

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Boise, Idaho, showing a mix of urban buildings and green spaces. In the background, there are rolling hills and a prominent cliff face under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on the center of the image.

# The Rise and Fall of Evangelicalism

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# The 1950s

- Golden Age of Liberal Protestantism
- Fundamentalists seen as Hicks





# Transition: Three Key Figures

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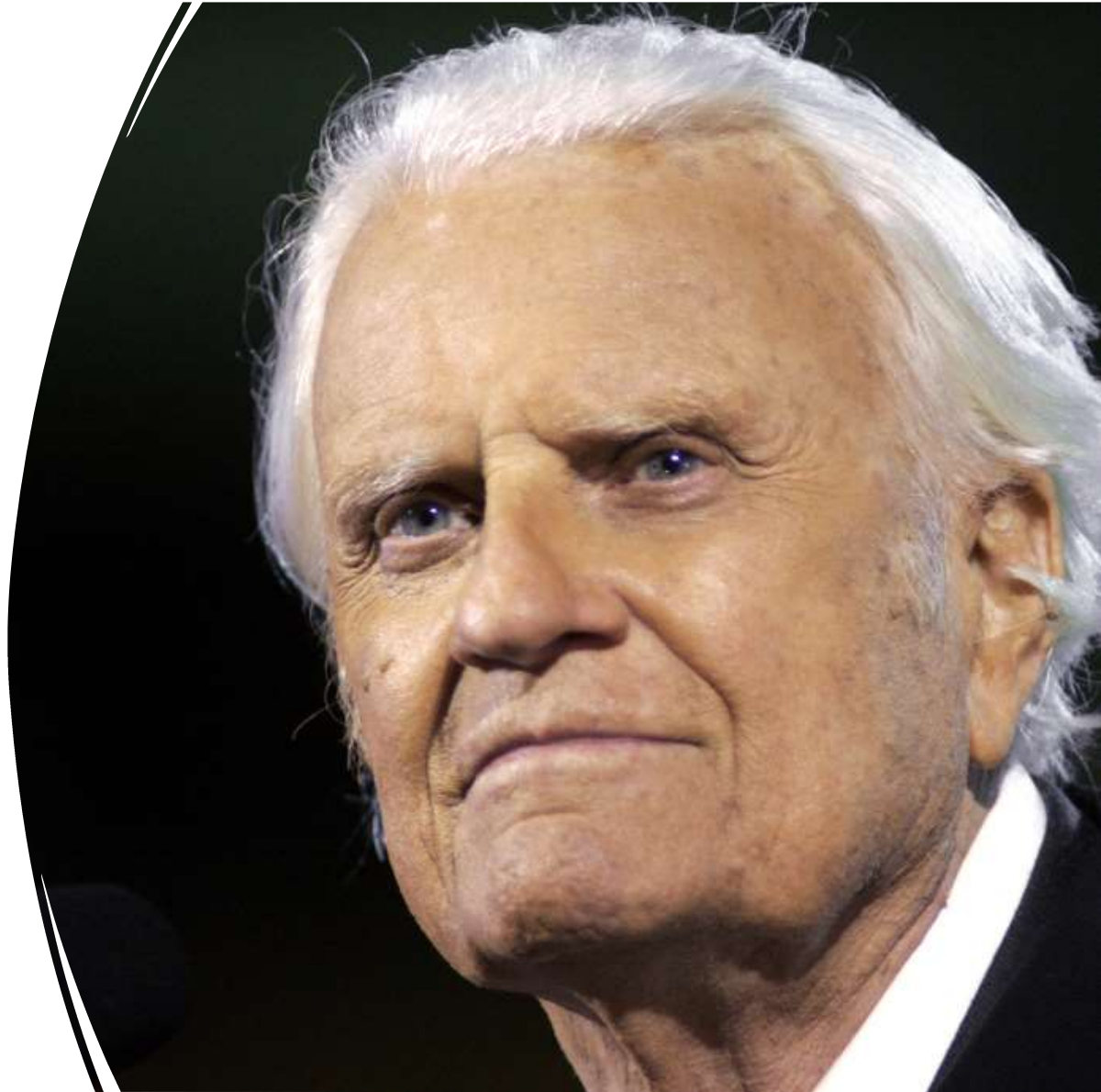
- Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003)
  - *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (1947)
  - Fuller Theological Seminary (f. 1947)
  - Evangelical Theological Society (f. 1949)
  - *Christianity Today* (f. 1956)



