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Opening a Market for Missions: American Evangelicals and the Re-Christianization of Europe, 1945-1985

HANS KRABBENDAM

ABSTRACT

In the mid-1940s the newly revitalized evangelicals in the United States fostered great plans to evangelize the world. They felt that their efforts were thwarted by two monopolistic arrangements. The first monopoly was the result of the official position of the more liberal World Council of Churches. Because this global organization had strong backing from the established churches in the United States and presented itself as the official spokesperson for global Protestantism, evangelicals felt locked out of prospective missionary opportunities in Europe and its colonies. In order to open these religious markets, the evangelical leadership launched an alternative organization, the World Evangelical Fellowship, and simultaneously embarked on a re-Christianization campaign. The second monopoly became visible once American missionaries landed in Europe. They encountered restrictions caused by nation states and established churches. Their efforts to overcome both obstacles moved through five stages. In the late 1940s, they defined Europe as a mission field. In the next decade they launched a great number of mission programs. This resulted in the formation of an alternative evangelical subculture in Europe in the 1960s, which diversified in the 1970s, and fragmented in the 1980s, with the new media revolution in TV and satellite. Halfway through this process, in the 1960s, evangelicals had found viable ways to displace monopolistic exclusion by religious pluralism. This not only led to the incorporation of Europe in global evangelicalism, but also opened opportunities for new and surprising joint ventures with competitors.

In 1946 a Dutch Reformed minister expressed his admiration for a new wave of American youth ministers who came to the Netherlands to stage a series of religious rallies: "The Youth for Christ team has done more in six weeks than our Dutch Reformed church has done in all of its history" (*Youth for Christ* 55). This reaction echoed the enthusiasm for a new type of ministry rather than being an evaluation of historical developments. This same sense of excitement was felt in North America. Two years later Oswald J. Smith, pastor of the Peoples Church in Toronto, returned from a six-week European trip and said, "Let us pray and let us work that Europe, one of the greatest of all mission fields, may be evangelized before it is forever too late" (21). Both ministers' statements illustrate the shift in the American-European religious balance that took place after World War II, but the second also expresses doubt about the possibility of realizing the plan to re-Christianize Europe.

The direction of religious influence from Europe to the United States had slowly begun to shift in the course of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of that century, the European ministers who accompanied or followed the millions of immigrants to America still greatly outnumbered the occasional American missionary traveling to Europe. American ministers in Europe were most com-

monly sent over to support Protestant denominational missions in Catholic or Eastern Orthodox countries. There were also those seeking to establish churches in the Holiness tradition. These activities had been small-scale until the last quarter of the century when evangelists such as Dwight Moody and holiness preachers such as Robert and Hannah Pearsall Smith had successfully awed European audiences. They were succeeded by evangelists such as Oswald Smith and Frank Buchman (of the Moral Rearmament Movement) in the early twentieth century.

After the Great War, mission-minded Americans flocked to Africa and Asia and surpassed the number of European missionaries. In 1911 almost 8,000 Americans were involved in Protestant missions beyond their own continent, compared to 12,000 Europeans. Only sixty years later, the numbers swelled to 34,000 Americans among 52,500 Protestant missionaries in the world, or almost two-thirds of the total number (Noll 80). After World War I the majority of Protestant missionaries came from North America and marked a quantitative shift among Western Protestants, but the post-World War II period also witnessed a second, qualitative shift. Europe's Protestant position changed from being an equal to a junior partner in the evangelical enterprise in the interwar years, and after World War II it became a sending—rather than a receiving—region.

After World War II the balance in finances and activism among Protestants in the West shifted from Europe to the United States. Millions of dollars in church relief flowed from prosperous America to war-torn Europe. Americans rebuilt churches, established care centers for refugees, and assisted families below the poverty line. The numbers of American Protestant missionaries in Europe grew from a few score in 1948 to more than 3,700 in 1985 (in addition to thousands of Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses). These Protestants stayed much longer than other missionaries and were succeeded by fresh recruits (Beaver, "Distribution"; Wilson 1-3).

When historians mention the presence of American religion in postwar Europe, it is usually in the context of the Cold War (which itself was an instrument to combat Communism), or to assess the performance of American cults such as the Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses in the Old World. Though Cold War concerns occupied the minds of religious leaders in the West, they were not the key motive for evangelical activity in Europe. Billy Graham's frequent anti-Communist statements might have led to this conclusion, but it was concern for a 'market,' rather than Communism that best explains American evangelists drive to go global (Kirby; Crouse; Preston; Herzog, 191-211).

This essay argues that concerns about monopolistic trends compelled American evangelicals to embark on missions in Europe as part of their program to secure missions worldwide. Though these evangelicals used theological concepts to describe their situation, their interpretation of the missionary market matched the economic concept of monopoly. In economics, a monopoly is a market situation in which a single company (or a few working in a cartel) renders all the services or products to the exclusion of competition by others. Often the anti-monopolist campaigners hope to break the existing monopoly and then replace it with their own (Postel 146-47). American evangelicals approached Europe in exactly this way. They feared they were being driven from the religious marketplace by liberal

Christians who had joined together nationally in the Federal (after 1950 known as National) Council of Churches and internationally in the World Council of Churches (WCC). This motive was especially strong among evangelicals in the first two decades after World War II.

While far from claiming that this anti-monopolistic impulse was the only interior motive for American evangelicals in taking the gospel to Europe, this essay argues that it does explain the timing and the format of this enterprise. One of the first aims of the new evangelical leadership was the prevention of a global liberal monopoly. A second major concern about monopolies arose once American evangelicals landed in European nations where either the state, the established church, or a combination of both restricted their activities. These two factors explain why American evangelicals invested their energy and meager finances in the creation of an organizational alternative to the WCC, and why they were reluctant to seek cooperation with established churches in Europe.

At the end of the 1960s, this fear of monopolistic exclusion subsided due to evangelicals' own quantitative expansion and the changing position of their opponents. This led to the European recognition of evangelicalism as a third force in Christendom—next to Roman Catholicism and mainstream Protestantism. This new situation changed evangelical strategy from opposition to cooperation, eventually resulting in cordial contacts with co-religionists in the twenty-first century.

