

Too Earthly Minded to be any Heavenly Good (Part 4 - Evangelism)

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In this part of the series, I look at the history of evangelism theology and praxis within the American Evangelical movement. My focus is upon practices in the 20th century, but the study stretches into previous centuries as they set the stage for 20th century behavior in popular culture and politics. As before, my definition of Evangelicalism does not follow narrow Reformed and/or Baptist traditions. Instead, the broader definition includes the Holiness and Pentecostal/Charismatic expressions of Christianity. I am using the broader description, because this is the sense attributed to the word “Evangelical” by the press, and the non-Evangelical public when describing White American Evangelical politics.

The heart of Evangelicalism in all its wild varieties is evangelism. It’s in the name, and in the DNA of the movement. Evangelicalism without evangelism is not Evangelical at all. It would stand to reason that this is true for the Evangelical believer as well. It is not out of character to the history of the movement to say that an Evangelical believer without a concern for evangelism is Evangelical in name only. It would only be natural then, to assume that this category of theology and praxis would have a profound effect on the whole of the believer’s life, including political choice. Though this study does not assume this as a fact from the outset, the research is directed toward the discovery of critical questions framed by this presumption. The basic historical research will be followed up with critical analysis based on the philosophies and social trends contemporary with the evangelistic practices as they occurred to determine whether they are helpful toward discovering vital connections between politics and faith.

The fundamental questions in front of me in this section are these: What and who are/were the most influential theologies, practices, and personalities of American Evangelical evangelism? How have they been influential?

I looked for a list of the most popular and influential evangelists, evangelistic movements, and soul-winning techniques over the 20th century. I talked to a few scholars of Evangelical history about such a list, and if it exists in any form as I am presenting it here, it alluded my capture. There are some short lists of influential evangelists, and some lists of gospel presentation methods,¹ but not in any framework conducive to this study. Consequently, this has been a rather long process putting this together. I’ve had to create it from the resources of individuals who have done the historical work on individual aspects of this set of historical vignettes. David Malcolm Bennett has been most helpful with his work on the Altar Call, the Sinner’s Prayer, and Charles Grandison Finney. Jim Henderson’s provocative thoughts as it relates to the term “Great Commission”, and the activities of Friendship Evangelism were as deep as every conversation I have with Jim always is. Michael Cooper continues to be a fabulous resource, and a deeply committed Evangelical resource. Matthew Sutton’s work on Aimee Semple McPherson is simply brilliant. John W. Morehead continues to be a great friend and fellow troublemaker as it relates to evangelism. His expertise in counter-cult ministries and apologetics is priceless. Steve Pate shared his thoughts on evangelism and its tendency toward colonialist activity. This may well prove to even more valuable in follow up sections of this research.

¹ <https://dudedisciple.com/methods-of-evangelism/> is a good example of a list of witnessing methods (5-17-2021)

Initially, all I was looking for was a list of the most influential evangelistic techniques and movements in the 20th century. Instead, I ended up spending months doing the gritty groundwork of pulling together this brief history of an extremely eclectic movement. I'm sure this is going to be terribly dry reading for many people, and certainly will be grossly incomplete, but I figured that I had to start somewhere. I'm just hoping I have not simply reinvented the wheel. If I find that someone already did this work, and I could have simply read it in a short sitting—well, I just might need a few friends to sit down for a pint and commiseration session. All in all, I hope this provides some groundwork for others to consider questions that proceed from this further than I am able.

As a note to my personal experience and direct knowledge of these evangelical practices, I should admit to the fact that this will likely lean in two, sometimes competing, directions on the evangelism spectrum. My personal experiences, practices, and study have been far more complete in three of the categories below: New Religious Movement apologetics, Charismatic expressions of outreach, and the Church Growth Movement. If the list appears to shortchange expressions of evangelism and outreach you are more familiar with, please excuse my ignorance.

Well, now for the show...

20th Century Doctrinal Influences Informing Evangelism:

Similar to the previous parts of this series, where I focused upon eschatology and the ecstatic, Evangelical evangelistic practices are eclectic, and they are influenced by multiple sources.

Soteriology (the doctrine of salvation), biblical anthropology, hamartiology (the doctrine of sin), and Christology are all major influences upon evangelism beliefs and techniques, but, if the devil is in the details, so is God, and in some sense, we are searching for both of them in this topic as it relates to theological influence upon Evangelical politics. Consequently, I will not focus primarily on large theological subjects. Instead, I will focus more directly upon specific details that frame the church's popular conceptualization of evangelism within today's Evangelical world. These may differ from Evangelical tradition to Evangelical tradition and are not typically universal. In fact, this category of evangelism is more eclectic than most other categories of the Evangelical religious experience, but there are a few practices that are nearly universal, and they are clearly informed by the development, and as you will see, the slow change of Evangelical theology over a few hundred years.

A Doctrine of Sin:

Early Evangelicalism calls us back to the 16th century with figures like Luther and Calvin. The Reformed traditions of the Evangelical church framed human sinfulness in the tradition of Augustine's theory of "original sin". People are born into sin, and they are generally believed to be responsible for the sin passed down from Adam as well as their own sins. Some believed that sin was transferred genetically from generation to generation, and others saw the connection as a type of legal matter—Adam is the "federal head" of the human race, and

therefore represents us before God. In either case, we are born with the penalties of sin already imputed to us, and simultaneously we are predisposed toward committing sin.²

To John Calvin, humanity is in a state of total depravity, and people were powerless to please God in any respect whatsoever. Even the ability to turn to God in repentance and faith is something that must be granted by a gracious act of God to the individual. Both the act of sinning and the turning away from sin to serve God are predetermined affairs. It is God who does all the determining, and we have no actual choice in the grand matters of life and death. To others, like John Wesley, people are free to both reject and/or accept the grace and salvation of God through an act of will.

According to Evangelical theology, sin carries a penalty, and that penalty is death. This is orthodox Christian theology dating back to the Pauline epistles and the early church fathers. Evangelicals did not create this belief out of stretched interpretations of scripture, but perhaps they have focused upon it as strictly as any group in church history, and they have taken a stricter reading than most. Consequently, humanity is viewed as being, “under the power of the evil one”, but those of us who have become Christians are “children of God.” (1 John 5:19) This emphasis is seen by some as being responsible for an us vs. them approach to the world—we are in, they are out—whereas others see the doctrine of sin as a radically egalitarian equalizer, placing everyone in the same lowly and humble position.

The Great Commission:

In a conversation with fellow provocateur Jim Henderson, the founder of Off-the-Map,³ he discussed his attempt to discover the popularization of the term, “The Great Commission”. Those exact words are not found in the pages of scripture, but they have come to describe the primary mission of Evangelicalism. The answer to his search is still up for grabs to those who would do the gritty historical groundwork.

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15 NKJV) These words, and similar matching passages in the Gospels and the Book of Acts give us a picture of the emphasis of Evangelicalism. These verses reiterate the command to take the gospel to the world, and call for preaching, baptizing converts, and making disciples. Each of these activities is generally viewed as critical ministry actions of Christianity. The emphases are a combination of proclamation, ritual inclusion to the faith, and spiritual mentoring.

Of note here is that evangelism and eschatology meet each other in the Great Commission, and Evangelicals make a point of highlighting this. Matthew 24:14 is used as a proof-text for this intimate connection between preaching the gospel and the Second Coming of Christ, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.”

The use of this phrase, “Great Commission”, which is not found in the Bible, appears to date back to the 18th century. Baron Justinian Von Welz is often cited as the individual to coin

² The Wikipedia page does a fair job of covering a variety of Christian beliefs about “sin.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_views_on_sin (accessed Mar. 30, 2021)

³ <https://www.offthemap.com>

the phrase.⁴ He taught that every Christian was responsible for the evangelization of the world. It is not a duty relegated to the professionals. Rather, we were all commissioned to do this work.

At the end of the 18th century, the ‘cobbler’ turned missionary, William Carey, appears to have set the stage for this term by his 1792 publication, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens*. He outlines the scope of the obligation for all Christians, and proceeds to comprehensively document the nations of the world: their population, and the primary religion in each country. By outlining these early and simple demographics of nations, William Carey becomes known as the father of modern missions. Though Carey never uses the term “Great Commission” in his enquiry, he regularly refers to the call to evangelize the world as a “commission”.

In the early 1840s, a missionary group connected with the “Scottish Establishment” held a contest for the “best Essay on THE DUTY, PRIVILEGE, AND ENCOURAGEMENT OF CHRISTIANS TO SEND THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION TO THE UNENLIGHTENED NATIONS OF THE EARTH.”⁵ The winner of this essay contest was Rev. John Harris. His winning tome was entitled, *The Great Commission, or the Christian Church constituted and charged to convey the gospel to the world*. This was first printed in 1842, and would go on to have multiple printings over the course of the next 100 years. We see a significant peak in the use of the words “Great Commission” in publications from 1841-1843, consequently this appears to be the first popularization of the term.⁶ The dates correspond to Harris’ influence, although factors such as a rise in apocalypticism may be linked as well.⁷

Critics of Evangelicalism’s approach to world missions note the resemblance it has to colonization of native peoples, primarily by European countries from the 15th through the 20th centuries. The apparent death of the young missionary John Chau on Sentinel’s Island in 2018 reignited this concern.⁸

The initial use of the term was as a call for all Christians to participate in the evangelization of the globe. Jim Henderson critiques its recent usage. It appears to make worldwide evangelism look like something only a few talented leaders are capable of performing, instead of emphasizing it as a simple act for the common man. He believes this recent emphasis has had a net negative effect on evangelism, and that it has been used mostly for fund raising purposes. This concern appears to echo public opinion about the practices of Christian Evangelists.

