

# Whither Evangelicalism?

*Donald W. Dayton*

One of the most discussed and analyzed of recent North American religious phenomena has been the resurgence and growth of evangelicalism. *Newsweek*, for example, proclaimed with a cover story that 1976 was the "Year of the Evangelicals."<sup>1</sup> Shortly thereafter, Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist deacon who made open profession of his evangelical faith, was elected president of the United States. Though Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford (as well as candidate George McGovern) had each in his own way claimed "evangelical" roots, something in 1976 enabled a submerged evangelical presence to break into the media spotlight as news that merited analysis and discussion.

There is still no agreement about what is happening. Optimistic triumphalist claims abound from a variety of evangelical sources. Some sober analysts discern the signs of a coming revival not unlike earlier "awakenings." Even pollster George Gallup comments that "evidence is mounting that the US may be in an early stage of a profound religious revival, with the Evangelical movement providing a powerful thrust."<sup>2</sup> Other more cynical voices perceive the trend as a retreat from the activism of the 1960s—more like a fascination with the occult and esoteric. Still others claim to see the spiritual and intellectual fruition of the work of a post-World War II generation of postfundamentalist evangelicals, who gave themselves to building up such movements as the Billy Graham Association, Youth for Christ,

DONALD W. DAYTON

and Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. It is difficult to deny the cold statistics of one such as Dean Kelley, who shows that highly disciplined "conservative" churches are growing to the detriment of others because, as he suggests, they succeed in giving meaning to life, in his view the appropriate task of the church.<sup>3</sup>

Whatever we should decide about the validity of all or any of these suggestions, evangelical currents are a major cultural phenomenon in contemporary American life, generating forces that will determine the future shape of the church. Nor are they a matter of merely provincial concern to North Americans. For good or ill, the United States not only has exported to much of the world its politics, its economics, its media culture, its consumerism, and its technology, but also its churches, and its varieties of religious life with their divisions and squabbles. For this reason it is not out of place in the context of an international theological consultation to probe certain distinctive features of the North American Christian experience. And so into these tangled thickets we go!

## The Meaning of the Word "Evangelical"

One way into these thickets is to consider the meaning of the word. In spite of the warning of Ralph Winter to the effect that one can no more describe evangelicalism "purely theologically than one can eat soup with a fork," we shall seek to give particular attention to the varieties of theological meaning that can be conveyed by the word.<sup>4</sup> Though there exists an honorable history of the use of the word evangelical from New Testament times through the Middle Ages, it has more often been adopted by a variety of Protestant parties for their own purposes. With regard to our own analysis, we would draw attention to three periods in the history of Protestantism when the word has come particularly to the fore.

The first would be, of course, the Reformation—"evangelical" is used to designate the emergent Protestant movement, especially its Lutheran wing, over against what has come to be known as the Roman Catholic Church. Here the word evokes the themes of the great "solos" of the Reformation—*sola scriptura*, *sola Christe*, *sola gratia*, and *sola fide*—and seems intended to convey a bibliocentric and Christocentric expression of faith, with special emphasis on such themes as an Augustinian anthropology (or some other variety of the doctrine of "bondage of the will"), an "objective" view of Christ's atonement, a forensic concept of grace, and especially the doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>5</sup> In this context, evangelical means, roughly, "Protestant," and so it is used in much of the world. In Germany, *evangelisch* means Protestant, especially Lutheran. And in Latin America, *evangelico* carries a similar meaning, perhaps in part because the Protestant population is so small as to render finer distinctions superfluous.

But in the English-speaking world, the word has added connotations that arise from its use in two additional historical periods. The first is the era of the Great Awakenings and the evangelical revival of the eighteenth century, with its outworking in the revivalism of the nineteenth. Here the emphasis is on conversion and the process of personal appropriation of grace. In this sense, we might agree with Ian Bradley that "Evangelicalism was never really a theological system as much as a way of life."<sup>6</sup> But at the same time it is possible to point to certain theological themes, and concern narrows to those related most directly to the "plan of salvation"—human sinfulness, the need for conversion, the appropriation of justifying grace, and the outworking of this in the sanctified life. It is also possible to discern a generally "low church" orientation and hints of innovations that pitted this understanding of evangelicalism against orthodoxy and traditionalism. These themes are present in varying degrees, whether one

speaks of Methodism, the Anglican evangelicals, or American revivalism.

