

2013

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Evangelicalism and Religious Pluralism in Contemporary America: Diversity Without, Diversity Within, and Maintaining the Borders

WILLIAM VANCE TROLLINGER, JR.

NOT THAT MANY PEOPLE need convincing, but the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) provides confirming evidence that evangelicalism in America is alive and well. In this survey, which involved 54,461 telephone interviews, the 76% of respondents who identified themselves as Christians were asked a follow-up question: "Do you identify as a Born Again or Evangelical Christian?" Forty-five percent answered yes. This number obviously includes a fair number of folks within "mainline" denominations and within predominately African-American churches; more surprising, perhaps, 18.9% of American Catholics identified themselves as "born again" or "evangelical." If one were to depend solely on the findings of the American Religious Identification Survey, one could reasonably conclude that, when it comes to religion, there are basically three types of folks in the United States: Nonbelievers, Other Christians, and evangelical Christians (with only 3.9% of Americans identifying themselves with non-Christian religious groups).¹

It must be noted that, when it comes to evangelicals, the ARIS report is in keeping with polling results over the past two decades, and in keeping with what many scholars of and commentators on religion in the United States have already noted, that is, since the mid-1970s evangelicals have been the most dynamic, vibrant subgroup of American Protestants, with their influence spreading far beyond the Protestant confines.² But this raises the question: What do we mean by "evangelical"? Regarding the ARIS survey, the summary report notes that—although interviewers did not supply respondents with definitions of "born again" and "evangelical" (just as they did not provide definitions of "religion," "Christian," and so on)—"born again" and "evangelical" are "usually associated with a 'personal relationship' with Jesus Christ together with a certain view of salvation, scripture, and missionary work." This serves as a good working theological definition: evangelicals are Christians who

emphasize the necessity of having a particular and typically dramatic conversion experience, who hold a very high view of scripture and its authority (which often translates into language of understanding the Bible as being “literally” true), and who actively seek to share the Gospel with others.³

That 45% of all American Christians claim to be “evangelical” could suggest that this definition is too tidy, that some sizable minority of these Christians would not articulate their “evangelical-ness” in quite this way. That this would be the case is not surprising, particularly given that there is an inherent instability built into the term. Not only do the evangelical emphases on conversion (the “born again” experience) and the Bible as final authority (even literally true and inerrant) strongly encourage an emphasis on the individual and his/her understanding of the Christian faith, but such commitments have also militated against primary loyalty to an institution (e.g., denomination). Of course, these evangelicals have gathered together in faith communities, but these communities have always been contingent—open to being radically reshaped, abandoned, recreated by individuals or groups of individuals, with their own particular understanding of faith and the Bible. And as evangelicals move out into the world, spreading the Gospel, new ever-changing communities of various stripes of evangelicals are constantly being formed.

Given this definitional instability, given there is no “Evangelical” denomination, it is a challenge to ascertain how and where one should look to examine the impact of religious pluralism on evangelical Protestants. One approach is found in Christian Smith’s 1998 sociological study, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. In the best study of its kind, Smith and his collaborators used phone surveys and face-to-face interviews to conclude that self-identified evangelicals have higher levels of religious orthodoxy, confidence, and church participation than individuals in other religious traditions.⁴ That is to say, evangelicals are thriving in this religiously pluralistic culture. But according to Smith, they are thriving not in spite of religious pluralism, not because they have sheltered themselves from religious pluralism. Instead, evangelicals—whose approach to the larger culture is one of “engaged orthodoxy”—are thriving *because* of religious pluralism. As Smith persuasively concludes, “it is precisely the tension-gathering confrontation between the activist, expansive, engaging evangelical subculture and the pluralistic, nonevangelical dominant culture that it inhabits—which to evangelicals seems increasingly hostile and in need of redemptive influence—that generates evangelicalism’s vitality.”⁵

American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving provides a solid sociological foundation for understanding the impact of religious pluralism on American evangelicals. Building on Smith’s work, taking as a given that evangelicalism thrives in a pluralistic environment, this essay seeks to look more closely at how evangelical opinion-shapers negotiate the issues raised by religious pluralism, how their discourse is affected by religious pluralism, and how they seek to make sense of the “increasingly hostile culture” to the broader evangelical public.⁶ In this regard, and given evangelicalism’s stake in maintaining an “orthodox” understanding of Christianity in its engagement with the wider culture,

it makes sense to ask how evangelical theologians have responded to religious pluralism. As the Finnish theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen has pointed out, “the relation of Christian faith to other living faiths” has been an “urgent issue” for evangelical theologians since the late 1980s. Kärkkäinen, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, asserts that some of this new-found interest grows out of the recent entrance of non-Christian faiths into the mainstream theological academy, which has resulted in evangelical scholars engaging in new and “fruitful dialogue” with scholars holding “views different from their own” on a variety of theological issues, including the theology of religions. But it is not simply an “academic” question for evangelical theologians. Because evangelicals, as Kärkkäinen puts it, “are the most mission-minded believers of all,” and hence are frequently engaged in direct “encounter[s] with . . . followers of other religions,” they are pushed to deal with the various theological questions attendant to the relationship of Christianity to other faiths.⁷

It is striking how often, especially since the early 1990s, evangelical theologians have proclaimed that the dramatic expansion of religious pluralism in the West makes these theological questions not only pressing but inescapable. “Religious pluralism feels like a new challenge for many of us because we have been culturally sheltered in the West,” explained Clark H. Pinnock, a Canadian-American theologian, in *A Wideness in God’s Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions*. “It is a new experience for us to be meeting Sikhs, Muslims, and Buddhists in our streets and shops. . . . [And it is this] religious pluralism [that] has gotten the theological pot boiling.” Terry Muck, an evangelical expert on world religions, put it much more dramatically in *Those Other Religions in Your Neighborhood: Loving Your Neighbor When You Don’t Know How* (a work designed for evangelical laypersons): “We Christians have been an uncontested majority in this country for so long that it is difficult to think of other religions challenging us here—in Chicago, Cedar Rapids, Lincoln, Austin, and Helena. This is, after all, America, founded on Christian principles by Northern European Protestants. . . . The religious marketplace has [now] become very crowded. . . . I do not think we are ready for the competition. It is time to get ready.”⁸

