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THE WORLD CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT 1950-1975: AN INTERPRETIVE ESSAY

Ralph D. Winter

This summary is chapter 62 in the 1975 Revised Edition of Kenneth Scott Latourette's *A History of Christianity*, now in two paper bound volumes, $6.95 each. These are available as a set at a special price from the Church Growth Book Club, 305 Pasadena Avenue, South Pasadena, CA 91030 USA.

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In 1975 anyone expecting to live to the year 2000 or even to 1984 would have had to take a very hard look at the unique developments of the 1950-to-1975 period. For the previous two centuries observers with increasing consternation had begun to predict dire events in the future owing to the giddy pace of the acceleration of history. But, by 1975, the voices of doomsday prophets had become a roar, and, at the time, the oil crisis only seemed to confirm man's worst fears. This was a period—if there ever had been one—in which an interpretative treatment of the development of the Christian movement would have to be done, in Latourette's words, "in relation to the total story of mankind." In doing this, a number of traits of the period stood out.

In the first place, during the 1950 to 1975 period the Western world underwent the most astonishing contraction of political empire that had ever been seen in history in so short a period of time. Shortly before the middle of the century, Western man had completed a gradual buildup of control over the rest of the world that was itself unprecedented. But while that control had been achieved during several centuries of time, the collapse of the Western colonial empires took place within the 1945-to-1969 period. Yet this is merely to speak negatively. Positively: never before had so many new nations come into being so suddenly.

In the second place, no account of this period could fail to take note of the great increase in what had been already a noticeable acceleration of history, an increase which distinguished this particular quarter of a century from any other in all the annals of human history. The acceleration that was noticed was only in part because people could travel faster, communicate more readily, and thus collaborate more efficiently. It was in great part because there was a startlingly greater number of people on earth to make things happen. During this twenty-five-year period the *gain* in world population was as great as the entire popula-

tion of the world in 1875. In the United States, specifically, the total number of human years lived out during the entire nineteenth century was equalled by the same number of people-years for only the fifteen-year period 1960 to 1975. The United States had 5.3 million people in 1800, and, after a very slow buildup for most of the next hundred years, had 76 million by 1900. But by 1960 there were 180 million, and by 1975, 214 million.

But this was not all. Not only was the world population enormously greater—and this meant that history would inevitably seem to speed up simply because there were each year massively more human beings delving, tussling, working at a given time—but an even greater factor in increased acceleration was the fact that in certain parts of the world (the so-called oil-consuming nations) a sudden and immense amount of labor saving, time saving, and effort multiplying had taken place. The almost unbelievable result was that while, as we have seen, United States citizens expended as much human effort between 1960 and 1975 as they had in the nineteenth century, the work performed (measured by Gross National Product adjusted for inflation) during the entire nineteenth century was equalled in just the two years 1973 and 1974.

In the fourth place, no previous twenty-five-year period in history had witnessed so many technological advances. It had been said that the period covered five revolutions and three renaissances. Whatever was intended by that statement, it was during this quarter of a century that the atom was tamed and the cybernetic revolution became prominent in the meteoric rise of the computer. It was the era of jet planes, earth satellites, moon landings, and unmanned travel within the solar system. Microelectronics brought amazing changes including the transistor radio, which found its way to the furthest reaches of the earth. Many of these new achievements remarkably enhanced the spread of Christianity.

In the fifth place, however, while the economic and technological development of the whole world had been a prominent goal for many years, by 1975 it had become clear that there was really no solution, no possible answer to the "rising expectations" of the majority of the population of the earth for development along Western lines. It became plain to all that economic development in the so-called underdeveloped nations was constantly being outrun by the population explosion in those same nations. Thus arose the widespread concern for limitation of population. But before any solution for overpopulation was discovered, it became clear that the Western way of life itself would be unworkable if extended even to the existing, unexpanded world population. If the average American used up twenty-two tons of mineral resources per day, it simply wasn't possible for such a way of life to become standard for all mankind. Neither was anything remotely like the United States diet something

other nations could copy. Senator Hatfield remarked in 1975 that "we can get 667 pounds of protein from one acre of soybeans, but we can only get nine pounds of protein from one acre cultivated in feed grain for cattle." Most nations could not afford to use up seventy-four times as much land in order to get animal protein instead of vegetable protein. Thus it turned out that the Western way was sustainable only by a very inefficient use of land for a very few people. By 1975, the impossibility of the orderly continuation of the pattern of past development had become dreadfully obvious.

In the sixth place, a phenomenon somewhat similar to the increasing inefficiency of land use was the increasing inefficiency in the use of fuel to obtain Western man's vastly increased productivity. Just as an animal protein diet was a highly inefficient exploitation of land, in parallel fashion in 1975 United States citizens, in order to produce as much in *two years* as in the entire nineteenth century, were using as much oil in *two months* as was consumed in the entire nineteenth century. That is, fifty times the productivity cost six hundred times as much oil.

In the seventh place, toward the end of this period, Western man finally discovered with acute embarrassment that the Western World itself had become almost irretrievably dependent—"umbilically dependent" was the phrase—upon a single, rapidly shrinking resource: oil. This was one of the main reasons the Western way of life could not be extended to the rest of the earth, but it was also why such a lifestyle could not be perpetuated even in the West at anything like the 1975 level. This sudden awareness threatened that at some future date Western man might appear not as the pioneering technological benefactor of all the earth, but as the bandit that broke into the storehouse and plundered all the world's energy resources before the bulk of mankind had had a chance to enjoy its share. People in 1975 feared that world oil consumption continuing to rise at 1973 rates would exhaust all known reserves in twenty-one years, and that the United States, if it were to use only its own oil, would run out by 1981. Alternative energy sources were believed to be costly, hazardous, delayed, and uncertain, while foreign sources of oil were also uncertain if only because prohibitively expensive.

Thus in early 1975 the outlook for Western man and his way of life was suddenly very bleak. But the hungry, exploding populations of Asia and Africa faced ever so much more serious dangers. Mesarovic and Pestel in *Mankind at the Turning Point: The Second Report to the Club of Rome* described a nearly inevitable scenario in which the number of children dying per year would rise from 10 million to more than 40 million by the year 2000. Probably at no time in the twentieth century had man's achievements loomed smaller in proportion to the real problems he faced. At no time was there greater need

for the best possible international understanding. At no time were the values and perspectives of the Christian faith more widely shared. Never before in history had the nations of the world as great a sense of obligation toward each other; superficial though this attitude might be, it was a feeling stemming from the remarkable record of selfless service that had been performed by Christian missions.

In 1975, the world in many ways seemed to be passing into a post-Western period. Would this be a post-Christian period as well? Hopefully the presence of the Christian movement in the world could make a considerable direct and indirect contribution in the troubled times ahead. The movement itself was not in decline. The number of Protestant missionaries from North America more than doubled between 1950 and 1975 and so did the number of mission agencies. The net increase in the number of Christians in the non-Western world by the end of this period was far larger than the total number of Christians in the non-Western world at the beginning of the period. That is to say, in the non-Western world, Christians increased by 140 percent while the general population increased by only 42 percent. Another way to visualize the growth rate of the Christian movement in the non-Western world in 1975 would be to picture at least one thousand new churches opening their doors each Sunday. But we are anticipating the study that follows.

The Western World

The two areas Latourette spoke of as "traditional Christendom" and "the Larger Occident" are really a single cultural sphere often called the Western world which, for the sake of space, can be discussed as a single unit. One reason this can be done is that during the third quarter of the twentieth century much of this whole area was undergoing the same series of experiences in regard to the breakdown of centuries-old established relations between civil governments and Christian institutional structures.

