

# Evangelicalism

## and Today's Church

Theological Equipping Class

<https://www.theparkwaychurch.com/tecrecordings/evangelicalism>

Prepared by Patrick J. Griffiths | 2023

Let Us Pray

Our Father, in His high priestly prayer, Our Savior and Advocate prayed for the souls of His children. He prayed for us to be kept in even as we are not a part of this world. This world assaults us daily. The theological creep taking place is ever before us. Even as Jesus prayed, protect us from this hour, but for this hour we have been prepared. Provide for us, Holy Spirit, clarity as to the study. May we set ourselves for the defense of the gospel. May we be attentive to our task. May we not compromise on truth, may we be forever resolute in our stand for truth and against error.

In Jesus name, amen.

### **What Is *THE EVANGEL*?**

- It is a transliteration of euaggelion
- Occurs extensively in the NT
- Means “Good Message | News”
- 1 Cor. 15:1; Gal. 1:6-11; 1 Tim. 1:11; 2 Tim. 2:18

It is from the word “evangel,” we have a group called the “evangelicals.” The meaning of evangelical changes over time. The meaning of “evangel” does not change, but the group called by and claiming to be evangel, does change. You have to consider the specific time period in order to define or explain evangelicalism.

### **To understand Evangelicalism is to understand Theological Liberalism and Fundamentalism.**

The shifting sands of evangelicalism works from the unavoidable premise of “being in the world, but not of the world” (John 17) and then determining where you are on a continuum between four progressing ideas of separation from, engagement with, accommodation of, and conquered by.

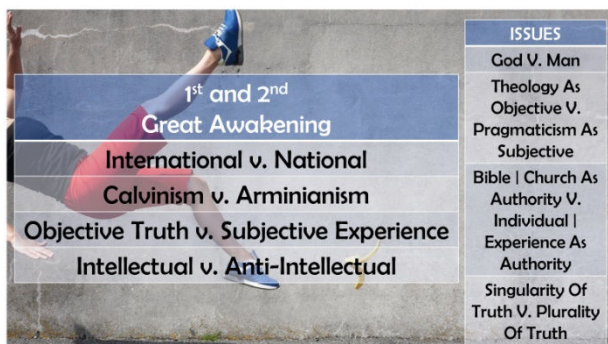
Church history is the story of the slow fracturing of the church. It is not getting more unified, but less unified.

The proverb holds.

If you give them an inch, they will take a foot.

If they get their foot in the door, their entire body will follow. The Arabic proverb, “Once the camel’s nose is in the tent, the entire body will follow.

## THE HISTORY OF EVANGELICALISM



### The Meaning of Evangelical in the Reformation

- Martin Luther
- you were either an Evangelical | or a Catholic

### The Meaning of Evangelical in the 18th-19th Centuries

1807 first time evangelical used as a noun.

- First Great Awakening
- Evangelical | Status Quo - did not assume they were born-again. Only identified as a church goer and “moral.”

Not identifying a protestant as it was during the reformation.

### The Meaning of Evangelical in the 1920's

Many observe how the 1920's was a theological train wreck.

"The challenge of defining evangelical identity remains one of the most important challenges for the movement—and one that entails no small amount of controversy. **This much is clear—there is no way for any responsible evangelical to avoid this challenge.** To do so is to

consign the word to eventual meaninglessness, and to deny evangelicals the right and responsibility to define themselves in theological terms. That is far too high a price to pay."(Al Mohler)

### **BEBBINGTON'S QUADRILATERAL**

- Here is what defines what an evangelical is.

The Evangelical Quadrilateral: Characterizing the British Gospel Movement, by David W. Bebbington. Published 2021.

1. **Biblicism:** a high regard for the Bible as the supreme religious authority. They would argue for authority and inerrancy, but not sufficiency of Scripture.

**For a further study on the abuse of being biblical see What is Biblicism? Why is it dangerous? | Theocast<sup>1</sup>**

2. **Crucicentrism:** a focus on Jesus's crucifixion and its saving effects as the heart of true religion. Trust Jesus.
3. **Conversionism:** a belief that humans need to be converted or born again. The only sacrifice that can atone for my sin.
4. **Activism:** the belief that faith should influence one's public life.

Parkway = An evangelical is more a theological position rather than a political position. It is a theological identification.

- "**An evangelical, at his best, is** a person who believes the good news found in the New Testament, that God has sent his Son to die on the cross and rise from the dead, ascend to glory, seated at the right hand of God, coming at the end of the age to redeem his image-bearers from their sin, their condemnation, pouring upon them his Spirit to justify them, sanctify them, and one day glorify them in perfection. It's all the good news of what God has done, and this demands a response of obedience, repentance, faith." (Don Carson)

- "**An evangelical is a plain**, ordinary Christian. We stand in the mainstream of historic, orthodox, biblical Christianity. So we can recite the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed without crossing our fingers. We believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit. Having said that, there are two particular things we like to emphasize: the concern for authority on the one hand and salvation on the other. For evangelical people, our authority is the God who has spoken supremely in Jesus Christ. And that is equally true of redemption or salvation. God has acted in and through Jesus Christ for the salvation of sinners...[W]hat God has said in Christ and in the biblical witness to Christ, and what God has done in and through Christ, are both, to use the Greek word, hapax – meaning once and for all. There is a finality about God's word in Christ, and there is a finality about God's work in Christ. To imagine that we could add a word to his word, or add a work to his work, is extremely derogatory to the unique glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (John Stott)

John R.W. Stott<sup>2</sup> notes a two-fold questions that define evangelicalism.

