

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NY
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“THY KINGDOM COME: THE WITNESS OF CHURCH HISTORY”

THE MODERN AGE: “Revival, Revolution, and to the Ends of the Earth” (6)

V. The Church Becomes a Worldwide Movement

A. Christian Witness in Africa and Asia cont.

3. Africa cont. – Muslim rule and the Ottoman Empire had for centuries inhibited European influence in Africa. The only sizeable Christian witness was found in Abyssinia (Ethiopia) with its ancient Coptic Church. But with European exploration, by the end of the 19th century (1899) Africa had been carved up by the European powers – principally Great Britain, Germany, and France, and to a lesser extent Portugal, Italy, and Belgium. Scottish missionary and explorer, Dr. David Livingstone’s travels and writings did much to arouse Christian missionary interest in Africa fifty years earlier, so that by the beginning of 1914 (start of World War 1) there were Protestant and Roman Catholics throughout the African continent. Soon indigenous African Christians took leadership roles in the various churches. It was a slow goal to break free from the colonial relationship that inherently upheld white leadership. However, with the independence of many African nations, black Christian leadership took root. In fact, the majority of the political leaders and business leaders had been educated in church schools, most in Anglican schools. Protestant missionaries that had worked in rural areas enabled new churches to be planted and more indigenous forms of the Christian faith to grow. In Kenya, for example, the Christian population went from less than 10 percent prior to World War 2 to over 60 percent 60 years later in 2000. Revivals in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) as well as in Nigeria and southern Sudan also saw not only great growth especially in Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches, but a counter to the spread of Islam. An ongoing source of conflict has been the desire of Muslims to establish Islamic or *Sharia* law in a number of African nations. However, It has been due to the opposition of the wider Christian Church that such attempts have been stifled or thwarted. In South Africa, the Church played a large role in the ending of apartheid and promoting reconciliation between whites and blacks in that region. Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu, Reformed Allan Boesak, and Methodist Nelson Mandela all were influenced by their Christian faith in their struggle to end white minority rule. When one looks at how the Kingdom of God has helped transform Africa for good, one can point to the decline of human sacrifice and witchcraft, the end of tribal and state sponsored slavery, colonial subservience, and abuse, and resistance to the expansion of fundamentalist Islam.

4. India

a. the early work of Baptist William Carrey inspired other Protestant missionaries to reach India during the 19th century. So, too the Roman Catholic Church worked to expand its reach at the same time. Both tried to connect with the small ancient Indian Church that had been there since the time of the Apostle Thomas, the apostle thought to have taken to the gospel to India during the generation of the early church in the first century. Each group grew in number and even a new Protestant Church, the *Church of Mar Thoma* was established. Great growth occurred in the lower castes and many in the upper classes combined Hindu contemplation with Christian faith without joining a church. With Independence from Great Britain in 1946, it provided an opportunity for Indian church leaders to work together. Earlier in 1901, the Reformed and Congregationalists combined to form the United Church of South India and in 1947 they joined with Methodists and Anglicans to form

the Church of South India. It was the first example of Christians denominations coming together for the sake of mission in the non European world. In some ways they echoed William Carey's original call to have a worldwide missionary conference in Cape Town, South Africa, a conference that did not take place until 1910 in Edinburgh, Scotland. Soon the Church of North India was established. In the later half of the 20th century Charismatic Christianity spread across India. However, with 1.4 billion people, it is estimated that only 2-3% are Christian. When one looks at Kingdom of God impact, however, one can't help noting how the Church helped curtail abuse based on the Hindu caste system, the burning of widows on their husband's funeral pyres and the mistreatment of women, and the instrumental influence on the Indian educational system. Despite a revival of radical Hinduism, the Church's witness in India remains strong in key areas but with so many entrenched in Hindu religion, the need for gospel transformation remains great.

b. Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929) – born into a high-caste Sikh family in northern India, his mother sent him to a Christian mission school to learn English. After her death, an angry Sadhu turned against Christians and burned Bibles. He soon became suicidal and prayed for vision, expecting Krishna, Buddha, or a Hindu avatar. When Jesus appeared to him, he told his family, who expelled him and poisoned him. Saved by Christians, he was baptized at age sixteen. He later began wearing the robe of a Hindu ascetic and traveled from village to village spreading the gospel often violently opposed. He taught that the Christian faith is not a foreign religion, but that Jesus actually speaks to and reflects Asian needs and hopes. Barefoot he travelled to Tibet, to Afghanistan, and eventually all over the world. He was known for healing and other miraculous gifts, but never allowed them to be publicized.

