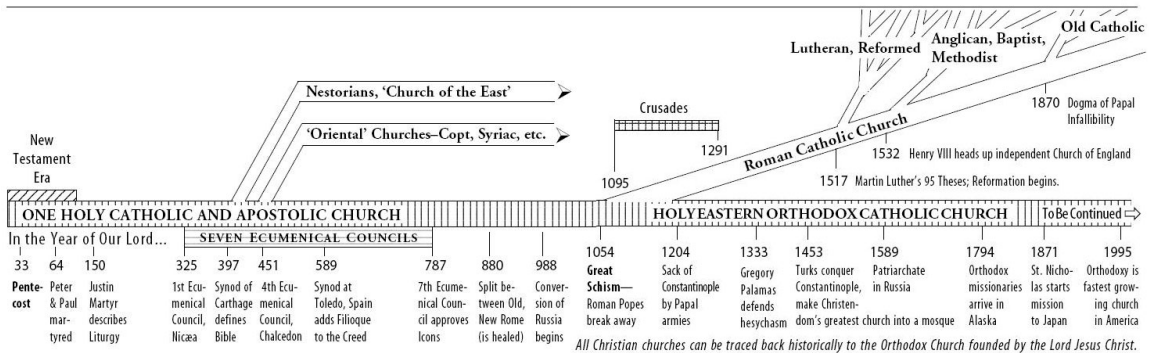


HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

TIMELINE OF CHURCH HISTORY



A black and white photograph of Dallas Willard, an older man with glasses, looking down and resting his chin on his hand. The image is cropped to focus on his head and shoulders.

foreword by
Scot McKnight

THE THEOLOGY OF DALLAS WILLARD

Discovering Protoevangelical Faith

GARY BLACK JR.

CHAPTER ONE

Willardian Theology in Context

TO BEST GRASP THE scope of Willardian theology, its protoevangelical vision, and its corresponding effect on contemporary forms of evangelicalism in America, we must begin by delineating from where Willardian theology has evolved. Interest in Willard's protoevangelical theology arises out of, and responds to, significant shifts occurring within existing forms of American evangelicalism. The variables of these shifts are important to understand in order to track why Willardian theology has become increasingly attractive. It is therefore helpful to highlight at least some of these shifts as described by relevant empirical social scientific research.¹ What appears to be emerging from the data is a growing number of disaffected and disillusioned evangelicals or what have been termed "post" evangelicals.² It is the nature and purpose of the postevangelical protest where Willardian theology appears to be making its most significant impact.

First, we must define what the term "evangelical" means in our contemporary setting, after which we will be better positioned to appreciate the qualifying prefixes "post" and "proto." Secondly, the intellectual historiography of American evangelicalism presented in this chapter defines, contextualizes, and traces the development and evolution of distinct themes within the evangelical movement. Tracking this intellectual lineage better contextualizes the pertinent issues currently active in contemporary settings wherein Willardian theology is understood and applied. To accomplish these two goals a selective and summative review of American evangelicalism frames the historicity of these key themes. Future chapters are then better positioned to more clearly discuss these same doctrinal themes in light of Willard's unique perspective and critique. Together, chapters two through four form a foundational understanding from which current manifestations of evangelical, postevangelical and protoevangelical theology and praxis can be properly

compared and contrasted.

Defining Evangelicalism

Throughout the past two centuries the terms “evangelical” and “evangelicalism” have carried various meanings and connotations. Even today definitions of these terms can span a wide horizon of theological, ecclesiastical, and practical variance. In some contexts the words can be used as synonyms for “conservative,” “revivalist,” “fundamentalist” “born-again” or even “reformed.”³ For others, especially those in Western European contexts, the words can connote “liberal,” “ecumenical,” or “progressive.”⁴ Ironically, depending on the situation and context, “evangelical” can carry in one environment the exact opposite meaning one might expect or intend in another.⁵ In the United States the ideas and images associated with the terms evangelical and evangelicalism are loaded with a plethora of intended, unintended, and hidden meanings or agendas.⁶

Theologically, “evangelicalism” also covers a broad range of dissonant or divergent definitions.⁷ This is exacerbated by denominational affiliations across a wide spectrum of inconsistent beliefs and practices. Evangelical denominations with theologies as varied as the Assemblies of God, Missouri Synod Lutherans, Southern Baptists, Wesleyan and United Methodists, Church of the Nazarenes, Church of Christ, the Presbyterian Church in America, and thousands in between, all consider themselves in some measure or form “evangelical.”⁸ Yet, evangelical Christians can also be found in Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox faiths, and various other sub-groups within mainline Protestant denominations.⁹ Timothy L. Smith likens evangelicalism to a mosaic; while individual “stones” remain unique and distinctly separate, when joined together, each evangelical group becomes part of the same overarching evangelical objective.¹⁰

However, a significant question in this work arises when attempting to determine exactly what the “evangelical objectives”

are. Some theologians suggest the high levels of diversity within evangelicalism, the plurality of its distinctives and the divergence of its groups, have convoluted the term to the point of irrelevance for providing clarity or consensus on evangelical claims, purposes or objectives. Donald Dayton writes,

I try to avoid the use of the word “evangelical” as much as possible. It is, in the words of British analytic philosophy, an “essentially contested concept” in which the basic meaning of the word is so at dispute that it is impossible to use it with precision or without participating in an ideological warfare that empowers one group over another.¹¹

Dayton suggests a moratorium on the word could allow theologians and scholars to better reengage the phenomenon of American Christianity more coherently and precisely. To that end Dayton argues for three very different but irreducible ways of using “evangelical” in contemporary contexts. He recognizes these definitions conflict, which well represents the theological struggle inherent across American evangelical religions.

The first meaning Dayton offers harkens back to a specific Lutheran theological advocacy. Evangelicals in this sense of the word tend to advocate for a Jesus-centered, New Testament/gospel-centric theology and ecclesiology focused on the Reformational *solas*.¹² Hence “evangelicals” in this view tend to position traditional Lutheran Protestantism over and against traditional Catholic or Greek Orthodox theology and ecclesiology.¹³ Secondly, Dayton suggests the definition of evangelicalism can also include the Wesleyan theological view.¹⁴ This position is founded on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century revivalism. As a corrective movement Wesleyans reacted against the forms of nominal or civil forms of Christianity in Europe and sought to establish a more personal “religion of the heart.”¹⁵ The results came in The Great Awakenings and a more robust focus on discipleship or sanctification that was deemed inseparable from salvific faith.¹⁶ Third, Dayton describes the evangelical faction of “neo-evangelicalism” rising from the mid-twentieth-century

reaction to the extremist views of fundamentalism.¹⁷ Led by evangelist Billy Graham, theologian Carl Henry, and others, neo-evangelicalism rejected the separatism advocated by fundamentalists and instead sought a more culturally engaged, socially active role in American society. Although now significantly diverse and segmented in its own right, neo-evangelicalism is perhaps the most widely recognized and comprehensive display of evangelicalism in America today.

Dayton recognizes these differing sects of evangelicalism often conflict radically in terms of theological preferences and priorities. At times these conflicts have risen to the point of creating stark opposition, division, and warring factions. The significant point to be made of Dayton's insights here is that American evangelicalism has carried forward over two centuries of adaptation and mutation. Therefore, contemporary evangelical religion in America currently represents the collective result of multiple streams of theological, cultural, and sociological thought and experience which now coexist simultaneously. Dayton recognizes that each of the definitions he proposes, although carrying severe distinctions and differentiations, also contains dominant similarities that tie each sub-group to a common and distinctive "evangelical" thread. In the end, Dayton draws the picture of a proverbial evangelical family tree with thousands of various branches. Each branch claims some degree of autonomy yet remains dependent on a common root system.

Scholars George Marsden, David Bebbington, and Randall Balmer each help more clearly define and describe these theological roots.

As a historian specifically interested in American evangelical religion, Marsden modifies and deepens Dayton's proposal.¹⁸ Marsden supports the position that evangelicals are groups of Protestant Christians who share a common theological prioritization of the "gospel of Jesus."¹⁹ The focus on the New Testament revelations of the person, mission and purpose of Jesus, above all other religious or Scriptural priorities, is what Marsden suggests has historically remained the preeminent focus for

American evangelicals. Secondly, Marsden argues evangelicalism can be understood to describe a distinctly Protestant ecclesiological movement as well, one that has maintained significant cultural and theological disparity. Nevertheless, Marsden notes evangelicals have retained many mutual traditions, influences, and experiences with other forms of non-Protestant Christianity that allow for evangelicals to participate in a shared and unifying Christian worldview. Third, Marsden senses a more recent generalizing trend that has created what he calls a “trans-denominational” effect within evangelicalism.²⁰ These trans-denominational groups demonstrate more fluid infrastructures than traditional evangelical denominations while remaining formidable enough to create coalitions and common fellowship.²¹ Marsden uses evangelist Billy Graham, and his parachurch organization, as an example of trans-denominationalism. Although Graham is a lifelong member of the Southern Baptist denomination, in his career as an evangelist, Graham’s ecumenism has demonstrated a significant commitment to the broader arena of evangelical theology and practice than the more limited perspectives or advocacies indicative of a single denomination.²²

Bebbington’s Evangelical Distinctives

Marsden’s reflections and typology of evangelicalism become a lens through which to better perceive Bebbington and Balmer’s classifications of evangelicalism. First, Bebbington’s analysis of evangelical theological distinctives has perhaps remained one of the most commonly cited works on the subject.²³ Bebbington identifies four key evangelical distinctives and theological prioritizations. These priorities are defined in the terms conversionism, activism, crucicentrism and biblicism.²⁴ Bebbington’s quadrilateral, first published in 1989, has maintained wide acceptance in both scholarly and popular evangelical circles.²⁵ Likewise, the Bebbington evangelical quadrilateral will serve this work as a standard against which contemporary forms of evangelical and postevangelical theology and practice are

gauged.²⁶ Finally, Bebbington's characterizations of evangelical theological values carry meaningful significance for clarifying Willardian theology, how it is perceived within contemporary evangelical circles, and where it corrects or adapts evangelical ideals and distinctives. Therefore, chapter two will compare and contrast Willard's theological critique and reform against the same four distinctives.

Conversionism

Bebbington suggests the classical or traditional evangelical understanding of Christian conversion refers to the life-changing event whereby a person receives or achieves a confidence (faith) in the deity, sanctity, and salvific capacity of Jesus Christ. Other evangelical theologians describe conversionism as a "new birth" experience that often radically alters a convert's life.²⁷ Frequently, evangelicals conjoin conversion with a moment of existential crisis whereby an individual comes to the awareness of their "lost" condition. This awareness motivates the pursuit of a remedy for their sin through the atoning work of Christ.²⁸ Hence, for the evangelical, families of origin, nationality or ethnicity have nothing to do with Christian identification. One must become a Christian either by a predetermined act of God's grace, a personal choice, or perhaps both acting in concert. One is not born an evangelical Christian. One becomes an evangelical Christian through conversion.

Evangelical conversion also carries eternal and supernatural properties affecting one's destiny in the afterlife. Yet, evangelical Christian conversion also includes the assumption of temporal changes that shift the teleological and ontological paradigm of a convert towards that of a Christian worldview. Evangelical theologians tend to describe conversion in totalizing terms since conversion affects a volitional shift resulting in "actual turning of the sinner in repentance and faith in Christ. Passive conversion is also termed 'regeneration' because it involves the renewal of the sinner's will. Active conversion, or the actual turning of the sinner to Christ, is often termed simply 'conversion.'"²⁹

As noted in the quote above, conversion and salvation are

related in evangelical theology since the converted are considered saved and the saved are believed to have converted.³⁰ Whether by means of predestination or the result of an act of the human will, conversion remains strongly emphasized in the evangelical enterprise.³¹ Gathering conversions became the primary focus of the revivalism of the second Great Awakening and continue to the present as a primary focus of much evangelical missiology around the globe.

Activism

Evangelicalism has also remained historically tied to the proselytizing act of “evangelism.” Both terms come from the root *euangelion*.³² Evangelical theologians interpret this Greek word used in the New Testament as, “that which is proper to an *euangelos*, or messenger of good news.”³³ *Euangelion* is often translated in the New Testament “gospel.”³⁴ In a wider sense the term “evangelical” has been applied since the Protestant Reformation to those churches or individuals placing preeminence on the activities involved in preaching and teaching the properties of the “gospel” specific to salvation.³⁵ The active, purposeful proliferation of this “news” as an inherently “good” opportunity has traditionally remained a primary evangelistic and missionary activity. Evangelicals place the mandate of this activism on the Great Commission, a declaration of Jesus described in Matthew 28:16–20 for his followers to go into the entire world, spreading his teachings and making Christ-following disciples.³⁶

Bebbington suggests evangelical activism represents a key distinctive which separates evangelicalism from other forms of Protestant Christianity.³⁷ Further, the desire to fulfill the Great Commission has remained a significant pillar in evangelical priorities and is a predominate value in the Southern Baptist denominational Faith and Mission Statement as well as the Assemblies of God’s “16 Fundamental Truths.”³⁸ The former represents the largest evangelical denomination in the United

States. The latter is the fastest growing evangelical denomination in the world.³⁹

Biblicism

Bebbington describes evangelical biblicism as the priority placed on the efficacy and reliability of the Bible as the solitary, authoritative source for all theological and ecclesiological formation.⁴⁰ What is key for evangelical biblicism is the holiness of Scripture and its unique representation as the divine revelation of God. Therefore, Scripture plays a supreme, totalizing and absolutist role in evangelical theology and practice. Held as inspired by God's Holy Spirit, evangelicals consider the Bible as containing the normative instructions for all of human endeavors while also establishing divine doctrines for the organization and purposes of the church catholic. Evangelicals often differ significantly regarding particular views of biblical inspiration or among esoteric understanding of inerrancy or infallibility.⁴¹ However, there exists overarching agreement between evangelicals that Scripture, in cooperation with the interpretive guidance provided by the Holy Spirit, carries an authoritative function to direct human life and living. Typically, evangelical debates regarding Scripture surround how and what measurement or degree of authority, inerrancy, infallibility, or accuracy should be applied, not if such a standard is necessary or appropriate.⁴²

Crucicentrism

The final of the four Bebbington distinctives is crucicentrism. Evangelicals contend the first century crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth represents both a historical event and a manifestation of the penultimate act of divine grace, love, and atonement leading to eternal salvation.⁴³ Generally, evangelical theology holds God's overarching mission (*missio Dei*) in human history, and perhaps Jesus' single objective in his earthly ministry, was the triumph of good over evil accomplished through an atoning blood sacrifice and subsequent resurrection.⁴⁴ Additionally, many evangelicals contend the overarching narrative of the Scriptures is a long

foreshadowing or prophetic illustration of the atonement Christ ultimately accomplishes through the crucifixion.⁴⁵ Thus, for evangelicals, the power and credibility of Christianity as a whole hinges upon the metaphysical events leading up to, surrounding and proceeding from Christ's death on the cross.

