

Key Events In Church History, Part IV

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The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been called the age of revolution. There have been destructive wars, re-drawing of maps and national boundaries, colonization followed by nationalization, and finally globalization. Rapid changes in society and social norms have resulted in a wide variety of social problems. Advances in science and technology have produced life-saving medicines and artificial body parts, rapid transportation and instantaneous communication, as well as weapons of mass destruction never dreamed of in previous eras. Progress and deterioration, advances and declines have characterized these two centuries.

The visible church reflects and reacts to the trends and challenges of every age. Our final four key events illustrate that this is true also in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

13. The Beginning of the Modern Mission Era

As the Eighteenth century drew to a close it looked very much as if Reformation Protestantism was dying. The Enlightenment emphasis on human reason had undermined and nearly destroyed simple faith in the authority of Scripture. There was an optimistic view of human nature that believed that human beings could solve all of mankind's problems, including the problems of sin and salvation. Rationalism was so dominant that even in the newly founded United States of America only ten to fifteen per cent of the population could be considered Christian in any meaningful sense of the term. Roman Catholicism was dominant in world missions because the major colonial powers were Roman Catholic and Rome had monastic orders ready and eager to spread Catholicism to the New World and to reclaim the Old. Nevertheless, in spite of all of the signs of deterioration and death, a new day for Protestant expansion was dawning.

To be sure there was some Protestant and Lutheran missionary activity among heathen peoples before the nineteenth century. The Swedish king Gustavus Vasa (1496-1560) sent Lutheran missionaries to the Arctic Circle to bring the gospel to the Lapps. The Lutheran pastor Johann Campanius (1601-1683) worked among the Native Americans along the Delaware River during his brief stay in America (1643-1648) and translated Luther's Small Catechism into the local dialect. His work antedates the more famous mission work in America by John Eliot (1604-1690). Campanius has the distinction of being the first to reduce a Native American language to writing and providing the first translation of Christian literature into a Native American dialect. Heinrich Pluetschau (1678?-1747?) and Bartholomaeus Ziegenbalg (1683-1719) brought the gospel to India in 1706 in the service of Fredrick IV of Denmark, establishing the famous Danish-Halle mission in that far-distant land and applying mission methods that have a rather modern ring. Hans Egede (1686-1758), a Danish Lutheran pastor, brought the gospel to the Eskimos of Greenland in 1722 and continued to work on that island until 1736. His work was eventually taken over by the Moravians who probably sent out more missionaries in the eighteenth century than any other Protestant group.

The Dutch also made some attempts to do heathen mission work in their possessions in Indonesia, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and Formosa (Taiwan). For a time the Dutch even operated a seminary in Leyden for training foreign missionaries.

In America pioneer missionary John Eliot established several "praying towns" for his converts among the Iroquois because he discovered that it was almost impossible for a converted Indian to remain a Christian if he remained within his tribe and culture. Several of these praying towns along with their inhabitants were destroyed by Native Americans during King Philip's War (1675-1676). David Brainerd (1718-1747) worked among the Delaware Indians between 1745-1746, baptizing thirty-eight converts. In 1746 Brainerd published his Journal which described his mission endeavors. When he contracted tuberculosis and died in 1747, he left behind his diary which detailed the emotional and physical hardships he endured during the years of his work

among the Delaware. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758), to whose daughter Brainerd had been engaged, edited and published the diary. It served as an inspiration for many missionaries during the next two centuries.

Although we can point to several efforts to do heathen mission work before the nineteenth century, they were few in number compared with the explosion of heathen missions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There are a number of reasons for this explosion. At the end of the seventeenth and into the eighteenth century there was an evangelical awakening¹ that swept across Protestant Europe. This awakening placed a strong emphasis on practicing a more sincere Christianity. European exploration and colonization by Protestant nations brought Christian Europe into contact with non-Christian peoples around the world. By the end of the eighteenth century a conservative religious reaction to rationalism had set in. All of these things helped to bring about a mission-mindedness that was worldwide in scope.

Mission Societies

Thomas Bray (1656-1730) and four other laymen established the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (S.P.C.K.) in 1698. The purpose of the organization was "to promote and encourage the erection of charity schools in all parts of England and Wales; to disperse at home and abroad Bibles and tracts of religion; and in general to advance the honor of God and the good of mankind by promoting Christian knowledge both at home and in the other parts of the world by the best methods that should offer." In 1701 Bray founded the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (S.P.G.) "to provide the ministrations of the Church for British people overseas; and 2) to evangelize the non-Christian races subject to the Crown."

In 1780 the Deutsche Christentumsgesellschaft was founded in Basel for uniting Christians and preserving Christianity. Several other societies were soon organized in a number of German cities for similar purposes. These societies kept in touch with each other and circulated reports on the state of Christianity in their area. They looked upon Basel as their headquarters. Out of these societies for the preservation of Christianity grew the various German mission societies. For instance, in 1815 the Basel Mission Society was founded and began to send missionaries to Africa and America. The various mission societies were usually voluntary organizations operated independently of the established church. There was a high degree of involvement of the laity. These mission societies were often also unionistic.

William Carey and the Cause of Heathen Missions

Most historians credit William Carey (1761-1834) with being the spark that ignited the great mission century. Carey was born in humble circumstances and baptized an Anglican. As a youth he was an avid reader and was particularly fascinated by written accounts of the adventures of the explorers. When he was eighteen he became convinced of Baptist preaching and joined that denomination. Without formal training he soon became the pastor of a small Baptist congregation. A cobbler by trade, he supported himself for several years by making and repairing shoes at night, also running a school, and being a pastor of very small and poor Baptist congregations. He had an exceptional gift for languages and taught himself Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Dutch, and French.