Here of course we are close to the heart of the topic of our consultation and are speaking generally of Methodism and related movements. These currents are so important for developments within the United States that one may speak of the nineteenth century in North America as the "age of Methodism," a term used by Baptists and Presbyterians as well as by chauvinistic Methodists.<sup>7</sup> From its small beginnings about the time of the American Revolution, by the 1860s, Methodism had grown to be the largest denomination in the United States. In addition, one may interpret the emergence of "new measures" revivalism, (associated with evangelist Charles G. Finney) as in many ways the "Methodistizing" of American Calvinism. At any rate, during this period a form of evangelicalism—consisting of an intermingled mixture of Methodists, Baptists, and revivalist Presbyterians and Congregationalists—emerged to become the dominant form of religious life in North America. And this form of evangelicalism was permeated with distinctively Methodist themes.

But this common ethos was soon to break up under the impact of modernity in a controversy that would produce a third meaning of the word evangelical. This was, of course, the fundamentalist/modernist controversy that peaked in the United States in the 1920s and 30s. This experience is closer to our times and lies behind the meaning most often given to the word today. In the mid-nineteenth century the rise of Darwinism and the results of geological study began to shake traditional interpretations of the early chapters of Genesis. When combined with the new biblical criticism being imported from Europe, these questions opened a split in North American Protestantism between a liberal party which attempted to reexpress the Christian faith in terms of these new intellectual developments, and a conservative, or

fundamentalist, party which resisted these new currents, fearing that accommodation to them would ultimately destroy the faith itself. "Evangelical" has, since World War II, been used increasingly to designate the conservative party in this great struggle within the churches.

As we shall see shortly, the story is much more complicated than this simple division between liberal and conservative indicates, but we have said enough to suggest the basic connotations given to the word evangelical in this third paradigm. Here the word means basically orthodox, or conservative, and opposed to the rethinking that liberals find necessary in response to "modern" questions of science, historical consciousness, and biblical criticism. The fact that evangelicalism in this sense has been primarily reactionary has tended to undercut the innovative side of an earlier evangelicalism that was in many ways opposed to traditional patterns of life and thought. Evangelicalism in this third sense has usually represented a cluster of conservative values, politically and socially as well as theologically.

This third and widely accepted meaning obscures some important theological differences between the second and third paradigms of evangelicalism, which for our purposes, require a fuller explication in order to illuminate the contemporary situation. These differences are often ignored, as illustrated by a recent anthology entitled *The Evangelicals*,<sup>9</sup> a much-discussed attempt to analyze and interpret North American evangelicalism. In a preface, the editors, David F. Wells and John D. Woodbridge of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, lament the decline of impact on American culture of evangelicalism as it found expression in the nineteenth century, and they express hope for a twentieth-century recovery. They do this with little recognition that the two evangelicalisms are significantly different and that theologically they are divergent in ways that relate to the varying social impact they have had. This may be seen at two points.

The first difference is that nineteenth-century evangelicalism found its most characteristic expression in a form of *Arminianism*, while twentieth-century evangelicalism has been dominated by a very conservative form of *Calvinism*. This in effect reversed the transition brought about by the Great Awakening of the eighteenth-century, which Martin Marty has described as the "hinge from Calvinist to Arminian America."<sup>9</sup> Much American revivalism incarnated an anti-Calvinist animus that gave extra impulse to the Arminian side of the rising tide of imported Methodism in the wake of the British evangelical revivals.<sup>10</sup> Timothy Smith's essay on *Revivalism and Social Reform* has demonstrated how extensively, on the eve of the Civil War, revivalism in America was permeated by Methodistic themes.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, twentieth-century fundamentalism was most acrimoniously present in Baptist and Presbyterian contexts. The dominant theology of this movement was the old "Princeton theology," represented especially by Charles Hodge and B. B. Warfield, defenders of the "old school" Calvinism that consistently opposed the "new school" revivalistic Calvinists of nineteenth-century evangelicalism. Though in some ways distinctively American, this theology is best understood as a repristination of Reformed Scholasticism of the post-Reformation era. Until Hodge finished his three volumes of theology, early Princeton students worked from the Latin text of the *Institutes* of Francois Turretin. Determinative for the self-understanding of the modern expressions of this theology was the struggle at Princeton which led to the founding of Westminster Theological Seminary, an effort to maintain intact the old Princeton theology, especially against its erosion in the face of the rise of modern biblical criticism and related currents. Most characteristic of this tradition of theology has been a doctrine of "biblical inerrancy," formulated especially by B. B. Warfield. As

