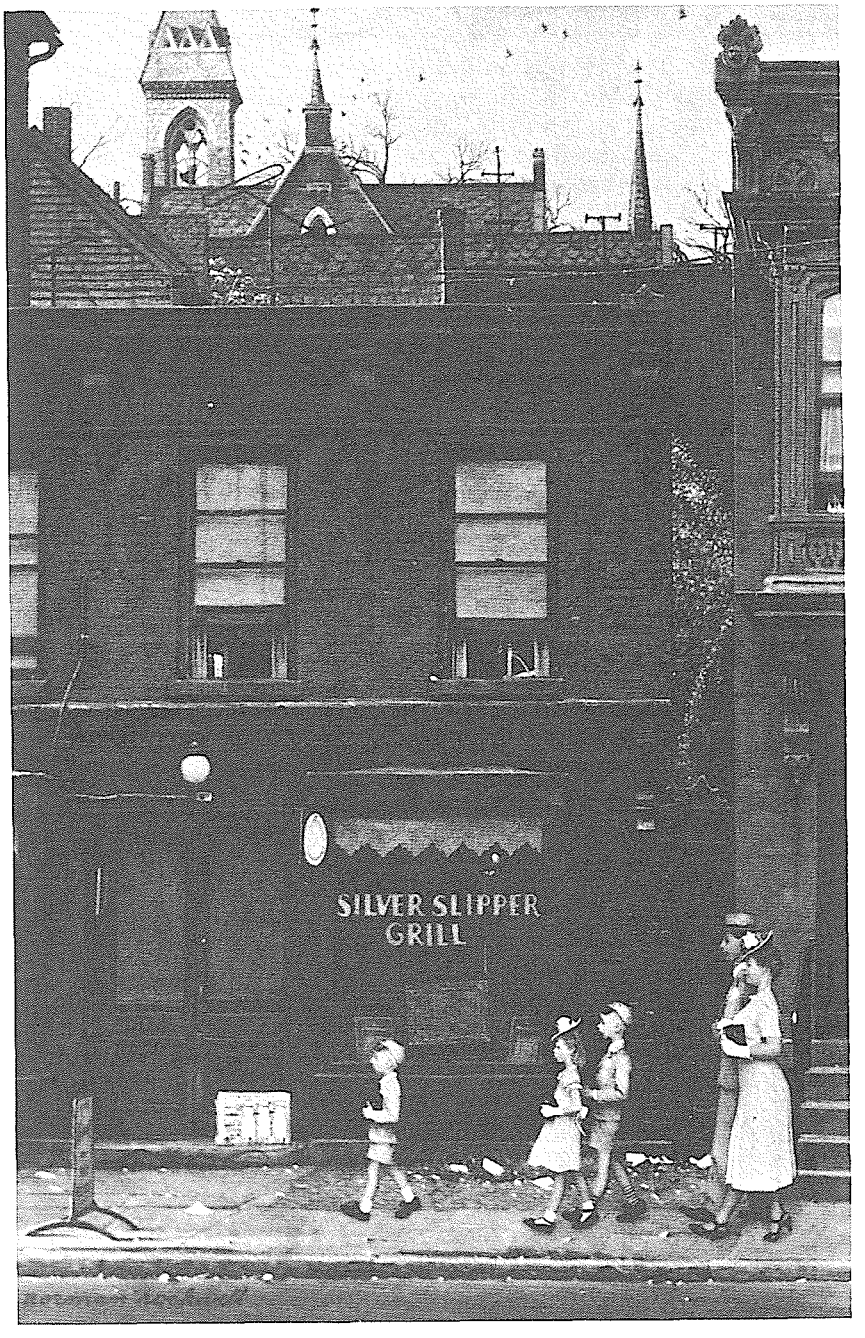

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Religion in America

During the past few years, opinion surveys have elicited what the Gallup Organization has called "new signs of vitality" in American religious life. A decline since 1955 in overall church/synagogue attendance has been arrested. (Forty percent of Americans attend services in a typical week.) The proportion of Americans who say that religious faith can help solve national problems (65 percent) has begun to rise for the first time since the mid-1960s. So has the proportion of those who express "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in organized religion as an institution (66 percent). More and more Americans have apparently "turned inward," perhaps tacitly acknowledging the failure of a consumer society to imbue their lives with meaning.

Such responses to polls may be signs of a religious revival. If so, we do not know whether it is deep or shallow: The world, as presented in such statistics, is two-dimensional.

By all accounts, however, America's major religious "families," for widely varying reasons, have undergone profound changes during the past two decades. The initial stresses and transformations identified by a handful of academics during the 1950s and '60s—Nathan Glazer, for example, in *American Judaism* (1957); Jeffrey Hadden in *The Gathering Storm in the Churches* (1969)—have fostered trends that preoccupy scholars and clergy alike.