Carey's concern for heathen mission was expressed in a pamphlet he published on May 12, 1792, entitled, "An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens." In the pamphlet Carey argued that modern navigation methods had now removed objections to mission work based on distance. He reasoned that the lack of civilization and other discomforts would be objections only to those who love ease. He downplayed the danger of being killed, claiming that most barbarities were probably the result of self-defense because of the indiscretions and recklessness of sailors. He suggested that procuring the necessities of life would be no problem if missionaries learned to subsist on the native food and did some

¹ This awakening embraced Lutheran and Reformed Pietism as well as the rise of Methodism.

gardening on their own. He also believed that most foreign languages could be learned in a year or two of diligent study.

A few weeks after publishing this pamphlet, Carey preached a sermon at a ministers' meeting in Nottingham that led to the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society. His text was Isaiah 54:2-3: "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. For you will spread out to the right and to the left; your descendants will dispossess nations and settle in their desolate cities." He implored the Baptists present at the meeting to look beyond their local community and nation and dare to undertake bolder programs. He castigated them for their lack of enthusiasm and vision. He declared, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God!" This motto has been associated with his name ever since. However, there was no immediate reaction to his sermon. The following morning during the business meeting Carey asked a friend, "Is nothing *again* going to be done?" Before the session was over, his friend, Andrew Fuller, proposed that a plan be prepared to form a Baptist Society for the propagating of the gospel among the heathen. With the adoption of that proposal the great mission century was under way.

Carey volunteered to be the first missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society. When he met Dr. John Thomas who had been in India as a naval surgeon for the East India Trading Company and had been privately involved in preaching the gospel to the natives there, Carey and the newly formed society decided to make India the choice for their mission venture. At first Carey's pregnant wife refused to go to India. He therefore determined to take his oldest son who was eight years old with him and return in three years for the rest of the family. Since the British East India Company had put a ban on all missionaries arriving in British ships, Carey and Thomas were put off the ship when their purpose was discovered. The two returned to Carey's house and Thomas talked Carey's wife, who had just delivered a new son, into coming along. They sailed again for India in 1793, but this time in a Danish ship.

The Carey family arrived in Bengal in November 1793. Carey eventually found employment running an indigo factory, which gave him time for his mission work since the indigo season was only three months long. In five years he translated the New Testament into Bengali and visited more than 200 villages. He patiently labored for several years before he could claim an Indian convert. When the indigo factory was closed in 1799, Carey moved to Serampore where some new missionaries sent out by the Baptist Missionary Society had been given refuge by the Danish rulers. Notable among the new arrivals were Missionary and Mrs. Joshua Marshman and Mr. William Ward, a printer. Carey, Ward, and Marshman became known as the "Serampore Trio." They supported themselves by founding schools. They took only a minimal amount of money for themselves and devoted all the rest to the mission. In 1801 they published the New Testament in Bengali on their own press. By 1809 Carey published a translation of the entire Bible into Bengali. Eventually he supervised the production of or personally translated six complete versions of the Bible and portions of the Bible into twenty-four other languages or dialects. In addition, he published grammars and dictionaries in Sanskrit, Marathi, Punjabi, and Telegu. When the British took over the Danish possession and founded Fort William College, Carey was asked to be a professor of Bengali, Sanskrit, and Marathi, a position he held for thirty years. Among his many other accomplishments Carey also founded the Agricultural Society of India.

Carey's mission methods still are practiced today. He made the translation of the Scriptures a high priority. He was convinced that work had to be done in the native languages. He made a careful study of the major religions of India and the culture and literature of the country so that he could understand the mind of the Indian. He also established schools for the training of the natives not only in Christianity and but in other useful subjects as well. Much of the mission interest in the nineteenth century can be traced directly to printed accounts of Carey's work in India.

The nineteenth century produced a number of notable missionaries in addition to Carey. Robert Moffat (1795-1883) became a renowned missionary in South Africa. Sent to Africa by the London Missionary Society, Moffat arrived in Cape Town in 1817. He began printing in Cape Town in 1830 and completed his translation of the Bible in 1857. Among his early converts was the Hottentot chief, Africaner. Moffat is also well known for convincing his future son-in-law David Livingstone (1813-1873) to come to Africa as a missionary. Moffat

continued his work in South Africa until 1870. Livingstone's medical work, educational efforts and explorations aroused much interest in mission work in both Great Britain and America.

The Second Great Awakening (ca. 1790-1840) did much to promote interest in foreign missions in the United States. In 1806 a group of "awakened" students at Williams College in Massachusetts took refuge in a haystack during a thunderstorm and determined to devote themselves to the cause of mission work. This so-called "Haystack Prayer Meeting" is often considered the beginning of American foreign mission efforts. The group formed the Society of Brethren in 1808 and took the motto, "We can do it if we will." They were joined by other students two years later at Andover Seminary and soon presented an appeal to the General Association of Congregational Ministers in Massachusetts to begin foreign mission work. The Congregationalists quickly acted on the request and formed the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions that same year. This board became the first foreign mission society in America and within ten years had sent out some eighty missionaries. Eventually the ABCFM sent missionaries to Hawaii, China, India, Sri Lanka, Japan, Southern Africa, Turkey, Syria, Europe, and Micronesia. Church periodicals regularly reported news of mission efforts and made regular appeals during the nineteenth century in America. Women's mission auxiliaries were formed to promote the cause of missions.