5. China – the gospel can't be stopped!

a. growth of the Chinese Church began steadily with through the work of Judson Taylor and others. Many thousands came to Christ but due to the European powers influence in China when there was a backlash against European and American interests in what was called the Boxer Rebellion in 1901, many Chinese were martyred for the faith. After the Boxer Rebellion was put down, Protestant missionaries continued to come until there were about 6000 in the country. As a result thousands of pastors and church leaders were trained. The Roman Catholic Church also made inroads so that by 1926 it had consecrated the first six native Chinese bishops. With such success, some anticipated that there would be mass conversions that would dwarf the conversion of Constantine and the Roman Empire! But then World War 2 began. Between the Japanese conquest and brutality and the rise of Mao Tse Tung and the rise of Chinese Communist party, the Church would face its greatest test. In 1950, the communist government instituted requirements that would force Christians to submit to the party over the Church. Many resisted and in response, the government, claiming there were too many churches, implemented a "consolidation" plan that closed down many churches and confiscated church property. During the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s, things got worse. All churches were closed. And yet many still met in secret, in private homes. By the 1970s, due to the failings of the Cultural Revolution, tension with the Soviet Union and economic stagnation, the government allowed more freedom for Christians. To everyone's surprise the Church in China had continued to grow! Whereas there had been 5 million believers in 1900, by 1980 there were 50 million. Churches became filled with new worshippers, seminaries opened, and by 2000 there were a limited number of foreign church workers allowed into the country as well as Chinese Church leaders travelling to ecumenical meetings abroad. Some estimates figured the total number of believers in China reached 150-200 million. Recently, however, the Communist Party again has cracked down on the Church. In 2015, under the leadership President Xi Jinping, the communist government instituted a ban on visible crosses on church structures and has had a number of churches torn down. Xi Jinping insists on his citizens to listen to his special audio messages every day. He is an autocrat of the worst kind, and the

people of China are suffering as a result. Regardless, the Kingdom of God won't be stopped. God's people will continue to worship and to the work of the gospel, bearing witness to the truth and love of Christ.

b. Dora Yu (1873-1931) - was a young medical student in Suzhou, China who experienced spiritual darkness for several weeks. She wrote, *"I seem to be standing at the edge of hell and may be pushed in at any time."* A sense of guilt and conviction plagued her despite her fervent prayers for forgiveness. Finally, she experienced a breakthrough: *"I was filled with the love of God himself. Those old feelings of conviction and fear suddenly disappeared without a trace."* After finishing her medical degree she left China to preach the gospel in Korea to Korean women. In 1904 she gave up her medical profession and devoted herself to full-time ministry in China and became the first missionary not to rely on support from churches in Europe or North America. As she shared the gospel in the southern provinces thousands came to Christ including Watchman Nee, who became one of the most influential Chinese leaders of the *Local Church Movement*. She also established a Bible school in Shanghai.

B. The Rise of Pentecostalism

1. From Topeka to Azusa Street – In 1900 an evangelist names **Charles Fox Parham** founded a Bible institute in Topeka, Kansas. Parham taught his students that "speaking with other tongues" should be evidence of the "second blessing" which was seen as an act of the Holy Spirit that could result in "Christian perfection" or total sanctification. On January 1, 1901, one of Parham's students began to speak in a language that none recognized. Other students received the same gift, believing they were empowered for missionary work. Five years later in 1906, the year of the San Francisco earthquake, **William Seymour** a black preacher, preached the Pentecostal message at the Apostolic Faith Gospel Mission on Azusa Street in Los Angeles. Many who heard him also received the gift of tongues and soon thousands were flocking to hear the message that one could be baptized with the Holy Spirit with the evidence of an unlearned tongue.

2. New denominations – out of these revivals where tens of thousands of both black and white believers were moved by and filled with the Holy Spirit, sprung up new denominations. They soon unfortunately fell back into the segregated ways of old. Black believers formed the *Church of God in Christ* while white believers founded *the Assemblies of God*, the *Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee)* and the *Church of the Foursquare Gospel*. Soon Pentecostalism spread overseas as missionaries were sent to other continents and countries. Pentecostal churches now account for well over 350 million adherents worldwide.

3. The Charismatic Movement – in 1960 the gift of speaking in tongues manifested itself in the priest of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Van Nuys, California. Fr. Dennis Bennet, whose 1970 book, *"Nine O'Clock In The Morning"* highlighted his own experience and the impact on his church in Washington state, became a best-seller. From there similar spiritual experiences began to spread in various churches of different denominations. Acknowledging that the spiritual gifts of **I Cor. 14** are for today, the Charismatic movement had been born. Similar to the Pentecostal movement in the acceptance of the spiritual gifts, the difference is that Charismatics either retain their denominational distinctives or are part of a nondenominational and independent church or groups of churches. The health, wealth, and prosperity movement has originated from a number of these independent as well as traditional Pentecostal churches as well.