William V. Crockett and James G. Sigountos sounded a similar alarm in *Through No Fault of Their Own: The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, issued by the popular evangelical publisher Baker Book House. “Already pastors are facing many of the questions raised in this book,” they wrote. “Large groups of people continually emigrate to the West, and increasingly we see them in our communities. These new immigrants have a religion, and it is not Christianity.” However, they went on to note that because the “pluralistic nature of modern society decrees that their religion isn’t so bad,” and because of the American commitment to “freedom and self-determination,” it “will not be easy to explain to the neighbors of these immigrants why we are trying to convert them to Christianity. . . . It will be [very] difficult to explain why we are being ‘intolerant.’”⁹ Crockett and Sigountos summarize nicely an argument often made—explicitly or implicitly—by evangelical theologians and scholars

grappling with the question of religious pluralism: not only are folks who hold to non-Christian faiths flooding America and the West, but governmental and legal structures that protect (even encourage) such religious pluralism combined with a “postmodern” culture that prizes pluralism for its own sake make it very difficult for Christians to make the case for the Truth of the Gospel, much less claim that other religions are wrong or that other religions will lead their adherents to hell.¹⁰

In *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* Dennis Okholm (Azusa Pacific University) and Timothy Phillips (Wheaton College) declared: “Western societies demand that everyone assume [a] relativistic attitude so that each religion must treat the others as if they have salvific access to God. Popularly we call this political correctness.”¹¹ This question of “salvific access to God” has preoccupied evangelical theologians at least since the early 1990s. As Kärkkäinen has observed, the “basic debate is about whether hope for eternal life can be extended beyond the borders of (confessing) Christians.” Not only is there no traction among evangelical scholars for a pluralistic theology that “posits a ‘rough parity’ between religions,” but all evangelical theologians agree on “the uniqueness of Christ” and “the biblical mandate of carrying on mission to all people.” Despite (or perhaps because of) this consensus, Okholm and Phillips described “the debate within the evangelical academy regarding salvation and the unevangelized” as “fierce and intense.”¹² On one side are theologians—Clark Pinnock and John Sanders are perhaps the best known—who have come to a position that can be identified (at least within the evangelical context) as “inclusivist,” in which there is granted the “possibility of [individuals] attaining salvation” by “faithfully responding to God within the light given to them apart from hearing the Gospel.” But such views have often produced a harsh response and remain very much in the minority. As Kärkkäinen persuasively asserts, a strong majority of evangelical “theologians and pastors still adhere to a more or less particularist paradigm,” in which “not only is salvation found in Christ, but also a person has to make a personal response of faith [in Christ] in order to be saved.”¹³

In short, the question of increased religious pluralism and the concomitant legal and cultural support for such pluralism have sparked a great deal of theological ferment among evangelical scholars, but the discussion has been carried on within fairly narrow bounds, and the commitment to a conservative theological understanding of Christianity vis-à-vis other religions remains quite strong. But what happens when we move a step or two away from the theologians? What happens when we move from an academic discourse to a more popular discourse aimed at a broad evangelical public?

One of the best places to look for such opinions is within the pages of *Christianity Today*. Founded in 1956 by Billy Graham and others as part of the neo-evangelical movement within American fundamentalism, by 2008 it had (according to its website) secured a circulation of 140,000, with a readership of 294,000. From its inception *Christianity Today* sought, quite self-consciously, to be the evangelical periodical. “My idea,” wrote Graham, “was for a magazine, aimed primarily at ministers, that would restore intellectual respectability and spiritual

impact to evangelical Christianity; it would reaffirm the power of the Word of God to redeem and transform men and women."¹⁴ Over time the magazine expanded its focus beyond the ministers and other opinion-shapers to evangelicals in the pews, moving from questions of biblical interpretation and theology to issues pertaining to popular culture, the everyday life of middle-class believers, and—to use Mark A. Noll's memorable phrase—"celebrity-driven sanctity."¹⁵ Although there is neither clarity about what it means to be evangelical nor an evangelical denomination, *Christianity Today* comes far closer than any other media source or institution to serving as the voice of American evangelicalism, reporting to insiders what is happening within the movement while also seeking (quite self-consciously) to determine the contours and boundaries of that movement.¹⁶

Using one decade of *Christianity Today* (1998–2008) as our guide, we find evangelicals growing more and more comfortable with the increased diversity within Christianity itself.¹⁷ There is little evidence of distress over what the historian Philip Jenkins describes in *The Next Christendom* as Christianity's increasingly rapid shift to becoming a religion dominated by the "Global South."¹⁸ This contrasts strikingly with the early years of the magazine, in which there was little recognition of Christianity outside the United States and Europe, except in the sense that the non-Western world provided venues for American missionaries to do their work. However, as Noll has observed, in 1975 "*Christianity Today*... ran five substantial articles on the Christian situation" in India, Latin America, Africa, and China. This trend toward worldwide coverage accelerated in the following years, with frequent references appearing to Christianity outside the West. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of *Christianity Today*, a contributor drew attention to "the changing complexion of world missions," which reflected "the emerging leadership of the churches in the Third World and the end of colonialism."¹⁹

By the twenty-first century the growth of a global Christianity had become a regular theme in *Christianity Today*.²⁰ As Christopher Wright put it in a 2007 article tellingly entitled "An Upside-Down World," at "the start of the twenty-first century at least 70% of the world's Christians live in the non-Western world," the result being that, for example, "more Christians worship in Anglican churches in Nigeria each week than in all the Episcopal and Anglican churches" in the West, and that there are "ten times more Assemblies of God members in Latin America than in the U.S."²¹ As Wright and other contributors pointed out, churches from "majority world" countries such as India, Nigeria, Brazil, and even Micronesia were now sending out Christian missionaries throughout the world, even into Europe and North America.²² South Korea alone sent "more missionaries than any country except the United States" and served as a "potent vanguard for an emerging missionary movement that [was] about to eclipse centuries of Western-dominated Protestant missions."²³

Perhaps there was so little angst about the demise of Eurocentric Christianity because *Christianity Today* contributors cheerfully understood that the emerging global church is, indeed, an evangelical church.²⁴ This sense of global evangelical triumph is reflected in the 2008 "Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration

of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment," a document signed by a number of American evangelical luminaries, including David Neff, the editor-in-chief of *Christianity Today*: "We gratefully appreciate that...the great majority of our fellow-Evangelicals are in the Global South rather than the North, and that we have recently had a fresh infusion of Evangelicals from Latin America, Africa, and Asia."²⁵

In places such as Latin America the growth of evangelical Christianity often came into conflict with (and at the expense of) the traditional enemy of conservative Protestants: the Roman Catholic Church. It is thus striking that there were virtually no attacks on and very few criticisms of Catholics. To the contrary, there was a very strong sense in the pages of the contemporary *Christianity Today* that evangelicals and Catholics—at least in the United States—were in the process of forming a happy rapprochement, a development in keeping with "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," a 1994 document signed by conservative Catholics and evangelical leaders.²⁶ Along with *First Things* editor Richard John Neuhaus, Charles Colson—a former Nixon Administration official and *Christianity Today* editor—played a prominent role in writing this statement. It delineated the ways in which evangelicals and Catholics agreed and disagreed theologically, mapped the road ahead for future conversations, and celebrated their "growing convergence," a convergence that owed much to their "common effort" to "protect human life" and oppose the "encroaching culture of death," including "abortion on demand" as well as "euthanasia, eugenics, and population control."²⁷