Interestingly, according to a Barna survey in 2019, only 17% of the Christians surveyed were familiar with this term and knew what it meant. A whopping 51% said they had never heard of the Great Commission.⁹

⁴ <https://theconversation.com/what-is-the-great-commission-and-why-is-it-so-controversial-111138> (accessed 4-30-2021)

⁵ The Great Commission, Rev. John Harris D.D., from 1890 American Methodist printing, pg. xiv

⁶ Visit Google Ngram Viewer for “Great Commission”: there are peaks in the use of this term in 1841-1843, slight rise around 1906-1909, dramatic rise from late 60’s, with a steep peak in 2010, and the precipitous drop in the usage of the word since then. (4-30-2021)

https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=Great+Commission&year_start=1800&year_end=2019&corpus=26&smoothing=0

⁷ Google’s Ngram Viewer does not go any further back than 1800, so previous spikes in the usage of this term weren’t available to me. William Carey’s influence on this exact term may be more important than I can discover.

⁸ <https://www.redletterchristians.org/missions-is-it-love-or-colonization/> (accessed Mar. 30, 2021)

⁹ <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/> (accessed 4-30-2021)

The Altar Call:

The Altar Call has become such a standard practice within so many Evangelical denominations and non-denominational expressions that it can almost be thought of as a sacrament of the Church. Thus, it warrants placement among the theological influences.

As a young pastor in the Foursquare Gospel Church in 1985, I was expected to turn in a monthly report with details of responses from the Altar Calls supposedly given each week. It was not a written rule of the church, but weekly invitations to receive Jesus and/or the Baptism with the Holy Spirit was certainly an unspoken rule loaded with high expectations. These Altar Call statistics were passed on to the denomination as success markers through numbers on the monthly reports with headcounts of salvations, recommitments,¹⁰ and Baptisms with the Holy Spirit.

The second reason for including this practice under theological influences, is that the act of the Altar Call appears to represent a developing theological transition from the 18th to 20th century. In the early days of pre-revolutionary America, American revivals were emotional events with sinners seeking God's mercy in the face of sermons on the subjects of sin, repentance, and judgment. Rather than being called forward to recite a prayer of forgiveness, anxious sinners were exhorted to call out to God for mercy upon their souls. They were urged to seek God's acceptance, and forgiveness for their multitude of sins. Today, "with every head bowed and every eye closed",¹¹ seekers are asked to lift their hands to acknowledge their interest in receiving Jesus into their hearts, and then they are called forward to the platform (or altar) to recite a prayer and receive counseling on how to begin living like a Christian. Often, they will be assured of their salvation by the counselor. They are told that if they have given an honest prayer, their forgiveness is certain, and their names are now written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

This thing we have named the "Altar Call" has been alternately attributed to John Wesley and Charles Finney, but these attributions appear to be based upon spurious information. There is no evidence in the writings of Wesley that he included an invitation to come forward to receive salvation, or even counseling for salvation. The first clear and regular appearances I have found from those who have studied the historical data of this particular phenomenon as a means of identifying penitent sinners is found among the Methodist circuit riders, and revivalist camp meetings in the waning days of the 18th century. There are random events of people being called out in a moment of their penitent conviction, but until this point, it does not appear to have been popularized into a common and standardized act.

In a small Methodist church called, "Paup's meeting-house", in Maryland on October 31, 1798, Jesse Lee made a personal journal entry about a service in which Bishop Francis Asbury preached, Jesse Lee "exhorted", and an unnamed "preacher then requested all that were under conviction to come together."¹²

¹⁰ At some point in the early 1990s (I think), the counting of recommitments was dropped from the monthly report forms, and we were required to give only the number of monthly salvations, baptisms, and Holy Spirit baptisms.

¹¹ This has been the typical Calvary Chapel model over the last 50 years.

¹² The Origin of the Altar Call In American Methodism: An Historical Study by Robert E. Coleman, 1958. (Article in the Asbury Seminary, pg. 22)

Over the course of the next few years, references to calling the mourning sinner forward in meetings appear in the journals of other Methodist preachers. Early in the year in 1800, William P. Chandler used the term “mourner’s bench” and commented on the helpfulness of this technique:

It was a great advantage because, with the seekers scattered all through the congregation, it was difficult to give them suitable attention. By bringing them together they were accessible to those who desired to instruct and encourage them. In the early part of the revival I saw twelve men kneel at the mourner's bench, and they were all quickly converted.¹³

At this point in the development of what would eventually become what we now refer to as the “Altar Call”, Charles Finney was still a young child. So, while it is likely that he helped popularize the phenomenon, this technique was well on the way to becoming a common occurrence before he entered ministry.

John Williamson Nevin wrote a booklet in 1843 entitled *The Anxious Seat*. In it, he railed against the practice of calling people forward to salvation, and Nevin blamed Methodism, for developing this troubling practice. Nevin attributed it to John Wesley, but there appears to be no historical evidence to support his accusation. The mourner’s bench, or the anxious seat, along with camp meetings seem to be a unique American experience that grew into the regular practice that we know of today as the Altar Call. The name most likely developed from the altar rail at the front of a Methodist Church, and the practice of coming forward to partake of communion or kneel in prayer. As a means of passing from unrepentant sinner to saved saint, the Altar Call has become a sort of Evangelical sacrament as important as water baptism in many Evangelical traditions.

Despite the influence of Francis Asbury, circuit riders, and Methodist camp meetings, we cannot place the whole responsibility of its development on Arminian preachers.¹⁴ As early as 1801, Barton Stone and a group of Presbyterian pastors hosted the Cane Ridge, Kentucky revival. They built mourner’s benches in front of the preaching platforms at the revival site for the convicted sinners to come forward and seek God’s forgiveness. The fact that these were built into the event seems to be evidence that it was not a brand-new practice. The Cane Ridge revival was hosted by the Presbyterians, but included Methodists and Baptists, and would become influential to the founding of the restorationist Church of Christ movement. The event went on for about a week in early August 1801, and it was attended by upwards of 25,000 people in what was still the remote wilderness of the American move westward.

In light of the historical evidence, it would appear that the Altar Call as we know it today is descended from a combination of the Second Great Awakening, camp meetings, and practices of Methodist Circuit Riders.

This traveling ministry of the Circuit Riders combined with the pioneering church work in the westward expansion of early America led to Methodism being the fastest growing denomination during this time. It is not unlikely that the quick growth of the Methodist Church was also a significant factor in the development of what we now refer to as the “Altar Call”. This perhaps accounts for the fact that the Altar Call has been nearly universal in Pentecostal circles.

¹³ *ibid* pg. 23

¹⁴ John H. Armstrong initially alerted me to this possibility in a Facebook discussion on this topic on Friday, March 20, 2021

During the development of this Evangelical practice, communication to seeking sinners slowly changed. Where once they were encouraged to personally seek God on their own and ask for his acceptance into his graces, over the course of a century and a half, they would then be asked to accept Christ in a public display of simple affirmation. Charles Finney's passion in calling for an immediate response from the hearers appears to be an extremely influential factor in the development of this practice.

Along with the next category (the Sinner's Prayer), the Altar Call has been attributed to creating what some have critiqued as "decisional salvation". This is to say that salvation is no longer seen as a moment in which Almighty God gives grace to, and accepts the penitent sinner, but the sinner chooses or accepts God, and thereby becomes part of a heavenly family. When we look at key historical figures in the development of evangelism efforts, we will see that this transition occurs slowly over time in developing evangelism theologies, but it can be traced through major Evangelical voices such as Jonathan Edwards, Charles Grandison Finney, and Dwight L. Moody.

So great was the power of this phenomenon in the period of America's settlement westward, that it is worth asking whether social developments such as the political Bandwagon,¹⁵ traveling drummers,¹⁶ and Medicine Shows learned from watching the evangelists or vice versa. As the psychology of closing the deal, or gaining a devoted following was perfected in the business and politics of the American expansion westward, it may well have been simultaneously perfected in the religious setting in a symbiotic relationship. This is certainly worth academic consideration, but it exceeds this current simple study. Identifying the invariable hypocrisies that come with the melding of the secular and religious world are no new trope. Novels and movies like *Elmer Gantry* (1927, 1960), and the documentary *Marjoe* (1972) are examples of this critique, but it is an extreme position to accuse every proponent of the Altar Call of being a charlatan. Just as most salespeople are not hucksters, most evangelists are not charlatans, but the similarities between their worlds is worth noting.

The Sinner's Prayer:

Like the Altar Call, the Sinner's Prayer (also called the prayer of commitment, or the salvation prayer) is a tradition of the conversion process that is uniquely Evangelical. It is used during Altar Calls at the end of church services, in personal evangelism efforts, and it is placed on gospel tracts and websites. It is a pre-formed prayer, which is used as an example of asking for God's forgiveness, and for his acceptance into the family of God. It is often used in exact repetition of the evangelist's words. Its goal is to lead the praying sinner to an experience of salvation. David Malcolm Bennett describes the Sinner's Prayer like this:

The Sinner's Prayer is a very commonly used tool in modern day evangelism. It is usually the climax of a counselling session with an enquirer into Christianity. It is used at the end of church services, the close of evangelistic meetings and in personal evangelism. It is now used so widely that it could be considered an almost universal method of evangelism.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Bandwagon effect first appeared in American politics in 1848 with the famous circus clown Dan Rice gaining momentum for his political campaign by placing a band on a wagon leading a parade. The phrase "jump on the bandwagon" was born here.

¹⁶ traveling salesmen

¹⁷ David Malcolm Bennett. *The Sinner's Prayer: Its Origins and Dangers*. Chapter 1, Kindle Edition.

