Randall Balmer, professor of American Religious History at Barnard College (Columbia University) and contributing journalist for *Christianity Today*, has presented a diverse and palpable sketch of American Evangelicalism in *Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*.

The book, now in its fourth edition, reads more like a personal journal than a scholarly analysis. While there have been a great number of scholarly texts written by sociologists and historians about the Evangelical phenomenon in the United States (see for example Christian Smith's *Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, Michael Emerson's *Divided by Faith*, Mark Noll's *American Evangelical Christianity* or D.G. Hart's *Deconstructing Evangelicalism*), none read as personally as Balmer's.

He explains that at least part of his reason for writing this text was to come to grips with his own history of being raised in a fundamentalist home. It is in this strain of both appreciation for and critique of the subculture that Balmer's book takes on a uniquely deep pathos. Yet, it is not only for personal reasons that the text is written, Balmer also contends that much of the media's presentation of the Evangelical subculture is inaccurate. Rather than seeing Evangelicalism as a cohesive whole, Blamer hopes to show in this book that the subculture is made up of diverse groups loosely linked by a slim theology and a common experience of mainstream culture as hostile. To make this point Balmer refuses to spend time and space discussing Evangelicalism's "big hitters" like Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell, or James Dobson. Rather, Balmer seeks to present a more organic vision of the subculture by presenting the ministries and perspectives of lesser known Evangelical personalities and groups.

Balmer calls this text a "travel log" into the subculture of Evangelicalism. And there no doubt appears to be thousands of miles logged here in sketching the landscape of the subculture. The organization of the chapters follows this flow: story about the group or person being discussed, a wider vision of how they (individual or group) connect to the larger history of Evangelical religion in America, and a return to the individual or group unpacking what they believe
about themselves, the culture, and God. It is in this last section that Balmer’s text takes on a deeply personal tone; he often adds in anecdotal accounts of how the perspective of this person or group connects to his own story and journey. The structure of these chapters leads one to see *Mine Eyes Have Seen The Glory* as a kind of hybrid history/ethnography piece.

While Balmer avoids the “big hitters” of Evangelicalism it appears that he discusses just about everyone else in his eighteen chapters. His journey begins in Southern California at Calvary Chapel and its birth as a church for the “Jesus freaks.” He then moves from the shorts and t-shirts of Calvary to the conservative tie and sport coat environment of Dallas Theological Seminary. After discussing dispensationalist theology, inerrancy of the bible, and sexism, Balmer moves on to Iowa to examine the Christian film making of director Donald Thompson. Before departing for Phoenix and the prophetic healing services of Neal Frisby, Balmer discusses the impact of Evangelicalism’s use of media technology.

Chapter five is one of the handful of chapters that has particular relevance for those interested in youth ministry. Here Balmer visits Word of Life youth camp, unpacking the ministerial philosophy and theology behind many youth camps in American Evangelicalism. Another chapter of relevance is chapter ten, where he discusses his experience at the Christian Book Association and raises questions about seeing Evangelicalism as a market force within culture. He continues to ask many of these same questions in chapter sixteen as he visits a Christian rock concert and follows the band Jars of Clay as they rise to top of the contemporary Christian music charts. Chapter eighteen is one of the two new chapters in the fourth edition (along with chapter seventeen), here Balmer visits Saddleback Church and unpacks the work of Rick Warren starting from his days in youth ministry.

In between these chapters Balmer examines a Pentecostal church that takes on liturgical forms (chapter six), the bleak future of the bible college (chapter seven), Evangelicals in the 1988 Iowa caucus (chapter eight), John Perkins’ fight for justice for African-Americans (chapter nine), Balmer’s experience of a holiness camp (chapter twelve), and Jimmy Swaggart’s life after his moral failures (chapter fifteen).

While *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory* is truly a journey, Blamer writes in way that one feels sucked into the life and situation of each chapter; this reviewer is left wondering if Blamer’s journey is truly representative. I say this in two views.