To register these shifts, it is first necessary to examine American evangelicals' attitudes towards Europe with regard to practical matters, as Europe was the keeper of the keys to the colonies. Secondly, Europe was on a more theoretical level the prime example of what had gone wrong in history and how the abandonment of religion had facilitated this process. It is convenient to divide this narrative in five periods: the discovery of Europe as a mission field in the late 1940s; the launch of mission programs in the 1950s; the creation of an alternative force in the 1960s; diversification in the 1970s; and diffusion in the 1980s, when the arrival of televangelists and increasing media competition significantly changed communications and perceptions.¹

The Discovery of Europe as a Mission Field in the 1940s

Evangelical missionaries came to Europe within a year after the end of World War II. In March 1946 a commercial aircraft brought six American evangelists to Preswick airport, close to Glasgow. From there, Billy Graham and five associates took the American postwar revival beyond American borders. As fear of monopoly was not yet one of their concerns, this international outreach had an improvised character. It was originally intended to reach men and women serving

¹ This paper will not deal with the differences between evangelicals and fundamentalists in their use of business methods in their missions, nor will it focus on prosperity gospel, Pentecostals and Charismatics, or include televangelists. These groups have received sufficient treatment, because they were most explicit in their messages and distinctive in their economic concerns. Neither will this article cover the activities of new religious movements from American soil, though these were certainly seen as serious competitors to fill Europe's spiritual vacuum.

in the military overseas, an extension of the religious revival of the period, which had been triggered by Youth for Christ. When the news of this burst of religious fervor spread in the media, Youth for Christ received invitations from believers worldwide to stir revivals in their areas, and civilian locations took priority. Theologically, a new sense of urgency inspired by the apocalyptic mood of global war made traditional believers hasten to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, to usher in the end times, and to add Europe as a target area (Shufelt).

The novelty of Graham's first campaign inaugurated an enduring American interest and investment in Europe, different from the occasional visit by American revivalists before the war. Thanks to monthly updates in the Youth for Christ magazines, news of the international revival's scope reached evangelicals at home. This was in line with the Protestant missionary goal, in John R. Mott's terminology, "to evangelize the world in this generation" (Mott). Depression and war stalled this endeavor, but victory and prosperity revived it.

The Youth for Christ revival of the 1940s resonated with the experiences of evangelical chaplains and missionary-minded service men who had witnessed the devastation of Europe first hand. They had concluded that this disaster was spiritual in origin and Europe needed their help to solve its problems (Carpenter 178-84). One of them, Samuel Faircloth, was a 1943 graduate from Wheaton College and a classmate of Billy and Ruth Graham. He took a degree from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia and enlisted as a chaplain serving the U.S. Fifth Army in Italy as a member of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society (CBFMS). This group deemed the American Baptist Convention too liberal because it accepted missionary work candidates who denied some cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the reliability of the scriptures, the necessity of atonement, and the bodily return of Christ. Since the Northern Baptist denomination did not allow the organization of a separate mission society, the CBFMS split off.

Faircloth was of the opinion that the destruction of Europe and the cruelty of its dictators was a result of secular humanism, which had started "from the inside" in Germany well before the war. He saw the Nazi terror as a logical consequence of decades of anti-Christian philosophy and the tradition of higher criticism of the Bible in German universities. This tradition had disarmed the countervailing powers of the German clergy, and left their flocks unprotected against Nazism. Other American soldiers shared his historical interpretation. After their demobilization, these evangelicals laid plans to return to the continent with gospel tracts instead of bombs. Faircloth and other U.S. chaplains helped Protestant ministers reunite with their scattered congregations in southern Europe. Faircloth became a missionary in Portugal in 1949, and would stay there until 1985 (Faircloth, Interview).² From his isolated position, he sought contact with the World Council

² After serving as a missionary to Portugal between 1949 and 1985, Samuel Faircloth became academic dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs of the evangelical Tyndale Theological Seminary in Badhoevedorp, Netherlands, from 1985 through 1990. See also Smith 19: "As I see it, it all started with higher criticism. Modernism came from Germany and when the Bible went, morals went. It is always so. Then comes judgment, and that has been the history of

of Churches. Upon his meeting with WCC secretary Willem A. Visser 't Hooft, however, he concluded that the unity the WCC attempted to achieve was driven too much by organizational doctrine that was “fabricated” and not “a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit” (Interview).³

Growing out of the postwar revival and the first-hand experience of soldiers, these activities were given greater organizational structure through the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). This organization of traditional Christians in America had little confidence in the mainline American Protestant denominations that they saw as embodying a growing liberalism, the same liberalism they considered to be the cause of the war. The global ambition of the World Council especially filled the evangelicals with concern.

James DeForest Murch, the editor of *United Evangelical Action*, house organ of the NAE, warned American Protestants that the WCC would very likely develop into a super-church. He envisioned “one church for one world” as the goal of the new global organization and drew a parallel to the monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church in the middle ages. Murch saw too many ominous mechanisms at work in the WCC to be at ease. The potential result of one super-church would be to allow all kinds of theological aberrations and leftist social policies and would disrupt effective evangelism and missions. Murch found a monopolistic agenda in the WCC—an agenda that would threaten to oust those who brought the traditional evangelical message (“Amsterdam” 46).

Despite the fact that the WCC denied the charges of being a super-church and emphasized that it was only a council, the goal of global unity made many evangelicals uncomfortable and alert. Some gave the WCC the benefit of the doubt and hoped that its evangelical contingent in the established churches would move the organization in their direction. Still, most remained suspicious.⁴ The German-American industrialist and evangelical philanthropist John Bolten even used the biblical parable of the mustard seed as a metaphor for the power of the Kingdom of God and the WCC to warn of the threat of the overgrown tree of apostate Christendom in which nations might take refuge. This unusual interpretation led him to believe that the “Monster Church” would “drive us soon underground and kill us.”⁵ While not all evangelicals endorsed this aggressive image of the WCC, many shared Bolton’s concern about the risk of being marginalized. Urged by his call to mobilize and organize evangelical Christians globally against the WCC threat, the officers of the NAE set out to expand internationally. To strengthen their own position, they sought conservative and free churches with whom they could design an alternative organization.

Germany.” Germans feel theologically superior, the only hope is with the next generation. For evangelical commitment to the armed forces, see Loveland 1-33.

³ CBFMS missionaries also had contact with the ICCC, but affiliated with EFMA.

