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Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism in the US and Beyond

## American Evangelical Missions Since 1910

by A. Scott Moreau

## American Evangelical Missions Since 1910

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**Abstract:** This article provides a brief synopsis of US evangelical missions over the course of the twentieth century. Each of the four historical sections (1910 to 1945, 1946 to 1974, 1975 to 2000, 2001 to 2020) explores developments, challenges, and trends of the time period under consideration. From the nascent development of evangelical missions to the current climate of evangelical splintering, the twentieth century has seen a tumultuous, exciting, surprising, and challenging journey of American evangelical missions.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** mission, missiology, missions, evangelical, ecumenical, conciliar, fundamentalist, Pentecostalism, contextualization, holistic mission.

### Introduction

At the start of the twentieth century, rival forces were influencing European and American churches and pulling them in multiple directions simultaneously. The White American missional enterprise was set for splits in multiple directions during the century to follow.<sup>2</sup> What follows is the story of White American evangelical mission in four time periods: (1) 1910 to 1945, (2) 1946 to 1974, (3) 1975 to 2000, and (4) 2001-2022. In each period, developments within White American evangelical mission practice and thinking are sketched out.

1. Significantly condensed and adapted from A. Scott Moreau, “Evangelical Missions Development, 1910 to 2010, in the North American Setting: Reaction and Emergence,” in *Evangelical and Frontier Mission Perspectives on the Global Progress of the Gospel*, ed. Beth Snodderly and A. Scott Moreau (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2011), 3-46. Used with permission from Regnum; book ISBN 978-1-870345-98-9.

2. To see some of the processes beyond those of White evangelicals, see, for example, Daniel Bare, *Black Fundamentalists* (New York: NYU Press, 2021), and Mary Beth Swetnam Matthews, *Doctrine and Race: African American Evangelicals and Fundamentalism Between the Wars* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2017).

## **American Evangelical Missions, 1910–1945: Shaken Foundations**

After the ecumenical World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (1910), evangelicals in the mainline denominations and mission structures experienced increasing marginalization and began questioning whether they should stay with their eroding organizations (and/or denominations) or leave. Those who stayed had to decide whether to remain quietly faithful to what God had called them to do or to join the fight to turn their organizations around. Throughout this period, the terms “evangelical,” “fundamentalist,” and “conservative” were all developing but generally could be applied to the same group of people who were distinguished primarily by the commitments to the five fundamentals (see below).<sup>3</sup>

Those who left their mainline organizations also had to choose between joining the more conservative faith missions movement, such as China Inland Mission, and starting their own evangelical mission organizations, denominations, and Bible colleges. Considering the stress on the individual in American culture, and the voluntary nature of churches and mission organizations, it is not surprising that the pattern of splintering of American denominations and mission structures, which started during this period of 1910–1945, has not stopped since then.

The flashpoint for the fundamentalist-modernist controversy came in 1909 with the ordination of three pastors in the Presbyterian Church in the USA who refused to affirm the virgin birth of Jesus. In the following 1910 General Assembly, the Presbyterians decided to accept five doctrines as fundamental to the Christian faith: (1) the inspiration of the Bible by the Holy Spirit and the inerrancy of Scripture as a result of this, (2) the virgin birth of Christ, (3) the belief that Christ’s death was an atonement for sin, (4) the bodily resurrection of Christ, and (5) the historical reality of Christ’s miracles.<sup>4</sup> Some proponents called these teachings *the fundamentals*, and those who promoted them were fundamentalists. Evangelicals, committed to these beliefs, were thus identified as fundamentalists. Initially the evangelical-fundamentalists did not insist on separating from the mainline denominations. Rather, they stayed within them and struggled for continued acceptance of their views.<sup>5</sup>

Preachers like Billy Sunday and Dwight Moody’s successors (such as R. A. Torrey) were part of the fundamentalist movement and were largely disdained by intellectual mainline church leaders and members. As more US denominations engaged in their own versions of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, and as prominent denominational universities—most notably Princeton—publicly fought

3. Paul Merritt Bassett, “Evangelicals,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, eds. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 393–95. See also *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* (Los Angeles: Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 1917), a series of pamphlets written from 1910 to 1915 that explained core doctrinal positions.

4. See George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925*, 2nd edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117.

5. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 164–70.

A. Scott Moreau: *American Evangelical Missions Since 1910*

theological battles, some evangelical-fundamentalists believed that becoming educated in liberal colleges and seminaries led to becoming liberal,<sup>6</sup> and this attitude carried to the end of this period. Bible institutes were started, but without the intention of becoming colleges or universities.

Because mainline church organizations and leaders so thoroughly dominated mission leadership and structures, the more conservative missionaries also eventually had to decide their own response. Many who stayed within their mainline missions did so at least in part because of the strong evangelical voices that still were part of the ecumenical International Missionary Council (IMC, established in 1921). It is easy to understand, however, that people on both sides closely watched everything the IMC and other mainline-associated bodies did.<sup>7</sup>

In 1917, after nondenominational agencies lost their vote in the Foreign Mission Conference of North America (FMCNA, a forerunner of the National Council of Churches in the USA), they banded together to found the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (IFMA).<sup>8</sup> The splintering of mission over the modernist-fundamentalist divide was evident in that no fewer than fifty-six new agencies were founded from 1918 to 1945,<sup>9</sup> the vast bulk of them nondenominational faith agencies founded by conservatives. In a parallel development, at least in part due to the shocks of World War One and the increasingly secular vision of the mainline Christian internationalists, fundamentalists increasingly identified with Premillennial eschatology (a requirement for agencies affiliated with the IFMA).<sup>10</sup> They judged the promotion of building the Kingdom of God through human efforts and commitment to the social gospel as non-biblical waste of resources.

By and large mainline leaders ignored or ridiculed the fundamentalists during this time. Fundamentalists argued against liberal theology and how it was shifting the church and society (e.g., J. Gresham Machen and William Jennings Bryan).<sup>11</sup> Others were more irenic, focusing on personal piety and evangelism and found new organizations, including Bible colleges and other educational institutions, which

6. As related to the author by John Gration, Chair of Missions and Intercultural Studies at Wheaton College Graduate School, who indicated he heard this statement many times while growing up in the 1930s.

7. See Arthur Johnston, *The Battle for World Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1978). Johnston, a career missionary, published this survey of twentieth-century mainline and evangelical missions, as Chair of the Division of World Mission and Evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois.

8. See E. L. Frizen, *75 Years of IFMA, 1917-1992: the Nondenominational Missions Movement* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1992), 10.

9. See A. Scott Moreau, "Putting the Survey in Perspective," in *Missions Handbook: US and Canadian Christian Ministries Overseas 2001-2003*, 18th ed., ed. John A. Siewert and Dotsey Welliver (Wheaton, IL: Evangelism and Missions Information Service, 2000), 36-37.

10. See Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 125-32. Concerning the requirement for agencies, see Frizen, *75 Years of IFMA*, 110.

11. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 125-32.

eventually became the evangelical Christian colleges, universities, and seminaries of today and served at the time as the seedbeds of early evangelical intellectualism. By the 1930s, those who most explicitly identified themselves as fundamentalists—eventually called separatists—were demanding separation from any organization that had compromised at any level. Not all fundamentalists agreed, and by the end of World War Two, a more cooperative type of evangelical—initially called neo-evangelicals—began to surface which maintained fundamental doctrines but chose to engage the mainline church and culture rather than separate from it. With the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals (1942) and a commission within the NAE called the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association (EFMA) which was to “serve common interests of members in government relations (domestic and foreign); use of communication channels; cooperative purchasing/travel; and relations between each other,”<sup>12</sup> evangelical denominations and mission agencies both had means to associate under a non-separatist organizational umbrella.<sup>13</sup>

Finally, during this period a third stream of the church was born and began to grow rapidly. Pentecostals, growing from the holiness denominations, and experiencing God’s presence in tongues and other signs and wonders, were disdained by both mainliners and fundamentalists. Pentecostals felt the sting of rejection from their very beginnings and knew that they had to grow their own missionaries and mission organizations from within. For example, in 1909, the Church of God (Cleveland) initiated international missions in the Bahamas.<sup>14</sup> By the end of World War Two, Pentecostals had started numerous denominations, many with vibrant international missions.

## **American Evangelical Missions, 1946–1974: New Opportunities**

### **Mainstream American Evangelical Missions**

From the explosion of new evangelical mission agencies in the immediate aftermath of World War Two to the Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne in 1974, evangelicals were the most active proponents of mission through this period.<sup>15</sup> In the 1950s neo-evangelicals lost the “neo” and became mainstream evangelicals. In

12. Billy Graham Center Archives, “Records of the Evangelical Fellowship of Mission Agencies (EFMA) - Collection 165,” accessed August 2, 2022, <https://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/guides/165.htm>.

13. See Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 150, 180.

14. Church of God, “A Brief History of The Church of God,” accessed August 15, 2012, <https://churchofgod.org/about/a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-god/>.

15. Dana Robert, “From Missions to Mission to Beyond Missions: The Historiography of American Protestant Foreign Missions since World War II,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 18 (October 1994): 50; see also Gerald H. Anderson, “Christian Mission in AD 2000: A Glance Backward,” *Missiology* 28 (July 2000): 275-88.



A. Scott Moreau: *American Evangelical Missions Since 1910*

the meantime, from the evangelical perspective, the fundamentalists had withdrawn from everyone but themselves.

Both the 1945 call of Douglas MacArthur for ten thousand missionaries to come to Japan and the organizational skills learned by many lay Christians in the military around the world contributed to the explosion of new evangelical organizations formed after World War Two. From student organizations to newly formed missions agencies, they built up evangelical missions in ways never before seen.

Over the 1950s the ecumenical movement reached its peak, but by the 1960s had begun to decline. Evangelicals, however, continually gathered personnel, organizational, and financial strength. The newly formed NAE and EFMA grew consistently after 1945, the latter becoming an umbrella for the new student ministries and mission agencies. Important highlights include evangelicals founding Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), Billy Graham holding numerous successful and well-publicized evangelistic crusades starting in Los Angeles (1951), the founding of the World Evangelical Fellowship (reorganized from The Evangelical Alliance in 1951) with four commissions (Evangelism, Missionary, Literature and Christian Action), Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru) starting on the UCLA campus (1951), the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) being formed and in turn launching *Decision Magazine* (1960), the IFMA and EFMA jointly launching *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* (1964), and Donald McGavran starting the Fuller School of World Missions (1965). Evangelicals founded at least 126 new missions agencies by the end of 1974,<sup>16</sup> clearly demonstrating evangelical mission vitality. As early as 1963 an ecumenical observer pointed to the explosive growth of evangelical missions and comparatively slow growth of mainline missions:

The number of foreign missionaries of all agencies related to the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council increased from 1952 to 1960 by 4.5%; those of the conservative evangelicals by 149.5%; the income for 'foreign missions' of the former by 50.5%; of the latter by 167.3%.<sup>17</sup>

Further evidence of evangelical vitality was the numerous mission conferences and congresses organized by and for evangelicals from the end of World War Two to 1974. In 1936, evangelicals within the increasingly liberal, interdenominational Student Volunteer Movement (established in the 1880s) formed the Student Foreign Mission Fellowship (SFMF). InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) traces its origin to 1877 when a group of Cambridge students organized to pray and study the Bible together. The resulting organization came to the United States in 1938. In 1945, SFMF merged into IVCF, becoming its mission department.<sup>18</sup> In 1946 InterVarsity

16. Moreau, "Putting the Survey in Perspective," 36-37.

17. Eugene L. Smith, "The Conservative Evangelicals and the World Council of Churches," *Ecumenical Review* 15, no. 2 (January 1963): 182; see also Anderson, "Christian Mission in AD 2000," 277.

18. Fred W. Beuttler, "Evangelical Missions in Modern America," in *The Great Commission*:

organized a missions conference for college students which, in spite of an ice storm on the first day, was attended by 576 students—three hundred of whom pledged to serve Christ overseas.<sup>19</sup> This blossomed into the much-anticipated triennial Urbana conferences. The last Urbana of this period took place in 1973 and welcomed 14,158 delegates.<sup>20</sup> In 1947, IVCF became one of the founding members of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students.<sup>21</sup>

In early 1966, the IFMA and EFMA jointly sponsored the Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission (Wheaton 1966). The 938 registered delegates represented over 258 evangelical mission-focused organizations. The two associations at that time represented more missionaries than the entire WCC, and the Congress redressed the fact that no explicitly evangelical mission conference had been held since Edinburgh 1910.<sup>22</sup> By 1972, Clyde Taylor, chair of the WEF Missionary Commission since 1951, reported,

There are only 9 evangelical missions associations in the world.... The total missionary staff of these 9 fellowships approximates 20,000 overseas missionaries. For a total picture ... there are at least 30,000 evangelical missionaries on active duty now. Of these two-thirds are directly or indirectly related to WEF.<sup>23</sup>

By 1966, concern on the part of Billy Graham and Carl Henry (then editor of *Christianity Today*) over the radical shift in Western theology—and the WCC in particular—framed the need for an international conference to unite evangelicals and clearly articulate and promote the evangelistic task of the Church. The result was the World Congress on Evangelism, held in Berlin (1966) with the theme “One Race, One Gospel, One Task.” It was attended by nearly twelve hundred delegates from one hundred countries. This was followed by four regional conferences (in Europe, North America, Asia, and Latin America) from 1968 to 1971. With a total of just over eight thousand delegates, they were geared to ensure that evangelicals would remain focused on the primacy of evangelism and to generate sustained momentum for the anticipated Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne in 1974, the evangelical capstone of this period. In the same span and independently of Lausanne,

*Evangelicals and the History of World Missions*, ed. Martin I. Klauber and Scott M. Manetsch (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008), 124.

