BOOK PEOPLE:
EVANGELICAL BOOKS AND THE MAKING OF CONTEMPORARY EVANGELICALISM

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ABSTRACT

*Book People: Evangelical Books and the Making of Contemporary Evangelicalism*

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"Book People: Evangelical Books and the Making of Contemporary Evangelicalism" traces the conjoined histories of evangelical Christianity and evangelical book culture in the United States. Although existing studies of religion, media, and business have explored evangelical print culture in the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, historians rarely have lent their attention to the century that intervenes. Addressing this historiographic silence, this dissertation's chapters move from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. These chapters center their narrative on the middle decades of this period, when ministerial and entrepreneurial evangelicals increasingly turned to books not only as tools of cultural and theological discipline but also as commercial opportunities. By the end of the century, the marketplace had molded evangelicalism into a constituency that everyone from ministers to scholars to politicians to suburban shoppers to international media conglomerates regularly imagined, addressed, and invoked. Drawing on such archival sources as business records, meeting minutes, advertisements, editorial correspondence, marketing plans, sermon collections, and interviews, "Book People" illustrates how contemporary evangelicalism and the contemporary evangelical book industry helped bring each other into being.
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To my parents,
Daniel and Lourdes Vaca
INTRODUCTION

Evangelicals and Books, Past and Present

Give to our new president, Barack Obama, the wisdom to lead us with humility, the courage to lead us with integrity, the compassion to lead us with generosity. . . . Help us, oh God, to remember that we are Americans, united not by race, or religion, or blood, but to our commitment to freedom, and justice for all. . . . And as we face these difficult days ahead, may we have a new birth of clarity in our aims, responsibility in our actions, humility in our approaches, and civility in our attitudes—even when we differ. . . . And may we never forget that one day, all nations and all people will stand accountable before you.

Thousands of American ministers would have relished the opportunity to deliver the invocation at Barack Obama's January 2009 inauguration, but the Southern Baptist pastor Rick Warren unexpectedly received the job. On the day of the ceremony, Warren tipped his theological hand by using such keywords as "new birth" and by implying an exclusivist model of salvation. Yet Warren also displayed a knack for speaking evangelical language in an inviting and inoffensive mode; his self-consciously inclusive tone solicited little criticism from pundits, and just as little praise.¹

In the weeks leading up to the ceremony, a single question swirled around the announcement. Why Warren? Some detractors pointed out that he was "not especially well known on the national stage." Fiercer critics, such as the Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson of New Hampshire, remarked that the appointment left him feeling as though "he'd been slapped in the face." Robinson and many other supporters of Obama's campaign pointed out that Warren publicly had "compared gay relationships like Robinson's to incest" and actively had supported California's Proposition 8, a ban on gay marriage that became law in November 2008. The

largest Spanish-language newspaper in the United States insisted that "allowing a man who claims that heaven will be denied to homosexuals, Jews and various other social groups to be the spiritual face of an entire nation is a serious error." Meanwhile, critics on the political and religious right chastised Warren for his willingness to bless a president who supported abortion rights and displayed other liberal political sensibilities.2

Attempting to make sense of these criticisms, a variety of pundits pointed out that Warren received the honor precisely because he and Obama were unlikely bedfellows. The choice signaled that "Obama is genuine about being a post-partisan president, and that he is not going to engage in the culture wars." Warren was positioned, one report predicted, "to succeed Billy Graham as the nation's pre-eminent minister." His selection "reflects the generational changes in the evangelical Christian movement." Underlining Warren's status as "America's pastor" and the new face of an evangelical Christianity commonly believed to compose a third or more of the U.S. population, a Washington Post-ABC News poll reported that sixty-one percent of Americans supported Obama's invitation to Warren.3

But who or what had lent Warren this ascendant status? As evidence of Warren's stature, journalists almost universally highlighted a single piece of his profile. They said virtually nothing, for example, about the tens of thousands who regularly attended Warren's Southern California

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megachurch, about his humanitarian initiatives in Africa, or even about his church having hosted a debate between John McCain and Obama in August 2008. Instead, reporters noted that Warren had written *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* Since Zondervan Publishing House had released Warren's book in 2002, it had become one of the bestselling books in American history, and its more than thirty million circulating copies not only testified to the scale of contemporary evangelicalism but also appointed Warren as its chief representative.4

Whatever Obama's reasons for selecting Warren, two assumptions lay at the heart of these stories about Warren's appointment. The first is that evangelical Christians constituted the kind of political constituency that deserved to have a voice on the presidential podium. Evangelicals had enjoyed this reputation since the 1970s, when survey figures began counting them at anywhere between seven and forty-seven percent of the population. Large survey figures had drawn legitimacy from the ascension of such evangelical leaders as Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell to national prominence and the appearance of evangelical books like *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Zondervan, 1970) on the bestseller lists of national periodicals.5 Yet in stories about Warren's selection, journalists seem unsure about who exactly evangelicals are. Deducing

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information about evangelicals from these stories, readers learn only that they possess illiberal inclinations and a penchant for books.

The second assumption is that it makes perfect sense for the author of a popular book to pray on behalf of America's evangelicals--whoever they are. Although many critics questioned whether evangelicals deserved to be represented at the inauguration, virtually nobody questioned Warren's representative credentials. True, it seems intuitive, in a way, to connect a bestselling author to a constituency of proportional scale. Yet such connections presume answers to dozens of questions about how people buy books, why people buy books, and how consumer behavior relates to social identity.

These two assumptions provide this dissertation with a starting point because they demand explanation. For the past few decades, historians of American religion and culture have credited evangelical Protestants with positions of influence within the cultural and political life of the United States and the Atlantic world. These histories often have used the "evangelical" label as a way of identifying individuals and religious groups from varied denominational and confessional backgrounds that have displayed particular constellations of Protestant style, affect, practice, and belief. Historians have found the concept of evangelicalism a handy narrative tool largely because of its ability to mark diverse styles of Christianity that champion the authority of the Gospel, a term that traces its etymology back to the Greek word *euangellion*.6

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Not until the middle decades of the twentieth century, however, did evangelicalism begin transforming into the kind of religious constituency that journalists recognized in 2009. These decades proved so decisive not only because putative evangelicals actually began calling themselves "evangelicals" but also because anti-liberal agitation and post-war consumer culture molded evangelicalism into a peculiar kind of social public. Particularly after 1950, evangelical leaders attempted to popularize oppositional postures through new institutional paradigms and media pathways. Those efforts brought large numbers of white, middle-class Protestants into

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7 I use the notion of a "public" in the sense that Michael Warner lays out in the second chapter of Publics and Counterpublics (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 63-124. Warner describes as public as a social imaginary that exists "by virtue of being addressed." Evangelicalism operates as a public insofar as it is "a space of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself."

Rather than diminishing evangelicalism's social standing, an emphasis on discourse helps explain why evangelicalism appears to occupy so much social terrain despite having no institutional center. "Lacking any institutional being," Warner explains, social publics not only "commence with the moment of attention" but also continue to exist so long as they continue to receive "renewed attention." People become members of the evangelical public by imagining themselves alongside others who understand and respond to the same discourse in the same way.

Publics depend on circulations of print. "Without the idea of texts that can be picked up at different times and in different places by otherwise unrelated people," Warner suggests, "we would not imagine a public as an entity that embraces all the users of that text, whoever they might be." Over time, sustained circulations of discourse persuade us "that publics have activity and duration." Discourse has this effect, Warner explains, by allowing its "constitutive circularity to disappear from consciousness." By participating in discourse, the members of social publics come to take for granted the discourse itself and its modes of circulation. Evangelicalism looks like a "tradition," and evangelicals look like a people.

evangelicalism's discursive orbit, but this popularity came at the expense of conservative Protestant distinctiveness. More than any single set of ideas or practices, evangelicalism's hallmarks became its overwhelming popularity and its ambiguous composition.

In addition to explaining how this kind of evangelicalism earned a place on the presidential podium, "Book People" explains why it made sense for journalists to connect America's evangelicals to the author of a book. That connection seemed intuitive largely because evangelical books had helped create contemporary evangelicalism. As this dissertation's initial chapters explain, some conservative Protestant book publishers thrived in the twentieth century's first half. But a variety of factors restrained their commercial prospects. Those factors included outsider status within the mainstream book industry, economic depression, the cultural anxieties of distinct religious communities, and the notion that Christians should read Bibles rather than books. Although publishers often spoke about each other as partners in "book ministry," conservative Protestant publishers and booksellers suffered from disorganization, which reflected their lack of common identity.

Beginning around 1950, however, self-consciously "evangelical" identities began to circulate, a new evangelical public began emerging, books received theological and devotional sanction from new evangelical leaders, and the book industry expanded its pathways of production, marketing, and distribution. This nascent industry situated books as lodestones of evangelical culture not only by establishing new nodes of cultural exchange and circulating

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8 For two reasons, I often use "conservative Protestant" in contradistinction to "evangelical." First, because putative evangelicals rarely called themselves "evangelicals" before the 1940s, "conservative Protestant" often seems less anachronistic. Second, I often discuss Protestants from distinct traditions alongside each other, and "conservative Protestant" often seems the best way of referring to different traditions simultaneously. Chapters Two and Three, for instance, examine Dutch Reformed and fundamentalist culture. Although Reformed Protestants worked in cooperation with fundamentalists, they also insisted upon their own distinctiveness. Even if that insistence was largely rhetorical, the term "conservative Protestant" acknowledges their cooperation without overemphasizing their cohesion.
shared discourses but also by cultivating and capitalizing on the ambiguous boundaries of evangelicalism's social space. Largely by becoming book people, evangelicals became the kind of indistinct but populous people that journalists perceived and Warren represented in 2009.

By telling the story of contemporary evangelicalism and its relationship with books, this dissertation addresses historiographic silences within the histories of religion and business in North America. More than that, "Book People" testifies to the codependence of religion and business in American history. This codependence becomes apparent if we consider all the ways that religious discourse and business practices mediate everyday life. But historians only recently have begun telling this relationship's story. In order to help narrate that story, this dissertation draws upon varied archival sources, most of which scholars have not examined previously. Through business records, meeting minutes, advertisements, editorial correspondence, marketing plans, sermon collections, and interviews, "Book People" explains how contemporary evangelicalism and its media industries helped bring each other into being.

**Being Book People**

This story of evangelicals and books both complements and conflicts with prevailing accounts of religion, media, and commercial culture in North America. The primary conflict is

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9 As Chapter Five and the Epilogue discuss, evangelical books are a premier point of contact between evangelical life and mainstream business interests. Note, for example, that Zondervan--the publisher of Rick Warren's book--is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation.

that the story seems like old news. Conventional wisdom tells us that Christians in general, Protestants especially, and evangelicals in particular always have been "people of the book." But this wisdom is misleading.

Christians have acquired this reputation, for example, on account of their devotion to the Bible, "the Book of books." But Christians never have devoted themselves to the Bible with uniform intensity and style, and the Bible itself always has been part of the problem. After all, the Bible is a collection of books, and Christians historically have preferred some parts of the collection to others. During the New Testament period, for example, the books of the Hebrew Bible remained in flux, and the books that came to compose the New Testament appeared anonymously, slowly, and even reluctantly. For the earliest Christians, belief and practice had little to do with the books of what we know today as the Christian Bible. The first people to question the provenance and legitimacy of New Testament texts were not modern-day Biblical critics but rather first- and second-century Christians, whose varied textual preferences reflected diverse understandings of apostolic faith.\(^\text{11}\)

To be sure, Christians had inherited from Judaism the notion that books were essential to religious life. At various points throughout the Gospels, Jesus not only quotes the Hebrew Bible but also challenges listeners by highlighting its stories (e.g., Matthew 12.3). The canonization of the Bible occurred partly because Christian communities began mimicking Jesus's model of textual reproach, using Gospels and epistles to identify what they saw as true and false teaching. By the fourth century, however, this defensive posture also provided the logic for translating the Bible into Latin and repressing versions whose vernacular language might engender theological

misunderstanding. A Latin Bible ensured that for the millennium that followed its appearance, Christians generally experienced the Bible principally as an object of devotion or as a source of rhetoric, instruction, and story, which they heard through ministerial intermediaries.12

Not until the end of the fifteenth century did printing presses in Europe begin producing vernacular Bibles.13 Yet even then, those Bibles made up only a fraction of the more than twenty million posters, handbills, and broadsheets that circulated throughout Europe. While the Whigs among us might like to imagine early printers slaving over their presses out of little more than devotion to the principles of renaissance humanism, they operated above all for profit. They could not print what they could not sell, and sensitivity to demand not only contributed to the rise of vernacular Bibles but also led printers to produce material on other subjects.14

During the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformations in Europe and Britain not only spurred the popularity of Bibles and other books but also owed their success to the possibility of printing them.15 Among the doctrinal and devotional developments that the Reformation

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13 The most well-educated Christians could read the Bible in Latin and its original languages, and sections of the Bible appeared in vernacular languages throughout the first millennium; but full versions began circulating in English, for example, only in the 1380s. In the early 1450s, Johannes Gutenberg began printing his Latin Bible in Strasbourg, and vernacular editions appeared in print a decade later. M. H. Black, “The Printed Bible,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West From the Reformation to the Present Day*, ed. S. L. Greenslade, vol. 3, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 415-423.


15 To be sure, as Febvre and Martin insist, the notion that "the Reformation was the child of the printing press" is a "ridiculous thesis." A "book on its own," they argue, "has never been sufficient to change anybody's mind." And yet "the printed book is at least tangible evidence of convictions held because it embodies and symbolises them; it furnishes arguments to those who are already converts, . . . and encourages the hesitant. For all these reasons books
heralded, three prove most important to the history of Protestants and their interaction with books. First, both the practice of reading the Bible and the idea of reading the Bible became Protestant imperatives. Second, inasmuch as Reformation Protestants privileged the Bible both in theory and practice, books other than the Bible invariably transmitted and transmuted that emphasis. In Luther's case, for example, such books included his *To the Christian Nobility of Germany* and his translation of the Bible itself. Like any other translation, Luther's was subject not just to his own hermeneutical and linguistic dispositions but also to the technical and financial decisions of his printers. After Luther's death, the "1545" edition of his translation enjoyed greater commercial success than others largely because it was the last edition that Luther himself vetted.

The third and final development is that books began serving not just as sources of doctrine and sites of debate but also as objects through which Protestants came to understand themselves and others. One way that books created nodes of identity was by creating celebrities. Luther, for example, became the first author to write a bestselling book with his name attached. He became what Benedict Anderson describes as "the first best-selling author *so known*." His work accounted for more than a third of all German-language books sold from 1518 to 1525. As a result, Luther's

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16 While Martin Luther became known for such varied doctrines as the idea that all Christians possess the spiritual privileges of priests and the notion that God graciously imparts justification to the faithful, Luther identified the doctrine of "sola scriptura" as the bedrock of the community that he unwittingly established. Still today in Germany, Lutheran churches are known as "evangelische" or, in English, "evangelical." The designation comes from the Greek word *euangellion*, which means "good news" or "Gospel."

17 Black, "The Printed Bible," 434. With authored books serving as so many gateways to faith for Protestants, authors clamored to secure established gates and to create better ones. As Candy Gunther Brown explains, the seventeenth-century English nonconformist minister Richard Baxter devoted himself to prolific plain-style preaching and writing because he "recognized the ease with which textual corruption could enter Bibles and other publications, whether by careless printing or intentional scheming." Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 3.
writings made him into more than a disgruntled monk who enjoyed scholarly debates over doctrinal "theses." Sympathetic readers and profit-seeking printers turned Luther's writings and their author into emblems of rebellion. Luther's books allowed people who had not met each other to imagine themselves as part of a common community; in Anderson's words, print "br[oke] up imagined communities of Christendom," and it created new ones.\textsuperscript{18}

While print enabled Luther's sympathizers to create new social imaginaries, it had a corresponding effect for Roman Catholic authorities. For centuries, the Church's scholarly community had conducted debates and crafted criticisms of official church doctrine and practice. Church officials always had abided this criticism, even if cautiously. But the popularity of writings both by Luther and other writers undermined the Church's authority, inspiring it to take disciplinary actions against authors and to police the printing presses of its ecclesial realm with greater intensity.

The Church began burning books and executing their authors in 1521, effectively affirming the criticisms that the burned books had circulated. A year after book burnings began, Luther published his bestselling New Testament. William Tyndale published his in 1526. To the extent that Protestants had become both a people and book people, they had become so through the cooperation of a Church that opposed books, writers who wrote books, laypeople who bought and read books, and printers who sold them.\textsuperscript{19}

\textsuperscript{18} Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}, 39, 42.

\textsuperscript{19} Black, "The Printed Bible," 430.
Becoming Book People

Although this dissertation tells a twentieth-century story, it begins with a survey of pre-Reformation print culture in order to illustrate that books did not become essential to Protestant identity and practice by some kind of natural affinity. To the contrary, Protestants became able to act with and through print only through particular alignments of discourse, technology, authority, economy, practice, and theology. Because we continue to interact with books today, it is easy to presume that past peoples interacted with them in the same ways and for the same reasons. But books "embody codes that reflect and act upon . . . structures of authority" that vary between times, places, and peoples. As Joan Rubin explains, to talk about "print culture" is to recognize "the nexus of practices creating and sustaining the ideological, psychological, political, and economic power of the printed word for a given social group." Confronted with the popularity of contemporary evangelical books, a number of scholars have asked what kinds of power books have had for evangelical Christians. Noting that "romance novels are big business," for example, Lynn Neal draws upon interviews to understand how the practice of reading evangelical romance novels relates to the devotional lives of evangelical women. Neal illustrates how practitioners use books to negotiate the tension between community commitments and personal convictions. Explaining that "evangelical romance reading emerges

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from and leads back to the evangelical subculture," Neal also argues that reading simultaneously reveals "the negotiations, inconsistencies, and disjunctures of evangelical living."22

James Bielo reaches similar conclusions by examining the phenomenon of evangelical Bible study, which he describes as a "social event" and "dialogical space" where the "evangelical imagination" is structured and circulated. "In short," Bielo explains, Bible study provides a space to "see Evangelical culture 'in action.'" Admitting that Bible study often cultivates interactions of "unfailing uniformity," Bielo also notes that studies display "disruption and discord." On the basis of this finding, Bielo remarks that "there is a certain dexterity to the Evangelical sense of self because it is not continually in danger of collapsing due to the lingering of competing hermeneutics, priorities, and ideological commitments."23

Bielo and Neal's conclusions in turn find support from Amy Johnson Frykholm, who uses both historical and ethnographic methodologies to explore evangelical engagement with the series of eschatological novels known as Left Behind. Written by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, the series comprised twelve books, released over a period of nine years. By 2005, ten years after Tyndale House (see Chapter Five) published the first novel in the series, the books had sold a collective sixty million copies. Explaining that her respondents take conversations about the novels as opportunities "to talk about the wide-ranging theological and social issues that divide them across . . . religious perspectives," Frykholm illustrates how evangelicals use "the act of reading to serve their own purposes and often reinvent the text to make this possible." In this


way, Frykholm insists, evangelicalism maintains a "multidirectional flow of meaning" that lends the movement social strength.\textsuperscript{24}

By illustrating how evangelicals use books to make religious meaning for themselves and others, each of these "reader response" studies essentially argue that twenty-first evangelicals are book people.\textsuperscript{25} But if these studies help explain how and why contemporary evangelicals give books a position of prominence in their devotional lives, they say far less about how and why books acquired that status.\textsuperscript{26} To be sure, historians occasionally address this latter question. But the historiography of twentieth-century evangelical book culture remains remarkably thin.

Just a handful of studies provide historical perspective on the evangelical book culture that Neal, Bielo, and Frykholm describe. Many of these histories have focused on exploring the traditions of theology and reading that paved the way for the \textit{Left Behind} series. Paul Gutjahr argues, for example, that the novels essentially marked the moment when "the last significant vestiges of opposition to the Christian novel receded from American Protestantism," and "the fictional form of the novel became an important, and largely untapped, resource for explicating

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{24} Amy Johnson Frykholm, \textit{Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 47, 51, 103-104, 183.

\textsuperscript{25} Although scholars interpret and apply the "reader response" approach in a wide variety of ways, its operating logic is the notion that meaning does not inhere in text; instead, meaning emerges out of interaction between texts and readers. Leah Price surveys the field of reading studies in Leah Price, "Reading: The State of the Discipline," \textit{Book History} 7 (2004): 304. Price explains that "reading means something different to literary critics (for whom it tends to feed either into case studies focused on the reception of particular texts or into theories of hermeneutics) than to historians (for whom it can become a subset of social or intellectual history)." Due to such diverse approaches to reading, "reader response still looks less like a field than a battleground: its manifestations range from structuralist neologism to folksy case studies to mad scientism." Janice Radway explores the subjectivity of both scholars' and subjects' reading practices in her classic \textit{Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature} (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984). See also Jonathan Boyarin, \textit{The Ethnography of Reading} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

\textsuperscript{26} To be sure, Neal explores the history of evangelical romance fiction in her study's second chapter, which devotes several pages to some of the developments that Chapter Five explores. Dating the rise of evangelical romance novels to the 1970s, for example, Neal notes that the founding of the Christian Booksellers' Association in 1950 saw producers and retailers receive an organizational resource to help sell fiction. About the C.B.A.'s founding, however, Neal says only that it reflected "the evangelical tradition of media usage." The statement is not wrong, but it prompts questions and provides answers in equal measure. Neal, \textit{Romancing God}, 23.
\end{footnotesize}
the non-fictional content of the Bible." Crawford Gribben, meanwhile, situates the series within a longer tradition of "prophecy fiction." He argues not only that this prophetic tradition too often has gone unrecognized but also that the popularity of the Left Behind series allowed the novels to serve as "the public face of a uniquely American evangelical faith."27 The most noteworthy exceptions to this focus on Left Behind come from a few studies of the Bible in the twentieth century. Peter Thuesen illustrates, for example, that controversies over Bible translation arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries out of conflicting "modes of authority and interpretation that had developed since the sixteenth century."28

When attempting to tell the story of evangelical print culture in the United States, historians typically have looked not to the twentieth century but rather to the nineteenth. As Chapter One explains, these historians typically have trained their attention on the era's pioneering interdenominational publishing initiatives, including the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and the American Sunday School Union. Displaying sensitivity to the "nexus" of practices and power that Joan Rubin places at the center of print culture, these studies illustrate how nineteenth-century publishing institutions emerged out of religious revival,


technological advances in printing, and what historians often call the "market revolution"—terminological shorthand for a cluster of economic changes that saw the commercial activities and obligations of the marketplace begin to orient life in industrializing societies.29 "The story of religious publishing in the early nineteenth century," David Nord explains, "is a story of the origins of the noncommercial sector of the American economy and the contribution of that sector to the birth, not only of mass media, but of business organization as well."30

These studies of nineteenth-century publishing initiatives have enriched understandings of the era's commercial and devotional paradigms. Still, why have historians of evangelical print culture focused so resolutely on the nineteenth century? The answer has to do with presumptions about who evangelicals are.

Since the 1970s, the idea of evangelicalism has become a convention that historians have used to identify what they see as the cohesion and the cultural power of theologically conservative nineteenth-century Protestantism. "In nineteenth-century America evangelical Protestantism had been the dominant religious ideology in a nation noted for its religion," George Marsden


explains. "Indeed, evangelical Protestantism constituted an unofficial religious establishment."31 In her history of nineteenth-century evangelical print culture, Candy Gunther Brown lends "evangelical Protestantism" just as large a social footprint as Marsden, but she conceptualizes the category differently. Casting her conceptual net broadly, Brown applies the label to all Protestants who seem to have "struggled with an inherent tension between their goal of purity, or keeping that which they defined as sacred uncontaminated by the profane world, and their goal of presence, or infusing the world with sanctifying influences." This leads Brown to apply the label not just to such interdenominational organizations as the Tract and Bible Societies but also to such trade publishers as Harper and Brothers.

Brown defines evangelicals in this way as a response to the approaches pioneered by historians like Marsden and Mark Noll, who often have received criticism not just for focusing more on the thought than on the activity of putative evangelicals but also for focusing in particular on certain strands of thought. In the 1990s, for example, Donald Dayton became known for arguing that these historians misleadingly had conceptualized evangelical history according to a "Presbyterian paradigm," largely limiting their gaze to such nineteenth-century leaders as Charles Finney and the leaders of twentieth-century neo-evangelicalism. Dayton lamented that the "pentecostal tradition" remained virtually ignored.32 Insisting that the term


32 Donald Dayton, “The Limits of Evangelicalism: The Pentecostal Tradition,” in The Variety of American Evangelicalism, ed. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Pasadena, CA: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 51. Dayton has in mind such work as George Marsden's history of Fuller Seminary. In a book whose very title places Fuller at the center of "the new evangelicalism," Marsden points out that each seminary founder "was deeply influenced by one dramatic part of the American fundamentalist experience: the struggle within the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A." Marsden sees the Presbyterian Church as so important because "the conservative wing of Presbyterianism was one of the rare parts of fundamentalism where high-level intellectual life had been greatly valued." Although Marsden's description of Fuller's founders is entirely fair, his book presumes that the intellectual tradition of "classic Calvinist Protestantism" is the kernel of contemporary evangelicalism. Evangelicals outside this tradition come across more or less as hangers-on. George M. Marsden, Reforming Fundamentalism, 6, 31.
"evangelical" is "inaccurate in some of its fundamental connotations and misleads our attempts to understand the phenomenon that we are observing," Dayton called for a moratorium on the term. A few other historians seconded Dayton's suggestion. But the vast majority of historians responded to Dayton's criticism by searching for new metaphors to describe evangelicalism's diversity.\textsuperscript{33}

With this debate over evangelicalism's significance in mind, Brown preemptively defends her decision to use the term to mark what she sees as the nineteenth century's evangelical consensus. Brown explains, "I write about evangelicals because the people whose story I tell used that label to describe themselves and because the term accentuates what I consider one of the central themes in American religious history: the goal of using the Word to transform the world."

Determined both to recognize the term's limitations and to strengthen its legitimacy, Brown begins her narrative by defending the term's use. "This book strives to rehabilitate the analytical usefulness of the term 'evangelical,'" Brown explains, "much as the scholarship of Perry Miller resuscitated the label 'puritan.'"\textsuperscript{34}


\textsuperscript{34} Brown, The Word in the World, 4-6, 17.
Yet Brown's grasp at Miller's legacy ultimately undermines her revisionist objectives, for her approach is susceptible to the same criticisms that Miller has received for decades. Today, it is a veritable rite of passage for graduate students in history to identify the theoretical and conceptual flaws inherent in Miller's habit of straightforwardly linking ideas to social groups to labels like "puritan" and "puritanism." As Michael P. Winship has pointed out, this style of social classification has produced "the not uncommon habit of using 'puritan' as an adjective before all and sundry legislation, persons, social customs, religious practices, what have you, in seventeenth-century New England and beyond." The problem is not simply that the habit obscures processes through which individuals engage and participate in broader social groups but also that it relies upon a circular logic. According to this logic, readers are asked to agree that terms like "puritanism" denote an essence whose features may be blurry, but whose blurriness testifies to--rather than undermines--the essence's social significance and narrative value. In contrast to this sort of circularity, Winship calls for historians to consider whether "puritanism is a label that is applied rather than a thing that simply is."36

Winship's suggestion applies to "evangelicalism" no less than "puritanism." Too often, histories of evangelicalism display a subtle anachronism. The anachronism lies in the tendency for historians to focus on aspects of the past that look like the present. This helps explain why historians of evangelical print culture have focused virtually all of their attention on the A.B.S.

35 Writing in 1956, Perry Miller lamented that the popular field of social history had led produced "monographs on stoves or bathtubs, or tax laws, banks, the conduct of presidential elections, or even inventories of artifacts," which "were not getting at the fundamental themes--or anywhere near the fundamental theme" of American history. In response, Miller decided that he could access "the uniqueness of the American experience" only by "calling attention to a constellation of ideas basic to any comprehension of the American mind." To that end, he decided to "begin at the beginning," and it eventually found it "obvious that I had to commence with the Puritan migration." By diligently identifying and elucidating what he saw as American Puritanism's core intellectual paradigms, Miller believed that he had laid bare the substructure of New England's intellectual and cultural life--and, by extension, that of the United States more broadly. Perry Miller, Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1956), vii-ix, 49.

and A.T.S. Variously implicit and explicit, the justification for this gesture is that these organizations possess the hallmarks of what passes for evangelicalism today. Contemporary evangelicals transcend denominational boundaries, for example, they emphasize proselytization, they pursue their goals through innovative techniques, they maintain a comfortable relationship with the market, and they focus their energies on girding orthodox doctrine and allegiance to the Bible's authority.\textsuperscript{37} For historians convinced that these modes of religious being encapsulate contemporary evangelicalism, only the tradition's most illustrative examples have merited attention.\textsuperscript{38}

"Book People" situates the rise of contemporary evangelicalism and contemporary evangelical book culture in the twentieth century. But in order to link that twentieth-century story to a historiography focused on the nineteenth century, Chapter One takes up the story of Fleming H. Revell Company. Founded in 1870 by the brother-in-law of the revivalist Dwight L. Moody, Revell Co. became the most successful religious publisher of the late-nineteenth century, and it remained powerful well into the twentieth. It achieved this success as the first self-


\textsuperscript{38} Christine Pawley notes that studies of print culture often encounter difficulty when moving from individuals to groups. To make that move, she explains, scholars typically resort either to "off-the-shelf categories" or to inferences about "imagined communities." In both scenarios, scholars often fail to allow "imagine [their subjects] in terms of their sense of their own identity." In a way, this criticism applies to the two studies of evangelical print culture that bear most resemblance to "Book People." Both Jan Blodgett and Heather Hendershot argue that evangelicals have used print to pursue different evangelical priorities. Blodgett focuses on the use of evangelical fiction for setting community boundaries. Hendershot focuses on the use of print and other products from the "Christian lifestyle industry" to "spread their messages." Although this study bears debts to both studies, they also conceptualize evangelicals as a social group with a firm group identity. Christine Pawley, "Seeking 'Significance': Actual Readers, Specific Reading Communities," \textit{Book History} 5 (2002): 149; Heather Hendershot, \textit{Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 6; Jan Blodgett, \textit{Protestant Evangelical: Literary Culture and Contemporary Society} (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1997), 153.
consciously "evangelical," for-profit publishing firm. These qualities allowed the firm to operate much more like contemporary evangelical publishers than the interdenominational institutions that historians typically have examined. Yet historians rarely have acknowledged Revell's existence.

As Chapter One illustrates, contemporary understandings of what the "evangelical" label denotes have little in common with how the category operated in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Highlighting this point, Chapter Two turns its attention the Dutch Reformed community of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Although historians of evangelicalism often impose evangelical identity upon the Dutch Reformed, that community engaged other conservative Protestants with caution during the twentieth century's first few decades.

Both capitalizing on that engagement and cultivating it were two of the community's leading religious publishers, William B. Eerdmans Company and Zondervan Publishing House. By narrating the early histories of these firms, Chapter Two illustrates how entrepreneurial endeavor helped create and circulate the religious networks and sensibilities that became known as "neo-evangelicalism" in the 1940s. Stepping into the commercial gap that Revell Co. had left open, Eerdmans and Zondervan transformed Grand Rapids into citadel of twentieth-century evangelical book publishing. As they helped create distinct modes of evangelical culture, it was Zondervan's mode that began producing bestsellers.39

39 This dissertation focuses on Eerdmans and Zondervan for a long list of reasons. Most of these reasons become clear in this dissertation's narrative. To list just a few: Zondervan is Rick Warren's publisher; Zondervan emerged out of Eerdmans; their concentration in Grand Rapids, Michigan, piqued my curiosity; both firms have possessed close relationships with twentieth-century evangelical leaders; both firms have cultivated and capitalized on "evangelical" identity in varying ways; both publishers created paradigms of evangelical publishing; and both companies provided me with access to their scattered archival collections. Although access to these collections enabled me to tell their stories, I have not focused this narrative on them for archival reasons alone. I admittedly focus more on Eerdmans in Chapters Two and Four largely because the firm's collections contain more material from the decades under consideration. But other publishers, including Baker Publishing Group, also provided me with access to their archives. I focus less on Baker's story not because it is unimportant but rather because doing so would have produced a narrative that tells everyone's story, but nobody's, with much depth.
Although Eerdmans and Zondervan achieved commercial success in the 1930s and 1940s by supplying the textual demands of both Reformed and fundamentalist Protestants, neither they nor most other conservative Protestant publishers experienced outsized success before mid-century. As Chapter Three illustrates, both book publishers and booksellers found their commercial prospects restrained by the ambivalence—and outright hostility—that many conservatives displayed toward books. Varied concerns, anxieties, practices, and convictions all complicated what conservatives in general and fundamentalists in particular imagined that books represented culturally and promised devotionally. Invariably, these complications centered upon diverse understandings of and attitudes toward the Bible.

Chapter Four reveals how the 1940s saw books receive theological and devotional sanction from leaders of the new evangelical movement. Although fundamentalists and other conservatives began the decade generally viewing radio as the most effective means of sharing the Gospel, books proved uniquely compatible with new religious aspirations and cultural orientations. Increasingly convinced that Protestant liberals threatened Christianity's future, fundamentalists produced such new institutions as the National Association of Evangelicals and began seeing themselves as participants in an "evangelical" public.

Imagining itself as a sanctified analogue to the secular public, this new evangelical imaginary relied upon books not just for what readers could learn from their pages but also for books' symbolic power. Once books received theological and devotional sanction, publishers like Eerdmans and Zondervan found themselves able to tout books more freely, and they transformed new evangelical language, networks, and oppositional postures into business tools.

If the evangelical public and the evangelical book industry both found their starting point in the 1940s, their respective profiles began rising dramatically in the 1950s. Chapter Five demonstrates how and why the second half of the twentieth century not only saw evangelical
books acquire a firm place in evangelical culture but also saw evangelicalism come to the attention of the American public. The process began in 1950, when the evangelical book industry began to professionalize, improve efficiency, and expand.

Part of this expansion was the popularization of Christian bookstores, which increasingly appeared in the shopping malls that proliferated during the 1960s and 1970s. These bookstores gave evangelicalism a public presence and inspired mainstream booksellers to begin distributing evangelical books. Those opportunities led publishers both to expand their range of products and to reach for new constituencies. By the 1980s, the marketplace had made it easier than ever to participate in evangelicalism's generous social space. For the same reasons that the evangelical public's profile became difficult to discern, its presence became difficult to ignore.
CHAPTER ONE

"Publisher of Evangelical Literature":
Dwight L. Moody, Fleming H. Revell, and Turn-of-the-Century Evangelicalisms

On January 21, 1920, a veritable who's who of the evangelical publishing world gathered together at the Canadian Club, New York, to honor Fleming H. Revell (1849-1931) and celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his book publishing company. Organizers had invited only fifty authors, publishers, and booksellers to the intimate event--one guest, organizers explained, "for each year of the golden cycle." But fifty people proved enough to produce a stream of ringing tributes over the course of dinner. Among tributes from such speakers as the authors Newell Hillis and Robert Speer, the most florid tribute came Howard Grose, editor of Revell's missionary texts:

For fifty years a publisher! And well,
The wide world round, is known the name Revell.
When readers see that name upon a book,
Whate'er the subject, title, be, they look
For something worth the while, and mostly find it,
For brain and heart and faith are all behind it.

This first stanza of Grose's poem sounds like little more than cheerleading for his long-time employer, but his effusive praise reflected market reality. In the fifty years between 1870 and 1920, Fleming H. Revell Company had become a publishing titan. This description of the firm's anniversary appeared, after all, not in a marginal Protestant periodical but rather in Publisher's Weekly, the publishing industry's magazine of record. Revell had achieved its success not only by publishing on a wide range of subjects but also by pioneering a new model of religious publishing.
Two designations set Revell Co. apart from late-nineteenth century publishing conventions. First, the firm situated itself as a publisher of "religious books" long before many other publishers embraced that relatively narrow label. To be sure, this does not mean that other publishers did not produce books on religious themes. But the designation does suggest that Revell Co. saw a "religious" identity as central to its publishing profile.

What, then, did the "religious" designation entail? The answer lies partly in another designation that Revell Co. applied to itself. For decades, the title pages of the firm's books described it as a "publisher of evangelical literature." While other publishers typically aligned themselves with particular denominations and denominational debates, Revell Co. stood out both for identifying itself as distinctly "evangelical" and for cultivating a broad evangelical readership. "Scarcely a single name, famous in the evangelical annals of the last forty years," the Publishers' Weekly report explained, "has failed to find a place in the Revell Catalog. Great preachers, world-wide evangelists, famous missionaries, Sunday school workers of international fame, writers of clean, healthy stories, known wherever the English language is spoken, have all had their books published under the auspices of this house."

While representations of "evangelicals" and "evangelicalism" often make definitions of the movement seem straightforward, the boundaries of the "evangelical" category always have been porous, with inclusions and exclusions depending largely on the meaning of the person invoking the term. Several kinds of evangelicalisms played a part in Revell's dramatic rise and eventual decline. Above all, however, Revell rose on the strength of a nineteenth-century strain of revivalistic, reformist, pan-denominational Protestantism associated with the evangelist Dwight

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1 Note that from this point forward, I generally use "Revell Co." to refer to the publishing firm; I will refer to its eponymous founder as "Fleming Revell" or, when appropriate, simply "Revell."
L. Moody (1837-1899). As another stanza of Harold Grose's poem explains, Fleming Revell received praise at his 1920 dinner largely for his success in perpetuating Moody's style:

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\begin{align*}
& \text{All hail, good Citizen! Thru all the years} \\
& \text{Your stand has been with those whose courage clears} \\
& \text{The course for moral action and reform,} \\
& \text{Fears not to face th' inevitable storm,} \\
& \text{But seeks the evil causes to remove} \\
& \text{That hinder Christ's redemptive reign of love} \\
& \text{A party man but not a partisan,} \\
& \text{We greet you as a true American!}
\end{align*}
\]

At its core, Moody's style of evangelical Christianity--and, by extension, Revell's--was ecumenical in orientation. To the extent that Moody's style later became known as "fundamentalism" in the 1920s, that fundamentalism was, in Kathryn Lofton's words, "not a consolidated creed espoused by an extremist social force but a language," and that language served multifarious commitments and convictions.\(^2\) In the pages that Revell produced, both mainline Protestants and more conservative Protestants were able to hear themselves. This diverse constituency not only brought Revell Co. remarkable commercial success but also allowed it to pioneer and monopolize the paradigm of for-profit "evangelical" publishing.

Yet in the twentieth century's first decades, the constellation of cultural and religious concerns that had made Revell Co. a hegemon of evangelical publishing began to realign. As the rise of separatist fundamentalism demanded that conservative Protestants delimit their engagement with the Protestant mainline, Revell Co. found itself unable to speak the new fundamentalist language. Although the firm's survival into the twenty-first century testifies to the resilience of its approach, the rise of new fundamentalist publishers in the 1930s also illustrates that Revell Co. lost its position of preeminence.

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Revell's story therefore provides more than a window into the world of late-nineteenth-century book culture. It accounts for the commercial paradigm that new evangelical publishing firms would inhabit in the 1930s and 1940s. This part of the story, however, focuses on the years before everything changed for evangelicals in general and for Revell in particular. This was the era in which Harold Grose felt called to praise Fleming Revell, latter-day evangelical hero, with these words:

All hail, true Christian! In your life you've sought  
To put in practice what the Master taught.  
In quiet ways, in a spirit free from pride  
You caught from Moody that firm faith of his  
That holds one true through all life's mysteries.  
For steady aim truth to perpetuate--  
With joy your fifty years we celebrate!^3

**Pages of Fame**

When Dwight L. Moody and his song-leader partner Ira Sankey reached New York on August 14, 1875, they were exhausted and overwhelmed. Just two years earlier, on June 7, 1783, they had set out for Great Britain as revivalists with modest reputations in their hometown of Chicago. Now, they returned to the United States as international celebrities. As their steamer approached Manhattan's docks early on the morning of the fourteenth, a barge carrying friends and reporters approached. After a hymn and a prayer, Moody offered brief answers to a fusillade of questions from reporters. He explained that the English had treated him kindly, that he did not know how many people he had addressed, that he had suffered from seasickness on the trip

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home, and that he needed time to recover. Ira Sankey estimated that they would need at least six weeks of recuperation.  

Recuperation seemed warranted, for the scale of their success in Britain confounded even their critics. "We believe we may fairly say that the extraordinary successes of Messrs. Moody and Sankey in England have been a source of great astonishment over here," the New York Times reported shortly before their return. Their success had seemed surprising, the article quipped, "to everybody who has ever come into personal contact with these two gentlemen." At London's Bow Hall, for example, an estimated 80,000 people attended Moody's meetings over the course of three days, and 3,000 of those spent time in introspective "inquiry rooms"; after the complete run of sixty meetings in Bow Hall, Moody reportedly had addressed 600,000. Sixty meetings elsewhere in London drew 720,000.

While most journalists used attendance numbers to quantify Moody's newfound status, others turned to happenstance. In a coincidence that seems almost scripted, Moody arrived in New York just two days after the death of Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875). Although still remembered in 1875 as the greatest evangelist of the century, Finney had slipped in recent decades from public attention. To remind readers of the late revivalist's significance, the author of Finney's New York Times obituary described him in a way that readers would not have understood only a few years earlier; "he was the Moody of his day," the obituary reported, "and great revivals followed his efforts." In the fall of 1875, only Henry Ward Beecher's adultery scandal competed with Moody's campaigns for dominance in newspapers' religion sections.  

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Moody’s celebrity provided him with incredible opportunities, but it also confronted him with problems. For decades, Moody had practiced using print to generate interest in his revivals and to share his teachings. But until now, Moody had produced print either for publicity or for instruction—not primarily because consumers demanded it. Virtually overnight, however, demand dramatically outstripped supply, and publishers raced to sell books by and about Moody. As early as the middle of 1874, biographies of Moody, collections of his sermons, and accounts of his campaigns appeared regularly both in newspaper and book form. By the year’s end, a collection of “Moody and Sankey hymns” had become well known in the United States.6

Immediately upon his return to the United States, Moody began sorting through invitations from cities eager to host his meetings, and he did not rest long before beginning a two-year-long revival tour that would take him from Brooklyn to Philadelphia to New York to Chicago. Throughout the tour, collections of his sermons, culled from shorthand notes written by revival attendees, appeared throughout both the United States and Britain. Hoping to make their collections stand out among the flood of competing titles, publishers sometimes centered their collections around certain themes or genres. One 1877 collection, for example, contained only Moody’s anecdotes about children.7

The problem with this explosion of print, however, was that it appeared almost entirely without Moody’s permission. According to some reports, opportunists even used unauthorized texts to imitate Moody’s performances; one Methodist minister in New York, for example,

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reported in 1876 that he had discovered a meeting where "Moody and Sankey . . . are advertised, at which Moody's sermons will be read, Moody and Sankey hymbook used, etc., then someone dashes out like Bro. Moody, or tries to sing a solo like Bro. Sankey--perfect copyist, and always more or less a failure." This imitation seemingly worried Moody more than it flattered him, for he decided quickly to take control of the medium that carried his messages by appointing an official publisher. Rather than start a publishing firm from scratch, Moody gave publishing rights to the fledgling printing firm recently founded by his brother-in-law, Fleming H. Revell. This decision both guaranteed Revell's success among Moody's audience and shaped Revell's publishing profile until the century's end.

If Moody gave his brother-in-law this opportunity due largely to nepotism, Fleming Revell also had proven himself by working with Moody for about five years. And they had known each other for much longer. Born in Chicago to an English father who built ships by trade, Revell first met Moody in 1860, when the revivalist came to speak at his school. The two men grew closer in 1862, when Moody married Emma Revell, Fleming's older sister. For several years, Fleming lived with the newly wed Moodys. Revell's father had died just a couple years earlier, and Revell reportedly pursued his early career largely under Moody's counsel.9

Moody had left behind his own career as a traveling shoe salesman in 1861, five years after coming to the city from Boston. Although Moody had proven adept at the shoe trade, which he had learned from his Congregationalist uncle, Moody had decided to enter the ministry full time. Much of that ministerial work occurred under the auspices of the Chicago Y.M.C.A. As early as 1861, Chicago's city directory identified Moody as the Y.M.C.A.'s "librarian," a position that not

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8 Quoted in Pollock, Moody, 189.

only saw him oversee the organization's publications but also required him to "act as Agent for the Association, and City Missionary." After the Civil War, Moody would become the vice-president of both the Chicago Y.M.C.A. and the Chicago Sunday-school Union.\(^{10}\)

Although Protestants generally invested print with great power during Moody's era, his work for the Y.M.C.A. left him more convinced than most. His work for "the Association" engaged him in two primary tasks. First, he regularly held prayer meetings, often at noon. Since the late 1850s, similar meetings had occurred in the downtowns of other major U.S. cities—especially Philadelphia and New York. "During the revival of God's work in America in 1857 and 1858," Moody explained in 1874, "in nothing was the power of God's spirit more manifest than in the gatherings that came together at twelve o'clock in the day for prayer and praise."\(^{11}\) Taking up this tradition, noon prayer meetings became Moody's hallmark, and they continued well into the 1870s. Once established as a successful publisher and religious leader in his own right, Fleming Revell led some of these meetings.\(^{12}\)

The second set of tasks that occupied much of Moody's Y.M.C.A. work involved publicizing his meetings and initiatives through newspapers and in-house periodicals. As Moody's description of the 1857 and 1858 meetings suggests, the Chicago meetings became seen as part of a larger revival movement known as the "Revival of 1857-58," or the "Businessmen's Revival." But as Kathryn Long explains, this movement took on the appearance of a cohesive phenomenon due largely to reporting in the national press, which not only presented these urban prayer meetings as the latest in a series of "Great" awakenings but also emphasized the seemingly

\(^{10}\) Ibid., 20, 43; Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*, 99.


\(^{12}\) "The City," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 4, 1876.
outsized participation of businessmen. Through his publicizing efforts, Moody helped cultivate this perception and reputation.  

Long's argument gains support from the 1910 memoir Frederick Cook, a long-time reporter at the Chicago Tribune. For years, Cook related, Moody had visited the Tribune's offices almost daily, constantly attempting to publicize various events and initiatives. Cook noted that the paper often ran "Moody news" as filler on days when more important stories proved unavailable. Cook also suggested that Moody's success as a self-promoter came at the expense of his reputation, for Moody became known for his "aggressive and unheeding manner." Cook reported, "Aye, what a hustler he was in his early days! And how brusquely he went about his business."

Like hagiographic biographies of Moody, however, we should read Cook's hyperbolic comments about Moody's early years alongside Cook's high estimation of the man Moody later became. Although Cook reported that he and his colleagues believed in the 1860s that Moody "lowered religion" through his relentless self-promotion, Cook had concluded by 1910 that Moody helped break down "unessential differences in some of the sects, and so helping to bring on the day of larger Christian fellowship." Cook's hagiographic tone testifies to the strength of Moody's reputation by the turn of the century, and it suggests that Moody's reputation developed largely in and through newspaper coverage.

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Moody achieved profound success in Britain largely because he put similar tactics to use while overseas. After befriending the Scottish publisher R. C. Morgan, Moody convinced Morgan in 1873 to puff his revival meetings in Morgan's popular newspaper *The Christian*. The coup de grâce saw Moody's supporters raise £2,000 to distribute the paper for three months to clergy of established and non-conformist churches throughout England.15

Moody learned the importance of periodicals and publicity not just by reaching out to papers like the *Tribune* and *The Christian* but also through founding a number of Y.M.C.A. periodicals--including *Everybody's Paper* in 1869. At Moody's urging, his brother-in-law almost immediately began editing and publishing the small sixteen-page religious newspaper. Fleming Revell quickly gave it a sheen of professionalism and increased its circulation dramatically. It sold 145,000 copies in its first year.16 In 1871, the paper's second year, Revell would report that the paper had seen 647,600 copies "sold to Sabbath Schools and Young Men's Christian Associations in all parts of the United States." This impressive record resulted partly from Revell's knack for strategic pricing. After reducing the price to twenty-five cents in January 1871, circulation had risen steadily: "for December, 40,000; for January, 50,000; for February, 80,000; for March, 100,000. Thus the circulation has more than doubled during the first three months of this year. The paper has been self-sustaining during the past year, which is only the second of its publication." Yet reductions in price also created sales imperatives; with the reduction in price, "a much larger circulation is now needed than heretofore in order to keep it self-sustaining."17


Revell's brief report to the Y.M.C.A. displays many of the characteristics that historians of nineteenth-century Protestant print culture have tended to emphasize. By focusing on the century's first half, however, the historiography of evangelical print culture has revealed far more about the earlier era's conventions than about how later printers, publishers, and booksellers stepped beyond those conventions into the twentieth century. As Revell's report suggests, these early qualities included: production by interdenominational institutions; the use of business practices to reach large audiences; and a non-profit or "self-sustaining" approach. Revell and Moody first established themselves by honoring these conventions; later, however, they achieved unconventional success by modifying them.

Conventions and Innovations

Candy Brown, David Nord, and other historians of nineteenth-century evangelical print culture note that the nineteenth century's concerns reverberate today. "The print market has changed dramatically between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries," Candy Gunther Brown explains, yet "twenty-first-century interpreters of religion and the media can perhaps gain some perspective from knowing that worries about confusing ministry and margin are scarcely new." Similarly, David Nord concludes his excellent study of nineteenth-century religious "mass media" by remarking that "in two hundred years much has changed, but the goal and the strategy have not." Although Brown and Nord helpfully emphasize both conjunctions and disjunctions between the past and the present, historians of print culture have yet to give the story of disjunction its due. The dramatic changes that they posit remain unexamined.18

Historians have overlooked these changes largely because they often prove diffuse and difficult to track. One way of overcoming this difficulty is to compare how Dwight Moody and Fleming Revell approached print before and after the early 1870s, when Moody suddenly transformed into a religious celebrity and Revell transformed into a publishing powerhouse. Before exploring the world of publishing that Moody and Revell created after 1875, this section explores the world that Moody and Sankey left in 1873.

The Interdenominational Paradigm

At the heart of most accounts of the nineteenth century's religious print culture were a cluster of "non-" or "interdenominational" institutions. The most prominent examples are the American Bible Society (founded in 1816), the American Tract Society (1825), and the American Sunday-School Union (1824). These organizations emerged out of the religious ferment that historians often describe as the Second Great Awakening, a term that does not mark one discrete movement so much a general spirit of revival that struck three main regions of the country during the early nineteenth century.19 This era produced not just revivalism but also social

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reform, and print became one of the principal fields of endeavor. Highlighting a style of Calvinist postmillennialism that he associates above all with the New Divinity theologian Samuel Hopkins, David Nord explains that these institution's founders believed that Christians should dedicate themselves to the spread of knowledge, missions, and earnest Christian action in anticipation of Christ's eventual reign on earth. By changing the minds and hearts of readers, print might even usher in that reign. "Central to their vision," Nord explains, "was a firm faith in knowledge, learning, and the efficacy of print." Even contemporaries recognized that American Protestants had come to see print as a site of hope and initiative; writing in 1844, Horace Bushnell criticized those who used the printing press almost as an excuse to avoid the difficult task of cultivating personal piety. Acting "as if God would offer to man a mechanical engine for converting the world with the least possible expenditure of piety," Bushnell remarked, Protestants had come to presume that "types of lead and sheets of paper may be the light of the world."

By the 1840s, however, the leaders of the A.B.S. and the A.T.S. seemed to talk just as much about their determination to spread righteous doctrine and Biblical piety as they did about their desire to serve as agents of a Christlike society. These two imperatives always had worked in tandem, but the relationship morphed as the revivalist spirit that initially oriented the organization's rhetoric quieted after the financial panic of 1837, when postmillennial Protestants increasingly wondered about God's hand over the past and future, and after 1845, when immigration to cities like New York boomed due to such European crises as the Irish potato

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blight.\textsuperscript{22} As a result, Paul Boyer explains, organizations like the Tract Society increasingly cast themselves as vehicles for disciplining the urban masses that increasingly found themselves at home in American cities. A.T.S. leaders hoped that "the distribution of God's Word in the cities would have a 'restraining effect on vicious habits' and thereby 'strengthen the fabric of civil society.'" In their view, Roman Catholics seemed both bad habits and disregard for civil society more than any other group. "Roman Catholics, particularly in this part of the United States," the Congregationalist Leonard Bacon explained in 1844, "are generally foreigners--strangers in birth and lineage, strangers to our history and our religion--market to some extent by a distinctive physiognomy, and to a greater extent by differences of language, or at least of dialect." What any American Protestant can easily see, Bacon explained, is that "to him who takes the Bible alone for his authoritative standard, the religion of Rome is polytheism."\textsuperscript{23}

The Tract Society cast its disciplining gaze not just on groups of people and perceived vice but also on other books. Bad books included "popish" books, such "infidel" books as Tom Paine's \textit{Age of Reason}, and fiction in general. The problem with fiction, one supporter of the Tract Society explained in the 1840s, is that it "enervates and dwarfs the intellect, depraves the heart, and often kindles fires of unholy passion which are never extinguished."\textsuperscript{24} Investing an A.T.S. book warehouse with both social and soteriological power, one writer remarked in 1846 that,

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\textsuperscript{22} Bratt, "The Reorientation of American Protestantism," 61-62.


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Nearly opposite our office, is the Boston Depository of the American Tract Society. It is filled from its first to its third story, with the purest evangelical literature—leaves from the very tree of life, for the healing of the nations. The sight of such an amount of reading, imbued with the spirit of Calvary, has most pleasantly affected us, as we have gone through this building, as we pass it, or look upon it. It encloses a fountain, whose streams of blessing circulate to make glad the city of God, to change moral wastes into science of religious verdure and loveliness. A thousand blessings on the American Tract Society, for its purifying influences on the literature and the morals of our land. This warehouse had special significance because there are other warehouses that are "known as depots of popular reading. What is it that renders them such? Are the publications which they send forth in floods, suited to form the mind to thought, to sobriety, to virtue and to religion?"

The writer concluded by asking "parents, teachers of youth, guardians of public morals, Christians, ministers of the gospel, are you aware of the magnitude and fearfulness of the evils that here beset us? May we not find in God, in a virtuous press, in our own unslumbering efforts, a corrective?"  

Historians have debated whether this agenda of social reform agenda reflected a strain of "disinterested benevolence" or the desire of elites to exert control over society. Devotees of the so-called "social control thesis" find support from the tendency for reform campaigns to center not on large ethical issues but rather on issues of everyday morality. Charles Finney was treated with hostility for withholding communion from slaveholders in 1833, for example, but the American Temperance Society received strong support from its founding in 1826. But the vagaries of human motivation put the answer somewhere in between, with Protestant leaders both consciously and unconsciously cultivating or "sanctioning" certain kinds of moral stances and dispositions, to the exclusion of what they saw and felt to be less desirable alternatives. Because a disciplined, moral society helped people to live a life in Christ, Protestant leaders in the North suggested, those who claimed to live their lives in Christ should attempt to usher in such a

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society. Temperance, for example, drew support not simply because Protestants objected to alcohol but rather because they opposed its deleterious social effects. These initiatives continued to draw "interdenominational" support because they pursued goals that most middle-class white Protestants supported.

In the 1840s, as denominations split along regional, ideological, economic, and ethical lines, denominational identities began hardening. The Presbyterians had split in 1837, the Methodists split in 1844, and the Baptists split in 1845. Even Alexander Campbell, the champion of post-denominational Protestantism, began adopting denominational conventions by 1849, essentially accepting a new status quo. This move toward denominationalism had many interlocking causes, but one contributing cause was the newfound ability of denominations to print books and periodicals cheaply. Books helped enshrine and circulate denominational confessions, prescriptions, and styles; periodicals meanwhile allowed geographically separated members of denominations to interact through text. From the 1840s on, American Protestants increasingly moved away from ecumenical endeavors, focusing their energies instead on denominational printing initiatives. Virtually every minor and major denomination established publishing capabilities.

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Yet even as denominationalism reconfigured the Protestant landscape, socially concerned interdenominationalism did not disappear. In a sense, stronger denominations made "interdenominational" efforts more worthy of the name. Such efforts continued to breathe not just through the Tract and Bible Societies but also through the initiatives and institutions that oriented Moody's career. Moody and Revell's work for the Y.M.C.A., for example, belongs to the tradition that these organizations pioneered. In 1861, for instance, Moody helped the Y.M.C.A. create the United States Christian Commission (U.S.C.C.) as a vehicle for distributing both medical supplies and religious literature to Union soldiers. Serving as a U.S.C.C. delegate instead of a soldier because of what one historian calls Moody's "somewhat nebulous personal pacifism," Moody dedicated himself to preaching and distributing Bibles, hymnals, and tracts. He also claimed to have confiscated playing cards from soldiers whom he helped liberate from the sin of gambling. Immediately after returning from his U.S.C.C. sojourn, Moody set about founding Y.M.C.A. periodicals and raising money to construct the Y.M.C.A.'s public library, which opened in Chicago in 1869 and offered visitors access to dozens of national newspapers and religious periodicals.28

In the 1870s, while touring England, Moody would speak about the mission of the Y.M.C.A. in ways that highlighted its approach to social reform. Because the organization was founded in London, because Moody, Sankey, and their closest associates all worked principally for the Y.M.C.A., and because Y.M.C.A. chapters often organized Moody's revivals, Moody

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often talked about the organization at his meetings. While holding a revival in Liverpool at the beginning of 1875, for example, Moody explained that "there is hardly a night that in walking from this hall to my hotel I do not meet a number of young men reeling through the streets. . . . These young men who come to large cities want somebody to take an interest in them. I contend that no one can do this so well as the Christian Association. Some ministers claim that the Associations are doing the church harm--they draw young men away from the church. That is a mistake. They feed the church; they are the handmaids of the church. They are not teaching down the church; they are drawing men into it." Urging listeners to think outside themselves, Moody insisted, "they may not be your sons, but bear in mind, my friend, they are somebody's sons. They are worth saving." How did Moody believe that the Y.M.C.A. saved young men? Speaking to an audience in Glasgow, he explained that it did so by making its aim "to promote the spiritual instincts and look after the temporal welfare of young men. Each ought to be a nursery of Christian character, a most efficient evangelistic agency, a center of social meetings, and a means of furthering the progress of young men in the general pursuits of life."29

Both Moody and the Y.M.C.A. often pursued this approach to "saving" young men through print. The Y.M.C.A. did so not just through initiatives like the U.S.C.C. but also through a range of other activities, including a campaign to distribute "religious and illustrated papers and magazines" to railroad workers. As late as July, 1878, for example, the Y.M.C.A. reported distributing a total of 1,258 tracts and papers to sixty-seven flag and switch houses, to twenty-six roundhouses and shops, twenty-six depots and offices, and 133 cabooses. Seemingly presuming that print speaks louder than person-to-person speech, Y.M.C.A. workers held religious conversations with only sixty-three men and held just four meetings in Northwestern

train car shops. This same report also noted that a total of 1,800 religious papers had been distributed to patients in hospitals, to inmates, and to residents of the poor-house and insane asylum. In addition to thanking such leading religious newspapers as Advance, Standard, Alliance, and Northwestern Christian Advocate for providing materials for distribution, the report thanked Fleming Revell's old Everybody's Paper and one book publisher: "F. H. Revell."30

Market Logics and Circulations

As Fleming Revell demonstrated by strategically reducing price in order to boost subscriptions, a second hallmark of the nineteenth century's Protestant print culture was its use of business strategies to achieve audiences of unprecedented size. The relationship between business and religious print reaches back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the so-called "market revolution" began transforming commercial habits and possibilities, and pious business entrepreneurs applied market mechanisms to their belief in print proselytization. In a way, applying market mechanisms to print production was less an innovation than a matter of course, for a print revolution had attended to the market revolution.

From the 1810s on, printing technologies saw dramatic advances, and the diffusion of waterways and railways made distribution cheaper and quicker. These developments fostered a rise in literacy rates, which in turn generated still more demand for print. With cheap and relatively easy printing possibilities, print became such a regular part of peoples' everyday lives that printing capabilities became a virtual requirement for any organization that sought a public voice. Printed tracts, sermons, and religious newspapers both contributed to and drew strength from the nineteenth century's dramatic growth in church attendance. By 1850, this demand for

magazines, newspapers, books, and tracts sustained 400 publishing firms, 3,000 booksellers, and over 4,000 printing offices. Religious publishing came to account for the majority of America's publishing output.\textsuperscript{31}

Rather than merely attending to broader industrial advances, the rise of print production and consumption seems to have spurred those broader changes. It was the A.T.S., for example, that in 1826 installed the first steam-powered Treadwell press in New York; by 1829, the A.B.S. had sixteen, while Harper and Brothers did not install their first until a few years later.\textsuperscript{32} In addition to becoming early adopters of cutting-edge technologies, these institutions also pioneered modern business and trade publishing practices, including centralized production and administration, localized distribution, economies of scale, and differential pricing. By 1830, these innovations in printing technologies, sales techniques, and distribution methods allowed the A.B.S. to distribute over one million Bibles; the A.T.S. distributed more than six million tracts.\textsuperscript{33} The scale of these numbers has led David Nord to present these organizations' religious print as "the first mass medium in America." R. Laurence Moore remarks that this medium enabled "antebellum ministers and their close allies" to become "a major force in creating a commercially exploitable reading public in America and in determining its tastes."\textsuperscript{34}

During his tenure as editor of \textit{Everybody's Paper}, Fleming Revell never achieved a circulation comparable to the scale of the A.T.S., but Revell Co., the Y.M.C.A, and Moody

\textsuperscript{31} Brown, \textit{The Word in the World}, 47, 64.