Claude Welch has put it, the Princeton theology became "a haven sought (properly or not) by all sorts of conservative revivalists and fundamentalists in the face of the threats of biology and biblical criticism."<sup>12</sup>

In addition to this contrast between Calvinism and Arminianism, we must notice another contrast between the evangelicalisms of the nineteenth and those of the twentieth century—one of *eschatology*. The dominant, though not exclusive, eschatology of the pre-Civil War era was postmillennialism, a view that was so confident of the efficacy of God's transforming grace that it saw itself on the edge of being ushered into the utopia of God's millennial reign. This was in a sense the social correlate of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian perfection—a doctrine of social sanctification or a form of realized eschatology, in which God would universally manifest his will. By contrast, the dominant, though again not exclusive eschatology of fundamentalism was a form of premillennialism that forsook any sense of continuity between this life and the next and despaired of social transformation, looking instead to the return of Christ before the millennium as a way of being rescued out of this evil age. It does not take too much penetration into these two eschatologies to recognize fundamentally different world-views and contrasting solutions to the perennial problem of "Christ and culture," which would have major implications for the shape of any social witness—or its lack. And there is a sense in which the transition between those two evangelical eschatologies represents as well the shift from Arminianism to Calvinism described in the preceding paragraphs. Robert Whalen has analyzed these eschatologies to reveal the Arminian tendencies of the first and Calvinist tendencies of the second.<sup>13</sup> This is a shift toward what has come to be known as fundamentalism. Ernest Sandeen has argued that fundamentalism must be understood primarily as the culmination of a long history of premillennialism that, in the later part of the nineteenth century, coalesced with the

Princeton theology to form an uneasy theological coalition on the basis of a common commitment to biblical literalism.<sup>14</sup> Our analysis confirms this, emphasizing in addition that these two traditions also have in common the rejection of the pre-Civil War optimistic Arminianism.

Understanding these distinctions is crucial to any discussion of the meaning of evangelicalism. Only by attention to them can we realize that what is at stake is not just a struggle between orthodoxy and liberalism, but a much more complicated matter, involving issues of eschatology, varying theological frameworks, and so on. One also may see how "American" some of the issues are—even though many of them have been exported abroad. Moreover, such distinctions are crucial for understanding the vicissitudes of evangelical social witness. The transforming impulse of pre-Civil War revivalism was in part related to its distinctive eschatology and its Arminian affirmation of the role of human ability and effort in the process of personal and social reconstruction, though other factors obviously were at work as well.

It is no accident that contemporary, postfundamentalist evangelicalism, for the most part, has not been marked by a strong impulse toward social witness and reconstruction.

### The Holiness Movement Among These Currents

Within this analysis we turn now to the special focus of our interest, *the holiness movement*, a form of Wesleyanism too often ignored and lost between the Methodistic currents of nineteenth-century evangelicalism and modern Calvinistic, postfundamentalist evangelicalism. The movement emerged in the pre-Civil War intermingling of Methodism and "new measures" revivalism and especially incarnated the revival of the doctrine of Christian perfection that took place in that era, in part in response to the sense of perfectionistic optimism that pervaded the culture. Early intimations of the movement may be seen in the Boston

*Guide to Christian Perfection* of the late 1830s, the turn to Methodist themes in revivalist Oberlin College at about the same time, the emergence of the abolitionist Wesleyan Methodist denomination in the early 1840s (this movement became, I believe, the first denomination to add a statement of Christian Perfection to its Articles of Religion), and related currents. All these movements were radically reformist in character, expressing and even carrying to an extreme the reform impulse carried by the broader forms of revivalism of the era. In addition, these movements reflected some differences from classical Wesleyanism, as a result of the American context and the impact of anti-Calvinist revivalism. They were generally more Arminian, more self-consciously postmillennial in eschatology, more oriented to the moral law and the possibility of its fulfillment (and therefore perhaps more "legalistic"), and in general more likely to affirm the broader perfectability of human life. These themes were in part distortion and in part intensification of classical Wesleyanism.