- By what authority do we believe what we believe?
  - o **Catholics** emphasize the church, the magisterium and the role of tradition.
  - o **Liberals** emphasize reason, conscience, and experience
  - o **Evangelicals** recognize tradition and reason, but as subordinate authorities to the only supreme authority, Scripture
- How can I, a lost and guilty sinner, stand before a just and holy God?
  - o **Catholics** emphasize the priesthood and the sacraments as necessary to meditate salvation between God and us
  - o **Liberals** emphasize good works, individual and social righteousness, as at least contributing to our salvation
  - o **Evangelicals** affirm ministry, sacraments, and good works, but our focus is on the cross – what God has done in Christ for us

### **WHAT IS THEOLOGICAL LIBERALISM?**

"**Fundamentally** it is the idea of a genuine Christianity not based on external authority. Liberal theology seeks to reinterpret the symbols of Christianity in a way that creates a progressive religious alternative to atheistic rationalism and to theologies based on external authority.

**Specifically**, liberal theology is defined by its openness to the verdicts of modern intellectual inquiry, especially the natural and social sciences; its commitment to the authority of individual reason and experience; its conception of Christianity as an ethical way of life; its favoring of moral concepts of atonement; and its commitment to make Christianity credible and socially relevant to modern people." (Gary Dorrien, Union Seminary)

- So whereas historic orthodox Christianity focused on truth and doctrine, liberal theology tends to focus on morality, feelings, social work, and personal experience.
- It replaces the traditional authority of Christianity (the Bible, creeds, confessions, tradition, etc.) with the enlightenment ideals of human rationality and experience and thus removes all of the supernatural parts of Christianity and retains those things which adhere to modern sensibility, reason, and experience.
- Responses to modernism: neo-orthodoxy and fundamentalism.

Historical Christianity – truth and doctrine  
Liberal theology – feeling and experience

**Rejects the authority of the bible, confessions, and churches. Takes all external authority and invests the individual with that authority. Christianity must adapt or it will die.**

1. Retain the language but reinterpret the concept.
2. Removes all the supernatural parts of Christianity.
3. Rise in Unitarianism [I.e. a whited sepulcher filled with dead man's bones].
4. Rejection of penal substitution. God is not wrathful.
5. Openness to multiple paths.
6. Denial of inerrancy.
7. His righteousness not imputed, but rather emphasis on moralism and works.
8. Growing tendency toward naturalism.

### **Theological Liberalism + Philosophical Naturalism = Modernism**

Neo-Orthodoxy disagreed with Liberal Theological but did not go back to orthodoxy, but redefines the meaning [I.e. Karl Barth | Germany vs. American Fundamentalism].

If the thesis is modernism and the antithesis is fundamentalism, then the synthesis is "new" evangelicalism.

- Fundamentalism fractures
- The birth of evangelicalism
- So, by the middle 20th century, being an evangelical generally meant that you were:
  1. not a theological liberal.
  2. not a Catholic.
  3. not a fundamentalist.

### **DOCTRINE MATTERS**

- Ephesians 4<sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

If the church is not built on orthodoxy, but is led by what you do and how you feel, then it is only a matter of time that the church ceases to be "the church."

Somewhere, someone is drawing a "line"

AND Somewhere, someone is erasing a "line"

BUT we all have a "line"

### **THE NEW EVANGELICALISM OF THE 1950'S TO TODAY**

"It's a fairly banal observation, at this point, to note that the success of Billy Graham and other mid-century evangelicals, like Carl F. H. Henry and Harold Ockenga, came from their ability **to formulate a centrist vision of American Protestantism. To their right stood the fundamentalists and on their left was the mainline denominations.**

**Like the fundamentalists**, evangelicals held to a high view of Scripture – many of the leaders of this centrist, mid-century evangelicalism would be involved in drafting the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy – as well as the centrality of the cross and the necessity of personal repentance.

**Like the mainline**, they valued the life of the mind and were concerned with the social applications of the Gospel. Out of this attempt to balance the perceived poles of American Protestantism came the most successful branch of the movement in 20th century America.”<sup>3</sup>

1970’s to today – the term evangelical becomes loaded with political connotations. Remember, historical, it was primarily theological and not political.

### **Let us consider two of the following three individuals**

- Billy Graham – Evangelism and the Crusades
- Harold J. Ockenga – Fuller Seminary
- Carl F.H. Henry – Christianity Today

### **NEO-EVANGELICALISM and BILLY GRAHAM**

“The fundamentalist movement took shape around two great controversies.

