



The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys (History of Evangelicalism)

By Mark A. Noll



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Winner of a *Christianity Today* 2005 Book Award! The word *evangelical* is widely used and widely misunderstood.

- Where did evangelicals come from?
- What motivated them?
- How did their influence become so widespread throughout the world during the eighteenth century?

In this paper edition of this inaugural book in a series that charts the course of English-speaking evangelicalism over the last 300 years, Mark Noll offers a multinational narrative of the origin, development and rapid diffusion of evangelical movements in their first two generations. Theology, hymnody, gender, warfare, politics and science are all taken into consideration. But the focus is on the landmark individuals, events and organizations that shaped the story of the beginnings of this vibrant Christian movement. The revivals in Britain and North America in the mid-eighteenth century proved to be foundational in the development of the movement, its ethos, beliefs and subsequent direction. In these revivals, the core commitments of evangelicals were formed that continue to this day. In this volume you will find the fascinating story of their formation, their strengths and their weaknesses, but always their dynamism.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In the inaugural volume of an anticipated five-volume history of evangelicalism, Noll, one of the deans of American church history, eloquently chronicles the development of evangelicalism in North America and Britain. Defining evangelicalism by four key ingredients (conversion, the Bible, missionary activity and the centrality of the cross in atonement for sin), Noll traces the contours of religious movements between 1730 and 1790 that he argues formed the core of the evangelical approach to Christianity. Paving the way for the revivals and religious reforms in the colonies, Noll points out, were the increasing dissatisfaction with the established church in England and the subsequent rise of reform movements such as Puritanism and Pietism. Primary among the leaders in colonial evangelicalism were Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield and John Wesley, each of whom led people in life-changing revivals emphasizing conversion and atonement. The latter part of the 18th century witnessed the formation of a variety of religious groups—including Baptists and Methodists—flying the evangelical banner. Admirably, Noll incorporates materials on the roles of women and blacks in evangelicalism, pointing out that writers such as Hannah More and Olaudah Equiano, a former slave, offer compelling views on the relationship between gender and race and evangelical religion. Many will find it strange that Noll anachronistically baptizes Edwards as an evangelical when he saw himself as a Calvinist. Otherwise, Noll's fine study is marked by his usual graceful style and his peerless insights into American religious history.

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Review

"Carefully researched and well-written analysis. . . . Pleasingly clear writing style. . . . This book is highly recommended as a reliable and insightful account of the rise of evangelical Christianity." (Mark Hepner, Ashland Theological Journal)

"There is to date no more succinct or accessible an introduction to the far-flung networks of friendships and rivalries that inspired these transforming cultural movements." (The Journal of Religion)

"This remarkable book provides an illuminating synthesis of the origins of evangelical culture. Noll travels easily across Great Britain, the European continent and North America, uncovering the intricate interplay of heroic theologians and their disciples, transformative ideas, and responsive congregants. He balances revealing examples against strikingly clear presentations of theologies within the social and political cultures of instability that included religious warfare, Atlantic exploration and settlement, and the rise of commercial capitalism. The result is a powerful narrative that envisions evangelicalism as the product of its era as well as an ascendant force that would change radically the nature of religious culture in Britain and North America." (Marilyn J. Westerkamp, University of California, Santa Cruz)

"Evangelicalism is heart-religion upheld and propelled by a variety of aids both temporal and spiritual. The historical form of the religion we are familiar with is of relatively recent vintage, but its seeds can be traced to ancient soil. Mark Noll's book describes the eighteenth-century background of evangelicalism, showing how its taproot gave us a large trans-Atlantic stem of awakening, and how that in turn produced a good number of branches and no small amount of fruit. Without ignoring the bramble mixed with the fruit, Noll offers an authoritative, surefooted guide through the halls of fractious contention and unyielding disputations that marked the origins of evangelical thought. It is clear from his account that excitement was linked to vigilant wariness and fastidious attention to ideas. The book is a valuable summary of an important force in

eighteenth-century intellectual thought and ideas." (Lamin Sanneh, historian of religion, professor at Yale University and coauthor of Abolitionists Abroad: American Blacks and the Making of Modern West Africa)

From the Inside Flap A History of Evangelicalism: People, Movements and Ideas in the English-Speaking World General Editors: David W. Bebbington and Mark A. Noll

This five-volume series seeks to integrate the social and intellectual history of a diverse yet cohesive Christian movement over the last three hundred years. The associations, books, practices, beliefs, networks of influence and prominent individuals which descended from the eighteenth-century British and North American revivals all come into view. Accessible to a wide range of readers, these volumes provide not only factual details but also fascinating interpretations of a movement that is still influential today.

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