\textsuperscript{33} Hatch, \textit{The Democratization of American Christianity}, 14.

himself all drew upon and helped refine the same set of business practices. Pricing, for example, always served as a site of experimentation. While Fleming Revell merely reduced his magazine's price to twenty-five cents, other publishers regularly dropped their asking prices all the way to zero. The A.T.S. and A.B.S. became known not just for cheap literature but especially for free literature. But free literature was rarely an end in itself; the idea behind it was that giving away free tracts might entice recipients to buy books. David Nord points out that books—not tracts—were the main business of the Tract Society. As part of their sales pitches, A.T.S. agents emphasized books' "permanency" and "perpetuity."  

Whether working for the A.T.S., A.B.S., Y.M.C.A., or Dwight Moody, these sales agents had a name: "colporteurs." Colporteurs helped overcome the principal distribution problem of their day: between 1840 and 1880, the geographic area of the United States nearly doubled from one-and-a-half to three million square miles, and population grew from seventeen to fifty million. The vast majority of this population lived in rural areas. During this same period, railroad mileage grew from about three thousand to 115 thousand miles. New railroad tracks expanded shipping capabilities and options, and publishers increasingly sent books to customers through the U.S. mail and via express shipping companies. While all of these options helped books to reach customers who demanded them, however, they did little to identify potential customers and to generate new demand. 

Colporteurs addressed this need by traveling from region to region and door to door. "When we find a family that has no book," one A.T.S. agent explained in 1852, "we generally

35 David Paul Nord, “Religious Reading and Readers in Antebellum America,” 245; Nord, Faith in Reading, 126-127.

have to grant one: at the next visit they will usually buy one; and at the next a number, and so on, increasing their purchases as a thirst for knowledge and habits of reading increase. The average amount of sales to each family visited a few years ago was twenty-one cents—now it is thirty-one. . . . Similar facts are coming in every month from all parts of the country." Beyond merely "endeavoring to supply a present demand," the agent continued, "it is creating a much greater and constantly increasing demand, which will afford ample scope for private publishers and kindred institutions, and still require a greater number of its own colporteurs to meet."37 After the A.T.S. hired its first two colporteurs in 1841, the system proved so successful that the Society hired 567 more within ten years. The A.B.S. soon hired its own, and when denominational publishers began proliferating and expanding in the 1850s, they did the same.38

The colporteur model still worked well enough in 1895 that Dwight Moody founded a publishing operation alongside his new Bible Institute in Chicago that became known as the Bible Institute Colportage Association (renamed Moody Publishers in 1941). The idea of the Colportage had been to distribute literature to areas of the Midwest that lacked access to it. In the fall of 1894, Moody reportedly had discovered that the state of Wisconsin had only one religious bookstore. He accordingly had Revell print 100,000 copies of his book The Way to God, which he had his associates distribute throughout the state. From then on, B.I.C.A. printed cheap paperback versions of Moody's books and those of other popular religious authors, distributing them especially to "prisoners, lumbermen, seamen, railroad men and miners." By 1900, the


organization had produced over 100 different publications, employed 600 colporteurs across the
country, and had distributed over three million volumes in total.39

David Nord insists that market principles fused together with print proselytization less
because of the market's inexorable tendency to commandeer all social processes than because the
"managers of the noncommercial Bible and tract societies made themselves practical
businessmen, savvy marketers, large-scale manufacturers, and capitalists in order to save the
country from the market revolution." Yet the A.T.S., the A.B.S., and--later--the Y.M.C.A.
washed themselves in business rhetoric and practice not just because their managers conformed
to business conventions but because those organizations' leaders often were captains of business
and industry. As one contemporary of Moody would suggest, "all religious revivals" have their
"origin among the merely well-to-do classes." This had been the case even in Finney's era; in his
1876 memoirs, Finney explained that he received strong support from what he called "the
highest classes of society." His revival meetings, he explained, "became thronged with that class.
The lawyers, physicians, merchants, and indeed all the most intelligent people, became more and
more interested, and more and more easily influenced."40 Such prominent New York
businessmen as the dry-goods merchants Arthur Tappan and Anson G. Phelps essentially
bankrolled Finney. Phelps, for instance, asked Finney to come to Manhattan in 1829 and rented
the buildings where Finney held his revivals; Arthur Tappan did the same a couple years later.
Tappan and Phelps both belonged to the "Association of Gentlemen" who funded the
publication of the New York Evangelist and received credit on the paper's front page until 1834.

W Gloege, “Consumed: Reuben A. Torrey and the Construction of Corporate Fundamentalism” (Ph.D., United
States -- Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2007), 285 fn 126; Pollock, Moody, 287.

40 Nord, Faith in Reading, 7; Moody, The Life of Dwight L. Moody, 203; Charles Grandison Finney, Memoirs of Rev. Charles
G. Finney (A. S. Barnes & Company, 1876), 285.
These same businessmen joined other New York elites in funding and leading organizations like the ABS and ATS; these leaders included the real-estate developer Henry Rutgers, the lawyer and former mayor of New York Richard Varick, and the Episcopal statesman John Jay.41

Both in the U.S. and in the U.K., Moody received support from many of the most prominent businessmen of his own day. John Wanamaker, the Philadelphia-based merchant and conservative Presbyterian, for example, worked with Moody regularly. Presiding over one of Moody's 1875 revival meetings in London, Wanamaker told the audience about "the deep interest that was felt in America in the great religious movement going on in London." On his return to the U.S. in 1875, a group of prominent businessmen joined the party that met Moody's steamer, including the railroad owner and congressman William E. Dodge, the banker and railroad tycoon D. W. McWilliams, and the banker George H. Stuart.42

Profit

The secret of the A.T.S.'s success was not so secret: they were non-profit. Debunking the notion that the A.T.S. served merely "to circulate the small tracts of the society bound up in volumes," one writer insisted in 1838 that the Society "is simply an enterprise for carrying the best practical religious publications of the last two centuries, by voluntary Christian effort, to be sold at cost, to every family in the land."43 The Tract Society and other interdenominational organizations were able to

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offer literature "at cost" because they relied financially not just upon income from book sales but also from charitable contributions. Non-religious commercial publishers sometimes complained that this charitable support put them at a competitive disadvantage; but, of course, this was precisely the point for religious publishers who wanted readers to choose their literature over and against secular alternatives. The convention of non-profit status became so entrenched that observers sometimes objected when they suspected that publishers or individuals had abrogated it either in spirit or in practice.

Taking on the system of colportage, for example, one critic explained in 1859 that the "system of colportage, as well as its name, was imported from France," where it helped compensate for meager "channels for the circulation of religious literature through the book-trade" and for few "local centers of Christian influence." Claiming that these two problems were not as apparent in the United States, the critic insisted that the "great national system of colportage . . . has led to a perversion of the system itself from that simple model which works so beautifully in France." While the system "has its appropriate field in sparsely settled districts, and would there be managed most economically and successfully by local arrangement and supervision, instead of by a remote central power," the system's national oversight has ensured that "the main business of the colporteurs is book-selling, and that their religious influence is incidental and secondary." Speaking about the Tract Society's controversial decision not to publish work on slavery for fear of upsetting its supporters, the critic concluded that "every bookseller knows that if the colporteurs were not book peddlers, but only tract visitors carrying the Gospel, there would be no such timidity at the bare mention of slavery."


On several different occasions in 1874 and 1875, Dwight Moody was forced to address allegations that he and Ira Sankey had been profiting from a hymn book published in their names. The controversy began in Newcastle, when the two revivalists decided to publish a book of the hymns that they had been using. The book emerged in response to demand, for standard hymnals did not include Sankey's hymns, many of which he wrote or compiled himself. Moody initially allowed the firm of Morgan and Scott to produce a sixteen-page pamphlet, which it sold at sixpence a copy. After publishing a series of new editions of the pamphlet in succeeding months, the firm published a full book in the fall of 1873. Over the next two years, Moody and Sankey earned the equivalent of $35,000 (by one estimate, about $750,000 today). Moody used the money to rebuild his Chicago church, which the Great Fire of 1871 had destroyed. Royalties from other editions went to other religious initiatives, including schools at Northfield that Moody helped found and support. After Moody's death, Fleming Revell would report that Moody had made $1,125,000 in royalties throughout his life, but that "none of this was used for his own personal expenses.46

It is not clear whether critics suspected that Moody was growing personally wealthy from the book's sale, or whether they merely balked at his use of the money to expand his own religious empire; either way, he addressed criticism during a February 1875, revival in London. "A great deal has been said about our making a fine thing financially out of this movement from the sale of the hymn-books, organs, etc.," Moody explained. "Now I desire to say that up to the 1st of January we received a royalty from the publishers of our hymn-books, but from that date, when the solo book was enlarged, we determined not to receive anything form the sale, and have requested the publishers to hand over the royalty upon all our hymn-books to one of your leading
citizens, Mr. H. M. Matheson, who will devote the same to such charitable objects as may be
decided upon." Again and again in 1875, newspaper reports noted how much Moody's revivals
raised and spent, and that Moody and Sankey had taken nothing for themselves.48

The most obvious way that Fleming H. Revell Company deviated from the conventions of
nineteenth-century Protestant publishing is that the firm was for-profit. In later years, Fleming
Revell would defend the firm's profit margin even from associates of Moody; in 1903, for
example, leaders of Moody's Bible Institute Colportage Association attempted to renegotiate its
publishing arrangement with Revell Co., which published all of B.I.C.A.'s material, possessed its
printing plates, and owned the copyrights to all of its books. The Colportage had hoped to
reduce its half-cent "plate rental" fee and, at the very least, to share in the savings that lower
printing costs had brought Revell in the years since the firms initially struck their publication
contract. As Timothy Gloege relates, Fleming Revell took a hard line, and only arbitration
settled the disagreement.49

Considering Moody received criticism for the mere possibility that his publications might
bring him personal gain, Revell's determinedly for-profit status is striking. Among the many
reasons why Revell might have received leeway from consumers and colleagues, a few
explanations prove most compelling. The first reason is that from the 1870s on, Moody helped
circulate and popularize the sort of transactional business logics that would have made Revell's
for-profit pursuits seem less offensive. "[Moody] is a business man and he means business," a
friend remarked in 1873. "Mr. Moody goes into the heart of this matter at once and puts it in a

business way. He says that he himself has salvation . . . and that every soul that wants it may have it too, at once, and know it, and go home with it, and be as happy as he likes."\textsuperscript{50}

But a second reason that Revell received leeway has to do with its company profile. While observers seemed to object to the notion that ministers or interdenominational institutions like the A.T.S. might profit from their pursuits, Revell fit neither of those categories. Although Revell shared a lack of denominational affiliation with the A.T.S. and A.B.S., authority over its operations rested not with board members of varied denominational background but rather with Fleming H. Revell and his employees. And Revell was not a minister. He was, in essence, a trade publisher; and it was utterly conventional for trade publishers to seek profit—even when those publishers specialized in items as close to Protestant hearts as the Bible. During Moody's time in Britain, he and his associates reportedly popularized new methods of Bible study; as a result, "the Bagster publishing house could hardly keep pace with the demand for Bibles."\textsuperscript{51}

To be sure, Revell was not alone among trade publishers for publishing religious literature. Typically named for their founders or editors, trade publishers marketed and sold religious books to Christians of all stripes as part of their wider catalogs. Maintaining "religion departments" alongside their other publishing priorities, trade publishers generally were denominationally promiscuous, even though each tended to have close connections to the denominations to which their leaders belonged. Firms' denominational promiscuity reflected their recognition that a broad readership made greater profits possible; it also reflected their origins, as trade publishers typically began not as publishers but rather as profit-maximizing book salesmen or printers.


\textsuperscript{51} Moody, \textit{The Life of Dwight L. Moody}, 163-66.
Founded in 1817 as a printer, for example, Harper and Brothers spent its first decade mostly reprinting British and European books before rising to become the nineteenth century's most successful trade publisher. D. Appleton and Company began not as a printer but as a chain of dry goods shops. By the middle years of the nineteenth century, Appleton's company challenged Harper for dominance of the book trade. The two companies fought over the rights to such influential books as Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, and both companies published a range of religious books as part of their wider catalogs. Appleton's regular publication of devotional and theological books made it the category leader before Appleton's death in 1849.\(^{52}\)

Among trade publishers, Revell was unusual—but still not exceptional—in that it published religious books exclusively. The most notable competitors were Standard Publishing and W. A. Wilde, founded in 1866 and 1870, respectively. Other competitors included Nelson and Phillips of New York, Sheldon and Company, T. Whitaker of New York, and Louizeaux Brothers.\(^{53}\) Because trade publishers sold their religious books in the face of competition from non-profit firms like the A.T.S., trade firms often compensated for their higher prices by also offering more elegant editions. Fleming H. Revell Company, for example, often published the same book under the imprints of Revell and the Bible Institute Colportage Association. While B.I.C.A.'s editions were simply paperbacks, Revell's editions often would have better paper, cloth bindings, and gold lettering on the book's cover.

Although Revell was exceptional neither for being a trade publisher that produced religious books nor for being a "religious" publisher, its monopoly over the works of Dwight Moody and

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52 Tebbel, Between Covers, 24-31.

his associates placed it in a category utterly unto itself. That association allowed Revell to tap into the same sort of interdenominational style that Moody drew upon, but without the constraints within which organizations like the Tract and Bible Societies were forced to operate. This interdenominational style allowed Revell Co. to take Moody's audience and Moody's concerns as its own, which gave Revell a commercial head-start that essentially freed the firm from worries about enticing, appeasing, or securing customers. In order to maintain this business freedom, all Revell had to do was to make sure that potential customers knew with whom it stood. To that end, one word proved more useful than any other: Revell became, above all, a publisher of "evangelical" literature. Before the 1880s, only the A.T.S. had used this word to describe its books or itself, using the ambiguous term to mark its loose constellation of social and theological concerns. By waving this rhetorical flag so visibly, Revell had both the A.T.S.'s evangelicalism and Moody's in mind.

The Moody Market

It was the Moody market that made Revell successful. Through its association with Moody, Revell's firm had a ready-made customer base. To be sure, every publisher had its own base. When Paul and Timothy Loizeaux founded the Brethren-affiliated firm of Loizeaux Brothers in 1876, for example, they operated out of Timothy's Iowa home and focused on cultivating customers through Darbyite Bible conferences. But Revell's association with Moody gave it access not just to those same conferences but also to an unprecedentedly large range of other customers and authors.54

Revell's earliest book came not from Moody's hand but from one of Moody's associates. In his 272-page *Grace and Truth under Twelve Different Aspects*, William P. Mackay (1839-1885) explored how the hubristic "grace of man" keeps humans from recognizing "truth": that God "deals in grace" and saves sinners even though "the whole truth is out about us." A Scottish pastor and hymn writer who served at a church in Hull, England, and had participated in and lent support to Moody's revivals, Mackay originally published the book in Edinburg. But when the Brethren firm of Pickering and Inglis released a new edition in 1872, Revell reprinted it through stereotype reproduction. In the preface to the 1874 "American edition," Mackay thanked "my beloved brother, Mr. Moody of Chicago, with whom I have had such holy and happy times in the work of the Lord in Britain."

We have no record of when, exactly, Revell became Moody's official publisher; the arrangement likely formed casually and orally. Regardless of when the arrangement became official, Revell began publishing Moody's books as early as 1875. "I deeply feel how partially and insufficiently the glorious gospel of the blessed God is represented," an 1875 review quoted Moody as having written in the preface to *Addresses of D. L. Moody*, "but I lay them at the Master's feet, praying, and asking all my Christian friends to pray, that they may be the means in their printed form of winning more souls to Christ than they have been when spoken." The review noted that "the book will be of particular interest to those active Christians who wish to study for themselves the secret of the evangelists success--the instruments which he uses, and how he uses

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them. There are some remarkable points of sympathy and similarity between Bunyan and Moody. FH Revell is the Chicago publisher."

By 1877, Revell began placing advertisements in prominent Chicago dailies. One ad, for example, capitalized on the popularity of Moody's revivals. Taking almost half a broadsheet column, three-quarters of a revival ad announced, in large letters, the "Last week of MOODY AND SANKEY at the Tabernacle." The ad explained that "Mr. Moody will Preach and Mr. Sankey will Sing every night this week, at 8 o'clock (except Saturday)," and it provided a detailed schedule of additional meeting times during the day, including the subjects that Moody would discuss. Those subjects included "Grace," "The Son of Man Is Come to Save the Lost," "Excuses," "The Blood," and "Heaven." Tickets for the meetings, the ad instructed, were available at the Y.M.C.A. The ad also noted that people who "have reason to believe they have been converted or reclaimed" could receive a ticket to Moody's "Converts Meeting," where he would preach a "Farewell Sermon to Converts."

Immediately above this attention-grabbing ad for Moody's climactic revival--the hometown stop on his post-Britain tour--an ad appeared for three books by "F. H. Revell, 91 Washington-st." At the top of list was *Gospel Hymns No. 2*, a revised version of the hymn book originally published with little input from Sankey. Priced "from 5 cents to 30 cents," this version would contain "the gems of the old book, together with a large amount of new material. . . . Will hereafter be used by Moody and Sankey." At 15 cents for paper covers and $1.25 per dozen, the second book was the thirty-two page *The Second Coming of Christ* by D. L. Moody. The final and most precious book, at $2 for cloth and $1 for paper was a collection of sermons delivered in Chicago titled *Great Joy*, priced highly because of its 528 pages.

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Published a few days after the first ad, another ad in *The Advance* offered the book of hymns and the collection of Chicago addresses. Of the latter book, the ad explained that they were "delivered during the Chicago Revival. From the Stenographic Reports, taken verbatim expressly for the Chicago Inter-Ocean, and published by special and exclusive arrangements with The Inter-Ocean. . . . In justice to the public we beg to announce that the only complete and authorized sermons . . . are in the above-named book." Suggesting that Revell Co. had begun making moves to expand its sales reach, the ad concluded with "AGENTS WANTED," an appeal for salespeople.59

The first of Moody's full-length "authorized publications" began appearing in 1880. Those books included *Twelve Select Sermons*, in whose preface Moody repeated his earlier note of humility, remarking that "in compliance with the wishes of many friends I have consented to the publication of the following Addresses. I deeply feel how partially and insufficiently the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God is represented in them, but I lay them at the Master's feet, praying, and asking that all my Christian friends pray, that they may be the means in their printed form of winning more souls to Christ than they have been when spoken." To convey the authenticity of these sentiments, Revell followed the text with a copy of Moody's signature. Perhaps due to this endorsement, the book sold 120,000 copies in its first year.60

An 1881 edition of *Twelve Select Sermons* placed an advertisement for six of Moody's other books between Moody's preface and the first sermon. The ad not only insisted that Moody's books "be widely circulated" but also pointed out that "all former books issued in Mr. Moody's


name have been mere compilations, issued without his consent and notwithstanding his protest."

The ad provides a window not only into the ways that Revell capitalized upon Moody's popularity but also into the relative popularity of the volumes themselves. The books included *Secret Power; or the Secret of Success in Christian Life and Christian Work* (offered in cloth for 60 cents, or in paper for 30 cents), *How to Study the Bible* (paper, 10 cents or $1 for a dozen; cloth, 15 cents), a book on "regeneration," and Bible study titled *The Way and the Word* (paper, 15 cents; cloth, 25 cents). Moody's *Heaven: Where It Is; Its Inhabitants and How to Get There* stood out among the other books. In addition to being available both in cloth with "rich gold stamp" (60 cents) and in paper (30 cents), the book reportedly had reached its 25,000th printing. The latter book's wide appeal is apparent from its widespread reprinting; one 1882 edition, for example, was reprinted in Spanish by the Mexican branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church.61 As this ad suggests, Revell's advertisements typically featured both association with Moody and the high sales figures that his books produced. In 1884, for example, a Revell ad directed at the female readers of *The Ladies' Home Journal and Practical Housekeeper* boasted that *The Way to God and How to Find It* had sold "nearly two thousand copies per week for six weeks since issued. We publish only authorized books by Mr. Moody."62

By 1891, Revell had secured the attention of the American book publishing scene's observers. One profile of notable "books and bookmakers" in *The American Bookseller*, for instance, reported that "the works of Mr. D. L. Moody have attained a sale of over six hundred thousand copies." This sales figure, the article pointed out, "comprises only the volumes prepared by Mr. Moody and issued by his only authorized publisher, Fleming H. Revell, New York and Chicago,


and does not include the large numbers of unauthorized and garbled reports of sermons, sketches, etc., that have been issued by irresponsible publishers. 65 Commenting upon a copy of an 1881 Revel catalog, a 1944 profile of Fleming H. Revell Co. in Publishers’ Weekly estimated that five and a half of the catalog's twenty-four pages were "given to the works of Dwight L. Moody himself." With the sort of understatement for which bibliophiles anecdotally are known, the profile remarked that Moody "was a very valuable literary property for the house of Revell." As early as 1881, Revell's success enabled him to begin acquiring smaller publishing firms and establishing outposts in cities like Edinburgh and London. 64

By many accounts, "Moody books" appealed largely because the books were seen as more permanent and portable versions of Moody's powerful sermons. As one of Moody's British listeners explained, "of Mr. Moody's own power . . . I find it difficult to speak. It is so real and yet so unlike the power of ordinary preachers, that I hardly know how to analyze it." 65 The editor of an unauthorized 1875 collection of Moody's sermons agreed with this estimate of Moody's rhetorical gifts. "One of the most common experiences, perhaps, of those who have had the privilege of listening to Mr. Moody," the editor explained, "is that his words carry with them a recurrent power, continually cropping up afterwards with somewhat of their original force; a sure token of vigorous and effective speech, albeit, occasionally it may be, crude and homely in form." But the editor insisted that effectiveness often lay behind crude form, and he explained the point with a few lines of verse:

--flowers on furse,


The better the unsouther:
Do roses stick like burrs?"  

The spirit of this poem, the editor explained, lay behind the idea to pursue "the present little volume, with the belief that the compilation in a book form of some of the more striking passages of his discourses would be gladly welcomed by many, as a lasting memento of Mr. Moody's visit to England."  

Readers fairly regularly noted that the power of Moody's sermons came through on the page. One prisoner in New York's Sing-Sing prison, for example, reported that he "had no thought of the necessity of a change of heart when committed, but . . . was attracted to reading Moody's book, The Way to God (copies of which have been furnished each prisoner). From this he got to reading the Bible, and feeling that he had no friends led him to seek the friendship of Christ, and on being put into a cell with a new convert he feels that he is now a child of God."  

Although testimony to the "power" of Moody's sermons helps to explain why people might have wanted to experience his words in print, such testimony sheds little light on what made Moody's sermons seem powerful in the first place. Edward Blum attributes that power to two principal sources. First, Moody told good stories. As Walt Whitman remarked, Moody's contemporaries knew him as "the boss story-teller." Moody deployed this ability so liberally, Blum argues, that Moody helped transform prevailing sermon genres "from discursive arguments and biblical expositions to sentimental storytelling." Lamenting "the characteristic delusion of the average revival preacher, whose stock in trade consists of threats and denunciations, . . . whose favorite inducements are fire and brimstone," one of Moody's critics praised him for "refrain[ing]  

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from anything like an attempt to work on the fears of the excitable multitude they address."
Some revivalists, the critic reported with shock, even used "children of tender years . . . as fitting subjects for some cold-blooded emotional vivisector." 68

In addition to telling good stories, a second compelling feature of Moody's sermons was his zealous avoidance of political issues. Instead of focusing on issues of social justice, for example, he addressed ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation with God and fellow man. In this way, Moody embodied the interdenominational spirit of the century's first half, pushing moral discipline while skirting both regional and sectarian flashpoints. Often relating stories about the Civil War, for example, Moody "depoliticized, sentimentalized, and distanced version of the struggle that diminished differences between the warring sections." 69 To many, this avoidance of political issues testified both to Moody's humility, in that he put aside personal opinion in the name of faith, and to his unswerving commitment to preaching the "old fashioned Gospel." As one colleague explained, Moody preached his sermons "with most impressive directness, not as by a man half convinced and who seems always to feel that a sceptic is looking over his shoulder." For Revell, Moody's simple agenda and tone allowed the firm to devise simple but catchy titles for his books. As one former Revell Co. editor explained a 1935 autobiography, if a book had a prominent author and a catchy title, it virtually sold itself. 70

But not everyone appreciated Moody and his style, whether spoken or written. Commenting on the British "Moody Revival" in 1875, for example, the Archbishop of


Canterbury reportedly "expresse[d] the opinion that the religious revival will have little permanent effect."\textsuperscript{71} Privately, Queen Victoria said the same, remarking that "this sensational style of excitement like the Revivals is not the religion which can last, and is not, I think, wholesome for the mind or heart."\textsuperscript{72} Expressing bafflement at the incredible size Moody's British audiences, another critic attributed Moody's appeal to sheer emotion. "If religious feeling, carried to excess, can and does produce insanity," the critic speculated, "it becomes necessary to decide when the indulgence of it begins to be injurious. Messrs. Moody and Sankey nightly filled crowded halls with rapturous devotees, and the effect of these exciting performances was watched by psychological students with keen interest. . . . What is it that attracts large audiences, and what are the results morally and physically? . . . Crowds do not reason they only feel; but because they do not reason is that, therefore, the best and truest sort of education which works through emotions only?"\textsuperscript{73}

Perplexed by Moody's success in England, one writer for the \textit{New York Times} decided to examine the sermons that had seemed to generate so much interest. To do so, he read Revell Co.'s published versions. Remarking upon Moody's use of the Bible, the writer noted that "the events related in Scripture are retold in a strain which, according to our humble opinion, is no improvement upon the original narrative, but which may probably be calculated to make a deep impression upon the minds of others." Yet even though the writer seemed unable to appreciate the content of Moody's sermons, he nonetheless praised their overall agenda. "Mr. Moody is evidently in earnest," the writer remarked, "and he endeavors to make the great truths of religion


\textsuperscript{72} Quoted in Pollack, \textit{Moody}, 16.

\textsuperscript{73} "Religion and Hysterics; An English View of Moody’s Work," \textit{Chicago Daily Tribune}, May 21, 1876.
clear to the comprehension of the most illiterate of his audience. He encourages everybody to
believe that the instant conversion and security of eternal peace are within their reach. No time
need be lost. No doubts need be entrenched." With his stories, Moody runs his hand across all
the chords of human feeling--striking them roughly, it is true, but still in such a way as to stir
deeply the finest emotions of our nature."74

Still, while this latter writer admitted understanding Moody's appeal, he still claimed "great
astonishment" at the scale of Moody's popularity. And he was not alone in this surprise. The
success of Moody's revivals provoked so much incredulity in some American circles that a rumor
circulated in May 1875 that Moody and Sankey had undertaken their campaign under the
auspices of the showman P. T. Barnum. As far away as San Francisco, that city's Chronicle
reported that "the New York Herald says that a great error has been discovered in reference to the
American revivalists. . . . Their movement is under the direction of P. T. Barnum, the great
American showman. Mr. Barnum, it is explained, having achieved so many triumphs in the way
of directing public opinion has resolved to found a new religion, and he has introduced the work
through Moody and Sankey."75

**Beyond Moody**

Revell's relationship with D. L. Moody was a commercial windfall, but it also could be a
liability. Inasmuch as the relationship brought the firm customers, Moody also could constrain
the firm's appeal by pinning Revell Co. to particular platforms and positions. Lacking such tight


*New York Evangelist* 46, no. 25 (June 24, 1875): 5; “The New York Tablet,” *New York Evangelist* 46, no. 21 (May 27,
1875): 2; “Occasional Notes,” *Christian Union* 11, no. 21 (May 26, 1875): 443. See also “Barnum, Moody, and
Sankey,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 1, 1878.
links to prominent figures of their own, other firms did not face this peculiar challenge. Neither the A.T.S. nor the Methodist Book Concern, for example, had a figure like Moody, who simultaneously enticed some customers and turned off others. The secret to Revell Co.'s success ultimately lay in its ability to play both sides of this conundrum--maximizing its connection to Moody, while also reaching beyond his orbit. Among other tactics, the firm's "evangelical" identity made this possible.

Up through the 1880s, many of Revell's books centered on the interests for which Moody had become known. Dozens of books focused on approaches to Sunday School instruction, Bible study, evangelism, and missionary work. By the decade's end, these books had led many observers to see Revell Co. and Moody as theological partners. In 1888, for example, the Baptist minister J. H. Gilmore jokingly swiped at Moody, his fellow pastors, and Fleming H. Revell Co. Reflecting upon pastors' reading habits, Gilmore admitted that "the pastor should, in his hours for reading, give the foremost place to the Bible"; but Gilmore meanwhile insisted that "the pastor should not confine his reading to the Bible; nor, as Mr. Moody recommends, to 'books illustrative of the Bible.'" Gilmore joked that

many a book which does not bear the imprint of our good brother Revell, and which Mr. Moody would utterly condemn, may, to a man of greater mental breadth and more generous culture, be eminently helpful and suggestive in fathoming the meaning of the Book of Books. Indeed, one may well ask, what book is there, which a Christian man ought to read at all, that may not serve to illustrate the meaning of that book which has, to so large an extent, moulded the thought and inspired the feeling of the Christian centuries?

Gilmore accordingly suggested reading classic works of literature, those "by common consent, of the highest excellence." Gilmore advised using "Emerson's suggestion that we read no book till it is a year old."76

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But Gilmore's characterization was not entirely fair. Revell was not merely Moody's mouthpiece, and it never had been. From the firm's start, Fleming Revell had milked his connection with Moody, increasingly capitalizing on the relationship and pushing against it. Among the sources that Revel Co. turned to for differentiation, Britain loomed large. Such books as W. P. Mackay's *Grace and Truth*, Hannah Whitall Smith's *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875), and William Blackstone's *Jesus Is Coming* (1878) sold extraordinarily well. By 1886, Mackay's book had sold over 200,000 in England and 30,000 in the United States. Smith's book became an early bestseller. As early as 1889, Revell's advertisements had touted their "authorized edition of this remarkable work" and boasted that demand for Smith's book "has been so great as to wear out two sets of plates." A blurb from the *New York Evangelist* urged readers to "buy the book, and keep it with your Bible for constant study, until you have thoroughly mastered, in your own experience, the 'secret' of which it tells." The ad claimed that *The Christian's Secret* had "become an accepted classic in devotional literature," and that claim proved accurate. With over 175,000 sold by 1889, Revell sold over 500,000 copies by 1944, with 5,000 reportedly still sold every year.77

Revell turned to British authors for a few reasons. First, Moody's network gave Revell access to them. Moody's revivals in Britain earned him not just a reputation but also a large network of friends and allies. And those friends became Revell's, too. Like Moody, W. P. Mackay had received regular publicity in the *The Christian*. Hannah Smith was American, but in 1875 she

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and her husband had taken up residence in England, where they became popular for their holiness teaching of "higher life." Henry Drummond (1851-1897), a Scottish minister and youth organizer in England, had helped Moody with his British revival while a divinity student in Edinburgh; Drummond became one of Revell's most popular authors in the 1890s. Yet Revell did not rely solely on Moody's connections; Fleming Revell himself reportedly spent as much as three months abroad every year identifying and meeting with potential authors; over the course of his life, he reportedly traveled to Britain ninety-eight times.\(^7\)

But Revell also turned to British authors because they appealed to American audiences. For a variety of cultural and practical reasons, Americans revered British books. Cultural reasons included dissimilarity between the landscapes of Christianity in Britain and the United States. Moody had benefited from this dissimilarity, as his position outside of British church politics or "churchmanship" had allowed him to speak relatively freely. Similarly, British authors could speak freely to American readers, who may not have understood or objected to authors' more polemical comments. This situation gave American readers freedom to admire British Christianity and its Christians without regard to context.\(^8\)

Yet Americans revered British books not just because Americans admired British tastes but also due to practical factors. The most prominent factor came down to supply. In an 1891 guide to the business of bookselling, Publishers' Weekly suggested that American booksellers regularly examine its list of new English books carefully, for the list gave booksellers a sense of up-and-coming book trends. Seen in one way, this advice suggests that Americans situated Britain

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\(^7\) Doran, Chronicles of Barabbas, 24.

ahead of the American intellectual, cultural, and devotional curve. This perception receives support from a narrative of American Christianity that highlights the British origins of such influential figures as the Puritans, George Whitefield, and John Wesley.\textsuperscript{80} Seen in another way, however, \textit{Publishers' Weekly} directed booksellers' attention toward Britain because Britain still produced a substantial proportion of English-language books.

Only in the twentieth century did American readers stop feeding their reading appetites mostly with British imports. This reliance on British books proved especially true in the case of religious books. Having worked at the conservative Willard Tract Company before coming to work for years at Revell Co., George Doran became familiar with a wide range of acquisition practices. In his 1935 autobiography, Doran explained that until the turn of the century, "there was a purely Anglo-American flavour to all American publishing. With the opening of the twentieth century came a great and startling change." Describing his time at Willard, Doran explained that in the 1880s the company often sent away to Britain or traveled there to acquire supplies. The company's reliance on British sources proved strong enough that Doran claimed to have had very little editorial experience before coming to Revell. At Willard, he mostly resold published British material.\textsuperscript{81}

In addition to importing books from Britain, American firms frequently reprinted British books. Candy Brown claims that by 1856, American books outnumbered British books by a factor of four to one; but her high number likely fails to account for the frequency with which American firms reprinted British books. Adolf Growoll, the author of \textit{Publishers' Weekly}'s 1891 guide to bookselling, actually cautioned American booksellers against importing too many books

\textsuperscript{80} Adolf Growoll, \textit{A Booksellers's Library and How to Use It} (New York: Publisher's Weekly, 1891).

\textsuperscript{81} Doran, \textit{Chronicles of Barabbas}, 10-15, 83.
printed in England, for "all English books for which there is likely to be a demand in this country sooner or later find their way into the lists of some American publisher." In an age when American copyright law was rather flexible (the United States did not sign on to the 1886 Berne Convention, an initiative led by European countries), many American publishers reprinted British books both with and without permission. Doran explained that before the establishment of "the international copyright agreement of 1891, . . . piracy--unauthorized reprinting--was perfectly reputable. Publishers on both sides of the Atlantic were on the alert to discover books which could be reprinted." English publishers received nothing, for example, from the popularity of authors like Dickens in the United States. After 1891, American publishers usually honored foreign copyrights--but only if the actual books were printed in the United States.82

With copies of British theological books relatively scarce in the United States, Revell met ministerial demand by reprinting volumes initially published across the Atlantic. Mackay's *Grace and Truth* represents one example. Another popular example was Charles Chiniquy's *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, a book that George Doran described as "the sensation of the day." Although Chiniquy was French Canadian, an English publisher first printed it in 1886. Revell issued its own edition later that year, but that did not stop another Chicago publisher from issuing its own edition in 1889. Chiniquy's book proved so popular because it tapped into well-worn Protestant prejudice against Roman Catholicism. "Read this book," Chiniquy commanded, "and you will . . .

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learn that Romanism, under the mask of religion, is nothing but a permanent political conspiracy against all the most sacred rights of man and the most holy laws of God.”

In a circular way, this practical reliance on British books amplified demand for them. With British books circulated so widely, American readers knew them well, and their authors often possessed both celebrity and cultural clout in the United States, which in turn led American readers to demand more. This circular process only intensified in the later nineteenth century, when the expansion of British and American book production meant that more Americans were encountering more reprints of more British books.

This process helps explain why Americans seem to have seen Britain not just as a source of ideas and books but as the place where American ideas and books could be tested for legitimacy. Part of Moody's appeal to American audiences seems to have been that he had turned the proverbial tables on Britain, which traditionally had exported evangelists and rarely imported them. Playing to this perception, Moody and his team regularly wrote from Britain to keep American periodicals abreast of their campaign. "A cable dispatch has been received here," a New York Times article with a Philadelphia dateline reported in 1875, "requesting the prayers of all Christians on the coming Sabbath for Moody and Sankey's religious work in London, which commenced this week under circumstances of extraordinary interest." The article suggested that Moody had been attempting to perform a kind of revival version of the A.B.S.'s general distribution: "vast pains have been taken to reach the entire population by personal visitation. Large buildings have been erected, to be used in connection with those now available."

83 Charles Paschal Telephore Chiniquy, Fifty Years in the Church of Rome (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1886), 4; Charles Paschal Telephore Chiniquy, Fifty Years in the Church of Rome (London: Protestant Literature Depository, 1886).

But Revell Co. built its business less on the backs of British celebrities than on those of small-time ministers and denominations in the United States. Protestant publishers traditionally had underserved these two groups. For the average minister in 1890 with aspirations of authorship, publishing options proved relatively limited. He or she had virtually no access to the A.T.S., for example, which tended to publish classic works of Christian literature. The aspiring author could publish with the publishing wing of the denomination to which he or she belonged. But if the author hoped to reach more people than Methodists, Presbyterians, or some other denominational constituency, the only other options were religious trade publishers like Standard and Louizeaux Brothers. But even these were small in stature and denominationally bound, with Standard largely serving "Christian Churches" and Louizeaux serving the Brethren. Meanwhile, because trade publishers like Harper and Brothers published religious books only as part of their wider catalogs, and they lacked access to denominational channels of distribution, those firms tended to publish the work of prominent and popular religious writers, whose books sold well in bookstores. These trade publishers determined not just who published the kinds of books that reached bookstores but also what kinds of books customers knew about and could access.85

Although publishing options were limited for aspiring authors, the book had become such a popular medium that publishing a book became an aspirational practice. In the preface to the evangelist M. B. Williams's *Among Many Witnesses: A Book for Bible Students* (1891), for example, Williams explained that he wrote it "in response to the many earnest requests of those who have heard these readings and sermons." George Doran might have had ministers like Williams in mind when he remarked that preachers often approached him explaining that their

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85 Growoll, *A Booksellers’s Library and How to Use It*, 5.
congregations had "begged of him to give to the wider world the blessing of his exhortations." By serving this desire, Revell functioned as a kind of Protestant vanity press.\textsuperscript{86}

But other small-time ministers sought Revell's imprimatur for more practical reasons. As George Doran explains, itinerant evangelists sometimes hoped to publish books as a way of legitimating themselves or supplementing their incomes. Some of these authors seemed "genuinely interested in the spiritual welfare of their fellows and thought not at all of financial results." Yet "others, by far the greater proportion, were shrewd and bargaining, more especially the traveling evangelist who took copies of his books with him for sale on his journeys to the members of his audiences--the profits to swell the income from collections and all to go to the purse of the evangelist, now a regular recognized and established merchant, or shall I say peddler."\textsuperscript{87}

If ministers sought to publish books as a way of legitimating themselves, the boards of small denominations felt this need even more strongly. Nineteenth-century Protestants valued print not just because they imbued it with power but because they imbued it with particular kinds of power. As denominational allegiance grew more popular in the century's second half, print became increasingly valued for its ability to allow groups and individuals to stake claims in a contentious denominational world. Observers of North American religious culture today sometimes refer to denominations as "cultural dinosaurs," and they largely are right, for denominational loyalties steadily have weakened in the twentieth century. But in the nineteenth century, the scene looked much like George Doran remembered in mid-nineteenth-century Toronto, where "it was essential that every man and woman and child should be an adherent of

\textsuperscript{86} Milan Bertrand Williams, \textit{Among Many Witnesses} (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1891); Doran, \textit{Chronicles of Barabbas}, 351.

\textsuperscript{87} Doran, \textit{Chronicles of Barabbas}, 24.
some church or denominational body. A business man, especially a retail merchant, did not dare not to be a church member. There was rivalry, doctrinal, social, and statistical, among the sects--especially among the Nonconformists."

As Doran's comment suggests, doctrine proved central to how Protestant groups imagined their own identity as well as those of others. This is not to say that all members of a particular denomination understood certain doctrines equally--or at all. But nominal loyalty to such doctrines as "Arminianism," "Calvinism," or "premillennialism" not only allowed Protestants to navigate religious waters crowded with dozens of denominations but also influenced whom certain Protestants deemed suitable allies. Denominational loyalties often had just as much to do with ethnic or national identity as with theological conviction. Presbyterians and Methodists, for example, often opposed each other not just because of disagreements over Arminianism but also because Presbyterians were largely Scottish and Methodists were largely English in origin.

If doctrinal stances provided rhetorical tools with which to articulate group identities, print provided the means of articulating those positions. Speaking again about Toronto, George Doran explained that

So highly controversial an atmosphere demanded literature and propaganda, and there were numerous religious publishing houses: the Presbyterian Board of Publication, the Baptist Publication Society, the Methodist Book and Publishing House, the Primitive Methodist Book Room, the Evangelical Churchman Company, and a branch of the English Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge--a purely Anglican or Episcopalian enterprise. From out of these rivalries there emerged a body of the holy discontents, something like the Fundamentalists of our day, who assumed for themselves a patent right to divine favour, and relegated all others to a more or less dubious state of mundane existence with grave questions of their immortal state.

As a result, Doran pointed out, Roman Catholics focused primarily on building institutions fed largely by immigration, while Protestants generally founded "a magazine or church paper with its editor for every shade of belief. They fought their battles and washed their dirty linen in full view
of a public which loved a religious fight." Virtually all denominations and theological factions--no matter the size--published periodicals that defended their positions and stitched together their social networks. But book publishing was more difficult for small denominations to manage.88

Thus in Revell's first few decades, it thrived not only by selling bestsellers written by authors whom Doran described in 1935 as the "stars of evangelicalism" but also by offering its publishing services to small denominations. While reverence for books and the American denominational landscape made books crucial outlets for articulating denominations' positions, small denominations tended to lack their own book production capabilities. Reflecting upon his leading role at Revell Co. during the 1890s, George Doran explained that Revell capitalized upon a broad array of small denominations that lacked publishing power. In Revell's early years, Doran recalled,

there were several publishers producing exclusively religious books, and practically all of the leading publishers of the day had important religious-book departments. However, one broad field had been neglected by them. There were in the North four major denominational publishing houses: Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational, but these confined themselves largely to denominational books. In addition to these four, there were at least thirty other and minor denominations and sects, and as most of these had their beginnings in evangelical zeal and were relatively small and struggling, they could not produce their own literature. Here was a fertile and fruitful field for the independent evangelical publisher. To be ambassador from the house of Revell to all of these denominational houses west of the Alleghenies was my first real opportunity.

Revell therefore became small Protestant denominations' go-to publisher. Keen not to give denominations the impression that Revell was merely profiting off of them, Doran often established joint publishing arrangements with denominations, particularly over prominent authors.

88 Doran, *Chronicles of Barabbas*, 7-8, 319.
The genius of Revell's approach was that its agreements with small denominations allowed it to make use of those groups' extensive distribution networks—including not just churches but also ministerial conventions and associations. Writing about the Seventh-Day Adventists, for example, Doran explained the efficacy of his approach:

The *Review and Herald* publishing house was formed, a thorough-going printing and publishing plant for the publication of their denominational papers and supplies, and for the selling of books by subscription. The parent house had a branch in the capital city of each state. A branch would be known as the Illinois Tract Society, located at Springfield, Illinois; the Iowa Tract Society of Des Moines, and so on. Each one of these Tract Societies was a branch headquarters for proselyting and sales. In all, they engaged a small army of men and women book-agents. They held their annual conferences at their tabernacle at the Battle Creek headquarters. Here was a golden field for operation. If one could just break down prejudice and gain access to this market!89

But the principal problem for Revell was that small denominations inherently clashed with each other. Conservative Presbyterians, for example, made strange bedfellows not just with Seventh-Day Adventists but also with less conservative Presbyterians. Revell was able to offer its services to small denominations, after all, only because they had refused to ally with each other. Revell therefore had to respect denominational distinctions while simultaneously convincing denominations to publish alongside each other.

Revell mollified this conflict by casting itself as "evangelical." That term signaled to denominations that the firm had Moody's strain of Protestantism at its heart. That sort of Protestantism always had respected denominational identities; at the same time, it had encouraged Protestants to rally together for the sake of pan-Protestant unity. Armed with a reputation as a Moody-style "evangelical" publisher, Revell was able to publish and sell books associated with individuals and denominations outside the bounds of what passes as "evangelical"

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89 Ibid., 21-25.
today. Some of its authors were far more theologically liberal, for example, than others. This suggests, again, not only that the "evangelical" designation was malleable but also that its inclusions depended less upon any objective taxonomic tests than upon regional and institutional networks, personal reputations, and styles of self-representation.  

The denominational diversity of Revell's authors also suggests that Revell saw little problem with publishing books that conflicted theologically. Revell recognized that books sold best when they appealed to the widest range of Protestants, but they were willing to sustain connections with more particularistic groups and individuals by printing opinionated works.

In 1879, for instance, Revell generated a lot of attention--and a small measure of controversy--by publishing a collection of essays from a "prophetic conference" on premillennialism. One review, for instance, noted that the collection had been produced by the "enterprising publisher and bookseller, F. H. Revell," but then insisted that "as samples of Biblical criticisms and exegetical reasoning the essays are of small worth." Even though this review appeared in a magazine otherwise sympathetic to Moody and his associates, the reviewer pointed out that "the endeavor to literalize all this is monstrously out of place." The most pleasant comment that the review ultimately made is that "one must be glad that they have been published," but only in order that so that "their radical unsatisfactoriness will be the sooner made manifest." But not all reviewers felt the same. Another reviewer proved more ambivalent, noting that "the volume is valuable as presenting the accepted theories of the received leaders and teachers among the literal interpreters of the second advent, so-called, of our Lord upon the

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90 For a discussion of the way that revivalistic Protestantism included people associated with "what would come to be characterized as the modernist or 'liberal' side of American Protestantism," see Long, *The Revival of 1837-58*, 130-31.  

Revell had published the book in the first place only because customers asked for it, after reading the conference's proceedings in an "extra" edition of the *Chicago Tribune.*

Another example of Revell's attitude toward controversial literature comes from an encounter with John Roach Stratton (1875-1929), the Fundamentalist minister of New York's Calvary Baptist Church. Doran explained that Stratton "called one day to reproach me" when his books did not "succeed as well as Straton had expected." Doran reportedly told Stratton "politely that the man in the street or even the man in the pews was not concerned with the minor points of difference in Nonconformist belief; that he was so confusing the minds of the public he hoped to win that he was creating scoffers, infidels, and unbelievers rather than believers and converts."

"Evangelicals" Found and Lost

As Fleming Revell's correspondence with John Roach Stratton suggests, Revell Co. cultivated an open stance. By focusing neither on the most conservative nor the broadest Protestant public possible, Revell Co. maintained a flexibility of content and scale that made it the default publisher for a wide swath of the Protestant world. Selections from Revell's books appeared even in Quaker newspapers.

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92 “Our Book Table,” *Zion’s Herald* 56, no. 22 (May 29, 1879): 170.


94 Doran, *Chronicles of Barabbas,* 354-55. Note that Doran wrote this description of Stratton in the 1930s, well after abandoning his more conservative Protestant sensibilities. Doran's personal convictions may explain the vitriol of his comment that Stratton had since "gone where all good Fundamentalists go. I may never see him again."

Revell Co.'s openness might surprise historians who take its self-appointed status as a "publisher of evangelical literature" as a sign of a rigidly conservative orientation. To the contrary, to readers at the turn of the century, this label keyed into a wide variety of associations. The historiography of American evangelical Protestantism rarely reflects upon the history of the label that constitutes its field, but the "evangelical" category carried resonances in the nineteenth century that it no longer carries today.

Nineteenth-century Protestants tended to use the "evangelical" category in three principal ways. First, the paradigmatic "evangelicals" were found in England, with the Evangelical Alliance enshrining the term in its name. Founded in London in August 1846, at a conference attended by 800 Protestant leaders from both Britain and the United States, the Alliance was the crowning achievement of several decades of anti-Catholic agitation. Although the organization came together in 1846, preliminary meetings had taken place as early as 1845. These meetings occurred when they did largely because May 1845 had seen Prime Minister Robert Peel's government increase and make permanent funding for a Roman Catholic seminary at Maynooth (known variously as Maynooth College and St. Patrick's College). Peel had made the move in an attempt to improve England's relationship with Ireland, but a large majority of British Protestants saw it as a sign that Roman Catholicism and "Puseyism"--a high-church Anglican movement--were on the rise. If 1846 therefore seemed like a good time to beat back "popery" through Protestant unity, the term "evangelical" seemed like an ideal way to identify the group's allegiance to the "evangel," a term for the "Gospel" based upon the Greek word euaggellion. This etymology implied that Roman Catholics honored something other than the Gospel of Christ. Seeking the same implication, Martin Luther had used the word "evangelical" to describe his

American historians often cite Robert Baird's 1844 \textit{Religion in America} as evidence for the cultural power of the "evangelical" category in the nineteenth century. Baird's subtitle, after all, was "The Origin, Progress, Religion to the State, and the Present Condition of the Evangelical Churches in the United States." To be sure, Baird was true to his subtitle's words, and "the evangelical churches" receive extended attention in his survey. Which churches did he consider evangelical? His list includes the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Congregational Churches, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Moravian Church, the Quakers, the German Reformed Church, and dozens of small churches and denominations. Which churches were "unevangelical? Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Universalists, Swedenborgians, Jews, Mormons, and Atheists. Like the founders of the Evangelical Alliance, Baird applied "evangelical" to Protestants rather broadly. The consonance of meaning between Baird and the Alliance makes sense if we consider not only that Baird wrote his treatise just before the Alliance's founding (and that he helped found the organization) but also that he prepared the book with a European readership in mind. As Baird explained in the preface to the American edition, he "originally intended to meet the wishes of Christians on the Continent," where he had been living
for a decade. Baird subsequently published the book in Britain at the request of "valued friends in Great Britain" who "expressed the belief that it might be useful in that country."97

In the United States, the second cluster of "evangelical" talk flowed out of the interdenominational organizations that historians typically cast as classic cases of evangelicalism. These include both the A.T.S. and the Y.M.C.A. For most of the nineteenth century, however, neither of these organizations used the term in a way that deviated much from the British. Summarizing the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Tract Society in 1839, one editorial remarked that "all the energies of this great institution are devoted of supplying an evangelical literature for the world. . . . It does one good to turn from the dust and din of a noisy world to see how entirely practicable is the effort for evangelical Christians to labour together in love for one common and glorious object, the glory of God in human action."98 Similarly, an 1843 report on the A.T.S. explained that "the first aim of the Society is to provide a pure, practical, evangelical literature."99 An 1850 report meanwhile remarked that "the American Tract Society is doing a great and good work in these new States though their colportuers, and other means of diffusing evangelical truth on the printed page."100 In virtually every one of these and other cases, the term "evangelical" serves not as a noun that denotes a religious group but rather as an adjective that describes a particular kind of acceptable, Protestant style of "literature" or "truth." The Roman Catholic specter often lurks just behind the page.


A glimpse at the ambiguity of the "evangelical" label, even in the United States, comes from the *New-York Tribune*’s report on the 1869 international convention of the Y.M.C.A. Gathering in Portland, Maine, participants spent much of the convention’s third day taking up "the most exciting and vitally important discussion of the Convention." The question was simple: "What is meant by 'Evangelical churches?'" For years, the Y.M.C.A. had made "evangelical church membership essential to membership in Young Men's Christian Associations," but members were at a loss over how to grant evangelical status. Meeting in a room "crowded to excess," the resulting conversation initially centered on the testimony of a minister who insisted that "there are members in his association who are Unitarians, but who say that they do love the Lord Jesus Christ." Surprisingly, some participants in the discussion seemed sympathetic to allowing these Unitarians to receive the evangelical designation. Unable to resolve the matter, however, other participants began insisting that theologically freighted words like "Vicarious" and "Deity" must appear in any doctrinal statement. The majority ultimately decided that the conversation required the attention of a special committee, to whom the matter was referred after the singing of a few hymns, including 'All Hail the Power of Jesus Name.'

The third cluster of "evangelical" language swirled around Moody and his associates. His use of the term essentially mirrored the ambiguity apparent in the 1869 Y.M.C.A. discussion. Having devoted his early career to the sort of interdenominational, reformist, anti-Catholic Protestantism that initially oriented the Y.M.C.A. and the A.T.S., he often used "evangelical" more or less as a synonym for "Protestant."

Yet by the 1870s, times had changed. The denominationalism that had begun gaining strength before the Civil War only continued to do so afterward. While American Protestants

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101 "Young Men's Christian Association; The International Convention; Excitement About ‘Evangelicals’,” *New-York Tribune*, July 19, 1869.
once had put aside denominational distinctions in the name of opposing vice and Roman Catholic incursions, and Northern Protestants largely had united in opposition to slavery, they increasingly turned on each other. As the 1869 Y.M.C.A. conversation suggests, many Protestants became unsatisfied with the paradigm of Protestant inclusivity, and their use of the "evangelical" label increasingly carried an implied acceptance not just of generally conservative Protestants but of conservative Protestants with a more narrow theological and cultural profile. The desire to begin giving this narrow profile institutional and intellectual heft is what inspired Moody and his associates to found the Chicago Bible Institute in 1889 (renamed Moody Bible Institute after Moody's death).¹⁰²

Over the next few decades, this narrower direction of "evangelical" meaning slowly solidified. As George Doran's 1935 autobiography demonstrates, the term came to denote a relatively specific conservative style of Protestantism within a few decades. If that style's theology was not entirely clear by 1935, its cultural presence was. Reflecting on his career, Doran explained how he decided to leave "the evangelical publishing business." He had come to realize that, despite Revell's attempts to diversify their publications, "do what we would, there was no escaping the classification." Doran claimed to have "come to be quite out of step with the smugness and inescapable hypocrisies of it all."¹⁰³

Before the turn of the century, Revell Co.'s "publishers of evangelical literature" slogan served as a kind of commercial umbrella under which a wide range of Protestant authors and readers were able to find themselves at home. In this way, Revell Co. had both profited from and cultivated the ambiguity of the "evangelical" category and the public that it identified. Even as


¹⁰³ Doran, *Chronicles of Barabbas*, 29-32.
the term became contested, Revell's relationship with Moody allowed the firm to maintain its hold on several different kinds of evangelicalisms. After Moody died in 1899, however, that balance became more challenging.

But even before Moody's death, Revell Co. had begun to make that challenge harder for itself. Inasmuch as the company had hoped to hold on to the breadth of the evangelical public, it also had been attempting to expand. One reason for expanding the firm had to do with money. As the firm's profile rose in the 1890s, both George Doran and Fleming Revell had begun participating in a favorite pastime of American businessmen: playing the stock market. With guidance from Newell Clark Knight (1862-1946)--who Doran described in 1935 as "a fellow churchman . . . a Fundamentalist, a speculator to the point of magnificent gambling (he called it investing)"--the publishers amassed substantial fortunes. Although Revell Co. thrived during the panic of the mid-1890s, the personal fortunes of the firm's leaders did not, and uncertain financial waters only reinforced Fleming Revell's desire for the financial security that he and his associates thought more customers would bring.104

In reaching for broader audiences, Revell Co. encountered two problems. First, the rising economic prosperity that followed the panic of the 1890s seemed to hurt sales of books that previously had sold well. To be sure, the firm remained successful. One 1904 profile of the firm explained that "the Fleming H. Revell Company, of Chicago, New York, Toronto, and London, is known as one of the largest publishers of evangelical literature in the world, if not the largest. Books from the leading devotional writers, like Spurgeon, Meyer, Murray, Matheson, Morgan, and Moody, one may safely say have come from the Revell house, if he does not happen to know. The amount of such literature which is read, even in the driest of times of so-called

104 Ibid., 28.
spiritual drouth, is amazing. Perhaps five times out of six, if not oftener, one will find that the devotional books which he is reading bears the Revell imprint. Naturally, such a house is in possession of a valuable thermometer of the religious temper of the times." But in an interview with Fleming Revell himself, Revell admitted to recent struggles:

"The demand," said Mr. Revell, in reply to my question, "is not as large, relatively, for the distinctly devotional type of literature, as it has been at other times. The books of a writer like Andrew Murray are a good type of what I mean. Note that I say "relatively," for there is always a large demand for such books even when their sale is the least. But that type of books is not at its zenith now. The reasons? It is largely on account of the great financial prosperity of the country; and I say this somewhat positively, for I have found this to be an invariable accompaniment of prosperous times. I have been in the publishing business for thirty-three years, during which time we have had three considerable panics, and the invariable rule has been that at the beginning of a panic there is at first a marked depression in all lines of the publishing business, and then a sudden increase in the demand for devotional literature until it has become enormous. One may safely say, therefore, that the reason why there is a relative falling off in the demand for devotional literature is that we are too prosperous.

Revell concluded by noting that "the total amount of religious literature sold does not decrease, . . . but the emphasis changes. Just now we are in a didactic and practical mood. The pendulum will doubtless swing back again."¹⁰⁵

The second problem for Revell stemmed from the first. In order to compensate for slow sales of devotional literature, the firm had attempted to expand its operations, in terms of both content and distribution. But these expanded operations ultimately cut into the bottom line. "As

¹⁰⁵ E. T. M., “What People Are Reading,” The Advance 47, no. 2004 (April 7, 1904): 429. A few years earlier, the New York Times had published an article with a similar theme. Citing an interview with a "New York man prominent" in publishing, the article reported the publisher having said "Let a panic come on, however. At first our business feels it as keenly as any other line. People suddenly cease buying everything except what they are obliged to have. As times fail to improve, people take more to going to church. Attendance increases very perceptibly. In a few weeks we can tell it in our business. There is a greatly increased demand for devotional books of all kinds. The business increases, and at the very height of the financial troubles we do the largest business. As times get better, you can see our trade in this line of publications gradually drop off, until, when prosperity again comes round we settle down to a normal business quite different from the boom we had been enjoying." “Panics and Religious Books,” New York Times, March 17, 1901, 16.
evangelical publishers we were specialists," Doran remarked, "we could reach our comparatively compact public at relatively low cost." Doran pointed out that Revell had been able to sell its "evangelical literature" with only meager advertising in national periodicals. With non-evangelical books, by comparison, "a broad national public had to be created." The firm therefore had to purchase advertisements in periodicals outside its typical range. To pay for such advertising, the firm in turn reached even harder for new customers.

Revell's expansion brought changes at all levels of the firm's operations. While Revell began as a publisher that took the best from interdenominational and trade publishing models, it drifted steadily closer to the latter model at the turn of the century. Changes in Revell's title pages provide one way of tracking Revell's transformation into a generic trade publisher. Initially, Revell identified Chicago as Revell's city of publication. But the firm began adding additional cities in the 1880s. Revell began putting New York on its colophon in 1884, for example, and Toronto appeared around 1888. Toronto became particularly important after 1893, when Doran organized Revell's purchase of the tract depository that once had employed him.

At first, the additional cities on Revell's title pages merely acknowledged additional branches and testified to the national and international reach of Revell and its evangelical universe. But by May of 1891, the Chicago office functioned mostly as a hub for regional retail and mail-order operations, and Revell consolidated its operations in New York. The consolidation reflected New York's rise as North America's publishing center; it also reflected Revell's desire to situate itself among the most prominent trade publishers. In New York, Revell set up its offices and bookstore in a region around Union Square that one reporter described as
"the New Paternoster Row." The nickname reflected the way that virtually all of the country's prominent publishers had established their headquarters within a few blocks of each other.\textsuperscript{106}

The clearest sign of Revell's attenuated relationship with "evangelical" identity was the slow disappearance of "publishers of evangelical literature" from its title pages. That description disappeared because Revell Co. became more and more convinced that the phrase turned away readers and authors sensitive to the term's sharpened edges. Doran claimed that the firm had been compelled to turn down a number of manuscripts simply because they concluded that the book would not pass muster with the firm's evangelical audience. Those books included Charles Sheldon's \textit{In His Steps}, which Doran described as "too revolutionary, too intensely practical" for his audience's liking. "Clearly we could not publish it," he mourned, "evangelical as was our effort, this did not extend to the point where we would present Jesus as Sheldon did, as the intimate and concerned personal friend of mankind. Thrice we declined the publication." One of the first books to appear without the "evangelical" designation on the title page was Roswell Field's novel \textit{The Bondage of Bollinger} (1903).\textsuperscript{107}

As the publication of Field's book suggests, Revell's move beyond the evangelical audience centered largely on fiction.\textsuperscript{108} Revell Co. had developed a popular fiction line, which it advertised in prominent newspapers without any reference whatsoever to the firm's "evangelical" interests. Ralph Connor's novels proved particularly popular; in a 1901 publishing roundup in \textit{Zion's}


\textsuperscript{107} Doran, \textit{Chronicles of Barabbas}, 26-30.