Thus, the most useful generalization about what happened to Christianity in the Western world between 1950 and 1975 is simply that it continued (and even speeded up) its gradual, painful withdrawal from entrenched legal and cultural establishment. This complex process of disestablishment—and we use the term more broadly than is customary—began much earlier and seemed to move much faster in America. Nevertheless, even as late as 1975 religious properties still escaped taxation in America. Similarly, in Russia, despite the violent disestablishment that occurred in the Communist revolution, the former state church still retained significant cultural influence. But everywhere in the Western world in both Protestant and Roman Catholic areas, and in both

Communist and non-Communist areas, the trend was relentlessly and probably irreversibly away from a Christianity possessing any political power of establishment which could conceivably force its forms upon a whole populace. Latourette stressed that Communism was not the only force hastening the process of disestablishment; he also felt that Communism and the process of disestablishment were partially products of Christianity, even though they might also be anti-Christian.

Thus, while the Communist movement represented the most extensive, single organized force in the trend to disestablishment, it drew much of its inspiration from the social concerns growing out of the Evangelical Awakening in Britain, where it was born amidst the labor pains of the industrial revolution. The Methodist class meeting, borrowed perhaps from the Brethren of the Common Life, was a forerunner of the Communist cell, and the Communistic emphasis on confession also stemmed from Methodism. Going further back in history, Communism's stress on "people governments" and the rights of the people could hardly be distinguished from any number of earlier, more obviously Christian, revolutionary movements such as Wat Tyler's Rebellion, the Bundschuh Revolt, the Peasants' War, etc., except that in these earlier movements the Bible had been appealed to as the source of revolutionary perspective. Since Marx, Engels, and Lenin apparently felt that the Church was forever on the side of the bourgeoise, they saw the rising up of the masses as inevitably requiring the destruction of the Church and, for safety, the elimination of the religion and theology behind the Church. Yet such goals were to some extent incidental to the more profound cause of Communism, the liberation of man—a concept which in turn is a cluster of ideals almost entirely stemming from Christianity. But could such ideals survive as fruits when once separated from their Christian roots? Elton Trueblood felt not and called the society with this kind of secular vision "a cut-flower civilization."

It is not surprising, therefore, that in the 1950's and 1960's many people in the Western world, especially in the United States, confused the somewhat academic tension between capitalism and Communism with the larger issue of Christianity versus atheism. But according to Latourette, even the latter tension did not best describe the major process unfolding in the Revolutionary Age. As Christianity was becoming disestablished, many of the surface evidences of this disestablishment—declining registration of Christians in Germany, declining statistics of baptisms in the areas of state-church traditions, and even declining perfunctory attendance in some of the older church traditions—did not by any means signal the exhaustion of the energy and vitality of the Christian movement. Again and again in Latourette's writings, and in our own observa-

tions of the Western world, we are forced to distinguish between the admittedly widespread evidences of the decline of the Christian establishment and the springing up of a vast plethora of new movements, contrasting sharply with the decline of the settled Christian past.

It was, for example, in 1818—early in Latourette's Revolutionary Era—that American churches in Connecticut were finally and dramatically cut off from state support. At that time the eminent church leader, Lyman Beecher, sincerely predicted the fatal demise of the United States Church, only to contradict himself ten years later with relief and exultation when the newly emerging "voluntary church" tradition seemed to offer more hope than ever before for continuity of vigor and vitality despite the absence of the older forms. For Europe, it was under Hitler that German congregations had briefly to face the necessity of direct local support of their pastors when state support was slashed or withdrawn completely. Then for more than a quarter of a century after World War II, the Church in East Germany had to survive in the face of intense opposition by the state. Even earlier in Russia, as we have seen, the Christian movement had proved itself capable of surviving the most extreme opposition of an atheistic government. But the loss of establishment apparently did not mean the emergence of a "post-Christian era."

The thrust of Latourette's blunt, earnest prediction in the 1950's that the use of the phrase "post-Christian era" was "hasty and naive" was eminently confirmed by 1975. A specific case might be the East Germany we have just mentioned. The Protestant community—consistently penalized for church involvement—dropped from 80 percent to 60 percent of the population, and by 1975 there were perhaps at the most only one million people (6 percent) who could be called highly committed Christians. Yet cautious observers suggested that this committed minority was probably larger than at any previous time. Students in Christian groups at the universities of Dresden and Leipzig numbered in the hundreds. It was not uncommon for groups of young people numbering more than one thousand suddenly to materialize for worship and Bible study, coming from all parts of East Germany but especially from the south, brought together by word of mouth alone. The famous Dom (cathedral) across from the Imperial Palace in East Berlin was being reconstructed by the end of the period. A small group of Communist-leaning pastors existed for a time, but had disappeared by 1975.

Thus, for all their trouble, the leaders of the totalitarian Communist regime had through diligent oppression apparently done no more damage to the Christian movement than had the benign neglect of the non-Communist governments in other parts of Europe and the Western world in the same period.

In both the East and West, from Russia west to Australia, the overarching phenomenon was the accelerated disestablishment of the Christian movement. Where was this massive process leading?

Clues to the future could perhaps be seen in the New World where the transformation was more advanced. "The shot heard 'round the world" at the outbreak of the American Revolution had an immediate effect in France but was then heard all down through the Americas. Mainly in the New World the reverberations almost instantly furthered the disestablishment of churches that were for the most part already heading that way. Thus, the churches in the United States were much more extensively disestablished much sooner than in Europe, even though between 1950 and 1975 events were still taking place that further disestablished Christianity even as a semi-official faith. In 1962, the Supreme Court made unlawful even the voluntary recital of a non-denominational prayer written by the New York State Board of Regents. In 1975, the California State Court of Appeal ruled that "the three-hour closing of state offices on Good Friday is unconstitutional and an 'excessive governmental entanglement with religion.'" That same year the California State Legislature appointed a Buddhist priest as chaplain, a move profoundly significant in the disestablishment process. Nevertheless, legal disestablishment meant cultural disestablishment only for a time. Church membership was 6 percent of the population at the time of the American Revolution, but was over 60 percent by 1975.

Latin America, at first glance, may have seemed to many Protestants an area of unrelieved and seemingly permanent Roman Catholic establishment. But by 1975, any such illusions were well-nigh completely shattered. As a matter of fact, the disestablishment of Christendom in Latin America had begun most emphatically over one hundred years earlier as country after country declared its independence both from Europe and from the Church in the years that followed the American Revolution to the north. What had confused Protestants was the apparently close, continued association of the Roman Catholic Church with the various governments. Yet the famous Concordat between the Spanish crown and the Vatican did not consolidate the power of the Vatican in Spain so much as it consolidated the power of the Spanish crown over the Church, and the same shift was true for the Colombian Concordat signed after the wars of independence. Such concordats did mean a continued, prominent role for the Church, but the Church now became subservient to the state—a development which we can see only as the first step in our larger concept of disestablishment. In Mexico, for example, the power of the state over the Church allowed the state eventually to seize all the properties of the Church and progressively

to disenfranchise it in many other ways. Legal proscriptions of Roman Catholic activities in Mexico long antedated and perhaps even guided similar measures taken later in Russia by the Bolsheviks as the new era of the USSR came to constitute an even more determined and relentless disestablishment of the Church. In the constitutions of most Latin American countries for over a century there had been provision for both freedom of, and freedom from, religion.

Nevertheless, despite such striking handicaps and limitations, the Roman Catholic Church was able to survive at least as a cultural tradition, and especially following Vatican II it adopted in many places an outright anti-government posture which aligned it with the masses and the downtrodden. Meanwhile, vigorous new thinking, especially in Latin America, championed a "theology of liberation" which boldly assumed the very institution of the Church to be secondary to the larger will of God in society.

Even more estranged from the institutional Roman Catholic tradition were the rising Protestant and Pentecostal movements which flourished in the anti-clerical atmosphere. Pentecostalism was especially prominent in Brazil and Chile, but by 1975 had become a significant force from Mexico to Argentina. Thus Christianity in various forms represented a vigorous and vital element in almost every sector of Latin America despite the fact that the older institutions of the Church by 1975 were more completely disestablished than ever before.

Nevertheless, these traces of final, legal disestablishment in the Western world were accompanied by abundant evidence that legal establishment as such was by no means essential—nor perhaps even desirable—for the best interests of the Christian movement. In America where disestablishment had gone beyond the same process in Europe, it was discovered that when the churches were thrown on their own initiative, this allowed and perhaps even encouraged the development of many striking signs of vitality.

