

EXCERPT

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## **The State of the Evangelical Mind** *Reflections on the Past, Prospects for the Future*

Available December 11, 2018 | \$28, 220 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-5216-1

*“ . . . these financial, political, and theological realities, among others, called into question the confidence of evangelicals and, in the case of this particular work, of evangelicals called to cultivate the mind. . . . How then would these leaders navigate such a future for their institutions? After years of prosperity, was the state of the evangelical mind now once again a story of peril?”*

## A Tale of Peril?

Shortly after Noll's National Humanities Medal was minted, the state of the evangelical mind, albeit slowly but surely, began to change. In 2007, cracks were beginning to form in the global economy, and by 2008 the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression was underway. For example, institutions such as many evangelical colleges, universities, and seminaries were fortunately, at that time, not heavily endowed. As a result, their tuition-driven status served them well in the short run. Individuals who lost jobs sought to enhance their expertise or change professions and returned to school.

As has been historically proven, however, being heavily endowed, even if painful in the late-2000s, yields greater financial security than being heavily dependent upon tuition revenue. As the stock market rose, so did college endowments. However, the lingering effects of the recession eventually came calling for heavily tuition-dependent institutions. Part of the reason for this mounting challenge came at the nexus of concerns over personal debt and the seemingly ever-increasing cost of tuition at private institutions. In the early 2010s, facing the possibility of enrollment downturns, many Christian colleges and universities sought to maximize their discount rates or the level of financial aid they could offer in relation to their costs for tuition—and in some cases, room and board as well. An arms race in financial aid thus ensued as many institutions, afraid of posting declining enrollments, allowed their discount rates to rise to unsustainable levels. At the same time, some schools had no choice but to face the reality of “right-sizing,” or laying off staff, administrators, and faculty members.

If these financial challenges were not enough to at least initiate a more cautious spirit among institutions called to cultivate the evangelical mind, a confusing political climate unleashed even more anxiety. While never simple, the landscape shared by evangelicals and American political life in the months leading up to the 2016 presidential election proved even more complicated than in recent years. Racing toward the finish line were two candidates with the lowest favorability ratings in history—Hillary Rodham Clinton and Donald J. Trump. According to a Gallup poll released on election day, “Trump’s 61% unfavorable score is worst in presidential polling history,” while “Clinton’s 52% unfavorable score is second-worst.” Early the next day, predictions that the candidate with the second-worst unfavorable score would win proved to be wrong as Trump emerged as the forty-fifth president of the United States.

White evangelicals historically tend to vote in larger numbers for Republican presidential candidates than Democrats. Despite garnering the worst unfavorable score in history, that voting trend, despite some predictions, only continued in relation to Trump. The Pew Research Center noted, “White, born-again/evangelical Christian[s] voted for Trump to the tune of 81% in 2016. In comparison, 78% of white evangelicals voted for Mitt Romney in 2012, 74% voted for John McCain in 2008, and 78% voted for George W. Bush in 2004.” In *The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America*, Pulitzer Prize winning author Frances FitzGerald notes white evangelical leaders decided that “Trump wasn’t so bad: At least he wasn’t Hilary Clinton.”

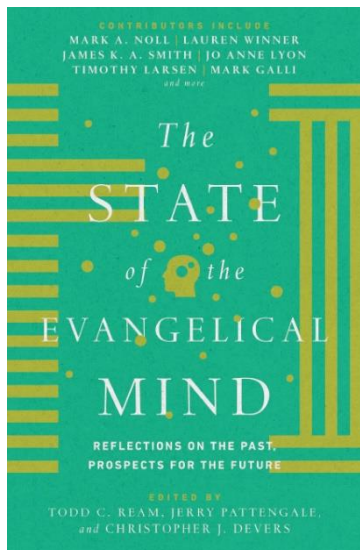


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If challenges posted by the wider economic and political climates were not enough, evangelicals also found themselves dealing with an uncharted set of theological questions that revolved in particular around questions of same-sex attraction. On June 26, 2015, the United States Supreme Court issued its opinion in *Obergefell et al. v. Hodges, Director, Ohio Department of Health, et al.* Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy offered men and women seeking to marry members of the same sex hope “not to be condemned to live in loneliness, excluded from one of civilization’s oldest institutions. They ask for equal dignity in the eyes of the law. The Constitution grants them that right.”

