

MINE EYES HAVE

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*A Journey into the*

SEEN THE GLORY

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*Evangelical Subculture  
in America*

EXPANDED EDITION

Randall Balmer

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*For Christian  
who in time, I trust, will find his place  
in the patchwork quilt of American evangelicalism*

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## NOTES

1. Everyone is casual here. I sat in on a seventh-grade algebra class at Maranatha Christian Academy (Calvary chapel's grammar school), where the students addressed their teacher, a man in his late thirties, as "Randy."
2. Singing is an important element in the worship at Calvary Chapel; every service or meeting I attended during my visit opened with a long period of congregational singing.
3. Estimates vary. One pastor quoted the figure at twenty thousand. A 1979 article in the *Los Angeles Times* put the number at twenty-five thousand; see Russell Chandler, "Cleric Finds Success Serving Hippie Needs," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 July 1979, pt. 2, pp. 1, 8.
4. Other examples: Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Anaheim, headed by John Wimber, and the First Evangelical Free Church in Fullerton, led by Chuck Swindoll.
5. Chuck Smith, *The History of Calvary Chapel* (Costa Mesa, Cal.: Word for Today, 1981), p. 3.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 6. For a description of Calvary Chapel in its early years, see Ronald M. Enroth, Edward E. Ericson, Jr., and C. Breckinridge Peter, *The Jesus People: Old-Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1972), ch. 4.
7. Oden Fong, interview, 11 May 1987.
8. L. E. Romaine, interview, 11 May 1987.
9. Fong interview.
10. Smith, *History of Calvary Chapel*, pp. 9-10.
11. Quoted in Richard Dalrymple, "Beach Baptism Helps Save the Young," *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*, 24 October 1970, p. A-7.
12. Romaine interview.
13. See Acts 2.
14. These, I recognize, are generalizations. Pentecostals will protest that doctrine and theology are indeed quite important to them, while fundamentalists will insist that they value religious affections.
15. This is a reference to Isa. 55:11.

## 2

## Dallas Orthodoxy

FLUSHED WITH OIL MONEY of the seventies and prompted in part by the arrival of Northerners to the Sun Belt, Dallas, Texas, has recast its skyline with a building boom that only now, in the unaccustomed austerity of the late 1980s, shows any sign of abating. The results are impressive: a passel of post-modernist structures that represents a wholesale assault on the canons of modernist and international-style architecture dominating much of the twentieth century.

The pleasant, well-manicured campus of Dallas Theological Seminary, just a couple of miles from the center city, will never win acclaim for architectural distinction, but the people of Dallas Seminary have sustained their own quarrel with a different sort of modernity for more than half a century. Since its founding in 1924 to combat the theological modernism then popular with American Protestants, Dallas Theological Seminary has, in its view, held down the fortress of evangelical and fundamentalist orthodoxy against the sundry assaults of twentieth-century theological liberalism. My visit to Dallas Seminary, then, was a kind of inspection tour of these doctrinal ramparts, or (to shift the metaphor) an examination of the

theological infrastructure of American evangelicalism. The intellectual case for evangelical theology, people here believe, rests to a remarkable degree on the twin pillars of biblical inerrancy (the conviction that the inspiration of the Holy Spirit rendered the Scriptures errorless in the original autographs) and a nineteenth-century doctrine that goes by the rather ponderous name of dispensational premillennialism.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1830s a British student of the Bible, John Nelson Darby, came up with a novel interpretation of the Bible. All of human history from creation through the present and into the coming millennium, Darby decided, could be divided into seven periods or dispensations. These different ages also largely coincide with successive covenants between God and humanity. In the Noahic covenant, for instance, God had promised Noah that the world would never again be destroyed by a flood. The covenant of works between God and ancient Israel obligated the Hebrews to strict moral and dietary standards. Since the day of Pentecost in the New Testament book of Acts, Darby argued, humanity has lived in the covenant of grace, under the terms of which Christ offers salvation and deliverance from the judgment of God to anyone who acknowledges Jesus as savior.

