peace and comfort the elders hoped they might be able to convey. Then one of the elders leaned forward and quietly commented, "Well, Harold, I suggest that when you see the Master, just say, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.'" Tears began to flow down Ockenga's cheeks.

At the end of his autobiography, *Just As I Am*, Billy Graham wrote the words that were so central to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century: *Soli Deo Gloria*—"To God Alone be the Glory." "Those are my words as well," concluded Graham. His old friend, Harold John Ockenga, would have understood perfectly.

**Garth M. Rosell is professor of church history at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. The article is taken in part from the author's recently completed study, *The Surprising Work of God: How America's 20th-Century Spiritual Awakening Became a Worldwide Christian Movement*.**

## Drawing the line

*What Ockenga believed was wrong with each of these theological movements:*

**Modernism** (or Liberalism) was a "defection from creedal orthodoxy." It repudiated much of the content of historic Christianity as reflected in Scripture, the Nicene Creed, and the Apostles Creed and substituted a new anti-supernatural content in its place.

**Neo-Orthodoxy**, a German theological movement (introduced into the U.S. by Reinhold Niebuhr in the 1930s) that criticized liberalism but did not hold strictly to biblical inerrancy, was "a subtle perversion" of true Christianity, according to Ockenga. It abandoned the church's historic commitment to the Bible as objective revelation in favor of a more subjective or existential understanding of the Scriptures.

**Fundamentalism** was essentially correct in its commitment to sound doctrine, but its militancy, anti-intellectualism, and cultural withdrawal needed to be replaced by Christian charity, commitment to the life of the mind, and active engagement with the culture.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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Issue 92: America's 20th Century Evangelical Awakening

## Who Were the "Fundamentalists"?

Many people associate this word with religious bigotry and close-mindedness. But in the early 20th century, fundamentalists were simply evangelicals determined to do battle for the faith.

Douglas A. Sweeney

During the late 19th century, most of the mainline Protestant churches struggled to cope with the rise of modernism (which favored adaptation to modern views and trends) along with scientific naturalism, higher biblical criticism, and spiritual apathy. Hundreds of thousands of evangelicals left the large denominations, forming smaller churches to combat the sins of the age.

The vast majority of evangelicals, however, stayed with the mainline and tried to purify their churches from within. By the early 1910s, they formed a massive, cross-denominational movement for reform based on a common acclamation of the "fundamental," or cardinal, doctrines of Christianity.

The most popular list was "The Five Point Deliverance" of the Northern Presbyterians. The 1910 Presbyterian General Assembly ruled that all who wanted to be ordained within their ranks had to affirm the Westminster Confession and subscribe to five fundamental doctrines: 1) the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, 2) the virgin birth of Christ, 3) the substitutionary atonement of Christ, 4) the bodily resurrection of Christ, and 5) the historicity of the biblical miracles.

At roughly the same time, A. C. Dixon, R. A. Torrey, and several other luminaries published 12 volumes of essays called *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (1910-1915). The books, which were mailed to ministers and missionaries around the world, opposed all kinds of modernism, from higher biblical criticism to theological liberalism, from naturalism to Darwinism to democratic socialism. Building on the momentum of the Northern Presbyterians, they rallied people from different Protestant traditions to a least-common-denominator flag of orthodoxy.

By the late 1910s, the conservatives entrenched along the Protestant mainline were poised for battle in defense of the fundamentals. The interdenominational World Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA), heavily influenced by premillennial dispensationalism, gathered conservatives for whom mainline apostasy was a sign of the coming great tribulation. With eschatological urgency, it reinforced the resolve of anxious evangelical leaders "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). In a 1920 editorial published in his Northern Baptist paper, the Rev. Curtis Lee Laws referred to these evangelicals (himself among them) as "fundamentalists." He deemed the name a badge of honor.

During the early 1920s, battles ensued in nearly every mainline Protestant body between the fundamentalists and those who wanted to remain "tolerant" and "open-minded" in response to modern learning. The fundamentalists were defeated in almost every case. They lost control of the mainline and its varied ministries. They lost control of mainline colleges and theological seminaries. Most of them withdrew, forming their own separate ministries. Many began to advocate "second degree separation"—separation not only from sin, worldliness, and apostasy, but also from other Christians standing too close to these things themselves.

Nothing symbolized their defeat more powerfully than the Scopes Monkey Trial held in Dayton, Tennessee, in the summer of 1925. A high school teacher named John T. Scopes was solicited by the fledgling American Civil Liberties Union to test his state's new law against the teaching of evolution.

Celebrity lawyer Clarence Darrow was retained for his defense. The prosecution's legal team included William Jennings Bryan, a Presbyterian and famous politician. Fundamentalists won the case (at least temporarily), but they were ridiculed by Darrow and the press. Despite their intellectual rigor and strength in northern urban areas, the fundamentalists have been portrayed ever since as country bumpkins.

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## The New Evangelicalism

Harold John Ockenga defines the vision of the movement in this excerpt from a sermon preached at Park Street Church on December 8, 1957.

What ... is the direction in which the evangelical should go? First of all, the evangelical embraces creedal Christianity—Christianity as expressed in the confessions of the church, which is New Testament Christianity grounded upon the acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God, as plenary inspired, and authoritative and infallible. Now on the basis of that Bible all of the doctrines of orthodoxy, which I need not mention now, are embraced by the new evangelicalism. This is their view. And this has a carry-over into the social scene so that there is an application of this to the problems of the day, so that our view of God, and of man, and of the church, and of society, and of sin, and of salvation, must have its effects upon the social problems of the day.

What about the strategy? The new evangelicalism believes in the positive preaching of the Word and of the doctrines of Scripture ... The evangelical believes that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, that it will convict, that it will convert, that it will change, and that this gospel is intellectually defensible and respectable in the face of all of the onslaughts of the day. The evangelical is willing to face the intellectual problems—whether they deal with creation, or with the age of man, or whatever it is—examining the claims of the Bible itself concerning inspiration and revelation and to state those in the light of the best knowledge of the day in which it lives. The evangelical is unafraid of this, and he believes in the positive, aggressive, constructive presentation of the Word—that there can be the fruit that is given to it as God has promised that it will come. ...

There has evolved today a different emphasis, a different theological application of orthodox Christianity—one that is dynamic and virile and strong, one that is able to say, "Christ is the answer. Christ is the answer to your sin problem. Christ is the answer in the biblical framework of reference because there is no other Christ. Christ is the answer when he and his teachings and biblical Christianity become translated into the framework of the social picture in which we live."

Beloved, this is the new evangelicalism, and we believe that this evangelicalism not only has a message for each individual and for a student, but that also it will present biblical Christianity in such a way that it is going to bear a powerful influence upon our society.

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## The Young and the Zealous

**How do you change the course of the nation's future? Youth for Christ had the answer: Win over the next generation.**

Bruce L. Shelley

During the Great Depression, Herbert Taylor, president of the Club Aluminum Company, and his wife Gloria provided bread and soup for long lines of people at a small storefront mission on the near north side of Chicago. As part of their ministry to the community, they surveyed 2000 homes in the neighborhood and discovered that 50 percent of the children never attended church services or Sunday school.

"This simply can't continue!" the couple concluded. Using stock from Herb's aluminum company to create the non-profit Christian Workers Foundation, the Taylors determined to help finance organizations capable of reaching the unchurched young people of America.

What began in a storefront mission came to focus on the world. War clouds were building over Europe, and America's evangelical Christianity had to change. Among the ministries encouraged by the Taylors was Youth for Christ, a vibrantly attractive movement among Christian youth during and just after World War II, and a training ground for new evangelical leaders. The movement had no founder; it had an explosion—driven by a deep concern for America's youth and future. YFC began in the hearts of people like Herb and Gloria Taylor who sensed that a new day had come to America, an hour of need.

### "Something big"

Probably the first youth rally director in America was fiery Lloyd Bryant, who organized weekly rallies for youth in the heart of Manhattan during the early 1930s. The youth rally became nationally known, however, when a converted insurance salesman and dance band trombonist named Jack Wyrzten launched a radio broadcast in Manhattan. He called it "Word of Life Hour" and then linked it with rallies held at Bryant's old meeting place, the Christian and Mission Alliance Tabernacle in the heart of New York City. The first rally came on October 25, 1941. Then came the war and the huge rallies.

Word of Life moved to Carnegie Hall but soon outgrew it too. Several rallies, beginning in 1944, drew more than 20,000 to Madison Square Garden, and radio soon carried the revival spirit across the land to Detroit, Washington, D.C., Indianapolis, St. Louis, Minneapolis, and a thousand smaller towns in between.

Radio may be key to understanding the movement, according to historian Joel Carpenter. Torrey Johnson and Bob Cook, two young pastors in the Chicago area, sensed that radio broadcasts of the rallies had immense symbolic and practical value. Not only was radio good for publicity and extended impact, but it also added to the legitimacy of the event. It made the audience feel they were "part of something big, and alive, and vital." This striving for an image of significance and eventfulness, says Carpenter, prompted rally directors to emulate radio celebrities. Jack Wyrzten and later Billy Graham clearly patterned their preaching after the clipped, rapid-fire urgency of radio newscasters.

### Calling all bobby-soxers

George Beverly Shea—later widely known as the bass soloist of the Billy Graham team—was on the staff

of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Shea and a few friends decided it was time their city had a rally too. Shea had worked with Jack Wyrzten in New York City and now urged Torrey Johnson, pastor of the Midwest Bible Church, to take the leadership of a Chicago rally. After some hesitation, Johnson agreed to organize the event and, surprisingly, secured prestigious Orchestra Hall for 21 Saturday nights in the summer of 1944. For the first night's preacher he turned to a young, neighboring pastor: Billy Graham. Huge crowds came, and media types took note.