A disorientation among American Catholics has received considerable attention from scholars and journalists, in part because so much of it can be linked to a single event: the Second Vatican Council, beginning in 1962. The liturgical overhaul and doctrinal facelift brought about by Vatican II had been anticipated by Catholic intellectuals, in America as in Europe. But such modifications, implemented fairly suddenly, estranged many laymen on both sides of the Atlantic even as some Catholic liberals sought more sweeping change.

The specific concerns of America's Jewish community have

not been as frequently aired in the non-Jewish press. One of these is a lingering preoccupation with identity. "A social group with clearly marked boundaries exists," wrote Nathan Glazer in the early 1950s, "but the source of the energies that hold [it] separate, and of the ties that bind it together, has become completely mysterious." Lately, the trend toward Jewish-Gentile intermarriage, the low Jewish birth rate, and the muted revival of anti-Semitism have prompted new worries.

The tangled landscape of present-day Protestantism is the most difficult to depict. Its elements are so diverse that one must question most popular generalizations. One trend is clear. Most of the major Protestant denominations—the ones commonly referred to as the "mainline" or "liberal" churches—have experienced sharp reversals since the high tide of their vigor and prosperity during the 1950s.

Until recently, mainline Protestantism might have been defined as the Protestantism most in the public eye, the one that conformed to popular visions of what American religion should be (and always has been). Its prestige was sustained by the better known theologians, the better known seminaries, and many of the most prominent clergy and laymen. Yet the mainline churches—Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational, et al.—have suffered significant declines in their memberships for reasons that are not fully understood.

Numerous congregations were torn by bitter, public dissension over such issues as civil rights, the Vietnam War, and the New Morality. The political activism of some clergymen alienated many churchgoers. Ecumenism encouraged "dialogue" among the various denominations, sometimes leading to a deemphasis of confessional distinctions—and loyalties. "In a free society," historian Martin E. Marty has written, "it is questionable whether many would take pains to continue to belong to groups that give them few reasons for adherence. When the Mainliners minimized their reasons, Americans began to take their quests to other locales." One result has been continued expansion of evangelical Christianity.

These and other issues are addressed in the three essays that follow.

PROTESTANTISM AND THE EVANGELICALS

by Cullen Murphy

The most important development within American Protestantism since the early 1970s has been the ascendancy of the evangelicals, a phenomenon that most journalists have described only in political terms, thereby contributing generously to public misunderstanding of the forces behind the evangelical "revival."

Many Americans seem to believe that the expansion of political activity by evangelical Protestants, widely noted during the 1976 and 1980 presidential campaigns, is unprecedented. Public opinion researchers, operating without much historical perspective, at first predicted (and then interpreted as radically "new") a tide of Protestant support for "born again" candidates for public office and for "moral" legislation in the areas of education (e.g., prayer in the schools) and family life (e.g., a constitutional amendment to ban abortion). Much of the credit, or blame, for this mobilization went to a network of organizations representing the so-called evangelical Right, symbolized by the Rev. Jerry Falwell's Virginia-based Moral Majority, Inc.

In fact, even if Falwell and his energetic allies did not exist, evangelical Protestants in large numbers would be politically active—in a variety of causes. This activity is nothing new. During the 19th century, northern Presbyterians (to cite but one group) joined with other evangelicals to lead crusades against slavery, urban vice, and alcohol; they were firm proponents of a tax-supported public school system. Social historians have long known that an individual's participation in politics often varies directly with the intensity of his religious commitment. The commitment of evangelicals to their beliefs has always been strong. The political surge that struck outsiders as "new" during the 1970s primarily reflected the great numerical increase in the community of evangelical Christians.*

*The word *evangelical* (from the Greek *evangelion*, or "good news") referred in the 18th century, and refers now, to Christians of whatever denomination who are determined to rest their faith and religious practice on the authority of the Bible; who believe that the New Testament promises eternal life through a morally transforming experience of the Holy Spirit that Jesus described to Nicodemus as being "born again"; and who are, for these reasons, intensely committed to missionary work ("evangelism"), both in their own towns and neighborhoods and around the world.

Yet, since the 1980 election, many groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Jewish Committee, have seemed genuinely alarmed by developments within American Protestantism. Their spokesmen, eyes fixed on the new evangelical Right, tend to cast all evangelicals into a sinister heap called "Fundamentalists." They bring to their analysis of Fundamentalism the same condescension that H. L. Mencken and Frederic Lewis Allen popularized during the 1920s (Fundamentalists, Mencken wrote, "are everywhere where learning is too heavy a burden for mortal minds"), while forgetting that Fundamentalism is merely a subculture within "mainstream" evangelicalism, a relatively young and extreme movement within an older, moderate one. The insistence of Fundamentalists on the literal "inerrancy" of the Bible in *all* matters and their implacable hostility toward virtually all of modern culture amount to a caricature of most evangelicals' beliefs—just as *Elmer Gantry* is a caricature of most Fundamentalists.