Darby's ideas, grounded in a literalistic interpretation of Scripture, also led him to posit that we are living now in the sixth and final dispensation before the return of Christ to take the true believers out of this world to their reward in heaven. The prophecies of the Bible—principally the books of Daniel in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New Testament—have been fulfilled and we can look for this "second coming" at any moment. We are poised at the end of human history, Darby believed, waiting for the apocalypse prophesied in the Bible. Although the notion of imminence was not new in Christian theology, this doctrine, known as premillennialism, held that Christ would return to claim (or rapture) His Church (the true believers) before the millennium, one thousand years of theocratic rule on earth predicted in Revelation 20.

Darby was not the first to predict the imminent end of human history. Ever since Jesus admonished His followers that "this gen-

eration will not pass away" before the coming of the Son of Man, Christians have speculated about the future and taken a strong interest in eschatology, the doctrine of the end times. Enigmatic passages about the seventy weeks in the book of Daniel and the elaborate apocalyptic imagery in Revelation have fueled the imagination of everyone from St. Augustine in his classic *The City of God*, written in the fourth century, to Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman, in his movie *The Seventh Seal*, released in 1957. The early Christians, taking Christ's words at face value, prepared for their immediate translation into heaven, while Martin Luther dismissed the book of Revelation as irrelevant to Christian life and theology and urged that it be excluded from the canon of Scripture.

Darby's interpretive scheme of seven ages or dispensations caught on in Great Britain, especially with the Plymouth Brethren (among whom Darby numbered himself), but his ideas found especially fertile soil among evangelicals in nineteenth-century America. When Darby came to the United States in 1862, he found that his premillennial views fit the evangelical temper perfectly. Although the New England Puritans had been decidedly premillennial in their theology—that is, they expected the return of Christ at any moment—most evangelical eschatology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had veered toward postmillennialism, the belief that Christ was even now establishing His kingdom on earth and that He would return for His Church *after* the millennium.

Postmillennialism implied a certain optimism about the perfectibility and progress of both humanity and society. It inspired, for example, such diverse utopian communities as the Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing (better known as the Shakers) and the Oneida Community in western New York, John Humphrey Noyes's experiment in "complex marriage." The Second Great Awakening, an evangelical revival early in the nineteenth century that engulfed three geographical theaters of the new republic—New England, western New York, and the Cumberland Valley—prompted breathless predictions about the millennial age already under way in America. More important, this optimism about the amelioration of society energized countless evangelical reform movements—abolitionism, temperance, education, prison reform, the

female seminary movement—all grounded in the conviction that Christ was even then, through the efforts of His people, constructing a millennial kingdom.

By the time John Nelson Darby arrived, however, much of this evangelical ebullience had dissipated. The sectional rivalries of the Civil War had fractured evangelical unity, and among Northerners the Emancipation Proclamation removed the one cause that, more than any other, had united them. The industrialization and urbanization of the latter half of the nineteenth century, moreover, together with the influx of immigrants (most of them Roman Catholic) engendered doubts about the progress of godly rule in America. Squalid tenements and rowdy taverns hardly resembled the precincts of Zion. Nineteenth-century evangelical orthodoxy also reeled from the assaults of two alien ideologies: The German discipline of higher criticism called into question the veracity of scriptural texts, and Charles Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859 challenged the Genesis account of creation and, pressed to its logical conclusions, undermined all literal interpretations of the Bible.

At the moment when evangelical leaders sensed the need for an adjustment to their theology, Darby arrived with his dispensational premillennialism. His claim to strict biblical literalism constituted part of Darby's appeal, but his elaborate schemata for understanding human history made even more sense. Darby convinced evangelicals that they had been mistaken to suppose the millennium already underway. In fact, such a supposition misconstrued biblical prophecies entirely, and he proceeded to recast the sequence of eschatology. The millennium would not begin before Christ returned for His Church. After this rapture, Darby said, a seven-year tribulation (predicted in Matthew 24) would occur, followed *then* by the millennium.