Paul Chitwood tells a story highlighting the ubiquity of this practice in Evangelical churches in the introduction to his doctoral thesis on the origins and theological elements of the Sinner's Prayer:

One of the most revealing parts of my research on the Sinner's Prayer came very early in the process. While discussing the subject with an historian and archivist at one of the most prestigious evangelical seminaries in America, I asked the individual if he had given any thought to the origin of the prayer. "What do you mean?!" he replied. "The Sinner's Prayer is in the Bible!" Laughing at my supposed ignorance, he quickly concluded the conversation.¹⁸

As has been noted by others before him, Chitwood points out that there is no example of the Sinner's Prayer found in the scriptures. Bennett discusses scriptures that have been used to justify the practice of the Sinner's Prayer: the thief on the cross, Cornelius—the Roman Centurion, and Paul's prayer for Agrippa, but these lack the elements that set the Evangelical Sinner's Prayer apart as unique. Bennett also points out the fact that in several places the sinner is exhorted to cry out to God in prayer. In setting today's Sinner's Prayer apart as unique to the biblical examples, he identifies three "essential elements" that characterize the Sinner's Prayer: It must be an actual prayer, there must be a statement that an honest prayer by the one praying ensures salvation, and it must entail the sinner asking, inviting, or receiving Christ into their heart and/or life.¹⁹

What we have as examples of the Sinner's Prayer today have been passed down to us from popular evangelists and pastors. Billy Graham's Sinner's Prayer is one of the most familiar examples of this form of Evangelical liturgy:

Dear God, I know I'm a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life. I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will. I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.²⁰

Paul Chitwood traveled to the headquarters of the American Tract Society, which is the world's oldest and longest running printer and distributor of gospel tracts. It has been a non-denominational but Evangelical organization since it's founding. Chitwood went through the archives of the tracts they have printed since their inception for evidence of the Sinner's Prayer. Throughout nearly 200 years of gospel tract printing, there was no evidence of what we now call the Sinner's Prayer until the 1950s. Although there were exhortations to turn to God, and as the 20th century came around examples of prayer began to appear, what we call the Sinner's Prayer, with its encouragement to repeat the exact words of the prayer, was not found until the latter half of the century began. Chitwood notes the importance of this fact:

No occurrence of a suggested prayer, and certainly not the Sinner's Prayer, appears in evangelistic tracts published by the American Tract Society before the 1950s. Why is it important that the Sinner's Prayer does not occur in the early tracts of the American Tract Society? Because the American Tract Society (CATS) can be seen-as representative of what was taking place in the evangelical world, especially in methods of personal evangelism. In short, if the Sinner's Prayer was in existence, we should see it in the tracts.²¹

In the end of his observations into the history of the Sinner's Prayer, Chitwood was unable to definitively discover if there was a single individual who is responsible for the creation of the practice, but he believes that Billy Graham and Bill Bright from Campus

¹⁸ Sinner's Prayer: An Historical and Theological Analysis, Paul Chitwood, pg.13

¹⁹ Bennett, Kindle Edition, Chap. 1

²⁰ You can find this at <https://lp.billygraham.org/find-peace-with-god/> (Accessed Mar. 27, 2021)

²¹ *ibid* pg. 48

Crusade for Christ are the two most influential voices in popularizing and encouraging its nearly universal use in Evangelical circles.²² Bennett's research indicates that earlier influences leading up to the creation of the Sinner's Prayer are likely to have been passed along from camp meetings, Charles Finney, William and Catherine Booth, D. L. Moody, and R.A. Torrey. In his final analysis, Bennett believes that the 19th century "Methodist preachers, such as James Caughey, and, especially, William "California" Taylor" were the most influential early voices to the development of the Sinner's Prayer.

One wonders if the coming of the Sinner's Prayer, like the development of the Altar Call, represents a turn toward a practical approach in dealing with emotional respondents at large gatherings, and an almost salesman-like attempt at getting people to make decisions. The influence of the former salesman D.L. Moody, and the adoption of sales principles by Bill Bright make this theory more than plausible. It is not uncommon to hear preachers refer to both the Altar Call and the Sinner's Prayer as "closing the deal."

Despite its common usage in Evangelical circles, this practice of having someone repeat a prayer as part of the process of salvation is not without controversy. It has been blamed for promoting "cheap grace", a term unrelatedly used by Bonhoeffer.²³ People have suggested that it creates a false indicator of the salvation experience. Pastor David Platt started a firestorm of controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention in 2012 after writing a two-part critique of the uses of the Sinner's Prayer.²⁴ At a 2012 Southern Baptist Annual Convention, a vote occurred on whether to retain the Sinner's Prayer as part of their tradition. It passed, and in fact, David Platt said that he voted in favor of its use, but his point had been made. Assuring people of salvation after a quick prayer was a bad practice—akin to false advertising. Another critique of the Sinner's Prayer is its appearance as a transaction with God, as though we are making a deal with the Almighty.

In my personal observation on the use of the Sinner's Prayer, which has been a mainstay of Evangelical traditions I have been connected with since I have been a Christian, it seems to have the potential for creating a dynamic in which the one leading the prayer appears to act as a mediator to the salvation process. Although this is unlikely to be the intent of the evangelist, it nonetheless looks like a mediated activity, in the same manner of the practice of confession in the Catholic Church.²⁵ This in itself is counter-intuitive to the very core of the movement. Evangelicalism prides itself in believing that there is only one mediator between man and God, and that is Christ himself, and tends to eschew anything that resembles a mediatorial role in the salvation process. Conversion is viewed as a direct interaction between God and the individual.

Bounded vs. Centered Set Thinking:

²² *ibid* pg. 62

²³ See <https://www.gotquestions.org/cheap-grace.html> for one reference to Sinner's Prayer in a discussion of cheap grace. (accessed Mar. 30, 2021)

²⁴ David Platt discusses his thoughts on the Sinner's Prayer with Mark Dever. <https://youtu.be/dAlaBullQ9s> (accessed Mar. 30, 2021)

²⁵ <https://thecatholicspirit.com/commentary/this-catholic-life/confess-sins-priest/> (accessed Apr. 7, 2021)

In 1978, Paul G. Hiebert wrote a short article in *The Gospel in Context* Vol. 1, No. 4 entitled *Conversion Culture and Cognitive Categories*.²⁶ In it, he described our understanding of conversion through mathematical concepts utilized within the field of psychology.

With the example of an illiterate peasant from India who hears the gospel for the first time and chooses to follow Jesus, Hiebert asks if we should believe that he is truly converted despite his ignorance of theological concepts as simple as the nature of God and salvation. Here, Hiebert presented the ideas of bounded and centered sets.²⁷

Bounded sets form a hard line around categories, and Christians look for the evidence of genuine belief by one's alignment with certain behavioral and/or intellectual categories. Do they believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, is the only begotten son of God (and in fact God incarnate), died for our sins, and rose again on the third day? Did they say a Sinner's Prayer, and confess their sins? Do they go to church? Did they stop drinking and smoking? Are they practicing the restrained monogamous sexuality espoused by the church? These hard category lines are often used by Christians to determine if another is a Christian, and consequently, it informs evangelism. A person fits inside the well-defined Christian box or does not.

Centered set thinking asks about the direction one travels. With Christ as the center of the Christian world, it is the direction one is moving in respect to the center that determines one's position to Christ. It is possible to believe all the doctrines, live an externally "clean" life and yet be far from God. So, in our eyes someone can look close to God, but paradoxically remain outside the family of faith. Jesus refers to this possibility when he says that there are many who will say "Lord, Lord..." on the day of judgment, and yet he will respond with the words, "I never knew you."²⁸ On the other hand, an individual may not understand the doctrinal content of the Evangelical faith. They may have a host of addictions and bad habits, but be moving toward Christ and growing in love towards God. This centered set view does not allow for hard lines, and boxes of categorization. It leaves us with an inability to make hard, fast determinations on the condition of another's soul.

Hiebert presented these ideas at Fuller Seminary's School of World Missions in 1978, and it was soon offered as innovative missions thinking to American pastors through the heyday of the Church Growth Movement in the 1980s through early 1990s. Notably, this is sometimes still touted as the latest radical thinking in missions in many circles today.

The question of whether centered set thinking has made it into the pulpits is not easy to track, but it may be that it can be most easily observed in the politics of the individual Christian. Politics has become increasingly polarized over the last 50 years. As early as 1994, the number of political centrists from both parties began to retire, and new congressional replacements drew politics in both directions of radicalization on the right-left spectrum.²⁹ There has recently been a similar radicalization of American Evangelical politics.

This observation on Christian politics and centered set vs. bounded set thinking begs the question: Do our theological constructs inform our politics, or is it the other way round? Is

²⁶ The pdf of this paper can be found at <http://hiebertglobalcenter.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/153.-1978.-Conversion-Culture-and-Cognitive-Categories.pdf> (accessed 2/27/2021)

²⁷ He left out the subcategories of fuzzy sets, because they did not fit the example he was presenting for Christian conversion theology.

²⁸ Matthew 7:22

²⁹ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-disappearing-political-center-congress-and-the-incredible-shrinking-middle/> (accessed Mar. 19, 2021)

the strict form-based bounded set thinking still dominant, or has centered set thinking become standardized within significant portions of Evangelicalism?

A Brief (and extremely incomplete) History of Major American Evangelism Influencers:

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758):

Although the 20th century influences on Evangelism are the primary focus of this section, one cannot avoid the American Great Awakenings as fundamental influences in the development of American Evangelical evangelistic praxis.

The Mathers, the Williams, and the Stoddards are just a few of the names among the influential families and preachers in pre-revolution America, and in a variety of ways they were all involved in the First Great Awakening, but Jonathan Edwards is the largest name on the theater marquis of 18th century American Evangelicalism. It is not so much that he was an innovator in evangelism, nor that he held the largest audiences captivated (that prize would go to George Whitfield), but simply that he is now looked back on as the biggest star in the 18th century revivalist drama. Many of these others had gone before him with similar approaches to conversion, and concerns about the marks “true religion”, but Jonathan Edwards has come to be seen as the benchmark of early American Evangelical attitudes and practices.