⁴ Murch warned against exclusion of evangelicals by liberals and condemned the criticism of capitalism.

⁵ Bolten was treasurer of the World Evangelical Fellowship from 1951-61. Almost all commentators apply this parable in Matthew 13: 31-32 to the potential of the Kingdom of God, not of God’s enemy.

Ambitions and fears culminated in 1948. Amsterdam hosted the formal launch of the World Council of Churches and a number of American evangelical organizations crossed the Atlantic to find partners in Europe, specifically in the strategic Netherlands and prosperous Switzerland. NAE representatives met in Beatenberg, Switzerland, where they tried to launch an international evangelical network, while Youth for Christ organized its first international meeting in St. Clarens, also in Switzerland. Members of the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC)—the stalwart fundamentalists who regarded the World Council of Churches as the Antichrist, the opponent of the church in the end times—also met. They challenged the WCC directly by organizing a conference at the doorstep of the WCC's founding assembly in Amsterdam. Most evangelicals shared many of the ACCC's arguments against the WCC, but disagreed with its separatist strategy, seeing it as a force to divide rather than unify evangelicals. The ACCC actively sought international partners for its mission and tried to present the NAE as a weak, predominantly Pentecostal group, while promoting itself as a powerful organization (Wright, Letter to Kok). However, the ACCC's head-on confrontation with the monopolistic threat failed because its separatist strategy kept it at the margins. These concerns about a monopolistic threat thus encouraged competition rather than unity between the two clusters in the creation of new European religious network (Zeilstra 207-74).

Most American evangelicals did not seek the destruction of the WCC, but wanted to stay connected to it without getting officially involved. Billy Graham, for instance, was a frequent visitor to the WCC assemblies and kept an open dialogue with them. Still, the leaders of the NAE rejected the formal institution of the Council, its binding concepts, its concentration of power, and its exclusion of groups who were not represented in national church bodies. They feared they would be locked out of the international market since the WCC presented itself as the official liaison between national governments and religious organizations. Instead, they preferred a loose organization structured like the NAE. Their solution was not only an alternative to the alleged monopolistic agenda of the World Council, but also an organization that offered shelter to para-church organizations that did not fit into the denominational structure.

Historian Michael S. Hamilton notes the importance of this alternative model of organization. He argues that the strength of a denomination, and also a council of denominations such as the National Council of Churches and WCC, is centralized power, which grants privileges to members and exclusion to non-members, similar to the operation of the United Nations. The para-church organizations might have entered the World Council as a kind of NGO, but that solution was not as yet in sight and still would not have made them full members. So these fell outside of the official organization. Consequently, they set up their own umbrella organizations that included denominations.

A second incentive for the NAE to expand internationally was their bond with two missionary councils: the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association (IFMA), the 25 year-old association of mission agencies supported by various churches; and the newly founded Evangelical Foreign Missions Association (EFMA), which welcomed both ecclesiastical and para-church organizations.

Without formally delegated power, these associations operated like corporations. Paradoxically, the theological pluralists of the WCC were organizational centralizers and in that respect exclusive, while the theological traditionalists were exclusive in doctrine but organizationally pluralist. Internationally, evangelicals had to create an alternative network as well. Clyde Taylor, the NAE representative in Washington, D. C., traveled to Britain to secure EFMA access for mission work in the British colonies in Africa from the British government. He received this approval thanks to his contacts within the established missionary board, but he strove for direct access to the colonies. Taylor found the existing British organization, such as the century-old Evangelical Alliance, ineffective because it only organized annual prayer meetings with non-evangelicals. He expected that the organization would soon be overrun by the WCC.

The NAE felt squeezed in between the powerful WCC and the divisive International Council of Christian Churches (the international extension of the ACCC). In his search for partners in Holland, Taylor encountered competition from both sides. Denominations affiliated with the WCC held many trump cards. Taylor found out, for instance, that the largest Protestant church in the Netherlands had as its contact person for the World Church Service (the international organization for humanitarian aid) the same person who was the liaison to the government. This individual had the authority to issue permits for rebuilding, transferring money abroad, and importing tracts free of charge. Meanwhile, the ICCC actively solicited support among the smaller protestant churches in Europe, but had to overcome considerable antipathy for its explicit Americanism. National boards of evangelical organizations in Europe were cautious and did not immediately jump on the NAE bandwagon. American evangelicals had to first persuade their European partners that they were not monopolistic themselves. They had to tone down their American features, such as their adamant activism and proud patriotism (Taylor, "Confidential" 3).⁶

Consequently, the NAE-organizers emphasized the informal character of the first meeting in Clarens and prepared the sessions in close consultation with European partners who would meet as equals and remain autonomous. Financed by travel allowances, more than one hundred delegates from fourteen countries met in accommodations of St. George's School, a Church of England boarding school at Lake Geneva. Essentially, the strategy was to pretend there was no strategy. The Europeans accepted the NAE-declaration of faith, agreed to open up their own national associations to churches, societies, and individuals, and promised financial aid to those countries with organized evangelicals. *United Evangelical Action* would serve as the medium for publishing news about Europe. However, some British evangelicals did not support the founding of an International Coordinating Committee to form an International Association of Evangelicals (Wright, "Minutes" 1). The British leadership of the World's Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1846, was not persuaded by the current call for cooperation, since it had already been functioning for a century. It was also more optimistic than the Americans about the World Council of Churches and advised the evangelicals not to aban-

⁶ Americans dominated the ICCC, which scared a number of European groups away.

don the WCC and leave it in the hands of the ‘Modernists,’ which could result in a pact with Rome. Traditionally, the World’s Evangelical Alliance agreed on a more inclusive foundation than the NAE. The Americans were not satisfied with this slow vehicle, though they tried to accommodate it as much as possible (Randall, “American”).

The American delegation traveled to Italy, returned to Switzerland for the European Youth for Christ conference at Beatenburg (an evangelical Bible school founded in 1934 that hosted a number of international conferences on world evangelization), and subsequently visited other evangelical assemblies in Europe. The delegation linked up with others such as the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) and Youth for Christ. While the American delegation noticed a variety of approaches—the IFES was more European and was student-led, while YFC had a large American contingent and was adult-led—both groups practiced what the evangelical leaders called “storming the gates of the enemy in Europe” (“Youth for Christ World Conference”; Wright, “Minutes” 7). Elwin Wright, the NAE secretary for international cooperation, traveled to meet German evangelicals and led the delegation at the founding conference of the WCC in Amsterdam.

