

# **Church History**

## **20<sup>th</sup> Century Church** *(RVS Notes)*

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## **20<sup>th</sup> Century Church: A Global Faith in a Fragmented Age**

### *A perspective on ourselves as students of history:*

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Corinthians 4:7)

The church of Christ in every age, beset by change, but Spirit led,  
Must claim and test its heritage, and keep on rising from the dead.  
Then let the servant church arise, a caring church that longs to be  
A partner in Christ’s sacrifice, and clothed with Christ’s humility. (Wareham)

### *A perspective on the value of historical study itself:*

“How shall we labor with any effect to build up the Church, if we have no thorough knowledge of her history ... History is, and must ever continue to be, next to God's Word [and Spirit], the richest foundation of wisdom, and the surest guide of all successful practical activity.” Philip Schaff

History is to a society or group therein what experience and heritage is to a person. However, there's a kicker. History is never as immediate to the group as experience is to the person, thus multiplying the chances of its lessons being ignored.

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## I. Introduction; 20<sup>th</sup> Century Milieu

**§6-101. In general.**—In 1914, Christianity was on a rising tide, even though internally there was open dissent and departure from the historic faith. Protestantism, once limited to Europe and eastern North America, became the main religion in emerging nations across both hemispheres. The 19<sup>th</sup> century had been expansionist and optimistic. The expansionist tendency was justified in Europe as the “white man’s burden” and in the United States as “Manifest Destiny”. Optimism accompanied expansion and Protestant missions and theology reflected that optimism. Protestant theological development expressed trust in human ability, in technological progress, in an evolutionary process that was bringing humankind to its appointed goal. Progress in Western civilization was a harbinger of the new age.

Then total war encompassed the world between the very powers who were supposed to be civilizing the globe. Progress and technology revealed its underside—the multiplication of destructive power and the reality of hatred and evil. The war, far from being “the war to end all wars,” solved nothing. There was a growing feeling around the globe that Western civilization, far from ushering in an era of happiness and fulfillment, was just involving the entire world into the tumult of its conflicts.

**§6-102. Christianity's transition to 20<sup>th</sup> century.**—Two aspects made Christianity’s transition into the 20<sup>th</sup> century different from earlier transitions: (1) the threats came mostly from within, and (2) the transition was quite revolutionary in tone and highly ideological. Modernism, ideological distortions of the Christian faith, and the results of industrialism and imperialism gave rise to the threats from within. The rise of the secular state and the militant ideologies of fascism and communism drove the revolutionary and ideological conflict. These militant ideologies were later surpassed by the rise of jihadist movements in Islam. The great wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ruptured the Western progress bubble and the idea of the superiority of Western culture. People around the globe insisted on doing theology from their own perspectives and dealing with their own problems and insights.

**§6-103. End of Christendom.**—Meanwhile, in the traditional centers of Christianity in Europe and North America, changes marking the “end of Christendom” were significant. There was no longer state support for Christian endeavor and that lack of support was reflected on the personal level. Increasing numbers of people felt that the old faith was no longer tenable. Society in Europe and North America grew increasingly secular with a modern worldview having no place for Christianity or for any religion.

The era also witnessed the decline of Western Europe in the total world scene. Optimism that had characterized the 19<sup>th</sup> century was replaced with pessimism, even a defeatist passivity. In addition, the era saw the de-Christianization of great masses of Western Europe. The proportion of those who called themselves Christians declined, and the percentage of regular practitioners

nosedived. But while this was happening, Christianity was taking deeper root in newer frontiers in Asia and Africa. In addition, new currents of ecumenical unity were stirring.

## **II. Key Trends in a Fragmented Era**

### **A. Social, Philosophical, and Political Trends**

#### **1. Secularism and the secular state**

**§6-111. In general.**—Secularization describes the changes in the Western world since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. To the medieval and early modern, church and state and sacred and secular were just two ways of looking at one reality—the Christian world. The Enlightenment drew a distinction between the sacred and the secular. With the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Church contended with an increasingly powerful and intrusive governmental reality determined to separate itself from religious influence. Religion was an aspect of life, properly a private matter, not the core of life.

The secular world has not only sidelined religious influence but has grown increasingly disinterested in God altogether. It does not seek to know or do His will, nor does it recognize His standards. Regions formerly referred to as Christian Europe or Christian America are now often described as being in a "post-Christian era."

#### **2. Secular ideologies**

**§6-112. In general; post-Christian ideologies.**—The historian, Arnold Toynbee, once suggested that the 20<sup>th</sup> century marked the replacement of the world's great religions by three post-Christian ideologies: nationalism, communism, and individualism. Each of these assumes the character of a religious faith, makes ultimate demands (patriotism, class struggle, or secular humanism), and has its sacred symbols and ceremonies, inspired writings, dogmas, and charismatic leaders.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century brought colossal struggles between political and military giants representing diverse ideologies. The new religion of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was nationalism. Pan-Germanism met pan-Slavism in the Balkans and provided the spark for a world war in 1914. In 1917, the Bolsheviks, a militant, self-appointed vanguard of the new socialist utopia, came to power in Russia. World War I ended with a vindictive peace at Versailles in 1919 and directly lead to the rise of Nazism ten to fifteen years later. A new paganism appeared in appeals to laws of economics, race, and the inviolate rights of individuals from both sides of the ideological spectrum.

**§6-113. Communism.**—The Berlin wall, erected in the summer of 1961, was a symbol for the divides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. On one side were the somber buildings of the Communist world with

its gospel of an earthly utopia in a future classless society. On the other side was the “free West” with its endless search for health, wealth, and happiness now.

**§6-114. —Russian Revolution and aftermath.**—Communism and nationalistic fascism resembled each other in their methods: dictatorial leadership, one centralized party, ruthless terror, propaganda, censorship, controlled economy, and hostility to religion. However, Communism emphasized the working class, revolution as a means of social change, and the utopian ideal of a classless society.

Lenin (Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov (1870-1924) was the mastermind of the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik ascension to power in the period from 1917 to 1924. When he died, a power struggle ensued between Joseph Stalin and Leon Trotsky. Stalin won and by 1927, he was the unrivaled dictator. In 1929, Stalin’s Law on Religious Associations placed strict limits church activities, effectively denying them any influence on Russian society. Intense persecution followed and thousands of clergy were imprisoned or killed in Stalin’s purges. The propaganda, harsh laws, and Stalinist terror brought the Orthodox and other churches to the brink of disintegration by the outset of World War II.

The exigencies of war brought some relief. Stalin allowed the churches to set up their organizations again, collect funds, and give religious instruction to children. By 1945, the Orthodox Church and other religious groups attained legal corporate status, allowing them to purchase property. The Orthodox enjoyed their most favorable situation in Russia since the Revolution.

**§6-115. Fascism; rise of Nazism.**—Fascist governments glorify the nation. The German cultured class was ripe for Hitler because they had turned to a romantic view of Germany’s past, one that was heroic, aristocratic, and often pantheistic. The Nazis rejected the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment and lionized the primitive past and ancient sagas where modern complexity and ambiguity had no place.

The Nazis developed a barbaric and racist anti-Semitism. To regain the lost innocence of the past, Germany needed to be purged of her impurities. The Jews served as scapegoats. The eradication of the Jewish race was an act of social purification necessary to restore Germany to her uncorrupted past. It started by denying Jews their rights as citizens, progressed to forcing many to emigrate, grew barbarically violent when the Third Reich overran much of Europe. In 1940, the “final solution” of exterminating the entire Jewish population of Europe began in earnest.

**§6-116. Christians in a war of ideologies.**—Christians on both sides of the conflict participated in their nations’ war efforts, but with less zeal than in World War I. German believers were in a particularly demanding situation. Hitler’s henchmen worked toward the “final settlement” of the church question, subordinating the church to the new order, stripping clergy of all privileges, and leaving Christianity to “die a natural death.” Resistance to Hitler was quite meager. German

Christian acceptance of the Nazi claim to be the only alternative to Communism was facilitated by an attitude concerned with individualistic faith, traditional ideas of the submission to the governing authorities, and a conservative outlook rejecting leftist social and political reform.

**§6-117. Effects of war.**—World War II had a devastating effect on European Christianity, physically and morally. Thousands of churches were destroyed, enormous numbers of clergy killed, and faithful believers persecuted and uprooted from their homes. The devastation of the war led many to doubt the possibility of a "just" war. Christian participation in war efforts only seemed to lead to their intensification. Nationalism frustrated international peace initiatives. The specter of atomic warfare made earlier theories justifying war seem naïve.

In the Cold War that followed World War II, Christians again found themselves on both sides of the divide. Although it began as a rivalry between the two great powers emerging from the war, it rapidly took on ideological dimensions. Both sides of the polarized world received support from Christians: anti-Communism in the West and anti-imperialism in the Soviet bloc and beyond.

### 3. Postmodernism

**§6-121. In general.**—By the 1960s, a widespread discontent with modernism's fixation on reason and progress became apparent. Generations born before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century had emphasized reason, progress, and cogent articulation of reality along optimistic lines. In the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, postmodernism came to the forefront. Postmodernists see limitations in human language and logic and focus more on shared experiences and images. They are not so concerned with large, calculated growth patterns, placing greater emphasis on personal connections and relationships. The sections that follow are something of a primer on postmodernism.

**(a) Intellectual and cultural passageways.**—Postmodernists see history unfolding in three stages:

**§6-122. Pre-modern stage.**—Pre-modern is that period in intellectual history encompassing the birth of reflective thought through the Renaissance and Reformation up until the Enlightenment. While this term embraces widely divergent opinions, including mythological paganism, classical rationalism, and biblical theism, these opinions share a belief in the supernatural and in the existence of objective truth. Life in this world owes its existence and meaning to a supernatural realm beyond the senses.

Christian theism came to dominate the intellectual landscape of this mode of thinking. God is the foundation of truth and human purpose lies in discerning our relationship with God and in discovering and doing his sovereign will. However, humanity's fallen desire to be autonomous did not fade, and this desire, coupled with the seeming success of reason and science, brought a shift in the dominant worldview to Modernism.

**§6-123. Modernism.**—The Enlightenment was the birth of the modern era. Reason alone would replace the reliance on the supernatural born from the ignorance of unenlightened times. While not all Enlightenment thinkers rejected belief in God, they did banish in practice the relevance of the transcendent. If God existed, he was either uninterested in or uninvolved with his creation. Reason, as best seen and applied in the scientific method, became the basis of the modern worldview. Rational man did not need to trust in anything beyond logic and normal sense experience.

Modernism's arrogance, in effect, banned the supernatural from thoughtful consideration and reduced the human situation to logic and empirical science. Humanity was simply the result of a random chance assimilation of pre-existing atoms, subject to the laws of nature in a closed universe. By removing God to the unreachable transcendent (and then by removing him altogether), Modernism enthroned reason and its scientific delivery system, giving sinful people the license to do all the unrestrained evil of which they were capable. After bloody revolutions, slavery, totalitarian oppression, two world wars, Communism, Nazism, and the terrifying specter of nuclear annihilation, people began to question whether reason, science, and technology necessarily make for a better people and a better world.

**§6-124. Postmodern stage.**—Postmodernism is, in essence, an anti-worldview. Large scale theoretical interpretations of reality capable of universal application just do not exist according to this view. Worldviews claiming to be foundational to understanding reality are oppressive according to postmodernists. There is a vital need to deconstruct ideas of reality based on these constructs. Reality is whatever individuals or communities make it out to be.

**(b) Tenets of postmodernism**

**§6-126. Truth, meaning, and morality do not exist objectively.**—Truth, meaning, and morality are constructs of individuals and/or communities. What constitutes truth is relative to the individual or community holding the belief. Modernism and biblical theism debated which view was “true;” postmodernism attacks both views because of their claims that there is something that is “true” in a generally applicable way. Postmodernism rejects the idea that reality makes sense in any objective fashion and reduces “truth claims” to personal or cultural biases.

**§6-127. Cultural forces completely shape individuals.**—Culture determines who we are; language determines how and what we think. This is neither right nor wrong; all cultures and language forms and patterns are equally valid. Against this background, it is difficult to understand how multi-culturalists have any basis for railing against what they see as oppression and injustice of governing institutions, or for making any argument to dismantle the paradigms of the past and bring the “margin to the center.” The agenda of bringing the margin to the center involves a rewriting of patterns of dominance in favor of those who have been excluded from power in the past, whether for reason of creed, race, gender, sexual preference, etc. However, given this belief structure, on what basis do you assert a persuasive agenda? There is nothing right, only striving for power to impose your group's will.

**§6-128. Individual identity undermined; new tribalism emerges.**—In fairness, most people identifying themselves as postmodernists would deny this. However, their viewpoint tends to see people as existing primarily as members of groups. The idea of American individualism is an illusion, a mere creation of the middle-class cultural values of independence and introspection. Identity is primarily collective. Group identity sets an individual's plate.

Thus, under the mantra of “diversity” what really emerges is a new tribalism. Multiculturalism asserts that the traditional idea of the American “melting pot” assimilating various cultures is false. America is a “salad bowl” with all sorts of distinctive ingredients. Group cultural interests define all the headline particulars—education, morality, politics, religion, and all others.

**§6-129. Humanism undermined.**—Values prioritizing human creativity, autonomy, and importance are misguided. There is no universal humanity; each culture constitutes its own reality. Traditional humanistic values are really canons of exclusion and oppression of the natural environment. Groups must empower themselves to assert their own values and take their proper place.

**§6-130. Transcendence rejected.**—There are no absolutes and even if there were, we would have no access to them. We are bound to our culture and circumscribed by our language. Society is not subject to overreaching moral law; it makes its own law. Moral values are simply expressions of preference and power.

In this rejection of transcendence, postmodernism has spawned a plethora of new faiths. These tend to revolve around self and keep the postmodern faith—the non-reality of an objective universe and the relativity of truth.

**§6-131. Reason undermined.**—Reason and objective truth are illusions, masks for cultural power games. Fulfillment comes in connection with the larger group, by releasing natural impulses, by cultivating subjectivity, and by being “authentic” and refusing to impose an artificial order on one's life. Postmodernism not only rejects the possibility of any worldview (“meta-narrative” in postmodern terms) but also in any belief in coherence itself. Belief in a worldview that is foundational to reality or even in the possibility of coherence is inherently oppressive. We are lost in a cosmic play with the next scene as the only firm reality, so let's get on with it. A “totalizing” understanding is beside the point.

**§6-132. Power games are what it's all about.**—All institutions, all human relationships, all moral values, all human creative endeavors are just expressions and masks for the desire for control. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a 19<sup>th</sup> century postmodern prophet. Nietzsche believed life was absurd. There is no truth, value, or overriding concern. All reality is about people's preferences and making sure you get yours. Nietzsche spoke dramatically of the “will to power” of the “overman.” Reduced to its essence, it involves the inner drive to get what you want and to overcome the oppression of others.

**§6-133. Deconstruction of the present reality a necessary step.**—Modern society, with its rationalism, order, and unitary concept of truth, must be replaced by a true cultural pluralism. Society must be segmented into its constituent groups for this to happen. Paradigms of the past must be dismantled and the margin brought to the center.

**§6-134. Postmodernism and the emergent church.**—At the opening of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a movement known as the “emergent Church” came to epitomize postmodern Christianity. The movement emphasizes social issues and has called for a “generous orthodoxy.” Some have indicated that it may be advisable in many circumstances to help people become followers of Jesus and remain in their Buddhist, Hindu, or Jewish contexts. Others do not view the Bible as authoritative, but merely as “a unique collection of literary artifacts that together support the telling of an amazing and essential story.” Critics have said that this “generous orthodoxy” is little more than liberalism repackaged. One commentator describes it as “Schleiermacher with a soul patch.”

#### **4. Globalization**

**§6-136. In general.**—In November 1989, the Berlin Wall came down. It symbolized the end of the Cold War world and the beginning of globalization. Globalization is a convenient term to summarize cultural, political, and religious changes around the globe as the peoples of the earth discovered and had to deal with one another. Technological advances brought home news and vital information instantly. CNN and others led the way in the globalization of news. Old walls continue to fall as a new series of international free trade agreements connected nations around the world. Labor markets changed as a result. Manual labor forces shrunk in developed nations and grew rapidly in the developing world. Increasingly, companies were international in scope and this reality challenged traditional notions of production and trade as the exchange of goods across national borders. News made religious conflict more apparent. Religion has become politicized and politics religionized around the world.

**§6-137. Globalization as opportunity.**—The former Soviet Union is the best political example of the opportunity that globalization presents for Christian witness. Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union in 1984 at a time when the economy was in total disarray. He announced a restructuring (*perestroika*) and openness (*glasnost*) as policies to revive the economy. These steps led quickly to the collapse of Communist ideology in eastern Europe. When Gorbachev made clear that he would not use Soviet forces to support collapsing Eastern European regimes, the eastern bloc collapsed. In 1991, the Communist system collapsed in the Soviet Union. A coup led by hard-liners met with such resistance that it promptly failed and the central controls that held the Soviet Union together crumbled. By December 1991, the Soviet Union was dissolved. Christian teachers from the United States and Canada were welcomed to Russian classrooms. The Russians were deeply perplexed over how to rebuild their society after Communist rule.

**§6-138. Globalism as challenge.**—Ethnic and religious conflicts from around the world seemed to fill the evening news. While Communism declined as the premier example of totalitarian ideology, a new totalitarian ideology reasserted itself—Islamic fundamentalism. Iran threw out the Shah and installed an Islamic fundamentalist state in 1979. Islamic fundamentalists in nearby states took heart and aimed at similar goals. Islamic fundamentalism became part of political scene across the Middle East, and governments were forced to make concessions to it to stay in power. Religious passions fueled strife among ethnic parties. These fundamentalist groups raised fresh questions about the proper relation between church and state. Christian leaders hoping to face the pluralistic world with integrity faced new challenges in defining justice in a meaningful way and in explaining the gospel with a tender and compassionate voice.

**§6-139. Globalization's impact on America.**—American reality became increasingly multicultural. Cities were the focal point of this multicultural reality. At the same time, urbanization slowed and even reversed in some places. Technology enabled people to continue their careers while living in the rural countryside. Denominational labels continued to decline, and ethnic groups could no longer be safely pigeonholed (Swedes as Lutherans; Dutch as Reformed; Italians as Catholics). America and other nations have produced an increasing number of individuals who look upon the world and their own lives without the benefit of any religious view of life. Secularization has undercut any Christian characterization, leaving people on the street with religious faiths defined primarily by their feelings.

Pluralism has undercut the missionary agenda. Pluralistic societies demand cooperation, not conversion. Pluralism has forced churches to market themselves and church activities have come to be dominated by popular tastes. Churches can meet the family and psychological needs of private individuals, but speak with muted voices to the moral, political, and economic issues of the day. Pluralism presents American churches with three basic options:

- Accommodate to the larger world, play the game of religious free enterprise, and come to terms with consumer demands as best they can;
- Refuse to accommodate, entrench themselves behind church structures, and continue to profess the old objectives as possible as if nothing has changed;
- Find mediating ground to stand upon in between these two extremes.

## **5. Christianity goes South**

**§6-141. In general.**—At the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Global North is becoming increasingly secular and de-Christianized, while the Global South is experiencing explosive growth. What is meant by the Global South are those areas of the world Westerners once characterized as Third World countries. I encourage you to pause with me over the next few sentences.

More Christians worship in Anglican churches in Nigeria each week than all the Episcopal and Anglican churches of Britain, Europe, and North America combined. There are ten times more Assembly of God members in Latin America than in the United States. There are more Baptists

in the Congo than in Great Britain. There are more people in church every Sunday in communist China than in all the churches of Western Europe. Really!

For nearly two thousand years, the bulk of Christian population lived in the northern hemisphere. That is changing. If current trends continue, most Christians will live in Africa or Latin America by 2025. This is due to an amazing faith explosion on those continents, especially among Pentecostals, and to the reality of the declining birth rates and growing secularism in Europe and North America. In 1800, Christianity's geographical epicenter would have been somewhere in Italy. In 1900, it would have moved west to Spain. By 1970, it would have dropped to northwestern Africa. In 2000, it was near Mali. By 2025, it may well be south of the equator, between the Congo and the mid-Atlantic ridge in the Atlantic Ocean. It may be soon that the European and North American continents will be the destination of Christian missionaries from Africa.

**§6-142. Global faith's shifting contours.**—Christianity has ceased to be a Euro-American religion and is becoming thoroughly global. In 1900, 83% of the world's Christians lived in Europe and North America. In 2050, 72% of the world's Christians will live in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In 1900, most believers were non-Latino whites. In 2050, non-Latino whites will be a small subset of Christianity worldwide. What will this shift to the Global South portend for the future of the Christian faith? Will it bear the imprint of Euro-American churches and mission agencies? What effect will it have on the poor, dispossessed, and downtrodden who are flocking to the Cross? Will the secularization of the Global North continue uninterrupted?

## 6. Persecution and more

**§6-146. In general.**—Christians have been persecuted since the time of Jesus. The 20<sup>th</sup> century was no different. Indeed, it was a century of intense persecution of Christians, whether by avowed atheistic states like China, the Soviet Union, or North Korea, or by opportunistic totalitarian nations like Nazi Germany, or by religiously motivated opponents such as Muslim jihadists. A recent estimate by a Christian missionary organization placed the number of Christians facing persecution upwards of 100-200 million people, with millions denied fundamental human rights because of their faith and 100,000 Christians killed violently each year. Of the top ten offenders, nine of them were Muslim nations. One international human rights organization has estimated that 80% of the world-wide acts of persecution are directed at Christian people.

**§6-147. Century of refugees.**—Wars, civil wars, religious persecution, ethnic strife, environmental disasters, and political and economic instability drove the number of refugees to historic heights throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The following events or situations in the century occasioned over one million refugees (not including those people displaced within their own countries or regions):

World War II (Europe)	1939-1945
Indian independence/partition	1947
Korean War	1950-1953
Algerian independence	1954-1962
Bangladesh liberation	1971
Indochina events occasioning refugees	1975 on
Mozambique civil war	1977 on
Soviet-Afghan war	1978-1989
Yugoslav wars/civil wars	1991 on
Somali civil war	1991 on
Iraqi uprisings	1991
Venezuelan conflicts	1998 on

Many of these situations involved significant numbers of Christian people. All of these were challenges to Christian compassion and ministry.

## 7. At the Millennium

**§6-148. In general; fragmentation.**—The 20<sup>th</sup> century left humanity in a quest for coherence. The world is fragmented along racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural lines. A new tribalism is a dominant theme, whether analyzing the politics of individual nation-states, Christian denominations, religious or ethnic conflicts, or the world's international scene. Christian theological endeavor is scattered, even atomized. Across the globe, society's centrifugal tendencies seem all out of proportion to its centripetal forces.

## B. Theological Trends

### 1. Classical Liberalism

**§6-151. Demise of classical liberalism.**—Classical liberalism was associated with idealism, biblical criticism, and rising support for evolutionary theory. In America, it challenged a prevailing Calvinism as modified by American revivalism. Liberalism asserted that the Scripture only contained the Word of God, that Christ was merely a man rather than God incarnate, that his atonement was as a moral influence rather than as a substitute, that people were essentially good rather than essentially flawed and sinful, and that Christ's return was replaced by the task of the Church to bring in the Kingdom of God with social action.

World War I shattered the optimism that fueled the drive of Protestant liberalism. Belief in the essential goodness of people and in a progression to an ideal society took a direct hit in a gruesome war among the world's "civilized elite nations" as well as the aftermath of that war when the world witnessed the rise of genocidal ideologies and totalitarian extremism on both the political right and left.

In 1933, one author observed that "the most important fact about contemporary theology is the disintegration of liberalism". Even such an ardent spokesman as Harry Emerson Fosdick, who argued that Christianity took "the intellectual culture of a particular period and adjusted Christian teaching to that standard," changed his tone. Liberalism had wedded itself to the culture of an earlier age which had collapsed with World War I and Fosdick himself would later confess to liberalism's failure. In his way, he acknowledged that the liberals had abdicated their prophetic voice by embracing modern culture too whole-heartedly:

We have been all things to all [people] long enough. We have adapted and adjusted ... long enough. We have at times ... talked as though the highest compliment that could be paid to Almighty God was that a few scientists believed in him.