If politicans and journalists are confused by the intricate mosaic of evangelical Protestantism, so are many evangelicals baffled by all the fuss. For whatever their personal political orientation—old liberal, new conservative, or young radical—a large proportion of America's evangelical Protestants have resisted, as their forebears always did, pressure from an ardent few for the formation of an explicitly Christian political program or party.

A 12-Ring Show

The recent surge of publicity has at least turned the spotlight on the continuing growth of evangelical Christianity. At the end of the 1970s, pollster George Gallup conducted a survey of America's religious beliefs and practices. That poll, which was published by *Christianity Today,* beginning in December 1979, indicated that at least 20 percent of Americans age 18 or older—some 31 million people—considered themselves to be evangelicals. One out of five adults described himself as either a Pentecostal or a "charismatic." Some 30 percent of those polled professed to have had a "life-changing" experience involving faith in Jesus Christ. Almost 40 percent believed the Bible to be free of error, although Gallup doubted whether all of those polled understood the Fundamentalist interpretation of iner-

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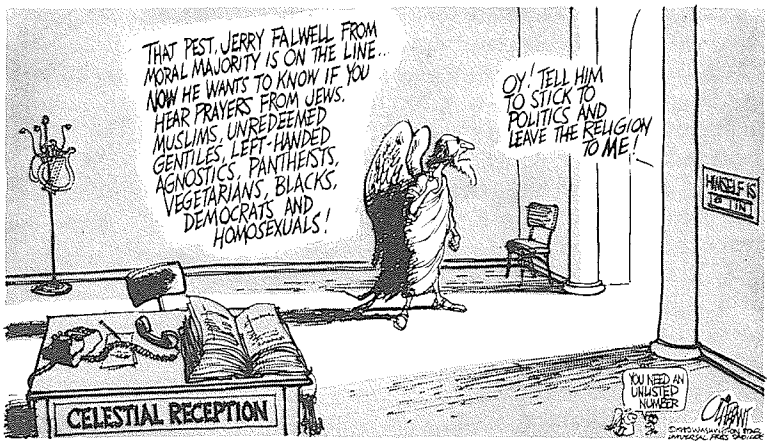

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During the 1980 campaign, Ronald Reagan attended a prayer meeting organized by Fundamentalist Jerry Falwell. One speaker asserted that God "doesn't hear the prayers of Jews," prompting this Oliphant cartoon.

rancy he had in mind. While firm data are impossible to come by, given the dispersion of evangelicals among scores of denominations, some estimates suggest that one-half of all Protestants may be considered evangelical Christians.

These numbers are startling, but the fact is that evangelical movements in the United States have been expanding steadily, at a rate not much changed since the 1930s. Dean M. Kelley's *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing* (1972) was but one of scores of books and articles, generally unheralded outside the larger Protestant community, that noted and analyzed the trend. Theologically conservative churches, Kelley wrote, performed most effectively that "indispensable" function of religion: providing *meaning* for people as individuals and as members of society. They were effective, and growing, precisely because they laid heavy demands for discipline upon their converts.

As Kelley predicted, the decline of the better known Protestant denominations, many of whose leaders championed "Modernist" views of Scripture, theology, and ethics and often exacted little in the way of religious commitment from their followers, has proceeded apace in this country. During the 10 years ending in 1980, the membership of the United Methodist Church declined by 11.4 percent; that of the United Presbyterian Church fell by 23 percent. The Episcopal Church shrank by 16.9 percent; the Christian Churches by 22.6 percent.

Theological Modernists still predominate in the leadership of these old-line Protestant denominations (and of their ecumenical umbrella, the National Council of Churches). Many of them have been all too ready to encourage the myth that all evangelical Protestants, particularly those who are both politically conservative and born again, are rather backward types. They know full well, however, that the accelerating decline of liberal Christianity stems less from a revival of Fundamentalism than from three other factors:

¶ The proliferation of large urban and suburban evangelical congregations *within their own denominations.* (All but a handful of the prominent Presbyterian pastors in New England today, for example, were educated at evangelical Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.)

¶ The rapid expansion of old-line denominations that have always been theologically conservative, such as the Southern Baptists, the Churches of Christ, the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, and most branches of the Mennonites.

¶ The emergence of large urban congregations among younger evangelical denominations, such as the Nazarenes, the Assemblies of God (to which President Reagan's Interior Secretary, James Watt, belongs), and the Christian Reformed Church.

These trends suggest what sociologists and historians have only begun to confirm: that the old demographic stereotype of evangelicals as primarily Southern, rural, and ill-educated—"the people that time forgot"—is obsolete.