Additionally, evangelicalism positions personal piety metaphorically in terms of accepting the death of one's carnal, disobedient willfulness through the idea of "picking up of ones cross daily" or becoming "crucified with Christ."⁴⁶ Here the symbol of the cross represents an existential reality of a life dedicated to obedience and submission to Christ's example. Furthermore, the suffering, sacrifice, and ultimate victory of "good" implicit in the resurrection are considered emblematic of the same or similar types of demonstrations of God's sovereignty and love in the personal life of the believer.⁴⁷ Hence, evangelicals place a significant level of representative meaning on the cross that includes, but also transcends, the physical act of Jesus' execution.

Again, Bebbington argues that the way crucicentrism is prioritized in evangelicalism is unique when compared to other forms of Protestant Christianity. Doctrinally, some mainline Protestants, depending upon how literal their interpretation of Scripture, may tend to accentuate the moral or ethical witness of Jesus' teachings or focus on a symbolic meaning to the death and resurrection of Christ.⁴⁸ Therefore, the crucifixion becomes not a literal but a representative, transcendent symbol of a divine type of love humans should attempt to emulate as an ultimate model. Conversely, evangelical doctrine holds to literal, historical, physical, bodily resurrection described in the gospel accounts. They contend this event legitimizes Jesus of Nazareth's teachings and therefore by implication Christian doctrine which proceeds from the same.

Further, the good news evangelicals are tasked to actively spread is objectively centered on the atoning sacrifice Jesus provided. The crucifixion made available God's merciful forgiveness of all sin, effectively rescuing humanity from the consequences and penalty

of their transgressions.⁴⁹ For evangelicals, the crucifixion and resurrection are tangible evidences, not symbolic representations, which prove God's existence, the divinity and authority of Jesus, the necessity of defending biblical authority and the efficacy of Jesus' overarching salvific mission the Scriptures describe.⁵⁰ The four theological distinctives are mutually dependent, each reinforcing of the other.⁵¹ Crucicentrist priority funds conversionism, the activist impetus, and vice versa.

However, Bebbington perhaps fails to recognize or elucidate the impact biblicism tends to make on the entire evangelical enterprise. Traditionally, evangelical theology has positioned the Scriptures as the premier authority over all subsequent doctrinal interpretations and evaluations.⁵² Consequently, the existence of the four evangelical tenets Bebbington describes each stems from an *a priori* assumption regarding the supremacy of Scripture. Consequently, despite whatever diverging interpretations may come from Scripture, evangelicalism has tended to elevate biblicism above the other three distinctives. Sometimes this prioritization has led to claims of a myopic over-prioritization of Scripture and even assertions of "bibliolatry."⁵³ Placing the Bible on such a lofty perch has required evangelicals at times to vehemently defend the Bible against any real or perceived attacks on its authority, since the Bible tends to become the linch pin that stabilizes the entire evangelical vision of Christianity as a whole.⁵⁴

Modern Evangelical Theology

Randall Balmer's more contemporary history of American evangelicalism adds further texture to Bebbington's quadrilateral.⁵⁵ Balmer discusses four imperative, transitional events in American evangelicalism he believes altered or added key doctrinal positions within Bebbington's overarching distinctives. The first transition centers on the soteriological shift between the first and second Great Awakenings. The second key modification is tied to the influence of premillennial/postmillennial eschatology resulting from John Darby's dispensational theology.

Third, Balmer connects the development of sectarian separatism and a fundamentalist subculture with the nineteenth-century rise of theological liberalism and scientific empiricism. Finally, Balmer highlights the attempt to re-acculturate evangelicalism into American socio/political arenas through the affiliations and agendas of the Religious Right. D. M. Oldfield connects the growth of the Religious Right with the popularity and acceptance of the seeker-driven, Church Growth Movement ecclesiology.⁵⁶

Each of these evolutionary events plays a key role in the development of the contexts wherein Willardian theology has emerged and gained increasing attention. Therefore, a brief investigation into each of these adaptations will better illuminate the unique issues, clarifications, or critiques found in both Willardian theology and the protoevangelicalism it advocates.

Soteriology

Balmer begins his analysis with a discussion of the evolving nature of evangelical soteriology. Historically, Balmer points to soteriology as representing perhaps the most essential, divisive, and yet consistently evolving aspect of American evangelicalism. For centuries evangelical theology has attempted to identify more clearly both what one is saved “from,” what one is saved “to,” and the existential or ontological nature of the “saved” condition itself. Balmer argues that each of the evangelical transitional events he investigates revolves around a prioritization of one soteriological ideal or belief over another. Balmer appears to believe that soteriology lies at the heart of what evangelicals deem the entirety of the Christian gospel represents. Further, both Balmer and Bebbington agree that soteriology is a core thread that conjoins evangelical biblicism, conversionism, activism, and crucicentrism inside the evangelical theological tapestry. Therefore, the debate on the nature and essence of salvation involves theological constructs that lie at the quintessential heart of the evangelical gospel message. Perhaps one of the most consistent and penultimate goals of evangelical theology, which is also true of Willardian theology, is to clearly articulate a biblically valid soteriology. Therefore, understanding the historical progression of the evangelical soteriological debates starting in the Great

Awakenings will clarify where the postevangelical protest generates and why Willardian protoevangelicalism is seen to offer an attractive correction and alternative.

Balmer agrees with Bebbington, Marsden, and Martin Marty's assertions that evangelicalism in the United States traces its origin primarily to the forms of Protestantism evident in the first (1730–50) and second (1800–1835)⁵⁷ Great Awakenings.⁵⁸ Centered largely on the revivalist preaching of Jonathan Edwards, Charles Finney, John Wesley and George Whitefield, evangelicalism spread quickly throughout the American colonies.⁵⁹ The “Awakenings” left a permanent soteriological impact on American religion. Edwards and Wesley's evangelical understandings of both the process and effect of Christian salvation significantly altered previous articulations of Protestant theology. These itinerant missionaries presented vast audiences with a Christian gospel emphasizing an increased sense of personal responsibility for individual holiness and the desperate need for a rescuing forgiveness from the consequences of sin.⁶⁰ The crucicentrist focus on the need for forgiveness, provided through the atoning work of Christ, allowed an escape from an eternal destiny in hell.⁶¹

The evangelical emphasis on personal conversion and individual forgiveness increasingly pulled evangelical converts away from prior Christian reliance on sacred rituals, priestly rites and church liturgies significant in more traditional, “higher church” forms of Protestant ecclesiology.⁶² These evangelistic messages were frequently delivered in a flowing rhetorical style to large revival meetings and often evoked impassioned “awakenings” or conversions within their hearers. Revival homiletics fostered intensely personal feelings of spiritual guilt, emotional anxiety and the need for salvific relief. As a result, the “revived” Christian was expected to lead a more introspective, contemplative, morally upstanding life, devoted to developing a Christlike character.

By the start of the second Awakening the progressive advancement of Enlightenment humanism was gaining increased

traction in both Western Europe and the American colonies.⁶³ One effect of this transition was a recognition, acceptance and application of what philosopher Charles Taylor describes as an evolving epistemology.⁶⁴ Taylor describes this paradigmatic change as the introduction and development of the “buffered self.”⁶⁵ Enlightenment humanism, Taylor argues, allowed seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western civilizations to increasingly apply a newfound volitional capacity to act as independent agents, on their own behalf, and from their own resources. This allowed human beings to become progressively aware of their “buffered” personhood, one no longer permeable and controllable by outside “spiritual” forces of good or evil.⁶⁶

Connecting to Taylor’s sense of the “buffered self” Balmer argues that several important soteriological changes occurring during the Awakenings produced long-lasting effects in American evangelical theology. Jonathan Edwards’ soteriology consisted of a fairly straightforward Calvinistic or Reformed view of divine election and predestination.⁶⁷ Balmer suggests Edward’s Calvinism worked well with a more “permeable” or un-buffered and therefore passive, pre-Enlightenment audiences of the First Great Awakening. Calvinists expected a spiritual force (the Holy Spirit in this case) to actively pursue and work to convert the soul.⁶⁸ This left the recipient rather passive in the conversion process.⁶⁹ Consequently, Edward’s preaching did not attempt to persuade non-believers toward a conversional, salvific decision. Rather Edward’s sermons tended to focus on calling pre-existing believers to a more devoted and pious Christian life.⁷⁰

The changing philosophical and epistemological environment of the mid-19th century facilitated the more individualistic and empowering Wesleyan/Arminian theology, which advocated and encouraged the engagement of the personal will in the salvific process.⁷¹ Hence, Wesleyan soteriology aligned with the more democratic humanism already working its way through American socio-political consciousness. As Wesleyan Arminianism gained

ground in the American colonies, and the new sense of empowerment found its way into the soteriology of the Second Awakening, evangelicalism also shifted toward incorporating the “manifest destiny” ideology inside the still pliable American political consciousness.⁷²

It is important to understand this transition. Edwards’ Calvinist soteriology was in stark contrast to that of Wesley. Wesley endeavored to spur non-believing listeners to voluntarily choose God’s gift of repentance.⁷³ He preached that sanctification was the completing, or second act of conversion, evidenced by the display of a disciplined, pious life.⁷⁴ Edwards tended to argue conversion was exclusively an act of predetermined grace on which human will had no effect. Wesley and later Charles Finney also positioned salvation as an act of divine grace, but conjoined the attainment of grace with a specific act or move of human volition. This recognition and proliferation of individual free will carried with it the accompanying potential, and obligation, to persuade or evangelize. Combined with the development of the industrial revolution which sought to attain higher degrees of efficiency and effectiveness, Finney and other evangelists soon comingled their evangelistic call of persuasion with a pragmatism to achieve the greatest numbers of conversions as expeditiously as possible.⁷⁵ To wit, both Finney and Wesley wrote extensive methodological treatises on how to most effectively convince revivalists to make choices they felt were eternally beneficial in light of the evangelical gospel they advocated.⁷⁶

This passive vs. active soteriological conflict produced many substantial consequences. Three are key for our purposes here. First, the Edwards/Wesley debate within evangelicalism became a genesis for two very different characterizations of the personhood or doctrine of God and his relationship to humanity.⁷⁷ Secondly, humanity’s ability, or lack thereof, to respond to God created two different teleological interpretations and responses to Christian life. The combinations of these two points build the third result. Evangelicalism now had two widely endorsed, biblically

supported, yet conflicting “gospel” messages. The introduction of pluralism, and the lack of a single cohesive message, would cause bitter and enduring splits, sectarian denominationalism and centuries of competition for authority and orthodoxy between warring factions inside the evangelical ranks.

However, despite this division, Edwardian Calvinists and Wesleyan Arminians widely concurred on one key evangelical tenet. Both agreed any revival deemed a success should produce the conversion of both lost souls and the transformation of human lives into more obedient disciples pursuing Christlike virtues.⁷⁸ Regardless of the bitter free will/determinist conflict, the first century of American evangelical theology maintained a soteriological position that conjoined the two priorities of soul conversion with an increasingly transformed lifestyle. Justification and sanctification remained of equal value in both the Edwardian/Wesleyan evangelical theologies that proceeded from the Great Awakenings.⁷⁹ Collectively, Edwards and Wesley’s work reveals a prioritization for the converted to progressively demonstrate a noticeable effect resulting from their salvific condition. Both soteriologies conjoined the redemptive state with a life of disciplined obedience to the commands and teachings of Christ.⁸⁰ This pursuit was often termed “holiness.” As we shall later discover, at least soteriologically, the Great Awakenings prioritized the objectives of evangelical theology and praxis in very similar terms to those espoused in the Willardian protoevangelical vision of life in the kingdom of God.

Eschatology

The second transitional event in American evangelicalism to consider is the rise of eschatology and the influence of John Darby’s esoteric, yet influential, dispensation theology.⁸¹ Gaining popularity in evangelical circles roughly in the mid-nineteenth century, millennial eschatology became a key theological and sociological phenomenon.⁸² The conflicts between post-millennial, a-millennial, or pre-millennial dispensationalism still maintain wide influence in contemporary theological

discussions.⁸³ Yet, the power of a- or post-millennial eschatology in the nineteenth century stems widely from its confluence with the pious, “perfectionist” theology that developed inside Wesleyan Methodism after the second Great Awakening.⁸⁴ During this era, Methodism hinted at the potentiality of such widespread personal piety that larger systemic societal ills would progressively be overcome.⁸⁵ The development of “perfectionist” theology, combined with millennial eschatology, fueled a zealous desire for widespread social reform.⁸⁶ Built largely on the Old Testament apocalyptic imagery, prophecy and visions within the writings of Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel, combined with the New Testament writings in Revelation, a new form of socio-religious activism came to the forefront. Following a desire to usher in or assist God’s kingdom influence into broader society, postmillennial and amillennial evangelicals sought to implement a Christian ethic they believed could and should lead to an increasingly Christlike civilization.⁸⁷

Furthermore, many nineteenth-century evangelicals believed the American nation state, and even the world at large, would become evermore positively affected by the acceptance and application of Christian piety.⁸⁸ This societal-focused gospel included all the soteriological, biblicist, conversional, and crucicentrist features previously asserted. Yet, it also added this new, post-conversion, divine edict to participate and contribute to an ever expanding, improving period of socio-religious activism resulting in the eventual unveiling of God’s kingdom ethos until the return of Christ.⁸⁹ Marsden writes this postmillennial vision dominated nineteenth-century evangelicalism and created the view that “America has a special place in God’s plans and will be the center for a great spiritual and moral reform that will lead to the golden age or “millennium” of Christian civilization.”⁹⁰ Thus moral reformation—personally, socially, and politically—was considered a hastening of God’s overarching will and plan.⁹¹

This optimism was eventually crushed by the tragic longevity

and severity of the Civil War (1861–65). The progressive socio-religious vision was replaced by a deep consternation over the inhumanity of warfare and racism. The close proximity and prolonged debauchery of battle no longer supported the belief in an ascendancy of civil righteousness and the triumph of a millennial kingdom ruled by virtue and righteousness. Human decency appeared to be in a free-fall decline within both Christian and non-Christian groups alike. Growing pessimism opened the door for a new theological understanding of divine providence. Once again evangelical theology demonstrated evidence of a continuing plasticity to changing contexts.