Conversion was not simply an intellectual assent to doctrinal truths for Jonathan Edwards and the preachers of the “New Light”. The truly converted soul was emotionally and volitionally moved in her/his desire for God. This combination of emotion and volition was referred to by Edwards as the “affections”, and his sermons are examples of this voluntarist focus. Although he was considered a first-class philosopher/theologian in his day, his sermons were written with the goal of evoking the fear of God and/or a sense of awe and wonder in God’s glory. For Edwards, the affections were nearly inseparable from the human will, and the properly moved affections were evidence (albeit, not incontrovertible evidence) of saving grace.³⁰ He spent a good amount of time attempting to bring balance to the excesses of emotion during the Awakening, but he never moved from the belief that the evidence of salvation was seen in the affections, and then resultantly in the actions, of the true believer.

This volitional movement toward God’s grace is something the individual worked out with God. Upon hearing the message of the gospel, the individual would personally struggle to find peace and forgiveness with God, and thereby, salvation. This struggle for discovery of grace would continue into the 20th century when the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was sought by Pentecostal believers through individual seeking at the altar. Interestingly, Edwards’ strong Calvinist theology focused upon the fact that God drew sinners to himself by granting them repentance as a gift, but Edwards’ focus on the affections and regular calls to repentance were a challenge to the emotions and volition of each individual.

Because Edwards believed that the affections must be moved to experience saving grace, he also believed that the first goal of preaching was to touch the affections.³¹ The most valuable affection for evidence of salvation was the fear of a holy God. Consequently, Jonathan

³⁰ Jonathan Edwards A Life, George M. Marsden, pgs. 281-282

³¹ Jonathan Edwards A Life, George M. Marsden, pgs. 282

Edwards is most known for his sermons on judgment and hell. His most famous sermon, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* highlights this focus.³² To this day, Evangelicalism is seen as the religion of Hellfire and Brimstone preachers, and this passionately emotional state of American Evangelical Christianity is traceable back to the preachers of the Great Awakenings like Jonathan Edwards.

Like Cotton Mather and many of the other early American preachers before him, Edwards saw New England as the center of God's worldwide movement to bring salvation to the earth through revival that would sweep the nations in preparation for the second coming of Christ. Within the first three generations of landing upon these shores, American evangelism and eschatology were already married, and news reports became part of the corpus of evidence that the end was near.

Like many of the Puritans around him, Edwards fervently defended the Calvinist faith against the onslaught of Arminian influence. In Edward's day, this influence was primarily Anglican, and John Wesley's revivalist activities in England were part of this influence. Edwards, with the other notable American preachers tended to be a contentious lot, and defending their faith against this onslaught of false doctrine was a primary concern.

While Jonathan Edwards may not be an initiator of any innovation in Evangelism, he is the most eloquent voice representing the early structural framework of American evangelistic practice: It was revival focused, it was emotional and based in the fear of God with a particular emphasis on preaching about Hell and Judgment, it was concerned with doctrinal purity as fundamental to salvation, and it was intimately connected to eschatology. It was also passionately rhetorical and focused on results in the hearer's affections and character.

The American personality has been described as intensely individualistic. From the beginning, Evangelical evangelism in America has focused almost solely upon the experience of the individual with God. Edwards is just one in a long line of preachers to emphasize this.

Bishop Francis Asbury:

American Methodism did not have clergy assigned to individual churches in the second half of the 18th century. Instead, the Methodist ministers would travel from church to church in a route called a "circuit". This practice was heavily influenced by one of the early (and certainly the most influential) Bishops of the American Methodist church, Francis Asbury.

Francis Asbury was sent to America by John Wesley in 1771. Throughout the years of his service, Wesley requested that he return to England a number of times, but he never saw the land of his birth again. During his 45 years in America, he led the Methodist Church as a Bishop for 32 years. During his years in America, the church grew from approximately 300 members³³ to almost 250,000 only a few years after his death.³⁴

Asbury never married, never owned a home, lived in voluntary poverty, and was famously generous with the poor. He had no office, no secretary, and it is guesstimated that he rode anywhere from 130,000 to 225,000 miles on horseback over his 45 years of service to America during its formative years as a nation, and the beginning of its expansion westward.³⁵ He

³² https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/edwards_jonathan/Sermons/Sinners.cfm (5/6/2021)

³³ <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Francis-Asbury> (June 16, 2021)

³⁴ American Saint, John Wiggins, Pg. 402

³⁵ <https://www.francisasburytriptych.com/francis-asbury-america/> (June 16, 2021)

ordained between 2,000 and 3,000 preachers, and it was said that he was the most recognizable person during the post-Revolutionary years in America—even above ³⁶ and his ordinations included both black preachers, and (in line with John Wesley) women preachers.³⁷

Although Asbury was a simple man from a simple working background, he had an astute understanding of human character, and was a brilliant organizer. He preferred that his circuit-riding preachers remained single like himself, understanding that maintaining a family while being a traveling preacher was extremely difficult, and more expensive. In the 1770s his own salary was £24/year, whereas the Anglican priests were making over £150, and were able to live like gentlemen, but Asbury expected that the Methodist preachers live sacrificially, and they did. Shortly after Asbury died, the Methodist church would be the largest denomination in America through the mid-1800s. The pattern of sending circuit riders to the churches allowed the church to follow the westward expansion, and reach small developing communities as people moved westward.

The Wesleyan-Armenian doctrine of the Methodists would become the standard for the fastest growing Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions of Evangelicalism. These would become the most wildly expanding churches through the 19th and 20th centuries. The Altar Call, which was not wholly a Methodist invention, would also be slowly developed by the influence of the Methodist circuit riders.

Asbury would never receive full credit in the history books for his foundational influence on American Evangelicalism. He would be shadowed by the towering intellect of Jonathan Edwards, the dramatic preaching of George Whitfield, and the relentless dark charisma of Charles Grandison Finney. Those who write about him shortly after his death were split between detractors and supporters. He was decried as impatient and fond of power, of which the former is far more likely true than the latter. The fact that he tended to make decisions alone or with a few people he trusted did not sit well with others. Yet even his detractors acknowledged his devotion to holiness, his impossible work ethic, and unrivaled concern for the basic concern of Evangelicalism—saving souls.³⁸ In my humble opinion, Francis Asbury ranks among the luminaries of America’s Evangelicalism during its founding years. He may well deserve the top billing on the top billing on the marquee of faith.

Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875):

In 1821, at the age of 29, Charles Grandison Finney felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He went off into the woods near his place of work, where he had been recently employed as a lawyer, and prayed for God’s mercy in a clearing in Adams, NY. He experienced both the forgiveness of God, and what he called “a mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost.”³⁹ This event would mark his confidence in Christ, and it would become defining for his theology. In similar manner to the experiential salvific moment described as crucial to salvation in Edwardian theology, Charles Finney would see this personal interaction with God as necessary for every true follower of Christ.

³⁶ American Saint, Pg. 3

³⁷ https://www.mymethodisthistory.org.uk/people-2/methodist_ministers/francis_asbury_and_related_topics/francis_asbury_and_women_preachers (June 16, 2021)

³⁸ American Saint, epilogue, pg. 401

³⁹ The Autobiography of Charles G. Finney, Charles G. Finney, Pg. 33

It was only a matter of days after conversion that he gave up his new occupation as a lawyer for the work of ministry. Charles Grandison Finney's work would become a model for the fastest growing segments of Evangelicalism in the following century.

Although, the "anxious bench", as it was later called, was used by Finney to identify those who were concerned for the condition of their souls, it was by no means his invention. The development of the "Altar Call" as a standard practice, as described above, had been in process since the end of the 18th century. Yet, it appears that Finney, in some manner, helped to popularize its use.

In his *Revival Lectures*, Finney devotes a chapter to the defense of what he describes as the "anxious meeting", the "anxious seat", These were devices, similar to the Altar Call, for identifying people that felt some inward conviction to surrender to God. A separate meeting would be often be held, specifically for those who felt the anxiety of their personal guilt and wanted to find God's forgiveness and comfort, and this was part of his use of "protracted meetings". Because Finney believed in the importance of immediately pressing people toward salvation, general meetings also had anxious seats set aside. These practices did not come to regular use in his revivals until the 1830s.⁴⁰

Perhaps more than any previous American preacher, Charles Finney highlighted the necessity of prayer as critical to the success of revival and the salvation of souls. For many years, he did not travel to speak in a town unless his prayer partners, "Father" Daniel Nash and Abel Clary preceded him.

Although these things stand out to most students of Finney's revival lectures, there are other elements of his ministry, which appear to be even more critical as long-lasting effects in American Evangelicalism.

Charles Finney viewed the subject of revival as a science, more than any preacher before, and perhaps since. His *Revival Lectures* merged religion with psychology, and in them he sought to identify the cognitive and volitional mechanisms of repentance and conversion. By attaching conversion to the affections, Finney simultaneously sought to describe the process, while acknowledging the unpredictable nature of it.⁴¹ In this sense, Finney was continuing, and in fact expanding upon, Jonathan Edwards' focus on the affections, and similarly to Edwards, sought to suppress over-emotional manifestations through his focus on the transformation of the will. Unlike Edwards, Finney stressed the immediacy of choosing to follow Christ, and this is likely a primary influence in promoting preaching practices that attempt to lead the sinner to repentance on the spot. This immediacy is connected to Finney's dislike of the Calvinistic belief that salvation is the complete work of God, and that the individual had no power on their own to choose to follow Jesus. Finney's influence around the freewill of the convert, and the necessity of immediate action is key to the development of both the Altar Call and the Sinner's Prayer, although he personally did not use either of these techniques as we know them today.