Indeed, it was never accurate. While detailed sociological studies of evangelical congregations are few, the pattern of evangelical growth indicates that born-again Christians mirror the rest of the U.S. population in many key characteristics. In particular, they share other Americans' aspirations for upward mobility. Historians of 18th- and 19th-century revivalism have shown that evangelical fervor was not confined to, or led by, the working classes; in fact, those most active in revivals tended to be merchants, doctors, factory owners.

The Fundamentalist image persists. Yet anyone who peers into the vast tent of evangelical faith will find a lively 12-ring show in progress, with true Fundamentalists holding the attention of only part of the crowd.

In one circle are perhaps a half-million "peace-church" conservatives, both noisy and quiet ones, anchored by a commitment to biblical ethics. This commitment has been characteristic of Mennonites since the Protestant Reformation and of Quakers and Brethren since the Puritan and Pietist awakenings in 17th-century England and Germany. The great majority of

these peace-church Christians remain firmly evangelical; indeed, their sense of identification with evangelicals of other orientations has lately strained their tradition of "separateness." Following the antiwar protests of the 1960s, some peace-church activists joined Fundamentalists and a few Wesleyans in the radical coalition that publishes Jim Wallis's *Sojourners* magazine in Washington, D.C. Others have supported Ronald Sider's Philadelphia-based Evangelicals for Social Action.

In another ring, more than two million strong, are a company of Arminian conservatives, descended from Alexander Campbell's 19th-century Disciples of Christ. The Disciples incorporated elements from virtually every other evangelical tradition: the Wesleyan doctrines of free will and free grace; the Baptist call for the immersion of adult believers; the Anglican custom of the Lord's Supper every Sunday. Their heirs can be found in several 20th-century extensions, particularly the Churches of Christ. The sectarian rhetoric of this denomination—"the reconstituted embodiment of the true church of the apostolic age"—sometimes suggests that its members think they are the only people under the tent. But they don't, really.

The "Mainline" Myth

In a third circle moves a group of denominations and institutions rooted in the immigrant experience: upwards of three million people in the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, with German and Scandinavian roots; nearly a half-million Dutch Calvinists in the Christian Reformed Church; a bewildering variety of both free-church and Lutheran Scandinavians and Finns; and assorted Italian, Romanian, Ukranian, and German Baptists. Throughout the 20th century, the Dutch Calvinists have given intellectual leadership to evangelical political activism. They remain concentrated in Michigan, particularly around Holland and Grand Rapids. (Grand Rapids is the home of Calvin College and of three major evangelical publishing firms.)

In a fourth ring are the lively black Pentecostals, who constitute perhaps one-quarter of the 16 million Christian blacks in this country. They maintain a network of independent churches (ranging from storefronts to vast congregations in Houston, Detroit, Chicago), radio ministries, and close-knit denominations. The largest black Pentecostal denomination, the 1.5-million-member Church of God in Christ, is "progressive" across the board, championing fair-housing laws on the one hand and the ordination of women on the other.

All of the rings are filled: by German Pietists, who estab-

A FAILURE OF NERVE?

Among the many reasons adduced for the relative decline of America's liberal Protestant churches is the erosion of their specifically religious *character. In a controversial October 1978* Harper's *essay, political scientist Paul Seabury weighed developments within the 2.8-million-member Episcopal Church:*

As early as 1966, when a commission of the Episcopal Church chaired by [Harvard's president] Nathan Pusey began its assessment of Episcopalian theological training, it was already apparent that large numbers of ministers and priests chafed at the routines of parish work. . . . The excitement lay outside the institutional church, and it was unlikely that even a church with a history of political moderation could fail to be dazzled by it.

In such times it was by no means certain which of many contradictory gusts should set the direction of the weather vane. What would be the marching orders? Civil rights? Poverty? Whose poverty? Colonialist exploitation? The Vietnam war? All these crusades found eager recruits among [clergy] who had come to doubt the significance of the unchanging church in a violently changing society.

It was not only that such church activists turned attention to all these secular and fashionable causes—their license the greater due to the prevailing political passivity of local congregations. Their hands also turned to the refashioning of the institutional church from within. Here, in a "revolution from above," the Episcopal Church also began to incorporate and accommodate the other gentler, introspective styles and causes of the Sixties, which were of the self-indulgent, rather than radical-activist mode: guitar liturgies, rap sessions, light shows. These were designed to effect within the church a new emphasis upon loving and caring, even at the expense of belief and Christian commitment. (So it was—a bit further down the road—that when Barbara Walters interviewed the first woman ordained as a priest under new dispensation, the colloquy went: "Reverend Means, do you consider yourself to be a woman of strong religious faith?" The response: "No, Barbara, I do not. But I do believe in caring, and that's what religion is all about, isn't it?")

