

all, the church is in a “we,” not a “me” business. Even One God is defined in Christianity as more than one person. For Noceti, this synodal “we” could indeed be God’s way of telling us it is a synodal church and synodal life.

CURTIS MCKENZIE, SJ
Fordham University, USA
cmckenzie20@fordham.edu

The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind: With a New Preface and Afterword. By Mark A. Noll. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2022. xvi + 291 pages. \$28.99 (paper).

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Publication of *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* in 1994 sent shock waves throughout American evangelicalism. The book was read, reviewed, and discussed extensively; *Christianity Today* named it their “Book of the Year,” while various scholars regarded it as one of the most significant treatments of American religious history published during the past century. This new volume presents the original text, unchanged from its initial publication, with a new preface and afterthought.

Noll’s principal concern is the life of the evangelical mind. As he explains, “By an evangelical ‘life of the mind’ I mean more the effort to think like a Christian—to think within a specifically Christian framework—across the whole spectrum of modern learning, including economics and political science, literary criticism and imaginative writing, historical inquiry and philosophical studies, linguistics and the history of science, social theory and the arts.” It is not enough for evangelicals to be able to function in the modern academy. “The much more important matter is what it means to think like a Christian about the nature and workings of the physical world, the character of human social structures like government and the economy, the meaning of the past, the nature of artistic creation, and the circumstances attending our perception of the world outside ourselves. Failure to exercise the mind for Christ in these areas has become acute in the twentieth century. This failure is the scandal of the evangelical mind” (7).

Throughout the nine chapters of this volume, aspects of the “scandal” are analyzed in considerable detail. Noll’s arguments and observations are insightful, historically astute, and theologically informed. Given the nature of the book and its arguments, however, a brief review cannot possibly do justice to it or indeed to the complex challenges confronting American evangelical life.

A volume of this nature was never going to please everyone, especially given the rich diversity found in American evangelicalism. Scholarly inclined evangelicals praised it as a powerful antidote to biblical literalism, cultural assimilation, and anti-intellectualism. Fundamentalists, dispensationalists, Pentecostals, and those from the holiness movement were less enthusiastic, taking issue with Noll's highlighting of the anti-intellectual tendencies embedded within their movements. Liberal (or mainline) Protestants simply regarded it as confirmation of their own prejudices. Some critics pointed out the book's inadequate consideration of the role of evangelical women and of the Black church. A final concern involved Noll's ambitious agenda; given the rapid expansion and dissimulation of information and of specialization during the past two centuries, can individual evangelicals be expected to obtain knowledge across the "whole spectrum of modern learning"? (The last man to know everything was allegedly the English polymath, Thomas Young, 1773–1829.)

In the new preface, Noll attempts to explain why the expression "the evangelical mind" sounds increasingly "like an oxymoron" (ix). Despite the many reasons for writing off evangelical intellectual life as a lost cause, he is convinced that evangelical variations of classical Christianity still contain rich resources for creative, outward-looking, and open-minded intellectual life, which are currently nurturing the intellectual labors of many throughout the world.

The afterword presents an analytical account of the contemporary evangelical mind. Two primary questions emerge from this consideration. Do the words "evangelical" and "evangelicalism" still refer to anything specifically Christian? And, does the American intellectual environment still have capacity for (or interest in) anything distinctly Christian? It would be difficult to deny the dismal state of both American evangelicalism and the academy. When, however, the current state of the scholarship being produced by an increasing number of evangelical (or evangelically connected) individuals is considered, along with the theological vision that underpins that scholarship, Noll's tone is more optimistic. Although serious challenges remain to be overcome, the observance of a number of green shoots pushing up through the permafrost inspires a greater sense of confidence for the future.

It is not easy to predict what lasting influence this new edition might have on the life of the evangelical mind. Its republication after thirty years, however, reflects a degree of hopefulness by the author (and his publisher) that might just prove prescient.

GRAYSON CARTER

Fuller Theological Seminary, USA

gcarter@fuller.edu