One could conclude that this new-found cordiality was politically driven, meant to smooth the process of Catholics and evangelicals working together on behalf of the Religious Right and the Republican Party. Such an analysis has a great deal of merit, particularly when one considers the involvement of the likes of Colson and Neuhaus, and when one takes into account that "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" remained silent on issues such as capital punishment. But politics alone does not adequately account for the very clear sense in the pages of *Christianity Today* that the old Reformation conflicts were rapidly fading away. In the 1950s and early 1960s *Christianity Today*, like many other Protestant magazines, often displayed a strong anti-Catholicism, as seen in founding-editor Carl F. H. Henry's strident editorial in the wake of John F. Kennedy's election as president: "Rome never changes, [as] she is [always] determined to make the secular government her own agents of ecclesiastical gain...in accord with her ambitious concept of Church and State."²⁸ Two decades later these concerns remained, but the rhetoric had been tempered somewhat. In addressing the perennial question of whether the Pope was the Antichrist, a contributor wrote: "The modern papacy still presents at least some of the Reformers' problems [as] beneath the robes of the congenial churchman is a secular ruler."²⁹

By the end of the century explicit anti-Catholicism had all but disappeared from the pages of the magazine. In this regard *Christianity Today* reflected what

seems to have been a growing conviction among evangelicals that Catholics, while still theologically mistaken on such issues as justification by faith, shared with them a strong commitment to traditional Christian doctrine and practice.³⁰ More remarkably, some evangelicals thought that they had something to learn from Catholics. In the early twenty-first century the editors twice treated readers of *Christianity Today* to Christmas cover stories on the mother of Jesus: "The Blessed Evangelical Mary" and "The Mary We Never Knew." Executive editor Timothy George, author of the first piece, suggested that, "while we may not be able to recite the rosary or kneel down before statues of Mary," it is time for evangelicals to get beyond their fear of being "accused of leanings and sympathy with Catholics" and instead "recover a fully biblical appreciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her role in the history of salvation."³¹

It is also significant—and further belies the notion that all of this is simply a matter of politics—that reading these ten years of *Christianity Today* could easily give one the sense that American evangelicals now have little or no interest in seeking to convert Catholics. (Whether this is because evangelicals have recast Catholics in "their own image," or because of what William L. Portier and others have referred to as the growing phenomenon of "Evangelical Catholics," it is hard to say.)³² Regardless, the traditional evangelical emphasis on soul-winning remains strong when one goes beyond the borders of Christianity. For example, *Christianity Today* published repeated calls for evangelicals to reject the notion, articulated in 2002 in a document produced by the National Council of Synagogues and the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, that Christians should cease efforts to "seek . . . the conversion of the Jewish people to Christianity," given that "Jews already dwell in a saving covenant with God."³³ Instead, and in keeping with the magazine's traditional stance on evangelizing the Jews, *Christianity Today* managing editor Stan Guthrie argued in 2008 that while there is "intense . . . pluralistic pressure to waffle" on the idea of "the necessity of faith in Christ for salvation," and while "we continue the good works of dialogue and practical ministries among our Jewish neighbors," let us also "renew our commitment to . . . sensitively but forthrightly persuade them to receive the Good News."³⁴ Guthrie also cosigned a document called "The Gospel and the Jewish People: An Evangelical Statement," sponsored by the World Evangelical Alliance and reprinted in an unusual full-page ad in the *New York Times*: "It is out of our profound respect for Jewish people that we seek to share the good news of Jesus Christ with them, and encourage others to do the same, for we believe that salvation is only found in Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the World."³⁵ In all of this there were hints—as Fuller Theological Seminary president Richard Mouw acknowledged in an article entitled "The Chosen People Puzzle"—that within evangelicalism there was some tension, perhaps even ambivalence, regarding efforts to persuade God's "chosen people" to convert to Christianity.³⁶

No such tension existed when it came to evangelizing religious groups further from Christianity. Although *Christianity Today* paid some attention to the matter of converting Hindus and other non-Christians, Muslims received by

far the most evangelistic attention, especially after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.³⁷ In fact, 9/11 seemed to have opened a door for soul-winning, a point reflected in a letter faxed by a Pakistani-American to *Christianity Today* columnist Philip Yancey the day following the tragedy: "The most painful discovery for me about the Islamic faith has been its concept of militancy.... As I know now, violence does have a strong precedent in Islam.... Do you think I would find loving and open-minded friends in the church?"³⁸ According to the magazine, this young Muslim's interest in Christianity was not anomalous. A 2002 cover story, "Doors into Islam," announced that Christian missionaries were experiencing "fresh momentum in the spiritual battle of presenting the gospel to the world's 1.2 billion followers of Islam."³⁹ Five years later the momentum seemed to be continuing, thanks in good part—according to a survey of 750 Muslim converts to Christianity—to the love and kindness former Muslims had received from Christians they had encountered, as opposed to the repressive and even violent treatment they reported having received from other Muslims.⁴⁰

Most of the repression and violence described in *Christianity Today*, was violence directed against Christians. The magazine's emphasis on persecution became much more pronounced over time. In the early years it devoted much less space to anti-Christian repression and tended to focus on persecution of Christian missionaries in communist countries. But, as Noll has noted, as the century progressed "the drama of persecution (first by communists, then by Muslims and Hindus) became a much more dominant theme" in *Christianity Today* and other evangelical periodicals, with increasing emphasis "on the persecution of national believers."⁴¹ By 2000 *Christianity Today* had become an extraordinarily thorough chronicler of the persecution of Christians—primarily, but not exclusively, Protestant Christians—around the globe, with virtually every issue containing one or more stories detailing anti-Christian acts. For example, numerous stories appeared about Buddhists attacking and oppressing Christians in such places as Laos, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, as did accounts of Hindu violence against Christians in India and Trinidad.⁴² Not surprisingly, Muslims came in for the most attention. Between 1998 and 2008 there were detailed references to Muslim persecution of Christians throughout the world, including in Afghanistan, Algeria, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sudan, and Turkey. Some of these reports focused on legal repression, as in a 2008 article on the Algerian government's decision to enforce a law barring "non-Muslims from worshipping," which resulted in the closure of "more than half of the...country's 50 Protestant churches."⁴³ Others described acts of horrific violence, as in a 2003 article about Muslim militiamen in Sudan who routinely gang-raped and cut off the breasts of rural Christian women, "as an example to others that this is what will happen to you unless you convert to Islam."⁴⁴