**The first** was a struggle with religious liberalism for control of the old, main-line denominations. **Fundamentalists lost that fight almost everywhere.** As they exited their denominations, they built up a large, independent network of both new denominations (e.g., the IFC and the GARBC) and non-denominational institutions. These institutions included schools, missions, book houses, magazines, papers, evangelistic agencies, inter-church councils, radio ministries, and youth organizations. By the 1940s this fundamentalist network had become a powerful vehicle through which American fundamentalists were working around the world.

**The second great controversy** was a contest with neoevangelicalism for the soul of this fundamentalist network. Cracks in fundamentalist solidarity appeared as early as 1941-42, when the ACCC and the NAE took conflicting positions on **the practice of ecclesiastical separation**. Neoevangelicalism congealed as a party in 1947 with the founding of Fuller Seminary, the launching of *Christianity Today*, and the organization of the Conservative Baptist Association. The real contest, however, began in about 1956 with the buildup to evangelist Billy Graham’s New York City crusade. The debate was over Graham’s use of non-Christians (as the fundamentalists saw it) in leadership positions during his crusades. By adopting this policy of “**cooperative evangelism**,” Graham made himself the *de facto* captain of the neoevangelical cause.”<sup>4</sup>

“Like the 19th-century revivalist **Charles Finney**, Graham demonstrated a knack for publicity and organization. In 1950, he established the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, which helped disseminate his message across an array of venues: television specials, the weekly radio program *Hour of Decision*, *Decision* magazine and a weekly newspaper column. In 1956, he founded the influential conservative magazine *Christianity Today*. Over the years, Graham befriended a series of presidents, both Republican and Democrat, and is credited by George W. Bush with leading him to “make a decision for Christ.” Graham transformed evangelism in

America and opened the door for the re-entry of conservative Christians like Jerry Falwell into the political arena.”<sup>5</sup>

### **NEO-EVANGELICALISM and HAROLD J. OCKENGA**

**The father of neo-evangelicalism and inventor of the term itself**, is said to be Harold John Ockenga, pastor of Park Street Congregational Church, Park and Tremont Sts., Boston. He tells us that **the strategy of neo-evangelicalism differs from that of Fundamentalism, which is that of separation, in that it adopts the tactic of infiltration**. This is the tactic of permeation, the aim being to capture from within.

Neo-evangelicalism does not, as Fundamentalism, make an “attack upon error”, but rather proclaims “the great historic doctrines of Christianity”. The implication is that Fundamentalism is largely negative, while neo-evangelicalism is more positive.

Says Ockenga, “The New Evangelical is willing to face the intellectual problems and meet them in the framework of modern learning.”

Specific issues on which the new evangelicalism differed from fundamentalism included

- (1) the proclamation of a “gospel” which was social as well as spiritual;
- (2) rejection of the traditional dispensational approach which stressed the spiritual and evangelistic aspects of the Great Commission as the defining duty of believers in this age;
- (3) a dismissal of the fundamentalist concept of separating from unbelievers and disobedient brethren in religious cooperative endeavors, and an emphasis on infiltration into the major denominations and cooperative ecumenical evangelism;
- (4) an enchantment with contemporary “scholarship,” which desires respectability from the unsaved academic community;
- (5) a toning down of differences between contemporary leaders in science and the Bible’s teaching regarding creation and the universal flood at the time of Noah, resulting in a toleration of evolutionary views of the earth’s creation;
- (6) rejection of fundamentalist emphases on lifestyle standards and personal holiness, resulting in a “liberating” attitude toward (or caving in to) the world’s attitude toward contemporary cultural issues;
- (7) an embarrassment with the concept of biblical inerrancy and the toleration of higher criticism;
- (8) the development of a neutral or positive attitude toward charismatic experience as noted in their broad acceptance and tolerance of the Charismatic Movement.

### **IS EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY CHANGING?**

Eight Dangerous Trends Announced in *Christian Life Magazine*. The following is taken from a very significant article published in the *Christian Life Magazine* (March 1956) entitled, “Is Evangelical Theology Changing?” The eight points in this article proved to be an accurate prediction of what soon was to be known as the “new evangelicalism” (sometimes called “neo-evangelicalism”). Here are the characteristics of this “new movement” as quoted directly from the article:

1. A Friendly Attitude Toward Science.
2. A Willingness to Re-examine Beliefs Concerning the Work of the Holy Spirit (especially in relationship to holiness experiences, a second blessing sometime *after* conversion, speaking in tongues, and healing).
3. A More Tolerant Attitude Toward Varying Views on Eschatology (a questioning of the premillennial and pretribulational position).
4. A Shift Away from So-Called Extreme Dispensationalism. "The trend today is away from dispensationalism--away from the Scofield Notes...in fact, many...rarely use the word dispensation now."
5. An Increased Emphasis on Scholarship.
6. A More Definite Recognition of Social Responsibility.
7. A Re-Opening of the Subject of Biblical Inspiration.
8. A growing willingness of Evangelical Theologians to converse with Liberal Theologians.

It sounds like “new” evangelicalism follows the same concerns and compromises of theological liberalism.

### **CHALLENGES FACING EVANGELICALISM**

#### **1. Political connotations: pros and cons**

The platform of one party holds more to evangelical worldview.