\textsuperscript{108} Today, Revell Co. is remembered largely as a publisher of religious fiction. Baker Book Company currently owns the Revell imprint and uses it mostly to publish Christian romance novels and Christian living books.
Herald, Revell bragged about having sold 60,000 copies of Connor's The Man from Glengarry before publication day. A 1906 Washington Post advertisement claimed that the first edition of Connor's The Doctor had sold 100,000 copies. Reviews sometimes recommended Revell's novels to those readers who appreciated "didactic fiction with pretty heavy touch of the obviously moral, not to say religious purpose in it." Valorizing "the merit of earnest and simplicity," Revell's novels embodied the evangelical style of the mid-nineteenth century more than the early twentieth. But if the "evangelical" label no longer marked that moralizing style, that simply was because those virtues had become commonplace in middle-class America.¹⁰⁹

Revell's expansion also included non-fiction titles. In 1903, for example, Revell published a book on "The Faith of Robert Louis Stevenson" that attempted to find a kind of inner spirituality in Stevenson's writings. This was noteworthy enough that the New York Times published two reviews of it in the space of a few months. The book is an indication of the way that Revell moved in the early decades of the twentieth century away from works of dogmatic theology to topics of more general interest. A few decades later, Publisher's Weekly would survey Revell Co.'s history by remarking that it began by publishing books "devoted almost exclusively to the promotion of Christian principles and the faith and the furtherance of world-wide Evangelism." Since then, it "has published quite a number of books which have had a wide appeal to the general public."¹¹⁰

And yet, even as the constitution of the "evangelical" world changed, Revell continued to keep a hand in it. In 1901 the firm's principal authors included W. A. P. Martin, Hugh Black,


Margaret Sangster, George Matheson, Henry O. Dwight, G. Campbell Morgan, Handley C. G. Moule, Charles H. Parkhurst, F. B. Meyer, and Andrew Murray. Revell continued using its old slogan on explicitly religious titles, including a biography of Dwight Moody, which Revell had Moody's son William write literally as the evangelist lay dying, so that competing biographies would not scoop Revell Co. and find the marketplace to themselves. Into the 1910s and 1920s, Revell was able to publish books by such prominent conservatives as William Jennings Bryan. At the same time, however, it also published books by such eminent "modernists" as Henry Fosdick. What might not have seemed so dissonant a few decades earlier increasingly appeared so, as distinctions between "fundamentalist" and "modernist" Protestants steadily came into view.

Tension between fundamentalist and modernist Protestants soon became palpable. Tensions rose in particular in the 1910s and 1920s, following the public shaming of conservative Protestantism through such now-mythic events as the Scopes Trial. These events brought into relief the variety of perspectives and dispositions that the loose "evangelical" movement had sheltered. As "evangelical" increasingly became synonymous with "fundamentalist," many nominal "evangelical Protestants" began handing in their proverbial membership cards for more mainline Christian commitments. Revell always had catered to those more mainline sensibilities. And it continued to do so. Meanwhile, fundamentalists set about building their own institutional networks, including book and especially newspaper publishers.

At the same time, other eventual "evangelicals," such as the Christian Reformed in and around Grand Rapids, Michigan, had yet to accept the label at all. Traditionally a text-centered people, the Dutch Reformed began new publishing firms in the twentieth century that quickly

111 “From the Publishers.” Zion’s Herald 79, no. 49 (December 4, 1901): 1554.

112 Bryan published a number of books, including The Making of Man in 1914 and In His Image in 1922. Fosdick published Christianity and Progress in 1922.
began serving not just their own local communities but also the dispersed fundamentalist and evangelical communities to which Revell and other New York firms once catered. When such firms as Eerdmans, Zondervan, Kregel, and Baker books became the unofficial publishing arm of the reconstituted evangelical movement in the 1940s and 1950s, the Dutch Reformed became recognized as "evangelicals" themselves. But these Michigan evangelicals were not the evangelicals that D. L. Moody and Fleming Revell once had in mind.

In 1920, when Fleming Revell and his guests celebrated their firm's fiftieth anniversary, the landscape of evangelicalism was shifting under Revell's feet. Fifteen years later, Doran himself recognized the change. "Religion has declined in power and popularity," he explained, "but F.H.R. Co. still stands as the leading publishing house in its field, even though evangelicalism has been broadened beyond the recognition of Fleming H. Revell, Dwight Lyman Moody, and the host of zealots of Chicago in the un-gay eighties." One effect of this change, in Doran's estimation, was that religious publishing started to demand tighter editorial control. "With the passing of religion and the broadening of evangelical thinking came necessity for a limited measure of editorial capacity," Doran surmised, "and this was invoked somewhat irregularly and intermittently from casual and needy readers." Evangelical books demanded tighter control precisely because the "evangelical" public had fractured. Publishers therefore had to narrow and specialize their products.\(^\text{113}\)

As Doran suggested, Revell did not evanesc. In some ways, its power hardly waned. It essentially became a mainline trade publisher, with conservative inclinations. During the 1940s and 1950s, such prominent "neo-evangelicals" as Harold John Ockenga would publish several

\(^{113}\) Doran, *Chronicles of Barabbas*, 32, 337.
books with Revell. But those evangelicals' decisions to publish with Revell generally reflected their desire to reach beyond the evangelical audience. To publish with Revell in 1945 was like publishing with Harper and Brothers in 1875. As Fleming Revell and Dwight Moody's style of evangelicalism had fallen apart, so too had Revell's status as the country's "publisher of evangelical literature."

**Conclusion**

If Fleming H. Revell Company was, at one time, such an overwhelmingly powerful evangelical publisher, why have historians given it, in one apologist's words, "scant notice"? Revell Co. has almost entirely slipped through the cracks of the historiography of evangelical print culture and evangelicalism more generally. Part of this inattention reflects the old wisdom that history is written by its winners, for Revell Co. encountered difficult financial times in the twentieth century's second half, and it was sold to a succession of Christian publishing firms. Today it is owned by Baker Publishing Group, based in Grand Rapids. Revell Co. also lost ground in the historical consciousness to Moody Bible Institute and its Moody Press, organizations that became the kind of evangelical leaders that Revell once had been. But the most substantial cause of Revell Co.'s absence from the historical record reflects how historians have conceptualized the history of evangelical Christianity. By exploring the story of Fleming H. Revell Company, the first "publisher of evangelical literature," the histories of evangelical print culture and evangelicalism itself come more fully into view.

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Chapter Two

Functional Fundamentalists: Reformed Book Publishers and Evangelical Horizons in Grand Rapids

Sometime around 1934, probably in Chicago, the evangelist Billy Sunday (1862-1935) met with two book publishers after one of his revival meetings. Both publishers hoped to secure a book by the aging, yet still famous, Sunday, but neither had known beforehand that the other would be attending. In keeping with his reputation for discomforting playfulness, Sunday had kept details about the meeting and its agenda to himself.¹

Once gathered with his guests, Sunday came right to the point. "I'm going to give the book to one of you two," Sunday revealed, "and we are going to decide today." Before either publisher could respond, Sunday added, "Let's pray about it." Looking up at the older, more elegantly dressed of the two men, Sunday pointed at his chest and insisted, "You first." Smiling, then nervously shuffling his feet, the first publisher bowed his head, collected his thoughts, and, in a faint but distinct Dutch accent, offered a relatively formulaic prayer of thanksgiving and praise. Once he finished, the younger, more jocular, and accentless publisher dramatically removed his hat from his head, bowed it, and launched into an extended extemporaneous prayer that by any measure blew away the first prayer. It impressed Billy Sunday so much that when the second prayer ended, Sunday looked squarely at the younger publisher and announced, "You got the book."

¹ For background on Billy Sunday and his stature among conservative Protestants during the early decades of the twentieth century, see Robert Francis Martin, Hero of the Heartland: Billy Sunday and the Transformation of American Society, 1862-1935 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 53. Martin highlights how Sunday's style of revivalism displayed humor, sentimentality, and an athleticism that reflected his background as a baseball player. These characteristics allowed Sunday to playfully "instruct, entertain, and manipulate an audience's emotions with consummate skill."
Who got the book? Peter "Pat" Zondervan (1909-1993), then the twenty-five-year-old founder of Zondervan Publishing House of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Who did Zondervan out-pray? William B. Eerdmans (1882-1966), Zondervan's uncle, of Grand Rapids' William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. Zondervan had founded his publishing firm just a few years earlier, after working for his uncle's firm during the 1920s. Eerdmans did not appreciate what he saw as a breach of loyalty. Not only had Eerdmans tutored his nephew in the ways of Christian book selling and publishing, but Zondervan increasingly had begun siphoning away prized books and authors. Still today an important piece of Eerdmans company mythology, this story speaks to that resentment. But it speaks to more than resentment alone.²

Each of the few times I have heard the story, it has appeared in a conversation with Eerdmans employees about the company's relationship to evangelical Christianity, a mode of contemporary Protestantism that today elicits ambivalence from William B. Eerdmans, Jr., (1923- ) and his employees. Told today, the tale functions as a kind of origins story for that ambivalence. Eerdmans never was comfortable, you see, with the style of Christianity that Billy Sunday and Zondervan inhabited so effortlessly. While today Eerdmans splits its publishing energies between intellectually inflected Christian scholarship and more general academic writing (typically on issues relating to Christianity), Zondervan, by comparison, publishes such apologetic best-sellers as *The Case for Christ* (1998) and *The Purpose-Driven Life* (2002).

The persistence of the Sunday story belies Eerdmans employees' ambivalence. If William Eerdmans, Sr., was so uncomfortable with Sunday's kind of Christianity, how and why did he

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meet with Sunday? Sunday was, after all, among the most well-known Protestants in the United States during 1930s, and not just anyone received a private audience with that kind of celebrity.

The early history of Eerdmans's and Zondervan's publishing careers help answer this question by illustrating how these two companies stepped into a commercial gap that Revell Co. had left open. By 1940, they became go-to publishers for fundamentalist Protestants. By skillfully navigating networks of conservative Christian celebrities, small-time revivalists, bookstores, churches, and periodicals, both companies achieved financial success and became pioneers of the fledgling evangelical book industry. In the process, they not only helped connect Dutch Reformed communities to northern fundamentalists and West-Coast conservatives but also cultivated and circulated evangelical sensibilities.

These Dutch Reformed publishers, and the connections they cultivated, are worth exploring for at least three reasons. First, because such groups as the Southern Baptists and the Dutch Reformed seem fully integrated into evangelical life today, historians often narrate evangelicalism's history as though this always has been so. Yet by not reflecting upon how those conservative constituencies came to see themselves as part of the contemporary evangelical public, historians have taken for granted the cohesiveness and popularity of "fundamentalism" and "evangelicalism." 3 Both highlighting and helping resolve this problem, the story of Grand

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Rapids' Reformed publishers illustrates how the Dutch Reformed became functional fundamentalists. It also explains why Grand Rapids, of all places, became a citadel of evangelical print culture.

A second reason for telling these publishers' story involves their institutional profile. While such historians as Joel Carpenter and George Marsden have done much to narrate evangelicalism's theological and institutional politics, the business side of evangelical life receives little notice. In his seminal history of twentieth-century fundamentalism's mid-century "reawakening," for example, Carpenter notes that "without a doubt, fundamentalism was a readers' and publishers' movement."⁴ Although Carpenter accordingly bases his history largely on popular fundamentalist periodicals and books, he says little about the status of books and magazines as commodities that authors themselves neither produce nor distribute on their own. Countless editors, salesmen, bookstores, advertisers, and other agents of commerce stand between reading materials and their readers. After all, print is "media" because it is mediated, and commercial interests ultimately orient that mediation.

A final reason for exploring the history of Grand Rapids' publishers is that their story illustrates how evangelicalism continued to abide diverse devotional styles even as the evangelical public came together. In the 1930s, Eerdmans and his nephews competed for the same customers. But their personal styles drew upon different alignments of theology, devotion, ministerial desire, and commercial initiative. By the middle of the 1940s, the two firms accordingly found themselves with different ministerial relationships, institutional networks, and commercial opportunities. Those differences ultimately brought the Zondervan brothers more commercial success than their uncle. And as new publishing firms emerged in the 1940s, they

would follow the lead of Zondervan Co. far more than Eerdmans Co. But commercial concerns ensured that evangelicalism's breadth remained in everyone's financial interests.

**Defending Distinctiveness**

If William B. Eerdmans was unable to charm Billy Sunday, he had his background to blame. The problem fundamentally came down to his personal style. Eerdmans was Dutch and Reformed, and Sunday shared neither affect. Both a commercial blessing and curse, Eerdmans's close relationship with the Dutch Reformed community enabled his initial business success and oriented his move beyond it.

Eerdmans emigrated to the United States from the Netherlands in 1902. As he concisely explained to a reporter in 1944, "Came to America at the age of 20 years, with the purpose of visiting relatives, and then stayed here." Hailing from a relatively prosperous family of textile merchants, Eerdmans initially settled in Paterson, New Jersey, with a sister who had married a book salesman. A year and a half later, he made his way to Grand Rapids, where he quickly rose to sufficiently high social standing that the "What is going on in Society" column of the *Grand Rapids Press* began following his affairs.5

Imagined today as something closer to the Gopher Prairie of Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920) than the Chicago of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1946), Grand Rapids may seem like an unlikely destination for European emigres. But the second half of the nineteenth century had seen western Michigan become what Dutch-American writer Daniel De Jong once described as a

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"new Jerusalem" for the Dutch.\(^6\) Like the Dutch that had immigrated to North America since the seventeenth century, the Dutch who came to Michigan beginning in the 1840s brought with them a distinctively Dutch form of Calvinist, or Reformed, Protestantism. Michigan's Dutch therefore found an ecclesial home in churches that belonged to the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church (known after 1867 as the Reformed Church in America), the denominational descendant of New Amsterdam's original Dutch Reformed Church.

But these latter-day Dutch immigrants also brought with them the ecclesiastical disagreements that afflicted the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands during the nineteenth century, including the conviction that many nominally Reformed Protestants had succumbed to theological liberalism, rationalism, and--worst of all--Arminianism. In the Netherlands, this conviction led a large group to secede from the state church in 1834, and these so-called "Secessionists" represented as much as thirty-five percent of those who emigrated to Michigan in the 1840s. In the United States, the cultural and linguistic distinctiveness of the newly arrived Dutch exacerbated this secessionist spirit, and Secessionist Dutch accordingly left what they saw as a compromised Reformed Protestant Dutch Church in 1857 to create the Christian Reformed Church. Because Dutch Secessionists came largely from the agrarian class, and because the majority of the Dutch who emigrated during the largest waves of 1840s and 1880s were agricultural workers fleeing agricultural downturns, a majority Grand Rapids' Dutch joined the Christian Reformed Church.

Beginning in the 1880s, these Dutch secessionists began serving as conduits for the influence of Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), a politician, journalist, and eventual prime minister of the Netherlands (1901-1905). Both feeding on and reinforcing earlier Dutch secessionist

tendencies, Kuyper's theology centered on the notion that that Christians should see their faith as a "life-and-world view." Instead of compartmentalizing their lives into "religious" and "everyday" dualisms, Christians should recognize that Christ reigns over their entire lives, and Christian principles therefore should infuse the everyday. The Christian community should be "distinctive," for only through distinctiveness could the merits of Christianity become clear to a world that does not recognize Christ's sovereignty. In 1886, Kuyper led a defection from the Dutch Reformed Church, claiming that it had lost sight of Reformed distinctiveness.7

This emphasis on distinctiveness affected Dutch life in Grand Rapids in at least two ways. First, although theologians and laypeople varied in their degree of practical and rhetorical opposition to outside cultural influence, virtually all agreed that the Reformed community should create its own core institutions. Schools came first; to this day the Christian Reformed Church requires that members send their children to private schools, which for decades operated out of the basements of most Reformed churches. Founded in 1876 to train Christian Reformed ministers, Grand Rapids' Calvin College remains the denomination's flagship institution. Its importance to the Reformed community led the college to broaden its policies and curricula early, admitting non-ministerial students in 1894 and women in 1901. Eerdmans came to Grand Rapids largely to study at Calvin. He enrolled in 1904, devoting five years to pre-seminary studies and one year to seminary.8

Second, the Reformed emphasis on distinctiveness led the Dutch to emphasize education and reading not just in children's lives but also in their own. The lay farmer-theologian became a


8 Herbert Brinks, "Interview with William B. Eerdmans," 2-3, Coll. 249: "Eerdmans, William B. Sr.", Box 1, Folder 1, Heritage Hall Archives, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.
kind of cultural icon. Even if that icon lived largely in the cultural imaginary, Michigan's Dutch attempted to manifest it in their everyday lives. What better way to maintain a connection to Dutch culture and orthodox Reformed faith than to read theological books in Dutch? Even outsiders recognized that Michigan's "Hollanders" were, as Publishers' Weekly remarked in 1920, "large consumers of books, especially in the field of religion and biblical study." This cultural ideal engendered a demand for books that made Eerdmans's book career possible.9

**Entrepreneurialism and Americanization**

Eerdmans company mythology provides a number of explanations for William Eerdmans's decision to address this demand for books. In what employees call "The Warfield Story," the young William Eerdmans had left Calvin Seminary after realizing that ministry was not his vocation. Wondering whether to become a doctor, a lawyer, or to take his life down some other path, he decided to travel to Princeton Seminary, where he somehow received an audience with Benjamin Breckinridge, or "B. B.," Warfield (1851-1921), then the Charles Hodge Chair and Professor of didactic and polemic theology.

Warfield belonged to the small pantheon of non-Dutch scholars that the Dutch Reformed revered for their strong piety, staunch orthodoxy, and intellectual scrupulousness. Warfield had become known above all for his defense of the Westminster Confession and the inerrancy of the Bible in its original autographs. If Eerdmans's story is any indication, Warfield also was a kind of oracle; after telling Eerdmans to lighten up and assuring him that worthy careers existed outside

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9 "An American Publisher of Books for the Hollanders," Publishers' Weekly, May 29, 1920, 1173; for a commentary on the insularity of Grand Rapids's Dutch community, see De Jong, With a Dutch Accent.
the ministry, Warfield suggested that Eerdmans consider publishing serious philosophical and theological books on the model of Kok Publishers in the Netherlands. Like the Billy Sunday story, the persistence of the Warfield Story says just as much about the present as the past. The Warfield Story in some ways says more, for its telling typically precedes both an admission that it probably never happened and an explanation of its significance. The most important aspect of the story for our purposes, however, is that it reveals a desire on the part of the storyteller to lend intellectual and spiritual justification to an enterprise that by most indications came largely out of sheer entrepreneurial savvy. True, there is no virtue in seeing Eerdmans's decision to enter the book business as purely religious or financial in motivation; the complexities of motivations render such binaries false. But a principal ingredient in the stew of his motivation included simple awareness of business opportunity. Eerdmans's nephew, "Jaguar" Jo Eerdmans (1905-1990; the "Jaguar" nickname stemmed from his work as an executive for the Jaguar automobile company) later claimed that his uncle entered the religious book business for purely profit-seeking reasons. While hyperbolic and no doubt wrapped in family jealousies, Jo's accusation reminds us that although Eerdmans later referred to his firm as a "Book Ministry," it simultaneously was a book business.

The Warfield Story suggests otherwise, but entrepreneurialism brought Eerdmans to book publishing circuitously. In the years immediately before 1910, Eerdmans operated in Grand Rapids as a peddler, selling second-hand goods on a small scale throughout the Grand Rapids

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10 William B. Eerdmans, Jr., interview by author, in person, 16 June 2008, Grand Rapids, Michigan. I also have heard this story from several other current company employees. Illustrating the story's longevity, Eerdmans, Sr., told it to an interviewer in 1965. But Eerdmans, Sr., divided the story in two; he mostly repeated the Warfield story as I heard it decades later, but he attributed the Kok suggestion to a professor whom Eerdmans claimed to have met while visiting Amsterdam. Ten Harmsel and Van Til also relate the Warfield Story in An Eerdmans Century, 19-20. For more on Warfield, see Randall Herbert Balmer, "Warfield, B(enjamin) B(reckinridge) (1851–1921)," in The Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism, (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 718-719.

11 Ten Harmsel, 3 November 2010; WBE to Albus, 24 October 1944.
community. Everywhere Eerdmans went, the legend goes, he carried books on the back of his bike, on the likely chance that he would encounter someone eager to buy. Eerdmans was one of many peddlers, all of whom found business opportunity in the confluence of three factors: the rising prosperity and purchasing power of the first immigration generation, continuing immigration, and a relative scarcity of Dutch goods.

Because Dutch books generally were imported rather than printed in the United States, books proved particularly scarce, and demand proved particularly strong. Peddlers therefore traded largely in books, and more successful peddlers tended either to set up shops for larger-scale sales or to move up the distribution chain into importing, an option made lucrative by low tariffs on books. Eerdmans pursued both options, setting up a bookstore in Grand Rapids and importing books alongside other goods. He continued importing items other than books well into the 1920s. William Eerdmans, Jr., recalls a trip to Marshall Fields in Chicago, for example, that occurred when he was four or five. Standing in front of the store, gazing at its display windows, Eerdmans Jr. recalls that his father pulled him close, pointed at one of the displays and proudly whispered, "Those are our blankets, son." 12

In 1910, Eerdmans took his first real step toward big-time publishing when he and associate Brant Sevensma purchased the book stock of John B. Hulst, a Grand Rapids bookseller and publisher. They founded Eerdmans-Sevensma Co. the following year and picked up where Hulst had left off. After challenging another local bookseller for dominance of the Dutch market in the 1890s, Hulst had achieved market dominance largely by becoming the official publisher of

12 William B. Eerdmans, Jr., 16 June 2008. This path from importer to publisher was not entirely of Eerdmans's making. Publishers outside the Dutch community regularly followed similar trajectories. In the nineteenth century, for example, Charles Scribner began his career as an importer before focusing on books and then publishing. John William Tebbel, Between Covers: The Rise and Transformation of Book Publishing in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 43.
the Christian Reformed Church. In addition, Hulst had set himself apart from the competition through his distribution tactics.

While Hulst's principal competitor had sold books mostly through a local bookstore (that stocked, according to an 1891 catalog, 1,500 items), he had sent local agents out to Dutch settlements throughout the country, where they sold Bibles, pamphlets, and religious books door-to-door. A little more than a decade after their partnership began, Eerdmans bought Sevensma out, renaming the firm the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, moving the company's operations firmly into English-language books, and beginning to publish what Eerdmans later described as "good, wholesome, character-building, christian [sic] books."

In 1923, Eerdmans would look back at his company's early trade and estimate that initially his "business was 80 per cent Dutch and 20 per cent English." Catering to Dutch readers in the 1910s, Eerdmans himself had written and published a 1912 book on the Titanic tragedy, an event that tugged at the heartstrings of a community whose families regularly traversed the Atlantic by ship. By 1920, however, Publishers' Weekly estimated that Eerdmans published as little as ten percent in Dutch. After calling the company "the largest and most active publishing house of books in the Holland language, or for the Hollanders in America," the magazine noted that "the flow of immigration to this country from Holland has largely ceased, and as the new generation grows up the demand for books in the Holland language has, to a large extent, changed to a demand for similar books in English, so that the sales of the firm are now as high as ninety per cent in English."  


Eerdmans's turn to English became part of a process that the Dutch termed "Americanization." A range of influences and individuals fed the process. While the Dutch language initially had served as a cultural barrier, for example, the need to speak English in American society had led the immigrant Dutch and their children to discontinue the use of Dutch. Eerdmans author and editorial advisor B. K. Kuiper attributed Americanization and the second-generation's preference for English to an "inferiority complex"; being "Dutchy looking," he explained, had become an object of ridicule. Writing about his childhood as a Dutch kid in Grand Rapids, David De Jong explained that "You were trying terribly hard not to be Dutch." The World War I era had accelerated the turn to English, both because the war limited immigration and importing possibilities and because the United States passed a restrictive immigration policy in 1921. But the Christian Reformed Church continued to use Dutch for official records into the 1930s.\(^{15}\)

While some Dutch worried that Americanization would erase cultural and religious distinctiveness, Eerdmans proved more pragmatic. "The influence of church, school and business is for the Americanization of the Hollanders who came to this country to make it their home," the "book dealer and importer" explained in a 1923 profile. "Persons advanced in years may cling to the language of their youth, but young Hollanders coming over and Hollanders of the second generation learn English."

Evidence for the quick pace of Americanization comes from the rising volume of attacks upon it from such denominational leaders. In 1928, for example, Henry J. Kuiper led a sustained

campaign against "worldly amusements." In a detailed report prepared on the denomination's behalf, Kuiper urged laypeople to remember their covenantal status and to avoid recreational activities that undermined their separation from the world.16

Whether or not Reformed laity concerned themselves with the theology of isolationism, a more open stance had become the easiest to practice in a pluralistic environment. Eerdmans, at least, felt that way, as evidenced in his personal and business life. In addition to running for the Republican nomination for the state legislature in 1922, Eerdmans gave a publishing platform to the Americanization side of the debate, making their voices heard in publications that served the community's churches, schools, and businesses.17

The pro-American wing of the Reformed ministerial community dominated the firm's list of authors in the 1920s. These ministers included Henry Beets, Louis Berkhof, Clarence Bouma, and Harry Bultema, all of whom Eerdmans published not just because they shared his opinions but also because they were popular and influential in the Dutch Reformed community. Christian Reformed churches selected their own ministers, and Beets, for example, ministered one of the most prominent Christian Reformed churches in Grand Rapids. Beets also served as editor-in-chief of the denomination's influential magazine The Banner (described anecdotally as the Reformed community's "paper pope"), and he held other high-ranking denominational positions. Born in the Netherlands, Berkhof studied at Princeton Seminary and became known as the C.R.C.'s most well-respected theologian. He eventually became president of Calvin Seminary.18

16 DeJong, Henry J. Kuiper, 61-62.


Writing books for adult audiences as well as catechetical texts for schoolchildren, these ministers supported Americanization on the logic that it would allow the light of Reformed Christianity shine more brightly in an American religious culture that the Dutch Reformed often derided as "Methodist." Too generous in terms of its inclusions and not generous enough in terms of it characterization of the Methodist tradition, the "Methodist" slur denoted an Anglo-American Christianity that the Dutch saw as both popular and misguided. James Bratt summarizes the Dutch opinion of this "Methodism" as "Humanism in a Protestant guise," a perspective whose symptoms included a penchant for innovation, a general indifference to doctrine on the part of the laity, revivalism, Sunday School instead of catechism, and such signs of church-as-entertainment as the use of organs, choirs, and English-language worship. These sorts of fears had led such isolationists as John Van Lonkhuyzen to describe Billy Sunday in a 1915 Dutch-language Eerdmans book as, in Bratt's words, "good for America but bad for Christianity." The problem, Van Lonkhuyzen insisted, was that Sunday preached far less about human Sin than about individuals' sins.\(^\text{19}\)

By comparison with Van Lonkhuyzen, Henry Beets initially opposed Sunday but began supporting him in 1916 on the logic that Sunday preached a generally orthodox message and attacked sin on a scale that few others could.\(^\text{20}\) Sunday and other "Methodists," Beets suggested, were more friend than foe. Moreover, only through friendship could the Reformed bear witness to misguided American Protestants. If the more isolationist Reformed took Kuyperian theology as a mandate to maintain "distinctiveness" by building theological walls around the community, Beets and other "positive" Reformed essentially argued that offense provides the best defense.

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\(^{19}\) Bratt, *Dutch Calvinism*, 59-61.

Particularly in the 1920s, Beets argued that this offensive strategy demanded that the Dutch actively engage and inhabit American culture. The Dutch, in short, needed to become American in order to win America over.

Just one example of Beets's Americanizing approach comes from his 1926 *Elementary Christian Doctrine for Bible Classes*, a revised version of a catechism published initially in 1912 under the original title *Primer of Reformed Doctrine*. In the preface to the new edition, Beets explained that the new title was intended "to reach wider circles which often do not understand, much less appreciate the word 'Reformed' in its historical and doctrinal sense, and whose scholars may possibly not all be 'children of the covenant'. We hope and pray that under its new name it may find doors open which hitherto were closed for it."21

As this preface indicates, Beets's apology for engagement with American culture had a proselytizing intention, but it also served partly as a kind of etiology, lending theological legitimacy to a process already underway. Yet at the same time, arguments for engagement with America did more than fend off anxious Dutch isolationists. Such arguments had at least two additional effects. First, they gave members of the community--like Eerdmans--theological license to reach beyond the community. Second, those arguments raised questions about which members of the larger Protestant world deserved the hand of Reformed friendship.

"Brethren in Christ"

As the influence of "school, church, and business" helped the Dutch laity Americanize, and as Dutch Reformed ministers watched the process unfold, the question for both laity and ministers turned away from the virtues and vices of Americanization to the task of identifying

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outside allies. Despite any attempts on the part of Christian Reformed leaders to focus on looking inward and cultivating the Reformed "life-and-world view," everyone knew at least a little about the religious landscape outside the community's walls. What did Reformed leaders bemoan as the primary characteristic of that landscape? Modernism.

The Reformed of Grand Rapids had little to do with the wind-up of fundamentalism in the 1910s, but by 1930 "modernism" came to symbolize all that was wrong with the outside world. The single term "modernism" collapses a wide range of individuals and theologies, but those sorts of nuances seemed irrelevant to Dutch Reformed who felt they had seen this all before. "MODERNISM [sic] is now having its heyday in the churches of the United States," The Banner reported in 1930, "as it was rampant in the Netherlands about fifty years ago. Practically all of the larger denominations and many of the smaller ones are capitulating to the spirit of 'liberalism.'" The high-profile Scopes Trial of 1925, the agonizing denominational disputes of the 1920s, and the unsettling changes in their community had convinced Reformed leaders that modernism had arrived at their Michigan doorsteps. That message began to appear virtually everywhere in Reformed circles, and not least in sermons, periodicals, and books. Eerdmans published most of those books, which ranged from church histories that traced out modernism's rise and influence to popular novels that pit "godless modernism" and Eastern liberals against earnest and faithful Midwestern protagonists.22

The Reformed also entered into a cautious alliance with like-minded groups of conservative Protestants. As Eerdmans's "Warfield Story" suggests, the most likely allies were conservative northern Presbyterians, symbolized by such leaders as Warfield and the professor J. Gresham

22 "Modernism in the Southern Presbyterian Church," The Banner, January 31, 1930, 100; Bratt, Dutch Calvinism, 130-31. See also the novels Erich Ohlson (1932) and Westhaven (1943).
Machen (1881-1937). Thus when Machen led the "Orthodox Presbyterian" break away from Princeton Seminary in 1929, the Christian Reformed supported the new Westminster Seminary with both money and personnel, including the professors Cornelius Van Til and R. B. Kuiper. And when Machen published his 1923 *Christianity and Liberalism*, arguably his best-known work, Eerdmans reprinted it. In 1930 Eerdmans published Warfield's *The Power of God Unto Salvation*, which a reviewer from Calvin Seminary urged readers of *The Banner* to digest "book in hand at their fireside this winter." Such a powerful book, the reviewer explained, required that readers "take their time and pour over these happy pages." During the 1910s and 1920s, Eerdmans used "The Reformed Press" as its tagline on its title pages and advertisements.

In addition to northern Presbyterians, fundamentalists ultimately became a second group of allies. But the Reformed proved far more suspicious of fundamentalists. While these suspicions drew upon a complex stew of theology and culture, Reformed leaders essentially lamented that fundamentalists far too often had Baptist and Methodist instincts, as opposed to tried-and-true Calvinist convictions. Agreeing with fundamentalists' emphasis on "orthodoxy" and their anti-modernist spirit, the Reformed found a large proportion of fundamentalist teaching incompatible with Calvinist principles.

Common points of criticism included the observation that fundamentalists tended to talk about "being saved" in a way that leaned on free-will Arminianism far more than the Calvinist doctrine of election. Louis Berkhof, Eerdmans author and eventual president of Calvin Seminary, insisted that premillennialism was inextricable from dispensationalism, a view of salvation history that he believed had more to do with Cyrus I. Scofield and his eponymous Bible than with

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orthodox hermeneutics. In addition, by generally adhering to a premillennial view of the end times, fundamentalists ignored such revered sixteenth-century Reformed creeds as the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession, both of which taught that Christ reigned over his church today, not just in the future. These catechisms were not merely texts that hung on the walls of churches or appeared in denominational pamphlets; children studied catechisms from an early age, and they provided Reformed Protestants with distinctive discourses about themselves. For such Reformed ministers as Berkhof and Beets, fundamentalists' avoidance of creeds led them to read the Bible too literally, without scientific, historical, or ecclesiastical context.  

But Beets supported what he saw as fundamentalism's efforts to purify the American denominations and public schools from liberalism and evolution, and he found himself agreeing with most of "the fundamentals" enshrined in the booklets of the same name (1910-1915). Those fundamentals included the inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the substitutionary atonement, and the Virgin Birth. Reformed leaders' reservations about fundamentalism, however, kept its institutional machinery at arm's length.

That distance allowed the Reformed to make connections to individuals and institutions that fundamentalists generally avoided. The Christian Reformed Church joined the Federal Council of Churches during World War I, for example, despite the widespread fundamentalist criticism of the organization's liberalism. The C.R.C. joined both to show patriotic support for what they described in a telegram to President Wilson as a "righteous cause" and to gain

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chaplaincy access to army camps. But they also simply had not yet adopted all of fundamentalists' prejudices. The Reformed were entering into fundamentalism, but they were not of it.\textsuperscript{26}

Reformed ministers and theologians therefore maintained what they saw as principled, careful distinctions between Reformed Christianity and their fundamentalist allies. But Reformed laity had a harder time keeping things straight. With fundamentalists sharing so many distinctive features with Reformed Protestants, laity increasingly came to see themselves as a kind of ethnic form of fundamentalism. Those features included an emphasis on piety, orthodoxy, conservative politics, moralism, and doctrine.

By the end of the 1920s, several prominent congregations from both the Reformed Church of America and the Christian Reformed Church left their denominations for the "undenominational" movement, a style of fundamentalist church that presaged the later "non-denominational" evangelical label. Writing about this trend, the editors of \textit{The Banner} remarked that defectors regularly had reminded Reformed ministers of "the necessity of striking the evangelical note [sic] and striking it more strongly than perhaps we have been doing it." Using "evangelical" to denote a straightforward gospel message, stripped of doctrinal intellectualism, the editors insisted, "this does not mean that the covenant idea should be 'soft-pedaled'."\textsuperscript{27}

Reformed laity received signs of fundamentalism's welcome from all around. Despite Henry Beet's serious criticism of several fundamentalist principles, for example, he taught regularly at Winona Lake Bible Conference, the summertime Bible camp of such fundamentalist stalwarts as Billy Sunday, the musician Homer Rodeheaver (1880-1955), and the evangelist William E. Biederwolf (1867-1939). What other signs created the impression that fundamentalists

\textsuperscript{26} Bratt, \textit{Dutch Calvinism}, 90; Hall, "The Controversy Over Fundamentalism," 89.

\textsuperscript{27} "What the Undenominational Movement Should Teach Us," \textit{The Banner}, Mach 14, 1930, 244; see also Bratt, \textit{Dutch Calvinism}, 131.
were "brethren in Christ"? The world of books, which increasingly became seen as tools with which to fight the liberal menace.\textsuperscript{28}

**Functional Fundamentalists**

The patronage of the Dutch community had made Eerdmans's publishing initiative a relative success, but he later admitted that he became a "major publisher" only in the 1930s. He did so by expanding his customer base. Fundamentalists ultimately composed a substantial proportion of that base, but because Eerdmans Co. did not belong to particular fundamentalist denominations or institutions, it was not limited in the same way that explicitly fundamentalist publishers might have been, marked as they were by rivalries between regions and personalities.\textsuperscript{29}

In addition, Reformed Protestantism's reputation for doctrinal scrupulousness essentially vouched for Eerdmans's seriousness and respectability. As fundamentalists increasingly used and praised Eerdmans's books, the firm's status rose exponentially.

Key to the firm's success were sets of multi-volume Biblical commentaries and theological works that Eerdmans began acquiring around 1930. In a 1931 *Banner* editorial titled "A Transaction in the Book World," the newspaper's editors praised the "remarkable announcement which appeared recently in our church papers that the Eerdmans Publishing Company has succeeded in purchasing the copyrights and publishing rights of some of the most valuable publications of a conservative type." The editorial singled out three particular works by the British scholar W. Robertson Nicholl, including *The Expositor's Bible* (six volumes), *The Expositor's


\textsuperscript{29} Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 15.
Greek Testament (five volumes), and The Expositor's Dictionary of Texts (two volumes). "The first of these three is a fine commentary which can be used by 'laymen' as well as theologians," the editorial noted, "and the price is reasonable indeed."

When Eerdmans reprinted these and other works, they typically included new introductions or new arrangements designed strategically to increase or reduce the number of volumes in the original series of books. Like the Expositor's series, almost all of these reprinted books were nineteenth-century British works that had become classics by connection with the Protestant network associated with Dwight L. Moody, whom hagiography and nostalgia for the nineteenth century had enshrined as the founding father of fundamentalism.

Reprinted classics dominated much of Eerdmans's catalog. In 1932, for example, Eerdmans touted Alexander Maclaren's Expositions of the Holy Scripture. A Scot who led the Baptist movement in England, Maclaren (1826-1910) never knew William Eerdmans or his company, but his status as a "Prince of Expositors" earned him a place on the "Our Authors" page of Eerdmans's trade newsletter, which praised Maclaren as "a great man of God" who "was accepted by the Christian Church everywhere." Described in the newsletter as a "A wonderful help!" and as a "Rich gold mine of material!", Maclaren's seventeen-volume work came in blue buckram cloth, sold for $25.00, and received endorsements from such fundamentalist authorities as Moody Monthly, which insisted that it "should be in every preacher's library." The Sunday School Times explained that the "pastor who owns a set of these volumes will find here a wealth of material to enrich his own mind and heart in preparation for preaching; and the Sabbath School

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30 "A Transaction in the Book World," The Banner, April 17, 1931, 258.
teacher who can consult them will be well equipped as he faces his class. The set would be a valuable addition to the library of any church, Bible institute or college."

Eerdmans also reprinted the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1915), issuing it in five volumes. Those volumes received endorsements in Eerdmans's 1939 catalog from such influential "enthusiastic users" as the English evangelist and Moody associate G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945), Louis Berkhof, Wilbur Smith (of Moody Bible Institute), and William Bell Riley (1861-1947), the Minneapolis-based founder of the World Christian Fundamentals Association. Riley described the set as "the best and most reliable of Bible dictionaries." Alongside Riley's endorsement of the encyclopedia, Eerdmans's catalog included Riley's endorsement of the firm itself: "I am grateful to your company that you publish a new edition of this important work." Available in DeLuxe Morocco for $39.50 or Library Buckram for ten dollars less, the set appeared as early as 1930 but received a new edition in 1940.

Finally, Eerdmans published the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, also known as the *Critical and Experimental Commentary on the Bible*. First published in 1871 in Britain and esteemed as a reliable and accessible reference, the work had been available to American audiences only in multiple volumes. Recognizing that complete collections were expensive and rare, Eerdmans advertised the book in its catalog with the prominent, capitalized, bolded words: "WHY PAY MORE? HERE IT IS! Complete. No more to pay." For just $2.95, the advertisement indicated, buyers could own a work recognized as "the best" by leaders that included William Bell Riley, Harry Ironside (1876-1951) of Moody

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Memorial Church, and thousands of Bible students. Looking back on the 1930s in a 1957 profile, Eerdmans later remarked that he became a "major publisher" only when he "acquired more standard sets of books than any other publisher in the United States--standards which are used in seminaries and Bible schools of all denominations."\textsuperscript{33}

Why did Eerdmans find so much success with these books? One explanation is that the firm had experience with the practices of reprinting and importing, for it had taken a similar approach with Dutch books. As with popular Dutch books, overseas publication of authoritative theological books meant that booksellers made those texts available to North American readers only by importing copies for resale, by acquiring rights to reprint them domestically as "exclusive agents," or by reprinting books that had passed out of copyright. Because some of the most cherished British texts were both out-of-print and out-of-copyright, savvy publishers could profit tremendously by acquiring printing plates and selling fresh copies to American conservatives eager to avoid the high prices for rare imported editions. Reprinting out-of-copyright books became particularly helpful during the Depression, when money saved by avoiding royalty payments helped publishers subsist on small profits, which had fallen as publishers dropped prices to foster consumer demand.\textsuperscript{34}

Because fundamentalists generally saw older theology as better theology, they provided a ready market for these reprints. But such strong demand, and with mainstream publishers adept at reprinting techniques, how did Eerdmans corner the fundamentalist market? Above all, more mainstream publishers like Revell simply had grown uninterested. In the same \textit{Banner} article that praised Eerdmans for buying the rights to the \textit{Expositor's} series, its editors lamented that the "great


\textsuperscript{34} Tebbel, \textit{Between Covers}, 282-284.
shift" from "orthodoxy to modernism" had become manifest in "the liberal trend in many Sunday school publications, denominational as well as undenominational." To make the point, the editors traced the ownership history of the series, noting that George H. Doran & Co. originally owned the rights as agents for the British firm Hodder & Stoughton; when Doran merged with Doubleday, however, the rights went to R. R. Smith, who later sold to Eerdmans after deciding that he was "more deeply interested in the school textbook field than in religious literature."³⁵

Making a similar point in his study of liberal religious book culture between 1920 and 1950, Matthew Hedstrom explains that American religious book publishing expanded dramatically in the 1920s and 1930s. But publishers effectively had abandoned conservative books by that period, in the name of promoting "a tolerant, practical, and modern spirituality transcending sect and tradition." Mainstream publishers wanted to move religion forward—not backward. Hedstrom accounts for this "transformation of the business in religious books" by pointing to "the hopes and fears of liberal religious leaders as they grappled with their declining cultural influence, expanding consumerism, and a pervasive postwar spiritual malaise."

To be sure, as Hedstrom suggests, Dwight Moody's brother-in-law, Fleming H. Revell, had continued to sell books that interested fundamentalists, and relatively conservative authors continued to publish with the firm. But that had just as much to do with authors' respect for Revell's history and distribution power as with Revell's actual interest in publishing conservative literature. Revell's 1929 trade catalog included a few small collections of Bible commentaries, but it carried no classics, and no reprints. Revell simply had moved away from the conservative constituency and toward a more centrist Protestant audience.

³⁵ "A Transaction in the Book World."
Tellingly, while Eerdmans would insist in 1944 that his firm had no patience for "modernism, agnosticism, marxism, freudism or liberalism," Revell had published Christianity and Progress in 1922, a book written by the very embodiment of the "Modernist" side of the "Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy," Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969). In addition, Revell helped organize the liberal Religious Book Week initiative, which represented precisely the sort of ecumenicism that fundamentalists detested.36

Seeing the scale of profits that these reprints made possible, a number of competitors soon entered the field. Herman Baker set up his own bookstore in Grand Rapids in 1939, for example, and he began publishing original books and reprints the next year. Baker was the nephew of the Dutch immigrant Louis Kregel, who had begun selling used theological books in Grand Rapids in 1909. Contemporary company mythology at both Baker Publishing Group and Eerdmans Publishing Company suggest that Herman decided to begin his own publishing enterprise after working during the 1930s alongside William Eerdmans and his uncle Louis. Mostly selling used books during the 1930s, Baker often accompanied Eerdmans on trips to Britain, where they would buy up the libraries of retired or deceased ministers. Baker then would sell those books at his uncle's bookstore, and Eerdmans would reprint whichever books sold best. By 1939, the story goes, Baker decided to cut out the proverbial middle men.

after his "sister brought the boy [Pat] with tears and begged us to take him in." Pat was fifteen, and he began working for Eerdmans while attending high school, and then Calvin Seminary for a year.

After working for Eerdmans in maintenance, in the warehouse, and then in shipping, Zondervan began working as a local salesman. By 1930, Zondervan regularly took sales and acquisition trips with his uncle, including a trip to Britain. In 1931, however, Eerdmans fired his nephew for reasons that are unclear. Eerdmans would explain to an associate in 1943 that "most people would have sent him away much sooner. I kept it up for seven long years, until I simply could not keep him any longer."

Eerdmans claimed that after firing Zondervan, he gave his nephew a line of credit and provided him the opportunity to work as a "jobber," the term for a wholesaler who buys large quantities from a publisher and resells to sales outlets. But Zondervan decided instead that he and his brother Bernie, who also worked for Eerdmans, would go into business for themselves. They began by buying heavily discounted remainder copies of conservative books, such as J. Gresham Machen's *The Virgin Birth* (Harper & Brothers), and reselling them in Grand Rapids and by mail, using mailing lists culled from denominational yearbooks and business contacts made through Eerdmans. But the Zondervans quickly moved from mere bookselling to book publishing. Beginning with Grand Rapids customers in mind, they identified an out-of-copyright Abraham Kuyper book titled *Women of the Bible* that had not appeared in English, paid a Calvin Seminary student to translate it, and published it as two separate books, *Women of the Old Testament* (1933) and *Women of the New Testament* (1934).

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In addition to publishing original books by a few Christian Reformed ministers, the Zondervans published out-of-print theological texts on the Eerdmans model, including their own version of the *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary*. This became a sore spot for Eerdmans, as customers came to prefer Zondervan's edition despite Eerdmans's willingness to sell his version for $2.00 less.

Customers preferred Zondervan's copy because the print was clearer. Eerdmans had published the book by using old printing plates that he had acquired in Britain, but the age of the plates made the book, in the words of an Eerdmans bookseller, "so much poorer that in most cases customers preferred Zondervan's edition." Meanwhile Zondervan purchased a complete set of the books and reproduced the text through the cutting-edge technique of photo offset. That technique printed text not with metal plates but rather with an inked rubber sheet, which acquired the image from a negative of a photograph of an original. Most publishers did not begin using this technique until the 1940s. Richard Baker, Herman Baker's son, dates the process to 1946, explaining that it enabled Baker in the 1940s to meet the large demand for reprints that had built up during World War II and its paper rationing.\(^{38}\)

**Fundamentalist Publishing in Its Prime**

Beginning around 1940, Zondervan began displacing Eerdmans as the preeminent fundamentalist publisher. But Zondervan built the foundations of its success in the 1930s, and it did so by essentially aping Eerdmans's successful approach. As Eerdmans's former employees, Pat and Bernie Zondervan had learned that approach's contours first-hand. As a result,

understanding how Eerdmans and Zondervan produced books and distributed them is key to understanding how the publishers collectively helped knit together the fundamentalist public of the 1930s and enabled the "evangelical" style of the next decade.

Books begin with authors, and methods of signing authors both drew upon and reinforced fundamentalist networks. Eerdmans regularly established connections with authors through a wide range of fundamentalist institutions. Among those institutions, fundamentalist summer camps proved particularly important.

For much of the twentieth century, and in the nineteenth century, fundamentalist summer camps served as key sites of theological and devotional culture. Summer camps provided ministers and laypeople both inexpensive vacation destinations and opportunities to cultivate piety. "Conferences! If only we could have fifty-two straight weeks of conferences," the brochure for the 1940 Mount Hermon "Fall Rally and Reunion" in California exclaimed. As the brochure explained, summer conferences were not seen as "taking the place of the church, the foundation of all Christian thought and action, but affording an opportunity for special training in the fine art of spiritual living."39

In addition to offering conference and camp attendees daily opportunities for "prayer and Bible meditation and study," they also tended to offer attendees time for reading. Partly for this reason, conferences almost always maintained camp bookstores. As the brochure for the 1941 Victorious Life Conference at Keswick Grove, New Jersey, explained, "One of the most far-reaching ministries of these Victorious Life Conferences is that of the books and pamphlets in the Conference bookstore." The idea of a camp bookstore was that books would serve camp

39 "Fall Rally and Reunion, October 1940," Mount Hermon Association, Mount Hermon, California, Box 2, Folder "Conferences, Miscell.,” Harold J. Ockenga Papers, Ockenga Institute, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminar, South Hamilton, Mass.
attendees both during conferences, and afterward. "Many a life, in homeland and foreign field," the brochure boasted, "has been revolutionized through the sending of a leaflet or book."40

But if camps maintained bookstores largely for attendees, bookstores also benefited the people who organized and led summer conferences. In addition to simply providing attendees with devotional time, summer retreats typically operated like fundamentalist answers to mainline Chautauqua assemblies, with popular authors making the rounds as speakers. Whenever authors spoke on the circuit, camp bookstores would stock their books. Both camp organizers and authors themselves benefited from bookstore sales. Publishers like Eerdmans and Zondervan often attended summer conferences both to sell books and to identify potential new authors among the ministers and evangelists who spoke.

Early in the 1930s, William Eerdmans received a spot on the board of the Winona Lake Bible Conference, the leading fundamentalist summer camp. Located in Indiana, Winona Lake had risen to prominence largely due to the patronage of Billy Sunday, who lived at Winona Lake. Through Eerdmans's connection to the Conference, he got to know William Biederwolf, a prominent revivalist who served as director of the Conference for decades. Biederwolf became one of Eerdmans's leading authors. Henry Beets occasionally spoke at Winona Lake, and Reformed laity increasingly spent summers there.

Winona Lake also connected Eerdmans to Harry Rimmer (1890-1952), an itinerant Presbyterian evangelist who spoke at Winona Lake virtually every summer in the 1930s and in many ways represented Eerdmans's ideal author.41 Although Rimmer lacked substantial scientific


training, he had become recognized as fundamentalism's scientist-in-residence. Rimmer gave credence to his status as a scientist by establishing the "Research Science Bureau" in 1929. Rimmer's status as "President" of the Bureau virtually always appeared after his name.\footnote{For more on Rimmer's self-aggrandizing titles, his debating prowess, and his educational endeavors, see Edward B. Davis, “Fundamentalism and Folk Science between the Wars,” \textit{Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation} 5, no. 2 (Summer): 220.}

Dedicated to using science to promote "research in such sciences as have direct bearing on the inspiration and infallible nature of the Holy Bible," the Bureau accepted members either by scientific contributions or by a $5.00 contribution, which bought a year's worth of Rimmer's booklets. Eerdmans published those booklets, as well as Rimmer's books and such booklet collections as \textit{Harmony of Science and Scripture} (1936), which Eerdmans reportedly produced due to extraordinary reader demand for more permanent and comprehensive versions of his booklets. Rimmer's books received regular praise from dozens of prominent fundamentalist periodicals. If the report of one reader is an indication, Rimmer's books acquired an almost talismanic value. With \textit{Harmony} alone going through seventeen editions between 1936 and 1958, Rimmer earned prime placement in Eerdmans's catalog.\footnote{In Mignon Brandon Rimmer’s biography of Harry Rimmer, he relates this story: "A Christian woman living in Baltimore wrote me about two years ago, telling of her continuing distribution of this book. She lives on a small income, but buys it periodically, sending it to prominent people as a gift. She prays over her choice of recipients and follows each book with prayer. She considers it 'the finest presentation of Christ' that she has ever read, and 'the most valuable Christian book in print.' One famous person who received a copy was Princess Margaret of England." Rimmer, \textit{The Fire Inside}, 98, 227.}

With the Reformed having embraced fundamentalists initially on the basis of such anti-modernist positions as opposition to evolution in schools, Rimmer suited Eerdmans's desire to cater to multiple conservative constituencies. Rimmer easily was the most popular opponent of evolution in the 1930s, and he had developed a following in Grand Rapids during the late 1920s among the Reformed and other conservative Protestants through regular speaking visits to the
town. Rimmer's books sold so well largely because of this constant itinerancy. Rimmer regularly traveled throughout the country, speaking to or debating nearly any group or individual that would welcome him. At each of these meetings, Rimmer would sell his booklets and books, leave flyers for his books, and generally whip up interest in them.

Eerdmans and Zondervan regularly attempted to recruit itinerant evangelists like Rimmer, for they made profitable authors. Publishers realized that revivalists virtually always were willing to write books, for status as an author lent revivalists a greater air of authority. Books also could raise a revivalist's profile, for books circulated in small towns long after revivals ended, and summer camp attendees took books home with them. Revivalists themselves knew all of this, and when they wrote to publishers asking if they would publish a book, revivalists tended to use their popularity as proof of their potential as an author. Paul Hutchens (1902-1977) provides a representative case.

By 1945, Paul Hutchens had become sufficiently successful as an author that Eerdmans described him in its *Eerdmans Quarterly Observer* newsletter as "the most popular American author of Christian fiction. This is clearly shown in the fact that over a million copies of his books have already been distributed throughout the world." Just over ten years earlier, however, in 1934, Hutchens had been a relatively little-known evangelist from George, Iowa.

When Hutchens sent an unsolicited letter to Eerdmans in 1934 to enquire about possibly publishing his novel manuscript, *Romance of Fire*, Hutchens attached to his letter a broadsheet advertisement for an upcoming fifteen-day revival that he would be leading at a Methodist church in Endicott, New York, outside of Binghamton. Hutchens also pointed out that Moody

Seminary provided the setting for his novel. "Our list of perspective [sic] buyers," Hutchens explained, "should include every former student as well as every present student, also the faculty." When Moody's administration later chafed at the idea that the school would appear in the novel, Hutchens agreed to insert "certain things . . . to exalt the school more than I have done," so as to make them see the book as "good advertising." Appeasing Moody was important because the school, its bookstore, and its alumni network were central both to Eerdmans's distribution in general and to Hutchens' hopes for his book.45

On the condition that Hutchens remove the "Irish vernacular which you introduce into the conversation" and agree to buy half of the 1,000 copies they would print, Eerdmans agreed to publish the book. These were generous terms, for publishers often required authors to pay printing costs, particularly when a book's sales potential seemed limited. Eerdmans gave Hutchens the standard salesman's discount of forty percent off the $1.50 retail price, and Hutchens sold the books himself to individuals and booksellers on his revival tours. Hutchens soon set up his own small book distributor, calling it the "Good News Book Room," taking the slogan "The Best of the Good' in Christian Literature."46

Hutchens threw himself into selling the book. He contacted Miss E. A. Thompson, who helped run Moody's Colportage Association, getting her to agree to sell copies. While in Alabama on a speaking tour, he arranged for the Alabama Christian Advocate to publish the book serially. While in Kansas, Hutchens sent a postcard to Eerdmans simply to tell him that "You might try to sell 50 to 100 copies to Defender Publishers, Wichita, Kans. Stress the fact that the book is FUNDAMENTAL AND A REAL DEFENDER OF THE FAITH. I know they will get behind

45 Paul Hutchens to WBE, 10 July 1934, Folder H, WBE Papers; Hutchens to WBE, 21 July 1934.

46 WBE to Hutchens, 10 July 1934; WBE to Hutchens, 14 July 1934; Hutchens to WBE, 8 May 1935.
it if they approve of it.” When the popular magazine *The King's Business* agreed to sell a stock of books to its readers, but refused to pay the price for the books that Eerdmans demanded, Hutchens voluntarily gave up his ten percent royalty and paid the additional costs out of pocket. He talked to the English evangelist and Zondervan author Herbert Lockyer (1886-1984) about publishing his book serially in England. All of this saw *Romance of Fire* go through seven editions in one year.47

But direct sales by revivalists made up only a fraction of the firms' sales, and publishers constantly searched for more efficient and effective distribution techniques. In addition to distributing books through revivalist networks, Eerdmans and Zondervan distributed books through book salesmen, bookstores, and book wholesalers. In some ways, book salesmen served a similar function as author-revivalists, in that both traveled the country offering bookstores wholesale prices. But book salesmen visited bookstores or booksellers systematically.

Publishers sometimes hired armies of book salesmen, for their efforts produced far greater sales than print advertisements in newspapers. The Moody Colportage Association, both a book publisher and a book wholesaler, claimed to employ 800 book salesmen. Publishers could employ so many booksellers because they worked mostly on commission. But this arrangement was somewhat unfair, for book salesmen often did publishers a far greater service than merely selling a couple hundred books. Book salesmen often relayed feedback to publishers from customers who had suggestions or complaints about book packaging, contents, and distribution. In addition, salesmen often pioneered new sales territories and established connections with bookstores or

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47 Hutchens to WBE, 27 Sept 1934; Hutchens to WBE, 16 Sept 1934; 15 May 1934; Hutchens to WBE, 4 October 1935; WBE to Hutchens, 30 December 1935.
other booksellers. This information's value lasted longer than the time it took for book salesman to tire of living off of the standard ten percent commission.\textsuperscript{48}

In 1937, for instance, Eerdmans received a letter from F. J. Wiens, then manager of the Mennonite Book Concern. Lamenting that the small size of his denomination made his business "almost a missionary enterprise" and that he desired "somewhat more renumerative" work, Wiens asked if Eerdmans might have work for him. Wiens noted that he had "learned to think a great deal of your firm," and that "you have definite Christian principles and that is more than I can say for certain religious publishing houses." For credentials, Wiens cited a decade of work in the book business, which had earned him "contacts that should be of inestimable value to me if I should enter your organization and spend part of my time traveling with your line of books."\textsuperscript{49}

Eerdmans hired Wiens and sent him to the West Coast, where he worked to strengthen Eerdmans's presence in Los Angeles, at such outlets as the Bible Institute of Los Angeles and the recently founded Church-of-Christ-affiliated George Pepperdine College (1937). But Wiens soon decided that Oregon deserved most of his attention, for it provided a relatively untapped market. The biggest bookseller in Portland, Wiens discovered, was the Methodist Book Concern, which trafficked mostly in Methodist books and did not sell Eerdmans books at all--a situation that Wiens ultimately changed. In addition to working with the Methodists, Wiens collected and sent back to Grand Rapids what essentially were scouting reports on all of the small bookstores in Oregon, identifying the men or women who managed each store, their personal family or credit

\textsuperscript{48} E. A. Thompson to Paul Hutchens, 30 November 1934, Folder H, WBE Papers.

\textsuperscript{49} F. J. Wiens to WBE, 10 April 1937, Folder W, WBE Papers.
problems, and their book preferences. Wiens even sold books to Portland's Catholic Book and Supply Company.⁵⁰

When visiting various bookstores and wholesalers, Wiens would carry with him an array of eye-catching book jackets, posters, and sample copies. Beginning in the late 1920s, mainstream book publishers in New York had begun abandoning the relatively plain book designs of previous decades, designing far more attractive and informative book jackets and posters. These materials provided newspapers and magazines with new copy to use in book advertisements, and the end of the 1930s accordingly saw advertisements and book catalogs stop merely listing book titles and begin offering more descriptive, often illustrated, advertisements of the sort that remain common today.

Religious publishers followed these changes, which occurred when publishers' marketing departments realized that titles alone did little to hook customers who increasingly acquired books by browsing bookstores and perusing newspapers.⁵¹ Zondervan's book jackets, for example, changed dramatically at the end of the 1930s. To take just one example, the cover of the pea-green book jacket for Zondervan's 1939 edition of *Winona Echoes* sedately offered a list of prominent evangelical speakers and described the book's contents as "forty-three notable messages by speakers at the 45th annual Winona Lake Bible Conference." The 1942 edition, by comparison, offered no speaker names but rather a woodcut etching of a lake surrounded by verdant trees. Stylish cursive font on the cover promised "inspiring messages." In 1942, Zondervan also transitioned from printing broadsheet lists of their books to producing richly illustrated booklet-style catalogs. Eerdmans made the same move, but in 1939.

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⁵⁰ Wiens to WBE, 18 October 1937; Wiens to WBE, 25 September 1937; Wiens to WBE, 14 September 1937.

⁵¹ Tebbell, *Between Covers*, 311.
Like other traveling salesmen, Wiens did not sell Eerdmans books exclusively. When he traveled, he carried with him materials representing at least one or two other lines of books, though he claimed to give Eerdmans sales preference. But placing publishers alongside each other was not unusual. Publishers regularly made agreements that allowed them to publish each others' books. In 1938, for example, Zondervan bought 500 copies of the novel *Rachel* from Eerdmans and received permission to place its own name on the book's title page.\(^{52}\)

More common than selling to direct competitors, larger publishers like Eerdmans often sold large quantities of popular books to booksellers, distributors, or publishers under those outlets' imprints. This practice gave those businesses a kind of cachet with their local customers. Eerdmans extended the same courtesy to fundamentalist book clubs, such as the Pinebrook Book Club associated with Percy Crawford's Pennsylvania retreat. Pinebrook described itself in advertisements as the "world's largest fundamental book-of-the-month club."\(^{53}\)

On its face, publishers could only hurt their brand by putting other company's names on their books' title pages. But the practice had a few benefits. First, it generated sales in previously untapped markets. When book clubs emerged in the late 1920s, they initially elicited ambivalence from publishers and hostility from the bookshops and booksellers with whom publishers worked. Advertising in magazines and taking advantage of Rural Free Delivery, book clubs largely serviced rural readers. Recognizing this, publishers soon accepted that book clubs offered an easy way to reach a diffuse national audience.\(^{54}\) Because book clubs offered publishers

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\(^{52}\) Wiens to WBE, 7 September 1937; Zondervan Publishing House to Peter De Visser, 4 October 1938, Folder Z, WBE Papers.

\(^{53}\) Percy Crawford to WBE, 4 April 1945, Folder C, WBE Papers.

guaranteed sales without the fuss of selling, Eerdmans and Zondervan both embraced fundamentalist book clubs as they emerged and proliferated in the 1930s.

A second reason for sharing books with other companies related to networks of distribution, which grew in strength and geographic reach only so far as publishers nurtured them. Providing particular bookstores or booksellers with vanity imprints helped Eerdmans and Zondervan to solidify the commercial networks that sustained them. Distributing books under other imprints had the final benefit of simply popularizing a firm's authors and books, cultivating demand for subsequent books. Largely out of concern for firm affiliation and loyalty, Eerdmans occasionally refused to link itself to authors who already had become known as Zondervan authors.55

**Evangelical Horizons**

Writing in 1944 about a manuscript he had been reviewing, William Eerdmans looked back on the previous decade and reflected upon his approach to publishing. Noting that the manuscript contained a criticism of alcohol consumption, Eerdmans insisted that "it is certainly a controversial point and we always try to avoid such things in the books we publish. Millions of people such as all Episcopalians, practically all Lutherans, Presbyterians, Reformed, and people of many other denominations would take exception to such a statement and the result would be that one would have endless criticism and polemicks on his hand."