By the late 1960s, national church authorities were dispensing millions of dollars of missionary funds collected from parishes and dioceses to radical political movements across the land—Black Power groups, migrant farm workers, Afro-American thespians, native American organizers, Puerto Rican nationalists, Marxist documentary-film producers, and Third World liberation movements. . . .

The "failure of nerve" in the churches is manifest in the conception that the world should set the agenda for the Church. The irony is that, since the world changes its agenda capriciously, the Church becomes directionless.

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lished themselves in the New World during the 1720s, and whose emphasis on inward spirituality was a major impetus behind the "Great Awakening" of the mid-18th century and still influences many evangelical congregations; by Baptists, notably the 14 million members of the Southern Baptist Convention, America's strongest evangelical movement and the largest Protestant denomination in the country (a statistic that should prompt some commentators to reassess exactly what they mean by "mainline"); by the black evangelicals, chiefly Methodists and Baptists, who together with black Pentecostals account for perhaps 25 percent of all evangelical Christians.

Old Landmarks?

The Adventists have a brightly lit place under the tent. Their millenarian traditions suffused many groups—Joseph Smith's band of Latter-Day Saints, the Jehovah's Witnesses—but the only ones today within the true evangelical tradition are the Seventh-Day Adventists and three or four smaller sects. There are Wesleyans and conservative Calvinists, both dating back to colonial times. And nearby is a growing group of white Pentecostals. Both black and white Pentecostals share many of the beliefs of other evangelicals but have one distinctive element: "speaking in tongues."*

Suffice it to say that none of these groups fits the Fundamentalist mold. Fundamentalism—occupying the final ring inside the tent—only emerged as a significant force within evangelicalism toward the end of World War I, in independent congregations and a handful of tiny new Baptist, Presbyterian, and Brethren denominations. It flourished chiefly in the cities of the East and Middle West, its temper, style, and program shaped in the public battles of the early 1920s against Darwinism and historical criticism of Scripture. Then as now, Fundamentalists wanted the world to think they were the only ones who guarded the "old landmarks." They insisted on the divine inspiration of every word of the Bible, declared it without error in all matters, and embraced the teachings of John Nelson Darby's Plymouth Brethren concerning the imminent Second Coming of Christ.

Moody Bible Institute (founded in Chicago during the

*Pentecostals believe that an experience of ecstatic, automatic speech in a mysterious nonhuman language is the God-given sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit. A form of Pentecostalism, often called "charismatic," has been sweeping through many Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant congregations since the late 1950s. Zealous missionary work has made Pentecostalism the dominant force in Third World Protestantism. The two largest Christian congregations in the world are Pentecostal groups located in Seoul, South Korea, and São Paulo, Brazil.

1880s) became after the turn of the century the most important of Fundamentalism's many centers. A network of similar institutions—Philadelphia College of the Bible, Dallas Theological Seminary, the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, Biblical Seminary in New York City, Northwestern Bible Institute in Minneapolis—sustained the Fundamentalist movement in every part of the nation.*

Some of the movement's latter-day adherents share with conservative Presbyterians and Southern Baptists the leadership of the National Organization of Evangelicals (established in 1942). Both in that body, and as faculty members at the burgeoning evangelical seminaries, these "post-Fundamentalists" (as some call them) persist in a determination to impose their brand of militant biblicism upon the whole of evangelical Christendom.

In 1976, shortly before his retirement as editor of *Christianity Today*, Harold Lindsell published a volume called *The Battle for the Bible*, asserting that anyone who denies that Scripture is free of "factual, historical, scientific, or other errors" cannot truly be an evangelical. In taking this position, Lindsell ignored the virtually unanimous reliance of 19th-century Protestants upon the Bible as the authority for "Christian faith and practice," if not necessarily for history or science. Lindsell's book sparked debate inside nearly every evangelical community. When the controversy began to surface in the daily press, Fundamentalists joined with journalists in labeling their opponents "liberals" or "Modernists," when in fact they usually represented the traditional evangelical perspective.

Such was the situation when, in 1979, Jerry Falwell, pastor of the sprawling, 13,000-member Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, launched the Moral Majority. Unnoticed at the time was the extent to which other Fundamentalists, not to mention traditional evangelicals, disavowed his efforts.

