LAKE INSTITUTE ON FAITH & GIVING

THE LOGIC OF EVANGELICALISM AND THE CHALLENGES OF PHILANTHROPY

MARK A. NOLL

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Foreword

The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, a program of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University, has among its founding principles the observation that, even though it is generally accepted that religion and giving are intricately connected, with few exceptions, the relationship has not been the subject of a great deal of scholarship. In the fourth annual Lake lecture, this idea is examined from the perspective of evangelical Christianity by one of the nation's leading evangelical scholars, who observes that associations between the terms "evangelical" and "philanthropic" have been close because "throughout modern evangelical history, money has been an unusually prominent subject."

Prof. Mark Noll of Notre Dame University, a respected historian of American religion and Christian thought, devotes his lecture to a segment of American religion where faith and philanthropy intertwine in fundamental ways and where the influences of American economic culture are as ingrained as they are unarticulated. Prof. Noll's work extends insights that have been gained from research conducted by the Center on Philanthropy, particularly studies of philanthropic behavior based on the Center on Philanthropy Panel Study, which is part of a data collection effort that has tracked the same families since the 1960s.

As one of the country's leading evangelical scholars, Prof. Noll brings to his topic long experience in observing and writing about the traditions of America's disparate Protestant churches and voluntary organizations, and the Center on Philanthropy is honored to benefit from his wisdom.

The Lake Institute honors the legacy of Thomas and Marjorie Lake and ensures that their values and commitment to faith and philanthropy will be passed

on to future generations. The Lake Institute's programs are designed to:

- Build a lasting scholarly foundation for the exploration of the vital role religion plays in philanthropy through the Thomas H. Lake Scholar in Religion and Philanthropy;
- Examine connections between faith and giving among the world's three prominent faiths – Christianity, Islam, and Judaism (and other religions later);
- Pursue research on important philanthropic issues relevant to churches, communities and nonprofit organizations;
- Engage the community through several events, including this lecture, as well as through seminars and mentorships and through publications.

The Institute's director is William G. Enright, Ph.D., a Presbyterian minister and author of several books, the latest being *Channel Markers: Wisdom from the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount*.

Eugene R. Tempel
Executive Director
The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University
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"Philanthropy," from the Greek for "love or lover of humanity." "Evangelical," from the Greek for "good news." It sounds, at first hearing, as if these words might have something to do with each other. Indeed they have had much to do with each other, and they continue to do so. In fact, one of the first widespread uses of the word "evangelical" in the Western church was its application to St. Francis and his associates in the thirteenth century whose disdain for material possessions and willingness to give everything away earned them the reputation of living close to the high standards of the Gospel. They became the first philanthropic "evangelicals."

In more recent times, associations between the terms "evangelical" and "philanthropic" have been almost as close because, throughout modern evangelical history, money has been an unusually prominent subject. Let me start with some instances that illustrate that prominence.

Modern evangelical Christianity was born in the trans-Atlantic revivals of the 1730s and 1740s, and no figure was more central in that quickening than the young Anglican priest who was named with pinpoint accuracy in the title of Harry Stout's biography—*The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism*. Whitefield's dramatic flair drew crowds to hear his message about the need for a new birth in Jesus Christ. But, as reported by one

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I am very pleased to acknowledge a long-standing debt to the Lilly Endowment for supporting the work that makes it possible for me, as very much an amateur on things philanthropic, to address this subject. Robert Wood Lynn, former head of the religion division at the Endowment, supplied long-term encouragement and a great deal of specific information for the one research effort I have carried out on these themes. With the support of Fred Hofheinz and Craig Dykstra, I was privileged to help coordinate a project at Wheaton College's Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals that eventually led to the publication of two books on general matters related to this lecture: Mark A. Noll, ed., *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Larry Eskridge and Mark A. Noll, eds., *More Money, More Ministry: Money and Evangelicals in Recent North American History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). These volumes, in turn, have provided a great deal of the material I am using for this lecture, which through William Enright and the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving of IU's Center on Philanthropy is yet another instance of the Endowment's encouragement of work on these subjects.

of the few colonial Americans who is better known than Whitefield, philanthropy was intrinsic to what Whitefield was about. The report is from Benjamin Franklin whose *Autobiography* contains several extensive accounts of what happened when the young preacher came to Philadelphia during the period when Franklin himself was still a young printer in search of a reputation. One account starts with Franklin's report that Whitefield had recently determined to found an orphanage in Georgia, which was his base in the colonies. Franklin then reported that in subsequent tours, Whitefield "preached up this charity and made large collections; for his eloquence had a wonderful power over the hearts and purses of his hearers." Yet when Whitefield arrived in Philadelphia, Franklin counseled him that, in light of the ready availability of capital and supplies in Philadelphia, and the dearth of both in Georgia, Whitefield should build his orphanage in the City of Brotherly Love. When Whitefield refused this counsel, Franklin was not offended, but he resolved that since Whitefield did not take his advice, Franklin would not contribute to his charity. Thereupon occurred a scene that Franklin's account has made famous:

> I happened soon after to attend one of his sermons, in the course of which I perceived he intended to finish with a collection, and I silently resolved he should get nothing from me. I had in my pocket a handful of copper money, three or four silver dollars, and five pistoles in gold. As he proceeded, I began to soften and concluded to give the coppers. Another stroke of his oratory made me ashamed of that and determined me to give the silver; and he finished so admirably that I emptied my pocket wholly into the collector's dish, gold and all.[1]

In Franklin's *Autobiography* there is actually quite a bit more about Whitefield and money, including Franklin's defense of Whitefield as completely honest in handling the large sums that he collected for his orphanage. Yet what is most striking about Franklin's Whitefield stories is the prominence—right at the dawn of modern evangelicalism—of fundraising and of generosity from those who responded to Whitefield's message.

About a century later another insightful statement about American religion in connection with American economic behavior came from another careful observer of his times. The Swiss-born and German-trained scholar Philip Schaff by the end of his life had become the most widely respected church historian and all-purpose theologian in the United States. Much earlier, in 1853, after Schaff had been in this country for ten years, he returned for a visit to Germany. That trip

[1] Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography and Selections from His Other Writings*, ed. Herbert W. Schneider (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952), 105.

was the occasion for lectures in which he tried to explain his new home. As advice offered to those who were thinking about migrating to America, Schaff tried to point out differences between European and American culture. One of the most prominent differences in his view was the strong connections sustained between American commerce and American religion:

> If you wish a calm and cheerful life, better stay at home….
> The genuine American despises nothing more than idleness and stagnation; he regards not enjoyment, but labor, not comfortable repose, but busy unrest, as the proper earthly lot of man; and this has unspeakable importance for him, and upon the whole a most salutary influence on the moral life of the nation. The New York merchant is vexed, if stopped with a question on the street; because he loses a couple of minutes. The same zeal, the same parsimony of time, is employed by the minister, the missionary, the colporteur, the tract and bible societies, for higher ends. Even the business man, if in any degree religiously disposed, considers his pecuniary gain only a means "to do good"—as he expresses it; and though the Americans are not unjustly reproached with avarice and covetousness, yet they are entitled, on the other hand, to the praise of a noble liberality towards all sorts of benevolent objects,—a liberality unrivaled in modern history save by the extraordinary offerings of the Free Church of Scotland in the glow of her first love.[2]

Schaff was referring to those who left the Scottish state church in 1843 to found the Scottish Free Church and to how, in a remarkably short time and from a constituency of limited means, the Free Church had raised a tremendous amount of money to construct hundreds of church buildings, support numerous missionaries overseas, and build the material infrastructure of a national denomination. But what is most striking about Schaff's remarks is the strong tie he saw between the industrious economic habits of his adopted land and the philanthropic virtuosity of the United States' churches and religious societies. Schaff, it is important to note, was writing about an American religious scene when more than ninety percent of the American churches were evangelical Protestant.