Samuel John Mills (1783-1818), one of the participants in the Haystack Prayer Meeting, not only took a leading role in founding the ABCFM, but also took an active part in the work of a number of other societies aimed at mission work and Bible distribution at home and abroad. He died on a return voyage from West Africa. He had undertaken the trip to Africa for the American Colonization Society to purchase land for the founding of Liberia as a homeland for freed American slaves.

Adoniram Judson (1788-1850), a friend of Mills at Andover Seminary, was among the first missionaries sent out by the ABCFM. On the long voyage to India he became a convinced Baptist. His conversion led to the founding of the American Baptist Missionary Union. In India he was advised to go to Burma. His mission work there, along with his sufferings and deprivations, made him a legend in America and roused much interest in mission work. He succeeded in translating the Bible into Burmese and produced a Burmese dictionary. At his death he left a thriving church which continues to this day.

The first Lutheran foreign missionary sent out from the United States was Johann Christian Friedrich "Father" Heyer (1793-1873). He was born in Helmstedt, Germany, but his parents sent him to live with an uncle in America in 1807 to escape the militarization in Europe during the Napoleonic Wars. Heyer served as a frontier missionary in the Mississippi Valley before being sent by the Pennsylvania Ministerium to India in 1842. He returned to America in 1845, partly because of lack of support from those in America who had sent him out. After earning a medical degree he returned to India, serving as a missionary from 1848 to 1857. Returning to America at the age of sixty-four, he journeyed to the frontier in Minnesota to do mission work and within a few years helped to found the Minnesota Synod. At the age of seventy-six he volunteered to return to India because of problems that had developed on the mission field. Returning to America after three years' service, he ended his remarkable career by serving as a chaplain and housefather at Luther Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

Bible Societies

One of the noteworthy achievements of the great mission era is the founding of Bible Societies for the translation of the Bible into the language of common people throughout the world. An essay by Joseph Hughes entitled, "The Excellence of the Holy Scriptures, an Argument for their More General Dispersion at Home and Abroad," led to the formation of the British and Foreign Bible Society in 1804. Other Bible societies quickly sprang up throughout the Western world. In 1946 the major Bible societies around the world formed a cooperative organization called the United Bible Societies which has sponsored and overseen the work of Bible translation in many countries. The Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., founded in 1934, has also taken a leading role in the translation of Scripture into many languages and dialects that had previously lacked a version of the

Bible. The work of missionaries and linguists was so productive in the twentieth century that more languages received a translation of the Scriptures during the past century than in the previous 1,900 years combined.

Decline and Advance

Many of the mainline denominations in America that were major participants in the world mission enterprise in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sent out fewer and fewer missionaries as the twentieth century progressed. As the spirit of religious liberalism began to dominate in the mainline denominations there was more and more focus on the here and now and less on the life to come. In many denominations the social gospel² to a great extent replaced the Christian gospel. Liberalism also took the heart out of Christianity, through the denial of our Savior's virgin birth, physical resurrection, and vicarious atonement. During the twentieth century universalism in one form or another began to dominate religious thought with the result that many no longer saw the Christian proclamation of salvation by faith alone in Christ alone as necessary. Modern minds have generally rejected any thought of eternal punishment for unbelievers. This spirit came to the fore as early as 1932.

Rethinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years (1932)

William Ernst Hocking (1873-1966) was the chairman of the Commission of Appraisal of the Laymen's Foreign Missions which was sent to visit American Protestant missions in India, Burma, China, and Japan in 1931 to evaluate a century of mission effort. Hocking served as the editor of the report issued by the commission in 1932 entitled, *Rethinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years*. The report was quite controversial when it was published, particularly its "General Principles" section which Hocking wrote. *Rethinking Missions* was quite critical of Protestant foreign mission efforts during the previous century. Hocking and his commission contended that the following principles should guide all future mission work:

First, missions ought to emphasize social effort, through medicine and other techniques, apart from evangelism. Second, missionaries should seek to link their faith with whatever common features they find in non-Christian religions. The aim ought to be cooperation rather than conversion. Third, there ought to be greater unity in missionary activity both between missions and with members of other religions. The ultimate goal ought to be an international fellowship in which each religion would find its appropriate place.³

In spite of the initial outcry, Hockings' principles have dominated much of the mission thought of mainline denominations ever since.

As mainline denominations relinquished their role in Christian mission work, evangelical groups and conservative denominations have taken over. Foreign mission work has increased with notable numerical success. Growth has been particularly significant in Africa and Asia. It has been estimated that the number of Christians in Africa has grown from nine million in 1900 to 310 million in 1997. During that same period of time the number of Christians in Asia increased from twenty million to 299 million. Some scholars now claim that there are more Christians in both Africa and Asia than there are in North America. In an ironic turn, Christians in third-world countries are now sending missionaries to the United States.

The Billy Graham Association has sponsored a number of conferences on evangelism that have become world-wide in scope. Conferences in Berlin (1966) and Lausanne (1973) have been repeated at regular intervals in other cities. The latest was held in Amsterdam in 2000. Participants have pledged themselves to many of the fundamental teachings of historical Christianity while tolerating disagreement in other doctrines. Practical

² The social gospel is the teaching that the church's responsibility is to improve conditions on earth by changing the social order and structures of society through mass or group action.

