

Protestantism in Europe

World War I and Aftermath

- Europe cradle of optimistic philosophy and theology, busted by two world wars, shaking Protestant Liberalism giving rise to increased skepticism and secularism
- Protestantism had no theology to help it when the war broke out in 1914. Karl Barth (1886-1968) produced the most significant theological response.
- After confirmation classes in 1901/2 he decided to study theology: Adolf von Harnack, Kant, Schleiermacher, and Calvin

- A pastor in parish of Safenwil (1911) he became interested in better living conditions for the poor, becoming a Social Democrat (1915) believing this party was God's instrument to establish the kingdom.
- This was shattered when war broke out and the optimism of his liberal mentors seemed out of place. In 1916 he decided theology had to be done on a different basis and needed to return to the text of Scripture.
- *Commentary on Romans* (1919): God of Scripture is transcendent (not our object) and Spirit is a gift from God (not our possession). Also rejected subjectivism claiming that to be saved one must be a member of the body of Christ.

- Barth moved from pastoral to teaching and some claimed he had begun new theological school: *dialectical theology, crisis theology* or *neo-orthodoxy*.
- 1927 published first volume of *Christian Dogmatics* — object of theology not Christian faith but Word of God. False start as it depended too much on philosophy. New start: Word of God provides answers and questions. i.e. We don't know sin by nature, God's word of grace convicts us of sin — without it we do not know grace or sin.
- Therefore he began again now with *Church Dogmatics*; 13 volumes published between 1932-1967.

Renewed Conflicts

- While Barth wrote *Church Dogmatics* Hitler and the Nazi party were rising to power.
- Protestant liberals had no theological tools to respond critically since they declared humanity perfectible which is what Hitler proclaimed. Also confused gospel with German culture and Nazi's claimed Germany called to civilize the world (colonialism). Hitler united Protestant churches then used them to German racial superiority and divinely given mission giving rise to *German Christians*.
- Also reinterpreted Christianity in opposition to Judaism adding to anti-semitic policies of the Reich.

- 1933 under direction of government a united German Evangelical Church was formed controlled by government.
- 1934 several professors of theology, including Barth, signed a protest against direction of united church. Then days later Lutheran and Reformed Christian leaders gathered at Barmen for a ‘witnessing synod’ and issued *Barmen Declaration* which became foundational for Confessing Church — a body opposing Hitler’s policies in name of the gospel.
- Rejected “false doctrine, that the church ought to accept as the basis for its message, besides and apart from the word of God, other events and powers, figures or truths, as if they were God’s revelation.”

- The Third Reich reacted: most critical pastors were drafted and sent to the battlefield and professors required to sign statement of unconditional support of the Reich (Barth returned to Switzerland).
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) a pastor in London, returned to Germany to lead a secret seminary writing *The Cost of Discipleship* (1937). The Reich disbanded the seminary but Bonhoeffer gathered two groups of students for theological instruction writing *Life Together* (1939).
- He had accepted an invitation to spend a year in US but decided on arrival he made a mistake knowing that Germans must soon choose between patriotism and truth and he could not make the choice in security.

- 1938 forbidden to live in Berlin. 1940 seminary closed by Gestapo and forbidden to publish anything or speak in public.
- Over next 3 years increased involvement in underground against Hitler, deciding that his pacifism was his escaping from responsibility so he conspired to assassinate Hitler.
- April 1943 arrested by Gestapo, imprisoned and sent to concentration camp. He served as chaplain to prisoners and guards, carrying on correspondence with outside. On April 9, 1945 he was hanged and days later his camp was liberated by Allied troops.

After the War

- Vast areas of Eastern and central Europe fell under Soviet rule, led to difficulty between Protestant and Communist regimes and increased dialogue between Marxists and Protestants.
- Czechoslovakia and Hungary state continued to support churches with public funds.
- East Germany Christians civil restrictions preventing them pursuing education or holding positions of responsibility.
- Elsewhere in Europe dialogue between Marxists (not Leninists) and Christians.

- Ernst Bloch Marxist philosopher saw early Christianity a movement of protest against oppression and reinterpreted biblical doctrine and stories through that lens. The value lay in the message of hope — humans not determined by their past but by future.
- This contributed to Protestant theology emphasis on hope and eschatology, i.e. Jurgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*. Our God meets us and calls us from the future — hope for new order. Leads to struggle against poverty and oppression signalling God's future.
- In Western Europe process of secularization accelerated.

- 20 years after war Protestant areas such as Scandinavia, West Germany and Great Britain church attendance and participation declined so only small minority had significant contact with organized Christianity. Leading to discussion of relationship between Christianity and modern secular view of the world.
- Rudolf Bultmann *The New Testament and Mythology*. Call to 'demythologize' the NT in order to really understand it.
- Modernity coming to a close; notions of objectivity, universality and closed world following mechanistic principles passing in favour of contextual theologies.

Protestantism in US

- US involved in WWI didn't have as big consequences as Europe. Reasons: 1) didn't enter until final stages and 2) lands weren't scene of battle.
- Originally public opinion wanted to stay out of a European conflict but once in it was glory and honour. Churches shifted from peace movement to rhetoric of war in 1916 needing to save civilization. Some even calling for total extermination of German people in name of God.
- This led to bad treaty which led to WWII and failed to join League of Nations (designed for resolution of international conflicts).