For example, in the 1950's and the 1960's in the United States, and especially in the 1960's as the Vietnam war was escalated, anti-establishment feelings and sometimes militancy were shared by a major sector of the population. Profound doubts about big government and all the established institutions threatened the main-line denominations along with the civil structures. Anti-war dissent bred anti-establishment dissent of many other varieties. The drive for racial integration was in some respects overtaken by the drive for black power, and then brown power, and Indian power, and female power, and youth power, and gay power, and led to a vast convulsion of self-determining subsections of society. The task of assimilating these cause groups into the orderly processes of civil and

ecclesiastical government meant a good deal of trauma for many of the ecclesiastical structures which tried hardest to respond to their voices. In the process, the disestablishment of inherited Christian structures seemed to be accelerated, although by 1975 the greatest intensity of most of these storms seemed to have passed.

Meanwhile, a vast profusion of new movements had gained strength. The youth counterculture, which earlier had spurned the entire array of established structures including the Church, had to a considerable extent become the mainspring behind the Christian vitality in the so-called Jesus People movement, which at one extreme was manifested in so radical a movement as the widely reported Children of God, but was also a force behind a new mood and considerable new strength in many traditional seminary student bodies. Of the more than 250 new missionary agencies formed in the period, a significant group were almost exclusively the product of the youth movement, and many more made room for youth divisions; "short-termers" became a third of all missionaries from the United States. Young people, long conspicuous by their absence in both European and mainline church congregations, now became prominent in dozens of unanticipated ventures, both in Europe and in America, which bypassed traditional channels but clearly expressed genuine Christian vitality. One major youth mission originating in the United States, Operation Mobilization, discovered British and Continental young people to be so much more receptive that it virtually abandoned further recruitment in the United States. At the same time the voice of youth became increasingly heard in traditional structures as well, and was characterized by an unprecedented sensitivity to the new common concerns about ecology, hunger, and social justice. But while the most populous American state, California, elected as governor at 37 Edmund G. Brown, Jr., a man who was in his twenties during much of the Vietnam war, it was by 1975 unheard of for there to be any comparable reliance upon youth for formal leadership in the major denominational traditions.

The largest single Christian structure, the Roman Catholic Church, could be the object of a special study of the process of disestablishment. We have briefly touched on it in our references to Latin America, and will be referring to it below in the section on Asia and Africa. For the Roman Catholics, the central event of the third quarter of the twentieth century was clearly Vatican Council II. In a physical sense, this event was simply a four-year-long series of consultations between some two thousand bishops from the world wide domains of the Roman Catholic Church. It was the result of the inspired genius of an elderly man who was elected virtually as an interim pope. Yet in launching this council, Pope John XXIII opened a window which might never be fully closed again.

As a result, in a hundred ways this major ecclesiastical tradition achieved a massive, breath-taking adjustment to modern times—the untranslatable *aggiornamento* in Italian. Pope John's more conservative successor, Pope Paul VI, qualified and tempered but also implemented willingly or unwillingly many of the gains. Long overdue was a readjustment of Roman Catholic theology to the unwaning prominence of the Bible in the Christian movement, a readjustment of Roman Catholic structure to the nearly universal acceptance in the modern world of democratic governmental structure in place of a monarchial pattern of authority, and a readjustment of the Roman Catholic official stance towards Protestantism. In regard to the latter, it seemed that the new attitude of some Catholics simply included Protestantism with other non-Christian religions, welcoming both Protestants and Buddhists on the same ground. But in a new and healthy way, the Catholic charismatic movement fused Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal patterns of informal prayer and worship with a new emphasis on the Bible, including in some quarters in the United States experiments in Christian community living that went beyond the casual fellowship so characteristic of United States church life.

Thus by 1975 in the Western world Christianity was less and less the legally or culturally established religion. In its nominal form it had lost much of the automatic respect it may have had in an earlier era. At the same time, voluntary structures were carrying forward a great deal of what seemed to be, over all, increased vitality in the Christian movement.

The Non-Western World

In 1975 one of the essential differences between the Western and the non-Western worlds insofar as Christianity was concerned was the fact that with some notable exceptions (e.g., the Syrian tradition in India and the Oriental Orthodox Churches in the Middle East and Ethiopia), the Christian movement was relatively young and accordingly less well established in the non-Western sphere. As we have seen, churches in the West were increasingly *disestablished,* while in the non-Western world the churches were to a much greater extent what we may call *unestablished*—that is, they had for the most part not yet attained either a legal or a cultural monopoly. Furthermore, as the nineteenth and twentieth centuries wore on, a significantly increasing percentage of the missionaries working in the non-Western world originated from within the new variety of American disestablished churches of which we have already spoken, and thus tended to implant in non-Western countries that same new type of Christianity which neither sought nor expected to become established. For example, despite the popular stereotype of missionaries being backed by

colonial governments, it is likely that as early as 1910 a majority of Protestant missionaries were at work in lands in which their home governments had no control, and this general absence of either government or cultural support tended to modify the very nature of the churches being planted.

We are not surprised therefore to find that by 1975 the overall character of the Christian movement in the non-Western world was extensively different from its Western counterpart. Many Western observers of the so-called younger churches in the non-Western world were so impressed by the unusually high quality of commitment they found overseas that they suggested there ought to be a "reverse flow" of missionaries from the younger churches to help in the work of renewal in the West. This was surely to be welcomed. Ever since Henri Godin and Yvan Daniel had written *La France, Pays de Mission?* the awareness of the need to consider traditional Christendom a mission field had grown apace, and the electrifying phrase of the World Council's new Division of World Mission and Evangelism, "Mission in Six Continents," had become the dominant perspective by 1975.

On the other hand, it would not have been entirely true to suggest that all non-Western Christians belonged to tiny, unestablished, committed minorities any more than to have maintained that all Western Christians belonged to vast nominal masses whose Christianity virtually came with their citizenship. Estimates for 1975 indicated, very roughly, that only about 120 million out of a total of 965 million Western Christians could be considered significantly disestablished, while 80 million out of a total of 214 million non-Western Christians were considered disestablished or unestablished. That is, the ratio was about 1 to 8 in the Western World and 3 to 8 in the non-Western World.

Reminding ourselves that we are speaking of a much broader type of disestablishment than the narrow and technical, conventional meaning of the term, the distinction here drawn is not intended to be invidious but descriptive. We have spoken of Christian communions possessing "legal or cultural monopolies" upon a citizenry, and have suggested that the third quarter of the century witnessed an accelerated shift from an established Christian tradition to a non- or dis-established Christian tradition. While the one form declined, the other was rising. Here is the paradox of weakness and strength referred to in the title of Chapter 60. Here is the distinction the absence of which allows such widely differing assessments of the state of Christianity in the modern world. Here is a perspective which prepares us to evaluate the uniqueness of the Christian movement in the non-Western world. However, our discussion will first turn to the Middle East, which is in some ways a halfway step to the rest of the non-Western world.

The Middle East

Thanks to Alexander the Great, who took Hellenism as far as India, and to Mohammed, whose forces held western Switzerland for over two centuries and parts of Spain for over seven, there was a great deal of inter-penetration between Europe and the Middle East. Furthermore, the Judeo-Christian heritage was by definition a blend of the Indo-European and the Semitic. As a result, the Middle East constitutes a fairly small step away from the Western cultural tradition. We are not surprised therefore to find that the life of the Christian movement in that area has been basically the confrontation of various human traditions, all of which have kinship at some point in the literate past.