Finney had a rather remarkable tendency toward exaggeration. In his autobiography, one is treated to regular statements declaring that the events of his revivals were like few things he had ever experienced. This self-promotional declaration of God following in the wake of his ministry is a particularly unique mark of the excitation now evident in Evangelical culture. In

⁴⁰ The Altar Call, Bennett, pg. 112

⁴¹ Justified: The Pragmaticization of American Evangelicalism from Jonathan Edwards to the Social Gospel, Shawn Welch, doctoral paper, University of Michigan, 2020.

line with this, Finney and his prayer partners occasionally prophesied about the coming of revivals. This too, continues as a practice in Pentecostal and Charismatic circles, and in my experience, today's expression of revival prophecies is common (and unfortunately, highly inaccurate). In San Diego County in the 1980s, and in Salem, MA in the late 90s through the early 2000s, I heard regular prophetic announcements that God was bringing great revival that would start locally and then continue throughout the world. Dates were given, and when those dates passed, the prophecies would be rehashed for the following year(s). The season of Donald Trump's presidency has also been marked with so-called prophets making such declarations.⁴²

Finney would go on to promote the abolition of the slavery, and become a force in the movement. Charles Finney would likely have never understood the separation and disagreements between the social justice and the evangelistic branches of the church.

D.L. Moody (1837-1899):

Dwight Lyman Moody was a headstrong young man. He left home at 17 to chase after his fortune. Eventually moving to Chicago, his success as a shoe salesman brought him toward this goal until he was interrupted by the call of God. D.L. Moody then set himself out to serve the children of Little Hell, a notorious slum of Chicago. His quickly growing youth class was so successful that it caught interest of the well-known people of his day, including the newly elected President Abraham Lincoln who visited his class in November 1860, just prior to taking office.⁴³

The same passion he showed for making money as a shoe salesman followed him into soul winning. He is quoted as saying, "It doesn't matter how you get a man to God as long as you get him there."⁴⁴ Moody was creative and cared little for the decorum in the religious world of his day. If he could find a way to interest a person in coming to hear the gospel, he would work his salesman's magic.

His preaching was common and plain, but humorous and filled with stories from daily life. D.L. Moody did not attend seminary and spoke as a layman to layman. In the 1867, Moody met a young man in Dublin who shortly thereafter visited him in Chicago, and when Moody heard the young Henry Morehouse preach, he felt almost as if he had never preached the gospel. "There was a time when I preached that God hated the sinner, and that God was after every poor sinner with a double-edged sword."⁴⁵ But now, the message of God's love for people became his trademark. This transition from the emphasis on repentance, sin, and judgment to love also marked the beginning of a slow but powerful transition in the focus of American evangelical preaching that remains with us today. Moody described his personal transition years later:

I could not keep back the tears. I didn't know God thought so much of me. It was wonderful to hear the way he brought out Scripture. He went from Genesis to Revelation, and preached that in all ages, God loved the sinner.⁴⁶

⁴² *God's Man in the Whitehouse: Donald Trump in modern Christian Prophecy* by James A. Beverley is filled with these kinds of revivalist prophecies.

⁴³ Belmonte, Kevin. D. L. Moody (Christian Encounters Series) Prologue. Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁴ *The Evangelicals*, Francis Fitzgerald, page 254

⁴⁵ Belmonte, Kevin. D. L. Moody (Christian Encounters Series) (p. 55). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁶ *ibid* (p. 56-57)

Following the great Chicago fire in 1871, Moody turned his attention to traveling, preaching in large revival campaigns, and raising money for the work. Dr. David Maas describes Moody's influence on Christian event organization:

During these crusades he pioneered many techniques of evangelism: a house-to-house canvass of residents prior to a crusade; an ecumenical approach enlisting cooperation from all local churches and evangelical lay leaders regardless of denominational affiliations; philanthropic support by the business community; the rental of a large, central building; the showcasing of a gospel soloist; and the use of an inquiry room.⁴⁷

Determining which of these elements were creative and organizational components originally developed by Moody, and which were copied and perfected by him would require greater research. Certainly, some of these items were already found in the work of Finney and Asbury, but Moody appears to have pulled them together into a model that would go on to be imitated by others:

Doubtless few preachers today consciously model themselves on Moody, yet Moody's influence on twentieth-century evangelicalism goes far beyond his role in the development of fundamentalism. The professional way he organized his revivals informed all subsequent revivalists from Billy Sunday to Billy Graham, and his businesslike approach to evangelism continues in the practices of modern megachurches.⁴⁸

Perhaps critically, Fitzgerald describes one of the most enduring influences of Moody's ministry, "Christianity, as Moody described it, seemed to be a matter of establishing a close personal relationship with this sentimentalized Savior."⁴⁹

Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944):

Aimee Elizabeth Kennedy was born in Salford, Ontario, Canada on October 19, 1890. Matthew Avery Sutton writes an entertaining and compelling history of the female Evangelist, who was as popular and controversial as the biggest Hollywood names of the 20s and 30s. Aimee's combination of theatrics, and her use of modern media set the stage for the coming of the multimedia Evangelicalism/Pentecostalism of the 20th-21st century.

There were not many categories of evangelistic trends in the 20th century she did not put her hand to. The platform at Angelus Temple was like a Hollywood stage set, and the church had a team of dedicated set builders who helped create a new spectacle each week. During the Golden Age of Hollywood, many people thought Sister Aimee's act each weekend was a better show than the burgeoning new movie industry down the road. She may well have been the first woman to preach on the radio, and the church owned its own radio station.⁵⁰ Angelus Temple had social programs for the feeding the poor, and caring for unwed mothers that often outstripped anything offered by the city of Los Angeles. They refused to send people away due to race or citizenship status, even when the city was requiring proof of identity.

As a woman leader of a newly forming denomination, she broke gender expectations and became a favorite celebrity among the young flappers of the 20s who were driving women's rights issues. On the other hand, Sister Aimee, crossed denominational barriers by identifying with the anti-Pentecostal Fundamentalist movement in the push against the teaching of evolution in schools. During the 1930s, she was identified as the second most influential

⁴⁷ <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/life-and-times-of-moody> (accessed Aug 5, 2021)

⁴⁸ The Evangelicals, Francis Fitzgerald, page 255-256

⁴⁹ *ibid*

⁵⁰ <https://www.radioheritage.net/Story51.asp>

woman in America, after Eleanor Roosevelt. In Aimee Semple McPherson the emphasis on healing and miracles, the social gospel of caring for the poor, a dramatic and flamboyant presentation of the gospel, the use of new technologies to spread the Word, and political engagement with an emphasis on America as God's nation were all wrapped up in one relentlessly productive 5'3" Canadian born redhead. Of course, like the rest of American Christianity she was not without controversy and scandalous gossip.⁵¹

Although Americans at the dawn of the twentieth century expected conservative Protestantism to fade away, it is clear a hundred years later that evangelicalism is here to stay. What made this possible? In large part it was the work of Aimee Semple McPherson, whose integration of the old-time faith with a compelling sense of drama, the newest technologies, and a commitment to traditional Americanism sparked a tremendous evangelical resurgence that continues to flourish. Emerging from an obscure new sect on the margins of Protestantism, McPherson became a superstar who, though dogged by scandal, was adored by her followers, large segments of the press, and the increasingly secular American public. And religion in the United States reaped the benefit of her popularity.⁵²

Henrietta Mears (1890-1963):

It was the fall of 1890, and across the frigid waters of the Great Lakes and wind frozen Great Plains in Fargo, North Dakota, Henrietta Mears was born just two weeks after another future female powerhouse of Evangelicalism, Aimee Semple McPherson (née Kennedy). That same year would bring debilitating winter and the Massacre at Wounded Knee.

Henrietta struggled with health problems and was expected to lose her eyesight by early adulthood, but she attributed prayer and divine intervention to what would become a long productive life. After studying education, she began teaching school in Minneapolis. Soon she was hired to run the Sunday School department at First Baptist Church in Minneapolis. She taught Sunday School, trained teachers, and applied teaching educational standards to the First Baptist Sunday School for a little over a decade. In 1928, Henrietta moved to Hollywood, CA to oversee Christian education at Hollywood Presbyterian Church. Over the next 35 years, Henrietta Cornelia Mears built the Sunday School (from children through young adult) from an attendance of 400 to 6500.

“Teacher”, as she was called, would help establish Forest Home retreat center, and Gospel Light Publishing. In a time when women were not viewed as true church leaders, Miss Mears would influence thousands of people to dedicate their lives to the Gospel. Bill Bright, Dawson Trotman and Billy Graham would count her as a critical influence in their own lives.

During the years of the growth of Fundamentalism in American Christianity, Mears’ influence is described as interdenominational by historian Arlin Migliazzo,

...a winsome engagement with secular culture and thoughtful bridge building across denominational lines that made Henrietta Mears a leading figure in the evangelical transformation of twentieth-century Protestantism. For while she came to maturity in the cockpit of fundamentalism as a member of Riley’s Minneapolis church and a teacher in his Bible school, her family heritage, educational training,

⁵¹ This information has been drawn from a combination of the Foursquare denomination website, and Matthew Avery Sutton’s book, *Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*.

⁵² Sutton pg. 277

and personal experience of faith led her in a direction that veered off the paths taken by more reactionary iconoclasts toward a gentler but no less orthodox expression of Christianity.⁵³

During her 45 years as a teacher and leader of the Sunday School movement and a trainer of other leaders, Henrietta Mears became one of the most respected Christian leaders in America, and she would help steer upcoming Christian leaders away from the divisive tendencies within Fundamentalism.