19. Jonathan Rice, “The New Missions Generation,” *Christianity Today* 50, no. 9 (September 2006): 100-104.

20. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, “Urbana 73,” accessed September 2, 2022, <https://urbana.org/past-urbanas/urbana-73>.

21. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, “InterVarsity and IFES History,” accessed August 2, 2022, <https://intervarsity.org/about-us/intervarsity-and-ifes-history?action>.

22. A. Scott Moreau, “Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, gen. ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 222-23.

23. David Howard, *The Dream That Would Not Die: The Birth and Growth of the World Evangelical Fellowship, 1846–1986* (Exeter, UK: Paternoster, 1986), 173.

A. Scott Moreau: *American Evangelical Missions Since 1910*

Campus Crusade organized Explo '72 (Dallas) with eighty thousand participants and Explo '74 (Seoul) in which three hundred thousand people received training in evangelism and discipleship.

The author chose 1974 as the final year of this period because it was the year of the Congress on World Evangelization held in Lausanne. Lausanne focused on evangelization (by which the organizers meant the whole task of the church) rather than evangelism (by which they meant the proclamation of the Gospel). Over twenty-seven hundred delegates came from one hundred fifty nations; including observers, media, and guests, more than four thousand were present. With almost one-half of the delegates from the Majority World, it was clear that evangelicals were not just Westerners. The report in *TIME* magazine noted that Lausanne '74 was “a formidable forum, possibly the widest-ranging meeting of Christians ever held.”<sup>24</sup>

The Lausanne gathering had an immediate impact in at least two significant ways for evangelical mission. The first was the Lausanne Covenant, ratified by all delegates. In the decades ahead the Covenant became the statement of faith adopted by literally hundreds of organizations and institutions. Second, the energy generated at Lausanne for reaching people groups rather than nation states provided a significant shift in the way evangelicals thought about the fulfillment of the Great Commission. Further impact will be seen in the discussion of the next period (1975–2000).

While the Lausanne Congress clearly deserves to be the capstone of this period, the vitality of evangelical mission-focused organizations outside of the Lausanne orbit demonstrate healthy growth both in breadth across the world and in depth of theological commitment and missiological sophistication. Experiencing marginalization from ecumenical organizations through much of the first half of the twentieth century, by the end of 1974 evangelicals realized that they had their own significant people, organizational and financial resources. The age of the modern evangelical as a significant part of the world Church was dawning.

In the context of this dawning momentum, new foci were added to the evangelical missions agenda during this period. Bible translation was galvanized through the development of Wycliffe Bible Translators. Israel was born as a nation, generating intense interest in biblical prophecy and fueling conferences, political support, and financial support for missionary efforts. Evangelicals gained national prominence when five missionaries lost their lives while trying to reach an indigenous Indian group in Ecuador in 1956. The rise of communism and the blockade of missionary efforts behind the Iron Curtain eventuated in the development of Bible smuggling, made famous in evangelical circles by Brother Andrew. In 1963 the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) movement was launched in Guatemala by Ralph Winter and James Emery.

24. The Lausanne Movement, “The Legacy of the Lausanne Movement,” accessed August 2, 2022, <https://lausanne.org/our-legacy>.



The development of the terminology of “people groups” started with Donald McGavran’s *Bridges of God* (1955) and was brought to the forefront by then-Fuller Seminary professor Ralph Winter’s Lausanne 1974 address in which he demonstrated that more than two billion people were not only not yet reached, but would never be reached without important changes in missionary strategy and deployment.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, however, at Lausanne a significant number of evangelicals insisted that social concerns had a significant role in mission,<sup>26</sup> an issue that would grow and mature in the coming years. Finally, a new word—contextualization—appeared in the mission lexicon in 1972. While initial evangelical reaction was mixed in no small measure because it was coined in ecumenical circles and framed in terms of justice, this term would be incorporated—with shifts in its definition—into evangelical missiology by the end of the decade.<sup>27</sup>

### **American Pentecostal Missions**

The remarkable growth of the Pentecostal movement and the developing growth of charismatics within mainline as well as evangelical denominations and organizations cannot be neglected or overlooked. Many have considered Pentecostals as evangelicals, but the explosion of American Pentecostal evangelical development merits separate focus.

Prior to the 1960s, despite their shared passion for Scripture and evangelism, evangelicals had largely dismissed the Pentecostal doctrines that evangelicals considered aberrant and the practices they had considered excessive. In the 1960s, when the Pentecostal and charismatic movements were gaining in numbers and momentum, their challenges to evangelical pneumatology in both doctrine and practice could no longer be ignored. At least in part because of disdain for perceived Pentecostal abuses, many evangelical organizations either dismissed or even banned specific Pentecostal and charismatic practices, especially speaking in tongues. Some were more willing to accommodate Pentecostal distinctives, but not many.<sup>28</sup>

As the evangelicals had felt about the ecumenical movement, so many Pentecostals felt about evangelicals. Marginalized (e.g., the IFMA did not allow Pentecostal organizations to join) and attacked (numerous evangelical books and

25. Donald Anderson McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (New York: Friendship Press, 1955); Ralph Winter, “The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism,” in *Let the Earth Hear His Voice: Official Reference Volume, Papers, and Responses. International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, Switzerland. Minneapolis*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications 1975), 226-41.

26. Anderson, “Christian Mission in AD 2000,” 281-89.

27. A. Scott Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions: Mapping and Assessing Evangelical Models* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2012), especially chapter 1.

28. C. Peter Wagner, *Look Out! The Pentecostals Are Coming* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1973). Here, Fuller Seminary’s Wagner touted Pentecostals’ evangelistic success in Latin America, where he had been a missionary.

articles criticizing Pentecostal doctrines were published from the 1960s on), some responded in kind. Most Pentecostals, however, simply continued to be faithful to their understanding of God's call to being Spirit-filled and doing what the Spirit led them to do. Essentially left to their own devices, Pentecostals built their own organizations and associations largely without non-Pentecostal evangelical participation. Charismatics, on the other hand, stayed in evangelical and mainline denominations and mission organizations, initiated renewal movements from within and generated both interest and anxiety primarily because they wanted others to experience what God had given to them.