NAE executive secretary Rutherford L. Decker, pastor of the Baptist Temple in Kansas City and a future (1960) presidential candidate for the Prohibition Party, concluded, “I came away from Europe more profoundly convinced that united evangelical action is the need of the hour all over the world” (“Confidential Resume” 9). To this mission of positive action, the WCC and the ICCC presented organizational obstacles. Decker observed that Protestant Europe was divided between historically established churches that were unfamiliar with evangelism, and small missionary-minded free churches that depended on strong personalities and distrusted others. He saw a movement towards cooperation as the churches felt the pressures of the aftermath of the war and its resulting poverty and the threat of communism, yet he saw that they lacked a plan and the means. Americans, however, could provide both. Decker recommended making the existing activities more efficient before launching new initiatives. In practical terms, this meant that evangelicals would concentrate on translating and distributing evangelical literature and tracts while closely cooperating with the World’s Evangelical Alliance.

Political and economic tensions due to the Berlin Blockade and the formation of NATO postponed the follow-up meeting for a time. But 1950 ushered the sense that times were urgent, as reflected by the United States and European venues of the conferences. “We are rapidly approaching the time when it may become more difficult for evangelicals to continue their worldwide propagation of the gospel,” Wright contended, “unless they are able to join their hands effectively in defense of their Christian liberties” (“Movement”). Decker cited the political power of the WCC along with the Communist and Catholic threats. The ‘Evangelical International’s’ main task was to protect freedom of religion. The Americans, however, believed that the Europeans acted too slowly (Taylor, “Implementing” 27).

Several European countries with small evangelical minorities responded positively to this American courting. The majority of denominations in the Nether-

lands, a country more pluralistic than most, joined the WCC. A few smaller denominations stayed aloof and considered the NAE proposal a safe middle ground. The NAE appeared confessionally reliable and action driven because it welcomed associations as well as churches. Twenty-one people from eight different denominations founded the Netherlands Evangelical Alliance in 1949 (Dresselhuis and Oussoren; Murch, Letter; Wright, Letter to G. E. Hoek March, and Letter to G. E. Hoek November).⁷ The Dutch were happy to host the next conference in Woudschoten in August 1951, which led to the foundation of the World Evangelical Fellowship. This should have tied the movement closer to Europe, but only evangelicals in Spain and Britain showed real commitment to the project. The other continental European representatives found the infallibility clause in the WEF constitution too legalistic and restrictive. These skeptics met a year later in Siegen, Germany, and decided to stay in contact though not seek full cooperation since they found the Americans too aggressive in their rejection of everyone who did not adhere to their understanding of the inspired status of the Bible, too separate from their church communities, and too self-assured in their presentation. They did not want to submit themselves to an American litmus test of reliability. In September 1952, they founded the European Evangelical Alliance in Hamburg, which would remain a separate organization until 1968. The British did not want to choose between their American and European friends and decided to join both organizations.⁸

The American push to create a network of national evangelical associations in Europe to support American missions worked as an alternative to the centralized WCC and was expected to bolster failing local churches. They furnished Europeans with a working American “business plan” that they could emulate. In October 1949, J. Elwin Wright wrote home triumphantly about the Dutch efforts at coordination: “They are proceeding with care and great expectations to develop a very worthwhile organization here. In every respect they are following our pattern” (Wright, Letter to home). Thus, the first period found the NAE operating between two competitors, both of which claimed to offer the best model for global religious cooperation. Though the NAE rejected both models, they also found common ground with their opponents. They rejected the liberalism and exclusivist monopoly-character of the WCC, but appreciated its organizational force. While they approved of the search for doctrinal cohesion that the ICCC promised (though applied too strictly), they rejected its lack of cooperation. Because they felt an urgent need for action, the evangelicals focused as much of their forces as they could on their tradition and maintained a flexible structure. It seemed the best strategy to counter the threat of an ecumenical dominance.

⁷ Interestingly, it was the Evangelical Broadcasting Association, EO, that took on this central role in the late 1960s.

⁸ For the battle for the Bible, see Hankins 136-59; Howard; Hinkelmann 4-6; and Kessler 97. The EEA joined the WEF in 1968. The Dutch became observers of the Alliance.

American Evangelical Pioneers in Europe in the 1950s

American evangelicals' antithetical rhetoric and alternative organization should not obscure the fact that they ran on a number of parallel tracks with ecumenicals. Both sent relief, assisted refugees, protested against discrimination of Protestants in Southern Europe, and were united in their rejection of the state church as an organizing principle. Yet their relative power was very uneven. The ecumenical organizations had official connections with the major European denominations. The evangelicals had a few contacts with individual pastors and evangelists, mostly from free-church denominations and para-church organizations. However, their small size and limited means were compensated for by evangelist Billy Graham. The media attention Graham received showed that it was possible to get things done, even internationally, without the formal structure of the WCC; and his rising visibility lifted him above the walls that separated kindred souls in European churches, providing a spiritual fellowship and organizational continuity.

In the 1950s Graham became a brand name for evangelicalism after he established his ministry in America and had run successful rallies in Los Angeles. His crusades in 1954 and 1955 acquainted the citizens in London, Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, Geneva, Oslo and a score of other cities with his American-style outreach. The Greater London campaign, held in the Harringay Arena in March and April 1954, drew hundreds of spectators from all over Europe, many of whom were convinced that something similar could be arranged in their own countries. These campaigns activated European evangelical Christians to reach out, not only to the unchurched, but also to each other (Randall, "Conservative").

Graham's campaign drew headlines in the press, but when he left Europe, the fieldwork had to be done by others. Youth for Christ had been building a string of national independent boards all over Europe and functioned in the network that had grown up around the 1948 meetings in Switzerland and the Netherlands. These bridgeheads in all European countries linked up with a number of other American missionary organizations.