The con, not as critical of the right.

#### **2. Cultural derision**

Leaves a bad taste in one’s mouth. Tend to hold moral positions that our culture hates (i.e. abortion, non-binary, same sex marriage, etc.).

#### **3. Secular assumptions**

Operates on a secular assumption. Evangelicalism has adopted theories of modernism.

For example; church growth, modern ideal of pragmatism. Stressing morality and personal experience.

#### **4. Theological vacuity [emptiness]**

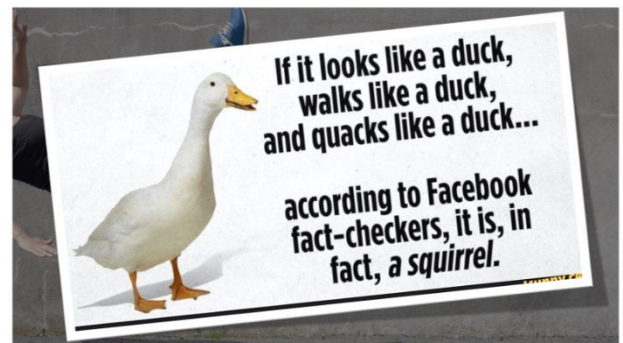
Christian books historical were meaty; today, very light and novella – self-help; moralist therapeutic deism. Today’s theology melts in your mouth. No need to chew.

#### **5. Anti-intellectualism**

Mark Knoll – open sentence. There is not much of an evangelical mind. Lack of theological precision as a virtue. People are proud to be squishy.

#### **6. Ambiguous borders**

Make the tent or office building as large as possible. People of varying positions can “rent” office space.





## KEY TAKEAWAYS - CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

- Theological wars v. cultural wars. Early rift in fundamentalism; the same between fundamentalism and “new” evangelicalism. As it relates to theological orthodoxy, how elastic or wide is our core? As it relates to our culture, what is or is not moral? Fundamentalism becomes more *separated from culture*, whereas evangelicalism *moves more into culture*.
- Very seldom can an engaged church stay a pure church. Something somewhere shall be compromised. It is only a matter of time. But is isolation and retreat from culture the answer? How can we sit with “publicans and sinners” and remain theologically and morally pure? Jesus did, thus can we.
- Today’s church / Christianity is decentralized. The para-church ministry has overtaken the role of the local church in the life of many believers. It has become primary in attention, affection, and devotion, but artificial in the development of maturity. Para-church ministries are mostly non-confessional and Arminian. Para-church ministries do not drive the consumer into the local church and under elder oversight. Para-church ministries bend toward social gospel rather than theological orthodoxy.
- Orthodoxy must lead orthopraxy. If orthopraxy leads orthodoxy, you end up with heterodoxy.
- The Renaissance paved the way for the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The Renaissance did two things. It pushed for learning and against church authority. Erasmus worked within the church, pushing for learning. Luther worked outside the church, both pushed against church authority. Erasmus stayed in the church; Luther “left” the church.
- An assumed gospel is a distorted gospel that produces a different gospel that is no gospel at all.
- No theological debate operates in a historical vacuum. Most are responses to their circumstances, culture, environment.
- Early fundamentalism rallied around the five fundamentals in their push against the assault by modernism. They kept the faith, but lost the furniture. Then, fundamentalism crossed denominational lines. Today, organizations like TFG and TGC, cross denominational lines, but still maintain a Calvinistic theology around the fundamentals.

“Often five doctrines are described as the fundamentals of the faith: (1) inerrancy, (2) the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, (3) the substitutionary atonement, (4) the bodily resurrection of Christ, and (5) the authenticity of miracles. Later, the authenticity of miracles was often combined with another doctrine and the Second Coming of Christ was listed as number five.”<sup>6</sup>

- In the fight against modernism, a leading proponent for “orthodoxy” was Karl Barth in Europe. Fundamentalism is a USA anomaly.
- If you do not lead with and maintain a vigorous orthodoxy, or lead with orthopraxy only giving orthodoxy second fiddle, it is only a matter of time before the gospel and theological orthodoxy is abandoned.

- Is there only one way to God through Jesus or are there many ways. As long as one is 'spiritual' or 'religious' they can still go to heaven regardless of whether or not it is through Jesus. What does matter is the object of one's faith. There is only one way to the Father (John 14:6).
- Coming out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Great Awakening was an unnatural emphasis on "good works." This led to an overemphasis, that ultimately eclipsed the gospel. Theological liberalism found a common ally in the social good that birthed the social gospel.
- The fundamentalism of the 1950's separated from "erring" Christians who were opening up discussions with unbelievers around the five fundamentals.
- The fundamentalists who wanted to engage the culture, became the "new" evangelical.
- The separation of the fundamentalist, led to isolation, and non-engagement with the 'world.' This led to what was called "secondary separation."
- The engagement of 'new' evangelicalism led to accommodation, adaptation, toleration, ending in co-existing with theological heresy.
- The autonomy of man in the interpretation of Scripture becomes a blight on the church. "I have the right to read the Bible for myself and come to my own conclusions. The church and confessions be 'damned.'"
- That mindset is the BIBLE CHURCH movement. The Bible Church movement is part of the same post-modern thought soil, "No creed but Christ, no book but the Bible."
- Free-will or human autonomy is the soil for all kinds of theological mish-mash [I.e. A low view of God. Open theism. Deism, etc.]
- The enlightenment is philosophical. Elevates human reason and rejects the supernatural.