# Transition: Three Key Figures

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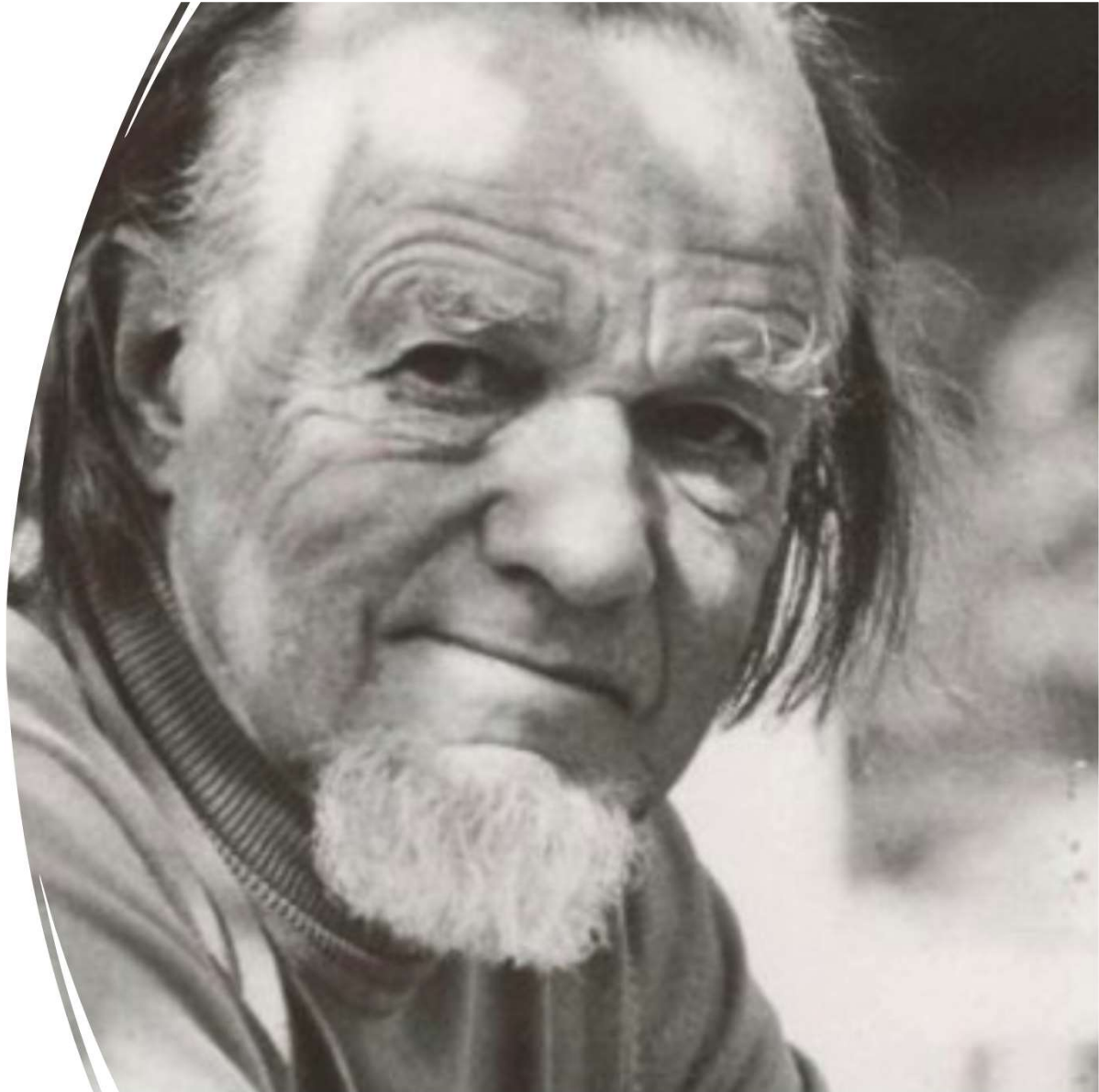
- *Christianity Today* (f. 1956)
- Popularity Raises Profile of Fundamentalists
- New York Crusade (1957)
  - Desegregated
  - Controversy: "Second Degree Separation"
  - Divides Fundamentalists from Evangelicals