In 1952 missionary reports began to include Europe as a separate category for the first time. The 250 American missionaries in Europe comprised only one percent of the total American missionary enterprise. Some of them were fraternal workers sent by American denominations, mostly Presbyterians and Baptists, to assist sister churches in Europe, but most were members of mission organizations. The largest concentration of these new missions were found in Italy, Belgium, France, Portugal, Spain, and Austria, with minor ones in Britain, Holland, and Norway (Beaver "Distribution," "Expansion"). American mission agencies soon divided labor between northern and southern Europe. The ministries of American evangelicals in northern European countries targeted youth and mobilized Christians for evangelism, while in the south they distributed literature and tried to start new churches.⁹

⁹ For the seven main activities—church planting, personal evangelism, mass evangelism, literature distribution, broadcasting, theological education, support of national churches—see Wagner 41-50.

Experiences in evangelical missions in Portugal and France illustrate how evangelicals entered a new market. In the summer of 1949, the Faircloth family (Sam, his wife Arlie, and baby daughter Becky) left for Portugal with fifty-three pieces of luggage, including three church organs, three bicycles, and four large boxes of second-hand clothing (Faircloth, Field Letter, 1 June 1949). The tiny Portuguese Baptist Convention had asked the Americans to open a seminary to educate nationals as pastors for their churches. Portugal, then ruled by dictator Antonio Salazar, was the poorest country in western Europe. Foreigners were followed constantly by secret police trained by the Nazi Gestapo and struggled to obtain and retain their visas.

Faircloth counted 5,000 born-again Portuguese in a population of seven million. He found willing audiences but few able preachers and therefore founded the Baptist Theological Seminary of Leiria in 1950. This institution graduated over sixty percent of the Baptist ministers during the years 1950-65, when it was replaced by another seminary supported by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Society. Faircloth reported a monthly score of ten to thirty converts in various parts of Portugal, as he cruised the country in a “mechanical missionary” (a Dodge vehicle). A growing number of people attended services in early 1950, which provoked angry responses from Catholics and Communists. But thanks to international evangelical cooperation, the young mission was able to organize a twenty-day Youth for Christ rally in the summer of 1950 (Field Letters, 1949-50). At the beginning of Faircloth’s second term five years later, the seminary had grown from three to twenty-seven students, the first Portuguese ministers had been ordained, and new churches were in the planning stages. Support from America helped to buy a new car, lawn mowers, tool chests, and photographic supplies for publicity purposes. American diplomatic pressure helped Faircloth overcome visa restrictions. In late 1956, the church body counted thirty-one churches in addition to twenty-five missionary posts, with 2,215 regular attendees at its services. Twenty-one ordained pastors, fifty-eight preaching laymen, and twelve women workers were involved in leadership, but they were still a long way from their target of one hundred churches (Field Letters, 1955-1956).

These and similar initiatives caused Europe to appear on the radar of the broader evangelical constituency in the early 1950s. In 1951 the Belgian Gospel Mission joined the Interdenominational Foreign Mission Association. The *IFMA News Bulletin* published in December that year listed Europe as a separate category for the first time, announcing that The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM) had sent four missionaries to France, Wycliffe Bible Translators planned to set up a Linguistic Institute in Britain, and Genoa, Italy, had hosted a conference for thirty-five missionaries.

In the *Bulletin* the reputation of Europe grew darker every year: “One cannot help but think of Communism as almost synonymous with Europe, as this Godless religion seems to grip more and more of the peoples of Europe in an ironclad grasp.” Evangelical reports from Spain in July 1954 confirmed that the Catholic hierarchy feared Protestants more than Communists. The mid-1950s appeared to be the darkest hour. Yet the Italian legal decision to grant legitimacy to the Assemblies of God raised positive expectations for other Protestant groups (*IFMA News*).

The newly designed *IFMA News* brought more positive news in 1957 about radio stations available for purchase, newly founded literature organizations, and new elections that would increase civil liberties. In April 1959, *IFMA News* rejoiced: “The Summit Meeting in May, the solidarity of NATO, and other political issues, and the increasing economic stability all add up to important and strategic days that could mean much for the future of Europe. It is a day of opportunity for the gospel.”

The entry into the new market was strongest in the countries that were culturally farthest removed from the United States: Catholic-dominated, dictator-led, Communist-threatened, and often poor. This was one aspect of presenting Europe to evangelicals at home. The other growing awareness was that Europe lacked religious zeal and, even worse, prevented the spreading of the gospel. This discovery pointed to specific needs for which candidates were recruited.

Competition and Growth to Maturity in the 1960s

While the Faircloths stand as an example of denominational missions that sought to establish a presence in Europe, Robert P. Evans (1918-2011) was a vital link in the evangelical network in Europe. The son of Baptist missionaries in French-speaking Africa, Evans shared a number of entries on Faircloth's vita. He was a graduate of Wheaton College and the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and he served as a Chaplain in the United States Navy and Marine Corps between 1943-46. These experiences positioned Evans to be a perfect executive secretary for Youth for Christ, the organization that engaged him in setting up activities all over Europe. In 1949 he founded the European Bible Institute in Paris and remained the key evangelical contact in Europe as coordinator of the Greater Europe Mission (GEM) that grew out of this operation in 1952. Four years later, the GEM had fifty-one workers, mostly in France and Germany, who were mainly involved in teaching evangelical theology and evangelism (Evans, Newsletter; Letter). In a later reflection on Graham's first appearances in Germany in the early 1950s, Evans noted that the Lutheran leadership resisted the evangelism campaign because it broke the monopoly of the Lutheran Church in bringing the next generation to faith. The promotion of an evangelical alternative was one of Evans's objectives, and he recruited hundreds of Americans and trained hundreds of Europeans to participate in this endeavor (Evans, Interview).