Rally after rally followed a similar pattern: Saturday night in a big auditorium, lively gospel music, personal testimonies from athletes, civic leaders, or military heroes, and a brief sermon, climaxing with a gospel invitation to receive Jesus Christ as Savior. This was revivalism tailored to youth.

In a passion for novelty and entertainment, many rallies got caught in a "one-upmanship" trap, featuring magicians, gospel whistling, and musical saws. The most outlandish attraction was a "gospel horse" called MacArthur. He moved his jaws to show "how the girls in the choir chew gum" and demonstrated his knowledge of the Bible by rapping his hoof three times when asked, "How many Persons are in the Trinity?"

Charles Neville, writing for the *Saturday Home Magazine* in August 18, 1945, said, "A million and more teen-age girls and boys have decided that boogie-woogie is old stuff and definitely on the way out. They don't sing the blues anymore. They sing of joy and hope in a world they intend to change for the better ... a new Saturday-night swing to salvation ... is sweeping the country, and youth is in command. ... Youth for Christ is drawing the bobby-soxers and their boy friends away from the juke boxes and darkboothed hideaways to a streamlined revival of that indestructible thing—the human soul... . Youth for Christ talks turkey to its young audiences, and they love it!"

### "Geared to the times"

With World War II raging, appeals to the patriotic spirit at the YFC rallies were open and direct. The Pauline images of faith, manhood, spiritual conflict, and heroism were too obvious for a talented speaker to ignore as he looked into the faces of huge wartime audiences. Some "Victory Rallies" were truly massive. Word of Life filled Madison Square Garden twice in the spring and fall of 1944, and 60 to 70 thousand people attended Chicagoland Youth for Christ's Memorial Day pageant at Soldier Field in 1945.

During the course of the huge rallies in Chicago, the Hearst newspapers carried a full-page story of the new youth movement now reaching half a million young lives every Saturday night. When right-wing preacher Gerald L. K. Smith came out in support of Youth for Christ, charges of fascism surfaced. The liberal journal *Christian Century* put no stock in the fascist charge but did roundly criticize "this streamlined evangelism" for "milky abstractions" and its lack of concern for social and ethical problems.

Still, the leaders of Youth for Christ knew what they were about. YFC was simply geared to its own times. Among the movement's rally directors, there was a preponderance of former dance band members and radio disc jockeys. Pastors with radio-preaching experience were also numerous, as were people with careers in journalism, printing, and advertising. As a consequence, YFC leaders, especially in the larger cities, received a good share of news coverage. The message was clear: YFC mattered in American life.

On July 22, 1945, 42 delegates met at Winona Lake, Indiana, for the founding of Youth for Christ International. Torrey Johnson was elected president and immediately recruited Billy Graham as the first full-time evangelist for the movement. The young itinerant traveled 135,000 miles that year, and United Airlines cited him as their leading civilian passenger. In two years' time Graham preached in 47 of the 48 states and throughout Canada.

By the fall of 1945, the war was over, but Youth for Christ had hardly begun. Chaplains, GIs and missionaries provided a bridge for overseas expansion. "Who knows," said Torrey Johnson, "but what

we've got an army of occupation for the purpose of establishing Youth for Christ." Rallies appeared around the globe, from Paris to Manila, from London to Okinawa, from Seoul to Venezuela. When the YFC Convention met at Winona Lake in 1948, Johnson, re-elected president for a third term, reported that the international office was "in touch" with 800 rallies in North America, and Billy Graham announced that YFC teams had gone to 46 countries the previous year.

### **Invasion of Bible clubs**

Early in the summer of 1948, Torrey Johnson shocked the fourth YFC Convention at Winona by asking that he not be renominated for president. His reason, he said, was to "travel more in evangelism." He recommended Bob Cook to succeed him and, in spite of some objections, the convention elected Cook.

Under Bob Cook's leadership, YFC continued its vigorous evangelistic efforts, including scores of teams sent overseas, but the new president sensed that the movement could not keep running on promotion and enthusiasm alone. He deplored the "talented opportunist who was in YFC for self-interest." And as a result, he drew guidelines for rally directors and stressed financial accountability. By 1951 Cook was convinced the one-shot rally approach was in serious trouble in many cities.

"The rally idea," Cook said, "is sound but in most places the ... rally is just the show window. Let's get something on the counters the rest of the week." What went "on the counter" were Bible clubs. The Kansas City YFC already had a successful club program under the leadership of Jack Hamilton and his wife Mary Jeanne. In 12 high school clubs they led students through the New Testament by a series of quizzes, then staged competitions between clubs at Saturday night rallies. The idea spread across the country when Hamilton left Kansas City to promote the program in other cities.

In the early 1950s, many conservative parents and pastors were frustrated by the Supreme Court decision in the *McCollum v. Board of Education* case (1948), which apparently removed the Bible from the public schools. They were eager to counteract the ruling. At almost every stop, Hamilton said, "The Court is taking the Bible out of the high schools. With Bible clubs we can put it back in through the lives of young people on fire for God."

By March 1952, when *Time's* Henry Luce discovered "a more serious interest in religion in America than in 30 years," YFC clubs passed the 1,000 mark. By 1955 Jack Hamilton, in the national office, reported 1,956 clubs in 41 states and seven foreign countries. Clearly, YFC Bible clubs had become for the 1950s what Saturday night rallies had been for the '40s.

Bob Cook also noticed that YFC was reaching "comparatively few from the so-called 'seamy side of town.'" One reason, he said, "is that so much of our advertising and programs are slanted to happy Christian youngsters. Let's do something to reach the teens outside." And so the ministry introduced the Youth Guidance Program with its summer camps for delinquent youngsters.

### **From YFC to the world**

Ten years after the organization of YFC, many of the early leaders had moved on to other endeavors. Billy Graham built his evangelistic team of former YFC leaders—including business manager George Wilson, crusade organizer Walter Smyth, song leader Cliff Barrows, associate evangelist Leighton Ford, and pianist Tedd Smith. In a sense, Billy Graham never left YFC; he took it with him to the world.

The entrepreneurial spirit moved freely in YFC circles, and leaders often created ministries and missionary organizations after their own tastes. As a result of evangelistic junkets in the Far East, Bob Pierce created World Vision. After years of overseeing YFC rallies in Europe, Bob Evans resigned and founded the Greater Europe Mission. While traveling for YFC in North Africa, Paul Freed felt called by God to build Trans World Radio. For a decade the story played out like the refrain of an old love song. While traveling

in China, Bob Finley, YFC's second staff evangelist, projected a ministry with international students, diplomats, and businessmen visiting the United States—which became International Students, Inc. The spirit and energy of YFC's Saturday night rallies were slowly but clearly spilling over into wider channels of evangelical expression.

By 1955, so many of his former colleagues had left YFC that Bob Cook lamented, "Everybody's bailing out except me." Two years later, Cook himself resigned as president to accept a position with Scripture Press, a publishing house in Wheaton, Illinois. He left behind a stronger, if less sensational, YFC than he had inherited.

On an interpersonal level, the exodus of leaders no doubt had its sad moments, but in the bigger picture of the renewal of American evangelicalism the exodus proved enormously important. YFC served as a training ground for young evangelical leaders who could take their youthful zeal into other arenas and make an even greater impact. It supplied leadership for a spectrum of new ministries that we now recognize as "the New Evangelicalism."

***Bruce L. Shelley is senior professor of church history at Denver Seminary and author of Church History in Plain Language (Word).***

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## The Riptide of Revival

Billy Graham's early crusades stirred the sleeping conscience of mid-century America.

William Martin

***Editor's note: The Fall 2006 issue of Christian History & Biography tells the story of the New Evangelicals. This vibrant, mid-20th-century movement eagerly sought active engagement in the culture, the application of Christian truth to society's problems, and the spread of biblical, historic Christianity throughout the world. From those early days, Billy Graham emerged as one of the movement's foremost leaders, as this article from the issue describes.***

The giant tent that housed the 1949 Greater Los Angeles Revival has become an iconic image in accounts of the ministry of Billy Graham, now considered the world's most famous preacher. The 30-year-old former Youth for Christ evangelist prowled the platform in a voluminous double-breasted suit that hung on his bony frame like a scarecrow's garment. He was still unknown to most of America, but he was ready for a larger stage. As his hands became pistols to fire accusations of shortcoming into the transfixed crowd or machetes to hack through the jungle of contemporary sin, it was not difficult to believe he had a candidate in mind when he declared, "When God gets ready to shake America, He may not take the Ph.D. and the D.D. God may choose a country boy. ... God may choose the man that no one knows, a little nobody, to shake America for Jesus Christ in this day, and I pray that He would!"

As the revival neared the end of its planned three-week run with only modest results, popular radio star Stuart Hamblen (who later wrote the gospel song "It Is No Secret") began attending, underwent a dramatic conversion, and plugged the meetings on his radio show. Then came an even more crucial break. One evening, a cluster of reporters and photographers met Graham when he arrived at the tent. Puzzled, even somewhat frightened, Billy asked a reporter what had happened. "You have just been kissed by William Randolph Hearst," the man said. "Look here." He showed him a scrap of paper from a wire-service machine. "The boss has said, 'Puff Graham.'"

The next day, the two Hearst papers in Los Angeles gave Graham and the revival banner headlines, and 12 other papers in the chain also gave the campaign extensive coverage. Within days, the Associated Press, the United Press, and the International News Service picked up the story, and **Time**, **Newsweek**, and **Life** followed suit soon afterward. On the train back to Minneapolis when the revival had finally ended after eight weeks, conductors and passengers treated him like a hero, and reporters crowded on board to press their inquiries. Billy Graham had become a national figure.