Two generations after Schaff's commentary, a Christian visitor from a very different part of the globe also paused to comment on religious culture in the United States. Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930) was a Japanese Christian evangelist and bible teacher who as a young man studied in the United States and thereafter made many visits to North America. Toward the end of his life, in 1926 he wrote at some length about his impressions of Christianity in the United States. Uchimura's American contacts were broad, but since those contacts included much

[2] Philip Schaff, *America: A Sketch of Its Political, Social, and Religious Character* (1855), ed. Perry Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 29-30.

interaction with conservative Protestants who worried about contamination from liberal influences, we can take for granted that he had evangelicals largely in mind in his comments. And this is what he wrote:

> Americans are great people; there is no doubt about that. They are great in building cities and railroads….Americans have a wonderful genius for improving breeds of horses, cattle, sheep and swine…. Americans too are great inventors. . . . Needless to say, they are great in money….Americans are great in all these things and much else; but not in Religion….Americans must count religion in order to see or show its value…. To them big churches are successful churches….To win the greatest number of converts with the least expense is their constant endeavour. Statistics is their way of showing success or failure in their religion as in their commerce and politics. Numbers, numbers, oh, how they value numbers![3]

To Uchimura, as earlier to Schaff, the American churches—perhaps especially evangelical churches—did their work under the guidance of general American imperatives. Like Schaff, Uchimura elsewhere had many positive things to say about American religious life, but he too was struck by how much the norms of an acquisitive, market-driven, and aggressively statistical culture had shaped the perspective of the churches.

My last introductory example of the close links between American evangelical history and American economic history comes from a recent article in *Christianity Today* that chronicles the booming business of debt-reduction counseling conducted by evangelical Protestants.[4] Industry leaders include Dave Ramsey from Nashville whose radio program is carried on hundreds of stations and who trains over 200,000 people each year in a thirteen-week, debt-reduction course; Mary Hunt, who writes a column on debt-assistance for *Woman's Day* magazine and whose website, "Debt-Proof Living," is hit more than 8,000,000 times each month; and the Willow Creek Association's "Good Sense," which offers a multi-week seminar applying biblical teaching to problems arising from debt. A major theme for the entire industry of counselors is the danger of credit cards. It is, thus, of real interest that counselors who differ in how to treat credit cards put their responses in just about the same terms.

On one side are advisors like Ron Blue, chairman of Crown Financial Ministries, a successor organization to the advice empire created by the late Larry

[3] Kanzo Uchimura, "Can Americans Teach Japanese Religion?" *Japan Christian Intelligencer* 1 (1926): 357-361, as quoted here from *The Complete Works of Kanzo Uchimura*, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 1972), 4:63-65. I was introduced to Uchimura and his opinions on American religion by Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 221-22.
[4] This material is from John W. Kennedy, "The Debt Slayers," *Christianity Today*, May 2006, 40-43.

Burkett through his Christian Financial Concepts organization. Blue, who has trained over one thousand advisors with his Christian Financial Professionals Network and whose book, *Master Your Money*, has gone through more than thirty printings, speaks out strongly, though not categorically, against the use of credit cards. In analyzing why credit card debt has become such an epidemic American problem, Blue does not blame the credit card companies. He says, rather, "Convenient credit never got anybody into financial trouble.…It's the person holding the card who gets into trouble."

Gary Moore, the treasurer of Opportunity International, which supports small loans as a development strategy through microenterprise, takes a different position. While he opposes the mass marketing of cards to adolescents and very young adults, he does not oppose credit cards in general. His judgment, however, echoes the verdict of Ron Blue: "Credit card companies probably make credit too available for young people…but for adults to say it's all credit card companies' fault is to imitate Flip Wilson's 'the Devil made me do it' excuse or to deny personal responsibility."

From both sides of this booming evangelical world of credit and debt management, the underlying message is the same: the real problem from credit card abuse comes from denying direct personal responsibility and from failing to realize that "it's the *person* holding the card who gets into trouble."

As the illustrations from Benjamin Franklin, Philip Schaff, Kanzo Uchimura, and the debt counselors suggest, assessing the logic of evangelicalism in relation to the challenges of philanthropy requires first an understanding of evangelical history and characteristic evangelical traits before going on to address strategic implications for philanthropy. Since I am a historian and not a specialist in philanthropy, this lecture will concentrate on "the logic of evangelicalism," but I hope at the end to offer a few suggestions from my analysis of evangelical character about philanthropy to, for, with, and among evangelicals.

What leaps out of American evangelical history, as in these opening illustrations, are four generalizations:

- Evangelicals are generous.
- American evangelicals have adapted readily, easily, and without a second thought to the democratic, free market, and entrepreneurial culture of the United States.
- American evangelicals have always shied away from principial, systematic, or intentional discussion of wealth, money, and economic affairs in general.

- Both the strengths and weaknesses of evangelical philanthropy are explained by the intensely personal focus of evangelical religion.

But before launching into a discussion of these four generalizations, I should attend to the sticky matter of defining evangelicalism. Historically, what it meant to be an "evangelical" was relatively clear, although the Anglo-American context has always been different from that of continental Europe. In Europe, "evangelical" still means "of the Reformation" or, more simply, just "Lutheran."

For the more usual Anglo-American usage it once was fairly easy to distinguish "evangelicals" along two trajectories. From a historical angle, "evangelicals" meant the churches and voluntary organizations descended from the eighteenth-century renewal movements associated with Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, and Jonathan Edwards. These churches and organizations have existed in an incredible diversity of institutional forms, but they have been identifiable by their maintenance of the quest for "true religion" as defined by the great revivalists of the eighteenth century. Denominations today that are marked by this historical evangelical tradition include the Southern Baptist Convention; pentecostal bodies like the Assemblies of God (which are denominational grandchildren of the Wesleyan revival); holiness groups like the Church of the Nazarene or the Salvation Army; scores of smaller Baptist, Presbyterian, Church of Christ, Methodist, and Episcopalian/Anglican denominations; new organizations like the network of Calvary Chapels and the Vineyard Association; and tens of thousands of independent local churches. Many of the older mainline Protestant denominations with strongly revivalist roots—like the United Methodists, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or the Disciples of Christ—contain many evangelical members but have moved as denominations away from this tradition to one degree or another. To make things more complicated, quite a few denominations that did not participate in Anglo-American revivals now see themselves as evangelicals, including some Mennonites, some Lutherans, some in the Dutch Reformed denominations, and some Quakers.

The second important angle for definition is doctrinal. Evangelicals have consistently been identified by their convictions. David Bebbington of Stirling University in Scotland, who is one of the key interpreters of evangelicalism in the United Kingdom, has provided a widely adopted four-fold definition of these convictions. It stresses the Bible (or reliance on Scripture as ultimate religious authority), conversion (or an emphasis on the New Birth), activism (or energetic, individualistic engagement in personal and social duties), and crucicentrism (or

focus on Christ's redeeming work as the heart of true religion).[5] In Bebbington's approach, evangelicals are the ones who embrace these four convictions no matter where they exist on the map of Christian denominations.