Her aptitude for stepping across longstanding spiritual boundaries with skill and grace created new prospects for American Protestant Christians. In so doing, she invented modern evangelicalism and modeled it decades before the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. Her innovative practices provided a template readily emulated by a corps of leaders that came into its own under her tutelage by example, resulting in the pervasive influence of postwar theologically conservative, transdenominational, evangelical Protestantism.⁵⁴

Dawson Trotman (1906-1956):

In 1933 a young man by the name of Dawson Trotman started the Navigators. Trotman emphasized one-on-one mentoring, and the importance of creating believers who were “producers”. Beginning with young sailors in the US Navy, he mentored one young man who mentored another, and slowly but surely the number of disciples who were discipling others grew until 125 sailors aboard the USS West Virginia were Navigators, and discipling work was happening on 50 ships in the US fleet when Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941.⁵⁵

Later, a frustrated Billy Graham asked Dawson for help. Graham recognized the impotence of calling people to salvation without having some kind of follow up for the people who came forward and said a prayer of salvation, and the Navigators pattern became a resource for the Billy Graham crusades.

Trotman created an illustration of the productive Christian as a stool with three legs. Prayer, and reading the Word were combined with witnessing about one's faith to create the stable and productive Christian. Over a number of years this illustration was given a fourth leg of fellowship. By the 1980s, it was common to find gospel tracts referencing these four elements as the components of living the Christian life: Read the bible, pray, find a church to fellowship with other Christians, and witness to others about your faith.

Dawson died in 1956 during a boating accident, while saving a young woman who was drowning. It has been said that Dawson was the primary influence for the idea of seeing the word “disciple” as a verb rather than a noun.

Billy Graham (1918-2018):

Billy Graham is biggest name in the history of world evangelism. He preached the gospel to more people than any person in history. Despite his success and fame, he cannot necessarily be identified as an innovator in many categories of evangelism. Nearly everything he did was already modeled by others: Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, Billy Sunday, Aimee Semple

⁵³ Migliazzo, Arlin C.. *Mother of Modern Evangelicalism: The Life and Legacy of Henrietta Mears* (Library of Religious Biography (LRB)) (pp. 22-23). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p. 23

⁵⁵ https://youtu.be/VQ_dVYTjLb0 (5/6/2021)

McPherson, and Dawson Trotman. Yet, his influence stirred trends both in the church and in culture as a whole. Billy Graham brought the term “Born Again” into the public domain of everyday conversation, perhaps more than any person in history, and his ability to move across denominational lines was more effective than any Evangelical preacher before him.

It was Billy Graham who initiated the Lausanne Conference in 1974, and helped kick off a concerted and well-networked worldwide effort to share the gospel to every culture and subculture. As his ministry grew, his influence exceeded Evangelicalism, and his impact upon evangelism touched the whole of Christendom.

A Brief History of 20th Century Evangelism Activities:

Personal Soul-Winning Techniques:

The American Tract Society:

At the turn of the 19th century, short gospel tracts were being distributed for a quick readable presentation of the gospel. In Boston and New York City, societies were established for the printing of gospel tracts. The two organizations merged in 1925, and formed the American Tract Society. By 1850, they were printing 5 million tracts a year. Despite being a nonprofit organization, in 1894 their operation had grown large enough to build the now iconic American Tract Society Building at 150 Nassau Street in New York City. At the time of its construction, it was one of the tallest buildings in the city.

Short simple presentations of the gospel message with a follow up invitation to receive Jesus as your savior, and a short prayer asking for forgiveness is the typical format of these gospel tracts in recent years. In 2012, the American Tract Society signed an agreement with Crossway, who now prints, sells, and distributes their material in the US.⁵⁶ The society claims to have “136 print partners in 76 countries who print and distribute tracts in over 100 languages.”⁵⁷ Over almost 200 years of existence, they have distributed billions of gospel tracts through a variety of ministry partners. The work of the American Tract Society put short simple gospel tracts into the hands of millions of Christians, and made tract distribution a mainstream activity of gospel proclamation.

The Romans Road - Jack Hyles

In 1948, The Romans Road was born in a sermon by a Fundamentalist pastor. That's the story we have from the controversial firebrand Independent Baptist preacher, Jack Hyles. The only evidence we appear to have at this time for this origination comes from Jack Hyles himself from a Wednesday evening Bible Study in 1970.⁵⁸ He mentions outlining the means of leading a person to salvation in Christ by utilizing a set of Bible verses from Paul's Epistle to the Romans: Romans 3:10, 3:23, 5:12, 5:8, 6:23.... Over the years the exact verses people use have changed slightly, but the practice of using a progressive set of verses in the Book of Romans

⁵⁶ <https://www.crossway.org/tracts/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/American-Tract-Society-132532570170893/>

⁵⁸ <https://www.baptistboard.com/threads/jack-hyles-the-romans-road-and-bus-ministry.102105/> (Nov. 20, 2020) and <https://www.jackhyles.com/muchland.htm> (Nov. 22, 2020)

to outline the path to salvation has not. Jack Hyles wrote a book called *Let's Go Soul Winning*, and placed this set of passages in the book as a means of sharing one's faith, and called it the Romans Road. Over 130,000 copies of the book have been printed, and it became a well-known method for personal soul winning.

I remember being taught to use this method in 1980, during my first year as a Christian, and it remained a common personal evangelism technique in a broad circle of Evangelical churches for years. Although Jack Hyles was an Independent Baptist with strong Fundamentalist leanings, I discovered this technique being used in Southern California Calvary Chapel and Foursquare Gospel circles in the 1980s.

The Four Spiritual Laws - Bill Bright:

Sometime between the late 50s and early 60s, Bill and Vonette Bright had already successfully organized ministry groups on College Campuses. Having difficulty getting the message out to people, Bill sat down with salesman Bob Ringer, and together they created a short, simple four-point outline of the gospel. The tract, now called The Four Spiritual Laws has been translated into at least 200 languages, and over 2.5 billion copies have been distributed, making it one of the most widely distributed booklets in history. These four points became a standard for communicating the gospel for a generation of Christians: 1 - God has a wonderful plan for your life, 2 - Man is sinful and separated from God, and so he cannot know God's plan, 3 - Jesus is the provision for man's sin, and through him we can know God's love and plan for our lives, 4 - We must receive Jesus as Savior and Lord by personal invitation.

Chick Tracts:

Jack Chick wrote his first tract in 1962, "A Demon's Nightmare", because he wanted to share the gospel with some young people on the street corner, but was too shy to go out and do it. He established Chick Publications in 1970, and since then they have distributed 900 million small comic book tracts. Jack Chick created gospel comic book style tracts from a fundamentalist perspective, and many tracts were designed to give Chick's fundamentalist perspective on controversial issues like abortion or non-Christian religious groups like Jehovah's Witnesses and Neo-Pagans. He died at home in 2016, but his publishing company continues to sell the (in)famous Chick Tracts.

Chick tracts are often cited by non-Christians as an example of Christian judgmentalism.

Evangelism Explosion and the diagnostic questions:

In 1962, Pastor D. James Kennedy, from the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida developed an evangelism technique he called Evangelism Explosion. This was later incorporated as a separate non-profit organization in 1972.

As a method for engaging dialogue with people about eternal issues, Evangelism Explosion utilized two simple questions:

1. Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you can say you know for certain that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?

2. Suppose that you were to die today and stand before God and he were to say to you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?" what would you say?

Once engaging an individual with these diagnostic questions, the trainee was taught how to describe the gospel in terms of humanity's need for God through faith in the grace of Christ. After 35 years using this technique, the questions were dropped from the training, because they were viewed as confrontational evangelism according to a 1997 study. At this point, the ministry changed its approach to "emphasize relationship-building and discipling new believers."⁵⁹ It appears that what once began as a cold call diagnostic approach to evangelism transformed and adopted the friendship evangelism approach following this 1997 study.

D. James Kennedy died in 2007, but Evangelism Explosion continues to grow. Training materials have been translated into over 70 languages.⁶⁰ Their 2019 annual report states that 37,000 churches worldwide are utilizing their methods, and that 11.5 million people came to Christ in that year.⁶¹

The two-minute testimony:

In first few years of the 21st Century, I was asked to teach an hour and half long session for a mandatory Evangelism class during each semester at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary. My approach to carnivalesque outreach on the streets of Salem, MA during the month-long Halloween season, and my work in anthropological missiology among American Neo-Pagans made my presentation unique in this Evangelical seminary setting. To my surprise, I discovered that the professor was assigning students the homework of creating a 2-minute testimony of their salvation experience. In other words, post-graduate students were being taught to give an Elevator Pitch of their personal testimony.

The Elevator Speech, or Elevator Pitch has a variety of origin stories from Elisha Graves Otis, the inventor of an elevator safety device, giving a speech from inside the elevator in 1852 while it dangled between floors,⁶² to author Philip Crosby giving advice about creating a pitch short enough to fit in an elevator ride, in his 2nd edition of *The Art of Getting Your Own Way* in 1981.⁶³ I had already seen this business sales-pitch format being used as a means of presenting the Gospel in the mid-1980s. It was a common technique for personal witnessing, and this sales-pitch approach to evangelism was still being promoted by Dr. Sam Schutz (along with many other preachers) in a mandatory class to post-graduate seminary students almost 20 years later.

Ray Comfort (1949-present) and the Ten Commandments as a Witnessing Tool:

In the early 1990s New Zealand Evangelist Ray Comfort teamed up with actor Kirk Cameron in Southern California and Living Waters Ministries was born from this collaboration. Ray teaches methods for creating dialogue with humorous icebreakers, and then utilizes a method of presenting the Ten Commandments that highlights individual sinfulness.