Although he had not been a party to the 1942 founding of the National Association of Evangelicals, Graham's efforts on behalf of Youth for Christ had introduced him to legions of people who were or would become leaders in that movement. Now, through his crusades and the attention they could draw, it seemed possible that he could play a significant role in helping the movement reach out to the larger culture. Eventually, no figure came to represent the spirit of the New Evangelicalism more fully than Billy Graham.

### A Country Boy

Born in Charlotte, North Carolina, on November 7, 1918, and reared on a dairy farm in a strict Calvinist household, Graham had occasion to hear numerous itinerant revivalists. Some of them stayed in his home and sowed the first seeds of interest in a preaching career. Graham attended Bob Jones College



briefly, Florida Bible Institute (where he began preaching and changed his denominational affiliation from Associate Reformed Presbyterian to Southern Baptist), and Wheaton College (where he met and married Ruth Bell, the daughter of a medical missionary, and undertook his first and only stint as a local pastor). He became the field representative for Youth for Christ International in 1945, and by the fall of 1948 he and his new music director, Cliff Barrows, were devoting most of their time and energy to Graham's revival campaigns.

After the success of Los Angeles, Graham opened the year 1950 with a little-heralded campaign in Boston. Despite his newfound fame, the leaders of the Evangelistic Association of New England felt the machine-gun pace and theatrical style of his preaching might be too intense for a Boston audience and decided to sponsor only one service, on New Year's Eve. Harold John Ockenga had once refused a request by YFC to have Graham hold a rally in 1947, primarily because at that point he knew nothing about Graham and was disinclined to throw his prestige behind an untested southern Bible school preacher with a penchant for loud suits and hand-painted ties. Now he agreed to let him preach for 10 days at Park Street Church.

To the surprise of all, the New Year's Eve service drew 6,000 people. An impromptu service the next afternoon filled the building again, and the scheduled service that evening packed every available space at Park Street and left more than 2,000 people frustrated because they could not get in. This response both exhilarated and terrified Graham, moving him to call Ockenga and prominent layman Allan Emery Jr. into a room and ask them to pray "that the Lord will keep reminding me of the fact that this is all of grace and to Him is all the glory, because I realize if I take the smallest credit for anything that has happened so far, that my lips will turn to clay." The announced run of 10 days stretched to 18, and swelling crowds necessitated moves to larger venues, winding up in Boston Garden with a climactic service that drew more than 25,000, of whom 10,000 were turned away.

Against strong urging and his own instincts, Graham left Boston to keep commitments elsewhere, most notably in South Carolina, where he forged friendships with then-governor Strom Thurmond and Time-Life publisher Henry Luce. He then returned to New England for a 16-city tour of the region, once again to extravagant press coverage.

"Almost a half century later," Graham wrote in his autobiography, "it is impossible to re-create the nonstop activity and excitement that engulfed us during those months following our meetings in Los Angeles and Boston. At times I felt almost as if we were standing in the path of a roaring avalanche or a strong riptide, and all we could do was hold on and trust God to help us."

### **Evangelical Standard-Bearer**

Other developments in 1950 would have even greater lasting effects than those of the triumphant New England and southern meetings. Within a few months of its founding, Graham's new Sunday afternoon radio show "The Hour of Decision" was attracting the largest audience the Nielsen rating service had ever recorded for a religious broadcast and was being heard on nearly 1,000 stations in the United States and at least 30 shortwave stations worldwide. In 1951, Graham filmed *Mr. Texas*, the first in a long series of motion pictures that would serve as effective evangelistic tools. The new media ministry, with the tremendous response it generated, required a more formal organizational structure, leading to the establishment of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The BGEA was headquartered in Minneapolis from 1950 until 2005, when it was moved to Charlotte, North Carolina.

In 1954, Graham held a 12-week crusade in London's Harringay Arena that cemented his already growing international reputation. Immediately afterwards, he and his associates went on a whirlwind tour of European cities, preaching to overflow throngs in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Berlin. The following year he returned to the United Kingdom for a successful campaign in Scotland and a whistle-stop tour of a dozen cities on the Continent. He then extended his reach to India, preaching to crowds estimated at more than a hundred thousand.

Billy Graham would have other continents to conquer, and his fame and influence in America were still far from their peak. But in less than a decade since his 1949 triumph in Los Angeles, he had clearly emerged as the acknowledged standard-bearer for the New Evangelicals. The dynamic preaching that drew people to his crusades and glued them to their radios was undergirded by a growing reputation for integrity and a determination to use his influence to strengthen evangelical Christianity. This was seen in his strong support of Fuller Theological Seminary and his founding in 1956 of *Christianity Today*, which quickly became the most widely read serious religious journal in the nation.

His stature was enhanced by his ability to forge friendships with powerful people, most notably President Dwight Eisenhower and his vice-president, Richard Nixon. Evangelicals understandably relished the fact that the most famous representative of their brand of Christianity was welcomed by and at home with the most powerful leaders in the free world.

### **"A Brotherhood That Transcends Color"**

A signal triumph came in 1957 when Graham preached from Memorial Day to Labor Day in New York City, filling Madison Square Garden night after night throughout the summer and winding up with a climactic service that filled Times Square and up Broadway's urban canyon. Once again, the numbers were impressive—total attendance above 2,000,000, with 55,000 recorded decisions for Christ—but the New York meeting was an evangelical milestone in other respects as well.

Leaders of the New Evangelical movement had urged evangelicals to revive the 19th-century practice of active involvement in social reform. Graham had not only spoken out on the major domestic issue of the time, racial segregation, but since the early 1950s had refused to allow segregated seating in his meetings. He went a step further in New York, persuading a young African American preacher, Howard Jones, to join his team as an associate evangelist.

More dramatically, at a time when sit-ins and boycotts were stirring racial tensions in the South, Graham invited Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to discuss the racial situation with him and his colleagues. Then, before a capacity crowd at the Garden, he invited the black leader to join him on the platform and to lead the congregation in prayer. In his introduction, he said, "A great social revolution is going on in the United States today. Dr. King is one of its leaders, and we appreciate his taking time out of his busy schedule to come and share this service with us tonight."

The words did not explicitly endorse King, and King's prayer called for nothing more revolutionary than "a brotherhood that transcends color," but the implication was unmistakable: Graham was letting both whites and blacks know that he was willing to be identified with the revolution and its foremost leader, and King was telling blacks that Graham was their ally. Graham would never feel comfortable with Dr. King's confrontational tactics; still, his voice was important in declaring that a Christian racist was an oxymoron.

This action led many southerners to turn against Graham, but he did not waver. Instead, he subsequently traveled to Birmingham, Little Rock, and other strife-torn cities in the South, calling on Christians to recognize that the ground at the foot of the cross is level and that God is no respecter of persons.

### **The Line in the Sand**

Many southerners who were offended by Graham's actions eventually came to see he had been right and repented of their attitudes and actions. Another segment of dissenters, however, hardened their opposition to him. For several years prior to the New York crusade, hard-line fundamentalists led by Carl McIntire, Bob Jones, and John R. Rice had grown uneasy with Graham's apparent comfort with

Christians who fell short of meeting their rigid standards of theological orthodoxy. When Graham accepted the invitation to hold a crusade in New York from the broadly representative Protestant Council of Churches, aligned with both the National and World Councils of Churches, fundamentalists attacked him in repeated editorials and articles in their publications. Graham's appeal to peace and harmony among Christians, they growled, was just the sort of thing to expect from a man who had gone soft on doctrine.

Graham declined to answer in kind but also made it clear he would not let their objections deflect him from his course. "By God's grace," he pledged, "I shall continue to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ and not stoop to mudslinging, name-calling, and petty little fights over nonessentials."

Following that episode, McIntire, Jones, Rice, and others of their ilk regarded Graham as no longer one of their own. The New York crusade did not cause the division between the old fundamentalists and the New Evangelicals; that had been signaled by the nearly simultaneous founding of the NAE and McIntire's American Council of Christian Churches 15 years earlier. But it did provide an event around which the two groups were forced to define themselves.

Many outsiders were unaware of what was happening within the ranks of this segment of conservative Christianity, and many would never fully understand their differences. But during the struggle that came to a head in 1957, the mask of evangelical unity was lifted, and the terms **fundamentalism** and **evangelicalism** came to refer to two different movements. Historian George Marsden is not far off the mark when he defines evangelicals as "those who like Billy Graham."

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## **Ambitious for God**

**Henrietta Mears loved hats, college students, and the boundless possibilities of Christian ministry.**

Jennifer Woodruff Tait

When she died, 2000 people crowded into the sanctuary of Hollywood's First Presbyterian Church for her funeral. Billy Graham said he doubted if any other woman besides his wife and his mother had so influenced him. Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, was not only converted under her ministry but later, along with his wife Vonette, ran CCC from her home for 11 years. Noted movie stars attended Bible studies in her living room. Thousands of young people passed through her Sunday school departments. Her Christian education curriculum, originally painstakingly mimeographed and sold from a garage, is now shipped to nearly 90 countries. Though the New Evangelical movement had a largely male leadership, a number of those leaders were inspired by half-blind Midwestern dynamo Henrietta Mears, director of Christian education at Hollywood Pres.

### **Something to think about**

Henrietta Cornelia Mears was born on October 23, 1890, in Fargo, North Dakota, the seventh child of banker Ashley Mears and Baptist laywoman Margaret Burtis Everts, whose father had been an influential Chicago pastor. Already 42 when Henrietta arrived, Margaret died when her youngest daughter was only 20. (An obituary tribute said, "as a Bible teacher she had few equals in the city of Minneapolis").

Originally wealthy, the Mears family lost most of their money in the Panic of 1893 and re-settled in Minneapolis. Here Henrietta inaugurated her early schooling by announcing that she was bored with kindergarten because it was "to amuse little children, and I'm amused enough. I want to be educated." At seven years old she declared she was ready to become a Christian and joined the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis.

