

## Introduction to Church History

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### The Twentieth Century

#### War!

Slaughter of WWI – 9 million soldiers, 7 million civilians.

Slaughter of WWII – est. 50-80 million, most of whom were non-combatants

In WWI, most deaths did not lead to repatriation of the bodies, so most bereavements could not be responded to with a funeral. It was this which led the many parishes in Church of England to reinstate **prayers for the departed**.

God is 'on our side'? Cult of the dead soldier-martyr: use of John 15:13 ("greater love hath no man").

Inter-war years: thinking about horror of war, rise of pacifism, critical theological reflection.

In Germany, the role of church and state had always been very close, following Luther. The *Manifesto of the Ninety-Three* – backing the Kaiser's war policy – including Adolf Deissmann, Adolf von Harnack, Wilhelm Herrmann, and Reinhold Seeberg. This prompted Karl Barth's rejection of their liberal theology.

In the 1930s: rise of the Nazis to power, the German Lutheran Church was largely passive. Most actively supportive were the "German Christians" (*Deutsche Christen*) who promoted:

- antisemitic reading of the New Testament
- de-judaizing of the Old Testament
- support for Nazi myths of arianism and German superiority

This was opposed by the *Confessing Church*, who actively opposed Nazification of the faith. Key leaders of the Confessing Church:

- Pastor Martin Niemöller
- Heinrich Grüber
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Karl Barth (until his deposition from his Professorship at the University of Bonn and move to the University of Basel, in his native Switzerland)

Barth was the key drafter of the *Barmen Declaration*, which declared the independence of the Church from the State and criticised State interference in Church affairs, as Jesus Christ is the only Lord of the Church.

Niemöller, Grüber and Bonhoeffer were sent to concentration camps. Bonhoeffer was executed in 1945.

In Britain, in the 1930s, the bishop of Chichester, *George Bell*, maintained contacts with the Confessing Church through his close friend Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bell himself signed the Barmen Declaration and got the backing of the bishops of the Church of England for the Confessing Church. During the war, Bell strongly and publicly criticized indiscriminate bombing of cities by the RAF and also supported the welfare of German POWs and conscientious objectors. He was strongly

criticized for doing this.

*Conscientious Objectors*: a highly contentious position in WWI. The majority were Quakers. They were put to other duties to support the nation, if not the war effort. Other Christian conscientious objectors included the Plymouth Brethren. Was legally permitted in both wars after conscription introduced.

*The Cold War*: the advent of nuclear weapons accentuated the moral questions of exterminating millions of non-combatants, children included, in the incineration of a nuclear and thermonuclear explosion. In Britain, Christians of all denominations were at the forefront of the foundation of CND and participants in the Aldermaston Marches of the 1950s to protest at Britain's nuclear weapons.

- During 1980s, CND was led by Monsignor Bruce Kent
- 1982, Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility produced *The Church and the Bomb* – affirmed that nuclear war could not be acceptable under Christian just war thinking and advocated unilateral disarmament.

The facts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century indicate that Christians are often divided on the issue of war and weapons. A single view seems elusive, although the relationship of nuclear weapons to traditional just war theory is a matter for ongoing concern.

## The Holy Spirit, Pentecostals and Charismatics

Little work on the Holy Spirit in the medieval and reformation periods. cf. The BCP.

Regular outbreaks of charismata in revivals, but isolated to place and time. eg. Under Edward Irving in 1830s.

Pentecostal Roots:

- 1901 – speaking in tongues in *Bethel Bible School, Topeka, Kansas*, under its principal, *Charles Parham*, in January 1901.
- 1906 – *Azusa Street Revival* under William J Seymour who followed his teacher (Parham) in proclaiming a second stage of initiation – the Baptism with the Spirit. It remains, along with the insistence of evidence by tongues, a core doctrine of Pentecostal churches.