Simple definitions for evangelicals are, however, no longer possible, as illustrated by two questions, one unthinkable until recently, the other perennial. First the previously unthinkable: Can Roman Catholics be evangelicals? Second, the perennial: Are African American Protestants evangelicals?

In 1996 an extensive, cross-border survey put Bebbington's four convictions to use in asking numerous questions of a large number of Canadians and Americans. Almost one-third of all Americans affirmed all four of Bebbington's characteristics, and about one-eighth of all Canadians. Yet among the Americans whom the survey could identify as evangelicals on the basis of the four Bebbington traits, almost one-fifth were Roman Catholics; in Canada, it was one-third.[6] From this survey, and other proliferating evidence, it is important to realize that the gulf that once divided evangelical Protestants and Roman Catholics into two completely different camps is shrinking and at least for some Catholics has become very narrow indeed.

With respect to African Americans, this same 1996 survey found that more than one-eighth of all Americans who could be identified as evangelicals by the Bebbington characteristics were African Americans. In the United States, white evangelical church-goers and black Protestant church-goers affirm just about the same basic convictions concerning religious doctrines and moral practices. But for well-established historical reasons, black Protestant political behavior and social attitudes are very different from those of white evangelicals. If in terms of both historical descent and religious convictions most black Protestants could also be considered evangelicals, American history has driven a sharp social wedge between them and white evangelicals. That wedge has also affected philanthropy, which operates under somewhat different traditions in black and white churches. Therefore, for this lecture, when I use the term "evangelical," the reference does not include African Americans.

Finally, evangelicals, as defined by either denomination traditions or beliefs, are strongly over-represented, by comparison with national totals, in the southern part of the country, somewhat over-represented in the Midwest, and under-

[5] D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2-17.
[6] This survey is explained and analyzed in Dean R. Hoge and Mark A. Noll, "Levels of Contributions and Attitudes toward Money among Evangelicals and Non-Evangelicals in Canada and the U.S.," in *More Money, More Ministry*, 351-73.

represented in the Northeast and West. Defined by denominational traditions, evangelicals probably make up nearly one-fourth of the American population, with about two-thirds of that number categorized as "committed" on the basis of regular church attendance and other factors indicating active adherence.[7]

I apologize only a little for taking so much time on matters of definition. Slippery usage of terms like "evangelical" is a plague among pundits. Granted, the word is flexible and may legitimately mean different things. But to deserve a hearing, commentators must first indicate how they are using the word before what they say about "evangelicals and philanthropy" is worth anything at all.

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And now to return from the thickets of definition to the high road of historical analysis and a discussion of the four generalizations.[8]

Evangelicals are Generous

That generosity was displayed from the start of American evangelicalism. In European Christian history, financial support for Christian churches and Christian activities had been supplied by some combination of government-collected tithes (i.e., taxes), government-supervised public expenditure, and free-will gifts. In the new United States, government-connected sources of funding vanished almost completely. Knowledgeable European observers in the late eighteenth century knew that, without government support, organized Christian life would not survive in the new country or would at best limp along. Yet in the new United States—and in the same period when rapidly expanding movements of evangelical Protestants transformed the national culture—voluntary forms of eleemosynary funding accomplished wonders.

In the new realities of American disestablishment, some churches relied financially on pew rentals and glebe lands for pastors, for which old-world precedents existed. That is, where governments no longer paid for (= "established") churches, there were still a few European practices left. But increasingly, and soon

[7] These generalizations are mostly from the many works of John Green, James Guth, Lyman Kellstedt, and Corwin Smidt, for example, "Why Moral Values Did Count: Religion and Religious Commitment in the 2004 Election," *Religion in the News*, Spring 2005, 5-8; "Onward Christian Soldiers? Religion and the Bush Doctrine," *Books & Culture*, July/Aug 2005, 20-21; "Faith and Foreign Policy," *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*, 3 (Fall 2005), 3-10. For similar results, which use the work of these four as well as other sources, see Luis Lugo et al., "Religion and Public Life," in *Trends 2005*, ed. Andrew Kuhot et al. (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2005), 24-39.

[8] In developing these four main points, I have adapted some material from earlier writings, including *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University press, 2002), chapter 9, "The Evangelical Surge," 161-86; and *God and Mammon*, "Introduction," 3-29; and chapter 12, "Protestant Reasoning about Money and the Economy, 1790-1860: A Preliminary Probe," 265-95.

overwhelmingly, American religious fundraising came to rely on free-will offerings and voluntary pledges. In many churches, free-will offerings were at first gathered only on special occasions, perhaps at Communion time for the support of poor families or at Thanksgiving Day services for similar causes. Typically, monies raised by free-will offerings were distributed for benevolent purposes and not used to pay the minister's salary. Baptists, who expanded dramatically in the early decades of U.S. history, were the pioneers in basing all church support, including the minister's salary, on free-will gifts. What seemed at the time an extremely precarious practice, driven mostly by Baptist resentment of elite meddling of any kind, soon became the evangelical norm.

A slight variation on the free-will scheme was subscription, which represented an early form of the pledge system that is still in common use among many churches today.[9] At first churches sought subscriptions mostly to fund new construction. Methodists on the frontier, however, also put subscriptions to use in supporting their work generally, with in-kind contributions of food, building material, and labor being quite common. Later, the Methodists began to use subscriptions for ministerial salaries. For well into the nineteenth century, church subscriptions were regularly paid in commodities—wheat, beef, whiskey, linen, flour, etc. The names of subscribers and amounts pledged were also sometimes circulated within the congregation as a means of encouraging (or shaming) all into doing their part. By whatever means, American churches rose to the challenge of disestablishment as they voluntarily funded an ever-growing number of local congregations and a reasonably stable network of denominations. In the early American republic most of those churches were evangelical.

It was, however, the rise of voluntary societies that demonstrated the prodigies that free-will funding could sustain. For American history, the key early precedents in organizing voluntarily were societies established by Anglicans and Presbyterians in Britain as well as by pietists on the Continent.[10] In the late eighteenth century, when Britain was itself turning in a more evangelical direction, Americans could see the Religious Tract Society (1799) and, supremely, the British and Foreign Bible Society (1804) excel at meeting specific religious needs efficiently, rapidly, and with lay-led, interdenominational leadership.

In the United States, a few small-scale voluntary societies had been formed before the turn of the nineteenth century, but as self-created vehicles for preaching

[9] Luther P. Powell, *Money and the Church* (New York: Association Press, 1962), 139-42.
[10] See John Walsh, "Religious Societies: Methodist and Evangelical, 1738-1800," in *Voluntary Religion*, ed. W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 279-302; and on Moravian influences, Colin Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998).

the Christian message, distributing Christian literature, and bringing scattered Christian exertions together, the voluntary society came into its own only after about 1810. Many of the new societies were formed within denominations, and a few were organized outside the evangelical boundaries, like the American Unitarian Association in 1825. But the most important were founded by interdenominational teams of evangelicals for evangelical purposes. Charles Foster's helpful (but admittedly incomplete) compilation of 159 American societies in the early nineteenth century finds 24 established between 1801 and 1812, and another 32 between 1813 and 1816, with a remarkable 15 in 1814 alone. After a short pause caused by the Bank Panic of 1819, the pace of formation picked up once again through the 1820s.[11] The best-funded and most dynamic interdenominational societies—the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (1810), the American Bible Society (1816), and the American Education Society (1816), which aimed especially at education for ministerial candidates—were rivaled only by the Methodists in the effectiveness of their national coverage and by the success of their fundraising.[12] The peculiarly evangelical affinity between parachurch organization and generous giving was underway.