Evans offered the most complete argument for Europe as a mission field. His 1962 book *Let Europe Hear* sought to correct the American perception that Europe was still a Christian continent. Evans argued it was in fact over-civilized, pagan, and de-Christianized. Each country had its specific cultural problem which explained its resistance to traditional Christianity: France was materialistic and therefore indulgent; Germany sought its salvation in cults and seemed bewitched; Denmark and most of Scandinavia had lost hope in the future; and nations with strong Christian traditions such as Holland had become ossified. No change for the better was in sight since the next generation seemed to have lost all interest in Christianity and the existing churches remained passive. Evans attributed this

situation to the Protestant Reformation that, he said, failed to bring the full gospel when it tied churches to territories. Christianity had lost authority through internal quarrels, was corrupted by nationalism, limited in scope, and most of all, had become too rational. The Reformation's legacy had led to intellectual change, but not a change of heart (47-89).¹⁰

Europe's freedom was at stake because of threats from Romanism, Communism, traditional Protestantism, secular existentialism, and militant cults. The first three threats were matters of monopoly, the second two were direct competitors for the minds and hearts of Europeans. In terms of foreign investment strategies, evangelicals had to choose 'greenfield operations,' in other words, launching new businesses. A 'take-over' was not possible, and a 'joint venture' was undesirable because it would only sustain the monopoly.¹¹

Evans and others succeeded in attracting thousands of Americans to religious work in Europe. His Greater Europe Mission was the largest missionary enterprise in Europe with one hundred workers, thanks to its three Bible schools in France, Italy, and Germany. In 1964 the home office in Wheaton circulated more than one hundred thousand missionary prayer letters and sent out 30,000 quarterly newsletters. In the same year an aggregate of 120 evangelical organizations in Europe offered a great variety of programs focused on distributing Bibles and literature, reaching children and youth, trying to establish evangelical churches, and educating evangelists (Frank, "Director's Report" 7; *North American* 66).

In February 1961, *IFMA News* began to impress upon its readers that Europe as a mission field was the "Ignored Continent." A spokesperson for evangelicals in Europe called for ten thousand missionaries in the next decade. The subsequent issues laid bare the drama of the European church. Bob Evans pointed to the invasion of new religious movements that had invested millions of dollars in sending thousands of missionaries into Europe. In comparison with the Mormons, who had 3,500 missionaries working in Europe, evangelicals lagged far behind. Thus the concern shifted from fighting an alleged monopoly to confronting new competition in which the historic European church, with less than three per cent of the population attending church services, was part of the problem, not the solution. Negative ideas about Europe accumulated without differentiating the particular situation in each nation. James H. Kane, mission instructor at Barrington College, Rhode Island and Lancaster Bible College, reported in 1963 that all Christian visitors to Europe after World War II came home shaking their heads: "Europe is the neediest of all mission fields today" ("Where are we").¹²

It was one thing to reject the monopoly of the WCC and to enter new territories and flood them with gospel literature. But it was another thing altogether to replace or change the traditional churches. To accomplish a change of mentality in

¹⁰ For a secular view of Europe at that time, see Calleo.

¹¹ Similar arguments were repeated in numerous contributions Evans made to evangelical publications. See "Can Europeans" 17, 26-27.

¹² A few years later, Kane lamented the decline in mission interest, which was noticeable in the drop of students in Missions in American Christian Colleges and Bible schools. He attributed this to increased competition from the Peace Corps and the growing popularity of short-term missionary trips ("Major Concerns").

Europe the agencies had to recruit more missionaries, raise more funds, and better cooperate with other missionary partners. This effort was made in the 1960s when the evangelical movement gained strength. In this decade the number of missionaries in Europe increased from 250 to 1,500, which was about five per cent of all missionaries active in American Protestant agencies. Even though budgets increased ten-fold during this decade, in absolute numbers American evangelicals spent only a few million dollars in Europe annually. Despite this growth, re-Christianization of the old continent was a far cry from what the missionaries envisioned. Most of these American missionaries continued to work in isolation with a handful of small congregations (Dayton).¹³

In the 1960s the various evangelical agencies adopted each other's specialties when sending a new mission group into the field. For instance, Portuguese Baptists trained for mass evangelism at the Billy Graham campaigns in London, and a Youth for Christ music team came to play at Portuguese outreach meetings. This combination of national growth and international support stimulated the missionaries in Portugal to prepare for a national campaign. In France the Conservative Baptist missionaries hosted cooperative campaigns with Operation Mobilization, the youth camp of Young Life, and with students from the Greater Europe Mission's Bible School in Lamorlaye, Paris ("Missions Situation Europe").

As the fear of being cut off from the market proved unwarranted, the American evangelicals had to reconsider their relationship to the ecumenical network. After all, Billy Graham's campaigns met considerable support from traditional Protestants and various evangelical mission agencies established themselves in many countries. The greatest difference between these adversaries was their relationship to the main European churches. To the ecumenical organizations, churches in Europe were partners; to the evangelicals, European churches were obstacles. The 1960s was a period of evangelical positioning, both in Europe and in the United States. Youth for Christ moved between established churches and independent groups. European staff discussed the relationship with the churches and concluded a bit self-assuredly, "Brethren with whom we find it difficult to agree may be longing for what we have to give them—namely, our testimony to the saving and keeping power of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we must have a humble spirit in our approaches to them" ("Report of European Youth for Christ"). Moreover, they thought that they could compensate for a reception in a 'cold' church on Sunday with 'warm' fellowship during the week. In the meantime they tried to involve ministers from mostly free churches in their follow-up training of new converts.

¹³ Only fragmental financial documentation about the budgets is available. The Greater Europe Mission's budget grew from \$134,444.84 in 1954 to \$504,810.50 in 1964 to \$828,567.25 in 1968 to \$1,964,003.69 in 1973. ("Auditor's Reports Greater Europe Mission"). The EEC had a 1969 budget of \$220,047.52 ("Auditor's Reports European Evangelical Crusade"). The Evangelical Alliance Mission spent about \$120,000 of its \$3 million budget on Europe in 1964, and in 1973, spent \$500,000 of its \$6 million budget in Europe ("Evangelical Alliance Mission Finances"). The Worldwide European Fellowship, Inc. spent \$67,535.56 on missionaries in the fiscal year 1963-1964 and \$98,275.35 in 1966 ("Worldwide European Fellowship Finances").

Evangelicals began to realize they could live neither with, nor without, the mainstream churches in the United States and Europe. As long as they were the underdog they could be critical, but now that they had built a strong base, they could add partnership to their strategies. A sense of a new evangelical self-worth was noticeable in the draft declaration written for the conclusion of the 1966 Congress on the Church's Worldwide Mission, in Wheaton, Illinois. It boldly stated that evangelicals were responsible for two-thirds of the Protestant missionaries in North America and Europe, even as it self-consciously rejected isolation, inefficiency, over-organization, and neglect of social evils ("Tentative Preliminary Draft," "The Wheaton Declaration").¹⁴ This statement expressed an awareness of the force of renewal within the Catholic church (without abandoning its caution since the changes could be cosmetic) while at the same time being alert to competition by cults and non-Christian religions. Though the draft still sternly warned against liberal Protestantism, which "ha[d] created an ecclesiastical organization aimed at achieving a religious monopoly," the final statement changed the wording into "moving in the direction of a worldwide religious monopoly." This small nuance revealed a change in the evangelical perception away from the WCC as a principled monopoly that needed to be attacked, to a perception of the WCC as a practical monopoly that evoked a practical response.