More determinative for the events that would follow was a parallel variation of these currents that developed within Methodism, especially around circles associated with lay evangelist Phoebe Palmer of New York City. Her parlor meetings for the promotion of holiness advocated a more experientially based and less socially radical form of Wesleyanism, in a style somewhat akin to the modern charismatic movement (though without any sign of the experience of glossolalia). Reinterpreting the Wesleyan doctrine of entire sanctification in terms of Finneyite new measures revivalism, Phoebe Palmer emphasized its universal and immediate availability to all who would cast themselves on the "altar" of "consecration." Her emphases contributed to a holiness variation on Wesleyan theology—one that tended to narrow the focus to the *experience* of sanctification, which had the effect of diluting the teleologi-

cal orientation of Wesley's formulation by moving sanctification from the goal, to an earlier point in Christian experience, and of giving greater attention to the mechanics of achieving the "second blessing." At about 1867, the National Campmeeting Association emerged, and proved to be the major institutional carrier of this renewal of the Wesleyan emphasis upon sanctification. The late nineteenth century was to see a proliferation of these currents, which, with the collapse of central control, produced a variety of movements and denominations. Among these was the more classically Wesleyan denomination, the Church of the Nazarene, and the more radical Pilgrim Holiness Church, as well as a number of other bodies and such missionary movements as the Oriental Missionary Society and what has come to be known as the World Gospel Mission. In the process, these currents broke through the confines of Methodism and generated an interdenominational holiness movement which swept others into its orbit and left a lasting impact on non-Methodist bodies as well.

Another factor in the emergence of the holiness movement was the reaction to what might be called the *embourgeoisement* of Methodism. As a result of the upward social mobility among Methodists that gradually had taken place in the nineteenth century, the denomination was becoming farther removed from its origins in the lower classes and its commitment to simplicity. The National Campmeeting Association expressed concern about this alienation of Methodism from the masses. The Free Methodist Church, founded in 1860, fought for simple churches and free pews, in the face of Methodist affluence and rented pews. The Wesleyan Methodists were protesting Methodism's compromise on the question of slavery, calling for primitive standards and earlier disciplines. Even evangelist Finney's churches in New York City were called free churches because of their identification with the "free

pews" slogan and thus with the lower classes. And similar themes were expressed by early Nazarenes and Pilgrims who boasted of their commitment to the poor of the inner cities and castigated the "steeple churches," which seemed to ignore those masses. The full meaning of this reaction against *embourgeoisement* is not yet clear to me, but it is a factor that deserves further research and must be taken into account in any full analysis of the emergence of the holiness movement.

At any rate, out of all this has flowed a church tradition with a distinctive Wesleyan character and shape that was in some ways conservative, though in other ways radical, and therefore is not to be confused with reactionary fundamentalism or Calvinistically inspired orthodoxy. It consists of a variety of subgroups: pre-Civil War perfectionist and abolitionist movements such as the Wesleyan Methodists and the Free Methodists; certain currents that remained as a self-conscious holiness wing within Methodism, as exemplified in Asbury College and Theological Seminary; products of the post-Civil War sect formation—the Pilgrim Holiness Church, the Church of the Nazarene, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), and others; various Quaker and Mennonite movements, deeply shaped by the impact of the holiness teaching; and the Salvation Army, originating in England, in part under American influence and later imported into the States, where the distinctively holiness orientation deepened. In addition, one may trace a radiating circle of impact in such related movements as the Keswick Conventions, various European movements, sister bodies such as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, and ultimately, pentecostalism—though the sibling relationship to the latter is resisted by those in the orthodox holiness tradition.

The study of this holiness tradition has recently come into its own. There is now a burst of secondary scholarship and efforts to rethink and reinterpret it.<sup>15</sup> Such reflection comes

at an opportune time because this tradition may provide not only important keys for understanding contemporary evangelicalism, but also paradigms and models that could offer a more satisfactory solution to some of the theological issues bedeviling recent evangelicalism.

For example, Robert Mapes Anderson comments that "any analysis of the Fundamentalist movement should take the Pentecostal and Holiness movements into consideration, but this has hardly been the case." He goes on to say that "when this is done, however, the inadequacies of existing historical interpretations of Fundamentalism will be readily apparent."<sup>16</sup> Anderson's comments raise certain questions of methodology, especially as to whether it would be better to understand the holiness movement and fundamentalism as distinct but related, or whether it would be better, as Anderson seems to suggest, to expand one's analysis of fundamentalism by the incorporation of data from holiness and pentecostal traditions. I am inclined to take the route of distinguishing the movements and tracing interaction; but whatever option is chosen, it is clear that contemporary evangelicalism cannot be understood apart from study and analysis of the holiness tradition.