In 1975 there were sixteen different kinds of older, culturally established Christian traditions in the Middle East. These groups were in most cases minority enclaves within the overwhelming context of the Muslim tradition, existing as battered survivors of centuries of turmoil. Yet, if North Africa and Ethiopia were included as part of the Middle Eastern museum of the ancient churches, there were by 1975 still nearly 17 million in the various sub-populations of the total Christian community, comprising 7 percent of the whole area, but 77 percent of Cyprus, half the population in Lebanon, 37 percent of Ethiopia, 13 percent of Egypt, 10 percent of Jordan, 9.8 percent of Syria, 5 percent of Sudan, and 4 percent of Iraq. Christians comprised 1 percent or less in all the other countries in this area—Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the smaller Arabian States. The vast majority of these 17 million Christians represented the tenacious continuation of ancient churches—one million Eastern Orthodox, 13 million Oriental Orthodox (i.e., non-Chalcedonian), and roughly 100,000 Assyrian Church of the East ("Nestorian"), all of whom were at least *culturally* established if not in all cases *legally* established. Then there were almost two million Catholic Christians (of eight different traditions) that recognized the Pope as their supreme authority. These too could be considered culturally established. This left less than one million Protestants and Anglicans who to some considerable extent reflected the characteristically disestablished posture of the Evangelical tradition, but these constituted only 5 percent of the 17 million Christians, and were thus only one-third of 1 percent of the general population of the area.

Curiously, although the scattered elements of this latter group were only tiny minorities wherever they were found, nevertheless because they were relatively committed and were backed by churches in the West, they had a truly immense impact in the area, especially in education and public health.

Between 1950 and 1975 the entire area was drastically shaken by the further

withdrawal of colonial forces, by internal revolutions, by wars and tensions with Israel, and in 1974 by the stunning impact of the unexpectedly vast new oil wealth of some of the states. All this turmoil affected the churches in the area. Immediately after withdrawing from Vietnam, the French were determined to hold onto Algeria, but in the ensuing conflict, over a million Algerians lost their lives, and an equal number of French, Spanish, and other foreigners, almost all nominal Roman Catholics, withdrew from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and later Libya.

The impact of the twenty-five-year period on the actual numbers of Christians in the area was extremely difficult to determine, not for the lack of knowledge in 1975 but for the lack of precise figures for the number of Christians in the 1950's with which to make comparisons. Numbers Latourette was forced to quote as estimates diverged so widely from quantities accurately known for 1973 that it was virtually impossible to do more than offer several fairly general observations. By 1950, as colonial protection of the minorities was gradually withdrawn, the Christian populations in the area along with some of the other minorities had been in many cases tragically decimated by nearly genocidal aggression against them in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. In the following twenty-five years, however, except for the plight of Christians among the West Bank Jordanians and the southern Sudanese, adversities of this sort were not so extensive. Generally speaking, the Christian communities were able to consolidate and to grow at least as fast as the general population, and thanks to a careful statistical study of the entire area sponsored by the Near East Council of Churches and conducted by Norman Horner, by 1975 there was detailed knowledge of the size and vast complexity of the constituent elements of the 17 million Christians to whom we have referred. Future studies of the area could build on these statistics and keep in closer touch with the growth and life of these churches.

It would be inaccurate to leave a depressing picture of the weakness and division of the Christian movement in the very region where Christianity first began. On the contrary, note the genius of the Eastern Orthodox tradition, for example, that created "autocephalous" branches comprising different ethnic and language communities. The vast bulk of the Christians in the area had early parted ways with the Greek tradition in refusing to accept the Chalcedonian Creed, but their autonomy within their own separate traditions was to a great extent in keeping with the autocephalous concept and was a surprising testimony to the resilience and flexibility of a Christian faith that embraced a widely disparate group of peoples whose diversity was, after all, not created by Christianity but in fact surmounted by it, even if imperfectly. Here was vivid

proof that Christianity does not blot out ethnic and cultural uniquenesss, but to an incredible extent is a preserver of such distinctions, even as emigrants from the Middle East carried their distinctive faith with them to other lands. The acid test would be whether ethnic and cultural traditions calling themselves Christian would be known by their love for one another and for all men. Early Protestant attempts to work within and for these ancient churches usually resulted eventually in small Protestant communities outside them. It was a promising fact in 1975 that the Near East Council of Churches, originally a council of missions, was able to number the Antioch Patriarchate of the Syrian Orthodox Church as a member.

In this connection a broad generalization might be hazarded. On the one hand, the Western Roman Catholic tradition developed a monolithic ecclesiastical umbrella that spanned many culturally diverse peoples. But para-ecclesiastical movements such as the Friars and Clerks Regular (e.g., Jesuits) constituted live options for the expression of internal diversity. Such structures by their very nature were voluntary options and thus "unestablished" in the way we are using that word. On the other hand, the Orthodox churches developed decentralized autonomy for each of the ethnic and cultural entities in their region, but possessed very thin overall unity and seriously lacked the profusion of voluntary options presented in the West by the Catholic orders. Protestants, Anglicans, and Western Catholics in modern times brought to the Middle East additional competitive ecclesiastical options, perhaps unintentionally; but they also brought a profusion of non-conflicting para-church structures, ranging from Sunday schools and youth movements of evangelizing societies to major (Catholic) orders. By 1975 it appeared as though these secondary elements in the Western presence were inspiring similar initiatives in the Orthodox churches, especially in Greece and Lebanon. One very influential renewing force which spanned several churches and countries was the Movements of Orthodox Youth, which provided from its ranks the new, young Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Cyprus when Archbishop Makarios was made president of the country. Movements like this had profound implications for renewal and unity in the world of these ancient churches.

Overshadowing all discussion of the Christian movement in the Middle East was the colossus of Islam. It is not our specific purpose to describe non-Christian movements, but it is for several reasons necessary to pause briefly to reflect on the nature and role of Islam. As president of Egypt, Nasser could say, "Islam recognizes Christians as brothers in religion and brothers in God." Contrary to widespread belief among Christians, when Islam overran the Middle East centuries ago, the enforced conversion of Christians to Islam was by far

the exception rather than the rule, and nothing in Muslim history approaches the ugliness of the militant opposition to Islam mounted by the warriors calling themselves Crusaders when Europeans fought back five centuries later. Reflections like this are necessary to clear the air.

However, only the most profound reorientation in our Christian thinking about Islam will avoid a harsh and artificial contrast between Islam and the various types of Christianity co-existing in the same area of the world. In some respects Islam was simply one more movement stemming from Judaism and Christianity. The missionary-theologian Arend Th. van Leeuwen suggested that just as Hellenic Christianity resulted from Paul's application of the Christian message to the Greek cultural sphere, so Islam was to a great extent the adaptation of Jewish Christianity into the Arab world. He claimed, in fact, that some forms of Orthodox Christianity in Ethiopia differed more from what the Western world understood by Christianity than did Islam. Whatever the case, the assumption that Islam was as different from Christianity as, say, Hinduism was a gross misunderstanding and perhaps hampered the possibility of Christian growth where Islam was dominant. Nevertheless, by 1975 it was clear that the relatively tiny presence of Western missions in the Middle East had opened a doorway of contact with the Western world which had spectacular influence. A handful of colleges and universities won over a high percentage of the entire new leadership of the area at least to Western science, technology, manners, and morals. This did not produce a Christianized stratum of society in the religious sense, but it did build an enormously significant bridge of understanding across which better religious communication could take place.

By 1975 Islam was the second largest of the world's religions, having about half as many adherents as Christianity. We have already seen Communism as an outgrowth of Christianity; it was far more obvious that Islam was also an outgrowth of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Van Leeuwen would even add that the scientific and technological revolution was still another outgrowth of Christianity. Thus we see that in one way or another the impulse that can be traced back to Jesus had flowed out across the world in the form of the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox forms of Christianity proper, plus the various "outgrowths" of Communism, Islam, and science and technology, such that virtually the entire planet had by 1975 been profoundly altered, indirectly at least, by the Gospel of Christ. If to formal Christianity, constituting one-third of mankind in 1975, we were to add the adherents of the profoundly theistic and ethical religion of Islam, constituting one-sixth of mankind, we would find that half of all people on the planet were at least nominal adherents of faiths that recognized Jesus in a very special way. Meanwhile, the other half of mankind

was subject to massive cultural, intellectual, educational, medical, political, and moral influences which stemmed from Christianity more than from any other single source.