³ *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, edited by Daniel G. Reid, et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990) p. 536.

discussions have aimed at discovering the best ways to reach the heathen and the unchurched. A strong emphasis has been laid on evangelism across cultures and partnership between western churches and the "young" churches elsewhere in the world.

Our Wisconsin Synod's mission efforts have also seen numerical success. The establishment of the Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Conference (CELC) in 1993 has been a special blessing of God. Daughter churches of WELS and the ELS are united in partnership with WELS, the ELS, and other sister churches. Unlike conferences sponsored by Billy Graham and others the CELC is built on full agreement in doctrine and practice.

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, the past two centuries have in many ways been the best of times and the worst of times for the visible church. It has been the worst of times as many denominations have turned their backs on the basics of Christianity. But it has been the best of times in terms of mission expansion into all the world.

14. The Edinburgh Meeting of 1910 - The Ecumenical Movement⁴

Background

The early Christian church was rather consistent in the application of scriptural fellowship principles. Orthodox Christians excluded false teachers from their fellowship. The first ecumenical councils condemned and excluded those who taught false doctrine. Unfortunately, the orthodox also often subjected those they condemned to physical persecution.

At the time of the Reformation Philip of Hesse attempted to bring together the Swiss and German Reformation to present a united front over against Rome. Although Luther and Zwingli agreed on fourteen of the fifteen Marburg Articles, Luther refused him fellowship because of disagreement on the doctrine of the real presence.

As the Thirty Years War was coming to a close in Europe, many people began to tire of the religious conflicts. In 1645 King Ladislaus IV of Poland tried to bring about a reconciliation of the Reformed, Lutherans, and Catholics. His efforts resulted in the Thorn Colloquy. George Callixtus (1586-1656) attempted to attend the colloquy as a Lutheran representative, but was refused because (among other things) he rejected the Formula of Concord. He therefore attended as a member of the Reformed delegation. Callixtus believed that all Christians could come together on the basis of the *consensus quinquaesecularis* (the doctrinal consensus of the first five centuries). Later on he zeroed in on the Apostles Creed as containing all fundamental articles of faith on which Christians need to agree. Callixtus, his son, and followers were opposed by the able Lutheran theologian Abraham Calov (1612-1686) and others in the three phases of the Syncretistic Controversy which followed the Thorn Conference. This controversy kept Lutherans and Reformed in Germany apart for more than a century.

In the early nineteenth century Frederick William III (1770-1840), ruler of Prussia and a Calvinist, was distressed because he could not commune with his Lutheran wife and the majority of his subjects. In 1817 he issued a decree that the Lutherans and Reformed would be united into one evangelical congregation at his court and among the military in Potsdam. The issuing of this decree during the 300th anniversary of the Reformation was one of the factors in Claus Harms' (1778-1855) decision to publish an edition of Luther's "Ninety-five Theses" together with ninety-five theses of his own. Harms directed his theses against rationalism, negative criticism, the ideas of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and the Prussian Union. He protested, "If at the colloquy at Marburg, 1529, the body and blood of Christ were in the bread and wine, it is still so today." He asked, "Which fell away from the faith of their church, the Lutherans or the Reformed? Or both?" He warned, "As a poor maiden the Lutheran Church is now to be made rich by being married. Do not perform the ceremony over Luther's bones. They will become alive at it, and then-woe to you!"⁵

⁴ The modern Ecumenical Movement is the attempt to unite outwardly all Christian churches without regard to agreement in doctrine and practice.

⁵ An English translation of Harms' 95 Theses is printed in the 1899 edition of the *Lutheran Cyclopedia*.

Harms' warning from outside of Prussian territory did little to dissuade Frederick William from his plan. In 1821 candidates for the ministry were required to pledge loyalty to the Prussian Union and in 1822 Frederick William published his Union Agenda to be used in worship by all of the churches in his realm. By 1830 he insisted that "Evangelical" be substituted for "Lutheran" and "Reformed." The forced Prussian Union caused many confessional Lutherans to emigrate to America and Australia.

Since America has been religiously pluralistic from colonial times, the trend among Protestants has been to downplay the doctrines which divide them. In 1747 Jonathan Edwards expressed the postmillennial hope for Christian unity to promote mission work and the advancement of the kingdom of God on earth in his *Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People in Extraordinary Prayer for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth Pursuant to Scriptural Promises and Prophecies Concerning the Last Time*. Revivalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tended to break down denominational barriers as common religious experience became more important than agreement in doctrine. Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799-1873) attempted to bring Lutherans in America in line with the generic sort of Protestantism that had developed in this country with his "Definite Synodical Platform" containing his "American Recension of the Augsburg Confession." The vast majority of Lutherans in America rejected Schmucker's "Platform" because of the growing confessional consciousness in America during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910

Although there were many precursors to the modern ecumenical movement, the cause of world missions was the catalyst for its development in the early twentieth century. Many Protestants were disturbed by the denominational competition on the mission fields and the duplication of mission efforts. They believed that Christian missionaries needed to present a united front in pagan societies if mission work was to prosper. By the mid-nineteenth century conferences were being held to coordinate world mission efforts and to promote a spirit of cooperation.