Early influence in the UK:

- *Charles Boddy* – pentecostal experience came through a pentecostal outpost from Azusa in Norway. Boddy and his wife Mary began to speak in tongues and he preached the doctrine of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. Mary laid hands on a young *Smith Wigglesworth*.

Pentecostal churches have two doctrines which have traditionally set them apart from older denominations: one is their adventist theology, which is pre-millennial; the second is their belief of the Baptism in the Spirit, as a second distinct Christian initiatory event, evidenced by speaking in tongues.

Growing Pentecostal influence after WWII:

*David Du Plessis*, Pentecostals became involved in the World Council of Churches and their influence spread among younger evangelicals in other denominations, including the Church of England.

*Vatican II*, whilst debating the Church, a draft text was submitted which suggested that the Charismata belonged to the era of the Early Church, but – following an intervention by Cardinal

Joseph Suenens – a hard cessationist position was avoided, and the acknowledgement of present charismata was included in *Lumen Gentium*, the Council's constitution on the Church:

It is not only through the sacraments and the ministries of the Church that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues, but, "allotting his gifts to everyone according as He wills, He distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts He makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks and offices which contribute toward the renewal and building up of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit". These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuine nature and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good. (*Lumen Gentium* 12.2)

*The Charismatic movement in Roman Catholicism* can be traced back to Catholic Professors reading *The Cross and the Switchblade*, by Nicky Cruz, in 1967, which speaks of a Pentecostal Baptism with the Spirit.

*Anglican Charismatic renewal* also began in America. In 1960, *Dennis Bennett*, a priest in the parish of St Mark's, Van Nuys in California received the baptism with the Spirit and spoke in tongues.

Van Nuys experience led to visits from some young priest from the Church of England. *Michael Harper*, John Stott's curate, received Baptism with the Spirit in 1965. Harper went on to found the Fountain Trust which, for the following 15 years, formed the organisational basis for the spread of Charismatic Renewal in the Church of England. Among those affected were:

- Colin Urquhart (St Hugh's, Lewsey, Luton)
- John Collins (Holy Trinity Brompton)
- David Watson (St Michael le Belfry, York)
- David Pytches (St Andrew's Chorleywood)

In the early 1980s, *John Wimber* visits with team from the Vineyard, in Anaheim, California. Wimber rejected dispensationalism (a hallmark of 'classic' Pentecostals) and embraced a much more radical approach to allowing the Holy Spirit to work charismatically in worship services during times set aside for this to happen, so called 'ministry times'. During the ministry times, significant actions of the Spirit were claimed to happen by way of healings, words of prophecy, words of knowledge as well as the more classic expression of the gift of tongues.

This brought a *new focus on the miraculous*, or 'signs and wonders' as a normal aspect of Church life. Following fifteen years: 'signs and wonders' became a regular feature with visits from 'the *Kansas City prophets*', and later, 'the *Toronto Blessing*' in which many people were overwhelmed with laughter and made other raucous noises.

*Alpha Course*: Holy Trinity Brompton – was all about bringing people to faith and included a 'Holy Spirit' weekend, where the opportunity would be given for people to experience the gifts of the Spirit for themselves. This recombining of charismata to evangelism helped rebalance the direction of Charismatic renewal in Britain thereafter.

## Vatican II

Position after Reformation was that of the *Council of Trent* (1545-1563).

19<sup>th</sup> century: things took a backward step: reaction to revolution and emergent triumphalism. The failure and condemnation of “Catholic modernism”.

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: influence of WWI, socialism and ecumenism. Key influence of the *Liturgical Movement* – called for a *return to primitive simplicity* in the liturgy and an *active participation by all the laity*. The Popes gave it some support and it inspired both priestly and monastic vocations and inspired spiritual regeneration at parish level. (Services were still all held in Latin.)

*Pope John XXIII* (Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli) – elected 1958, died 1963. Called *Second Vatican Council*.

