

Christ, Whose Glory Fills the Skies*Charles Wesley (1707–1788)*

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
 Christ, the true and only Light,
 Sun of righteousness, arise,
 triumph o'er the shade of night;
 Day-spring from on high, be near;
 Day-star, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn
 unaccompanied by Thee;
 joyless is the day's return,
 till Thy mercy's beams I see,
 till they inward light impart,
 glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit then this soul of mine,
 pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
 fill me, radiance divine,
 scatter all my unbelief;
 more and more Thyself display,
 shining to the perfect day.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***The Seventies: Part Six***Kevin T. Bauder*

In the early 1970s Bill Gothard had begun to teach a series of practical Bible studies to large groups. In 1974 he began to call these the “Seminar on Basic Youth Conflicts.” They became famous for the red notebooks that attendees used. These seminars became very popular within the evangelical and fundamentalist world, largely because they dealt with real-life problems that pastors too often failed to address. Unfortunately, Gothard was not particularly skilled in his handling of Scripture, with the result that his interpretations and applications became increasingly suspect through the years. Nevertheless, his platform allowed him to speak directly to believers in many local congregations and even to control some of those churches, if only indirectly.

Another source that spoke to many believers was Christian radio. The 1970s was still within the golden era of Christian broadcasters, of whom there were many. Carl McIntire had the Twentieth Century Reformation Hour and radio station WXUR. John D. Jess hosted the Chapel of the Air, and Theodore Epp hosted Back to the Bible. In 1970 Paul Meyers turned the Haven of Rest (with its famous quartet) over to its next host, Paul Evans. Lester Roloff broadcast The Family Altar, which came to include a running commentary on his conflict with the state of Texas. One of the best-known broadcasts was the Radio Bible Class, which was hosted by Richard W. De Haan and which published a small devotional entitled *Our Daily Bread*. The best-known Pentecostal broadcaster was healing evangelist Kathryn Kuhlman. Oliver B. Green preached on the Gospel Hour, J. Vernon McGee taught on Thru the Bible radio, and Jerry Falwell held forth on the Old Time Gospel Hour.

A new generation of broadcasters also took to the airwaves during the 1970s. These included Focus on the Family with James Dobson (1977), Grace to You with John MacArthur (1977), and Insight for Living with Chuck Swindoll (1979). All three of these broadcasters became celebrities within the evangelical world.

The 1970s was also a decade of political involvement for evangelicals. Going into the decade, figures like Carl McIntire and Billy James Hargis headed up ministries that were explicitly anti-communist. Two of McIntire's earli-



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est books, *Rise of the Tyrant* and *Author of Liberty*, had been written to defend free markets and capital enterprise. His paper, the *Christian Beacon*, hammered both communism and the ecumenical movement (he believed the two were linked) every week. Eventually the FCC pulled his radio station off the air. McIntire bought an old minesweeper and anchored it in international waters off New Jersey, broadcasting under the name of Radio Free America. McIntire's anti-communism became more stringent through the years, leading many fundamentalists to back away from him.

Hargis operated a college in Tula and had a daily radio broadcast. If anything, he was even more stringently anti-communist than McIntire was. His influence came to an abrupt halt in 1974, however, when several students of both sexes at his college accused him of sexual improprieties. For a few years no evangelical really carried the torch in politics, but that would change before the end of the decade.

Also in 1974, evangelicals met in Lausanne, Switzerland for the International Congress on World Evangelism. This event was dominated by neo-evangelicals, especially Billy Graham. Its contribution to the social and political ethos of evangelicalism was to elevate socio-political involvement to a place alongside evangelism as a mission of the church. Its version of socio-political involvement, however, was poles apart from the strident anti-communism of McIntire and Hargis.

Indeed, the social ethos of the evangelical world was increasingly dominated by the nascent Evangelical Left. Ron Sider was a key spokesman for the new position, which was socially liberal in most of its agenda. The attempt to amalgamate left-wing politics with evangelical piety is well represented by Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon. While a Republican, Hatfield was a political liberal who often found himself aligned with Democrats. One example is his co-sponsorship with South Dakota Democrat George McGovern of an amendment calling upon the United States to withdraw all troops from Viet Nam.

Jimmy Carter—ostensibly an evangelical—was elected president in 1976. Carter was a populist whose positions were mildly conservative in international affairs but decidedly liberal on domestic issues. While claiming to be evangelical, he pointed to neo-orthodox theologian Reinhold Niebuhr and existentialist theologian Paul Tillich as significant influences. He also gained notoriety and scandalized many Christians when he granted an interview to *Playboy* magazine, as part of which he confessed to having committed adultery in his heart “many times.”

Carter had campaigned as a born-again evangelical, but his pronouncements quickly cost him support among conservatives. Still, his election was remarkable enough to prompt the curiosity of *Time* magazine. When *Time* discovered that over a third of all Americans claimed to have had a born-again experience, it declared 1976 to be the “Year of the Evangelical.”

Carter's presidency is remembered for stagflation, ennui, an artificially-induced fuel shortage, a nationwide 55 mile-per-hour speed limit, and Billy. The public rapidly lost confidence in the president, and any remaining faith in his competence was shattered when Iranian militants captured the US embassy and held its personnel hostage. This decline in Carter's fortunes occurred at the very moment when a vigorous conservative leader was emerging in American evangelicalism.

That leader, Jerry Falwell, organized the Moral Majority in 1979. Falwell never claimed that the Moral Majority was a religious organization, but he did say that it was an organization of “religious people,” including Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, and others. Its original mailing list was provided by John R. Rice—it was the mailing list for *The Sword of the Lord*. As events developed, Falwell and the Moral Majority became part of a groundswell of conservative politics that swept Ronald Reagan into office in 1980. A self-identified fundamentalist, Falwell had now taken McIntire's place as the most visible fundamentalist in America.

Not all fundamentalists rejoiced. To many, it seemed that Falwell had made too many easy alliances with unbelievers and “disobedient brethren.” In 1976, Bob Jones University had organized the World Congress of Fundamentalists, and the Joneses certainly held a different view of ecclesiastical separation than the one held by Falwell. Indeed, they had fallen out with John R. Rice over just this issue in 1971. Mutterings soon arose in the neighborhood of Greenville that Falwell was a “pseudo-fundamentalist.” Tensions between these two camps continued for years. The breach never was entirely healed.

John R. Rice died in 1980. Robert T. Ketcham had preceded him in 1978. Others of their generation (Bob Jones, Sr. and Paul R. Jackson, for example) had died during the previous decade. The earlier fundamentalists were now almost all gone. It remained to be seen what the next generation would do with this movement.

On the other hand, all of the original neo-evangelicals (except for Edward John Carnell) were still very much alive. The 1970s seemed to present them with their moment in history. What actually happened, however, was that the 1970s began the demise of neo-evangelicalism as a movement. I'll turn to that story next week.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