The most significant of the missionary conferences was held in Edinburgh in 1910. Most historians consider this meeting to be the birth of the modern ecumenical movement. The chief organizer of the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh was the American Methodist layman, John R. Mott (1865-1955). Mott was a founder of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions in 1886. In 1888 he became chairman of the committee which made the Student Volunteer Movement the mission arm of the YMCA and YWCA. This organization became associated with Mott's motto, "The evangelization of the world in this generation."

The Edinburgh Conference was significant for a number of reasons. More than 1,200 delegates were present, representing not only Western evangelical denominations, but also Anglo-Catholics from the Church of England, and seventeen delegates from mission churches daughtered in the previous century of mission work. Delegates represented some 160 different mission boards or societies. Those in attendance debated eight separate themes or subjects, for each of which there was a volume of published reports. Among the themes considered were the work of taking the gospel to the entire non-Christian world, the message of Christian missions in relation to non-Christian faiths, the relation of missions and governments, and the promotion of Christian unity. The conference was not merely a debating society, but made provisions for its work to continue. The Continuation Committee that was appointed saw to it that subsequent conferences were held in Asia. The committee also inaugurated the scholarly publication, *The International Review of Missions*, and founded the International Missionary Council.

From the Edinburgh Conference also emerged two movements that eventually resulted in the founding of the World Council of Churches. The Faith and Order movement was promoted by the American Episcopalian bishop, Charles H. Brent (1862-1929). The purpose of this organization was to bring together representatives of various denominations to discuss the doctrines and issues that had historically divided them. Major conferences were held in Lausanne in 1927 and Edinburgh in 1937. The second organization, Life and Work, was the brainchild of the Swedish Lutheran bishop, Nathan Soderblom (1866-1931). The aim of Life and Work was to

discuss ways that Christians could join forces in bringing the Christian principles to bear on various social, economic, political, and educational problems in the world at large. Universal Christian Conferences on Life and Work were held in Stockholm in 1925 and Oxford in 1937.

The 1937 conference of Faith and Order in Edinburgh and the 1937 conference of Life and Work resulted in a committee appointed to produce a constitution for a World Council of Churches. In 1938 a constitution was drawn up and a provisional organization, The World Council of Churches in Process of Formation, was established. After the interruptions of World War II, the committee's work resulted in the formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948. In 1961 the council described itself as the "fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit." In 1948 the council numbered 144 member churches. Today there are 342 member churches in over 120 countries, including most major western Protestant denominations, most Eastern Orthodox churches, and many third-world churches. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member, but since 1961 it has sent observers to the various assemblies. In 1968 Rome became a full member of the Faith and Order Commission. The World Council of Churches continues to foster not only ecumenical discussions between Christian churches, but also interfaith discussions with major non-Christian religions. Some in the West have treated the WCC with suspicion. Before the fall of the Iron Curtain concern was frequently expressed that the policies of the World Council of Churches had been co-opted by churches under communist control.

In America the Federal Council of Churches was founded in 1908 by several Protestant denominations and was an active participant in the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. In 1950 the Federal Council of Churches merged with thirteen other interdenominational agencies to form the National Council of Churches. The National Association of Evangelicals was founded in 1942 as a conservative alternative and balance to the liberal Federal Council of Churches. Membership in the NAE is based on a seven point doctrinal statement emphasizing agreement in fundamentals while ignoring other doctrinal differences among member churches.

Consultation on Church Union (COCU)

The spirit of the ecumenical age can be seen in the movement known as the Consultation on Church Union. The COCU was begun as an attempt by several mainline American churches to bring about a united church. There are currently nine denominations participating in the movement: the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Church, the International Council of Community Churches, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church.

The first plenary meeting of the COCU was held in Washington, D.C. in 1962. Meetings eventually produced *Principles of Church Union* (1966), a consensus statement on Scripture and tradition; the threefold ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons; the faith of the church and the sacraments. Later meetings have produced ecumenical liturgies and a theological text, *The COCU Consensus* (1984). In recent years the COCU has been concentrating on regular expressions of fellowship, recognizing each other's members and ministers, joint mission and evangelism efforts, and participation in local, regional, and national councils, rather than a formal merger of existing ecclesiastical organizations.

In spite of all of the ecumenical efforts there have been only two notable multi-denominational mergers in North America. The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 by the union of the Methodist Church of Canada, the Congregational Union of Canada, the Council of Local Union Churches, and about two thirds of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. In 1957 the United Church of Christ was formed in the United States by the merger of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church (itself a merger of the Evangelical Synod of North America and the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States).

More common have been ecumenical agreements aimed at achieving "full communion" rather than outward merger. The ELCA has been involved in reaching such compromise agreements with the Roman Catholic Church as well as the Reformed, the Episcopalians, and the Moravians.

As ecumenical agreements have been reached and fellowship or full communion has been established between disparate groups, doctrinal integrity has become the victim. Doctrinal relativism and antipathy to doctrine have become the order of the day. The trend in many denominations has been toward universalism of one kind or another. As the spirit of universalism and doctrinal relativism has increased, mainline denominations have experienced membership loss. Denominational leaders have had to contend with trying to maintain some kind of denominational identity and denominational loyalty while implying in their ecumenical statements that one denomination is as good as another. In recent years the ecumenically minded have suggested that each "tradition" has a contribution to make to the church as a whole.

15. The Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements

Few movements in all church history have advanced so quickly (both numerically and geographically) as have the Pentecostal and the Charismatic Movements. Pentecostalism has been called the "third force" in Christendom alongside Protestantism and Roman Catholicism or a "fourth strand" of Christianity after Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. It is a movement that cannot be ignored.