Of course, there were complications with a system built on free-will donations, even given spectacular American successes. Once mission and benevolence programs of denominations and the voluntary societies developed, a system of agents was introduced whereby organizations (like the American Bible Society) sent representatives for annual fundraising visits to local congregations.[13] Eventually, this competitive drumming up of business for benevolent causes came to be a burden for some urban churches, which found too many agents knocking too often at the door.

Yet, on balance, and far beyond what could have been anticipated from the European history of Christianity, the American pattern worked. The two key things to note about the funding of American religion after the end of establishment is that the whole process was pioneered by evangelical denominations, especially the Methodists and the Baptists, and that it was very successful. In the mid-nineteenth

[11] Charles I. Foster, *Errand of Mercy: The Evangelical United Front, 1790-1837* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), 275-79.
[12] The best studies of how the societies actually did their work are from David Paul Nord, including "Free Grace, Free Books, Free Riders: The Economics of Religious Publishing in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 106 (1996): 241-72; "Benevolent Capital: Financing Evangelical Book Publishing in Early-Nineteenth-Century America," in *God and Mammon*, 147-70; and *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of the Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[13] A full discussion of the expansion, management, and difficulties of the agency system can be found in Peter J. Wosh, *Spreading the Word: The Bible Business in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

century, Francis Bowen, a Harvard moral philosopher and himself a Unitarian, wrote about a United States in which religion was predominately evangelical. His words made an important concession, but also grasped a genuine reality: "We may be a speculating, but we are not a miserly people."[14]

After the Civil War the American situation did change considerably for evangelical Protestants. With the emergence of Catholicism as a major religious force, and then the pluralization of religion that went far beyond Christianity, evangelical prominence in the culture at large was diluted. The well-publicized struggles between fundamentalists and modernists early in the twentieth century probably did not directly affect very many Protestant churchgoers since most continued mostly in an undefined middle on many of the era's controversial debates. But that controversy did further push Protestants to the margins of American social influence. On the more conservative side, fundamentalists, Pentecostals, many holiness advocates, and the so-called neo-evangelicals were content for several decades to build their own institutions out of the public eye and away from centers of national influence.

But through these vicissitudes, evangelicals in all of the various Protestant tributaries continued to give great sums of money to their churches and for other religious causes. Of particular importance for evangelical fundraising history was the strengthening of parachurch agencies as significant institutions for defining tasks, recruiting personnel, and raising money. Beginning with cross-cultural mission agencies modeled on the China Inland Mission, a growing number of nondenominational foreign and home missionary organizations had come into existence by the 1930s. To this number was added a flourishing of independent radio and print ministries. Already by the 1930s, the parachurch networks were beginning to act like traditional denominations in their networking, their communications, and their fundraising.

On top of this parachurch foundation came then a great boom in non-denominational activity during and after the Second World War. Sometimes alongside traditional denominations, sometimes in competition with them, evangelical parachurch organization spread rapidly for youth work (Youth for Christ, Campus Crusade for Christ), relief efforts (World Vision), general organizations (the National Association of Evangelicals), and missionary efforts.

Comparisons of mission agencies over time show the great change worked by the rise of parachurch agencies. They also illustrate the changing of the guard

[14] Francis Bowen, *The Principles of Political Economy*, 4th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1865), 545.

from mainline to evangelical sponsorship of such activity. In 1935, the only three organizations with over 1,000 missionary personnel assigned overseas were the mainline bodies the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodists and the Seventh-day Adventists. In 1972, the organizations with over 1,000 missionaries serving overseas included three evangelical or quasi-evangelical groups (the Southern Baptists, the Churches of Christ, and the Seventh-day Adventists) and two parachurch bodies (Wycliffe Bible Translators and Youth With a Mission), along with one mainline Protestant body, the Presbyterian Church (USA). In 1999, there were three evangelical denominations (Southern Baptists, Churches of Christ, and Assemblies of God), three evangelical parachurch organizations (Wycliffe Bible Translators, Youth With a Mission, and New Tribes Mission), and no mainline Protestant organizations.[15]

The constant in the changing history of evangelical church and parachurch organization is generous giving. That giving has expanded rapidly in recent years as more and more evangelicals and evangelical-like Protestants have moved into the middle and upper classes. To be sure, some students of philanthropy have questioned whether giving among evangelicals has held up proportionately to the general rise in American incomes.[16] But whatever is concluded about that matter, the generosity of evangelicals compared to other religious groups is striking.

Dean Hoge, one of the most careful students of the subject, has recently concluded that, "to our knowledge, higher giving by evangelicals has been found in every research study." He goes on to suggest that "three factors are foremost as reasons" evangelicals give more than others. "First, evangelicals are more involved in their churches, and church involvement is the strongest single predictor of giving. Second, evangelicals hold to strong beliefs in Bible truths, and this is a strong predictor of giving. Third, evangelicals disproportionately consider religion important in their lives, and this is a predictor of giving. Evangelicals' faith includes belief in God's promises that God will take care of the faithful, and it gives higher priority to a spiritual life than the material life." In Hoge's view, "these are the prime explanations for impressively high evangelical giving, rather than any background factors such as education, age, or occupation."[17]

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[15] Figures are gathered from Joel A. Carpenter, "Appendix: The Evangelical Missionary Force in the 1930s," in *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, ed. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 335-42; Edward R. Dayton, ed., *Mission Handbook 1973* (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1973); Samuel Wilson and John Siewert, eds., *Mission Handbook*, 13th ed. (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1986); John A. Siewert and Dotsey Wellner, eds., *Mission Handbook 2001-2003*, 18th ed. (Wheaton, IL: EMIS, 2001).

[16] For example, John L. Ronsvalle and Sylvia Ronsvalle, *The State of Church Giving through 1994* (Champaign, IL: empty tomb, inc., 1996), and informative updates in various publications thereafter.

[17] Hoge, in "Levels of Contributions and Attitudes toward Money among Evangelicals and Non-Evangelicals," 352, 373.

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Evangelicals Adapted Easily to American Economic Practices

American evangelicals have adapted readily, easily, and without a second thought to the democratic, free market, and entrepreneurial culture of the United States.

Evangelicalism arose in the North Atlantic region during the eighteenth century as a religion particularly well adapted to the turmoils of political revolution, massive immigration, and large-scale industrial and commercial change. Evangelical stress on the New Birth, biblical authority, active personal holiness, and the cross of Christ represented only slight modifications of previous Protestant emphases. But these eighteenth-century modifications were significant for breathing new life into forms of faith that were stagnating, where the model of a unitary Christendom still prevailed, where personal freedoms were still quite restricted, and where lay people were still mostly silent. In the United States, this religion took off when evangelicals joined their fortunes to the cause of American independence and when they eagerly exploited the democratic and republic realities of the new nation.[18]

Understanding that evangelicalism was preeminently a form of "experiential biblicism" suggests why it could flourish in the United States where European traditions of all kinds, including religious traditions, no longer prevailed. In this setting, an evangelical religion of biblical experientialism provided personal meaning and group motivation when other props failed. Historian Gordon Wood has well described the remarkable success of evangelicals whose religion allowed them to advance amid the tumults of the era: evangelicals "developed and expanded revivalistic techniques because such dynamic folk-like processes were better able to meet the needs of rootless, egalitarian-minded men and women than were the static, churchly institutions based on eighteenth-century standards of deference and elite monopolies of orthodoxy."[19]

Nathan Hatch has also well summarized the fit between evangelical religion and the American context: the "nonrestrictive environment" of post-Revolutionary America "permitted an unexpected and often explosive conjunction of evangelical fervor and popular sovereignty. It was this engine that accelerated the process of Christianization within American popular culture, allowing indigenous expressions of faith to take hold among ordinary people, white and black. . . . The rise of evangelical

[18] For fuller accounts of evangelical expansion in these areas and of "experiential biblicism," see Mark A. Noll, "Revolution and the Rise of Evangelical Social Influence in North Atlantic Societies," in *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990*, ed. Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 113-36.
[19] Gordon S. Wood, "Evangelical America and Early Mormonism," *New York History* 61 (Oct. 1980): 371.