This may be seen on several levels. Contemporary evangelicalism in the United States (and probably also beyond) is built, to a surprising extent, on institutions and movements that are products of the holiness tradition. About a third of the membership of the National Association of Evangelicals consists of holiness denominations or closely related bodies. Of the colleges recommended recently in the pages of *Christianity Today*, about the same percentage is rooted in the holiness movement, and this percentage is increased when one turns to the more visible Christian College Consortium that is a major force in contemporary North American evangelicalism. The significance of this force in American church life is also illustrated by another statistic, in comparison with the

United Methodist Church. United Methodism, now with somewhat fewer than ten million members, has about one-third of its membership in church on any given Sunday. By contrast, the holiness churches, with membership somewhere between one and two million, often have a larger Sunday attendance than their membership—sometimes double, especially when the large Sunday school attendance is taken into account. What we have then in the holiness traditions is a major force within evangelicalism—a force that can claim impact approaching the classical Methodist tradition, but that usually is interpreted today, within and outside evangelicalism, by using categories drawn from traditions alien and even antithetical to the spirit of Wesleyanism.

What therefore emerges when this holiness tradition is taken into account? On the more technical historiographical level, one could follow the vicissitudes of popular evangelical movements in the crucial decades of the nineteenth century by tracing the development of the institutions they spawned. One might look, for example, at Wheaton College, perhaps the most prestigious of the evangelical Christian colleges, and trace its founding by the Wesleyan Methodists as a center of perfectionist reform, its movement in a more Calvinistic direction under the influence of Congregational leadership, the impact of the rising tide of premillennialism and the consequent dampening of the earlier social witness, the increasing influence of the Princeton theology, the emergence of non-evangelicalism in the post-World War II era, and so forth. Or one could study the movement by focusing on the literature it has produced; as a popular movement, less anchored to confessional and academic constraints, the holiness movement provides a literature more in touch with the subliminal feelings of the people. There one can easily trace the significance of the shift from postmillennialism to premillennialism or chart the popular religious response to

industrialization and urbanization. Study of these neglected aspects of nineteenth- and twentieth-century religious currents also would fill important gaps in our understanding of the broader culture.

More to the point, however, is the possible future impact of the holiness tradition in providing paradigms that may indicate ways out of current evangelical impasses.

To understand the contemporary evangelical scene, we must sketch the developments since the fundamentalist/modernist controversy. The generation of the 1940s reached toward the label "evangelical" to project a more positive image and a new style, centering on several themes that were in reaction to the stances of the preceding generation, especially earlier separatism.<sup>17</sup> The move back into the mainstream denominations was an effort to recover an apologetic offensive by entering into dialogue with the dominant theological culture and by recovering a social dimension to the gospel. Westminster Theological Seminary played a major role in mediating the themes of the old Princeton theology to this movement, and the basic concern and badge of evangelical authenticity came to be adherence to the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Scriptures. This concern is obvious in the variety of institutions spawned by this movement: The National Association of Evangelicals, *Christianity Today*, Fuller Theological Seminary and related institutions, and others. Holiness groups, just beginning at that time to emerge from cultural isolation, were attracted to this movement as a part of their push toward respectability. In the process they lost many of their distinctive Wesleyan characteristics and become largely indistinguishable from the more Calvinistically inclined general movement.

But the 1960s have seen a further development within this postfundamentalist evangelical tradition, that in some ways is a reaction to the earlier ethos and in other ways is in continuity with it. The members of this new generation have been variously labeled "young evangelicals," "new

evangelicals," and even "radical evangelicals." If they have a manifesto, it is to be found in a book by Richard Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals*, in which the following themes seem to be especially important: a more ecumenical stance, replacing the earlier antiecumenicity of the preceding "conservative evangelicals"; a greater willingness to draw upon the insights of the charismatic movement and its nondogmatic style of life in the Spirit; a reaction against older premillennialism, especially in its dispensationalist forms; a greater openness to biblical criticism and critical theological scholarship; a renewed emphasis on sanctification, particularly in the search for a new shape of the Christian life and a recovery of social witness; and a broader cultural affirmation than was permitted by the taboos of an earlier form of evangelicalism.<sup>18</sup> The ironic aspect of Quebedeaux's book is the fact that it speaks so exclusively out of the self-understanding of contemporary evangelicals that it shows little awareness of the earlier styles of nineteenth-century revivalism. One well might argue that the Wesleyan/holiness tradition is better able to incorporate these themes than are the dominant forms of Calvinistic evangelicalism. If so, the time is ripe for a resurgence of Wesleyan thought that could reshape contemporary evangelicalism toward Wesleyanism, just as the Princeton theology of a generation or two ago led the evangelicalism of that day toward Calvinism.