## 2. Neo-Orthodoxy

**§6-152. In general; crisis theology.**—Neo-Orthodoxy challenged classical liberalism after World War I. Neo-Orthodox thinkers stressed the sinfulness of human beings, scorned liberal ideas of the inevitability of the progress of the human condition and society, and rejected liberal ideas of fundamentally finding God in our own consciousness, in nature, and in messianic efforts to create an ideal society. They emphasized the otherness or transcendence of God, looked to the Scripture to find him revealed, and saw "crisis" points when humans must choose to believe and encounter the One who is infinite and eternal. This last tendency lent Neo-Orthodoxy its pseudonym—"crisis theology".

### **§6-153. Neo-Orthodox views.**—

**Bible**—Neo-Orthodoxy accepts the principles and results of higher biblical criticism and rejects the Bible as God's infallibly inspired objective, historical revelation. The Bible can only be a human witness to God's revelation until the Holy Spirit reveals God to the human heart in a moment of crisis.

***Transcendence and sovereignty***—Neo-Orthodox thinkers centered their system on God who is holy, absolute, sovereign, eternal, and wholly Other. This view of a transcendent, sovereign God is opposed to the immanent, subjective view of God held by liberals since the days of Schleiermacher and Ritschl. Because of the discontinuity between God and people and history, people cannot know God by reason or sensation.

***Salvation***—People are in bondage to sin and are utterly unable to help themselves in the matter of salvation. Salvation can only come through the miraculous supernatural piercing of history by God himself in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Word of God. It is in the crucified and resurrected Christ alone that people can find salvation.

***Later drift***—Neo-Orthodoxy later seemed to disintegrate into the vague theism of Tillich (1886-1965), the demythologizing of Bultmann (1884-1968), or Reinhold Niebuhr's (1892-1971) stress on limited social action.

#### (a) Karl Barth

**§6-156. In general; early influences and training.**—Between the world wars, the theological world was dominated by the towering figure of Karl Barth (1886-1968). His father was a conservative Reformed theologian who shaped Karl's early studies. Karl was a student of Harnack and other followers of Ritschl while studying at Berlin. His subsequent theological studies at Tübingen and Marburg left him convinced of the tenets of liberal theology. He was on board with the idea of the Church's mission to create the Kingdom of God on earth. His early years in the pastorate in Switzerland saw him involved with the Social Democratic movement. He was convinced that God was working to bring in the Kingdom, not so much through the church, which was very lethargic, but through the Social Democratic political movement.

**§6-157. Disillusionment.**—World War I left Barth disillusioned with liberal optimism, political action, and ideas of the essential goodness of people. He came to reject the synthesis of Christianity and culture, becoming convinced that liberal Christian culture as then conceived had little to do with transformative Christianity. He opted to base his theology, not on ideas of Christian experience or common morality, but on the text of Scripture. In 1919, he published a *Commentary on Romans*, which was something of a bombshell to European theological liberalism. He emphasized the transcendent otherness of God, the power and rootedness of sin in humanity, the reality of divine judgment on wayward humanity, the utter failure of "Christian" culture to deal with these powerful undercurrents of the human condition.

**§6-158. Barmen Declaration; Confessing Church.**—In the 1930s, Barth, then a professor at Bonn, grew concerned with the willingness of his fellow theologians to submit to Nazi demands and threats. Concerned that the faith was accommodating a horrific culture, he joined the Confessing Church which opposed the German Christian Church sponsored by the Nazis. In 1934, he helped draft the Barmen Declaration in which the Confessing Church repudiated the

false teaching that the church should conform its message and practice to assuage dominant ideological and political convictions.

**§6-159. Subsequent work; conflicts.**—He fled Germany and settled again in Switzerland and continued work on his monumental treatise, *Church Dogmatics*. He worked from the standpoint that theology should be based squarely on the Bible, that God is “wholly other” who has chosen to reveal himself in Scripture, that Scripture becomes especially meaningful when the Holy Spirit uses it in moments of crisis to create an encounter between individuals and God.

His emphasis on God’s transcendence and on discontinuity between sin and grace, human experience and God’s action, led to breaks with his contemporaries. The first break occurred in the early 1920s between Barth and Brunner on one hand and Bultmann and Gogarten on the other. Bultmann and Gogarten thought that the task of theology was to study and explicate people’s understanding of faith. Barth and Brunner thought this reduced theology to the study of human experience. They wanted to move theology to the firm ground of the Word of God and concentrate particularly on Christology. Barth had the growing conviction that there was content to the Word of God; it was more than just the occasion for an encounter with God. He began to seek to understand the Word of God and elucidate its implications, not based on existential philosophy but on the “logic of faith”. This led Barth to reject existentialism as a proper tool of theology and to place greater emphasis on the role of the church in the task of theology.

After breaking with Bultmann and Gogarten, Barth next broke with Brunner. Barth concluded that “natural theology” must also be rejected. Barth believed that previous centuries had placed things next to the Word of God and conjoined them. Thus, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was revelation AND reason. For Schleiermacher, it was revelation AND religious consciousness. For Ritschl and his followers, it was revelation AND the history of religion. For others, it was revelation AND creation. Brunner believed Barth had misunderstood the doctrines of the Word of God and *sola gratia*.

- That the image of God in humanity was totally destroyed by sin;
- That revelation was limited to that in Christ;
- In rejecting “preserving grace”;
- In rejecting “orders of preservation” which are crucial bases of Christian ethics;
- In denying “points of contact” in human beings and society for the grace and action of God;
- That he misunderstood the relation between the old creation and the new.

Barth rejected Brunner’s reply. He thought that natural theology could not be part of theology or a parallel endeavor.

**§6-160. Church Dogmatics; impact.**—Barth’s career-long work was the *Church Dogmatics*, which he worked on from 1932 until his death. It composes thirteen thick volumes. It is notable for the vastness of the scope of the enterprise, its remarkable coherence, and its Christological concentration. Barth’s impact is hard to overstate. His theology gave impetus to the German

Confessing Church and to the ecumenical movement. Furthermore, among Protestant leaders in the Third World, the theology of Karl Barth was highly influential.

**(b) Neo-Orthodoxy in America**

**§6-166. In general; Niebuhrs.**—Neo-Orthodoxy did not have the impact in America that it had in Europe. Neo-Orthodoxy largely came to America through the Niebuhr brothers, Reinhold (1892-1971) and H. Richard (1894-1962).

Reinhold was a pastor in Detroit who faced the suffering and dehumanization of the working classes. He did not embrace Marxism, although he thought that much of what Marx observed about the inner workings of capitalism was true. He thought that Christians must reject the facile equation of liberal democratic capitalism with a just economic order. He concluded that unbridled capitalism was destructive and, left to its own devices, produced a society morally worse and more self-seeking than the sum of its members. He forcefully expounded this view in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. He said it was time to recover a balanced view of humanity, involving a deeper understanding of sin and its ramifications, and a radical view of grace.

Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) published the *Social Sources of Denominationalism* in 1929, in which he charged the American church with capitulating to the gods of class and self-preservation. He thought denominations divided and scattered the energies of Christianity but also signaled its moral weakness in the defeat of the Christian ethics of brotherhood by the ethics of caste and group particularism. Denominationalism in the United States was an adaptation of the gospel to various racial and socioeconomic strata of the country geared to a self-preservation ethic based on class and church type rather than the ethics of the gospel. What ultimately happened in denominationalism is that Christianity surrendered its moral leadership and allowed itself to be molded by the social forces of national and economic life. In 1937, he published *The Kingdom of God in America*, in which he made his famous indictment of American mainline Protestantism: “A God without wrath brought men [people] without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.”

**§6-167. Tillich.**—Reinhold Niebuhr was instrumental in bringing Paul Tillich (1886-1965) to the United States and to a position at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Tillich argued for a “method of correlation” which analyzed the existential questions posed by human life and responded to them in terms of the Gospel. As we look at our lives, we discover our incompleteness and that, beyond our concerns for security, there is an ultimate concern. We cannot stand on our own, but only on a “ground of being”. In our brokenness, we often assert our own sufficiency, what Tillich calls “autonomy”. This is shallow and inadequate because we cannot be the ground of our own being. A second option is that of “heteronomy”, where we ground our being on that of another. This does affirm our incompleteness but on a false ground and produces an inauthentic life. Only in the third option, that of “theonomy”, which grounds our being on its proper foundation, can we be truly authentic.

The Christian message is the message of the “New Being”. This new being is Jesus Christ and is the essential being under the conditions of existence that conquers the gap between essence and existence. It is the certainty of one’s own victory over the death of existential estrangement which creates the certainty of the Resurrection of Christ as event and symbol. This is a strange reversal—the resurrection of Jesus is not the seal of his life, but it is faith in him and in our own victory that is the guarantee of his resurrection.

Tillich shared the Neo-Orthodox critique of liberalism but with a heavy dose of Heideggerian existentialism. He argued against identifying God with religious feeling but taught that God is so transcendently removed from people that we can know nothing about him as he is in himself. But, while not personal, God is the “ground” of all being revealed in history in general and in Christ in particular. However, this Christ is not identical to the historical Jesus, about whom we know virtually nothing (forget the gospels). The important thing is how Jesus surrendered himself to the “ground” of his being, setting the pattern for us to do likewise. Tillich saw concepts like incarnation, atonement, and resurrection not as unique events in Jesus’ life, but as experiences continually repeated by anyone seeking authentic healing.

Influential in his lifetime, Tillich today is something of an outsider at the theological table. His was a highly personal work which became dated almost immediately.

### 3. Existential thought

**§6-168. In general.**—Existentialism embraces a variety of philosophies and attitudes toward life that flourished in Europe and America in the first half of the 20th century. It was concerned above all with the tangible problems of human life in the modern secular world. Existentialists wanted to think from the standpoint of the actor or participant rather than from that of the detached spectator. It protests against systems of thought into which human life is made to fit.

**§6-169. 19<sup>th</sup> century origins.**—Its origins, both in its believing and unbelieving modes, are often traced to the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the persons of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dostoevsky. On the believing side, behind all of Kierkegaard’s writings was the deep conviction that God exists and that He became incarnate in Jesus Christ. However, God’s existence and Christ’s divinity could never be proved by reason, which is only capable of dealing with the here and now of our living. Only from the standpoint of faith can one get a true view of God and the world. Thus, the truth of our existence is only grasped in the total commitment of faith. Working out that existential truth is not a matter of choosing correct systems of thought, but of choosing to be faithful to God in the tangible situations of our lives and to act on those choices.

On the unbelieving side, Nietzsche declared that God was dead, and humanity must learn to live without him. There is no meaning to life other than what we give to it. If people are rise above the flux of meaningless existence, they must choose a way of life that brings meaning. For Nietzsche, that was the over-man, the completely self-possessed one who has no fear of others,

of his own limits, and of death itself. You can see the Nazi holocaust coming into being in between the lines of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

**§6-170. 20<sup>th</sup> century versions.**—Most of 20<sup>th</sup> century existentialism, popularized by novels by such authors as Albert Camus and Jean Paul Sartre, took the mode of unbelief. The influential philosopher, Martin Heidegger, rejected the idea of a personal Creator upon whom the world depended for its existence and drew a distinction between Being generally (*sein*) and those who participate in Being (da-sein). For Sartre, the world is absurd, and humanity is dumped into it and cannot turn to anyone for guidance but themselves. His motto “existence precedes essence” reverses the traditional sense of humanity having a fixed nature. Rather, people in essence create themselves in that their choices frame what they become.

Many 20<sup>th</sup> century existentialists wax eloquent about authentic and inauthentic existence. However, it is difficult to understand precisely what they are talking about. Authentic existence implies that one form of existence is right. But how can one say in any general sense that one act or choice is intrinsically better (or authentic) than another when individuals alone determine value and meaning. Once you get beyond the heroic rhetoric, the assertions are vacuous.

Existential thought has had influence in theology. Bultmann made use of Heidegger's terminology, especially his distinction between authentic and inauthentic existence to describe Bultmann's own distinction between the life of faith and the life of the flesh in the context of his dymythologizing program. Tillich also makes use of existential categories in his discussion of the ground of being.

#### **4. Curious cycle of Biblical criticism**

**§6-171. In general.**—Biblical critics questioned cherished doctrines and assumptions, such as the accuracy of such historical narratives as the exodus account and the gospels, the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus, the authorship of many of Paul's letters, among other things. Biblical critics have pursued more and diverse literary and rhetorical approaches to the text and have shown little interest in the original meaning or authorship of the text. The approach has grown much more fragmented, with so many different approaches to the academic study of the Bible undergirded by so many conflicting presuppositions, that the insights are not readily transferable between approaches. Much of this has little or no influence on actual church practice with a substantial proviso for those studies involving the historical and theological investigation of the person of Jesus.

The major result of modern critical study of the Bible has been to question its cohesiveness. Christians of yesteryear approached the Scriptures as having an essential unity and presenting a coherent message. Modern critical biblical scholarship leaves the strong impression that the Bible is a collection of hopelessly disparate documents that sits smack dab in the middle of our cultural heritage.

**§6-172. Demythologizing; Bultmann.**—Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) was a leading New Testament scholar of the 20th century. He published *History of the Synoptic Tradition* in 1921, in which he argued that the synoptic gospels are composed of layers of material based upon oral traditions that circulated in the early church and were shaped by early editors to suit their theological purposes. The gospels are, at best, a record of what early Christians thought about Jesus.

In 1941, Bultman published *New Testament and Mythology* in which he went further and asserted that the New Testament conveys its message by means of a mythological worldview which is impossible for moderns to accept. The mythological elements are not essential and central to the message and therefore must be eliminated to winsomely proclaim the gospel in the modern setting. The task for the modern theologian was to “de-mythologize the New Testament.”

Bultmann wished to preserve a portrait of Jesus and the early faith that had relevance for the contemporary context. He did not think Jesus could be known, but his essential message about humanity and its existence and destination could be discerned within the theological clutter of the early church as presented in the New Testament.

**§6-173. —Dissent within the ranks.**—Bultmann’s own students broke from their teacher. Ernest Kasemann (1906-1998) argued for at least a modest consideration of the historical Jesus. Without at least a minimal historical grounding, the figure of Jesus becomes a powerful symbol open to exploitation for any purpose whatsoever. Kasemann had seen the Nazis appropriate an a-historical, non-Jewish Jesus and use that image to support and implement a horrid agenda of extermination. The “new quest for the historical Jesus” has been a debate about criteria for determining what we can know about Jesus. It has resulted in a very minimal picture of Jesus based on a few sayings and deeds that scholars can agree on. This effort has continued with voluminous discussion and little agreement. It has led some to embrace the “Christ of faith” (the theologically driven picture of Jesus in the New Testament) and to forsake any attempt to ascertain the true, historical Jesus.

**§6-174. Biblical theology movement.**—The substantial and growing disagreement among biblical critics led to the biblical theology movement that sought to restore a sense of unity to our understanding of the Scripture. Members of this movement were American and European scholars who shared liberal, critical assumptions and methods while attempting to do theology in relation to the biblical text. They shared a common concern with Neo-Orthodoxy in attempting to understand the Bible, which they viewed as a fully human book to be investigated with historical-critical methods, as a vehicle or witness of the divine Word. They were trying to mesh the modern naturalistic-evolutionary worldview as developed by natural science, modern philosophy, and critical history with the biblical view of a transcendent God who provides meaning and coherence to this world in his personal acts in history. But how is the Bible both a fully human book and yet a vehicle for divine revelation? Does the element of revelation claimed for the Bible lay in the text, behind the text, in text and event, or in some other mode?

## 5. Theologies of Hope

**§6-176. In general.**—The theologies of hope are closely associated with the thought of Jurgen Moltmann (1926-2024) and Wolfhart Pannenberg (1928-2014). Both wanted to recapture an eschatological sense independent of the classical liberal view that the Kingdom of God was about the improvement of human society with its overly political overtones and the conservative approach that they thought reduced eschatology to speculation (when Christ would return and the world as we know it would end).

**§6-177. Moltmann.**—Jurgen Moltmann, in the *Theology of Hope* (1964), argued that biblical revelation is primarily one of promise and that God acts from the future drawing history toward the goal set by the divine plan. He sought to recover the centrality of eschatology for Christian faith. Eschatology is more than the doctrine of last things but includes both that for which the Church hopes and the hope itself by which the Church lives. At the heart of Christian eschatology is the hope and promise of the kingdom. Moltmann is proposing an understanding of Christian faith which finds God in history, concretely in those aspects of history which bear the mark of the cross. That mark shows forth in the dispossessed, the oppressed, and the afflicted. The Christian faith calls us to join Christ at the cross, not in a mystical experience of union but in the tangible moments of history.

Jurgen Moltmann took up the theme of hope during post-War oppression. In *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*, he argued that hope is the central tenet of biblical faith. God is not finished with the world. Christians must live into the future hopefully. Eschatology, properly understood, was not the faithful passively waiting for the future, but rather joining struggles against poverty and oppression that signaled God's good future.

**§6-178. Pannenberg.**—Pannenberg, in *Revelation as History* (1961), argued that in Jesus the reign of God has begun, and God is drawing history toward its fulfillment already revealed in Jesus. Pannenberg has given the historical accuracy of the Bible much more play than biblical critics. In *Jesus-God and Man* (1964), he argued for the historical accuracy of the resurrection accounts. He thought that the logical interpretation of the evidence led to the conclusion that Jesus was raised from the dead. Only the narrow modernist presuppositions of biblical critics prevented them from acknowledging this. On this point at least, “the consensus of scholarship” was nothing more than a subjectively biased “gut” about what was presupposed to be impossible.

## 6. Contextual Theologies

**§6-181. In general.**—These theologies often arise among women and minorities and among people in Third World countries and focus on their experiences, aspirations, and perspectives. These theologies found their early expression in the thought of Dr. Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement in the United States. The subsequent development of black theology

emphasized the Exodus and its radical eschatological hope (e.g. James Cone). Feminist theology also emerged where women insisted on their right to be treated as equal partners with men. Some concluded that Christianity was so male-oriented that it had to be rejected (e.g. Mary Daly), but others made significant contributions to a more inclusive understanding of the faith (e.g. Letty Russell and Rosemary Reuther). In the Third World, theologies developed that were rooted in the problems and concerns of the people (social justice issues in Asia and Africa, apartheid in South Africa, social and economic justice in Latin America).

**§6-182. Common characteristics.**—These theologies vary widely, but have several common characteristics:

- They reject classical liberalism, seeing it as an expression of a particular time, culture, and social situation;
- There is a strong eschatological element in these theologies;
- The thought is radically incarnational. They see in Jesus Christ the heart of the Christian faith, but also draw on the doctrine of the incarnation to grapple with the nature of God's action in the world;
- There is a strong ecumenical emphasis;
- They attempt to reconstruct the entirety of theology from the perspective of their concrete situation (social justice, Christianity and culture, women's rights, etc.).

#### **(a) Liberation Theology**

**§6-186. In general.**—Its methodology places liberation theology in opposition to traditional western theology. Liberationists see traditional theology as dominated by intellectualism and a faith that has little interest in action. Liberationists argue that faith requires commitment to implement the gospel, which they see as focused on liberation, both from personal sin and from oppressive structures that result from the aggregate effects of sin. It is not enough for Christians to offer comfort to the poor and suffering, it must also combat the political, economic, and social structures that cause that suffering. Traditional theologians focus on theological formulations that are objective true, in all places and always. Liberationists think that what God has to say to people depends on the context in which the people find themselves. The task of the theologian is not to consider timeless universal truths, but to help people in their struggle for the biblical mandate of social justice. Liberationists as a group are critical of the established church, thinking that it is too comfortable with the dominant culture and abdicating its responsibility to the poor and oppressed.

**§6-187. Latin American context.**—Liberation theology developed in Latin America in the context of European colonialism. The Roman Catholic Church had been associated for centuries with the ruling and affluent classes in Latin America. By mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, many saw the United States as the new, oppressive, economic power and grew disillusioned with the West in its dealings with oppressive regimes and in its failure to relieve poverty in Latin America. Young

theologians were encouraged by Vatican II's emphasis on Christian responsibility to ensure that all have the necessities of life. Contemporaneous with this was the rise of small ecclesial communities, described as the poor in action, living out the gospel of liberation for the whole person.

**§6-188. Gustavo Gutierrez and subsequent Latin liberationists.**—Gustavo Gutierrez (1928-2024) is the father of liberation theology. In *A Theology of Liberation* (1971), he asserted that the root cause of pervasive poverty in Latin America was the social and economic injustice caused by European and North American economic manipulation. Jose Miguez-Bonino (1924-2012) taught that Scripture is always a call to correct present conditions. Its dominant theme is love manifested in action. Orthopraxis (right action) rather than orthodoxy (right doctrine), becomes the criterion for theology. Leonardo Boff (1938-) argued that the kingdom Jesus came to inaugurate is not only a future hope, but to be realized now. He was applying the ideas of C.H. Dodd (1884-1973) that with the appearance of Jesus the Kingdom of God began to be realized. Oscar Romero (1917-1980), seized by the conditions of the peasants in his bishopric, became a passionate voice for the poor, actively supporting base communities of priests working among the poor. He was murdered by right wing hit squads while saying Mass.

Liberation theology uses a Marxist analytical model to lay bare the degree to which traditional theological interpretations reflect the interests and social standing of those doing theology. Liberation thought has taken various manifestations. Minjung theology (meaning people's movement) developed in Korea. Elsewhere, Kwame Bediako sought to relate the Christian faith with traditional African culture.

**§6-189. Shifting theological context.**—Liberationists, by emphasizing context in which theology is done, operate from a perspective quite different than that of traditional theologians. Critics argue that it devolves into non-theology. It is not about God at all, but about people's immediate social and economic concerns, be that in fulfillment or survival mode. Others assert that liberationists' concern to take biblical themes of justice and righteousness seriously has made them important forces in Christian practice.

#### **(b) Other Varieties of Liberation Thought**

**§6-191. Feminist theology.**—Another expression of contextual and liberation theology was feminist theology. In 1960, Valerie Goldstein wrote an essay "The Human Situation: A Feminist View" in which she asserted that what was called the human experience was in reality the experience of men. Women suffer from sins of self-sacrifice and self-negation, rather than typical male sins of pride and self-assertion. Mary Daly (1928-2010), in *Beyond God the Father* (1973), argued that picturing God as father only allows traditional cultural patterns to parade as spiritual norms. Rosemary Reuther (1936-2022), in *Sexism and God Talk* (1983), asserted that injustice is rooted primarily in systems of hierarchy that limit possibilities for women and that the Church was largely complicit with these structures. She wanted to establish "women churches," open to

women and sensitized males, to provide safe contexts for women to exercise their gifts and find their true roles. Feminist theology has played a significant role in the inclusive language discussion in biblical studies.

**§6-192. —Womanist theology.**—Some have gone further, feminizing God, embracing the idea of the Goddess. A branch has arisen that describes itself as womanist theology. The spokespersons for this group often describe themselves as “women of color.” They are critical of feminist theology, which they portray as sexist, and of the founders of feminist theology, whom they characterize as white, middle-class racist and economic classist academics. Womanist theologians assert that feminists are occupied with self-fulfillment issues whereas womanists are struggling with more basic issues, such as economic survival.

**§6-193. Black theology.**—African American liberation thought understands racism as the chief social sin in North America, a sin that Caucasians do not recognize readily because it is built into the very structures of society. James Cone (1938-2018) was the primary leader of this group. He grew dissatisfied with the pacifism of Martin Luther King and instead identified with the black power movement of Malcolm X. He wrote *Black Theology and Black Power* (1969) and *Black Theology of Liberation* (1970) which asserted that “the idea of heaven is irrelevant for Black theology. The Christian cannot waste time contemplating the next world ... Jesus’ work is essentially one of liberation. Becoming a slave himself, he opens the realities of human existence formerly closed to man.” He saw it as the black Christian’s purpose to refashion and recreate the religion offered to them by their Christian slave masters. They were to remold it nearer to their needs. Critics have characterized Cone’s work as a theological justification for black racism.

## 7. Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism

### (a) Fundamentalism

**§6-201. In general.**—Fundamentalism was a reaction to Protestant liberalism on the North American continent. It was a movement to combat the harmful effects of modernism and liberalism.

