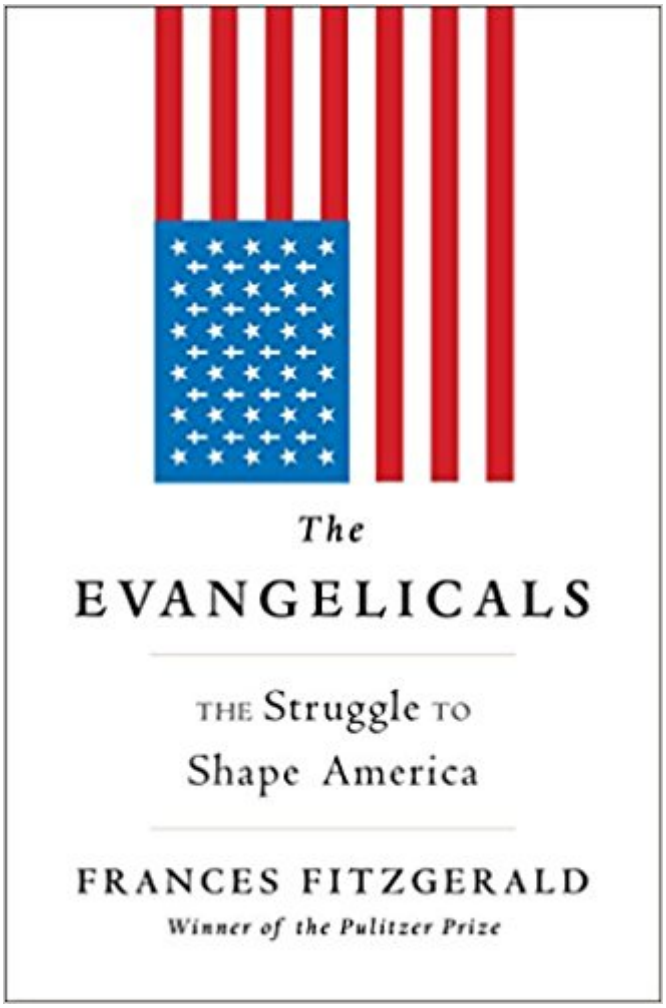
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The Evangelicals: The Struggle To Shape America



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“A page turnerÃ¢â ¬Â¦We have long needed a fair-minded overview of this vitally important religious sensibility, and FitzGerald has now provided it.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times Book Review Ã¢â ¬Å“Massively learned and electrifyingÃ¢â ¬Â¦magisterial.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Christian Science Monitor This groundbreaking book from Pulitzer PrizeÃ Â- Ã¢â ¬â œwinning historian Frances FitzGerald is the first to tell the powerful, dramatic story of the Evangelical movement in AmericaÃ¢â ¬â •from the Puritan era to the 2016 presidential election.The evangelical movement began in the revivals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, known in America as the Great Awakenings. A populist rebellion against the established churches, it became the dominant religious force in the country. During the nineteenth century white evangelicals split apart dramatically, first North versus South, and then at the end of the century, modernist versus fundamentalist. After World War II, Billy Graham, the revivalist preacher, attracted enormous crowds and tried to gather all Protestants under his big tent, but the civil rights movement and the social revolution of the sixties drove them apart again. By the 1980s Jerry Falwell and other southern televangelists, such as Pat Robertson, had formed the Christian right. Protesting abortion and gay rights, they led the South into the Republican Party, and for thirty-five years they were the sole voice of evangelicals to be heard nationally. Eventually a younger generation of leaders protested the Christian rightÃ¢â ¬â„¢s close ties with the Republican Party and proposed a broader agenda of issues, such as climate change, gender equality, and immigration reform. Evangelicals have in many ways defined the nation. They have shaped our culture and our politics. Frances FitGeraldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s narrative of this distinctively American movement is a major work of history, piecing together the centuries-long story for the first time. Evangelicals now constitute twenty-five percent of the American population, but they are no longer monolithic in their politics. They range from Tea Party supporters to social reformers. Still, with the decline of religious faith generally, FitzGerald suggests that evangelical churches must embrace ethnic minorities if they are to survive.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“A page turner: FitzGerald is a great writer capable of keeping a sprawling narrative on point . . . Anyone curious about the state of conservative American Protestantism will have a trusted guide in this Bancroft and Pulitzer Prize winnerÃ Â . . . We have long needed a fair-minded overview of this vitally important religious sensibility, and FitzGerald has now provided it.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â (The New York Times Book Review)Ã¢â ¬Å“A well-written, thought-provoking and deeply researched history that is impressive for its scope and level of detail.Ã¢â ¬Â• (The Wall Street Journal)Ã¢â ¬Å“The waves of conservativeÃ Â ProtestantÃ Â influence that have swept American life at various points in history have often seemed to come out of nowhere. The emergence of theÃ Â ChristianÃ Â right's political influence in the 1970s, for example, just as experts saidÃ Â religionÃ Â was losing its place in U.S. culture, was shocking. But in her new major work on the subject,Ã Â The Evangelicals, historian Frances FitzGerald shows how the origins of these booms are discernible from afar. Her book makes the case so well, it leaves readers with the feeling that we should all be paying closer attention.Ã¢â ¬Â• (TIME)Ã¢â ¬Å“An epic history of white American evangelical Protestantism from Plymouth Rock to Trump Tower . . . Fitzgerald, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1973 for Ã¢â ¬Å“Fire in the Lake,Ã¢â ¬â„¢Ã¢â ¬â„¢ an account of the Vietnam War, gracefully swoops over the decades of populist evangelicalism with Barbara Tuchman-like grace. This is a comprehensive, heavily footnoted, yet readable study of how the evangelical tradition has become seared into the fabric of American life and the key figures who made it happen.Ã Â . . . Fitzgerald, always judicious and unbiased, nobly succeeds in analyzing the nuanced differences between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, Calvinism and postmillennialism, charismatics and Pentecostals.Ã¢â ¬Â• (The Boston Globe)Ã¢â ¬Å“[A] capacious history of Evangelical American Protestantism. This rich narrative ranges across the various Evangelical denominations while illuminating the doctrinesÃ¢â ¬â •especially personal conversion as spiritual rebirth, and adherence to the Bible as ultimate truthÃ¢â ¬â •that unite them. . . . A complex and fascinating epic.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â (Booklist, starred review)Ã¢â ¬Å“FitzGeraldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s brilliant book