Evangelicals, Fundamentalist or not, are a diverse lot. What this brief summary cannot provide is a sense of the bewildering

*More than any other evangelical movement, the Fundamentalists seized on the new communications technologies. Beginning in the 1920s, radio airwaves were crowded with the messages of Charles E. Fuller and others. While the first religious TV star was actually Catholic Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, Fundamentalists today dominate "televangelism." However, despite estimates by religious broadcasters and even the *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal* that as many as 130 million Americans watch religious television programs every Sunday morning, the actual figure may be only 40 million—and falling, according to A. C. Nielsen estimates. Pentecostal faith healer Oral Roberts remains the nation's most popular TV preacher, followed by Robert Schuller, Rex Humbard, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jerry Falwell. Falwell's "Old-Time Gospel Hour" drew fewer than 1.5 million viewers weekly in November 1980, despite his own organization's estimate that the audience is 10 times greater. See William Morris, "The Birth of a Media Myth," *Atlantic* (June 1981).

internal diversity within each of the 12 major evangelical groups, from Pietists to Pentecostals. (The peace-church group, for example, includes about 20 separate religious bodies, including a dozen Mennonite sects.) These evangelical families are tied together—and, more importantly, to each other—by webs of nondenominational "para-church" organizations: Christian liberal arts and Bible colleges, publishing houses, radio and television ministries, family vacation camps, women's fellowships, businessmen's associations, and so on. Evangelical coalitions are resilient, comfortable with diversity, and successful in maintaining loyalties over long periods of time.

Wesley's People

The history of the Wesleyans illustrates the persistence over two centuries of a complex, organizationally fragmented, but nevertheless coherent religious culture. The first society of "Methodists" (as Wesleyans were derisively called) was founded in England by John Wesley (1703–91), the son of an Anglican clergyman. Wesley opposed Calvinist predestinarian doctrines and was firmly committed to the idea of Christian perfection: Beyond the experience of being born again lay the possibility of a "second moment" of grace that brought purity of heart—eradication of the impulse to sin inherited from the Fall of Adam. Under the leadership of Francis Asbury, whom Wesley sent from England as a lay preacher, Methodism flowered in America during the Revolutionary era. In 1784, Asbury organized most American Wesleyans into the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Dogmatic distinctions were probably less critical to Methodism's success in America than was the transmission to the new nation of (*a*) a distinctive *style* of religious discipline, piety, and evangelistic passion; (*b*) the system of moving pastors frequently and making each responsible for a "circuit" of congregations—crucial at a time when the American frontier was expanding and clergymen were scarce; and (*c*) Wesley's commitment to social justice for the poor and oppressed. This last consideration, in the American environment, made Methodists champions of political democracy.

Asbury quickly learned how to develop evangelical cooperation in a pluralistic religious culture. This is evident in his association with Philip Otterbein's German-speaking United Brethren, resulting in the spread of Wesleyan doctrines among Reformed and Lutheran Germans in the Susquehanna Valley. This produced several Wesleyan sects, including Jacob Albright's Evangelical Association, whose merger in the 20th century with

the United Brethren presaged the affiliation of both with the United Methodist Church.

The diversification of the larger Wesleyan movement proceeded. The "Republican Methodists" split off in 1794, protesting the authority of bishops. A half-century later, disagreements over the issue of slavery prompted the secession first of the abolitionist "Wesleyan Methodists" and then of the "Free Methodists," both concentrated in upstate New York.

A Common Heritage

Meanwhile, a "holiness" movement emerged, whose advocates believed that Methodist churches had forsaken Wesley's original emphasis on spiritual perfection. During and after the Civil War, it spread to other denominations, deeply influencing many Quakers, and eventually giving rise to several "antisectarian" sects, the most notable being the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana). It also paved the way for the welcome that American Methodists gave to William Booth's thoroughly Wesleyan Salvation Army, which arrived in New York City in 1880. A full-scale debate over the doctrine of Christian perfection preoccupied American Methodists during the following two decades. It produced a half-dozen denominations that now constitute the backbone of the Wesleyan holiness movement, the strongest being the 500,000-member Church of the Nazarene.

While Wesleyanism's organizational diversity denies John Wesley's dream of catholicity, the enduring loyalty of the movement's many factions to his doctrines of holiness and free grace is remarkable. Evangelical Wesleyans today include not only those in the many independent denominations but also many clergy and a growing number of congregations within the 9.6-million-member United Methodist Church.

The kaleidoscopic character of American evangelicalism often makes it difficult to perceive the movement as a whole. At any given moment, of course, one can discern well-defined boundaries demarcating a variety of evangelical forces. Yet, over time, the boundaries shift. Upstart groups merge into a somnolent mainstream. New groups take their place. Clergy and lay people move from one congregation to another. Schisms and mergers alter the landscape. For all of these reasons, those who would interpret the present status of evangelical Protestantism in light of its past, or would project its future on the basis of the present, should be prudent. And they should bear several things in mind.

One is the persistence of evangelical interest in issues that

demand a moral response. The sectarian impulse (be it manifested in a withdrawal from worldly affairs or an unwillingness to cooperate with other Christians) has only rarely been an important barrier to evangelical social concern. The Mennonites offer an example. They have clung for 400 years to their convictions that Christian citizenship is in "two kingdoms," the heavenly one being primary, and that they must live at peace with all lawful authorities, even evil ones. The Mennonites are reputedly a classic example of sectarian withdrawal.