Background

Pentecostalism has its roots in the theology of John Wesley (1703-1791) and Methodism. John Wesley rejected strict Calvinism for Arminian theology that emphasized universal atonement and human responsibility in conversion. Looking for certainty of salvation Methodism began to stress a crisis conversion experience. The experience of conversion or "sure salvation" (the sinner must feel in his own consciousness the certainty of his salvation) was a hallmark of Methodism and Methodistic revivalism. This is the reason for the emotional fervor of revivals as revivalists seek to lead their hearers to a crisis experience, a feeling which they believe is the testimony of the Holy Spirit that they are children of God.

Wesley's stress on sanctification and the "perfected" man led to the belief that a Christian can reach a point in this life in which he no longer sins consciously. This Christian perfection was a second work of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion and justification. According to Wesley, receiving forgiveness and receiving a new heart take place at two different times.

During the revival fires of the Second Awakening Charles Grandison Finney (1792-1875) developed and employed specific methods designed to bring people to a crisis conversion experience. He also taught that there was an experience subsequent to conversion called "baptism of the Holy Ghost" that was necessary for success in the pulpit and society. The revivals of the Second Awakening often produced bizarre manifestations which were thought to be evidence of the working of the Holy Spirit. These manifestations included being slain in the spirit (fainting), barking like a dog and treeing the devil, the jerks (a rapid snapping of the head), holy laughter, and speaking in tongues.

After the Civil War when the fires of the Second Awakening had died down, many people became concerned that their churches had become too institutionalized and had lost their former fire and vigor. This was particularly true of many Methodists. They missed the camp meetings and the old Methodistic spirit and did not particularly like what they saw as innovations, things like seminary-trained ministers, robed choirs, and organs in worship. The Holiness Movement developed as a response to what was perceived as a loss of the original spirit of Methodism. Several holiness denominations grew out of this movement.⁶ There is a direct historic and theological link between the Holiness Movement and the Pentecostal Movement.

⁶ Among the better known holiness churches are the Church of the Nazarene, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), and the Wesleyan Church (a result of the 1968 merger of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America with the Pilgrim Holiness Church). These denominations by and large reject the practice of glossolalia.

The Spark That Ignited the Pentecostal Explosion

In 1900 Charles Fox Parham (1873-1929) established Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas. Parham asked his students to search the Scriptures to discover what *the* evidence of the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" was. He saw this "Spirit baptism" as a third grace of the Spirit after conversion and entire sanctification. His students determined that *glossolalia* or speaking in tongues was invariably the evidence of Spirit baptism. On December 31, 1900, Parham held an all night vigil with his students. During the vigil one of Parham's students, Agnes N. Ozman (1870-1937) asked Parham to lay his hands on her and pray so that she might receive Spirit baptism. Early on the morning of January 1, 1901, Ozman began speaking in tongues. Those present believed she was speaking Chinese and claimed that a halo seemed to surround her face. For three days she was unable to speak English and could only write what was described as Chinese characters. The other students as well as Parham sought and received the same experience and began to promote it.

Azusa Street Revival

A few years later Parham began another school in Houston, Texas. One of his students was Willaim J. Seymour (1870-1922), a young black Baptist preacher, who had become convinced of entire sanctification as proclaimed by the Holiness Movement. Seymour learned of the "third experience of the Spirit" from Parham and sought and received Spirit baptism. After moving to Los Angeles Seymour secured an abandoned Methodist Church at 312 Azusa Street in the warehouse district of the city. In April 1906 a three-year revival began under Seymour's leadership that gained national and international attention and spawned the Pentecostal Movement. A Pentecostal historian describes what took place in that little church.

A visitor to Azusa Street during the three years that the revival continued would have met scenes that beggared description. Men and women would shout, weep, dance, fall into trances, speak and sing in tongues, and interpret the message into English. In true Quaker fashion, anyone who felt "moved by the Spirit" would preach or sing. There was no robed choir, no hymnals, no order of services, but there was an abundance of religious enthusiasm. In the middle of it all was "Elder" Seymour, who rarely preached and much of the time kept his head covered in an empty shoebox behind the pulpit. At times he would be seen walking through crowds with five- and ten-dollar bills sticking out of his hip pockets which people had crammed there unnoticed by him. At other times he would "preach" by hurling defiance at anyone who did not accept his views or by encouraging seekers at the wood-plank altars to "let the tongues come forth." To others he would exclaim: "Be emphatic! Ask for salvation, sanctification, the baptism with the Holy Spirit, or divine healing." . . . Sounds of shouting and rejoicing echoed over the lumberyards, stables, and tombstone shops that surrounded the mission. As the meetings continued week after week, more and more people began to attend, until by the summer of 1906 people of every race and nationality in the Los Angeles area were mingling in the crowds that pressed into the mission from the street. There was no racial prejudice in the services. Negroes, whites, Chinese and even Jews attended side by side to hear Seymour preach. Eventually what began as a local revival in a Negro church became of interest to people all over the nation, regardless of race...As the Azusa revival continued, hundreds and later thousands of both the curious and the serious began to flock to the mission. Every day trains unloaded numbers of visitors who came from all over the continent. News accounts of the meeting spread over the nation in both the secular and the religious press. The most interested observers were the members of the holiness movements around the country.⁷

Some twenty-six Pentecostal church bodies trace their origins directly to the Azusa Street Revival. During the years that followed Pentecostalism spread even further through the efforts of itinerant revivalists and faith healers.