⁵⁹ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1997/march3/7t3058.html> (1/17/2021)

⁶⁰ <https://evangelismexplosion.org/about-us/history/> (1/17/2021)

⁶¹ <https://evangelismexplosion.org/about-us/annual-results/> (1/17/2021)

⁶² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elevator_pitch (1/15/2021)

⁶³ <http://www.the-confidant.info/2012/the-history-of-the-elevator-speech/> (1/15/2021)

Through the ensuing sense of personal guilt, he follows up with the offer of free salvation through Christ.

This particular style of witnessing is perhaps the largest influence among street preachers within the United States. Living Waters Ministries has produced a video series showing real life examples of Ray Comfort's methods in action on the street.

YWAM (1960-current):

The short-term mission was inspired by the Peace Corps, and the increased long-distance mobility of air travel. Youth with a Mission (YWAM), founded by Loren and Darlene Cunningham, has become the largest Christian organization utilizing this model of outreach, and along with Operation Mobilisation (OM) was one of the first to do it.

Apologetics, Counter-Cult, and Biblical Creation Movements:

Christian concern and response to false doctrine dates back to our founder and his apostles. Jesus warns his disciples to, "beware the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."⁶⁴ Later Paul would write at length to refute the Judaizers, who focused upon obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as a necessity for Christian living. The early church fathers took on the mantle of apologists against false doctrine, and perhaps this is nowhere better modeled than in the ongoing efforts by Augustine of Hippo and Jerome to finally have Pelagius declared a heretic. After many failed attempts, Pelagius was finally expelled from Jerusalem in 418.⁶⁵

American Evangelicalism would elevate apologetics against false teachings to new levels. By the late nineteenth century, new religious groups were proliferating. Joseph Smith and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints (1830s), the Oneida Community (1848), Seventh Day Adventism (1863), The Theosophical Society (1875), Mary Baker Eddy and the First Church of Christ Scientist (1879), Charles Taze Russell's Bible Student movement (1880s)⁶⁶ are just a few of the more notable examples. With the rise of Pentecostalism and the Unity School in early the 20th century, the growth of new religions was not about to abate. Some of these would be declared outright heretics by the apologists, and others such as Pentecostalism and Seventh Day Adventism would be accepted, or teeter on the edge of inclusion, with Evangelical pastors and academics.

Philip Johnson gives a brief history of what he calls, "Heresy-Rationalist Apologetics" found in the writings of A. H. Barrington's *Anti-Christian Cults* (1898), Lewis Radford's *Ancient Heresies in Modern Dress* (1913), and J. K. van Baalen's *The Chaos of Cults* (1938).⁶⁷

Evangelicals would respond to the development of cults and new religions, but it wasn't until Walter Martin and his groundbreaking book *The Kingdom of the Cults* (1965) that things began to coalesce into an evangelistic movement. Along with the book, Martin hosted the Bible Answer Man, and started the Christian Research Center. Soon counter-cult apologists

⁶⁴ Mark 8:15 KJV

⁶⁵ It should be noted that recent scholarship has begun to question Augustine's position on Pelagius.

⁶⁶ The Jehovah's Witness Watchtower Organization developed from Russell's teachings.

⁶⁷ Apologetics, Mission, and New Religious Movements: a holistic approach, Philip Johnson, Sacred Tribes Journal, Vol. 1 No. 1, Page 10

were popping up across the country and making waves in academia and the Christian publishing industry. Christians were being taught how to refute and convince their friends and neighbors who were members of these non-Christian cults. In 1982, Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR) was formed to facilitate the networking of Counter-Cult ministries. As evidenced in the name of the group, the word “cult” has been set aside in recent years for the less offensive term New Religious Movement (NRM), and new methods of evangelistic approach were being considered.

At the death of Walter Martin in 1989, Hank Hanegraaff took the helm of the Christian Research Center, and the focus turned to defending the church from internal heresies, and the overall influence upon evangelism is slowly subsiding. More recent voices like Ken Mulholland founder of the former Salt Lake Seminary, now at the Western Institute for Intercultural Studies, Terry Muck, Paul Louise Metzger at Multonomah University, John W. Morehead founder of MultiFaith Matters,⁶⁸ and a smattering of others began to critique the lack of a relational and/or cultural approach to people in new religious movements, and new tacks of navigating dialogue with people in NRMs were being investigated. In my own work living among Neo-Pagan friends in Salem, MA, we trained thousands of Christians to treat Witches and Pagans with the same respect every person deserves.^{69 70}

During the early season of this movement (1970s-1990s), apologetics in general was becoming relatively popular in Evangelical Church circles. Josh McDowell’s *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* was published in 1972, and was consistently popular in my circles in the mid-1980s in Southern California among young Christians interested in theology and evangelism. Like publications from the Counter-Cult Movement, general apologetics tomes would present proof texts and rational arguments for the validity of the Christian faith in contrast to other worldviews.

An offshoot of this same method of evangelism can be seen in the work of the Institute for Creation Research, and its combination of scientific evidences for a young earth creation and using the Bible as a origin proof text. Henry Morris formed this organization for educational and evangelistic purposes in 1972, believing that Darwinian evolutionary teachings were antithetical to biblical and gospel truth.⁷¹ The Creation Science Research Center and Ken Ham’s Answers in Genesis were spin-offs of this ministry, and there are other organizations with a similar approach such as the older Creation Research Society.⁷²

Although apologetics and rational argumentation has been a standard approach to presenting the Christian faith, whether to agnostics and atheists, or members of new religious movements, by the end of the century, new forms of missional activity have begun to take shape among Evangelicals. This is not so much a replacement for rational debate, but rather the recognition that a hammer may not be the best tool for every job.

Church Planting Movement:

⁶⁸ This group developed from a grant from the Louisville Institute. Led and organized by John W. Morehead, myself and Paul Louise Metzger with other pastors and academics have been a part of this from its inception.

www.multifaithmatters.org (5/5/2021)

⁶⁹ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB116225928137808417> (5/5/2021)

⁷⁰ <https://www.benjaminlcorey.com/interview-with-the-pastor-of-witch-city/> (5/5/2021)

⁷¹ <https://www.icr.org/tenets> (5/5/2021)

⁷² <https://www.creationresearch.org/general-information> (5/5/2021)

Missionary/missiologist Donald McGavran founded The Institute of Church Growth at Northwest Christian College in 1961, and later became the first dean of the new Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Missions in 1965. His lectures were published as *Understanding Church Growth* in 1970. His theory of the *homogenous unit principle*—that people are more likely to convert en masse when they share common demographics—became a foundational principle of the Church Growth movement in the 1980s.

Church Planting (starting new churches) and Church Growth became primary obsessions for the Evangelical Movement in the last twenty years of the 20th century. Denominations set target goals for planting new churches by the year 2000. For example, I attended the Foursquare National Convention in San Diego in 1988. They announced a plan to plant enough churches to have 2000 churches in the US by the year 2000. Pastor Ralph Moore from Hope Chapel in Hermosa Beach, CA spoke on a morning plenary session, and presciently declared that if the denomination reached that goal, they would reach 3000 by 2010, but if they could not reach the goal, they may never reach it. Over the next dozen years, Foursquare closed as many churches as they opened, and effectively had a zero net gain over the 1990s decade. They still had approximately 1,800 churches at the turn of the millennium. Today, they list “more than 1,700 churches” in the US.⁷³

The Church Growth Movement worked to help churches grow into big churches from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. Techniques included the Seeker Sensitive Church model popularized by Bill Hybels⁷⁴ and the Willow Creek Community Church. My personal experience in the training seminars, and conferences was that the movement created tracks according to church size: how to grow your church beyond 100, 250, 500, or 1,000. I remember traveling to periodic one-day conferences in Hermosa Beach with fellow small church pastors; one cynically remarked, “Most of us are just trying to grow our churches beyond 25.”⁷⁵

Statistics were provided by Win and Charles Arn showing that people who joined churches and remained faithful in attendance were overwhelmingly influenced by friends and family instead of evangelistic crusades or gospel tracts. This may well be one of the primary influences of the Friendship Evangelism model.

Some of the primary authors and voices to this movement include Win and Charles Arn, C. Peter Wagner, Elmer Townes, and Lyle Schaller. Among these, it was only Lyle Schaller who spoke to the dynamics of small church life.⁷⁶

Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization

Under the encouragement of Billy Graham, 2,400 ministers of the gospel from 150 nations gathered in Lausanne, Switzerland for the First International Congress on World Evangelization in 1974.⁷⁷ John Stott wrote the covenant for the congress.⁷⁸

⁷³ <https://www.foursquare.org/why/church/> (1/27/2021)

⁷⁴ Bill Hybels is among a list of embattled mega-church pastors and former pastors with a trail of abused women in his history. See my Wild Theology Podcast on this issue. <https://youtu.be/J6T3SxlJpmA> (1/27/2021)

⁷⁵ It should be noted that in Kristin Schwarz seminal work, *Natural Church Development* (1996), there was a rather stunning observation at the bottom of page 38. Small Churches were more effective in most of the eight observed categories, and were significantly more effective in reaching un-churched people than large churches.

⁷⁶ <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol6/iss4/14/>

⁷⁷ <https://lausanne.org/our-legacy>

⁷⁸ <https://lausanne.org/content/covenant/lausanne-covenant#cov>

The Congress has since met two more times: Manila, Philippines in 1989, and Cape Town, South Africa in 2010. This has been a gathering of Evangelical leaders united for the purpose of reasserting their commitment to focus on the Evangelization of the World. The foci of the most recent Lausanne Congress included the affirmation of the command to evangelize the whole world, a commitment to alleviate suffering and bring peace, the necessity to reach those in other religions and religious systems, the promotion of biblical literacy, a call to humility and integrity, and a challenge to collaborate with other gospel ministers around the world.⁷⁹

Although this is an international congress, its influence on American Evangelicals in respect to world missions has recommitted many leaders and churches to the missionary impetus foundational to Evangelical evangelism.