Henrietta was troubled by poor health, contracting muscular rheumatism at age 12. Though the prayers of a family friend brought healing, she suffered from bad eyesight all her life, and her doctors advised her that if she continued her studies (she planned to enroll in the University of Minnesota) she would be blind by age 30. Her response was, "Then blind I shall be—but I want something in my head to think about." She graduated from UM in 1913, still able to see, and began a career as a public school chemistry teacher, establishing a home with her older sister, Margaret.

Public education might have remained Henrietta's life work if not for an encounter with Stuart MacLennan, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood, who spoke at the Mears sisters' church in Minneapolis in the 1920s. In 1927 Henrietta took a sabbatical year to consider whether she should enter Christian work full time. She and Margaret traveled to California, where the sisters visited Dr. MacLennan's church and Henrietta spoke. Before Henrietta left, MacLennan offered her the Director of Christian Education post, and in 1928 she and Margaret moved to Hollywood.

### **Rewriting Sunday School**

Henrietta remained the head of Christian education at the Hollywood church until her death in 1963, overseeing the department's growth from 500 students to over 6500. Her emphases were twofold. She wanted the educational facilities and content of the Sunday school to be as high-quality as what students experienced in the public schools, and she wanted closely graded classes so that each age group would

be able to study material appropriate for its developmental stage.

Both of these goals required training teachers, not merely asking willing people to "take a class," and Henrietta recruited her Sunday school leadership from among the congregation, focusing on highly motivated individuals with an established Christian walk. She had a particular fondness for young adults and taught the college department herself for many years, eventually assisted by a cabinet of 60-100 students who did much of the organizational work and kept tabs on the 600-800 weekly attendees.

Her first major "founding" grew directly out of her work at Hollywood Presbyterian. Dr. MacLennan gave her free rein in choosing curriculum for the Sunday school, "as long as it teaches the Bible," but the older biblically-based curriculum she found was uninteresting and not age-graded, whereas newer books coming on the market denied the miraculous in Scripture. She began writing her own curriculum in collaboration with her personal assistant Ethel May Baldwin, mimeographing the books at the church and pasting in colored pictures from old Christian calendars.

The curriculum soon drew attention from neighboring churches, but Henrietta, fellow author Esther Ellinghusen, and Ethel May (the one-woman production department) could hardly keep up with the demand for their own church. In the early 1930s they finally found an inexpensive printer, and one of the Sunday school teachers, Stanley Engle, offered to handle distribution and accounting. The first 1000 copies were stored in his garage. In 1933 the endeavor was formally incorporated as Gospel Light Press, which became one of the largest U.S. independent publishers of Sunday school material, eventually developing an overseas arm, GLINT (Gospel Literature International).

## **Camp Decision**

Perhaps closest to Henrietta's heart was Christian camping. From her earliest days at Hollywood Presbyterian, she was committed to giving the youth of the church an enjoyable yet carefully structured summer experience. "If you place people in an atmosphere where they feel close to God and then challenge them with the Word," she once said, "they will make decisions."

In the summer of 1937, Henrietta bought the beautiful nearby Forest Home resort. The camps at Forest Home were interdenominational and to some extent interracial. Henrietta developed a roster of plenary speakers, planned seminars, counseled individual students, and even made sure song leaders and pianists were around the Club House for supposedly spontaneous "sings." Though many camps were inspiring, it was the 1947 and 1949 College Briefing Conferences which had the greatest influence on New Evangelical leaders.

In 1946 and 1947 Henrietta traveled to Europe to see postwar conditions and was horrified. She challenged attendees at a teachers' training conference to rise to the situation. Among those who responded were new Christian Bill Bright, Hollywood Presbyterian assistant pastor Richard Halverson (later to become U.S. Senate chaplain), and pastor's son (and boyfriend of Hollywood star Colleen Townsend) Louis Evans Jr. This group determined to hold a week-long collegiate conference in the fall of 1947, advertising it nationally. Over 600 college students showed up from 87 colleges and universities, and a full-fledged revival broke out, with many—including Bright—dedicating themselves to some form of full-time Christian service.

The 1947 conference not only inaugurated a series of annual collegiate conferences, it also led to the formation of the Hollywood Christian Group through Louis Evans's relationship with Townsend, whom he later married. Christian and seeker movie stars met together, originally in Henrietta's living room, and many of the actors converted there testified publicly. Some (like Townsend) went into Christian filmmaking, including several who assisted Billy Graham in his evangelistic films.

Graham himself was profoundly affected by the 1949 conference. He was then little known, and

Henrietta had invited him as a speaker. Exhausted by serious doubts over the authority of the Bible, and dreading his upcoming Los Angeles crusade, he tried to come merely as a conferee, but she kept him on the faculty. During the week, as he prayed together with fellow speaker J. Edwin Orr, he reached a personal crisis. Alone with his Bible in the woods, he surrendered his doubts to God, and, in the words of Henrietta's biographer, "arose from that place of prayer with faith strong in his soul." For the rest of his life Graham cited that moment at Forest Home as a turning point.

### **Ostrich plumes and godly dreams**

Henrietta was a dynamic, intelligent woman with a love for the finer things in life. The home she shared with Margaret (and after her sister's death with the Brights) was full of art and collector's objects (Venetian goblets, hand-painted china, marble tables), many acquired on her trips around the world with Margaret and Ethel May Baldwin.

Both sisters were famous for dressing flamboyantly in furs and outlandish hats; Henrietta always said, "I wear my hats for my college boys, and they love them." She loved color, frequently wearing bright pink and red and painting her two-door Ford green and canary yellow. Although highly focused on her administrative responsibilities and on the necessity of constant personal witness, Henrietta also knew how to have fun, according to her friends and biographers. Once, while on one of her cruises, she appeared at a costume party as a 1920s flapper complete with ostrich plumes in her hat.

As she grew older, Henrietta determined that God did not want her to retire, though some endeavors, like the Hollywood Christian Group, passed into other hands. The day before her death, she was discussing Sunday school plans with Ethel May and Forest Home endeavors with her friend Jack Franck. On the night of March 18, 1963, she died in her sleep, leaving on her desk notes for future talks, including the Easter breakfast message for her college department.

Henrietta would never allow herself to be called a "preacher," though others attributed the title to her. She believed that preaching was a male role and preferred "Teacher," which became the loving nickname her friends and students called her. But she preached the gospel to thousands, and her intense, whirlwind approach to faith left a profound mark on the changing evangelical scene at mid-century. "What do you want to see in your church?" she asked. "Idealize! Dream dreams! ... Be ambitious for God."

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## Evangelical Entrepreneurs

The Parachurch phenomenon

Michael S. Hamilton

Born just two years apart, John D. Rockefeller and Dwight L. Moody were both impatient men. Rockefeller couldn't bear the chaos of the oil industry and its volatile price swings. Moody couldn't bear the thought of millions of men and women living and dying without Jesus Christ. Each channeled his impatience into intense entrepreneurial activity designed to find solutions. But there the similarity ended. Rockefeller's method was to gain control of everything he could, while Moody's approach was to inspire others to serve everyone they could.

Business tycoons in the late 1800s used for-profit corporations to build industrial empires, while Moody and his followers used non-profit corporations to build a network of non-denominational organizations. We now call these **parachurch organizations**. They bypassed denominations and denominational differences, performed a specialized ministry purpose for a specialized target audience, and employed lay workers who could, as Moody put it, "stand in the gap" between clergy and laity.

By 1920, a growing network of Bible institutes, foreign missionary agencies, and other organizations had emerged. Then in the 1920s the fundamentalist-modernist controversy left the large northern "mainline" Protestant denominations in control of those who favored theological pluralism. As a result, evangelicals put even more energy into the parachurch network. Parachurch organizations united both evangelicals who left the "mainline" denominations and those who remained. They also drew in many from immigrant churches like the Mennonites and Dutch Reformed.

By the 1930s, many talented young evangelical leaders like Cameron Townsend, Dawson Trotman, Clarence Jones, and Charles Fuller were pouring their energies into parachurch organizations. Despite the Depression, the network continued to grow. With the return of prosperity after World War II, growth was explosive. Youth for Christ launched the career of Billy Graham. He then founded his own organization in 1950 and encouraged the founding of others like Campus Crusade for Christ and **Christianity Today**.

Other visionaries founded new types of organizations: humanitarian agencies like World Vision, short-term missionary groups like YWAM, and television networks like Pat Robertson's CBN. Evangelical colleges soon enrolled more students than Bible institutes, and Christian schools started to appear everywhere. Eventually there were so many parachurch organizations that they grouped themselves into associations—for missionary agencies, Christian education, broadcasters, and others.

Parachurch organizations gave the New Evangelicals institutional homes and legitimacy. Charles Fuller's broadcasting ministry funded Fuller Seminary, and his reputation with ordinary evangelicals protected the scholars who worked there. The New Evangelicals, in turn, articulated theological reasons for many of the changes that parachurch entrepreneurs were introducing—de-emphasis on dispensationalism, involvement in social service, and the importance of scholarship, women's leadership, and political action.

To spread their theological vision, the New Evangelicals started **Christianity Today**. They would have been happy with that one magazine. But **Christianity Today** is also a parachurch organization, and parachurch organizations are run by entrepreneurial spirits who are never satisfied with the status quo. So naturally they saw other needs, envisioned new fields of service, and got busy. Today Christianity

Today International is a family of 13 different magazines (including ***Christian History & Biography***). It just goes to show—the evangelical entrepreneurs of today are as restless and impatient as Moody.

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## America's Evangelical Explosion

The central section of the timeline shows the growth of evangelical parachurch organizations, institutions, and associations during this era. Founders names are in parentheses.