This could be illustrated on a number of levels, although one can only hint at most of them. The turn to sanctification on the part of the young evangelicals provides obvious opportunity—if the Wesleyan/holiness themes can be restated, leaving behind some of the shibboleths of the holiness theology. Similarly, the holiness tradition provides paradigms for a nondogmatic vision of the work of the Spirit that emphasizes ethical and social outworking rather than ecstatic experience. Holiness eschatology has been more resistant to dispensational premillennialism, and this fact

makes it easier than in some other contexts to oppose this influence. One might even find bases for certain cultural affirmations, especially in some liturgical traditions from Anglicanism that have been preserved in at least parts of the holiness movement. There is also an important basis in the holiness tradition for a broader ecumenism. The *Discipline* of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, which was among the most deeply influenced by modern fundamentalism of the various holiness denominations, recognized in the preamble to its "Articles of Religion" that their purpose is not only to define belief but also to "prepare the way for more effective cooperation with other branches of the Church of Christ in all that makes for the advancement of God's Kingdom among men." And there is among the holiness churches a pattern of recent mergers that rivals better-known illustrations of organic union. There also has been an ambivalence about the National Association of Evangelicals that has kept some holiness churches out, and has pushed others to a variety of ecumenical contacts, even in some cases to relationships with conciliar movements. These contacts and orientations well might become the basis of new arrangements and configurations that could make a major contribution to the ecumenical stance of modern evangelicalism.

But let us focus more closely on the remaining questions. One is the most controversial issue among modern postfundamentalist evangelicals—the doctrine of Scripture; the other is the recovery of the social witness of earlier evangelicalism.

One has only to look at the study by Harold Lindsell entitled *The Battle for the Bible* and the various responses that it has engendered, to sense both the acrimony of this debate and the theological stalemate to which the Princeton formulation of biblical inerrancy has led.<sup>19</sup> The emerging new evangelical critique of this doctrine points in two significant directions. There is first the suggestion that the



Princeton formulation is at root docetic, in that it does not attach enough importance to the human aspect of the Scriptures; and second, that it fails to account for the fact that the classical Christian teaching has been more interested in its teleological purpose—that of effecting salvation—than in historical and cosmological detail. At both points the Wesleyan tradition provides paradigms superior to those of the older Calvinism so influential in contemporary evangelicalism. Surely the docetic tendencies of the Princeton formulation are at least partially rooted in the high Calvinism of that tradition and its tendency to undervalue the role of the cooperating human will. Are there not resources in the Wesleyan/holiness interpretation of grace for developing more adequate understandings of the role of the human in the production of the Scriptures? Similarly, the growing emphasis on the teleological and transformational function of the Scriptures fits more naturally into the Wesleyan vision of them as being given for our salvation and sanctification. From these starting points it would be possible to articulate fuller doctrines of Scripture that would avoid the postfundamentalist fixation on inerrancy and propositional revelation, without denying valid aspects of these concerns. And such a concern for the transformational intention of Scripture also would provide a point of contact for discussion with the liberation theologies.

Even more pertinent, however, is the young evangelical push toward recovery of their lost social witness. Here the Wesleyan/holiness tradition provides a rich fund of historical models. On one level, my own book is an effort to project into a wide evangelical audience the styles from the Wesleyan tradition that counteract the fundamentalist tradition's denial of the importance of social aspects of the gospel.<sup>20</sup> Here the relationship with the preceding generation of evangelicalism is particularly ironic and poignant. It was Carl Henry who first called evangelicals to "kingdom preaching" and to the recovery of an evangelical social

witness in his book *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*.<sup>21</sup> But it was also Henry who was editor of *Christianity Today* during the 1960s, when the older evangelical social vision so clearly revealed itself to be limited and hopelessly reactionary.<sup>22</sup>