In the post-Civil War gloom, John Nelson Darby (1800–1882) offered renewed hope for evangelicals looking to make sense of their disappointing, yet grand social project. Darby's hermeneutical configuration was well suited to the biblicist, conversionist, and activist propensities of nineteenth-century evangelicalism. In short, his dispensationalism argued the Bible should be divided by eras (dispensations).⁹² These eras carried separate and distinct attributes that governed God's action with humanity.⁹³ Each dispensation was understood in terms of divine covenants God made with key patriarchs of Scripture such as Adam, Moses, King David, etc.⁹⁴ And like all contractual agreements, Darby's theology taught each covenant had its unique terms and conditions through which God's personal action was mediated. Hence, the era or "dispensation" for those struggling to make sense of the tragic events of the Civil War was significantly different from previous eras described in Scripture.

Darby's exegesis/eisegesis of Scripture posited the dispensation of the nineteenth century was one of trials and tribulations, in which worldwide evil would grow and spread.⁹⁵ Consequently, Darby prophesied the immediate future would be marked by an increasingly tumultuous climate. Faithful Christians should therefore expect and prepare for the imminent return of Jesus to rescue (rapture) true believers from the trials and destruction of a tribulation period. Darby described this hellish purgation of evil from the world as the pouring out of God's wrath as a judgment on

those “left-behind” during the rapture.⁹⁶ As a result, pre-millennial dogmas formed around the tenet Jesus would return before (pre) the millennial rule to rescue (rapture) the faithful from his divine punishment. After the tribulation, Jesus would return with the faithful and establish his millennial reign in a purged and purified world.⁹⁷

Pre-millennial dispensational eschatology grew and spread largely through the preaching of Dwight L. Moody, (1837–99) and Charles Spurgeon (1834–92).⁹⁸ Now undergirded with the eminence of premillennial rapture eschatology, evangelicals following Moody’s vision of the gospel saw a divine imperative to reach as many unsaved souls as quickly as possible.⁹⁹ As a result, the Moody-esque nineteenth-century revival preaching departed from the more holistic Edwardian/Wesleyan message that articulated a growing spiritual maturity as a result of salvific faith. Instead, evangelists proliferated a confrontational call directed specifically to the non-churched and unsaved.¹⁰⁰ Premillennialism evoked a fear response to the impending delivery of God’s wrath.¹⁰¹ Thus, Moody’s focus was primarily on justification of the unsaved, not sanctification of the believer. His revivals focused almost exclusively on conversion.¹⁰² Combined with Darby’s pre-millennial eschatology, Moody’s soteriology highlighted the urgency of removing sin guilt through a profession of faith in the viability of Christ’s penal substitutionary atonement. Such a profession saved one from both the trials of the tribulation, the world-ending battle of Armageddon, and the fires of eternal damnation.¹⁰³

In light of the demise of humanity and the end of time, matters such as piety and spiritual maturation became increasingly marginalized. By the time of the publishing of the Scofield reference Bible in 1909, premillennial dispensational theology had taken deep root, replacing Methodism’s socially transforming gospel as the embodiment of American evangelical Christianity.¹⁰⁴ Again, this soteriology fit well with the growing

American sense of democracy and populism. The result was another broadening of evangelical prominence in America. The priorities of personal piety, character transformation, development of the intellect, concern for liturgy and the pursuit of sound theology carried forward in the writings and ministries of stalwart evangelicals such as Luther, Calvin, Edwards, Wesley, Whitefield, Edwards, and Finney gradually diminished.¹⁰⁵ Moody and Spurgeon's form of revivalism, which eventually led to the popularity of bombastic evangelists such as Billy Sunday and Aimee Simple McPherson, dramatically changed evangelical theological priorities and values.¹⁰⁶

Consequently, American evangelicalism migrated toward becoming an anti-intellectual, historically un-rooted, populist movement set on evoking emotional religious conversion experiences in large crowds led by famous personalities. This populist version of evangelicalism became increasingly well known through Billy Graham's Crusades and remains prevalent in the plethora of tele-evangelist organizations today.¹⁰⁷ Entering the twentieth century, premillennialism had built an evangelical missional superstructure around a myopic obligation to save as many souls as possible from both a hellish tribulation and hell itself.¹⁰⁸

As will become increasingly clear, Willard's holistic theology of the kingdom of God starkly opposes the effect, if not all the doctrinal eccentricities, of Darby's premillennial dispensationalism. Further, Willard's emphasis of discipleship evangelism contradicts the conversion-focused, soul-saving impetus of Moody/Graham's populist revivalism. However, other contributing factors were also building during the late nineteenth century. The rise of fundamentalism would radically affect evangelical theology and practice over the next century. The long-ranging influence of fundamentalism is the topic to which we now turn.

Fundamentalism and Liberalism

In conjunction with the proliferation of premillennial dispensationalism and revivalism, the third key influence on American evangelical religion is the rise and effect of

fundamentalism.¹⁰⁹ Inspired by Moody's teachings, two wealthy Chicago businessmen compiled and published a collection of twelve books, containing some ninety essays, titled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* in 1910.¹¹⁰ Written by conservative evangelical scholars and pastors, these essays reveal a deep concern over the increasing influence of modern empiricism, specifically evidenced in the new application of German higher criticism of Scriptural texts.¹¹¹ One-third of the essays in the *Fundamentals* dealt specifically with the issues of biblical inspiration. Together they attempted to forge a bulwark defense to protect and preserve Christianity from the perceived encroachment of modernism and its accompanying liberal theology.¹¹²

Chief among the defenses pursued in the *Fundamentals* were a strict belief in the supernatural acts of God and a clear doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible that produced an absolutely inerrant Scriptural text. This inerrancy extended to all genres of Scripture and created a literalist hermeneutical methodology to all the historical, theological, as well as supernatural events described in the Bible.¹¹³ *The Fundamentals* also conveyed strong opposition to any and all deviations from their stated orthodoxy. Infamously stated, "the literal exposition of all the affirmation and attitudes of the Bible and the militant exposure of all non-biblical affirmations and attitudes" were essential in the fundamentalist ethos in order to properly discern orthodoxy in evangelical Christian faith.¹¹⁴ The *Fundamentals* soon became the reliable litmus test for judging acceptable practice of evangelical faith. They also became useful as a defensive playbook in the fight against the encroachment of liberalism. Darby's interpretation of the New Testament book of Revelation argued for a widening refutation of the gospel as a whole in the run-up to the rapture and tribulation.¹¹⁵ Conjoined with premillennial dispensational theology, fundamentalists saw higher literary criticism as a providential sign of the predictable and systemic rise of evil that Darby prophesied would occur

during the end times.

By the beginning of the second decade of the twentieth-century, evangelical fundamentalism had achieved wide-spread popularity in America. Marsden notes that during this period, American evangelicalism and fundamentalism were nearly synonymous. He writes, "There was not a practical distinction between fundamentalist and evangelical: the words were interchangeable."¹¹⁶ Princeton University served as headquarters for fundamentalist theological training where J. Gresham Machen, A. A. Hodge, and B. B. Warfield led sway from 1812–1921.¹¹⁷ Presiding over *The Princeton Review*, Warfield editorialized the benefits and virtues of exclusivist, separatist fundamentalism.¹¹⁸ According to Warfield, anyone who did not accept the specific doctrines depicted in the *Fundamentals* "forfeits the right to be called a Christian. There could be no legitimate position in between."¹¹⁹ His exuberant theological claims became a lasting trademark of the narrow, rigid legalism inherent to fundamentalist Christianity.¹²⁰

When the Scopes Trial opened in 1925, fundamentalist Christianity in America had positioned itself in direct competition to the rise of modern thought.¹²¹ The Scopes Trial is formally known as *The State of Tennessee vs. Scopes*. It is also informally known as the Scopes "Monkey" Trial. The case represents a landmark American legal battle between the State of Tennessee and high school biology teacher, John Scopes. Scopes was accused of violating Tennessee's Butler Act which made it unlawful to teach evolution in public schools. In addition to the Scopes issue, fundamentalists found themselves fighting liberalism on many fronts. What the Scopes trial represented was the coalescing threats from Enlightenment humanism versus the inerrant authority of the Bible. In addition, the troubling propositions in Charles Darwin's theories of evolution raised significant concerns with the fundamentalist beliefs regarding the origins of humanity.¹²²

Although the prosecution, led by fundamentalist William

Jennings Bryan, officially won the Scopes trial due to the popularity of fundamentalism in the south, in the larger court of public opinion, Bryan's brand of anti-science, anti-reason, anti-modern, biblical literalism was broadly lampooned by the newly formed media culture. Newspaper journalists and radio broadcasters painted caricatures of fundamentalists as the stereotypically intolerant, rural, backward, ignorant, over-zealous, and bigoted underbelly of American Christianity. With these broad stroking depictions, increasing numbers of evangelicals became disassociated, alienated, and marginalized from the wider American culture.

Balmer classifies this as the creation of the "evangelical subculture" and the beginnings of a separatism that defined evangelicals for more than forty years.¹²³ Fundamentalism's reaction to the scientific revolution remains a lingering issue in evangelicalism's attempt to conjoin their theology and political policy. Public discourse about the separation between faith and reason, or science and faith, has at times created a widening dualistic gap regarding the appropriate means of attaining knowledge and what kind of education should be provided in public institutions.

In the aftermath of the Scopes trial, large groups of evangelicals faced dwindling public acceptance, a dispensational eschatology that perceived the events of WWI and WWII as poignant signs of the eminent progression of the apocalyptic tribulation and its accompanying persecution, secularization, and ultimate rejection of Christianity.¹²⁴ In response, evangelicals retreated from the public square to begin a four-decade building spree. The result was the development of an autonomous religious infrastructure that fundamentalists hoped would maintain the purity of their doctrinal beliefs.¹²⁵ During the period from roughly 1930 through 1976, evangelicalism developed into a broad-scaled subculture of local churches, national denominations, private schools, Bible colleges, publishing houses, and parachurch groups.¹²⁶ The majority of these organizations remained cloistered from the influences of both secular and mainline

religious institutions of the day.¹²⁷ “Evangelicals burrowed into their own subculture. They socialized almost entirely within that world . . .” and were able to function virtually independently from the larger American culture.¹²⁸ Ironically, forty years later this separatist subculture—first created as a response to the perceived threat of religious liberalism and civil secularism—would produce one of the largest and most powerful conservative political activist organizations in the history of American society.¹²⁹ It is to this highly political brand of evangelicalism where we now turn.

The Religious Right

Theologian Robert Webber reminds us that fundamentalism never left the evangelical tent. Webber, a long time evangelical scholar at Wheaton University from 1968–2000, chronicles his first-hand experience of both neo-evangelicalism and the “younger evangelical” movements of the 1970s–90s.¹³⁰ He argues fundamentalism began to reshape itself during the 1960s when Americans widely reacted to the proliferation of the “peace, love, and dope” sentiments of the counter-culture movement. In concert with the tragedies and protests of the Vietnam war, Supreme Court rulings on prayer in public school, legalization of abortion, and the Watergate scandals, a growing number of Americans rekindled a desire for a more conservative lifestyle. In the wake of these complex social upheavals, Balmer suggests Americans were eager for “a message that cloaked itself in a very simple morality, one that appropriated the language of Christian values.”¹³¹

With the election of evangelical president Jimmy Carter, *Newsweek Magazine* declared 1976 the “Year of the Evangelical.”¹³² Historian Roger Olson suggests fundamentalist leaning political groups represented by Southern Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell, Pentecostal/Charismatic televangelist Pat Robertson, and Focus on the Family psychologist James Dobson fostered a growing audience for their conservative blend of patriotism and Christian virtue.¹³³ Falwell’s Moral Majority and Robertson’s Christian Coalition began to exert tremendous influence in

American culture and politics.¹³⁴ En masse evangelicals came out of their self-imposed hiatus and exerted their considerable influence on national and local political machines. Backed by the infrastructure and financial clout of radio and television media outlets, universities, publications houses, and para-church organizations built during the preceding four decades of seclusion, Falwell, Robertson, and Dobson blanketed the country with conservative evangelical values, sponsored legislation and endorsed evangelical candidates for public office.¹³⁵

Political parties once avoiding evangelical connections began to court evangelical endorsements. As a result, from the 1980s through the present, conservative evangelicals have played substantial roles in each national election cycle.¹³⁶ A considerable amount of research and commentary has given either credit or blame to the “new Christian right”¹³⁷ for their role in the two-term presidency of Ronald Reagan,¹³⁸ the impeachment of Bill Clinton,¹³⁹ and the two-term election of George W. Bush.¹⁴⁰ Although the issues of abortion, prayer in schools, and moral/family values remain key concerns, conservative right-wing evangelicals have also taken on other contemporary issues such as same-sex marriage, the appointments of federal judgeships, Islamic terrorism, and Jewish-Muslim-American relations regarding the state of Israel.¹⁴¹ Additionally, the theo-political connection with Republican fiscal conservatism, trickle-down economic policy and the rising popularity of the “prosperity gospel” created a mutually reinforcing ideological symbiosis between conservative nation-state political ideology and conservative evangelical theology.¹⁴²

However, over the past three decades, the political arena is only one demonstration of the increased willingness and ability of evangelicals to exert tremendous influence on American culture. Beginning in the 1960s and running through the present, a more pragmatic and culturally sensitive brand of evangelical

ecclesiology began to evolve within younger generations of neo-evangelicals. It is to the creation and effect of the more contemporary evangelical movement that we now direct our focus.

Contemporary Evangelical Movements

The past four sections have set the stage to best understand the contemporary context of American evangelicalism. The biblicist, conversionist, activist, and crucicentrist focus of Bebbington's analysis, combined with the historical transitions in Edwardian vs. Wesleyan soteriology, millennial vs. dispensational eschatology, fundamentalism's reaction against liberalism, and the politically powerful and polarizing "Religious Right" movement, are all essential elements still swirling within contemporaneous forms of American evangelical religion. These issues are integral to Willard's theological proposal as well. This section will consider how each of these previous incarnations and adaptations of evangelical faith have combined to create three expressions or movements within evangelicalism today. First, a review of the rise of the neo-evangelicals will describe what has come to be accepted as the most prevalent mainstream form of evangelical doctrine and practice. Secondly, the Church Growth Movement (CGM) reveals yet another pragmatic move in the ongoing contextualization of the evangelical gospel and the goal of fulfilling the Great Commission. Finally, a short discussion will investigate the rise of postevangelicalism evidenced in the Spiritual Formation movement (SFM) and Emerging Church Movement (ECM). Each of these groups carries significant implications on the motive and intent of Willardian theology.