Initially, fundamentalism’s two main sources were the academic reaction at Princeton to classical liberalism and the dispensational teachings of J.N. Darby. The scholarly criticism was led by three professors at Princeton Seminary: Charles Hodge (1797-1878), who emphasized the idea of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible; B.B. Warfield (1851-1921), who emphatically emphasized the Bible’s infallibility; and J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937), who defended what he regarded as historic Protestant orthodoxy. Machen famously tangled with Henry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), a leading figure in the social gospel movement.

**§6-182. Key beliefs.**—A series of pamphlets, *The Fundamentals*, published between 1910 and 1915, popularized fundamentalism. The pamphlets affirmed the key doctrines understood as central to Christian orthodoxy:

- Inerrancy of the Bible—Fundamentalists believe that the Bible is without error in the original manuscripts. This was a reaction against higher biblical criticism.
- Deity of Christ—Fundamentalists focused on Jesus' virgin birth as the chief demonstration of his divinity.
- Substitutionary atonement—Fundamentalists embrace the substitutionary, penal theory of the atonement (that Jesus took upon himself the punishment for the sins of others, indeed of the world).
- Literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus.
- Literal future return of the risen Christ.

They also identified enemies of the Christian faith, including socialism, biblical criticism, and evolution. Nearly three million copies of the book were sent without charge to theological students and Christian ministers and missionaries all over the world. Wealthy evangelicals, convinced of the need to reaffirm Christian truths in the face of biblical criticism and liberal theology, funded the effort. Sixty-four people contributed articles that appeared in these books, including representatives of the premillennial movement, the English Keswick Conference, and academia.

**§6-203. Early organization.**—William Riley founded the World's Christian Fundamentals Association in 1919. It started with a bang, a conference in Philadelphia in which 6,000 people attended, but soon descended into a constant squabbling among its leaders. A Presbyterian fundamentalist, Carl McIntire, founded the International Council of Christian Churches in 1948, but soon ran into similar divisive problems.

**§6-204. Dispensational influence.**—The other initial source fueling fundamentalism was dispensationalism. J.N. Darby developed as a theological integrator the idea that God deals with humanity in terms of dispensations (*oikonomia* = household rules), in which God graciously relates to humanity in different periods according to different principles. Scofield Reference Bible embraced dispensationalism and supplied extensive explanatory notes. Dispensationalism became identified with pretributational premillennialism (that Christ will reign for a thousand years on earth following his return and prior to the inauguration of the eternal state) and with young earth creationism (the belief that God created all reality less than 10,000 years ago in a literal week of 24-hour days).

Darby divided biblical history into different dispensations, in which God dealt differently with human beings. Typically, seven periods were identified by dispensationalists: innocence, conscience, human government, promise, Law, grace, and the millennial kingdom. Darby took Daniel 9 to be a key passage of when Messiah was to come to earth again. He thought that the current dispensation, the Church Age, was ending. When, no one quite knows (Matt. 24:36-41; Mk. 13:32-33). One of the prophecies relegated to the end times was the rapture (from the Latin translation of the Greek verb "caught up" in 1 Thess. 4:17), an event in which all true Christians will be physically taken out of the world. After the Rapture, the Antichrist will appear, a

political-religious figure, backed by churches who have fallen away from the true message. Darby thought that the Bible predicted the return of the Jews to Palestine where they will suffer intense persecution. In this time, a considerable number of Jews will accept Jesus as Messiah. Christ will return and defeat the forces of evil and establish his earthly reign of 1,000 years.

**§6-205. Fundamentalist-modernist controversy.**—Fundamentalists engaged in a religious/cultural battle with modernists over how Protestants ought to respond to the ideas of the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

- The intellectual challenge of modern science, particularly focused on the theory of evolution;
- Social and economic changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution;
- Changes in the approach to the Bible and faith ushered in by the various schools of Higher Criticism;
- The advent of early feminism; and
- The assertion of other religions as equally valid ways to know the divine.

Fundamentalist-modernist controversies rocked denominations and particularly their educational institutions. Numerous denominational splits occurred. J. Gresham Machen was ousted from the Princeton Seminary faculty and helped found both Westminster Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. North American Baptists divided and many left to form the General Association of Regular Baptist Church and institutions like Northern Seminary in Illinois, Eastern College in Pennsylvania, and Gordon College in Massachusetts. The Southern Baptist largely identified with the fundamentalists. Canadian Baptists divided along lines similar to Northern American Baptists.

Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fundamentalism was a diverse movement including various theological traditions (e.g. Calvinists and Arminians) and denominations (e.g. Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists) which took different views on a number of theological issues. As more conservative denominations formed, various distinctives began to be asserted (especially teaching about the End Times). Fundamentalism's unity began to unravel. Some fundamentalists became dissatisfied with even the newly formed conservative colleges and universities and founded a host of Bible institutes to train their leaders (e.g. Moody Bible Institute, Prairie Bible Institute, and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles). Fundamentalism became a polyglot movement, including whole denominations, independent institutions, and fundamentalist elements within denominations. They also understood and used mass media with effect, beginning with radio and then television broadcasting.

**§6-206. Biblical separation.**—By the 1930s, many fundamentalists favored what they called biblical separation, a separation from and a refusal to cooperate with non-fundamentalist Christians. In 1941, Carl McIntire (1906-2002) formed the American Council of Christian Churches as a way of identifying those adhering to “true” fundamentalism and those failing to do so. In response, the National Association of Evangelicals was formed in 1942. These two groups

share a number of common theological positions, although the evangelicals were less likely to have strong opinions on eschatology, science, modern culture, and biblical literalism, and were more likely to cooperate with other Protestants and even Roman Catholics at times.

**§6-207. Later public involvement; Moral Majority.**—Fundamentalism was a potent force on the American religious scene without having much effect on the broader American cultural landscape largely because of its self-isolation (biblical separation) and its pervasive cultural negativism. In the 1970s and 1980s, Jerry Falwell (1933-2006) founded the Moral Majority and focused fundamentalist fervor on the national scene. Falwell was willing to make common cause with groups (e.g. Mormons, Roman Catholics) sympathetic with his social and political agenda (opposition to abortion, promotion of school prayer and young earth creationism, etc.) even though they disagreed on various theological issues. Fundamentalism continues as a broad movement that crosses denominational lines, endorsing traditional Protestant doctrine, a thorough-going adherence to the authority of the Bible, and is suspicious and critical of the culture at large.

**§6-208. Fundamentalism as American phenomenon.**—Protestant fundamentalism was and is a predominantly American phenomenon. George Marsden has suggested reasons for this:

- The intellectual style of the early English colonists in America. There were a disproportionate number of English Puritans, Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, and Dutch Reformed, all members of the Reformed tradition that focus on rationalistic arguments about fine points of doctrine and worried about reconciling faith and reason.
- America was a culturally diverse country with vast distances and different subcultures from 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, home of the new “progressive” scholarship.
- Fundamentalists focused on proper Christian behavior but also thought of scientists and university professors as enemies of the faith.
- Fundamentalist understanding did not resonate with the cultures of what we now know as the Global South.
- From the 1930s through the years of the Cold War, American fundamentalists tended to fuse their understanding of Christian orthodoxy with a nationalistic vision of American greatness and uniqueness.

## **(b) Evangelicalism**

**§6-211. In general.**—Evangelical comes from a Greek word meaning “concerning the good news.” In Europe, it is another term for “Protestant.” In the United States, the term was originally synonymous with fundamentalists but, by mid-century, it came to refer to Protestants who embrace traditional views of faith and doctrine, emphasize the importance of personal conversion, but do not consider themselves fundamentalists. Both evangelicals and fundamentalists believe in the Bible’s supernatural inspiration and embrace orthodox doctrine.

However, evangelicals take issue with the separationist tendencies of historic fundamentalism, and dislike what they see as the inflexibility and harsh divisiveness of fundamentalists.

**§6-212. Origins of “new” evangelicals.**—By mid-20<sup>th</sup> century there were three theological options: theological liberalism, Neo-Orthodoxy, and fundamentalism. Liberalism was not an option for anyone who understood the Bible to be truthful and authoritative. Neo-orthodoxy correctly critiqued the shortcomings of liberalism but slipped easily into liberal perspectives on the biblical text that undermined the Bible’s authority. Fundamentalism held to the truthfulness and authority of Scripture, but their notion of total separation meant ministerial disengagement from modern life and increasingly meant divisive critique of other believers and even denial that they shared the faith itself.

In 1942, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was organized. Where fundamentalism focused on “worldly separation” and on precise external standards that defined being a “good” Christian, the NAE was willing to dialogue with anyone who recognized the truthfulness of Scripture and salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. Two people instrumental in the growth of this group were Carl F.H. Henry and Billy Graham. Billy Graham was a popular evangelist who willingly worked with anyone who accepted that salvation came by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus.

**§6-213. Carl Henry’s contributions.**—Carl Henry’s contributions formed the theological foundations of the evangelical movement. His *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* took on what Henry saw as fundamentalism’s retreat from meaningful communication with modern culture. Their focus on external and secondary personal standards on obscure issues caused them to seem to have nothing intelligent to say to modern society. Henry called on evangelicals to speak intelligently to modern culture without compromising their commitment to core Christian beliefs. In the mid-1950s, Graham launched Christianity Today, whose goal was to win a hearing for evangelical orthodoxy from non-evangelical authors, and Henry became its first General Editor. In 1978, Henry was instrumental in the formulation of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, outlining what evangelicals meant when they said that the Bible is without error.

While fundamentalists fought everything from new versions of the Bible to rock music and contemporary fashions, evangelicals became increasingly open to interacting with non-evangelical churches. The results of this openness was a wide range of trends, including seeker-sensitive churches, Christian political lobbying, a booming industry for Christian books and music, and popular para-church movements like Promise Keepers.

**§6-214. Evangelicals and Roman Catholics.**—Evangelicals have also shown a readiness to dialogue with Roman Catholics. In 1994, forty Roman Catholic and evangelical leaders signed a statement entitled “*Evangelicals and Catholics Together (ECT): The Christian Mission in the New Millennium*”. Supporters included Chuck Colson, Bill Bright, J.I. Packer, Elizabeth

Achtemeier, and Richard John Neuhaus. Critics included R.C. Sproul, John MacArthur, and D. James Kennedy. Three years later, the ECT supporters issued a second statement “The Gift of Salvation” agreeing that “justification is not earned by any good works or merits of our own; it is entirely God’s gift ... The gift of justification is received through faith.” Critics contended that it did not say “by faith ALONE”. With the passing of Pope John Paul II in 2005, Pope Benedict XVI reaffirmed that the Roman Catholic Church is the sole true church and that organized groups outside the Church were merely “ecclesial communities” and “should not be called churches in the proper sense”. The window of opportunity for meaningful Catholic-Protestant interaction had passed yet again.

**§6-215. Evangelical identity on the current scene.**—In 2008, “An Evangelical Manifesto” by Os Guinness and Timothy George defined evangelicals as “Christians who define themselves, their faith, and their lives according to the good news of Jesus of Nazareth” and pointed to core theological beliefs. Many theological affirmations were left hazy, leaving evangelicals still striving to secure a spot on the spectrum between liberalism/modernism and fundamentalism.

Evangelicals believe that the primary problem of human existence is alienation from God and thus they stress evangelism. They have tended to focus on the transformative impact of sanctification in the lives of believers and on “getting people saved” as the primary force for the moral improvement of society at large. They tend not to emphasize economic, social, or political systems as corporate sources or manifestations of sin. As a result, they have rarely engaged in concerted reflection on and action relating to structural sin. Their focus is on sin in terms of individual behavior patterns. African American churches linked to evangelicals because their theological stance, tend to be much more liberal politically.

In the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, evangelicalism has emerged as an intellectual force in American culture. While not always the case, evangelicals of late have emphasized training and preparation and have encouraged the earning of advanced degrees at the best schools with the most rigorous programs. Evangelical scholars are gaining appointments at major universities and evangelical schools are increasingly recognized for their quality. Billy Graham (1918-2018), Harold Ockenga (1905-1985), Carl F.H. Henry (1913-2003), and others have worked to emphasize an intellectual element in evangelicalism that has been absent in the development of fundamentalism.

## **8. Pentecostals and Charismatics**

**§6-216. In general.**—Through the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the holiness movement grew out of Methodism. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, holiness Christians embraced Pentecostalism. A holiness evangelist, Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929), founded Bethel Bible School in Kansas. He taught his students that speaking in tongues should accompany the second blessing, a blessing which holiness groups believe results in “Christian perfection.” Speaking in tongues became part of the spiritual experience for many of his followers. In 1906, one of Parham’s students, William

Seymour (1870-1922), was holding a revival at Azusa Street in Los Angeles when “fire came down” and hosts of people were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Hundreds of holiness Christians flocked to the Mission to experience the “baptism of the Holy Spirit,” thus launching modern Pentecostalism.

In the United States, students of Pentecostalism point to three movements of the Spirit:

- First wave of the outpouring of the Spirit at the Azusa Street Revival;
- Second wave denoting an embrace of charismatic gifting and life by mainline Protestantism and Roman Catholicism in the 1960s and 1970s;
- Third wave denoting the embrace of the signs and wonders movement by conservative Protestants.

In more recent years, Pentecostalism has expanded most rapidly in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Preachers like Simon Kimbangu and his African Independent Church, Sundar Singh in southern India, and Watchman Nee in China were instrumental in the early growth of Pentecostalism overseas.

**§6-217. Spirit baptism; second work of grace.**—Pentecostals believe that conversion to Christ should be followed by an intense experience of the Spirit of God, often called Spirit baptism or the second work of grace. This experience usually results in speaking in tongues in the patterns of Acts 2. This gift can be speaking in a known human language unknown to the speaker or (usually) in unknown “heavenly” tongues. Modern Pentecostalism began with the confluence of African American Christian experience and the holiness movement.

**§6-218. Growth of movement.**—Until the 1960s, Pentecostals primarily drew their followers from the poor and under-educated members of society. Beginning in the 1960s, they increasingly attracted highly educated and affluent followers, which augured a new phase in the charismatic movement. Historically, Pentecostals tend to be in denominations the specifically emphasized the gifts of the Spirit. The new “charismatic” phase cut across denominations, including both Protestants and Catholics. In the 1970s, an annual conference at the University of Notre Dame typically drew tens of thousands of people.

The movement has spread worldwide. Pentecostals hold doctrinal stances similar to fundamentalists, albeit they usually express their beliefs in a much more emotional way. They believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, hold traditional Orthodox positions on God, Christ, salvation, and the immanence of Christ’s return. They also affirm that one is not fully within the fold until one experiences the filling of the Holy Spirit, which they link with speaking in tongues.

**§6-219. Health and wealth; signs and wonders.**—Some Pentecostals and evangelicals are part of the health and wealth and signs and wonders movements. The health and wealth people tend to think that any sickness or infirmity is an activity of Satan and, since God opposes Satan, He necessarily wants to remove the infirmity. This idea extends to financial health. A number of believers state unequivocally that God wants them to be wealthy. This spirit is categorically opposite to the medieval glorification of poverty.

Robert Schuller (1926-2015) has been a promoter of the of what is called self-esteem theology. He believes that lack of self-esteem is a fundamental problem with people and that traditional ideas of original sin are destructive in that it causes people to have negative self-images. Schuller even defines sin in relation to self-image, “as any act or thought that robs me or another person of his or her self-esteem”. In addition, John Wimber (1934-1997) has been instrumental in the “Signs and Wonders” movement. He emphasizes the power of the Holy Spirit to heal people of disease and infirmity. The modernist worldview embraced by western Christians prevents them from recognizing this as the teaching of the New Testament.

## 9. Secular Theology

**§6-221. In general.**—Secular comes from the Latin *saeculum*, meaning age or generation. The meaning morphed in ecclesiastical Latin to denote earthly time and worldly affairs, what is temporal rather than eternal. Then the word progressed to denote anyone living in the world and applied to parish clergy who did not live by a particular rule. Now secularization is about the balance of power between the world and the church. One sociologist identifies three ways of thinking about this:

- disenchantment—a shift from a supernatural worldview to a materialistic explanation of everything;
- privatization—a retreat of organized religion from a position of authority in the public square to something that is a person's private business;
- differentiation—religion is just one worldview among many and no longer taken for granted as a base line.

**§6-222. Secularizing endeavor.**—These people see the task facing the Church to be one of making its message intelligible to a modern, industrial, urbanized society. The surest indicator of God’s character was in His actions, and God acts in love and justice. Secular theologians distinguish between secularism and secularization. Secularism is an ideology opposed to faith. Secularization is the result of biblical faith and therefore part of God’s unfolding design. They see themselves as reinterpreting the Christian message in secular terms. The common theme of all these “theologies” is to make Christianity relevant and acceptable to modern thinking about concrete human situations.

**§6-223. Representatives.**—Harvey Cox (1929-) asserts that the world has “come of age”. With the maturity of scientific and technological understanding, the world is shedding control imposed by religious understandings of humanity. John A.T. Robinson (1919-1983), in *Honest to God* (1963), asserted that Christianity’s whole way of thinking was the obstacle to an intelligent faith. The idea of the “God out there,” upon whom people must call to order their lives, was akin to persuading moderns again to take seriously the gods of Olympus.

**§6-224. Secularism and the death of God.**—Death of God theology movement of the 1960s gave expression to an idea incipient in modern Western philosophy and theology—the reality of

a transcendent God was, at best unknowable, and at worst non-existent. Bultmann and Tillich were both avowed anti-supernaturalists. Bonhoeffer also contributed to this line of thought in his *Letters and Papers from Prison*. He makes statements about humanity “coming of age” of a religion-less Christianity, of a “world without God.” It is not always clear what Bonhoeffer meant, but he did provide the vocabulary that radical theologians could exploit.

Thomas Altizer and Paul Van Buren were representative of the death of God movement in the 1960s. Altizer's belief in God's death was that ceased to exist as a supernatural, transcendent being. In other words, God had become fully immanent and only immanent in the world. The result was the essential identity between the human and the divine. Paul Van Buren was more interested in the linguistic aspects of God's existence and death. He accepted the premise of the analytic philosophy of the day that concrete knowledge and meaning can only be conveyed by language that is empirically verifiable. That means or assumes that the reality of God is meaningless because we cannot verify His existence by any of our physical senses. The ultimate upshot of this line of thinking is that these modern theologies, by surrendering essential elements of the Christian belief in God, were actually anti-theologies.

## 10. Process Theology

**§6-226. In general.**—Process theology is a 20<sup>th</sup> century movement teaching that God is bipolar, both transcendent and integrally involved in the endless processes of the world. In His transcendent nature are the timeless perfections of His nature and character. In His consequent or worldly immanent nature, He is part of the cosmic, evolving process of the world. The attributes of God are His divine qualities that are necessarily true of him regardless of circumstances. However, His concrete nature is those particulars which He has gained by His interaction with the world. In His concrete actuality, God is a living person in process. Thus, He is necessary and supremely absolute in His abstract, divine nature but dependent and supremely relative in His concrete nature. God is more than just the world in its totality (contra to pantheism) because He has His own transcendent self-identity. Yet God includes the world within himself (contra to classical theism) by His perfect prehension or participation in the creative, evolving events of the world. This view is called pan-entheism (all in God-ism).

**§6-227. Representatives.**—Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) was the foremost exponent of Process theology in America. Beginning with the doctrine of God, Process theologians sought to show that Process thinking was more in accord with the Biblical view of God as dynamically related to the world and human history than the more traditional Christian theism. Such people as John Cobb, Stuart Ogden, and Norman Pittenger were involved in this endeavor.

## 11. Ecumenism

**§6-231. In general.**—The ecumenical movement attempts to promote unity among various Christian groups. Many have noted the acrimony that has divided different Christian groups since the Reformation and have asserted that the transforming power of the gospel commits

Christians to work towards reconciliation and unity. The task of common witness and service to people is more important than the issues that have historically divided Christian groups.

Ecumenical concern is one of the hallmarks of 20<sup>th</sup> century Christianity. Historically, the first significant effort was the Evangelical Alliance organized in London in 1846. It was an alliance of individuals and active in nine European countries. In 1908, thirty-one American denominations joined in the Federal Council of Churches. The Council was active in addressing social, economic, and political questions, and conservative clergy criticized its liberal theology and agenda. In 1950, the Federal Council was absorbed by the National Council of Churches in Christ.

**§6-232. World Council of Churches.**—The most ambitious of the ecclesiastical ecumenical projects was the World Council of Churches formed in 1948 in Amsterdam. The World Council is a commingling of three sources: the International Missionary Council, the Conference on Life and Work, and the Conference on Faith and Order. All three trace their source to the International Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910.

The early decades of the ecumenical movement were forged by John R. Mott, Charles H. Brent, Nathan Soderblom, and Willem Visser't Hooft. Mott (1865-1955) was an American Methodist lay person with deep faith, evangelistic zeal, and powerful communication and organizational skill. He founded the World's Student Christian Federation and made hundreds of personal contacts around the world. He was a natural for chairing the Edinburgh Conference in 1910. After the Conference, Mott served as the chair of the Continuation Committee and then as chair of the International Missionary Council, founded in 1921 to serve as a meeting place where strategies, experiences, and resources were shared. The Council assembled in Jerusalem in 1928 and in Madras, India in 1938 where the nature of the Church and the content of the Christian message came to the foreground. A third assembly was held in Canada in 1947 to re-establish links broken by World War II and to reconstruct missionary labors ravaged by the war.

World War II delayed the foundation of that organization. The World Council of Churches first met in 1948 at Amsterdam. Willem Visser't Hooft (1900-1985) served as Secretary in the Council's early years. He reflected the influence of Karl Barth who felt that the modern church had almost lost its soul in adjusting modern historical trends. His unofficial slogan was "let the Church be the church," by which he meant that the church, while not running away from the world, should not merely echo the world either.

The Amsterdam meeting was attended by 107 churches from 44 countries. With the Cold War beginning, the Council called on all churches to reject both Communism and liberal capitalism and to oppose the mistaken notion that these two systems exhausted all possible options. At its second conference in Evanston, Illinois in 1954, 163 churches were present and the Council began to turn its attention to the church in its local concreteness. The size of the subsequent assemblies at New Delhi, India (1961), Uppsala, Sweden (1968), Nairobi (1975), and Vancouver (1982) continued to grow. At the latter two conferences, the sacraments and the local ministry of

the church were in the foreground of the agenda. The assembly at Canberra, Australia (1991) turned its attention to ecological matters and the care of creation and to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit brought to the fore by the far-reaching charismatic movement. At the assemblies at Harare (1998) and Porto Alegre (2006), it was clear that the World Council was in crisis. Financial support was dwindling, and many were questioning the international model of ecumenism and were looking for other means to develop the unity of the church.

**§6-233. Faith and order.**—Charles Brent (1862-1929) was a Canadian Anglican who served as a missionary to the Philippines. Brent was very conscious of the doctrinal differences that separated churches. He believed that lasting cooperation between churches was only possible based on agreement on the essentials of the faith. He thought disunity was fundamentally creedal. Thus, he labored on the Conference of Faith and Order.

**§6-234. Life and work.**—Nathan Soderblom (1866-1931), Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala in Sweden, was the founder and promoter of the Life and Work Movement. He rejected faith in the divine and human nature of Christ because he considered it unacceptable to moderns. He stressed that revelation was an ongoing process, not limited to the apostolic age. True religion does not rest in our conception of God, but in our moral character. Religion is what people are and do, not what they believe. Thus, Christian unity does not lie in doctrinal agreement, but in historical outworking. Christians needed to come together in matters of common concern. He labored on the Conference of Life and Work, believing that an environment of mutual respect and common labor toward shared goals would yield progress in Christian unity.

**§6-235. Loss of dynamic tension between doctrinal and social concerns.**—At first, a dynamic tension existed between the doctrinal emphasis of the Faith and Order Conference and the social concern of the Life and Work Conference. Over time, the doctrinal concerns declined, and social concerns predominated. The World Council focused on issues such as racism, peace protests, liberation theology, poverty, and unemployment. As a result, efforts to support reunion and dialogue with separated churches and communities were left to other agencies and institutions.