Sat from 11 October 1962 until 8 December 1965. Key areas of change included:

- a new *constitution on the liturgy* and worship in vernacular languages;
- the acceptance of non-catholic (protestant) churches as “separated brethren”
- Roman Catholic Church as an observer, but not a full participant, in the World Council of Churches (the Orthodox Churches are full members);
- the promotion of the Bible through new translations and commentaries and the encouraging of ecumenical Christian scholarship;
- the re-recognition of the orthodoxy of the Eastern Churches and the opening up of links after centuries with those churches;
- the reform of the understanding of the Catholic Church of the religious status of Jews.

In the wake of the Council, ecumenical discussions opened up between the *Catholics and Anglicans*

- Archbishop of Canterbury visited Rome in the 1960s
- Pope John-Paul II made the *first ever papal visit* to the UK in 1982
- The *Anglican/Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC)*
- In the 1980s, *discussions took place between the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance*, and these only stalled because of opposition from the Baptist side. A second series of talks took place between 2006 and 2010.

1968 *Humanae Vitae* reaffirmed the traditional church rejection of *artificial means of birth control* *Sex is primarily for procreation*. This also explains the rejection of homosexuality as *intrinsically unnatural*. *Humanae Vitae* was deeply challenged, not only by gay liberation, but also by the AIDS crisis in Africa, where heterosexual infection was aggravated by the condemnation of condom use by the Catholic bishops there.

## Women

In the NT there were many women in positions of leadership and influence in the Church, but from the second century onwards, their role was reduced with increasing formalisation of the authority structures of the church. Women’s influence in early Montanism.

Women took significant roles in radical non-conformity: Quakers and other fringe groups like the Shakers in America. Joanna Southcott (1750 - 1814) was a famous prophetess who claimed, at the age of 64, to be pregnant with the Messiah.

Women in the Salvation Army: William Booth – ‘all my best men are women’. Women were

allowed to hold officer's rank in the SA from its outset. *Catherine Booth* changed her husband's mind on the appropriateness of women teaching in the organisation, partly through the evangelistic effectiveness of her addresses.

*The place of women in society* – biology and technology. *Patriarchal attitudes* were undermined, to some extent, by the place of women in the industrialised workforce. *The law* : women didn't legally have custody of their children until 1838. The *Married Women Property Act 1870* granted married women the right to own property they had earned or inherited: prior to that, a married woman's property belonged to her husband.

As medical practice developed in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the *experience and longevity of women improved* significantly. The *move for women to get the vote*: began in Australia at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and moved to the UK in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Women were at the forefront of moves to *take control of their fertility*, with Marie Stopes (1880 – 1959) being a public advocate of the taboo subject of *contraception*. The Church of England formally opposed artificial birth control, with the Lambeth Conference of 1908 and retained this position until the Lambeth Conference of 1930 which lifted the condemnation.

Women made up *a very significant proportion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary movement*. Single women began to *work within the deprived areas of British cities* in the Church of England: the first deaconess in the Church of England was Elizabeth Ferard, who was admitted to the order by the Bishop of London in 1862.

In the twentieth century, gradually, women were accepted into the ordained ministry of protestant churches. The first congregational woman minister was *Constance Coltman* who was ordained in 1917. *Edith Gates* was ordained to the Baptist ministry in 1918.

In Anglicanism, *the first woman to be ordained priest was Florence Li*, who was ordained priest in 1944. In 1971, the province of Hong Kong and Macau was the first Anglican province to *approve the ordination of women to the priesthood*.

- USA (1974), Canada (1975), New Zealand (1977), Kenya (1980), Ireland (1990).

The Church of England Synod passed enabling legislation in 1992 with the first ordinations in 1993.

*The ordination of Bishops* followed a similar pattern:

For Anglican woman bishop was in the USA (Barbara Harris) in 1989

The Church of England General Synod agreed in November 2014, Libby Lane ordained as Bishop of Stockport in 2015.

*Feminist theology* is a distinct discipline and process from the opening up of ordained ministry to women.