

# FROM HERE TO THERE

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LEARNING CHURCH HISTORY BACKWARDS

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# Evangelicalism & The Gospel

## The Aim of Our Discussion

1. To trace the modern **characteristics of American evangelicalism** back to their major movements, influences, historic developments and key figures.
2. To understand our own religious **context**, spiritual **experiences**, **traditions** and church **preferences** in light of American evangelical history.
3. To **deconstruct** our current religious/Christian/church perspective.

We have a tendency to exist with **an abstract theological grid** with respect to our church and religious practice as American evangelicals. We don't know why we are in various traditions within evangelicalism or where they came from (contra. Mainline). This leaves us open to the innate drift of trends, theological detachment and traditional shallowness.

**Example:** Coalitions / 1846 Evangelical Alliance

**Question:** Why are you in the tradition you are in? From where did it arise? Why do you hold the truths you do? Are you an evangelical?

**Question:** Are we evangelicals? What does it mean to be an evangelical?

## Defining Evangelicalism

Defining evangelicalism is “notoriously” difficult due to the fact it lies outside of any definable denominational history or creed.<sup>1</sup> Evangelicalism by its nature is **trans-denominational and trans-traditional and trans-historical and trans-continental**.

### Basic Definition

A Christian or group of Christians characterized by 1) an emphasis of the **Gospel**, 2) the authority of the **Bible**, 3) **conversion** of sinners and 4) impact of church in broader **culture**.

### General Definition

“An evangelical is recognized by a **passion for the gospel of Jesus Christ**, by a **deep commitment to biblical truth**, by a sense of **urgency to see lost persons hear the gospel**, and by a **commitment to personal holiness** and **the local church**.”<sup>2</sup> – Al Mohler

“...the key ingredients of evangelicalism [are] **conversionism** (emphasis on the new birth as a life changing religious experience), **Biblicism** (a reliance on the Bible as the ultimate religious authority), **activism** (a concern for sharing the faith) and **cruci-centrism** (a focus on Christ’s redeeming work on the Cross.)”<sup>3</sup> – Mark Noll

“Of the various meanings associated with the term evangelical, the theological meaning is primary. *Evangelical* is derived from the Greek word *evangelion*, meaning **message of salvation** through the atoning work of Jesus sacrifice of Christ. It contains a **missionary** thrust because it is centered in the proclamation to the world of the good news of salvation. It also entails an appeal to **conversion** and **decision** based on the free grace of God...”<sup>4</sup> – Donald Bloesch

1 Clark, R. Scott, *Covenant, Justification and Pastoral Ministry*, loc. 178.

2 Mohler, Albert, *Four Views of the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, p. 69.

3 Noll, Mark, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, p. 8.

4 Bloesch, Donald, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, p. 7.

## Expanded Definition

1. The evangelical is entirely **subservient to the Bible**.
2. "The next thing about the evangelical is that he uses this term as a prefix and not as a suffix...What I mean is that the first thing about the man is that he is an evangelical...**He may be a Baptist, he may be a Presbyterian, he may be Episcopalian, but he is primarily, first and foremost, evangelical**" (322-23).
3. The evangelical **is always watchful**. He is discriminating and examining.
4. The evangelical distrusts reason and particularly reason in the form of philosophy. We are not concerned about contradictions between the gospel and the philosophies of our day. **Reason and scholarship must be kept in their place**. They are servants, not masters. Reason can teach us how to believe, but not what we believe. We must not be afraid of scholarship, but we are not desperate for the approval of the academy. Remember, most of the lasting damage to the church in the past two centuries has come through the seminaries.
5. "The next thing about the evangelical is that he takes a **particular view with regard to the sacraments**" (329). Evangelicals have only two sacraments and they do not make them the focal point of our thought and worship.
6. The evangelical also **"takes a critical view of history and tradition"** (329). He sees discontinuity in the history of the church, spots where the church became hardened and then broke free, by God's grace, into purer light.
7. The evangelical is **"always ready to act on his beliefs"** (330). We don't just discuss; we do.
8. The evangelical is "is a man who always simplifies everything" (331). He is a clear thinker. He can state the gospel clearly. His worship is simple and uncluttered with forms and vestments and all the rest. **"Formalism is the characteristic of the non- evangelical; freedom is the characteristic of the evangelical"** (331).
9. The evangelical is **"always concerned about the doctrine of the church"** (332). He is interested in a pure church. He does not believe in a state church. The evangelical is not just interested in starting movements, but in coming together as churches.
10. **"The next thing, clearly, about the evangelical is the tremendous emphasis he puts upon the rebirth"** (332). Conversion is uppermost in the evangelical mind. We are interested in more than correct belief. We want power, prayer, and piety. "Pietism has almost become a pejorative term at the present time and a term of abuse. I am getting very tired of evangelicals attacking pietism. I maintain that the true evangelical is always pietistic and it is the thing that differentiates him from a dead orthodoxy" (333). **The evangelical cares about the way people live.**