### **American Evangelical Missions, 1975–2000: From Marginalization to Prominence**

#### **The Demographic and Historiographical Shift**

The vitality and energy of evangelical missions from the US grew almost exponentially from 1975 to 2000 so that by 1991,<sup>29</sup> for example, “Overseas missionary personnel of evangelical agencies outnumber those in mainline agencies by a ratio of 10 to 1.”<sup>30</sup> The growth was so significant that American secular intellectuals could no longer ignore evangelicals, eventuating in a shift in the historiography of mission in the 1980s. Prior to then, secular intellectuals conceived of mission as nothing more than an ecumenical effort and the extension of American culture (and foreign imperialism). When they even bothered to portray evangelical missions, they did so as schismatic and ideologically driven. The massive changes in mission demographics together with the reluctant recognition of evangelical scholarship were such that secular religious historians began to disengage missions from American cultural extension and to acknowledge that evangelicals played significant roles in the story of American missional history.<sup>31</sup> Alongside this shift, in 1989 historian David Bebbington identified four key distinctives that characterized British evangelicals—but applied equally to American evangelicals: (1) conversion and a changed life, (2) activism (especially evangelism and missionary work, (3) being Bible-centered, and (4) being Christ-centered (especially on Christ's work on the cross on our behalf).<sup>32</sup> In 1997, missiologist Klaus Fielder noted,<sup>33</sup>

29. See, for example, Winston Crawley, *World Christianity 1970–2000: Toward a New Millennium* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001).

30. Robert T. Coote, “Evangelical Missions,” in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, eds. Nicholas Lossky et al., (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 392.

31. See Robert, “From Missions, to Mission, to Beyond Missions.”

32. David Bebbington, *Evangelicals in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

33. A scholar of the discipline of missiology, which incorporates history, theology, and the social sciences related to Christian mission.

In spite of the pluriform expressions of the evangelical theology of mission, ... the evangelical theology of mission is distinguished by certain common features: (a) a close relationship to holy scripture, which is regarded as inspired and all-sufficient for life and doctrine; (b) emphasis on the atoning and redemptive work of Christ; (c) emphasis on the necessity of a personal decision of faith (conversion); and (d) the priority of evangelization and the building up of congregations over all other work (e.g., social justice and interreligious dialogue) in the field of mission.<sup>34</sup>

In addition, missiologist James Scherer posited what evangelicals rejected, namely,

It could not follow liberal Protestantism in embracing (a) the kinds of biblical criticism which undermined the deity of Christ and the authority of scripture, (b) evolutionary theory, or (c) a social gospel separated from the life-changing power of the proclaimed gospel.<sup>35</sup>

In the following section, our overview of evangelical missions during this late-century era of prominence will focus on the most important developments, as portrayed in five confluent “streams.”

### **Agency Growth and Development**

American evangelicals formed at least 210 mission agencies or organizations from 1975 to 2000.<sup>36</sup> By 1980 evangelicals comprised as much as 90 percent of the missionaries on the field,<sup>37</sup> and by 1999 US Protestant mission agencies which specifically defined themselves as “ecumenical” in ecclesiastical stance comprised only 1.1 percent of the US Protestant mission force (though their reported budget for overseas missions work was 9.1 percent of the Protestant agency total).<sup>38</sup>

From 1975 to 2000, US evangelical agencies developed numerous initiatives for recruiting new missionaries, being more effective in mass outreach and the managing of tasks of missions, including the 10/40 Window, people group thinking, and coming of AD 2000.

The 10/40 Window (coined in 1989) captured the imagination of evangelical missions and became a major focus (though not without debate) for missiologists, mission agencies and mission-minded churches.<sup>39</sup> The people group thinking that

34. Klaus Fielder, “Evangelical Mission Theology I,” in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspective*, eds. Karl Müller et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), S.V.

35. James A. Scherer, James A., Richard H. Bliese, and John Nyquist, “Evangelical Mission Theology II (Lausanne Movement),” in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspective*, eds. Karl Müller et al. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), S.V.

36. See Moreau, “Putting the Survey in Perspective,” 36-37.

37. Derived from Beuttler, “Evangelical Missions in Modern America,” 119.

38. Moreau, “Putting the Survey in Perspective,” 42.

39. Rick Love, “10/40 Window,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), 938.

### A. Scott Moreau: *American Evangelical Missions Since 1910*

came onto the public stage at Lausanne became an organizing agenda for new missions efforts among people who had no access to the gospel in their own language or cultural frames of reference. The coming of the turn of the millennium was seen by evangelicals as a challenging target date for completing the task of the Great Commission now defined in people group categories, and they developed, announced and deployed literally hundreds of plans focused on AD 2000,<sup>40</sup> using tools such as the Jesus Film (developed in 1979),<sup>41</sup> SAT-7 satellite broadcasting, and Internet-based evangelism.

At the same time countries that had achieved their independence during the “winds of change” of the second era no longer welcomed overt missionary presence, and new strategies (e.g., nonresidential missionaries)<sup>42</sup> and terminology (e.g., “creative-access”) were developed to describe and deploy people in such settings. While some doors closed in the 1950s and 1960s, others opened in the 1990s when the Soviet Union split into multiple independent countries. Such a massive missionary influx resulted that many agencies banded together to ensure better cooperation and less competition for their work in Russia.<sup>43</sup>

By the end of the century, however, evangelicals began discussing changes in the younger generation that would impact the entire evangelical missions enterprise. They urged mission agencies to change if they wanted to meet the new challenges in the coming century.<sup>44</sup>

## Gatherings

Certainly, the ongoing gatherings of the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization (LCWE) and World Evangelical Fellowship (later World Evangelical Alliance) in this period were among the most significant events that took place.<sup>45</sup> However, they do not give the complete story of American evangelical mission gatherings. Other groups and movements have perhaps been less visible in the larger public eye but were the engines that drove American evangelical missions to the end of the millennium.

40. David B. Barrett and James W. Reapsome, *Seven Hundred Plans to Evangelize the World: The Rise of a Global Evangelization Movement* (Birmingham, Alabama: New Hope, 1988); also, Todd M. Johnson and David B. Barrett, eds., *AD 2000 Global Monitor: Keeping Track of World Evangelization 1990–1994* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1995).

41. Paul A. Eshleman, “The ‘Jesus’ Film: A Contribution to World Evangelism,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 26 (April 2002): 66-73.

42. David Garrison, *The Nonresidential Missionary* (Monrovia, Calif.: MARC, 1990).

43. Donna Bahler, “The Co-Mission,” *Mission Frontiers* 14 (March-April 1992): 3-4.

44. For example, see James Engel and William Dyrness, *Changing the Mind of Missions: Where Have We Gone Wrong?* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next: Quantum Changes in Christian Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); George R. Hunter, III, *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West Again* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000) and Leonard I. Sweet, *Soul Tsunami* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999).

45. For an expansion on this, see Moreau, “Evangelical Missions Development,” 18-21.

In what the organizers called the only parallel to Edinburgh 1910 during the century, the First World Consultation on Frontier Missions was held in Edinburgh in 1980 and brought together 270 people representing 194 evangelical mission structures to focus on anticipated mission issues prior to the turn of the century.<sup>46</sup> A follow up conference took place in 1989.