The message was clear: although folks around the globe hungered for the Gospel, life for Christians in the non-Christian world remained precarious

indeed. One could thus easily imagine *Christianity Today* holding up the United States as a shining example of religious freedom for all faiths, a country where pluralism flourished. But the magazine rarely celebrated America in this way. Instead, it commonly expressed a deep ambivalence about, even a palpable discomfort with, religious pluralism at home. The dominant message stressed that, in contrast to the freedom granted by the United States to Muslims or Hindus or Buddhists, the government often limited the free exercise of Christianity—and did so in the name of religious pluralism. The magazine found much of concern to report: courts (including, on occasion, the U.S. Supreme Court) prohibiting displays of the Ten Commandments on public grounds, banning prayers before city-council meetings and high-school football games, and eliminating references to God in high-school valedictory addresses, a practice that seemed to demonstrate that “Christian students” were not “fully members of the political community.”⁴⁵ In addition, some colleges and universities refused to give credit for courses from Christian high schools, blocked Christians from distributing religious tracts, employed professors who refused to write graduate-school recommendations for biology majors who rejected evolution, and “derecognized” Christian organizations on campus in the name of a “pluralism that even the pluralists admit [is] not truly enforceable.”⁴⁶ From time to time local communities sought to block the building of a church, state governments removed crosses from roadside memorials, and various government officials and business leaders—afraid of giving “offense” and being charged with creating a “theocracy”—made war on Christmas. As described by the magazine, government workers and store employees were “muzzled from wishing people ‘Merry Christmas,’ carols [were] squelched in city holiday parades, candy canes [were] confiscated from public school classrooms,” all in an effort to erase any references to Christ from the public square.⁴⁷

Editorial writers for *Christianity Today* sometimes offered more nuanced articulations of the argument that Christians in the United States were oppressed. For example, in the aforementioned piece on Christmas the editors went on to observe that what mattered most is “not the crèche on the lawn” but “whether we’re encouraging people to make room for the Christ child in their hearts.” Similarly, regarding the Ten Commandments, the editors reminded readers that “heeding the Commandments is far more important than displaying them.”⁴⁸ More generally, in an editorial response to the “new atheism,” they made the point that while liberalism—with its emphasis on tolerance—is “vapid,” it does serve as “a safeguard” against militant antitheists. In a generally favorable assessment of David Limbaugh’s book, *Persecution: How Liberals are Waging War against Christianity*—“Christians should be pleased with Limbaugh’s high-profile recitation of a creeping anti-Christian bias in American society”—the editors noted that the author was “too gloomy” (neglecting positive signs, such as President George W. Bush’s support for faith-based social service organizations), and they criticized the publishers for the “melodramatic” book title, writing that while what Christians are going

through in the United States “can be called . . . injustice, liberalism run amok, or discrimination,” in “no way” does it “rise to the level of persecution,” especially when compared to what Christians elsewhere in the world were forced to endure.⁴⁹

One person commended the editors for their “concern for persecuted brothers and sisters abroad,” but went on to opine that the discrimination American Christians faced was simply the final stage before full-blown persecution; according to another reader, this day had already arrived: “Limbaugh’s book is a realistic portrayal of what many U.S. Christians face on a daily basis. I’ll call it what Jesus called it: persecution.”⁵⁰ Notwithstanding editorial efforts to provide nuance, much material in the pages (including in the editorial pages) of *Christianity Today* reinforced such readers’ understanding of what it meant to be Christian in America.

Especially egregious to some contributors to *Christianity Today* was the government’s protection, indeed promotion, of homosexuality. How could it be, they reasoned, that a legal system that forbade high-school seniors from mentioning Jesus Christ in public addresses, insisted that physicians, when asked, provide lesbians with artificial insemination? Such rulings, they feared, foreshadowed the day when Christian doctors and nurses would be “pushed out of health care” entirely. It seemed incongruous that a corporate culture that prohibited employees from saying “Merry Christmas” could, in accordance with the “diversity and tolerance propaganda promoted by [their] human resource departments,” command “millions of employees . . . not just to tolerate homosexual behavior but also to respect and even promote it.”⁵¹ A nation that tolerated “sodomy” could not be far from “legally sanctioned polygamy, incest, pedophilia, and bestiality.” A country that repudiated “historic Christianity, the Bible, the Torah, and the principles of natural law that guided us so long” had, for all practical purposes, become “a pagan state.”⁵²

Christianity Today rarely mentioned that Christians remained the overwhelming majority in America and displayed no awareness of what it is like to be Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, or gay in America. Instead, the magazine frequently indulged in what Martin Marty aptly described in *The Protestant Voice in Religious Pluralism* as a “whining, griping, moaning, whimpering, and complaining” response to pluralism, which fueled “the ‘politics of resentment’ and the ‘politics of nostalgia’” at the heart of the Religious Right.⁵³

Anxiety about the loss of Protestant dominance and the rise of religious pluralism permeated the pages of evangelicalism’s flagship journal. And it is striking the degree to which this anxiety reflected the same concerns troubling evangelical theologians: how to think about other religions in a time of rapidly increasing pluralism and of governmental and cultural support for such pluralism? But all of this had to do with pluralism outside the walls of Christianity. What about the pluralism that emerged from within evangelicalism itself? Even more than for Protestantism in general, pluralism has been part of the theological DNA of American evangelicalism; one might even say that evangelicalism is ontologically pluralistic.⁵⁴

The great centrifugal impulse of evangelicalism, unrestrained or uninhibited by much in the way of institutional constraints, gave it much of its extraordinary energy. One result was the ever-increasing array of evangelical organizations that operated outside of denominational structures. We see this at the local church level, with the extraordinary multiplication of “non-denominational” or “independent” churches (a fact that has led many commentators to talk about contemporary Protestantism as having moved into a “post-denominational” phase). But beyond the local church, we see it in the stunning multiplicity of regional and national “parachurch” organizations and campaigns, most of which have as their primary purpose the bringing of individuals to a “saving knowledge” of Jesus Christ.