Representatives from the WCC observed both the strength and the ambition of the international evangelical network and were shocked by the hostility that they encountered at the 1966 Wheaton conference. Evangelical leaders took up the WCC's invitation to meet on an informal, personal basis to present positions to each other. The result was channels of communication remained open and common ground was found (Taylor, Letter to Pitts; Shuster, Interview).¹⁵

The 1966 Wheaton Conference had been Graham's idea since the early 1960s, but it had taken the evangelical leadership more time to agree on the proper people to invite. Graham changed his course by adding to his activities the training of evangelists at major international conferences. The result of this combination was recognized at the European counterpart to Wheaton held in Berlin in 1966, two decades after Graham's first arrival in Europe. For the first time, European journalists discovered 'evangelicals' as a coherent religious group with a unique selling point. Thanks to direct contacts and the educational projects—and soon-to-be mass media events—Europeans would get to know the American evangelicals better than the mainstream American churches. But the evangelicals had even higher ambitions.

¹⁴ The approved text said "that create ecclesiastical organizations moving in the direction of a worldwide religious monopoly." For an example of visa problems in India caused by the agency not belonging to the NCC in India, see Taylor, Letter to Kirby.

¹⁵ The partners included Horace Fenton, John Howard Yoder, Lesslie Newbigin, and Eugene Smith, but the evangelicals gave up when the WCC assembly in Uppsala approved violence for liberation purposes. Eugene Smith was appreciated by Taylor, but considered naive and not critical enough (Taylor Letter to Kirby 1964). Kirby had an article about evangelical cooperation but Taylor kept it private in order not to give its enemies an argument (Taylor to Kirby 1962).

The newest technological innovations, such as direct TV connections between European cities, were tested during Billy Graham's Earls Court Crusade in London, 1967. New media connections seemed to multiply Graham's presence everywhere and offered an alternative to addressing large audiences in person. American evangelicals' sense of urgency led to an efficient organization, which targeted diversified audiences in Europe.

The End of Monopoly Thinking: Diversification and Cooperation in the 1970s

After the first generation of American evangelical missionaries in Europe collected sufficient converts to launch new congregations, some coordinators of the mission agencies reviewed their stance toward the existing churches in Europe. They realized that a foreign-based mission would alienate Europeans from their natural environment. To avoid this isolation, they began to explore collaborations with European churches. These contacts would remove the stigma of being an American proselytizer. Furthermore, they would provide legal protection, leave converts less isolated, and open up two-way communication with European churches. This process could increase religious unity and make European churches share the responsibility for missions, which, in turn, would provide more continuity for young believers. Edwin E. Jacques, the overseas secretary of the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society, summarized the findings of a summit of evangelical mission leaders in 1972, and concluded that staying culturally separate would harm, not help, the missionary cause (Jacques).

Yet even with this strategic turn away from isolation, it was difficult to find a European church that shared the basic ideas of American evangelicals. A survey of key issues confirmed the existence of a transatlantic divide, extending even among the free churches in Europe that had no government support. Many free churches rejected the American concept of the "word-by-word dictation" of the Bible and most orthodox Protestants in Europe strongly adhered to "baptismal regeneration" without an explicit conversion experience (Jacques 3).

Jacques concluded that finding European partners was an almost impossible task. The goal of collaboration was hindered by the low prestige of American missions, which they ranked well below the majority churches—whether Catholic or Protestant—and the free churches. So even an affiliation with the latter could not improve their acceptability. Moreover, these free churches displayed a great variety within their own affiliations: some had joined the WCC in order to survive; others resolutely rejected these ties, following American separatist sentiments. Even if European partners could be found, identification with them led to alienation from their American constituency, as relaxed use of alcohol and tobacco in Europe, for example, went against evangelical taboos (Jacques 4).

Self-critically, the report suggested that the main obstacle was American impatience with the survival strategy of European churches. What Americans considered a lack of spirit and vitality, Europeans felt as a respectable effort to survive centuries of pressure. The report saw few options for cooperation. European church bodies that allowed theological and political differences or were affiliated

with non-evangelical organizations did not qualify as potential partners. Only after the essential issues had been cleared, could flexibility be granted. Yet even then the pace of affiliation was slow, requiring much time to build trust. Too often European pastors felt attacked by American missionaries and their claims of quick success. If a partner denomination could be found, the missionary needed to cooperate with the existing bodies of that church and identify responsibilities and tasks. This report revealed that evangelical missions to Europe had entered a new phase of reflection and calibration.

Not all American agencies were ready to embrace this new policy. The older mission groups organized in the IFMA, which was more conservative than the EFMA, held on to their strategy to keep converts away from the existing churches. They advised only affiliation with small free evangelical groups. Walter Frank of the GEM justified the separate churches in traditionally “Christian countries” in Europe. These churches were weak and in an “apostatized anemic condition” and needed American reinforcements, both spiritually and organizationally. He considered the risk of membership in the existing, (partly) state-supported churches too high, because believers would be absorbed without a trace and not allowed to belong and create “a N. T. self-supporting, self-governing and self-propagating church” (Frank, “IFMA Missions” 4).