**§6-236. Denominational mergers.**—Zeal for unity also created denominational mergers and international alliances. In the United States alone between 1900 and 1970, there were over thirty mergers of denominations, including the creation of such groups as the United Methodists and the United Presbyterians. In addition, there have been world confessional alliances, including—

- International Congregational Council;
- Mennonite World Conference;
- World Methodist Conference;
- Baptist World Alliance;
- Lutheran World Federation; and
- World Alliance of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches

**§6-237. Critics of ecumenism.**—Critics of international ecumenism question the federation form of Christian unity. They challenge the inadequate doctrinal basis of the World Council and its commitment to evangelism. The Council’s increasing involvement in political activities in developing nations has also been criticized. Since the 1970s, the World Council increasingly considers the unity of the church as a question of the unity of humankind. Critics charge that humanistic economic and political goals are emphasized rather than distinctive Christian witness.

**§6-238. Evangelical expressions of unity.**—Evangelicals have always stressed the necessity of personal religious experience. George Whitefield speaks through the ages: “Father Abraham, whom do you have in heaven? Any Episcopalians? No! Any Presbyterians? No! Any Independents or Methodists? No, no, no! We do not know those names here. All who are here are Christians ... Oh, is this the case? Then God help us to forget party names and to become Christians in deed and truth.”

In the early 1940s, American evangelicals created two organizations: the National Association of Evangelicals and the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC). They were both loyal to orthodox Christianity but differed in their attitude toward the ecumenical movement. The ACCC was vehemently critical of the World Council and all those having anything to do with it. Evangelicals also had several congresses to encourage united efforts in evangelism, including meetings in Berlin (1966) and in Lausanne, Switzerland (1972). Evangelism brought Christian unity front and center. How can we preach a gospel of reconciliation and ourselves remain unreconciled in so many disparate groups? Thus, while the World Council turned to social issues with political overtones and common action thereon as the practical theater of unity, evangelicals turned to the restoration of evangelism and the historic mission of the church as the forum to engage meaningful on Christian unity.

**§6-239. —Roman Catholics and Evangelicals.**—Since the mid-1990s, Catholics and evangelicals have dialogued on points of commonality between them and have put together a document *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*. Catholics and evangelicals are also moving closer together as evangelicals rediscover the spiritual disciplines and the rich heritage of Catholic spiritual tradition. The appreciation of people like Henri Nouwen (1932-1996) or Thomas Merton (1915-1968) among evangelicals is a result of this growing sense of commonality.

## **12. Roman Catholic developments**

### **(a) Pre-Vatican II**

**§6-241. In general; early 20<sup>th</sup> century.**—Through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Roman Catholic Church was guided by very conservative popes, who contended with modernism and the aggressive posture of secular European states. The pontificate of Pius X (1903-1914) was dominated by issues relating to anti-clericalism in France and with Catholic modernists. Benedict

XV (1914-1922) guided the Church through the difficult years of World War I. The Church took a neutral stance while condemning the war. Both sides blasted the Church's refusal to abandon its neutrality.

Pius XI (1922-1939) had to contend with belligerent Fascist governments in Italy and Germany after the World War I. He came to terms with Mussolini (1883-1945) in the Lateran Concordat and Treaty of 1929. The Vatican was recognized as a sovereign state, many privileges of the Church prior to 1870 were restored, including the right to run the Catholic school system. In return, the Church surrendered any right to the former Papal States, promised to stay out of Italian politics, and made the appointment of Italian bishops conditioned upon their approval by the state. Under Pius XI, the educational mission of the Church was strengthened with the creation of new episcopal sees and new youth organizations. Theologians like Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) and Etienne Gilson (1884-1978) led a revival in neo-Thomist studies.

Pius XII (1939-1958) was pope during World War II and its aftermath. He was criticized for not doing more to stop and to denounce Nazi atrocities against Jews, Slavs, and other groups. He was an able, but conservative administrator who encouraged the continuing concentration of ecclesiastical power in Rome and resisted the spread of communism.

**§6-242. Pre-Vatican theological currents.**—The middle years of the century saw the rise of new voices in Catholic theological thought. Catholics began to think in new ways about the connections between history, evolution, and Christianity.

Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) thought that evolution lay at the root of modern thought, but thought that the “survival of the fittest” was not evolution's operative principle. He proposed that cosmic evolution was guided by the “law of complexity-consciousness.” He thought that the universe evolves through ever-higher states of complexity and consciousness under the attraction of an ultimate goal, which he called the “Omega.” The Omega was none other than Christ. However, this grand scheme left no room for concepts central to traditional Christian thought – the human fall from perfection, the ongoing implications of that fallen state, and need for redemption made possible by the sacrificial death of Christ.

Other theologians spoke to the issue of faith and history and raised the possibility that dogmas proclaimed by councils and popes over the course of 2,000 years are not perfect, timeless expressions of truth, but as formulas conditioned by historical and cultural realities. Yves Congar (1904-1995) argued that the Church had sometimes articulated its doctrines too narrowly, formulating them too closely to social and intellectual conditions that drove specific historical situations.

Karl Rahner (1904-1984), a German Jesuit, may well have been the most influential Catholic theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was a great systematizer of Catholic theology in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two topics have particular significance: (1) his Christology and the understanding of anthropology and grace that flows from it (he made much of the incarnation of Jesus and saw it as the touchstone gracing our humanity); and (2) his understanding of the catholicity of the

Church. Instead of uniformity, he thought of the church in terms of incarnation in the various situations around the world.

He believed Christians of every age must rediscover the meanings behind the doctrines of the Church. He asserted both the value of Church tradition and the importance of determining its relevance for the modern situation. He focused much of his energy on an understanding of the Church. He emphasized the importance of the collegiality of bishops, who, though needing to recognize the primacy of the pope, must also have the freedom to minister to the special needs of the cultures in which they live and work. He stressed the operation of grace outside traditional Church structures. All human existence is derived from and rooted in God and all people are objects of His grace.

These thinkers had a considerable impact on Catholic thinking leading up to Vatican II. They argued that expressions of Christian faith must adapt to the historical situation in which Christians find themselves. Vatican II was to adopt the modern view that reality is dynamic and evolutionary rather than static.

## **(b) Vatican II**

**§6-246. In general; calling the Council.**—Angelo Roncalli's (Pope John XXIII) ascent up the ecclesiastical ladder was unspectacular. He spent time as a letter carrier in the Oriental Congregation of the Vatican, as an apostolic visitor to remote Bulgaria, then to Muslim Turkey, and then to troubled and secular post-World War II France. His ministry included the purposeful meeting and befriending of non-Catholics. He wanted his papacy to be that of the good shepherd defending truth and goodness and not as one that was particularly politically adept or learned. He often left the Vatican to visit orphanages, schools, jails, and churches. Soon after his ascent, he called for a general council. Vatican II was the first general council called for pastoral purposes, rather than to combat heresy, pronounce new dogmas, or marshal church resources against hostile forces.

**§6-247. Challenge to the fortress mentality.**—From the Council of Trent until Vatican II, the image of Rome that seemed ascendant within Holy Mother Church was that of a fortress under assault from the forces of heresy, secularism, modernism, and individualism. Salvation lay within the secure walls. Do not even think of venturing out. Vatican I (1870-1871) was a defensive maneuver against the modern world. It declared the Pope infallible when speaking *ex cathedra* in matters of faith and morals and squelched the bid of progressives to have the Church embrace democratic liberalism and liberal biblical scholarship.

With Vatican II (1962-1965), things changed. The Council spoke of the Church as a pilgrim people that needed to engage the world. That was a challenge to the previous mentality of being besieged. The Council sought to open the windows and let fresh air into the Church. The Pope declared that the Church leaders were not to be museum keepers but to cultivate a flourishing garden of life.

The Council met in four sessions over three years (1962-1965). There were three key areas of discussion and deliberation: religious pluralism, Church authority, and human sexuality. The Pope invited non-Catholic observers and allowed women to attend as auditors in the third session. These were unprecedented moves.

**§6-248. Assembling the Council; rival factions.**—Vatican II (1962-1965) pitted rival factions against each other. Conservatives dominated the Theological Commission that prepared various documents for consideration. Pope John XXIII saw the Council's goals differently and spoke of the need for *aggiornamento* (updating) that sought to adapt the deposit of revelation to contemporary needs and to apply the medicine of mercy rather than the arm of authority to those who were not faithful children of the Church. The new theology of the likes of Karl Rahner was seen to have much to contribute to the Church.

There was a constant struggle between the conservative curia and the more progressive general Council in the early sessions. The Council had four distinct meetings in the falls of 1962-1965 and issued sixteen decrees.

**§6-249. On liturgy and doctrine; religious pluralism.**—The first session touched upon liturgy (allowing modern languages instead of traditional Latin) and doctrine (authority from two sources (Scripture and tradition) versus authority understood as a single stream with two channels (Scripture and tradition). The Council absolved the Jews for the death of Jesus and transformed Rome's official position toward Protestants—no longer hell-bound heretics but “separated brethren.” The Council also affirmed religious liberty for all. The Council's affirmation of freedom of conscience even if that freedom leads people astray was remarkable considering Church history.

**§6-250. Power of the papacy.**—John XXIII died before the second session convened in the fall of 1963 and his successor, Paul VI, opted to continue the Council. The second session focused on the power of the papacy. Conservatives emphasized the infallibility and primacy of the papacy (the sovereignty of the pope) and the progressives emphasized that the whole college of bishops were to be involved with the pope in governance (collegiality of the bishops). Paul VI stoutly resisted any suggestion that a robust understanding of the primacy of the papacy was under reconsideration or that the traditional Catholic assertion that it and it alone is the one, true Church was to be modified.

**§6-251. Guidelines for Church life.**—The third session wrestled with guidelines for the life and ministry of priests, the mission of lay people in the world, and missionary work among those outside the faith.

**§6-252. Freedom of religion.**—The last session renewed the debate on freedom of religion. The Church turned away from the dictates of Christendom in favor of the dictates of conscience. It abandoned the assumption that whenever the Church possessed the means (as in Catholic nations

like Spain and Italy) it had the right to exercise public power to enforce its religious demands and to further its religious work.

**§6-253. Sexuality and birth control.**—Another area of concern was that of sexuality and birth control. The Church's traditional teaching was that every act of intimacy between husband and wife must be open to the possibility of procreation. A papal study commission recommended that the Church permit Catholics to use contraceptives. Unnerved by the amount of change the Council had already approved, Pope Paul VI, John XXIII's successor during the middle of the Council, wrapped up the Council without following this recommendation and later issued an encyclical *Humane Vitae* (1968) which affirmed the Church's traditional position.

### (c) Post-Vatican II

**§6-256. Tidal wave of change.**—The Council issued important documents on liturgical reform (including Mass in the vernacular and adapting the liturgy to native cultures), religious freedom and conscience (completely revoking the Syllabus of Errors), on ecumenism, and on the new pastoral mood of the Church expressed in the “pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World”. The decrees of Vatican II were compromises, but the Council did break with the angry spirit of Trent and the defensive mood of Vatican I. Roman Catholicism turned to the world with concern rather than anger.

The decade that followed the Council was quite tumultuous for Catholics. The liturgical changes to the Mass brought controversy and the pronouncements on authority stirred a hornet's nest. However, the basic structure of the Church remained hierarchical. The Pope ruled the Church, the bishops their dioceses, and the priests their parishes. Pope Paul's encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, condemning the use of artificial means of contraception brought the authority issue to a head. His ruling was contrary to the recommendation of a significant majority of his birth control commission. A similar controversy raged over the issue of the Church's prohibition of divorce.

**§6-257. Crisis of identity.**—During the initial decade after the Council, the Church faced a crisis of identity. Between 1962 and 1974, the total number of seminarians in the United States declined by thirty-one percent. Between 1966 and 1972, 8,000 American priests left the ministry. The root cause was the priest's identity. The sacredness of the priestly office all but vanished. The democratic trends in the Church made the Church's hierarchy seem medieval. The conflict over authority pitted two contrasting theologies: (1) a fellowship of spiritual communities held together in essentials by their recognition of papal primacy; and (2) the traditional hierarchical view that saw the Church as a medieval super-state governed by an absolute monarch. In addition, there grew in the Church a hunger for a more personal faith, and this found expression in the explosion of the charismatic movement in American Catholicism.

After the dust settled from Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church has followed a pattern of being conservative on theological issues while taking more liberal positions on a number of social issues. The popes have been advocates for social and economic justice and have

increasingly opened Catholic practice to the laity. American laypeople serve in a variety of pastoral and quasi-pastoral positions in thousands of parishes. And among these lay ministers, it is estimated that over eighty percent of them are women.

**§6-258. New theological currents.**—In addition, the Church has taken a broader approach to understanding God, moving from a rationalistic Thomism to include more experiential dimensions. Hans Kung (1928-) has been a leader in this trend. He questioned papal authority in *Infallibility? An Inquiry* (1971). He was subsequently stripped of his accreditation as a teacher of Catholic theology. Stepping into an ecumenical position at Tübingen, he wrote *On Being a Christian* (1976) and *Does God Exist* (1978). Kung understands theology as beginning “from below.” The task of the theologian is to understand contemporary existence and to seek modern people in the places where they actually live to relate the knowledge of God to the things that stir people.

**§6-259. Church in post-colonial politics.**—The Church was an influential player in the independence movements that rocked the Global South in the 1960s and 1970s. Vatican II placed the Church firmly on the side of democracy and dignity for oppressed peoples. The situation in the Philippines serves as an example. While Vatican II did not directly cause the revolution that ousted strongman Ferdinand Marcos, the revolution would not have unfolded the way it did without Vatican II. Filipino Catholic leaders adopted the Latin American idea of base communities, self-reliant worship communities made up of peasants and poor workers who often lived at a significant distance from the nearest parish church. These communities pushed for reform of the Marcos-led Philippines while rejecting atheistic communism. The movement for reform grew stronger as the greed, corruption, and brutality of Marcos and his henchmen grew more obvious. When a leader of reform, Benigno Aquino, was murdered by Marcos' henchmen, Manila erupted, the military sided with the rebels, and Marcos was through.

**§6-260. At the millennium with John Paul II.**—John Paul II (1978-2005) was the first non-Italian pope since Hadrian VI (1522-1523) and a most influential one. He was an advocate of social justice and increased the papacy's moral suasion in international affairs. He was genuinely concerned with physical persecution and the suffering faced by people around the world and was credited with a role in hastening the end of Communist domination of Eastern Europe. He was not receptive to European and American concerns involving contraceptives, a loosening of sexual mores, or with the ordination of women. While genuinely concerned with the plight of the poor, he was noticeably cool towards liberation theology. He thought that liberation thinkers were too beholden to Marxism while ignoring relevant biblical sources. In the 1980s, he addressed the Latin American bishops and said that liberation theology could be both legitimate and necessary if purified of Marxism.

### III. European Religious Setting

Our having grown up forces us to realize where we stand with God.  
 God is teaching us to live as those who can manage without him. (D. Bonhoeffer)

#### A. Leading up to World War II and its Aftermath

**§6-261. In general.**—The aftermath of World War I left Europe profoundly affected on both a psychological and societal level. Much of the continent was moving “beyond Christendom” through a period of cultural malaise akin to an era of societal depression. The lost generation was a phrase used of the European generation that came of age during World War I. They were lost in the disconnected, wandering, direct-less spirit of so many of the war’s survivors. War, revolution, the rise of ideologies, and Europe’s evident decline from its apex on the world scene just prior to the great war, fed a disillusioned, pessimistic spirit far removed from the optimism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**§6-262. Rise of totalitarian states.**—Politically, the development of overriding concern was the rise of totalitarian states. Bolsheviks seized power in Russia and won a withering civil war against the White Russians. Mussolini seized control in Italy in 1922 and fostered dreams of a new Roman Empire. Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in early 1933. He cruelly suppressed all rivals and soon revealed himself as a dictator bent on voiding the Treaty of Versailles of 1919, rearming in a ruthless pursuit of a chilling vision, and going to war.

#### 1. Western Europe

**§6-263. In general.**—Protestant liberalism was shaken to its foundations by the world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Great War exposed the lie of liberalism’s false dreams and contributed to a sharp increase in skepticism and secularism in society. Among the countries of Western Europe, the process of secularization accelerated, prompting Christians to ask about the relationship between Christianity and the modern, highly secular view of the world.

**§6-264. Protestantism between the wars.**—The Protestant churches struggled with the growing secularism of northern European states. People were active in ecumenical efforts, but Protestantism was sorely lacking a theological response to the challenges of the times. Karl Barth attempted to meet that need (see the discussion under Neo-Orthodoxy in the division relating to Key Trends-Theological). Yet, these advances were eclipsed by events in the birthplace of Protestantism during the 1930s and 1940s.

**§6-265. German Christians under Hitler.**—Hitler was born and raised a Roman Catholic but completely abandoned Catholicism for a faith in Germany’s regeneration through national socialism. He courted Christian support by emphasizing national pride and pretending to favor

the churches' role in the state. Catholics were strong presence in the German republic in the 1920s and endorsed the new Nazi government in the early 1930s. The pope signed a concordat with the Fuehrer in 1933.

Some German Protestants wanted to unite the various regional Protestant groups under a single bishop and elected Ludwig Muller, a fervent Nazi, to the post. These German Christians combined Christian beliefs as interpreted by liberalism with Nazi ideas of German racial superiority and nationalistic pride. They also reinterpreted Christianity in terms of opposition to Judaism in accord with the anti-Semitic policies of the Third Reich. They confused the gospel with German culture. Fascist calls to "civilize" the world were echoed in Protestant pulpits and academic chairs in the 1930s. In 1933, this group claimed about 15-20% of the Protestant pastors in Germany. They adopted the "Aryan paragraph" which called for the dismissal of all people of Jewish origin from church positions.

**§6-266. Confessing Church.**—To counter the German Christian movement under Muller, a group of ministers led by Martin Niemoller formed the Pastors' Emergency League and set up a structure known as the Confessing Church. They eventually claimed about the same number of pastors as the German Christian movement. Most pastors remained unaffiliated and eventually obeyed Hitler's commands without open protest. When it was clear that Ludwig Muller had failed to unite the Protestants behind the Fuhrer, Hitler appointed an anti-Christian Nazi, Hans Kerrl, as Minister of Church Affairs which promoted the idea that Nazism was the true fulfillment of Christianity and that God's will reveals itself in German blood.

**§6-267. Barmen Declaration.**—In May, 1934, The Confessing Church set out its theological convictions in the Barmen Declaration. Largely written by Karl Barth, it called the German churches back to the central truths of Christianity and to reject the totalitarian claims of the state. While it planned no resistance to Nazism per se, the Confessing Church was harassed by the Gestapo and repudiated by most Protestant pastors. Many pastors church leaders were imprisoned, others were deported, and not a few lost their lives. Martin Niemoller spent eight years in prison. Barth refused to sign a document pledging unconditional support for the Third Reich and was exiled to Switzerland.

Hitler moved against the Confessing Church, beginning by requiring all professors and then all pastors to pledge allegiance to the Fuehrer. In 1938, a Jewish teenage boy was accused of shooting a minor German official. Hitler seized on this as an excuse for killing or imprisoning thirty thousand Jews and destroying hundreds of homes and synagogues in the "Night of Breaking Glass". Bonhoeffer was one of the few to publicly protest the pogrom. Others privately risked their lives to rescue Jews during World War II which soon followed.

**§6-268. Dietrich Bonhoeffer.**—Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) was a pastor in London at this time and returned to head a Confessing seminary. In 1937, He published *The Cost of Discipleship*. That year, his seminary was disbanded but secretly continued for two small student

groups. He wrote *Life Together* in 1939 reflecting on their community's experience of shared obedience and danger.

In the 1940s, Bonhoeffer got involved in the underground resistance movement against Hitler. Until this time, he had been a pacifist but concluded that this kind of pacifism was only a way to escape his own responsibility to act against evil. Bonhoeffer was arrested by the Gestapo in 1943 and spent the rest of his life in prison or in concentration camps. He served as chaplain to those prisoners inside and was able to correspond with people outside. As the Allies advanced into Germany, the Third Reich moved to eliminate its worst enemies. Bonhoeffer was executed on April 9, 1945, three weeks before Hitler's suicide and one month before Germany's total surrender.

**§6-269. Protestantism in other nations (Britain as illustrative).**—There were serious losses to Protestant participation in the British Isles between the wars. There were several factors contributing to this:

- Continuation of intellectual trends questioning or dismissing Christianity as intellectual untenable or irrelevant.
- The progressive industrialization of the nation. The routine of industrial laborers, their attitudes, working conditions, and patterns of life tended to wean them from the faith.
- Forms of worship and parish organization were ill suited to industrialized society and the Church was slow to adapt.
- The growth of the welfare state with its increasingly socialistic program handicapped the Church with people to whom it had traditionally ministered.
- Divisions resulting from revisions in the Book and Common Prayer. Evangelicals asserted that it went too far in the direction of Roman Catholicism and Anglo-Catholics criticizing it for not going far enough.

British scholars continued to make significant contributions to the statements of historic faith, characteristically expressing moderate views on issues. These scholars were not carried away by form criticism or by eschatological speculation as many others were. William Temple emerged as the outstanding British ecclesiastical statesmen of the era and C.S. Lewis as the outstanding apologist for the faith. There was a significant decline in the numbers of British clergy compared to the pre-war years with the noticeable languishing of clergy salaries at least partly to blame.

**§6-270. Roman Catholicism between the wars.**—The reconfigured Europe after the Treaty of Versailles impacted the Catholic Church. Traditional Catholic strongholds such as Austria-Hungary and Belgium were severely weakened or destroyed. The exhausting drain on France, a rich 19<sup>th</sup> century source of Catholic missionaries, and the aggressive secularism of post-war French society was hurtful to the Church's worldwide ministry. The defeat of Germany, whose Catholic constituency was increasing throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the rise of totalitarian Nazism challenged the Church's policy stances on numerous fronts. The debilitating conflict with

the Italian government continued, but the Church did come to terms with the Fascist regime of Mussolini in the Lateran Concordat and Treaty of 1929. In addition, the Church benefited (at least politically) from the ascent of Francisco Franco in Spain in the mid to late 1930s. As generally true of the Church's relations with favorable authoritarian states, there would be criticism in the future for complicity with the abuses of the Fascist regime.

During this period, Benedict XV (1914-1922) and Pius XI (1922-1939) served as capable popes. There was a revival of sorts in the Church, an increase in devotional and liturgical interest, and a neo-Thomist theological renewal led by Jacques Maritain. There was a deep conviction among the faithful of the Church that the West had been proceeding on a faulty conception of humanity and of the world and that the truth was in the historic Catholic faith.

**§6-271. Catholic response to Hitler.**—With Hitler's intentions clear by the mid to later 1930s, the Catholics grew alarmed with the "new heathenism" and appealed to the Vatican. Pius XI published an encyclical *With Deep Anxiety* in 1937 criticizing Hitler's oppression of the church and calling Catholics to resist the idolatrous cult of state and race. In 1938, the Pope protested Hitler's crimes against the Jews in the encyclical *With Burning Sorrow*. Hitler's initial fury cooled, and he decided to treat the piece with utter silence while stepping up the pressure on churches to conform and eliminate any possibility of organized resistance.

## 2. Eastern Europe

**§6-276. In general.**—The map of Eastern Europe was redrawn by the treaty of Versailles. A host of new nations came into being, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary in Central Europe, Yugoslavia in the Balkans, and Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the Baltic region. These decades were chaotic—the establishment of fledgling democracies, the onset of economic depression, the oppressive advance and subjugation by Nazi Germany, and concluding with Soviet oppression behind the Iron Curtain.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were forcibly incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940. The other nations discussed above, except for Finland, were ruthlessly subjugated by Nazi Germany during the lead up to and the early years of World War II. They were "liberated" by Stalin's advancing armies in the concluding year of World War II.

It was in Communism that the Roman Catholic Church discerned its foremost enemy in the decades following World War I and through World War II. The Church stoutly resisted Communist advances. The Soviet state did everything in its power to undermine Roman Catholicism, severing its national units from allegiance to Rome, moving those units to a submissive state vis-a-vis the Communist state, and launching a relentless propaganda campaign with total disregard for the truth.

**§6-277. Christians in the crucible.**—All three major branches of the faith struggled to maintain themselves in this era. The Orthodox in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Yugoslavia had to deal with the oppressive religious policies of Stalin or his henchmen and, for a time, Himmler's Gestapo. Roman Catholics in Central Europe and Protestants in Czechoslovakia and Hungary also dealt with both ends of the totalitarian firmament. The devastation of war, the economic emergency, the uprooted populace, and the religious oppression left the church in survival mode.