### **FRANCIS SCHAEFFER and THE GREAT EVANGELICAL DISASTER**

The evangelical world has been celebrating the 50th anniversary of the beginning of L'Abri in Switzerland by Francis Schaeffer. At his prime, in 1984, he wrote a book called *The Great Evangelical Disaster: 1934-1984* (Published by Crossway Books) in which he traced out the downgrade in evangelicalism in the fifty years preceding 1984. How similar to Dr Lloyd-Jones were his convictions. These are some of the things Schaeffer said in what was one of his most important books.<sup>7</sup> [all page numbers within the book are noted at the end of each quote]

**"Make no mistake. We as Bible-believing evangelical Christians are locked in a battle. This is not a friendly gentleman's discussion. It is a life and death conflict between the spiritual hosts of wickedness and those who claim the name of Christ. It is a conflict on the level of ideas between two fundamentally opposed views of truth and reality. It is a conflict on the level of actions between a complete moral perversion and chaos and God's absolutes. But do we really believe that we are in a life and death battle?" (31, 32).**

"Do you understand now what the battle is about in the area of culture and ideas? In the last sixty years the consensus upon which our culture was built has shifted from one that was largely Christian (though we must say immediately it was far from perfect) to a consensus growing out of the Enlightenment: that is, to a consensus that stands in total anithesis to Christian truth at every point- including the denial of the supernatural; belief in the all-

sufficiency of human reason; the rejection of the fall; denial of the deity of Christ and his resurrection; belief in the perfectibility of Man; and the destruction of the Bible. And with this has come a nearly total moral breakdown. There is no way to make a synthesis of these ideas and Christian truth. They stand in total antithesis," (35,36).

**"Here is the great evangelical disaster – the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth. There is only one word for this – namely accommodation: the evangelical church has accommodated to the world spirit of the age. First, there has been accommodation on Scripture, so that many who call themselves evangelicals hold a weakened view of the Bible and no longer affirm the truth of all the Bible teaches – truth not only in religious matters but in the areas of science and history and morality. As part of this, many evangelicals are now accepting the higher critical methods in the study of the Bible. Remember, it was these same methods which destroyed the authority of the Bible for the Protestant church in Germany in the last century, and which have destroyed the Bible for the liberal in our own country from the beginning of this century. And second, there has been accommodation on the issues, with no clear stand being taken even on matters of life and death" (37).**

"Within evangelicalism there is a growing number who are modifying their views on the inerrancy of the Bible so that the full authority of Scripture is completely undercut" (44).

"Unless the Bible is without error, not only when it speaks of salvation matters, but also when it speaks of history and the cosmos, we have no foundation for answering questions concerning the existence of the universe and its form and the uniqueness of man. Nor do we have any moral absolutes, or certainty of salvation, and the next generation of Christians will have nothing on which to stand" (46).

#### WARNING – BUYER BEWARE

Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

"Mr. Gallup once opined, "There has never been a time in American history when the church has made so many inroads, while at the same time, made so little difference." Perhaps that's because the church is more interested in being invited to the table of secular opinion and receiving a nod of polite appreciation, than it is in telling the truth. Instead of taking advantage of open doors and opportune times, the church has softened its message and, in the words of Tozer, has begun to offer suggestions rather than ultimatums."<sup>8</sup>

How do we guard ourselves and this church against the shift?

Be Resolute | Hold the Line - THE REFORMATION

Rather than asking, "How can we be relevant?" We should be asking, "How can we be right?"

Do we understand the Storyline of Scripture and how does this show forth in me and through me to those around me?

## LET US PRAY

Thank you, father, for this time. May it have been informative as well as filling us with gratitude.

In Jesus name, amen.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dd-b7t1Ht8A>

<sup>2</sup> For a simplistic look at Stott see <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-john-stott/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://mereorthodoxy.com/evangelical-center-after-billy-graham/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://centralseminary.edu/the-fundamentalists-and-billy-graham/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/godinamerica/people/billy-graham.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://shepherds.edu/a-brief-history-of-fundamentalism/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://banneroftruth.org/us/resources/articles/2005/the-great-evangelical-disaster/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://shepherds.edu/president/> President Steven Davey.