The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) sponsored three International Conferences of Itinerant Evangelists before the turn of the century (1983, 1986 and 2000), each of which had some ten thousand participants. The Billy Graham Center (BGC; established at Wheaton College in 1980) sponsored more than one hundred mission conferences and consultations between its founding in 1976 and 2000,<sup>47</sup> including A Century of World Evangelization: North American Evangelical Missions, 1886–1986 (1986), Conference on Evangelizing World Class Cities (1986), Evangelicalism in Transatlantic Perspective (1992), Evangelism Consultation 2000 (1995), Consultation on Support of Indigenous Christian Ministries in the Majority World (1996) and Internet Evangelism Conference (1999).

The AD 2000 and Beyond Movement, formed immediately after the LCWE Manila 1989 congress, sponsored three major Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE) meetings: Singapore (1989), Seoul, Korea (1995), and Pretoria, South Africa (1997). Their planned consultation for 2000 was cancelled, and they disbanded by constitutional provision in 2001.

InterVarsity continued the Urbana Student Mission conferences every three years, which grew from 17,112 delegates in 1976 to 18,818 in 2000, with further growth hampered by the size of the facilities. Campus Crusade organized the largest international conference linking ninety-five locations in fifty-five countries around the world by satellite feeds (Explo’ 85<sup>48</sup>), and later brought together delegates from 102 countries to evangelize Manila in the 1990 “New Life 2000” campaign. Over a six-month span, participants shared the gospel with more than 3.3 million people.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the conferences and consultations, evangelicals gathered to publicly demonstrate their faith in Marches for Jesus which started in 1987.<sup>50</sup>

46. Ralph Winter, “Edinburgh 1980 Reports: World Consultation on Frontier Missions,” *Mission Frontiers* 2, no. 12 (December 1980): 1, 4.

47. Billy Graham Center Archives, “Records of Billy Graham Center (BGC) - Collection 3,” accessed August 2, 2022, <https://www2.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/guides/003.htm#501>.

48. David B. Barrett and Todd Johnson, eds., *World Christian Trends AD 30–AD 2200: Interpreting the Annual Christian Megacensus* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001), 177.

49. Cru, “Cru Historical Fact Sheet,” accessed August 15, 2023, <https://www.cru.org/us/en/about/cru-press/background/cru-historical-fact-sheet.html>.

50. A. Scott Moreau, “March for Jesus,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), 597.

## Evangelical Academics

Observers of the vigor of evangelical missions noticed not only the missions activities mentioned, they also saw growth in academic institutions and publications supporting the entire enterprise. By 2000, the perspective that American evangelical missionaries were not well-trained or educated, though still widely held in some non-evangelical circles, was no longer valid.

In the broader scheme of American evangelicalism, it was people like Carl Henry, Kenneth Kantzer, and Francis Schaeffer who propelled nascent evangelical intellectualism during much of the 1960s and 1970s. In missiological circles, it was faculty at institutions such as Fuller Theological Seminary, Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, Asbury Theological Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School who were active contributors in evangelical and ecumenical journals and academic societies. To reach a popular audience, the Ralph Winter-founded US Center for World Mission in Pasadena, California, developed the course, “Perspectives on the World Christian Movement,” through which thousands of lay evangelicals across the United States were trained in evangelical missional thinking. Perhaps more than any institution, Perspectives mobilized new energy and generated significant enthusiasm among missions-interested evangelical laity.

Evangelical mission journals that started between 1975 and 2000 include *Gospel in Context* (1978, ended 1979), *Mission Frontiers* (1979), *Urban Mission* (1983, ended 1998), *International Journal for Frontier Missions (IJFM)*, 1984), *Transformation* (1984), *Journal of Applied Missiology* (1990, ended 1996), *Taiwan Mission Quarterly* (1991, ended 2000), *Missio Apostolica* (1999) and *Journal of Asian Missions* (1999).

Academic associations initiated during the same period include The US Society for Frontier Missions (1986, later changed to the International Society of Frontier Missiology) and the Association of Evangelical Professors of Missions (1968, reorganized as the Evangelical Missiological Society—EMS—in 1990). Both produced regular publications such as the *EMS Bulletin*, the *Evangelical Missiological Society Series*, and the *International Journal for Frontier Missiology*, and held annual regional and national conferences. Additionally, many evangelical missionaries and missiologists continued to be active members in the American Missiological Society, the International Associations of Missiological Studies, and published articles in *Missiology*, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research (IBMR)*, and *International Review of Mission (IRM)*.

In addition to numerous journal articles, evangelical missiologists, missionaries, and mission leaders produced significant research books for understanding mission as a whole,<sup>51</sup> and missional statistics for prayerful consideration.<sup>52</sup> It is therefore not

51. Moreau, gen. ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*.

52. Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993).



surprising that American evangelicals produced solid biblical studies on mission<sup>53</sup> and theological texts on the missionary nature of the biblical narrative.<sup>54</sup> However, it would not have been anticipated in the early 1900s that they would also write significant books on anthropology,<sup>55</sup> communication,<sup>56</sup> cross-cultural ethics,<sup>57</sup> culture,<sup>58</sup> intercultural communication,<sup>59</sup> history,<sup>60</sup> and sociology.<sup>61</sup> They also produced resources on the globalizing of theology,<sup>62</sup> newer ways of theologizing,<sup>63</sup> contextualization,<sup>64</sup> and the challenges of the world's religions,<sup>65</sup> and wrestled over church growth,<sup>66</sup> justice,<sup>67</sup> money,<sup>68</sup> and transformational development.<sup>69</sup>

In the applied frame, they produced grounded books for practitioners on a wide range of topics including church growth,<sup>70</sup> church planting movements,<sup>71</sup> cross-

53. Among many others, see Peter T. O'Brien, *Gospel and Mission in the Writings of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995).

54. For example, Walter C. Kaiser, *Mission in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000).

55. Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Reflection on Missiological Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994).

56. Charles Kraft, *Communication Theory for Christian Witness* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983).

57. Bernard Adeney, *Strange Virtues: Ethics in a Multi-Cultural World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995).

58. John R. W. Stott, and Robert T. Coote, *Gospel & Culture: the Papers of a Consultation on the Gospel and Culture* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1979).

59. David J. Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Missionary Communication* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978).

60. Andrew Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

61. Stephen A. Grunlan and Milton. Reimer, *Christian Perspectives on Sociology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982).

62. See, for example, William A. Dyrness, *Learning about Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990); Dyrness, *Invitation to Cross-Cultural Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992); and Dyrness, ed., *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994).

63. Charles Van Engen, Nancy Thomas and Robert Gallagher, eds., *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission* (Monrovia, CA: MARC Publications, 1999).

64. Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture: A Study in Dynamic Biblical Theologizing in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979).

65. Phil Parshall, *New Paths in Muslim Evangelism: Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980).

66. Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *Exploring Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983).

67. Samuel Escobar and John Driver, *Christian Mission and Social Justice* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1978).

68. Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991).

69. Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999).

70. C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and The Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981).

71. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements* (Richmond, VA: International Mission Board of

### A. Scott Moreau: *American Evangelical Missions Since 1910*

cultural church planting,<sup>72</sup> cross-cultural conflict,<sup>73</sup> cross-cultural evangelism,<sup>74</sup> cross-cultural ministry,<sup>75</sup> folk religions,<sup>76</sup> planning and strategy,<sup>77</sup> trends,<sup>78</sup> urbanization,<sup>79</sup> and women in mission.<sup>80</sup> And this cursory listing does not even begin to account for the numerous and very popular mission-focused books published, such as *Peace Child* and *For This Cross I'll Kill You* (later re-titled *Bruchko*).<sup>81</sup>

One of the more fascinating developments of this period was the gradual introduction into evangelical missiological thinking of the use of terms and ideas first seen in ecumenical circles (such as *missio Dei*, justice, and mission “from everywhere to everywhere”). Typically, twenty years or more after such terms or ideas first caught on in ecumenical circles, evangelical missiologists adopted the same terms, though often reshaped them to fit evangelical convictions.

### Trends and Contentious Issues

Across the American evangelical spectrum, it is easy to recognize six significant areas where evangelicals were challenged. Space permits only a brief synopsis of each.

First, the Church Growth Movement (pioneered by Donald McGavran and his colleagues at Fuller Theological Seminary in the prior phase) helped missionaries understand the dynamics of church growth.<sup>82</sup> While the movement peaked and then began to decline during this time, it generated huge energy over two core issues,<sup>83</sup> namely, to what extent was “growth” definable in terms of quantity rather than quality, and was “people group” thinking (which dominated evangelical agencies) as biblical as proponents believed?

Southern Baptist Convention, 1999).

72. David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980).

73. Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

74. Marvin K. Mayers, *Christianity Confronts Culture: A Strategy for Cross-Cultural Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974).

75. Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: An Incarnational Model for Personal Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1986).

76. Paul G. Hiebert, Daniel Shaw and Tite Tienou, *Understanding Folk Religions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000).

77. Edward R. Dayton and David A. Fraser, *Planning Strategies for World Evangelization* Rev. ed. (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1990).

78. Stan Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2000).

79. Roger S. Greenway, and Timothy M. Monsma, *Cities: Mission's New Frontier* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989).

80. Ruth A. Tucker, *Guardians of the Great Commission: The Story of Women in Modern Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1988).

81. Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, 1974); Bruce Olson, *Bruchko* (Altamonte Springs, FL: Creation House, 1978).

82. Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970).

83. See, for example, Shenk, *Exploring*.

Second, evangelical missiologists also wrestled with issues related to holistic (or integral) mission. Significant impetus came from Majority World evangelicals who critiqued the position of many American evangelicals.<sup>84</sup> Though evangelical mission consultations produced statements on the need for evangelism and social concerns in mission, the fact that discussions and publications over this issue continue today is clear evidence that evangelicals have not yet come to a settled conclusion. It also is a reminder of the long-standing concern among US evangelical missionaries and scholars to avoid an uncritical acceptance of the social gospel. However, the generation that personally experienced that conflict is no longer with us, and the next generation of US evangelical missionaries and missiologists do not share the same concerns as their predecessors.

Third, by the 1990s, international short-term missions trips (typically one to three weeks long) organized within evangelical churches of all sizes began to explode, all without significant input from the agencies and well before evangelical scholars began any serious study of the phenomenon. Evangelical entrepreneurs, on the other hand, founded a host of new agencies with an exclusive focus on short-term missions trips.<sup>85</sup>

Fourth, at the very end of this period questions were being raised about evangelical contextualization practices with the concern that some were going so far that they were in danger of syncretism.<sup>86</sup> There were also evangelical reflections on how to respond to the religions of the world, noting that some evangelicals were shifting in a direction of inclusivism or universalism.<sup>87</sup>

Fifth, evangelical concerns over charismatic *emphases* reached a peak among missions in the 1970s. By the 1990s, however, many (though not all) of the same organizations were far less concerned with this as a doctrinal issue. Those evangelicals who did not become charismatic or Pentecostal during this period but who still recognized the continuation of the miraculous gifts in operation today were labeled “Third Wave,”<sup>88</sup> and many simply continued within their institutions and agencies. They took analytic approaches to their concerns (e.g., the “flaw of the

84. See, for example, Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel* (Oxford: Regnum, 1999) and C. René Padilla, *Mission Between the Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985).

85. Roger P. Peterson and Timothy D. Peterson, *Is Short-term Mission Really Worth the Time and Money? Advancing God's Kingdom through Short-term Mission* (Minneapolis: STEM, 1991).

86. See Phil Parshall, “Danger! New Directions in Muslim Contextualization,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 34 (October 1998): 404-410.

87. Harold Netland, *Dissonant Voices: Religious Pluralism and the Question of Truth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991).

88. C. Peter Wagner, ed., *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1988).

excluded middle”) as justification for what they had experienced.<sup>89</sup> Some engaged in energetic spiritual warfare, though not without controversy.<sup>90</sup>

The sixth and final trend to note is the incredible advent of the Internet and the way it enabled completely new forms of instant communication that evangelical missionaries and organizations were quick to grasp. From e-mail to Web sites such as *Brigada* (1995), Mission Network News (1999), MisLinks (1997), evangelicals explored ways to utilize this tool for missional purposes. At the same time, challenges including pornography and social media loomed over the horizon.<sup>91</sup>

## **Pentecostal Missions**

Pentecostalism expanded at an almost exponential rate, and initially evangelicals maintained the antagonism of the prior period. However, they slowly thawed as they realized that the Pentecostals were not going to go away and were not interested in larger societal power games.

By the end of the century, Barrett et al. estimated that there were some 523 million Pentecostals/charismatics/neo-charismatics in the world,<sup>92</sup> and Pentecostal scholars began to publish important works.<sup>93</sup> Even so, by the turn of the century a Pentecostal assessment of their own mission reflection was that they had little focused mission theology.<sup>94</sup> They also recognized that they shared the following implicit values in their missional focus:

- (1) a high value placed on experience and participation; (2) a preference for oral communication; (3) spontaneity; (4) otherworldliness with the sense of

89. Initially proposed in print by Paul G. Hiebert, “The Flaw of the Excluded Middle,” *Missiology* 10:1 (January 1982): 35-47, and which continues to be used by missiologists today in multiple ways today.

90. Concerning proponents of “spiritual warfare” theory, there are none better known than Charles Kraft and Peter Wagner. See, for example, Charles H. Kraft, *Christianity with Power: Your Worldview and Your Experience of the Supernatural* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1989) and C. Peter Wagner, *Engaging the Enemy: How to Fight and Defeat Territorial Spirits* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1991); concerning the controversy, see Edward Rommen, ed., *Spiritual Power and Missions: Raising the Issues* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1995) and A. Scott Moreau et al., eds., *Deliver Us from Evil: An Uneasy Frontier in Christian Mission* (Monrovia, CA: World Vision, 2002).

91. Mike Pocock, Gailyn Van Rheenen and Douglas McConnell, *The Changing Face of World Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 299-320.