This premillennialism, the doctrine that Christ would return to rapture the Church before the millennium, had broad implications for the social ethics of evangelicals. Society, this new rubric insisted, was careening toward judgment; it could never be reclaimed for Christ, short of His return to establish the millennium. Despite the continuation of some evangelical reform efforts, this notion relieved evangelicals of the obligation to labor for the amelioration of social

ills. Evangelicals increasingly stood in judgment of culture and awaited its destruction, which would follow their translation into heaven. "I don't find any place where God says the world is to grow better and better," evangelist Dwight L. Moody, a premillennialist, said in 1877. "I find that the earth is to grow worse and worse, and that at length there is going to be a separation." That separation of godliness from sinfulness, righteousness from worldliness, Moody believed, would take place at the rapture, when Christ came to translate the true believers out of this world.<sup>2</sup>

Historically, the adoption of this new eschatology coincided with the splintering of American Protestantism. At the same time that evangelicals began to neglect social reform efforts and exhorted anyone who would listen to prepare for the second coming by confessing faith in Jesus Christ, some of the more liberal theologians such as Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch articulated what they called the Social Gospel, a theology that sought first to understand the social conditions that lay behind the wretchedness of the urban dwellers and then worked toward their deliverance from the sinful social institutions that perpetuated their enslavement to poverty. As Protestant conservatives retreated to an otherworldly theology, liberals became convinced that the gospel mandated efforts to reform social institutions.

Even a century later, the twain still have not met. While evangelicals engage in internecine quarrels over eschatology—columns of the faithful have mustered over such issues as whether Christ will return before, during, or after the seven-year tribulation—mainline Protestants, for the most part, reject this dispensational scheme altogether. Grace Presbytery of Texas, for instance, whose bailiwick includes Dallas, has declared dispensationalism a heresy and "out of accord with the system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession of Faith."<sup>3</sup>

Although John Nelson Darby formulated this dispensational premillennialism, a whole network of individuals and institutions disseminated these notions. Dispensationalism caught on with such evangelical preachers as Moody, Reuben A. Torrey, A. J. Gordon, James M. Gray, and A. C. Dixon, among many others. Those leaders, in turn, organized prophecy conferences to advance these views.

Schools such as Moody Bible Institute and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (now Biola College) further promoted dispensationalism.

The one man responsible more than any other for popularizing this new gospel was Cyrus Ingerson Scofield, a Congregational minister from Dallas. Scofield sponsored a series of Bible institutes around the country and established the *Comprehensive Bible Correspondence Course*, the Scofield School of the Bible in New York City, and Philadelphia College of the Bible to propagate dispensational premillennialism.<sup>4</sup> His most enduring contribution to the evangelical subculture, however, was the Scofield Reference Bible, and edition of the Scriptures, first published by Oxford University Press in 1909, that included elaborate glosses and cross-references to guide the reader in his or her understanding of dispensationalism. For generations of fundamentalists ever since, the Scofield Bible has served as a kind of template through which they read the Scriptures. Although superseded in many ways by the Ryrie Study Bible, compiled by a former member of the Dallas Seminary faculty, the Scofield Reference Bible continues to sell briskly.<sup>5</sup>

Scofield passed the mantle on to a protégé, Lewis Sperry Chafer, a graduate of Oberlin College and an evangelist who had met Scofield at Dwight Moody's Bible conference center in Northfield, Massachusetts. Chafer, who in 1923 succeeded Scofield as pastor of the First Congregational Church in Dallas (promptly renamed Scofield Memorial Church), began to explore the possibility of addressing what the World Christian Fundamentals Association called "one of the greatest needs of the hour," namely, "the establishment of a great evangelical premillennial seminary."<sup>6</sup> On October 1, 1924, thirteen students assembled for classes offered by the new Evangelical Theological College (later renamed Dallas Theological Seminary).