11. **“Yet another characteristic is the evangelical’s interest in revival.** The only people who are ever interested in revival are evangelicals” (334).
12. The evangelical **“always give primacy to preaching”** (334).
13. “My last point is that the evangelical is a man who is always concerned about **evangelism**” (335).<sup>5</sup> – Martin Lloyd-Jones

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5 Lloyd-Jones, Martin, *Knowing the Times*, pp. 322- 335 (Via *Martin Lloyd-Jones: What is an Evangelical* (2), Kevin DeYoung)

## Tracing Evangelicalism's Development

### 1. First Usage of "Evangelical" (1525)

"*Evangelion* (that we call the Gospel) is a Greek word; and signifieth good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that make a man's heart glad, and maketh him sing, dance and leap for joy."<sup>6</sup> – William Tyndale

### 2. Evangelicalism and the Reformation (1517-1650)

"When Reformed folk call themselves evangelicals they are thinking of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but almost no one today who might be included under the adjective evangelical defines the word according to sixteenth and seventeenth century usage."<sup>7</sup> – R. Scott Clark

**Note:** Protestantism and evangelicalism are not synonymous realities. You can be protestant – in that you are within a denomination that adheres to the Reformation in its separation from Rome – without being evangelical by existing within a mainline denomination.

### 3. English/Scottish Evangelical Revival (1701-1800)

The state churches of England and Scotland were **orthodox in their confessions** and creeds but the influence of the Enlightenment (Deism) had **robbed the pulpit of any Gospel proclamation**. Congregations were largely **unregenerate** and the general culture in Europe had slid into **degradation**. The Church had lost its Gospel voice. As a result, **non-conformist preachers** (Wesley, Whitefield) began to preach the Gospel outside of the church. In order to distinguish themselves from the dead state church they called themselves "evangelicals." They were also referred to as "gospellers."

"The basic evangelical impulses have been quite clear from the mid-eighteenth century, when leaders like George Whitefield, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards and Nicholas von Zinzendorf **worked to revive churches in northern Europe and North America and so brought 'evangelicalism into existence.'**"<sup>8</sup> – Mark Noll

<sup>6</sup> Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises*, p. 8

<sup>7</sup> Clark, *Covenant*, loc. 212

<sup>8</sup> Noll, Mark, *Scandal*, p. 8

#### 4. Evangelicalism and the Great Awakening(s) / Revivalism (1730-1830)

**Note:** Puritanism had failed to take hold with its emphasis upon introspection.

##### a. Cold Orthodoxy

**Note:** Usually, “evangelical” movements are reactions to dead orthodoxy or spiritually lifeless mainline denominations.

“For some the consciousness of entering the Christian life through a ‘new birth’ had been replaced by an insistence upon mere assent to orthodox beliefs as the foundation of the Christian life. Others stressed the reasonable character of the “grand essentials” of all religion and emphasized moral behavior as the distinguishing mark of the Christian.”<sup>9</sup> – Winthrop Hudson

##### b. Failure of the Traditional Church

The mainline denominations that came over from Europe did not adapt to the climate of the New America and the colonies. With a nearly non-existent federal government America was a very fluid and rapidly expanding country. The climate of expansion, religious freedom and individual rights pushed religious commitment and experience far outside the traditional aristocratic boundaries of established churches.