### 3. Orthodoxy, the Russian Revolution, and Its Aftermath

**§6-281. In general.**—By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fully 25% of the Russian population were minorities outside the Orthodox faith. In 1905, Tsar Nicholas II ended the ban on Orthodox people converting to other faiths, granting minority communities the right to govern themselves, hold prayer meetings, and own property. There were several different minorities in the Russian community:

- Old Believers, a conservative sect that broke away from the Orthodox Church in 1650 because the Patriarch decided to reform the holy books and the liturgy.
- Doukhobors rejected most of the basic tenets of Christianity and rejected civil authority. They believed that God's Spirit illumines everyone and therefore violence is not permissible. Upon their refusal to fight for the Tsar in 1895, they were driven into exile.
- The Skoptsy take their name from the Russian word meaning “to castrate.” They preached castration (for women the amputation of breasts) as a seal that bonded members to Christ and restoring them to the original human innocence in the Garden before the Fall tainted human sexuality. With the toleration edicts in 1905, some Skoptsy were allowed to return to their homes.

**§6-282. On the eve of revolution.**—Almost 65% of Russians were nominally Orthodox. Around 10% were Muslim or Jewish. Russian intellectuals were debating the church's encounter with modernity and calling for a churchless Christianity in which an individuals' salvation did not depend entirely on the institutions of the formal church. Despite his edict of toleration, Tsar Nicholas II viewed religious orthodoxy as inseparable from political loyalty, allowing the Orthodox Church to beat down any rival church that grew too influential.

The Orthodox Church had a long history of maneuvering for wealth and political power and was open to Marxist accusations that religion was just a tool that the ruling class used to exploit the people. The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the consistent growth of Russian anger against the Tsar. During this period, Russia faced significant financial challenges, widespread corruption, increasing labor unrest, and the military and diplomatic setback at the hands Japan in the 1904-1905 conflict. When the country went to war in 1914, partly to recover their military prestige, partly to have credibility in the Balkans, the situation went completely off the rails. By 1915, Russia had suffered hundreds of thousands of casualties, and the army was at near mutiny. By

1917, when the Tsar asked the army to quell protests against his rule, the army refused, and the Tsar was toppled from power.

**§6-283. Bolshevik coup.**—After the Tsar was ousted, a provisional government was installed. It was too weak to control the factions in the Russian Duma and made the fatal mistake of continuing Russia's involvement in World War I. The Bolsheviks led a revolt in the streets and seized power in October 1918. The royal family was brutally executed and over the next four years, Bolshevik opponents were destroyed.

Marx was a materialist who dismissed religion as a tool of the powerful justifying their own rule. It was the “opiate of the people,” making the miserable lives of the masses easier to bear. But he believed in freedom of conscience and resisted using force to cause people to abandon their faith. However, Lenin saw the Orthodox Church as an obvious rival and took aim immediately. The Bolsheviks seized church property and rounded up priests, demanding loyalty to the revolution. Many priests ended up in prison, in mental hospitals, or were tortured and executed as enemies of the revolution. The Bolsheviks demanded that the church turn over its valuables to feed the poor, capitalizing on a long history of church privilege at the expense of the laity. They ended the toleration of minorities and were zealous in their persecution of them.

**§6-284. Under Stalin.**—In 1929, the government enacted the Law on Religious Associations setting the rules for all religious worship. All religious organizations had to be approved by the State and reside in an authorized building. No religious festivals, evangelizing, education, charity work, or anything else could go on unapproved or occur at other than an authorized location. In addition, the Government started a rival organization called the Living Church. It had clergy that preached the Communist program as the fulfillment of Christianity. The Russian Orthodox Church splintered, some trying to play ball with the Government and others refusing to compromise and going underground or setting up rival organizations abroad. The Russian Orthodox Church became a skeleton of what it once was. At the outset of World War II, there were only four bishops who were not in prison.

In 1941, the German invasion caught Stalin completely off-guard. He decided that the Russian people needed religion to make the colossal sacrifice he was asking of them. The war years were a time of religious revival in Russia. Stalin reversed his policy of suppressing church activity. Churches, seminaries, schools, and monasteries all began to function again.

The Russian losses in the war were devastating—11 million soldiers and up to 20 million civilians. While Stalin seemed to understand that religion needed to play a part in people rebuilding their lives, the State's relationship with organized religion seemed a hodge-podge, a mix of cooperation, persecution, benign neglect, and various means of pressure. Communist policies and the Orthodox Church's own corruption doubtless destroyed the faith of Russians, but the long history of Orthodoxy in Russia and the Russians deep commitment to the weekly rhythm of church life proved tenacious. So did the commitment of Russian religious dissenters.

## B. Postwar Decades; Cold War

### 1. Western Europe

**§6-291. In general.**—Among the countries of Western Europe, the process of secularization accelerated prompting Christians to ask about the relationship between Christianity and the modern, highly secular view of the world. Many people in Europe at this time were convinced that the era of modernity was ending. For two centuries, theological issues were dominated by the assumptions of modernity. There was a growing conviction that ideas such as objectivity and universality, the view of the world as a closed system guided by mechanistic principles, ideas that marked modernity's claims in this period, were waning and new ideas were arising in contextual theologies developing in the Third World.

**§6-292. Observations.**—In Europe there was a general move away from religious observance and belief in Christian teachings. The "secularization of society", attributed to the time of the Enlightenment and the years following, was primarily responsible for this. Only about one sixth of Europeans attend religious services on a regular basis, less than half give God "high importance" or believe in a "personal God". Other surveys and estimates give an even more grim view of religious participation.

However, recent surveys show that the "de-Christianization" of Europe may be slowly beginning to swing in the opposite direction. Renewal in certain quarters of the Anglican church, as well as in pockets of Protestantism on the continent attest to this initial reversal of the secularization of the continent in which Christianity originally took its deepest roots and from which it expanded around the world.

### 2. Eastern Europe and the Soviet Bloc

**§6-296. In general; religious repression.**—The Soviets tried to repress religious practice and offer their citizens atheistic substitutes. In the end, the policy backfired, and Christianity (particularly the Catholic Church) played a significant role in the collapse of the Soviet Empire.

Stalin relied on the Russian Orthodox Church to rally Russia during World War II. After his death in 1953, the Soviet leaders feared that religious organizations had benefited too much from their role in the war effort. In 1954, Khrushchev reauthorized the League of Militant Atheists to renew its drive to squash religion. The campaign was short-lived but renewed in 1958. While asserting that religion was officially a matter of conscience, but emphasizing that it should never disturb the peace, the Soviet regime planted KGB informants seeking grounds for accusations that could justify persecuting religious groups.

Eastern Europe followed in toe in varying degrees. The portion of Germany that fell under Russian control after World War II was the cradle of Protestantism. Marxist doctrine saw

Christianity as an enemy and Communist leaders in East Germany followed a policy of open persecution and opposition to the faith. In Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the leaders opted for benign neglect for a time, betting that the opium of the masses would soon disappear.

**§6-297. Cult of scientific atheism.**—The Communist hierarchy also built a quasi-religious cult devoted to their own power. In 1957, they promoted an atheist alternative to Christian confirmation for young communists. Then Communist wedding rites were authorized in “palaces of happiness.” Then an Institute of Scientific Atheism was founded in 1963 that would lay the groundwork for improving atheistic education. The main act of this pseudo-religion was the glorification of Soviet roots, highlighted by the reverence extended to Vladimir Lenin at his mausoleum on Red Square.

**§6-298. Brezhnev era.**—Khrushchev fell from power in 1964, and Brezhnev took over. His stay-the-course policy was more conservative. He left the pro-atheist programs in place but acknowledged that it would take time for “developed socialism” to take hold. An interesting feature of the Brezhnev era was that several Soviet scholars started writing honest assessments of religious communities in Russia, acknowledging them as loyal citizens with good work ethics. Christian communities were not dying out as predicted. In fact, the dissenting groups were even evangelizing on the sly. These groups would later nurture a powerful dissent against the Soviet regime.

**§6-299. Illustrative situations.**—In Czechoslovakia, a Marxist-Christian dialogue began, a dialogue associated with Joseph Hromadka, dean of the theological faculty at Prague. Given the background of Catholic opposition to Protestantism by the Hapsburgs, Hromadka and others initially saw Communism as perhaps removing the Catholic constraints and providing greater freedom for Protestants. He had fled to the United States from the Nazis in the 1930s and came to the opinion that Christianity in the United States was little more than the justification of liberal democracy and capitalism. While he was convinced that Christians must not be led astray of Marxist atheism, he was also skeptical of capitalistic materialism. There was a radical difference between Marxism and Christianity, but the church must be careful not to identify that difference with a particular side in Cold War politics. Christians must be critical of both the Marxist state and the injustices of the capitalist order.

Subsequent developments proved less hopeful. In 1949, the state adopted the policy of administering all churches through a department of ecclesiastical affairs and paying clergy salaries. By the following year, 90% of the clergy had taken oaths of allegiance to the Communist state.

In Hungary, while a constitution was adopted in 1949, which “separated” church and state “to guarantee freedom of conscience and the free practice of religion”, repression and the gross violation of human rights were the actual practice. In that year, despite vehement protests from the Vatican, Cardinal Mindszenty, the Roman Catholic primate of Hungary, was sentenced to life

imprisonment for treason. Church schools were nationalized, close to sixty church orders dissolved, and the property of these orders seized by the government. By 1950, only eight Roman Catholic schools remained from what had been more than half the educational institutions in the nation.

### C. At the Turn of the Millennium

**§6-301. In general; Western Europe.**—In Western Europe, the process of secularization continues to accelerate. However, Protestants have had success in evangelistic work in heavily industrialized areas. They have taken leading roles in international justice concerns and in service to people disenfranchised or uprooted by industrial development. At the same time, large numbers of immigrants from former European colonies have resulted in unprecedented growth in religions such as Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was little doubt that Europe was moving beyond Christendom.

**§6-302. Russia and Eastern Europe.**—The 1990s began with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dismemberment of its empire in Eastern Europe. In East Germany, Reformed and Lutheran pastors and Christian lay people led the effort to overthrow the regime, and many of these people occupied important positions in the effort to rebuild the country after Germany's reunification. In Hungary, Reformed pastor, Laszlo Tokes, played a leading role in resistance to the old order. In Poland and Romania, Reformed pastors and other leaders made important contributions in framing new constitutions. In other Soviet-bloc countries, progress was less decisive. The Silesian Lutheran Church deposed its bishop for collaborating with the old regime. When Yugoslavia disintegrated, so did the Reformed Christian Church in that area.

**§6-303. Poland as illustrative; John Paul II.**—Poland supplies an illustrative case. The story is different in various Eastern European countries and Christians played different roles in those various contexts. The Polish story reflects the unique place of Catholicism in that country's psychic and the unique role of the future Pope John Paul in ushering in change.

Catholicism served as a powerful counter-force against atheistic Communist regime established by the Soviets after World War II. The future Pope John Paul was orphaned early in life, spent a number of years in basically slave labor under the Germans, was ordained priest after the war, became a bishop in 1958, played a major role in Vatican II, made an archbishop in 1964, and then Pope in 1978. He was a conservative with respect to Church doctrine and a vehement freedom fighter. Eastern European dissidents came to see him as a man of principle who challenged the moral legitimacy of totalitarian regimes wherever he found them. His reception when he returned to Poland as Pope was the stuff of legend.

**§6-304. —Collapse of Communism.**—The Church was surprisingly vibrant in Poland at the time John Paul became Pope. Dominated by powerful neighbors for centuries, the Catholic

Church had become a potent part of Polish national identity. Leaders such as Cardinal Wyszyński had been savvy, and while himself imprisoned for lengthy periods, had won the Church more freedoms than enjoyed by Christians in most Communist countries. With the Polish economy crumbling, dissidents forged Solidarity, a trade union free of Communist control. Lech Wałęsa, a devout Catholic, led this mixed ideological group demanding change and free elections. While dissidents worked in other Communist countries, Poland was the only one where intellectuals and workers worked effectively together to make dissident protest a mass movement. The Catholic Church was the glue that made that work. It was not until 1989 that anything resembling free elections happened in Poland. When they did, Solidarity swept the ballot and Communist rule formally ended in April of that year.

## IV. American Religious Setting

**§6-321. In general.**—One commentator has remarked that one noticeable aspect of the life of the American church in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the degree to which the American church was insulated from the drastic changes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While technological change is very apparent, the great political, economic, and social upheavals of the century did not impact American life and thought as they had elsewhere.

### A. From World War I to the Great Depression

**§6-326. In general.**—World War I did not have the same immense consequences for the United States as it did for Europe. The United States did not get involved until near the end of the war and its own lands were never the scene of battle. However, American liberals were disillusioned, first, in that the war itself disabused them of their belief in the steady progress of humanity, and second, in their subsequent belief that World War I would make the world safe for democracy. President Wilson's hope for a fair peace treaty that would prevent future conflict was not achieved. The United States failed to join the League of Nations, a forum designed to avoid future conflicts. Instead, the United States entered another period of isolationism.

The Klu Klux Klan grew in numbers and activities, adding Catholics and Jews to blacks as the great enemies of American democracy and Christianity. Immigrants did not always receive a warm reception, and the initial waves of the "red scare" spread throughout the United States. In mainline denominations, a growing split between national leadership and local organizations began to show itself, in theology and well as in politics. Significant portions of the regular members of these denominations increasingly felt that their national leadership did not represent their views.

**§6-327. Fundamentalist-modernist controversy.**—The post-war years saw intensified conflict between liberals and fundamentalists. Nearly all denominations were affected by this conflict. The fundamentalists believed that the modernists were surrendering the central truths of the gospel: the sinful nature of people, human inability to be saved apart from the grace of God, the

centrality of Jesus' death for the regeneration of people and the renewal of society, and the authoritative revelation of the Bible. A conference hosted in Buffalo, New York in 1920 was the first to use the name fundamentalism for the movement.

Central to the modernist-fundamentalist differences were conflicting view of the Bible. Fundamentalists consider Scripture as supernaturally given while modernists see Scripture as the record and product of a developing religion. Inherent in the modernist approach are the hallmarks of liberal theology: (1) evolutionary ideas applied to religion; (2) an optimistic view of the nature of people centering on their individual religious experience; and (3) a moralistic concept of God, who can be readily "found" by people. Fundamentalist views focused on (1) a supernatural Jesus attested to by his resurrection; (2) a supernaturally given, trustworthy Bible; and (3) the need for people to have a new birth.

The decade of the 1920s saw the liberal-fundamental divide widen. Liberal preachers like Henry Emerson Fosdick, reinterpreted classic Christian doctrines like the authority of Scripture, the virgin birth, and the second coming of Jesus in a way that denied their miraculous elements. He emphasized tolerance, the right to think religion through in modern terms, the social applications of the principles of Jesus, and the abiding verities of the experience of the gospel. Conservatives increasingly reacted to this kind of vaporous reconstruction of the faith by rejecting every idea that was remotely associated with liberalism. Because liberalism held to postmillennialism, conservatives flocked to pre-millennialism. Because liberals controlled numerous seminaries, many fundamentalists rejected the need for theological training at all. Since evolutionary theory was central to liberal thought, fundamentalists rejected everything associated with evolution, even micro-evolution.

**§6-328. Scopes trial.**—The debate came to a head in the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee in 1925. John Scopes was charged with violating Tennessee's law against the teaching of evolution in the public schools. William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow squared off at the trial. Darrow, with a huge assist from a hostile media, succeeded in putting Bryan on the defensive and in portraying Bryan and Bible-believing Christians as stupid, bigoted fanatics. Bryan saw himself as defending the Word of God against atheistic and agnostic hostility while Darrow saw the trial as a defense of intellectual freedom. Bryan won a guilty verdict, and a small fine was assessed, but Darrow won in the arena of public opinion.

**§6-329. Era of causes.**—The era of "causes" was still on. At first, the postwar mood was a sense of unity and a renewal in idealistic causes. The Interchurch World Movement was launched designed to unite Christian benevolent, missionary, and spiritual efforts. A united church uniting a divided world was the rallying cry. In the 1920s, most Protestants united in prohibiting the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages. The Eighteenth Amendment, prohibiting alcoholic beverages, was adopted in 1919. Enforcement proved impossible, enabling bootlegging operations around the country and leading to the growth of organized crime. Such corruption was enriched and enhanced by lucrative trade in forbidden spirits. The roaring 20s deflated Christian

idealism for moral reform. Indeed, just the opposite was happening in the culture at large. By the time the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed in 1933, the idea that “one cannot legislate morality” had taken root in the American psychic.

## **B. Through the Great Depression and World War II**

**§6-331. In general.**—The optimism in America that immediately followed World War I was shattered by the stock market crash of October 1929 and the resulting Great Depression. While the depression that hit the United States in the 1890s may have even been greater than that of the 1930s, Americans took the later depression to heart in a much greater way. A generation accustomed to relative prosperity and confident in continual progress faced significant disillusionment when their expectations were not realized.

**§6-332. Church life in the era.**—Liberal congregations tended to dwindle (Congregationalists, certain Methodist groups, Northern Baptists, and Episcopalians) while more conservative ones (Southern Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Black congregations, holiness groups, and Pentecostals) grew. The conservative groups knew how to provide a home for ordinary folks and to proclaim a convincing Christian message for daily life. Controversy continued. J. Gresham Machen was expelled from the PCUSA and out of that the Orthodox Presbyterians were founded.

From the point of view of the media, the liberal Federal Council of Churches spoke for Protestant Christendom. The fundamentalists rejected this and retreated into their separate conclaves. However, they thrived in numbers and resources. The Roman Catholic Church also grew during the Depression. Catholics turned to the Church for help, and they found it. Parochial schools educated Catholic youth inexpensively and Catholic relief agencies coordinated relief work among those hit hardest by the downturn. Meanwhile, Catholicism was undergoing a new scholastic revival. Neo-Thomism stressed the authoritative teaching (magisterium) of the Church, the value of disciplined reasoning, and the unifying spirituality of the sacraments. Like fundamentalism, the Catholic teachers spoke to their own and did not presume to speak to America as a whole.

While the fundamentalists thrived in practice through the 1930s, in the world of thought and influence, it was a drought. They forfeited any public presence, retreating into their established denominations and insulating themselves from any attempt to shape the fabric of American social life. Fundamentalist writing was popular and practical and directed to the faithful rather than probing and engaging in the marketplace of ideas. The more confessional conservative groups were well served by internal spokesmen. Franz Pieper of the Missouri Synod Lutherans and his *Christian Dogmatics* and Louis Berkhof of the Christian Reformed and his *Reformed Dogmatics* became standard fare for their respective denominations.

**§6-333. Neo-Orthodoxy in America.**—The less optimistic theologies that hit Europe after World War I began to resonate in America. Karl Barth’s commentary on Romans hit the classical

liberal community like a bombshell. His *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, published just before the onslaught of the Great Depression, found a ready audience. Names like Emil Brunner, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr came to the fore in this era.

These Neo-Orthodox dons were not fundamentalists. They did not believe in inspiration of Scripture, in key tenets such as Christ's physical resurrection, or in schemes of prophecy currently in vogue in fundamentalist circles. However, their liberal optimism was shattered by World War I. They reasserted forcefully the doctrine of the fallen human nature, argued against liberal religious sentimentality, and reemphasized the transcendence of God.

**§6-334. New Deal and the growth of Federal power.**—The Depression produced a critique of laissez faire economics. The advent of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal in 1933, the policies of this critique began to be implemented. The leadership of mainline denominations moved toward the conviction that a system of social security, unemployment insurance, and antitrust laws was necessary, while the ordinary people moved in the opposite direction, even to the point of accusing leadership of being infiltrated by Communism.

While the New Deal did improve conditions of a number of poor people, it was the advent of World War II, not the New Deal, that put an end to the Great Depression. However, the New Deal did launch the expansive use of Federal power to implement a social agenda of which many Christians were increasingly suspect.

### C. Postwar Decades; Cold War

**§6-341. In general.**—The soldiers and sailors who had been around the world found returning home to status quo as difficult. The generous provisions of the GI bill made attending college possible for many veterans who would not have been able to do so without that bill. Social mobility increased as a result of the war. The war also accelerated the movement of neglected social groups to the mainstream of American society, women and African Americans in particular.

These decades were a time of great prosperity for the country and for its churches even though the threat of the annihilation of humanity through nuclear conflict hung over peoples' heads. There seemed to be endless opportunities of financial and social advancement readily available. More affluent people abandoned the inner cities for suburban areas and churches followed ministering to their family and social needs and becoming an important source of stability and social recognition. Inner cities became increasingly the abode of the lower classes, recent immigrants, and poor minorities.

After World War II, Truman chose not to return to isolationism and instead assumed the global leadership role previously held by Britain. On the other side, Stalin was determined to maintain a Soviet empire in eastern Europe. A temporary dividing line between Soviet-occupied areas and

Allied occupied areas became permanent. The Iron Curtain was both an economic and political dividing line.

America became a very active supporter of free Europe, backing the anti-Communist regimes of Greece and Turkey in 1947, implementing the Marshall Plan for revitalizing western Europe in that same year, and forging the NATO defense league in 1949 after the Berlin airlift foiled the Russian blockade of West Berlin.

Nuclear weapons development continued and became a decisive factor in the post-war geopolitical situation. Concepts like Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) became the common fodder of news and debate and hung over the world situation like a dark cloud. The potential for nuclear-armed confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union underlay every element of American foreign policy between 1945 and 1990. Christian intellectuals wrestled with implications of nuclear conflict and traditional ideas of a just war while a vehement sense of anti-Communism characterized the ordinary people of postwar Christianity in America.

**§6-342. Margins coming into American mainstream.**—The process of Americanization accelerated for marginal groups in American society. For postwar Catholics, there were two basic tendencies—mobilization and a reaction against the “religious ghetto.” Mobilization meant determined Catholic action “to redeem all things in Christ” as Pius X said. There was an impressive record in forming Catholic schools, service organizations, publications and periodicals of varying kinds, and scholarly societies. These groups urged Catholics to move beyond Catholic insularity. John Kennedy won national political office. John XXIII was calling on Catholics to open the windows of the hermitage. Catholics were increasingly in the American mainstream and not regarded as a threatening influence at the disposal of the foreign potentate called the Pope.

Other groups, formally isolated on the margins of American society, were also making their way into upon the mainstream. Immigrants moved from their urban clusters to the suburbs and gradually lost their ethnic distinctives. Whether Catholic, Lutheran, or Orthodox, members of these groups tended to be less distinctively of their own culture and much more an American than in previous generations.

**§6-343. Divided nation.**—Vietnam took its toll on national unity, shaking the nation's institutions and structures. The outcome of the Vietnam war influenced America in profound ways:

- the role of dissent and civil disobedience in political dialogue;
- The role of the media in conflicts;
- American government became more cautious about any military interventions;
- keeping American casualties low became a higher priority than ever before;
- the military restricted media access to operations;
- politicians sought exit strategies before seeking engagement in future operations;

- Christians disagreed and earnestly debated the ethics of any military action at all.

In addition, the number and diversity of ethnic minorities raised new questions. The idea of the American melting pot, where ethnic distinctives were reduced and immigrant peoples absorbed into the American nation, seemed a fanciful sociological theory. Ethnic minorities preserved their language, culture, and social organizations to a surprising degree, particularly in American cities. For many recent arrivals, their religious orientation sustained their cultural identity. This was particularly true of various Catholic immigrants.

Cultural fragmentation and religious pluralism went hand-in-hand. Arrivals from the Orient of religions and cults that had never previously flourished in America was the most obvious indicator of that reality. Their only common denominator was their significant divergence from traditional Christianity. American Catholicism exhibited this pluralistic tendency even while sustaining the concept of the big tent. Many American Catholics became cafeteria Catholics believing that their faith should be defined not by what the church taught, but what the individual thought (or more precisely, wanted to believe).

The growth of Oriental faiths began after World War II as U.S. forces brought home foreign faiths. New immigration laws were passed in the 1960s allowing for the arrival of missionaries from these foreign faiths. The more successful groups grew up around a charismatic teacher or prophet (Scientology around Ron Hubbard; Unification Church around Sun Myung Moon). Some religious groups even attempted to recover pre-Christian pagan myths. The response to this potpourri of new faiths varied. Many offered refutations of what they saw as heresies. Some went beyond this to interventions in process known as “de-programming.”