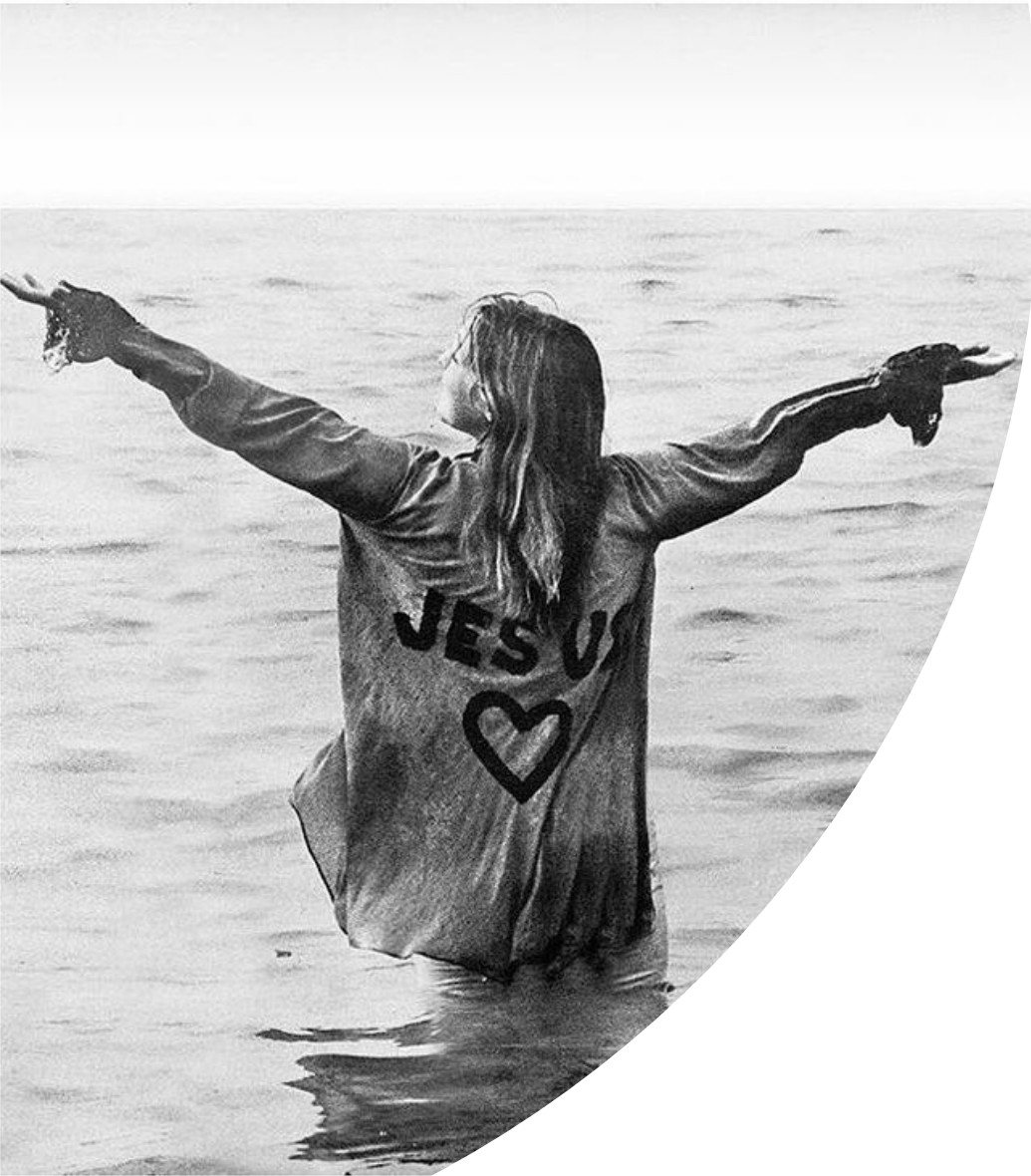


# Transition: Three Key Figures

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- Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984)
  - *L'Abri* (f. 1948)
    - Middle Way Apologetics
    - Inspires a Whole Generation of Christian Scholars
  - *A Christian Manifesto* (1981)
  - *The Great Evangelical Disaster* (1984)





# The Jesus Movement

- Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel
- Larry Norman and "Jesus Music"
- Strong Emphasis on Evangelism
- Strong Emphasis on Emotion/Experience
- Dispensational Theology Assumed as Only Legitimate Approach to Scripture



# Results

## Evangelicalism Replaces Fundamentalism

- Intellectual Engagement
- Culturally Active
- Politically Involved

## Fundamentalism

- Remains Viable for a Time
- Merges into Evangelicalism

# Jimmy Carter and “the Year of the Evangelical”







## The Moral Majority and the Religious Right

- Jerry Falwell (f. 1979)
- Return to Activism via Politics
  - Abortion
  - LGBT Issues
  - Alliance with Republican Party
- Ronald Reagan
  - Social Conservatives
  - Economic Conservatives
  - Irony: Defeats Evangelical Jimmy Carter
- Evangelicalism Gains Unprecedented Cultural Influence



# The Church Growth Movement

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- Donald McGavran
  - Sociological Analysis of Missions
    - *The Bridges of God* (1955)
    - Work within Culture
  - School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary

# The Church Growth Movement

## Applied to United States

- Aim at Demographic