Neo-Evangelicals

Evangelical fundamentalism has maintained a long and illustrious influence on American life.¹⁴³ However, after WWII a new brand of evangelicalism would attempt to break from fundamentalist hegemony. By the mid-point of the twentieth century the first signs of a more moderate evangelical perspective began to emerge.¹⁴⁴ The separatism advocated by fundamentalists created a split with moderates over the issues of

cultural integration in an increasingly secular society. Moderates resisted fundamentalism's overvaluing of the eminence of doctrinal primacy and the desire to remain pure through reclusively resisting the broader culture.¹⁴⁵ Instead, this new breed of moderates, or "neo" evangelicals, attempted to maintain devotion to the core tenets of evangelical orthodoxy while also appropriately engaging the wider culture.¹⁴⁶ Instead of separatism, neo-evangelicals sought increasing degrees of acculturation in an effort to both evangelize their communities and constructively affect the moral and spiritual direction of society at large.

Significant numbers of key evangelicals began to dispute the separatist tendency of the fundamentalist majority. Larry Pettegrew points to a Southern Baptist source from 1956 entitled "*Is Evangelical Theology Changing?*" which lists the key indicators of a "new" or neo-evangelicalism.¹⁴⁷ The article described moderate neo-evangelicals as representing

- Friendly attitudes toward science
- Willingness to re-examine beliefs concerning the work of the Holy Spirit
- More tolerant attitudes toward varying views of eschatology and a shift away from so called "extreme dispensational" theology
- Increased emphasis on scholarship and intellectual pursuits
- A more definite recognition of social responsibility
- Desire to re-open the subjects of biblical hermeneutics and inspiration
- A growing willingness to dialog with liberal theologians

Pettegrew notes fundamentalists were quick to offer a chastening response to the article.¹⁴⁸ The fundamentalists' critique also leveled concerns of an increased reliance on the experiential or transcendent aspect of Christian spirituality instead of maintaining a dependence on the veracity of imminent, concrete biblical doctrines that define salvific faith.¹⁴⁹ Ironically, these

critiques suggest perhaps an unconscious acquiescence to modernity and a scientific, empirical rationalism motivating a doctrinal-centric focus.

Some neo-evangelical theologians such as Jesse Bader argued the neo-evangelical movement was simply a new manifestation of old evangelical pietism and not a foundational shift in evangelicalism at all.¹⁵⁰ Carl Henry, a theologian at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School was a key figure who argued for a studied engagement with broader culture.¹⁵¹ As a result of Henry's exegetical prowess and substantial evangelical credentials, neo-evangelicals found a biblical basis to distance themselves from fundamentalist separatist dogma. Joining Henry were influential pastors and evangelists Harold Ockenga, Charles Fuller, and Billy Graham.¹⁵² Each came to recognize the liability in the public's conjoined fundamentalist/evangelical perception. Such a view greatly limited their ability to evangelize non-believers.¹⁵³ Neo-evangelicals moved to re-shape an evangelical future defined as more positive, non-legalistic, inclusive, evangelizing, and more culturally relevant.

However, as the neo-evangelical splinter evolved, most if not all of the fundamentalist theological positions remained, including premillennialism, literal biblicism, free-will Wesleyanism, and Moody's revivalist activism and soul-winning conversionism. The key difference was the manner by which neo-evangelicals pursued their faith. As Pettigrew's taxonomy described, neo-evangelicals engaged in more open dialogue and intellectual engagement in non-condemning, non-judgmental ways in hopes of portraying a more attractive faith.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, neo-evangelicals increased their participation in popular culture, putting more attention and effort into public relations.

Eventually, Ockenga, Fuller, and Henry joined to form Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. Ockenga led Fuller Seminary as President from 1947 to 1954, and again from 1960 to 1963.¹⁵⁵ His leadership pushed Fuller Seminary to assume, like Princeton half a century prior, a seminal role in developing the

newer, non-fundamentalist, neo-evangelical movement.¹⁵⁶ In 1956, Ockenga and Graham also established the widely successful evangelical periodical *Christianity Today*, which remains the most influential voice of mainstream evangelicalism today.¹⁵⁷

Neo-evangelical participation in secular American culture created disequilibrium in evangelical circles.¹⁵⁸ Fundamentalist groups continued to express discomfort, warning against increasing levels of worldly integration. This apparent dichotomy of being “in the world but not of the world” represents a long-standing debate in evangelical circles.¹⁵⁹ In his PhD dissertation, Farley Butler suggests this separation between evangelicals and fundamentalists is further evidenced in the increasingly tense relationship between the young upstart Graham and his fundamentalist mentors.¹⁶⁰ Butler describes how Graham’s sermons began to propose a version of evangelicalism focused on “matters of the heart” and not the pursuit, profession, and maintenance of fundamentalist doctrinal orthodoxy.¹⁶¹

Even Graham’s popularity did not prevent him from coming under severe scrutiny, and even repudiation, by fundamentalists who condemned his ecumenical work with non-evangelical denominations as heretical.¹⁶² The result of Graham’s decision to remain open to non-evangelical Christians created a clear departure from fundamentalist exclusivism and highlighted differences in neo-evangelical objectives. Marty notes neo-evangelicalism was “devastating to the flank that wanted to keep ties to separatist fundamentalism and liberating to those who promoted Ockenga’s ‘new evangelicalism.’”¹⁶³

Historian Mark Noll suggests neo-evangelicalism was crucial in the progression, development, and popularity of current evangelical expressions.¹⁶⁴ He draws a straight line from Graham/Ockenga/Henry’s neo-evangelical vision to the popularity of modern, contemporary evangelical pastors Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, and Timothy Keller.¹⁶⁵ These contemporary

neo-evangelicals, led by Graham's example, promoted neo-evangelicalism by entering the world and attempting to convert the lost out of secular society and into a more accepting and savvy evangelical subculture.¹⁶⁶

Once called liberals by conservative fundamentalists, neo-evangelical theology now represents the mainstream, theological, ecclesiological, and doctrinal norm from which evangelical orthodoxy is measured.¹⁶⁷ No longer a minority, neo-evangelicals now claim the most prestigious positions in each of the most significant evangelical institutions once held by their fundamentalist forbearers.¹⁶⁸ The exclusive, separatist approach of early twentieth-century fundamentalism is now no longer normative even within conservative evangelical circles. The preponderance of mainstream evangelical institutions, universities, and denominations now employ some semblance of Graham, Henry, Ockenga, and Fuller's theological, ecclesiological, and missiological perspectives.¹⁶⁹

The Baby-Boomer/Church Growth Movement

Quick on the heels of the neo-evangelical transition from fundamentalism came the ever-dynamic "Baby Boomer" phenomenon.¹⁷⁰ Richard Quebedeaux notes the genesis of this Baby-Boomer theological transition in his 1974 work *The Young Evangelicals*. He records the continuing evolution of neo-evangelicalism and reveals the fermentation and coalescing of theology and practice currently representative of mainstream evangelical thought.¹⁷¹ Quebedeaux suggests the "younger" evangelicals of the mid-1960s began to move away from the remnants of fundamental theology that remained inside Graham, Ockenga, and Henry's neo-evangelicalism.¹⁷² While neo-evangelicalism had become increasingly popular and taken firm hold in American culture during this period, younger neo-evangelicals became more interested in political and social policy. Due to the conflicts surrounding the injustices within the Vietnam War, younger evangelicals demonstrated a capacity for prophetic criticism of the state and a greater openness to engaging

both non-evangelicals and non-Christians.¹⁷³ Further, the charismatic forms of evangelicalism gained increasing popularity in both their ecclesiological and theological frameworks. These are the first signs of what would eventually propel the CGM.¹⁷⁴

Organizations such as Calvary Chapel and the Association of Vineyard Churches became significant evangelical movements during this period.¹⁷⁵ John Wimber, the founder of the charismatic Vineyard movement, was also a professor of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary.¹⁷⁶ This period also marked the beginnings of Bill Hybel's and Rick Warren's careers and their introduction to the CGM ideology through Robert Schuler, the first protégé of Fuller Theological Seminary professor and CGM founder Donald McGavran.¹⁷⁷ The two influences of the charismatic and pragmatic would eventually transform neo-evangelicalism into the current manifestation widely recognized in contemporary American society at present.¹⁷⁸

Centered mostly on college campuses and beach communities on the west coast, the "Jesus People" Vineyard/Calvary Church movement of young adults, later called the "Baby-Boomer" generation, became a focal point of a growing number of "adumbrated evangelical hippies of the late 1960s."¹⁷⁹ Comprised largely of students, recent seminary graduates, street people, intellectuals, activists, pastors, evangelists, politicians, and concerned laity, younger evangelicals attempted to form evangelical churches significantly different from, and more aesthetically appealing to, their counter-cultural generation.¹⁸⁰ Quebedeaux discusses a number of intellectual and theological catalysts for the younger evangelicals. Among these influences, he cites the works of C. S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Francis Schaefer.¹⁸¹ The influential works of George Ladd and the broader contribution of other scholars at Fuller Theological Seminary are also noted as significant contributing factors.¹⁸²

Quebedeaux also notes younger evangelicals placed greater weight on discipleship as the necessary effect of a genuine

Christian conversion. The transformational effect of a gospel that spoke to the “whole person” and not simply the conversion of a “soul” rose in importance as well. This inclusive, whole-life conversion traces back to the early ministries of Wesley and Edwards but was also a focus of evangelical Leighton Ford, Billy Graham’s brother-in-law, and the development of organizations such as Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and the Urbana 70 conferences.¹⁸³ Both Quebedeaux and Webber also describe an increased desire for making a substantive impact on societal condition and a deeper, more valid, systemic change in their individual lives.

However, as with their neo-evangelical parents, younger evangelicals resisted doctrinal innovation and maintained Bebbington’s basic evangelical tenets. The Bible retained its core authoritative position as divine revelation.¹⁸⁴ Premillennial dispensationalism also remained. A focus on crucicentrist conversionism was the premier focus of Ladd, Bonheoffer, and Schaefer’s missiological soteriology and ecclesiology. Once again, the theological difference between neo-evangelicals and their evangelical offspring was one of emphasis and application, not content.

As the new aesthetically and culturally “hip” younger evangelical/Jesus People movement grew, McGavran’s publishing of *Understanding Church Growth* provided an ecclesiological platform for the enterprising Baby-Boomer generation to follow.¹⁸⁵ McGavran and C. Peter Wagner’s unique conceptual mix of corporate organization, brand marketing, and missiology encouraged accommodation to local culture as an essential element to successful evangelistic efforts.¹⁸⁶ To capitalize on the key evangelical pursuit of the Great Commission, McGavran and Wagner buoyed pastors and leaders to focus efforts on evangelizing non-believers through first advocating the benefits of church affiliation, then conversion, and eventually church membership. To best accomplish this evangelization McGavran encouraged churches to create religious programs and structures that meet “felt needs” of relatively homogenous culture



groups.¹⁸⁷ To track the quality of church membership, McGavran suggested modern quantitative accounting methods to evaluate and measure specific determiners of church “success.”

Therefore, the CGM methodology gradually emphasized the accumulation, public reporting, and management of key metrics and measurements of congregational accomplishment.¹⁸⁸ These measurements focused on the number of new converts, membership growth, church service attendance, and financial giving.¹⁸⁹ McGavran’s overt focus on quantitative—not qualitative—measurements created an ideological and theological rationalization for developing entertaining, attractional religious programming to compete in what Barry Kosmin calls a religious “free-market” ideology.¹⁹⁰ To both participate and win in this competitive environment, churches applied business model marketing strategies, hoping to attract as many potential purveyors as possible to their evangelical “storefront.”¹⁹¹ The now popular “seeker-sensitive” or “seeker-driven” methodology that spawned the megachurch phenomenon was the culmination of upstart, enterprising Baby-Boomer pastors applying the CGM theology and missiology.¹⁹²

There are four essential principles that define the CGM as applied in the “seeker” church model.¹⁹³ As mentioned earlier, quantitative measurements of determining success play a significant role. Metrics such as worship attendance, increases in cash receipts, and number of new converts are considered significant determiners for discerning if proper contextualization is occurring and to what degree. If “crowds, cash, and converts” are growing, then successful contextualization of the gospel into the culture is believed to have occurred. This represents the second goal of the CGM/Seeker methodology and the overarching objective of the movement. Third, applying the latest, modern consumer marketing techniques and technologies is essential for displaying cultural acumen, creating an entertaining atmosphere, and maintaining brand loyalty in a competitive religious marketplace. The technology and marketing efforts focus directly



on the Sunday morning “worship service.” This typically becomes the calling card or primary focal point of the entire church organization. Each segment of the service, from the sermon, music, drama, video, etc., is carefully choreographed to convey a pleasurable, relevant, user-friendly, and palatable Christian message.¹⁹⁴ Thus, the seeker-driven worship service became significantly centered on the creation of a performance event or spectacle that would equally entertain as it would inform and enlighten.¹⁹⁵ The outcome is an acculturated church experience using popular communication styles, entertainment trends, and beneficial programs to satisfy “felt needs” in an attempt to accomplish an evangelistic priority.¹⁹⁶ Finally, the value of networking with like-minded churches and church leaders allows younger leaders to learn from veterans of the movement and pass on “what is working” in terms of growth strategies for competitive advantage.¹⁹⁷

The seeker-oriented churches were vastly successful at corporately applying McGavran’s ecclesiology and missiology.¹⁹⁸ The goal was to contextualize and implement popular forms of secular culture to first attract, then to convert, attendees to evangelicalism and finally membership to a particular church.¹⁹⁹ In the process megachurch pastors often became minor celebrities in their own right. Following the example set by Robert Schuller at his Crystal Cathedral and its weekly service televised as the *Hour of Power*, megachurch organizations worked with noted business consultants such as Peter Drucker and John Maxwell, professional athletes, famous entertainers, and celebrities to spread and endorse their populist evangelical ethos.²⁰⁰ As such, this era of American evangelicalism tended to present a fashionable, persuasive, and attractive group of cultural icons and leaders across a broad spectrum of American society who gave convincing testimonials and endorsements for the benefits of evangelical brands of faith in their lives and professional careers.²⁰¹

Leith Anderson, a CGM advocate, puts perhaps the best spin on the contrast between the more traditional neo-evangelical and

CGM ecclesiology. He writes, "We cannot view the church as an island isolated from the rest of society. It cannot be isolated. As the culture changes, the church changes."²⁰² Critics such as scholar Os Guinness commenting on the CGM suggest, "Fundamentalism prided itself on being world denying by definition. Today [evangelicalism] has become world affirming in a worldlier and more compromising way than liberalism."²⁰³ In less strident terms, Mark Noll says mainstream CGM evangelicalism is exceedingly "flexible and adaptable" and that evangelicals have become "pervasively shaped by their particular cultures."²⁰⁴ Other scholars and writers label this move not simply enculturation but rather a secularization of evangelicalism itself.²⁰⁵