**§6-344. Public turmoil and its aftermath.**—The civil rights movement was a shock to the American social system. That movement posed a challenge to churches to rethink things (like segregation) and assumptions (white cultural superiority). Public violence associated with this and other social movements added to the turmoil. In particular, the assassinations of John Kennedy in 1963 and of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy in 1968 scarred the American psyche. Sustained violence arose in protests over the Vietnam war. These two premier issues, civil rights and the Vietnam war, were the most momentous events leading America to re-examine basic values and to search for a new moral dimension in public life.

This was a time of the flowering of environmental issues, the challenge to traditional roles of women, a relaxation of sexual standards, a massive preoccupation with body beautiful, and a seeming unending search for one's authentic self and for self-fulfillment. American urban realities complicated this. Increasingly, American cities became “throw-away” places for the upwardly mobile in society and a depressing cauldron of unfilled expectations and frustrations for the new and usually unskilled minorities moving in.

Most white churches sold their urban properties and followed their upwardly mobile congregations to the suburbs. The proliferation of urban action training programs for clergy and laity was another phenomenon of the 1960s. Techniques of power analysis, pragmatic problem-

solving, group self-direction, and change theory became the curriculum of consciousness raising and for the mobilization of mainline Protestant inner city advocacy. The result was a very pragmatic Christianity in which faithfulness to the gospel was measured by programs and social action. By the 1970s, most of these efforts were defunct.

The socially mobile who landed in city conclaves also presented challenges to church ministry. These people displayed a wide range of interests, often with no central concern, and found full existence and easy mobility in tailor-made human environments. The pursuit of happiness and career as well as an experimenter's outlook on life and morality increasingly represented the norm.

**§6-345. Civil rights movement.**—In the worldwide struggle for civil rights which unfolded in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity has been both a tool to reinforce white superiority and a source of inspiration for those fighting for racial equality. New momentum came to the struggle for civil rights in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. While some in the African-American community persisted in finding refuge in an understanding of religion in an otherworldly mode that did not challenge the existing order, many returning home from the war wanted the freedom they fought for overseas to be their own reality at home. Denominations took stands against segregation and leaders drawn from the black clergy, like Adam Clayton Powell and Dr. Martin Luther King, rose to prominence.

African Americans did not participate in the new postwar affluence. They remained part of their own culture and that culture remained shut off from the American mainstream. *Brown v Board* (1954) struck down the “separate but equal” doctrine of *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896), upon which the segregation of public education was based. But fully a decade later, only 9% of American children attended integrated schools. The contrast between black poverty and white affluence produced frustration which erupted in urban violence in the 1960s. Despite Federal legislation, like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, black Americans were frequently cut off from basic rights and lived outside the sphere of American affluence.

The career of Martin Luther King, Jr. unfolded in this backdrop. Son of a prominent Baptist minister, King earned a doctorate from Boston University before following his father into the pastoral ministry. He rose to prominence in 1955 when he led the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott against racial segregation. The success of the boycott pushed him to the front ranks of the civil rights movement.

Martin Luther King came from a long tradition of African American pastors whose task as a preacher often included negotiating their community's relationship with white institutions. He was also a lifelong student of liberation theology, which sees the Church as an agent for social change and for political and economic liberation here and now. He was influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of nonviolence. He was famous for his insistence on non-violence and felt that violence in the face of violent suppression was immoral and self-defeating. He and

his followers submitted themselves to physical abuse and imprisonment to dramatize racial oppression of black people in America.

In 1957, King was instrumental in forming the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the organization that gave the civil rights movement its direction and strategy during the early years of the movement up until King's own death. King looked to the Hebrew prophets and refused to “get used to” injustice. He sought the prophetic voice, insistent in decrying injustice and racism and using civil disobedience to make the situation an uncomfortable one that would not go away. This proved a powerful tool for building a mass movement.

Over the last decade of his life, advances were made, including the desegregation of public facilities, access to better housing and better education, and passage of significant Federal legislation promoting civil rights. King won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his civil rights leadership. When an assassin's bullet ended his life in 1968, America lost a truly prophetic voice for freedom and justice:

I have a dream that one day, on the red hills of Georgia, sons of former slaves and sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day, even in the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963)

There were others who were impatient with nonviolent protests. They (Stokely Carmichael, Malcolm X, and others) asserted that violence was necessary for change to occur. Violent confrontation replaced nonviolent protest as the *modus operandi* of the movement. They concluded that they would not attain full rights until they had their just measure of power. The cry “black power” arose.

African Americans were attracted to Islam as a religion not dominated by whites. Black theology emerged. James Cone would assert that Jesus' ministry was one of liberation. It was time to recreate the religion offered to black people by their Christian slave masters. They were to remold it closer to their life context. Black churches were gathering and training places for those active in the struggle against injustice. Preachers frequently articulated the connection between the gospel and the movement.

Still others (Joseph Jackson) thought that King's active protests and the more militant protesters were dragging the Church into a dangerous cauldron of political activism which was not the Church's proper role. These people thought that change would come if black Americans worked hard, had faith, obeyed the law, and served the nation well.

**§6-346. Feminist movement; Christian reaction.**—In mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, most denominations did not ordain women, and all were under male control. The feminist movement charged that the Church was complicit with systems of hierarchies that limited possibilities for women. They focused on women's right to have their call to the ministry validated by ordination and critiqued theology traditionally done and dominated by men. The movement demanded contexts for women to discover and exercise their spiritual gifts and find their true roles in an inclusive ministry.

The rise of the women's movement in the decades of the 1970s and following fostered a feminist mindset, observable within the church and frequently behind attitudes towards the church. This mindset sought a new inquiry into past paradigms of the Bible and of culturally prescribed gender roles. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American women aligned themselves in one of three camps with respect to attitudes regarding this emerging feminist movement: the loyalist wing, the reformist wing, and the rejectionist wing.

**§6-347. —Loyalist wing.**—The loyalist wing sees no pervasive and oppressive sexism in the biblical record, albeit there has been at times in church history. The traditional loyalist seeks order in the family and in the church through the implementation of complementary roles. Women's role is fulfilled through voluntary submission in the family and in the church. God's pattern for men is for loving leadership. An egalitarian segment of this wing emphasizes mutual submission and is much more candid in admitting chauvinism in family and church structures. This segment does not see prescribed roles in the home, the church, and in society based solely on gender.

**§6-348. —Reformist wing.**—The reformist wing sees patriarchal chauvinism in the Bible and in church history and desires to overcome it. This group tries to bring to light the positive role of women in the Bible and seeks alternatives to traditional paradigms that consistently abandon women to subordinate, dependent positions that leave their talents undeveloped and their skills untapped. A more radical element of this wing views the Bible and church history as male-centered and calls for a thoroughgoing "hermeneutic of suspicion" to reconstruct the Christian tradition in a fashion more acceptable to feminists.

**§6-349. —Rejectionist wing.**—A rejectionist wing is not Christian at all and does not purport to be. It understands the Bible as promoting an oppressive patriarchal structure and rejects it and the Judeo-Christian tradition as hopelessly male-oriented.

**§6-350. Sexual revolution.**—The sexual revolution in 1960s brought a dramatic shift in traditional American attitudes towards sexuality. Sex became more socially acceptable outside the strict boundaries of heterosexual marriage. Studies have shown that, in the decade between 1965 and 1974, the occurrence of premartial sex showed a marked increase. The social and political climate of the 1960s was one in which traditional values were challenged loudly by a vocal minority. This climate of change led many, particularly the young, to challenge social norms. With the success that the Civil Rights movement was having, others who wanted change grew confident that the time was ripe for them to bring it about.

The follow-on to this heterosexual revolution was the homosexual revolution sparked by events in the late 1960s and growing into a movement in the 1970s. In 1969, violent demonstrations by gays against a police raid in the Greenwich Village in New York City sparked an increase in both public awareness of the assertion of gay rights and also in the willingness of homosexuals to openly campaign for the rights they believed that they were due. By 2003, *Lawrence v Texas* made it legal in all fifty states to have anal sex.

**§6-351. Stripping the public square.**—A number of Supreme Court decisions in the 1960s have been characterized as establishing the naked public square. Bible reading and prayer were prohibited in public school classrooms. Traditional Christian teaching on gender roles lost their hold. Practices that traditional faith found abhorrent, abortion and homosexuality, gained social acceptance and approval.

**§6-352. Importance of the media.**—In 20<sup>th</sup> century America, thousands of newspapers were available. These were complemented by radio stations by the 1920s and television stations by the late 1940s. Preachers quickly recognized and seized on the possibilities. Franklin Roosevelt would use the new technology in his “fireside chats” which enabled him to advocate his policies in person. Television intensified the possibilities and by 1960 was almost universally available. It enabled Americans to follow remote dramatic and controversial events. Religious groups made extensive use of television.

Computers revolutionized personal communication and information access in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The spread of the Internet and email in the 1990s gave regular folks almost instant access to one another around the world.

**§6-353. —Perception of religion.**—This television era, with its penchant to abridge consideration of every issue into sound bites that fit the simplified format of evening news, had a definite impact of people's perceptions of religion. It tended to be heavy on slogans that did indeed speak of genuinely significant developments, but in superficial ways. Phrases like “the new morality”, “the death of God”, “the Jesus people”, and “born again” filled media discussions that were frothy with images. So frothy that one wondered whether the discussion participants ever darkened the door of the religious institutions they so confidently analyzed. Discussion of religious topics went on without careful definition, meaningful content, or historical context. Yet many Americans took these discussions as their main source of religious information and as in-depth insights into the state of American faith.

**§6-354. —As change agent.**—Television and the proliferation of media outlets revealed the “backstage” to general audiences which led to a decline in the prestige of political leaders and the adults for children and men and women for each other. It contributed to the widespread rejection of traditional roles: adult and child, male and female, and leader and follower. Media also played a significant role in minorities seeing themselves as unfairly isolated in pockets and needing to come together and achieve the recognition they deserved. Liberation movements utilized television and mass media in their promotion (blacks, women, elderly, children, disabled,

homosexuals). It fed the demand that all information, whatever the source, be accessible to the average person. The consumer was king.

**§6-355. —In Church practice (electronic church).**—The latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century American church scene saw the emergence of the electronic church. Characteristics included:

- Evangelical leadership. Television was to be a new means of bringing people to Christ.
- Focus on miraculous healing—a signs and wonders type of focus.
- Promise of success to those who bought into the message—a type of health and wealth gospel.

The incessant appeals for money were a common source of criticism as well as the disconnect with real church experience among those in the audience. The electronic church was converting people to a private form of religion alongside real congregations of Christians in community and becoming a competitor, and a very convenient competitor, to those real congregations dealing with issues in community.

**§6-356. Postwar religious resurgence.**—There was a religious resurgence in the post-war years, surging numbers for church membership, Sunday School attendance, and other standard indicators of religious interest. The depth of these sentiments were disputable. The age-old question of American civil religion (whether meaning a basic Christianity overloaded with patriotism or a basic nationalism garnished with Christian concepts) was front and center:

- Some people thought that this interest in religion had less to do with religious commitment as it did with being American. One remarked: “The typical American has developed a remarkable capacity for being serious about religion without taking religion too seriously.” Along with the boom in religious indicators came a remarkable economic boom. The abundance of goods and services and the increasing ability to have them created materialistic appetites and the adjustment of values to justify their acquisition. These increasingly materialistic values coexisted peaceably with a benign religiosity.
- There was renewed pride in being American. Being American was being anti-Communist, but also being “religious”. In 1954, “in God we trust” became the country's motto and “under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance. President Eisenhower remarked: “our government makes no sense unless it is founded on a deeply felt religious faith—and I don't care what it is.” In this civil faith, there was a resurgence of support for traditional values.
- Increasing mobility of American society had a profound effect. There was a movement to the suburbs across America. However, the suburbs offered more privacy, but less sense of community. The cultivation of affluent privacy affected the style of suburban Christian practice and worship and left suburban Christianity radically out of touch with the urban migration that had been going in America since the 1930s.
- Churches in the West had prestige and influence in the 1950s. They appeared to be thriving and growing. However by 1965, church attendance started to gradually decline. By the mid-1960s, traditional religion faced numerous challenges.

- Spokespeople sought to defend traditional teaching by appealing to non-religious sources of authority. It reflected how scientists and philosophers had challenged church authority for centuries for everything from human origins to life after death. Rapid cultural changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had accelerated individualism that led people to walk away from a communal experience like church attendance and membership or even spending time with family. Modern science also accelerated a trend to turn to doctors and health professionals rather than priests and ministers to solve life's enigmas. A drastic drop in “untimely” mortality and the sweeping breadth of “scientific” answers to problems seemed to be a broad experience in the West.
- Another aspect of this religious resurgence was a return to, or continuation of, American revivalism. Leaders like Billy Graham sought conversions with a sense of national and international crisis. Often these personal appeals carried an insistence that the only way to “save” America was to return to God personally and as a society.

**§6-357. Focus on inner peace and happiness.**—Post-war Christianity also tended to focus on the faith as a path to inner peace and happiness. The popular author, Norman Vincent Peale promoted faith and “positive thinking” as a route to mental health and happiness. It was a religiosity that provided peace in a confusing age that said little about social responsibilities and did not risk conflict with the Cold War mentality that framed the international politics of the day.

**§6-358. Faith in the age of self.**—Later in the postwar decades, Christians found themselves in an age of self. A new reality, centered on self, affected traditional religious groups, minimizing denominations and other community connections. People increasingly designated “no religious preference”, considering themselves spiritually inclined but not affiliated with any organized religious group. “Old-time religion” was swiftly moving toward a minority status in the culture.

Two developments stand out in the rise of the so-called age of self: (1) the popular acceptance of psychology and (2) the pervasive use of television and mass media. Popular interest in mental health and stability boomed and the therapeutic model was accepted and popularized by the media. Social critics surveyed the cultural landscape and suggested that its symbolic center was not the church building or legislative hall but the hospital.

The baby boomers, an unusually large generation that grew up in the post-World War II years (1946-1964), rejected the traditional ethic of self-denial, stressing self-liberation. These self-expressive Americans came to treat every commitment, including marriage, work, politics, and religion, not as moral obligations but as instruments of personal happiness. In this culture of self, sexuality filled a critical function in the quest for self-expression and self-realization. By 1980, the gospel of personal freedom and sexual expression had spread by stage, screen, and film into the general population of America.

**§6-359. Therapeutic church.**—Churches joined the therapeutic revolution. They presented themselves as healing communities, experimenting with tokens of affection and signs of

community. Churches became increasingly user-friendly, emphasizing personal choice. Confession, covenant, vows, ministerial authority, traditional community and its expectations were de-emphasized or neglected. Americans increasingly chose churches to satisfy personal needs, not to meet God and submit to His revealed ways. Churches were expected to be havens of love and acceptance in an otherwise harsh and competitive society.

The rise of the expressive individual and the therapeutic mindset resulted in setting liberationists and traditionalists against one another. One group saw the easing of divorce laws, the legalization of abortion, the ending of censorship for erotic and offensive content, and the new toleration of “alternative lifestyles” as great advances for human freedom and dignity. The other group saw these as evidence of moral decadence, social degeneration, and national decline. One group wanted to re-emphasize traditional ethics based in Judeo-Christian heritage while the other embraced a secular morality that saw people creating their own moral code.

**§6-360. Christian counterculture.**—The Jesus people movement arose in the 1960s and 1970s amidst an increasingly unconventional American religious consciousness. Eastern mysticism, new forms of self-awareness, and spiritual narcissism were becoming popular. Thousands were “turning on to Jesus” from the cradle of counterculture in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district to the sun-tanned beach scene set. They came to faith through those with a most marginal connection with the institutional church. It was a grassroots movement that was highly diverse and widely scattered in subgroups without clear structure or objectives. Most found their way into established evangelicalism and affected their respective destinations with a growing informality. Some became cult groups, like the Children of God, isolated, culture-rejecting, and wayward in belief structure from traditional Christianity. The Jesus movement was full of experimentation and that emphasis found its way to their respective landing places. New interest arose for communal living arrangements, diverse modes of worship, and on an emphasis on simplicity and naturalness.

**§6-361. Ecumenism through the era.**—The ecumenical movement grew strong after the war. The political hopes that rested with the United Nations (aiming at peaceful resolutions among nations) had an ecclesiastical shadow that focused on the World Council of Churches (looking to achieve unity and cooperation among Christians). The missionary conference at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1910 is often cited as the beginning of the ecumenical movement in its modern form. After the conference, the movement developed internationally along three lines:

- International Missionary Council formed in 1921 to facilitate cooperation between sending and receiving churches;
- The Life and Work movement sought to engage churches in a stronger witness in the secular order;
- The Faith and Order movement sought frank discussion of doctrinal issues.

In the United States, several state and city councils of churches mirrored this ecumenical order. These tended to focus on social action and veer to the liberal segment of the political spectrum.

In the 1960s, the American National Council aligned itself with the civil rights movement, the protests against the Vietnam war, and to the protests of migrant farm workers. More conservative evangelicals often opposed membership in these councils, fearing the compromise of doctrinal convictions, the loss of ecclesiastical freedom, and the sacrifice of evangelism and gospel proclamation to social action.

**§6-362. Theological reflection without an anchor.**—It's hard to describe theology in America in the later years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its heartbeat moved briskly and in pell-mell fashion from Neo-Orthodoxy (Barth, Brunner, Bultmann) to the God is dead movement (Altizer, van Buren) to a theology of hope gone activist in a Marxist vein (Multmann) to a variety of liberation theologies with their hope for society remade to address the grievances of various groups (a plethora of these) to secular religiosity, where God really does meet humanity but incognito (Harvey Cox), to a very esoteric process theology (Whitehead and Hartshorne). It was as if God was no longer in the business of shaping individuals and their social relations, but that society was in the business of shaping him. In that transformation, the possibility of enduring moral norms is lost, the possibility of transcendent truth is abandoned, and human autonomy proclaimed and justified because there is no fixed revelation to anchor human thought about God.

**§6-363. Bible boom and Bible study.**—The second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed a variety of Bible translation projects of significance. The Revised Standard (1952), the New American Standard (1970s), the New International Version (1978) were new translations, the Living Bible and the Good News Bible, popular paraphrases. After Vatican II, there was a renewed interest among the Catholic laity in Bible study similar to that in Protestant circles. The Catholic Church sponsored the Jerusalem Bible (1966) and the New American Bible (1970). In 1979 alone, the American Bible Society distributed 110 million copies, portions, and selections of the Bible in the United States.

This era also saw increasing conflict concerning the Bible and Biblical studies. Harold Lindsell published the *Battle for the Bible* (1976) in which he argued that many evangelicals had abandoned the view of biblical inerrancy championed in an earlier age by such people as Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield. The Council for Biblical Inerrancy did a 10-year study (1978-1988) to produce an extended statement to clarify what proponents meant and did not mean by “biblical inerrancy”.

The debate over inerrancy was symptomatic of a wider turbulence in the churches involving Christian engagement or disengagement from the modern world. Debates over contraception and abortion, the ordination of women, doctrinal controversies over the divinity of Christ, the status of homosexuals, and acrimonious conflicts over positions towards Israel highlighted those struggles.

**§6-364. Religion in the public sector.**—After World War II, evangelicalism returned to the public scene in America. Billy Graham became a household name. Carl F.H. Henry’s *Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* expressed distress over fundamentalism’s failure to apply Christian truth to the dilemmas of modern life. Christianity Today was launched intending to present the implications of the gospel to every area of life. Pentecostal growth accelerated evangelical renewal. Both in Roman Catholicism, in mainline Protestant denominations, and in new Protestant denominations, holiness groups exploded numerically with new vitality. The 1970s presented the concern of a new and revitalized evangelical presence—Does faith matter in the moral and intellectual climate of America?

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was more religious involvement in public issues than previously in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through the 1960s and early 1970s, that voice came from the Left, on the Vietnam war and on civil rights. In the mid-1970s and into the 1980s, a dramatic shift occurred. Religious conservatives, long mute as to national social issues, arrived in force especially on the issue of abortion and sexual liberty, whether heterosexual or homosexual. Abortion drove a deep wedge in the American church. More liberal members, while agreeing on the undesirability of abortion, thought it the less evil than the social cost and infringement of personal liberty. Conservatives saw abortion as an affront to life and an infringement of moral law.

A related issue was the role of women. Those groups deeming themselves “progressive” readily opened leadership roles to women. Those deeming themselves historically conservative, closed ranks on an austere application of the “headship” doctrines that had traditionally been interpreted as confining women to submissive and supportive roles in the home and family. In between, there were all sorts of “positions” taken.

Education was yet another issue. Catholic schools were undercut by the decline in the number of nuns and the dispersal of Catholics from urban inner cities in the post-World War II years. Reformed and Lutheran schools fared better in their more limited circles. The boom in private education occurred in fundamental and evangelical circles. There was a tremendous surge in the founding of schools. Critics claimed that the motivation was escapist or racist. Supporters saw things very differently. They saw public education hopelessly lost in internationalism and in the promotion of secular humanism. They questioned the sex education programs in the public schools, the teaching of evolution without any alternative offered, a permissiveness that ducked on the traditional idea of the educator as character forger, the negation of American values in favor of those of promoting a vague idea of diversity, the mealy-mouthed relativism that made every choice permissible and pushed those choices on their immature charges.

It was clear that the moral consensus that had prevailed in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was no longer the case. Legal traditions and rulings sought to replace this previous consensus with a foundation free from all religious admixtures. Some people sought to recapture the fading Christian culture. Others sought to explore how Christians should fend in an alien society. Many people who deeply loved both God and country began to recognize, perhaps for the first time,

that those two things, God and country, were not the same thing. They were beginning to realize how much American civil religion had structured their perception of things.

**§6-365. Later evangelical resurgence.**—The 1970s in America saw a revitalized evangelicalism on the public stage. Americans found this surprising and alarming. Many people saw outspoken evangelical faith as the province of faith healers, holy rollers, and counterfeit preachers (the Elmer Gantry types), not serious-minded, sensible people. Suddenly, born again types were appearing all over America, threatening to change the face of things. Evangelicals numbered tens of millions, a large group that outsiders and the media tended to see as simplistic yahoos who were in political lockstep.

Evangelicals did not represent a single approach to America's issues. The movement included a variety of subgroups. Most were conventional Protestants who held staunchly to the authority of the Bible and to orthodox Christianity who emphasized making a conscious, personal commitment to Christ. Despite its growth and visibility, evangelicals did not reshape the ideas and ideals of American culture. It had little impact on government, academia, or in the communication centers of the nation.

**§6-366. —Characteristics of resurgence.**—The importance of denominations declined in the era of this evangelical resurgence. The corruptions of modernity, the impact of individualistic empire builders, the effects of television and its tendency to create ecclesiastical stars, and the impact of growing para-church movements all took their toll. Following the modernist-fundamentalist controversy, Protestants grew suspicious of denominational structures. Ecumenism began to look much like the British Latitudinarians or Broad Church movement of the previous century. Ecumenical people seemed to have of a wide theological girth that had no center, no coherence.

Meanwhile, more traditional conservative groups, not known for their ecumenism or inter-faith sensitivities, or their liberal leanings, grew rapidly. Common features of these groups were that they made serious demands on their members, refused to be indulgent about moral and religious lapses, and maintained traditional Christian doctrines and distinctives in the increasingly pluralistic American culture.

A resurgent evangelicalism was active through these growth patterns in conservative churches. The launch of national organizations like the National Association of Evangelicals helped drive this resurgence, as did a new concern for engagement with society at an intellectual and cultural level. Evangelical educational institutions sought full academic credentials. There was a dramatic growth in publishing houses and in the production of Christian reading material. There was an emergence of new missionary agencies and ministries designed to disciple young people. This evangelical resurgence owed far more to para-church enterprises than it did to denominational support and dynamics. This resurgence grew new structures for interdenominational cooperation and strengthened colleges and seminaries providing more professional training for a broad range of services to church and society.

**§6-367. —Questions and concerns.**—With this resurgence also came a host of questions and concerns. What exactly was an “evangelical”? What should we make of the entrepreneurial spirit of many para-church organizations, whose operations and management structure resembled business corporations much more than local churches and parishes? It was easy to see the values of evangelicals having close kinship with professional and upper-middle class tastes and viewpoints. So many evangelical endeavors (upscale Bible conference centers, journeys to the Holy Land, cruises with nationally known speakers) seem to assume an affluent setting. Few evangelical ministries tried to show lay people connections between personal faith and any number of contemporary problems.