Yet virtually all of them identify readily with theological conservatives in the other peace churches and strive for a common stand with other evangelicals on both religious and social issues. Mennonites are among the leaders of the radical evangelical Left, championing unilateral disarmament as well as the "right to life." They have financed agricultural projects in impoverished areas of the Third World.

At more than 100 evangelical liberal arts colleges around the country—from Presbyterian Whitworth College in Spokane to Southern Baptist Wake Forest University in North Carolina and Christian Reformed Calvin College in Grand Rapids—faculties keep Christian social and political strategies constantly in the forefront of their students' attentions. The ecumenical evangelical magazine *Christianity Today* (circulation: 185,000), perhaps the world's most influential religious journal, performs a similar function. Most evangelicals share the conviction, grounded in the Old Testament and revitalized in the New, that they must demonstrate their faith through the exercise of justice and com-

A Methodist circuit preacher roams the Western frontier in the early 19th century.

Library of Congress.

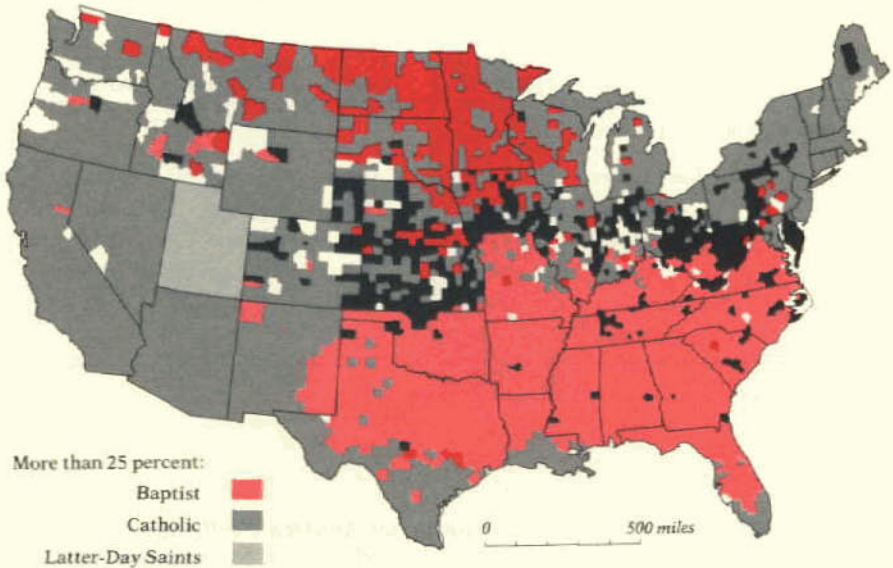
passion toward other human beings.

The preoccupation of the media with the evangelical Right diverts attention from the great majority in the middle. It also slights the ethical action of black evangelicals, who never have separated the social from the spiritual gospel, or their earthly from their heavenly hopes. Whether white or black, evangelical Christians feel themselves bound, as Jesus and the Apostles were, to advance justice by bearing crosses, not swords. For the most part, they do not embrace the neo-Marxist analysis of the economic order, or accept the inevitability of violence as do the proponents of radical "theologies of liberation" now being offered to the oppressed peoples of the world. On this point, they stand alongside Pope John Paul II.

What the leaders of the many evangelical movements—and their congregations—need right now, some say, is more knowledge of the real history of conservative Protestantism in this country. Without this knowledge, and the confidence it engenders, the moderate majority may find it difficult to sustain a middle course. Many moderate evangelicals are insufficiently aware of their own churches' past to recognize the incongruity of the doctrines now described by others as being in line with the old evangelical traditions. From the radical Right, they hear a crassly nationalist appeal for political involvement. From religious and secular neoconservatives in the social sciences, they hear that religious values are best maintained when enshrined in, and enforced by, the laws of the land.

Evangelicals in the 19th century marched to a different drum. They embraced the American experiment in religious liberty, believing that Christian values would most readily triumph in a society that allowed no legal constraints upon religious choice—if only Christians would practice what they preached. Those values would prevail, they insisted, not by force or political pressure but by the persuasiveness of the Bible's moral message, and by the love that God's spirit, through faith, would implant in the hearts of those who were born again. This tradition, which is not that of the Moral Majority or the neoconservatives or the neo-Marxists, is the common heritage of the vast majority of evangelical Protestants.

WHERE MAJOR DENOMINATIONS ARE STRONGEST



Source: Glenmary Research Center, Washington, D.C.; National Council of Churches.