Christianity in the early republic is, in some measure, a story of the success of common people in shaping the culture after their own priorities rather than the priorities outlined by gentlemen."[20]

In early U.S. history, the combination of evangelical energy and religious disestablishment created an affinity with the new nation's reliance on a market economy. A move away from top-down monarchical, hierarchical, and colonial control in religion predisposed many evangelicals in the same direction economically, that is, toward localism and free trade. As anti-establishment evangelicals, these Protestants rejected close regulation of the public spaces in which they hoped to promote their religion, and they were predisposed in favor of situations where individuals could make the choice for God freely. They were also confident in the Spirit-given ability to persuade free agents to move toward Christ. Such convictions about religion no doubt pushed many American evangelicals toward corresponding values in economic practice, including an acceptance of market reasoning. At the same time, the prevalence of market instincts in the new United States also doubtless reinforced some of the activities and instincts of evangelicals.

To be sure, evangelicals also retained a great deal of hereditary Protestant nervousness about the accumulation of wealth, suspicion about the seductive power of money, and caution about the corrupting influences of economic power.[21] But for early American evangelicals, there was no contradiction in carrying some of these historic reservations into the much looser social environment of revolutionary and early national America.

In an insightful book on religious-social connections in the era of the Great Awakening, Timothy Hall has shown that George Whitefield excelled in aggressive use of practices associated with the new consumer capitalism. According to Hall, "Itinerancy…paralleled commerce and embodied mobility, working hand in glove with both to challenge not only boundaries of space but those of society and self as well. The partnership with commerce was tinged with irony for preachers, including Whitefield himself, who often preached against the ostentatious use of consumer goods like 'jewels, patches, and gay apparel.'"[22] Hall describes this

[20] Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 9.
[21] On that inheritance, see, for example, W. Fred Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin and His Socio-Economic Impact* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1971), 65-94; and Gordon Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the Development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1717* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 115-26.
[22] Timothy D. Hall, *Contested Boundaries: Itinerancy and the Reshaping of the Colonial American Religious World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 131-32, which draws on the insights of T. H. Breen, "'Baubles of Britain': The American and Consumer Revolution of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (1988): 73-104; and "The Meaning of Things: Interpreting the Consumer Economy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1993), 249-260.

conjunction as an irony, probably because he knows that the Protestant acceptance of market practices eventually led to a privatization of religion and to social consequences that figures like Whitefield could not have approved.

Yet Whitefield and later evangelicals had their eyes wide open as they abandoned European Christendom and eagerly exploited the possibilities opened up by an open American environment. There was no irony in this situation. There was, rather, adaptation to the free forms of American society. It was an adaptation that evangelicals gladly embraced, not because they had thought through all of the implications, but because it worked.

Later evangelical history continued that easy adaptation to American economic practices, a fact that can be illustrated by summarizing the work of several of the scholars who contributed to the Lilly-funded study in 2000 on evangelicals and money. In the late nineteenth century, middle-class evangelicals did entertain some doubts about the great expansion of popular advertising that accompanied the growth of American mass media, but they nonetheless accommodated themselves to that development.[23] The leading evangelical revivalists—from D. L. Moody and Sam Jones in the late nineteenth century, to Billy Sunday, on to Billy Graham—have been as shrewd in adopting business practices and as effective in raising money as the best of their commercial peers.[24] During a brief period at the height of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, evangelicals did turn aside from norms of financial practices as defined by the nation's business elite,[25] but they still succeeded very well in maintaining strong organizational efficiency.[26]

After World War II, evangelicals returned to more mainline business procedures. The exchange that took place in this period was movement away from a model based on avoiding public solicitation of funds—that is, away from a model relying on financial support provided as the Holy Spirit moved individuals to contribute.[27] This model had become important in the era of fundamentalist disengagement from the American mainstream. But it did not last long. The move back to the mainstream was marked by increased use of radio marketing, mass

[23] Gary Scott Smith, "Evangelicals Confront Corporate Capitalism: Advertising, Consumerism, Stewardship, and Spirituality, 1880-1930," in *More Money, More Ministry*, 39-80.
[24] Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, "'Sanctified Business': Historical Perspectives on Financing Revivals of Religion," Ibid., 81-103.
[25] On division over business practices as marking a key difference between fundamentalist and mainline Protestants, see Peter Dobkin Hall, "Moving Targets and the Transformation of American Economic Life, 1870-1920," Ibid., 141-79.
[26] Joel A. Carpenter, "Fundamentalist Institutions and the Rise of Evangelical Protestantism, 1929-1942," Ibid., 239-73.
[27] On the integrity, but also the compromises, of that apparently "spiritual" system, see Alvyn Austin, "No Solicitation: The China Inland Mission and Money," Ibid., 207-34.

mailings, and, later, sophisticated Internet contacts to solicit funds.[28] In other words, the move was back toward a simple acceptance of American business as usual as the standard for evangelical attitudes and practices with money. The meteoric career of financial consultant Larry Burkett and his Christian Financial Concepts illustrates a typical modern pattern.[29] On strictly religious matters, Burkett remained a fundamentalist with strong dispensationalist views on Christ's Second Coming, the dangers of accepting evolution theory, and the apocalyptic end of the world. But on money, Burkett offered sound, commonsensical advice that enabled thousands of conservative Protestants to share the wealth of the burgeoning modern economy without being chewed up by that economy.

The recent history of evangelical fundraising has been very well summarized by Michael Hamilton in the single best essay ever published on the subject. Hamilton's survey, "More Money, More Ministry," draws this conclusion: "Evangelicals truly believe that their churches and their favorite parachurch organizations are doing God's work in the world. The good news here is that this has generated enormous creative energy in bringing Christian concerns to bear upon innumerable aspects of contemporary life…. Evangelical entrepreneurs have pioneered new visions and directions for Christian ministry that, though new, are at the same time in line with their constituency's core beliefs. The bad news is that, just as in a business corporation, the growth and survival of the parachurch groups always threaten to become ends in themselves. Any organization that depends on broad popular support inevitably becomes deeply concerned with the image it projects. Concern with image and popular opinion always colors and shapes the biblical and moral criteria by which the evangelical entrepreneurs profess to make decisions."[30]

With the exception of the "no solicitation" phase of evangelical history, which was always more a British than an American phenomenon, U.S. evangelicals have always felt at home with the main social and economic practices of American culture. Evangelical religion, even in its most accommodated forms, maintains at least some capacity to offend standard American values. By contrast, evangelical financial habits have mostly aligned with standard American practices. And that alignment has taken place without a great deal of theological reflection, which brings us to our next main point.