1914 World War I (ends in 1918)

### 1920's

1920 Rev. Curtis Lee Laws first uses term "fundamentalist"

1920 Prohibition

1920 19th Amendment gives women right to vote

1921 Latin American Mission (Harry and Susan Strachan)

1923 J. Gresham Machen publishes *Christianity and Liberalism*

1924 Evangelical Theological College, later called Dallas Theological Seminary

1925 Scopes "Monkey" Trial

1927 First "talking" motion picture

1928 Henrietta Mears becomes Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church of Hollywood

1929 Stock market crash begins Great Depression

1929 Fundamentalists leave Princeton to form Westminster Theological Seminary

### 1930's

1930 Christian Business Men's Committee / Connecting Business Men to Christ

1931 Christian Medical Association / Christian Medical and Dental Association

1931 Zondervan Publishers

1933 Navigators (Dawson Trotman)

1933 Gospel Light Publications (Henrietta Mears)

1933 Scripture Press (Victor and Bernice Cory)

1934 Summer Institute of Linguistics / Wycliffe Bible Translators (W. Cameron Townsend)

1936 Student Foreign Missions Fellowship (Robert McQuilken)

1936 Harold John Ockenga becomes pastor of Park Street Church

1937 Old Fashioned Revival Hour (Charles Fuller)

1937 Child Evangelism Fellowship (Jesse Overholtzer)

1939 Pioneer Girls / Pioneer Clubs (Betty Whitaker)

1939 Hitler's invasion of Poland sparks World War II

### 1940's

1940 Word of Life (Jack Wyrzten)

1941 Japanese attack Pearl Harbor

1941 Young Life (Jim Rayburn)

1941 Carl McIntire founds American Council of Christian Churches

1941 First "Word for Life" youth rally held

1942 National Association of Evangelicals

1943 National Religious Broadcasters

1944 Ockenga holds "scholar's conferences" (until 1947)

1945 Youth for Christ (Torrey Johnson)

**1945 *Guideposts*** (Norman Vincent Peale)  
**1945** U.S. drops atomic bombs on Japan  
**1945** United Nations founded  
**1945** Evangelical Foreign Missions Association / Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies  
**1945** Christian Airmen's Missionary Fellowship / Mission Aviation Fellowship (Betty Greene)  
**1945** Chicagoland Youth for Christ's Memorial Day pageant at Soldier Field  
**1945** Billy Graham becomes first full-time evangelist of Youth for Christ International  
**1947** Carl Henry publishes ***The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism***  
**1947** Fuller Theological Seminary (Charles Fuller)  
**1947** Accrediting Association of Bible Institutes and Bible Colleges / Association for Biblical Higher Education  
**1948** YFC Congress on World Evangelization in Beatenberg, Switzerland  
**1948** Evangelical Press Association  
**1948** L'Abri (Francis and Edith Schaeffer)  
**1949** Cold War nuclear arms race begins  
**1949** Graham's Greater Los Angeles Crusade

## 1950's

**1950** Graham's Boston Crusade  
**1950** World Vision (Bob Pierce)  
**1950** Billy Graham Evangelistic Association  
**1950** Christian Booksellers Association  
**1950** Joseph McCarthy launches anti-Communist campaign  
**1950** Korean War (ends in 1953)  
**1950** Truman authorizes U.S. military aid in Vietnam War  
**1950** "The Hour of Decision" radio show begins  
**1951** Campus Crusade for Christ (Bill Bright)  
**1952** Trans World Radio (Paul Freed)  
**1952** Compassion International (Everett Swanson)  
**1952** ***Time*** magazine notes "serious interest in religion in America"  
**1954** Graham's London Harringay Crusade  
**1954** Medical Assistance Programs/MAP International  
**1954** Fellowship of Christian Athletes (Don McClanen)  
**1954** ***Brown v. Board of Education***  
**1956** ***Christianity Today***  
**1957** Russians launch Sputnik  
**1957** Timothy Smith publishes ***Revivalism and Social Reform***  
**1957** Graham's New York Crusade  
**1959** Bible Study Fellowship (Audrey Wetherell Johnson)

## 1960's

**1960** Youth With A Mission / YWAM (Loren Cunningham)  
**1960** Operation Mobilisation (George Verwer)  
**1960** Teen Challenge (David Wilkerson)  
**1960** Christian Broadcasting Network (Pat Robertson)  
**1960** Coral Ridge Ministries (D. James Kennedy)  
**1960** Graham visits eight African nations in three months  
**1962** Tyndale House Publishers  
**1962** Graham visits seven nations in South America  
**1962** Crisis at Fuller Seminary over biblical inerrancy  
**1963** Christian Camp and Conference Association  
**1963** National Black Evangelical Association (William Bentley, Tom Skinner)

**1963** John F. Kennedy is assassinated  
**1963** Trinity Evangelical Divinity School makes plans to become a major evangelical seminary dedicated to preserving inerrancy  
**1963** Henrietta Mears dies  
**1964** Institute in Basic Youth Conflicts (Bill Gothard)  
**1965** Francis Schaeffer holds first major U.S. speaking event in Boston  
**1966** Berlin Congress on Evangelism  
**1967** Thru the Bible Radio (J. Vernon McGee)  
**1967** Women's Aglow Fellowship/Aglow International  
**1968** Martin Luther King Jr. is shot  
**1969** Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary  
**1969** First man on the moon  
**1969** Woodstock

## **1970's**

**1971** Food for the Hungry (Larry Ward)  
**1971** Maranatha! Music  
**1971** Christian College Consortium  
**1971** Jim Wallis and others found *The Post-American*, later called *Sojourners*  
**1973** Roe v. Wade  
**1973** Watergate scandal; Nixon impeached  
**1973** Evangelical representatives sign Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern  
**1973** Trinity Broadcasting Network (Paul and Jan Crouch)  
**1976** Christian College Coalition/Council for Christian Colleges and Universities  
**1976** Jimmy Carter elected president  
**1976** Prison Fellowship Ministries (Chuck Colson)  
**1976** *Newsweek* declares "The Year of the Evangelical"  
**1977** Focus on the Family (James Dobson)  
**1977** American Family Association (Donald Wildmon)  
**1978** Evangelicals for Social Action (Ron Sider)  
**1979** Feed the Children (Larry and Frances Jones)  
**1979** Concerned Women for America (Beverly LaHaye)  
**1979** Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability

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## **The Born-Again Mind**

**Harold John Ockenga's conviction that the church needs thinkers helped spark a renaissance of evangelical scholarship.**

George Marsden

Only 60 years later, it is difficult to imagine the pitiable state of evangelical scholarship as it looked at the end of World War II. "Fundamentalist" was the more typical title to designate the whole movement we now call "evangelical," and to be a "fundamentalist" meant, with very few exceptions, that one stood outside mainstream academia. Ever since the Scopes "Monkey Trial" of 1925, fundamentalism had been identified with anti-intellectualism. In the 1940s most of the small number of accomplished fundamentalist scholars were found in a few separatist seminaries and Bible schools.

Harold John Ockenga and his associates hoped to reverse this trend and bring Bible-based scholarship back into the mainstream. Their hopes for intellectual renewal were part of a larger strategy, built first on national revival. Beginning with aggressive evangelism, they hoped to restore evangelical influences throughout American culture.

### **Separating from separatism**

One early organizational step was to found the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942. The name of the new organization signaled the beginning of a return to the 19th-century term "evangelical" to designate their movement. For Ockenga the change in terminology meant a repudiation of what he regarded as the mistaken separatist tendencies among fundamentalists. In their zeal to counter theological modernists, many militants had withdrawn from mainstream institutions to form their own "pure" schools and churches. Some were making such separatism a virtual test of genuine commitment.

A classic instance had occurred at Princeton Theological Seminary while Ockenga was studying there. In 1929 conservatives left Princeton to form Westminster Theological Seminary. Even though Ockenga had joined that conservative exodus to continue studying with the great New Testament scholar, J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), he later parted ways with his mentor when in 1936 Machen left the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to found what became the tiny Orthodox Presbyterian Church. Ockenga now saw such separatism as hiding one's light under a bushel.

### **The "Cal Tech of the evangelical world"**

Working from his strategic base in Park Street Church in Boston, Ockenga helped lay the basis for an evangelical renaissance in scholarship. From 1944 to 1947 he sponsored a number of "scholar's conferences." Ockenga could identify fewer than two dozen scholars from around the country to invite, and still fewer came. Nevertheless, these small gatherings helped inspire a larger vision. They also encouraged a number of young scholars in the Boston area, most notably Carl F. H. Henry at Boston University and Edward J. Carnell at Harvard.

The most substantial expression of this vision was the founding in 1947 of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, with Ockenga as its president (though he remained in Boston). Evangelist Charles E. Fuller, whose "Old-Fashioned Revival Hour" was one of the most popular programs on the radio, provided most of the finances. On the seminary's early faculty were impressive younger scholars, including Henry, Carnell, and New Testament scholar George Eldon Ladd, another recent Harvard grad.

Ockenga stated in his inaugural address at Fuller, "Is it a time to build a theological seminary when the world is on fire? Yes, this is the fastest way of doing the job before us." Fuller Seminary, he said, would be "a Cal Tech of the evangelical world" and a "research center for evangelical scholarship." He and the scholars in this movement wished to strengthen an aspect of American evangelicalism that had fallen on hard times. Evangelicalism, as they saw it, was grounded in a strong theological tradition going back to the heirs of Luther and Calvin. That scholarly heritage had been eroded by the "can-do" activism of popular American evangelicalism, which placed a premium on quick results.

Ockenga and his fellows certainly did not repudiate either the revivalism or the individualistic piety of the American evangelical heritage. In fact, these were top priorities, and the long-term success of their movement was built largely on their close association with Billy Graham. Graham, a Wheaton College graduate, had respect for intellectual endeavors and included a place for scholarship as a part of his hopes for national renewal.