“It is true that revivals were initially welcomed and later eagerly promoted as an answer posed by the problem posed by the fact that a **large part of the population stood outside of the church altogether**. England the parish system, which through custom and tradition provided the possibility of long term nurture and instruction in the Christian faith, had broken down... **Thus churches were confronted by a clear cut summons to a missionary endeavor**. Given the circumstances that prevailed, the time was ripe for preaching that would **prick the conscience, convict people of sin, and lead them through the agony of repentance** into personally apprehended experience of the new life that was to be found in Christ.”<sup>10</sup> – Winthrop Hudson

##### c. Adjustments in Preaching

Traditionally, preachers were part of the social hierarchy and cultural aristocracy. The clergy were among the more wealthy and influential people in society. As the population grew and expanded the upper class became separated from the common man. With the rise of anti-establishment the authority of the clergy over the masses was diminished. This was seen practically in that traditional sermons from traditional pulpits failed to

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9 Hudson, Winthrop, *Religion in America*, p. 61.

10 Hudson, *Religion*, p. 62.



reach or impact ordinary people. This left the door wide open for the influence of the itinerate preacher and revivalist.

**Note:** This is similar to the events of the reformation

“They proposed that **the emotions of the soul could be enlivened through the stimulation of the senses**. Accordingly they argued for the institution of preaching techniques and forms of worship that suited that purpose.”<sup>11</sup> – Winthrop Hudson

d. Jonathan Edwards in Northampton

Jonathan Edwards, with his unique combination of intellect and spirituality, observed the moral laxity and cold orthodoxy of his community in Northampton. He began to preach against these trends within his own congregation. The result was an eventual spiritual awakening that eventually grew into the Great Awakening.

1) Concern for Moral Laxity

“Many of them were addicted to night walking, and frequenting the tavern, and lewd practices... It was their manner very frequently to get together in conventions of both sexes for mirth and jollity, which they called frolics, and they would often spend the greater part of the night in them.”<sup>12</sup> – (Edwards) Winthrop Hudson

2) Concern for Influence of Arminianism

“The notion of human ability, he believed, undercut a dependence on divine grace which was at the heart of the Christian faith. To counter this threat **he preached a series of five sermons in 1734 on justification by faith alone**. Those sermons, Edwards reported, were attended by a ‘very remarkable blessing of heaven to the souls of the people of this town.’ A young woman of questionable morals was converted, other young people were stirred by her example, the tempo of religious interest increased, and conversions multiplied.”<sup>13</sup> – Winthrop Hudson

Note: Sermons on Justification created the Great Awakening.

3) The Resulting Effect on Northampton

“This work of God... made a glorious alteration in the town, so that in the spring and summer following the town seemed to be full of the presence of God. It was never

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11 Ibid, p. 64.

12 Hudson, *Religion*, p. 67-68.

13 Ibid., p. 68.

so full of love, not so full of joy, and yet so full of distress, as it was then. **There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house.** It was a time of joy in families on account of salvation being brought unto them; parents rejoicing over their children as new born, and husbands over their wives, and wives over their husbands."<sup>14</sup>  
– Jonathan Edwards

#### 4) The Resulting Effect on the Rest of the Country

Edwards published an account of the revival in Northampton entitled A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton and Neighboring Towns. This made its way to Europe. It was read by the non-conformists John Wesley and George Whitefield. When they arrived in America around 1739 and adopted Edward's account as a pattern for reaching the masses of America. This includes Whitefield's open air/revival meetings and Wesley's circuit riders. This sparked the first Great Awakening which lasted from 1731-1755 and lay the groundwork for the Second Great Awakening which lasted from 1790-1840.