C. The Evangelical Movement

We briefly look at the Fundamentalist response to the liberal theology that crept into many churches during the last half of the 19th century in Study #4. The rise of fundamentalism continued with the Scopes Trial of 1922 and led to the formation of fundamentalist denominations and the Bible Church movement.

Over time a movement began that also held to the belief in the inerrant (without mistakes) Word of God and the need to evangelize others for Christ but were more open to working together across denominational lines to see that the gospel is spread locally, regionally, nationally, and worldwide. While not as restrictive as fundamentalists, the evangelical movement includes traditionally evangelical churches as well as Pentecostal, charismatic, and non-denominational churches, as well as some fundamentalist churches. The *National Association of Evangelicals* (NAE) was formed during World War 2 to unite like-minded churches and help distinguish evangelicals from fundamentalists. It also proved essential later in countering the liberal *National Council of Churches* which had originally formed as an association of 33 denominations in 1908. It also was bolstered by Billy Graham's ministry and men like Carl F. Henry and Francis Schaeffer, to name only a few. Television, radio, and print media all helped bolster the Evangelical movement.

D. A Response to Liberal Protestantism - World War One crushed the optimism of European Protestantism. Its liberal ways and confidence in human progress left it wholly inadequate to respond to the spiritual void that war opened. As fascism and communism rose to address the needs of a post-war society, the Church found itself lacking in response. Many sought a return to the essence of the Christian gospel. Chief among them was **Karl Barth (1886-1968)**. Son of a Swiss Reformed pastor, Barth studied theology in Berlin. He soon concerned himself with the struggle of peasants and laborers and became a Social Democrat in 1916. Viewing political engagement as a way to promote the Kingdom of God, he soon realized that the forces of war made that virtually impossible. Instead, he began focusing on the Holy Scriptures as God's Word. He argued that the object of the Christian faith is not theology but rather God's Word, itself. The Word of God is not the Scriptures themselves, but the truths they express. In addition, our understanding of reality, including our knowledge of personal sin and our need for salvation, does arise from philosophical questioning, but the grace of God. Barth sought a to return to the essence of Lutheran Theology. His focus on the more essential elements of the Christian faith as objective realities led to his classic theological work, *Church Dogmatics*, which many consider one of the greatest theological achievements of the 20th century. His more biblically centered approach to faith and theology is why his theology is often called *neo-orthodoxy*.

E. Roman Catholicism' Vatican II (1962-65) – some of what the Protestant Reformation had called for was finally instituted by the Roman Catholic Church during what was called the Second Vatican Council. Recall that the First Vatican Council was held from 1869-70 under Pope Pius IX and had condemned such innovations as separation of church and state, freedom of worship, freedom of the press, public schools under state supervision, and the idea that Protestant Churches were legitimate expressions of the true Christian Faith. However, under what would be known as "Vatican II" a different tract was taken. The background for Vatican 2 was painted by the political and religious disruption of two world wars and the rise and fall of Nazism, and the continued threat of Communism. Pope Pius XI (1922-39) had vigorously promoted missionary work. He was the pope to consecrate the first Chinese bishops in 1926. He at first tried to work with Adolf Hitler and Mussolini in the early years of the 1930's as he saw atheistic Communism as more of a threat. But when he saw their true intentions, he condemned both Hitler and Communism in two encyclicals only five days apart in 1937. He condemned Nazism as a new form of paganism and Communism for their increased antireligious propaganda and crack down on churches. After his death in 1939, Cardinal Pacelli was elected pope, and he took the name Pius XII to show his desire of continuing the policies of his predecessor. Though he tried earnestly to prevent the conflict that led to World War 2, he charted a course of neutrality during the war. This led to silence from the Vatican concerning the extermination of Jews even though

the Pope knew atrocities were being committed. However, the Vatican did often speak out against German treatment of Polish Roman Catholics – clergy and lay – often resulting in harsher treatment of those same Polish Catholics. Still there were many Roman Catholics throughout Europe who risked their lives and well-being for the sake of the Jewish people and who actively fought in the resistance against the Nazis. After the war, Pius' primary objective was to oppose communism. This led him to signing a concordat with Franco's regime in Spain. In terms of ecclesiastical and theological matters, he charted a very conservative stance clamping down on priests whose writings weren't totally in line with current doctrine. It was in 1950 that Pope Pius made the doctrine of the *Assumption of Mary* (that the Virgin Mary didn't die but ascended to heaven) as a dogma of the Church. He pulled his support of priests who were active in the labor movement in France. And yet, he instituted some reforms that led to the further reforms of Vatican II. These including work on modernizing the liturgy, encouraging modern methods of Bible Study, the independence of nations from their colonial powers, and the formation of indigenous churches under indigenous leadership. He also sought to internationalize the college of cardinals which by the time of his death was still one-third Italian. Thus, by the time of his death, the Roman Catholic Church was ready for a true reformation.