To be sure, many fundamentalists might have praised criticism of alcohol. But as Eerdmans explained to a reporter the same year, his "attitude always has been the positive and constructive one. . . . I always tried to stay away from the negative and the controversial, telling the

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55 WBE to Mrs. Lloyd T. Bryant, 21 January 1947, Folder B, WBE Papers.
theologians to discuss and settle those things in their Synods etc." On the one hand, this publishing philosophy reflected a principled and inclusive ecclesiology. On the other hand, however, it reflected pragmatic business reasoning. Seeing as though controversial issues have supporters and detractors, Eerdmans wondered, why limit sales to just one side of an issue?

Throughout the 1930s, Eerdmans and Zondervan shared this tendency to downplay controversial issues in their books. As Candy Brown explains, this approach was not exactly new. Nondenominational publishers had taken a similar approach in the nineteenth century. They avoided, she explains, "specifically denominational and controversial publications" in order to foster "participants' sense of unity as evangelical Christians."

But even if conservative publishers in the 1850s and 1930s shared seemingly similar tactics, those tactics had different contexts, causes, and effects. Most important, those tactics served different kinds of "evangelical" unities (see Chapter One). In the 1930s, evangelical unity had just begun coming into view, and publishers like Eerdmans and Zondervan had helped push fundamentalist discourse and practice toward that horizon.

Dedicated to offering a wide range of reading options to a wide range of consumers, for example, Eerdmans and Zondervan both began publishing conservative Protestant counterparts to Reader's Digest in the 1930s. Eerdmans began publishing its Religious Digest in 1935, and Zondervan followed suit in 1939, acquiring a small Omaha-based magazine called Christian Digest. Both digests appeared monthly and reprinted what they described as the best of current Christian writing. Although such fundamentalist magazines and newspapers as Christian Life and

56 Eerdmans to Kellow, 28 November 1944; Eerdmans to Albus.


Times and Moody Monthly often reprinted articles from like-minded periodicals, these two digests were unique both in selecting articles from diverse outlets and in explicitly modeling themselves on a popular mainstream counterpart.

Looking at both periodicals, a reader is struck by the way that they refrain from simply hyping the books of their respective publishers. Instead of pushing only their own authors and books, both periodicals openly shared work from many corners of the fundamentalist universe. Among the seven core editorial policies listed in copies of Religious Digest, two insisted that articles "not be narrow or sectarian" and that the periodical would "be positive in our approach, and seek to present the best from the whole field of religion per se." An editorial in a January 1936 edition of Religious Digest said it best:

Through the days of the World War some of us dreamed and talked of a coming better world. We resolved that when the war was over we should begin to build that better world. Seventeen years have gone by and it is the same old world, a monotonous repetition of old thoughts and old ways. We cannot build a new world out of men with old dispositions. New years are for new men, with new heart and spirit. It is through new thinking and feeling and living that the new light will break on the horizon.59

Insofar as historians of evangelicalism tend to cast the 1940s as the era when fundamentalists threw open their doors to the outside world, this language was ahead of its time. As Chapter Four illustrates, the 1940s would see such fundamentalists as Carl F. H. Henry agree that "new thinking and feeling" paved the path to the Christian future. And as other conservatives adopted this stance, evangelicals began seeing themselves as participants in a

common movement. For at least a decade, however, publishers had been helping fundamentalists to see themselves in this way.

By the end of the 1930s, publishers had developed extended networks of ordinary people who were deeply invested in perpetuating an ecumenical approach to conservative Protestantism. The livelihoods of hundreds of bookstore owners, book salesmen, distributors, club operators, revivalists, publishers, editors, countless others depended on a kind of pragmatic ecumenism. When authors sat down to write books, when editors decided whether to accept them, and when salesmen considered how to sell them, everyone not only participated in a burgeoning evangelical public but also imagined it, positioned themselves within it, and invoked it. Meanwhile, by buying texts with an evangelical slant, by listening to sermons preached by people who read and wrote evangelical books, and by discussing ideas and stories at church and home, ministers and lay fundamentalists circulated evangelical ideas, styles, and sensibilities.

**Evangelical Dawn**

At the end of the 1930s, Eerdmans and Zondervan pursued business strategies similar enough that some customers had difficulty distinguishing between them. In one letter to William Eerdmans, for example, a bookstore owner addressed him as "William Zondervan." Eerdmans likely kept this unremarkable letter in his collection of correspondence precisely because he found it so galling.60

Eerdmans always had feared that his nephews' success would come at his firm's expense. Such conclusions were difficult to avoid, considering the Zondervans not only had stolen such authors as Billy Sunday but also had stolen actual books from Eerdmans's warehouse. Eerdmans

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60 Christian Art and Gift Shoppe to William Zondervan, undated letter from late 1930s, Folder Z, WBE Papers.
also claimed that they printed copyrighted material without permission. As a result, as early as 1931, Eerdmans attempted to turn authors, book distributors, and publishers against his nephews.

Eerdmans continued the campaign into the 1940s. "There is not a single religious publisher in the country," Eerdmans wrote to a friend in 1944, "which so arbitrarily fathers material from all kinds of copyrighted and existing and good selling sources, and publishes this in reprint form and then has it copyrighted." When Norman Kellow, the manager of Pinebrook Book Club, urged Eerdmans to be more forgiving with his nephews, Eerdmans insisted, "I don't care how anyone soft-soapes [sic] and Uncle Billy's me. Sin remains sin. If you have a wallet on your hip pocket, with a hundred dollar bill in it, and I, as a pickpocket, succeed in lifting that, what am I?"  

To repeated requests that Pinebrook abandon all relations with Zondervan, Kellow always responded that he would do so when Eerdmans required the same of its readers and other distributors. "Even Moody will not consent to stop selling and stop featuring Z books altogether," Kellow explained in 1945. "I have consented not to use any more Z first selections this year. I feature only E books. I have cut Z's out a lot more than Moody has. There magazine is full of Z from cover to cover. Their store reeks with the stuff."  

But by 1945, Eerdmans's war with Zondervan had become a matter of principle more than a matter of profit. Around 1940, Eerdmans and Zondervan had begun taking possession of

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61 WBE to James Starr, 9 May 1944, Folder S, WBE Papers; WBE to Norman Kellow, 12 July 1943, Folder P, WBE Papers.

62 Kellow to WBE, 16 April 1945.
different segments of the emerging evangelical market. The battle for Billy Sunday foreshadowed this process.63

Three years after winning Billy Sunday's book, and two years after Sunday's death in 1935, the Zondervans published Sunday's book as *Billy Sunday Speaks!* Homer Rodeheaver, who directed Winona Lake and managed many of Sunday's affairs posthumously, ultimately disagreed with the Zondervans' marketing plan for the book, complaining that "those babies up in Grand Rapids . . . are Hollanders and quite set in their ways." But that did not stop the Zondervans from taking over the management of Winona Lake's bookstore in 1937, a move that effectively cut off Eerdmans's connection to the institution. The Zondervans soon began securing the most prominent fundamentalist authors.64

Beginning in 1937, for example, Zondervan Co. began publishing books by Harold Ockenga, a regular Winona Lake speaker, who would go on in the 1940s to become the first president of the National Association of Evangelicals and the figurehead of what he called "neo-evangelicalism."65 Soon, it was Pat Zondervan who began attempting to pull authors away from

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63 One marker for the companies' different directions is that very few documents related to Eerdmans exist among the dozens of revivalists' collections located at Wheaton's Billy Graham Archives. Yet those collections contain a substantial amount of material related to Zondervan Co., which cultivated relationships with Billy Graham and other "evangelicals" in the 1940s.


other publishers. "I have taken your advice concerning the matter of Revell," one author assured Zondervan in 1942, "They are to publish one more book for me, but that is all."66

The Zondervans also drew authors from their participation in Gideons International and its subsidiary, the Christian Business Men's Committee (C.B.M.C.). Pat Zondervan joined the Gideons as early as 1938. His involvement reportedly began after Charles Trumbull, editor of The Sunday School Times, asked Pat about his spiritual life. This question reportedly sent Pat reeling. "'It was then that I realized that I had been operating from my head but not from my heart,'" Pat later reported to James Ruark, Zondervan's company historian. This realization led Pat to join the Gideons three months later. By the following year, Pat began a three-year stint as president of the Grand Rapids Gideons Camp; in 1956, he would begin the first of three one-year terms as international president of the organization.67

As president of the Grand Rapids' Camp and as founding president of the city's C.B.M.C. chapter, Zondervan regularly organized brought prominent revivalists to the city. Such events


67 Quoted in Ruark, The House of Zondervan, 35-36. Although Ruark's report of Pat's story does not explain why participation in the Gideons seemed like the natural response to Pat's spiritual renewal, both that response and its telling both convey a naturalness that testifies to the cultural position of the Gideons in the late 1930s. As Sarah Hammond explains, the Gideons sat at the crossroads of a few different aspects of evangelical culture. Founded in 1899 as a kind of professional fraternity for traveling Christian businessmen, the Gideons broadened their membership guidelines in 1937 by admitting "businessmen"--a category that did not include doctors, lawyers, or other "professionals," who had to wait until the 1960s to join. Initially focused on man-to-man proselytizing, the Gideons began placing Bibles in hotel rooms in 1908. As early as 1910, local camps worked together with revivalists and ministers to hold city-wide revivals.

In the early 1930s, the Gideons helped found an initiative that would focus more concertedly on city evangelism. Known as the Christian Business Men's Committee (C.B.M.C.), this organization functioned less as a hierarchical institution than as a rubric for local cooperation, with groups of businessmen in each city drawing up their own chapter constitutions. In these ways, both organizations drew together Protestant biblicism, revivalism, and devotion to business and the market. Devoted personally to all of these emphases, the Zondervans participated in both ventures and gave them a high profile in Grand Rapids. Pat Zondervan served as founding president of the city's C.B.M.C. chapter. For more on both organizations, see Sarah Ruth Hammond, “'God's Business Men': Entrepreneurial Evangelicals in Depression and War” (United States--Conn.: Yale University, 2010), 82-94.
provided him with opportunities to promote Zondervan books. In November 1944, for instance, Zondervan brought Hyman Appelman to the city for a three-week revival sponsored both by the Gideons and Grand Rapids' Christian Business Men. Having met Appelman through the Gideons, the Zondervans had published his first book, *Ye Must Be Born Again* (1939) and subsequent books. Although Appelman never quite reached the upper echelons of itinerant evangelism, his biography simultaneously suited the conventions of evangelical conversion narratives and appealed to conservatives' persistent intellectual insecurities. As Pat Zondervan succinctly explained in a fundraising letter for a 1944 Appelman revival in Grand Rapids, "The Rev. Appelman is a Russian Jew. He was a Chicago lawyer. He found Christ as his Saviour through reading a Bible in Denver, Colorado."

When the Zondervans solicited support for revivals by Appelman and others, they often put their books to use. One of Pat Zondervan's first moves when organizing Appelman's revival, for instance, was to write personally to 150 community leaders and send them a copy of *Ye Must Be Born Again*. By circulating the book, Zondervan simultaneously testified to Appelman's prominence, proved his theological orthodoxy, and boosted the profile of Zondervan Publishing House. The cross-promotional possibilities that revivals offered also explains why Zondervan regularly met petty requests from Appelman and others. While traveling throughout the country,

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69 PJZ to "Fellow Believer," undated letter from 1944, Box 1, Folder 7, Appelman Papers. As a convert from Judaism and a former lawyer, Appelman was regarded not just as an ideal witness to Christianity's supremacy and reasonableness but also as a participant in an end-times drama that would see Jews accept Christ as savior. Appelman regularly recounted in revival sermons and in a 1960 radio program that the story of his conversion began in a Denver hotel room, where he picked up a Gideon Bible, discovered that the "Gentile" Bible included the Hebrew Bible, and set about exploring the case for Christianity. Note that Appelman's biography shared much in common with that of Lee Strobel, the former lawyer and self-described atheist who rose to evangelical fame in the 1990s with his book *The Case for Christ* (Zondervan, 1998) and related books.

70 PJZ to Appelman, 20 July 1944, Box 1, Folder 7, Appelman Papers.
for example, Appelman regularly would write to Zondervan Co. requesting copies of his books, but rarely more than twenty copies at a time. Appelman regularly wrote requesting book shipments. E.g., Appelman to PJZ, 25 February 1944, Box 1, Folder 7, Appelman Papers.

71 "Thank you again infinitely for the books you have been sending me," Appelman wrote to Zondervan, "I wish you would tell me how, more definitely, I can advertise them. Of course, I talk to the people and the preachers about them all the time." Selling books in this way benefited Appelman, too, as his occasional queries about his royalty balance suggest.

Whenever the Zondervans organized revivals in Grand Rapids, they always made sure to gear the event for maximum appeal. In the early stages of planning for the Appelman revival, for instance, Zondervan wrote to the revivalist and explained, "since our dutch [sic] churches, and especially the Christian Reformed and Reformed churches, form a very large percentage of the sound, Gospel people of this city, pressure is continually being put upon us to ask you not to say anything regarding the matter of becoming baptized or immersion. May we have your cooperation in this delicate matter?"

On other occasions, Zondervan simply invited revivalists who conservatives rarely criticized. In 1942, for example, the renown the broadcaster and revivalist Charles E. Fuller came to Grand Rapids at the invitation of the Grand Rapids Gideons, led not just by President Pat Zondervan but also by Vice-President Bernie Zondervan and Publicity Chairman Ted...
Engstrom (a Zondervan editor). On May 28, Fuller held a mass meeting in the city and broadcast the event as that week's episode of the *Old Fashioned Revival Hour.*

As William Eerdmans's encounter with Billy Sunday demonstrated, the Zondervans became far more familiar than their uncle with the revivalistic style of evangelicalism that became popular in the 1940s. During that decade, Eerdmans's stature as an evangelical publisher would continue to rise, but it came largely through his firm's relationship with evangelicalism's intellectual wing. Fuller Theological Seminary and its faculty, for instance, would treat Eerdmans Co. as its unofficial publishing arm. Having moved away from its Reformed roots during the 1930s in the name of reaching fundamentalist and evangelical audiences, the firm reclaimed its Reformed identity in the 1950s. In succeeding decades, the firm's reputation, its institutional inertia, and the dispositions of its editors would see the firm retain this profile. Such modern-day evangelical intellectuals as George Marsden and Mark Noll, for instance, have published several books with Eerdmans. Zondervan went a different direction.

As early as December 1945, the Zondervan brothers felt distanced enough from their uncle, and sufficiently successful in their own right, that they attempted to arrange a meeting with him and several "impartial" judges to resolve past disagreements. Each of the judges were prominent evangelical leaders. But they also were prominent Zondervan authors. Will H. Houghton was president of Moody Bible Institute. E. Schuyler English was editor of *Revelation*

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74 "12,000 Jam Auditorium for Old-Fashioned Religious Revival," St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat, April 11, 1942; Lee J. Hoyt to PJZ, 24 April 1942, Box 1, Folder 7, Appelman Papers.

75 In the preface to his history of Fuller Seminar, Marsden notes that Eerdmans was the "obvious choice" to publish the book because "not only are they a publisher of distinguished books; they have also had a long and mutually beneficial relationship with Fuller Theological Seminary that deserves to be honored." Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, viii. One Eerdmans editor confides to me, however, that the firm retains this profile largely out of institutional inertia. They would not be opposed to publishing Christian bestseller; they simply never receive offers for them.
magazine and president of the Philadelphia School of the Bible. And J. Palmer Muntz was Biederwolf's successor as director of Winona Lake.

At the meeting, the Zondervans "gave their versions of each of the complaints" and "admitted having erred in the past." The judges "came to the conclusion that the Zondervan brothers had in times past performed and followed certain practices which we would not deny as having been doubtful and unethical." But the judges meanwhile insisted that "we whole-heartedly believe that . . . there will be no repetition of them in the future, and no reason for complaint."

The penalty might have been stiffer if William Eerdmans had his say. But he had refused to attend. The judges, and the Zondervans, were not his kind of people.76

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Writing in May 1938, Frans Keuker had a simple message for readers of *The Banner*: "The Bible first, the Bible last, the Bible always and above all." A native of Holland, a graduate of "one of our most famous American universities," and the head a nursing home in Shimla, India, Keuker allowed neither the distance between India and Grand Rapids nor his institutional obligations to keep him from leaping to the Bible's defense. For Keuker, the threat came not from such typical specters as modernist theology or liberal hermeneutics but rather from a source whose perniciousness proved more subtle: religious books.

Keuker wrote his defense in response to an editorial by Henry J. Kuiper, who served between 1928 and 1956 as editor of *The Banner*, the Christian Reformed Church's English-language weekly newspaper and the denomination's unofficial "paper pope." In an earlier article on church libraries, Kuiper had remarked that "if Christian people do not read Christian literature, they will not understand and love Christian principles; they will not be able to listen with profit to good sermons; and there will not be a sufficient number of good leaders in their consistories and church societies." For Frans Keuker, however, human authorship made all Christian literature irreparably corrupt.

"What is religious reading?", Keuker asked, sarcastically admitting that "if under 'religious' is understood the reading of God's Word, [the editor's] statement is certainly unassailable." But Keuker accusingly insisted that the editor was "not speaking about the Bible, the Word of God inspired by the Holy Spirit; he is speaking here about religious books written by sinful men, by men who were conceived and born in sin." True, Keuker admitted, some religious books occasionally seem worthwhile. But because worthwhile books invariably "find the basis of their
religious teachings in God's Word," even the best books amount to little more than "derivatives of God's Word," making them subject to the deductions of sinful authors and readers. "When the original is so close at hand," Keuker asked, "shall we partly displace it by a derivative, with an extract that is infected with sin? No, a thousand times no."

For much of the 1930s, many conservative Protestants agreed with Frans Keuker, either in principle or practice. Although fundamentalist leaders regularly urged laypeople to read in the 1920s, fundamentalists often displayed ambivalence or outright opposition toward religious books well into the 1940s. Yet by 1950, conservative Protestants increasingly bought, read, and discussed religious books. Why, then, did books encounter resistance in the decade or so before World War II? This chapter answers this question by contrasting the different ways that Reformed and fundamentalist Protestants engaged the Bible and perceived books' benefits.

Because most histories of the book in the 1920s and 1930s say little about religious books, the historiography of the era generally focuses not on the relationship between books and the Bible but rather on two others: the relationship between cheap books and literary books, and between lower- and middle-class readers. As Janice Radway explains in her seminal study of the Book-of-the-Month Club (founded in 1926), the late-nineteenth century had seen Americans associate books "either with the pleasures of leisure time or with the particular objectives of specific interests and occupations." The book was, Radway explains, "a tool for accomplishing a concrete goal." Cheap books served these ends particularly well, but the emergence of circulating libraries soon helped Americans to value books for their intellectual or cultural property, which seemed to increase with age.¹

After the turn of the century, middle-class critics increasingly bemoaned the prevalence of cheap books and the seemingly tragic tendency for lower-class readers to read the wrong books, and too few. By the 1920s, book publishers and sellers had figured out how to take advantage of these class distinctions to sell both cheap and literary books on a mass scale, marketing and advertising books with the same "imagine-yourself-like-this" techniques used to sell cigarettes and automobiles. In magazines like *Good Housekeeping*, books even became objects for household decoration. As a result, book ownership—and perhaps reading—rose dramatically in the 1920s. Secular books acquired such a prominent place in American imaginations that musty religious books were described, by comparison, as "old fashioned."²

Before World War II, conservative Protestant book culture displayed both commonalities and differences with the era's mainstream book culture. Just as mainstream literary critics displayed what Megan Benton describes as "perverse pleasure in calculating the neglect books were suffering," religious leaders' prescriptive comments about books often displayed a measure of class self-positioning.³ But the greater cohesion and market sophistication of the mainstream book industry ultimately gave it far greater ability than the conservative Protestant book industry to orient readers' preferences and attitudes.

Until the evangelical book industry began amassing commercial and cultural power after World War II, a variety of concerns, anxieties, practices, and convictions all complicated what conservative Protestants imagined that Bibles and books represented culturally and promised devotionally. These complications in turn forestalled the evangelical book industry's ability to

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³ Benton, "‘Too Many Books,’" 274.
amass commercial power. While Chapters Four and Five explain how this circular process stopped spinning, this chapter illustrates why different modes of devotion to the Bible temporarily provided the process with fuel.

**Biblicism and Books**

"Should We Read Only the Bible?", Henry Kuiper asked in response to Frans Keuker's letter. For Henry Kuiper, the answer ultimately was no. Acknowledging "hearty agreement" with his critic's overall "zeal for the gospel and for the study of the Bible," Kuiper admitted "that there is a lack of systematic Bible reading among Reformed people, and that when the reading of religious books takes the place of Scripture reading our spiritual life will not flourish as it should." Yet Kuiper meanwhile argued that Frans Keuker's letter displayed "some clear traces of what is nowadays called *biblicism*, which consists in part of a one-sided emphasis on Bible reading and Bible study and a mistaken insistence on the use of only Bible terms in summarizing its teachings."¹

The problem with biblicism, Henry Kuiper explained, is that its adherents did not recognize that "the same God who *inspired* holy men to write the books of the Bible also *illuminizes* the minds of his people thus enabling them to understand and interpret those books." More to the point, biblicists failed to see that some people "have far more light than others," and that "those servants of Christ who surpass others in the knowledge of the Word have both the right and the duty to instruct their brethren, either orally or in writing." In Kuiper's view, "this is the origin and justification of the production of Christian literature." Rather than disparage religious books, Kuiper insisted, Christians should recognize "the good which can be derived from the

¹ Note that in these quotations and others, I have not added emphasis; it is original to the quotation.
study of those Christian writings which are the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit in the minds of superior persons among those who are regenerated by that Spirit." To do otherwise is to display "a type of religious individualism for which we have very little sympathy."⁵

As both Henry Kuiper and Frans Keuker recognized, their different attitudes toward books and the Bible largely reflected a mutual lack of sympathy for each others' styles of Protestantism. Although Keuker noted that his "father is a staunch Calvinist" and that "our household was the typical Calvinist family," he admitted having moved away from the tradition. Kuiper added that Keuker's "views are not wholly in accord with those held by people of the Reformed faith."

If Frans Keuker had left the Reformed faith, what denominational affiliation or ecclesiological identity had he embraced? He does not say. Reading between the lines of his dialogue with The Banner's editor, however, he appears to have had fundamentalist inclinations; the editor's comments essentially mirrored those other Reformed writers often made about fundamentalism during the 1930s. Just a few years earlier, for example, Rienk B. Kuiper (no relation to Henry) had described fundamentalism with marked disdain. President of Calvin College from 1930 to 1933 and subsequently professor of theology at Philadelphia's Westminster Seminary, R. B. Kuiper (1886-1966) often wrote for The Banner. In 1932, he had written a series of articles about "the attitude of our Christian Reformed churches" to the "two opposing camps" of American Protestantism: modernism and fundamentalism. "The adherents of Orthodoxy in our land are commonly called Fundamentalists," Kuiper explained in an article titled "Fundamentalism and We."⁶

⁵ "Should We Read Only the Bible?", The Banner, May 5, 1938, 412.

⁶ For more on both Henry and R.B. Kuiper, see James A De Jong, Henry J. Kuiper: Shaping the Christian Reformed Church, 1907-1962, The Historical Series of the Reformed Church in America no. 55 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2007). De Jong notes that Henry and R.B. were not brothers, but R.B. and B. K. Kuiper were brothers. De Jong, 63.
Beginning his article by praising fundamentalism, R. B. Kuiper insisted that "we are, to put it very mildly, sympathetic. . . . Better than that even, we of the Reformed faith are Fundamentalists, and strong ones at that." At the same time, Kuiper admitted that "instead of being perfectly at home among them we not infrequently feel quite out of place. The atmosphere in the Fundamentalist camp strikes us as being somewhat oppressive, not altogether pure." Kuiper lamented that "in recent years a considerable number of individuals and families have severed their connection with our churches in order to become affiliated with this or that Fundamentalist Group." Among other points of disagreement, Kuiper noted that "the great majority of American Fundamentalists are Arminians of the Wesleyan type. . . . American Christianity is very largely Methodistic."

Like Henry, however, R. B. also noted that "another widespread error of present-day Fundamentalists is known as Biblicism." R. B. Kuiper noted that "the Biblicist prides himself on his implicit faith in the Bible; he is frequently heard to say with emphasis that he accepts the Bible from cover to cover as the very Word of God, but his attitude toward the creeds of the church is rather scornful." Preempting the typical fundamentalist response, he insisted that "we of the Reformed faith think not a whit less of the Bible than does the most ardent Biblicist, and it never occurs to us to place the creeds on a level with the Bible; but we do esteem the creeds more highly than does the Biblicist." Acknowledging that "the great Creeds of Christendom" were "surely not infallible," Kuiper explained, "at sundry times [the church] has been blessed by its Lord with especially highly enlightened leaders," and the creeds "are the rich products of this activity of the Spirit of Truth." As a result, "the Biblicist, unwittingly no doubt, yet really, belittles a most important work of the Spirit of God."
Both R.B. and Henry Kuipers' derogatory use of "biblicism" stands in contrast to the term's conventional use. Today, "biblicism" appears most often in scholarly lists of evangelicalism's hallmarks. David Bebbington's oft-cited "quadrilateral," for instance, includes "biblicism" on the grounds that evangelicals historically have insisted that "all spiritual truth is to be found in [the Bible's] pages." By decrying biblicism, the Kuipers do not exactly prove Bebbington wrong; Bebbington himself recognizes that Reformed Protestants often have shown "discontinuities" with the wider evangelical movement. More important, Bebbington and other historians likely would argue that Reformed Protestants' high regard for the Bible made them functional biblicists, even if they denounced the term itself. Yet the Kuipers' criticism of biblicism nonetheless underlines the diversity of Protestant belief and practice that the notion of "evangelicalism" attempts to amalgamate. Neither all evangelicalisms, nor all biblicisms, it turns out, are created equal.

If both fundamentalist and Reformed Protestants can be seen as biblicists, their respective biblicisms stood on dissimilar foundations and had dissimilar effects on their relationships with books. Each of the two Protestant groups imagined the Bible's power and authority in different ways, and they engaged both the Bible and books for different reasons, with different means. Indicting Reformed attitudes toward the Bible, Keuker lamented that he had "never seen my parents sitting day after day studying the Bible"; mournfully, he remarked, "I fear that I have pictured the average Calvinist family." Although Calvinism was and is a devotionally diverse and geographically diffuse theological tradition, and the "average Calvinist" exists only in individual

7 David W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 12.

imaginations, Keuker was partly right to identify differences in attitude and practice between "Calvinists" and fundamentalists. At the same time, however, Keuker was wrong to mistake qualitative differences between styles of Bible reading for quantitatively lower levels of devotion to the Bible.

**The Anxieties of Reformed Biblicism**

Frans Keuker could not understand how supposedly orthodox Christians simultaneously could insist upon the Bible's authority while also insisting upon engagement with other books. The latter insistence seemingly cut against the first. But neither Reformed leaders nor laypeople seem to have believed that engaging extra-canonical authorities diminished their devotion to the Bible. As Henry Kuiper had suggested in his dialogue with Keuker, the opposite seemed to be true: books amplified devotion both to the Bible and to the God who inspired it.

This attitude informed how Reformed clergy and laity engaged the Bible. In a 1932 review of the classic and recently reprinted commentary *Maclaren's Expositions of the Holy Scripture*, for example, the reviewer noted that the commentary complemented two different approaches to studying the Bible. Noting that "the enterprising Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company has again made a mark for itself in the world of religious publications," the reviewer explained that the commentary is "exegetical but not threadbare, imaginative but not fanciful, warm but not sentimental." The reviewer described two different styles of exegesis. A minister should "do his own thinking first." He should spend time reflecting on the text, "jotting down his thoughts as they come to him. . . . The real value of a commentary does not lie in the ideas which it offers so much as in its function to clarify and elicit the preacher's own thoughts." Laypeople, by comparison, are concerned less with finding "a precious gem in obscure corners of the Bible."
They care more, the reviewer suggested, with understanding "the Bible as a whole," and with engaging the Bible closely "whenever an obscure passage is read at the table or a lesson for the Men's Society has to be prepared." The reviewer surmised that *Maclaren's Expositions* served both styles well.\(^9\)

Beyond reviews of such aids to Biblical study as *Maclaren's*, few other articles in *The Banner* reflected upon Bible-reading practices. The paucity of such reflection suggests that those practices generally belonged to the realm of the taken-for-granted. The scattered references to Bible reading that do exist generally indicate that laypeople engaged the Bible most consistently in three venues: at school, where the Bible often provided primary reading materials; before mealtimes, when families read Bible passages together; and before the "family altar," a catch-all term for family worship in the home, usually led by the father.\(^10\)

Yet the tendency for Reformed writers to reflect consciously upon Bible practices in book reviews also suggests that a symbiotic relationship existed between book reading and Bible reading. Book reading sometimes seems even more urgent than Bible reading; while Reformed writers often insisted upon the importance of the Bible, they rarely imbued it with the same power than they ascribed to books. Writing in 1931, for example, one writer remarked that "before wireless telegraphy was ever dreamed of books carried the greatest messages of mankind around the world and across the centuries. All the arts and sciences transmit their treasures in

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\(^10\) Suzanne M. Sinke, *Dutch Immigrant Women in the United States, 1880-1920*, Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Centennial Series (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 197; see also "Will the Family Altar Survive?", *The Banner*, February 26, 1932, 197. This latter article in *The Banner* provides a glimpse of family worship practices, through criticism. "It cannot be denied," a writer lamented,"that the prayers and Scripture readings at many a family altar are mere formalities, wholly lacking in that warmth of spiritual devotion which ought to mark our approach to God. . . . Various devices which can be used to enlist the interest of the children are usually left untried because there is a lack of interest in the Scriptures or because the father has not sufficient alertness and independence ever to try something new."
print. . . . He who gives a book 'touches the springs of life, plays upon the keys of an organ whose notes will sound perhaps in other lands and other centuries.'”

In less florid language, another article from 1932 asked "What Shall I Read?" The problem with reading, the writer explained, is that the options are overwhelming. "There are so many books that you could read only a small part of them," the writer explained, adding, "what of the books that are given you in other ways, some that are lent by friends, and others borrowed from the library?" Above all, the writer warned, Christian readers should determine what to read after first recognizing that "it is a great mistake to think that because a book is a book, and is in a store window or library, that, therefore, it is good. Many, many books are trash; many are worse than that--really harmful!" Whether beneficial or pernicious, books had power.

In the latter writer's view, readers should focus their attention on books that "tell us about the wonders of the world; the great men and women of past ages; the thoughts of the great thinkers; the lives of great workers and heroes; books of imagination that lift us into the realms of pure fancy; stories that teach us and inspire us; amusing tales to make us laugh; useful books that tell us how to make things." Whatever the genre, "you must look for this one thing: is God praised, or is man?" What is striking about these comments is that the writer mentions both God and books, but not the Bible. When he ultimately does mention the Bible, it comes at the end of a long list of reading options, which included "nice story books and silly story books; lives of famous people; stories from history; stories of great inventors, explorers, artists, musicians, missionaries, and scientists; books of travel and poetry; and books about the Bible--and, the Bible itself." For this writer, books are a conduit of intellectual and spiritual nourishment. "You are probably very particular about the food you eat," he explained, "but shouldn't you be much more particular

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about the food that is given to your mind and your soul?" Grouping readers based on their ability to recognize the true value of books, the writer remarked that

Readers may be divided into four classes. The first may be compared to an hour glass, their reading being as the sand; it runs in and out, and leaves not a trace behind. A second class resembles a sponge, which sucks in everything, and returns it nearly in the same state, only a little dirtier. A third is like a jelly-bag, which allows everything that is good to pass away, and retains only the refuse and the dregs. The fourth class may be compared to the slave in the diamond mines of Golconda, who, casting aside all that is worthless, preserves only the pure gems.

Read books, this writer urged readers, preserve the gems, and teach others how to do the same. "Talking over what you read, and telling it to the younger children, or to your folks at home," the writer explained, "is capital practice. . . . [I]t is a good plan to make a list of the books you read, the date when finished, and just a word or two saying what you think of them."12

Among the many reasons why this writer, Henry Kuiper, and other Reformed Protestants embraced books with relative ease, the simplest reason was that Calvinists always had relied upon books that helped illumine and explicate complex theological principles. John Calvin's *Institutes of Christian Religion* provides the most obvious example. Throughout the 1930s, Reformed leaders frequently sought out opportunities to underline the importance of books and their relationship to Calvinism. In a review of H. Henry Meeter's The *Fundamental Principle of Calvinism* (Eerdmans, 1931), for example, Henry Kuiper remarked that "in a time of superficial spirituality like ours we need good devotional literature and much of it. In our day of manifold heresies we need books of a polemical character, both scientific and popular, in which unscriptural teachings are refuted and the true doctrine is explained and upheld." More to the point, Kuiper insisted, "there is one kind of literature . . . which American Christians of Reformed persuasion need more than others. We mean books on Calvinism, either as a whole or some special feature of it. Let some say what

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12 "What Shall I Read?", *The Banner*, January 8, 1932, 35.
they will about unduly stressing our distinctive life and world view, all must acknowledge that the strength of our Church lies in our emphasis on the *Covenant*, the *Kingdom*, and--more fundamental still--on the *Sovereignty of God* and related concepts.\(^{13}\)

Yet books appealed to Reformed leaders not just because of their consonance with Calvinist thought but also because books helped the Reformed to manage a number of anxieties about their community's future. The leaders of Grand Rapids' Reformed community traditionally had imagined Dutch culture as a kind of bulkhead against forces that threatened to undermine true Christian orthodoxy. So long as members of the community continued to read Dutch and see themselves as ethnically Dutch, community leaders assumed, their ancestral Calvinism would remain secure.

This idea had roots in the close connection that the Dutch maintained between language, education, and Christianity. In the Netherlands, the Dutch parliament had made school attendance mandatory in 1900, and attendance had stood at approximately ninety percent; in areas that sent the largest numbers of immigrants to the United States, attendance rates had stood even higher. In the United States, church schools helped provide the standard of education to which the Dutch had become accustomed, often offering students the extra lessons that their parents could not otherwise access or afford. Those church schools typically used the Bible and catechetical materials as textbooks.

By the 1920s, however, Dutch immigrants increasingly inserted themselves in the American culture that surrounded them; this held particularly true for men and the younger generations, both of whom took on English as their primary language. Ministers had encouraged adult men to learn English partly so that they could engage young people in Sunday school and teach them

\(^{13}\) "The Kind of Books We Need," The Banner, February 27, 1931, 189.
the faith. Soon, English became a primary language even for women—largely because Dutch women in the United States had little to read in their native tongue aside from religious literature. Evidence for this causal relationship comes from the tendency for second-generation Dutch women to speak Dutch most fluently when speaking about the matters of faith they read about in Dutch-language books.

In this way, Dutch language increasingly became seen as a relic of the religious past.\textsuperscript{14} Thus even as many Reformed leaders presented Americanization and English-learning as important and inescapable processes, they simultaneously feared that authentic Reformed faith was ebbing away along with Dutch dialects and dispositions. "In the past," Henry Kuiper explained,

our people have been able to slake their thirst for sound Biblical knowledge at the streams of Dutch Calvinist literature. This day is nearly past. We are not now having our preachers in mind, but our people in general and even our teachers and other educated groups among us, among whom there is but a small and rapidly diminishing number which is able to read Dutch books with profit and pleasure. It is a sad phenomenon, but true. A wonderfully rich literature on Calvinism and of a Calvinistic stamp is gradually becoming inaccessible to our people because it is written in a language which is gradually but surely dying out among us.\textsuperscript{15}

Because Reformed people often could not read classic Dutch literature and because their inability to engage that literature potentially left them theologically adrift, Reformed leaders increasingly strategized during the 1920s and early 1930s about how to secure Reformed Christianity's future. While they often insisted casually that the Bible held the key to that future, they meanwhile suggested that Christians would develop proper Biblical knowledge and uncover spiritual "gems" only with the assistance of texts other than the Bible. This assistance included both Christian literature and classic Christian creeds.


\textsuperscript{15} "The Kind of Books We Need," \textit{The Banner}, February 27, 1931, 189.
The operating logic of creedal Protestantism is that creeds provide theological axes upon which Christian teaching and experience swings from generation to generation. Or as Henry Kuiper put it in a 1930 editorial, catechism teaching "makes it possible for the minister to nurture his church in the fundamental truths of the Christian religion and thus to arm the members against the spirit of error which seems to be waxing stronger from year to year." Without such armaments, "denominations which do not at all indoctrinate their members suffer heavy losses due to sectarian propaganda." Inasmuch as Reformed leaders saw fundamentalists as ecclesiological brethren, they also bemoaned their "sectarian propaganda," which increasingly seemed to lure away members of Reformed congregations.

In Grand Rapids, the fundamentalist propaganda with the highest profile came from the so-called "Undenominational Movement," associated above all with the minister and broadcaster M. R. DeHaan. Minister of Grand Rapids' Calvary Reformed Church in the 1920s, DeHaan formed Calvary Undenominational Church in 1929, after the Grand Rapids Classis of the Reformed Church in America charged him with a number of theological errors—including belief in believer's baptism and premillennial eschatology. Meeting in Grand Rapids' Orpheum Theater before moving into a 2,000-capacity church building, DeHaan's congregation watched him pound the pulpit every Sunday in the exuberant style of Billy Sunday. He resigned in 1938—but over a power struggle with the church's board rather than theological disagreement. Beginning a second career in 1939 that took the Undenominational Movement's fundamentalist Biblicism as its operating logic, DeHaan became best known for his *Radio Bible Class* (renamed from *The Detroit Bible Class* in 1941).16

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16 For more on DeHaan and his broadcasting career, see James R. Adair, *M.R. DeHaan: The Life Behind the Voice* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Discovery House, 2008), 70-89.
As Henry Kuiper explained in a 1930 editorial, the Undenominational Movement appealed to potential members partly by besmirching aspects of faith that Reformed Christians held dear. Creeds and rigid doctrine ranked high among those objects of attack. Calling for "the necessity of a better indoctrination of our members," Kuiper acknowledged that "upon reading this some may shake their heads in vigorous dissent and say: 'We have too much doctrine already; if we had less, fewer members would probably have left us." But he meanwhile suggested that members left not because of too much doctrine but rather because they never had learned how to fully embrace the doctrine they had received. "If our doctrine chases certain members away, it is either because they want other doctrines, or because they have no real interest in the truth... or because doctrine is preached in a stale, dry-as-dust fashion--in sermons which are devoid of spiritual warmth and of the application of Christian doctrine to modern errors and practical life."

Hoping that writers might inject freshness into the denomination's sometimes stale teaching, Kuiper called for better books and textbooks. "Not only has there been--and there still is!--a woeful lack of equipment in the majority of our catechism classrooms," he lamented, "but our textbooks have been unsatisfactory."\(^7\)

In these ways, anxieties about orthodoxy, Americanization, fundamentalism, and the Undenominational Movement all oriented how Reformed Christians thought and talked about both books and the Bible. Writers like Kuiper not only privileged books largely in response to fundamentalists' emphasis on the Bible but also criticized how fundamentalists engaged it. Commenting on a local "Bible reading marathon" conducted at a meeting of Daniel Poling's Christian Endeavor organization, one Christian Reformed writer essentially agreed with associates who dismissed the event as a "publicity stunt," arguing that "the books of the Bible should be studied, not simply read." To truly understand the Bible, Christians should not bow to

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\(^7\) "What the Undenominational Movement Should Teach Us," *The Banner*, March 14, 1930, 244.
the "typically American emphasis on quantity at the expense of quality." For quality, Christians should study not just the Bible itself but also books that offer "information about the various books of the Bible which one needs to be able to read its chapters with much profit." Such an understanding comes through private study, or through Christian schools and correspondence classes.\(^{18}\)

Seeking evidence of fundamentalists' flawed approach to the Bible, Reformed writers often highlighted fundamentalists' reliance on an eschatological strain of hermeneutics known as dispensationalism. A full discussion of dispensationalism appears in this chapter's next section; for the moment, however, any readers of these pages who are unfamiliar with dispensationalism should know that Reformed Protestants generally knew little more about dispensationalism's inner-workings than this paragraph now offers. For some Reformed writers, dispensationalism served primarily as an easy foil against which to position their own ideas about the Bible and Biblical faith. As early as 1932, R. B. Kuiper claimed that dispensationalism provided fundamentalist biblicism with its operating logic. "The greater number of our American Fundamentalists are Dispensationalists," Kuiper explained; "They are better known among us as Premillenarians, but not all Premillenarians, I am happy to say, are Dispensationalists."\(^{19}\)

Yet as late as 1946, the president of Calvin Seminary, Louis Berkhof, recalled how at an impromptu gathering, he "gave an impromptu talk on dispensationalism, and was immediately requested by some who heard it to write on this subject." In the resulting article, Berkhof

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\(^{18}\) "A Bible Reading Marathon," *The Banner*, February 16, 1939, 148; Daniel Poling would become editor of the *Christian Herald*, a popular evangelical periodical. Because he helped market Zondervan's Bibles in the1960s, Poling appears briefly in Chapter 5's section "Bibles as Books."

\(^{19}\) Ernest Sandeen repeated the point in 1967, remarking that "not all premillennialists were dispensationalists, but every dispensationalist was a premillennialist." Ernest R. Sandeen, “Toward a Historical Interpretation of the Origins of Fundamentalism,” *Church History* 36, no. 1 (March 1967): 68-70.
explained that although "the term 'dispensationalism' is frequently heard in evangelical circles, and is very common in their religious writings, there are many of our people who do not understand it and consequently hardly know what to think of it." Although most people thought that it merely described the difference between the Old and New Testaments, "at the same time they have a vague feeling that dispensationalism means something more than that."  

Publishers' activities testified to Reformed anxieties. One January 1932 advertisement in *The Banner*, for example, insisted that the "present so-called business depression is doing one very good thing"; condemning the same forces of commercial culture that helped fuel processes of Americanization, the advertisement rejoiced that "people are keener. . . .they think twice before buying. . . .one can't put anything over on them with a smooth tongue and a few graceful gestures." Thankfully, the ad continued, "people are not merely buying books to read and toss away. . . . A book to sell must be of enduring interest." These remarks preceded the sales pitch for a book by Nicolas J. Monsma titled *The Trial of Denominationalism*. Monsma's book both recognized the "problem of denominationalism" and criticized "the increasing agitation for Church Unity" among both ecumenical liberals and Undenominational fundamentalists.  

Additional testimony to the Reformed community's anxious biblicism and attendant openness to books came from the virtual absence of Bibles from Eerdmans's offerings. As late as 1939, the forty-eight pages of Eerdmans's 1939-1940 catalog offered just one page of Bibles. To be sure, Eerdmans's catalog did offer a range of aids to Bible study. Examples include numerous commentaries and encyclopedias, as well as such books as G. Frederick Owen's *Abraham to Allenby*, a "fascinating, readable account of 4,000 years of Palestinian history." Of Owen's book, the

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*American Lutheran Standard* remarked that "we can heartily recommend this book as a popular library volume for the average Christian's home. It can also be displayed with pride in the study of the scholar"; the *Intelligencer-Leader* praised Owen's book for reading "like a novel. Beyond that, it is a reference work to which you will often turn. The student, teacher, preacher or layman will find here a wealth of reference material."

This small selection has a number of possible explanations. It may merely indicate that the Reformed generally knew which kinds of Bibles they preferred, for example, or it may mostly reflect the tendency for people to buy new Bibles irregularly. Taken together with other evidence, however, it also suggests that Eerdmans's Reformed readers engaged literature about theology and the Bible just as much as they read the Bible itself. At the very least, it demonstrates that Eerdmans treated the cultivation of book reading as a business objective.22

In this way, publishers' activities seem not only to testify to Reformed anxieties but also to have capitalized on them. "MAKE Your Church and School Library 'Distinctive' and 'Exclusive,'" one Eerdmans advertisement urged. It asked, "Why fill your church and school libraries with books which can be brought in any drug store or book store at 50 cents or 75 cents? Why not make it distinctive an exclusive, and fill your shelves with books which cannot be had in any other place."

This language of distinctiveness operated in two registers. In the Dutch Reformed register, it engaged Kuyperian ideas about maintaining and defending distinct Reformed communities. Supporting this sense, the advertisement remarked a few lines down, in much smaller print, that "The biggest part of the fiction published in America is trash. But in England and Scotland one can still obtain GOOD, CLEAN, WHOLESALE, UPLIFTING Fiction [sic] with a Christian

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tone. The type of books we used to read in the Holland language. Yet to the ears of Eerdmans's broader fundamentalist audience—to such ears as Keuker's, for instance—the advertisement spoke a language that fundamentalists increasingly used to talk about their own institutional and religious cultures. Founded in 1927, for example, Bob Jones College regularly described itself in advertisements as "America's most unusual college." Zondervan ads described the firm's offerings as "better books," and a prominent Christian bookstore in Portland was known as "The Better Book and Bible House."

Whatever the relationship between Reformed publishers' business objectives and Reformed leaders' anxieties, the two groups shared at least one desire: they wanted laypeople to read more books. But in the end, their collective testimony to the power of books seems more prescriptive than descriptive. If only laypeople read more books, leaders dreamed, their anxieties would prove unjustified and, eventually, would evanesce. "We have not much hope for the preservation and intensification of the Calvinistic character of our group," Henry Kuiper insisted in *The Banner*, "unless our leaders produce more, many more, books . . . and unless our people can be prevailed upon to read them." The problem, Kuiper complained, simply was that "So few Christians read good books! That is true also of the Christian people in our own churches." With earnest hope, Kuiper pleaded,

> We appeal to our readers to develop a taste for good religious literature. . . . They will find it less exciting perhaps, but more, far more satisfying and beneficial than hearing or reading the extravagances and religious offices of the many would-be spiritual leaders of our day who make a good deal of noise, but whose knowledge of the Scriptures is pathetically insufficient.  

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24 "The Kind of Books We Need," 189.
Kuiper's criticism of lay book culture seems at least partially accurate. A search of extant collections of church bulletins and meeting minutes reveals very few references to lay book groups or lay conversations about particular books. Still, for the Reformed, biblicism did not keep books from holding the promise of a better life and a better relationship with God. To the contrary, books rendered that promise both visible and tangible.

**The Paradox of Fundamentalist Biblicism**

As Chapter One explains, and as the historiography of American print culture testifies, the nineteenth century was the heyday of Christian literature in the United States. With literacy rising, distribution improving, technology transforming, and "evangelical" Christianity exploding, the era's printing presses produced far more literature with religious themes than otherwise. In print, nineteenth-century reformers of various denominational stripes saw a medium through which they might address and ameliorate a wide range of social and spiritual ills. Historians have continued to argue about the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of this attitude toward print; at the heart of their collective opinions, however, lay a stew of phenomena that ultimately produced twentieth-century fundamentalism's paradoxical biblicism.

In one way, nineteenth-century reformers privileged print for the same reason that the sixteenth-century's Reformers did: an emphasis on direct encounter with the Word of God. As one historian of Martin Luther's theology explains, "Luther set the preaching of the apostles and...

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our preaching, if centered in Christ, on precisely the same level. If the message is the same, then it is the same Word of God. Luther even suggested that contemporary ministry can exceed Jesus's, insofar as the pulpit and the page give the Word a much broader reach today than Jesus enjoyed in first-century Palestine. As Luther's busy preaching career demonstrated, Protestants often believed that this encounter occurred through listening to sermons; scriptural support for this idea came from Romans 10.17, which explains that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

But as nineteenth-century Protestants came to emphasize, faith also came by reading the Bible and Bible-based books. After all, the eye encountered the Word even more immediately than the ear. "Although the moment of conversion could happen in a variety of contexts," John Lardas Modern explains, "reading--and the kind of epistemic empowerment instantiated by reading--was a privileged vehicle for maintaining the emotional assurance of redemption." Through reading, Christians viscerally brought the Word into their lives. By producing and distributing literature, they attempted to give others the opportunity to do the same. This was the operating logic of such organizations as the American Bible Society, the American Tract Society, and--most latterly--Fleming H. Revell Company. These organizations found their headquarters in New York largely because they saw the Word as the only reliable response to the tumult that immigration and economic change had wrought in American society, and New York put that tumult in starkest relief.

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Despite any congruence between how sixteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestants imagined encountering the Word, the nineteenth-century context configured that encounter in unique ways. Various historians have emphasized different aspects of that context. Mark Noll, for instance, has highlighted the influence of Scottish Common-Sense Realism, a philosophical paradigm that "provided . . . broader habits of mind or reassuring conventions of thought." Those conventions found their core in an endorsement of human intuition. Common-Sense philosophy taught that human intuition allows humans not only to perceive reality as it truly is but also to feel and know basic moral principles.

Noll argues that this Common Sense both shaped evangelical thought and oriented the belief and practice of such diverse Protestants as primitivist "Christians," New England Unitarians, and the liberal American Transcendentalists who helped loosen American Unitarianism from its Christian moorings. Approaching the Bible with Common-Sense principles, these Protestant groups reached diverse conclusions. Yet Common-Sense philosophy led each group to presume that their textual interpretations were not "chimerical speculations" but rather "facts." Common Sense was, in a word, "scientific."\textsuperscript{29}

While Noll accounts for the rise of "scientific" exegesis by pointing toward Common-Sense philosophy, John Lardas Modern insists that as print capabilities expanded in the nineteenth century's first half, those capabilities cultivated a paradigm of "systematic organization," which cultivated styles of reasoning, new "conceptual spaces," and "sensual criteria for evaluating the true, the good, and the beautiful." Modern contends that "systematicity" became, in a sense, "the grammar of piety." By presenting systematicity as the engine of nineteenth-century evangelical

piety, Modern challenges Noll's suggestion that evangelicals used Common-Sense philosophy to self-consciously "regulate themselves and the world around them." Granting humans such rationality, "agency," and "autonomy," Modern insists, "does not do justice to the complexity of that desire or to its effects."³⁰

To be sure, Modern and Noll have different agendas; while Noll hopes to constitute an American evangelical tradition by identifying its core intellectual principles, Modern argues that evangelical print culture simultaneously relied upon and helped call into existence the logic of secular society. Yet when considering how and why Protestants engaged print, Noll's intuitive Common-Sense and Modern's systematicity are, in a way, different sides of the same coin. Both paradigms attempt to account for how nineteenth-century Protestants tried to identify and defend Truth in the face of perceived challenges to it. In a way, Common-Sense intuition was a tool of secular systematicity.

No conservative leader typified systematic intuitionalism more than Reuben A. Torrey (1856-1928), the first superintendent of the school that became Moody Bible Institute and the founder of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (B.I.O.L.A.). Known to most historians as a founding father of fundamentalism, historians rarely have recognized that he stood somewhat at odds with the style of conservative theology for which twentieth-century fundamentalism became known. Torrey explained his approach to the Bible most extensively in his 1896 How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit. Published with Fleming H. Revell, the book reflected Torrey's conviction that "nothing is more important for our own mental, moral and spiritual development, or for our

³⁰ Modern, Secularism in Antebellum America, 53-75.
increase in usefulness, than Bible study." Torrey presented the book as a service to those who had written "letters . . . from all quarters asking how to study the Bible."[31]

Torrey's method for studying the Bible flowed out of his insistence that "the Bible contains gold, and almost any one is willing to dig for gold, especially if it is certain that he will find it." In order to sift through the layers of sediment that hid Biblical gold, Torrey advised a variety of approaches and described them in exhaustive detail. Those approaches included studying one Biblical book at a time by "reading the book through, without stopping and then reading it through again, and then again, say a dozen times in all, at a single sitting." By repeating the process almost to the point of exhaustion, the Bible "begins to open up." Torrey did not rule out using such aids as concordances or Bible manuals, but he urged readers to record the "facts" of the Bible for themselves and to make time for "meditation upon them." Outside aids proved suitable mostly when important points hinged on single words; "many an important Bible doctrine," Torrey explained, "turns upon the meaning of a word."

In addition to reading the Bible book-by-book, Torrey suggested reading topically, chronologically, or from beginning to end. Describing the latter method as "a great corrective to one-sidedness and crankiness," Torrey promised that readers who explored the Bible from start to finish would find that "every part of God's word is precious, and there are gems of truth hidden away in the most unexpected places." Torrey also warned that "some people go insane through becoming too much occupied with a single line of truth." Although admitting that truth

31 Timothy Gloege makes this perceptive observation about Torrey in his dissertation, “Consumed: Reuben A. Torrey and the Construction of Corporate Fundamentalism” (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame, 2007), 53-58; Reuben Archer Torrey, How to Study the Bible for Greatest Profit (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1896), 5.
sometimes inhered in single lines, Torrey encouraged readers to train their attention on impressions that found substantial empirical support.\textsuperscript{32}

Claiming a scientific logic for his system of Bible study, Torrey suggested that it mirrored the "method now pursued in the study of nature; first, careful analysis and ascertainment of facts; second, classification of facts." Yet if Torrey believed that everyone had the innate ability to put his principles into practice, he doubted that everyone would allow themselves to use those abilities. Here therefore identified several "fundamental conditions" that ensured profitable study. "The student must be born again," Torrey explained, for "only a spiritual man can understand [the Bible's] deepest and most characteristic and precious teachings." In a circular way, Bible study also required a second fundamental condition: "a love for the Bible." Readers cannot have "more appetite for books about the Bible . . . than for the Bible itself." Torrey also suggested that students of the Bible possess "a child-like mind," which prevented students from coming "to the Bible full of your own ideas, and seeking from it a confirmation of them." Finally, Torrey insisted that readers "study it as the word of God." For Torrey, this condition "involves the unquestioning acceptance of [the Bible's] teachings when definitely ascertained, even when they may appear unreasonable or impossible." This condition also meant "absolute reliance upon all [of the Bible's] promises in all their length and breadth." Torrey even urged readers to "be hunting for promises." In sum, Torrey insisted that readers not only should do everything within their power to identify the Bible's facts but also should consciously avoid the temptation to misidentify those facts as anything less than divine gold.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 16-18, 23, 34, 54, 86.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 12, 95-110.
What stands out most about Torrey's method is the leeway he affords individual interpreters. As Torrey's "fundamental conditions" suggest, he assumed that the readers who used his method would take doctrinal orthodoxy as a starting point, subsequently honing and girding those convictions through intuitive, empirical observation. Ironically, however, this experiential approach easily could lead practitioners in more idiosyncratic directions. Although Torrey's approach proved "systematic" in its way, it also attests to John Modern's suggestion that systematization did not just foreclose unorthodoxy: it also opened up new theological possibilities and social potentialities. At the end of the nineteenth century, all of this increasingly concerned Torrey's fundamentalist colleagues.

Under the influence of such critics as H. L. Mencken, early-twentieth-century fundamentalists are remembered primarily as outmoded reactionaries, desperately trying to force the square peg of conservative Christian thought and morality into a round hole at the heart of an American society unsettled by economic change, a flood of immigration, and shifting scientific paradigms. Two decades after his conversion during the revival of 1858, Dwight L. Moody spent his revivalist energies attempting to popularize an 1858 strain of piety among middle-class urban audiences.

What such historians as Matthew Bowman and Timothy Gloege point out, however, is that Moody and his fundamentalist colleagues resurrected past pieties mostly in their rhetoric; in practice, they charted new directions. One direction was to abandon Torrey's intuitional approach to Christianity. Torrey had touted his inductive and pragmatic method as a response to skeptics, but such fundamentalist leaders as James M. Gray found Torrey's method too subjective. While all parties appealed to the "plain meaning" of the Bible's text, fundamentalists

34 Bowman, "The Urban Pulpit," 61.
increasingly sought that meaning not through induction but through a rigid form of interpretation known as dispensationalism.\textsuperscript{35}

Dispensationalism gained popularity in the United States largely through the teaching of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), an English Plymouth Brethren theologian who visited North America regularly during the 1860s and 1870s. Casting the Christianity of his day as reprobate and insisting that true Christians not associate with the unfaithful, Darby saw in the Bible a soteriological story that he divided into several "dispensations." In order to explain away what otherwise looked like textual contradictions, Darby assigned problematic texts to different dispensations. Each of Darby's dispensations represented distinct components of a pessimistic plot line, wherein God graciously has establish covenants with his creation, humans repeatedly have broken those covenants, God has punished the apostate majority, and God has saved the elect few. Situating today's world within a dispensation characterized by steadily intensifying apostasy, Darby called for true believers to withdraw from Christian denominations and to await Jesus, whose imminent return would precede (rather than follow, as most Protestants assumed) the new dispensation of Christ's millennial reign. For dispensationalists, the Bible's message and the world's fate both were clear; referring to debate among Christians about "whether the world is growing better or worse," a 1921 editorial in a leading fundamentalist magazine exasperatedly asked, "why do Christians not accept the Word of God about it and adjust their thinking accordingly?\textsuperscript{36}"


\textsuperscript{36} "Some Methodists Are Stirred Up," \textit{Moody Monthly}, October 1921, 599.
The virtue of the dispensationalist hermeneutic lay not just in its ability to make sense of the world's apparent problems but above all in its ability to make the entire Bible come alive. For this reason, the dispensationalist James M. Gray described his approach to the Bible as "synthetic," in that it "put it together and consider[ed] it as a whole" and revealed "a stupendous divine plan running through the whole, linking them all together as an indisoluble unit."\textsuperscript{37} In a 1904 book titled \textit{How to Study the Bible}, New York's Isaac Haldeman insisted that "careful examination and prayerful consideration will show whole bodies of truth which belong exclusively to one dispensation and not to another"; at the same time, "failure to put them in their proper dispensational relation means as great a disaster to that body or bodies of truth as the disarticulation of its members would be to the human body."\textsuperscript{38}

Convinced that dispensationalism brought previously ignored parts of the Bible into view, dispensationalists imagined their approach as a way of encountering the complete and unmediated Word of God. Gray emphasized, for example, that the Bible's previously unseen connections would become clear if a reader merely approached the Bible with several simple guidelines in mind: read from the beginning ("where God began to write it"), read each book, read continuously, read repeatedly, read prayerfully, and "read without assistance." By urging readers to avoid assistance, Gray not only encouraged unmediated encounter with the Bible but also suggested that intermediaries generally distracted, confused, or otherwise misled readers of the Bible. "To be ever leaning on help from others," Gray said of extra-canonical books, "is like walking on stilts all one's life and never attempting to place one's feet on the ground. Who can ever come to know the most direct and highest type of the teaching of the Holy Spirit in this

\textsuperscript{37} James Martin Gray, \textit{How to Master the English Bible} (London: Oliphant, Anderson & Ferrier, 1907), 31, 16.

\textsuperscript{38} Isaac Massey Haldeman, \textit{How to Study the Bible: The Second Coming and Other Expositions} (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1904), 7, 18. Originally published by Haldeman in 1901 as \textit{Friday Night Papers}.
way?" More pointedly, Gray noted that "there is another reason for the independent reading of the book, and that is the deliverance from intellectual confusion which it secures."39

This rhetorical emphasis on direct encounter with the Bible is a hallmark of dispensationalist Biblicism. Locating pieces of God's eschatological plan in such disparate passages as Matthew 24.15, Daniel 9.27, Revelation 7.14, and Revelation 20, dispensationalists imagined that they alone had recognized the Bible for what it truly is: a repository of divine knowledge whose surface humans had only begun to scratch, and whose depths humans scarcely could comprehend. Urging readers to extract as much as possible from the Bible, Isaac Haldeman urged readers of his manual to "get all the light, examine every word, subject every part to microscopic investigation; a preposition or an article makes a difference." Both recognizing and criticizing this approach to the Bible, one critic of premillennialism surmised in 1919 that "premillennialism claims to be nothing more than a transcript of what the Bible itself says." George Marsden makes a similar observation in noting that dispensationalists "were absolutely convinced that all they were doing was taking the hard facts of Scripture, carefully arranging and classifying them, and thus discovering the clear patterns which Scripture revealed."40

And yet, paradoxically, dispensationalism relied heavily on extra-canonical texts and teachings. Haldeman, for example, suggested that students of the Bible required not just any Bible but a "Bagster Bible," a reference to a version of the Bible published by the English publisher Samuel Bagster. Beginning in 1816, Bagster had published a range of Bibles that

39 Gray, How to Master the English Bible, 49-50.

became known collectively for their large and clear print, wide margins for notes, tables with which to convert Jewish measurements and money, and tens of thousands marginal cross references. In addition to Bagster Bibles, Haldeman called for "Cruden's Concordance," a "topical text book," and a copy of the Revised Version of the Bible "for examining readings and phrase constructions."41

But if Haldeman found certain books essential to discovering the Bible's "supernatural wisdom" and encountering "a life of peace and power in the Paradise of God," he found general knowledge of "Dispensational Truth" even more important. True, he recommended certain "implements of study" precisely because he found them complementary to that Truth. Yet Haldeman nevertheless treated dispensational convictions less as educational goals than as points of entry. "No matter what may be the equipment of the Christian," Haldeman explained, "no matter what intellectual, moral, or spiritual endowment he may have, unless he understands dispensational truth he will never fully lay hold of Bible doctrine."42

More than any other book, Cyrus Scofield's The Scofield Reference Bible encapsulates the paradox that simultaneously saw fundamentalists insist on engaging the Bible without assistance, and meanwhile make heavy use of extra-canonical books and teachings. Published by Oxford University Press in 1909, Scofield's Bible sold over 250,000 copies in a little over ten years.43 By 1932, the book's popularity inspired R. B. Kuiper to remark that "this annotated Bible is the textbook of Dispensationalism."