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[28] Barry Gardner, "Technological Changes and Monetary Advantages: The Growth of Evangelical Funding, 1945 to the Present," Ibid., 298-310.
[29] Larry D. Eskridge, "Money Matters: The Phenomenon of Financial Counselor Larry Burkett and Christian Financial Concepts," Ibid., 311-40.
[30] Michael S. Hamilton, "More Money, More Ministry: The Financing of American Evangelicalism Since 1945," Ibid., 104-37 (quotation 137).

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American Evangelicals Have Always Shied Away From Discussing Economic Affairs

American evangelicals have always shied away from principial, systematic, or intentional discussion of wealth, money, and economic affairs in general.

In the European past, at least some Protestant churches that maintained the ideal of Christendom at least sometimes thought in terms of all-encompassing models of life-as-a-whole, including economics. Examples include Reformed churches in Geneva under John Calvin, in the Netherlands in the tradition leading to Abraham Kuyper, and in Scotland as illustrated best by Thomas Chalmers. Some theoretical attention to economic matters also can be found among Continental pietists. But in the United States, since disestablishment meant giving up assumptions about church control of society, evangelicals regularly found themselves *reacting* to changes and circumstances in economic life over which some European Protestants had tried to exert self-conscious control. In choosing to stress voluntary spiritual persuasion, American evangelicals seem deliberately to have turned aside from direct and self-conscious attention to the structures of society. The revivalistic instincts of disestablishmentarian evangelicals predisposed them to seek first the transformation of individuals. The next move was the assumption that, if society could be transformed as a whole, it would only be through multiplying the conversion of individuals.

The contrast with Britain is instructive. It is not true that in early U.S. history there was no serious consideration of political economy from self-consciously Christian thinkers. It is true, however, that this kind of thinking was almost always derivative from Continental thinkers and that it was never well integrated with strong theological reasoning.[31] By contrast, in Britain, as outstanding books by Boyd Hilton and A. M. C. Waterman have shown, British churchmen of various theological positions self-consciously theorized about economic matters from distinctly Christian perspectives. A few of these figures, like Thomas Chalmers in Scotland, went beyond theorizing to actively implement broad economic reforms on the basis of what he took to be overarching theological principles.[32] Of that activity, there has been almost nothing similar among American evangelicals.

[31] The best study of these American efforts is Stewart Davenport, *Friends of the Unrighteous Mammon: Northern Christians and Market Capitalism, 1815-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, forthcoming 2008).
[32] Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); A. M. C. Waterman, *Revolution, Economics and Religion: Christian Political Economy, 1798-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

To be sure, in the nineteenth century there did arise among American Protestants a concern for what was called Systematic Benevolence. Specific appeals for charitable giving to be handled systematically arose at the same time as the voluntary societies themselves became more organized. Early on, it was common for benevolent appeals to come backed by extensive statistics and further appeals for systematizing the collection of funds. By the 1830s and 1840s, proposals were multiplying to describe "The Benefits of System in Our Religious Charities" to encourage giving not by passion but by system, to explain the ideals of "Systematic Benevolence," and to show why "Benevolence Should be Conscientious and Systematic."[33] The character of such writing was fully on display in the *Quarterly Christian Spectator* of 1837 where an appeal was published to recruit agents for benevolent societies. It argued that the work of these societies needed to "be performed by men especially set apart to this service," just as agriculture, manufacturing, and business needed specially assigned workers. Ministers could not manage benevolences effectively while discharging their proper duties. Among the qualifications listed for the agents were the religious traits of piety, circumspection, liberality, and devotion to benevolence generally and to the special aim of the specific society. But agents were also to have marketplace virtues as well: a certain measure of talent, a decent appearance, a knack for making and carrying out plans, and good business habits, especially honesty and the ability to function as a "good financier . . . strictly accurate in all pecuniary concerns, and scrupulously and punctiliously so, in collecting funds and accounting for them."[34]

In the decade before the Civil War the flurry of publications in support of systematic benevolence reached its peak with several publications moving from exposition of I Corinthians 16:1-2 ("Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come") to well-developed programs for well-organized charitable giving. One of these works, entitled *Zaccheus*; or *The Scriptural Plan of Benevolence*, offered considerable reassurance to potential donors. In its view, systematic benevolence tended "to secure God's blessing on business, and to enlarge the means of giving.... [I]t is not to be supposed that systematic benevolence will insure wealth.... But there are various ways in which

[33] Specific details and further references are provided in Noll, "Protestant Reasoning About Money and the Economy," 279-82.
[34] Anon., "The Necessity and Qualifications of Public Agents for Benevolent Societies," *Quarterly Christian Spectator* 9 (June 1837):255-63 (quotation 259).

systematic beneficence tends to promote prosperity" by making one a better manager of money, identifying the giver with Christ's interests, and reaping the reward of scriptural promises.[35]

Criticism of Systematic Benevolence was predictable, especially from traditionalist evangelicals and sectarian evangelicals. For different reasons, both kinds of critics feared that Systematic Benevolence was only smokescreen cover for power grabs by the national Money Power headquartered in New York. From the traditionalist side, an Old School Presbyterian, James Alexander, complained that associations, subscriptions, and systematic charity were at best necessary evils, "machinery which intervenes between us and the Saviour, to whom we would minister in his poor members."[36] In other words, systems of benevolence unnecessarily complicated what Scripture intended to be simple, direct, and person-to-person.

Years earlier Alexander Campbell had made a much more extensive criticism of early moves toward systematizing fundraising That earlier tirade by the key leader of the Restorationist Movement took the form of a commentary on II Peter 2:2 ("and through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandize of you"). In Campbell's interpretation, this passage was a warrant to denounce the sale of pews; lambaste all lingering remnants of church establishments; rail against the over-paid clergy of England, Wales, and Ireland; criticize the money-raising activities of the voluntary societies; and in general warn against the great evil that occurred when money was "drained from the people" by "the itinerant beggars of this age."[37]

Viewed from afar, the promoters of Systematic Benevolence, as well as their critics, can both be seen as charting a financial course between, on the one side, standard practices of American economic life and, on the other, straightforward application of individual scriptural texts. In this perspective, Systematic Benevolence was an adjustment by the churches to principles of regularity, efficiency, and maximum profit that foreign visitors noted as characterizing American business culture as a whole. Criticism of Systematic Benevolence represented the complaints of contrarians who feared the uncontrolled power of centralized economic authority. In both instances, fidelity to the Bible was important. In neither case did Protestants go deeper to explore how main themes of Scripture could challenge the structures of American economic life or guide believers in shaping economic behavior.

[35] Samuel Harris, *Zaccheus* (New York: American Tract Society, 1850), 37.
[36] James W. Alexander, "Daily Service of Christ," in *Discourses on Common Topics of Christian Faith and Practice* (New York, 1858), 353.
[37] Alexander Campbell, "A Text Illustrated by Facts," *The Christian Baptists* 1, no. 1 (July 1823): 33-36.

Joel Carpenter has commented wisely on the mixed record of Systematic Benevolence. In his view, Systematic Benevolence should be praised as a case of justifiable "cultural responsiveness" insofar as it represented the adaptation of historic Christian convictions to America's commercial society. It was an instance where the God of the Incarnation again honored "earthen vessels by making them carriers of his greatest gift." On the other hand, Carpenter also wonders if the adaptation did not take place too easily and thus present a case of "too readily making peace with the . . . new [commercial] surroundings."[38]

The nineteenth century's experiment in Systematic Benevolence is singular in American evangelical history for the self-consciousness it brought to thinking about money in relation to faith. More characteristically, evangelicals, while maintaining a consistent appeal to Scripture on some matters of personal economic behavior, have tended to drift with the nation's economic culture. This combination explains why evangelicals have been moved to exploit American economic opportunities for the great financial benefit of churches and parachurch agencies. But it also explains some of the disasters of evangelical economic history, like the New Era scandal of John Bennett in the 1990s.