The Great Awakenings (and Revivalism) left an immeasurable and permanent impact on American evangelicalism that we feel to this day. It affected **preaching**. Preaching was primarily aimed at the individual's needs before and after salvation. It affected the role of **church**. The ritual, ceremony, sacramentalism and hierarchy of traditional church was gone. It affected **worship**. Christianity became intensely personal fostering a deep sense of spiritual conviction and redemption. It encouraged introspection and a commitment to a new standard of personal morality. It affected dogma.

**Note:** Basically, the Great Awakenings collectively were the central force in creating most all of the modern characteristics of evangelicalism.

#### 5. Evangelicalism and The Early America Republic (1730-1830)

The context of early America development fit perfectly with the central aspects of evangelicalism (Conversionism, Missions, Evangelism, Biblicism, Cruci-centrism, etc.) As the country expanded and populations grew the religious culture mimicked much of the socio-political realities happening around it. Our current church experiences directly descend from this critical period of American history.

##### a. Anti-establishment

"The democratic revolutions of the early republic sent external religious authority

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14 Edwards, Jonathan, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton and Neighboring Towns*, p.146-147.

into headlong retreat and elicited from below powerful visions of faith that seemed more authentic and self-evident. These new expressions of faith, fed by passions of ordinary men and women, did not merely diverge from received authority; increasingly they failed even to take into account the standard religious categories that served as guides for religious experience and formed the common denominator of theological discussions between disputants – Old Lights and New Lights, Baptists and Anglicans, or Presbyterians and Quakers.”<sup>15</sup> – Nathan Hatch

b. Populism

“The rise of evangelical Christianity in the early republic is, in some measure, a story of **the success of common people** in shaping the culture after their own priorities rather than the priorities of outlined by gentlemen such as the framers of the Constitution.”<sup>16</sup>  
– Nathan Hatch

Note: This was in stark contrast to the state church of Europe. Church and state.

c. Independence

“...dissent flowed out of a passion **for religious liberty** that exalted **the individual conscience** over creedal systems, **local control** over powerful ecclesiastical structures, and **popular sensibility** over the instincts of the educated and powerful.”<sup>17</sup> – Nathan Hatch

The argument here is basic. Those realities which shaped the greater union of the United States of America and were present in the formative years of the nation greatly effected American Evangelicalism. Those effects are present today and can be observed in various religious traits common to our experiences in the modern church in America.

6. Evangelicalism and the Fundamentalist Movement (1870-1925)

“Fundamentalist movement was a response to general changes in American life, of which the transformation of the universities was only one among many. Those who would become fundamentalists feared what the massive immigration of Roman Catholics, Jews and the unchurched was doing to a United States they considered a protestant country... **and they were appalled by the vogue for naturalist philosophy, and with it the dismissal of the Bible...**”<sup>18</sup> – Mark Noll

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15 Hatch, Nathan, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, p. 34.

16 Hatch, *Democratization*, p. 9

17 Ibid, p. 97.

18 Noll, *Scandal*, p. 114

“At a time when naturalism threatened religion, when relativism assaulted social morality, when intellectual fashions were turning the Bible into a book of merely antiquarian interest, fundamentalists said what needed to be said about the supernatural character of religion, the objectivity of Christian morality, and the timeless validity of Scripture.”<sup>19</sup> – Mark Noll

Generally, fundamentalism was a reaction to the onset of modernity in American culture and religion. As the enlightenment spawned humanism and humanism made its way from philosophy to religion it had a radical impact on mainline religious institutions. Fundamentalism by nature is suspicious of denominations, systematic theological perspective and confessional context. This is because liberalism made its way to the evangelical church through these realities. Beyond this, there were several other factors which shaped the response of fundamentalism.

a. Secularism: Cultural Separation & Personal Holiness

The ongoing secularization of culture disappointed any hope for a Christian America that had been a central feature of the revivalist era. A sharp separation began emerging between the secular and the sacred / church and culture. More and more segments of the evangelical church viewed themselves completely distinct from the culture in everything from education to art. Activism, missions and humanitarianism replaced a regular engagement as citizens. The message of the church began to centralize itself in the condemnation of the culture, “redemption” of the individual, the believer’s responsibility for personal holiness and the rejection of worldliness.