To read the flagship journal of evangelicalism is to become immersed in this “parachurch” world. And it is not just well-known and firmly established organizations—such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Campus Crusade for Christ, or Focus on the Family—that have received attention in *Christianity Today*. One gets a real feel for the entrepreneurial zeal within parachurch evangelicalism when one reads about the Cowboy Church movement, which seeks to bring worship services to cowboys, ranchers, and “others who enjoy western culture,” and which can include barn-style churches equipped with “old kerosene lanterns” and “antique saddles” on the walls. Another outreach program, *Festival con Dios*, featured a packaged Christian music road show that ran from 2001 to 2003 and that brought to cities throughout America a one-day festival of motorcycle stunt shows, bungee jumping, climbing walls, and “sloppily dressed rock bands.”⁵⁵ Still another was the Lighthouse Movement, a collection of groups from more than 200,000 local churches that in 2000 sought to “reach every person in America with prayer, friendship, and a video depicting Jesus’ life” (not to be confused with “Light the Highway,” a 2007 prayer campaign involving hundreds of folks alongside Interstate 35, praying to make it the “holy highway” foretold in Isaiah 35:8).⁵⁶ In the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks, evangelicals in Maryland established Nehemiah’s Watchmen, a community emergency response team that sought to combine “search and rescue” work with sharing the Gospel. “In a situation like 9/11, that’s when people are seeking God the most... and we can be there and share with them,” explained the founder of the group. “You don’t know if you’ll be with someone when they take their last breath.”⁵⁷

Such organizations and campaigns reflected the evangelical willingness to use (almost) any means and any occasion to get the Good News out to the people. Perhaps inevitably, given the lack of ecclesiological constraints, some entrepreneurs pushed against or transgressed evangelicalism’s (admittedly fuzzy) doctrinal and behavioral limits, a problem that the editors of *Christianity Today*, worried about pluralism inside the evangelical camp as well as outside it, explicitly addressed.

To take one example of how *Christianity Today* monitored evangelical pluralism, in 1979 Kip McKean in Boston founded the International Churches of Christ (ICOC), an offshoot of the “non-instrumental” (no musical instruments

in worship) Churches of Christ. The ICOC (sometimes referred to as the Boston Movement) engaged in aggressive evangelistic practices, such as learning the schedules of college students deemed likely to convert and waiting for them outside their classrooms. In 1997 *Christianity Today* ran a lengthy piece on the ICOC, in which the author asserted that, despite the organization's claim to be evangelical, the ICOC may "be among the most dangerous" Christian movements in America. It not only practiced extreme evangelism but claimed "to be the only true Christian church," maintaining that salvation is dependent on baptism in an ICOC church. It also required that church members submit to an intrusive form of "disciplining," during which members underwent "rigorous scrutiny by local church leaders who look for signs of godly living," thus giving church leaders the opportunity to intervene in all aspects of a member's personal life.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, by 2003 the movement had recruited 185,000 members. That year *Christianity Today* published a pair of articles detailing troubles within the ICOC, including "financial mismanagement, legalism, dishonest statistical reporting, and abusive teachings." The ICOC experience prompted the magazine to warn evangelicals that "it is extremely difficult for an aberrant Christian group [such as ICOC] with such an authoritarian structure to move into mainstream evangelicalism." In the end, membership began to decline, and McKean resigned as ICOC leader.⁵⁹

Christianity Today also intervened directly in a controversy over whether or not the so-called Local Church Movement, a small Christian sect founded by Watchman Nee in China in the 1920s that grew to an estimated 250,000 members worldwide by the twenty-first century, was truly evangelical. Although leaders of the movement characterized themselves as evangelical, critics charged that they held to such un-Christian beliefs as claiming that true Christians become "part of God" and that the Local Church was "the only true church that God is satisfied with."⁶⁰ *Christianity Today* conducted its own investigation, reporting the results in 2006: "Just to be clear, the Local Church... is not even close to being a cult.... CT editors have asked Local Church leaders doctrinal questions, and their answers were straightforward and satisfying. We agree with a Fuller Theological Seminary study that concluded the Local Group represents a 'genuine, historical, biblical Christian faith in every essential aspect.'"⁶¹

The nutritionist and religious leader Gwen Shamblin did not fare so well. In 1990 Shamblin, whose "luminous smile, big blonde hair, and petite figure" led one observer to describe her as a "Southern Barbie doll," turned her secular weight-loss workshop program into a Christian program designed for use in churches.⁶² The program spread rapidly through evangelical churches in her native Tennessee and beyond, but the movement took off in 1997 with the publication of her first book, *The Weigh Down Diet*, in which she combined evangelical theology with a weight loss program. Her gospel was simple: it does not matter what type of food you eat; what matters is recognizing the spiritual void that prompts you to overeat (an act of rebellion against God); get right with God and the pounds will disappear. Her program exploded

throughout evangelical America, with her book selling over a million copies, and with 30,000 churches organizing “Weigh Down” groups that sought to reach the overweight and the spiritually deficient.⁶³ By the end of the century the entrepreneurial Shamblin had become an evangelical superstar. Befitting her status, *Christianity Today* featured her in a 2000 cover story. In her nuanced article, “The Weigh and the Truth,” Lauren Winner wondered about the lack of nutritional guidelines in the Weigh Down program, expressed concern with Shamblin’s strong suggestion that God wants Christians to be thin, and observed that—for someone who had “become such an influential voice on spiritual matters”—she “has very little theological heft behind her teachings.” At the same time Winner noted that “Christian dieting programs have helped many non-Christians come to faith.” She also praised Shamblin for “doing the church a great service” by “teaching people to let God—not food—meet their deepest needs” and by helping “many Christians move into deeper relationships with God.”⁶⁴

Nuance notwithstanding, the cover story reinforced the notion that Gwen Shamblin was clearly within the evangelical fold. But even as “The Weigh and the Truth” was going to press, reports began circulating that the problems with Shamblin’s theology were more serious than simply a lack of “heft.” Questions intensified with the revelation that in an e-mail to her followers Shamblin rejected a traditional Trinitarian understanding of God, asserting instead a hierarchy within the Trinity. Although “we believe in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit,” she wrote, “the Bible does not use the word ‘trinity’ ... [and] the word ‘trinity’ [wrongly] implies equality in leadership, or shared Lordship.... God is clearly the Head.”⁶⁵ As the controversy escalated some evangelical pastors ordered Weigh Down workshops out of their churches, and the evangelical publisher of Shamblin’s latest book, *Out of Egypt*, canceled publication.⁶⁶ In response *Christianity Today* intervened, contacting Shamblin in order to determine if she had indeed crossed the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy. A mere seven weeks after the initial cover story, and now with “Weigh Down Heresy?” on the cover, John Kennedy, who had served as news editor from 1992 to 1999, issued the verdict. Not only were the rumors of Shamblin’s heterodoxy true, but, worse, she had made it clear that she was not going to back down. “People don’t care about this,” she was reported as saying. “They don’t care about the Trinity. This is going to pass. What the women want is weight loss. They care about their bodies being a temple and their lives turned over to the Lord. That’s what my ministry is about.”⁶⁷