From the beginning, Chafer, president of the institution which now bills itself as "the largest independent evangelical seminary in the world," insisted that the curriculum emphasize the biblical languages, especially Greek and Hebrew.<sup>7</sup> At a time when theological liberalism (or modernism) and the Social Gospel prompted some of the older seminaries in the United States to abandon their emphasis

on languages in favor of courses in psychology, philosophy, and sociology, Dallas held firm. Even today Dallas requires two years of Hebrew and three years of Greek, an exacting schedule that, coupled with all the other required courses, demands four years to complete, rather than the three years required for a divinity degree at most seminaries.<sup>8</sup>

My day in classes at Dallas Theological Seminary began early. A Protestant seminary is not supposed to be a monastery—the Ref-ormation did away with that notion—but, at least by twentieth-century standards, the regimen here might draw grudging admiration even from St. Benedict, who required his charges to "rise at the eighth hour of the night" to engage in study, meditation, and prayer.<sup>9</sup> On Tuesday and Thursday mornings at seven forty-five, students choose among two sections of elementary Hebrew, two sections of elementary Greek, two sections of expository preaching, two sections called senior preaching, a course on pre-exilic and exilic prophets, and a course on eschatology.

I chose eschatology. Well in advance of seven forty-five, students totting briefcases and large, well-thumbed Bibles filed into the lecture hall. (The student population is overwhelmingly white, overwhelmingly male, and invariably dressed in jackets and ties, in compliance with the seminary's dress code. Despite an occasional lack of sartorial sophistication, students here look like they might be refugees from Wall Street: very clean, with closely cropped hair, conservative, very Republican.) When the professor, John A. Witmer, arrived, he grabbed a card from a lucite holder on the lectern and announced that today's prayer request concerned mission work in Bulgaria. Witmer said that, unfortunately, Bulgarian religion was overwhelmingly Eastern Orthodox, that the number of Protestants there was less than one-half of one percent. He asked for someone to "remember these missionaries in prayer." Even at this hour, it seemed, there was no shortage of volunteers. After choosing someone in the front row, Witmer asked, "Any special requests?" Yes, said a young man. He asked for prayer to help him locate a volleyball and volleyball net for the church youth gathering he was organizing for Saturday night. After some sympathetic moans from the class,

Witmer said, "Let's remember that youth meeting and the need for equipment." The man in the front row then prayed aloud for a volleyball and a net and asked God to "raise up the missionaries" in Bulgaria and to "send others to proclaim the Word."

The morning's lecture, midway through the semester, opened a section on "the imminent return of the Lord," an important tenet in dispensational theology. (Article XVIII of the seminary's doctrinal statement reads: "We believe that, according to the Word of God, the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself into heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming, and also all who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and that this event is the blessed hope set before us in the Scripture, and for this we should be constantly looking.")<sup>10</sup> This blessed hope, Witmer said, "is the next item on the prophetic agenda; it could take place at any time, without delay." He then recited a numbing litany of proof-texts that, he insisted, substantiate his view—and the view of the entire faculty here—that Christ will return at any moment and certainly before the tribulation. In the jargon of eschatology, this is pre-trib premillennialism, the belief that the rapture will precede the seven-year tribulation and the thousand-year millennium predicted in Revelation.

Perhaps it was the early hour or perhaps the soporific presentation, but the lecture prompted no dissent, just a friendly query from the back row: "Dr. Witmer, Christ spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem. How does that fit in?" "That does present a problem," the professor conceded. But it is a problem, his long, rambling answer implied, that can be finessed by juggling certain verb tenses and re-examining the context of the quotation.