Despite its critics, the seeker oriented/CGM brand of evangelicalism has become the prevalent stream of evangelicalism in American culture. The mega and "super-mega" church phenomenon continues to spread across the nation often at the expense of smaller, less fiscally robust congregations.²⁰⁶ Timothy Weber interprets the seeker-driven megachurch trend as evidence of the height of evangelicalism's enculturation into the broader American society.²⁰⁷ Driven largely by the works and publications of Hybels and his Willow Creek Association, and Warren's publication of the *Purpose Driven* series of books and study guides, the CGM's seeker model continues to attract the largely suburban, Baby-Boomer audience.²⁰⁸ Expansive building programs have been commonplace during this era. Outside business consultants often assist with professional fundraising strategies, management direction, and leadership development.²⁰⁹ Church campuses tend to resemble modern shopping malls.²¹⁰ Theatrical lighting, smoke machines, laser lights, and large projection video and sound equipment continue to entertain larger and larger crowds. Some congregations have even taken over stadium venues to accommodate larger audiences, convinced increased attendance represents affirmation

and often a degree of divine blessing.²¹¹

For those without the financial wherewithal or desire to build increasingly larger church campuses, many megchurch leaders have chosen to create a satellite or franchise structure. In this model satellite churches are planted using the same branding logos, similar names, marketing materials, even the same Sunday morning sermon. The preacher of the “franchisor” becomes what Bob Smietana calls a “High-Tech Circuit Rider” often delivering live sermons via internet connection or tape-delayed, pre-recorded sermons cast over a large-screen video system. A non-preaching “franchisee,” or multi-site minister, is available to direct all other aspects of the service, leading worship, prayer, etc. According to Smietana, “The idea behind multisite or franchise churches is the same one that’s made chain stores successful – take a system that works, and duplicate it over and over.”²¹²

Thus, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, American evangelicalism had more than recovered from their early twentieth-century malaise. Evangelicalism became a popular, articulate, attractive, well-managed organizational structure that pursues business-like methods and excellence in many of its endeavors. Evangelicals learned well from the American corporate culture how to market, brand, lead, strategize, and mobilize evangelicalism through popular media outlets into both mainstream American society and its political institutions.²¹³

Post-Evangelicalism

However, exactly what determiners are used for defining “success” or “a system that works” were key factors up for debate with many postevangelical groups. In response to the expanding influence of the seeker oriented/CGM methodology, theology and paradigm for defining a “successful” ecclesiology, several groups of evangelicals began to express concerns. Sociologists J. B. Watson and Walter Scalen describe “counter movements” that rose to correct perceived excesses and oversights in the CGM’s ecclesiological syncretism with American individualism and consumer culture.²¹⁴ They suggest these groups are contemporary versions of counter or protest movements of the past and offer five

common yet integral critiques. The first critique centers on the prioritization of individualism and the acquiescence of consumerism in the evangelistic strategies of the CGM. These critiques argue consumerism and competition drive church activities toward the single goal of attracting more and more attendees. One result is to pay less attention on the development and maturation of existing member's faith. This absence of focus on the development of Christian character became a more obvious concern as prominent evangelical leaders were discovered engaging in various sexual, financial, and political improprieties.²¹⁵

Second, as a corollary to the first critique, the soteriology communicated in the CGM ecclesiology often carried a Moody-esque focus. CGM-styled evangelicalism tended to climax at the moment of conversion. Lacking in the seeker/CGM theology was a holistic vision of life after conversion. The concepts of discipleship and "holiness" discussed earlier were not a primary concern beyond the civility required for church membership. This absence left increasing numbers of evangelical church attendees desiring a more holistic, satisfying, and robust Christian experience.²¹⁶ Thirdly, the sheer size of many megachurch organizations is not conducive to the development and maintenance of intimacy in personal relationships.²¹⁷ Communal engagement can be difficult. Increasingly, some megachurch attendees began to sense the loss of a church "family" and desired more meaningful relational interactions. The result was the beginning of the "cell" or "small group" movement.²¹⁸

Fourth, premillennial eschatology provided a strong motive for CGM organizations to evangelize the world. However, the premillennial rapture theory carried significant repercussions. One repercussion was an overarching disinterest in responsible environmental care.²¹⁹ Since premillennial rapture theory holds Christian will be removed from the earth before the Tribulation period while the planet is destroyed and recreated, Christian environmental groups became increasingly concerned about the cavalier approach to pollution, destruction, and over-

consumption of natural resources these eschatological views elicited.²²⁰ A second repercussion of premillennialism was the creation of an insider/outsider mentality within many evangelical groups. The overwhelming popularity of the *Left Behind* novels, an eighteen-book series of biblio-fiction describing the premillennial apocalypse, capitalized on the literalist biblicism advocated by fundamentalists in the early twentieth century.²²¹ The book series drew a number of significant critiques.²²² Perhaps the most troubling aspect of the series was the extremely violent and wrathful portrait of God that was widely accepted and praised by millions of mainstream evangelical readers.

One or more of these four central issues motivated particular counter movements and created what Watson and Scalen describe as “emerging schools of thought much larger than simply a response to the CGM, [which] in some cases have a long history.”²²³ Barna’s research group has also tracked specific reactions within younger generations of evangelicals against the neo-evangelical theological distinctives and the CGM ecclesiology.²²⁴ Watson, Scalen, and Barna’s research suggests these counter-reactionary movements are primarily comprised of disaffected evangelicals and not influenced by outside or non-evangelical agendas. As such, each counter-movement shares a similar evangelical, historical, and theological context. In particular, two of these counter-movements are most pertinent to Willardian theology.²²⁵

Spiritual Formation

The “Spiritual Formation” movement (SFM) is one of the more pronounced counter-CGM/seeker movements.²²⁶ The subject of Christian spiritual formation is a vast, multi-layered, and historically diverse phenomenon within both evangelical and global forms of Christianity. Thus, there is no attempt here to define or localize the movement in general. However, the Renovaré ministry became increasingly popular in evangelical circles through its reemphasizing of the concepts of character formation and “holiness,” once so prevalent in early years of evangelical

faith.²²⁷ Led by philosophers, theologians, and psychologists such as Richard Foster, Larry Crabb, Gary Moon, John Ortberg, and Willard, the SFM centered on the development of Christian character and discipleship.²²⁸ Significant in the SFM message was the professed attempt to focus more exclusively on the gospel Jesus preached—one centered on transformation of the human heart—that enables Christ followers to manifest Godly character in everyday interactions and events. Such a virtuous life was described as one inhabiting the kingdom of God.²²⁹

In time, Renovaré and other spiritual formation/discipleship ministries such as Navigators, joined with the relatively new sub-discipline of Christian Psychology to reintroduce the traditions and practices of Christian formation in the distinctly therapeutic format of mental health.²³⁰ The growing arena of Christian counseling increased interest and attention in the forming and re-forming of human personality and character.²³¹ The use of personal retreats and the spiritual disciplines such as contemplation, silence, solitude, and service were also reintroduced and re-emphasized.²³² To this end, the SFM initiated many evangelicals into the classic devotional and contemplative readings from ancient church fathers such as St. John of the Cross, Brother Lawrence, Augustine, and Thomas Merton.²³³

The ideals and values of the SFM offered a sometimes stark alternative to the individualistic, corporate, and consumerist values of the CGM ethos. Willard, Hull, Foster, Crabb, and others, conveyed warnings against the overt pragmatism inherent to the CGM and its focus on proliferating larger church organizations simply for the sake of attaining numerical growth.²³⁴ They warned congregational size, large budgets, and expansive buildings could become antithetical to what SFM leaders understood as the intent of the biblical message of Jesus, the mission of the kingdom of God, and the historically orthodox purposes of the church. Some of these critiques rose to the level that suggested the SFM's vision of the kingdom of God posed direct

opposition to the CGM's propensity to build a "kingdom of the church."²³⁵

Over time, the SFM's theology of the kingdom of God also became a prominent focus of the Emerging Church Movement (ECM), which Watson and Scalen suggest is the second influential evangelical counter-movement. Early leaders in the ECM wrote of being widely attracted to the ideas of the kingdom of God offered by writers such as Willard, N. T. Wright, George Eldon Ladd, and Eugene Peterson.²³⁶ Thus, we now shift our focus to this genesis and impact of the ECM and its effect on contemporary evangelicalism.

Emerging/Emergent Church Movement

The roots of the ECM are varied but the history is rather clear.²³⁷ Like previous evangelical generations described in this chapter, the ECM arose as Gen X evangelicals attempted to adapt and correct the theology and praxis they inherited.²³⁸ As a protest/counter-movement, Watson and Scalen claim the ECM embodies the most direct and complete critique to the perceived inadequacies of the CGM, the influence of modern philosophical empiricism and its quest for certainty, and the lingering fundamentalism in neo-evangelical theology.²³⁹

Furthermore, when considering the whole of ECM literature, it becomes evident several ECM leaders have not only questioned but also opposed seminal interpretations of each of the previously listed characteristics of Bebbington and Balmer's evangelical distinctives. In

total, the ECM has critiqued, and often resisted, the hegemony of the religious right, the consumerism of the CGM, the fundamentalist anti-intellectualism of premillennial dispensationalist theology, and the effects of modern Enlightenment epistemology in systematic theology prevalent within neo-evangelical institutions, denominations, and universities. The ECM's protest of these aspects of evangelicalism demonstrates an essential desire to recapture an authentic recontextualization of Christian faith within their postmodern

cultural setting.²⁴⁰ These same sentiments are present in Willard's theological pursuit, albeit with a different outcome. Thus, the overall sentimentality, ethos, and objective of the ECM's pursuit found a sympathetic conversational companion in Willard's corpus and therefore become indispensable topics for consideration in this work.

The first seeds of discontentment are articulated in the early works of ECM writers and leaders such as Brian McLaren, Tony Jones, Doug Pagitt, Dieter Zander, Mark Scandrette, Karen Ward, and Todd Hunter. While positing different views and offering varying solutions, each recognized a significant degree of American nationalism, corporate-styled leadership structures, consumer driven ecclesiology, and fundamentalist theology that became synergistically conjoined inside mainstream evangelical theology and practice.²⁴¹ By 1995, a "conversation" between groups of younger (under forty) youth and young adult pastors, formalized into what was first labeled The Young Leader Network. These pastors, coming from mostly mainstream evangelical churches and megachurches, were seeking to find a means of recontextualizing the neo-evangelical gospel to a changing generational dynamic.²⁴²

Early in its evolution, few ECM proponents suggested outright dismissal of evangelicalism. Initially, the ECM focused primarily, but not exclusively, on more stylistic differences or preferences in worship styles, evangelistic endeavors, and leadership structures. Since many early ECM leaders started ministry careers in evangelical churches with CGM type structures, their first instinct was to discover or create new and more effective ways of communicating the fundamental principles of traditional evangelical theology. Therefore, like previous CGM advocates, many ECM leaders believed the Gen X crowd required only another re-contextualizing adjustment in order to re-appropriate the gospel into more culturally relevant terms. However, others in the ECM soon sensed the CGM's pragmatically focused, corporate-styled structure that advocated consumerism, conservatism, and theological fundamentalism had re-created an

insider/outsider culture of separatism and a tendency to celebrate the “profane elements within established evangelical religion.”²⁴³ As such, the differences between the Gen X/emerging culture and the CGM’s Baby-Boomer culture quickly came into more striking relief.

Trying to make sense of this difference, ECM leaders began discussing postmodern philosophy and epistemology. Some argued the postmodern proclivities of Gen X groups caused a rejection of more than the seeker-sensitive, purpose-driven ecclesiology. To many in the ECM, a recontextualization of neo-evangelicalism in total was required in light of the tenets of postmodern epistemology.²⁴⁴ Hence, ECM leaders began to write and discuss the philosophical concepts and potential effects of philosophical postmodernism and how the cultural phenomenon of postmodernity might impact the receptivity of evangelicalism to Gen X groups.²⁴⁵

During the early development of the ECM, leaders like Brian McLaren, Dieter Zander, Mark Scandrette, Todd Hunter, and others were all experiencing similar epiphanies about the difficult conflicts inherent to modern vs. postmodern perspectives on a variety of sociological, ecclesiological, and theological problems mentioned above.²⁴⁶ Scott Bader-Saye describes this period as one when the implications of postmodern philosophy and hermeneutics began to cause some ECM leaders to investigate alternative, essentially non-evangelical theological values and goals.²⁴⁷ Bader-Saye describes the significant amounts of literature, blogs, and websites attributed to the ECM beginning in the mid-1990s, much of which deconstructs and exposes significant flaws in the CGM/neo-evangelical theology and practice.²⁴⁸ One seminal work published during this period came from author and pastor Dave Tomlinson. Tomlinson was the first to discuss the concept of a postevangelical vision for evangelical reform.²⁴⁹ However, Tomlinson was not alone in his conclusions. The works noted below represent a marked interest and angst within a growing, critical segment of younger evangelicals.²⁵⁰

Also, Barna continued to publish research detailing the changing attitudes of the Gen X and Gen Y evangelicals. Sensing that evangelicalism was not prepared for the cultural changes these groups would require, Barna increasingly raised warnings forecasting evangelicalism's inability to attract future generations of believers.²⁵¹

Several writers in the ECM have suggested the key issue, and perhaps one of the most significant hurdles, in both the ECM's adaptation or contextualization of mainstream evangelicalism and the postevangelical reconstruction of an authentic Christian praxis is the conundrum within the rise of postmodernism and its effect on epistemology. Tony Jones has consistently declared the proverbial "it" that funded the overall impetus of the ECM was the philosophical implications of postmodernism.²⁵² Doug Pagitt also recalls, early on in the evolution of the Young Leader Network, discussions and discoveries of postmodernism began to develop an agenda surrounding the subject of epistemology.²⁵³ These discussions soon began to trump all other topics. According to Jones, philosopher John Caputo, one-time student of Jacques Derrida and a professor at Syracuse University, was the first voice within the ECM regarding the issue of postmodern epistemology.²⁵⁴ Gibbs and Bolger also suggest postmodernism came into increasing focus and interest as the ECM deconstruction of evangelicalism progressed.²⁵⁵ McLaren's seminal book, *A New Kind of Christian*, refers continually to the concepts of postmodernism.²⁵⁶ Key scholars and researchers of the ECM often refer back to McLaren's references to postmodernism.²⁵⁷ Certainly, McLaren is not the first to introduce the potential effects of postmodern epistemology on American evangelicalism. Theologians Lesslie Newbigin, D.R. Griffin, Stanley Grenz, and others had previously bracketed the subject.²⁵⁸

By the turn of the millennium the ECM's protest against neo-evangelical theology and praxis was becoming more visceral. Some ECM writers suggested, at points, the institutionalization of neo-evangelicalism threatened to escape the limits of biblical

Christian faith and the traditional purposes of the Church.²⁵⁹ Eventually, some postevangelical writers and leaders began to inch toward advocating a separate and distinct post-evangelical theology and praxis. Still other postevangelicals remained sympathetic to a preponderance of evangelical theological distinctives. Biblical authority, activism, and conversionism remained key measures of Christian orthodoxy. However, with the growing interest in postmodern hermeneutics, gone was the literalist interpretations of Scripture, and a more communal hermeneutic became preferred.