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## **FOR FURTHER READING**

"In the late 1940s there was a move by some leaders within conservative Protestantism toward a new kind of evangelicalism. It expressed dissatisfaction with fundamentalism (note Carl Henry's book, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*, published in 1947, as well as Harold Ockenga's inaugural address at the founding of Fuller Seminary that same year). Its new evangelicalism differed from the older fundamentalism in several ways. As their movement developed, some of these differences surfaced immediately and others more gradually. The overall difference could be noted as a change from recognizing the essential importance of doctrinal conviction and practice with a call to defend the truth, to a less precise view of doctrine, with an emphasis upon personal relationships, and a softened attitude toward (or capitulation to) the world's way of thinking and doing. It's not that historic orthodox doctrine was generally denied initially. Rather, a more relaxed attitude developed which tolerated doctrinal and positional variations. Thus, Bernard Ramm could write an editorial in *Eternity* magazine about "Green Grass Evangelicals" – "the new breed of evangelical theology but not committed to the older bromides of previous generations."<sup>1</sup>

And another example of this early toleration is noted in *Christianity Today* magazine, in a news article on ten evangelical Christians who spent a weekend of dialogue with Moonies at the Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York. The article states that when they met for their final session, "Convener [Richard] Quebedeaux, in an emotionally charged speech, admitted that he had not been enthusiastic about his first encounter with the U. C. seminary students last March. But, said he, two visits to the seminary had changed his mind. 'I've never seen a place where agape has worked out so well,' he said. 'Theologically, doctrinally, I think you're wrong. Emotionally, I think you're right . . . You may be heretics – I'll let God decide that. But I love you, and I believe the world is a better place because of you.'" A Moonie responded similarly, expressing respect and love for the evangelical participants. The gathering concluded with a period of spontaneous prayer led by Moonies and evangelicals alike. "One evangelical seemed to sum up the sentiments of a number of his colleagues as he offered a farewell comment; 'I'm going back and telling everyone I found real Christian fellowship in Barrytown.'"<sup>4</sup>

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"Green-grass evangelicals are not interested in doctrinal questions like 'eternal security.' To them such issues are too academic . . . The real business of Christianity is living the Christian life . . . . [They] are not much interested in prophecy or the millennium or details about the tribulation. That is all future. It will be fulfilled as it will be fulfilled. So why so much concern about settling details about something that hasn't happened yet? Furthermore, so much can be done now for Christ it is a pity to waste time, energy and print over something yet to happen! . . . [They] believe that debates over Scripture (infallibility, inerrancy) pay no great dividends. They are more experience-centered."<sup>3</sup>

Today, as we are now in the twenty-first century, and a few generations separate us from the beginnings of the new evangelicalism, there are some from within fundamentalist circles who are saying, "New evangelicalism was at one time a reality, but today it is non-existent (or at least, not a formidable foe any longer)." Is this really an accurate statement? The answer is an emphatic "No!" The issue is not the term new evangelicalism. Terms come and go. The question is, "Are the issues and attitudes raised by the new evangelicalism gone?" And, again, the answer is an emphatic "No!"

Neo-evangelical thinking is seen today in the following areas.

(1) The rapid rise of the church marketing movement from the early 1990s to the present, with its emphasis upon relationships and experience, drama and contemporary music, to reach and hold people. The Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, has a Willow Creek Association of many other churches (into the hundreds) which are following the Willow Creek model.

(2) The positive response of evangelicals to the programs and ministry of Robert Schuller and his Crystal Cathedral.

(3) The broad acceptance (or at least toleration) of the Contemporary Christian Music movement and rejection of fundamentalism's personal separation standards, so that Charisma magazine could write that "British Christians Use Techno-Dance to Reach Youth." The article talked about alternative worship services, evangelistic night clubs, and "a revolutionary Christian dance movement." In describing this movement, the article said that "strobe lighting, smoke effects, DJs, dancers, Celtic music and tribal rhythms were served up for this worship feast. The trend can be found everywhere."<sup>5</sup>

(4) The influence of the apologetic writings and lecturing of Dr. Hugh Ross, who teaches that the earth is billions of years old and began with a "big bang," that death and degeneration existed in the beginning and have continued for billions of years, and that neither the fall to sin nor the Flood resulted in significant physical changes in nature.

(5) The positive attitude of many evangelicals toward the Charismatic Movement, especially as seen in the signs-and-wonders movement.

- (6) The acceptance of religious teachers and institutions which have not held the line on belief in eternal punishment. Fuller Seminary modified its doctrinal statement in this area, and individuals like Clark Pinnock have opened the door to the idea that people can hear the gospel after death and have a chance to respond positively, or that hell is simply annihilation.
- (7) The hearing being given in evangelical circles to “the openness of God” concept which rejects His absolute foreknowledge, among other things.
- (8) The toleration by some evangelicals– especially in academic settings–of deviant sexual lifestyles, particularly homosexuality.
- (9) The willingness of evangelical publishers to publish works which allow for aspects of higher critical views of the Bible, including redaction criticism, in interpreting the life of Christ in the Gospel accounts.
- (10) The broad acceptance of the Promise-Keepers movement, even though it tolerates working with Roman Catholics and has strong charismatic overtones.
- (11) The willingness of major evangelical leaders to sign their names to the Evangelicals and Catholics Together 6 document, and still others to sign the later statement entitled The Gift of Salvation.<sup>7</sup> Although traditional differences (including sacramentalism) are recognized, there is a willingness to call each other “brothers in Christ.”
- (12) The belief by some evangelicals that the Head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, is an evangelical.