A booklet published and distributed by the seminary insists that "Dispensationalism is an interpretive necessity," and that "Without this recognition of the different ways God has governed the world, consistent interpretation of the Bible becomes impossible."<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, I found that many people at Dallas Seminary were eager to dispel the impression that dispensationalism was the most important tenet of the seminary's theology. "Some people have the idea that we live, think, and breathe dispensationalism around here," said Randy Gardner, a Master of Theology student who has

also recruited students around the country for the past two years. He finds that dispensationalism is "the number one question I get from prospective students." Dispensationalism, Gardner acknowledged, is "an underlying philosophy" at Dallas, but what makes the seminary distinctive, he thinks, is a passion on the part of the faculty to "teach people to know and communicate the Scriptures." American evangelicalism, he said, has moved away from the Bible, and there's a need to reassert the importance of the Scriptures as the inerrant Word of God.

Norman Geisler, professor of systematic theology, agrees. "I think inerrancy is a test for evangelical consistency, for evangelical leadership, and it should be in our doctrinal statements. If you do not hold to inerrancy, that the Scriptures are errorless in the original autographs, you are not evangelical on that doctrine." How important is it? "I think it's crucial. It's a watershed. Almost everybody who is anybody in evangelicalism has affirmed this view."<sup>12</sup>

A greater attention to the dictates of Scripture, Geisler believes, would help evangelicals avoid the perils of what he calls experientialism, "an experiential test for truth." Accordingly, Geisler and others at Dallas Seminary take a dim view of even the modulated sort of pentecostalism at Calvary Chapel. Charismatics, Geisler said, are most culpable of relying on religious experience, but he sees other assaults on evangelical orthodoxy coming from Eastern or New Age spirituality, American pragmatism, and vestiges of existentialism. "All of these are experience-oriented epistemologies—it's true because you experience it—rather than a more rational, cognitive one," he said. "I think ultimately we could all drown in a cesspool of experientialism."<sup>13</sup>

This rationalistic approach to the Bible and theology, Geisler contends, implicitly refutes a neo-orthodox or Barthian view of Scripture. Karl Barth, an eminent twentieth-century Swiss theologian, believed that the Bible *becomes* the Word of God, an idea that lent dynamism to the reading of Scripture; the Bible, Barth argued, is not a static book meant to be treated as an ancient relic but is rather the *living* Word of God that, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, speaks afresh to the reader. But such a view, Geisler insists, undermines the whole process of hermeneutics or biblical

interpretation. "When you finish your exegesis and you've found out, presumably, what the author meant—that's what exegesis is all about; what did the author mean?—you still have to ask the question, 'Hath God said?' You have to have an objective focal point that is hermeneutically determinable wherein rests divine authority."

One of the longtime fixtures on the faculty at Dallas is J. Dwight Pentecost, the redoubtable professor of Bible exposition, now retired. I sat in on an elective course he still offers on Thursdays called "The Biblical Covenant." Pentecost, a genial, white-haired man who drives to work in a Mercedes-Benz sports coupe, opened the class with prayer and then said, "I think we're somewhere in the Davidic Covenant." The notion of successive covenants, a distinctive characteristic of dispensational theology, asserts that God has adopted different strategies for dealing with humanity through the successive dispensations. According to Pentecost, the Davidic covenant—God's covenant with David, king of ancient Israel—came to a close when the Jews rejected Jesus as their messiah. That apparently signaled a kind of interregnum, also known to dispensationalists as the Church Age, between the Israelite kingdom of the Old Testament and the millennial kingdom predicted in Revelation. "The Davidic covenant was postponed," Pentecost said, "until Christ's return."

This covenantal understanding of the Bible has enormous implications for the relation of Christians and Jews. Pentecost and other dispensationalists believe that the Jews' rejection of Jesus as their messiah during His lifetime exempted them from God's favor and effectively transferred the Old Testament promises from the people of Israel to the Christian Church. Although the interests of Israel and the Church will be reconciled in the millennial kingdom, according to Pentecost, the very fact that we live now in the Church Age (or dispensation) implies that God has turned His back on the Jews for their rejection of His Son. "Israel is condemned by God," Pentecost said, "although individual Jews can escape judgment by acknowledging Christ and identifying themselves with the Church publicly, by baptism."