92. David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Survey of Churches and Religions in the Modern World*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), Table 1-6a.

93. Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

94. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “One Hundred Years of Pentecostal Missions: A Report on the European Pentecostal/Charismatic Research Association’s 1999 Meeting,” *Mission Studies* 17 (2000): 210-11.

eschatological urgency; (5) biblical authority; (6) openness to the Spirit; and (7) lay participation.<sup>95</sup>

An increasing number of American evangelicals recognized that Pentecostals and charismatics were very evangelical in their convictions on Scripture, the need for evangelism, their eschatology, and their energy for mission. Some evangelical missiologists promoted spiritual warfare and power ministries,<sup>96</sup> which had been largely overlooked by American evangelical missionaries,<sup>97</sup> but were deeply integrated into Pentecostalism. It is therefore not altogether surprising, then, that some evangelical mission organizations took a more pragmatic stance of cooperation rather than competition or avoidance.<sup>98</sup> Even so, by the end of the century some of the evangelical missions associations (e.g., the IFMA) still did not offer membership to mission agencies that did not repudiate Pentecostal doctrines, let alone those that promoted them.<sup>99</sup>

## **American Evangelical Missions, 2001–2020: From Prominent to Challenged**

### **Agency Growth and Challenges**

In the 2007 edition of the *Mission Handbook* Scott Moreau analyzed the data from 700 US Protestant mission agencies (2007). More than 82 percent were not denominationally oriented, and even among the denominational agencies many were evangelical. Thus, it is fair to say that the results identified among the seven hundred agencies will largely reflect the changes that took place among the US evangelical agencies. Moreau distinguished the findings by identifying as *trends* changes that were consistent over ten years or more and *shifts* as changes that happened for less than ten years (in this case, between 2001 and 2005).

The most significant trends (ten years or more) for the US Protestant agencies (2007) were increases in (1) US citizens working for US agencies, (2) non-US citizens working for US agencies, and (3) people working as tentmakers rather than as traditional missionaries. Additionally, there was an inflation-adjusted increase in the budgets used for overseas ministries, though this was concentrated in the largest agencies whose primary activities focused on relief and development. That latter shift

95. Kärkkäinen, “One Hundred Years of Pentecostal Missions,” 212.

96. Kraft, *Christianity with Power*; Wagner, *Engaging the Enemy*; Rommen, ed., *Spiritual Power and Missions*; Moreau et al., eds., *Deliver Us from Evil*.

97. Hiebert, “Flaw of the Excluded Middle.”

98. Gary B. McGee, “Pentecostal Movement,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000), S.V.

99. Frizen, *75 Years of the IFMA*, 276.

A. Scott Moreau: *American Evangelical Missions Since 1910*

carries its own significance, as financial resources overall swung from evangelism and church planting towards relief and development.

The most significant *shifts* (between five and nine years) were decreases in the number of (1) long term US missionaries, (2) short-term missionaries, and (3) agencies reporting primary activities in mass evangelism and national church nurture/support. These were offset by increases in the number of agencies reporting activities in the areas of (1) discipleship, (2) community development, (3) short-term missions coordination, (4) personal and small group evangelism, (5) partnership, (6) childcare/orphanages, (7) member care, and an increase in the extent of (8) financial and human resources shifted away from agencies reporting primary activities in the evangelism/discipleship category and towards agencies reporting primary activities in the relief and development category.

In sum, long term changes were more US citizens working for mission agencies as expenditures for overseas ministries increased. Shorter term changes included fewer US missionaries on the field and shift in resources and activities away from evangelism towards relief and development.

After the turn of the century, the survey revealed that challenges for US evangelical mission agencies include (1) mobilizing more US citizens to serve as full-time residential missionaries, (2) the appropriate care and support of the burgeoning non-US citizens serving under US agencies, and (3) ensuring that agencies whose primary activities are in evangelism and discipleship are adequately staffed and financed. From the author's perspective, the shift away from evangelism and church planting towards relief and development is perhaps the most significant change in evangelical mission agencies over the past century.

It is still too recent to determine the number of agencies founded since the turn of the millennium. Many are small and specialty focused (on short-term work, focused projects, or specialized emphases). They frame themselves around highly focused ministries or ways of living such as new monasticism.<sup>100</sup> It is possible that, given the American ideals of entrepreneurial individualism seen among evangelicals over the course of the century, a host of virtual agencies and missionally-framed social media groups will also spring up, having an Internet presence but no offices or even actual on location physical presence ministries.

A further change is that over the past two decades numerous US megachurches developed their own approaches to mission that are tailored to their philosophy of ministry so that the money given by their members is used in ways that gives them a greater sense of ownership. Evangelical mission agencies founded thirty or more years prior to this period are scrambling to develop viable and healthy partnerships

100. For example, Scott Bessenecker, *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006); Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *New Monasticism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2008).



with churches that do not focus on the mission agency of people they support, but of the people themselves.

One of the more significant changes today is the global financial uncertainty and its impact on Western evangelical missions. From the tech bubble's burst in 2000 to the real estate bubble's meltdown in 2008 to the post-COVID recession in 2022, evangelical agencies have seen wild swings in funding since the turn of the century which have challenged the traditional "faith missions" model of financing used by American missionaries and agencies.<sup>101</sup>

Finally, US mission agencies are also facing the retirement (and expiration) of a generation of donors who were more financially committed to missions than the generation replacing them. Additionally, an entire generation of post-World War Two missionaries are now retiring, and meeting their needs is becoming a significant issue for American evangelical agencies.<sup>102</sup>

### **Evangelical Mission Academics**

Evangelical mission programs proliferated with degrees offered through the PhD. While these were in place in the 1990s, they have expanded in significance and scope since the turn of the millennium, most notably at the PhD level. A generation of evangelical missiological scholars has arisen, and their impact will be felt for generations to come. At the same time, however, the author has heard at missiological gatherings concerns that the job market for missionary academics is shrinking rather than growing, raising challenges for both those who complete their PhDs and for the institutions offering them.

Missiological topics being subjected to rigorous academic study are short term missions,<sup>103</sup> diaspora missiology,<sup>104</sup> orality,<sup>105</sup> environmental stewardship,<sup>106</sup> transformational development,<sup>107</sup> and ethnodoxology,<sup>108</sup> to name a few.

101. See Jonathan Bonk et al., eds., *The Realities of Money and Missions: Global Challenges and Case Studies* (Littleton, CO: William Carey, 2022).

102. Gary Corwin, "A Second Look: Retiring and Shy," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (2007): 8-9.

103. Robert J. Priest, ed., *Effective Engagement in Short Term Missions*, EMS Series Volume 16 (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008).

104. Sam George and Miriam Adeney, *Refugee Diaspora* (Littleton, Colorado: William Carey Publishing, 2018); see also Sadiri Joy Tira and Juliet Lee Uytanlet, eds., *A Hybrid World* (Littleton, CO: William Carey Publishing, 2020).