### **The progress of a vision**

While the outlooks of Ockenga, Graham, and the flagship academic center, Fuller Theological Seminary, were slightly more inclusive than those of the stricter separatist fundamentalists, the irony was that the New Evangelicals' efforts to infiltrate the intellectual life of the culture resulted mainly in building or strengthening their own institutions. Internal divisions made institution-building no easy task.

One aspect of the vision to influence the culture was to found a great "Christian University," but such plans always faltered over differences about which sorts of evangelicals would set the boundaries. Intra-evangelical conflicts over how open the movement should be eventually plagued Fuller also. In the 1960s, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts, the latter headed by Ockenga himself, took up what they saw as the original, more strictly bounded Fuller mission.

Nonetheless, the larger vision of restoring a strong intellectual life among American evangelicals was spreading in the wake of the post-war revivals. Particularly influential was *Christianity Today*, founded in 1956.

Evangelicals and other conservative Christians had scores of little colleges that included dedicated teachers who inspired excellent students to attend the nation's top graduate programs. University campus ministries such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship helped bring British models of faith and intellect to American attention and also encouraged academic vocations among some bright young evangelicals on secular campuses. Other young scholars were encouraged by pastors or by a rapidly expanding number of capable scholars at evangelical seminaries.

### **Evangelical renaissance**

From these and other modest beginnings, a genuine renaissance in evangelical scholarship would grow geometrically throughout the next decades. By the 1970s and 1980s, not only were many evangelical colleges assembling excellent faculties, but increasing numbers of evangelicals were publishing in the academic mainstream and taking their places in the broader university culture.

Today this growth continues and has burgeoned into a considerable force in American academia. All over the country, outstanding evangelical students are crowding into graduate programs, especially those that show some sympathy for their religious concerns. It is probably impossible today to find a major university in the United States without a thriving community of evangelical graduate students. A decade or so ago people talked of "tenured radicals" to designate students from the 1960s counterculture who were reshaping academia; soon they may be speaking of "tenured evangelicals."

This renaissance of evangelical and other theologically orthodox scholarship is far too broadly based to be attributed to the work of any one movement or group of leaders. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the vision of a few strategically based men of 60 years ago helped to reinvigorate the ideal that the evangelical branches of the body of Christ should include a respected place for intellectual service.

*George Marsden is professor of history at the University of Notre Dame.*

### **A magazine of their own**

Christianity Today ***gave evangelicals a megaphone for their message.***

In the early 1950s, Billy Graham saw that American evangelicals were "confused, bewildered, divided, and almost defeated in the face of [great] opportunity ... " A flash of inspiration hit him at 2:00 A.M. one night in 1953, and he became convinced that the movement needed a magazine—a magazine like the **Christian Century**, only different. It would articulate evangelical views, the way the **Century** spoke for the liberal cause. The result would be to restore "intellectual respectability and spiritual impact to evangelical Christianity."

Graham shared his vision for the magazine with a small circle of friends, including his father-in-law L. Nelson Bell, a returned missionary surgeon. Dr. Bell had been thinking similar thoughts, and he got busy contacting potential funders and networking with key leaders. Graham also shared his ideas with Fuller Seminary librarian Wilbur Smith, who reported that he had already outlined remarkably similar ideas for a magazine. Graham asked Smith to be the editor, but at age 60, Smith thought a younger man should carry the burden.

Graham then tabbed the 42-year-old ex-newspaperman and double-doctorate theologian Carl F. H. Henry to be the editor. Oilman J. Howard Pew donated a large portion of the funding, while additional monies came from Graham's own evangelistic organization and businessmen like John Bolten and Howard Butt.

**Christianity Today** launched in October 1956, with Henry as editor and Bell as executive editor. Initially, it circulated free to about 200,000 Protestant clergy. By the end of the first year, the paid circulation had reached 38,000—surpassing the **Christian Century** by 4,000.

There were tensions among the editors and some board members. Bell wanted the magazine to have a more popular, readable style (which he modeled), while Henry wrote for a seminary-trained audience. There were also differences over editorial independence and the magazine's tone. Funder J. Howard Pew wished for sharper attacks on liberals, while Henry tenaciously stuck with a cooler, more analytical approach.

Though the early years were rocky in terms of relationships, the magazine won the public respect that Graham and others had aimed for. AP's George Cornell said it was "already influential" and labeled it "a sort of intellectual voice of conservative Evangelical Protestantism."

*—David Neff, editor of Christianity Today and executive editor of Christian History & Biography.*

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## Awakening the Evangelical Conscience

The New Evangelicals called for a fresh application of Christian truth to the social problems of the day.

Richard J. Mouw

Speaking to a large group of evangelical pastors in the mid-1940s, Carl F. H. Henry, soon to become a founding faculty member at Fuller Seminary, questioned them about the place of social concerns in their preaching. As he tells the story in the opening pages of his 1947 book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, he asked them: "How many of you, during the past six months, have preached a sermon devoted in large part to a condemnation of such social evils as aggressive warfare, racial hatred and intolerance, the liquor traffic, exploitation of labor or management, or the like—a sermon containing not merely an incidental or illustrative reference, but directed mainly against such evils and proposing the framework in which you think solution is possible?"

Henry was chagrined when "[n]ot a single hand was raised in response." But he was not really surprised. He knew that inattention to such matters was a general characteristic of the evangelicalism of his day. He also knew, however, that this pattern was out of step with the mainstream evangelical tradition. "For the first protracted period in its history," he observed, "evangelical Christianity stands divorced from the great social reform movements."

Ten years later, evangelical historian Timothy Smith was to document this situation in detail in his *Revivalism and Social Reform*, showing that the pre-Civil War Holiness movement had actively participated in the abolitionist cause, as well as the campaigns for woman suffrage and temperance. In a "great reversal" (Smith's term), evangelicals retreated from these reformist efforts around the turn of the century, fostering instead a social pessimism and an almost exclusive focus on evangelism and individual piety.

For Henry, Ockenga, and others, this was an unfortunate over-reaction against liberal theologians who, drawing on the "social gospel" movement of the early 20th century, tended to identify the Christian message almost exclusively with a social-economic agenda. Henry and others were now calling for a comprehensive revitalization of the evangelical witness that would include serious efforts at social reform.

For all of the energy that Henry and others put into this revitalization, however, they did little to address the practical social ills that Henry had listed in 1947. This continuing failure was due to several factors. Most significant was the fact that Henry and his closest allies were scholars, and their natural inclination was not to take to the streets but to give sustained attention to correcting what they saw as the theological defects of the evangelical movement of their day.

In addition, they were worried not only about social inactivism but also about the image of evangelicals as anti-intellectual. So they expended much effort on intellectual renewal, working especially on remedying widespread evangelical cultural pessimism. They were convinced that recent evangelicalism had placed too much of an emphasis on a future millennial Kingdom, ignoring the possibility of important Kingdom gains in the present.

The solution was not, they argued, to conform to a liberal social gospel agenda, but rather to develop a more comprehensive, biblically faithful perspective. They wanted a theological perspective that did not abandon the classical evangelical themes of individual fallenness and the need for personal redemption, but would also address global realities in a way that clearly exposed the errors of those

who trusted in an evolving humankind's capacity for self-improvement. The New Evangelicals gave major attention to developing a "new apologetics" (a major theme in Fuller Seminary's early days), a theology of culture, and a view of God's work in history that allowed for partial successes in reformist efforts prior to the return of Christ.

### **On the defensive**

But the newly "progressive" evangelicals also experienced pressure from a virulent anti-communism that emerged in the 1950s. Carl McIntire, Billy James Hargis, and the members of the John Birch Society (founded in 1958) not only accused liberal Protestant leaders of Marxist sympathies, they also monitored statements of evangelical leaders, looking for hints of support for "socialist" causes. This often put Henry and others on the defensive, forcing them to regularly demonstrate their biblical orthodoxy—and creating a reluctance to proclaim too boldly on matters that might leave them open to charges of social gospel sympathies.

This reluctance was clearly on display during Henry's editorship of *Christianity Today* from 1956 through 1968. The magazine frequently expressed misgivings about the tactics of the civil rights movement, as well as voicing strong support for the Vietnam War. Most significantly, Henry himself came to espouse a perspective on the role of the church in social matters that seemed to conflict with his previous calls for more political preaching.

While he always allowed that there were moments in history when social "emergencies" (Nazi Germany was an obvious case in point) necessitated official church pronouncements, Henry argued that the church has neither the "competence" nor the "authority" to pronounce on social specifics. The task of preaching, he insisted, was to offer general guidelines for faithful discipleship; the business of applying these guidelines to specific social situations was to be left to the individual.

In short, while the New Evangelical leaders had proclaimed, in the 1940s, the need for a new evangelical activism, very little practical involvement resulted from the social agenda they had set forth. As the '70s dawned, liberal Protestants and Roman Catholics still depicted evangelicalism as a movement given to "other-worldly" concerns.

### **A new generation of activists**

This is not to say, however, that the urgings to action of the immediate post-World War II period came to nothing. The probings of Henry and others had brought about a significant theological renewal, albeit one whose practical outworkings had to wait for others to implement. And the implementation did begin to happen in a serious manner in the 1970s when a very visible evangelical activism emerged, led by a younger generation who had been energized by the civil rights and anti-war movements.

In 1971, a small group of students at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School led by Jim Wallis, a onetime "New Left" activist who had returned to his evangelical roots, established a magazine of "radical Christian" support for various social causes. The magazine was later called *Sojourners*, but its original title was *Post-American* to symbolize—in a time when many were proclaiming that the United States had become "post-Christian"—the need for evangelicals to foster a "post-American Christianity."

While the young activists clearly were espousing causes that did not always sit well with what were now the older generation of New Evangelicals, representatives of the two groups did manage to speak, on at least one occasion, with a common voice. In 1973, they gathered for a long weekend in Chicago to hammer together "The Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern."