As set out by attorney Thomas Berg, the New Era scheme was successful in fleecing several major evangelical organizations—but also many non-evangelical organizations—by joining a language of conventional piety to a set of business practices on—and then over—the boundary of legality.[39] While the scheme was running, it seemed but another instance of fruitful cooperation between evangelical piety and the great American Money Machine. Only after the scheme was exposed did outside analysts, as well as some rueful victims, recognize the need for sharper critical scrutiny. The need for critical scrutiny concerned, however, not just business practices, but also assumptions about what should count as legitimate economic piety as well.

Yet in evangelical history, that kind of critical scrutiny about properly pious use of the economy has been rare. American evangelicals have a strong record in displaying many admirable traits, but not foundational, concentrated, or long-term thought about the structures and practices of American economic life. This observation builds a natural bridge to a fourth generalization.

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[38] Joel A. Carpenter, "Revivalism Without Social Reform," *Books and Culture: A Christian Review* (Nov./Dec. 1998), 27. Carpenter is here reviewing Kathryn Teresa Long, *The Revival of 1857-58* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), which is also insightful on questions of mingled business and Christian practices.

[39] Thomas C. Berg, "'Too Good to Be True': The New Era Foundation Scandal and Its Implications," in *More Money, More Ministry*, 374-98.

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Strengths and Weaknesses of Evangelical Philanthropy

Both the strengths and weaknesses of evangelical philanthropy are explained by the intensely personal focus of evangelical religion. Evangelical history began in the 1730s with dramatic moments of personal conversion. From the hundreds converted under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards at Northampton, Massachusetts, in the paradigmatic revival of early evangelicalism, the experience of John Wesley at Aldersgate when he felt his heart strangely warmed, and the personal journey of George Whitefield to the New Birth that sparked his own riveting preaching of the New Birth—right to the leading evangelical spokespeople of the present day, evangelical religion has been intensely personal religion.

Not surprisingly, then, personal encounter with Jesus Christ is the scarlet cord in evangelical hymnody that contributed so greatly to the worldwide worship of Christian churches. Certainly the personal dimensions of the Christian faith had been well known before the eighteenth century. But in and through the fires of evangelical revival those dimensions took on a powerful urgency, as in one of the most often reprinted hymns from early evangelical history:

> Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
> Tune my heart to sing thy grace;
> Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
> Call for songs of loudest praise….
> Jesus sought me when a stranger,
> Wand'ring from the fold of God:
> He, to rescue me from danger,
> Interposed his precious blood.[40]

In communicating the personal unction of Christian faith, otherwise serious theological differences faded away. So it was that all evangelicals, of whatever theological stripe, have sung with the intensely Calvinistic Augustus M. Toplady:

> Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in Thee!
> Let the Water and the Blood,
> From thy riven Side which flow'd,
> Be of Sin the double Cure,
> Cleanse me from its Guilt and Pow'r.[41]

[40] Robert Robinson, "Come thou fount of every blessing" (1758).
[41] Augustus M. Toplady, *Hymns and Sacred Poems, on a Variety of Subjects* (London: Daniel Segwick, 1860), 163.

And so all evangelicals have sung with Charles Wesley, whose Arminian theology contrasted strongly with Toplady's Calvinism:

> O for a thousand tongues to sing
> My dear Redeemer's praise!
> The glories of my God and King,
> The triumphs of his grace! . . .
> He breaks the power of cancelled sin,
> He sets the prisoner free;
> His blood can make the foulest clean—
> His blood availed for me.[42]

Participants and observers who know contemporary evangelical praise songs—whether you love them or hate them—know that the strongly personal element remains central in the evangelical spiritual cosmology.

A recent discussion of potential evangelical contributions to American foreign policy makes points that apply just as well to economic history. Mark Galli, an editor at *Christianity Today*, wrote that evangelicalism includes not just belief but "a disposition toward culture." In that disposition, while many evangelicals "recognize the complexity of social problems," they "have a sixth sense for the moral dimension. As those who believe in Jesus as their *personal* Savior and Lord, they tend to focus . . . on specific problems that affect specific people in specific ways. And for those who hold the Bible in high regard, the more clearly the moral cause relates to biblical injunctions, the better. The larger, more complex, and abstract the problem, the less interested they become." Galli notes further that evangelicalism has transformed millions of lives at home and abroad because evangelicals have "a knack for helping individuals grasp the essentials of the spiritual life in their cultural context, giving them concrete guidance on how to nurture that life." But the same qualities mean that "evangelicals have been able to sustain interest in politics and foreign policy only for short stretches…. Our holy impatience and deep discomfort with ambiguity are albatrosses when it comes to global affairs." Galli's summary words apply just as much to economics as to diplomacy: "We—the champions of instantaneous conversion brought about by spiritual technique—do our best work, and help the world the most, when we create specific solutions to specific problems that have an unambiguous moral

[42] Charles Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* (1780), ed. Franz Hildebrandt and Oliver A. Beckerlegge, vol. 7 of *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 79-80.

center."[43] By implication, Galli suggests that longer-term, complex, and structural problems pose great difficulties for an evangelical foreign policy. The same would be true for philanthropy.

In response to Galli, Walter Russell Mead of the Council on Foreign Relations urged him not to be so hard on his fellow evangelicals. Mead agreed with much of Galli's analysis, but also contended that the problems Galli complained about were characteristic of almost all Americans and not just evangelicals. Mead went on to say that with the relative decline of mainline Protestantism, he felt that evangelicals had a great deal to offer. And so his concluding words were quite positive: "The rise of an evangelical establishment, well represented not only in the pews and in the Christian press, but in the institutions of government, academia and think tanks, and in the secular press as well, is I think one of the keys to more effective American foreign policy over the long haul."[44]

To switch from foreign policy to philanthropy, Mead's conclusion, while granting the weight of Galli's analysis, would suggest that, precisely because evangelicals are attuned to popular American ways, for that reason they possess the capacity to assert a real influence for good, at least so long as their personal religion remains vital and alive. Whatever weakness comes from such a strong concentration on personal faith is balanced by energy, action, and at least the potential of wise generosity arising from the same source.

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To the extent that I have characterized American evangelicalism accurately, we are now in position to address the challenges of philanthropy directly. Recall the four generalizations: Evangelicals are generous; American evangelicals have adapted readily, easily, and without a second thought to the democratic, free market, and entrepreneurial culture of the United States; American evangelicals have always shied away from principial, systematic, or intentional discussion of wealth, money, and economic affairs in general; and both the strengths and weaknesses of evangelical philanthropy are explained by the intensely personal focus of evangelical religion. For philanthropy, there would now seem to be several things to say.

Perhaps most importantly, it is necessary to assert that if evangelical Christianity abandoned its character as preeminently a personal religion, it would

[43] Mark Galli, "Evangelical DNA and Foreign Policy," *Faith and International Affairs* 4, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 53-55.
[44] Walter Russell Mead, "The 'God's Country' Forum: A Reply," *Faith and International Affairs* 4, no. 3 (Winter 2006): 61.

abandon itself. Moreover, if evangelical Christians backed away from any of the evangelical distinctives catalogued by David Bebbington—the supreme authority of Scripture, the necessity of the New Birth, the imperative for an active faith, and the cross of Christ as the key to human salvation—they would be throwing away their pearl of great price. One more general observation is in order: if American evangelicals ever lost their easy adjustment to the mid-ranges of American popular culture, it might actually lead to a more distinctly Christian form of the Christian faith (as I have tried to argue elsewhere).[45] But it would also compromise their ability to function vigorously in those mid-ranges, which has been one of the truly great strengths of American evangelical history.