If those attitudes and issues do not seem to be of such concern today, it is only because the new evangelical position has become mainstreamed into many Bible-believing circles to the extent that speaking against them puts one in a rather small minority. Issues such as ecumenical evangelism are still very significant today, but we hear little about them because many whose voices might at one time have spoken out in opposition have been quieted by a changed or at least a relaxed position. The new evangelical attitude has become so prevalent that one may be tempted to tolerate it as inevitable and normal.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Neo-Evangelicalism and Billy Graham<sup>5</sup>**

In our last installment Ecumenical Evangelist Billy Graham was shown to be one who loves to be a great mixer with modernists and church liberals. He is one of the great spokesmen for the new evangelicalism, one of the greatest compromise movements the world has yet seen.

The compromise of the neo-evangelicals does not stem from any eschatological position maintained, but from a spirit motivated by concession to ecclesiastical liberalism and the modern world. Neo-evangelicalism pretends to have a more respectable and more comprehensive theological and philosophical position than Fundamentalism that it more closely approaches to having a weltanschauung, a Christian world-and-life view. In this connection it charges Fundamentalism with setting up a “dichotomy between the personal gospel and the social gospel.”

It is not a figment of our imagination that Graham openly cooperates not only with the worst modernist liberals of apostate Protestantism, but also with Christ-hating Jews and with Roman Catholics, to whom all history witnesses were the greatest enemies of the Lord and His people.

"Although she was never as prominent as Billy Graham or many of the other iconic male evangelists of the twentieth century, Henrietta Mears was arguably the single most influential woman in the shaping of modern evangelicalism. Her seminal work *What the Bible Is All About* sold millions of copies, and key figures in the early modern evangelical movement like Bill Bright, Harold John Ockenga, and Jim Rayburn frequently cited her teachings as a formative part of their ministry. Graham himself stated that Mears was the most important female influence in his life other than his mother or wife."<sup>6</sup>

## THE THEOLOGY OF NEW-EVANGELICALISM

### 2) THE NEW EVANGELICALISM IDENTIFIED BY ITS CHARACTERISTICS

#### CHARACTERISTICS of New Evangelicalism

The following is taken from the class notes of a seminary course taught by Dr. John C. Whitcomb dealing with modern religious movements:

1. A calling into question of the basic significance, or even the validity, of the doctrine of the verbal inerrancy of Scripture.
2. A conscious desire for intellectual prestige and sophistication, for "re-thinking" Christian doctrines with a view toward modifying them for the benefit of the "modern mind," for entering into "communication" and "dialogue" with non-evangelical leaders and thinkers, and an elevation of "love" above doctrine.
3. An emphasis upon "ecumenism" among all born-again Christians with corresponding avoidance of doctrines upon which all Christians are not agreed and of ordinances that are distinctive.
4. A new emphasis upon the responsibility of Christians to participate in various social programs and to make direct contributions to purely humanitarian and philanthropic enterprises.
5. Startling concessions to modern theories of organic evolution and geologic uniformitarianism, at the expense of a consistent historical-grammatical interpretation of the first eleven chapters of Genesis.
6. A shift from dispensational premillennialism to some form of "historic" premillennialism, together with a minimizing of the importance of eschatology in general.
7. A shift in emphasis regarding charismatic gifts. "Pentecostalism may be right after all!" Desperate, short-cut, direct techniques to get something done or to have an experience.

### 3) NEW EVANGELICALISM IDENTIFIED BY ITS SYMPTOMS

#### SYMPTOMS of New Evangelicalism

The following is taken from the booklet, *The Challenge of a New Religion*, by Pastor Carlton Helgerson:

1. Any slanting of the gospel that omits the need for atonement by the shedding of blood.
2. A sentiment that regards as important only the Bible passages that directly relate to redemption.
3. An evident hesitancy to be against anything, or to take a definite stand against apostasy.
4. Ignorance of, or the disregarding of, the doctrine of separation, especially as it applies to separation from willfully disobedient professing Christians (2 Thessalonians 3:6,14-15).



5. A pathetic dread of being in a small religious minority and a fear of not being considered broadminded.
6. An inordinate admiration for novel methods and the latest versions of the Bible.
7. The justifying of questionable methods in missions or evangelism by pointing to successes, e.g. the popularity of the enterprise, numbers, "conversions," etc.
8. The absence of awe before the written Word of God, making human reasoning the arbiter.
9. An avoidance of the unpopular Biblical doctrines of vicarious atonement, separation, judgment, hell, etc.
10. An acquiescence to mixture in association and practice, and an accommodation to popular moods.

#### 4) NEW EVANGELICALISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The following is taken from Dr. George Houghton's article entitled, "*Another Look at the New Evangelicalism*" ( *Faith Pulpit*, May/June 2002, a Faith Baptist Theological Seminary publication): Today, as we are now in the twenty-first century, and a few generations separate us from the beginnings of the new evangelicalism, there are some from within fundamentalist circles who are saying, "New evangelicalism was at one time a reality, but today it is non-existent (or at least, not a formidable foe any longer)." Is this really accurate? The answer to that is an emphatic, "No!" The issue is not the term "new evangelicalism." Terms come and go. The question is, "Are the issues and attitudes raised by the new evangelicalism gone?" And, again, the answer is an emphatic "No!"