The long-term impact of this resurgence may well depend on two factors:

- Will evangelicalism retain its faith focus? So often in the past, religious movements lost their dynamic by their involvement in the shifting tides of politics. Evangelicals learned that fundamentalists’ separation from the culture negated their influence. But they often do not seem to count the cost of cultural involvement. In liberalism’s relevance to the culture, they lost their relevance to the essence of faith. What effects on evangelicalism?
- Will evangelicalism control its penchant for rampant individualism? Will the movement get lost in its ecclesiastical stars?

**§6-368. Culture wars and the religious right.**—The Founding Fathers abolished the idea of a national established church, but they believed that Christian morality was the foundation of the new republic. Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism all shared a common moral essence and contributed to a broad public ideology that many people have called American civil religion. Debate ensued on what exactly that moral essence was. Many thought it meant submission to God as the ultimate authority and held that in contrast with Marxism’s elevation of the authority of humans and Communist insurgence around the world. Others wed the relationship between spiritual and economic values. Thus, for these people, the moral essence of America included a commitment to free markets and opposition to the welfare state.

The religious right refers to organizations and activists that arose in the 1970s with the aim of mobilizing voters to restore the authority of the traditional Christian ideas in the public sphere and to roll back the social changes of the 1960s. Five key ideas motivated these people:

- America is a Christian nation and traditional Christian ideas derived from Scripture ought to rule over the various spheres of our culture.
- There seemed to be a racial assumption that white Protestants ought to be in charge of American culture.
- Heterosexual nuclear family should be the protected norm where sex is bound within marriage.
- The free market is the Christian way to do business.
- It is America’s duty to defend these values around the world.

What brought this into focus were the social upheavals of the 1960s, the Great Society programs of the Johnson administration, and women's and gay liberation movements. The mid-1970s saw the effort to end legalized abortion become the signature cause for the Christian right. The roots of the Christian conservative reaction did not spring out of nowhere but went back to the early days of the anti-communist movement. The difference was that these groups displayed a new level of political savvy, organizational ability, and institution building.

Jerry Falwell, a Baptist pastor in Virginia, created a group known as the Moral Majority in 1979. It was a loose coalition of fundamentalists, Pentecostals, evangelical, and Catholic Christians who were concerned with the decline in American public morality and became active in the political arena. They saw the culture falling under the influence of secular humanism and asserted that traditional family values were under assault in the media and in the public schools. Abortion, homosexual rights, and feminism mobilized conservative Christians for battles in the political arena. Abortion was a prominent issue, vaulted into national debate by the *Roe v Wade* decision in 1973. The Equal Rights Amendment, a movement to grant women equal legal protection with men enshrined by its own amendment to the Constitution, was a feminist billboard item. By the end of the 1980s, the Moral Majority was running out of steam and Pat Robertson recruited Ralph Reed to launch the Christian Coalition. That group increasingly took a combative role in asserting its traditional agenda.

**§6-369. Rise of the megachurch.**—Large churches grew, thinking of themselves as independent and highly individualized. They appealed to popular tastes and worked feverishly to meet the personal needs of their parishioners. They shared a number of characteristics:

- They seldom carried a denominational label;
- Worship was fast-paced and enthusiastic, often featuring popular music;
- They were built around magnetic preachers with winsome personalities;
- Their facilities lacked for nothing;
- Their agendas served their parishioners' private lives—help on child rearing, family unity and peace, and emotional and psychological well-being.

But in this world of private choices, Americans were discovering how many people were desperately lonely. Americans sought more privacy and felt lonelier and more alienated in getting it. They competed rather than cooperated; avoided rather than engaged; played it cool rather than seeking connections.

**§6-370. Roman Catholicism.**—Second Vatican Council did “open the windows of the church” as John XXIII desired. The Council's attitude towards the Bible spawned an opposing pair of developments in America. The moderate encouragement given to biblical criticism dissolved the older cautions Catholic scholars had felt towards Higher Criticism. Catholic critics became almost indistinguishable from their Protestant counterparts. However, the Council's benign attitude toward Protestantism, even allowing, for the first time, that Protestants had legitimate

churches, encouraged many lay Catholics to draw closer to evangelical Protestants by adopting their methods of informal Bible study.

In addition, beginning in 1967, the charismatic movement created perplexity and misunderstanding. The charismatic movement is an international interfaith spiritual revival, which derives its name from the Greek *charismata*. The word refers to spiritual gifts, described in 1 Corinthians 12-14, which charismatics claim they receive after being “baptized in the Holy Spirit”. This is a post-conversion experience akin to the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the early Christians at Pentecost. Catholic charismatics exploded after 1967. Modern Charismatics differ from the earliest Pentecostals in several ways:

- They are not a separate entity or denomination;
- They are inclined to ecumenism rather than sectarianism;
- They stress a variety of spiritual gifts and not just speaking in tongues;
- They attract followers from all socioeconomic classes and not just the lower classes.

They have been criticized for being divisive, anti-intellectual, and reluctant to assume responsibility for social and institutional reform. They have been praised for having given life and renewal to institutional Christianity.

Vatican II quietly confirmed the Church's traditional prohibition against tampering with the birth process. However, Paul VI did so in a decidedly unquiet way, reaffirming the Church's opposition to contraception in *Humanae Vitae* in 1968. It became the occasion for a statistical disaster in America as Church attendance, confessional frequency, giving, parochial school enrollment, seminarian enrollment, and the number of nuns fell like a rock between 1965 and 1975. American sexual attitudes were changing profoundly and a rebellion against Church teaching was afoot. Resistance to pre-marital sex was rapidly declining, tolerance of homosexuality was increasing, support for contraception was gaining ground, and opposition to abortion abating. Traditional Catholicism began to birth a New Catholicism which refused to keep either evangelical Protestantism or the secular culture at arm's length.

#### **D. At the Turn of the Millennium**

**§6-376. In general; end of the Cold War.**—The pressure of the arms race and the costly military failure in Afghanistan combined to undermine the postwar Soviet Empire. The Iron Curtain collapsed in 1989 and the Berlin Wall, symbol of the Cold War since its construction in 1961, came down. The nuclear standoff did not end in nuclear war.

However, the new world order was tested immediately in the Gulf War of 1991. Foreign policy dilemmas arose in the Balkans in the 1990s, in east Africa, and with terrorist pockets in various areas of the world. Anti-American terrorism heightened anxiety throughout the 1990s. Enemies were harder to find and no longer correlated directly with nation-states. They were covert organizations or individuals difficult to trace or track. Nevertheless, America remained the one unquestioned superpower and everything America did or did not do, mattered. Christians in

America may have wanted at times to revert to old patterns of isolationism, but the tumult of the New World order prevented that from any realistic implementation.

**§6-377. 9/11 and the new century.**—The events of September 11, 2001, shook America to its roots. In 2008, the country fell into the worst economic recession since the Great Depression. Fear of terrorism and economic recession and angst led to a new nativism. Immigration had changed the face of the nation, and many saw these developments as a threat to traditional values. In 1900, there were 10,000 Muslims in the United States. By 2005, that number was almost 5,000,000. In 1900, Asian faiths were negligible in number and influence. By the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Buddhists numbered 3,000,000 and Hindus 1,000,000 and gaining members and influence rapidly. It seemed that the United States, like Europe, was moving “beyond Christendom.”

## V. Beyond the Occident

**§6-401. In general; do the numbers.**—During the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the center of gravity of the Christian world shifted southward to Africa, Asia, and Latin America. While Christianity has been in crisis in its traditional centers in North America and Europe, it has shown great vitality in other areas. Christianity is moving beyond the traditional homeland of Christendom. The following chart reflects that dynamic.

<i>Number of Christians in millions</i>				
	<i>1900</i>	<i>1970</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2050</i>
Africa	10	143	493	1,031
Asia	22	96	352	601
North America	79	211	286	333
Latin America	62	270	544	655
Europe	381	492	588	530
Oceania	5	18	28	38
Totals	558	1,230	2,291	3,188
<i>Source:</i> <a href="http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org">http://www.worldchristiandatabase.org</a>				

**§6-402. Future is looking South.**—By 2050, 34% of the world’s people will be Christian, about the same percentage as in 1900, at the height of the European world hegemony. However, the motherlode of that population will be in the southern hemisphere. If we look at the nations with the fastest demographic growth and younger populations, they are evenly distributed between

Christian and Muslim dominated societies. The predominate religion of the world's poorest is Christianity, rather than Islam or Hinduism.

**§6-403. Implications.**—Beyond the simple demographic transition, there are numerous implications for faith and practice. For example, Christianity changed thoroughly when a movement founded in a Jewish and Hellenistic context moved into the Germanic lands of Western Europe during the early Middle Ages. Jesus became a German chieftain with his followers adopting a warrior code and European ideas of lordship, fealty, and feudalism shaping the development of theology.

Take Anselm's substitutionary atonement for instance. For Anselm, human sins were like grievous offenses committed against a great lord, debts and required a ransom or restitution of great price, which, in Christianity took the form of the death of God's Son. While eastern Orthodoxy rejected this understanding as overly legalistic, it made perfect sense to a society concerned with problems of honor, fealty, and the acknowledgement of the proper claims of lordship. The biblical Lord became a feudal lord. As Christianity moves southward, the faith and its practice will be modified by immersion in the prevailing cultures of those host societies.

What will the new synthesis look like? Some people assume it will take a liberationist bent. However, while people in the Third World espouse political liberation, they make it separable from deliverance from supernatural evil. Global South Christians are more conservative in belief and moral teaching than churches in the Global North. The churches that have made the most progress in the Global South have been either Roman Catholic of the traditional type or evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism.

**§6-404. Fires from heaven; Southern Pentecostalism.**—Global South Christians have a strong supernatural orientation and are more interested in personal salvation than in radical politics. Christianity in the south often grows in highly charismatic and Pentecostal forms. In addition, rapid growth is occurring in nontraditional denominations that adapt Christian belief to local traditions and customs. These African Indigenous Churches (AIC) preach deep personal faith and communal orthodoxy, mysticism, and puritanism, basing those on Scriptural authority. The dominant southern churches of the future could have much in common with those of medieval or early modern European times.

Western summaries of the crucial trends of the 20<sup>th</sup> century often devote significant space to political ideologies like fascism and communism, while virtually ignoring religious currents like Pentecostalism. Yet today, Fascists and Nazis are not at all in vogue and doctrinaire Communists are much less in evidence. However, current estimates are for the number of charismatic/Pentecostal believers to cross the one billion mark before 2050. Normative Christianity is being remade before our very eyes. The typical Christian is not a Euro-American member of a mainline Protestant denomination.

**§6-405. Twilight of Western Christianity.**—For the foreseeable future, the dominant tone of the emerging world Christianity is traditionalist, orthodox, and supernatural. For some time, the assumption of secularists in the West has been that Christianity is failing and will continue to do so until it comes to grips with prevailing liberal orthodoxies on sex and gender. When viewed from Cambridge or Amsterdam, this orthodoxy looks persuasive. However, the viewpoint of the southern hemisphere is quite different. A parallel to the revivalism in Europe and America in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries is interesting. Secular Enlightenment ideas made enormous progress in social elite circles. Christian beliefs were mocked and predictions of orthodoxy's demise abounded. However, the rationalism prevailing in many Protestant churches was overwhelmed by wave after wave of new evangelical revivals.

**§6-406. Reality of clashing civilizations.**—While the last Christendom offered a common culture and worldview, it was anything but an unmixed blessing for either church or society. It was often characterized by widespread intolerance, seen at its worst in aggressive crusades, heresy hunts, and religious pogroms. The Crusades, the Christian-Muslim conflict over the Outremer from 1099-1270, may prove the closest analogy to the coming reality in many parts of the world. While there are forces for harmony and mutual benefit between Muslims and Christians, in recent years it has been tragically common for conflicts to erupt even in those societies in which Christians and Muslims have peacefully coexisted for years. A worst-case scenario could include a wave of religious conflicts reminiscent of the high Middle Ages, a new age of Christian crusades and Muslim jihads.

## **A. Africa**

### **1. Overview**

**§6-411. In general.**—Between 1950 and 1975, over a century of Western colonial occupation came to an end. Our purpose is not to record the African independence movements, but to note that over forty nations gained their independence in this period. Many leaders in these new nations were products of mission schools and Christian faith was a formative influence. In addition, revivals have deeply influenced many African congregations and nations.

Christianity is now one of the two most widely practiced religions in Africa. Islam is the other. There has been tremendous growth in the number of Christians in Africa, coupled by a relative decline in adherence to traditional African religions. Only nine million Christians were in Africa in 1900, but by the year 2000, there were an estimated 380 million Christians. According to some estimates, 40% of these were "renewalists" (i.e. Pentecostals and Charismatics).

According to one source, in 1995, most of the 552,000 congregations in 11,500 denominations throughout Africa were completely unknown in the West. Christianity in Africa shows tremendous variety, from the ancient forms of Orthodox Christianity in Egypt (Coptics) and Ethiopia to the newest African-Christian denominations of Nigeria, a country that has

experienced large conversion to Christianity in recent times. Recent Christian growth in Africa is due to native African evangelism and very high birth rates.

Several syncretistic and messianic groups have formed throughout the continent, including the churches in South Africa and Nigeria. Some evangelical missions founded in Africa are also quickly spreading in influence all around the world. Interestingly, there are also widespread populations of Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses. A recent study estimates that there are over two million Christian believers from formerly Muslim backgrounds in Africa, most of whom belong to some form of Protestantism.

Experts predict the shift of Christianity's center from the European industrialized nations to Africa and Asia in modern times. Commitment levels are high causing some to suggest that the flow of missionaries may well reverse, going from Africa to Europe and the United States rather than vice-versa.

**§6-412. African independence and missionary influence.**—Many of the prominent leaders of African independence movements were schooled in the Western Christian tradition. They had gone to church-run schools that colonial governments had entrusted to missionary enterprises. These Christian schools had a huge role in shaping African elites. The 1950s and 1960s saw the big era of African independence. However, many of these fledgling governments gave way to corruption. These corrupt African strongmen and democrats also turned to religious language and alliances with churches to claim authority in unstable times. Many of these governments struggled to provide their people basic services and the people relied on their church to provide education for their kids, healthcare for their families, or justice in their controversies.

**§6-413. Task of the church.**—The missions task of the Church is being seriously debated. Two problems come to the forefront: evangelization and contextualization. Some see evangelization as primarily concerned with the task of preaching the gospel and planting churches among unbelieving people groups. Others increasingly focus on social needs of people and that tends to be the dominant emphasis in Protestant ecumenical circles.

The second issue (contextualization) is an issue of culture. It arises when we think of Christianity's role in the world. Christian faith claims supernatural origins, but cannot escape its historical roots and journeys. Should it reject cultural norms and create new ones, or should it be accommodating to the prevailing culture? What if the art and customs of a people are linked with religious beliefs opposed to Christian faith?

A third corollary issue is the concern of other world religions. The West brought a revolution to the Third World and to cope people have turned to religion, either to "native" versions of Christianity or to resurgent ancient versions of non-Christian faiths.

**§6-414. Roman Catholicism in Africa.**—Roman Catholicism has long been present in Africa, first in Portuguese Angola and Mozambique and then in the vast French colonies in central and North Africa. Vatican II's decisions concerning liturgy and the use of the vernacular produced

some friction. Nevertheless, Catholicism grew in every nation in sub-Saharan Africa and African nations were making contributions to the church at large. By 2000, African priests were serving parishes in Ireland, Portugal, and France.

**§6-415. Protestant growth.**—Truly explosive growth occurred among Protestants. When the former British colonies became independent, most of the leaders of the new nations, in politics, education, trade, and the professions, were educated in Protestant schools. Missionaries had long worked in the rural populations and among poorer urban dwellers. Independence provided opportunities for growth connected with the ancient traditions of the people. For example, in Kenya, the church exploded. Before World War II, 10% of the population was Christian. By 2000, 60% of Kenya was Christian.

**§6-416. Pentecostalism.**—Pentecostalism arrived in Africa in the early 1900s and grew enormously in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. There was tremendous growth in independent churches with their array of prophets, the most numerous of which was connected with Samuel Kimbangu (1887-1951). There are thousands of these types of churches and in 2010, the number of adherents were estimated at 80,000,000 to 90,000,000 people.

**§6-417. —Prophetic religion in Africa.**—Today one half of Africans are some variety of Christian, a staggering six hundred million. The prosperity gospel, the idea that God rewards true believers with worldly blessings and punishes those who do not keep the faith, has gained an increasing following. The prosperity preachers have roots back a century ago during the global influenza pandemic. That plus an episode of bubonic plague and the Great Depression geared people for a hopeful sign from God. One Joseph Babalola heard the call of God to a healing ministry. This healing and signs ministry continued to grow and now claims almost 40 million adherents.

Are churches in this African prophetic tradition helping build more stable and prosperous society or are they holding Africans back? There are people on both sides of that question. Some say prophetic revivalism encourages a work ethic, motivation, and discipline. Others claim that much of the prophetic tradition is a materialistic and over-controlling sham.

## 2. Illustrative Varieties of African Christianity

**§6-421. In general.**—What follows illustrates the wide variety of African Christianity. It is impossible to make accurate statements of sweeping generality. The Orthodoxy of Egypt and Ethiopia is far removed from the prophetic Pentecostalism of equatorial Africa or the successors to the Reformed tradition in South Africa.

**§6-422. Belgian Congo.**—A number of African movements broke away from missionary churches between 1890 and 1920 as Africans increasingly sought to move away from white supremacy. Simon Kimbangu felt called of God to take care of his sheep. Rejected by white

Church officials because he lacked sufficient education, Simon continued his pastoral and healing ministry. It eventually led to his imprisonment in 1921 and the persecution of his followers by the Belgian colonial government. Tension continued to build until the 1950s. A dramatic standoff occurred in 1957 between police and peaceable Christians which resulted in the Governor-General of the Congo granting the Kimbanguists religious toleration.

Today, Christianity is the majority religion in the Congo. However, various syncretistic sects often merge Christian beliefs with traditional tribal beliefs and rituals which lead some people to question whether they are truly part of Christianity. In the Congo of today, class, ethnic, and religious identity of individuals is often fluid and situational. In search of spiritual resources and answers, Congolese, both rural residents and sophisticated urban dwellers, have displayed a very pragmatic openness to various religious and philosophical ideas.

**§6-423. Ethiopia.**—The Ethiopian Church is in the Orthodox orbit. It was the largest of the churches that refused to accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon in 451. It played a significant role in the resistance to Italian imperialism in the 1930s. It suffered significant difficulties first by the inroads of Islam from neighboring countries and then by a hostile regime in the 1970s. In 2000, it was comprised of approximately 35,000,000 people.

**§6-424. Nigeria.**—Nigeria has the largest Christian population of any country in Africa, with more than 80 million persons in Nigeria belonging to various denominations at the turn of the century. These included Anglicans, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, various independent evangelical groups, Seventh-Day Adventists, Roman Catholics, and Jehovah's Witnesses. Christians in Nigeria comprise approximately one-half of the population. Christians are dominant in the southern and central regions of the country. Since the introduction of Sharia law in the north of the country, violence towards non-Muslims has substantially increased.

**§6-425. South Africa; apartheid.**—Apartheid is an Afrikaan word meaning “separateness.” It describes a system of laws and land distribution used to protect the privileges of white South Africans. Afrikaners are white descendants of Dutch colonists that began to settle South Africa in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Apartheid became a formal policy in 1948. The policy divided people in four groups: whites, blacks, Indians from Indian subcontinent, and colored (mixed race). The policy used legislation and coerced resettlement to force people to live with only their own race. Mixed marriages were outlawed and a separate and inferior education system created for blacks. A systematic disenfranchise strategy was used to make sure whites remained the majority of the voting populace.

In South Africa, the great struggle was first against colonial rule and then against the systems of white supremacy. In that struggle, Anglican Desmond Tutu, Reformed Allan Boesak, and Methodist Nelson Mandela expressed the concerns of black Africans, connected them with their Christian faith, and sought resolutions that were both just and peaceful.

**§6-426. —Christian complicity.**—Apartheid was understood as a Christian ideology supported by the Dutch Reformed Church. The idea frequently used in its support was that of sphere sovereignty by Abraham Kuyper. In the Netherlands, these ideas meant greater civil liberties for separate communities that tended to break down by belief: Protestants, Catholics, atheists, socialists etc. In South Africa, it operated as a limiting function for civil liberties for all but white Afrikaners.

**§6-427. —South African liberation tradition.**—Nonviolent protest characterized the early phases of black South African protest but after severe repression, things turned violent. By the early 1980s, the leaders realized that violence only played into white propaganda. Strikes, boycotts, and marches made more sense. These, as well as international pressure, over many years paved the way for multiracial democratic elections in 1994, with Nelson Mandela becoming South Africa's first black president.

**§6-428. —Ongoing story.**—The black South African experience with Christianity started under the yoke of colonialism and slavery. They first encountered the Christian message as one of the white slaver, telling them to accept domination with gratitude. However, generation after generation of black Christians made the faith their own. They combined the Christian message with their own life experiences to yield a prophetic pragmatism. These stories of racism speak with a dual focus. Christians, like other human beings, tend to construct a faith that affirms the world they want to believe in, and like most, they want to hold onto power. However, they also speak of the power of Christian ideals and institutions to help the powerless as well.

## **B. Asia**

**§6-431. In general.**—What stands out about the situation in Asia is the presence of religions claiming the loyalties of the masses and the presence of Communism espousing secular materialism. Millions die in Asia without knowledge of the Christian gospel. India is the heartland of Hinduism with a Muslim presence. Christianity has grown there, especially among the underprivileged. There has been remarkable growth in Korea, in the Philippines, and in some areas of Indonesia. However, Asia represents the goliath of unreached regions with respect to the Christian gospel.

Today, Christianity is the predominant faith in a few Asian countries, including the Philippines, Russia, Armenia, and Georgia. There are significant percentages of believers in South Korea and other areas, such as Singapore. In addition, Christianity is alive and growing in nations like China and some areas of Indonesia. The rise of Islamic extremism has led to persecution and, in the worse cases, torture and death. In other Muslim countries, Christians have limited freedom of worship and are forbidden to spread their faith. A recent study estimates that there are seven million believers from a Muslim background in Asia and approximately 500,000 Christian believers from a Muslim background in the Middle East, most of them belonging to some form of Protestantism.

**§6-432. China.**—During the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were 6,000 Protestant missionaries in China and their success was such that some spoke of a massive conversion that would dwarf what occurred in the Roman world with the conversion of Constantine. Roman Catholics were also making great strides. Then came World War II and its aftermath and the establishment of the People’s Republic of China and its communist regime.

When Mao Tse Tung came to power shortly after the end of World War II, he moved quickly to expel foreign missionaries and attempted to herd as many believers as possible into a church controlled entirely by the government. Various new organizations were founded in the early 1950s—the Three-Self Patriotic Movement and the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association—fronts to round up Protestants and Catholics and control their activities if not to extinguish their existence. In 1950, the government forced churches to adopt a “Christian manifesto” which many believed violated their conscience. All the missionaries left at the beginning of these turbulent years.

The Cultural Revolution under Mao Tse Tung (1966-1976) was a truly trying experience for people of faith. Mao became convinced that capitalists, counterrevolutionaries, and Western-infected intellectuals (enemies of the people) needed to be purged from Chinese society. The Red Guards rampaged the land and a Terror reigned. Churches were “consolidated” and then closed altogether. All religion was banned. During this time, underground house churches sprung up and grew all around China. As the 1970s progressed, the failure of the Cultural Revolution became increasingly evident, tensions with the Soviet Union surfaced, and the need for economic reform became painfully apparent. Gradually, the government granted more freedom to Christians and Christianity began to grow vigorously.

In 1900, there were approximately 5,000,000 Christians. Today, estimates place that number at 50,000,000 and some even higher. Christianity is and has been spreading in China. Christianity is a genuine indigenous faith in China today, growing through independent churches not controlled by foreign bodies or the Chinese government. House churches abound, often reflecting more charismatic overtones than the larger church.