⁷ Vinson Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Movement in the United States*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971) pp. 108-109.

Pentecostal teaching is often summarized as the four square gospel, the proclamation of Jesus as Savior, Baptizer, Healer, and Coming King. Those who use this summary of their faith explain that they teach salvation by faith in Jesus, emphasize "Spirit baptism" with subsequent charismatic gifts, stress the availability of divine healing of illnesses, and believe in the imminent return and subsequent millennial reign of Jesus. Most Pentecostals are relatively conservative in regard to the fundamental teachings of Christianity. Some Pentecostals, however, have rejected the doctrine of the Trinity. These "Oneness" or non-Trinitarian Pentecostals practice baptism in the name of Jesus only. All have made Christianity anthropocentric by placing their main emphasis on inner experience, subjective feelings, and what Christ does in them rather than for them.

The Charismatic Movement

For several decades Pentecostalism lacked respectability in mainstream America. Flamboyant preachers, displays of emotional excesses in worship, and questionable claims of miraculous healings gave the movement an unsavory reputation. In the early 1950s, however, Pentecostals began receiving a hearing from mainstream America. The Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI), founded by Demos Shakarian and Oral Roberts, brought together mainline clergy and laity with Pentecostal businessmen. Through this organization the popular and unsavory image of Pentecostalism began to change. By 1960 an Assemblies of God minister had been elected chairman of the National Association of Evangelicals.

In 1959 Dennis Bennett, a rector of St Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California, received baptism in the Spirit and began speaking in tongues. This event is usually considered the beginning of the modern Charismatic Movement. The Charismatic Movement entails the spread of Pentecostal practices into non-Pentecostal denominations. The movement has advanced rapidly. Members can be found in most mainline denominations in America. Larry Christenson and the Lutheran Charismatic Renewal Services, headquartered in Minneapolis, have done much to promote it in certain Lutheran circles. The Charismatic Movement has also infiltrated Roman Catholicism. The movement among Catholics began at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh in 1967 when a number of students on a weekend retreat received "Spirit baptism." In June 1967 the first National Catholic Pentecostal Conference was held at Notre Dame University with just under one hundred students, priests, and faculty members participating. Seven years later more than 35,000 gathered for the eighth international conference. Catholic Charismatic Renewal has become an international movement and has received the official endorsement of the Roman Catholic Church.

It has been estimated that some 500 million Christians today or one quarter of all Christians on earth can be identified as Pentecostal or Charismatic. Growth of the Pentecostal/Charismatic Movement has been particularly significant in Latin America, Africa, and parts of Asia. The movement has helped change the historic emphasis on doctrine within the Christian Church to an emphasis on inner experience. The triumphalism of the movement has proven to be a temptation for many in older Christian denominations. Its influence will have to continue to be reckoned with in the future.

16. Vatican II

Background

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Roman Catholic Church took a strong stand against modernism and religious liberalism. More than one papal encyclical condemned Darwinism, negative criticism leading to the denial of historic Catholic teachings, political movements aimed at democracy, and other modern tendencies. The declaration of papal infallibility at Vatican I (1870) was in many ways a defensive response to the rapid changes taking place in the modern world. An infallible pope could act quickly and decisively to preserve the Catholic Church.

After World War II a new spirit began to emerge among Catholics that was more open to change and the use of critical approaches to Scripture. Already in 1943 in his encyclical "Divino Afflante Spiritu" Pope Pius

XII (pope 1939-58) opened the door to a more liberal approach to biblical criticism. In 1947 he expressed sympathy with the desire for the use of the vernacular in worship.

When Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (1881-1963) was elected pope in 1958 and took the name John XXIII, nearly everyone considered him to be a caretaker pope because of his age. His reign was expected to be uneventful. In calling the Second Vatican Council John XXIII opened the way for changes that sent the Catholic world reeling. Catholicism is still trying to deal with all the developments resulting from the spirit and decisions of Vatican II.

Vatican II

After his election John XXIII went to work quickly. In 1959 he proposed a diocesan synod for Rome, an ecumenical council for the church, and a revision of the code of canon law. He claimed that the idea for an ecumenical council came from a sudden inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Unlike previous ecumenical councils which were usually called to deal with heresy and to define doctrine, Vatican II was intended to be pastoral. The council was meant to renew the religious life of the Catholic Church and its purpose was described as *aggiornamento*, bringing the church up to date. Ultimately the council was intended to work toward the goal of unity of all Christians. In line with the spirit of the council John XXIII invited many non-Catholic observers to attend.

The council produced sixteen documents during four sessions from October 1962 to December 1965. Between the first two sessions, in June 1963, John XXIII died. Paul VI (1897-1978) was elected in his place and resolved to continue the council until its work was completed. Vatican II produced four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations. Much traditional Catholicism was reaffirmed. Papal infallibility, the role of tradition, purgatory, the sacrifice of the mass, and the Catholic Church as the only way of salvation were reaffirmed. The veneration of Mary was encouraged. At the same time there were some new developments. Protestants and other Christians were referred to as "separated brethren." Dialogue with other faiths was proposed. Translation and reading of the Bible was encouraged. Religious freedom for all was affirmed. The laity were recognized as spiritual priests and the mass was required to be in the vernacular with the laity participating. Regrets were expressed for the events and excommunications that led to the schism of 1054 between the Eastern and Western Church. Whereas Vatican I had declared the pope infallible when speaking *ex cathedra*, Vatican II now emphasized the collegiality of pontiff and bishops in the oversight of the church.