As Kennedy later reported, “thousands of church leaders canceled Weigh Down classes after Shamblin publicly rejected the doctrine of the Trinity.” However, as the historian R. Marie Griffith has observed, “the numbers of those choosing to retain Weigh Down or start it anew were high enough for her program to retain its title as the largest Christian diet plan on the market.” Shamblin responded to the furor over her theology by creating her own quasi-denomination, the Remnant Fellowship, which by 2002 comprised ninety churches throughout the United States.⁶⁸

The evangelical emphases on a “born again” experience and the Bible as final authority—along with a very weak ecclesiology—mean that evangelicals have a great deal of freedom to tailor their faith to their needs. As Baptist historian Winthrop S. Hudson has pithily observed, the great emphasis on “faith as a one-to-one relationship between God and the individual” has the “practical effect” of “mak[ing] every man’s hat his own church.”⁶⁹ Thus there is an instability at the heart of evangelicalism, an instability that gives evangelicalism much of its power and entrepreneurial energy. But when this instability interacts with the ever-increasing diversity both inside and outside the boundaries of Christianity, it produces anxiety about religious pluralism. One factor fueling the effort in *Christianity Today* and other evangelical publications to shore up the walls against enemies from within and without could be a sense that many younger evangelicals do not share their elders’ anxieties about religious pluralism.⁷⁰ No one knows where the next generation will take evangelicalism, but we can be certain that a thriving evangelicalism does not mean an unchanging evangelicalism.

Notes

* The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their helpful comments and criticisms on earlier drafts: Ed Agran, Jake Dorn, James Heft, Brad Kallenberg, Bill Portier, Susan Trollinger, Sandra Yocum, various colleagues in the University of Dayton History Department, and the editors.

1 Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, “American Religious Identification Survey 2008: Summary Report” (Hartford, CT: Trinity College Program of Public Values, 2009), 2–3, 9, accessible at www.americanreligionsurvey.org. For a similar estimate, see the *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey*, 5, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, February 2008, at <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>.

2 See, for example, the 2005 Gallup Poll summary of polling results since the early 1990s, at www.gallup.com/poll/20242/Another-Look-Evangelicals-America-Today.aspx.

3 This definition draws on David Bebbington’s oft-cited “quadrilateral,” in which he defines “evangelical” as containing a commitment to conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism (the latter referring to an emphasis on Christ’s sacrifice on the cross). David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin, Hyman, 1989). The phrase “born again”—often understood as a synonym for “evangelical”—suggests that “conversionism” is the most significant side of Bebbington’s quadrilateral.

4 Christian Smith et al., *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 20–66. Looking beyond evangelicals per se, Robert Wuthnow’s *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) is a wonderful study of how “we as individuals and as a nation are responding to the challenges of increasing religious and cultural diversity.” Wuthnow divides Christians into “spiritual shoppers,” “Christian

inclusivists," and "Christian exclusivists," with 50% of "exclusivists" claiming affiliation "with an evangelical denomination" (209).

5 Smith, *American Evangelicalism*, 151. Here Smith is directly challenging the "secularization paradigm," which asserts that as moderns come into contact with contrasting religious faiths the "truth" of their own faith becomes less convincing, thus reducing levels of religious commitment.

6 Thanks to Coleman Fannin for his assistance in examining the literature on the effects of religious pluralism.

7 Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Evangelical Theology and the Religions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*, Timothy Larsen and Daniel J. Treier, eds. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 199.

8 Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992): 9, 11; Terry C. Muck, *Those Other Religions in Your Neighborhood: Loving Your Neighbor When You Don't Know How* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992): 9–10. See also Irving Hexham, "Evangelical Illusions: Postmodern Christianity and the Growth of Muslim Communities in Europe and North America," in *No Other Gods Before Me?: Evangelicals and the Challenge of World Religions*, John G. Stackhouse, Jr., ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001): 138; Alister E. McGrath, "A Particularist View: A Post-Enlightenment Approach," in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995): 153–154; Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 9–11; Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, "Introduction," in Okholm and Phillips, eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, 7; John G. Stackhouse, Jr., "Preface," in Stackhouse, ed., *No Other Gods Before Me?*, 11.

9 William Crockett and James Sigountos, "Are the Heathen Really Lost?," in *Through No Fault of Their Own?: The Fate of Those Who Have Never Heard*, Crockett and Sigountos, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991): 263–264.

10 See Elias Dantas, "The Incarnation of Christ and its Implications to the Ministry and Mission of the Church," in *Christ the One and Only: A Global Affirmation of the Uniqueness of Jesus Christ*, Sung Wook Chung, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005): 16–17; McGrath, "Post-Enlightenment Approach," 151; Muck, *Those Other Religions*, 154; Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism*, 12–14; Pinnock, *Wideness in God's Mercy*, 9; Anthony J. Steinbronn, *Worldviews: A Christian Response to Religious Pluralism* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007): 156–157; and Mark D. Thompson, "The Uniqueness of Christ as the Revealer of God," in Chung, ed., *Christ the One and Only*, 90.

11 Okholm and Phillips, "Introduction," 9.

12 Kärkkäinen, "Evangelical Theology and the Religions," 205–207; Okholm and Phillips, "Introduction," 12.

13 Kärkkäinen, "Evangelical Theology and the Religions," 199–207. In this regard the theologians are in keeping with evangelicals in the pews, 94% of whom believe that "the only hope for salvation is through personal faith in Jesus Christ." Christian Smith, *Christian America?: What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 202. See also Wuthnow, *Challenges of Religious Diversity*,

164–165; and James M. Penning and Corwin E. Smidt, *Evangelicalism: The Next Generation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 49.

14 In Paul Robbins, “Welcome,” at www.christianitytoday.com/anniversary/features/welcome.html.

15 Mark A. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 147. In this quotation Noll is referring both to *Christianity Today* and to other evangelical magazines over the last few decades of the twentieth century.

16 William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: Morrow, 1991), 211. For a summary of *Christianity Today*’s origins and history, see Douglas A. Sweeney, “*Christianity Today*,” in *Popular Religious Magazines of the United States*, P. Mark Fackler and Charles H. Lippy, eds. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1995), 144–151 (where one will also find the Martin quotation).

17 As will be seen below, Noll’s discussion in *World Christianity* of *Christianity Today*’s treatment of global Christianity over the last quarter of the twentieth century is helpful in placing *Christianity Today*, 1998–2008, in its historical context. I have also examined the 1961 and 1981 issues of *Christianity Today* to identify ways in which the magazine has changed over time. Thanks to Justus Hunter for his assistance in this regard.

18 Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

19 Noll, *World Christianity*, 132–133; J. Herbert Kane, “‘The White Man’s Burden’ is Changing Colors,” *Christianity Today* 25 (July 17, 1981): 62. See also Samuel Moffett, “The Church in Asia: Getting on the Charts,” *Christianity Today* 25 (October 2, 1981): 38.