  - Typically Upper Middle Class Whites
- Make Church “Comfortable,” “Familiar”
- Select Music for Target Demographic
- Address Felt Needs

## Result?

- Megachurches
- Christian Subculture
- “Mission Station” Christianity



# The 2000s: Cultural Shift

- Turn from Conservatism
  - Multiculturalism
  - Mainstreaming LGBTQ+
  - Emergence of Critical Theory into Broader Culture
- Churches Left Scrambling
  - Trying to Stay “Relevant”
  - Trying to be Missional to Urban Elites
  - Trying to Maintain Cultural Approval



# Paradox and Problems

## Nothing is Less Relevant than a Church Trying to be Relevant

- Agenda Set by Culture, not Scripture

## Congregations Poorly Catechized

- Megachurches and Imitators Fail at Discipleship
  - E.g. Never explain “why” of Biblical Sexuality
  - So Catechized by Culture
- Results
  - 70%-80% High School Graduates Leave Church
  - 35% Return
  - Marriage and Family?



# Recent Politics and the Church

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- Donald Trump
  - Issue of Character
  - Responses among Evangelicals
    - Ardent Anti-Trump
    - Ardent Pro-Trump
    - Pragmatic Pro-Trump
- BLM and CRT
- Covid and Lockdowns
  - Extent of Legitimate Governmental Powers



# Paradox and Problems

## Alliance with Republicans

- Worked when in Conservative Phase
- Cultural Power has Swung Left
  - Elites vs. Populists

## Division

- “Relevant” Evangelicals Shift Left toward Critical Theory
  - Missional to Elites
- “Republican” Evangelicals Stay Right
  - Vox Populi
- Both Politicized and thus Polarized
- Result? Evangelicalism is in Danger of Imploding