42 Haldeman, How to Study the Bible, 7, 55-57.

The Scofield Bible drew upon insights that Scofield had shared previously in lectures at Bible conferences, in a correspondence course that first appeared in 1890, and in a book titled *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (1888). Well after Scofield's Bible appeared, such fundamentalist periodicals as *Moody Monthly* continued to advertise both the earlier book and the course. In the 1920s, Moody Bible Institute offered Scofield's course alongside its other seven correspondence courses, which included "Synthetic Bible Study," "Practical Christian Work," "Bible Doctrine," "Bible Chapter Summary," "Introductory Bible Course," "Evangelism," and "Christian Evidences." One advertisement for the courses offered a photo and quotation from Theodore Roosevelt, who reportedly said: "'To every man who faces life with real desire to do his part in everything, I appeal for a study of the Bible.'" Describing the course as "Better Than College Course," the advertisement also quoted a satisfied student, who reported that "I finished the Scofield Bible Course about three years ago. It has been of greater value to me than any other training I have ever had, though I spent four years in college." The "Correspondence method of Bible study," the advertisement insisted, cultivated more "thorough knowledge of the Bible" than college courses largely because it confronted students with the Bible's text rather than with mere "oral teaching."

While Moody Bible Institute held exclusive rights to Scofield's course, a number of outlets sold *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth*. In 1921 James Gray praised the book for having "unlocked the treasures of the Bible to so many thousands of people."44 In an April 1922 advertisement, for example, the Philadelphia School of the Bible--which Scofield helped found in 1914--offered an "Authentic Edition" of the book, noting that "50 of the 95 pages of the current editions of this book have been altered without the knowledge or consent of Dr. C. I. Scofield, the author. . . .

Shortly before the author went to be with the Lord, he learned of the above changes, and therefore requested the Philadelphia School of the Bible, of which he was President, to publish a new issue conforming to the original text. Every one interested in Bible Study should have a copy of this book." Yet Moody's Bible Institute Colportage Association also offered the book. Moody himself had founded the Colportage before his death as a mass outlet for cheap paperback versions of Christian literature written by him and his colleagues. A quarter-page Colportage advertisement from September 1921, for example, presented "Dr. C. I. Scofield" in large bold letters, with a tribute following in italics "In the spirit he now sees Christ / In the flesh he saw Him by faith." The advertisement offered nine books and tracts, including *Rightly Dividing*, which it cautiously described as "Now almost a classic." Only a Bible, it seems, could be a true classic, without qualification.

It was Scofield's Bible that elevated him to the rank of fundamentalist luminary. In the book's introduction, Scofield explained what made it unique. While previous versions of the Bible occasionally had indicated when particular words were repeated throughout the Bible, Scofield's had included a "new system of connected topical references," through which a reader "may for himself follow the gradual unfolding of these." In the 1909 edition, topics appeared in italics next to the relevant Bible passages, with lists of related Bible passages following each topic. Scofield's Bible also featured notes and definitions, which Scofield assured readers were neither "expository novelties" nor "personal views and interpretations."

In addition to dividing the text into paragraphs for easier consumption, Scofield also identified and labeled seven "Dispensations," which he collectively described as "the majestic, progressive order of the divine dealings of God with humanity." Finally, before each book and collection of books (such as the Pentateuch), Scofield provided a brief "introduction and analysis."
to facilitate the study and comprehension of the book." With the exception of the italicized topics, all of these supplementary texts appeared in the same font and font size as the Biblical text itself; while this feature likely reflected the publisher's desire to minimize the complexity and cost of printing, it also led a reader to focus on Scofield's words no less than God's.

![Advertisement for Scofield Bible in a May 1922 issue of Moody Monthly. Page 1034. Note that purchasing the book "Equals a Course in Bible Study"

As both Torrey's and Haldeman's study methods suggest, turn-of-the-century fundamentalists imagined Bible study as a practice wherein readers not only would examine individual sections of the Bible in depth but also would compare and contrast different passages and sections. Scofield's Bible made this activity easier than ever, essentially offering an Authorized Version, a Biblical commentary, and a topical concordance in one inexpensive,
leather-bound volume. Since a single copy of the Bible was all a reader needed, it became possible to put the Reformation doctrine of "sola scriptura" into practice. Looking at the Bible through dispensationalist eyes, the "Bible alone" simultaneously seemed more important and easier to understand.

Predicting that Scofield's Bible would "do much to stimulate Bible reading," one 1909 reviewer remarked that "never before have so many new and helpful features been found in any edition of the Bible." Disarmingly unselfconscious, the reviewer inadvertently admitted what few fundamentalists would: Scofield's Bible would succeed "by making the Bible readable." True, the Scofield Bible was not the only version that helped make the Bible readable for fundamentalist consumers. Yet competing Bibles inevitably became subject to comparisons with Scofield's. One 1921 review of The Shorter Bible, for instance, noted that it "divides the Old Testament into five main divisions. . . . These are suggestive of the Bible with which many of us are familiar." The review goes on to explain that such similarities appeal only superficially: "it is so shiny that at first it quite dazzles us. As we continue the examination we wonder at the audacity and irreverence of the newness, and indignantly exclaim, 'This is not a shorter Bible, but a new Bible!'"46

Such comparisons ensured the ongoing popularity of the Scofield Bible, with fundamentalist publishers regularly repackaging its text in new editions. In 1937, for instance, Moody's Colportage printed a four-page illustrated advertisement in the December issue of Moody Monthly.47 Among the nearly sixty books featured in the Colportage's four-page spread,


47 December issues of most fundamentalist magazines often devoted more space to book advertisements than usual, in the hope of selling books as Christmas gifts. But few single advertisements stretched beyond two pages.
only two Bibles appeared. One Bible was a simple, small, and inexpensive New Testament, designed to be purchased "in quantity" and distributed as an act of evangelism. The other Bible was *The Scofield Reference Bible: D. L. Moody Edition*. Commemorating the hundred-year anniversary of Moody's birth, the Bible offered readers "large type on fine white Bible paper, and bound in a rich share of maroon Sturdite, straight edges, with round corners, gold edges, gold stamped, and end papers and fly leaves, head bands, and one maroon, and one white silk bookmark. . . . Each book has a special commemorative jacket." The advertisement insisted that book was "truly a beautiful gift, and one that will endure a lifetime."\(^{48}\)

In an April 1939 article surveying "worthy versions" of the Bible, Wilbur Smith described the Scofield Bible as "without doubt the greatest reference Bible ever produced in the English world. Some of its notes are almost perfect. . . . Whatever its faults, there is nothing today to take its place, and tens of thousands of people in our country have had the Bible opened to them for the first time in a new and wonderful way by closely studying the valuable notes which Dr. Scofield worked for twenty years to produce."\(^{49}\)

Whatever their preferred means of accessing the words of God, conservative Protestants of the early twentieth century increasingly read their Bibles by way of the dispensationalist hermeneutics that Scofield's Bible codified. This tendency proved so pervasive that it sometimes became a problem. In 1935, for example, Samuel Ruddock, the "American Representative of the Baptist Union of Ireland," wrote about his experience visiting a "widely-known church with a reputation for soundness of faith and doctrine." While worshiping, holding a pew Bible and

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\(^{49}\) Wilbur M. Smith, "The First One Hundred Books for the Bible Student's Library (Part 2 of 12)," *Moody Monthly*, April 1939, 427.
standing in the gallery, Ruddock "became, in a subconscious way, impressed that there was something strange about the Book I held in my hand. . . . For a minute or two it eluded me, and then I saw it. The book was in a well preserved condition, apparently almost unused except for one small part, but that part was so worn by frequent use that it was tattered and soiled. The much-used part was the book of the Revelation." Ruddock claimed that he proceeded to peruse "all the copies of the Bible in reach, and noted that all had the same peculiarity." This discovery led him to remember that "published utterances from that church were almost entirely in reference to the symbolism of the book of the Revelation." Insisting that "the Revelation is not the complete Bible," Ruddock's article asked, "Of What Does Your Bible Consist?"\(^{50}\)

Another conservative critic, Philip Mauro, argued that "the Scofield Bible has usurped the place of authority belonging to God’s Bible alone." Mauro presented dispensationalism as such a threat to the Bible's authority that he compared it to modernism. Mauro's comments received little support from fellow fundamentalists, but they nonetheless are telling. While Mauro may have overstated his case in claiming that Scofield had relegated the Bible to second place in fundamentalists' hearts and minds, Mauro was right to suggest that Scofield's Bible had popularized distinct ways of understanding and engaging the Bible.

By presenting readers with so much information between just one set of Bible covers, it gave heft to the notion that Christians should read the Bible without the help of any other books beyond the Bible. Meanwhile, however, the overwhelming popularity of the Scofield Bible trained fundamentalists to read the Bible with the assistance of extensive cross-references, background essays, and explanatory footnotes. At the same time that Scofield's Bible helped fundamentalists to imagine a Bible that demanded unmediated engagement, it transformed

\(^{50}\) Samuel Ruddock, "Of What Does Your Bible Consist?", *Moody Monthly*, October 1935, 60.
fundamentalists' relationship with the Bible into one that deeply depended upon the mediation of other sources of authority. Fundamentalist Biblicism became paradoxical both in theory and practice.

Disciplining Fundamentalism Through Print

In the same way that Reformed Protestants' anxious biblicism reflected their community's concerns, fundamentalists' conflicted attitude toward extra-canonical sources of authority was more than an exegetical accident. It reflected the anxieties and aspirations of fundamentalism's leaders. Those leaders included Dwight Moody's associates, who helped found Moody Bible Institute in 1889 and subsequently transformed it into a fundamentalist flagship in the twentieth century's first decades. For these leaders, a primary source of anxiety came from the "radical" edges of the holiness movement, which had become a veritable "tinderbox" of revival fervor around the turn of the century. In the twentieth century's first decade, that tinderbox would ignite into the movement that became known as "pentecostalism."51

Particularly after 1906, fundamentalist leaders began to conclude not only that pentecostalism represented a discernible movement but also that its participants did not belong to the sort of social class that they desired to call their own. In a way, this same discomfort with the theological and social fringes of American Protestantism had oriented Dwight L. Moody's entire ministerial career. Both his urban revival campaigns and his eponymous Bible Institute operated out of a desire to reach America's urban middle class with emotional yet reserved revivalist piety. The surprisingly weak reception that Moody and his message received among his target

audiences not only made the campaign seem all the more urgent but also led fundamentalist leaders to identify scapegoats.52

After concluding that these dangerous forms of piety proved too consonant with the experiential and intuitional forms of piety that Reuben A. Torrey preached, fundamentalist leaders increasingly presented dispensationalism as a reliable path to knowledge about the wider world and human life within it. With its focus on systematic study, doctrinal reproducibility, and the wealth of intellectual and moral principles that the Bible's "verbal" and "plenary" inerrancy made accessible to earnest readers, dispensationalism presented itself as a thoroughly modern form of Christianity. With its exhaustive systematization, it would revitalize cities and make future missionaries and evangelists more effective.

The phenomenon of "Bible institutes" embodied these aspirations of middle-class dominance as well as the attempt of fundamentalist leaders to pursue them through institutional and instructional muscle. Both because of its association with Moody and because of its access to Moody's network, Moody Bible Institute set the standard for other institutes. This never was more true than in the 1910s and 1920s, when fundamentalist leaders attempted to strengthen the institution's resolve in the face of perceived threats to fundamentalism's reputation, underlining their own authority over proper Christian belief and practice. President James M. Gray and trustee Henry Parsons Crowell led the campaign to revise Moody's methods and mission, with Gray offering theological vision and Crowell offering corporate attitudes, practices, and organizational philosophies. M.B.I.'s Vice President, Fleming Revell, brought his own corporate experience, but it paled in comparison with Crowell, whose long business career saw him found Quaker Oats Company in 1901.

Beginning in 1905, for example, M.B.I. developed a new "Extension Department," which would send out teams of revivalists as institutional ambassadors and fundraisers, simultaneously domesticating and capitalizing on the revival excitement whose "excesses" they feared. In addition to creating the Extension Department, Crowell and Gray revised course offerings and promotional literature, stripping descriptions of the Department of most references to the work of the Holy Spirit and to the "latter rain." In the 1910s, as the "tongues movement" crystalized, fundamentalist leaders increasingly spoke out against it. Their attacks often centered on the notion that members of the movement misinterpreted the Bible and disseminated false teaching. These attacks often appealed to the spirit of the late Dwight L. Moody, who became a kind of corporate mascot.

Hoping not only to generate a national reputation for M.B.I. but also to plug into middle-class magazine-reading habits, the Institute created a magazine known as *The Institute Tie* in 1900. A. P. Fitt, Dwight Moody's son-in-law and acting president of M.B.I. after Moody's death, originally had proposed the magazine at the end of 1905, envisioning it as a way of reaching an audience beyond the immediate reach of the Institute. Torrey and Gray initially served as co-editors in chief. As Crowell and other institutional leaders not only labored to cultivate the Institute's public reputation but also became increasingly willing to capitalize on Moody's legacy, the magazine changed its name first to *The Christian Workers Magazine* (which was close to the name of a magazine Moody himself once had published) and, in 1920, to *The Moody Bible Institute Monthly*. With the 1920 name change came a new vision for the magazine. Following the model of such popular middle-class magazines as *Literary Digest*, M.B.I.'s magazine devoted large amounts of space to advertising, used a large and easy-to-read font, and included many
illustrations--especially photographs of missionaries abroad and the locals to whom they ministered.\textsuperscript{53}

Surveying twenty years of \textit{Moody Monthly}'s issues, the fundamentalist tension between books and biblicism comes into view. At different times, for different reasons, the magazine's writers, editors, and advertisers either insisted that fundamentalist Christianity should flow straightforwardly out of the Bible or directed readers to look to books for insight into Christian life and thought. In the 1920s, fundamentalists insisted rhetorically upon the importance of engaging the Bible directly, yet they condoned and even encouraged the reading of other books. By the late 1930s, however, a question mark hovered over books' status.

During the 1920s, both advertisements and sections of \textit{Moody Monthly} presented books as important parts of both ministerial activity and lay devotion. Using the October 1921 edition of \textit{Moody Monthly} as a random but representative source of advertisements, almost fifty appeared--not including the page of classified ads. Of the magazine's fifty advertisements, almost half touted books; in secular periodicals for middle-class readers, only about thirty percent of advertisements offered books.\textsuperscript{54} Four offered Bibles, three touts hymn books, two solicited subscribers to magazines, and three advertised church furniture and such worship supplies as communion cups and pews. Three advertisements offered such ordinary items as typewriters and shoe inserts for arch support.

Advertisements for books outnumbered all others, but who were the advertisements for? Taken together, they suggest that advertisers mostly targeted ministerial readers, who not only

\textsuperscript{53} Gloege, "Consumed," 374-396.

\textsuperscript{54} Benton, "Too Many Books," 280.
needed arch support after spending hours on their feet but also needed books to help write sermons.

Most of the books advertised seem pitched toward ministerial use. A half-column ad for Revell's books, for instance, touted F. B. Meyer's *Daily Devotional Commentary* and claimed that "no work from Dr. Meyer's helpful pen contains more of his inerrant thought." Just below, the advertisement described William E. Biederwolf's *Evangelism: Its Justification, Its Operation and Its Value*, which offered readers a "calm, measured presentation of the methods best calculated to secure results." Toward the end of the issue, an advertisement for George H. Doran Company touted a book of illustrations to use in evangelism, Torrey's *The Importance and Value of Proper Bible Study*, as well as a "manual that tells how to institute and carry" the "junior department" of a "full-fledged modern church."

To be sure, many of the magazine's advertisements also seem to target lay readers. "Out of work?", asked one Bible Institute Colportage ad, explaining that "the period of business depression now prevailing has released among others a large number of earnest Christian men and women and for these we suggest Colportage or 'Book Missionary' work--even if undertaken temporarily." The ad argued that "no employment could have a higher purpose--the promulgation of the Gospel message and the upbuilding of the Christian life." Moreover, "no work is scarcely more apostolic in meeting the world's greatest need than by home-to-home visitation (Acts 5:42)," and "few forms of labor have a wider adaptation to territory, age, and natural gifts." Book missionary work also had the virtue of yielding "an encouraging return" despite demanding work only in "spare time." But even these pitches to the unemployed had church employees in mind. One publishing company's December request for commissioned
sellers asked, for example, that Sunday school teachers and out-of-work ministers make sure to apply.55

Still, if Moody Monthly's advertisements reached mostly for ministerial readers, the magazine's articles and sections addressed lay reading habits directly. Before 1925, for example, the final pages of every issue of Moody Monthly had a section titled "The Gospel in Print," which focused on the importance and power of print and books. Because "so many of our modern homes have no real religious books," one article observed, "some of the younger generation (and quite as many, if not more, of the older generation) seem to have frivolous, restless, and unsatisfied minds today." Too many "otherwise sensible people" have avoided acquiring books because they "seem to think that they cannot afford to buy books. It is time that some of them considered whether they can afford to buy books." Another article in Moody Monthly attributed low readership not just to money but also to limited distribution. The magazine insisted that "money should be spent freely for sound literature, and its wise distribution should be pressed upon every child of God. As never before, Christians themselves need to be clearly taught in the truth." The magazine urged school teachers in particular to serve as "book missionaries" during their summer breaks, "carrying the gospel message, together with inspiring books for the saints of God--directly into the homes of people. Do not such persons know the needs of the children and of the home? Are they not themselves intelligent and well read? Do they not usually have the confidence of the parents, as well as the children? A rich spiritual blessing awaits the endeavorer in these lines."56


As the notion of "book missionaries" suggests, fundamentalist leaders often saw books as means of impressing orthodox doctrine and middle-class values not just upon adults in their congregations but especially upon children, the urban poor, immigrants, and potential converts abroad. One former book missionary reminisced in a 1925 article, for example, about a day when he "climbed the back stairway of an apartment house in the suburb of a city, where several mill workers lived." Selling Moody Colportage books, the missionary moved from apartment to apartment before "a young German girl opened the door. She could speak broken English, but could read only in the German language." She apparently purchased a German translation of Moody's *Secret Power*. "Later," the missionary related, "I happened to call in the same house . . .
And she told me a great blessing had come into her life. She had been a Christian and a member of a German Evangelical church, but she had lost the joy of the Christian life." Having read Moody's book, she had realized "the cause of her unhappy conditions, and how she could have the joy of the spirit-filled believer."\(^{57}\)

Whatever language a person spoke, many fundamentalists believed, books could reach them. "We read and hear of various methods of evangelism, all more or less effective," one article explained, "but book and tract evangelistic endeavor should be more freely encouraged and practiced. It is well known that the giving or loaning of a good book has resulted in the salvation of many souls. I know a preacher who used to keep an assortment of very choice religious books on a table in front of the pulpit to loan to the people." At the same time, the writer insisted, "Of course the Bible, or at least certain portions of it, should be among the books."\(^{58}\)

Depending on their context, fundamentalists envisioned books either as tools of theological and moral discipline or as tools of compassion; more often than not, discipline served as a form of compassion. In Denton, Texas, one Presbyterian minister reportedly became alarmed at "the vast amount of circularizing that is being done by the 'Millennial Dawnists' and similar unevangelical religious bodies." In response, the pastor had "undertaken to distribute good literature to the masses by means of literature bags with pockets, that are placed in public places throughout the city--churches, colleges, city hall, post office, hotels, railroad stations, etc."

Convinced that "modernistic preaching" threatened to poison his parish, another minister in Pennsylvania took a different approach. After asking an evangelical publisher for a list of books, he bought a large quantity and then "went out among my parishioners a couple of

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afternoons. I disposed of them all." Because the minister expected to move to a new parish soon, he wanted "to have every home supplied with literature that is in keeping with the sort of preaching I have given my people here, the last six years, so that in case they should every be cursed with modernistic preaching, they will be in possession of an antidote against it."59

This same belief in books as tools of compassionate discipline led B.I.C.A. and M.B.I. to collaborate on a project that lasted decades. As reported on for decades at the end of every issue of *Moody Monthly*, the Institute solicited and received contributions for "Mr. Moody's Book Funds." In December 1921 those funds included the Hospital (4 contributions for $13.00), Prison (136 for $804.97), Lumber Camp (1 for $5.00), Mountain (6 for $22.20), Free Tract (2 for $1.15), and Pioneer Book Funds (136 for $804.97). Two funds for Spanish-speakers were the "Spanish 'All of Grace' Book Fund" (1 for $5.00) and the "Spanish 'Way to God' Book Fund" (5 for $28.00).

Using these funds, the Colportage distributed books to churches throughout the country and listed which books, in what quantities, each state received. Occasionally, the magazine published notes of thanks from book recipients. "The books you sent me about two years ago are yet being used to carry God's message of love to many in sin," Mrs. E. D. of Alabama wrote in 1935. "I use [the books] in library style. Many come for them and bring them back asking for more. They tell how the books help them choose Christ, or the influence they have on their lives. The parents of my pupils send to the school and ask for more to read. I see great results." In 1935, Moody's Book Funds included such new categories as Africa, Alaska, Army and Navy,

French Louisiana, Negro, Philippine Islands, Railroad Men, Spain, and Reforestation. Of these new categories, Reforestation received the most contributions.⁶⁰

Moody's book funds and grants continued into the 1930s, but the pages of *Moody Monthly* testify to a marked difference in attitudes toward books in that decade. In the 1920s, fundamentalist leaders had looked at books in much the same way that Reformed leaders had: books held the promise of instilling lay readers with the right beliefs, practices, and attitudes. In a way that shows more commonality than difference with non-religious book culture, Reformed and fundamentalist periodicals, publishers, and advertising all worked together to cultivate devotion to books. In the 1930s, books continued to serve this purpose; yet that decade also saw fundamentalists in particular recognize and seek to address the paradox at the heart of their biblicism. Having more or less secured theological and social discipline through books, fundamentalist leaders called on fundamentalists to abandon them.

**Back to the Bible**

With fundamentalist leaders having blessed the notion that books were legitimate aids to faith, laypeople often sought out advice on what books they might read. In response to a reader's question, for example, M.B.I. professor of homiletics and doctrine John C. Page wrote an article in the Young People's Society section of a 1926 edition of *Moody Monthly* titled "What Books Have I Found Worthwhile?" But Page hardly answered the question he asked himself. Citing Joshua 1.1-9 as his inspiration, Page essentially argued that Christians should not invest books with too much worth. "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth," Joshua 1.8 instructs, "you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all

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that is written in it." Taking this verse to heart, Page insisted that "in our reading of books written by men we must not let the Book of God be crowded out." Quoting William Phelps, a professor of English at Yale who reportedly remarked that "'a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible,'" Page lamented the "appalling ignorance of this one outstanding book."

Page's remarks presaged a trend that in the 1930s that saw fundamentalists increasingly insist upon the Bible's preeminent authority and lament that Christians too often ignored it. As in Page's case, the very popularity of books seems to have brought the Bible's supposed second-place status to mind. The center of Christian faith, Stanley James Robinson argued in 1935, should be "the Bible and not a book." Annoyed with Christians he knew who recently had been discussing the literary strengths of the Bible, Robinson argued that "it is expedient to inform the exponents of a literary Bible that it is literary in form only, not in purpose. If all man needed was a literary masterpiece, not one jot or tittle from Genesis to Revelation would ever have been recorded." In no uncertain terms, Robinson insisted that "there is little merit in acknowledging the literary supremacy of the Bible."

Speaking in Grand Rapids in 1932, the Lutheran fundamentalist Walter Maier lamented, "'we have today a generation that knows not God, a generation that sneers at religion. . . . The business depression is the least of the ills the world is facing. Worse than that is the moral and spiritual depression.'" Gesturing toward the previous decade's turn toward books, Maier explained that "'we have tried all sorts of remedies, education among others. But education that is of the mind and not of the soul does no good.'" All that education had given the church, Maier

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complained, is that "her pastors know all about the book of the month but have forgotten the book of the ages." Both Page's and Robinson's comments seem to take issue not just with Christians who had taken on literary and intellectual approaches to the Bible but also with the American culture that privileged those approaches.

Urging Christians to return the Bible to its place atop the world's books, Wilbur Smith suggested that the Bible never had left that position, even in spite of widespread neglect. The proximate cause for Smith's article was the news that St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, had developed a "new education policy" in which "the students through four years are to read and become thoroughly acquainted with the fundamental ideas and the process of reasoning revealed in the one hundred greatest books that have arisen from and most vitally influenced European (for the most part) civilization." The Bible had not made the list.

In response, Smith described "the circulation of the six best selling books published . . . in the last sixty years." They included Tom Sawyer (published in 1875; 1.5 million copies), Black Beauty (1877; 1 million), In His Steps (1897; 8 million); Freckles (1904; 2 million); The Winning of Barbara Worth (1911; 1.5 million); and Gone with the Wind (1936; almost 2 million). The point of listing these figures was to contrast them with the Bible's circulation; using numbers provided by the British and Foreign Bible Society as well as the American Bible Society, Smith calculated that "these two societies alone have circulated since the beginning of the nineteenth century more than 110,000,000 copies of the complete Bible! If the circulation of a book, which is more or less an indication of the extent to which a book is read, is a factor in determining the greatness of a book, there is still no other book in all the world even to compare with the Word of God." 

63 E. J. Tanis, "Dr. Maier in Grand Rapids," The Banner, February 26, 1932, 200.

In addition to complaining about a widespread lack of Bible reading, fundamentalists strategized about how to fix the situation. "In our church," Frederick Niedermeyer of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, explained in 1937, "we try to make the Bible available to all." Niedermeyer's church used a number of strategies. Convinced, for instance, that many of his congregants often "lack sufficient information to make discriminating investment in a Bible," Niedermeyer's church preceded Christmas with "a display of Bibles and Testaments in the auditorium. Suggestions are given from the pulpit as to the advantages of various editions and someone is at hand to give counsel." The church also presented Bibles to children in Sunday School at various stages of life; at the age of nine, when children are promoted to "the Junior Department," they receive "a leather-bound, gilt-edged Bible." When students graduate "from the public high school, our Sunday School gives our members a Scofield Bible, cherished because of its invaluable helps."

Beyond merely getting Bibles in congregants' hands, Niedermeyer's church also had several plans designed to facilitate their engagement with the text. One program, for example, saw children memorize Bible verses, often giving the children tokens to place on a ribbon to signify their successes. Another plan rewarded students for reading the Bible aloud in their homes. As for adults, Niedermeyer's church encouraged them to follow a plan of Bible reading, such as a Moody Bible Institute plan that saw a devotee read the entire Bible in the course of a year. The church's preachers often would base their sermons on selections from the week. As a result of these initiatives, Niedermeyer explained, "our people are more at home than formerly in speaking of the Bible, and they have a wider basis for understanding scriptural references and spiritual messages."65

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65 Frederick Niedermeyer, "Getting the Bible Read in the Home," *Moody Monthly*, November 1937, 122-123.
One way to refamiliarize Christians with the Bible, various writers suggested, was to overhaul conventional approaches to Sunday School. "Many writers of Church school literature seem to be obsessed with the theory that the present-day boy or girl cannot be interested in anything but present-day topics and events," Nashville's Ross L. Holman argued. "This is fine as far as it goes," Holman elaborated, "but the trouble is . . . they have carried this trend so far that many writers of such literature, as well as many Church School officers and teachers, actually believe that the Bible is too deep a subject for the average youth." Describing his approach to reasserting the Bible's preeminence in Church School classrooms, Holman remarked that "those who think the Bible is too deep and dry a subject for the present-day youth except when it is mixed in medicine dropper doses with vast reams of present-day life and facts, are due for a surprise." When he told children such Bible stories as the creation account, Holman explained, "eager questions . . . were fired at me so fast I had difficulty in getting the complete story across in my limited time."\(^{66}\)

In 1939, Will Houghton drew these sentiments together with his book *Let's Go Back to the Bible.*\(^{67}\) President of Moody Bible Institute since 1934, Houghton had received the position from then-president James Gray while serving as minister of Calvary Baptist Church in New York City. It may seem ironic for Houghton to call for a move away from books in a book, but this particular book was the capstone of a campaign that had involved other forms of media. For twenty Sundays in 1938, Houghton had broadcast a "Let's Go Back to the Bible" radio program over the Mutual Broadcast System. This broadcast continued in 1939, airing a series of "radio rallies"; in April 1939 alone, Houghton and the Moody Men's Octet visited cities throughout the


heartland of Northern fundamentalism, including Pontiac, Lansing, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Allentown, Hackensack, Paterson, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Yonkers, Bridgeport, Scranton, and Buffalo. Advertisements for the rallies asked readers to "try to have a large representation from your church at the rally in your area." The chapters of Houghton's book were adapted from his broadcasts.

The title of Houghton's book encapsulates his message. "You can get along without other books," Houghton insisted, but "this one you ignore at your peril. It is the book of warning. Do not add to it, or take from it." Reflecting in one chapter upon the relationship between the Bible and other books, Houghton recalled,

> How well I remember the day, when, sitting in my office with my Bible open before me, I looked up at the books surrounding me on the wall. Some of them have lived long and intimately with me, and I value their friendship greatly. Sitting there alone, I talked out loud, and said something like this: "Books, some of you have been my companions for many years. When lame, I have leaned upon you as a crutch. When tired, I have found rest in you, even as upon a couch. Hungry and thirsty, I have come to you to find food and the water of refreshing. Books, I value you for what you are and for what you have meant to me. As I look at you, ranged on the shelves, I think of each one of you as a bottle of pure spring water. Thirsty, I reach up to drink from your pages that which will bring the slaking thirst and deep satisfaction." And then, taking in my hand my open Bible, I continued, "But, books, this is more than a bottle of spring water, this is the spring itself, and if you have anything of truth in your pages, that truth was first in embryo here." Oh, the remarkable inexhaustibility of the Word of God!

In addition to demonstrating how fundamentalists called for a return to the Bible during the 1930s, Houghton's book helps explain why such calls became rhetorically popular and powerful. "Why go back to the Bible?", Houghton asked. "Because only there," he answered, "is to be found an answer to life's questions, a solution of the world's problems, and an offer of the life that is eternal." Among the three explanations, it was the "world's problems" upon which Houghton elaborated. "It would be commonplace to say that this is a sick world," he explained.

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"Nearly everyone admits that, and immediately begins to prescribe, but some of the remedies only increase the patient's pallor and deepen his disease. Communism and Fascism, while perhaps intended as remedies, have themselves become afflictions from which the world needs deliverance. So with others of the quack cures, until the world is much in the condition of the woman in the gospel story who had suffered many things of many physicians."\(^{69}\)

Beyond mentioning Communism and Fascism, Houghton does not speak in detail about the problems that he believed plagued the world. But consider the variety of events that elicited conservatives' consternation. Prohibition, for example, had gone into effect in 1920, the year after the necessary thirty-six states ratified the Eighteenth Amendment. Although prohibition had advocates from across the political and social spectrum, the idea had drawn unflinching support from a century of moralizing conservative Protestants; the 1910s accordingly closed with conservative Christians both triumphant and hopeful. But at the end of 1933, the Twenty-first Amendment killed the the Eighteenth Amendment and wounded conservative hopes.

Prohibition's end nearly coincided with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's ascension to the presidency. As Matthew Sutton explains, many fundamentalists opposed Roosevelt's election, suspicious both of his charismatic personality and his New Deal platform. At the same time, Roosevelt drew fundamentalists' suspicions for reasons beyond his control. While fundamentalists might not have balked at his policies in the 1920s, the rise of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler had nurtured and invigorated apocalyptic thinking and discourse. "Troubled by what they were witnessing at home and abroad," Sutton explains, "white conservative Christians began to view their president and his administration not as God’s emissaries on earth but as tools of the devil." These perceptions gained renewed strength after 1936, when it became clear that Roosevelt's

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\(^{69}\) Houghton, *Let's Go Back to the Bible*, 21, 45.
1932 election was more than a fluke. Protestant civilization seemed to be receding, and communism seemed to be advancing.\textsuperscript{70}

Anxieties about the state of the United States and the wider world were refracted through and fueled by economic turmoil. The most well-known marker of that turmoil is the stock market crash of October 1929. But emphasizing that date obscures the economic turbulence that grew before and intensified after "Black Friday." It was 1933, rather than 1929, that proved to be the nadir of what became known as the Great Depression. While popular memory tends to focus on the Depression's material effects, evidence suggests that Americans often found its psychological effects most troubling. "Over and over again," Alan Brinkley explains, "we find the same image: not outrage, not defiance, not an inclination to reassess values and challenge prevailing norms, but humiliation, self-doubt, shame." For many--and especially for cultural leaders--the response was to "reinforce old values and pressure individuals to conform to them."\textsuperscript{71}

Until World War II both rejuvenated the American economy and brought unwelcome distraction, both the material and the psychological effects of the Depression reverberated. In the meantime, Will Houghton exhorted, "America, you are a God-forgetting nation, whose only desire now is for a return to prosperity. But in your present state of mind a new prosperity will mean only a new prodigality. . . . To your knees, America, in the acknowledgement of sin, in repentance, in the recognition that God lives and that He must be acknowledged by the nation as well as be enthroned in the heart and life of the individual. America, let's go back to the Bible!"\textsuperscript{72}


\textsuperscript{71} Alan Brinkley, \textit{Culture and Politics in the Great Depression}, 1st ed. (Waco, Tex: Markham Press Fund, 1999), 8-11.

\textsuperscript{72} Houghton, \textit{Let's Go Back to the Bible}, 129.
At least one other development in the late-1920s and 1930s reoriented how fundamentalists, Protestants, and Americans in general interacted with the Bible and books: the rise of radio. Almost as soon as radio broadcasts began transmitting in 1920, so too did religious broadcasts. The first religious radio broadcast came out of Pittsburgh in 1921, and within four years religious organizations controlled about ten percent of the United States' 600 radio stations. Convinced that radio made it possible to share the Gospel on an unprecedented scale, conservative Protestants proved the most active religious broadcasters.

Radio quickly became central to how the fundamentalists of Moody Bible Institute understood themselves and their mission. By February 1926, radio had become so central that Moody Monthly magazine abandoned its long-running "Gospel in Print" section, which had focused on religious books; in that section's place, the magazine debuted a section dedicated to its radio programming. Broadcasts had begun a few months earlier. Initially broadcasting on the station WENR for two hours on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays, the Institute's programming included a morning hour on Biblical exposition with James Gray; an evening hour of sacred music; and a children's bed-time story read by Edna Gray Johnson, the superintendent of Women of the Institute. Tuesday evenings, John Page would lead listeners through a "systematic" study of the Bible, and Friday morning saw a "women's hour" offer a Bible class "for the instruction, the comfort and inspiration of mothers, housewives and shut-ins, in homes or hospitals."

By March 1926, Moody would broadcast for fourteen and a half hours a week on WENR, and it would receive its own broadcast license in July. Once licensed, the newly christened


WMBI station almost immediately began offering listeners forty hours of programming a week. In 1938, WMBI upgraded its transmitter, allowing listeners as far away as 300 miles to tune in. With a broader audience and expanded broadcast time, programming diversified. One show, for instance, consisted simply of an hour of reading from current books by popular authors. Radio seemingly made the practice of reading books for oneself seem obsolete.\textsuperscript{75}

"We should remember," Wilbur Smith insisted before a group of 200 evangelical leaders in May 1946, "that our Christian faith rests upon a book." Delivering the closing address at the Minneapolis Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals, Smith (1894-1977) explained that "You and I have a literary faith; a book faith, a true Book, thank God, a divine Book, a living Book, an inspired Book, but nevertheless, a book." The point for Smith was not simply that the Bible deserved praise but also that "this Book has been the parent of glorious progeny." That progeny included the writings of such eminent Christian authors as Origen, Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Calvin. He and his fellow evangelicals, in short, were book people.

But Smith found little to praise about the current state of Christian literature. Then a professor at Chicago's Moody Bible Institute and soon-to-be founding faculty member of Southern California's Fuller Theological Seminary, Smith disparaged both the quality and quantity of contemporary Christian books. Recounting a recent lunch with a "distinguished professor," Smith revealed that his lunch companion had strayed long ago from his Presbyterian faith yet had reached such intellectual heights as "a Ph. D. From Harvard, twice Guggenheim fellow," and mastery of "the major European languages." After their lunch the professor had surprised Smith by asking for a book that might give him an understanding of the Bible, a personal knowledge of Christ, and lasting peace in his soul. But Smith drew a blank. "My
friends," Smith asked his audience with frustration, "do you know of something to put in the hands of a man like that today? I am afraid I don't! But we ought to have something!"

During the 1940s, many conservative Protestants came to agree both with Smith's diagnosis and solution. Although fundamentalists and other conservatives began the decade generally viewing radio as the most effective means of sharing the Gospel, the decade's end saw rebranded "evangelicals" increasingly turn to books as the preferred method of reaching not just Smith's intellectual "men like that" but also laymen, women, children. Beginning around the time of Smith's 1946 speech, books received renewed theological sanction and practical support from at least two directions.

First, books proved uniquely compatible with new religious aspirations and cultural orientations. Although the 1930s had seen fundamentalists nurture devotion to the medium of radio, they found themselves increasingly denied access to the airwaves by 1940. Resolving to right this wrong, fundamentalists produced such new institutions as the National Association of Evangelicals and began seeing themselves as participants in an "evangelical" public. This public imagined itself as a sanctified analogue to the secular public, and this new social imaginary relied upon books not just for what readers could learn from their pages but also for books' symbolic power. More than merely serving as carriers of intellectual authority, books allowed evangelicals to present themselves as the people that they hoped to be. Evangelical leaders like Wilbur Smith and Carl F. H. Henry imagined evangelicals as doctrinally sound, intellectual, and socially engaged people. But books served other imaginaries just as well, and their versatility fueled their popularity.

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If evangelical aspirations and orientations provided the first source of books' popularity, the marketplace provided the second. During the 1930s, such publishers as Eerdmans and Zondervan had established themselves as thriving fundamentalist publishers. But their businesses encountered restraints in the form of conservative concerns about the Bible, fundamentalist fascination with the radio, wartime production restrictions, and the fundamentalist tendency to privilege old books over new books. Once books received theological and devotional sanction, however, publishers found themselves free to tout books with abandon. More important, new "evangelical" language, networks, and oppositional postures provided established firms with new business tools and inspired other evangelicals to found new firms and industry initiatives.

Historians of the 1940s typically focus their attention on the cultural power of technologies like radio and television. But this decade not only saw the contemporary evangelical book industry take shape but also saw contemporary evangelicalism come into being. As this chapter illustrates, these two movements overlapped not by coincidence but by co-constitution.

**The Church of the Air**

Media consumption is not a zero-sum game, but radio's ascension restrained books' popularity during the 1930s and early 1940s. Both the novelty of radio technology and the logistical advantages of radio broadcasting made print seem less appealing, by comparison. But radio's reign would end in the 1940s, as the sources of its appeal waned in strength.

In a circular way, radio fueled its own popularity. In the 1920s, virtually every religious group wanted to broadcast. One *Christian Century* article from 1927 provides a glimpse of early radio's religious landscape:

A friend of ours spent a night not so long ago near Los Angeles. He kept a record of the religious services which were on the air, and of the subjects with which
these services dealt. Located where he was, the loudest station proved to be one carrying a Christian Science service of that church. From a wave-length close on the dial came the voice of a Presbyterian minister, launched into a vigorous tirade against Roman Catholicism. From her own broadcasting station the dramatic voice of Mrs. Aimee McPherson expounded her special brand of Four-square gospel. A Bible institute also had a station of its own, and was using it to present an ultraconservative type of prophetic interpretation to any who might care to listen. The calm, cultured and persuasive voice of some Unitarian came on the wave-length assigned to one of the commercial stations. At the same hour it happened that a Baptist was trying to make plain the fallacies underlying Christian Science. A Church of Christ evangelist specialized in the Old Jerusalem gospel, while another evangelist, connected with the Church of the Nazarenes, was also on the air. And from the new station of his Methodist Church, the Rev. "Fighting Bob" Schuler was making a desperate effort--via radio--to clean up Hollywood. All this at one time, and from within a radius of twenty-five miles.²

With so many religious groups entering the radio marketplace, broadcasting became a matter of importance and urgency. Moody Bible Institute, for example, made broadcasting such a priority that it initially broadcast without "the necessary government license to broadcast." President James Gray explained that "at the present time there are almost twenty-four broadcasting stations in any about Chicago and the crowded conditions of the air makes the possibility of securing this license remote from the human point of view. . . . This help can be rendered by prayer and also by letters to the Department of Commerce at Washington, D.C., urging that the application for a license by the Institute be granted."³

Even the Reformed, who long had imagined print as the path to the religious future, admitted the inescapability of radio. "Every serious-minded person deplores the steady output of jazz, nonsense and profanity, or near profanity, into millions of American homes every day of the year through radio," a Reformed writer lamented. He added, "a mere turn of the switch is

² "Should Churches Be Shut Off the Air?," Christian Century, May 12, 1927, 582-83.

sufficient to bring 'the evil world', with some of its rankest influences into the Christian home, polluting its atmosphere and threatening to wipe out its distinctiveness. . . . Sects and religious organizations of all kinds, Christian Scientists and Swedenborgians included, spend huge sums for the propagation of their principles by means of the radio." But the writer then asked, "What shall we do about it? Refuse to buy radios? We may as well counsel Christian people to refrain from using automobiles. The radio, still a luxury, will soon become a necessity, as the automobile has become a necessity, and will be so increasingly." As a result, the writer called for engaged, active broadcasting and listening. "We know of four localities where religious services are broadcasted, regularly or occasionally, by our people," the writer reported,

But very little is being done for the propagation of our distinctive principles. Most of our broadcasting is of a devotional character. Our special aim is to provide edification for our shut-ins or to bring the simple gospel message to the unchurched. We have no fault to find with this kind of broadcasting. We believe in it with our whole chart. We do maintain, however, that we fail to perform our whole duty in this matter unless we do far more than we have done in the line of expounding our Reformed and Calvinistic principles in a thorough but popular fashion. From this point of view the monthly question hour which used to be in charge of Dr. Clarence Bouma over WOOD and the present efforts of our Chicago men to explain the Christian school movement over WMBI are the best we have put forth so far.

As for listening, "we would urge our Christian people to make it a habit to comment, favorably or unfavorably, on the material which the radio brings into the sanctuary of their homes. . . . Let us make use of the radio to propagate the true gospel of Jesus Christ. . . . We believe that our Calvinistic world and life view is the only hope of the modern world in its intellectual bewilderment and moral confusion."4

4 "Religion and Radio," The Banner, October 10, 1930, 908.
To be sure, not everyone accepted radio entirely without hesitation. In 1926, for example, one "North Dakota correspondent" wrote a letter to Moody Monthly asking if "the radio is of God or the Devil?" One of the magazine's writers responded by explaining that "We think it is of God but that the Devil, as usual, is trying to pre-empt the use of it." When the correspondent speculated that "radio will be a powerful tool for the Antichrist," the writer asked, "who will win in the long run, Christ or the Antichrist? Remember that long after the Lord shall have consumed that Wicked One with the spirit of His mouth and destroyed him with the brightness of His coming, the radio and the ether will be here for the saints to use, and through which to transmit their messages and render the service of their King."

But even critics of radio admitted that it had transformed paradigms of communication. After insisting that he "doesn't pose as a 'radio fan,'" for example, W. S. Bowden of New Albany, Indiana, reflected at length upon how radio provides a metaphor for the relationship between God and humans. "What ether is to the radio wave," Bowden explained, "the Spirit is to the revelation wave. Do the ether waves carry the human voice 186,000 miles per second? The Spirit of God practically annihilates time and distance in conveying to us the messages from God's broadcasting station concerning the blessed Saviour, our coming King."5

Inasmuch as the newness of radio fostered the suspicions of some, its newness ultimately led many more to look at radio and see the future. "Speeding through the air at a rate of 186,000 miles a second," Ralph E. Stewart, the associate director of M.B.I.'s Radio Department, remarked, "the sound waves of radio transcend barriers of race, color, and creed into every city, town and village. . . . [Radio] is the modern altar erected in the center of the life of the world. It

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speaks with a voice of authority." Reflecting in 1946 on previous decades of radio ministry, the radio evangelist Manuel Aldama noted that "it does not take a great stretch of imagination, nor does it require a deep knowledge of mathematics to visualize the number of years that it would take to reach the other two thirds of humanity with the Gospel if God did not come to the air of Christ's Church, giving her the means of supplementing the ways and methods at her disposal thus far." Recounting a ministerial career carried out during what he termed "the Age of the Air," Aldama explained that "the dominion of the air is a product of this century; is a thing of our day." Aldama's view of radio let him to place the medium within a kind of dispensational framework; "the predominant use of some earthly element in human activities and interchange of ideas and commerce," Aldama remarked,

has given ground to the division of human history into dispensational ages and to the characterizations of them. The primary and most rudimentary means used by man for the exercise of his activities gave name to the stone age, and so consecutively with the bronze, iron and steel ages. Ours has rightly been designated as and 'air age'--the air being the most recently recognized dimension towards which humanity is turning its eyes for the development of human relations.

For these reasons, "the time has come for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ to become air-minded, too; and to utilize the air to propagate the Gospel and meet the spiritual needs of this dying world." William Ward Ayer, the pastor of New York's Calvary Baptist Church, went so far as to describe radio broadcasting in 1943 as "an evangelical duty." It is, Ayer explained, the "chief means of evangelizing millions of unchurched."7

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Yet if radio broadcasting was every Christians' duty in the 1930s and 1940s, not all Christians were able to perform that duty without hindrance. As early as 1927, the federal government had decided to tame the wild radio landscape. In the name of minimizing signal interference and establishing public standards of operation, the Radio Act of 1927 established the Federal Radio Commission (renamed the Federal Communications Commission in 1934). Tasked with granting and renewing station licenses, the Commission consolidated stations by consigning religious stations to a "special interest" category and forcing them to share frequencies with each other. As a result, each station automatically had less airtime than before. Few dedicated religious stations survived; prominent exceptions included Aimee Semple McPherson's KFSG in Los Angeles and Moody Bible Institute's WMBI. But these outliers maintained their status only through determined and continued legal wrangling.

Because the Federal Radio Commission insisted that radio stations should offer free noncommercial airtime to religious broadcasters as a service to the public, religious broadcasts remained on the air. Between this free "sustaining time" and airtime that religious broadcasters purchased, religious programming represented about eight percent of all radio programming in 1932. By the end of the 1930s, however, demand for airtime increasingly exceeded supply. With less and less incentive to give away what they could sell, stations began cutting back on sustaining time. Although such major networks as the National Broadcasting Company (NBC, founded in 1926), the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS, 1927), and the American Broadcasting Company (ABC, 1944) continued offering sustaining time to prominent religious organizations, not all organizations had equal access.

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Founded in 1908 as a manifestation of the Christian mainline's ecumenical optimism, the Federal Council of Churches served on NBC's advisory council and helped determine which broadcasts received sustaining time. Representing a wide range of Protestant denominations, the Federal Council began insisting in 1928 that potential broadcasters should use radio only for programs that were "non-sectarian and non-denominational in appeal," offering "constructive ministry of religion" and "interpret[ing] religion at its highest and best." With many conservative broadcasters framing their teachings polemically, they rarely received sustaining time.

Conservative Protestants in general--and fundamentalists in particular--increasingly complained about these restrictions. Writing to an associate in January 1940, Will Houghton reported that a representative of the Federal Council in Pittsburgh had forced all but one of that city's stations "to agree to take speakers with their O.K." When Houghton had asked NBC to air his "Let's Go Back to the Bible" program, he was "plainly told it was all in Federal Council hands." Showing more rhetorical restraint than many of his ministerial colleagues, Houghton insisted that "I feel there is a strong case against the present policy of NBC."\(^9\)

Without sustaining time, how did conservative Protestants reach their audiences? While conservatives initially responded by simply purchasing airtime, the FCC soon convinced the National Association of Broadcasters and its member networks to stop selling airtime for religious broadcasts. Mutual Broadcasting Network became the only national network willing to sell. Having launched only in 1936, Mutual needed popular programming to fill out its schedule. Mutual's recent vintage also meant that it did not belong to the National Association of Broadcasters, which freed it from following the same exclusionary policies as other N.A.B.-

member networks. In the early 1940s, Mutual broadcasted most of the popular conservative Protestant radio programs, including Charles Fuller's *Old-Fashioned Revival Hour*, Walter Maier's *The Lutheran Hour*, and Percy Crawford's *The Young People's Church of the Air*.

But in March 1943, Mutual announced that it too would stop selling airtime for religious broadcasting. The network ultimately backed down after listeners complained, but it meanwhile instituted several other restrictions in 1944, such as prohibiting religious broadcasters from fundraising over the air, limiting broadcasts to thirty minutes, and requiring them to air only before 1pm on Sundays.10 While Mutual provided popular religious broadcasters with a tenuous national platform, most broadcasters struggled to address anything larger than a regional audience. Yet with both national and local stations often banning broadcasters from soliciting donations over the air, money for purchasing airtime proved difficult to generate.11

Both despite and because of these difficulties, radio maintained an advantage over print. As the previous chapter suggested, part of that advantage reflected radio's relative lack of conflict with forms of biblicism. But radio's advantage also reflected pure logistics. At a time when economic depression and wartime rationing limited print, for example, radio allowed broadcasters to disseminate the Gospel at relatively little cost, and with fewer compromises.

During World War II, for example, severe paper quotas limited publishers' capacities and even shifted their business strategies. As the president of the publishing firm of Little, Brown & Company explained in 1947, these restrictions saw "drastic steps . . . taken during that period to save paper and to save manufacturing costs." By the summer of 1945, "all possible economies had been made." Throughout the industry, publishers restricted new titles. Harold Ockenga felt

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the sting of these restrictions even in 1947, when Revell's president William Barbour rejected one manuscript and asked Ockenga to drastically shorten another. Revell and other firms had been forced to devote their limited paper quotas to printing tried-and-true sellers, rather than gambling on new titles.12 As Barbour explained to Ockenga in an apologetic letter, "Of course, you realize that we are facing unbelievable production problems and indications are that conditions will be worse, rather than better. In this connection, you will be interested to know that that National Arts Club, of which I am a member, in arranging for their fall book exhibit, sent out requests for books and stipulated that publishers were to submit their fall books. They were chagrined and amazed to learn that there are so few autumn books as announced which are ready, that they were obliged to back up and extend the period to January 1946, in order to have a book fair at all!"13 Rather than publishing new books, publishers focused on fulfilling orders for books from their backlists.

Publishers responded with a variety of other strategies. Common strategies included using smaller type, reducing margins, cutting words, thinning paper, dropping entire sections from books, and raising sale prices to meet higher production costs. Occasionally, publishers tried to deal with the limitations by cooperating among themselves. In 1943, for instance, Harper and Brothers began a conversation with Eerdmans about having Eerdmans use 140,000 pounds of its paper quota to print Harper and Brothers books. But Harper and Brothers eventually backed out of the agreement when Eerdmans expressed reservations about putting its name to any and all that Harper selected. In a letter canceling the contract, Harper's representative admitted that


13 Barbour to HJO, 6 December 1946, Box 5, Folder "Publishing:Revell," Ockenga Papers.
Eerdmans "acted quite properly in restricting the use of your imprint to editorial material meeting your particular standards." But the representative insisted that "it would be quite awkward, if not impossible, to make the fullest use of the additional paper quota . . . within the limits which you might wish to have us operate."¹⁴

While wartime restrictions made life difficult for all publishers, religious publishers in general--and conservative publishers in particular--found the pinch particularly painful. During the war, some publishers curiously had enjoyed stronger sales than before or after, for they secured the government as an eager customer. Desiring reading materials for members of the armed services, the government established purchase contracts with some publishers and lifted those publishers' quota restrictions.¹⁵ Conservative religious publishers clamored to publish books that the government wanted. But intense competition for contracts made it difficult for them to secure contracts even for Bibles. Altogether, these print problems made radio seem relatively cheap and effective. Dwelling on the reasons for their lack of access, fundamentalists collectively blamed the situation on liberal malice rather than logistical limitations.

In addition to radio's potential logistical advantages, the medium benefited from a tendency to reinforce--rather than challenge--fundamentalist networks of authority. Although religious broadcasters often found their audience regionally circumscribed, this sort of regionalism suited fundamentalism's traditional patterns of power, which divided the country into a loose constellation of fundamentalist fiefdoms and conservative publics. As a result, broadcasts often displayed sensitivity to regional concerns, which may have heightened those broadcasts' appeal.


Still, this regionalism meanwhile limited radio's ability to unite fundamentalists by cultivating shared discourses, agendas, and political aspirations.\textsuperscript{16}

One of radio's greatest strengths had less to do with logistics or regional concentrations of authority than with the new modes of collective imagination that radio fostered. Listening to a radio broadcast, Depression-era conservatives could imagine themselves as part of a common public, which they could address, embrace, and contest. As Bruce Lenthall explains, "ideas as to what constituted genuine communication expanded: rather than simply an interchange between individuals, many believed authentic communication could include one-way transmissions to an impersonal, vast audience." Because it created imagined communities of worshipful listeners so easily, radio quickly escaped the criticisms that always plagued print in general and fiction in particular--that it was little more than a form of "entertainment" that distracted individual Christians from the Bible and nurtured lusts, diversions, and other unsavories.\textsuperscript{17}

Conservative Protestants' limited access to radio intensified their ability to help cultivate imagined publics. These limitations increasingly had given conservative broadcasters the sense that they were fighting alongside one another. United in the battle for radio access, conservatives not only lent each other support but also monitored each others' behavior. William Ward Ayer lamented in 1943, for example, that "one cantankerous religionist can destroy . . . goodwill in a very short while." Ayer noted that "station owners complain that fundamentalist broadcasters are too prone to 'toot their own horn' and to advertise themselves as the greatest of the realm. Better to exalt Jesus and forget self." He accordingly recommended that "all gospel broadcasters


prayerfully analyze their position in the light of the dangers that beset us on every side and eliminate from their programs all things that offend unnecessarily.\textsuperscript{18}

By limiting conservatives' ability to evangelize, restrictions on radio not only strengthened the identity that broadcasters imagined for themselves but also made their imagined listening public seem more real. The logic of religious broadcasting was that someone out there needed to hear the Gospel; he or she might come to Christ if given the opportunity. The inability of broadcasters to create those opportunities made potential converts and their unmet needs seem more palpable.

If restrictions on radio access made both the broadcasting and listening publics seem more real, it did the same for the specter of modernism. For decades, conservatives had treated modernism as a rhetorical adversary; but conservative attacks on liberalism always had seemed slightly diffuse. The Federal Council long had drawn the ire of conservatives who saw it as the champion of a wan ecumenism. But the Council's radio policy provided conservatives with proof that the Council opposed not just conservative broadcasts but the Gospel that those broadcasts attempted to share with listeners. Access to radio became a kind of symbolic battleground for America's soul, a surrogate for the broader battle against those who persecute Christ and his people.

In these ways, radio helped sharpen lines of opposition and identity. Asking themselves why they had been denied radio access, conservatives laid most of the blame at the feet of modernists. But their sense of embattledness also had helped them to find their own feet. Increasingly seeing themselves as united, conservatives Protestants began lamenting that they had not seen it sooner. Had they done so, they might have been able to work in cooperation. In the 1940s, conservatives

\textsuperscript{18} Ayer, "Broadcasting Gospel is Evangelical Duty."
began drawing together such organizations as the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action as a means of correcting the error of their divided ways.

**United "Evangelical" Action**

At the dawn of the 1940s, the issue of radio access variously irked and enraged conservative Protestants across the country; more important, however, it also linked them symbolically and rhetorically. Throughout the 1940s, those links increasingly took more tangible form. The National Association of Evangelicals and its institutional infrastructure became the preeminent manifestation of that unity, and the N.A.E.'s early history illustrates how the radio controversy led conservatives to begin asking larger questions of themselves and their country. To these larger questions, radio ultimately offered fewer solutions than books.

By virtue of fundamentalists' concentration in the North and their proximity to such media centers as New York, Northern fundamentalists led the push for radio access and guided that initiative's institutional turn. As early as January 1940, for example, Boston's Harold John Ockenga began writing to managers of prominent radio stations in New England. He soon wrote directly to Lenox R. Lohr, the president of NBC. Taking the most generous stance toward Lohr that he could, Ockenga explained that he agreed with NBC's decision not to sell airtime for religious broadcasting. But he then insisted that placing free broadcasts under the supervision of such organizations as the Federal Council, the National Council of Catholic Men, and the United Jewish Laymen's League created a situation where a "large group of religious minded people are not being represented upon the air. These people are Protestants whose opinions are

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19 For more on Ockenga and his leadership of "neo-evangelical" movement during the 1940s, see Garth Rosell, *The Surprising Work of God: Harold John Ockenga, Billy Graham, and the Rebirth of Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2008).
not represented by The Federal Council of Churches." To prove his case, Ockenga pointed out that "Mr. Walter Maier and Mr. Charles Fuller conduct weekly national broadcasts over the Mutual System, costing in Mr. Fuller's case ten thousand dollars weekly." Ockenga complained that "NBC extends a monopoly of religious broadcasting time to the Federal Council for Protestants."

As a solution to the impasse, Ockenga suggested that NBC's policy "should be modified so as to include Protestants of a different opinion from the liberal Federal Council. A representative organization of this second group could easily be formed." The idea of forming a "representative organization" quickly began receiving traction among fundamentalist leaders. William Ward Ayer, for example, bemoaned the "fragmentized condition" of conservative Christianity. Displaying the same wariness toward government for which late-twentieth-century conservatives became known, Ayer argued that fragmentation had allowed conservatives to suffer at the hands of the government, which "is becoming increasingly paternalistic and feels that it should direct the activities of all phases of our national life." Speaking during World War II, Ayer and his colleagues undoubtedly recognized the occasional benefits of government direction. But Ayer nevertheless lamented that the government had launched a campaign of "regimentation and classification in religion."

In Ayer's view, the problem was not simply that the government regimented American religion but principally that it did so on the wrong peoples' advice. "The government," Ayer lamented, "gladly does business with the Federal Council as representing Protestantism." But the Federal Council, Ayer insisted, "does not represent me in many of its programs and pronouncements. . . . There is not an outstanding evangelical speaker broadcasting under the

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20 HJO to Lenox R. Lohr, 6 January 1940, Box 2, Folder 6: "Federal Council of Churches," Ockenga Papers.
direction of the Federal Council who, without fear or favor, preaches Christ and Him crucified."

A broadcaster himself, Ayer used the radio controversy to prove his point. Complaining that "the Federal Council . . . affiliated liberals control the free radio time assigned to Protestants upon two of the great networks," Ayer warned that they even were "endeavoring to control the religious time upon local stations." Soon, it seemed, conservatives would have no access to radio at all.  

Ayer made these latter remarks in St. Louis in 1943, speaking to the 147 conservative leaders who had gathered to draft a constitution for the sort of "representative organization" that Ockenga had described a few years earlier. Dubbed the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action, the new organization was designed as a direct counterpart to the Federal Council. In the 1943 pamphlet titled "National Association of Evangelicals: What Is It and How Does it Function?", the authors insisted that "The Federal Council, because of its lack of a positive stand on the essential doctrines of the Christian faith, its inclusion of leaders who have repudiated these doctrines and its active support of programs and institutions which are non-evangelical or apostate, does not represent the evangelicals of America. The National Association of Evangelicals was organized because of this fact and its creation is a testimonial to the conviction of its constituency that the Federal Council does not represent Bible believing Christians." Even outside observers recognized the N.A.E.'s approach. Reporting on the N.A.E.'s initial 1942 meeting in Chicago, for example, the Christian Century described the N.A.E. as "a rival organization which will parallel the Federal Council of Churches in every one of its activities."  