“The abolition of selected sins of the was the principle moral concern remaining for those whose hopes for a Christian America has been crushed by the changes in the modern world.”<sup>20</sup> – George Marsden

“A line should be drawn between the church and the world, and every Christian should get both feet out of the world.”<sup>21</sup> – Dwight Moody

“Dispensationalists traditionally viewed their task in the present epoch as rescuing unbelievers from sin and keeping themselves unspotted by the world.”<sup>22</sup> – Mark Noll

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19 Noll, *Scandal*, p.115

20 Marsden, George, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, p. 32.

21 Marsden, George, *Fundamentalism*, p. 36.

22 Noll, *Scandal*, p. 118

## b. Futurism: Eschatological Pessimism & Premillennialism

An increasing eschatological pessimism replaced an era of “manifest destiny” and inevitable national glory. Following the Civil War, Post-millennialism, the dominant theological perspective of the last century, was overwhelmed by the economic, political and social upheaval within the country. People lost hope that an age of recovery and restoration would usher in the age of Christ’s kingdom upon the earth. The optimism of this system was met with the hard reality of the times as it was largely a cynical historic moment.

“Postmillennialist typically were **optimistic about the spiritual progress of the culture**. They saw human history as reflecting an ongoing struggle between the cosmic forces of God and Satan, each well represented by various earthly powers, but with the victory of righteousness ensured. In the early nineteenth century many American Postmillennialist believed the **defeat of Satanic forces was immanent**.”<sup>23</sup> – George Marsden

Pre-millennialism began to emerge as the leading theological perspective among evangelicals because it had a “realistic” tenor. According to Pre-millennial thought society breaks down and culture grows worst before Christ’s return. Under the dispensational model the church fit in a parenthesis within a prophetic timeline that ended in mass judgment. This emphasis resulted in a strong focus on personal holiness and an impassioned effort at evangelization.

## c. Intellectualism: Liberalism & Anti-supernaturalism

“The Bible could no longer stand up to scientific standards. Without that, little would remain that was distinctively evangelical. ‘The truth is staring the Christian world in the face, that the stories of the old Hebrew books cannot be taken as literal statements of fact.’”<sup>24</sup> – Oliver Wendell Holmes (Marsden)

With the onset of mechanistic naturalism in the universities and mainline churches conservative Christians rallied to defend supernaturalism (inspiration, miracles, regeneration). They viewed the intellectualism of mainline institutions and churches with suspicion given their association with humanistic philosophy (liberalism). This reaction resulted in a number of characteristics.

- 1) There was a decidedly primitive perspective towards the Christian faith. “Not

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23 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 51

24 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 16

creed but the Bible.” As a result of this Fundamentalism is characterized by an anti-intellectual spirit (primitivism).

2) There was a disconnection with the historic faith and confessional theology. “No creed but Christ.” As fundamentalism’s primary focus was a defense of the Bible it overcompensated and neglected the rich history of church dogma. It also held systematic theology and the confessions in suspicion.

3) A spirit of sectarianism and separation began to manifest itself in the fundamentalist world. Disassociation with those individuals, denominations and organizations that did not adhere to a strict set of theological criteria, or those who associated with those who didn’t.

## 7. Evangelicalism and the Holiness Movement

With the influx of immigrants and a morally declining urban context an emphasis on personal reform

“...according to Wesley, believers could by God’s grace be freed not only from particular sinful acts, but also from the disease of sinful motives and the ‘power’ of sin. This state he called entire sanctification. It usually involved both a growth in grace and a dramatic experience. The condition of ‘perfection’ or having ‘perfect love’ had to be maintained at all times and was one from which the Christian might fall.”<sup>25</sup> – George Marsden

While traveling in England during a crusade Dwight L. Moody was exposed to the Keswick (pronounced “Kesick”) Revival that emphasized a second work of the Spirit in the regenerate believer’s life. Moody, having himself experienced a second blessing of the Spirit, brought this emphasis of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life back to American evangelicalism. With an already existing emphasis on cultural separation, pietsm and personal holiness the idea(s) of “second blessing”, “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”, “the victorious Christian life” and “fillings of the Holy Spirit” took hold.