These statements are not meant to imply that Christians conceived their task to be finished once people had been influenced in the ways we have described. Indeed, Christians would consider the task only begun. Rather, the purpose of such statements is to integrate the massive extent to which the influence of the life of one man has already encompassed the world, and to note the extent to which future efforts have a tremendously significant foundation on which to build. Islam in particular, now that its heartland had come into unbelievable wealth, was by 1975 undergoing the most rapid transition into modern ways, meaning mainly Western ways, and was surely a phenomenon urgently requiring profound, new theological reinterpretation from Christian and Islamic scholars alike.

Africa

As we shift our vision to Sub-Saharan Africa, we realize immediately how much further from the Western world we are moving culturally speaking. Unlike the area of the Middle East, North Africa, and Ethiopia which we have just surveyed, in 1975 Sub-Saharan Africa offered no comparably long-standing points of contact with the Western world except in those limited areas that were Semitic or Muslim. The advance of Christianity in Africa in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries thus initiated an abrupt confrontation and interpenetration of cultural systems that were utterly distinct from each other. As a result, the rising interest in the 1970's in the development of African theology raised issues far more profound than did the relatively minor variations involved, for example, in the development of a Latin American theology, a development to a great extent within Western culture. The only parallel in Western experience to the immense impact of Christianity on non-Semitic Africa was the impact a millennium earlier of Latin, Greek, and Celtic Christianity on the pagan tribes of northern Europe—a series of events so far back in history that in the 1970's the lessons seemed not to be readily recoverable.

Between 1950 and 1975 over a century of serious occupation of Africa by colonial nations was abruptly ended. By 1975 forty-one African countries had been granted their freedom and had become members of the United Nations, leaving only a handful of African countries to continue under colonial rule. The largest single sector of these populations were under Portugal, which either partially or fully withdrew from each sector by the end of the period. Speaking in historic terms, a more sudden and complete collapse of external control

could hardly have been imagined. Many predictions turned out to be false. Organized Communism was not able to fill the vacuum. Even a man like Kenyatta, whose accession to power was assumed to be equivalent to introducing Communism to Kenya, turned out to be much more pro-Christian and anti-Communist than the reverse. Westerners assumed that the new nations could not manage themselves politically, but the record by 1975 did not involve any instabilities which had not already bedevilled Western countries from the beginnings of the modern nation states. Even the marked trend to dictatorship and totalitarian police states was unfortunately not altogether different from the conditions in many Western countries. As for civil wars in the absence of the colonial powers, leaders in the Nigerian civil war drew comfort and even military guidance from the American experience. The inevitable attempts of resource-rich portions of countries to form separate nations, as in the case of mineral-rich Katanga in Zaire and oil-rich southeastern Nigeria, were direct parallels to the inclination of the cotton-rich American South to rule its own affairs as a separate country.

On the other hand, not everything paralleled contemporary Western experience. In the African nations the dominant social patterns inherited from the colonial era even if relatively secure were nevertheless relatively superficial. Christianity was in many ways becoming culturally established and increasingly nominal. Here the parallel was perhaps with fourth-century Rome when Christians had only recently gained government backing for schools, hospitals, libraries and, most important, public worship. Between 1950 and 1975 as the African states burst into independence it was inevitable that there would be in some measure a resurgence of the cultural substratum. Following the colonial period of nominal Christian ascendance, would a "Julian the Apostate" appear and attempt to reinstate the pagan tradition?

In Chad the Christian movement had brought no effective substitute for the important and impressive indigenous "rites of passage" at puberty, and in 1974 the government sponsored the widespread reintroduction of African puberty ceremonies, even for highly Westernized government officials in adult life, some losing their lives in the austere practice. On the other hand, in Tanzania tribal dress was suppressed in the interests of national unity. But in Zaire in the interests of African "authenticity," beginning in 1972, the government ordered the people to drop European for African names, banned religious youth organizations, church periodicals, and radio programs, seized control of elementary and secondary schools (the vast proportion church-run), and replaced religion courses and wall decorations with teachings that tended to present the president as a saviour. In 1974 Christmas was henceforth to be eliminated in favor of a

June independence celebration, and key theological seminaries were notified of closure at the end of the school year. In December of that year, according to one report, the state press agency announced that the nation's single political party "must henceforth be considered as a church and its founder a messiah." Kwame Nkrumah had already attempted to transfer devotion to the state and to himself in Ghana. He too had problems with the continuing influence of the churches, but was overthrown in 1966.

Christianity and its schools had virtually singlehandedly produced the new leadership of the African nations. But where state power was held by one tribal group and threatened potentially by the leadership of another, the church within the second group often became the enemy of the state. In such a situation, educated leaders of the wrong tribe, as often as not pastors, might be slain by the thousands, as in Burundi. In Uganda, although Muslims constituted only 6 percent of the population, the military dictatorship was held by a Muslim; and Libyan oil money, perhaps with the hope that the number of Muslims could be increased, seemed to provide an external source of power to a government so despotic as to be reminiscent of Caligula's reign. This fact by 1975 might have held grave forebodings for the strong Roman Catholic and Anglican communities in that country had they not constituted two-thirds of the population.

The overall picture in Sub-Saharan Africa seemed to imply that the power of the Church would go unopposed only if it supported political governments, or at least avoided conflict with them. Governments were sometimes rattled by the existence of a pluralism of churches which, though friendly to each other, did not support a centralized church administration for all varieties of Christians. Russia for a long time had attempted to bundle all Protestants under a single Baptist umbrella, and during World War II Japan had attempted the same in the formation of the Kyodan. In Zaire all Protestants were forced into a single council, and in Ghana Nkrumah had moved in the same direction. In Africa, however, the ethnic sub-stratum constituted a mosaic exceedingly more diverse than in Japan, or in the Western world, and the result was an increasingly unmanageable diversity. In particular, what were called the African Independent Churches became prominent. The phrase referred to denominations born in Africa outside missionary initiative. Latourette was well aware of the significant growth of the African Independent Churches even by 1950 (p. 1437). According to estimates by David Barrett, while mission-founded churches were still the majority Christian pattern in less than four hundred denominations, the number of Independent Church denominations had increased by 1975 to five thousand (one thousand in 1950) with a total membership of 7 million adherents (one million in 1950). This kind of church grew about 40 percent faster than the Christian movement in general, which itself grew twice as fast as the popula-

tion in most areas. The phenomenon of Independent Churches was found in thirty-four African nations and 290 different tribes. Some of these churches were quite orthodox in their theology, others so unorthodox as to have within their midst a "divine" person. Yet each called itself Christian, and most of them looked upon the Bible as their sacred book.

Some observers felt Africa was descending into a chaos of cults. Latourette, had he been alive, would probably have rejoiced cautiously at the luxuriant spontaneity, the apparent overall vitality of a Christian movement which continued despite (perhaps because of) all the tumult of the times. Christianity had not created the immense African diversity but did ultimately bring to it a common denominator. One of the most outstanding indigenous movements, the church resulting from the work of Simon Kimbangu, by 1975 numbered well over one million members, mainly in Zaire, even in the most cautious estimates. Its desire to join the World Council of Churches and its acceptance by that body in some ways hinted that the diversity of the Christian movement worked ultimately for unity rather than disunity.

Between 1950 and 1975 no African nation adopted Christianity as a state religion, and by early 1975 the legal establishment of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was increasingly tenuous. The prevailing mood did not seem to lead toward a European type of church establishment. For one thing, in most countries Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant traditions were all well represented, and it would have been unlikely that any one tradition would become established in the political sense. Furthermore, even Roman Catholic missionaries from the United States (and certainly all other missions from the New World) arrived without any desire or expectation of becoming established, as noted previously. This was not to say, however, that Christianity was not increasingly established in the cultural sense in many (if not most) African nations south of the Sahara. One significant factor postponing the nominality so often associated with establishment was the continued rapid growth by conversion and the continued high percentage of people in many churches who had elected to become members of the church as adults, especially in the newer and Independent Churches. Even so, by 1975 second- and third-generation Christians dominated the leadership of many denominations, and a remarkable phenomenon called the East African Revival played an important role in renewal. Originating in an Anglican area in the 1930's, it was a movement that deliberately held its meetings outside normal church hours and offered an additional option of fellowship and openness beyond normal church membership. By 1975 it was found in most of East Africa and neighboring countries, touching more than one million lives, and did not show any signs of decline.