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed into law by President Barack Obama on March 23, 2010, raised considerable questions for religious institutions in relation to the latitude they would possess concerning how they provided health care for their employees. Such questions already made their way to the Supreme Court via cases such as *Burwell, Secretary of Health and Human Services, et al. v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, a case decided no more than one year before *Obergefell*. Beyond the decision itself, however, *Obergefell* exposed fault lines among evangelicals that existed prior to the decision but had generally gone unrecognized.

In *Still Evangelical? Insiders Reconsider Political, Social, and Theological Meaning*, Mark Labberton, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, writes, “As the East and West Coasts of the United States have led the way in the growing affirmation of LGBT people and lifestyles, evangelicals in these regions have quietly done likewise.” In particular, Labberton offers, “Perhaps even more noteworthy is the generational divide over the acceptance of LGBT relationships, with affirmation from 47 percent of white evangelicals under the age of 30, despite their otherwise more traditional views.”

Cumulatively, these financial, political, and theological realities, among others, called into question the confidence of evangelicals and, in the case of this particular work, of evangelicals called to cultivate the mind. Churches, parachurch organizations, colleges and universities, and seminaries were now often more consumed with navigating these realities than they were with advancing an agenda of their own creation. For example, research and the fruits it yielded came to seem like a luxury to college and university administrators trying to balance budgets. Regardless of the quality of their work, faculty committed to those tasks, especially if those tasks came with lighter teaching loads and thus lower tuition generation, were vulnerable to layoffs. How then would these leaders navigate such a future for their institutions? After years of prosperity, was the state of the evangelical mind now once again a story of peril?

—Taken from the introduction, “The State of the Evangelical Mind: Tales of Prosperity and Peril”

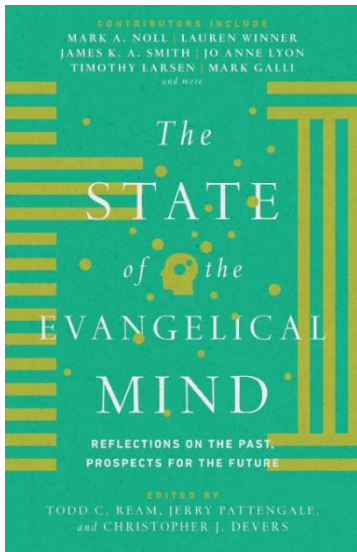


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Richard Mouw, from the foreword

## Leaders Take Pulse of Modern Evangelicalism

Two decades on from Mark Noll's *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, could we now be on the threshold of another crisis of intellectual maturity in Christianity? Or are the opportunities for faithful intellectual engagement and witness even greater now than before? These essays invite readers to a virtual summit meeting on the current state of the evangelical mind. The insights of national leaders in their fields will aid readers to reflect on the past contributions of evangelical institutions for the life of the mind as well as prospects for the future.

**Mark A. Noll** is Francis A. McAnaney Professor Emeritus of History, University of Notre Dame. One of the nation's foremost scholars of religious and cultural history, Noll is a prominent participant in dialogues between evangelical and Catholic scholars. Selected in 2005 by *Time* magazine as one of the twenty-five most influential evangelicals in America, Noll is the author of numerous books, including *God and Race in American Politics*, which traces the explosive political effects when religion and race intermingle. A former professor of religion and history at Wheaton College, where he cofounded the Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals, Noll has served as a visiting teacher at Harvard Divinity School, University of Chicago Divinity School, Westminster Theological Seminary, and Regent College, Vancouver. Noll's research concerns mostly the history of Christianity in the United States and Canada. He also teaches courses in the Civil War era, general Canadian history, and the recent world history of Christianity. He is currently working on a book that tries to combine two large narratives about the Bible in American history: first, the rise and decline of a biblical civilization defined mostly by activist British-origin Protestants; and second, the ever-widening diversity of Bibles, biblical uses, and other sacred Scriptures in a liberal America open to Christian believers of all kinds as well as the adherents of many other authoritative religious texts.