20 Noll, *World Christianity*, 133–134, 143–144.

21 Christopher J. H. Wright, “An Upside-Down World,” *Christianity Today* 51 (January 2007): 42.

22 One of the most interesting examples of this is the Redeemed Christian Church of God, a Pentecostal denomination founded and headquartered in Nigeria, which has sent missionaries and has established churches in more than 100 nations; as of 2008 it had 15,000 adherents in the United States, most of them Nigerian immigrants. Andrew Rice, “Mission from Africa,” *New York Times Magazine*, April 12, 2009, 30–37, 54, 57–58.

23 Mark Hutchinson, “It’s a Small Church After All,” *Christianity Today* 42 (November 16, 1998): 46–49; Rob Moll, “Missions Incredible,” *Christianity Today* 50 (March 2006): 28, 30.

24 In *World Christianity*, 13–14, 112–113, Noll argues that global Christianity “looks more and more like the [evangelical] Christianity in North America” less “because North Americans have pushed it in this direction,” and more because “the newer regions of recent Christian growth” have followed “a historical path that Americans pioneered” in the nineteenth century, when “a conversionistic, voluntaristic form of Christian faith” came to dominate the American religious landscape.

25 “An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment,” May 2008, at www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/media/manifesto.htm. See also “Gospel Independence,” *Christianity Today* 52 (July 2008): 20–21.

26 "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium," *First Things* 43 (May 1994): 15–22. This document was followed by "Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Gift of Salvation," *Christianity Today* 41 (December 8, 1997): 35–37.

27 "Evangelicals and Catholics Together," 19.

28 Carl F. H. Henry, "Editorials," *Christianity Today* 5 (March 27, 1961): 20–21. Henry's alarmist rhetoric was easily matched by the editors of *Christian Century*; see "Editorials," *Christian Century* 78 (October 11, 1961): 1196.

29 David P. Scaer, "The Pope as Antichrist: An Anachronism?" *Christianity Today* 25 (October 23, 1981): 66.

30 [Editors], "Honest Ecumenism," *Christianity Today* 44 (October 23, 2000): 28–29; Richard Mouw, "An Open-Handed Gospel," *Christianity Today* 52 (April 2008): 44–47.

31 Timothy George, "The Blessed Evangelical Mary," *Christianity Today* 47 (December 2003): 34–39, on 36; Scot McKnight, "The Mary We Never Knew," *Christianity Today* 50 (December 2006): 26–30. McKnight concludes his article with a list of recent books and articles by evangelicals regarding Mary, including Tim Perry's *Mary for Evangelicals: Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

32 William Portier, "Here Come the Evangelical Catholics," *Communio* 31 (Spring 2004): 35–66.

33 Consultation of the National Council of Synagogues and the Bishops Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, "Reflections on Covenant and Mission," *Origins* 32 (2002): 218–224. For a discussion of the controversy this statement generated within the Catholic Church, see John Pawlikowski, "Reflections on Covenant and Mission: Forty Years After Nostra Aetate," *Cross-Currents* 56 (Winter 2007): 70–94.

34 Stan Guthrie, "Why Evangelize the Jews?" *Christianity Today* 52 (March 2008): 76. See also David Brickner, "Elephant in the Room," *Christianity Today* 48 (May 2004): 67–68. On the magazine's earlier views toward the conversion of Jews, see, for example, Kenneth S. Kantzer, "Editorials," *Christianity Today* 25 (April 24, 1981): 12–15; and Vernon Grounds, "The Delicate Diplomacy of Jewish-Christian Dialogue," *Christianity Today* 25 (April 24, 1981): 26–29.

35 *New York Times*, March 28, 2008, A13. Thanks to Myrna Gabbe of the University of Dayton Philosophy Department for bringing my attention to this advertisement.

36 Richard J. Mouw, "The Chosen People Puzzle," *Christianity Today* 45 (March 5, 2001): 70–76.

37 Andy Crouch, "Christ, My Bodhisattva," *Christianity Today* 51 (May 2007): 34–37. It should be noted that, as with Jews, there was some discussion of efforts at Christian-Muslim dialogue, which typically emphasized the necessity of evangelicals' keeping in mind the theological gulf between the two faiths. See, e.g., Jocelyn Green, "Foreign Correspondence," *Christianity Today* 52 (March 2008): 21; and Stan Guthrie, "All Monotheisms are Not Alike," *Christianity Today* 52 (November 2008): 71.