This movement and literally hundreds of other para-church phenomena

vitally contributed to the overall health of the Christian movement. There was a tendency in the 1960's and 1970's, as the colonial officials disappeared from Africa, for it to be assumed in some quarters that the Western mission agencies also had no further role. A proposal by John Gatu, an East African church leader, for a "moratorium" on Western mission personnel and funds was widely discussed in the 1970's and its meanings and merits were as widely misunderstood. His proposal was eminently reasonable for many situations where a well-founded national church—somewhat parallel to a national political entity—needed to function entirely on its own power. He did not intend his proposal to wipe out all the initiatives of a para-ecclesiastical nature, much less divert attention from population elements that were not yet Christian. On the other hand, while his own church was prepared to send missionaries, very few African denominations had organized their own mission boards. A major exception was the Evangelical Churches of West Africa, which by 1975 had established an autonomous board under which over two hundred Africans served as missionaries.

In any case, the very discussion of a moratorium highlighted the fact that by 1975 the dominant voices in church leadership in Africa (not only in the Independent movement but in the churches which were the direct result of mission agencies) were duly empowered African church leaders. For example, Latourette noted that there were in 1952 only four African Roman Catholic bishops. By 1975 the Roman Catholic Church had consecrated 129 African bishops, 22 African archbishops, and 5 African cardinals. The change in the Protestant sphere was comparable even though not so easily summed up. Christianity, as a movement, was clearly out of the control of the West.

In no other continent during the 1950-to-1975 period had Christianity made a greater apparent advance. Yet the future was not clear. Some signs threatened serious cultural backlash. In many places nationalism seemed to conflict with the power and presence of the Christian churches. Islam was a rising force with new prominence and potential power owing to the oil wealth in its heartland countries. But in 1975 in Sub-Saharan Africa, Christianity was by far the most widespread, potentially unifying religion and was uniquely influential in the formation of most of the other social and cultural forces deriving from the West.

Asia

By the time Christianity in the 16th century first penetrated to the Far East in force, Asia was by no means a sea of animism as uncontested by any other "higher" religion, as was Sub-Saharan Africa. For the greater part of the first sixteen Christian centuries there was no effective sea route to Asia from Europe, and

Christian missionaries sent overland accomplished relatively little that endured except for the Syrian Orthodox presence in South India. Prior to modern times, Islam had greatly expanded under Muslim rule in many parts of India and even in Southeast Asia. Buddhism, a Hindu reform movement, early had a special appeal where Hinduism was strong, and in expanding into other areas had the advantage of being a religion which originated in the very heart of Asia rather than at its geographically distant Western edge like Christianity and Islam.

Furthermore, when Western colonial powers began to take over many parts of Asia, the two great Protestant colonial powers, the British and the Dutch, never seriously sponsored mission work as did the Portuguese, Spanish, and French. Thus by 1900 Christianity in Asia numbered only 9 million adherents, constituted mostly by the nominal Roman Catholic communities in the Philippines and Indochina. By 1975 Christians had grown to more than 80 million, at an average growth rate of three times that of Asia in general, but this number was still a modest presence compared to the 285 million Muslims just in that part of Asia east of Pakistan. Furthermore, depressed classes in certain parts of India were rapidly becoming Buddhist, and Islam, while not at this time actively missionary in India, had the potential backing of the new wealth of the Middle East. The development of an Islamic way of life—an Islamic basis for civil government—was the serious concern of the new Islamic state, Pakistan, during the entire 1950–1975 period. Nevertheless, neither Buddhism nor Islam possessed a mechanism of outreach remotely comparable to that which had been mounted by Christians in the West and carried to the Far East following the development of sea travel in the sixteenth century. Even so, not until the ninteenth century did the Protestant movement begin participating seriously in this effort, and it was not until the twentieth century that the major growth of Christianity took place.

Between 1950 and 1975 the vast new energy of an industrialized West eclipsed all previous influences on a relatively passive East despite the simultaneous collapse and withdrawl of the formal colonial government apparatus. By 1975 Christianity possessed literally thousands of centers of outreach, mostly new in the twentieth century, which meant that while it was still overshadowed in sheer numbers in most of Asia by the earlier advances of Buddhism and Islam, its overall presence was no longer tenuous but in fact remarkably influential.

On the other hand, its future was by no means assured. One great handicap to a continuation of Western mission efforts was the widespread assumption that the evangelism and missionary outreach of the younger churches, once firmly established, would be relatively automatic. On the contrary, churches

in India, for example, showed little ability to evangelize non-Christians. As missionary leadership from the West declined, the churches moved rapidly to co-existence with Hinduism. The vast bulk of what evangelistic efforts there were was evangelism of existing now-nominal Christians. Many of the older missions interpreted the missionary task as "helping the younger churches" rather than communicating the Gospel to unbelievers. Since the main drive of both nation and Church in the post-colonial years was to get rid of foreign domination, the churches showed little ability to use their foreign servants in pioneer evangelism. Consequently huge numbers of the citizens of India, Pakistan, and latterly Bangladesh, growing larger every year, were left untouched. The burgeoning cities, rapidly filling up with immigrants from the countrysides, did not blossom with thousands of new congregations as happened in Africa and Latin America. The main churches remained tied to the cantonments, where the British had lived in the colonial period, and until the mid-1970's few new churches were established in the urban developments which proliferated all over India. On the other hand, in almost no area of India did Christians decrease in their percentage of the population; indeed, they generally increased slightly more rapidly. In the Hill Provinces of northeast India by 1975 Mizoran had become 98 percent Christian, Meghalaya 50 percent Christian, and Nagaland 80 percent Christian.

A word of caution is necessary in regard to these references to percentages of Christians in a given area of the world. For example, of what great value is it to note that the percentage of Christians in Asia was 4 percent or a little more in 1975? As with all averages, there might actually have been no specific area whatsoever where that percentage was actually true. On the one hand, at least a third of the Christians in Asia were those nominally Christian peoples in the Philippines, where practically everyone was Christian but where neither Roman Catholics nor Protestants would claim very many truly committed Christians. On the other hand, there were vast sectors of India, and perhaps virtually the whole of the People's Republic of China, where there was little Christianity, if any, in terms of known numbers of formal adherents. Meanwhile, there were specific areas of Asia where there were not only a large number of Christians, constituting a high percentage of the population, but in fact there was a great deal of fresh, young, vital Christianity. This was spectacularly true in northeast India, as we have mentioned, but was also true for many areas of Indonesia. Burma was not a Christian country, but in northern Burma the vast proportion of the population was Christian. Thailand was not a Christian country, and yet there were areas where there was a strong, virile Christian witness. Roman Catholic Christians had survived in large numbers in South Vietnam, and although the Protestant movement was small, it was healthy and had more than a quarter

million adherents, exercising an influence which was considerable. In Hong Kong one out of every ten people was Christian. In Japan a very small proportion of the population, far less than Asia's average, was formally related to Christian churches as such, but more than half of all the marriages taking place in Tokyo followed the Christian pattern. In Japan well over 75 percent of the people answering a government census which asked, "Who is the greatest religious leader in history?" answered "Jesus Christ." In many respects, Korean Christians represented the strongest Christian community in Asia. Over half of all the Protestant theological students in Asia were Koreans studying in one of the many large seminaries there. While only one out of one hundred in the rural areas of South Korea was Christian, one out of ten in the cities was Christian, and one out of seven in the capital city of Seoul. One out of three of the lower-level government officials was Christian, and the proportion of Christians was even higher, close to half, in both the army and the upper echelons of government.

Thus where Christianity had taken root, it had often grown spectacularly. It had proven that it could flourish on almost any soil. But there were many places where it had not taken root at all. It had not necessarily favored any class of society but had demonstrated its ability to give substantial meaning and hope even to the lowest levels of society. In the areas of medicine, in education, and in sacrificial social amelioration, the Christian movement had worked almost without competition.