**James K. A. Smith** is professor of philosophy and the Gary and Henrietta Byker Chair in Applied Reformed Theology and Worldview at Calvin College. Trained as a philosopher with a focus on contemporary French thought, Smith expanded on that scholarly platform to become an engaged public intellectual and cultural critic. An award-winning author and widely traveled speaker, he has emerged as a thought leader with a unique gift of translation, building bridges between the academy, society, and the church. He is the author of a number of influential books, the most recent being *Awaiting the King: Reforming Public Theology* (Baker Academic, 2017)—the third and final volume in his Cultural Liturgies series. Smith also regularly writes for magazines and newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, *Slate*, *First Things*, *Christianity Today*, *Books & Culture*, and *The Hedgehog Review*. He serves as editor in chief of *Comment* magazine.

**Lauren F. Winner** is associate professor of Christian spirituality at Duke University Divinity School. Winner writes and lectures widely on Christian practice, the history of Christianity in America, and Jewish-Christian relations. Her books include *Girl Meets God*; *Mudhouse Sabbath*, a study of household religious practice in eighteenth-century Virginia, A

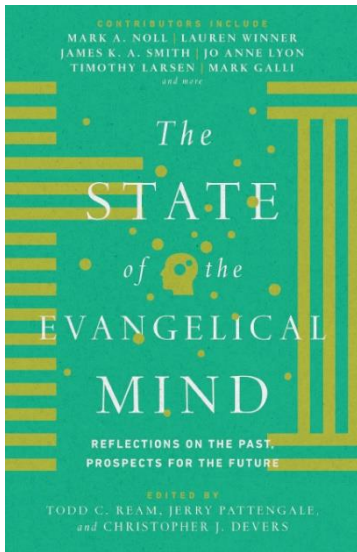


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Richard Mouw, from the foreword

Cheerful and Comfortable Faith; Still: Notes on a Mid-Faith Crisis; and most recently, a book on overlooked biblical tropes for God, *Wearing God*. She is completing a book called *Characteristic Damage*, which examines the effects of sin and damage on Christian practice. Winner's research has been supported by numerous institutions, including Monticello, the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, the Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University, and the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University. She has appeared on PBS's *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly* and has served as a commentator on NPR's "All Things Considered." She has written for *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Washington Post Book World*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Books & Culture*, and *Christianity Today*, and her essays have been included in several volumes of *The Best Christian Writing*. Winner, an Episcopal priest, is vicar of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Louisburg, North Carolina.

**Mark Galli** is editor in chief of *Christianity Today*. He has previously served as associate editor of *Leadership Journal* and editor of *Christian History*. Before entering the world of journalism, he was a Presbyterian pastor for ten years, serving an international congregation in Mexico City and a congregation in Sacramento, California. He has written many books, which fall into two categories. He has written in the areas of Christian spirituality, such as *Jesus Mean and Wild: The Unexpected Love of an Untamable God* (Baker, 2008), *Beyond Bells and Smells: The Wonder and Power of Christian Liturgy* (Paraclete, 2009), and *Beautiful Orthodoxy: The Truth, Goodness, and Beauty of the Life in Christ* (Christianity Today, 2016). The other area of writing interest has been history, especially popular biographies, such as *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (B&H, 2010), *Francis of Assisi and His World* (InterVarsity Press, 2002), and *Karl Barth: A Biography for Evangelicals* (Eerdmans, 2017). He resides in Glen Ellyn, Illinois, with his wife, and he has three married children and five grandchildren. His extracurricular interests include golf and smallmouth bass and trout fly fishing, and he's hoping to take up clay shooting in his retirement years.