When the GEM looked back on twenty-five years of service in 1974, its founder, Robert Evans, noted that missions in Europe were too relaxed and seemed satisfied with the 2,000 students that the GEM had trained (“As I see it”). His executive director, Don Brugman, responded in 1977 to voices calling for foreign missionaries to go home, reflecting that many functions had been handed over to Europeans, but “Europe is still at the pioneer stage of missions compared with many parts of the world. The need for missionaries is more critical than ever” (7). Two years later, in 1979, Wayne Detzler, GEM’s associate director for Northern Europe, witnessed a new generation of European evangelical leaders and wrote more responses to the GEM’s activities (1). Even so, Evans wanted to keep his workers from fully integrating in European churches: “we do not believe that the foreign missionary’s role is best played when he independently joins the national church structure itself. He then is in the same position as a national pastor or Christian worker. He loses the very uniqueness inherent in the nature of the missionary task.” In actuality, he saw that a true believer inevitably would have to leave his or her church because he or she was “trapped in a less than adequate group where he cannot grow.” Moreover, the foreign missionary who joined a national church (even a non-liberal one) would lose his advantage, as “a different viewpoint, an optimistic outlook born of experience in a more active evangelical environment [read: America], mobility, knowledge of worldwide methods, the prayerful backing of expectant donors, biblical oversight and accountability, and many others” (Evans, “Our responsibility” 3). He pleaded for a separation of roles; the foreign missionary must keep his or her distance, even to the free churches in Europe.

Billy Graham did not intend to establish new churches. However, a growing disappointment with European churches, which failed to take the gospel outside their sanctuaries, moved him to take matters into his own hands. While the number of evangelical American missionaries swelled worldwide, Graham prepared

an even larger effort through a series of large international training conferences. He organized the first one in Amsterdam in 1971, where he told 1,200 Europeans that evangelism was not a project of a church, but rather, as the current Jesus Revolution in California showed, an attitude of each believer (Press conference).

This sentiment was echoed by a Dutch evangelist, Jan van Capelleveen, who characterized the situation of Western Europe in the 1970s as “The Church is out; the Bible is in” (151). He alluded to the unpopularity of institutionalized religion and the vitality of grass-roots religious activities. As evidence for his claim, Capelleveen contrasted the decline of the number of clergy to the growth of informal Bible study groups. The choice to invest more in individual outreach to others ignored the older religious institutions in Europe and was one way out of the dilemma over existing churches.

The growth of the evangelical presence in Europe allowed evangelicals to present themselves not only as antipodes to the WCC, but also as partners (Baker, *Travelog* 5). The big 1974 mission conference in Lausanne, Switzerland marked the maturity of a global evangelical network. Evangelicals succeeded in establishing an international podium and made themselves visible as a third force to be reckoned with in Christendom alongside the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches. The Lausanne conference broadened the social and political scope of the evangelicals, set the stage for indigenization, and opened American evangelicalism to global influences. The outcome of this decade was that technology offered an alternative network to churches and provided new methods of mobilization, making it possible to reach Europe as one market and Christians as individuals.

Recognition came from the other side as well. In 1976 the WCC circulated a plan for a joint evangelical, conciliar, Roman Catholic and Orthodox missiology conference. Evangelicals were beginning to realize that the WCC was theologically different, but also that there was common ground with the WCC that could serve evangelicals as well. This shift was a result of a new historical awareness. WEF president Waldron Scott expressed this new insight in 1976, noting, “this business of evangelical cooperation is always relative to the past and the future and is therefore evolutionary in character. I must keep this in mind. I am eager for broader evangelical cooperation” (Baker, *Letter to Scott*; Scott, *Letter to Baker*).

Yet the difference in scope and organization between WCC and WEF remained enormous. The WCC had a 1977 budget of \$18 million while the WEF operated on a budget of \$150,000— not even one percent of the WCC’s budget, and barely sufficient to keep the organization afloat. Of this money, \$25,000 came from the Billy Graham organization.¹⁶ Still, this money was needed to make the WEF a global organization. At the end of the 1970s, the Third World constituency became a stronger voice in the WEF, and Pentecostal and Charismatic Christians, including those in the Roman Catholic Church, were welcomed (Howard 116-24). Despite the continuing differences of opinion about the best way forward

¹⁶ American churches contributed a third to the WCC budget, and German churches 40 percent. Two thirds of the WEF funds came from the United States and one third from Europe (also mainly from Germany) and Australia (Scott “Double Helix”).

(either under the WEF or by continuing the Lausanne Committee), it was clear that evangelicals wanted to broaden both their scope and their constituency.

Conclusion: The 1980s and beyond

The growth of the evangelical missions in Europe continued in the 1980s. In 1985 ten percent of the 37,000 American missionaries worldwide were stationed in Europe. Not only were they overwhelmingly evangelical, they were also involved in their number one priority: evangelism. Missionary statistics would stay at this level, showing that Europe had become a standard mission field for Americans.¹⁷

Before American televangelists came to dominate the news and complicate European-American relations in the 1980s, many missionary organizations, including the Graham campaign, enriched Europe's religious market with a comprehensive evangelical network, which had reproduced itself through training programs and mass meetings. While American evangelicals did not accomplish their goal of re-Christianizing Europe, they did achieve their other goal of challenging the monopolistic power of the WCC without marginalizing themselves alongside their fundamentalist brethren. Thanks to the mobilization of staff, money, and organizational innovations, these evangelical agencies introduced the new category of the 'evangelical Christian' and consolidated American religious pluralism all over Europe. According to the EEA, evangelicals in Europe are presently estimated at 15 million souls.

The initial resistance to uniformity and mandatory organizational structures among evangelicals had encouraged the privatization of missions, but in the 1980s shifted to more cooperation. This trend achieved its climax early in 2011. What was unimaginable 70 years before happened that summer: on Tuesday, June 28, 2011, the World Council of Churches, The World Evangelical Alliance, and the Vatican reached agreement on a document calling for cooperation in world missions and a code of conduct. The market for Protestant religious services from the United States changed from a monopolistic construct to a real joint venture.

Acronyms

ACCC – American Council of Christian Churches
 BGCA – Billy Graham Center Archives
 BGEA – Billy Graham Evangelical Association
 CBFMS – International Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society
 EEA – European Evangelical Alliance
 GEM – Greater European Mission

¹⁷ Europe had proven to be the fastest-growing area in evangelical missions and it stayed close to the core activity of evangelism. In the 1960s evangelicals began to invest increasingly more money in humanitarian causes at the costs of direct evangelism and church planting, but this shift did not take place in Europe (Hamilton 118-19).

ICCC – International Council of Christian Churches
 IFMA – Interdenominational Foreign Missionary Association
 NAE – National Association of Evangelicals
 WCA – Wheaton College Archives
 WCC – World Council of Churches
 WEA – World Evangelical Alliance
 WEF – World Evangelical Fellowship
 UEA – United Evangelical Association

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