- Fear of foreign: 20's KKK revival adding Catholics and Jews to blacks as enemies of American Christianity and democracy. In SW Mexican Revolution had many immigrating from Mexico and discrimination increased. Red scare: radicals, Communists and subversives. Christianity became main line defence against red threat.
- Divide increased between liberals and fundamentalists, i.e. teaching of evolution in public schools and inerrancy of Scripture (hallmark of fundamentalist orthodoxy).
- 20's Protestants (most) united in prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Leading to conclusion you can't legislate morality — used by conservatives opposing legislation against racial segregation.

Depression and WWII

- October 24, 1929 — mid-1930 Stock Market dropped — great economic depression. 1/4 of labour force unemployed with no security systems due to fear of socialism. Optimism faded as a generation which had never known want faced it.
- Now less optimistic theology made an impact on US
- “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” H. Richard Niebuhr in *The Kingdom of God in America*

- Federal Council of Churches with Methodist Church supported government in economic planning and means to safeguard the well being of the poor. This was viewed as socialism that was responded to with traditional fundamentalism and anti-socialist/Fascist views. This to the point that some supported Hitler as he halted communism in Europe. Roosevelt's New Deal implemented many of these church ideas.
- US divided whether to enter war in Europe and Far East: some due to remorse over militarism and nationalism of last war. Some Fascists or afraid of communism. Some from Germany and Italy. Some believed should leave rest of the world to own devices. Some racist & anti-semitic do nothing to hinder Hitler.

- Then Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, after anyone opposed to war had national loyalty questioned. Churches remained moderate during conflict.

Postwar Decades

- Dawn of nuclear age: generation grew up under threat of annihilation of humankind. Largest generation in history 'baby boom'. Postwar years unprecedented prosperity, most affluent consumer society world has ever seen.
- Also Cold War, enemy Soviet Russia. McCarthy Era, lack of church membership = possible anti-American inclinations. So, suburbia churches grew quickly (50's & 60's).

- 1950 Billy Graham Association incorporated. Abundant resources it used advanced tools and techniques of communication.
- Mainline churches had abandoned inner cities (populated by poor and racial minorities). Vast numbers lost contact with organized Christianity. For 20 years churches had no clear idea how to renew mission to cities.
- New understanding of Christianity leading to inner peace and happiness, Norman Vincent Peale: faith and positive thinking. Suitable for peace in confusing world with little about social responsibility and didn't conflict with Cold War mentality.

- Civil rights movement had been brewing for decades (NAACP 1909), black soldiers and sailors returning from war finding they didn't have access to freedom they had been fighting for. Leading to government desegregating armed forces (1949) and integrated public schools (1952).
- Supported by some Caucasians and churches, but led by African-Americans: Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., (50's & 60's). Sit-ins, arrests, beatings, and death (Montgomery and Selma, Alabama). "We shall overcome."
- Not all were happy with non-violent channels. Saw Islam as a religion not dominated by whites giving rise to the Black Muslims. Others broke into riot.

- Mid-60's conclusion that they could not attain full rights until they attained just measure of power — leading to 'black power.'
- The civil rights movement took inspiration from Christian faith of the black community. The old spirituals regained their old meaning of defiance that they had on the plantations. Finally, a black theology emerged.
- Parallel, the feminist movement was coming to the fore as well. During 50's women's movement gained in strength, experience and solidarity. In church fought: right to affirm call through ordination and critique of theology traditionally male. By 80's most major Protestant denominations ordained women.

- US entered war with Southeast Asia, unsuccessful, brought into the living-room through media and revealed that it was founded on misinformation leading to protests, bitterness and patriotic disappointment.
- Protestant theology was fragmenting and attempts were made to express Christianity in secular terms. There were commonality to the theologies: 1) orientation toward the future, 2) interest in sociopolitical realities, and 3) attempt to bring the two together. Eschatology as future hope brought to bear in present day social involvement.
- Contact with international churches led to concern for hunger, political freedom, and international justice making conservatives believe denominations infiltrated by Communists.

- Charismatic movement continued to grow finding representation in mainline denominations including Catholic, creating an ecumenical movement outside of organized ecumenism.
- Evangelicalism gave rise to television and radio preachers; the electronic church. They created the Moral Majority to defend moral values and support conservative economic and social policies. Others, felt called to critique economic and social order at home and abroad.

New Century

- 21st c. optimistic: Cold War ended, death of Soviet Union left US as only superpower and previous decade years of unprecedented abundance.
- September 11, 2001 and resulting revenge in Afghanistan and Iraq dividing US around policies responding to terrorism. Then, 2008 economic recession. Together led to nativism.
- Immigration had changed cultural and ethnic composition. Churches responded with programs to new immigrants, Christian-Muslim dialogue, and care ministries.
- Declining numbers in mainline Protestant denominations.

The Pilgrim's Progress

Week 10

Pages 127-142

1. How do the Pilgrim's deal with Atheist's claims?
2. What is the process that brought Hope onto this journey?
3. What is the difference between Hope's testimony and Ignorance's?
4. What is lacking in Ignorance's thinking?