**Richard J. Mouw** is president emeritus and professor of faith and public life at Fuller Theological Seminary. A philosopher, scholar, and author, he served as Fuller's provost and senior vice president for four years prior to his presidency, and as professor of Christian philosophy and ethics beginning in 1985. Before coming to Fuller he served for seventeen years as professor of philosophy at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He has also served as a visiting professor at the Free University in Amsterdam. Mouw has a broad record of publication. He has been an editor of the *Reformed Journal* and has served on many editorial boards. He is the author of more than twenty books, including *The God Who Commands*, *The Smell of Sawdust*, *He Shines in All That's Fair*, *Culture and Common Grace*, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*, *The Challenges of Cultural Discipleship*, *Talking with Mormons: An Invitation to Evangelicals*, and most recently, *Adventures in Evangelical Civility: A Lifelong Quest for Common Ground*.

**Timothy Larsen** is Carolyn and Fred McManis Professor of Christian Thought at Wheaton College. In addition to his efforts at Wheaton College, Larsen is an honorary research fellow at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David and has been a visiting fellow in history at Trinity College, Cambridge, and All Souls College, Oxford. Larsen is a fellow of both the Royal Historical Society and the Royal Anthropological Institute. He is the author of six books, including *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford University Press, 2006), *A People of One Book: The Bible and the Victorians* (Oxford University Press, 2011), and *The Slain God: Anthropologists and the Christian Faith* (Oxford University Press, 2014). He has edited nine books, including *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*

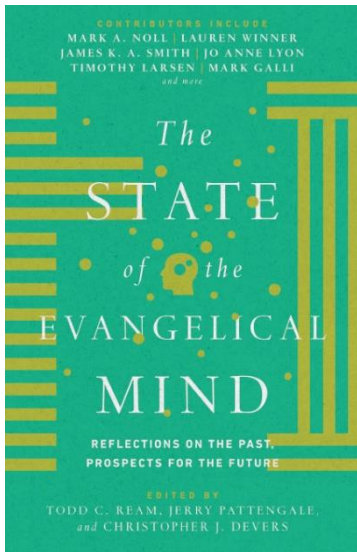


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(Cambridge University Press, 2007), *Bonhoeffer, Christ and Culture* (InterVarsity Press, 2013), and *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). Larsen is the general editor of Oxford University Press's *Spiritual Lives* biography series. He was a contributing editor of *Books & Culture*, and he has also written for the *Times Literary Supplement*, *Christianity Today*, *Christian Century*, *Comment*, *World*, *Touchstone*, *Tablet*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *CNN.com*, and the *Wall Street Journal*.

**Jo Anne Lyon** served the Wesleyan Church as general superintendent from 2012 to 2016. Now acting ambassador, Lyon serves on the board of directors of many organizations as representative of the Wesleyan Church, including the National Association of Evangelicals Executive Committee, Christian Community Development Association, National Religious Partnership for the Environment, Asbury Theological Seminary Board, Council on Faith of the World Economic Forum, and the President of the United States Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. As the founder and CEO of World Hope International, Alexandria, Virginia, Lyon directed the faith-based relief and development organization's efforts in over thirty countries. Those efforts captured the attention of officials at the White House and other federal agencies who were seeking to understand how faith-based organizations were addressing some of the planet's most pressing challenges. Lyon holds a master's degree in counseling, continued graduate studies in historical theology, and has been granted five honorary doctorates. She has written several articles and publications, including the book *The Ultimate Blessing*, and has served over thirty years in pastoral ministry. She has been adjunct professor of church and society at both Indiana Wesleyan University and Asbury Theological Seminary.

**Todd C. Ream** is professor of higher education at Taylor University and a distinguished fellow with the Lumen Research Institute. Previously, Ream served on college and university campuses in residence life, student support services, honors programs, and as a chief student development officer. He is the coauthor and coeditor of many books, including most recently *Restoring the Soul of the University*, and contributes to a wide variety of publications, including *About Campus*, *Christianity Today*, *First Things*, *Gastronomica*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Modern Theology*, *New Blackfriars*, *Notre Dame Magazine*, *The Review of Higher Education*, and *Teachers College Record*.