“The holiness teachings of the nineteenth-century American evangelicalism were built upon the idea that the present era was the age of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which had begun on or near the time of the first Pentecost as recorded in the Book of Acts. Dispensationalists central teaching – the church age was the unique age of the Spirit – stressed the same thing. The holiness teachings, which... had roots in earlier nineteenth-century American revivalism as well as in Wesley’s Methodism, seem in

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25 Marsden, Fundamentalism, p. 73-74

fact to have prepared the way...<sup>26</sup> – George Marsden

“While rejecting as too strong the Wesleyan view of the eradication of one’s sinful nature, the Keswick teachers rejected as too weak the more traditional view that one’s sinful nature was simply suppressed by Christ’s righteousness.”<sup>27</sup> – George Marsden

**Note:** Wesley, The Church of God of Prophecy and Pentecostalism. Innately legalistic. Mysticism.

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26 Ibid, p. 72

27 Ibid, p. 77

# Observing the Impact of American Evangelicalism

## 1. Revivalism (vs. Protestantism)

“...in its wider dimensions, revivalism blossomed as the most successful means for Christianizing the United States.” – D.G. Hart

The revivalist movements of the late 18th and 19th century permanently reformatted America’s understanding of church, theology and religion. What was a formed and traditionally stable repository of sacrament and truth aimed at growing the faith of the redeemed within well defined institutions gave way to a constantly expanding enterprise at converting the unsaved and growing the membership of newly formed denominations and organizations. Once this shift took place a greater emphasis was laid upon evangelical expansion rather than theological consistency.

This perspective necessarily included an increased emphasis on technique and a lessened emphasis on divine sovereignty. Camp meetings and outdoor revival meetings focused on preaching and services aimed at moving the emotions of individuals toward their need for a decision. The Gospel was offered primarily as an entry point for the faith and not the central point of the faith.

“In its historical meaning evangelical has come to refer to the kind of religion espoused by the Protestant Reformation. It is also associated with the spiritual movements of purification subsequent to the Reformation – **Pietism and Puritanism**. The **revival movements** within the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have also been appropriately termed evangelical... When the term is used in its strict theological sense, **it crosses all sectarian lines.**”<sup>28</sup> – Donald Bloesch

### Observations:

- Revivalism is ubiquitous. The largest denominations are born of revivalist movements.
- This is why the Gospel is thought of as something offered in a moment and not something contemplated over time.
- We must be “doing”, rather than simply “believing.”

<sup>28</sup> Bloesch, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 7



## 2. Pietism (vs. Confessionalism)

**Note:** Piety and Pietism are two different things. Pietism is a movement.

Pietism, a reaction to the potential of **stagnant orthodoxy**, turned Christianity from an **externally oriented** and **objectively defined** reality to an **internally oriented** and **subjectively experienced** one. The interior of the Christian life (personal experience/practicality) and not the life of Christ (personal sacrifice/redemption) became the focus of American evangelicals. The natural drift was away from historic and reformed confessions and toward personal experience as the measure of personal faith. **The Christian and not Christ became the focal point.** In the U.S. pietism was popularized through the revivals including their methods and measures.

“Philipp Jakob Spener was convinced of the need for a moral and religious reformation within German Lutheranism. He saw a rigid orthodoxy sapping the zeal from the Christian life of the church. To counter that, he began meetings in his home where he encouraged personal and small-group Bible study, involvement in church leadership by laymen, and **a preaching style which would implant Christianity in the inner man and result in visible fruits of good works.** Many of these Lutherans stayed within the church and attempted to enact these reforms. Others left and formed a variety of new churches, most of them with names including the term “Brethren.” Swedish Lutherans who were influenced by Spener’s teachings came to America and formed the Evangelical Covenant Church and the Evangelical Free Church of America. In England, the Pietist movement impacted John Wesley, who began the Methodist movement.” – GotQuestions.org