Additionally, postevangelicals no longer expressed the overt desire to evangelize their world with a wrath-filled, pre-millennial, crucicentrist gospel wedded to a penal substitutionary atonement theory. Postevangelicals considered this an anemic soteriology, one perceived as offering only membership in a megachurch and an ambiguous description of life after death. Overall, the CGM gospel was uninspiring, theologically reductionistic, and increasingly anthropomorphic to postevangelicals.²⁶⁰ Such a message was received as impotent in its ability to positively shape the broader culture, while also appearing ineffective in transforming the lives of those within the evangelical congregations applying its practices and beliefs.

As a result, an increasing sense began to grow among many ECM leaders that something foundationally altering would need to occur within modern evangelical forms of faith to accomplish their objective of recontextualizing the gospel into postmodern culture. At this point, a shift occurred in the new ECM leadership. One time ECM leader Mark Driscoll describes a moment when he felt the ECM conversation moved from reformation, recontextualization, and deconstruction of orthodox Christianity into heretical propositions against not only evangelicalism but also Christianity at large.²⁶¹ Driscoll ceremoniously distanced himself from the movement and became a prolific opponent of his former colleagues, going as far as labeling some as heretics and non-Christians.²⁶² In a much less demonstrable way, Todd Hunter describes sensing that the ECM conversations appeared to

him to be suggesting the reconstitution of some liberal theological pursuits reminiscent of the early twentieth century.²⁶³ Thus, for those inside the movement, as well as its outside critics, rumors of “warmed over” liberalism began to hover over the ECM ethos.

The ECM literature, and its extensive “blog-trail,” appears to suggest that some, but not all, of the theological “conversations” within the ECM have broadly evolved. One of these early conversational shifts marked a transition from questioning how to progressively recontextualize existing neo-evangelical theology toward more deconstructive efforts to eradicate the influence of modern, rationalist epistemology in contemporary evangelicalism. Some ECM leaders even reconsidered the efficacy and/or value of such a “modernized” Christian faith.²⁶⁴ In the pursuit of these questions, the ECM tended to employ their more egalitarian, diverse, inclusive and communal hermeneutical methods. Whether these factors actually prove claims of theological “liberalism” in the ECM as a whole depends specifically on how the “liberal” label is defined, by whom, and for what purpose.

Certainly, the postmodern/modern clash created as divisive—and as slippery—a theological slope as that which existed during the turn of the 20th century.²⁶⁵ Yet, there are undeniable differences as well. Unlike previous liberal/fundamentalist clashes, the Bible, the cross, Christian activism, and conversion/transformation remain key components and priorities within both the mainstream evangelical and Emerging/Emergent Church movements. The question is not if these two movements share traditional evangelical distinctives and priorities. The question to pursue is how these two groups manifest their shared theological priorities, and as a consequence, have developed different expectations and results. It is the contemporary representations of these long-standing questions we now must investigate.

Contemporary Context

So far this chapter has reviewed specific instances in American evangelical history that continue to shape and affect

contemporary forms of evangelical theology and praxis. Within the past five years, findings from several independent socio-religious research endeavors point to momentous change within the religious environment of the U.S.²⁶⁶ Tracing trends over several decades, the *General Social Survey* (GSS) and *American Religious Identification Survey* (ARIS) conducted in 2008 and published in 2009, both revealed a decrease in American's identification with Christianity in general and evangelical denominations in particular.²⁶⁷ GSS provides comparative data over four decades, and the 2008 data revealed a rather sudden and dramatic increase in the percentage of respondents with no religion affiliation; from under 7 percent in the 1970s to over 16.5 percent in the 2008. The category of "non-Christians" also moved from under 11 percent of respondents in the 1970s to over 21 percent of respondents during the same period. Further, the GSS shows "Baptists," which includes the largest evangelical denomination in the United States, have seen the most rapid decline over the past decade.²⁶⁸ The 2008 ARIS study also revealed a 10.2 percent drop in Christian identification in the US from 86.2 percent to 76 percent. This was the first major slide recorded since the study began in the mid 1950s. Additionally, identification with Protestantism dropped 9.1 percent from 60.0 percent to 50.9 percent during the same period.²⁶⁹ In total, the GSS and ARIS research revealed significant weakening among American Protestantism in general since their peak in 1990s, with evangelicals as a subgroup representing the steepest decline of all.²⁷⁰

George Barna, an evangelical pollster, also reported a dramatic increase in what he calls the "unchurched" over the past decade. Although performed on a smaller scale to the ARIS and GSS reports, The Barna Group studied a thirteen-year period from 1991–2004 and found a 93 percent increase in American adults who no longer attended a Christian church.²⁷¹ More recently, Barna has discovered that the growing population of young adults and teenagers (ages eighteen to twenty-nine) represents one of the

fastest growing unchurched or “de-churched” demographics.²⁷² Also, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest evangelical denomination in the US, published an internal 2011 report that reinforces the ARIS, GSS, and Barna Group results. The SBC recorded four straight years of declining membership, baptisms, and church attendance.²⁷³ In 2011 the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life presented the results of a survey of church leaders from around the world. Eighty-two percent of evangelical ministers from the United States indicated their movement was losing influence in their communities. This represented a higher percentage loss of ministerial influence than in any other country studied.²⁷⁴ Commenting on these overarching trends, the *USA Today* stated, “The percentage of people who call themselves in some way Christian has dropped more than 11 percent in a generation. The faithful have scattered out of their traditional bases: The ‘Bible Belt’ is less Baptist. The ‘Rust Belt’ is less Catholic. And everywhere more people are exploring spiritual frontiers—or falling off the faith map completely.”²⁷⁵

Prior to the publication of these key studies, little quantifiable evidence existed to suggest anything but the continuation of evangelical Christianity as a growing and sometimes dominating force in American culture.²⁷⁶ However, the summation of these studies suggests that American Christianity in general, and evangelicalism in particular, has entered a state of flux and shows signs of a significant decrease in the hegemony it once held in American culture. The data also suggests increasing numbers of self-identified evangelicals have begun reevaluating and altering previously held opinions regarding the role Christian religion plays in their lives. It is in this theological transition where Willardian theology has grown and offers increasing numbers of evangelicals a new platform from which to engage their desire to reimagine and/or recontextualize their Christian theology and praxis.

Specifically within evangelical circles, these research reports, and the flux they describe, have been met with a wide variety of responses from social commentators, evangelical practitioners,

and scholars alike.²⁷⁷ Popular as well as scholarly publications investigated, chronicled, and editorialized the various issues and challenges American evangelicalism faced theologically, ecclesiologically, politically, and philosophically.²⁷⁸ Evangelical theologians have attempted to suggest cause and effect relationships in order to describe, understand, and perhaps reverse the transitional tide. Such proposals cover a range of explanations and justifications.

However, those with theologically conservative perspectives tended to offer a rather univocal account of the decline of evangelicalism as stemming from the popular rising, widening influence and effects of secularism and postmodern epistemology. The combined effect of these ideological forces is often pointed to as posing a broad-scaled threat to Christian faith in general and, therefore, represents the greatest areas of concern for evangelicals.²⁷⁹ The literature represents a significant collection of conservative authors and scholars offering multiple tangential opinions on this main proposal. Perhaps the most prolific conservatives representing these views are Dr. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Seminary,²⁸⁰ systematic theologian Millard Erickson,²⁸¹ New Testament theologian D. A. Carson,²⁸² and author/pastor John Piper.²⁸³

Furthermore, each of these authors also suggests the surfacing, development, and influence of the ECM represents the most poignant example of the theological, philosophical, and cultural maelstrom threatening the mainstream evangelical theology and praxis. Some evangelical leaders began to consider the ECM phenomenon as either evidence of the reemergence of theological liberalism or the outcome of the unholy union between postmodern constructivism, relativism, and pluralism and the modern rationalism in systematic evangelical theology.²⁸⁴ More outspoken conservative evangelicals went so far as to decry ECM leaders as heretical opponents to the Christian gospel itself.

ECM leaders have attempted to defend themselves against such claims but with mixed results.²⁸⁵ Perhaps their difficulty is

largely due to the fact the movement never anticipated nor intended to engage in vitriolic epistemological or theological battles with conservative institutions and their leaders. Theologically, critics and supporters alike have suggested the ECM's well-intended attempts at fostering an open, conversational environment for theological, pastoral, and ecclesial reflection was more difficult and problematic than initially expected. At times the ECM's inclusiveness and considerations of so many varied opinions and perspectives led to levels of ambiguity that triumphed over the substantive ability to discern a coherent proclamation of Christian theology or praxis. Further compounding this problem, ECM advocates have yet to agree philosophically on an epistemological position that addresses the logocentrism of historic Christianity and the potential conflicts such a position maintains with postmodern hermeneutics, nominalism, and philosophical constructivism.²⁸⁶

Whether it is a fair assessment of the ECM to describe it as either a threat to evangelical orthodoxy or as a manifestation of the effects of postmodern epistemology and secularism is a matter with as much diversity as the ECM leaders themselves.²⁸⁷ However, the data suggests, over the past two decades, increasing numbers of disaffected evangelicals have left mainstream evangelical churches.²⁸⁸ Additionally, many emerging generations of Christians have been drawn to the increasingly popular, non-denominational, postevangelical type churches that specifically avoid the political positions, doctrinal-centric theology, leadership hierarchies, and consumeristic ecclesiology indicative of contemporary evangelical institutionalization. Often termed "Gen X," "postmodern," "recovering," or "postevangelical" Christians, this relatively young constituency (aged eighteen to forty-five) appreciate the more inclusive, ecumenical leanings of the ECM, with its emphasis on equality, social justice, environmentalism, doctrinal humility, mystery, and a priority placed on relational living.²⁸⁹ Dave Tomlinson, perhaps the first to coin the phrase postevangelical, defines postevangelicals as those evangelicals who progressively have found it difficult to

reconcile their experience of evangelicalism with their “personal values, instinctive reactions, and theological reflections.”²⁹⁰ This tension often creates a considerable level of relational conflict and interpersonal angst that spawns a search for relief.

Tomlinson makes clear that “post” evangelical is not to be confused with “ex” or “anti” evangelical. Instead, the “post” prefix should be considered a type of evangelical that “takes as given many of the assumptions of evangelical faith, while at the same time moves beyond its perceived limitations.”²⁹¹ Additionally, Tomlinson suggests postevangelicals tend to relate to their world both culturally and epistemologically from a postmodern perspective. Thus, postmodernism and/or postmodernity is the “cultural environment that influences the way they think about the experience of their faith, and this is the context in which the integrity and credibility of their faith must be tested.”²⁹² The deeply felt connections, heritage, and experiences of the evangelical culture and theology make this transition difficult.

The issue of soteriology has been demonstrated as a historically evolving and contested theological doctrine. Starting with the Calvinist/Arminian debate that progressed into Moody revivalism, Methodist social activism, and finally arriving in the contemporary distinctions and juxtapositions between fundamentalist separatism, the Religious Right, the CGM/seeker movement, and the ECM’s protest of the same, a commonly agreed upon definition of salvation remains an elusive and divisive pillar in the postevangelical enterprise. The presence of a dichotomous soteriological message continues to fragment the movement.

The result is a multitude of competing, oppositional, and polarizing factions struggling to claim the “biblical” authority for what an evangelical convert can and should become as a result of applying an evangelical brand of faith. Past and present examples of evangelical priorities directed toward cross-purposes are plentiful. Pre-millennial fundamentalists choose to abstain from social and political interaction, while the Religious Right strives to overwhelm the American political process. The seeker/CGM ecclesiology attempts to attract the highest quantity of

non-believers as possible to church complexes the size of sports arenas, while the SFM attempts to focus on developing the highest quality of individual character through small communities gathered in living rooms. Evangelicals committed to modernity advocate the benefits of doctrine and find the concepts of certainty, mastery, and predictability inherent to systematic theology to be warmly securing.

Conversely, postmodern evangelicals champion humility in the face of a mysterious, ambiguous, dangerously unpredictable, yet awe-inspiring God. Each of these opposing perspectives finally stems from different expectations, interpretations, and assumptions about the core message Jesus presents in the New Testament gospels. Yet, this lack of consensus on the end product of evangelical faith creates a dearth of confidence that is devastating to young evangelical generations looking for guidance and direction on the same, bedrock evangelical priorities of Scripture, the cross, Christian activism and spiritual transformation while engaging these questions in a post-Christian, post-foundationalist, secular, global, multi-cultural, and cross-cultural society.

The ECM protests have offered significant critiques against secular acculturation by neo-evangelicals in the seeker/CGM ecclesiology, fundamentalist theology, and the Religious Right. Even some neo-evangelicals leaders agree with the insights and constructive criticisms of the excesses of mainstream evangelicalism exposed by the ECM. James Davidson Hunter makes a poignant insight in describing how significant the dichotomy exists between younger and more traditional evangelical visions of Christianity. In describing the stark difference between the two, Hunter questions whether young evangelicals are actually intending to be missional to non-believers or if, in fact, their goal is to re-evangelize traditional evangelicalism itself.²⁹³ The impact of that statement is profound. Postevangelicals have perhaps unwittingly sought the means to evangelize their neo-evangelical progenitors into a gospel void of the traditional trappings of modern epistemology, fundamental theology, literalist bibliology, secular enculturation,

sectarian factions, and grandiose political or social aspirations. In short, postevangelicalism seeks a Christianity deemed worthy of its namesake and funded solely by the same.

It is a significant and troubling irony that postevangelicals sense evangelicalism has evolved into a form of Christendom devoted to esoteric doctrines that no longer well represent the “*euangelion*” Jesus articulated in the New Testament. Joining historians Kyle, Marty, Olson and Marsden, and theologians Grenz, Gibbs, Bolger, Guinness, and Webber, the ECM sensed a troubling paradox of theological and epistemological compromise inside mainstream contemporary evangelicalism.²⁹⁴ Each of these scholars in his or her own way articulates evangelicalism’s steady approach toward a line that separates relevance to, versus absorption into, the surrounding culture. Therefore, this intellectual historical review reveals the lingering volatility, plurality, and plasticity in the American evangelical tradition that now appears to be on a trend of steady decline in the United States.

What is important to grasp from the ECM phenomenon is the level of divisiveness and attention the emergence of the postevangelical ethos created within the largest and most powerful of evangelical institutions in America. This conflict serves to illuminate both the instability, insecurity and tension currently present within evangelical Christianity in America. At the same time the nature and scope of this conflict reveals, in part, why many welcome Willard’s protoevangelical vision as a potential remedy.