could not have been more timely, more well-researched, more well-written, or more necessary.Ã¢â ¬Â• (The American Scholar)Ã¢â ¬Å“Frances FitzGerald answers the recurrent question, Ã¢â ¬Å“Where did these people [mainly right-wing zealÃ Â- ots] come from?Ã¢â ¬Â• She says there is no mystery involved. They were always here. We were just not looking at them. What repeatedly makes us look again is what she is here to tell us.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â (The New York Review of Books)Ã¢â ¬Å“An excellent work that is certain to be a standard text for understanding contemporary evangelicalism and the American impulse to reform its society.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Library Journal)"Timely and enlightening" (The Economist)Ã¢â ¬Å“Without a doubt the best book on the history and present status of American evangelicals. . . . ambitious, engaging, and nuanced.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Harvey G. Cox, Jr., Hollis Professor of Divinity Emeritus, Harvard Divinity School)Ã¢â ¬Å“This is the book IÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve been waiting for. Now we have in one volume the richly textured, often puzzling, and always engaging story of American evangelicalism from colonial days to the present. To understand evangelicalismÃ¢â ¬â„¢s impact on our country, this is must reading.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Robert Wuthnow, Professor of Sociology and Director of Princeton UniversityÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Center for the Study of Religion)Ã¢â ¬Å“Another superb work by renowned but long-absent political journalist FitzGerald . . . this one centering on the roiling conflict among American brands of Christianity. . . . Overflowing with historical anecdote and contemporary reportage and essential to interpreting the current political and cultural landscape.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Kirkus Reviews (starred review))Ã¢â ¬Å“FitzGerald has crafted nothing less than a spiritual history of the nation whose truest believers have for four centuries constituted themselves a moral majority. This is an American story, objectively told and written from the inside outÃ¢â ¬Â• (Richard Norton Smith, author of On His Own Terms: A Life of Nelson Rockefeller)Ã¢â ¬Å“A compelling narrative history of Ã¢â ¬Å“the white evangelical movements necessary to understand the Christian right and its evangelical opponents.Ã¢â ¬Â• . . . [FitzGerald] skillfully introduces readers to the terminology, key debates, watershed events, and personalities that have populated the history of white American evangelical Protestant culture in the last half-century. She explains issues such as fundamentalism, biblical inerrancy, Christian nationalism, civil religion and anticommunism, the charismatic movement, and abortion, and introduces such diverse figures as Karl Barth, Jerry Falwell, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Pat Robertson . . . a timely and accessible contribution to the rapidly growing body of literature on Christianity in modern America.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Publishers Weekly)Ã¢â ¬Å“This is an important book. FitzGerald has written a monumental history of howÃ Â evangelicalism has shaped America. Few movements in our long story have had as significant an influence on American life and culture as conservative Christianity, and FitzGerald does full justice to the subject's scope