For many, the experience of the 1960s broke the spell of the older evangelical theology and set up a search for new models, socially as well as theologically. The first indications came from a series of new periodicals, which attempted to sort out the relationship of evangelicalism to a variety of liberation movements that were emerging in the culture. The civil rights movements produced an evangelical journal, *Freedom Now*, which since has evolved into *The Other Side* (the title is significant in its identification with the poor and oppressed), "a magazine for radical Christian discipleship." Concern for urban ghettos found expression in a magazine titled *Inside*, now a newsletter for political action in the legislative arena. The Jesus Movement produced *Right On* (now *Rādix*), which has developed into a politically conscious countercultural expression of Christian life. Perhaps most significant was the emergence of *The Post-American* in the antiwar protest movements of the late 1960s. That journal has become *Sojourners*, an important force today for forging both new visions of the social outreach of the church and new ecumenical channels of contact and interaction. Most recently, *Daughters of Sarah* has attempted to find a standpoint of Christian feminism rooted in the Scriptures in such a way as to chart a path between post-Christian feminism and evangelical traditionalism.

In all this turmoil there has been a discernible tendency to reach toward the Wesleyan tradition for paradigms that can be used as evangelical theologies of liberation. Looking to the nineteenth century for examples of social involvement, significant interconnections are being uncovered between evangelical faith, abolitionism, and feminism.

Roger Anstey has recently critiqued some economic analyses of the collapse of slavery and indicates that its decline was dependent at least in part upon the rise of the evangelical world-view.<sup>23</sup> Anne C. Loveland has argued for a fundamental congruence between the evangelical vision and that of immediate abolition, emphasizing such themes as repentance, human ability, and benevolence.<sup>24</sup> And John Hammond has analyzed Ohio voting records by computer, to demonstrate a close connection between revival religion and antislavery politics.<sup>25</sup> Hammond emphasizes the significance of the collapse of Calvinism and the rise of doctrines of "free will" and "human agency." His analysis is given impressionistic support by the fact that Arminian Wesley was a more active critic of slavery than was his Calvinist contemporary, George Whitefield. At any rate, it would seem safe to presuppose at least some connection between abolitionism and Arminian evangelicalism.

This evangelically grounded abolitionism gave an extra impulse to the emergence of feminism—by extending the egalitarianism another step toward full human freedom; by raising up a generation of professional reformers who expanded the range of issues being agitated; by forcing women engaged in benevolent work for the slaves to defend their work in the face of biblically based objections; but most important, by providing a hermeneutic that permitted the reinterpretation of the Scriptures. Feminists found that "the Bible argument against slavery" provided a method for dealing with the Scriptures. The *magna carta* of Galatians 3:28 seemed to permit a relativizing of the prohibitions against women's speaking and teaching (especially in face of the fact that women in the New Testament seemed to have engaged in such practices). And the *Haustafeln* passages about women were to be handled as were the parallel passages on slaves. Out of all this came an extension of the egalitarian impulse that was transmuted into feminism and carried

especially by the perfectionist traditions in American revivalism.

With this background, we more easily may understand phenomena of the period. Early Oberlin College, deeply under the influence of the evangelical abolitionism of Charles G. Finney, was a natural place for women to find new roles, even though it remained more conservative than might have been wished by the many feminists of the era who attended. We are not surprised to discover that the Seneca Falls meeting of the first women's rights convention was held in a Wesleyan Methodist church, though most historians of feminism are insufficiently attuned to Methodist distinctions to be aware of the significance of the location. Nor are we astonished to learn that Antoinette Brown, usually celebrated as the first woman fully ordained as a minister, was a disciple of Finney and a graduate of Oberlin; and that the minister who preached her ordination sermon was Luther Lee, one of the founders of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.<sup>26</sup> In addition, B. T. Roberts, founder of the Free Methodist Church, was an ardent feminist who defended the ministry of women and the concept of "egalitarian marriage" in a book titled *Ordaining Women*.<sup>27</sup>

This pre-Civil War egalitarian feminism, carried by perfectionistic revivalism, is in many ways parallel to modern forms—though it was to some extent grounded in the postmillennial eschatology of the era. Some of the liberature of that period seemed to view the gospel as a sort of time bomb, dropped into history and set to go off with the unfolding of providence, successively eradicating slavery, the subordination of women, and so forth, in ever-widening circles of the influence of its transforming power. This vision supported to a great extent the reformist dynamic of the era, and as the underlying eschatological vision fell into disrepute, the reforms also declined.