“...(one may account for) **the high regard for practical Christianity among American Protestants specifically and within American society more generally by examining the influence of revivalism, an Anglo-American form of pietism.** The sort of religion heralded by the revivals of the First Great Awakening is chiefly responsible for the triumph of a utilitarian view of faith. The itinerate evangelists, as well as their successors, transformed Christianity from a churchly and routine affair into one that was intense and personal. The conversion experience marked the beginning of this new form of Christian faith. But it was only the start. **True converts were expected to prove the authenticity of their faith through lives that were visibly different from nonbelievers. Indeed, the demand for a clear distinction between the ways of the faithful and those of the world not only propelled many of the social reforms associated with evangelicalism but also provided the foundation for viewing Christianity in practical categories.** If faith was supposed to make a difference in all areas of life, not just on Sunday but on every day of the week, it is no wonder

the emphasis shifted from churchly forms of devotion to ones that should be seen in personal affairs, community life, and national purpose. In other words, the cycle of revivals throughout American history, inaugurated by the First Great Awakening, secured the victory of pietism within American Protestantism. Like its European antecedents, American pietism dismissed church creeds, structures and ceremonies as merely formal or external manifestations of religion that went only skin deep."<sup>29</sup> – D. G. Hart

### **Observations:**

- The division between doctrine and practice stems back to this. We don't know what we believe.
- This is why most Christianity is primarily viewed as a means of moral reform and not declarative.
- Assurance is based on the behavior of the individual and not the work of Christ. Doubt. Legalism and behaviorism.

### **3. Conversionism (vs. Effectual Calling)**

During the revivalistic era the primary motive driving the church and preachers was the conversion of the individual. This emphasis moved the church and its preachers toward techniques rather than theology. They chose methods that facilitated the immediate conversion of individuals and minimized those which emphasized God's effectual calling. The whole concept of crisis conversion dominated the concept of entry into the Christian life and pushed religious instruction to the periphery.

"The evangelical message spread infectiously because it had redefined the most crucial step in the missionary endeavor: how to cross the threshold into the Christian church. Anglicans and Presbyterians had stressed religious instruction in their efforts (at conversion). They thought of conversion as a process of religious nurturing, expecting catechumens to leader the Creed, the Lords Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. The individual convert had to conform to the objective standrads of the authoritative church.... In contrast to this didactic and condescending approach, Baptist and Methodist exhorters focused attention on the promise of immediate conversion." Hatch 104

"The first instance I remember of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words 'Now unto the King Eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever,

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29 Hart, Protestantism, Loc. 295

Amen.' As I read these words there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being, a new sense, a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before... An inward sweet sense of things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was lead away in pleasant views and contemplations of them."<sup>30</sup> – Jonathan Edwards

### Observations:

- "Conversion" is a new concept. It brings with it methods that are mainly dependent on the ingenuity of man. The whole idea of facilitating the regeneration of an individual through human strategy is foreign to the Bible.
- Evangelism was moved by decisionalism and not by normal humanity.
- Guilt.

## 4. Fundamentalism (vs. Egalitarianism)

## 5. Individualism (vs. Corporatism)

With the rise of populism church institutions were forced to adapt to the needs and preferences of the individual and popular thought. Religion became fashioned around the common man rather than the common man being connected to a corporate and historic set of truths emanating from the church. Theologians refer to this as an **Audience Orientation**. Congregants were no longer tied to relationships with parish churches, or pastors, but could choose how and where to associate regardless of how far

outside traditional orthodoxy their choices fell. This fell in line with the guaranteed American concepts of religious liberty and the determinism of the individual. Ultimately, faith was privatized and commitment was determined by preferences.

In general, Americans recoiled at the notion of ecclesiastical authoritarianism or the sense that any individual or organization would determine their convictions. The individual was sovereign in every other sphere of life. As a result, the concept of church authority is all but absent from the evangelical mindset and any obligation to a religious organization was subject to the individual's choice. If the preacher or church did not meet their specific need or fall within their favored practice the solution was simple: Find one that did.

