



Kenneth J. Stewart (PhD, University of Edinburgh) is professor of theological studies at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Georgia. His books include *Ten Myths About Calvinism*, *Restoring the Reformation*, and *The Emergence of Evangelicalism*.

Stewart is a specialist in the history of Christianity from the Reformation to the present with special interest in the development of the evangelical Protestant tradition. He has contributed to reference works such as the *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography*, and the *Encyclopedia of the Reformed Faith*.

Is Protestant evangelicalism in crisis?

Today it is increasingly difficult for Protestants to identify what counts as distinctively Protestant, much less what counts as evangelical. As evangelicals increasingly lose contact with the churches and traditions descending from the Reformation and as relations with Roman Catholicism continue to thaw, it becomes harder to explain why one should remain committed to the Reformation in the face of perceived deficits and theological challenges with the Protestant tradition.

*In this brief Q-and-A with Kenneth J. Stewart, he unpacks how his years of scholarship and observation of the Protestant church have led to his writing of *In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past and the Evangelical Identity Crisis*.*

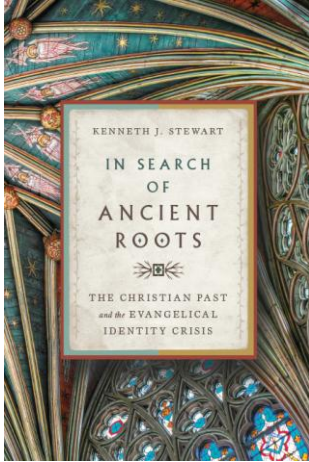
When did you start to see what you call the evangelical identity crisis develop?

Kenneth J. Stewart: Beginning in the mid-1980's, I observed what began as a 'trickle' of departures from broadly evangelical Christianity for Roman Catholicism and forms of Eastern Orthodoxy. Since then, this trickle has increased into something greater. Though the total numbers of those who have 'voted with their feet' in this way is not really large, those who undergo this transition have mastered the art of drawing attention to their change of allegiance both by publishing testimonial books and articles and making clever use of the internet. The attempt is made to suggest that there is a 'tsunami' of such departures from evangelical Christianity, when the actual numbers are quite modest. The number of Catholics turning evangelical Protestant far exceeds those traveling in the opposite direction.

How is the book a part of a broader history of scholarship for you?

Stewart: My actual expertise is in Reformation and Modern era Christianity and the bulk of my writing and reviewing has focused on the transmission of the evangelical tradition across the past half-millennium. Yet the present book represents my effort to come to terms with the emergence among younger (and quite thoughtful) Christians of today of an idea that is ready to discount (or at least to relativize) the value of the evangelical Protestant tradition. They now increasingly suspect that this tradition has short-changed them by depriving them of contact with the best of pre-Reformation Christianity.

But this attitude falsely attributes to the *whole* of evangelicalism and of Protestantism these patterns of neglect which are: (1) characteristic, if at all, only in the middle decades of the twentieth century (1920-1970) and (2) most characteristic of evangelical churches that represent an 'independent' or 'non-aligned' Christianity, which had decided to live without the benefit of the Christian tradition mediated across the centuries in Lutheran, Anglican, Reformed, Methodist, and Baptist forms.



In Search of Ancient Roots: The Christian Past and the Evangelical Identity Crisis

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\$30, 304 pages, hardcover

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Who do you hope will read this book?

Stewart: The book is written primarily to provide broadly evangelical Christians with a framework for thinking about the difficulty posed by departures from evangelicalism. Those who leave evangelicalism in this way are rendering a negative verdict about evangelical Christianity's adequacy. They judge that it is not properly informed by Christian antiquity; they find that it has a steady tendency to frivolity and banality; they question whether it is capable of producing thought-leaders who are prepared to influence society from a Christian viewpoint.

What do you want readers to take away from your scholarship here?

- It gives fresh articulation to the conception that evangelical Christianity has been a perennial (though not solitary) strand of the Christian faith.
- It highlights evangelical Christian contributions to the study of the intertestamental literature, early Christian writings, and the Church Fathers across the past five centuries.
- It provides an irenic, though not uncritical, analysis of the modern papacy and of ecumenical dialogue on the doctrine of justification.