Signed by, among others, Wallis, Henry, Vernon Grounds (the president of Denver's Conservative Baptist Seminary), Senator Mark Hatfield, the National Black Evangelical Association's William Bentley, faculty



members from Wheaton College, Calvin College, and Fuller Seminary, and leaders of the Christian feminist Daughters of Sarah, the document received national publicity. **Time** magazine's Richard Ostling observed that this was likely the first time in the 20th century when 40 evangelical leaders got together for a whole weekend to discuss issues of social concern.

The Declaration addressed a number of topics (e.g., gender concerns and environmental issues) that went well beyond the causes to which Henry and others had pointed in 1947, and those present were aware that not all of the older leaders were enthusiastic about each of the topics treated. But the rough continuities with the 1940s were symbolized nicely in the fact that one of the signatories was Carl Henry's son, Paul, who had recently joined the political science department at Calvin College after serving as a Peace Corps volunteer. Paul Henry, who led a small anti-war caucus in the Michigan delegation to the 1972 Republican National Convention, went on to serve four terms in Congress.

The new evangelical activism received additional national attention when Jimmy Carter, campaigning for the presidency in 1976, identified himself as an evangelical. **Newsweek** magazine's cover story declared 1976 "The Year of the Evangelical." A very different sort of activism made its appearance when the New Religious Right became a political force in the '80s. With a leadership drawn largely from the Baptist Bible belt, this movement has displayed characteristics that run counter to the spirit of the 1940s plea for modest reformist efforts based on careful theological reflection. But in a larger sense, the impulse for all of the evangelical activist programs from the mid-20th century onward can be traced back to the New Evangelicals' original call for a corrective to the "uneasy conscience."

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## One in the Spirit?

Evangelicals are still searching for the elusive ideal of unity.

Douglas A. Sweeney

It is time that the evangelical movement sees itself for what it is: a lion on the loose that no one today seriously fears." So wrote Carl F. H. Henry in the very year *Newsweek* dubbed "The Year of the Evangelical" (1976). Harold John Ockenga was wont to be more optimistic. But two years later, even he was worried that the New Evangelicalism was fraying around the edges.

"Great visibility is being given today to the word 'evangelical' and to the evangelical movement," Ockenga wrote in a volume to honor Wilbur Smith, another erstwhile optimist. "Hopefully, it will not be vitiated by a division of the movement or by a loss of fidelity to evangelical content and practice." By the end of the 1970s, despite their notable fame and fortune, the New Evangelical leadership had several weighty reasons to fear that their movement had started to slip between their fingers.

### Division and Diversity

During the early years of the movement, the New Evangelicals largely succeeded in their efforts to re-engage American culture. By the end of the 1950s, their ministries were thriving. Their numbers were increasing, as was their clout in the realms of politics, education, and the media. During the decade of the '50s, in fact, more Americans joined a church than ever before in history. More than 60 percent of the nation belonged to a church by 1960.

Many now looked to the likes of Billy Graham, Carl Henry, and Harold Ockenga for leadership of global evangelicalism. But as the movement grew it also began to diversify, exceeding the grasp of the New Evangelicals. Graham and company tried their best to keep their growing family together. But despite their recent success in reviving fundamentalism—and American culture at large—some of their siblings became uncomfortable with their leadership. In the 1950s, Graham made changes in his methods—such as desegregating seating and including non-evangelicals in his crusades—that upset some fellow conservatives, especially in the south. Right-wing fundamentalist leaders opposed Graham publicly and encouraged their constituents to turn their backs on the evangelist.

During the early 1960s, the New Evangelicals also began to divide on theological grounds. Fuller Seminary softened its stand on biblical inerrancy and in 1970 dropped the doctrine from its theological statement, causing widespread controversy. Eventually the debate faded from view, but resentment still simmers in some circles.

Evangelicals differed on other theological issues as well. During the 1960s and '70s, many younger evangelicals heralded liberal social views, speaking out against their elders' social and cultural conservatism. Led by Jim Wallis, they took their brothers and sisters to task for abandoning civil rights, supporting the war in Vietnam, and failing to act consistently for social justice.

The swelling number of Pentecostals and charismatics within the evangelical ranks also added to the conflict over evangelicalism's nature and destiny. Beginning especially in the '60s, evangelical leaders were faced with widespread conflict over things like speaking in tongues, faith healing, and power evangelism—not to mention charismatic, or "contemporary," worship.

Questions of doctrine, practice, and worship style were not the only factors that contributed to the growing diversity of the evangelical movement. It was also beginning to have a very multicultural face. The benchmark Immigration Act of 1965 helped Hispanic and Asian-American evangelicalism to flourish, contributing several million new Protestants to the movement. Anglo-American evangelicals have remained largely ignorant of the scope of this development, and have yet to offer much in the way of outreach to or with these brothers and sisters in the gospel (especially the Hispanics, more of whom are working class). Nonetheless, theirs will likely be the next major chapter in the ongoing story of the evangelical movement.

### **Challenges for A New Generation**

It has become rather obvious over the course of the past half century that larger-than-life leaders like Billy Graham cannot unite all evangelicals, at least not by themselves. Their movement has grown too big. Moreover, we live in a day when Christians often celebrate diversity as much as they work for unity. This does not mean, however, that the New Evangelical aspirations to oneness in Christ were in vain. It simply means that evangelicals are past the days of defining themselves primarily in opposition to "mainline" Protestants, whose churches have less and less to do with many younger evangelicals.

Evangelicals lost the battle for control of the mainline. But they won, or at least are winning, the larger war for Protestantism. In fact, it might be said that they now compose a new "mainline," one that is far larger and more diverse than the one they lost in the 1920s—even the one they re-engaged in the 1930s, '40s and '50s.

Today, they face more global challenges—those of a privileged majority, not a dissident minority. Fresh leadership is required, as well as a new, global vision, a humbler spirit of partnership, and a stronger support for the common good (especially the welfare of the poor). Guiding their movement will be difficult. Their leaders will have to unify a larger family than ever, one with a host of historical reasons to keep each other at arm's length. But if they take a look around them, they will discover a wealth of capital in evangelical history for getting the job done.

Carl Henry prophesied boldly to some of his New Evangelical colleagues who were more worried about controlling the future than learning from the past: "Evangelicalism presumptively acts as if it were the permanently appointed preserver of 'the faith once-for-all-delivered' and specially entrusted with ecclesial keys to the Kingdom. But no earthly movement holds the Lion of the Tribe of Judah by the tail. We may need for a season to be engaged in the Lion's den until we recover an apostolic awe of the Risen Christ, the invincible Head of a dependent body sustained by his supernatural power. Apart from life in and by the Spirit we are all pseudo-evangelicals."

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## A New Evangelical Awakening: Recommended Resources

Dig Deeper into this issue's theme

### The history of American evangelicalism

- Randall Balmer, *Blessed Assurance: A History of Evangelicalism in America* (Beacon, 1999)
- Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America* (Oxford, 1989)
- Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (Oxford, 1997)
- George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, 1987)
- George M. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Eerdmans, 1991)
- David O. Moberg, *The Great Reversal: Evangelism Versus Social Concern* (J. B. Lippincott, 1972)
- Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (InterVarsity, 2004)
- Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Eerdmans, 1995)
- Garth Rosell, *The Evangelical Landscape: Essays on the American Evangelical Tradition* (Baker Books, 1996)
- Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998)
- Douglas A. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story: A History of the Movement* (Baker Academic, 2005)

### Youth for Christ

- *The Youth for Christ Movement and Its Pioneers*, edited by Joel Carpenter (Taylor & Francis, 1988)

### Billy Graham

- Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (HarperCollins, 1997)
- William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (William Morrow, 1991)

### Other special interests

- *Dream Big: The Henrietta Mears Story*, edited by Earl O. Roe (Gospel Light, 1990)
- Tona J. Hangen, *Redeeming the Dial: Radio, Religion, and Popular Culture in America* (Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2002)
- Michael Hamilton, "We're In the Money: How Did Evangelicals Get So Wealthy, and What Has It Done To Us?" *Christianity Today* (June 2000)
- Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1998)
- Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (reprint, Eerdmans, 1997)

## Christian History & Biography Back Issues

- Issue 8: ***Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening***
- Issue 23: ***Spiritual Awakenings in North America***
- Issue 38: ***George Whitefield***
- Issue 55: ***The Monkey Trial and the Rise of Fundamentalism***
- Issue 65: ***The Ten Most Influential Christians of the 20th Century***
- Issue 77: ***Jonathan Edwards***

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## The Politics of Service

Three Christian activists who drew on faith to fight social challenges

Collin Hansen

Since President George W. Bush's 2004 electoral victory, there has been a flood of books promoting apocalyptic visions of impending theocracy. Reading them, you might think the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition invented Christian political activism in the 1980s.

Christians have long applied the teachings of their faith to their politics. Yet today's activism is an anomaly. Traditionally, faith-based activism has not been so closely associated with one party. During the tumultuous years when America grew into a financial superpower, Christians spread across the political spectrum. They often rallied to their economic allies, such as populists, socialists, and conservatives.

William Jennings Bryan, Dorothy Day, and Abraham Kuyper would have disagreed about plenty. Yet all three brought their faith to bear on the great social challenges of their day and saw politics as an arena in which to serve their neighbors as agents of God's grace.