The election of seventy-seven-year-old Cardinal Roncalli (Pope John XXIII) in 1958 was viewed as simply a transition before the Cardinals could chart a steadier course for the future. However, Pope John XXIII believed that now was the time for true reform and he moved rapidly, calling for an ecumenical council. He was opposed by many of the cardinals at the time, but he set a new tone calling his fellow bishops, "my brother bishops" and asking advice rather than commanding them. It was said that when some questioned the need for a new council, the pope simply opened the windows and said, "*Let fresh air in!*" After two years of preparation, the Second Vatican Council formally began on October 11, 1962 and ended with its official declarations on December 8, 1965. His opening address emphasized that it was time for the Church to respond to the concerns of the modern world with understanding and encouragement rather than with harsh condemnations. Nearly 100 non-Roman Catholic outside observers were allowed to attend. Many bishops from Latin America, Africa and Asia came. Most felt the time had come to address the plight of the poor, the needs of the laity, and the ability to speak to the non-Christian world in more constructive ways. As a result, the following reforms were agreed upon: the liturgies would now be in the language of the people not just Latin. Bible reading was encouraged, lay ministry was promoted as the church was to be centered on the notion of both clergy and laity being the "People of God." Religious freedom and conscience were now to be respected in all places, even where Roman Catholics were in the majority. There was an acknowledgment that Protestants are fellow Christians who need not repent and return to the Roman Catholic Church in order to be accepted by God. The Second Vatican Council also led to a more open tolerance of the Jewish faith as the Council rejected traditional prejudice against Jews and affirmed the unique connection of the Christian faith with that of Israel.

VI. New Challenges and Opportunities

A. Moral and Spiritual Decline in the West

The optimism of the Christian Church in the West was **shattered by the two World Wars**. Those wars decimated Europe. A spiritual vacuum developed that was never really filled by the Church effectively afterwards. While the United States helped rebuild Western Europe with the Marshall Plan and ensure its peace with the establishment of NATO, it could not bring spiritual revival. In the other half of Europe in the East, the Soviet communists ruled the day, limiting religious expression and worship. An underground church developed in many of the Eastern bloc countries.

In Asia, the United States had the responsibility of overseeing the rebuilding of Japan. General Douglas MacArthur had requested missionaries for Japan as he believed that the Christian faith would benefit the Japanese greatly, but few came. China, with the exception of Taiwan, remained controlled by the communists.

In the post-war years, the United States served as the main sending nation of missionaries around the world. The US economy continued to expand providing for an affluent Middle Class. After the war, with the baby boom and expansion of the suburbs, thousands of churches were planted. To be a respected member of the community included church membership. As a result, Protestant mainline churches and the Roman Catholic Church thrived during the two decades following the war.

However, a number of factors came together in the 1960's to turn our nation spiritually and sociologically upside down. **First, there was the growing turmoil caused by the *Civil Rights Movement*.** Martin Luther King and those in the Civil Rights Movement were viewed by many, including the FBI as a threat even though King and most others sought peaceful reform. Many church leaders, black and white, were involved in the movement. However, many churches, especially in the South did not. This sent a contradictory message to our society, **Second, the assassination of JFK** rocked the psyche of the nation. Rather than bring us together it set the stage for further turmoil. **Third, our government's involvement and handling of the Vietnam War** caused an anti-war movement that led to the further questioning and distrust of those in authority. **Fourth, easy access to new and dangerous drugs as well as greater acceptance of "free love" and sexual promiscuity led to a drug culture and sexual revolution** that further weakened the nuclear family and caused many to ridicule and questioned traditional Christian values. **Fifth, the vast majority of universities and colleges became centers of secular bias and indoctrination**, promoting a worldview that was both anti-Christian and anti-traditional family.

The Church was able to counter and slow some of the negative effects that these developments brought through the spread of the gospel. During this time, **evangelist Billy Graham became a household name** and his crusades reached millions with the good news of Christ. **Parachurch ministries** like *Campus Crusade for Christ*, *InterVarsity*, and *Navigators* provided a light of Christian witness on college campuses. Christian leaders and pastors used **television and radio to reach millions**. In response to the changing political climate, organizations like the Jerry Falwell's *Moral Majority* and Pat Robertson's *Christian Coalition* were formed to unite evangelical Christians as a voting bloc in our nation. Existing Christian schools and colleges and the establishment of new ones all helped counter the negative trends of the 1960s and provide a foundation for young believers. Likewise, a thriving homeschool movement took root in the 1980s and only grew stronger numerically with each passing decade providing a counter to the secular and often mindless indoctrination of the public school system.