A few final comments about the meaning of Christianity within so vast a population as Asia, in view of the limitations of space, can perhaps best be focussed on the three largest ethnic-religious groups of non-Christians: the Muslims, the Hindus, and the Chinese. In 1975, by one estimate, they numbered roughly 650 million, 500 million, and 820 million respectively, or about three-fourths of all Asians. It was illuminating to see the potential relationship of the Christian faith to these three major cultural spheres as a parallel to certain new developments in the relationship between Christianity and the Jewish tradition.

In the 1960's and the 1970's there had been increasing interest in certain Christian circles in the possibility that Jews might become "Christians" without calling themselves Christian and without assimilating themselves to what is perhaps basically a Hellenic Christian tradition in the West. "Jews for Jesus" had become well known, although the phrase actually referred to a number of different attempts to reach Jewish people without tearing them out of their cultural tradition. Meanwhile many voices counselled that all evangelistic efforts be given up with regard to the Jews, a view which Gerald Anderson successfully challenged (*Missiology, An International Review*, Vol. II, No. 3). "Messianic Judaism" was

the phrase used to refer to the desired result of most of the attempts new in the 1970's and late 1960's, not all of them successful. But it was probably true that the most sensitive attempts along this line avoided many of the admittedly objectional elements of evangelism as it had been practiced toward the Jews in earlier periods.

Of great significance, however, was this approach to the Muslim tradition. The acceptability of the Christian message among the Muslims was hindered by ill-will retained from the age of the Crusaders. There was also the fact that Christianity had approached the Muslims almost invariably from a Hellenic base. The apostle Paul had felt that he should be a Greek to the Greeks and a Jew to the Jews. He might just as well have suggested that he be a Muslim to the Muslims. It was not beyond reason to suppose that Muslims might become truly believers in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord without calling themselves Christians, even as the "Messianic Jews" did. Theoretically then what was needed was for the Muslims to become believers without having to abandon their Muslim language and culture. For the most part this was not possible in those areas where the only Christian contact the Muslims had was with enclaves of Christians who had been there for centuries and who represented differing racial, linguistic, or cultural traditions. For Muslims to have to shift from one culture to another, even to a "Christian" culture, seemed to be the kind of proselytism which the Apostle avoided and which all future missions ought assiduously to avoid.

A similar barrier existed to Christian efforts among the Chinese. The very earliest missionaries had felt that the Chinese language and culture could become a vehicle for the Christian faith without, for example, the necessity of destroying the strong cultural traditions in China involving a continuing and abiding respect for one's ancestors. Later missionaries were required by the Pope to reject this inheritance. Communism did everything possible to demolish this trait, and so did the bulk of Protestant missionaries. By 1975 there were fascinating possibilities in recent thinking being done by both Protestants and Catholics with regard to the relations of Chinese to their ancestors and the ways by which Christian truth could be made meaningful to them. Was it possible to encourage the Chinese to adhere to the meaning of the first commandment, that no one but God must be worshipped, and at the same time allow them to honor their elders as is enjoined in the fifth commandment? In early 1975 there was hope that a new era of leadership by Chou En-lai might somehow offer new opportunities for Christian witness in China. This very possibility encouraged a thorough rethinking of the approach.

One of the great practical obstacles to Christian growth in India was the fact that most Christians there—the main exception being the Syrian tradition—

came from the depressed classes, earlier called "untouchables." This fact demonstrated to India more graphically than anything else could have the phenomenal power of the Christian faith to transform and uplift. Yet it also tended to seal off the Christian movement within certain social classes. A few voices were raised in defense of a deliberate "second front" into the higher strata of the former caste system. Asked what receptivity there might be for Christianity on the part of the 500 million middle-caste peoples of India, one Indian leader suggested that at least 100 million of these people would become Christians if it were possible for them to do so without abandoning their entire social inheritance. Yet many Western Christians tended to believe that social evils, seemingly perpetuated by the traditional social structures, could be conquered only by displacing those structures. By 1975 Christian denominations and larger associations bridged many social barriers and impressively demonstrated the unity of all men in Christ; nevertheless, at the same time relatively few local congregations spanned great cultural distances. Many social groups had church traditions within them, but the majority of more than one thousand middle-caste groups, constituting at least 80 percent of the population, had as yet no branch of the Christian Church represented within their communities.

Yet Christian unity across all cultural distances, prejudice barriers, and political boundaries was an accomplished fact in Asia, and the same could be said for other regions of the world, and indeed the world itself. This uniting dimension of the Christian movement was one of its major contributions to international understanding as well as being one of the essential features of Christianity itself. As such it is a fitting subject with which to conclude this interpretive essay.

Diversity and Unity

Curiously, during the 1950–1975 period, Christianity as a movement became strikingly more diverse and at the same time remarkably more unified. Its greatest diversity was displayed in Africa, especially in the vast profusion of African Independent Churches, which have already been mentioned. On the other hand, this same period was the era of the World Council of Churches, of new, friendlier attitudes between Catholics and Protestants following upon Vatican Council II, of a remarkable series of local, regional, and world evangelistic crusades and congresses, and finally of the emergence of the neo-pentecostal charismatic movement which by 1975 had penetrated all major Christian traditions.

The diversity was itself unique. Christianity as it expanded across the world displayed the capacity to become clothed in the language and culture of all

peoples accepting it, and at the same time to bind those diverse peoples into fellowship with other Christians in other parts of the world. This characteristic was not so well known, nor so widely appreciated, prior to the 1950-to-1975 period, despite the fact that the shift from Semitic to Hellenic culture was one of the central dramas of the New Testament. For example, it was not until Vatican II in the 1960's that the Roman Catholic Mass was extensively translated into other languages, although for Protestants the translation of the Bible had long been a principal task of missions. Nevertheless, the effect of missions had generally been to uplift and enhance the local cultures in which they worked—despite the widespread stereotype to the contrary. Widely diverse types of Christianity were the inevitable result, but that diversity surprisingly did not imply isolation or disunity; rather, it contributed a new richness and renewing balance to the entire world movement.

It was true that centuries earlier as the Roman Empire and later Western Europe had become nominally Christian, wars continued between the nominally Christian peoples of that region, right down to World War II. But the reappearance in modern times of significant movements of relatively disestablished Christianity injected a new and unifying element that became quite powerful by the twentieth century. One of the most significant manifestations of the trend toward this new type of voluntary Christianity was constituted by the various student initiatives at the turn of the century: the college division of the YMCA, the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, the various Student Christian Movements, the World's Student Christian Federation, etc. These movements almost immediately leaped ancient barriers, and the impact of this new generation of committed students upon Christian unity world-wide was permanent and incalculable. Latourette had noted that these students, soon church leaders, raised money from the Allied Nations to support German mission efforts during World War I. One of them, J.H. Oldham, made the decisive suggestion at the table of the Treaty of Versailles which prevented expropriation by the Allies of German mission properties. While this new impetus did not prevent World War II, it had by that date forged unbreakable bonds of fellowship and collaboration across warring lines in an unprecedented way (p. 1378). An outgrowth of these student movements had been the trail-blazing World Missionary Conference of 1910. An usher at that conference, William Temple, thirty-two years later (1942) was crowned Archbishop of Canterbury amidst the ruins and deep mood of depression following the Battle of Britain. His oft-quoted remarks at that ceremony (p. 1390) appropriately had as their immediate background the Tambaram (1938) meeting of the International Missionary Council, which had once again demonstrated the long-standing working unity of foreign mission agencies and overseas national church leaders

participating in the highly diverse cutting edge of Christianity as it expanded in the non-Western world, a unity which was finally to be realized in the more nominally Christian European and American homeland as the World Council of Churches was formally founded in 1948.