Holiness feminism, however, was something of an

exception to this pattern and was continued in the movement and given a different grounding. It was linked with the premillennialism and the rise of pentecostal imagery (not yet "pentecostalism") that became dominant by the end of the century and was taken up by the Church of the Nazarene and the Pilgrim Holiness Church. In the latter the mix of themes was forcefully stated by Seth Cook Rees, who insisted that the ideal church made no distinction with regard to the sexes. In his view, "as the grace of God and the light of Gospel are shed abroad . . . woman is elevated until at Pentecost she stands, a second Eve, by the side of her husband."<sup>28</sup> Some writers in the *Guide to Holiness* were able to bend this argument in an even more distinctly feminist direction, to claim, for example, that "Pentecost laid the axe at the root of the tree of social injustice."<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Catherine Booth, called to the ministry under the influence of Phoebe Palmer, carried a feminist thrust into the creation of the Salvation Army to help create one of the few Christian movements committed from its beginning to the equality of women. And perhaps the most radically consistently feminist of Christian bodies is one of the most esoteric and sectarian of the holiness groups, the Pillar of Fire, founded at the turn of the century by Alma White. For years this body fought for suffrage and other reforms through a periodical called *Woman's Chains*. Other similar currents could be traced, but these hints indicate a massive amount of Christian feminist sentiment largely obscured from the rest of the church, as well as from feminist scholars, by its unexpected location.

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate the debt of contemporary evangelicalism to the holiness movements of the last century, and to point to the impoverishment that has occurred as evangelicals have lost contact with that Arminian heritage and have been co-opted by fundamentalism, premillennialism, and biblical

literalism. The creative alternative to reactionary versions of Calvinism is to be found, I believe, in those Wesleyan sources. And the challenge to Methodist theologians of an evangelical persuasion today is to make the evangelical world aware of that alternative.

53. *OE*, 1 (August 14, 1839), p. 138.
54. *OE*, 2 (May 6, 1840), p. 76. Cf. the letters in the same series in the two succeeding issues: (May 20, 1840), p. 84; (June 3, 1840), p. 92. Finney composed these letters shortly after completing the last seven lectures in the series on Christian perfection, printed in *OE* from January through mid-April, 1840, and in July of the same year, in his *Views of Sanctification*. These concluding lectures recapitulated the logic of the earliest ones in the series and do not employ the terminology of Pentecost, which led scholars (including myself), who previously relied chiefly on that volume and neglected to read the *Evangelist* carefully, to suppose that Finney did not at this state teach the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.
55. *OE*, 1 (August 14, 1839), p. 140.
56. I am instructed on this point by Joseph H. Smith, "The Psychoanalytic Understanding of Human Freedom: Freedom From and Freedom For," *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, vol. 26 (1978), pp. 87-107.

#### Chapter 7. Donald W. Dayton

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3. Dean Kelley, *Why Conservative Churches are Growing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
4. Ralph Winter, review of several recent books on evangelicalism, *Christianity Today* (April 9, 1976), p. 38.
5. Heinrich Bornkamm thus explicates *The Heart of Reformation Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).
6. Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1976), p. 22.
7. For this concept, cf. Winthrop Hudson, "The Methodist Age in America," *Methodist History*, vol. 12 (April 1974), pp. 3-15; C. C. Goen, "The 'Methodist Age' in American Church History," *Religion in Life*, vol. 34 (1964-65), pp. 562-72.
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10. Cf. James E. Hamilton, "Academic Orthodoxy and the Arminianizing of American Theology," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, vol. 9 (Spring 1974), pp. 52-59.
11. Smith, *Revivalism*.
12. Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), p. 201.

13. Robert Whalen, "Millenarianism and Millennialism in America, 1790-1880" (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1972).
14. See his various writings on the subject, but especially Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
15. Cf. especially the pioneering work of Smith, *Revivalism and Called Unto Holiness* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1962); Melvin Dieter, "Revivalism and Holiness" (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1973); and the work of Charles Jones, *Perfectionist Persuasion* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974) and *A Guide to the Study of the Holiness Movement* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1974).
16. Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 5.
17. See for example, Ronald Nash, *The New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963).
18. Richard Quebedeaux, *Young Evangelicals* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).
19. Howard Lindsell, *Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976).
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21. Carl Henry, *Uneasy Conscience* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1947).
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23. Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1975).
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28. Seth Cook Rees, *The Ideal Pentecostal Church* (Cincinnati: Martin Wells Knapp at the Revivalist Office, 1897), p. 41.
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#### Chapter 8. Nancy A. Hardesty

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