22 National Association of Evangelicals: What Is It and How Does it Function? (Boston: National Association of Evangelicals, undated), Box 13, Folder 15: "National Association of Evangelicals Minutes and Reports, 1942," Ockenga Papers. The pamphlet is undated, but context suggests a publication date no earlier than 1943; "Evangelicals' Launch Association to Push Costly Program—Say Liberals Have Sapped Evangelistic Power," The Christian Century, May 19,
The N.A.E.'s leaders modeled the organization not just on the Federal Council but also on the New England Fellowship, a Boston-based organization founded in 1929 by J. Elwin Wright, a prominent lay member of Ockenga's Park Street Church. A kind of Rotary Club for conservative New Englanders who dissented from what they saw as the deep-seated liberalism of the region's denominations, the Fellowship bequeathed to the N.A.E. both its membership model and organizational attitude.23 The N.E.F.'s embattled attitude led it to pursue initiatives designed to nurture New England's conservative subculture. Those initiatives included Bible conferences, Christian education programs, a daily broadcast, and two "Fellowship Bookstores" -- in Boston and Portland. Describing the bookstores as a premier "outlet for Christian literature," the N.E.F. often placed advertisements in popular conservative periodicals, touting the bookstores' "books by outstanding Bible teachers."24 When organizing the N.A.E., its leaders borrowed the Fellowship's fields of activity. Like the Fellowship, the N.A.E. also used a membership model that welcomed not just denominations but individuals and churches. A direct challenge to the Federal Council's membership policy, the N.A.E.'s model emphasized its desire to be a safe-haven for churches that sat unhappily within Council-affiliated denominations. This approach to membership also proved more palatable to Baptists, who championed congregational polity. Almost all of the N.A.E.'s first member churches also belonged to the N.E.F.25

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25 Daniel Iversen to HJO, 14 May 1943, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Correspondence 1942," Ockenga Papers; Leslie Marston to HJO, 25 July 1945, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Correspondence 1945," Ockenga Papers; H.S. Nesbit to HJO, 1 May 1944, Box 13, Folder: "National Association of Evangelicals, Correspondence 1944," Ockenga Papers. In 1942, the initial round of applications for membership
By enlisting individual churches, the N.A.E. presented itself not as a new denomination but rather as a group of Christians united around issues of common concern. As Ockenga scribbled in the margins of his personal copy of the N.A.E.’s constitution, the Federal Council had been able "to have united front because of watered down message"; by comparison, "our convictions are so strong we are reluctant to resign them." But cooperation on behalf of such issues as radio forced participants to soften convictions that otherwise proved divisive. One representative for InterVarsity, for example, admitted that he had "always had a dislike and distrust of Holiness and Pentecostal people [sic] but I think this conference has done more to right my attitude toward them and to help me to discover in them real Christian brethren than anything I know."26

The "evangelical" designation itself represented one way that the N.A.E.’s leaders sought to unite conservatives despite their mutual distrust. The N.A.E.’s leaders found the term important; when the executive committee of the N.A.E. decided in 1946 to have Harold Ockenga publish a book articulating their position, for example, they decided to change the title from Foundation of the Faith to Our Evangelical Faith.27 For much of the 1940s, however, neither nominal evangelicals nor outside observers seemed to know exactly who "evangelicals" were. In 1942, for example, J. E. Wright recounted a recent dinner he had with the retired vice-president of one of the large banks in New York. During the dinner, Wright had solicited funding and advice for the Association. Wright remarked that the banker was an "ardent Christian," but he believed that


"such an organization as the National Association of Evangelicals is needless. He believes he is evangelical, and that practically all the Federal Council people are the same. . . . I told him plainly that we found the Federal Council ineffective as an evangelistic agency, and hoped to be able to show them what might be done by adopting a strong position on the essential doctrines and building a program to conform therewith."\(^{28}\)

Picking up on the opposition of "evangelicals" to the Federal Council, such mainline periodicals as the Christian Century insisted that "evangelical" was essentially a euphemism for "fundamentalist." But the Protestant mainline used "fundamentalist" with just as little nuance as fundamentalists used "liberal," and the Christian Century's criticism was not entirely fair. True, most of the N.A.E.'s members easily would have accepted the "fundamentalist" label. Yet they meanwhile differentiated themselves from self-conscious fundamentalism, a stance embodied by Carl McIntire and his American Council of Christian Churches.

McIntire and like-minded critics regularly denounced the N.A.E. as an organization built on "compromise." For McIntire and his associates, the N.A.E. compromised Christian principles not only by associating with churches that belonged to denominations in the Federal Council but also by inviting "Arminians, the Holiness and the Pentecostals" into fellowship. Restricting its members to "those of Calvinist, pre-millennial faith," the A.C.C.C. attempted to sabotage the N.A.E. by stoking long-standing suspicions. As J. R. Flower, the General Secretary of the Assemblies of God, explained in response to a 1944 A.C.C.C. campaign, "I am not so sure our 'Holiness' brethren will take so kindly to the publicity given [by the ACCC] to their association

\(^{28}\) J.E. Wright to HJO, 9 July 1942, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Correspondence 1942," Ockenga Papers. For more on the discursive boundaries that evangelicals identified for themselves and others, see Jon R. Stone, On the Boundaries of American Evangelicalism: The Postwar Evangelical Coalition (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).
with the Pentecostal bodies. . . . But our chief concern is the inevitable fear that will be born in
the hearts of many of our good brethren and the Baptist and Presbyterian faith."29

In response to the A.C.C.C.'s criticism, evangelical leaders described the N.A.E.'s position
as "cooperation without compromise." Still, the grounds of cooperation were not entirely clear.
As R. L. Decker, the chairman for the N.A.E.'s Rocky Mountain region explained in 1942,

the term "evangelical" in the name of this organization testifies that it is founded
upon certain definite theological beliefs. To be evangelical is to believe in the
inspiration and authority of the Bible; the virgin birth, deity, vicarious blood
sacrifice, bodily resurrection and personal second coming of Jesus Christ; the
necessity for individual regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the Judgement to come
and the life everlasting. To be evangelical is also to be concerned for the spiritual
welfare of others and to be willing by manner of living as well as by word of
mouth to testify to these truths and to bring others to know Jesus Christ as their
Saviour and Lord. In other words, to be truly evangelical is to keep the
evangelistic motive dominant and to make evangelism paramount in all Christian
work.30

Decker's theological definition of evangelicalism sounds very much like such contemporary
definitions as David Bebbington's oft-cited "quadrilateral." As with those contemporary
definitions, however, R. L. Decker's list of doctrines clarifies little on its own; taken out of context,
each of its components could describe a wide range of Christians, including many Roman
Catholics. Even cartoonish caricatures of "works-based" soteriology, for example, ultimately rely
upon "individual regeneration by the Holy Spirit."

Decker himself acknowledged the term's ambiguity in December 1945, in an article titled
"Who Are the Evangelicals?" Decker noted that "the formation of the National Association of
Evangelicals has popularized the use of the word 'evangelical.' Although this term has been in use

29 J. Roswell Flower to HJO, 4 May 1944, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Correspondence
1942," Ockenga Papers.

30 R. L. Decker, "Cooperation Among Conservative Christians: Setting forth some reasons why evangelical churches
should cooperate with the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action," Box 13, Folder "National
Association of Evangelicals, Minutes and Reports, 1942. Ockenga Papers.
among Christians for hundreds of years . . . it was not exactly a house-hold term among Bible-believing Christians when the National Association of Evangelicals was formed. . . . The term is certainly more widely used than ever before."

As these confused conversations about "evangelical" identity illustrate, evangelical leaders often presented their activity as little more than an attempt to help fundamentalists to give voice to their own disgruntled yearnings. "Is the National Association of Evangelicals," Donald Grey Barnhouse (1895-1960) asked J. E. Wright in 1942, "to be an association of those who are classed by the middle of the roaders as being out and out fundamentalists? If it is, of course, the scope of the organization is much more limited than I had hoped." Presenting American Protestantism as a veritable tinderbox of evangelical fervor, Barnhouse explained that "I strongly believe that it is possible to get scores and scores of churches to unite in the Association of Evangelicals providing the leadership is not in the hands of men who are not too out and out in their fundamentalism."

As Bob Jones illustrated in correspondence from 1943, evangelical leaders believed that many conservative Protestants were evangelicals in spirit, though perhaps not yet in name. "The rank and file of evangelical people in America do not even know there is a National Association of Evangelicals," Jones explained. He added, "What is needed in this country as I see it is a campaign to sell to the rank and file of evangelicals the idea of a harmonious program built upon the fundamentals of the faith as incorporated in the creed of the National Association of Evangelicals."


32 Donald Barnhouse to J. E. Wright, 13 July 1942, Box "National Association of Evangelicals, Correspondence 1942," Ockenga Papers; Bob Jones to J. Elwin Wright, 10 June 1943, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Correspondence 1943," Ockenga Papers.
Historians generally have talked about these new labels and institutions in a few different ways. First, such historians as George Marsden and Joel Carpenter have cast the initiatives as evangelical leaders' attempt to reclaim evangelicalism's former glory. Describing such evangelical initiatives as the founding of Fuller Seminar in 1947, George Marsden portrays the new evangelical offensive as a "step toward demonstrating that the fundamentalists might still win" the battle for America's soul. This sort of depiction holds true to the portrayal of such leaders as James DeForest Murch, who later described the N.A.E. as "a great forward movement." But this portrayal also overemphasizes continuity with the supposed evangelical past. Although evangelicals undoubtedly narrated themselves into a longer evangelical story, historians' acceptance of that narrative has forestalled studies of how the narrative itself acquired cultural traction.

A second approach to story of the N.A.E. has focused less on narrative continuity than on rupture. In Christian Smith's telling, for example, the N.A.E. created evangelicalism more or less out of nothing. "On a snowy day on April 7, 1942," Smith's *American Evangelicals: Embattled and Thriving* (1998) begins, "a group of about two hundred Christian men--mostly moderate fundamentalists--met at the Hotel Coronado, in St. Louis, Missouri, to launch a religious movement they hoped would transform the character of conservative Protestantism and literally alter the course of American religious history. . . . More than a half-century later, we now see that they succeeded."34

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But neither of these two approaches capture the key innovations of the era. Rather than repurposing past triumphs or creating entirely new triumphs out of sheer institutional will, the greatest contribution of the N.A.E. lay in circulating new discursive tools and institutional logics, effectively creating new paradigms of association and action. The hallmark of these new institutional logics lay not simply in opposition to a supposedly hostile culture but rather in the creation of sanctified analogues to mainstream institutions. To be sure, as Joel Carpenter explains, during the 1930s fundamentalists created "a host of new agencies and retrofitted many older ones to do their work, and their work prospered." But fundamentalists generally had crafted these institutions on a logic of insularity and isolation, premised on criticizing mainstream institutions mostly from a distance.

By comparison, the N.A.E. maintained opposition to the mainstream, but it presented evangelicals less as members of an isolated enclave than as participants in an open, alternative culture. Rather than merely attempting to fit in, they attempted to inhabit and repurpose secular paradigms. The N.A.E. set out to perform the same functions as the Federal Council, for example, and it attempted to compete with the Council for access both to pathways of power and to American hearts and minds. Beginning in the mid-1940s, the notion of creating evangelical analogues to secular organizations, practices, and trends became the operating principle of evangelical culture.

After the N.A.E.’s founding, the next institution to take this approach was the National Religious Broadcasters. Founded in 1944 at the N.A.E.’s second annual convention in Columbus, Ohio, the N.R.B. took William Ward Ayer as its chairman and initially took the name

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35 Carpenter, Revive Us Again, 31.

"Association of Evangelical Radio Broadcasters." The subsequent name change seems to have reflected the organization's emphasis on professionalism and its desire to present itself as the representative of a broad constituency of religious broadcasters. In the N.R.B.'s early years, the leaders of the N.A.E. judiciously policed the N.R.B.'s public pronouncements, fearing that and slip-ups would lead policy-makers not to take the organization seriously. "If statements are there that cannot be substantiated," R. L. Decker remarked in a conversation about a draft of the N.R.B.'s statement of purpose, "it weakens their standing with the Federal Communications Commission. . . . We are at the point where we can very easily allow to happen the thing which has killed the Federal Council of Churches with the Bible-believing people. The Federal Council of Churches never made any such pronouncements as a whole, but their commissions did. We must not allow any of our commissions, or any of our affiliated organizations, to go to the people with statements which have not been reviewed and approved and, if necessary, amended in this Board."  

By the end of the 1940s, evangelicals were able to purchase airtime from Mutual, C.B.S., and N.B.C.--even if on a limited basis. Most airtime purchases came during the summer, as "summer replacements" for National Council programs. Although the N.R.B. claimed and received credit for these small victories, the N.R.B.'s case had been made substantially easier by the rise of television. As the medium of television increasingly attracted viewers' interest, commercial advertisers had sought advertising time on television rather than radio. With fewer broadcasters demanding time on radio, and with less revenue coming from commercial

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38 "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Administration, May 1, 1945," Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Minutes and Financial Reports, 1945," Ockenga Papers.
advertising, radio networks became more open to allowing religious broadcasters to pay for airtime. Together with the N.R.B.'s steady insistence that the National Council did not represent all Protestants, such conservatives as Donald Barnhouse began receiving sustaining time in 1954. Convinced that their efforts were proving effective, the N.R.B. doubled-down on its lobbying efforts in 1956 by moving the organization's headquarters to Washington. 39

A decade after the issue of access to radio led conservative Protestant leaders to found the N.A.E., radio no longer seemed like such a problem. The reasons for that resolution proved complex, but evangelical leaders focused their attention on the simple lesson that their approach had proven effective. Far more than mere criticism, the paradigm of opposing mainstream institutions and practices by creating evangelical alternatives seemed to hold promise. In the late 1940s and beyond, the evangelical book industry adopted the same paradigm.

**The Book Battle**

In the undated manuscript of a speech that Ockenga drafted around 1943, he announced that "There is no longer any use for laymen in the Church." Urging his future listeners to "learn from the war modern warfare," Ockenga insisted that "it is not only the minister who needs a Christian education. Every Christian soldier must be likewise trained in the word of God. The Bible must again be brought to the family table. Only then can we answer Socialism with

Christianity." These sentiments stood at the heart of the turn toward books that evangelical leaders pursued after World War II.

In a way, Ockenga’s statement was little more than a paraphrase of Martin Luther's "priesthood of all believers." But it represented a new direction, rather a return to an old approach. Radio encapsulated the old approach. Radio had worked on the premise that unbelievers might hear the gospel, recognize Christ as Lord, and subsequently work on behalf of the Kingdom. But now the move was to build internal resilience, fighting off what evangelical leaders saw as liberal attempts to undermine it.

Books became an object of conservatives' attention for much the same reason that radio had proved so galvanizing: the perception that liberals had monopolized the medium and used it to ill effect. As Matthew Hedstrom demonstrates, publishing executives and liberal religious leaders had cooperated since the 1920s to encourage religious reading and to popularize liberal books. This alliance emerged out of two mutually beneficial concerns. On the one hand, liberal religious leaders hoped to revitalize what they saw as an American culture in decline, wracked by an "array of cultural and spiritual anxieties--postwar disillusionment and anomie, the perceived crisis of masculinity, and the waning of liberal Protestant institutional power." On the other hand, just as religious leaders began searching for ways of addressing these deep-seated problems, publishers presented themselves as potential saviors.

During the 1920s, the habits and practices of consumer culture had reoriented American society, and publishers saw in religious leaders' anxieties an opportunity to cultivate literary consumerism. "By marrying cutting-edge business practices with a liberal religious outlook," Hedstrom explains, "these leaders aimed to create new markets for books while fortifying the

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spiritual life of those middle-class Americans struggling to cope with the dislocations of modernity." Encapsulating this alliance was Religious Book Week, an initiative held March 13-20, 1921, which used new marketing techniques to "unite the promotion of religious books into a single, coordinated, national campaign, with the full resources of the New York publishing world devoted to broadcasting a simple message about modern books and a modernized faith." The initiative was remarkably successful. Hedstrom surmises that between Religious Book Week and the initiatives that it inspired, these initiatives "put more books into the hands of more Americans than ever before."41

Religious Book Week succeeded because it had such a broad range of support. The initiative claimed to operate on the logic that religious books could and should help Americans to look beyond the narrow concerns that separated them and toward the higher truths that might unite them; as a result, it claimed the support of both liberal Protestants and the more conservative. Among the twenty firms that helped dream up the initiative were Fleming H. Revell Co., Thomas Nelson & Sons, and the Presbyterian Board of Publication. Sharing his understanding of books' ability to redeem readers, Revell Co.'s William Wooster remarked that "if all young married couples could realize how much their future happiness actually depends upon creating the right religious atmosphere about their home from the start, I am sure a number of religious books would be installed along with their very first furnishings from the start."42

As Wooster's comments illustrate, the logic of Religious Book Week was not simply to promote books in general but rather to promote the right kind of books and the right kind of

41 Matthew Sigurd Hedstrom, “Seeking a Spiritual Center: Mass-Market Books and Liberal Religion in America, 1921-1948” (The University of Texas at Austin, 2006), 63-64, 11, 100.

42 Ibid., 66, 78-80.
readers. Toward this end, this initiative helped popularize a number of new paradigms: reading
guides, book clubs, and book lists. While such books as Ezra Pound’s *How to Read* (1931) set out to
teach readers middle-class reading practices, the Book-of-the-Month Club (founded in 1926) and
the Religious Book Club (1927) helped readers to select suitable reading materials. The related
phenomenon of reading digests, including *Reader’s Digest* (1922), presented readers with the
articles and stories that digest editors considered most worthwhile. Finally, organizations like the
American Library Association began producing and disseminating lists of books that deserved
readers’ attention. With urban populations increasingly wealthy, better educated, and able to
devote leisure time to reading due to the newly instituted eight-hour workday, these initiatives fell
upon fertile ground. They helped to create a thriving middle-class culture. The religious side of
these efforts helped popularize books that focused largely on mystical, psychological, and
positive-thinking topics.43

Both the publishing industry and these reading initiatives lost momentum during the
Depression years, as the imperative of financial survival made publishing firms reign in their
ambitions. At the same time, however, the Depression also streamlined publishers’ book lists and
book stocks, as publishers cut title production in the hope of having their supply suit more limited
demands. This ultimately helped clear the way for the industry’s reinvigoration during the 1940s.

During World War II, publishers discovered opportunities for marketing and outreach that
previously had eluded them. The era’s publishers historically had found themselves logistically
and financially unable to create a national book market. The problem not only was that the
industry was centered in New York City, with only a handful of minor outposts throughout the
United States, but also that the industry’s non-professional participants were almost all women.

43 Ibid., 103, 163.
As Trysh Travis explains, "teaching and librarianship . . . were feminized professions, only just emerging from the slough of effeminate amateurism onto the higher ground of well-trained, nationally certified, scientifically categorized masculine professionalism. In an age that idolized the figure of the robber baron . . ., what respect could the image of a trade-book publisher command, especially if he spent all his time hobnobbing with girls and women?" The advent of World War II, however, had "created an occasion, even a mandate, for public outreach."  

One influential form of outreach took the form of the Council on Books in Wartime. Founded in February 1942, the Council popularized the notion that books and reading were essential to democratic societies. As the Council's motto insisted, "Books are weapons in the war of ideas." In an age when bookmen not only worried not only about the feminization of their industry but also possessed genteel anxieties about appearing like self-promoters, the Council "allowed the book trade to solve several problems: bookmen could simultaneously work for the public good as well as the bottom line, and do the outreach necessary to build their markets without losing masculine credibility." Book publishers pushed the notion that "good books, in and of themselves, might make for better men and women, who would, in turn, become better soldiers and more dutiful civilians." 

One of the Council's most prominent components was its Religious Book Committee. "Religious books are being bought and read in astounding numbers," chairman Pat Beaird explained to the New York Times in 1943. "A trend in this direction is expected in a democracy where religious freedom is considered worth fighting for." With their fathers' World War I experience in mind, Beaird explained, young soldiers today "do not discount the dangers ahead.


45 Hedstrom, "Seeking a Spiritual Center," 230.
They are more realistic than their fathers of the first world war, give more thought to religion and are asking for and receiving more religious books." Beaird was right to suggest that soldiers were receiving large numbers of books. The armed services helped make it so, soliciting books from publishers as a way to provide soldiers with leisure activities. But the Council emphasized their power for cultural and religious uplift both on the battlefield and on the homefront.46

Beaird reported that back in the United States, "the demand for religious books . . . is more significant perhaps because it receives little publicity, and its proportions are seldom recognized. Books to strengthen personal faith are the vogue, as with the boys in the service." The most popular books reportedly were "not generally found in libraries" but rather "books designed to be read in small doses, usually in quiet moments at home, during the lunch hour, or while commuting." In Beaird's view, "religious books are becoming recognized as important to a sustained total war effort. The Council on Books in Wartime, aided by a publishing industry eager to assist in prosecuting the war and maintaining morale, has given this recognition."47

Working in tandem with the Council and its Religious Book Committee was the National Conference of Christians and Jews, an interfaith group founded in 1927 whose pioneering efforts focused not just on learning about each others' faiths but, more uniquely, on placing Judaism on the same social footing as Christianity. For the Conference's leaders, "Christianity" essentially meant Roman Catholicism and liberal Protestantism. The N.C.C.J.'s liberal Protestant leadership included such figures as Harry Emerson Fosdick and Samuel McCrea Cavert.48

46 Travis, "Books as Weapons and "The Smart Man's Peace,"" 387.
48 Hedstrom, "Seeking a Spiritual Center," 244-250.
Between 1943 and 1948, the N.C.C.J. annually organized Religious Book Weeks, which drew inspiration both from the Religious Book Weeks of the 1920s and from a similar initiative held in Boston in 1942. The first Religious Book Week kicked off on March 28, 1943, with a fifteen-minute broadcast over the NBC radio network. At the opening gala event for 1943's Religious Book Week, Henry Seidel Canby served as master of ceremonies. Canby personified the spirit that guided Religious Book Week and related initiatives. In addition to serving as an advisor to the Council on Books in Wartime, Canby served the Book-of-the-Month Club as chairman of its book selection committee and, unofficially, as its most influential figure from 1926 until his retirement in 1956.49

Premised on the notion that American democracy and a future without fascism demanded religious tolerance and spiritual vitality, Religious Book Week focused not just on encouraging good books but on cultivating forward-thinking faith. To that end, it produced lists of books that it endorsed, and it disseminated these lists through a variety of outlets. The N.C.C.J. printed the complete list in pamphlet form and distributed it to more than six thousand libraries throughout the United States. But the list also appeared in radio spots and in national newspapers.

Occupying four broadsheet pages in the Sunday, March 28, 1943 issue of the New York Times, the entire Religious Book Week list appeared under the headline "Works of Permanent Value Selected for Religious Book Week." This list presented books in four categories: the Jewish List, the Catholic List, the Protestant List, and the Good-Will List. These categories allowed Jews, Catholics, and Protestants to discover books that not only addressed the devotional or theological concerns of their own traditions but also approached those concerns with a common

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spirit of openess and inclusivity. The Good-Will List enshrined that spirit. Signaling the importance that the leaders of Religious Book Week gave to the Good-Will List, they placed it before the other lists and intended for members of all traditions to read its books.

The Good-Will List offered works of both non-fiction and fiction, all of which attempted to cultivate understanding of and appreciation for each others' traditions. With German crimes against Jews seemingly in mind, several books attempted to historicize and condemn anti-semitism. In Jacques Maritain's *A Christian Looks at the Jewish Question*, for instance, the list suggested that "a famous Catholic writer condemns anti-Semitism as un-Christian"; Louis Goulding's *The Jewish Problem* promised to explain "anti-Semitism, its causes, nature and manifestations"; and Cecil Roth's *Jewish Contributions to Civilization* offered exactly what its title described. Other books focused on emphasizing how members of each tradition faced shared social problems and pursued shared objectives. Willa Cather's *Death Comes to the Archbishop*, for example, offered readers "the story of a parish priest and his beneficent influence on the community," and B. Y. Landis's *Religion and the Good Society* presented "parallel statements about society from Protestant, Catholic and Jewish sources."50

After 1943, Religious Book Week occurred annually until 1948. Over this period, its profile only rose; leaders of government, unions, and culture all lined up behind the notion that a tolerant form of religious life lay at the heart of the American way of life. One member of Congress, for instance, spoke about the initiative from the floor of the House in 1944. In 1947, the Library of Congress produced a complementary exhibit. The chaplain of the War Department had Religious Book Week materials sent to outposts overseas and to Veterans

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Administration hospitals, while such unions as the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union distributed materials to its chapters.

Less important symbolically but far more important logistically, thousands of public libraries and librarians supported Religious Book Week. Since the 1920s, they had supported similar initiatives, which had flowed out of the same sentiment that helped produce the Religious Book Week of the 1920s. Chief among these efforts had been the American Library Association's annual list of recommended religious books. In June, 1943, for instance, the *New York Times* reported on the A.L.A. list, noting that a committee of "five distinguished theologians, educators in the fields of philosophy and religion" had chosen the fifty books from 139 that publishers had submitted. The five committee members included Louis Finkelstein, president of Jewish Theological Seminary; Arthur Cushman McGiffert, president of Pacific School of religion; and Edna Hull, head of the philosophy and religion division of the Cleveland Public Library. While the list's selections seem generally in concert with those of the N.C.C.J., the A.L.A. list was less rigidly liberal than its competitor. C. S. Lewis's *The Screwtape Letters*, for example, appeared on the list alongside Henry Emerson Fosdick's *On Being a Real Person*.

The N.C.C.J. list largely supplanted the A.L.A. effort. The *New York Times* devoted just one half of one broadsheet column to the A.L.A. list--not four entire pages.\(^{51}\) And at least one prominent library began selecting its religious books from the N.C.C.J. list. The latter list's appeal lay largely in the N.C.C.J.'s superior public relations abilities; but it also lay in the importance that Religious Book Week attributed to what Hedstrom terms "the search for a spiritual center." While this search had been "a matter of business and religious concern in the 1920s and 1930s," organizations like the N.C.C.J. and the Council on Books in Wartime's Religious Book

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Committee helped both liberal religion and books become "a matter of national concern in the 1940s."\textsuperscript{52}

If sales figures are any indication, the complementary efforts of the Religious Book Committee and the N.C.C.J.'s Religious Book Week were effective. Between 1935 and 1945, religious books rose from 4.7 percent to 9.9 percent of all book sales. "When American booksellers added up their sales figures for the year 1949," Eugene Exman, the head of Harper and Brothers' religious-book department reported in 1953, "they discovered that four out of the five best-selling titles of non-fiction . . . were religious titles."\textsuperscript{53}

But another measure of influence proves just as compelling as sales figures: the ire of fundamentalists and newly christened "evangelicals." But the two conservative camps prescribed different responses. Old-school fundamentalists responded largely through continued criticism. A fundamentalist lawyer and layman from New York, for example, complained that "the world is learning more and more about many things, but is 'never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.'" As a result, "apostate churches and atheistic colleges, with their subtle, false teachings, are really undermining our civilization by leading our youth farther and father from God and the knowledge of His truth." The best response to such literature, fundamentalists often taught, simply was to avoid liberal books. As one fundamentalist explained, not even God himself could make liberal books spiritually beneficial. Instructing Christians to "ask God's blessing on our reading by always praying beforehand," Charles Lamb cautioned that "saying grace over a meal of poisonous mushrooms wouldn't make them edible." Christians accordingly "should read only those books that will contribute to our betterment and growth." Lamb concluded by remarking

\textsuperscript{52} Hedstrom, "Seeking a Spiritual Center," 221.

that "the dearth of good reading in America today is one of the most lamentable conditions of our society."

But if many fundamentalists suggested avoiding contemptible books, a growing number of evangelicals advocated responding in kind. For two different reasons, Smith noted, the present moment provided the perfect time to respond. Wartime book campaigns provided the first reason. "At a time like this," Wilbur Smith explained in 1946,

> when the Army distributes such a book as Bruce Barton's *The Book Nobody Knows*: when Harry Emerson Fosdick's columns have a phenomenal sale within two months of publication, and deceive many people into thinking they are reading something that is religious true; when most of the official religious lists of books put out by the various national library associations, reading clubs, etc., are made up for the most part of modernistic titles; . . . when our religious book stores are advertising and hanging up for display charts supposedly sketching the development of religion from the earliest times, and show our faith to be ultimately descended from the mythological conceptions of savages, it is time for us who know that only faith in Christ as the Son of God can ever save men from the wrath to come, *it is time* that we begin the production of some literature that can powerfully and triumphantly, let us pray God, meet this mounting tide of faith-destroying literature.

Inciting evangelicals to action, Smith insisted that "it is our business not only to begin to produce this type of literature, but to advertise it, talk about it, circulate it, and introduce it into schools where nothing but destructive literature is now known, until these enemies of the cross are provoked to anger, until they are forced to give a reason for their own unbelief, and are faced in class, and on the campus, in literary periodicals."

As a second reason, Smith highlighted the potential of the new evangelical movement. "An evangelical Christian church," Smith explained, "can do it. We can search out the very best men available in this country, and across the water, lay the opportunity and privilege and necessity of such works as these upon their souls, aid in underwriting the cost of such compositions, and pray

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that God will give them the wisdom and facility of expression by which from their pens may come pages, and chapters, and books, that will stir our indifferent laodicean age, and make young men and women realize once again that Jesus of Nazareth is none other than the only begotten Son of God."\footnote{Smith, "The Urgent Need for a New Evangelical Literature," 20-22.} Harold Ockenga went so far as to suggest that the National Association of Evangelicals could reform American Christianity in the same way that the Protestant Reformers had reformed European Christianity. Ockenga recounted in 1945 how "human intellect" once had helped the Protestant Reformers "to the discovery of God's meaning in the Scriptures." Since then, however, "Protestantism . . . came to subordinate the Bible, not to tradition as had Rome, but to human reason"; in the end, "the Bible was leveled to a plane with other books to become a record of racial experience, not a revelation; the mariner's log rather than his chart and compass." New books, Ockenga suggested, could realign American minds.\footnote{Harold John Ockenga, "Evangelical Christianity in This Age," \textit{United Evangelical Action}, May 2, 1945, 8.}

Essentially refuting the "Back-to-the-Bible" approach that such fundamentalists as Will Houghton had championed in the 1930s, Ockenga and Smith insisted that the Bible alone could not reform Christianity. Reminding listeners that "great achievements have marked the various periods of the Christian church . . . by the books which the servants of God have produced," Smith noted that "our enemies have made use of books, too, and are making more use of them today than ever!" Addressing those who suggested that "all we need to do is to put the Bible in the hands of men and women, and it will suffice," Smith insisted that the Bible "is in the hands of thousands of people today who are lying about it." Locating these lies in liberal books, Smith pleaded, "we not only need sound Christian literature to counteract this wave of soul-destroying, agnostic, God-denying books and periodicals, but we need some well-written, logically-arranged
booklets and books, that can be placed in the hands of a countless multitude of intelligent man and women who today are just groping in the dark, wanting something and not knowing where to find it."\textsuperscript{57}
In the middle of the 1940s, the N.A.E. began taking books seriously. Attempting to stay abreast of book trends, the Association spent a large proportion of its 1945 budget, for example, on books. The book budget nearly surpassed the budget for conventions. The previous year, the N.A.E. had begun an initiative designed to challenge liberal book initiatives directly. Meeting in Evanston, Illinois, from September 19-20, 1944, the N.A.E.’s Board of Administration began their approach to books in the same conciliatory style that evangelical leaders initially had approached radio. "A motion prevailed," the meeting's minutes read, "that the Board approve in principle the establishment of a supplementary service to the American Library Association, providing them with a list of outstanding evangelical books and periodicals each year." Amending the initial motion, a second motion determined "that the N.A.E. request representation on the committee of the A.L.A. which makes up the list of religious books, and that they be requested to appoint someone to the committee of the N.A.E." Presumably because the A.L.A. denied the N.A.E. the representation that it desired, the N.A.E. soon set out not to alter the A.L.A.'s list of religious books but rather to produce a list of its own. In the same way that the N.A.E. had emerged as a sanctified analogue to the Federal Council, evangelical leaders positioned their proposed list as an analogue to non-Christian alternatives. As early as January, 1945, Leslie R. Marston--a Free Methodist bishop from Greenville, Illinois--began sending letters to publishers with information about the new initiative. "The National Association of Evangelicals is setting up an Evangelical Book Committee," the form letter began, "to select each year's outstanding books which are evangelical in religious 

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viewpoint and literary in quality. This list is intended to supplement the American Library Association's general list of outstanding religious books, and it is hoped will serve Christian America as a guide to the best in current evangelical thought." Assuring publishers that "the committee of course will have no publication connections or commercial interest in the books selected, for we are attempting no 'book-of-the-month' or similar project on a profit basis," the letter explained that "the Evangelical Book List will be made available to librarians, Christian publications, book dealers, and in general the religious reading public."

The selection process initially was opaque. The invitation letter explained that "lists of cooperating publishers will not be announced, nor will the committee discriminate against books of general publishers, nor against general religious publishers in favor of definitely evangelical publishers." The letter insisted that "books as literary presentations of evangelical thought will be judged rather than publishers or their denominational or doctrinal affiliations." Yet books would be judged only after passing the "preliminary examination" of the committee's secretary, who then would pass acceptable books on to three anonymous readers.60

As the invitation letter explained, the committee planned not just to present a list of "outstanding evangelical books" but also "another list of books not necessarily evangelical but of striking evangelical significance." The invitation asked publishers "to submit candidates for this

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list also.\textsuperscript{61} Marston later explained that this latter list would contain "outstanding books of significance which are a 'must' for evangelicals to read."\textsuperscript{62}

A little over a month after sending out the invitation letters, Marston reported that "these publishers are not waiting for further details regarding the organization of the committee but are already sending books." Marston took this interest as a sign that "this is a ripe opportunity and that we should proceed quickly with the matter of organization." He accordingly made selection procedure slightly clearer, explaining that the Committee's secretary would receive readers' reports and "determine from these whether or not the book should go on the list of outstanding books for the year."

United Evangelical Action announced the kick-off of the "Evangelical Book Project" in April, 1945, and the first "N.A.E. Book List" appeared on June 15.\textsuperscript{63} While the list would span multiple pages in subsequent years, the first list occupied just one. Starting in 1946, UEA began dedicating an entire issue to books, with its "Annual Book Number." By 1950, these book numbers appeared in both the fall and spring. Every year's list contained two separate categories: "Evangelical in Sentiment" and "Not Evangelical in Sentiment."

\textsuperscript{61} Leslie R. Marston to The Cokesbury Press, 25 January 1945, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals Correspondence, 1945," Ockenga Papers.


Remaking Evangelical Minds

In March, 1945, before the first list appeared, the N.A.E.'s executive committee appointed Carl F. H. Henry as secretary of the "Evangelical Book Committee." In 1947, both Henry's title and the name of the committee received an upgrade, with Henry using the more impressive "Chairman of the N.A.E. Book Commission." Henry cut a sharp contrast with Leslie Marston. A bishop in the Free Methodist Church, Marston was a regular speaker on the revival circuit and an authority on methods of evangelism. Marston's understanding of books and print reflected his revivalist self-understanding. For Marston, print served above all as a tool of conversion. After passing on oversight of the Book List to Henry, Marston became the leader of the N.A.E.'s newly organized "Publications Committee," which placed its focus on sharing "the world view of the Christian mission," rather than engaging points of theology that Christians debated among themselves.

By comparison with Marston, Henry styled himself not as an evangelist but rather as an evangelical intellectual. In addition to serving as secretary of the Book Committee, he served as literary editor of United Evangelical Action, was professor of Philosophy of Religion at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, and would become a founding professor and dean at Fuller Theological Seminary. For Henry, books were not tools of evangelism so much as tools with which evangelicals could and should strengthen their own minds. Only in this way, he insisted,

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could evangelicals evangelize effectively. Books, in other words, did not speak for themselves. They only spoke through book people.

In an article introducing the first list in June, 1945, Henry laid out his vision for the Evangelical Book List. He predicted that "as the annual project gains momentum, it will accomplish several important ends." These included:

(1) encourage wider reading of significant books by evangelicals generally; (2) stimulate the publication of a higher quality of evangelical literature by evangelical publishing houses; (3) remind secular publishing houses of the 'vast demand for evangelical publications which is now largely overlooked; (4) remind evangelical leaders of the rather meagre quality of thought, doctrinally conservative, that attempts to make historic Christianity relevant to peculiar contemporary problems; (5) provide a comparison and contrast between the spear-head interests of most books evangelical and not evangelical in sentiment.67

As many of these goals suggest, Henry found the list of books "not evangelical in sentiment" just as important as the list of evangelical books. In an italicized, parenthetical description of the "not evangelical" list that appeared in book lists throughout the 1940s, Henry explained that "the volumes listed below as not evangelical are so designated either because (1) they are doctrinally inarticulate, obscuring their evangelical loyalties; or (2) they clearly reflect various degrees of departure from evangelicalism, yet represent a viewpoint or achievement with which evangelicals should be familiar; or (3) they are compilations of representative viewpoints and hence necessarily are not exclusively evangelical."68

Henry saw non-evangelical books as means of educating evangelicals and challenging them to engage both the issues of their day and their relevance to Christian faith. From the start, Henry admitted that he generally found non-evangelical books superior to their evangelical competitors. "The plain fact is that, by and large, non-evangelical thought continues to speak


68 Ibid., 14.
definitely [sic] in numerous crisis areas because no orthodox treatment appears," Henry complained. "Too frequently," he continued, evangelicals had relied upon books that have taught them "to detect the weakness of a position which the modern mind itself had abandoned, or seriously modified." ⁶⁹

This praise for non-evangelical books became one of Henry's refrains. In 1947, for instance, he described the list of evangelical books as "by far the strongest, taken as a whole, which has yet represented the evangelical camp." But he meanwhile insisted that "better days are ahead for the evangelical movement." Henry admitted that evangelical books continued to lag behind non-evangelical books, by most measures of quality. "A comparison of the two lists discloses that while the evangelical viewpoint may have a stronger representation than in recent years," Henry explained, "nonetheless its volumes, however much truer their perspective, do not measure up by and large to the vigor of the non-evangelical treatments."

As late as 1950, Henry continued to cast evangelical books in negative light, but he admitted their improvement. "The evangelical volumes reflect a considerable merit," Henry explained, "although in the main they do not yet grapple with current theological and cultural problem centers with a life-or-death interest. But even a casual glance at the list indicates that it is no longer true, as might have been said not too many years ago, that the evangelicals are permitting other thinkers exclusively to define the issues and problems which theology must face in our times." ⁷⁰

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By 1950, Henry had begun not just to criticize evangelical books but also to attack what he saw as the cause of their inferiority. In his view, the bread-and-butter practice of reprinting had become a primary impediment to evangelicalism's intellectual advance. "A word must also be said about the reissuance of choice evangelical volumes which have been long out of print," Henry began, "a program for which the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company especially provided impetus." Offering a measure of praise for these "restorations" (a term he chose to contrast the practice with "reprints" of current books and recently out-of-print books), Henry noted that Eerdmans's *Pulpit Commentary* had received a place on the 1950 list. He highlighted its scale, explaining that it would "require fifteen solid carloads of paper and will occupy the largest offset press in the country for more than six months."

But after remarking that "many of the restorations have done a substantial service to the evangelical cause," Henry suggested that they had proven valuable mostly by "confronting liberalism with a solid perspective with which it has never ably grappled." Henry argued that "lacking contemporary volumes of similar merit, the evangelical movement has had to step into the gap with older classics, tried and true, but which has disappeared from the markets because liberalism had no interest in them. But at most this is a delaying action which if not paralleled by contemporary evangelical effort, will result only in embarrassment to the evangelical cause."

The year after beginning this line of criticism, Henry intensified it, remarking that some publishing firms, with deep roots in the evangelical past, are frequently indifferent to the theological sympathies of some of their authors, or concentrate on the publication of a type of material which, if it were issued, would hardly work serious hardship upon conservative Christianity. One of the dangers in this regard is the extent to which the republication of last-century books has taken hold. In many cases such volumes have an apologetic value which survives until a competent contemporary literature arises to take its place; the impetus which the William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company has given in this regard, caught up by numerous other publishing houses, is commendable enough. But when one observes the increasing flow of last-generation and even last-century material, in which a primary consideration seems to be an opportunity to reissue volumes on
which a publisher's royalty need no longer be paid, there appears cause for meditation, when rather acceptable substitute volumes are available.\textsuperscript{71}

If Henry went out of his way to gild his criticism of reprinting with praise for Eerdmans Company, that was largely because Eerdmans published his own books. To the extent that Henry proverbially bit the hand that fed him, he attempted to soften the bite's blow through praise.

In 1947, Eerdmans Co. published Henry's \textit{The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism}. The treatise would secure Henry's reputation as an evangelical leader. Henry insisted in the book that fundamentalists had been right in opposing modernism, with its "shallow insistence on inevitable world progress and on man's essential goodness." But he lamented that fundamentalists had abandoned social reform merely because modernists had focused their energies on such efforts. Unfortunately, Henry explained, "for the first protracted period in its history, evangelical Christianity stands divorced from the great social reform movements." Meanwhile, "the liberal goes scot free in a forest of weasel words."\textsuperscript{72}

In Henry's view, fundamentalists had failed to remain committed to social reform because they too often had backed themselves into theological corners, often compelling themselves to take up positions "so extreme that only a mental incompetent would subscribe to it." He complained that fundamentalists had "needlessly invited criticism and even ridicule, by a tendency in some quarters to parade secondary and sometimes even obscure aspects of our position as necessary frontal phases of our view." (Henry sometimes called this phenomenon

\textsuperscript{71} Carl F. H. Henry, "A Look at the Year in Books," \textit{United Evangelical Action}, April 1, 1951, 10.

"fundamentalist phariseism."\textsuperscript{73} Henry warned that if fundamentalists did not address this criticism, "fundamentalism in two generations will be reduced either to a tolerated cult status or, in the event of Roman Catholic domination in the United States, become once again a despised and oppressed sect."

In order to address fundamentalism's social shortcomings, fundamentalists needed to address their theological limitations. One of the best ways to do this, Henry explained, was to develop "competent literature in every field of study" and, with that literature in mind, "project a solution for the most pressing world problems."\textsuperscript{74} To be sure, centuries of Christians had insisted that sanctified ideas could and should translate into righteous action. The difference here, however, was that Henry positioned books not only as the carriers of these ideas but also as the foundation for action and collective mobilization.

In other words, Henry consciously positioned books as the engine of the new evangelical public. Henry hoped that books would strengthen evangelical self-awareness and help evangelicals to honor their best intentions. Henry sometimes explained that books should serve as "propaganda." In 1950, Henry remarked that "the world of religious books is a propaganda world, and while propaganda in our age tends to be either false or deficient, it is not always so. The Christian message came into the world as \textit{news}, indeed as \textit{the good news}. Christianity from its beginnings has involved a literature which has been set apart from all other world writings as the written revelation of God."\textsuperscript{75}

\textsuperscript{73} Henry to Ockenga, 22 January 1948, Box 40, Folder "Henry, Carl, 1947-1948," Ockenga Papers.

\textsuperscript{74} Henry, \textit{The Uneasy Conscience}, 68-70.

\textsuperscript{75} Carl F. H. Henry, "The Year in Books."
But if Henry saw books as the path to the evangelical future in 1947, he had invested far less in books or evangelicalism just a few years earlier. Paradigms had changed quickly. In the early 1940s, he had been a supporter of print in general, but not books. Published with Zondervan and originally written as a thesis for a Masters of Divinity that he received from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1942, Henry's *Successful Church Publicity, a Guidebook for Christian Publicists* (1943) retells Christian history as a history of print publicity. It cast the authors of the Bible, Reformation leaders, and American founders as the publicists of their respective eras. Throughout Christian history, Henry explains, Protestants historically relied upon print to publicize and shape their movement.

In every era that Henry narrates, periodicals draw most of his attention. Acknowledging the imbalance of books and periodicals, he explains that Christians generally have published books only "when finances permitted." But if books represent a surprising absence from Henry's early book, so too does evangelicalism. Henry never uses the term "evangelical" to describe himself or his Protestant compatriots, always preferring the simple word "Christian."

Judging by the dozens of periodicals that gave Henry's *Uneasy Conscience* positive reviews, his work of propaganda had the sort of effect that he hoped it might. His book not only solicited the intellectual interest of a wide range of conservative Protestants but also drew them into the oppositional paradigm that Henry championed. One Mennonite explained, for example, that "it is most heartening for those of us who have accepted the Anabaptist tradition and have caught its vision to hear a Fundamentalist to say these things. It is precisely because of the faults in Fundamentalism pointed out by Dr. Henry that Mennonites have been afraid of that movement even when they were yet more afraid of liberalism. So Mennonites had been caught between two

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great forces in Protestantism, neither of which seemed Biblical to them." As a review in the *The Presbyterian Outlook* explained, Henry's accusations "exploded a bombshell in fundamentalist ranks." Had they not sensed that Henry's book spoke to them, fundamentalists might not have felt such percussive effects.

"Evangelical" Markets

The attitude toward books that Carl Henry embodied and advocated received a welcome reception from the evangelical book industry. They had, after all, spent years not only touting books' intellectual and devotional utility but also emphasizing the ability of all evangelical Christians to benefit from their offerings. But with Henry and other evangelical leaders sanctioning books as gateways to the evangelical future, publishers encountered unprecedented opportunity, and they seized it. They built business strategies in its service. These strategies included book contests and an emphasis on fiction.

"The Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company," an August 1946 Eerdmans advertisement trumpeted, "announces an Evangelical Book Award which will be given to the author of a book in the field of Evangelical Christianity. . . . Long a leader among evangelical publishers, Eerdmans is seeking to encourage writers, both old and new, to produce volumes which will make a real contribution to the field." In the contest rules, the company explained that "with the exception of fiction, all unpublished manuscripts in accord with the spirit and great doctrines of

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77 Melvin Gingerich, "On My Desk," attributed to *Mennonite Weekly Review*, but available as a typed-out copy of original article; Ernest Trice Thompson, "Review of *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*," *The Presbyterian Outlook*, February 9, 1948. I encountered both reviews and dozens of others in a scrapbook that Eerdmans Co. maintained and stored in Henry's author file. Eerdmans Co. Archives.
Evangelical Christianity are eligible for the award. Writers should be positively and constructively Christian in their approach."

The submission deadline for Eerdmans's award was September 1, 1947; in February 1948, the firm would announce that E. J. Carnell won the $5,000 prize with his *Introduction to Christian Apologetics*, which Carnell originally had titled *The Logic of Conservative Christianity*. According to the press release that Eerdmans published in *Christian Life and Times* (which had subsumed Eerdmans's *Religious Digest* in October 1947), the book "was planned and written in response" to the award, going "through three complete drafts before being submitted." Carl Henry wrote the book's foreword, in which Henry explained that "few things are as promising for the future of conservative Christianity as the vigorous apologetic mood among the younger evangelicals, among whom Prof. Carnell stands as an able and effective representative." 78

Alongside this "Evangelical Book Award," Eerdmans launched a fiction award. The company announced the fiction award in February 1946, several months before announcing the Evangelical Book Award. Setting the prize at $5,000, Eerdmans solicited the novel "most successfully depicting Christian faith and Christian living." Advertising the contest in such prominent periodicals as *Moody Monthly, King's Business*, and the *Christian Herald*, Eerdmans explained that "on the whole, Christian fiction has fallen far short of the literary standards established and maintained in the secular fields." Noting agreement with a recent *Moody Monthly* article that made precisely this point, Eerdmans set out to "raise the art of the Christian novel to a new and acceptable level." 79


79 Eerdmans Company Scrapbook, 51.
In a mailing for the contest, Eerdmans printed extracts from a recent article in *The Presbyterian Guardian* by Robert Atwell, of Grace Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Westfield, New Jersey. In his article-cum-advertisement, Atwell attributed "the dearth of good Christian fiction" to three factors. "First, is the anti-intellectualism of our day which has put its stamp so emphatically on our current 'Christianity.' Second, even in fundamentalist circles, there is a poverty-stricken conception of Christianity which surrenders the whole realm of nature to the world in the mistaken conviction that it is Satan's domain. Third, Christians have mistakenly adopted a defeatist attitude." Atwell explained that this attitude saw Christians accept that if books "present the true Gospel of Christ," then they "would not be a best-seller." As counter-examples, Atwell cited the Bible, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, *Ben Hur*, and Shakespeare, whose prose drew upon Biblical language but "suffers not a whit in popularity from Biblical quotation and from large elements of Christian morality." In conclusion, Atwell shared that "literature, including good fiction, is an instrument both for grounding the faith and nourishing the zeal of the Christian and for presenting the gospel truth to the non-Christian. Let us then claim it for our God."

The timing of Eerdmans's contest announcement, the firm's contest rules, and descriptions like Atwell's all place the contest firmly in and around the sort of book vision that Henry championed. To be sure, this was not a surprise, for Eerdmans had shared the same vision for decades. Yet it had tied that vision to the "evangelical" name only occasionally, and the label itself produced some confusion. Writing an editorial on the contest in *The Banner*, editor Henry Kuiper noted that

we make just one exception. One of these rules pertains to the religious character of the novels to be submitted and reads as follows: "The Christianity exemplified

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80 Ibid., 211.
in the manuscripts should be evangelical in doctrine and spirit." Since the word 'evangelical' can be interpreted in various ways and since the question arose in our minds whether the Wm. B. Eerdmans Company intended this qualification to express the minimum or the maximum of Christianity which the novels that will be submitted should contain, we wrote a friendly letter to Mr. Eerdmans asking for some information on this point. In that letter we also expressed the conviction that the term "evangelical" should not point to the maximum of religious thought and atmosphere in these novels since that would exclude the effort of every one in our circles who might aspire to a delineation of characters and situations reflecting our Calvinistic approach to life.

William Eerdmans apparently responded by explaining "Yes, what we say in point 3 is the very minimum. An 'evangelical story of a definitely Calvinistic type' is the very thing we hope we will get, and I hope it will win the prize."\(^{81}\)

To be sure, Eerdmans had not invented the idea of book contests. Both Eerdmans and other firms pitched their contests in explicit opposition to mainstream counterparts. "Let us encourage the production of good literature," Atwell insisted. "If Doubleday Doran will award a $20,000 prize to Elizabeth M. Howard for her corrupt and corrupting Before the Sun Goes Down, it is high time for Christian publishers to offer greater incentives for Christian novels." Other Christian publishers also had launched book contests. In April 1945 Moody Press had launched a writing contest with $1,000 for first prize, $750 for second, and $250 for third. Noting that the prizes were separate from royalties, Moody's contest rules explained that "new high grade fiction would be a blessing to youth in an age which has been particularly hard on its young people."\(^{82}\)

As Henry noted in his 1946 comments on the second annual book list, "several prize contests are in the offing." Highlighting Moody Press's distinguished fiction contest, Eerdmans's fiction contest, Abingdon-Cokesbury's prose contest ($7,500), and a rumored Zondervan contest, Henry explained that competitions would enable writers to "present the thrust of the gospel with greater

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81 Henry J. Kuiper, "Fiction Contest," *The Banner*, January 18, 1946, 68.

82 Eerdmans Company Scrapbook, 424.
literary power." He supposed that "if evangelicals can speak anew, they will speak more creatively in the present hour of indecision than may again be their opportunity for many decades." Above all, book contests demonstrated that "the modern mind is being remade."83

Although book contests publicly took comments like Henry's as their official operating logic, they also emerged out of a desire for sales. The genius of book contests was that they operated in two registers. On the one hand, they provided a way to encourage people to write or submit good manuscripts. On the promise of cash and status, authors might write and submit manuscripts that they might not otherwise. Perhaps more important than their ability to solicit books, however, book contests appealed to firms because they generated sales. The contest was essentially a marketing campaign wrapped in the language of Christian service.

Every time a publisher selected a contest winner, the firm initiated a publicity campaign that touted both the book and the interest it had generated. In January 1950, for example, Zondervan announced in such periodicals as United Evangelical Action that it had chosen Sallie Lee Bell's Until the Day Break as the second winner of its International Christian Fiction Contest. A housewife from New Orleans, Bell received a $2,000 prize for her "historical novel on the time of Christ." Zondervan noted that the book had been "selected as the book of the month choice by the Family Book Club of the Doubleday and Company, New York City," and that it had sold over 75,000 copies in its first edition. Such sales temporarily made it the bestselling title in Zondervan's history.84

The sales expectations of book contests became sufficiently high that authors occasionally felt guilty when their books did not meet sales expectations. In 1948, for example, E. J. Carnell

83 Henry, "Literature for Our Time."

felt called to apologize for his books' low sales. "Doubtless Mr. Eerdmans is disappointed that my Introduction is such a shameful piece of work from the point of view of sales, in comparison with Root Out of Dry Ground." But Carnell touted the book's quality, noting that "the only consolation I have is that the Introduction is of such thorough and penetrating character that it will make up in enjoying immortality for what it lacks as a flashy 'take' with the public right now."85

Even more than non-fiction books like Carnell's, fiction benefited from the sanction that books received in the late 1940s.86 To be sure, Eerdmans, Zondervan, and Moody all had expanded their fiction production dramatically around 1940. As early as 1939, Eerdmans had begun pushing fiction. While its 1939 trade catalog displayed books alphabetically, its forty-seven-page general catalog for 1940 devoted the first ten pages of its attractively laid out catalog to fiction.87 Around the same time, Zondervan made a similar shift to fiction. Fiction was a crucial ingredient in Zondervan's rise to prominence.

For a number of reasons, however, publishers had touted their fiction lists with something less than a full throat. The problem was that publishers traditionally had cast the book business as a kind of ministry, and fiction was more difficult to reconcile with the idea of ministry than non-fiction. In 1946, the novelist Paul Hutchens testified to publishers' reticence in a memoir about his early career. Hutchens recounted that one month after submitting his novel to a leading evangelical publisher, "we received the verdict--a rejection--the reason, 'Fiction with a purpose is


86 When Carnell himself attempted to write a novel in 1950, Eerdmans replied that "fiction is not your field." WBE to Carnell, 11 October 1950, Folder "Carnell," WBE Papers.

87 Catalog and List of Publications, Fall and Winter, 1939-1940, Eerdmans Co. Archives.
the hardest for us to market.' This verdict, however, instead of taking the wind out of my sails, only irked me. I knew the publisher was wrong. I knew it was a good story and that it would sell—a God-given conviction, I am now sure." Hutchens added, "a second publisher, aware of the other rejection, and being very busy, showed no interest in the manuscript. A third submitted it to one of his readers, who, while a consecrated Christian did not believe fiction to be an acceptable vehicle for Christian truth." Hutchens mentioned that after getting in touch with one of the publisher's readers, he was urged to pursue "factual writing rather than fiction."

To be sure, Christians had read such novels as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) for centuries. But as Bunyan explains in his introductory "Apology for his Book," even he had reservations about the usefulness of fiction. Bunyan explained that he had written the manuscript mostly "[his] ownself to gratify." After completing it, "Some said, John, print it; others said not so / Some said it might do good; others said, no." By the nineteenth century, many conservative Protestants called for a more utilitarian approach to reading. Critics of Christian novels not only claimed that Christians needed no books other than the Bible but also that inferior Christian novels degraded the tenor and tone of authentic Christian faith.

Novels could degrade faith in a number of ways. By definition, fiction was not true; beyond that, some conservatives criticized it for cultivating imagination, promoting idleness and idolatry, and taking attention away from evangelism. As Lynn Neal suggests, suspicion of fiction also was bound up with suspicion of women, who were the most diligent readers of fiction. Running alongside this suspicion of women was the attendant suspicion that publishers sold novels to

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capitalize on women's frivolous interests and consumptive habits. Popular lines of "dollar fiction" seemed not only to cater to those supposed habits but also devalue more serious and worthwhile reading. When conservatives reflected consciously on the value of fiction, the most positive comments tended to share the sentiment of a 1939 review of a Zondervan novel in *The Banner*. "The books cannot do any harm," the reviewer remarked, "but may do some good."92

With such ambivalent attitudes toward fiction swirling around, publishers like Eerdmans often marketed Christian fiction by turning not to theological principles but rather to the language of class. In addition to arguing that Christians should read fiction and non-fiction books as necessary aids to faith, Christian publishers attempted to increase sales by presenting books as an essential part of middlebrow culture. Quoting W. E. Gladstone in the second issue of the *Eerdmans Quarterly Observer*, a magazine that the company distributed to book dealers, distributors, and anyone else interested in the company's offerings, Eerdmans instructed readers, "books are delightful society" and urged them to "value them much."93 This endorsement had followed an editorial in the first issue of the *Quarterly Observer*, in which the editor explained that "if we are careful in the selection of our books, and learn to pick out really good books, they will enrich, widen, and enlarge our lives and clarify our experiences. . . . We should feed our minds with a variety of thoughts, as we do our stomachs with a variety of foods."94

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But beginning in the mid-1940s, publishers received greater sanction to tout their novels. The prevailing opinion of fiction moved from suspicious ambivalence to general support. This support rested on the notion that novels held both theological and devotional promise. Theological promise lay in novels' emphasis on gospel truths; novels' devotional promise lay in their ability to entertain Christians who otherwise might turn to less wholesome reading materials.

Critics of Christian literature therefore urged Christian writers to produce novels that were both doctrinally sound and entertaining. In April 1945, for example, Roger Heidelberg published an article in *Moody Monthly* titled "Christian Fiction--a Criticism." Just a few years earlier, an article with this title likely would have repeated classic criticisms of fiction. But Heidelberg's criticism took fiction's importance as a starting point. After noting that Christian fiction often carried the valuable message that "Christ died for our sins," Heidelberg insisted that "any message, to be effective, must somehow reach the heart of the ones for whom it is intended. In fiction, this can only be accomplished if the story is sufficiently well written to create the illusion of reality in the mind of the reader." In other words, Heidelberg's criticism simply was that novels needed more compelling narratives and better storytelling.⁹⁵

Remarking upon Heidelberg's article in *The Banner*, Henry Kuiper insisted that "We need better fiction!" Kuiper complained that existing fiction often "is not good, either as fiction or as vehicles of Christian thought." Yet even as he encouraged "Christian fiction which has literary value," Kuiper still cautioned "lovers of fiction" not to "confine their reading to this type of literature lest they spoil their taste or make it hard to develop a taste for more solid reading." Kuiper made a special plea for Christian fiction in the Reformed style, noting that "there is no

fiction which is merely Christian, without any further qualification." Fiction always reflects the theological dispositions and denominational affiliations of its authors. Still, even recognizing that fiction might undermine Reformed identity, Kuiper insisted that the potential pros outweighed the cons.96

Both this support of fiction and this concern about its quality often reflected the belief that good fiction could reach young people. "When cultural knowledge is added to realistic knowledge," a 1945 editorial in *Eerdmans Quarterly Observer* explained, "we have the basis of a true education. In this sense, the novel can be used as an instrument of education. Novels take us through many lands, new experiences, and strange adventures. The reading of fiction will be wholesome if we choose that which is pure from that which is base. Christian fiction should have a prominent place in our choice of novels." The editorial emphasized that children benefited from fiction even more than adults. "The children may not always understand what they read," the editorial explained, "but good literature will ring in their minds long afterward, building for them a foundation for the future. . . . If we place good books in the hands of children, we will cultivate for them the desire for only the best types of literature."97

To be sure, the desire to keep succeeding generations in the faith was not new. The same desire had helped create such established paradigms as Sunday school, and--more latterly--initiatives like Youth for Christ.98 Y.F.C. began as an organization in 1944 in Chicago, under the leadership of the pastor Torrey Johnson, the businessman Herbert Taylor, and the young evangelist Billy Graham. The organization cast itself as the institutional manifestation of youth

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96 Henry J. Kuiper, "We Need Christian Fiction!", *The Banner*, January 11, 1946, 36.


rallies that appeared independently throughout the country. "Where did it come from?" Torrey Johnson rhetorically asked a group of Y.F.C. leaders at the organization's first annual convention, which met at Winona Lake in July 1945. "I don't know. In West Virginia they've been having a YOUTH FOR CHRIST movement for the last twelve years. . . . In New York Jack Wyrtzen is going on his fourth or fifth year. Detroit has been going since 1937, and Walter Smyth's group has been going in Philadelphia for about ten years."99 Y.F.C. meetings often met on Saturday nights, offering young people an alternative to secular amusements and the opportunity to see themselves as part of something larger than themselves. One of the first Y.F.C. meetings, a "Victory Rally" held at Chicago Stadium in 1944, took on a war theme and drew as many as 30,000 attendees. A reported 60,000 people attended the second Victory Rally at Chicago's Soldier Field on Memorial Day, 1945--just three weeks after V.E. Day.100

As the Y.F.C leader Merv Rosell explained in a 1945 Zondervan book about the movement, "Youth demands a challenge! It will accept nothing less. It hungers for victory, conquest, warfare, faith! . . . We shall look to the yesterdays for grand banners, great conquests and historic miracles . . . and then believe God to match and outdo them today for victorious tomorrows!" Rosell explained that the war had given young people in general and young men in particular a "world vision," and he urged them "to carry this converting challenge to every war-sodden corner and crevice of this shrinking globe." To that end, Rosell noted that "books are the best means of preserving and transmitting truth in its integrity." He of course prioritized the


100 For more on Y.F.C. and the evangelical businessmen who supported it, see Sarah Ruth Hammond, ""God's Business Men": Entrepreneurial Evangelicals in Depression and War" (United States--Conn.: Yale University, 2010), 120-25.
place of the Bible, "the Book of the Burning Heart." But he also noted that books like his were necessary to "challenge the youth I cannot reach personally."[101]

Even if attention to youth was not new, this organized attention to youth and the cooperative possibilities of the N.A.E. allowed publishers to treat young people as a relatively untapped market. Beginning in 1944, evangelical publishers pushed particularly hard for revised Sunday school materials. Since the nineteenth century, the vast majority of Protestant Sunday schools had based their curricula on a system known as the "International Sunday School Lessons," which came together in the 1870s out of international Protestant ecumenism. The idea behind the system was that all English-speaking Protestant Sunday schools would examine the same sections of the Bible every week. It was a "uniform" plan.[102]

Predictably, Protestants disagreed wildly on how to teach each week's Bible selections; as a result, publishers offered a variety of commentaries on the International System. Fundamentalists produced a number of these commentaries, and competition between them occasionally fueled inter-personal conflict. In the 1930s, for example, Wilbur Smith had become editor of Francis Peloubet's popular Peloubet's Select Notes on the International Sunday School Lessons. Writing to Harold Ockenga in 1943, Smith complained the Moody Bible Institute professor Clarence Benson had become "head of an organization . . . publishing a graded lesson system." Smith was particularly outraged by Benson's habit of attempting to sell it at every opportunity. "Everywhere he goes,"


Smith explained, "he attempts to thrust this particular lesson system, and all of his printed literature, upon those who are listening to him, or those who are writing to him."  