It is the nature of this remedy that establishes both the subject and context for the following chapters. Within this volatile and sometimes tumultuous evangelical milieu, Willard’s rather unassuming, practical protoevangelical perspective has emerged and gained increasing influence in postevangelical circles. A closer examination of the pillars that support Willardian theology will consume the rest of our focus.

¹ See pages 47-50.

² This term was perhaps first coined by Dave Tomlinson in his book *The Post Evangelical*.

³ Hankins, *American Evangelicals*, 13, 98, 185.

4. Catherwood, *The Evangelicals*, 98. In recent years media outlets ascribing contentious and even malevolent attributes to the terms “evangelical” and “evangelicalism” have exacerbated this confusion.

5. An example of this can be discerned by comparing and contrasting these definitions of evangelicalism discussed in the works of Lloyd-Jones, *What is an Evangelical?*, Shepherd, *Our Evangelical Faith*, Randall, *Evangelicals Etcetera*, and Stott, *Evangelical Truth*.

6. This is seen most pervasively when considering the political and sexual controversies regarding evangelicals. There is something of a cottage industry devoted to investigating and revealing the worst of evangelical hypocrisy. See *Religulous*, directed by Larry Charles, Lions Gate Entertainment, 2008; *The Trials of Ted Haggard*, directed by Alexandra Pelosi, HBO Entertainment, 2008; and *Lord Save Us from Your Followers*, directed by Dan Merchant, Big Finish Media, 2008. For a broader analysis of the terms evangelical and evangelicalism see Balmer, *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism*, Blumhofer and Carpenter, *Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism*, Brint and Schroedel, *Evangelicals and Democracy in America*; Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*.

7. Seller, *America's Definition*.

8. Seller, *Defining Evangelical in Polling and Research*. This study suggests even evangelicals have trouble self-defining their own faith.

9. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 35–44.

10. Smith, “The Evangelical Kaleidoscope,” 125–40.

11. Dayton, “Are Charismatic-Inclined Pietists,” 40–49.

12. Ibid.

13. Martin Luther’s advent of the five “*solas*” became theological touchstones for the Protestant Reformation. In Latin they are understood as *sola: fide, gracia, scriptura, Christus, and gloria*. That there is more than one “*sola*” is an infamous theological oxymoron. Contemporary theologian Alistair McGrath is an example who advocates for such an understanding. See McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*.

14. Dayton, “Are Charismatic-Inclined Pietists,” 40–49.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 2–5.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid. Marsden suggests members or participants of trans-denominational groups often remain active in non-evangelical churches while remaining committed to an overarching evangelical ethos.

22. Along with Marsden, see Wacker, "Billy Graham's America," 489–511. Butler Jr., "Billy Graham."

23. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*.

24. Ibid., 3.

25. See Hankins, *American Evangelicals*, 1. Haykin et al., *The Advent of Evangelicalism*; Dockery et al., *Southern Baptists, Evangelicals*; Wells, *No Place for Truth*.

26. While Bebbington's analysis has been added to and challenged over the past several decades, the quadrilateral has remained a worthy standard from which to measure compliance or deviation from traditional, historical evangelical distinctives. For agreement with Bebbington see McGrath, *A Passion for Truth*, 22. For additions to Bebbington see Harris, "Beyond Bebbington," 201–18. For a limited critique see Sweetnam, "Defining Dispensationalism," 191–212; Larsen, "Defining and Locating Evangelicalism"; Stewart, *Continuities in Evangelical History*. An excellent summary of Bebbington's distinctives is made by Fahlbusch and Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 216–19.

27. McGrath, *Passion for Truth*, 22. Dayton agrees with Bebbington's prioritization of conversionism and suggests evangelicalism is primarily concerned with "convertive piety." See Dayton, "The Limits of Evangelicalism," 48. Hankins, *American Evangelicals*, 45.

28. Shibley, *Resurgent Evangelicalism*, 21.

29. Greenough et al., *Dogmatic Theology*, 953.

30. There is debate in evangelical circles as to the durability of conversion. This debate traces its roots to the theological conflicts between John Calvin and Jacob Arminius. This discussion remains an issue in evangelicalism into the First and Second Great Awakenings, the significance of which will be discussed later in this chapter regarding the effect it has produced in evangelical theology and practice. Also see Olson, *A–Z of Evangelical Theology*, 430; Thuesen, *Predestination*; Feinberg et al., *Predestination & Free Will*.

31. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, chapter 1.

32. Balz and Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary*, 70.

33. Fahlbusch and Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 446.

34. Ibid.

35. Yet, as we shall see later, the history of evangelicalism reveals a continuously evolving debate regarding a) exactly what the gospel is, b) which qualities of the gospel (good news) are in fact “good,” and c) to what degree such qualities should or must be emphasized within the essence and content of evangelical theology and doctrine. Hence, the evangelical understanding of the gospel as a representation of the Christian metanarrative remains an evolving and changing subject of varied opinion and emphasis over the centuries, this despite more contemporary claims of the gospel’s inviolate, singular and eternally constant nature. This has been a continuing claim from conservative evangelicals regarding the passage in Jude 1:3. Conservatives interpret this to mean the gospel has only one valid or orthodox meaning and interpretation. See Bauckham, *2 Peter and Jude*, 34. Also see Piper, *Jesus: The Only Way to God*.

36. See Klauber and Manetsch, *The Great Commission*.

37. Using a generalization, Bebbington suggests mainline Protestant faiths tend to prioritize the satisfaction of more eminent, physical needs such as hunger, shelter and social justice issues. In contrast, Bebbington notes evangelicals tend to focus on the transcendent, spiritual needs of eternal salvation of the soul. This emphasis dictates an activism of proselytizing the unsaved. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 74.

38. See the Southern Baptist Faith and Message doctrinal statement at <http://www.sbc.net/BFM/bfm2000.asp>. The Assemblies of God 16 Fundamental truths can be accessed at http://www.ag.org/top/beliefs/statement_of_fundamental_truths/sft_full.cfm.

39. Lindner, *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches*.

40. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 12.

41. This is seen during the period called the “Bible Wars” where fundamentalist and liberal factions debated the viability of Scriptural accuracy and authority. See Wright, *The Last Word*; Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*.

42. Malley, *How the Bible Works*.

43. Bartlett, *Cross Purposes*; Driscoll and Breshears, *Death By Love*; Green and Baker, *Recovering the Scandal of the Cross*; MacArthur, *Ashamed of the Gospel*; Piper, *The Future of Justification*.

44. A history of the development of the theology behind the confluence of *missio Dei* with salvation itself is found in Fahlbusch

and Bromiley, *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, 563. As H. H. Rosin has shown, not only did *missio Dei* serve to identify God as the genuine subject of Christian mission, but the phrase became a means to enlarge substantially the horizon of salvation itself. See Rosin, *Missio Dei*.

45. Lewis and Demarest, *Integrative Theology*, 432–45.

46. Stott and McGrath, *The Cross of Christ*, 271.

47. Blackaby, *Experiencing the Cross*.

48. Here Bebbington makes fleeting reference to the Bultmann debates. See Bebbington, 253. Also see Borg and Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*, Davis et al., *The Resurrection*.

49. Again, the nature of the penalty of sin and hell is a matter of some debate in evangelical circles. Recently wading into this quagmire was popular evangelical pastor and writer Rob Bell in his book *Love Wins*. Bell introduced many evangelicals for the first time to long standing theological debates regarding the nature of hell and the afterlife. Bell drew significant condemnation from many conservatives for simply engaging these issues.

50. See Wright, *The Resurrection* and Stott and McGrath, *The Cross of Christ*.

51. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 17–19.

52. This is what Clark and Feinberg track as the reformational edict of *sola scriptura* within contemporary evangelical theology. See Clark and Feinberg, *To Know and Love God*, 221–23; Wells, *No Place for Truth*, 128.

53. George, *Pilgrims on the Sawdust Trail*, 176. Also see Robbins, *Between Faith and Thought*, 135; Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, 195.

54. This will become of increasing importance when discussing the effect of postmodern hermeneutics in more contemporary representations of evangelical faith, specifically the Emerging Church Movement, as well as its effect on Willardian theology as a whole. See Hankins, *American Evangelicals*, 109–32.

55. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*.

56. Oldfield, *Right and the Righteous*, 195.

57. The dates of the second Great Awakening are disputed among historians. The arguments tend to rest on whether one considers the second Awakening as simply the results of the Yale College and Cane Ridge revivals which began in 1801 and ended a few years later. See

Olson, *Arminian Theology*, 27ff. There is also debate as to whether evangelicalism predates the Great Awakenings. Prominent evangelicals John Stott and J. I. Packer argue that evangelicalism is in essence nothing but first century Christianity, recovered by the Reformation reinstated by the Puritans and popularized by the Awakenings. See Hughes and Armstrong, *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, 45; McGrath, *Christianity's Dangerous Idea*, 37–61; Stewart, “Did Evangelicalism Predate the Eighteenth Century,” 152.

58. So pervasive was its growth, Marty calls the period from 1776 through 1877 the century of the “Evangelical Empire.” Marty, Marsden, Olson and Balmer all suggest the early American evangelicals were a mix of what Balmer describes as the three Ps—New England Puritanism, Continental Pietism, and Scottish-Irish Presbyterianism. Some might add a fourth P for Scottish Pragmatism. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 86, and Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 491.

59. Marty, *Righteous Empire*. It is well understood that other key figures contributed to both the First and Second Great Awakenings other than Edwards, Wesley and Finney. However, for the theologically illustrative purposes of this work, a limited perspective on these three figures is sufficient.

60. Kidd, *The Great Awakening*, Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, and Harper, *The Way to Heaven*.

61. This salvific message remains largely unchanged in mainstream evangelical theology today. See Piper, *Jesus: The Only Way to God*, Mohler, *The Disappearance of God*; MacArthur, *Experiencing the Passion of Christ*; Driscoll and Breshears, *Doctrine*; Erickson, *Christian Theology*.

62. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 353; Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 432.

63. Lovelace, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life*, 44–49; Wright, *No Place for Sovereignty*, 17–43.

64. Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 38.

65. Ibid.

66. This is a very abbreviated synopsis of the humanistic progression. Gay, *Age of Enlightenment*; Gergen, *The Saturated Self*; Heelas et al., *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*; Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*; and Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.

67. Balmer, 20. Also see Thuesen, *Predestination*.

68. Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 55–61.
69. Balmer, 21.
70. Helm, “Calvin, A. M. Toplady and the Bebbington Work,” 199–220. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, ch. 17.
71. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 22. Also see Bryant, “Original Sin,” 536–38.
72. Anheier and Hammack, *American Foundations*; Brint and Schroedel, *Evangelicals and Democracy*; Corbett and Hemeyer, *Politics and Religion*; Lippy, *Being Religious*; Noll and Harlow, *Religion and American Politics*; Hunter, *American Evangelicalism*.
73. Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, 12.
74. Finney, *Sanctification*.
75. Wauzzinski, *Between God and Gold*, 120–24.
76. Working off Wesley and Finney’s revivalist agendas B.W. Gorham’s 1854 publication of the *Camp Meeting Manual* provided detailed blueprints on how to most effectively and efficiently conduct a successful revival meeting. See Finke and Stark, *The Churching of America*, 98.
77. This will be developed in Willard’s *essentia dei* theological perspective in chapter three.
78. Tracy, *The Great Awakening*, 422–31.
79. See Calvin, *Golden Booklet*; Edwards and Moore, *Pursuing Holiness*; Finney and Parkhurst, *Principles of Holiness*; Wesley and Weakley, *The Nature of Holiness*.
80. Armstrong, “How John Wesley Changed America.”
81. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 34.
82. Gribben, *Writing the Rapture*, 19–22.
83. The widely popular “Left Behind” series or theo-novels are evidence of Darby’s long legacy. See Isaac, *Left Behind Or Left Befuddled*, and Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*.
84. Kostlevy, *Holiness Manuscripts*, 9–20.
85. Bucke, *The History of American Methodism*, 337–401.
86. White and Hopkins, *The Social Gospel*, 5–15.
87. Most evangelicals advocating for such a social transformation held to an a-millennial or post-millennial eschatology. These theologies held that during, (a-millennialism) or after, (post-millennialism) one thousand years of Christian advocacy, Christ would return and complete what was still yet to be perfected. See

Feinberg, *Millennialism, the Two Major Views*; Baumgartner, *Longing for the End*; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 92.

88. The connection between nationalism and millennialism is discussed by Smith, *Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 16–21.

89. Reichley, *Religion in American Public Life*, 207.

90. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 92–112.

91. Many examples of the benefits of the so-called social gospel are still available. The abolition of slavery, the six day work-week, child-labor laws, the public school system, women's suffrage, and the beginnings of equal rights are all traced to the social activism of evangelical theology in the nineteenth century. See Marty, *Religion and Republic*, 116, and Dorrien, *Social Ethics in the Making*.

92. Prosser, *Dispensationalist Eschatology*.

93. Couch, *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology*.

94. Olson, *The Westminster Handbook*, 112.

95. Newport and Gribben, *Expecting the End*.

96. This is where the title of the best selling “Left Behind” series by La Haye and Jenkins gained its inspiration.

97. There are several descriptions of this theological proposition. Much of it remains key to mainstream contemporary evangelical theology. See Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1212–16. Also Meissner, *Thy Kingdom Come*; Blomberg and Chung, *A Case for Historic Premillennialism*.

98. Influenced by the theology and works of William Carey (1761–1834) and Andrew Fuller (1754–1815), Moody combined his pre-millennial dispensationalism with renewed focus on a fulfilling the Great Commission. Carey and Fuller departed from the traditional English view of evangelism and missions of their day believing instead that, in view of the Great Commission, pastors and churches were given a divine responsibility to call the lost to conversion, not existing believers to a holier life. Terry, “The Great Commission and International Missions: A Historical Look,” 70.

99. Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism*.

100. Ibid.

101. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, and Rice, *We Can Have Revival Now*, 199.

102. Long, *The Revival of 1857–58*, 128.

103. Ibid. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*, 90–93.

104. Marty and Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed*, 170; LaHaye, *Revelation Unveiled*, ch. 34; Rice, *We Can Have Revival Now*, 199.

105. Ibid. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ*.

106. Fox and Kloppenberg, *A Companion to American Thought*, 219–23.

107. Sweet, *Revivalism in America*, 24–25; McClymond, *Embodying the Spirit*, 132.

108. This is an incredibly interesting confluence of factors that come together at a fortuitous period in evangelical history. For an excellent discussion on this see Yong, *In the Days of Caesar*, 316–23.

109. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, ch. 3. In fact, the premillennial rapture theology became one of the fundamentalist evangelical beliefs. Torrey et al., *The Fundamentals*, 400.