A student later elaborated this doctrine for me. "There's a future

for Israel," he said, "but it's related to the messiah, to Christ. There's no salvation for Jews now, short of recognizing Jesus as the messiah." This conviction has prompted proselytization efforts (such as the organization called Jews for Jesus) among the Jews by fundamentalists. Although less rigid Christian theologians, following the lead of Reinhold Niebuhr in the late 1950s, have been willing to acknowledge that Jews, as God's chosen people, attain salvation through their own covenant, dispensationalists insist that Jews must become Christians in order to enter the kingdom of heaven.

But what does this interregnum between ancient Israel and the millennium mean for the present age or dispensation? The parables of the New Testament, Pentecost believes, reveal the essential features of "theocratic administration." In the present age God has assigned authority in four areas: in the civil realm, to magistrates to curb lawlessness; in employment, to the master or employer; in the Church, to elders; and in the family, to the husband and father. Moreover, according to Pentecost, "when God assigns authority, He demands submission to authority. So that in the civil realm, we are to be subject to rulers. The wife is subject, the children subject, to authority. The employee is subject to the authority of the employer." And finally, in the Church, "the younger are subject to the authority of the elders."

Perhaps unwittingly, Pentecost provided an illustration. At one point during the lecture a student, one of only seven women in a lecture hall of ninety-four students, admitted some confusion about the configuration of the covenants. Pentecost responded: "Can I ask you to hold that until I go a bit farther? Maybe a light will go on. Prayerfully. Hopefully." He paused. "If not, can I fall back on Paul's injunction? Ask your husband at home." The classroom erupted in loud, sustained laughter and guffaws. If the instructor intended the remark as good-natured humor or a wry riposte, his expression betrayed no hint. He simply resumed the lecture.<sup>14</sup>

The mere presence of women here at Dallas has provoked some controversy. As biblical literalists, students and faculty point to St. Paul's injunctions against allowing women as teachers in the Church in order to justify their exclusion from the ordained ministry, even though many Protestant groups over the past two decades have

abolished their proscriptions against women's ordination, citing the broader, inclusive demands of the New Testament.<sup>15</sup> At Dallas, however, the seminary's constitution bars women from serving on the faculty. Although they have been allowed into selected degree programs and permitted to take courses as non-degree candidates for several years, women were admitted as candidates for the Master of Theology (the seminary's basic divinity degree) for the first time in the fall of 1986. Women now make up thirteen percent of the student body (as against the national average in Protestant seminaries of twenty-six percent, a figure that is much higher, approaching fifty percent, in liberal institutions).<sup>16</sup> But even though they are enrolled in the divinity program at Dallas, women are not allowed to take homiletics courses, the expectation being that they would never have occasion to preach, that their activities would be limited to some sort of parachurch work, teaching in a Christian school, or perhaps, in less rigid fundamentalist churches, administration or Christian education.

Apparently, however, such restrictions do not concern the female students. During my visit the current issue of *Kindred Spirit*, the seminary's glitzy, four-color public relations magazine, contained an article by Barbara A. Peil, a Master of Arts student in Christian education. Entitled "A Seasoned Approach," the article urged older Christian women to tutor younger women in their proper roles: "Young women need to be taught a biblical view of their roles and relationships with their husbands in order to truly liberate them to be all that God intended them to be and to experience the best that He has for them." God measures a woman's success in life, the author wrote, "by her relationship with her husband and children." Extolling the virtues of purity and self-control, Peil urged younger women to learn "the oft-maligned delights of homemaking."<sup>17</sup>

In such a climate, even modest attempts by women to enlarge the scope of their responsibilities meet with resistance. Holly Hankins completed her studies for the Master of Arts in biblical studies in December 1986, but in April 1987 she was working part-time as a clerk in the seminary bookstore. She hopes to find a job in a church somewhere but, she said, "I'm having a hard time finding a job because I'm a woman." Still, she has no designs on ordination be-

cause she believes that would be a violation of biblical teaching. Hankins would like a job as head of a women's ministries program in a church, a kind of nonordained pastor to women in the congregation. "Women should be counseled by women," she said, and that would take some of the counseling burden off the pastor.