The map above depicts denominational concentrations by county. Some 219 religious groups are active in the United States according to the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches *(1981). These range from the 50-million-member Roman Catholic Church to the 175-member General Six-Principle Baptists (established in Rhode Island in 1653). America's religious diversity is real—but also somewhat exaggerated. Thus, of the nation's 133 million church members, nearly 75 percent are Catholic, Baptist, or Methodist. Three-quarters of the 76 million U.S. Protestants belong to the Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, or Presbyterian families. (The fifth-largest Protestant denomination, the 2.8-million-member Episcopal Church, will soon be overtaken by the sixth-largest denomination, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, one of the most rapidly growing conservative churches in the United States.) The smallest 200 of the 219 religious groups account for less than five percent of total church membership. Jews do not appear on the map because they do not make up 25 percent or more of any single U.S. county's population. More than one-half of the estimated six million U.S. Jews live in five metropolitan areas: New York (two million), Los Angeles (500,000), Philadelphia (300,000), Chicago (250,000), and Miami (225,000). More than 60 percent of all Americans are* formally affiliated *with some religious body.*

EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES BY RELIGION DURING THE 1970s

	JEWISH	TOTAL WHITES	JEWISH	TOTAL WHITES
Years of school completed		Males		Females
Less than 12 years	15.2%	46.1%	16.0%	44.9%
12 years	22.5	28.5	35.3	35.5
College: 1–3 years	17.3	11.1	21.0	11.1
4 years	14.9	7.2	13.6	5.7
5 or more years	26.5	7.1	10.6	2.8
Unknown	3.5	—	3.5	—

Socioeconomic differences continue to set America's religious families apart from one another. With regard to education, for example, Jews (above) still outpace all other groups. Indeed, Jewish women *are twice as likely to attend graduate school as Catholic* men. *Catholic-Protestant educational differences (below) have narrowed, particularly among the young. The same pattern is evident in employment. Catholics moved from blue-collar to white-collar jobs faster than did Protestants in the 1950–70 period. Today, proportionately more Catholics than Protestants have incomes of $25,000 or more.*

	College: 5 or more years		College: 4 years		College: 1–3 years		12 years		Less than 12 years	
Age	WCED	WPNS	WCED	WPNS	WCED	WPNS	WCED	WPNS	WCED	WPNS
18–29	5.1%	4.9%	10.2%	12.9%	28.5%	21.2%	41.7%	44.4%	14.5%	16.6%
30–49	4.3	7.6	11.1	8.7	14.9	17.5	46.0	41.8	23.7	24.4
50 or older	2.5	4.7	5.0	6.8	12.8	14.1	30.3	30.4	49.4	44.0

WCED: white Catholic of European descent

WPNS: white Protestant, non-South

Source: Mary T. Hanna, *Catholics and American Politics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1979; Milton Himmelfarb and David Singer, eds., *American Jewish Year Book 1981*, New York: American Jewish Committee.

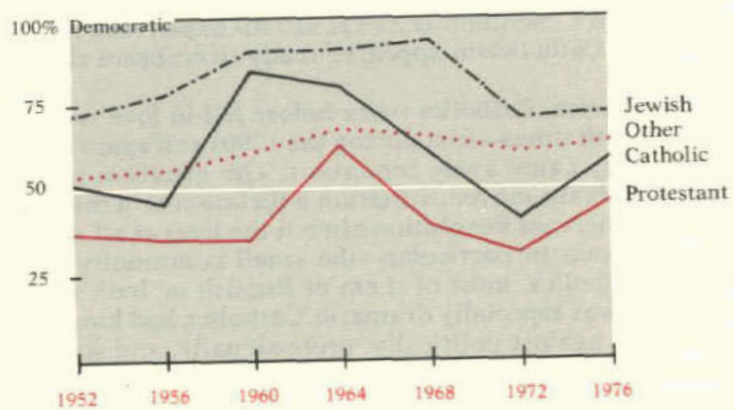
PARTY AFFILIATION BY RELIGION DURING THE 1970s

Age	Democrats	Independents	Republicans
WHITE CATHOLICS OF EUROPEAN DESCENT			
18–29	40.2%	45.3%	14.0%
30–49	44.4	38.4	15.7
50 and older	54.1	26.7	18.5
WHITE PROTESTANTS, NON-SOUTH			
18–29	23.5%	51.1%	24.2%
30–49	33.0	34.5	31.3
50 or older	29.4	26.7	47.4

Source: Mary T. Hanna, *Catholics and American Politics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1979.

Of all major religious groups, Jews (below) remain the most consistently Democratic. But Catholics, one-quarter of the population, provide the Democratic Party with more than one-third of its total vote in presidential elections. Catholic allegiance to the Democratic Party is eroding slowly, as young Catholics register in large numbers as Independents (above). Churchgoers are generally more conservative than those whose religious identification is weak, but fervent Protestants are more conservative than fervent Catholics.

PRESIDENTIAL VOTE BY RELIGION, 1952–76



Source: Warren E. Miller, Arthur H. Miller, and Edward J. Schneider, *American National Election Studies Data Sourcebook, 1952–1978*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1980.