In the wake of the N.A.E.'s founding, evangelicals generally complained less about commentaries' relative merits than about what they saw as the control of modernists over the International Council of Religious Education, the caretaker of the International System. Evangelicals pointed out, for instance, that the system included relatively few lessons from the book of Revelation. Several different groups of conservatives accordingly began organizing their own lesson systems; these included the Assemblies of God and Carl McIntire's American Council of Christian Churches.

The A.C.C.C.'s initiative led the N.A.E. to begin plans for its own version. This plan's momentum was restrained, however, by Fleming H. Revell Co., which published the International System itself and cautioned the N.A.E.'s executive committee "against the adoption of any new uniform lessons." Revell Co. used the same argument as the president of *The Sunday School Times*, who explained that "we earnestly hope that if it seems absolutely necessary to break away from the International Uniform Lessons, there may be only one other system of sound, evangelical uniform lessons. It may seem difficult at present to bring this about. . . . If we cannot, and if there should be three or even four systems of uniform lessons in the field, then there would be a great deal of confusion in the Sunday schools."  

In December 1944, the executive committee temporarily respected Revell Co.'s wishes, voting "to approve the International

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103 Wilbur M. Smith to HJO, 23 December 1943, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals Correspondence, 1944," Ockenga Papers.

104 Wilbur M. Smith to HJO, 29 December 1943, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals Correspondence, 1944," Ockenga Papers.

105 Philip E. Howard to HJO, 11 February 1944, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals Correspondence, 1944," Ockenga Papers.
lessons, but with the request that certain changes be made. . . . A committee of three was appointed to go to the International Council to tell them they did not like the material, and to insist that some change be made." The meeting's minutes note, however, that "all the publishers are not satisfied with this action." And, in the end, when the International Council rebuffed the N.A.E.'s appeal, other publishers had their way.\textsuperscript{106}

As early as April 1944, evangelical publishers gathered together in Columbus as part of a "Conference of Independent Publishers," meeting concurrently with the National Association of Evangelicals. The goal was to discuss the creation of a new lesson system. Publishers saw this as a tremendous opportunity to involve themselves in an initiative that they hoped would find widespread adoption, and firms like Zondervan went out of their way to ingratiate themselves with evangelical leaders. Almost immediately after the conference, Zondervan Co. began sending Ockenga somewhat sycophantic letters, congratulating him on the N.A.E.'s work, asking him to visit Grand Rapids, and soliciting manuscripts.\textsuperscript{107}

Publishers saw Sunday school materials as a good commercial opportunity largely because the publishing industry more broadly had turned its attention toward children. In 1931, the National Association of Book Publishers released the results of a survey whose "basic purpose . . . was to study the economic structure of the industry and to suggest practical means for strengthening it--for eliminating waste and for improving profits of all rightfully engaged in it." Led by O. H. Cheney, the study had received financial support from such allied trade groups as the American Booksellers Association, the International Council of Religious Education, the

\textsuperscript{106} "Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee, National Association of Evangelicals, December 13, 1944," Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals, Minutes and Financial Reports, 1944," Ockenga papers.

\textsuperscript{107} Philip E. Howard to HJO, 11 February 1944; B. D. Zondervan to HJO, 19 April 1944, Box 13, Folder "National Association of Evangelicals Correspondence, 1944," Ockenga Papers.
American Library Association, and the American Association for Adult Education. So many organizations lent the study their support because they feared that the economic downturn would destroy their businesses. Cheney was not a member of the book trade, but "had taken a special interest in publishing facts and figures" as vice-president of Irving Trust Company. The Survey Committee included such publishing luminaries as W. W. Norton as Alfred A. Knopf. The report ultimately proved so popular that R. R. Bowker republished the report in 1949 in response to "continued interest in the material collected and its present value as a base from which to evaluate current conditions."

Virtually every participant in the book industry therefore knew about the so-called "Cheney Report" and lent its findings their attention. One of Cheney's principal conclusions was the book industry could and should focus its energies on transforming "readers" into "book buyers." The best way to "produce" more book buyers, Cheney explained, was to guide children through "the break between school and 'life.'" The failure to do so, he explained, had led to "the failure of 'carry-over' in reading habits, even after college."108

Increasingly aware of the commercial possibilities created through this Sunday school initiative and other evangelical book initiatives of the mid-1940s, the N.A.E. spent the first half of the 1950s debating whether or not the Association itself should enter the marketplace. The debate began in 1952, when Cincinnati's Standard Publishing Company decided to sell itself on the open market. After learning of the sale, James Forest DeMurch, then-editor of UEA and former editorial secretary of Standard Publishing's Christian Standard, wrote to a number of "large-visioned" and wealthy evangelical businessmen, including Charles Fuller, R. G. LeTourneau, Herbert Taylor, and John Bolten (owner of Bolta Rubber Company) to see if they might be

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interested in purchasing a firm that "has for close to hundred years produced religious journals, books, Sunday School supplies, religious art subjects, . . . [and] materials for some thirty Protestant denominations." A booklet provided by the firm's representative noted an asking price of six million, but also explained that the firm would produce an annual profit of one million within three years. A former organ of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), that denomination remained the firm's largest customer.\textsuperscript{109} Murch presented the core convictions of the Christian movement as deeply consonant with the N.A.E.'s mission.

Among the businessmen whom Murch contacted, Bolten displayed the most interest. He became convinced that the N.A.E.'s non-profit status was an incentive to purchase the firm. Whereas the firm's previous owners paid federal taxes on their profits, Bolten reasoned that the N.A.E. would not. But the federal government balked at this assumption. As a result, in 1954 the N.A.E. continued its attempt to purchase the firm by setting up a separate non-profit foundation as a shelter.\textsuperscript{110}

In 1955, Bolton completed the purchase through the "Publishing Foundation of Cincinnati," which he created as "a non-profit and non-sectarian organization." At the request of N.A.E. members who worried about associating the business publicly with the N.A.E.'s initiatives, the purchase occurred anonymously. Cincinnati newspapers speculated about the buyers' identity; rumors suggested that Billy Graham had orchestrated the purchase. In a way, rumors were grounded in fact; Murch had written Graham in 1953, informing him of the impending purchase and explaining that "it would be difficult to envision the vast possibilities for

\textsuperscript{109} James DeForest Murch to John Bolton, 29 August 1952, Box 13, Folder "N.A.E. Standard Publishing Co.,” Ockenga Papers.

\textsuperscript{110} Clyde Taylor to John Bolton, 5 February 1954, Box 13, Folder "N.A.E. Standard Publishing Co.,” Ockenga Papers.
the evangelical cause which could grow out of such a purchase." But Graham had little to do with the purchase itself. After Bolten bought Standard, he hired Murch as a consultant to the firm. It was a personal triumph for Murch, for a conflict with the firm's management had forced him to leave its employ in 1945.

As Murch revealed in undated notes he wrote to himself about the firm's potential, he believed that "in the evangelical world Standard is practically unknown, due to its isolationist policy." Yet he hoped that "Standard can be a spokesman" for the "New Evangelical Movement." He imagined that it could furnish "strategy, literature, promotion," linking together disparate evangelical organizations and producing an "orthodox journal" analogous to the *Christian Century*. This latter goal ultimately produced the periodical known as *Christianity Today*, which Standard printed but did not own.

Although Standard never amounted to very much, the firm's purchase and Murch's vision for it testify not only to the sanction that books received by the early 1950s but also to the support that the sanction received from the marketplace. "The book business has a potential far beyond that which is being developed," Murch explained in another private note. "Books on Sunday school methods need to be revised and brought up to date. Many new titles need to be produced to keep abreast of the times. New general religious titles are not being produced." Only the marketplace, Murch concluded, could redress these shortcomings. Both evangelical businessmen

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and evangelical leaders agreed with him. As John Bolton remarked to Murch in 1955, "man is not for production but production for man."\textsuperscript{112}

**Conclusion**

In 1956, the year after the N.A.E. completed its surreptitious purchase of Standard Publishing, representatives from the Christian Booksellers Association visited the White House. They met with President Eisenhower's staff and presented the President with fifty books, all published by evangelical publishers and all available from their Association's booksellers.\textsuperscript{113} Eisenhower later wrote a personal response to C.B.A. President John Fish, remarking that "the range of spiritual wealth covered by your selection is wide and deep. I know these books will be the source of strength to me and to others in the days and years ahead."\textsuperscript{114}

As the next chapter illustrates, the C.B.A. enabled the expansion of the evangelical book industry in the second half of the twentieth century. But the important point here lies not in what the C.B.A. became but rather in what its founding signified. Founded in 1950, it encapsulated the dramatic changes that this chapter--and previous chapters--have explored.

Far from an idea that the Association's founders devised on their own, the C.B.A. took its cues from a secular analogue: the American Booksellers Association. Since the turn of the century, the American Booksellers Association had linked secular bookstores, negotiated

\textsuperscript{112} Bolten to JDM, 7 June 1955, Box 12, Folder "Standard Publishing Sale (Bolten Correspondence)," Murch Papers. In his letter to Murch, Bolten urged him to read a recent *Harvard Business Review* article that argued that the industrialization of the economy had left American businesses and workers without the sense of "God manifesting Himself in His creatures." O. A. Ohmann, "'Skyhooks': With Special Implications for Monday Through Friday," *Harvard Business Review* 33, no. 3 (June 1955): 34.

\textsuperscript{113} "Books for the President," *Christianity Today*, September 25, 1964, 50.

relationships with publishers, provided booksellers with marketing materials, and facilitated the creation of new stores. Since 1930, the A.B.A. also had visited the White House every four years, delivering at least 200 new books.\textsuperscript{115} The Christian Booksellers Association attempted to perform these same services for evangelicals.

The C.B.A.'s services seemed necessary--and, in one founder's words, "obvious"--in 1950, but they would have been difficult to imagine a decade earlier.\textsuperscript{116} In 1940, conservative leaders had not begun creating sanctified analogues to secular institutions, evangelical leaders had not given books theological and devotional sanction, few publishing firms produced evangelical books, even fewer bookstores sold evangelical books, and evangelical institutions had not wedded themselves to the logics of the marketplace. Above all, the evangelical public had not come into being. But here in 1956, evangelical booksellers were able to ask the President for an audience, and the President recognized them as suitable visitors. C.B.A. representatives would visit the White House again in 1964, by which time evangelicals had become fixtures both in Washington and on the landscape of American Christianity.

Did Wilbur Smith find Christian literature more adequate in 1956 than in 1946? We cannot know for certain. But if he encountered another "man like that" in 1956, he could have searched for suitable books in C.B.A.-affiliated bookstores, read about suitable books in Evangelical Book Lists, or sought out potential books through any number of other "evangelical"


outlets. In succeeding decades, evangelical books would become easier for consumers to access, for readers to apply to their lives, and for critics like Smith to condemn.
CHAPTER FIVE

Going Public: Evangelicals and Books In Ascendance

"Born Again!" announced the cover of an October 1976 issue of *Newsweek* magazine. This brief exclamation served not only as the title of the issue's cover story but also as a two-word portrait of "The Evangelicals," whom the magazine would describe as "the most significant--and overlooked--religious phenomenon of the '70s." What made these overlooked evangelicals so significant?

Above all, the soon-to-be-elected presidential candidate Jimmy Carter recently had identified himself as an evangelical. The cover story opens with a vignette from Carter's church in South Georgia, with Carter sitting in a men's Bible class led by his cousin Hugh. In passing, the article also notes that Gerald Ford recently had appeared before the Southern Baptist Convention and "presented himself as an equally devout evangelical."

Perceptions of evangelicalism's popularity received support from a recent Gallup survey, which had found that "half of all Protestants--and a third of all Americans--say that they have been 'born again.' That figure comes to nearly 50 million adult Americans who claim to have experienced a turning point in their lives by making a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as their Saviour." Such figures had led George Gallup Jr. to describe 1976 as the "year of the evangelical."¹

In addition to highlighting Gallup's survey figures, *Newsweek*'s writers cited the "booming evangelical book market." That market recently had produced such stand-out bestsellers as Kenneth Taylor's *The Living Bible* (Tyndale House and Doubleday, 1971), which ranked as the

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¹ Historians regularly have implied that *Newsweek* itself gave 1976 this title, but the magazine merely was quoting Gallup.
bestselling book nationwide in 1972 and 1973. Hal Lindsay's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Zondervan, 1970) went on to become the bestselling book of the 1970s.² Both books were published by avowed "evangelical" publishers, and their unprecedented sales figures linked Gallup's percentages to tangible consumers. Suddenly, it seemed, evangelicals were everywhere. How, *Newsweek*'s writers asked, could everyone have overlooked such an important phenomenon?

The article offered two excuses. First, reporters estimated that evangelicals had begun their rise to prominence only recently. "Evangelical Christianity has been growing quietly for ten years--often at the expense of played-out mainline churches." The second excuse was that evangelicalism proved elusive. Paradoxically, evangelicals simultaneously had become more significant and more diverse during the past decade. After noting that "all evangelicals are united by a subjective experience of personal salvation, which they describe as being 'born again,' converted or regenerated," the writers explained that evangelicals varied wildly otherwise: "its substance and style vary," reporters explained, "by region, denomination and theological tradition." Ranging from Dutch Calvinists in Michigan to Southern Baptists in Texas to "black churches" in the Southeast, evangelicals are "sharply divided over fundamental religious issues." It turns out, the article admitted, that evangelicals do not even agree on what being "born again" entails or demands.

*Newsweek*'s reporters interpreted evangelicalism's diversity as evidence that they nearly had discovered it too late. "As it happens," the article's concluding sentences note, "just as the nation is at last taking notice of their strength, evangelicals find their house divided. The Presidential election has only exacerbated latent differences in doctrine and social attitudes. As a result, 1976

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may yet turn out to be the year that the evangelicals won the White House but lost cohesiveness as a distinct force in American religion and culture." Just ten years after beginning its ascent, in other words, evangelicalism had begun to fall apart.³

Historians often have presented this *Newsweek* article an inexact way of marking the moment that the evangelical movement's protracted ascent reached its apogee, and evangelicals finally received credit as major players in American culture. Due to varied understandings of what evangelicalism is, however, these same historians often have disagreed about who participated most prominently in that ascent, and when it began. Depending on the sort of evangelicalism that historians have had in mind, they have traced the movement back to a wide range of points in the past. But the assumption almost always is that evangelicalism had been on the rise long before 1976.⁴ Seen this way, *Newsweek*’s profile of evangelicalism proves above all that the American public of the 1970s had learned just enough about evangelicals to recognize their social presence, but not enough to recognize their illustrious past.

Seen another way, however, the *Newsweek* article had its chronology nearly right. The evangelical phenomenon that the article describes had been in development for only a decade or two. What was that phenomenon's hallmarks? Aside from going by the "evangelical" monicker and comprising irreconcilable diversity, evangelicals seemed to constitute an incredibly large religious public, and that public not only seemed to wield tremendous political sway but also seemed to sustain a powerful and profitable media industry. Evangelicalism acquired these

³ "Born Again!", *Newsweek*, October 25, 1976, 68.

⁴ See, for example, George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, vol. 2nd (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 242.
characteristics in the decades immediately before 1976, and the evangelical book industry had helped make it so.

The process began in 1950, when the creation of the Christian Booksellers Association allowed the Christian book industry to professionalize, improve efficiency, and expand. Post-war suburbanization and the proliferation of shopping malls abetted the industry's expansion. During the 1960s, Christian bookstores transformed from industry outliers to epicenters of white, suburban evangelical life. The rise of Christian bookstores not only brought publishers commercial success but also gave evangelicalism a public presence.

By the 1970s, evangelical publishers' commercial aspirations both fed and drew strength from the evangelical public's concomitant growth. Publishers not only placed evangelical books in mainstream bookstores, for example, but also popularized new ways of understanding, interpreting, and discussing the Bible. Altogether, it became easier than ever to practice Christianity in the evangelical mode or, at the very least, to identify as "evangelical" or "born again" if Gallup's researchers asked.

This chapter explains how and why the second half of the twentieth century saw evangelical books acquire a firm place in evangelical culture. They did so not only by speaking to issues of evangelical belief and practice but also by cultivating new beliefs and practices. Circulating new discourses and creating new circulatory possibilities, the evangelical book industry steadily pushed the boundaries of evangelicalism's circulation. If Newsweek reporters had a hard time recognizing evangelicalism's contours in 1976, that was because the marketplace rendered them unrecognizable.
Bookselling In and Out of Stores

Among the many pieces of mail that Hero Bratt opened in November 1947, a letter from Mrs. Daisy L. Moody, of the Christian Book and Supply Store in Meridian, Mississippi, probably proved the most entertaining. As Eerdmans's credit manager, Bratt had written to Moody a few days beforehand to acknowledge receipt of a $25.00 payment. At the end of his brief letter, Bratt had added a few remarks that not only displayed kindness but also betrayed commercial concern about the future of Moody's account. "As we have not heard anything further," Bratt remarked, "we take it that you did not sell the store as yet. We sincerely hope that with the fall season, your business is now much better, and we wish you success, Mrs. Moody."

Responding to Bratt's enquiry, Moody followed Bratt's model of wrapping commercial concern in friendly language. Writing her response as longhand annotations on the copy of Bratt's original letter of receipt, Moody thanked Bratt for the note and shared that it "breathes a warm (and warming) friendliness." Yet after admitting that "I can't get along without my publishers," Moody insisted that "they can't get along without me, and others like me, who put the carry in their wheels."

Moody went on to recount how another publishing firm recently had sent her a letter that concluded with the platitude "we are praying for your success." The remark had set Moody thinking, and it inspired her to take time off "in the heat of a busy day" to write a poem she titled "Do Publishers Pray?" Suggesting that her poem might bring "wisdom and guidance" to "you and all the Eerdmans" no less than to the firm that originally inspired it, Moody wrote:

Do publishers pray, really pray, I mean-
For unknown patrons, sight unseen?
Do they think of the book-folk here and there-
And carry their names to the Lord in prayer?
   I WONDER!
Do publishers pray, really pray for ME--
an unknown quantity- no identity?
Do they take time off from a busy day
To pray for a lady down Dixie-way?
   I WONDER!

Do publishers carry a secret load
As they journey down life's weary road?
Does my publisher have a need waiting there
For my Heaven-sent thought and my winged prayer?
   I WONDER!

Moody undoubtedly offered her poem largely in humor, but each of her stanzas
nonetheless revealed humorless assumptions and concerns about her relationship with firms like
Eerdmans Company. Above all, she seems to have wondered if publishers saw her and her store
as mere cogs in their profit-making machines, or whether publishers saw the relationship as one
of fellowship and cooperative ministry. Both Hero Bratt and William Eerdmans no doubt
understood the sentiment implicit in Moody's poem, and Eerdmans took it upon himself to
respond. Known to friends and family as a joker, it is unsurprising that he replied in verse.5

If Moody's poem revealed how she understood the relationship between publishing firms
and "book-folk here and there," Eerdmans's poem suggested that he valued the spiritual
partnership of bookstores to the extent that they remained loyal and reliable sales outlets. "Some
publishers pray," Eerdmans's poem began, "and others do not / For sweet little daisy's like you /
But when a person with us casts her lot / Our answer is: yes, we do." Referring to the careful way
in which publishers monitored the sales of their bookstores, Eerdmans's second stanza added:

   Yes, in a way, you're unknown and unseen
   But angels winged us a report
   Of good name, fine repute and ability keen
   There's no doubt; you will hold the fort.

5 Daisy L. Moody to Hero Bratt, 11 November 1947, Folder M, William B. Eerdmans, Sr., Papers, William B.
Concluding his letter by thanking Moody for her "sweet and kindly words," Eerdmans assured her that "people like you are the least of our worries." But bookstores like Daisy Moody's presented Eerdmans with little worry simply because his firm did not wager its commercial future on the sales of such stores. As late as 1947, Christian bookstores provided unreliable outlets for book sales. Only in the twentieth century's second half did Christian bookstores become the backbone of the Christian media industry.⁶

Before 1950, a web of problems accounted for the Christian book industry's prevailing practices and restrained Christian bookstores' commercial prospects. The leading problem was that Christian publishers lacked access to mainstream bookstores. Christian publishers' distribution outlets were limited mostly to what they secured themselves. "Yes, we cover the country," William Eerdmans wrote to the manager of a Roman Catholic bookstore, "but inasmuch as we are a Protestant religious publishing house, there is plenty of territory which we do not cover. We do not cover the secular book trade and we do not cover the stores and outlets which have contact with our good brethren of the Roman Catholic Church and so there should be plenty of territory left for you a wide distribution." Writing to a potential book salesman, he explained, "You see we are a religious house, and we publish nothing but religious books. Our

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⁶ WBE to Daisy Moody, 17 November 1947, Folder M, WBE Papers. Colleen McDannell and the few others who have studied twentieth-century Christian bookstores generally suggest that "during the 1950s, independent Christian bookstores that were not associated with publishing houses began to be founded." To be sure, bookstores like Daisy Moody's possessed minimal commercial power before 1950. Yet it is both inaccurate and misleading to ignore such bookstores. Only by understanding the limitations that independent Christian bookstores experienced before 1950 can we understand why the bookstore paradigm became popular and commercially powerful in the twentieth century's second half. Colleen McDannell, Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1995), 247; Anne L. Borden, "Making Money, Saving Souls: The Christian Bookstore Field in the United States" (Emory University, 2006), 24; Charles Marvin Brown, "The Culture of Culture Industries: Art, Commerce, and Faith in the Christian Retailing and Entertainment Industry" (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 2002), 62; Heather Hendershot, Shaking the World for Jesus: Media and Conservative Evangelical Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 21.
contacts are almost exclusively with the religious trade. Denominational houses, religious bookstores etc. etc. in all the english [sic] speaking countries.”

Although Christian publishers could not rely on mainstream bookstores, distribution issues kept Christian bookstores from providing publishers with reliable alternatives. Especially before the 1950s, wholesale salesmen arranged transactions on publishers' behalves. Working either on commission or, less frequently, on salary, salesmen would travel around visiting bookstores, book distributors, and denominational agencies. Although salesmen visited even the smallest Christian bookstores, most of those were "mom and pop" operations, and they rarely rewarded salesmen with large commissions. With bookstores' capital generally drawn from their owners' personal savings, they always ran the risk of committing themselves to stock that would not sell. When the salesman F. J. Wiens went on the road for Eerdmans in 1937, for instance, he visited a new bookstore in Oregon that proved interested but unable to place an order. Visiting Tacoma's "The Hagman Printers and Radio Gospel League, 412 So. 13th St.,” Wiens reported that "Mr. Hagman promised to place an order as soon as he catches up on his bills. He only started his business in April and is having somewhat tough going because he is overstocked on World

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7 WBE to Thomas Moore Book Shop, 16 November 1945, Folder M, WBE Papers; WBE to F. Jack O'Neill, 26 January 1943, Folder O, WBE Papers. Part of the reason for Christian bookstores' limited access to mainstream bookstores is that the latter bookstores solicited and catered above all to middle-class urban consumers. In the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, mainstream bookstores appeared primarily in urban centers, both because population density enabled more customers to shop more easily and because urban areas provided a home to most of the people who possessed the characteristics of regular readers and book buyers: disposable income, leisure time, education, and a desire to embrace the values and class consciousness that books marked. Bookstore practice and procedure catered to this middle-class book culture, with bookstores operating more or less like pharmacies. Customers would enter the store, approach the counter, and ask clerks for advice and recommendations. Clerks' counters also contained periodicals, stationary, and such fancy goods as medicines, all of which clerks also recommended and sold. These counters typically separated customers from bookshelves. But even if customers could browse shelves themselves, the task was made more difficult by bookstores' tendency to arrange books by publisher, rather than topic or author. Under this arrangement, not all publishers were allotted space on bookstores' shelves, and not all books received recommendations from store clerks. Conservative Christian publishers rarely were welcome. Michael Winship, “The National Book Trade System: Distribution and Trade,” in The Industrial Book, 1840-1880, ed. Scott E Casper et al., vol. 3, A History of the Book in America (Chapel Hill: Published in association with the American Antiquarian Society by the University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 129.
Syndicate Bibles and Gospel Trumpet greeting cards. Due to situations like this, salesmen prioritized large accounts, including larger book distributors and denominational agencies.

Denominations made ideal customers because their denominational mailing lists and literature represented ready-made advertising channels. But the largest orders for books tended to come not just from denominations but also from a number of large bookstores that positioned themselves as regional sales hubs. On the West Coast, hubs included B.I.O.L.A.'s Book Room and the Bible House of Los Angeles. Apologizing to Eerdmans in 1937 about disappointing sales, for instance, Wiens explained, "Had the Biola Book Room and the denominational houses come through with larger orders, I'm sure that sales would have been nearly twice that amount." In 1944, the Bible House's manager, J. E. Jaderquist, wrote to William Eerdmans and boasted that "the Bible House is reaching hundreds of small stores and agents on the Pacific Coast which would not be likely to contact you directly." Jaderquist promised that if Eerdmans temporarily gave the Bible House the rights to sell a popular song book, "I believe we will find many new outlets for their books which will ultimately mean that future trade will go directly to you instead of to us."

The most successful Christian bookstores and book hubs secured solvency by supplementing the sale of new books with used books. Because used books were inexpensive for bookstores to stock, and because demand often proved strong for rare and out-of-print classics, the most prominent of these bookstores often prioritized used books over new books. Prominent

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8 F. J. Wiens to WBE, 25 September 1937, Folder W, WBE Papers.

9 When positive reviews or attractive advertisements appeared in Methodist periodicals, for instance, Methodist customers often visited their local Methodist Book Concern or wrote to the denomination in the hope of purchasing it. This trend proved so reliable that the book buyer of Portland's Methodist Book Concern refused to buy Eerdmans's books in 1937 because they had not appeared recently in any Methodist magazines, which led the book buyer to anticipate that nobody would buy them. Wiens to WBE, 25 September 1937, WBE Papers.

10 Wiens to WBE, 15 October 1937, WBE Papers; J. E. Jaderquist to WBE, 3 April 1944, Folder B, WBE Papers.
used bookstores included Grand Rapids' Baker Book House, Chicago's Blessings Book Store, and New York's Schulte's Book Store. Each of these stores built their business model on offering the most comprehensive selection imaginable. On every piece of its promotional literature, for example, Blessings Book Store offered a simple slogan: "If It's a Religious Book, Try Blessings."

The typical Blessings catalog from the early 1940s presented potential customers with more than 1,000 choices and encouraged them to write in with requests for any books that they did not see on the list. "If the Book you are seeking is not listed please write us," the store's 1941 Summer Book News mailer announced, "this list contains only a small portion of our huge stock of Religious Books." Baker Book Store, by comparison, offered a more curated selection of books, including fewer in its catalog, offering longer descriptions of each book, and ending the catalog's listings with an announcement of books "We Offer to Buy." The firm explained that "We are interested in buying good copies or sets of the following titles at reasonable prices. We have immediate demand for some; others we will buy for stock. This is only a partial list. We are interested in buying many other religious books, including large or small libraries." Used bookselling was a problem for small bookstores not just because they had difficulty sourcing high quality used books but also because their mail-order sales programs were meager, at best.

The practice of selling books by mail provided another problem for bookstores like Daisy Moody's. Although stores like Baker Book House sold books to customers on site, the most successful bookstores also conducted much of their business by direct mail. Baker, Blessings, and other bookstores even designed their catalogs with the intention of mailing them. In the 1930s,

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these stores typically printed their catalogs on large sheets of paper, which they folded down to envelope size and mailed directly to potential customers.

Publishers adopted similar designs for their own catalogs. Both mainstream and Christian publishers had developed extensive mail delivery programs, and they only expanded these programs after President Roosevelt lowered the parcel post rate to 1.5 cents per pound in 1939. Mail-order sales became so common that Zondervan felt called to apologize to its wholesalers when it opened a retail bookstore in Grand Rapids. "This store is a service feature for the local Grand Rapids retail trade only," the firm insisted in 1945, "and in no way competes with the publishing house's wholesale business." 12

On the receiving end of publishers' mailings, the larger bookstores developed such extensive experience with mail-order sales that a few of them began their own book clubs. Like all mail-order sales, book clubs proved most useful to rural readers, who often found themselves without ready access to bookstores. Book clubs benefited large bookstores not only by locking customers into purchases by subscription but also by enabling bookstores to buy books from publishers in large quantities, at lower cost. The Crusaders Book Shop in Toronto, for example, began such a club in 1945, explaining to American publishers that "we are launching a 'Book a Month Club' for Canadian readers. As you will readily realize, it would be prohibitive (due to the 50 per cent landing charge) for individual readers to receive single books from the U.S.A. We are

wondering what books you have available in large quantities that we might use as premiums in our Club."13

Like mainstream publishers, religious publishers had mixed feelings about book clubs. On the one hand, it was easy money, for clubs either placed large orders up front or paid a set amount for subsidiary rights, and then reprinted books on their own. The arrangement proved so lucrative that mainstream publishers became financially dependent on subsidiary rights from book clubs by the late 1940s. But the downside of book clubs was that they tended to make large orders only at low unit cost, which they then translated into low club prices. In July 1943, William Eerdmans complained to one book club manager that its prices benefited the club far more than his firm. Reporting that Eerdmans Co. did $300,000 in business the previous year, and estimating that he would do as much as $500,000 in business in 1943, Eerdmans estimated that Pinebrook Book Club accounted for only $10,000 of the previous year's business. The figure was low largely because Pinebrook received "lower prices than anyone."14

But if publishers like Eerdmans proved increasingly hostile to book clubs, the hostility also stemmed from frustration over their rapid proliferation. Because clubs proved so lucrative to their owners, new clubs appeared regularly during the 1940s. After receiving the news that a new "Evangelical Book Club" had been founded in Wheaton, Eerdmans remarked that "it looks like another cheap undertaking, crowding in, unfair to others in the book club business . . . with a lot of personal hulla-balloo, self-glorification, all very piously put, and evidently an effort to sell a certain line of books, around an occasional winner or monthly leader." Eerdmans also pointed


14 WBE to Norman Kellow, 16 July 1943, Folder P, WBE Papers.
out that many supposed book clubs appeared virtually identical to bookstores that conducted their business by mail. With catalogs that spanned multiple pages, they appeared "much more like a large religious Book Mail Order House." Eerdmans suggested, with optimism, that "the book club idea is well nigh buried."15

In a number of ways, each of the Christian book industry's prevailing practices stemmed primarily from the industry's lack of organization. Had Christian bookstores been more organized, alternate methods of distribution might have proven less alluring. Better organization also might have allowed bookstores like Daisy Moody to speak out against practices that seemed to operate at their expense. Within the Christian book industry, such criticisms were difficult to voice if only because everyone described their activities as elements of "ministry," and ministries are difficult to criticize. Daisy Moody ultimately made her frustrations known, but only in a poem, and only indirectly.

Finally, because the Christian book industry lacked industry-wide organization, publishers themselves served as the closest thing to the industry's hubs. But because publishers competed with each other, they did not share knowledge. As a result, neither bookstores nor any other participants in the Christian book industry knew very much about its scale or scope. Historians have virtually no industry-wide sales data for this era precisely because no such data was collected. Both collective sales figures, and strategies to improve them, would come only through cooperation.

15 WBE to Kellow, 22 April 1945, WBE Papers.
Building the Bookstore

"In my early years at Moody Press," the publisher and *Living Bible* author Kenneth N. Taylor (1917-2005) recounted in his 1991 autobiography, "all of us could see that the Christian bookstore industry was in a sorry state. Perhaps only a tenth as many Christian bookstores existed then as today and they were often in out-of-the-way or upstairs locations. Many were operated by people who had a desire for ministry but very little business experience." Writing this description decades after 1947, when Taylor began working at Moody, Taylor remarked that "the solution" to Christian bookstore industry's problem "now seems obvious." But it was obvious in 1991 only because Taylor had the benefit of hindsight; he held the story of his life and career firmly in mind. In 1947, essential components of his solution had just come into view. Those components included the idea of evangelicalism, its prescribed practices, and its modes of association. Taylor, evangelicalism, and its book industry essentially grew up together.

Hailing from Oregon, Taylor was reared on dispensationalism Biblicism by his father, a fundamentalist Presbyterian minister who counted Louis Sperry Chafer among his friends. After graduating from high school, Taylor undertook undergraduate studies at Wheaton College in 1934. He subsequently studied at Dallas Theological Seminary, the school Chafer founded in 1924.¹⁶

But it was Wheaton where Taylor struck up friendships with such classmates as Carl F. H. Henry and Harold Lindsell, both of whom came to share Taylor's obsession with evangelical books and periodicals. Taylor ultimately discovered his interest in print through the embryonic

evangelical networks that criss-crossed through Wheaton. After graduating in 1938, for example. Taylor began working for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, which just had arrived in North America. About five years later, a Wheaton classmate asked Taylor to help edit and publish a new magazine on child evangelism in 1943, and Taylor became convinced that editing suited to his sensibilities far more than evangelism. InterVarsity soon offered him a position as editor of *HIS*, the organization's new magazine.¹⁷

By the middle of the 1940s, Taylor's time at Wheaton and his experience with InterVarsity had given him more experience thinking and talking about evangelicalism than many putative evangelicals had yet acquired. Around 1943, he began consciously imagining an evangelical audience, reflecting upon an evangelical "college audience" in particular. Motivated by an advertisement for a Christian writing contest, Taylor decided to write a short story for college students because he felt that it might "might be helpful to college-age Christians." This feeling drew support not from empirical data but rather from his own evangelical imaginary. Soon after, Taylor wrote a small booklet called *Is Christianity Credible?*, which attempted to address what he saw as college students' need for "a better understanding of the reasonableness of Christianity and why their pagan professors didn't believe in Christianity." InterVarsity published it in 1946, the year after the first Evangelical Book List appeared and the year before that decade's evangelical turn toward books led InterVarsity to found InterVarsity Press.¹⁸ By imagining the evangelical audience, and by addressing it in print, people like Taylor helped call both evangelicalism and its print culture into existence.


¹⁸ Ibid., 123-130.
Before long, Taylor began working for the Moody Colportage Association. A friend from InterVarsity had secured the position for him. After serving as assistant to the director of the Colportage for a year, Taylor also began serving as director of Moody Press, the name for the printing and sales division of the Colportage Association since 1941. Missionary literature had retained the "Colportage" monicker, even if its activities had little to do with colporteurs.\textsuperscript{19}

Tasked with overseeing both the commercial and philanthropic sides of Moody Bible Institute's print division, Taylor increasingly trained his attention on matters of production and distribution. Distribution problems initially came to his attention at the Colportage. Through missionaries, he discovered that millions of Africans became "new Christians" every year, but those Christians had meager access to Bibles and Christian books. Although he noted that "radio messages are a vital help," he insisted that books and Bibles must be provided if new Christians are to grow strong and if pastors are to be trained. Otherwise, most of them will be virtually untaught. Many of them will be like the seeds told about in Christ's parable of the sower--they may grow quickly in the excitement of their new-found faith, but with little nourishment they soon fade.

Taylor soon concluded that similar distribution problems plagued American evangelicalism. "The warehouse was filled with hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of books that were not selling," Taylor explained, because Moody Press did not have enough salesmen to sell the books through bookstores. More problematically, there were not enough bookstores, and mail-order sales alone could not correct the problem. Even if Moody could sell the books in its warehouse, it still found itself able to print just a small percentage of the manuscripts that it received, for fear of stockpiling even more unsold stock. "As the new director of Moody Press," Taylor recounted, "there was a large stack of perhaps a hundred manuscripts piled in a corner of

my office. Former editors had felt they should be published, but we didn't have the capital to carry out such an aggressive publication program."²⁰

By 1950, Taylor became convinced that sales capacity prevented the Christian book industry from performing its "ministry" on the scale that it could. Christians needed books; but to produce more books and better books, publishers needed a way of selling them more efficiently and effectively. With Bill Moore as his assistant director, Taylor reduced Moody's production costs and opened three retail stores, to operate in coordination with the original store located at the Institute. But even these solutions were insufficient. Drawing upon the oppositional evangelical paradigm of the N.A.E.--recently modeled by the N.R.B., the Evangelical Book List, and various book contests--Taylor and Moore concluded in 1950 that a secular organization held the solution to evangelicals' book problem. That organization was the American Booksellers Association.

What did the A.B.A. offer? Since its founding in 1900, the organization's principal purpose had been to advise bookstores on pricing strategies. As the secretary of the A.B.A. explained at the organization's fourth annual convention in 1904, the A.B.A. initially worked together with the American Publishers' Association (1901). The two organizations had created an agreement "of mutual benefit, the [A.P.A.] binding its members not to sell to dealers who cut net prices on copyrighted books, or who supplied to others who do, thus protecting the dealers from unfair competition. The Booksellers Association membership agree[d] not to put in stock nor to offer for sale the books of any publisher who declines to join the Publishers' Association, and to

issue new copyrighted books at net prices." In other words, publishers asked booksellers not to cut prices too low, and booksellers asked publishers not to sell to outlets whose discounts they would feel compelled to match. Both sides agreed to do business only with those who played by the rules of their agreement, which mandated that certain "net books" would be sold in bookstores at the same price nationwide.

This agreement was the crowning achievement of decades of pricing experiments pursued by earlier organizations and collectives, most of which centered on publishers selling books to booksellers at discounts no greater than twenty or twenty-five percent. But it would not last. Staunchly opposed to the net system of pricing, R. H. Macy filed a suit against it in 1902. After a series of decisions and appeals, the Supreme Court decided in 1913 that the system violated the Sherman Antitrust Act, and the A.P.A. folded the following year. Even without formal agreements, however, such trade organizations gave mainstream bookstores and booksellers collective bargaining power and disseminated bookselling knowledge.

In the 1940s no less than in earlier decades, the A.B.A. continued to advise bookstores on pricing strategies. During World War II, for example, book campaigns for soldiers had led to an expansion of paperback publishing, and the war's end saw mass market paperback lines grow tremendously. But these were inexpensive, sold at only about twenty-five cents each. Hardback books, meanwhile, were more expensive than ever to produce, and demand for hardbacks declined. In response, the A.B.A. encouraged publishers to offer higher discounts to bookstores.

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on the logic that lower hardback prices would entice readers. The Association also encouraged bookstores to compensate for lower book margins by selling items with higher margins, such as toys and records.

But the A.B.A.'s efforts increasingly centered less on securing book prices than on cultivating book networks and knowledge. In 1946, for example, it set up not just one annual meeting but six regional meetings to reconnect an industry whose contacts had frayed during the war. At such conventions, and through its Associational literature, the A.B.A. taught its members how to run their bookstores better. The hope was that well-managed bookstores would entice customers to buy more books, which in turn would lead to the opening of more stores. In order to improve bookstore management, the A.B.A. instructed members in techniques relating to better store operation, training, stock control, and merchandising. At the 1948 convention in Chicago, the A.B.A. unveiled what it termed the "packaged bookstore," which offered standardized plans, stock lists, estimates, and display fixtures to prospective bookstore owners. These packaged "assemblies" came at various prices, depending on their scale. The design of these assemblies encouraged stores to turn away from the patrician, library-like atmosphere of earlier bookstores in favor of functional, modern, colorful design.23

Bill Moore had a deep familiarity with the A.B.A.'s benefit to its members. Although Moore served as Kenneth Taylor's assistant director at Moody Press, Moore possessed more experience than Taylor in the book business. Moore had entered the business in the 1930s, after serving a few years in the military. After his discharge, he had begun working for Brentano's Book Store in Chicago, where he remained for eleven years. Founded in 1907, Brentano's was one of Chicago's largest and most prominent bookstores; when it ultimately closed in 1995, the

victim of low-margin bookstore chains like as Barnes & Nobles and Borders, the *Chicago Tribune* described it as Chicago's "oldest and best-known book dealer." This prominence gave Brentano's a place of authority within the American Booksellers Association, whose meetings Moore frequented.

At Moody Press, Moore served as wholesale manager and director of retail sales. His job essentially tasked him with overseeing the sale and distribution of books to Moody's network of mom and pop stores, located both in and out of Chicago. Under his oversight, Moody's retail mail business doubled between Decembers 1945 and 1946.

Moore's position at Moody essentially made him the point person for bookstores that contacted Moody. Moore later reported to *Left Behind* author Jerry Jenkins that he spent several hours of every day answering letters from people who had little "money to start a store" but "felt 'called' to serve God in this way and were anxious to get started." Through conversations with Taylor, Moore set out to see "whether anything could be done about this situation and specifically what Moody Press might do to strengthen this weak industry." They concluded that "strong stores should be giving counsel to those struggling for survival." The problem simply was that stores had no way of communicating.

In April 1950, Moore began reaching out to a number of Chicago-area booksellers, including John Fish of Chicago's Scripture Press store. Together with Fish, Moore brought a dozen other store managers and owners together at Chicago's Lawson Y.M.C.A. for the purpose

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of discussing "mutual problems in retailing."\textsuperscript{26} The participants at this meeting created the Christian Booksellers' Association and decided to hold a convention in the fall of 1950.

According to the one-page "Christian Booksellers Convention Report for 1950," which the Association sent out with the application form for the 1951 meeting, the first convention had 281 paid registrations, with 186 booksellers in attendance, representing 127 "bookstores and supply houses." In addition, eighty-seven publishers and publishing representatives attended, along with eight "miscellaneous folk," representatives from two magazines, and five people from "miscellaneous concerns." Publishers present at the 1950 convention included not just Eerdmans, Zondervan, Baker, Revell, Moody, and Standard but also Abingdon-Cokesbury, Augsburg, Concordia, Harper & Brothers, Thomas Nelson, Sword of the Lord, and the university presses of Cambridge and Oxford.\textsuperscript{27}

Because the organization came together so quickly, and largely through Moore's personal connections, the first convention's booksellers came disproportionately from the Midwest. Forty nine came from Chicago, twenty four came from elsewhere in Illinois, thirty one came from Indiana, and the numbers drop off from there. Nineteen came from Michigan, twelve from Ohio, ten from Wisconsin, eight each from Minnesota and Iowa, and fourteen other states each sent just a handful. Southern states were most poorly represented, with Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Tennessee each providing just one representative. Kansas had two. Three booksellers came from Canada.


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 83-85.
Even if its scope was largely regional, the 1950 convention was surprisingly well-attended. But those attendance numbers say more about the strong initial interest in the Association than about the strength of its organizational management. For its first few years, the Association remained a rather ramshackle affair. As late as January 1951, it did not even have its own stationary; when conducting correspondence on the organization's behalf, Moore simply would stamp "Christian Booksellers Association" across the top of his letters. In the organization's first year, many of those letters saw Moore attempting to convince publishers to take the Association seriously.

In one such letter to William Eerdmans, Moore noted that the Association had been incorporated in December of 1950 as non-profit in Illinois. Moore urged Eerdmans to take that status as "further evidence of our desire to become established as an Association and to show publishers and fellow booksellers and supply dealers that we really mean business." Assuring Eerdmans that "you may rest assured of the 100% co-operation of the C. B. A.," Moore insisted that the Association alone could "stabilize the Christian bookselling trade." Moore suggested that the Association's benefits would not serve booksellers alone. "We need your help and advice," he explained, "and you certainly need the help of the Christian Booksellers Association and its members."

Although Moore's claim that Eerdmans "needed" the Association's help was an example of salesman's hyperbole, the benefits that the Association offered publishers were compelling. One benefit had to do with pricing. Just as in the case of the turn-of-the-century "net pricing" agreement between the A.P.A and the A.B.A., the price of books was a source of consternation for Christian publishers and booksellers. Publishers complained that booksellers discounted their

28 Moore to WBE, 19 January 1951, Folder C, WBE Papers.
books too much, effectively devaluing the product; booksellers felt that they had no choice but to
discount books in order to stay competitive. As a result, beginning with the first convention in
1950, C.B.A. conversations often centered around pricing issues, with the Association's officials
urging booksellers not to discount books substantially. "There were so few good Christian books
and publishers anyway," Jerry Jenkins later explained, "by discounting what is available to sell,
stores would be cutting into their own profits."29

The second benefit to publishers had more to do with their relationships with booksellers
than with those sellers' prices. As Chapter Two illustrates, before 1951, Eerdmans and other
publishers created distribution pathways either by tapping into established evangelical networks
or creating new ones. To be sure, new networks rarely emerged by accident. As the example of
the Zondervan brothers illustrated, personal connections through institutions like the Gideons
and the Christian Business Men's Committee often created bookselling relationships with both
individuals and organizations. And word of mouth often allowed such relationships to multiply.

Yet even though publishers successfully built relationships with booksellers, and networks of
distribution and devotion sustained those relationships, all parties essentially maintained their
relationships with each other through their own effort. As S. Malme of Christian Service Press in
Moline, Illinois, remarked at the 1950 convention, "Christian booksellers know very little if
anything about the existence of each other. Booksellers as a rule are individuals here and there
who felt they should sell Christian literature, and their scope of operation varies from an agent
with a set of samples to a store stocked with a complete line." In countless ways, efforts were
duplicated, energies wasted, and potential efficiencies unwittingly avoided.

29 Jenkins, Twenty-Five Years of Sterling Rewards in God's Service, 19.
Because retail outlets like Daisy Moody's bookstore made up such a small percentage of publishers' sales, creating and sustaining relationships with such outlets was terribly inefficient. The bookstore industry remained small largely because publishers were aware of this inefficiency, and they accordingly invested their energies elsewhere. Ironically, precisely because industry participants rarely worked in cooperation, some initially were reticent to cooperate with each other and share business techniques.  

In addition to giving Moore sensitivity to the industry's anxieties, his experience also helped him to address them. He urged potential C.B.A. participants "to make this Convention and the Association a real means of increasing the distribution of religious books and Bibles, Sunday school and Church supplies, gifts and other material." Because Moody Press was such a prominent hub of evangelical bookselling, its list of contacts was extensive, and Bill Moore had used them to put together what he described as "a master list of some 5,000 religious booksellers and supply dealers." He invited them all to attend the 1951 convention.

The prospect of having so many publishers and booksellers in one place, at one time, allowed Moore to insist that the convention was "your BEST OPPORTUNITY TO REACH BOOKSELLERS at a minimum of cost and with a far greater opportunity to display more merchandise." By the third convention, over 450 participants registered, and fifty-seven exhibitors participated. These annual meetings became known as "selling conventions," with publishers exhibiting and taking orders for their merchandise from booksellers of all kinds.

30 Ibid., 18-19.


From booksellers' perspectives, the C.B.A. had a wide range of practical benefits. In 1951, for example, the Interstate Commerce Commission ended a special postal rate that had facilitated mail-order sales. The entire book industry balked at the new policy and sent emissaries to Washington to lobby against it. In 1953, C.B.A. president Dale Johnson made the trip on behalf of the Association's members; due to his efforts and others', the policy changed relatively quickly. Other practical benefits were even more mundane. Also in 1953, for example, the Association's new Advance magazine began warning bookstores about individuals who had been visiting various member bookstores and paying for merchandize with checks that later bounced. Collective awareness of such practices allowed bookstores to help apprehend at least one repeated offender.\(^{33}\)

More important than stopping check fraud, the C.B.A. offered booksellers training. The Association began a correspondence course on sales training in 1953. Both national and regional conventions also offered training courses in such areas as merchandising, marketing, stocking, and employee management. In the 1980s, a survey of bookstore owners would reveal that many found the C.B.A.'s courses insufficient.\(^{34}\) But such dissatisfaction ultimately testified to their proven utility; at the very least, the C.B.A.'s courses were better than nothing. Before the C.B.A. began offering such courses, mom-and-pop bookstores had few sources of bookselling advice. More often than not, publishers themselves offered the most guidance; and even if both bookstores and publishers cast their affairs as ministry, both parties understood that their own commercial interests came first. Publishers like Zondervan, for example, not only taught

\(^{33}\) Grannis, "More than Merchants," 90-91; Jenkins, Twenty-Five Years of Sterling Rewards in God’s Service, 28-30.

bookstores to encourage customers to hold Vacation Bible School but also offered guidance about which Zondervan books would serve students best.

By the 1960s, the C.B.A. began producing short handbooks that offered guidance on bookstore ownership. In 1968, for example, John Bass and Robert DeVries co-authored the C.B.A. book *The Christian Book Store*, which reissued material from an earlier booklet titled *The Christian Book Shop Manual*. The 1968 book simultaneously offered prospective Christian booksellers guidance and caution. "It will probably cost more than you think to open a Christian bookstore!" a chapter on "Facts You Should Know" begins. "If you are contemplating the purchase of a store already in operation, contact the Christian Booksellers Association for advice on how to determine the value of the stock, fixtures, and other considerations." The handbook explained that anyone considering opening a new store should realize that "a figure of $12,000 is probably a minimum for a well stocked small store," if the bookstore owner hoped to reach annual retail sales of at least $25,000. Other sections of the handbook advised readers on such topics as choosing a location, negotiating a lease, buying insurance, arranging displays for good first impressions, how to order merchandise from publishers, how to keep the books, how to choose non-book "sidelines," and how to advertise.35

Reflecting in 1968 on eighteen years as a book salesmen, Moody Press's Sid Zullinger testified to the effectiveness of the C.B.A's training courses and literature. Zullinger remarked that when his career began, "I can recall the appearance of the majority of the Christian bookstores, the types of displays, and the appearance of the merchandise . . . left much to be desired. Now I can truthfully say that I, as well as the majority of other salesmen that I talk to, are very proud of

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the attractive new [book] jackets, the new racks and displays, the attractive lighting, and the new fronts on many of the stores. One very significant factor is the better trained and sharper sales personnel in the stores.36

In a way, the rise of the C.B.A. cut into the ability of publishers like Zondervan to control their own destinies. With more participants in the book industry more aware of each other and more cognizant of their commercial opportunities, publishers had less of an ability to compel particular bookstores or book clubs to behave in particular ways. In the early 1940s, for example, Eerdmans Co. had asked Pinebrook Book Club not to sell Zondervan's books; by the 1960s, however, with the proliferation of publishers, books, and knowledge about both, requests like Eerdmans's would have seemed quaint. In addition, in the days before the C.B.A., publishers often provided bookstores such materials as posters, leaflets, and even catalogs. Zondervan, for example, allowed bookstores to order versions of its catalogs that touted particular bookstore's names instead of Zondervan's. The firm made the same offer for other varieties of marketing materials. After 1950, publishers continued to provide such materials, but the C.B.A. also made similar offers--without restricting firms to just one publisher. In this way, the Association diminished publishers' ability to exert authority over their resellers.

But if the C.B.A. took away some pathways of power, it created others. For the first few years of the Association's existence, for example, the C.B.A. operated largely in and around Chicago. At the 1952 convention, Bill Moore formally had become the Association's executive secretary, and the C.B.A.'s headquarters accordingly became the offices of Moody Press. Although Chicago had been a center of Northern conservative Christianity for the better part of

a century, the concentration of publishing authority in the city represented a change to the status quo. Grand Rapids publishers quickly adapted by finding ways to co-opt the Association's influence.

In 1953, for example, Bill Eerdmans began a conversation with Kenneth Taylor about bringing together "the Evangelical Publishers who are not denominationally related." Sensing tension between Chicago and Grand Rapids, Taylor wrote to "Uncle Bill" and offered to hold the initial meeting either in Grand Rapids, Chicago, or "some 'neutral' spot chosen, where none of us will have any ties with our offices."37 Seizing the spirit of the N.A.E. and the C.B.A., Eerdmans explained to Taylor that "if the independent Christian publishers were united, we no doubt could exert some wholesome influence on the American Christian people. Now and then we could issue statements supporting Christian movements and give all good movement, especially those that bear on Christian literature, our full and moral support."

Searching for ways that such cooperation could bring his firm more practical benefit, Eerdmans also explained that "there are demands on all of us to publish manuscripts which we know in advance would be a considerable risk from a financial point of view to publish. However, now and then a manuscript of merit which may render a definite and valuable contribution to some cause or issue or problem might be worthy of support, and I can see that a situation might arise where united action and effort and sharing of expenses may help to bring such a message across." Eerdmans also proposed that this new publishers' group meet alongside of organizations like the C.B.A., and that the group "publish a little gift book to be presented to delegates and visitors."38

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37 Kenneth Taylor to WBE, 19 November 1953, Folder M, WBE Papers.

38 WBE to Taylor, 23 November 1953, Folder M, WBE Papers.
The Zondervan brothers took a different approach. Rather than attempting to create a parallel organization to the C.B.A., they simply attempted to tilt the organization toward its own interests. Although Chicago hosted the first four C.B.A. conventions, other cities often hosted after 1955, when the convention occurred in Washington, D.C. In 1959, Grand Rapids played host. The Grand Rapids bookstore owner and emerging publisher Robert Kregel probably led the push to bring the convention to Grand Rapids; in 1960, Kregel began a one-year term as C.B.A. president. But the Zondervan brothers took fullest advantage of the convention's location.

Held from August 17 to 20, the 1959 convention was the tenth, and the organizers treated it as a milestone. The convention boasted 1,586 attendees, 698 of whom represented 367 bookstores, five of whom came from countries outside the U.S. and Canada. A concert kicked off the convention, with Zondervan recording artists performing. Two of the convention's headlining devotional speakers were Zondervan authors, and the firm had them greet booksellers at their exhibit booth. On the final day of the convention, Zondervan Co. took three hundred convention participants on a tour of its offices and plant, serving lunch to everyone afterward. The firm gave each visitor a copy of its recently published *Our Daily Bread*, written by Grand Rapids' radio luminary M. R. DeHaan.

The next year, when the 1960 C.B.A. convention returned to Chicago, Zondervan's exhibit featured even more prominent authors. They included Henry H. Halley, whose *Halley's Bible Handbook* already had sold a million copies when Zondervan purchased the rights to the book in 1960. Other authors included Eugenia Price, whose *Strictly Personal* (titled *What Is God Like?* after 1965) had sold 40,000 copies in three months, at a rate of a thousand copies per week.

Joining Halley and Price was Rosalind Rinker and Clyde Narramore. Zondervan just had released Rinker's *Prayer: Conversing With God* in a new softcover edition; it would go on to sell over a million copies, remaining one of Zondervan's bestsellers well into the 1980s. In addition,
Zondervan recently had released Narramore's *The Psychology of Counseling*, and the firm had launched a massive publicity campaign around it. Zondervan printed and distributed over 150,000 circulars, placed advertisements in *Christianity Today*, pitched the book to book clubs, and secured the selection of such prominent book clubs as the Evangelical Book Club—which Frank Gaebelein, Paul Rees, and Harold Ockenga served as selectors.39

More than quantitative measures, qualitative measures testify to the C.B.A.'s influence on evangelical bookstores and on evangelicalism itself. One way to understand its influence, for example, is simply to imagine what it would have been like for Daisy Moody to rub elbows with the authors and publishers whose surnames appeared on the books that lined her store's shelves. In a way, that image tells you all you need to know. Whether or not Moody ever attended a convention, the mere possibility of attending changed the dynamic of Christian bookselling. It created an infrastructure that gave authors, publishers, editors, agents, bookstore owners, book distributors, book club operators, traveling evangelists, devotional speakers, small-town ministers, and ordinary readers easy opportunities to both imagine and to engage with one another. It strengthened the evangelical imaginary by taking it out of the imagination. Together under one roof, evangelicals manifested and absorbed the organizational efficiency of the marketplace.

Quantitative measures of the C.B.A.'s influence are impressive, but the numbers alone do not convey their significance. Writing in Zondervan's monthly trade pamphlet in 1965, for example, Zondervan's Vice-President of Publishing, Floyd Thatcher, rejoiced over the book industry's ascent. "The retail book business is booming," Thatcher remarked, "and the key to its success is the creative and optimistic bookseller. In 1964 the industry showed a 9% increase and

it now projects an increase of between 10% and 15% this year—and this is in books. By the way . . . where are those crepe hangers who were ready to bury the book business a few years ago because of television? Nonsense."

What Thatcher does not mention, however, is that virtually all book retailers experienced growth in the years between 1950 and 1965. Non-C.B.A. Protestant booksellers reported in 1952, for example, that their sales had increased ten to twelve percent from the previous year. Meanwhile, the number of general retail bookstores tripled between 1948 and 1976, moving from about 2,900 to 12,000. The number of books published rose from 5,400 in 1945 to 27,400 in 1977.


More compelling than figures alone are the explanations that Thatcher and others gave for them. Thatcher accounted for the retail boom, for instance, by explaining that "the key to success is in caring—in giving personal service." He pointed out that a recent issue of Time magazine recently had noted, "'Many buyers go into a store with only a vague idea of what they want, need attentive salesmen (all too rare) to guide them to their hooch. 'Give me five minutes conversation


with a man about books,' says Everett Noonan, manager of Martindale's in Beverly Hills, 'and I can tell what he would like and hit it on the nose just about every time.' As a friend of Everett Noonan, Thatcher felt qualified to account for Noonan's confidence. Thatcher explained that Noonan not only "loves books" and "cares about people" but also knew his inventory well enough to make his care for customers "pay off in sales." Thatcher concluded, "There's no hokus pokus about it--it just works. Try it."42

Beginning in 1950, the C.B.A. helped demystify the practice of bookselling. Although this meant that bookstores' success became less magical, it also meant that bookstores became more profitable and--as a result--more numerous. Between 1950 and 1965, the number of C.B.A. member stores grew from 102 to 725. That expansion that paralleled the growth of all religious bookstores from 1,200 in 1950 to 3,300 in 1970.43

In 1965, Thatcher wrote about the retail boom with first-person perspective. Around that time, Zondervan just had begun its entry into the retail book market. To be sure, Zondervan's company history points out that its retail activities began much earlier. Zondervan had operated a small retail store in Grand Rapids since 1932, the year after the firm's founding. And beginning in 1937, it had operated the bookstore at Winona Lake. But only in the 1960s did Zondervan begin building what became a retail empire.

The firm's first store outside Grand Rapids and Winona Lake appeared in 1962, just south of Grand Rapids in Wyoming, Michigan. Zondervan placed the store in a new strip mall built near the first large shopping mall in the region. With a store layout that became the template for


subsequent Zondervan stores, the Wyoming store became profitable within eight months. Soon after, Zondervan bought a failing Holiness bookstore in Flint, Michigan, and built new stores in East Lansing, Michigan, and Indianapolis. The chain’s numbers expanded both through the creation of new bookstores and the acquisition of new stores. In 1974, for instance, Zondervan acquired a small chain known as "Good News Bookstores," giving Zondervan a presence in Lawton and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Wichita Falls, Texas; and Rockville, Maryland. By January 1974, Zondervan owned and operated thirty-one bookstores across the United States, supplying those stores with what it described as a "state-of-the-art warehouse and distribution facility in Kentwood, Mich." As one longtime Grand Rapids editor remarks, new inventory-control systems allowed stores "to sell and restock books in the same way that hardware stores sell and restock hammers."44

Zondervan's turn to retail bookselling was the firm's response to a number of concerns that the C.B.A. had diagnosed and attempted to help solve. With its own stores, the firm could set its own prices, take care of its own distribution, and manage its own promotion and advertising schemes. Yet inasmuch as Zondervan drew upon the C.B.A.’s bookselling wisdom for advice on such issues as store design, the firm simultaneously pioneered other approaches to Christian bookselling.

Zondervan pioneered two approaches in particular. First, it built a bookstore chain. As late as 1960, chains remained relatively rare. The largest chains before the 1960s were Brentano’s and Doubleday. But in 1960, Doubleday had only thirty-three stores, and Brentano’s had only

fourteen. In the 1960s, such chains as Walden Books and B. Dalton would begin building hundreds of bookstores on the logic of offering consumers popular titles at deep discounts.45

Zondervan's second approach consisted of building its bookstores in suburban shopping malls, which had begun proliferating during the 1950s. The concept of suburban, centralized shopping centers had become well known by the mid-1930s. But private construction had suffered during the Depression and World War II, and only eight shopping centers existed in 1946. Ten years later, however, shopping centers appeared nationwide due to such varied factors as a suburban housing boom, white flight, the popularity of automobiles, increased road construction, and changes to the tax code that made commercial construction serve as a tax shelter. Money poured in, and shopping malls blossomed.46

By turning its commercial attention to shopping malls in 1962, with its Wyoming store, Zondervan came to the paradigm relatively early. Walden Book Company also opened its first store in 1962, but its stores appeared regularly only in the 1970s. Still largely staking its commercial fortunes on the notion that urban, downtown bookstores drew both sophisticated readers and random passers-by, the mainstream book industry came to the suburbs and its


shopping centers slowly. In the 1950s, about half of book sales still occurred in downtown department stores.\textsuperscript{47}

Zondervan's decision to move into shopping malls cut against the received wisdom of the C.B.A. In their 1968 Christian bookstore handbook, John Bass and Robert DeVries devoted an entire section to guidance on choosing a location. They emphasized that the choice of location should balance high traffic with low rent. While prospective bookstore owners might find that small towns or villages offered low rents, they explained, populations smaller than 40,000 or 50,000 residents would not sustain a bookstore. To compensate for fewer customers, booksellers would be obligated either to sell sidelines "which are not particularly religious" or to develop "a substantial mail-order business." With retail space in high-traffic downtown locations coming at a premium, the authors advised "finding a vacant store on the ground floor one to three blocks from the main street."