and complexity.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize winning author of Destiny and Power and Thomas Jefferson)Ã¢â ¬Å“A rare and valuable book. ItÃ¢â ¬â„¢s admirable that Frances FitzGerald is able to tell the story of the American evangelical movement without judgment or biasÃ¢â ¬â •but itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s absolutely astonishing that sheÃ¢â ¬â„¢s able to tell it with such authority, clarity, and complete grasp of the historical context.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Daniel Okrent, author of Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition)Ã¢â ¬Å“The EvangelicalsÃ Â is a comprehensive history of white evangelical movements in the United States, geared to provide a deeper understanding of present-day evangelicals and their influence. Journalist and historian Frances FitzGerald presents nearly 300 years of complex ideologies, schisms, social reforms and energetically creative theology in a well-organized, eye-opening narrative.Ã Â . . . This book is not only for those with a particular interest in religious history; it is for anyone with a serious interest in American social movements, politics and culture. It is a history that strongly re-emphasizes the evolution of a nation, and those who hope to shape the future are wise to study the past.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Shelf Awareness)"The EvangelicalsÃ Â explodes any notion of evangelicalism as a monolithic movement. FitzGerald also deftly captures the 'exotic cast' of this pure product of America..." (San Francisco Chronicle)"AÃ Â masterful narrative."Ã Â (Gospel Coalition)"Essential reading on the conjoined nature of religion and politics today." (Barnes & Noble (BN.com))Ã¢â ¬Å“Massively learned and electrifying . . . the long, contradictory, and compelling history of American Evangelicals and the world they made. In the telling of this story, FitzGerald pulls off an admirable feat. She writes compassionately about generations of deeply held faith without seeming naive, even as she resists cynicism while noting the psychotics, charlatans, and con artists who have sometimes arisen to "deceive the very elect." The result is a quiet marvel of a book, well deserving of winning its author her second Pulitzer . . . magisterialÃ Â . . . FitzGerald is adroit and gentle in noting how often AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s religious right wing seems to have been fighting rearguard actions.Ã¢â ¬Â• (The Christian Science Monitor)Ã¢â ¬Å“This incisive history of white evangelical movements in America argues that their influence has been more pervasive and diverse than generally realized.Ã¢â ¬Â• (The New Yorker)

Frances FitzGerald is the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Bancroft Prize, and a prize from the National Academy of Arts and Sciences. She is the author of The Evangelicals: The Struggle to Shape America; Fire in the Lake: the Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam; America Revised: History School Books in the Twentieth Century; Cities on a Hill: A Journey through Contemporary American Cultures; Way Out in the Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and

the End of the Cold War; and Vietnam: Spirits of the Earth. She has written for The New Yorker, The Atlantic, HarperÃ¢â ¬â„¢s, The New York Review of Books, The Nation, Rolling Stone, and Esquire.

Frances FitzGerald's new history of the American Evangelicals is a massive one: 637 pages of text plus another hundred pages of a Glossary, extensive Notes, and a Bibliography. While it is a weighty history it is nevertheless an engaging one, well written and replete with short biographies of major figures and revelatory anecdotes that help to illuminate important points. You need not be a theologian or a historian to enjoy The Evangelicals, anyone interested in American history, American Christianity, and America's possible futures will find much rich material here.A major theme of The Evangelicals is the recurring or cyclical nature of the history of American Evangelicalism. Beginning in the 18th and 19th centuries with the First and Second Great Awakenings evangelical religion developed out of dissatisfaction with the Established Churches and mainstream religion in general. In the early to mid nineteenth century evangelicalism had to deal with the same overwhelming issue as the rest of the nation: the debate over African slavery. As in the nation as a whole the debate eventually led to division, with many evangelical churches splitting into Northern and Southern halves. After the Civil War ended the evangelical divisions continued, with the result that much of the ferment for reform and the subsequent rise of new evangelical beliefs took place in the North since the South was smaller, poorer, and more uniformly minded. Conflict and controversy continued in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the debate between Fundamentalists and Modernists that culminated in the 1920s with, among other events, the Scopes Monkey Trial and the rise of the Pentecostal and other movements that threatened to splinter Evangelicalism still further.The summary I've supplied thus far takes readers through Chapter 5. The following 12 chapters and Epilogue concern the period from about the World War II era through the 2016 election. Here once again the history of Evangelicalism is one of conflict and controversy: how churches should deal with modern war and Cold War; Civil Rights and other movements for social change from the 1950s through the 1970s; and the reaction to these social changes that led to the rise of a harder line fundamentalism in the South, the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition's attempts to influence American politics, and the development of the Christian Right in the 1990s and early 2000s. Throughout this period FitzGerald documents another recurring theme in Evangelical history: the sad story of organized religion's attempts to influence secular politics, which inevitably result in religious belief becoming subordinate to and controlled by political ambition. Included in these chapters are the stories of the careers of Billy Graham, Pat Robertson, Jerry Falwell and other