Perhaps the most visible change in Catholicism following the council was the rapid liturgical change. Very quickly the Latin mass was replaced with the vernacular amid all kinds of liturgical experimentation and innovation. Laymen who previously had watched the mass being performed for them were now participating. Different styles of music were introduced. Many parishes began offering communion under both kinds on a regular basis. Laymen and women soon were serving as catechists, lectors, parish administrators, and assistants in the distribution of communion.

Many lifelong Catholics were not properly prepared for what seemed to them to be radical changes. Almost overnight the old and familiar, the treasured and sacred had been done away with. In some congregations radical priests greeted the faithful with performances of *Jesus Christ, Superstar* when they came to worship. Attendance at mass and confession dropped off significantly as many Catholics were put off by the rapid changes and young people drifted from the church of their youth in spite of the changes. There seemed to be little of substance to hold them during the rebellious decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

As the laity were given a greater role in the church, the numbers of priests and nuns in the Western world in general and the United States in particular dropped dramatically. Thousands left the priesthood and few replacements presented themselves to be trained at Catholic seminaries. It seemed to many of the priests that the reforms of Vatican II had not gone far enough. Celibacy was still required. Many, no doubt, wondered why they needed to go through the hardships of religious orders when laymen were being allowed to do many things that had previously been the responsibility of priests. Advertising campaigns to encourage males for the

priesthood have not as yet begun to fill Catholic seminaries with students to replenish the steadily shrinking pool of priests.

Laymen have also expressed frustration even though they have been given greater responsibilities. They still often are given little say in decisions to combine or close parishes or schools. Bishops still have the authority to act autocratically.

The Decree on Ecumenism has opened up Roman Catholicism to a number of ecumenical discussions, agreements, joint worship, and joint work. Since 1965 the Roman Church has been involved in a Joint Working Group with the World Council of Churches to discuss issues and questions affecting both groups. In 1968 Rome became a full member of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission and created a joint secretariat to link the WCC with Rome's Pontifical Commission on Justice and Peace. Paul VI also established a number of Post-Conciliar Commissions to put into effect the wishes of the council and confirmed the permanent Secretariats for the Promotion of Christian Unity, for Non-Christian Religions, and for Non-Believers.

Because of the openness proclaimed by the council many Catholic laymen, priests, bishops, and theologians have since felt free to disagree vocally and publicly with the pope and the Catholic hierarchy. American and Dutch Catholics have been particularly outspoken. Many believe that Vatican II did not go far enough in reform and change. Feminists want to do away with the patriarchal hierarchy and are campaigning for the ordination of women. Educators and theologians claim academic freedom to push the theological envelope and enter uncharted waters.

Paul VI, John Paul II, and conservatives in the Catholic hierarchy have made a number of efforts to corral radicals and put limits on change. As early as 1968 Paul VI lamented the spirit of self-criticism leading to self-destruction that had entered the church since the council closed. In 1972 he declared that the smoke of Satan had somehow entered the temple of God. Some well-known theologians like Hans Kueng who have dared to challenge the infallible authority of the pope have been disciplined. Early in his pontificate John Paul II warned Latin American clergy and monks about Liberation Theology, indicating that politics was the business of the laity. The recently published *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is a conservative attempt to define and preserve Catholic orthodoxy. The special indulgence John Paul II has proclaimed as part of the "Great Jubilee Year 2000" is evidence that little has changed in Rome since Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses against indulgences in 1517. This indulgence was a plenary (full, not partial remission) indulgence for Catholics doing penance during the celebration of the third millennium of Christianity. According to the proclamation, "the Jubilee indulgence can also be applied in suffrage to the souls of the deceased."

The pendulum in some quarters of Catholicism seems to be swinging away from the radicalism and liberalism that followed Vatican II toward a more conservative stance. Published reports indicate that Catholic seminarians and new priests are much more conservative than their counterparts of a generation ago. Movements like the Neo-Catechumenal Way⁸ emphasize a deeper and more thorough catechetical instruction of Catholics in reaction to the secularization of modern society, the decline in personal devotion and church attendance among Catholics, and detachment from the Catholic faith. There have also been some successes for Rome. In many ways recent ecumenical agreements have been victories for traditional Catholicism. Some see the interfaith dialogs and Rome's participation in the Ecumenical Movement as a way to help "separated brethren" return to the papal fold.

In the wake of Vatican II many problems remain for Roman Catholicism. The severe shortage of priests and nuns continues. Rome still needs to solve the theological problem caused by Vatican II's reaffirmation of the Catholic doctrine that there is no salvation apart from the Roman Church, the recognition of Protestants as separated brethren, and the claim that adherents of heathen religions ("anonymous Christians" as Karl Rahner calls them) may be saved. Many Catholics are still pushing for the ordination of women and the marriage of priests. Some want to limit the authority of the hierarchy and give a greater role to the laity. Some want to legitimize homosexuality. A confusing doctrinal pluralism pervades the Roman Catholic Church in spite of efforts to promote Catholic orthodoxy.

⁸ See Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, vol. 95 #4 (Fall 1998) p. 297-298

John XXIII called Vatican II for the purpose of *aggiornamento*, letting in some fresh air and bringing the church up to date. That "fresh air" has greatly affected Roman Catholicism in the second half of the twentieth century and by all appearances will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

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