110. Ibid.

111. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, xiii.

112. Torrey et al. *The Fundamentals*, 22. And Couch, *The Fundamentals for the Twenty-first Century*, 22.

113. Christian historical theologian Roger Olson notes that most reformed protestant fundamentalists disregarded the fact that their early reformed forefathers did not teach anything like meticulous, perfect Scriptural inerrancy. Inerrancy rose in interest only after liberal theology put the Bible in question. Previously verbal, plenary inspiration and meticulous inerrancy were an unnecessary proposition for Christian orthodoxy. Thus, inerrancy is a fundamentalist reaction, not a traditional doctrine. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology*, 548–608. Also see Rogers and McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*.

114. Dollar, *A History of Fundamentalism*.

115. Ironically, in an apparent acquiescence to modern rationalism, the complexity and chronological classifications within dispensationalism provided a rationalistic means of developing a systematic intellectual foundation that fundamentalists hoped would conserve evangelical theology. Darby, *Notes on the Book of the Revelation*. See also Krapohl and Lippy, *The Evangelicals*, 119–29.

116. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 48.

117. Livingston et al., *Modern Christian Thought*, 315.

118. Ibid.

119. Hutchison, *Religious Pluralism in America*, 146.

120. Boice and Ryken, *The Doctrines of Grace*, 58–61.
121. See Hankins, *American Evangelicals*, 81.
122. These are extremely complicated issues that are very interesting and intricate. They are mentioned in summary here due to their complexity and the space it would require to give full credence to their heft. For a review of these issues see Bowler, *Monkey Trials and Gorilla Sermons*; Cornwell and McGhee, *Philosophers and God*; Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, 327–29.
123. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 43.
124. Kirsch, *A History of the End of the World*.
125. Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 7.
126. Peshkin, *God's Choice*; Nezar and Massoumi, *The Fundamentalist City?* 82.
127. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 5.
128. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 50.
129. Utter and True, *Conservative Christians and Political Participation*; Press, *How the Republicans Stole Christmas*; Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States*.
130. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*, and Webber and Bloesch, *The Orthodox Evangelicals*.
131. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 55.
132. Meacham, "From the Editors Desk," 6.
133. Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 568.
134. Snowball, *Continuity and Change*, and Patterson, *Restless Giant*, 139.
135. Campolo, *Speaking My Mind*, ch. 3.
136. Bromley and Shupe, *New Christian Politics*, 92–97.
137. The term "Religious Right" and "New Christian Right" are interchangeable. Butler, *Born Again*, 4–12.
138. Corbett and Hemeyer, *Politics and Religion*, 369; Djupe and Olson, *Encyclopedia of American Religion and Politics*, 366–71; Haynes, *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics*, 389; Queen et al., *Encyclopedia of American Religious History*, 82–86; Martin, *With God on Our Side*.
139. Berlet and Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America*, 305–22; Utter and Storey, *The Religious Right*.
140. Benson and Heltzel, *Evangelicals and Empire*; Erdmann, *So Help Me God*; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 282.

141. Green et al., *The Christian Right in American Politics*; Campolo, *Red Letter Christians*; Oldfield, *The Right and the Righteous*.

142. Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 61; Wolfe and Katznelson, *Religion and Democracy in the United States*, 34; Gerber, "Behind the Prosperity Gospel," Editorial.

143. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) created in 1942 listed key fundamentalist leaders Bob Jones, Sr., John R. Rice, and Harry Ironside as founding members. Rice, *The Charismatic Movement*, 15–17. As such, much of American evangelicalism has German Protestant roots which eventually transitioned into Lutheran Pietism.

144. Webber presents an excellent study of this history. Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*. Also see Sweet, *The Evangelical Tradition in America and Post-Modern Pilgrims*.

145. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 108.

146. Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 135.

147. Pettegrew, "Evangelicalism, Paradigms, and the Emerging Church," 159–75; Christian Life Magazine Editorial, "Is Evangelical Theology Changing?" 16–19; Olson, *A-Z of Evangelical Theology*, 43; Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 163; Marty, *Modern American Religion, 1941–1960*, 524.

148. Alva J. McLain responded to the article by stating the worst part of new evangelicalism was a focus on "new birth" as opposed to contending for accuracy and orthodoxy in doctrines of faith. He clearly stated a deep fear that new evangelicalism focused significant attention on the "subjective experience" of new birth and not the "objective matters" of faith. He concluded, as a result "real" conversions would soon become impossible. See McLain, "Is Theology Changing in the Conservative Camp?" Additionally, Richard Clearwater, then the first President of the self-described fundamentalist seminary Central Baptist Theological Seminary, directly confronted the flaws of new evangelicalism by suggesting it "depreciated doctrinal differences, neglected outward churchly arrangements, and highlighted human experience." See Clearwater, "The Bible: The Unchanging Evangelical Volume." Many other sources of similar responses are available in the literature. Perhaps the best examples may be Bader, *Evangelism in a Changing America*.

149. There is a significant connection to the increasing influence of

Pentecostalism within evangelicalism in America that appears to coincide with this concern of the experiential noted by fundamentalist theologians above. However, the revivalism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, led by fundamentalist preachers, was clearly not a Pentecostal expression of evangelical faith. It did create many schisms within evangelicalism. Pentecostalism will again rise to the forefront later in the research as the post-evangelical movement spawns the Vineyard Churches through John Wimber. Wimber had a significant influence on the ministry training of Todd Hunter. See McGee, *Miracles, Missions, and American Pentecostalism* and "William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival." Especially helpful was Goff and Wacker, *Portraits of a Generation*.

150. Bader, *Evangelism in a Changing America*.

151. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.

152. Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 180–86.

153. The very term neo-evangelical was an attempt by Ockenga to create distance between evangelicalism from fundamentalism. Smith and Emerson, *American Evangelicalism*, 11.

154. Also see Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 134–37.

155. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* 146n.

156. Marty, *Modern American Religion, 1941–1960*, 445–46.

157. Smith and Emerson, *American Evangelicalism*, 12.

158. Dalhouse, *An Island in the Lake of Fire*, 2.

159. This phrase, although often quoted as if from the Bible, is not actually written as such. It seems to come from a culmination of phrases Jesus makes in a prayer recorded in John 17 or a statement in John 15:19–20. It may also have some connection with the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans in chapter 8, verse 12.

160. Billy Graham notes in his autobiography that Jones, Rice, and McIntire provided a significant degree of influence on the then young evangelist. Both Bob Jones Sr. and Bob Jones Jr. were a part of Graham's first evangelistic crusade through the south, starting in the Carolinas. As a one-time student at Bob Jones University, Graham had significant ties to Jones and the fundamentalism Jones advocated. Graham, *Just as I am*, 34–42, 303–4.

161. Butler, Jr., "*Billy Graham and the End of Evangelical Unity*."

162. This is one of the most compelling and seemingly untold

stories in American evangelical history. Mark Noll, an evangelical scholar and historian, recalled this tension in an article for the fifty-year anniversary edition of *Christianity Today*. Noll noted Graham's crusade in New York city was a key turning point for highlighting key differentiating features and marked a decisive break from the fundamentalist past. Graham's overwhelming popularity allowed him to cooperate with whomever would assist his evangelistic endeavors. This included mainline Protestants and Catholics, many of whom conservative evangelicals considered dangerously liberal. When fundamentalist critics challenged this strategy, Graham stood firm. Graham notes that the divide between him, Jones, McIntire, and Rice was difficult. Graham writes the battle started over "their objections to my growing ecumenism, of course, but the New York Crusade marked their final break with our work. I studied and prayed over their criticism, wanting to accept their indictments if they were right. But I came to the firm conclusion that they were not and that God was leading us in a different direction. Ruth, likewise studied the whole matter; we discussed the issue and prayed over it frequently. Her conclusion was the same as mine. In addition, my study of the major evangelists in history also showed me that the issue was not new; every one of them—from Whitefield and Wesley to Moody and Sunday—had to contend with the similar criticism, both from the right and from the left." See Wacker, "Billy Graham's America," 494. And Graham, *Just as I Am*, 302–3.

163. Marty, *Modern American Religion*, 447.

164. Noll, "Where We Are and How We Got Here."

165. Ibid.

166. Ibid.

167. This is not to suggest there are not both liberals and conservatives now within the neo-evangelicalism. There are such distinctions and they are regularly in conversation. This phenomenon is called the "evangelical tent." See Clark and Feinberg, *To Know and Love God*, 221–23. Sweet, *The Evangelical Tradition in America*, 84. Basden and Dockery, *Southern Baptists & Evangelicals*, 40, 231.

168. Neo-evangelicals are now leading many of the publishing houses, seminaries, magazines, universities, and para-church organizations once held by their fundamentalist forbearers. See Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power*.

169. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*. Also, the media appears

to understand evangelicalism from this perspective as well. See two studies from Seller, *Defining Evangelical in Polling and Research* and *America's Definition*.

170. Baby-Boomers are classically considered the generation born to WWII veterans between 1945 and 1965. See Easum and Miller, *How to Reach Baby Boomers*; Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers*.

171. Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals*.

172. Ibid.

173. Ibid.

174. Wacker, *Heaven Below*, and "Uneasy in Zion: Evangelicals in Postmodern Society," 17–28.

175. Miller, "Routinizing Charisma, 216–39.

176. Sweeney, *The American Evangelical Story*, 151.

177. Hybels and Hybels, *Rediscovering Church*, 69; Einstein, *Brands of Faith*, 61–65.

178. The history and evolution of the CGM is best presented in a paper presented to the American Society of Church Growth on the past and future of the movement. See Stetzer, "The Evolution of Church Growth, Church Health, and the Missional Church."

179. Hunter, "The New Class and the Young Evangelicals," 155–69.

180. They also desired an honest dialog on what appeared to some as an inappropriate level of complicity in the syncretism of conservatism in both evangelical theology with American political policy. Many works catalogue these events and people in addition to Quebedeaux. Gish, *The New Left and Christian Radicalism*; Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*; Marty, *A Nation of Behaviors*; Brown, *The Christian Revolutionary*; Hunter, "The New Class and the Young Evangelicals," 261–67; Webber, *The Younger Evangelicals*; Webber and Bloesch, *The Orthodox Evangelicals*.

181. Quebedeaux, *The Worldly Evangelicals*, 107–9.

182. An excellent review of the significant influence of Fuller Theological Seminary is compiled by Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*. Fuller is at the forefront of the new evangelical movement discussed here. Several EC leaders who teach adjunct classes or seminars at Fuller have welcomed the evolution of evangelical theology wherever it leads.

183. Gibbs and Bolger, *Emerging Churches*, 49.

184. The eventual split between Chuck Smith and John Wimber was largely over how literally one chose to interpret the Bible on the

issue of spiritual gifts. See Poloma, *Main Street Mystics*, 148.

185. McGavran, *How Churches Grow*; McGavran, *Church Growth and Christian Mission*; and McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*.

186. McGavran eventually created the Institute of Church Growth at Fuller Theological Seminary. Towns and McIntosh, *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement*, ch. 1.

187. This proved to be one of McGavran's most controversial suggestions. Yet still, many Church Growth advocates still sense McGavran's pragmatic wisdom in maintaining cultural and even racial segregation in growing churches. See Malphurs, *Planting Growing Churches for the 21st Century*, 320, and McGavran and Wagner, *Understanding Church Growth*, 223.

188. Each subsequent reissuing of McGavran's *Understanding Church Growth* shows a progression of more pragmatic language and the use of increasing "thermometers" of church growth. There are currently three editions, one published in each decade from 1970 to 1990. Also see Towns and McIntosh, *Evaluating the Church Growth Movement*.

189. McGavran called these measurements "facts." See chapter 6 of each edition of *Understanding Church Growth*.

190. Kosmin and Keysar, *Religion in a Free Market*, 11.

191. Ibid.; also Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 2.

192. Wuthnow, *After Heaven*, and Roof's two works, *A Generation of Seekers*, and *Spiritual Marketplace*.

193. Roof, *A Generation of Seekers*; Roof *Spiritual Marketplace*.

194. To draw and not offend the seeker, CGM organizations strive to implant or mimic the larger cultural milieu into their religious services, reducing the contextual conflicts between the non-religious and religious environments. A wonderful description of this is provided by Carlson and Lueken, *Renovation of the Church*. Also Hoover, "The Cross at Willow Creek," 145–60; also Malphurs, *Strategy 2000*, 93.

195. DeWaay, *Redefining Christianity*, 6; Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*.

196. Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 75–80, 251–308; Hybels and Hybels, *Rediscovering Church*.

197. For additional insight into the "Seeker" movement other than Wuthnow and Roof see Stetzer, *Planting New Churches in a Postmodern*

Age.

198. Einstein, *Brands of Faith*, 61–65; Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 29; Gortner, *Transforming Evangelism*, 25.

199. Sargeant, *Seeker Churches*.

200. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services*, and Douglass, *Truth Matters*, 14.

201. Dorrien, *The Remaking of Evangelical Theology*, 171; Kyle, *Evangelicalism*, 272.

202. Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 43.

203. Guinness, “Sounding Out the Ideals of the Church,” 92, 154.

204. Noll, *American Evangelical Christianity*, 14

205. Lee and Sinitiere, *Holy Mavericks*; Guinness, *Dining with the Devil*; White and Yeats, *Franchising McChurch*; Davis, *More than a Purpose*; Ostwalt, *Secular Steeples*; Einstein, *Brands of faith*, 61–65.

206. Loveland and Wheeler, *From Meetinghouse to Megachurch*, 127–80. Definitions of the term “mega” church vary. However, most commonly, a mega church is categorized as regularly drawing more than 2000 in weekly attendance. “Super” megachurches are those with over 10,000 weekly attendees. Approximately fifty churches in America are in the “Super” category. Thumma and Travis, *Beyond Megachurch Myths*, 186. And Thumma and Bird, “Not Who You Think They Are.”

207. Weber, “Fundamentalism Twice Removed,” 428–30.

208. Warren makes it clear how significant the teaching of McGavran was on his early development. See Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 29. Hybels and Warren recognize the influence of megachurch television pastor Robert Schuller as the first “seeker driven” church model. Hybels and Warren studied with Schuller prior to the planting of their churches. Einstein, *Brands of faith*, 62.

209. Elisha, *Moral Ambition*, 50–55; Ammerman, *Pillars of Faith*, 104–8.

210. An interesting investigation into the connections between shopping malls and religion is done by *Malls R Us*, directed by Helene Klodawsky. Also see Gruber and Hungerman, “The Church Versus the Mall,” 831–62.

211. Witham, *Marketplace of the Gods*, 91.

212. Smietana, “High Tech Circuit Riders,” and Jethani, *Discovering a Faith Beyond Consumer Christianity*.