The aftermath of all the students' high-minded aspirations through the 1950–1975 period was a complex and in some ways perplexing story. Voluntary societies, whether denominational or interdenominational, had blazed the trail in the realm of cooperation and in explorations of unity, hoping to renew the older ecclesiastical structures in the process. The resulting ecumenical movement was a gradual transition from the initiatives of para-church structures to the greater and greater prominence of duly constituted church leadership, a phenomenon parallelling in many ways the long-standing process whereby the Catholic order structures had across the centuries lent leadership to the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the Western Roman tradition. In twentieth-century Protestant experience, however, the very voluntary structures which had created the ecumenical movement lacked the centuries of experience and mutual understanding characterizing the abbot-bishop, order-diocese relationship, and gradually gave over and virtually gave up their life to the churches they loved and served. Thus the dozens of councils founded by John R. Mott (and others) around the world generally moved from being consultations between leaders of active voluntary societies to being meetings of leaders of churches—structures passive by comparison. As that happened, the International Missionary Council became increasingly based not on such voluntary societies at all, but (indirectly) on churches (through its national and regional councils) just as the World Council of Churches was (directly) based on churches. The eventual merger of the two organizations in 1961 was in many ways a logical step. The International Missionary Council thus became the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, the first meeting of which then took place in Mexico in 1963, the second meeting in Bangkok in 1972–1973. At the Bangkok meeting, of the 326 who gathered, 20 percent were World Council and regional council staff, 50 percent were denominational officials, 15 percent theologians, 7 percent Roman Catholic observers, and only 8 percent missionaries or mission directors.

Thus it was equally clear that in the great transition we have described a growing vacuum resulted where once the para-church structures—the voluntary societies—had long held the greater part of the initiative. Let us look at India as an example. The National Christian Council of India, in its decisive constitutional change of 1956, excluded all entities other than churches from direct representation and thus became functionally, from then on, simply a council of churches. But no adequate provision was made or envisioned for continuing

consultation specifically between voluntary societies, either (*a*) those working in India from abroad, or (*b*) those springing up in India and working in India and/or abroad. (By 1975 there were at least two hundred societies of the latter category.) The resulting vacuum was filled in part by the Evangelical Fellowship of India, which allowed both churches and voluntary societies as members.

To complicate the picture, in 1974 there appeared the Federation of Evangelical Churches of India, the largest member of which, at its founding, was the St. Thomas Evangelical Church, which had in 1961 separated from the Mar Thoma Church. This new structure was for its member churches presumably a substitute for the National Christian Council. Yet, theoretically, a denomination in India could belong simultaneously to the National Christian Council, the Evangelical Fellowship and the Federation of Evangelical Churches as well as to the East Asia Christian Conference (in 1974 renamed Christian Conference of Asia), the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Fellowship. In many cases a church could have regional, national, and international confessional linkage as well, for example with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation, the Baptist World Alliance, etc. By contrast, a non-denominational Indian voluntary society could belong only to the Evangelical Fellowship and the World Evangelical Fellowship, and in neither case would the specific role of a society, as distinct from a church, be the dominant concern of the unifying structure. In 1974 the Asia Missions Association was proposed for establishment in 1975. Related to it, hopefully, would be various national associations of Asian-based voluntary societies in mission.

This was still only part of the picture since unity was not expressed merely by the existence of unifying councils, fellowships, and transdenominational voluntary societies (such as the YMCA, the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, the American Bible Society, etc.) Many other types of gatherings also brought Christians together. Beginning in 1966, one society in particular, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, sponsored a number of "congresses" on evangelism, which drew representative leaders from a very wide spectrum of the Protestant world. Two of these, Berlin 1966 and Lausanne 1974, were world-level gatherings, the latter spawning a Continuation Committee which in 1975 organized regional committees pledged to the promotion and coordination of evangelism in all six continents.

However, despite the many avenues of unity briefly mentioned, the resulting mechanisms of consultation not only worked for unanimity in some matters but also brought to light seriously different perspectives. Structures of unity, operated by human beings, sometimes tend, against all good intentions, to be monolithic in viewpoint in given subject areas at a given time. Even some denomina-

tional structures, in the period under study, tended perceptibly to be fountains of singular emphases, not merely forums of the diverse views of their constituencies. In this respect Protestant and Orthodox communions suffered for the lack of the wide variety of decentralized initiatives represented by the Catholic orders; better said, the Protestant tradition spawned eventually a large variety of mission sodalities, to use the technical term, but Protestant attempts towards unity had not by 1975 achieved any regular, structural way for the churches and the para-church structures to work in constant, responsible reference to each other.

A second area of dispute related to the profound, ultimate question of the destiny of human diversity. In the United States by 1975, owing significantly to the emergence of the Black Power drive for ethnic self-determination, the goal of either racial or cultural integration was for many a thing of the past, and the dominant mood was to allow for and abide all kinds of diversity. This mood ran counter to all forms of imperialism or paternalism or interference, but tended logically to suggest virtual isolation instead. This was not a Christian concept of unity—which assumed interdependence, not independence—yet in an age of new-born nationalism it was difficult to turn away from the new voices pressing for disengagement. An extreme case of the new emphasis stressed mission *in* six continents in place of mission *to* six continents, since it virtually outlawed the sending of missions from one country to another unless, conceivably, the sending structure were internationalized so as at least partially to disguise the national origins of workers from foreign lands.

Yet despite the relative confusion of many clashing views, there seemed to be by 1975 an appreciably greater mutual understanding on the part of all the varied participants. Never before had so many different sectors of the world Church been so well acquainted, so well on the road to even better insights both into self-understanding and into appreciation of the true nature of a multicultural world family of faith.

The United Nations gathered together all of the diversity of humanity. But bitter enmities and non-speaking relationships existed in its corridors from the very beginning and without noticeable abatement across the years. Christian circles, on the other hand, gathered people from as wide a spectrum of humanity and did not have anything like the barriers to understanding between them. Furthermore, the success of the movement toward Christian unity was not based on a simple watering down of beliefs and giving up of distinctions, but was in the earliest instances, proposed and carried forward by those members of the world Christian community most committed to their own Christian beliefs, namely the missionaries.

There was a time when Christians fought each other with seeming impunity

in much the same way that warring factions within the world Communist movement often found themselves in opposing political polarizations. As late as World War II, Christian nations were locked in massive conflict. Russia and the United States were allies against a country which had contributed much to the Reformation heritage dominant in the U.S. By 1975 there still seemed no hope of resolving the conflict between nominal Protestants and nominal Catholics in Northern Ireland. In the same way, some of the most profound rivals on university campuses were different factions of Communist sympathizers.

Yet, while Christians could not readily find major distinctions between nominal Christian nations and non-Christian nations, there was, nevertheless, no parallel outside of Christendom either to the degree or to the quality of cooperation between Christians. In 1975 consultation, fellowship, and collaboration went on at local, national, regional and world levels in dozens, even hundreds, of ways as Christians conferred, planned and moved earnestly together in worship, conference and united action. It could truly be said that being a Christian in 1975 guaranteed one a profoundly sincere welcome in more countries, among more peoples, in more places than would result from any other allegiance, whether religious, political, ethnic or professional.

Summary

By 1975 Christianity had clearly outpaced and was continuing to outgrow all other religious movements in global size and influence. Insofar as this achievement was largely one of an established nominal membership, along with other older nominal religious movements, Christianity had little power to contribute to the larger human community, and its lukewarm witness in some cases even contributed to its own decline. Insofar as Christianity was able to be manifested in forms that allowed for its highest ideals to be enacted and expressed, it displayed an active, transforming energy which could be traced in the background or the context of a great proportion of the high-minded men and women of integrity in countless circles throughout the world of 1975.

Certainly, in view of the tragic stresses planet earth was sure to face in the days ahead, the developing world unity of the Christian movement could become not only an important aspect of the greatest religious movement in the world but conceivably an essential resource in an ever more necessary civil world community of coordinated action against the age-old problems of hunger, famine, war, and pestilence. By 1975 such goals did not seem more achievable than they had at any earlier time—in some ways less possible. Whatever might come of optimistic hopes for man, it was clearly the hope of the Christian that there might be peace on earth, good will towards all men.

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