### Williams Jennings Bryan (1860-1925)

The Great Commoner

Williams Jennings Bryan trusted a God who sided with common folk. Bryan made a name for himself in the Progressive Era by fighting the economic elites of his own Democratic Party. His oratorical skills catapulted him all the way to the party's nomination for President in 1896 when he famously harangued the gold standard. "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns," Bryan thundered, stretching out his arms. "You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

Three times Bryan ran for President; three times he failed. Nevertheless, besides Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt, Bryan dominated the era of reforms that ran from the 1890s to the 1920s. He championed four constitutional amendments enacted during this period—prohibition, direct election of senators, the income tax, and woman suffrage. Known as the "Great Commoner," Bryan opposed the business interests that he believed had undercut America's working classes. "There can be no good monopoly in private hands until the Almighty sends us angels to preside over the monopoly," he argued.

Traits that won Bryan the masses made him controversial and unpopular among others. A great speaker during an age of oratory, Bryan came across as a loud demagogue to many business and political leaders. He stuck to his principles and resigned his position as secretary of state in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet as America prepared to enter World War I. But Bryan had appeared inept in his efforts to mediate the conflict, and his simple piety did not impress opponents. Yet according to biographer Michael Kazin, "admirers embraced him because he so publicly campaigned in the name of Christian principles and was never known to have transgressed them."

Unfortunately, Bryan's name became associated with the fundamentalist retreat due to his role in the 1925 Scopes evolution trial. Dubbed the "Fundamentalist Pope" by H. L. Mencken, Bryan feared the nascent theological liberalism of his Presbyterian denomination. He eagerly took the stand at the Scopes trial in defense of God's Word, when Clarence Darrow picked him apart.

But Bryan did not entertain any retreat from culture. "Sometimes the Christian has sought to prepare himself for immortality by withdrawing from the world's temptations and from the world's activities," Bryan said. "Now he is beginning to see that he can only follow in the footsteps of the Nazarene when he goes about doing good and renders 'unto the least of these,' his brethren, the service that the Master was anxious to render unto all."

### **Dorothy Day (1897-1980)**

Advocate for the downtrodden

It is perhaps symbolic that a mover and shaker like Dorothy Day survived the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. As she watched her mother help the earthquake's homeless, Day developed a sensitive heart toward "the least of these." But it was socialism—not the church—that first harnessed her activism. In 1917 police arrested the budding journalist while she protested at the White House for woman suffrage. The activist Day saw little use for a meek Jesus. "I wanted a Lord who would scourge the money-changers out of the temple," Day wrote in her autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, "and I wanted to help all those who raised their hand against oppression."

Nevertheless, the time Day spent in prison tried her commitment to secular activism. She even asked for a Bible and sought comfort from the Psalms. For years after she left prison, Day's interest in Christianity grew slowly but steadily. Love for the poor drew her to the Roman Catholic Church, whose huddled masses she met while reporting among immigrants.

Day's move toward Catholicism came at a cost. She split with her common-law husband, Forster Batterham, when Day gave birth to their daughter, Tamar, in 1927. Day, feeling the guilt of an earlier abortion, saw Tamar's birth as a sign of God's mercy and forgiveness, and had her baptized. Like many of Day's radical friends, Batterham would not tolerate religiosity. "It was not because I was tired of sex, satiated, disillusioned, that I turned to God," Day wrote. "It was because through a whole love, both physical and spiritual, I came to know God."

While writing for the Catholic magazine *Commonweal* in 1932, Day met the man who would steer her toward her life's calling. Peter Maurin, a French immigrant and former monk, urged Day to launch a newspaper that would spread Catholic social teaching. Maurin supplied the philosophy behind *The Catholic Worker*, but Day provided the journalistic know-how. The newspaper's pacifism and advocacy for the poor afforded Maurin and Day numerous opportunities to back their words with action. Yet on two occasions things became so difficult that Maurin asked Day to quit with him.

By 1936, 33 Catholic Worker houses had sprouted nationwide as the growing network of newspapers opened their doors to the down and out. But some staff members lamented Day's commitment to the "undeserving" poor. They preferred to spend the limited funds on socialist propaganda. Day held her ground, and the dissenters left.

Likewise, World War II tested the newspaper's integrity. When *The Catholic Worker* declined to choose sides, two-thirds of their readers quit taking the paper. Maurin wondered if they should give up, since the world evidently didn't want to listen. "God gives us our temperaments," Day remembered, "and in spite of my pacifism, it is natural for me to stand my ground, to continue in what actually amounts to a class war, using such weapons as the works of mercy for immediate means to show our love and to alleviate suffering."

### **Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920)**

Prime minister with a message

Though known as a conservative, Abraham Kuyper backed William Jennings Bryan for President in the 1900 election. Being a Dutch citizen, he couldn't vote, but Kuyper's ties to America ran deep. He believed

"America represented the future of liberty on our planet," according to theologian John Bolt. He couldn't help feeling affinity for America, home to so many Dutch immigrants.

In his native Netherlands, Kuyper earned his reputation as a man of many gifts and boundless energy. He founded the Anti-Revolutionary Party, the first national party in the Netherlands and a forerunner to Christian Democratic parties in Europe. An ordained minister, Kuyper started a Christian university and two Christian newspapers, including *The Standard* in 1872. At the pinnacle of his political career, Kuyper served as the Dutch prime minister from 1901 to 1905.

This career did not seem likely when he took a pastorate in Beesd after seminary in 1863. During university studies, Kuyper had not shown much sympathy for the orthodoxy of theologians like John Calvin. In Beesd, a young evangelical woman, Pietje Baltus, stopped going to church because of his liberal sermons. Baltus even refused to shake his hand, but Kuyper decided to hear her out. Over time his views changed so dramatically that he left the Dutch Reformed Church in 1886 and helped start a more conservative rival denomination in 1892.

Kuyper did not remain in ministry long. In 1874 he won a seat in Parliament, where he championed Christian education. He founded the Free University in 1880 and delivered his hallmark phrase at its inaugural convocation: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry 'Mine!'"

He brought his message to America in 1898 when B. B. Warfield invited him to lecture at Princeton. Kuyper explained Calvinism's implications for all spheres of life, including science and art. "The sovereignty of the state and the sovereignty of the church exist side by side, and they mutually limit each other," Kuyper said of his belief in "sphere sovereignty."

Kuyper preached a lofty view of God's sovereignty and pointed out his acts of "common grace." "The world after the fall is no lost planet, only destined now to afford the church a place in which to continue her combats; and humanity is no aimless mass of people which only serves the purpose of giving birth to the elect," Kuyper said. "On the contrary, the world now, as well as in the beginning, is the theater for the mighty works of God, and humanity remains a creation of his hand, which, apart from salvation, completes under this present dispensation, here on earth, a mighty process, and in its historical development is to glorify the name of Almighty God."

***Collin Hansen is an associate editor of Christianity Today.***

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# CHRISTIAN HISTORY

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## Fueled by Fervent Prayer

Youth for Christ's praying community sent young Harold Myra on a lifetime quest.

What transformed me in 1957 from an introverted, self-absorbed high school senior with no college plans into a college student with a passion for service, leading a half-dozen Youth for Christ high-school clubs? A combination of forces invaded my life, chief among them the authenticity and fire of prayer. The New Evangelicals were fueled by fervent prayer, and becoming part of YFC meant hours on one's knees with students and leaders in confession, intercession, and calling on God to do mighty works.

God's invitation to Jeremiah resonated in my soul: "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things." As a child, I had prayed earnestly, and as a teen had experienced some remarkable "coincidences," but YFC brought a community of intense prayer. For instance, during the invitation at Billy Graham's New York Crusade, I was praying for seekers with such obvious intensity that someone tapped me on the shoulder and asked if I wanted to go forward.

Billy, YFC's first full-time employee, had a rich history of fervent prayer, especially at his crossroads moments. The same with Harold Ockenga; his mother's prayers and his own wrestlings with God formed a lifetime of commitment to prayer. Near the end of Ockenga's life, we interviewed him for *Christianity Today*. We asked how he had simultaneously functioned as president of Fuller Seminary in California and as pastor of historic Park Street Church in Boston. His immediate answer was to reach for a stack of prayer cards he turned to each morning. He would pray about each concern and then leave it in God's hands.

In the early YFC, however brash or shallow some of its leaders may have been, they joined with hundreds of others asking for God's forgiveness, wisdom, and empowerment. We heard countless stories of the power of prayer, including YFC leaders gathering around Billy in prayer long into the night, with the result of God's forever after blessing his invitations to receive Christ.

In 1959 I faced a 32-hour bus ride from eastern Pennsylvania to Kansas City to attend YFC's Director's School. I prayed earnestly that the trip would not be a dreary time-waster but a catalyst for my training to reach young people.

On the bus, I noticed three passengers bond because they were all doing the same tragic thing—going "home" because their spouses had rejected them. All were young—an airman just returned from Korea, a Mexican woman, and a 19-year-old girl, baby in arms.

A heavy snowstorm brought unusually good spirits to the bus as we started singing about snow and travel. Later, in the darkness, I talked and prayed with the beautiful but devastated Mexican woman about her future and her spiritual life. As I write this, I still see the teenage wife with her baby stepping down off the bus to meet her parents. The entire trip seemed a dramatic answering of my prayers.

At church a few weeks later, a phrase from a YFC song resonated in my soul, especially in light of the bus ride: "For who am I, that I should choose my way?" God, I was determined, must choose my path, and that would be possible only through prayer.

Prayer is mysterious, sometimes maddening in its seeming non-results, sometimes exhilarating in its sense of genuine connection and answers. Ole Halleby once said, "Prayer is for the helpless." I early recognized this reality.

Recently my friend Philip Yancey published a marvelous book titled simply **Prayer**. Yancey quotes Karl Barth's observation that "the most active workers and thinkers and fighters in the divine service in this world have ... been the most active in prayer."

This is exactly what I was drawn into as a young adult, and as with Graham and Ockenga, prayer for me has been an essential lifetime quest.

***Harold Myra has been CEO of Christianity Today International since 1975 and is co-author of CTI's 50th anniversary book, The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham.***

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