preachers; thinkers like Francis Sheaffer and Rousas Rushdoony and their influence; and the politicians like Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush who encouraged Evangelicals to believe they were on their side in order to obtain their support but then put their concerns at the bottom of their agenda. The final chapter and Epilogue describe the changes in American Evangelicalism, changes which parallel those in the nation as a whole: greater tolerance, more awareness of the threat of climate change, less interest in hardline political policies of either the left or the right, and overall a more multi-cultural society. FitzGerald ends her history by noting the heavy Evangelical influence in the election of Donald Trump, but maintains that the larger trends I've just mentioned might be delayed but not derailed.I enjoyed The Evangelicals, though as an American Southerner with a lengthy family history intertwined with evangelical and fundamentalist history I could have wished for more details in the early chapters (but that would have made the book even longer). FitzGerald herself points out that she deliberately did not include African-American Evangelicalism since that is a long and rich history in itself deserving of more detail than she could provide in this volume. Even with these limitations The Evangelicals is an important study that non-specialists should not shy away from (FitzGerald's clear descriptions, as well as the Glossary, are very helpful). Whatever the future course of American Evangelicalism, those wishing a clear understanding of the movements' beginnings, conflicts, and continuing struggles will find FitzGerald's work to be a useful guide.

I've read a fair amount of books connecting the history of religious movements in America and how they shape politics and society today and I found this book to be one of my favorites among them. The author went into great depth into the past of evangelical Christianity in America and defined how each the term "evangelical" has changed and been adopted by those with different beliefs, making it easy to follow from the past to the present day. I would have enjoyed more depth to section on the present day, but many books focus solely on the present without connecting it to the past and I felt much more knowledgeable of the whole of the movement after reading this book.

Fitzgerald's research is exceptional. She breaks up facts and history with her interesting story telling style. Once I started the book, I HAD to plow through its over 630 pages and finish it.I have researched and written a book on the history of cultural and religious discrimination against the LGBT community in America and knew much of the skeletal information in this book. It was absolutely fascinating to read more history and information to supplement what I already knew. I learned a LOT from this book!What I found particularly well done was he early history of evangelicalism to the 1960s. Since I frequently teach using a visual timeline, I am going to try and

plot some of the key parts of the history of evangelicalism in the US in a similar manner to supplement my own work.The strongest take away I have is that the divisions, power grabbing, posturing and attempts to dominate the Republican Party are based in ideology and certainly not theology. One would hope that Christian leaders seeking to impact those around them would be motivated by the Spirit. Unfortunately, that is not what jumps out as the motivating force -- it is power and control.I am an evangelical, but a progressive. I am sickened by the merger of religion and politics and frequently refer to it as an unholy matrimony. Politics, in the form of Weyrich and Viguirie came seductively knocking on the door of Falwell in the late 1970s. They were invited in for a chat and a drink, and the whore got in bed with the church and the two have been shacking up since.Until those of us who are evangelical acknowledge the problems and the cost to ourselves and to minorities and women, we will continue in a downward spiral that destroys both conservative politics and religion.This book is SO GOOD! Thank you Frances for the work and research you did to put it together. It is truly impressive and I VERY MUCH appreciate learning from your efforts.

This book provides the best historical analysis of Protestant fundamentalists I had yet read. As a Mormon missionary in Pennsylvania in ’72-74 I had many discussions with evangelicals of all sorts and fundamentalists were particularly hard to understand as I was even then a relatively liberal person. Maybe it was having grown up in the relatively liberal City of Eugene Oregon. This book not only helped me understand Protestants better, but also was greatly helpful in understanding fundamentalist Mormons in particular, of which there are many who have bedeviled me over the years. The book is sympathetic to fundamentalists without glossing over their problems and deficiencies. Well worth the nearly 800 pages.

This account is comprehensive but does not bog down in details or statistics. It is an exciting and enlightening read. It traces the roots of American Evangelicalism back to the Puritans and the Great Awakenings.

This book is the most comprehensive history of the white Christian Evangelical movement in America that I have encountered. In particular, the book provides a very thorough history of the Christian right and its attempts to shape politics in this country. Unlike many critical books on the Christian right that I have read, FitzGerald attempts to convey a more neutral objective historical account of this movement and its leaders.

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