Hankins, an attractive, articulate woman, has been something of a pioneer at Dallas Seminary—the first woman to serve on the student council and the first woman to pray publicly in the seminary chapel. She insists that neither the professors nor the students have looked down on her, but the placement office has provided little help. The head of placement, she said, "definitely believes" that a woman has no place on a church staff. "It's slow," she said of her job search. "Even after receiving my résumé, many churches tell me they have secretarial jobs available."

Defending traditional roles for women at Dallas Theological Seminary follows logically from both its epistemology and its cultural location. As biblical literalists, the faculty cannot maneuver around Paul's emphatic proscriptions against women in leadership positions.

Moreover, as the spiritual and intellectual descendants of fundamentalists who earlier in this century began dissenting from what they regarded as a secularizing society, their opposition to fuller roles for women coincides with their uneasiness with popular American culture. At a time when academic scholarship adopted the tenets of Darwinism and German higher criticism, and when the publicity surrounding the trial of John T. Scopes, a biology teacher from Tennessee, succeeded in portraying fundamentalists as rubes and anachronisms, fundamentalists began to perceive American culture as hostile. Whereas in the previous century evangelicals had shaped social and political agendas, in the twentieth century fundamentalists found themselves pushed to the periphery. Thus marginalized, they grew increasingly suspicious of the broader culture. Generations of children in fundamentalist households were instructed to eschew "worldliness" and to adhere to strict codes of morality that forbade card-playing, gambling, cosmetics, motion pictures, dancing, alcohol, and tobacco. Some of the proscriptions have

eased somewhat in evangelical circles, but the suspicion of worldliness, of theological and cultural innovation, endures.

Norman Geisler, for instance, who describes himself as a "strong creationist," has testified in the courts in favor of permitting the Genesis account of creation to be taught along side of evolution in public schools. "I hold that God directly and immediately created every kind of thing, every form of life, and that there was no macroevolution between them," he insisted.<sup>18</sup>

Geisler along with other faculty and students at Dallas Seminary have also been active in the anti-abortion movement. A sign in the student center read:

Join Drs Geisler and House  
and your Fellow Students to  
Protest the Destruction  
of Innocent Human Life  
at a Local Abortion Clinic  
Meet each Wednesday right  
after chapel in the parking  
lot by Academic 1

Several of the students I spoke with denied any necessary connection between conservative theology and conservative politics, although they acknowledged a correlation between the two. "I think there's something to be said for taking a conservative stance regarding abortion and subscribing to conservative Christianity," one man told me. "I think there's something to be said for taking a conservative stance against homosexuality and being a conservative Christian. I wouldn't vote for a politician who was for gay rights, because there you're dealing with morality."

I asked two students, Herb Bateman, who had come to Dallas Seminary from Philadelphia College of the Bible, and Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist from Tulsa, what was at stake in the doctrine of dispensational premillennialism. How does one's adherence to premillennialist ideas affect the way you live? "The imminent return of Christ affects the way I approach each day," Bateman said, "because if I know that He can return at any moment I certainly want

to make sure that my life on a daily basis is in accordance with what His will is, which is derived from the imperative statements of Scripture. Wherever I'm at, I'm to be living for Christ, and I know that with Him returning at any time I'll have to give an account for my life, and I'll be rewarded accordingly."<sup>19</sup>

Bateman added that a premillennialist interpretation of the Bible was "the best option available and the most consistent, but that's not to say that someone is any less a Christian because he believes that Christ will return during the tribulation rather than before. It's not an issue to die over."