"Even so, what lay behind revivalist Protestant forms of anticreedalism and anticlericalism was a strong antipathy to any person, institution, or activity that

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30 Murray, Iain, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, p. 35- 36

presumed to come between God and the people. This explains the tendency among Anglo-american Protestants to turn ceremonies performed by clergy that communicate divine grace, such as baptism and the Lord's supper, into symbolic gestures that express the faith of converts."<sup>31</sup> - D.G. Hart

### Observations:

- The most essential consideration for the organization of the church is no longer what God said, but what does man want from Him. Not God has done, but what can man do. We are innately audience oriented.
- Privatization of faith.
- We read the Bible through an individual lens.

## 6. Pragmatism (vs. Dogmatism)

With the focus on the individual the need became the immediately practical. This led to a very pragmatic approach to ministry on the part of the clergy and to the church on the part of the congregant. Church existed for individual needs rather than the church serving the central need of every human being.

"What happens to faith when its adherents fashion it to serve practical, whether personal or public ends? Of course, **if the founder of a specific religion intended to solve sundry personal and social problems, then the only legitimate question is whether his followers have applied their faith in him correctly**... the mainstream churches, both liberal and evangelical, abandoned large pieces of their Christian heritage by working so hard to make their faith practical and relevant to everything from the personal lives of ordinary citizens to the affairs of one of the most powerful nations in modern history. **In a word, by trying to make religion relevant, American Protestants ended up trivializing Christianity.**"<sup>32</sup> - D. G. Hart

### Observations:

- We have a tendency to reduce the aim of the atonement to matters of practicality. "What does this mean to me?" This leads to moralization.
- Most evangelical Christians have no sense of orthodoxy. Or would consider it impractical.
- There is no sense of redemptive history

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31 Hart. D. G., The Lost Soul of American Protestantism, p. 19

32 Hart, Protestantism, p. 200

## 7. Entrepreneurialism (vs. Orthodoxy)

“Authority flowed to those claimants whose person, language, and deportment best resonated with the interests of common people. At the very time that elites were finding the ministry less attractive as a profession, the opportunity opened for Americans to preach. This free environment multiplied the potential of the sermon as a mass medium: it elicited new and bold strategies of persuasion... This was an age of **communication entrepreneurs** who stripped the sermon of its doctrinal spine and its rhetorical dress and opened it to a wide spectrum of fresh idioms: true-to-life passions, simplicity of structure and dramatic creativity.” Hatch p. 138

“The result of religious disestablishment was a **free market approach** to questions of faith and the consequences were far reaching. Churches that had previously been assigned parishioners in a particular local were now **forced to compete for adherents**. In other words, the separation of church and state put an end to the welfare state for religious bodies and in turn made churches dependent on people for support. Not surprisingly, the primary means that churches used in their search for members was something akin to revivalism.” Hart p. 12

### Observations:

- Evangelicalism is constantly reinventing itself. There is no mooring. Trends. Fluid.
- The most popular at the moment receives the most adherents. Bigger is viewed as better.

## 8. Activism (vs. Compassion)

As the church took on the social ills of the booming metropolitan and urban center fed by the influx of immigrants, it became partly an activist organization.

### Observations:

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## 9. Anti-Clericalism (vs. Church Authority)

“The virulent anticlericalism resembled the kinds of dissent that were endemic to Protestants from the English Civil War through the Great Awakening. Sustained volleys

of criticism about pride, spiritual apathy, and love of station and wealth continued to discomfort clergymen... (anticlericalism) became an intergral part of a profound upsurge to erase the distinction between gentlemen and commoner, privilege classes and people."<sup>33</sup> - Nathan Hatch

### **Observations:**

- This is the root and passion of congregational forms of government in American Evangelicalism.
- The ability of people to experience Christianity without a commitment to an organization.

## **10. Anti-Confessionalism**

### **11. Moralism**

"...the pietist version of Protestantism, the salvation of individuals was a sure route to moral improvement and, thus, a righteous society through the conversion of many." - Hart, p 122

## **12. Denominationalism (vs. Centralization)**

## **13. Arminianism (vs. Calvinism)**

## **14. Biblicism**

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33 Hatch, Democratization, p. 44