**David Mahan** is executive director of the Rivendell Institute at Yale, where he has served as a campus minister since 1987, and a lecturer in religion and literature at the Institute of Sacred Music, Yale Divinity School. Mahan holds his master's degree in religion and literature from Yale Divinity School and his PhD in theology from the University of Cambridge. He has taught extensively on reading literature theologically and is the author of several publications on this subject, including his book *An Unexpected Light: Theology and Witness in the Poetry and Thought of Charles Williams, Micheal O'Siadhail, and Geoffrey Hill*. He served as the director of Yale Students for Christ (Cru) from 1987 to 1995 and remains a campus minister at Yale as a member of Yale Religious Ministries. He is one of the cofounders of the Consortium of Christian Study Centers, a growing network of parachurch institutions affiliated with universities around the United States.

**Jerry Pattengale** is university professor at Indiana Wesleyan University and a distinguished fellow with the Lumen Research Institute. Pattengale has authored over twenty books and has contributed to venues such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *Christianity Today*, *Washington Post*, *Books & Culture*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Patheos*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and the History Channel. He also serves as executive director of education at the Museum of the Bible (Washington, DC) and is

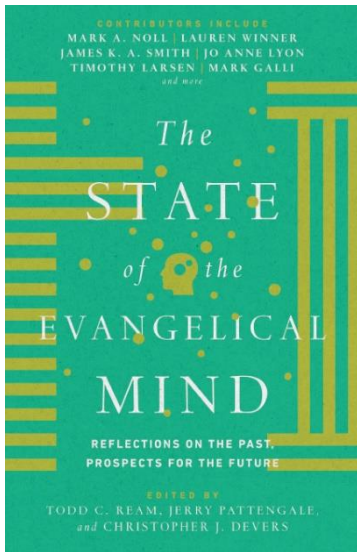


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one of its two founding scholars. Pattengale has undertaken various international projects and received international awards. He is editor in chief of the multifaceted, high-tech Bible curriculum with the Museum (approximately twenty forthcoming print volumes, a gamified online version, and two digital app versions) being used by 100,000 Israeli public school students. He has appointments with the Sagamore Institute, Tyndale House, Cambridge, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and serves on the boards of the Religion News Service and the Jonathan Edwards Center (Yale University). He is associate publisher of *Christian Scholar's Review* and also executive director of NationalConversations.com, which he cofounded with David Wright. *The World's Greatest Book* (coauthored with Lawrence Schiffman) and *The Global Impact Bible* (gen. ed.) were released with Worthy Publishing.

**Christopher J. Devers** is associate professor in the School of Education and the director of research for the Center for Learning and Innovation, Indiana Wesleyan University. Devers received a PhD in curriculum and instruction from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, as well as an MS in educational administration and a BS in engineering and technology education from Purdue University. He is also the director of the Lumen Research Institute at Excelsia College. His research focuses on online education, video learning, student success, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

**Don Smedley** is senior fellow at the Rivendell Institute, Yale University, where he has served since 1995, and a teaching fellow in philosophy and guest lecturer in religious studies. He is also a member of Yale Religious Ministry and a fellow of Berkeley College. Smedley holds a BA in molecular biology from the University of California, San Diego, and a ThM from Dallas Seminary. He also has seven years of graduate philosophy work at Tufts University and Oriel College, University of Oxford, and a Rotary Graduate Fellowship at the University of Aberdeen. He served on staff with Cru as an international traveling speaker from 1980 to 1991, and prior to that he was minister to single adults at Northwest Bible Church in Dallas. He has worked in Muslim-Christian dialogue and diplomacy for the past ten years, having organized and participated in a panel with the first Muslims to present at the Evangelical Theological Society. Don has presented papers in political philosophy and politics and religion at the Evangelical Philosophical Society and the Society of Christian Philosophers. He serves on the board of directors for the New England District of the Evangelical Free Church of America.



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