105. Samuel E. Chang and Grant Lovejoy, eds., *Beyond Literate Western Contexts: Honor & Shame and Assessment of Orality Preference* (Hong Kong: International Orality Network, 2015).

106. Kathy Ide, ed., *Tending to Eden: Environmental Stewardship for God's People* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2010).

107. Bryant Myers, *Engaging Globalization: The Poor, Christian Mission and Our Hyperconnected World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017); see also Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009).

108. James R. Krabill et al., eds., *Worship and Mission for the Global Church: An Ethnodoxology*

Contextualization theory and practice continued stretching traditional boundaries.<sup>109</sup> Debates over translation of divine familial language,<sup>110</sup> ecclesiology in practice (e.g., “churchless” Christianity<sup>111</sup>), church planting movements,<sup>112</sup> and insider movements<sup>113</sup> have characterized selected segments of Western evangelical missions.

## **Pentecostal Missions**

With the core of Pentecostal-Charismatic pneumatology focused on empowerment for witness<sup>114</sup> it is natural that Pentecostal energy flows into mission. This is buttressed by academic inquiry, such as the online database of Pentecostal scholarship, Pentecostal-Charismatic Theological Inquiry International, ([www.pctii.org](http://www.pctii.org)) which has a membership of several hundred scholars.

## **Contentious Issues**

It should be noted that each of the contentious issues from the previous period continue to be issues for evangelical missions. For example, the massive growth seen prior to 2000 in short-term missions accelerated, with an estimated 1.6 million Americans Christians of all theological persuasions going on international short term missions trips through American churches.<sup>115</sup> Clearly, however, COVID shut down international trips and the world has yet to see what the recovery for them will be.

In addition, however, a significant challenge for evangelical missions in the future will be the increasing splintering and broadening of what the term “evangelical” means.<sup>116</sup> Bebbington’s four-fold depiction has stood well for thirty

*Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2013), or see <https://www.worldofworship.org>.

109. See Moreau, *Contextualization in World Missions*, as well as Moreau, *Contextualizing the Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018).

110. Roger Dixon, “Identity Theft: Retheologizing the Son of God,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43 (April 2007): 220-26; and Rick Brown, “Why Muslims Are Repelled by the Term ‘Son of God,’” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43 (October 2007): 422-29.

111. Herbert Hoefler, *Churchless Christianity* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2001); see also Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan: 2007).

112. David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God Is Redeeming a Lost World*, Midlothian VA (WIGTake Resources, 2004). For a critical review, see <https://rtim.org/book-review-church-planting-movements-by-david-garrison/>.

113. See, for example, Jan Hendrik Prenger, *Muslim Insider Christ Followers* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2017).

114. Wonsuk Ma, “‘When the Poor Are Fired Up’: The Role of Pneumatology in Pentecostal-Charismatic Mission,” *Transformation* 24, no. 1 (January 2007): 28-34.

115. A. Scott Moreau, “Short Term Missions in the Context of Missions Inc.,” in *Effective Engagement in Short Term Missions*, EMS Series Volume 16, ed. Robert J. Priest (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 1-34.

116. Moreau, interview by Send Institute, “Episode—Dr. Scott Moreau: A Missiology for North America and 1,000 Splinters,” accessed August 22, 2022, <https://www.sendinstitute.org/podcast-episode/episode-7-dr-scott-moreau-missiology-north-america-1000-splinters/>.

years, but a parallel study done today may come to very different conclusions. Brian McLaren and more recent voices have challenged evangelical orthodoxy's rootedness in modernist epistemology.<sup>117</sup> In addition, biblical inerrancy is decreasingly the theological centerpiece for many evangelicals, and numerous social, political, and cultural "volcanoes" loom over the evangelical church on multiple fronts.<sup>118</sup>

Web-based advancements continue to revolutionize communication options. Positively, live online Webcasts from everywhere to everywhere are now common. Many (including the author) have spoken, taught, and trained people from around the globe via Zoom and similar platforms. Missionaries also utilize podcasts and social media to enhance mission networking effectiveness. On the other hand, they also have discovered that social media can become massive time-wasters. Missionary updates and prayer letters are available online or via e-mail, but security concerns have increased for those who work in countries opposed to Christian witness.

### **Rise of the Nones**

Together with evangelicals splintering into multiple tribes, a huge challenge is the rise of a generation that is increasingly leaving faith behind.<sup>119</sup> Generation Z in the United States is being called the first post-modern, post-mission generation of American evangelicals<sup>120</sup>—and evangelical mobilizers are being challenged to energize a generation with a largely negative view of mission. While it is too early to develop conclusions, this is likely the most significant negative challenge for Western evangelical missions today.

### **Conclusion**

For the first fifty years after the Edinburgh 1910 meetings, evangelical missions can best be understood in light of the antithetical relationship with ecumenical missions. The strong ecumenical movement tended to not see or understand evangelicals as part of the missional efforts coming from the West. American intellectuals almost completely overlooked them, and when they bothered to portray evangelical missionaries, they presented them as schismatic legalists who refused to keep up with the times. As a result, evangelicals defined themselves as an opposition set to the ecumenists, whom they characterized as despised compromisers of God's

117. David M. Hesselgrave, "Brian McLaren's Contextualization of the Gospel," *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (January 2007), 92-100.

118. Leonard Sweet, *Rings of Fire: Walking in Faith through a Volcanic Future* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2019).

119. Pew Research Center, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," accessed September 2, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

120. Jolene Erlacher and Katy White, *Mobilizing Gen Z* (Colorado Springs, CO: William Carey Library, 2022).

A. Scott Moreau: *American Evangelical Missions Since 1910*

word and uncaring about the unsaved peoples of the world. Thus, for some six to seven decades, evangelical missionaries and their agencies perceived themselves with such words as faithfulness, fidelity, obedience, evangelistic, and uncompromising.

Even though by 1960 the demographics had reversed, most American evangelicals and ecumenicists were not aware of this for another thirty years. Evangelical missiologists (just coming into existence) continued to see ecumenical scholars as powerbrokers who compromised the Word of God. They did not trust overtures to participate meaningfully in ecumenical events (with some exceptions, such as the ASM) and felt that the ecumenical movement was so taken with Modernism (and then Postmodernism) that they would never return to their biblical roots.

By the year 2000, however, American evangelical missionaries and missiologists (especially including Pentecostals) were recognized as far more significant in missionary energy, missionary work, and missionary personnel than any other Protestant group.

Even then, however, there were significant signs on the horizon of new challenges to come in the twenty-first century for which US evangelical missionaries and missiologists have not been nearly as well prepared as they were to face the challenges that confronted them across in the twentieth century. These have been largely challenges from within rather than from without as US evangelicalism has fractured across theological, missional, generational, and political (among others) fault lines and the emerging generation is increasingly turning away from organized Christianity. While the final story of these concerning trends has yet to be written, they will certainly remain challenges for Western evangelical mission for the foreseeable future.