When thinking about the challenge of philanthropy for evangelicals, it is, therefore, pointless to advise that evangelicals simply become

- more corporate, more disciplined, and better organized (like Roman Catholics);
- more traditional, more theologically refined, more sophisticated, and better organized (like traditional European Protestants),
- more proprietary, more committee-driven, more politically correct, and better organized (like mainline Protestants),
- more focused on fewer philanthropic purposes and better organized (like Jews), or
- more generous with respect to inward-looking purposes and better organized (like Mormons).

Evangelicals have made their contributions to world Christian history and to the social history of the United States precisely because of the traits that distinguish them as evangelicals. To the extent possible, they should retain these traits as they think about how to make better contributions with more integrity in both domains.

But perhaps more can yet be done within the boundaries of inherited evangelical characteristics to balance some of the excesses and gaps in evangelical philanthropic history. So let me, on the basis of that history, offer four injunctions as possible guides to a wiser evangelical philanthropy.

The first is perhaps the most important: Go beyond Bible verses as signposts for economic life to biblical themes and theological reflection, but without giving up Bible verses. Modern economics is complex. Proper Christian duty respecting the environment, energy use, personal and corporate debt, and balance of trade requires theological grounding as broad and as deep as

[45] For example, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

these economic realities are broad and deep. Evangelical religion is a religion of the person engaged with the Bible. To lose that engagement would be to lose something essential. But to go beyond that level of engagement to serious theological engagement would not mean to turn from Scripture. It would mean, rather, allowing the full scope of divine revelation to address the full depth of economic reality.

A second injunction is like unto the first: Go beyond the personal and the immediate to the cultural and the institutional, but without losing the personal and the immediate. It is a false dichotomy to think that a strongly personal religion must neglect broader cultural concerns. In this 200th anniversary year of the British Parliament's ban of the Atlantic slave trade, we have a much-publicized example of what a large team of activists did in translating personal evangelical religion into a powerful cultural force. But the details of that example are important. For Granville Sharp, Thomas and John Clarkson, Sir Charles and Lady Middleton, Bp. Beilby Porteus, Hannah More, William Wilberforce, and the many others who worked on this reform, it took patience (more than twenty years of often-discouraging slogging). It took an understanding of institutional life (how Parliament worked) and a feel for the broader society (how publicity could work). It took an ability to absorb defeats and press on (and there were many defeats). It took a willingness to work with Quakers, with Anglicans who were not evangelicals, and with some unsavory politicians (since only by that kind of cooperation could the job be accomplished). The traits that stood the anti-slavery reformers in good stead are also traits that are required for wise philanthropy. To some degree, they have been present in the evangelical past; they could be more visibly present today as well.

A third injunction follows: Go beyond the parachurch to the denominational and interdenominational, but without losing the parachurch. Generous funding of parachurch organizations is the jewel in the crown of evangelical philanthropy. With sacrificial fundraising efforts for evangelical parachurch agencies, evangelical gospel proclamation and evangelical good works have displayed a flexibility, urgency, adaptability, and mobility that have accomplished marvels. But longer-term projects that need to be sustained generation through generation have not done so well.

Evangelicals, for example, are faithful funders of missionaries, but not of advanced higher education. The short-sightedness of such strategy has been manifest in the past half century. When rising scholars from the second and

third generations of churches established by evangelical missionaries—in Korea, Nigeria, Brazil, the Philippines, and many other places—looked for advanced theological education in the West, they found it. But not primarily in seminaries and research universities under evangelical sponsorship. They found it, instead, at Catholic, mainline Protestant, and secular institutions of higher learning that over the decades had been supported from their constituencies, unlike the pattern found among evangelicals. Evangelical missions, as a result, were sometimes compromised in reaching their goals because evangelicals had funded the immediate aims of parachurch organizations but not the longer-term goals requiring denominational or interdenominational effort. It is my impression that the situation I have described may be changing: more evangelicals are using their means to link up with other philanthropists for long-term, cooperative projects. If so, this is a good sign, but it is a movement that still needs to overcome the intuitive turn to parachurch agencies as the sole means to reach worthy goals. In an ideal world, of course, the worthy virtues of both parachurch and denominational sponsorship would receive all the funding each needs.

The fourth and last injunction is the most comprehensive and can only be set out in broadly theological terms: Go beyond altruism without calculation to altruism with calculation, but without losing the altruistic impulse. At our best, we evangelicals are generous to others because we know we have been dealt with generously by a loving God. So long as that motive for generosity remains, evangelicals have the potential for a bright philanthropic future. Yet with the existential experience of the God of grace, evangelicals would do well to grasp the plentitude of divine grace. Adjustment, not complete renovation, is the necessary task. The God of grace is a redeemer of individuals. The God of grace *can* and *does* transform sinners immediately through the work of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. But the God of grace is also the creator and sustainer of all things; the God of grace is the Father of every human being; the enabler of every act of human kindness, the source of all human wisdom. The appeal at this point is for evangelicals to realize the breadth and depth of God's gracious provision for the whole world. The key to a more Christian evangelical philanthropy is not, therefore, a turn from the grace of God; it is to understand more comprehensively, more profoundly, and more extensively how deep and wide that grace actually is.

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Prof. Mark Noll, whose specialty is American religious history, came to the history department at Notre Dame after 27 years at Wheaton College as a member of the history and theology departments. There, he taught a range of courses from American intellectual history and the general history of Christianity to modern British history and historiography. At Notre Dame he hopes to concentrate on American religious history. Questions at the intersection of religion and politics or intellectual life are the ones that interest him most.

The majority of Prof. Noll's research and writing has dealt with subjects involving the history of Christianity and the intellectual or political history of the United States and Canada. He has published articles and reviews on a wide variety of subjects involving Christianity in modern history. In October 2006, Prof. Noll gave three lectures on a very expansive topic: "Race, Religion, and American Politics from Nat Turner to George W. Bush." He is expanding these lectures into a short book. He is also doing research for a book on the public history of the Bible in North America.

In 2004 Prof. Noll was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and in 2006 he received the National Humanities Medal from President Bush.

Prof. Noll's recent books include *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (University of North Carolina Press, 2006); *Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical Assessment of Contemporary Roman Catholicism* (with Carolyn Nystrom, Baker Publishing Group, 2005); *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Wesleys* (InterVarsity Press, 2004); *America's God, From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Oxford University Press, 2002); and *Sing Them Over Again to Me: Hymns and Hymnbooks in America* (co-editor, University of Alabama Press, 2006).

The Center on Philanthropy's Lake Institute on Faith & Giving is dedicated to helping people of faith, regardless of their religious persuasion, think creatively and reflectively on the relationship between their faith and their giving. The Institute engages in research, provides resources that will educate and help people better understand giving as a reflection of their faith, and creates venues for civic conversation on this subject.

The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving honors the legacy of Thomas and Marjorie Lake. Thomas H. Lake served as president and chairman of the Lilly Endowment Inc. for more than 20 years, accepting that leadership role after 30 years at Eli Lilly & Company, following his retirement as president of the company. The Lake Institute honors Mr. and Mrs. Lake and their many contributions through leadership in philanthropy.

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