This is seen today in several areas.

- (1) The rapid rise of the church marketing movement from the early 1990s to the present with its emphasis upon relationships and experience, drama and contemporary music, to reach and hold people. The Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois, has a Willow Creek Association of many other churches (into the hundreds) which are following the Willow Creek model.
- (2) The positive response of evangelicals to the programs and ministry of Robert Schuller and his Crystal Cathedral.
- (3) The broad acceptance (or at least toleration) of the Contemporary Christian Music movement and rejection of fundamentalism's personal separation standards, so that *Charisma* magazine (April 1997, 26ff.) could write that "British Christians Use Techno-Dance to Reach Youth." Their article talked about alternative worship services, evangelistic night clubs and "a revolutionary Christian dance movement." In describing this, the article said "strobe lighting, smoke effects, DJs, dancers, Celtic music and tribal rhythms were served up for this worship feast. The trend can be found everywhere."
- (4) The influence of the apologetic writings and lecturing of Dr. Hugh Ross, who teaches that the earth is billions of years old, and began with a "big bang," that death and degeneration existed in the beginning and have continued for billions of years, and that neither the fall to sin nor the flood resulted in significant physical changes in nature.
- (5) The positive attitude of many evangelicals toward the charismatic movement, especially as it is seen in the signs-and-wonders movement.

(6) The acceptance of religious teachers and institutions which have not held the line on belief in eternal punishment. Fuller Seminary modified its doctrinal statement in this area, and individuals like Clark Pinnock have opened the door to people hearing the gospel after death and having a chance to respond positively, or hell being viewed as annihilation.

(7) The hearing being given in evangelical circles to "the openness of God" concept which rejects His absolute foreknowledge, among other things.

(8) The toleration by some evangelicals—especially in academic settings—of deviant sexual lifestyles, particularly homosexuality.

(9) The willingness of evangelical publishers to publish works which allow for aspects of higher critical views of the Bible, including redaction criticism, in interpreting the life of Christ in the Gospel accounts.

(10) The broad acceptance of the Promise-Keepers movement, even though it tolerates working with Roman Catholics and has strong charismatic overtones.

(11) The willingness of major evangelical leaders to sign their names to the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" document, and still others to sign the later statement entitled "The Gift of Salvation." While recognizing traditional differences (including sacramentalism), there is the willingness to call each other "brothers in Christ."

(12) The belief by some evangelicals that the head of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope, is an evangelical.

If those attitudes and issues do not seem to be of such concern today, it is only because the new evangelical position has become mainstreamed into many Bible-believing circles to the extent that speaking against them puts one in a rather small minority. Issues such as ecumenical evangelism are still very significant today, but we hear little about them because many whose voices might at one time have spoken out in opposition have been quieted by a changed or at least a relaxed position. The new evangelical attitude has become so prevalent that one may be tempted to tolerate it as inevitable and normal."<sup>7</sup>

Evangelicalism in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Fundamentalism fractured into two groups in response to Modernism.

1. Against the scope trial, fundamentalism retreated. Created their own churches, denominations, and schools. They circled their wagon. Separate from the world.
2. Evangelicalism – retain their theology, but reject their isolationism. Engage the world.

Billy Graham became the litmus test to determine whether one was an Evangelicalism or a Fundamentalism.

### **WHERE ARE WE TODAY?**

"With the advent of "new evangelicalism" in the 1950s began a new movement among evangelicals that bases itself on human experience, minimizes the importance of doctrine, and neglects outward church relations and perhaps makes evangelicalism difficult to distinguish from the rest of Christianity. Since the Reformation, evangelicalism has undergone a number of paradigm shifts, including classic evangelicalism, pietistic evangelicalism, fundamentalist evangelicalism, and more recently, new evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Within

evangelicalism, the emerging church has arisen as an attempt to serve the postmodern culture. Postmodernism is a new cultural paradigm that holds to no absolutes or certainties and that promotes pluralism and divergence. The emerging church gears itself particularly to the younger generation. Diversity within the emerging church makes it difficult to analyze as a movement. One can only analyze its individual spokesmen. One of its voices recommends returning the church to medieval practices. Other voices depart from traditions in eschatological thinking, the role of Scripture, and soteriology. Post-evangelicalism is a sort of British cousin to the emerging church and has some of the same deviations. The emerging church has surprisingly complimentary words to say about theological liberalism.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ramm, Bernard. “Green Grass Evangelicals.” Eternity, March 1974, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Ramm, Bernard. “Green Grass Evangelicals.” Eternity, March 1974, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <https://faith.edu/faith-news/another-look-at-the-new-evangelicalism/>

<sup>5</sup> Publication date: February, 1964 | Author: Rev. R. Harbach | Rubric: Truth vs. Error | Volume: Vol 24 No 1 1964 <https://beaconlights.org/sermons/neo-evangelicalism-and-billy-graham/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.amazon.com/Mother-American-Evangelicalism-Henrietta-Religious/dp/0802877923>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/separate/newevan.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <https://tms.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/tmsj17h.pdf>