38 Philip Yancey, "Letter from a Muslim Seeker," *Christianity Today* 45 (December 3, 2001): 80.

- 39 Stan Guthrie, "Doors Into Islam," *Christianity Today* 46 (September 9, 2002): 35.
- 40 J. Dudley Woodberry, Russell G. Shubin, and G. Marks, "Why Muslims Follow Jesus," *Christianity Today* 51 (October 2007): 80–85.
- 41 Noll, *World Christianity*, 133, 148.
- 42 "Deceitful Propaganda," *Christianity Today* 45 (October 1, 2001): 68 (Laos); Manpreet Singh, "Anti-Conversion Conspiracy," *Christianity Today* 48 (May 2004): 20 (Sri Lanka); Sheryl Henderson Blunt, "'Destroy the Christian Religion,'" *Christianity Today* 51 (April 2007): 20–21 (Myanmar); Mary Cagney, "Hindu, Christian Tensions Rising," *Christianity Today* 43 (March 1, 1999): 21 (Trinidad and Tobago); Manpreet Singh, "Militant Hindus Assault Christians," *Christianity Today* 45 (February 5, 2001): 24 (India); Joshua Newton, "Hindu Leaders Crack Down on Conversions," *Christianity Today* 47 (November 2003): 34 (India); "Terror in Orissa," *Christianity Today* 52 (November 2008): 22–23 (India).
- 43 "Undue Attention," *Christianity Today* 52 (September 2008): 16.
- 44 "Submitting to Islam—or Dying," *Christianity Today* 47 (October 2003): 100. For other examples, see Alex Buchan, "Hostage Drama Exposes Christians' Vulnerability," *Christianity Today* 44 (December 4, 2000): 25 (Philippines); Stan Guthrie and Yunis Khushi, "Christians Massacred," *Christianity Today* 45 (December 3, 2001): 26 (Pakistan); "Out-of-Control Clerics," *Christianity Today* 48 (July 2004): 59 (Iran); Obed Minchakpu, "A Kinder, Gentler Shar'ah?" *Christianity Today* 52 (March 2008): 24–25 (Nigeria).
- 45 "Hang Ten?" *Christianity Today* 44 (March 6, 2000): 36–37; "Justices Turn Down Decalogue Appeal," *Christianity Today* 45 (July 9, 2001): 15; Marshall Allen, "Watch That Invocation," *Christianity Today* 47 (August 2003): 25; Deann Alford, "Pregame Prayer Barred," *Christianity Today* 44 (August 7, 2000): 19–20; "Invalidating Valedictorians," *Christianity Today* 45 (May 21, 2001): 35.
- 46 Dean Nelson, "Admissions Rejected," *Christianity Today* 49 (December 2005): 22–23; Sarah Pulliam, "Reading, Writing, and Rulings" *Christianity Today* 52 (October 2008): 17; Stan Guthrie, "University Forbids 'Offensive' Tracts," *Christianity Today* 47 (October 2003): 19; Ted Olsen, "Not Recommended," *Christianity Today* 47 (April 2003): 23; Randy Bishop, "Belief Police," *Christianity Today* 44 (June 12, 2000): 24; Andy Crouch, "Campus COLLISIONS," *Christianity Today* 47 (October 2003): 60–64, on 62.
- 47 Ted Olsen, "There Goes the Neighborhood," *Christianity Today* 46 (December 18, 2002): 21; Karen Schmidt, "Roadside Memorials Spark Religious Freedom Dispute," *Christianity Today* 44 (April 3, 2000): 20; "You'd Better Watch Out," *Christianity Today* 50 (January 2006): 29.
- 48 "God Reigns—Even in Alabama," *Christianity Today* 47 (October 2003): 35; "You'd Better Watch Out," 29.
- 49 "The New Intolerance," *Christianity Today* 51 (February 2007): 25; "Persecution Is a Holy Word," *Christianity Today* 47 (December 2003): 32–33. David Limbaugh is Rush Limbaugh's brother.
- 50 "Readers Write," *Christianity Today* 48 (February 2004): 10.
- 51 Sarah Pulliam, "Interview with David Stevens," *Christianity Today* 52 (October 2008): 19; John W. Kennedy, "Corporate Thought Police," *Christianity Today* 48 (January 2004): 26–27.

52 Charles Colson and Anne Morse, "Sowing Confusion," *Christianity Today* 47 (October 2003): 156; Harold O. J. Brown, "A Decisive Turn to Paganism," *Christianity Today* 48 (August 2004): 40–41.

53 Marty, *Protestant Voice in Religious Pluralism*, 71–72. William R. Hutchison makes a similar argument in *Religious Pluralism in America: The Contentious History of a Founding Ideal* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003): 219–226.

54 I am indebted to my colleague Sandra Yocum for this pithy observation.

55 Linda Owen, "Worship at the O.K. Corral," *Christianity Today* 47 (September 2003): 63; Todd Hertz, "Evangelistic Circus in a Box," *Christianity Today* 46 (October 7, 2002): 18. *Festival con Dios* worked with the Luis Palau Evangelistic Association, which continues to organize evangelistic festivals that now include a service component designed to address needs in host cities; see Tim Stafford and Eric Pulliam, "Servant Evangelism," *Christianity Today* 52 (November 2008): 42–47.

56 "The Prayer Team Next Door," *Christianity Today* 43 (October 4, 1999): 17; Gary Tuchman, "Hitting the Road (Literally) With Some Faithful," at www.cnn.com/2007/US/12/19.

57 Sharon Mager, "Quenching Worst-Case Scenarios," *Christianity Today* 46 (November 18, 2002): 57.

58 Randy Frame, "The Cost of Discipleship?" *Christianity Today* 41 (September 1, 1997): 64–67. For a helpful summary of ICOC history and commitments, see Kevin S. Wells, "International Churches of Christ," in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*, Douglas Allen Foster and Anthony L. Dunnavent, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 418–419. On the ICOC's intervention in the family lives of members, see Kathleen E. Jenkins, *Awesome Families: The Promise of Healing Relationships in the International Church of Christ* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

59 John W. Kennedy, "'Boston Movement' Apologizes," *Christianity Today* 47 (June 2003): 23; Timothy R. Callahan, "'Boston Movement' Founder Quits," *Christianity Today* 47 (March 2003): 26–27. In monitoring such movements the editors and reporters of *Christianity Today* were, in a sense, functioning as evangelical bishops.

60 "The Local Church," in *The Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions*, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, eds. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishing, 1999): 211–212.

61 "Loose Cult Talk," *Christianity Today* 50 (March 2006): 27. See also Mark A. Kellner, "Local Church fights for Evangelical ID Card," *Christianity Today* 47 (February 2003): 24–25. As an indication of *Christianity Today's* importance in the evangelical world, the publisher and the authors of the *Encyclopedia* responded immediately and forcefully to the magazine's verdict; see "Readers Write," *Christianity Today* 50 (May 2006): 12, 14.

62 Lauren F. Winner, "The Weigh and the Truth," *Christianity Today* 44 (September 4, 2000): 50–58, on 50.

63 R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 176–177.

64 Winner, "The Weigh and the Truth," 50–58.

65 John W. Kennedy and Todd Starnes, "Gwen in the Balance," *Christianity Today* 44 (October 23, 2000): 15. The final five words of this quotation were found

only on the online version of this article: www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2000/october23/14.15.html.

66 Between *The Weigh Down Diet* and *Out of Egypt*, Shamblin wrote *Rise Again*, which, according to Marie Griffith, “vanished from bookshelves” in the midst of this controversy. *The Weigh Down Diet*, however, continued to sell. See Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*, 3.

67 Kennedy and Starnes, “Gwen in the Balance,” 15.

68 John W. Kennedy, “Gwen Shamblin’s New Jerusalem,” *Christianity Today* 46 (December 9, 2002): 15; Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*, 182. On reports of child abuse in the fellowship, see Corrie Cutrer, “Faith-Based Child Abuse?” *Christianity Today* 48 (April 2004): 26. Although Shamblin herself was cleared of wrongdoing, in 2007 the accused Remnant couple were sentenced to life plus 30 years in prison for the death of their child; see www.religionnewsblog.com/17829/joseph-and-sonya-smith-sentenced.

69 Winthrop Hudson, *Baptists in Transition: Individualism and Christian Responsibility* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1979): 142.

70 This certainly seems to be the case regarding homosexuality. The 2008 “Faith in American Politics Survey: The Young and the Faithful” reported that “among young evangelicals, a majority favor either same-sex marriage (24%) or civil union (28%), compared to a majority (61%) of older evangelicals who favor no legal recognition of gay couples’ relationships” (Washington DC: Faith in Public Life/Public Religion Research, 2008), at www.faithinpubliclife.org/tools/polls/faps.