Alpha Courses:

In 1977, Holy Trinity Brompton in Knightsbridge, London, England developed a course on the basics of the faith for church parishioners. It was a 10-week course on basic teachings of the Christian faith from an Evangelical/Charismatic perspective. After a number of iterations, Charismatic Anglican priest Nicki Gumbel took over as director of the program in 1990. From 1991 to 1995 it grew from four courses to 2,500 courses around the UK.⁸⁰ 1998 was the peak of its popularity in the UK, but in 2019, it was still growing significantly in the US with 426,231 participants, and 7420 churches running 15,542 courses.

Alpha has a course book, and a set of videos. It typically occurs in the homes of the church parishioners or in cafes among friends and neighbors who eat together then study and discuss the materials. What began as a training course in the basics of the faith has become a church growth and evangelism tool around the world. It now includes specific courses for children, marriages, and a prison support program for released ex-offenders. It has reached over 100 nations and been translated into over 100 languages. Although this movement is not based in American Evangelicalism, it has been used by scores of American Evangelicals to share their faith, and it has a uniquely Evangelical and Charismatic emphasis to its program.

John Wimber, Peter Wagner, and Power Evangelism:

In 1982, about 30 churches left the Calvary Chapel Association and formed the Association of Vineyard Churches. There is some disagreement about these numbers. John Wimber, the man behind the impetus for this transition, said it was about 30 churches, while Chuck Smith, the Calvary Chapel founder, said that it was as many as 100.⁸¹ John Lai was the pastor of the Escondido Calvary Chapel at the time. His church was one of the Vineyard breakaway churches, and I was briefly involved at the church around the time of the transition. On a recent Facebook post, he commented that the first leadership gathering of the newly forming Vineyard denomination had just over 20 churches. It is likely that the original number

⁷⁹ <https://youtu.be/TAsBddvELkk> (5-3-2021)

⁸⁰ <https://alphausa.org/annualreport>

⁸¹ Church Identity and Change - editors David A. Roozen and James R. Nieman, chapter by Donald E. Miller, Routinizing Charisma: The Vineyard Christian Fellowship in the Post-Wimber Era (page 148)

was around 30, but a slow peel away from Calvary Chapel occurred over a couple years that eventually reached nearly 100.⁸²

From 1982 to 1985 John Wimber and C. Peter Wagner co-taught the class MC510 at Fuller School of World Missions initially entitled *Signs, Wonders, & Church Growth*. It was a wildly popular class. My library included a short bi-fold booklet Wimber wrote on signs and wonders through church history. This was part of the MC510 class, and was basically “the white papers”, which later were expanded into his book *Power Evangelism* (1986).

John Wimber and the Vineyard movement provided the impetus for congregational growth by highlighting signs and wonders, and supernatural gifts practiced by laymen and women in the church. Wimber's influence was a combination of Charismatic Christianity and his Quaker upbringing. Simultaneously, C. Peter Wagner provided the academic support for Third Wave Pentecostalism through Fuller Seminary and conferences. A group of about 40 scholars and missionaries gathered at Fuller in 1988, and presented lectures on topics of Power Evangelism, which was initially published in 1990 as *Wrestling with Dark Angels*.⁸³ This became the academic support base for a popular rise in Spiritual Warfare and signs and wonders ministries.

Subcategories of Power Evangelism have included Prophetic Evangelism and Dream Interpretation. The late John Paul Jackson, and his Streams Academy took the lead on training people for this form of outreach. Initially, John Paul Jackson taught Dream Interpretation and Prophetic ministry in church settings. My friend Steven Maddox, who traveled with John Paul, began to interpret dreams as an evangelistic contact point. He would set up a table in Borders, or Barnes and Noble bookstores. While pastoring in Salem, Massachusetts, I organized a live outdoor music stage for the month-long Halloween event for over 20 years. In 2003, Steve Maddox and I began to use this outreach technique on the streets of Salem, and by the following year, Streams Academy joined us on weekends through the month of October. For the next 18 years, various ministry teams from different schools, churches, and outreach programs joined our church in Salem to set up ministry tents, interpret dreams, and give prophetic words to people. Visitors and locals stood in lines that were up to an hour long, and this continued throughout the whole of those 18 years. This style of outreach was simultaneously occurring in other events such as Burning Man, Body Mind Spirit Expos, and local fairs. It spread quickly to include thousands of lay-Christians participating in prophetic evangelistic outreach within a handful of years, and included ministry schools from a number of popular charismatic mega-churches.

Final Thoughts on my List:

There are a number of well-known individuals, movements, and personal soul-winning techniques I have not mentioned here, and probably scores more that I haven't even heard of. George Whitfield, Billy Sunday, Kathryn Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, Luis Palau could easily be

⁸² John Lai's reply by Facebook post 1/29/2021: "I can't remember the exact number, but JW's number is closer. I could be wrong, but I think there were ~22 churches represented at the very first conference held in the Central Coast area near Los Osos. This happened shortly after Chuck Smith sent out his "decide what you are" letter to all the Calvary Chapels and Vineyards. It grew quickly from there. I don't know how many Calvarys eventually identified with the Vineyard in the end. It could have been a hundred, but I have no way of verifying that."

⁸³ *Supernatural Forces in Spiritual Warfare*, edited by Douglas F. Pennoyer and C. Peter Wagner 2012 reprint, page 9

added to the list simply for their fame, but I wasn't sure they added anything significantly unique to the list as it relates to the focus of this study of primary influences on American Evangelical church culture and beliefs. George Whitfield and Billy Sunday may be exceptions and you can chastise me for that if it seems fitting. Individuals like Doug Coe and his political/evangelical movement called The Family represent more subtle but powerful expressions of Evangelical influence.

Denominations and church movements born in the 20th century could have been added to this list. Pentecostalism and Charismatic churches, their denominational and non-denominational affiliations are the powerhouse of church growth in broader Evangelicalism. Calvary Chapel, particularly on the West Coast, and the Association of Vineyard Churches are other robust examples of church growth, and consequently, evangelism.

The Bridge to Life gospel tract, Promise Keepers, the House Church movement, the Master's Plan for Evangelism, Door to Door evangelism, taking spiritual surveys, and Bus Ministries (which seems to have been perfected by Romans Road preacher Jack Hyles) are potential additions as well, but may not add significantly unique points or have enough popular appeal within Evangelicalism as it relates to influencing its culture and politics. Other potential items appear to be subcategories of those that are listed above. Servant Evangelism, for example, promoted by Steve Sjogren's Church in Cincinnati, seems to me to be a sub-category of Friendship Evangelism. Similarly, there are other College Campus ministries, but Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru), and Youth for Christ are among the first and largest of these.

Perhaps, most evidently missing from this list (to those who know me) are the missional and emergent movements. The Emergent Conversation, which was had its largest influence in infancy of the 21st Century does not appear to have maintained the foundational elements of a unique evangelistic thrust. Meanwhile the "Missional Movement" led by people like Alan Hirsch was an early breakaway from the Emergent Conversation, and it sought to focus upon church planting, and church growth and health, but the term "missional" appears to be experiencing a bit of the same tension that its mother, the Emergent Conversation did.

The inclusion of the couple events/movements I was directly involved in are only here for historic interest, and as evidence to my direct involvement with the dynamics of Evangelical evangelism efforts. It should be clear that I am no stranger to this issue, but rather that it has been in some way, a focus of my Evangelical practice for the last 40 years. Although, I would fall into some categorization as an innovative fringe practitioner, I don't think I've had much influence over contemporary Evangelical evangelistic behavior, other than among a handful of renegade Pentecostals and neo-Charismatics who flit in and out of Salem, MA during the visitor season, and perhaps among a handful of Christian Burners, missional festival goers, and pioneer Anglican innovators.

Where Do I Go from Here?

Where this study goes from here is still to be ascertained. As it is with doing many types of scholarly work (of which this is at best a sophomoric attempt), one has to study broadly first in order to figure out what one needs to specifically study. My feelings at this point are split in a couple directions. After covering general historic views of Evangelical eschatology, the ecstatic, and now evangelism, I am wondering if I should also cover ecclesiology.

Evangelical views of church development and leadership are likely to carry deep attachments to how Evangelicals view non-Christian (i.e. political) leadership as well. Yet, I feel the need to look more critically at the three categories I have already covered. It seems necessary to view them in the light of non-Christian 20th century influences. Philosophy, science, politics, economy, and a host of surrounding factors are likely to have had significant impact on the development of Evangelical theology. This is particularly true since Evangelicalism has often focused upon crowd size and conversion results, and the movement has traditionally developed popular theologies as opposed to deeply academic theologies. Dwight L. Moody, Aimee Semple McPherson, and Billy Graham are prime examples of this populist approach. Viewing Evangelical practices through the lens of Pragmatism,⁸⁴ or through the development of sales techniques and capitalist ventures may also yield fruit. Other issues like the rise of Darwinian evolution, the 60s free love culture, and abortion rights may also shed light on how and why the church has developed in the way it has. Thus, the factors of theological development consist of both integration of the surrounding culture, and battling against it. Of course, there will be significant difficulty determining who influenced whom. Was the church influential in the world, or vice-versa? The answer to such a question is likely messy, and the relationships, symbiotic. Multi-Level Marketing programs and the rise of Donald Trump are key examples of this complex symbiosis.

⁸⁴ Justified: The Pragmaticization of American Evangelicalism from Jonathan Edwards to the Social Gospel
Doctoral Committee: by Shawn Welch. Docotoral dissertation. University of Michigan, 2020. See my podcast with Shawn Welch: <https://wildtheology.podbean.com/e/wild-theology-007-shawn-welch-on-the-pragmatisms-of-evangelicalism/>