The development of Christian contemporary music, devotional literature, and the rise of mega-churches all proved influential in providing opportunities to bring the light and love of Christ to others. Denominations like the *Assemblies of God* and the *Southern Baptist Convention*, and non-denominational and Bible Churches multiplied greatly in the 70's and 80's furthering strengthening a biblical witness and worldview among our citizens. The Jesus Movement triggered a mini-revival during the early 70s. At the same time, all the white liberal Protestant mainline denominations (*Presbyterian Church USA*, *Methodist Church*, *American Baptist Church*, *United Church of Christ*, *Episcopal Church*, and *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*) declined significantly in membership, a decline that continued well into the 21st century.

However, while these moral and spiritual decline of America slowed, it could not be stopped and continues as we become more polarized and less grounded in traditional

Christian values. The advent of the computer, the internet, and social media have meant that the gospel can get out in more ways than ever. We can communicate with others in most parts of the world. There is an interconnectedness like never before. But there is also a detachedness that has crept in as a result of the ability to access everything online. We can stay in our own homes, in our own “echo” chambers and create our own worlds. Rather than having a few main centers of gravity for all in terms of news, entertainment, community we know have literally thousands of choices and avenues to get information and to express ourselves. The result? Less community and more disorder.

The challenge for the Church in the West will be for it to not get distracted by new trends or fads, and to maintain fidelity to the Scriptures and to the mission of making disciples. In order for this to be truly done, it means meeting together consistently for worship every week, being involved in smaller groups or fellowships, and seeking to make a difference in our own personal spheres of influence as well as the community we are in, partnering with like-minded churches and also seeking to connect with overseas ministries and churches. This is the glue that will keep us stuck to gospel minded mission and to spiritual growth both inwardly in the soul and the church and outwardly in the community and world.

B. Fall of Communism in Eastern Europe

When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 it marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. For the previous four decades the world had been divided between two blocs – the West under the leadership of the USA and the East under the control of the USSR/Soviet Union. The world in between was known as the “Third World.” Most countries in this “world” took one of the two sides. With the fall of the Soviet Union, it meant new freedom for not only the nations in Eastern Europe that had been controlled by the communists, but for even nations that had been part of the USSR. In many of these lands, a new openness to Western ideas and democracy took root. This included the idea of religious freedom. Many missionary agencies and churches took advantage of this new openness. The result? **A revival in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, a renewal in the Roman Catholic Church in Poland and Orthodox Church in Russia, and increased opportunities for growth for many Christian denominations and para-church ministries.** After religious freedom was suppressed for so many years, there was a greater eagerness for spiritual things than one would find in Western Europe.

C. Growth of Christianity in the Global South

After the end of World War 2, many areas of the world that were under colonial rule by Great Britain, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and even the United States (the Philippines) were given their independence as new nations. Literally dozens of new nations were formed. As a result of this newfound freedom, new opportunities for Christian witness developed. Many churches were now becoming indigenous autonomous churches with indigenous leadership.

The East African revival led to many coming to Christ in the nations of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches grew tremendously in Nigeria other places of West Africa. In Asia, South Korea went from on 2% Christian following the Korean War to nearly 50% of the population today. In fact, some of the largest churches in the world are found in South Korea. Latin America, traditionally a Roman Catholic bastion of faith has seen the spread and rapid growth of Protestant churches, especially those of Pentecostal and Charismatic persuasion.

Even in traditionally closed places like Communist China and Islamic Iran, the Church is growing. In the last 20 years, a revival is occurring among Muslims in the Middle East and among those in the Islamic refugee communities in Europe.

As a result, the Body of Christ is no longer a predominantly white European but has truly become an international community of Christ followers. We now are seeing the fulfillment of Jesus' words and in the vision given to the Apostle John by Jesus in **Revelation 7:9-10**: ***“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”***

D. The Future

We should also remember that Jesus said in **Mt. 24:14** that ***“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”***

That is the witness of Church history. The world is being tested and prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ! As His Church we are called to continue to preach and bear witness to the Kingdom of God, being the light and love of Christ to our generation. Mindful that one day every tongue will confess and every knee bow before the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we see the signs of Christ return, may we remember His words of 2000 years ago – ***“look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near!”***