The ecumenical movement in China has been influenced by the communist government’s “consolidation” of churches so that Protestants speak of a post-denominational age in China. Roman Catholics struggle with the question of whether to accept the authority of bishops who followed the Communist government’s policies and who were selected by the government. Likewise, Protestants on the Chinese Christian Council, officially recognized by the government, have been vigorously criticized for being too subservient to the political authorities.

**§6-433. India.**—India is a prime example of changes taking place. The years between world wars marked by India’s struggle for independence whose most influential leader was Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948). India boasted some of the most ancient Christian churches which claimed to have been founded by the apostle Thomas. The church fragmented between Anglicans, Catholics, Uniates, and a Protestant body known as the Church of Mar Thoma. Despite the

divisions and the political unrest of the era, Christians in India showed unusual creativity and evangelistic zeal. Charismatic communities appeared throughout the nation. There was also the phenomena of “churchless Christians,” mostly of the higher castes, who sought to combine traditional Hindu contemplative practices with Christianity without joining a church.

Protestant churches excelled at developing indigenous churches with native leadership equal to the challenges they faced. They played a significant role in the emerging educational system of the entire nation. Indian churches also showed great creativity in ecumenical dialogue. The Indian Christian community played a significant role in the birth and leadership of the International Missionary Council and later of the World Council of Churches.

**§6-434. Japan.**—World War II and its aftermath put an end to any dreams of large numbers of Christian converts. During the war, the government forced churches to unite into the United Church of Christ of Japan, from which many segments withdrew as soon as it was allowed. The church has not grown in Japan as it has in China and any growth has taken place primarily among Pentecostal and charismatic groups.

**§6-435. Korea.**—Protestant Christianity has experienced its most notable growth in Korea. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, missionaries in Korea began following the “Nevius missionary method”, named after John Nevius, who argued that missionary work should concentrate on the working lower classes as well as women and girls, on the development of native leadership, and on the growth of the church towards self-support in finances and personnel.

Japan dominated Korea from 1910 to 1945. The authorities saw Christianity through a jaundiced lens and characterized it as a cult devoted to overthrowing the regime. The authorities burned churches, arrested and executed Christian leaders, and repressed Christian faith. After World War II, when the Allied powers ended Japanese domination, the Americans occupied the south and the Russians the north. The Korean War lasted from 1950 to 1953, ended by an uneasy armistice. The state religion of North Korea is the worship of the Kim family folded into the ideology of *juče* or “self-reliance”, demanding total loyalty of all subjects. The Communists drove evangelicals south where they became zealous church builders.

The church grew in South Korea throughout World War II and continued to grow vigorously after the war. In the decade of the 1960s, South Korea began producing its own brand of liberation theology, *Minjung* theology, which sought to affirm the struggles of people seeking liberation from economic and social oppression. Conservative Protestantism abounds and many Korean Christians have held on more tightly to the teaching presented by Western missionaries than in other parts of the world. Korean evangelicals have also accommodated Korean culture, tending to place special emphasis on the Fifth Commandment to honor one's parents. They have also adopted Christian versions of ancestor rites called services of recollection. In addition, the marriage of Christianity and Korean nationalism has both strengthened Korean churches and led them into questionable alliances with authoritarian regimes.

Throughout Asia, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century has witnessed the growth of churches that are self-governing, self-propagating, self-supporting, and self-interpreting. These churches seek to understand their mission as well as their own theological perspective within their cultural, social, political, and religious contexts.

### C. Latin America

**§6-441. In general.**—For centuries, Latin America was the Catholic continent. However more recently, even the Church has admitted that only a small percentage of the people are more than nominal believers. Evangelical Protestant missionaries have brought many to a new and more vigorous faith in Christ. In addition, Vatican II produced real if gradual change in Latin Catholicism. A new ecumenical spirit arose, Bible reading was promoted, Mass was conducted in local languages, and a Christian social conscience grew.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the continuation of conflict between political conservatives and liberals and the impact of this struggle on the life of the Catholic Church. Struggles involving dictators (Peron in Argentina; Vargas in Brazil) waxed and waned with the Roman Catholic Church hierarchy often supporting the dictators. Their overthrows affected the Church in those countries.

**§6-442. Grass roots Catholic revival; Medellin conference.**—By the 1960s, Catholic leaders were seriously concerned about poverty in their communities and how Church institutions were complicit in the unjust economic arrangements that hurt the poor and made them more receptive to Protestant missionaries.

A gathering in Medellin, Colombia in 1968, proved to be a watershed event in the history of Latin American Catholicism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Paul VI attended and denounced the exploitation of peasants, turning the Church from its own internal issues and problems to the needs of the oppressed and poor people in their countries. The first document of the conference addressed the matter of world economic order, asserting that both communism and capitalism “militate against the dignity of the human person” and that “Latin America sees itself caught between these two options and remains dependent on one or the other of the centers of power which control its economy.” Medellin saw a church that had traditionally been preoccupied with its privileges and power declare itself to be the champion of the poor and the oppressed.

One of the suggestions emerging from the conclave was for small basic ecclesial communities to empower rural grassroots Catholics. This would minister to both the problem of the shortage of priests and implement a Vatican II emphasis on encouraging lay people to take a leading role in Catholic parish life. However, these base communities soon became linked with activist political agendas and with liberation theology.

**§6-443. Protestants in Latin America.**—After the countries of Latin America won their independence from Spain and Portugal, they wanted to modernize their economies. A number of

newly minted Latin American governments offered limited religious freedom to Protestant traders and business people to expand their businesses in Latin America. They were forbidden to evangelize, but the early Protestant immigrants had no problem with that. They were there for the money.

The authorities reflected further on this line. Protestant missionaries could accomplish much in building the infrastructure needed to make a free market work, education, widespread literacy, healthcare etc. That would involve little Government investment and would be free from the autocratic control of the Catholic Church. If the Protestants wanted to use their Bibles and other literature to educate or to evangelize while providing health and other services—well, that was a reasonable price to pay.

As a result of immigration and missionary work, Protestantism was well established in Latin America by 1900. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, traditional Protestant churches continued to grow, but the truly explosive growth occurred among Pentecostal groups. Chile was the first country noted for this pattern. It was initially led by a Methodist missionary, Willis Hoover. Hoover eventually left the Methodist Church and formed the Methodist Pentecostal Church.

At the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there were 5,000,000 Pentecostals in Chile and fewer than 20,000 Methodists. The same kind of growth among Pentecostals occurred in such other countries as Brazil and Mexico. By 2010, by some estimate, Pentecostals accounted for 47% of the population in Brazil, 36% of Chile, and 13% of Mexico. A region that had long been counted as a part of Christendom was to a large degree changing its allegiance from traditional Roman Catholicism to Pentecostal Protestantism. The autocratic Catholic Church fumed and things got ugly on the local level, but Protestantism continued to grow in Latin America. By 2014, 20% of Latin Americans were Protestants.

Some of these groups preached a “gospel of prosperity” promising economic success to their followers, most notably the Universal Church of the Reign of God in Brazil and The Light of the World Church in Mexico. There were also “apostolic networks” who claimed that pastors who joined these networks would have unprecedented success.

**§6-444. Ecumenism.**—The ecumenical movement did not make much progress in Latin America for a number of reasons: (1) many Protestants feared ecumenism was a papal ploy among those churches which had long been preaching anti-Catholicism and anti-Communism and (2) fundamentalism and power struggles had caused frequent splits in the churches, resulting in relatively small groups that really wanted to be separate. This was exacerbated by a rigorous insistence on minor points of doctrine that were all deemed essential to salvation.

**§6-445. Liberation theology.**—The line is that Liberation theology merely puts into practice a recurring theme in the Scripture—that God is on the side of the oppressed and the suffering. God wants justice and the Christian message challenges the corrupt powers of this world. However, in

the 1960s and 1970s, Liberation theologians blended these biblical themes with the unique situation of the Latin American context and with Marxist social criticism and activism.

In 1971, Gustavo Gutierrez published *A Theology of Liberation* in which he lambasted capitalism as antithetical to Christianity and attacked the Church's role in holding up the structures of unjust Latin American economies. He and other liberationists drew on Marx's economic ideas as a set of tools for reform while rejecting his atheism. However, they were noticeably more critical of capitalism and its ills than of the Soviet command economy, which was clearly showing signs of inequality. This was probably due to the reality of Western economic influence in Latin America in that day.

For religious and political conservatives, liberation theology was just communist propaganda in disguise. Pope Benedict XVI called it a severe deviation from orthodoxy, confusing the Kingdom of God with worldly political movements and inciting class conflict rather than supporting the universal love that Jesus advocated.

**§6-446. Change and growth in a turbulent era.**—Although the overall percentage of Christians changed little in Latin America over the 20th century, the internal composition of Christianity has changed significantly. Catholics remain the largest tradition, but Protestants (*evangélicos*) and Independents have been rapidly increasing their shares of Christians on the continent. This includes Protestant denominations such as Presbyterians in Guatemala, Pentecostal groups such as the Assemblies of God in Brazil, and independent charismatic churches such as the Methodist Pentecostal Church and the Evangelical Pentecostal Church in Chile. Other independent churches have also been growing rapidly, especially the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses in Brazil and Mexico. Finally, the Orthodox community has experienced growth in Chile and has the third-fastest growth rate among churches in Latin America today.

Some Christian families in Latin America are experiencing continual growth. The increase is clearly the result of Catholics joining Protestant, independent, or Pentecostal churches. The charismatic movement within the Catholic Church continues to grow in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Argentina and other countries, and has grown significantly over the last half-century. The movement began in the late 1960s in the United States and Colombia and quickly spread throughout Latin America. Today, the world's largest Catholic charismatic community is in Brazil. Many Pentecostal/charismatic movements have connections to the United States. For example, in Peru roughly 70% of today's Pentecostal churches trace their origins to the original United States Assemblies of God and to the groups that separated from it and then followed the same denominational structure. However, Latin American Pentecostalism is very diverse, ranging from classical Pentecostalism to independent Pentecostal movements that are close to Catholicism in actual practice. There are also networked charismatic groups and ministries under the leadership and authority of so-called apostles.

Christians in Latin America face a wide range of challenges at the beginning of the 21st century.

Major scandals plague governments and businesses. Christian involvement in politics ranges from pastors and priests running for public office to eschewing politics altogether. Drug and gang violence is real and severely impacts churches. For example, in El Salvador, affiliation with Protestant Evangelical Christianity provides people safety from violent gangs. Often joining an Evangelical church is the only safe alternative to joining a gang, as well as the only safe way to leave a gang, especially for young men and boys. Such challenges have also given way to a variety of fruitful ministries through which churches have the opportunity to serve their communities in such efforts as prison and peace-building ministries.

Christians in Latin America have also been engaged in overseas Christian missions. Catholics have been sending missionaries for the longest period, including brothers and sisters in both religious and secular orders assigned to countries in Northern America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. Protestants and independents are also sending missionaries, with Brazil as a leading sending country. Many of these missionaries got their start through diaspora communities of their own people, only later engaging people of other languages and cultures. Deliberate mission sending to Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus is a newer feature of Latin American mission outreach.

## VI. Summary and Observations

**§6-451. In general.**—Challenges that immediately impact Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century include (what I call) big picture issues:

- Engagement with Islam;
- Reaction to forces of secularism;
- Attitudes toward global capitalism.

as well as more immediate and pressing concerns:

- Ongoing spiritual nurture. Spiritual vacuousness is a problem worldwide, North and South.
- Assisting the poor and caring for the sick. Poverty and disease plague humankind.
- Educating the next generation. Illiteracy and lack of education straddles the globe.

**§6-452. Clash of civilizations.**—In *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, Sam Huntingdon divided the modern world into seven different civilizations:

- United States, Canada, most of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand;
- Latin America;
- Orthodoxy in Russia and Eastern Europe;
- Hindu civilization of India, Nepal, and Bhutan;
- Confucian civilization of China, Korea, and their spheres of influence;
- the Muslim world.

The world scene is increasingly fragmented and that reality has significant effect on Christian ministry worldwide.

**§6-453. Bloody borders.**—In this analysis, Muslims tend to have “bloody borders,” that is they get into fights with their non-Muslim neighbors. Islam, like Christianity, is an exclusive faith that claims to have the truth. However, unlike many Western Christian communities, Muslims have not adjusted their beliefs and practices to embrace values of pluralism, democracy, and Enlightenment rationalism. Even in the past, when Muslims tolerated non-Muslim subjects, those subjects acknowledged their inferiority and accepted Muslim domination which included various religious restrictions. Couple this with the population boom in many Muslim regions, the demographic reality is that two-thirds of the world's population will be either Christian or Muslim by 2100. This works to continue the history of “bloody borders,” particularly between Christian and Muslim neighbors. The bloodiest of these borders are in Africa where there have been numerous encounters in places like Sudan.

**§6-454. Secularization.**—Declining church attendance numbers and the shrinking influence of Christian clergy in public affairs have underlined the reality of secularization in the West. Evangelical Christians have gone from calling themselves the moral majority to saying they must accept their role as a moral minority in an essentially pagan culture. The numbers game is increasingly difficult to play and conclude that the Christian faith is a big success in this era. Some Christian groups have begun to sound and act like survivalist groups.

From another angle, things look quite different. Secular modernity has not brought peace, happiness, and material comfort to the world. War and terrorism rage across the globe. Drug addiction epidemics have destroyed individuals, families, and impacted communities. Moral confusion increasingly reigns as a climate of narcissism descends and self-anointed critics posit their subjective assertions as norms because they scream the loudest or command the biggest media outlets. Disappointment with modernity and its promises may well be the reason for the global explosion of Pentecostal and charismatic forms of Christianity who look for and welcome supernatural intervention and look askance at the all-encompassing claims of rationalism.

Will globalization bring a Western-style postmodern secularism to the rest of the world or will the reverse missionaries of the Global South re-Christianize the West? What will surely be constant is our desire to seek order and meaning in the universe, the pursuit of our curiosity about what lies beyond the material world, and our hope to know the comfort that someone or something really does care for us.

**§6-455. Global capitalism.**—At the end of European colonialism in the 1960s, multinational corporations became adept at extracting material and human resources and moving their centers of production to where the costs are the lowest. National governments became less able to control their domestic economies. Globalization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century mirrors industrialization in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has brought tremendous benefits to some, cheap goods to many, raised the standards of living in developing countries, and has brought great misery to many who have lost

jobs to overseas workers. These workers have watched their communities erode by foreign competition deemed unfair and a consumer culture that steamrolls over traditional values. In Christian practice in several areas, this has accompanied the expanse of the prosperity gospel. The descendants of the social gospelers pit themselves against this. The debate is on for the best way to respond to suffering near at home in our own neighborhoods as well as in faraway countries.

### **A. Christianity in the Postmodern West**

**§6-461. In general.**—In the West, the outward signs of religiosity following the world wars masked serious intellectual, cultural, and political cracks in Christendom. Religion increasingly became a person's private business and less a mantle of morality over the public square. This is the inevitable result when everyone's worldview is different from everyone else's. In this context, religious skepticism and atheism have become acceptable positions and not just the quiet views of a few outliers.

**§6-462. Trends.**—A number of observations are in order:

- For centuries, Europe was the citadel of Christian faith. By 2000, Christianity was clearly in decline in Europe. There have been substantial defections from Christian faith to communism, secularism, and materialism. Today, Europe is really a post-Christian secular heartland—a non-Christian, pluralistic, and hostile culture.
- United States continues to surprise analysts. It is a highly modern society with an increasingly secular civic policy, and still its citizens are remarkably religious. The late 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a steady, if not remarkable, growth in evangelical denominations. Christianity in both Europe and North America has a substantial challenge. It must educate its members in global moral and ethical issues. It must learn to relate to its culture while retaining its Christian distinctives. It must recognize that Christianity is no longer a Caucasian European faith. In terms of attitude, United States is clearly on the European trajectory noted above.
- The power basis from which Christian theology speaks has been reduced. Theology must be done in the modern age from a position of political weakness. The scope of Christian theology has also narrowed and the audience has become increasingly limited. Theologians speak exclusively to the church or those on its immediate periphery.
- However, Christian theology and ministry has expanded in the sense that it is no longer a male-oriented, Euro-American enterprise. This will bring considerations of theology and culture to the forefront. In the past, theology was Euro/Western dominated and developed in the context of a Greek philosophical background. The questions that other cultures, particularly from the Southern Hemisphere, raise will have enormous consequences for Christian theology and ministry and its future development.
- Christian theology has also expanded confessionally. In the past, it has been possible to narrate theology's development along confessional lines. The debates and divisions had a

certain cohesion to them. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that has expanded and caused a substantial fraying of confessional conformity among Christian groups. Theologians have looked at their own confessional traditions and have attempted to understand them in a more ecumenical fashion. In addition, there has been a sociological expansion, in that theology has grown to include crucial issues involving attitudes towards social justice and to include entire groups that hitherto have not had a voice in theological discussions.

## **B. Beyond Christendom or a New Christendom? Implications of the Global South**

**§6-471. In general.**—In 1900, 80% of Christians lived in Europe and North America. By 2000, that figure had dropped to 40%. In addition, Christianity is rapidly becoming a religion of the impoverished and oppressed. The Christian message of hope for the future and the dignity of each person has a powerful resonance among the downtrodden.

**§6-472. Trends in the Global South.**—While the change described above has been going on in the West, something quite different has seized the Global South. Christianity's center of gravity has shifted at various times in its two thousand year history and is on the move once again. Note the trends for the growth of Christianity:

- Africa is the continent with the world's fastest growing concentration of Christians.
- Asia, the most populous region in the world, is also the region most resistant to Christianity. While there is a net growth of Christians in Asia every year, on balance the region is closed to Christian activity.
- By the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Latin America remains overwhelmingly Roman Catholic but with a growing contingent of Protestants. However, many Roman Catholics on the continent are that in name only and Pentecostal Christianity has made astounding strides in Brazil and other Latin American nations. Ditto for central America.
- The explosive growth of non-western Christianity is the most important dynamic emerging from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The keys to this growth seem to be the wealth of Bible translations in native languages and the tremendous growth and influence of the Pentecostal movement. Continuing Christian vibrancy seems assured, but the faith will have a less western cadence in doctrine, demographics, and practice. An interesting counterpoint is that international Christian groups are still dominated by western, male-oriented hierarchies.

**§6-473. Keys to growth.**—The full translation of the Bible into 450 languages and parts of the Bible into 2,500 tongues means that millions of the world's Christians read and study Bibles in their own language. The missionary vision for Bible translation into native languages has proved to be a key to growth in the Global South. Bible translation was oft maligned as an example of an opportunity for missionaries to import their own cultural bias to native faiths. Yet the effect of these translations has not been more cultural manipulation but a boost for cultural independence. Many have noted the centrality of Bible translation to the emergence of independent thinking.

There is an empowerment that results from receiving the Bible in one's own language. This is a notable contrast with Islam with its insistence on a single language for the Koran.

Another key to this growth is the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement. Since 1970, the number of Pentecostals and charismatics has increased by more than ten times. Religious historians see this is the most significant movement of the 20th century, perhaps more significant than Communism or Fascism in terms of how it is changing our world.

**§6-474. Conflicts with Global North.**—Christian churches in the Global North, rooted in lengthy traditions and embattled by forces of secularization and materialism, oft look with disdain on the spiritual enthusiasm and energy of worship styles in the Global South. The boisterous services filled with vibrant singing that is a full body exercise are far removed from the much more restrained Western practice. In addition, there is in the Global South, especially among charismatics, the expectation that God speaks directly and currently through believers gifted with prophecy (meaning revelatory speech, not just preaching). Westerners are concerned that the new prophetic word might trump the biblical revelation. However, in most instances the Bible is not displaced by the ongoing gift of prophecy. The new prophetic word begins in the study of Scripture, a biblical phrase becoming the new pronouncement's root.

There is a deep sense of spiritual warfare and an engagement with spiritual enemies in corporate worship with which Westerners are uncomfortable. Personal prayer and liturgical practice are often shaped by the vision of victory over spiritual enemies. The Global South embraces foreign missions unapologetically without all the hand-wringing and Western angst over a cultural chauvinism that violates the modern mandate of diversity. In addition, churches in the Global South are conservative and oppose and resent the sexual and materialistic values pushed on them by Christians in the North. Christians in the Global South identify with the struggles of oppressed peoples recorded in the Bible and with Biblical concern for the poor and the outcast. They identify with political and economic oppression, with the reality of plagues and famines, and cherish accounts of divine power in healing and miracles. The very things that their sophisticated kin in the North all but roll their eyes over.

**§6-475. Missionaries; immigrants; refugees.**—Missionaries are dramatically declining in number from the Global North to other nations but are increasingly coming from the Global South to the North. Their primary audiences tend to be immigrants to the North from the countries sending the missionaries but are also branching out to native peoples of the Global North. One needs to add the reality of global immigration to this picture to appreciate the impact. Take Hispanics in the United States as an example. They total over fifty million people in the United States, now composing 35% of the American Catholic community. The impact on American Catholicism is immense. In today's world, immigration will be a major factor in our future. The poor and disadvantaged will seek refuge in the North, and they have created a major, non-Western missionary movement.

In addition, the 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed an enormous number of refugees fleeing war, civil war, religious persecution, and economic or environmental disasters. The sheer numbers are staggering, and the new situations are playing havoc with the old systems of attempting to deal with the problem.

### C. What Will the Future Hold?

**§6-481. In general.**—How will story of the Christian faith play out in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Some suggestions include:

- Christianity will be truly global faith. Christianity will not only stretch around the world but will be dominant in places not its traditional base.
- Those who were previously marginalized, culturally, intellectually, or otherwise, will be part of the narrative. This includes women in most parts of the world and the poor, the uneducated, ethnic and cultural minorities, and the oppressed.
- Some commentators foresee that the new global narrative will be missions-based. The historians of the faith will speak of the faith not from its traditional center to the periphery but from the periphery to traditional centers.
- Christianity will be challenged by political fragmentation in nation-states around the world. The theme of political fragmentation is a dominate one, with governments having less control over information, technology, border integrity, financial transactions, weapons, and a host of other issues bearing on the vital interests of people. Many analyze the decline of nation-states in the face of globalization and note parallels with the cosmopolitan world of the Middle Ages and suggest the possibility of a new feudalism akin to that which existed in Western Europe in the Middle Ages. This reality may place Christians around the globe at greater risk of persecution by their neighbors because of their faith.
- Religious diversity and secular hostility will characterize most lands that have traditionally been associated with Christendom. Indeed, traditional ideas of “Christendom” have collapsed in the face of a secularized nationalism. This will put the challenge of culture on the front burner of earnest Christian thought and activity.

**§6-482. Christendom of the future.**—Will the future be a time for a new Christendom or one that goes beyond Christendom? Christendom has collapsed in the face secular nationalism. Will it recrystallize in a new form, or will the Southern experience go beyond traditional ideas?

There can be little doubt that the emerging Christian world will be anchored in the Southern continents. This has led to varied intellectual speculation. The Western left, attracted by visions of liberation, sees the rise of Southern Hemisphere Christianity as highlighting the need to commit to social and political activism at home, to combat racism and insure economic justice, and to promote cultural diversity.

Western conservatives take a different view. Christians in the non-western world are, in the main, theologically traditional, which puts them at variance with more theologically liberal Christians in Europe and North America. In addition, the affluence of Christians in Europe and North America cause Christians elsewhere deep misgivings, particularly when the western church champions issues that appear to non-westerns to exhibit western cultural insensitivity and arrogance. The growing church in the South stands farthest from the Western liberal orthodoxies and we should learn from their success.

So which vision wins—the liberation dream or the conservative dream? It would be wrong to expect the southern churches to reproduce Western obsessions and approaches. Each side fails to see the whole picture, the immenseness of it, or to realize that the determining issues may be quite different and unknown.

What will the future hold? Only time will tell. But Christians should be full of hope. No person in recorded history has influenced more people in so many different conditions over so long a time as Jesus of Nazareth. The shades of His image and effect seem to shift with the needs of people: the Jewish Messiah of the believing remnant, the Wisdom of the Greek apologist, the cosmic king of the Imperial Church, the Heavenly Logos of the orthodox councils, the World Ruler of the papal courts, the monastic Model of apostolic poverty, the personal savior of evangelical revivalists. Truly, He is a man for all ages. Today, as in every day through history, people have proclaimed him irrelevant, a relic of the past, buried in the sands of time. But somehow, through every age, the quiet testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ did not disappear from the scene. His image may change but His truth endures to all generations.

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