As a final solution, Bass and DeVries noted that "a number of Christian bookstores are now located in some of the numerous shopping centers springing up across the country." But they also explained that "these stores have special problems of their own." While acknowledging that such problems "may be a special challenge in which you are equipped," the authors informed readers that "a recent national survey" had demonstrated that "thirty eight percent of all bookstores located in shopping centers were losing money. A majority of them were branch stores of larger operations, so they could operate at at deficit while developing their business." The authors

concluded that "the operation of a store in most shopping centers must be done on a skilled, professional basis, and we have found that few are qualified to start there with their store first."\(^{48}\)

To be sure, even after the rise of shopping malls, some of the most successful bookstores appeared outside of malls, as Bass and DeVries advocated. In the 1970s, Jim Carlson's Logos Bookstore, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, provided a well-known example. Telling his story in a series of articles in *Bookstore Journal* in 1971, Carlson explained that Logos opened in July 1968 with a first-year sales goal of $15,000. It ultimately achieved $47,000, and it doubled its sales in its second and third years. The store did this, Carlson boasted, despite selling "no textbooks, school supplies or Sunday school curriculum." He broke down sales "by department . . . in descending order of dollars as follows: books, Bibles, posters, prints (art), records, gift items, cards, medallions, and church supplies." Carlson's store eventually became so successful that it allowed him to transform Logos into "the Association of Logos Bookstores," a kind of chain-cum-franchise.\(^{49}\)

Carlson attributed the store's success to four factors. First, the bookstore's staff engaged customers in conversation and conveyed a determined "gospel message." Second, the store had an attractive appearance. Those characteristics, Carlson insisted, should become standard industry policies. But the third and fourth factors were more difficult to reproduce. Third, his store had a good location, sitting in "the highest traffic location in the area on University


\(^{49}\) Carlson initially told his store's story at an InterVarsity Press workshop at the 1970 C.B.A. convention, and popular acclaim led Carlson to publish it as a series of articles in three successive issues of *Bookstore Journal* in 1971. In his story, Carlson recounts how he had served as a counselor for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. When Gordon Van Wylen, Dean of the University of Michigan's Engineering School, gathered $12,000 in capital and set out to establish a Christian bookstore, Van Wylen asked InterVarsity to manage it, and the organization tapped Carlson to lead the initiative. The experience ultimately gave Carlson expertise not just in Christian bookselling but also distribution. After his time at Logos, Carlson founded Spring Arbor Distributors, which became one of the two most powerful Christian book distributors of the 1980s. Ferré, "Searching for the Great Commission," 107.
Avenue." And fourth, the town had no other Christian bookstores, yet it had many eager readers. Many of those readers, Carlson noted, belonged to "main-line Protestant denominations, along with a sizable Roman Catholic representation." Carlson also admitted that "we at Logos are quite aware that if we were not located here at the U. of Michigan campus, the vast majority of these books would never be bought or read." But he insisted that "the point of this article is not that every bookstore should model itself after Logos. But, rather, that each bookstore owner or manager should carefully analyze his total community in ways similar to ours."\textsuperscript{50}

Carlson therefore attributed his bookstore's success largely to its downtown location and to its proximity to proven readers. But such a customer base was hard to find. Few towns in the United States mirrored Ann Arbor. But American suburbs and shopping centers, by comparison, offered a customer base whose self-selectivity lent their stores consistency. For white, middle-class, automobile owners, shopping centers became what Lizabeth Cohen describes as a "new kind of consumption-oriented community center." For suburbanites in general and suburban women in particular, malls served as a "centrally located public space that brought together commercial and civic activity."\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{center}
\textbf{A Bookstore Public}
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Shopping mall bookstores cultivated new ways of understanding and participating in evangelicalism. They had this effect by confronting consumers with words on authorized pages, by providing evangelicals with physical manifestations of evangelical imaginaries, and by serving


\textsuperscript{51} Lizabeth Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America,” \textit{The American Historical Review} 101, no. 4 (October 1996): 1055-56.
as sites where evangelicals could enact evangelical identity through devotional and consumer practice. In other words, Zondervan's focus on these citadels of suburban commercial space had profound effects both for Zondervan's bottom line and for the life of the evangelical public.

The first effect was financial. Above all, Zondervan's bookstore chain boosted its revenue tremendously. Since 1971, the bookstore division had been known as "Family Christian Bookstores." The name change had allowed the company to trade the corporate specificity of the "Zondervan" label for an ambiguous endorsement of "family" values and "Christian" identity. In addition, the name change allowed the chain to gain a commercial foothold in regions where the Zondervan name had less cachet. In the early 1970s, for instance, Zondervan established a number of stores in Southern Californian shopping malls, capitalizing on the region's vibrant evangelical, automobile, and consumer cultures.52

By 1970, Zondervan already had taken to calling itself "the largest nondenominational religious publisher in the world," and their broad geographic reach made the description ring true. In 1994, when Zondervan spun off its bookstore division as a separate company, it operated 153 stores in twenty-seven states and generated about $110 million in revenue--more than the company's publishing division. Ranking just behind such ubiquitous bookstore chains as Waldenbooks, B. Dalton, and Crown, Family Christian was the fifth largest chain in the United States.53

The second effect of Zondervan's shopping mall presence had to do less with the Zondervan Corporation than with its books and its readers. As Laura Miller explains, the

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52 See, for example, “Zondervan Family Bookstore Celebrates First Year,” Los Angeles Times, September 12, 1974; “Zondervan’s Offers ‘Just Good Books’,” Los Angeles Times, July 4, 1974.

presence of bookstore chains in shopping malls "lessened the elite aura that had formerly encircled the bookshop by bringing the bookstore down to the level of the supermarket across the parking lot or the teen jeans outlet next door." For customers both of mainstream bookstore chains and of Zondervan's, the chain bookstore became "just another place to shop." Miller sees this approach as "part of a deliberate strategy to attract nontraditional book buyers, who, as Crown Books’ market research found, ‘perceived that [traditional] bookstores are intimidating.’" In the mid-1970s, Zondervan became known for its slogan "Just Good Books," a phrase that left consumers free to decide what sort of "good" they desired from books.54

To be sure, publishers continued to tout the intellectual and theological value of books. "GO AHEAD: GROW YOUR MIND on Francis Schaeffer," an inside-cover, full-page InterVarsity Press ad shouted at readers of the July-August 1971 issue of the C.B.A.’s Bookstore Journal. "GO AHEAD: GROW YOUR MIND on John Stott," another ad trumpeted two pages later. "GO AHEAD: GROW YOUR MIND on Paul Little," came another ad after another two pages. "GO AHEAD MR. BOOKSELLER: GROW EVERYONE’S MIND," the series concluded. But even though this series of advertisements seems, at first glance, in the spirit of Carl Henry's emphasis on books' intellectual value (see Chapter Four), InterVarsity's advertisements simultaneously provided scant information about why and to what end readers should grow their minds. More than emphasizing intellectual growth, such ads emphasized middle-class intellectual guilt. Whatever a reader's reason for growing his or her mind, and whatever they considered growth to be, books were the best way to achieve it.

Dovetailing with the move away from treating books as objects of elite intellectualism, both secular and Christian bookstores increased their emphasis on selling sidelines along with books.

By the mid-1970s, approximately half of all Christian goods were sold through Christian bookstores. Recognizing this diversity of consumer goods, Family Christian Bookstores changed its name again, abandoning its explicit focus on books. It became "Family Christian Stores."  

In "Christian stores," music proved particularly important. To be sure, the book industry had dealt in music for decades. As early as 1941, Zondervan had been producing both songbooks and recordings. As the official distributor for the Singspiration line of songbooks and recordings, Zondervan helped popularize such well-known songs as "This Little Light of Mine" and "Fishers of Men."  

By circulating Christian music through stores, however, the industry began cultivating practices of devotional listening and pathways of distribution that allowed the Christian music industry to break away from books during the 1960s and 1970s. To be sure, as such historians as David Stowe note, the Jesus Movement of the 1970s not only lent contemporary Christian music its emphasis on folk, rock, and pop musical styles but also gave Christian music a high public profile. But as Quentin Schultze acknowledges, Christian music fundamentally "grew out of the established evangelical publishing business, using religious bookstores for retail outlets."

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56 Ruark, The House of Zondervan, 50, 68, 100-105.  

The third effect of putting Christian bookstores in shopping malls was that the marketplace made evangelicalism manifest. This phenomenon began in the 1950s, as the expansion of the book industry, its tightened organization, and its heightened sophistication all presented the marketplace as a panorama of evangelical life. As it had become easier to examine the behaviors and preferences of evangelical consumers, it also had become easier to see those consumers as representatives of the wider evangelical world. The rise of shopping mall bookstores democratized and intensified this phenomenon.

Before the 1960s, industry participants and evangelical leaders had seen this symbiotic relationship between evangelical books and evangelical imaginaries most clearly. In the decades immediately after the C.B.A.'s founding, for example, the book industry had become able to categorize evangelicals in new ways. Zondervan's marketing division carved up the spectrum of "Christian Conservatives" and "Church-Oriented Lay Readers" into five categories. Those categories included children (sub-teens), young teenagers (ages 13-15), older teenagers (ages 16-18), college youth, and adults. Alongside these readers, Zondervan believed that two additional classes of readers might occasionally be brought into the evangelical orbit. They included "the non-conservative church-oriented layman reader" and the "non-Christian and unchurched reader." Zondervan found it less effective to market market books to different denominational, regional, or theological inclinations than to treat evangelicals as functionally homogeneous, divided mostly by ages and aspirations than by Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, or Baptist particularities.58

From about 1960 on, industry leaders constantly attempted to situate books at the center of evangelical identity. "We have a product that is needed for every age," one C.B.A. leader explained in the mid-1950s, "for every circumstance life brings. We are the only business in the world that can give the rich what he can not obtain with his riches or the poor what he needs to become a child of the King." Writing in 1968, John Fish--the longtime editor of the C.B.A.'s Advance magazine, president from 1954-1955, and owner of a Michigan bookstore--insisted that "good Christian reading is essential for every believer." Only secondarily did Fish note that reading "also is a means of influencing the outsider for Christ."\(^{59}\)

By the 1990s, marketing executives talked even more directly--and less piously--about capitalizing on and cultivating evangelicals' cultural obligation to books. As the "consumer perception" section of the marketing plan for Billy Graham's autobiography Just As I Am (HarperCollins and Zondervan, 1997) explained,

The Naked Truth of this product: core CBA customers in fact each family will want a copy of Billy Graham's autobiography. Not to have one will be to turn their back on their Christian faith. It is similar to making sure that your family has a Bible. Even if they don't regularly read the Bible they want to have one, 'just in case.' There are also some similarities to William Bennett's Book of Virtues. Everyone was expected to have one, even if they only dipped into it once."

To disseminate this "Naked Truth," HarperCollins and Zondervan would use two "Communication Objectives." The "Positive approach" associated a purchase of the book with "Thanksgiving and honor: Affirm the power of your faith and testify to the impact and heritage of the preeminent leader of American evangelicalism by purchasing a copy of JUST AS I AM by Billy Graham." The "Negative approach," by comparison, would capitalize on "Guilt manipulation: To be a committed Christian, a well-informed Christian, a Christian who stands

\(^{59}\) Quoted in Jenkins, Twenty-Five Years of Sterling Rewards in God's Service, 34; John F. Fish, "CBA International," Bookstore Journal, July-August 1968, 16.
together with his/her brothers and sisters YOU MUST PURCHASE A COPY OF JUST AS I AM by Billy Graham.\textsuperscript{60} Although this HarperCollins marketing strategy sounds like capitalism at its most cynical, it speaks to the way that the evangelical book industry believed that evangelicals perceived books and engaged them.

While these panoramic perspectives of evangelical consumers always were available to marketing executives and industry participants, bookstores made them available to everyday shoppers. One mode of access was the practice of book browsing and buying, which evangelical leaders had cultivated as a full-fledged devotional practice. As Donald Kauffman explained to readers of Christianity Today in 1963, "Christians need to read without necessarily accepting all reviewers' verdicts. Christians might profitably engage in more book browsing, personally sampling the wealth of spiritual treasure now available as never before. They might well emulate the pastor of a small rural church whose wife worked to supplement his meager income; when we discussed a new Bible commentary, he said, 'I'm going to buy it on faith.'"\textsuperscript{61} Such practices were easy for both evangelicals and curious shoppers to perform, even outside of shopping malls.

But shopping malls gave evangelicalism, its material culture, and its devotional practices unprecedented visibility, and they did so everyday except Sunday--when Christian bookstores typically closed. True, anyone who walked down Ann Arbor's main thoroughfare, observed Jim Carlson's Logos Bookstore, and perhaps entered it would have seen evangelicalism in action. Bookstore handbooks devoted so much attention to interior design and presentation precisely to help bookstores entice new customers. But Carlson's bookstore was exceptional, both because


Carlson had a knack for appealing to college students and because his store had a prominent location. Until Christian bookstores began appearing in shopping centers, most bookstores were located in out-of-the-way locations, where rental space came more cheaply.62

Annual meetings of the Christian Booksellers' Conventions had much the same effect as bookstores, though on a larger scale, and far more infrequently. Virtually every year since the early 1970s, annual C.B.A. conventions have inspired journalists to reflect with surprise upon the scale of the evangelical book industry and apparent vitality of evangelical Christianity. Writing from the 1970 C.B.A. convention in Minneapolis, for example, the New York Times's McCandlish Phillips reported that "a new kind of piety that stresses immediate personal experience and encounter, and that deemphasizes doctrinal formulations has given Protestant religious publishers a big surge in sales." Recounting a conversation with Zondervan's Robert DeVries, Phillips reported that the firm's vice president of publications explained, "We think of the 26 million evangelical Christians in America as our main audience." Ten years later, Carol Flake would write a similar piece for the Washington Post. "There are most then 6,300 Christian bookstores across the country," Flake reported in 1981. "And just as evangelicals constitute the fastest-growing religious group in the country, evangelical-oriented publishing is the fastest growing sector of the book trade." These are just two of many similar stories.63

62 As late as 1991, Kenneth Taylor felt called to praise Zondervan for managing to survive financially despite putting its bookstores in major shopping malls Taylor, My Life, 295.

With bookstores making evangelicalism manifest, the fourth effect saw book authors, publishers, sellers, and leaders gain a newfound ability to create books and other commercial goods for the consumption of the ever-expanding evangelical market. Collecting and capitalizing on new data about evangelical consumer behavior, new publishing companies, distributors, marketers, and talent agencies all attempted to recognize, serve, and cultivate evangelicals' supply and demand.

By the turn of the century, for example, Zondervan possessed not five but twenty or thirty "target markets." When Zondervan and Harper-Collins collaborated in 1997 to publish Billy Graham's *Just as I Am*, their marketing plan identified ten groups of "target consumers," falling within two classifications. The "primary audience" included: "Christians who shop frequently in CBA bookstore chains and independents"; "Christians who listen to Christian radio"; "viewers of Christian television (national and regional)"; "subscribers to Christian magazines: Decision, Christianity Today, Moody, Discipleship Journal"; "donors to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association"; "active members of most major evangelical denominations"; and "Christian entertainment buyers and Christians interested in spiritual growth." The "secondary audience" included: "preaching-teaching pastors"; "church and parachurch leaders"; and "people passionate about evangelism and discipline."

These classifications testified to the way that the industry essentially overlooked the kinds of regional and denominational distinctions that evangelical leaders once had relied upon to divide and quantify the conservative constituency. Occasionally, publishers brought regional concerns back into their marketing calculations. Graham's marketing plan, for example, noted that the "Billy Graham Evangelical Association ranks the following states as its top markets based on the number of requests for spiritual guidance participation: 1) California 2) Texas 3) Pennsylvania 4)
North Carolina 5) Ohio 6) Florida 7) Virginia 8) New York 9) Georgia 10) Tennessee.” But these regional classifications said less about who the B.G.E.A. believed evangelicals to be than where they thought evangelicals lived. This emphasis on region merely provided a guide for approaches to advertising.

From the 1950s on, one product genre above all appealed to evangelical publishers precisely because it seemed able to appeal to all target markets, transcending and mollifying both regional and denominational divisions. This genre was the Bible. In the second half of the twentieth century, evangelicals continued to see the Bible as the Book of books. Recognizing this, publishers and booksellers transformed it into a business plan. Although the Bible remained a Book above all others, it was--above all--a book. More than that, it was a book whose potential profitability remained largely untapped.

**Bibles As Books**

"Reports stemming from recent Christian Booksellers Conventions show that the Bible is still far and away the world's best seller," *Christianity Today* reported in September 1964. "Moreover, the circulation of religious literature in general is increasing, and even the largest book publishers have found a fertile field in Christian devotional material representing the conservative tradition." But the article also lamented that "the abiding attraction of the Bible as represented by the number of copies Americans buy each year contrasts ironically with the fact that biblical norms are so little practiced in government, in business and labor, in home and

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personal life. . . . The dismaying discrepancy between Bible buying and Bible reading on the part of American people should be a call to repentance.\textsuperscript{65}

Although this article's critique of "American people" and their supposed rejection of "biblical norms" was hardly new, the article's focus on the purchase of Bibles reflected a shift in the evangelical book market of the 1960s. Before, new versions of the Bible had appeared rarely. Now, new translations, editions, and packagings of the Bible proliferated. While conservative observers of the book industry long had insisted that the Bible was the "world's best seller," the trope always had been misleading; various versions of the Bible may have outranked all other books when added together, but particular editions rarely achieved such sales on their own. In the twentieth century's second half, however, such Bibles as Zondervan's New International Version gave the old trope credibility.

In the 1950s, conservative Protestants still relied almost exclusively on the King James translation of the Bible, which had changed relatively little since first appearing in 1611.\textsuperscript{66} True, that translation appeared in various presentations. In Zondervan's 154-page 1955-1956 catalog, for instance, sixteen pages touted seventeen varieties of Bibles. With the exception of one American Revised Version, the other sixteen Bibles took the "beloved authorized King James version" for their text. The differences between them consisted primarily of size (e.g., "Vest Pocket Testaments," "Coat Pocket Testaments," and "Oxford Pocket Scofield Bible"), textual design (e.g., "New Red Letter Editions" and "Large Pica Type Bibles"), and interpretive aids.

\textsuperscript{65} "The Neglected Treasure," \textit{Christianity Today}, September 25, 1964, accessed in Box 13, Ockenga Papers. Although the author of the article is unknown, Carl Henry likely wrote it. He served as the magazine's editor at the time, and he often wrote brief editorials of this sort.

\textsuperscript{66} It had undergone a series of revisions, but the bulk of the text remained unchanged. See Jack Pearl Lewis, \textit{The English Bible, from KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 37.
(e.g., "Readers Text Bible with Concordance," "Teachers' Reference Bible with Concordance," and "Scofield Reference Bibles").

Although Zondervan and other firms offered customers Bibles of varied designs, the relative homogeneity of Bibles provided room for innovation. Innovation became possible for both religious and commercial reasons. The leading commercial reason is that the book industry's rise had expanded the market to which publishers could sell new Bibles. This made publishers aware of potential demand for them. In his 1991 autobiography, Kenneth Taylor identified this motivation as the catalyst behind his creation of The Living Bible. Early in his time as head of Moody Press, Taylor learned that the publisher of Charles B. Williams's The New Testament in the Language of the People had allowed the book to go out of print. Interested in the book "because of my long-standing difficulty with Bible reading," Taylor republished the book in 1952. It became one of Moody's bookstores' bestsellers, and it helped the firm to earn one million dollars in profit between 1948 and 1962.67

Soon, on Williams's model, Taylor began mulling over how to make "Bible reading more attractive" not just for children but also for adults. Having written a few books of Bible stories for children, Taylor opened his King James Bible one night and turned randomly to 2 Timothy, which he began paraphrasing. After reading the result with "great interest and satisfaction," he decided to continue the exercise, using the "American Standard Version of 1901 . . . because it was, and still is, in my opinion, the most accurate of the word-for-word English translations." Writing with "vocabulary and construction that would be acceptable for the average reader at

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67 Taylor, My Life, 176-179.
Reader's Digest level," he completed a paraphrase of the Pauline epistles in December 1960 and titled it Living Letters.68

Convinced that Moody Bible Institute's leaders would see his paraphrase as a challenge to Biblical authority, Taylor decided not to publish the manuscript through Moody Press. Printing a few copies in 1962, he brought it to the same place other Christian authors sought out publishers: the annual C.B.A. convention. James Ruark explains that Taylor offered the manuscript to Zondervan, but the firm "had misgivings about the concept." Taylor therefore created Tyndale House Publishers, secured distribution through his C.B.A. connections, and ultimately solicited the interest of Billy Graham, who would give away copies to viewers of his Hour of Decision television program in the fall of 1963. After printing more than 600,000 copies of Living Letters and receiving requests for additional parts of the Bible from Christian bookstores, Taylor began paraphrasing the whole Bible piece-by-piece.69

At the July 1971 C.B.A. convention, Taylor launched The Living Bible. By that time, the success of his Bible series had allowed his new firm to secure books by such prolific Christian authors as James Dobson, Tim LaHaye, David Wilkerson, and James Kennedy. The success of his Bible series also had drawn the interest of "secular bookstores," which Taylor supplied through a co-publishing agreement with Doubleday. Distributing The Living Bible through Christian bookstores, secular bookstores, drugstores, grocery stores, and such department stores as J.C. Penney, it sold three million copies in 1971 alone, topping national bestseller lists in both 1972 and 1973. By 1975, it sold eighteen million copies.70

68 Ibid., 208-216.


70 Brown, "The Culture of Culture Industries," 298.
Recognizing the same market opportunities as Taylor, Zondervan also increased its Bible offerings at the end of the 1950s. In 1958, for example, it published *The Amplified New Testament*. The Amplified Version was the creation of F. Dewey Lockman, of La Habra, California. Through a mutual friend, Pat and Bernie Zondervan had learned about Lockman's "Amplified Gospel of John," which essentially took the King James Version and inserted additional words parenthetically to help clarify the King James text. Meeting with Lockman in 1956, the Zondervan brothers agreed to publish Lockman's entire New Testament. At the August 1959 C.B.A. convention in Grand Rapids, the firm unfurled a banner announcing that it had sold 385,000 copies of the book; it would sell half a million by March 1960.

When Zondervan released the complete *The Amplified Bible* in September 1965, the *Amplified New Testament* already had sold a million copies. Floyd Thatcher boasted in 1965 that the firm had sought out and secured "newspaper and magazine coverage, . . . radio coverage in Los Angeles, excellent television and radio coverage in Houston and Atlanta, and outstanding television coverage over WNBC-TV new in New York. Across the country, leading clergy and news people evidenced outstanding interest and co-operation." As a story in the *Zondervan Book News* reported, Daniel Poling of the Christian Herald Association appeared on WNBC's 6 o'clock news on September 27, 1965 and explained how the *Amplified Bible* works. "That's right," Poling remarked, "you have the King James Version, and in parenthesis, you have the meaning, the explanation." He added, "No, I don't think it raises any problems, but it certainly does solve some of the old problems."71

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The next year, in April 1959, Zondervan published *The Berkeley Version of the Bible in Modern English*. The translator, the Presbyterian minister Gerrit Verkuyl, had named his translation after the Bay Area city in California where he lived. Verkuyl published his New Testament in 1945, and Zondervan purchased the rights in 1950. Zondervan soon gathered a group of Hebrew scholars to create a complementary Old Testament. Once released, the Bible sold well, but not as briskly as the *Amplified Bible*. It sold approximately 50,000 copies by 1960.72

Convinced that Bibles could generate high sales volume, Zondervan bought the Bible division of Harper and Row in December 1965. The purchase gave Zondervan the publishing rights to both the Harper Study Bible and the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. On the strength of the acquisition, Thatcher insisted, Zondervan "will not only be the major religious publisher in the United States, but will also be one of the major Bible publishers." Bible sales not only provided the firm with capital to fund its bookstore expansion but also generated investors' interest, inspiring the firm to begin trading its stock publicly in 1973.73

If market opportunity provided one reason that publishers began producing new Bibles, perceived theological need provided another. Yet as both Kenneth Taylor's and Zondervan's stories illustrate, theological needs often have proved malleable, bending both to market opportunity and cultural identity. In both publishers' cases, perception of theological need centered largely around reactions to the publication of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.

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The R.S.V. appeared in September 1952. It was a revision not of the King James Version but rather of the American Standard Version (1901), the American take on the Revised Version (1885), which had been devised as the replacement for the King James. Meeting initially in 1870, the Revised Version's translation committee began their work at the request of the Church of England; in the optimistic spirit Protestant ecumenism and nineteenth-century "evangelical" zeal, the committee included both English and American scholars of varied denominational and theological backgrounds. The translators' hope had been to create a "perfect" Bible, correcting the Authorized Version's mistranslated words, typographic errors, and unclear prose.

But the revised versions did not receive the support that translators had hoped for. Some people criticized the translations' literal language, others pointed out that new ancient manuscripts had been discovered since the 1880s, and still others argued that Roman Catholics should have a larger say in the translation process. Eventually, the call went out for another translation. Beginning in 1929, though working in earnest only after 1937, translators began working on what became known as the Revised Standard Version. They finished their New Testament in 1946.74

As Peter Thuesen points out, the R.S.V. was generally well received. Criticism mostly "fell into two categories: opposition to Bible revision in general, and opposition to Bible revision by liberals." The second kind of criticism drew the most vocal support. In 1901, the firm of Thomas Nelson and Sons had received exclusive copyright to the A.S.V.; but when the new translation initiative began in 1929, Nelson had sold the rights to the International Council of Religious Education. As Chapter Four's discussion of the International Sunday School Lesson system illustrated, conservatives painted the I.C.R.E. as a modernist collaborator with the Federal

Council. Those suspicions seemed prescient when, in December 1950, the Federal Council became part of the newly created National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America (N.C.C.), and the N.C.C. absorbed the I.C.R.E. The R.S.V. initiative had become the territory of the National Council. By the time the entire R.S.V. appeared in 1952, many conservatives already had made up their minds about it.

As early as December 1952, the N.A.E. announced its opposition to the new translation. The organization's executive committee "declare[d] in behalf of the N.A.E." such criticisms as:

1. We protest the assumption by the National Council of Christian Churches . . . the right to pronounce any version of the Holy Scriptures "authorized" for English speaking Protestants. God's Word carries its own authority. [. . .]
2. We regret certain features of advertising and promotion that appear to have been designed primarily to stimulate sales [. . .]
3. We deplore that . . . the Revised Committee saw fit to use "you" in reference to our God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Altogether, the Committee announced its "unwillingness at this stage to recommend the Revised Standard Version until competent evangelical scholarship has clarified certain dubious points." Along with the R.S.V. committee's connection to the N.C.C., and its decision to abandon the traditional "thee" and "though" language of previous versions, many conservatives objected to seemingly minor changes to the text. Chief among such changes was the committee's decision to interpret the Hebrew word _almah_ in Isaiah 7.14 as "young woman" rather than the Authorized Version's "virgin."

To a degree, these criticisms reflected petty posturing; they were a way of justifying opposition based largely on disdain for the translation's supposed modernism. Additional petty

75 Ibid., 79-87.
criticisms included the complaint that the translation was copyrighted. "Why copyright the Bible?" asked a contributor to *United Evangelical Action*. This critic apparently did not realize that even the King James Version was copyrighted.\(^7^7\)

At the same time, however, seemingly petty criticism of individual words also reflected the tendency for fundamentalist hermeneutics to hinge on small matters of language. Although some conservatives acknowledged, for example, that the R.S.V. committee had good textual reason for translating *almah* as it did, they simultaneously insisted that the new translation diminished the passage's traditional status as a prophecy that pointed toward the virginal status of Jesus's mother.

Summarizing and endorsing criticism of the R.S.V. in *United Evangelical Action* in 1953, James DeForest Murch presented a list of reasons that "competent evangelical scholars . . . are definitely opposed to recommending or using the RSV." Murch's insisted that "*The RSV in many instances weakens the fundamentals of the Christian faith,*" and he complained that "*The RSV translators who did most of the work . . . are practically all 'modernists.'" On the basis of such criticism, Murch insisted, "Evangelicals should be roused to action by the advent of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. This action should be more than critical of the RSV. It should be primarily concerned about the production of a new, universally-acceptable translation of the Holy Scriptures in the English vernacular."\(^7^8\)

To be sure, not all evangelicals endorsed the idea of a new translation. As with the translation's critics, supporters generally fell into two categories. First, supporters included such self-conscious evangelical intellectuals as George Eldon Ladd, E. J. Carnell, Wilbur Smith, Carl

\(^{77}\) Witmer, "Why Copyright the Bible?", *United Evangelical Action*, August 15, 1946, 9.

\(^{78}\) James DeForest Murch, "Evangelicals and the 'New Version,'" *United Evangelical Action*, January 15, 1953, Murch Archive, 5-6. For the details of the fourth claim--especially the R.S.V.'s replacement of "virgin" with "young woman"--see Thuesen, *In Discordance With the Scriptures*, 126.
Henry, and Harold Lindsell—all professors at Fuller Theological Seminary. In 1946, Henry's Evangelical Book List had recommended the R.S.V.'s New Testament to evangelicals as "a translation that makes for pleasurable reading." Lindsell gave the R.S.V. such strong support that he used the translation as the basis for his Harper Study Bible (1964), which he created as a kind of modern-day alternative to the Scofield Reference Bible.79

Lindsell and other Fuller professors praised the translation not just for what they perceived as its scholarly strength but also for its ability to serve as a medium of evangelism. While a conservative evangelical translation perhaps would help gird evangelical faith, they reasoned, outsiders likely would not engage the text. But "the Revised Standard Version," Lindsell explained in 1964 to readers of Christian Life, "is here to stay. It has been adopted by most of the major denominations in America."

Lindsell's assumption was essentially that the Bible's authority spoke for itself. Rather than focusing on reinforcing its God-given authority with man-made effort, evangelicals should focus on helping nonbelievers to encounter it. Recognizing that the King James Version "still commands the affections of millions who do not understand what it means half the time, but who swear by it anyway," Lindsell explained that he relied upon the R.S.V. for his study bible because he hoped to reach "those millions of people who simply wish help in understanding the Bible," rather than "those who will not look at the RSV."80


Evangelical publishers provided a second category of R.S.V. supporters. Pat Zondervan became particularly supportive of the version after 1965, when Zondervan Co. purchased the Bible division of Harper and thereby received the rights to the R.S.V. He boasted in 1969, for example, that he had been "pushing" the version to his customers. Claiming theological, ecclesiological, and hermeneutical principle, Zondervan opposed the creation of a new translation. When the 1966 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church rejected a proposal to participate formally in a new translation initiative, for example, Zondervan described the decision as a "great step forward."

But Pat Zondervan's position also reflected financial calculations, for he was protective of his investment in the R.S.V. and his earlier Bible projects. Yet even greater market opportunity soon led Zondervan to change his mind about the R.S.V.'s sufficiency. Although the C.R.C. had decided not to participate as a denomination, a group of Christian Reformed ministers had continued to support the campaign for a new evangelical translation. In 1965, they came together with N.A.E. leaders to create the Committee on Bible Translation, and the Committee's project received financial support a year later from the New York Bible Society, an auxiliary of the American Bible Society. As James Ruark notes, the Committee's executive secretary became Edwin H. Palmer, a pastor at Grand Rapids' Grandville Avenue Christian Reformed Church. Pat Zondervan’s secretary had recommended him to the position.

But the New York Bible Society's financial support faltered due to the economic downturn of the 1960s, and the initiative needed additional backing. In 1971, after learning of the situation, Pat Zondervan offered to sponsor it through advanced royalty payments. In exchange, his firm

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81 Cited in Thuesen, In Discordance with the Scriptures, 133.
82 Ruark, House of Zondervan, 152.
received exclusive copyright privileges to the translation for thirty years.\textsuperscript{83} In 1995, the firm renewed those privileges for twenty-eight more years.


Zondervan released the entire N.I.V. in October 1978, with an initial printing run of 1.2 million copies, which sold out even before the book's release. It would become the bestselling modern English-language Bible. In 1981, salesmen boasted amongst themselves that Vice-President George Bush had used their N.I.V. to take his oath of office. In 1991, the firm would claim that one out of every three Bibles sold was an N.I.V. version. By 1996, it would print one hundred million copies. The translation owed its extraordinary commercial success largely to its extensive distribution network. Months before the \textit{Gospel of John} was released Zondervan had been touting it to bookstores, insisting that "If you haven't yet ordered a supply of the New International Bible . . . do it now! An interdenominational effort by scores of scholars, this new translation promises to be one of the most important of the century."\textsuperscript{84}

Hoping that the text would replace the King James as evangelicals' everyday Bible, Zondervan's advertisements for the translation emphasized both its scholarly credentials and its easy-reading accessibility. It was "A mature translation," an ad explained in June 1973. "Each book was developed by a separate team of experts, then submitted to three successive editorial

\textsuperscript{83} Thuesen, \textit{In Discordance with the Scriptures}, 148.

committees. By this process of constant honing and translation matured into ripe dependable version. And since its editors represented many different denominations the translation is free from narrow sectarian bias. The *New International Bible* is truly as broad as Christendom!" Yet the translation also was "*Faithful to the original,*" the same ad insisted. "It is not a paraphrase, nor is it like other modern versions that are easy to read but not entirely accurate. The translators have made every effort to be faithful to the original."

Simultaneously addressing long-standing frustrations with the King James Version's turgid prose as well as evangelicals' appreciation for that language's reverential tone, advertisements highlighted the translation's "*idiomatic*" and "*dignified*" style. "It is not a revision of the King James," the ad explained, "These still carry many of the old-fashioned sentence structures that are unnatural in the 20th century. Instead it is written in up-to-date language that has been thoroughly tested among many, many people of diverse backgrounds." And while "it is written in the language of the common man, . . . it is not coarse or slangy."85

Even Harold Lindsell eventually supported it, agreeing to publish a version of the *Harper Study Bible* with the text of the N.I.V.86 And while it emerged largely out of principled opposition to perceived liberalism, with translators touting its "maturity" and "dignity," those qualities alone did not bring the Bible its success. Above all, the N.I.V. became the unofficial Bible of the evangelical world because Zondervan successfully taught consumers to see it that way.

As the firm's 1977 marketing strategy reveals, Zondervan cultivated the N.I.V.'s prominent position in at least three ways. First, it began presenting the N.I.V.'s text in a wide range of study

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Bibles, and it marketed those studies directly to churches. The marketing plan notes that "with the current boom in individual and group Bible study, [study Bibles] have proven hotter than ever!" The popularity of group Bible study had boomed alongside the rise of Christian books, for increased access to and awareness of study aids had facilitated the studies themselves. By positioning its Bibles in this way, Zondervan was capitalizing on devotional practices that it had helped create. Second, Zondervan produced a large number of "add-ons" to the text, such as study guides and paraphernalia that used the N.I.V. text. As one financial report noted, these were "high-margined products." 87

Third, in the same way that increased access to Christian books had fueled group study practices, access to Christian books had circulated the notion that Christians could and should turn to books as instruments with which to fine-tune their personal faith. "Last year," the 1977 marketing plan explained, "we launched a coordinated marketing push designed to educate prime buyers . . . about the availability of 'a Bible for every individual need.' Our current 'Do-it-yourself' campaign has done the job, increasing sales substantially. Thus for 1977 we are not only reinstituting the campaign but expanding it to include individual key product advertising/promotion under the 'Do-it-yourself' theme." Rather than pay only three-quarters of these new "Do-it-yourself" promotional kits, Zondervan offered them for free. 88

Driving home the idea that individual Christians should seek out Christian books as textual prescriptions for spiritual ailments, Zondervan had adopted the slogan "Read for Your Life" in 1973. The centerpiece of the promotional campaign for the new slogan consisted of posters that


displayed a dark sky, with a light shining in the distance, illuminating dark clouds above. It could be a view of heaven, or of the star that guided the wise men to Bethlehem. At the foot of the image, two shadowed figures stood next to each other in conversation, talking presumably about matters of life and death. Above them, at the top of the poster, viewers were instructed to "Read for your life."

This was serious business. But it also was a cohesive enterprise. From Zondervan's perspective, Bibles and books operated the same way in their customers' lives. In 1980, the firm acknowledged what the firm's historian describes as "the close relationship between the New International Version and so many of the company's books" by merging its Book and Bible Divisions. Bibles had become books.\(^\text{89}\)

**Evangelicals Everywhere**

"If there's truth to the saying 'We are what we read,'" Russell Chandler reported to readers of the *Los Angeles Times* in August 1975, "then Americans are becoming increasingly religious." Although "surveys show that U.S. church attendance dropped and then leveled off in recent years," Chandler explained, "the demand for books that appeal to religious needs has been soaring. . . . One survey found that 42 per cent of American families bought Bibles or other religious books last year--a total of about 9 million Bibles and 12 million other books.\(^\text{90}\)

Although Christian bookstores had moved Christian books into public view during the 1960s, only in the 1970s did their high sales volume draw the attention of more mainstream sales venues. As one Christian book editor remarked to the *Chicago Tribune* in 1975, "Now it's become

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\(^{89}\) Ruark, *The House of Zondervan*, 159.

easy to pick up religion when you buy your groceries." The Tribune reporter added that "racks for religious paperbacks, are not only sprouting up in supermarkets but also in drugstores, airports, restaurants, and gas stations."

In the thirty years before 1975, Christian book publishers not only had transformed evangelical books into a popular site of religious practice but also begun to situate books at the heart of an expansive, if amorphous, religious identity. But the processes through which this occurred had not run their course. To the contrary, those very processes allowed the sales of evangelical books and the scale of the evangelical public to expand still further. Only with evangelical books circulating everywhere could they begin to constitute what we recognize today as contemporary evangelicalism—a religious phenomenon that seems to appear both everywhere and nowhere.91

More than any single book, Zondervan's Late Great Planet Earth (1970) brought Christian books fully into the mainstream marketplace. Originally titled Behold a White Horse—an allusion to Revelation 19.11—Hal Lindsey and Carol (or "C.C.") Carlson collaborated on the book and split the royalties. But Lindsey received most of the credit. For most of the previous decade, he had worked for Bill Bright's Campus Crusade for Christ. By his estimate, that service had allowed him to deliver sermons and talks to more than 200,000 people, and those occasions gave him opportunity to develop his views on prophecy and eschatology.

As a draft of an early press release for the book explained, "The Late Great Planet Earth builds a logical case for trusting Biblical prophecy... The book shows how the signs which would precede the return of Christ are falling together like pieces of a fantastic prophetic puzzle."

Lindsey insisted that "This is not a complex theological treatise, but a direct account of the most thrilling optimistic view of what the future could hold for any individual."  

While the success of any book is difficult to explain, Lindsey's in particular confounded both its publishers and industry observers. Lindsey's book eventually sold ten million copies in its first decade in print, an accomplishment that led the New York Times Book Review to describe it as the bestselling non-fiction book of the 1970s. Yet nobody seemed to know why it became so popular. In 1975, Kenneth Taylor would praise the book, but he could find no explanation for its popularity other than to remark that "Hal Lindsey's verbal artistry has opened up the Bible's contents more than any other ingredient in the last half-a-decade." 

With more historical distance, Paul Boyer suggests that Lindsey's book "contributed nothing new to an already well-established framework of premillennialist nuclear-war interpretation." Both Boyer and a former Zondervan executive suggest that the book consisted of little more than versions of Lindsey's lecture notes from Dallas Theological Seminary. Crawford Gribben points out that it "blurred the boundaries between prophetic entertainment and biblical interpretation." While dispensationalists traditionally had deflected criticism of their views by refusing to set dates, Lindsey pointed toward current events and hinted that the time of Christ's return seemed to have come.

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Aside from the book's timing, and its ability to draw compelling connections between eschatological speculations and current events, two explanations help account for its success. First, it benefited greatly from word-of-mouth testimonials. Such testimonials circulated largely through Zondervan's bookstores, carried across the country by Zondervan's team of wholesalers. In January 1975, for instance, salesmen received a memo that shared a story that "Jack Wyrtzen recently wrote Pat Zondervan." Wyrtzen related,

We have a student here at the Word of Life Bible Institute who was involved with the Chariot of the Gods cult. He picked up a copy of The Late Great Planet Earth by mistake thinking it was connected with the Chariot of the Gods and was wonderfully converted. . . . I interviewed him on our new television program that will be seen nation-wide each week beginning in January.

Other testimonials came directly from readers. "Six months ago I became a Christian," Billy Archie wrote from a federal prison in Indiana in June 1976, "and the more I study the Bible the more I realize there is to learn." Addressing the "Editor" at Zondervan, Archie explained that "Lindsey's book is, by far, the best I've read on interpretation of prophecy." Archie had read the book after "one of the Christian guards loaned me a copy of his to read," and Archie had written to Zondervan to plead for "a copy of my own, which I could use to show others the Bible's truth and accuracy." Responding to Archie's letter a few days later, Managing Editor T. A. Bryant sent Archie both the book in question as well as one of Lindsey's more recent books.95

A second explanation for the Late Great Planet Earth's success was its low cost and unprecedented distribution. In its initial year, the books' sales benefited not just from Zondervan's sales expertise but also from Lindsey's personal network of connections through Dallas Theological Seminary and Campus Crusade. Selling well from the start, sales soon increased so rapidly that Zondervan's ads for the book played upon the rapid pace of change. In

one ad in *Bookstore Journal*, for example, the "5th" printing of "66,000" appeared to be crossed out and replaced by a hand-written "7th" printing of "100,000."\(^{96}\)

These quick sales led Bantam Books, a leading publisher of mass market paperbacks, to purchase reprint rights from Zondervan in 1972. The book would spend much of 1973 on the list of Bantam's top ten bestsellers. Benefiting from Bantam's mass production and distribution capabilities, the next few years would see the book secure and retain a place on B. Dalton Bookstores' list of top twenty-five titles. It rose to seventh in 1971, second in 1972, first in 1973, and twelfth in 1974. Considering that B. Dalton and Waldenbooks together accounted for a quarter of all book sales in the country, this ranking was no small thing. In shopping malls across America, Lindsey's book was featured in all of its bookstores--secular and Christian alike.\(^{97}\)

Distribution through Bantam not only allowed Lindsey's book to sell more copies but also allowed the mainstream book industry to take greater note of their sales. Particularly in the decades before computerized record keeping, sales volume had not always been easy to track. Although we tend to think of a bestseller list as an objective measure of market success, it often is, in Laura Miller's words, a "marketing tool and historical fiction." By describing lists in this way, Miller emphasizes that bestseller lists often reflect a range of subjective motivations and decisions. Those include not just prevailing perception of a books' importance but also commercial collusion between book publishers who aspire to place their books on lists, booksellers who hope

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\(^{96}\) "Late Great Planet Earth Advertisement," *Bookstore Journal*, February 1971, 37.

to publicize their offerings, and newspapers who create lists to generate subscriptions and advertising revenue.\(^9\)

More problematically, sales figures do not reach list-makers automatically or comprehensively; instead, publishers and bookstores tend to report sales figures voluntarily, at the invitation of the list-maker. Many copies of many books fall between the cracks of this process. Until Lindsey's book began selling so many copies, in so many places, that the mainstream book industry could not ignore evangelical books, neither Publishers' Weekly nor the New York Times generally included evangelical books in their lists.

Inadvertently testifying to the evangelical book industry's low statistical profile, one report from 1987 claimed that Christian books suddenly had come to account for a third of the commercial book market. The suddenness that the reporter perceived likely had more to do with new procedures of data collection than a spike in sales. As the reporter admitted, "the statistics are compiled from various sources and perhaps are not complete because of the diverse scope of the industry."\(^9\)

In 1983, evangelical book publishers and book dealers began a campaign oriented against what they described as the "silent censorship" that the mainstream book industry orchestrated. "There is a tendency to keep Christian thinking out of the mainstream," one report explained in September 1983, "to marginalize it and make it look like a product of a 'fringe group.'" With displays provided by the C.B.A., bookstores cast their products as "banned books." The campaign was a response to a "banned books week" campaign that the American Booksellers' Association recently had ran in mainstream bookstores; the latter campaign had focused on

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ninety-three titles that moralizing Americans often had chosen to censor. The campaign also reflected the recent publication of Cal Thomas's *Book Burning* (Crossway, 1983), which argued that secular bias against Christian views kept Christianity out of the public sphere. This campaign stood on the premise that evangelicalism had proven itself to be a sufficiently important part of American religious life that it deserved full access to its pathways of power.

But the irony was that until the 1970s evangelicals essentially had ostracized themselves, and that ostracism itself had helped give them the sort of self-awareness necessary to claim, in 1983, that they were being ostracized. Since the 1940s, evangelical books had achieved commercial success by servicing the self-understanding of a subculture that cast itself as a sanctified analogue to secular culture. Even in the mid-1980s, oppositional discourse still plucked evangelicals' devotional and commercial heartstrings "We see ourselves as the Christian alternative to B. Dalton's and Walden's (the major secular chain bookstores)," the vice president of Zondervan's bookstore division told a reporter in 1984.

This oppositional discourse and behavior had lent evangelicalism social cohesion and allowed evangelical publishers to capitalize on it by creating such "alternative" institutions as Christian bookstores. Paradoxically, however, Christian bookstores not only had manifested this oppositional evangelicalism but also invited the public to participate in it. At the same time that the evangelical book industry transformed the idea of evangelicalism into a constituency of

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people who bemoaned their oppressed status, it also erased evangelicalism's barriers to entry. At the end of the twentieth century, contemporary evangelicalism thrived primarily because it became easy for Americans to recognize evangelicalism's social presence and to participate in its accessible discourses and practices. Simply buy C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity*, or pick up Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life*, and you become an evangelical in the making.

By 1984, when Zondervan's vice president described his firm's bookstores as the "Christian alternative" to secular bookstores, the firm had undermined the very idea of secular bookstores. As one financial report indicated in 1982, Zondervan sold sixty percent of its books to secular outlets, and just forty percent percent to religious outlets. Together, its secular and religious outlets sold almost ten percent of the nation's religious publishing.

Observers of evangelicalism often suggest that evangelical popular culture achieved such market success by "cloning" secular culture. Publishers themselves would acknowledge the

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102 Such scholars as Christian Smith and Michael Emerson presume that "strong religious identities and commitments" make evangelicalism a "thriving," if "embattled," religious movement. In their telling (with the theoretical support of Roger Finke and Rodney Stark), evangelicals "compete" with other subcultures to bring people into their fold. They would say that evangelical books provide tools with which to do so. But neither religious identity nor the commercial culture within which people live out those identities work in the way that they require. They presume, for example, that "most churchgoing people possess meaningful religious self-identities about which they are sufficiently self-aware to be able, when asked, to place themselves in a multipositioned field of religious identity." But their own data undermines that presumption. Of the evangelicals they surveyed, nearly a quarter chose to identify with three of four possible religious categories, and more than a third selected two categories. This is not "strong religious identity." Christian Smith and Michael Emerson, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 144, 151, 234-235.

103 Tanya Luhrmann turns to evangelical books regularly to support her assertions about evangelical belief and practice. Luhrmann's use of evangelical books seems to draw not only upon her scholarly presumptions about what books demonstrate about the communities from which they emerge but also upon the evangelical engagement with books that she experienced in her fieldwork. In the same way that she inhabited evangelical modes of prayer, she also seems to have inhabited evangelical book culture, though she is far more reflexive about the former experience than the latter. See Tanya M. Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 23, 26, 40, 56, 73, 84. For more on the relationship between consumerism, evangelical Christianity, and American culture, see Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2009), 92.


tactic. But such characterizations fail to recognize that "secular" and "religious" divisions exist first in the imagination and only secondarily in visible and tangible form. The evangelical book industry succeeded by cultivating and capitalizing upon a religious public whose ambiguity has allowed it to operate everywhere.

If scholars of religion often have overstated the rigidity of contemporary evangelicalism's boundaries, commercial conglomerates have not. Beginning in the mid-1980s, various individuals and companies attempted to purchase Zondervan, hoping to capitalize on the commercial potential that the evangelical public presented. In 1986, for instance, the British investor Christopher Moran waged a hostile takeover of the firm, buying as much as forty-three percent of its stock by May 1987, when he abandoned the attempt.

Zondervan's management and employees had opposed the idea because Moran had made clear that he likely would break up the company and change the corporate culture of its remaining parts. "'The ministry of the company is a laudable thing,'" Moran explained to the *Grand Rapids Business Journal*. "It would continue as long as it is beneficial to the stockholders, but once that mission cuts across the stockholders then it would have to be changed." Moran and other investors complained that "Zondervan is run like a mission," and they asked the company to cut its operating costs, increase its efficiency, and generally rectify what investors saw as mismanagement. For Moran, the firm had not realized its potential.

In 1988, Rupert Murdoch's Harper and Row bought Zondervan. Becoming a division of News Corporation had mixed effects. Possessing little interest in retail, Harper and Row made

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106 Robert Hudson, interview by author, in person, 7 April 2011, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Zondervan begin separating itself from Family Bookstores. As for Zondervan's books, the firm's editors have insisted that Harper and Row (and after 1990, HarperCollins) has allowed Zondervan to remain loyal to its vision statement. But they admit privately that right-wing politics and the media cycle of Fox News occasionally orients the firm's editorial direction. Such tactics help bring attention to its books.

In years past, such cross-promotion had given Zondervan a competitive advantage in the battle against its chief rival, the Nashville-based firm Thomas Nelson. Known throughout the twentieth century as a mainstream Bible publisher, Thomas Nelson was sold in 1969 to the evangelical entrepreneur Sam Moore. The firm became known for publishing books not only by such "spiritual growth" authors as Joel Osteen and Max Lucado but also by such "prosperity gospel" authors as T. D. Jakes. Those books allowed Nelson to overtake Zondervan around the turn of the century as the largest religious publisher in the United States. But the joke in Grand Rapids was that Thomas Nelson enjoyed that status only because "they'll publish anything."

Those jokes quieted down by the end of 2011. That November, News Corporation bought Thomas Nelson, too. For Rupert Murdoch, even more than for Newsweek's reporters, potential evangelicals were everywhere.

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109 For more on Jakes, other prominent black televangelists, and its relationship to such categories as "prosperity gospel," see Jonathan L. Walton, Watch This!: The Ethics and Aesthetics of Black Televangelism (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

"Evangelicalism is a marketing slogan."

So said an editor at a leading Grand Rapids firm, when I first met him in 2009. He had made the comment in the middle of a long conversation about the evangelical book industry. We had been talking about how the industry's various firms understand each other, and how they situate themselves in relationship to the idea of evangelicalism. "Do you consider yourselves an evangelical publisher?", I had asked. His answer took me aback.1

But the editor did not mean for the answer to sound as cynical as it might sound. His point was that the question itself presumes that evangelicalism possesses a distinct profile or marks a bounded audience. He explained that evangelical publishers and their books address a Christian audience with ambiguous composition.

In various historical moments, the "evangelical" label has helped Christian consumers recognize that they were being addressed. In the 1940s, for example, the term had precisely that effect. Sometimes, it still does. But conversations with this editor and others revealed that publishers generally had come to find the label restrictive. Due to negative media depictions of evangelicals and evangelicalism, the label's resonances seem turn away customers who might not consider themselves "evangelical," but might find themselves willing to read an evangelical book.

As this dissertation has illustrated, the evangelical book industry and the evangelical public grew up together. The relationship was symbiotic. As more evangelicals began to see themselves as part of a shared religious tradition, the book industry found itself with more potential

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1 As I occasionally have done throughout this manuscript, I withhold this editor's name to protect him. As I explain, this statement is not meant to offend. But I can imagine some of his publishing colleagues--and, worse, some of his firm's authors and customers--taking offense.
consumers. At the same time, as publishers and booksellers saw their potential customers multiply, they simultaneously expanded their distribution networks, diversified their offerings, and pitched their products with increasingly broad appeal. This in turn allowed more people to speak evangelical languages and inhabit evangelical ways of religious being. It created a kind of evangelical snowball effect, both in the sense that evangelicalism fed its own growth and in the sense that it became increasingly visible to observers of the American religious landscape.

Before evangelicalism and its book industry operated on such a large scale, publishers often acted as "gatekeepers" and attempted to define the evangelical community. In a way, they retain that function today; after all, not all books are published. In addition, publishers often ask authors to edit books in ways that might enhance or ensure their appeal. An editor from Baker Publishing Group shared, for instance, that his firm nearly published Brian McLaren's *A Generous Orthodoxy*. But Zondervan secured the book instead. After doing so, Zondervan asked McLaren to add what became known as "Chapter Zero" in which McLaren insists that his book adheres to orthodox Christian principles, even if it sounds "scandalous."²

But just as often as contemporary evangelical publishers put their gatekeeping authority to use, they also disavow theological responsibility for their books. Judging theological or devotional validity is not their role, several editors explained to me. The task of evangelical publishers simply is to provide the material, and let customers decide. To convey the point, one Eerdmans editor recounted a story about a bookseller named Carl Ziegler. In the 1950s, Ziegler had been

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traveling in Ohio, attempting to sell copies of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible. He
discovered that he had sold some copies to members of a church that had begun holding book
burnings of the R.S.V. in protest of its perceived liberalism. But Ziegler continued to supply their
copies. As Ziegler remarked to a friend, "they've got to buy it to burn it."³

Whatever the theological defensibility of disavowing responsibility in this way, the practice
undoubtedly has broadened publishers' consumer reach. Recognition of that enhanced reach has
lured a long list of mainstream media conglomerates either to buy evangelical publishing firms or
to found new ones. Those conglomerates include not just News Corporation but AOL Time
Warner (who own Warner Faith) and Random House (WaterBrook). "For decades," David
Kirkpatrick reported to the New York Times in 2002, "the world of Evangelical Christianity was as
remote from the New York literary scene as the Bible Belt is from the canyons of Time Square.
Now, . . . the major publishing houses are getting religion." Although Kirkpatrick's comments
erroneously ignored New York's long relationship with American evangelicalism, he correctly
identified a publishing trend. Both William B. Eerdmans, Jr., and Richard Baker told me that
they regularly receive calls from corporations interested in buying their family-owned firms.⁴

Notably, as commercial activity has blurred the boundaries of the evangelical public, new
groups of people have participated in it and received recognition as its members. Scholars
occasionally have asked, for example, whether various styles of black Christianity count as

³ Reinder Van Til, interview by author, in person, 16 June 2009, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

“Publishing Gets Religion: The Christian Book Business Has Become a Multimillion-Dollar Industry, Competing for
The Observer, July 22, 2001; Scott Leith, “Spreading the Gospel: Christian Books Hit the Big Time,” The Atlanta
William B. Eerdmans, Jr., interview with author, in person, 15 June 2009, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Richard Baker,
evangelicalism. Although typically posed as an objective question, the answer of course depends on what kind of evangelicalism you have in mind. If defining evangelicalism by way of theology and practice, for example, the answer is yes. But if defining evangelicalism by way of its cultural composition during the first three quarters of twentieth century, the answer is no. The same holds true for the question of Latinos and evangelicalism.5

For most of the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first, contemporary evangelicalism has been a resoundingly white religious public. Zondervan's CEO admitted the point in 1991. In a year that saw the firm's market opportunities expanding rapidly, Jim Buick explained, "Now we are seeing a new market in the black community, and we have an obligation to minister to these people, too, as well as to Hispanics and Asians." Reflecting upon his goals for the firm, Buick explained that "We have been negligent regarding the black community; once we get that up to where we want it, we will look at other communities."6

5 Evidence comes largely through silences. Histories of evangelicalism—including this dissertation—rarely discuss black experience. In many cases, the silence stems from scholars' inattention to racial politics. Other times, however, it stems from the conscious or unconscious inattention of scholars' respondents. While writing this dissertation, for instance, I researched and wrote with a self-conscious desire to lend my narrative diversity. Even so, my determination to bring black evangelicals into the narrative was forestalled by the almost complete absence of references to black life or to black people in my archival sources. This absence reflects the kind of de-facto segregation that has permeated evangelical culture in the past, and often in the present. For many white evangelicals—particularly in the twentieth century—blacks have remained out of their sights and, as a result, out of their minds and those of the scholars who study them.


Such scholars as Arlene Sánchez-Walsh have attempted to bring Latinos into evangelicalism's conceptual space. But Sánchez-Walsh's work makes the conceptual problem apparent. In order to present Latinos as evangelicals, she begins by talking about Latinos as pentecostals. And pentecostals, too, have an ambiguous relationship to the notion of evangelicalism. Sánchez-Walsh does note, however, that Latinos appear today to fit within evangelicalism more easily. Essentially demonstrating what Jim Buick promised in 1991 (see below), Sánchez-Walsh explains that "a generation of Latinos has now been grafted onto a larger, un-widey network of contemporary Christian music, merchandising, missions organizations, and other parachurch organizations that comprise the American evangelical subculture."Arlene M. Sánchez-Walsh, Latino Pentecostal Identity: Evangelical Faith, Self, and Society (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 2.

While many stories, books, and practices testify to this dissertation's presentation of evangelicalism as an ambiguous religious public that has taken shape in and through its textual and commercial cultures, one in particular draws the story together. In 2006, Greg Stielstra released *PyroMarketing: The Four-Step Strategy to Ignite Consumer Evangelists and Keep Them for Life*. Intending the book to serve as a marketing textbook, Stielstra insisted that "there are four steps to creating successful marketing campaigns. You build them the same way you build a campfire."

Stielstra explained that marketers should:

1. Promote to the people most likely to buy. ["Gather the driest tinder"]
2. Give them an experience with your product or service. ["Touch it with the match"]
3. Help them tell others. ["Fan the flames"]
4. Keep a record of who they are. ["Save the coals"]

On their own, these principles seem intuitive and unremarkable. But they become more noteworthy in light of Stielstra's background. As Stielstra explains in his book, he served before 2006 as "the senior marketing director for the Trade Book Group at Zondervan," and he oversaw the marketing campaign for *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

Noting that Warren's book experienced "unprecedented" success, Stielstra asks, "How did this one book accomplish what millions more fail to attain?" He answered that "its success was a side effect of a ministry campaign that, perhaps unknowingly, modeled the four steps that define PyroMarketing."

Back before Warren's book came out in 2002, he had shared it with a network of 1,200 pastors that he had cultivated since the 1990s. He invited them to participate in what he called

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the "Forty Days of Purpose Campaign." The forty days corresponded to the book's forty chapters, each of which provided readers with a kind of daily devotional. Word of mouth ensured that "by the campaign's end, four hundred thousand people were intimately familiar with the book and its many benefits. They knew its message, but more important, they had firsthand experience of its power to change a life." After the book's publication, Zondervan repeated this process with other groups. "As people told their friends about Jesus," Stielstra recounted, "they would often mention The Purpose-Driven Life as a way to learn more."8

Both explicit and implicit in Stielstra's textbook are several assumptions about evangelicals and books. First, Stielstra suggests that the potential audience for Warren's book was so vast and indistinct that mass-marketing tactics could not have brought the book success. Stielstra insists that "mass audiences" and "mass media no longer exist because there are now nearly as many media choices as people to consume them." If this is a lesson that he learned through working at Zondervan, it suggests that the "evangelical" audience and the "mass" audience possess equally blurry boundaries.

Second, Stielstra explains that potential customers for evangelical books may exist in unlikely places. "The driest tinder," he explains, "are the most valuable prospects for your product or service because they are most likely to buy, benefit from, and then enthusiastically promote it to targeted people in their sphere of influence." Applied to the marketing of evangelical books, Stielstra's principles suggest that likely consumers or "dry tinder" may include constituencies that neither appear evangelical nor recognize themselves as such.

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8 Ibid., 206-207. This word-of-mouth approach received support from a Publishers Weekly survey. The magazine found that out of 30,000 readers of Warren's book, 83% had "actively recommended the book" and 46.5% had "bought additional copies to give away." Juli Cragg Hilliard, “Mega Tactics For Mega-Hits,” Publishers Weekly 252, no. 21 (May 23, 2005): S12.
Finally, Stielstra argues that "fanning the flames" for products like books can transform disparate individuals into a people. Once those individuals begin to see themselves as a people, they become better consumers. "People can be taxpayers, commuters, baby boomers, or frequent fliers," Stielstra explains, "without thinking of themselves in those terms." But once they do, they "increase their susceptibility to emotional contagion."9

Stielstra's textbook almost went unpublished. In July 2005, Stielstra told Publishers Weekly that Rick Warren had "held up [PyroMarketing] by insisting it not mention his bestselling The Purpose-Driven Life." One of Warren's representatives explained that Warren "didn't want PDL 'associated with the word "marketing" in any way, shape or form.'"10

Speaking for himself a couple months later, Warren explained that "My request to HarperCollins was simply that Greg's forthcoming book not use The Purpose-Driven Life as example of 'pyromarketing,' since that would be inaccurate. The effectiveness of 40 Days of Purpose spread from one pastor to another through word-of-mouth endorsement, not through anyone's marketing plan." Warren added that "the worldwide spread of the purpose driven message had nothing to do with marketing or merchandizing. Instead it was the result of God's supernatural and sovereign plan, which no one anticipated."11

Maybe Warren was right. Maybe Stielstra's plan had nothing to do with his book. Maybe, as one of Grand Rapids's Reformed Protestants might have said, we simply do not know the ways

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9 Stielstra, PyroMarketing, 24-25, 78, 145, 163.

10 The report noted that Stielstra had been "taken off the PDL campaign and given other projects at Zondervan." He soon left the firm. Juli Cragg Hilliard, "Purpose-Driven Interference?," Publishers Weekly 252, no. 29 (July 25, 2005): 14-15.

of God. What is clear, in any case, is that whoever crafted and executed the plan, they operated within cultural paradigms and discourses that people like Stielstra had crafted for decades. If marketing strategy had not made the difference for Warren's book, it had for the religious public that he was asked to represent in January 2009.
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