Both Bateman and Carter felt more strongly about the inerrancy of the Scriptures. Bateman volunteered that he would "go to the wall" for the doctrine of inerrancy, and Carter said that he couldn't envision ever changing his views on that issue. I wondered if subscribing to the doctrine of inerrancy affected the way they read the Bible. "When you approach it as an inerrant text, it's not open to the subjectivity of man," Carter said. "By believing that the text is inerrant, we can go to it as the basis of our authority." Bateman concurred, adding that "if you throw that out, you lose some of your footing."

"We're taught a theological grid here, I won't deny that," Bateman acknowledged, a bit defensively, "but I don't think the Christian community is as closed-minded as the world would like to make us out to be. We're more than willing to open up and speak and dialogue. The closed-mindedness many times doesn't come from the Christian, it comes from the liberal." He paused. "If you've got the truth, what's there to fear in open dialogue?"

## NOTES

1. Dallas Seminary's statement of purpose reads in part: "The Seminary is committed to the primacy of the authoritative, inerrant Scriptures. Its instruction, which includes teaching, defending, and applying the truths of the Christian faith, is given within the framework of evangelical, premillennial, dispensational theology."

2. Quoted in William G. McLoughlin, ed., *The American Evangelicals, 1800-1900: An Anthology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), p. 184.
3. Grace Union Presbytery, "Position Paper on Employment of Seminary Students" and "Policy Regarding Reception of Ministers." I am grateful to Carrie Washington, executive presbyter of the Presbytery of Newark and a former resident of Texas, for pointing this out to me.
4. John D. Hannah, "The Early Years of Lewis Sperry Chafer," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144 (January-March 1987): 21, 22.
5. Records are incomplete, but Donald Kraus, Bibles editor at Oxford University Press, estimates that the press has sold anywhere from thirty to fifty million copies since 1909. According to Jonathan Weiss, sales manager at Oxford, the Scofield Bible has sold more than 4.2 million copies since 1967, eighty-five percent of them leatherbound editions, an indication of the Scofield Bible's continued popularity as a devotional tool.
6. Quoted in John A. Witmer, "What God Hath Wrought—Fifty Years of Dallas Theological Seminary, Part I: God's Man and His Dream," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130 (October 1973): 295.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 292.
8. The divinity degree awarded at Dallas is the Master of Theology (Th.M.), the requirements for which include writing a thesis. Most seminaries offer the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) as their basic divinity degree and the Th.M. after another year of specialized study.
9. Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 165.
10. James H. Thames, ed., *Dallas Theological Seminary: 1886-87 Catalog* (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986), p. 161.
11. Charles C. Ryrie, "What Is Dispensationalism?" rev. ed. (Dallas: Dallas Theological Seminary, 1986), [p. 5].
12. Norman Geisler, interview, 1 April 1987.
13. Several months after my visit, Dallas Theological Seminary dismissed three members of the faculty because of their apparent sympathies with charismatic theology; see Randy Frame, "Three Professors Part Paths with Dallas," *Christianity Today*, 5 February 1988, pp. 52-53.
14. Although he breezily dismissed the woman's query, Pentecost readily fielded questions from male students. Later in the lecture, seeking to illustrate the meaning of the term *leaven*, Pentecost asked: "Any of you girls bake bread?"
15. Typically, the biblical references cited against the ordination of women are 1 Tim. 2:11-12 and 1 Cor. 14:34. Those in favor of women's ordination point to Gal. 3:28, where Paul insists that in Christ there is "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (RSV). Pentecost's reference to "ask their husbands at home" comes from 1 Cor. 14:35 (RSV).

16. Roy B. Zuck, academic dean at Dallas, interview, 2 April 1987; Ari L. Goldman, "As Call Comes, More Women Answer," *New York Times*, 19 October 1986.
17. Barbara A. Peil, "A Seasoned Approach," *Kindred Spirit* 11 (Spring 1987): 12, 13.
18. Geisler interview.
19. Herb Bateman and Jimmy Carter, interview, 3 April 1987.