The History of Christianity 4: Christianity in the West 1750 to the Present
Christianity in the West, 1750 to the Present

Intellectual Movements that Influenced Western Christianity

Christianity in Europe: The French Revolution
Christianity in America: The “Great Awakening” and the American Revolution
Development of Catholicism after 1800
Development of Protestantism after 1800
Intellectual Movements that Influenced Western Christianity

Rationalism (the “Enlightenment”)
Romanticism
Marxism
Rationalism ("The Enlightenment")

questioned the intellectual credentials of Christianity itself

criticism of Christianity based on
  “ominicompetence” of human reason
- Christian beliefs rational
- therefore, basic ideas of Christianity should be derivable from reason itself: “Revelation” is only the rational reaffirmation of moral truths available to enlightened reason
- reason supreme source of revelation. Goddess of Reason enthroned Notre Dame 1793
Romanticism

reaction to rationalism; reason spiritually enslaving, experientially and emotionally deficient
appealed to human imagination rather than reason individual human subjectivity and inwardness mirrors of the infinite, revelations of a higher order than any morality or philosophy both reason and doctrines of Christianity fail to do justice to the complexity and mystery of the world
Marxism

Karl Marx (1818-1883)
the way human beings respond to their material needs determines everything else (ideas, values, belief-systems, religiosity)

*human alienation* is a result of:
- division of labor (alienation from product)
- private property (alienation from society)

Capitalism inherently unstable and doomed to collapse
Marx and Religion

religion is a direct response to social and economic conditions; it has no independent existence
“religion is just the imaginary sun which seems to man to revolve around him, until he realizes that he himself is the centre of his own revolution”
religion is the product of human alienation
“The struggle against religion is therefore indirectly a struggle against the world of which religion is the spiritual fragrance”
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Development of Protestantism after 1800
The French Revolution

marks the high point of anti-religious feeling in Europe
pillars of French society:
  - monarchy
  - church
1789 - 1792: moderate reforms ongoing:
  - agreed all church lands should be nationalized
  - July 1790: Civil Constitution of the Clergy
    rejected authority of the Pope
French Revolution

1792: more radical revolutionary faction launches “Reign of Terror”
   - Louis XVI publicly guillotined Jan 21, 1793

1793-1794: program of dechristianization
   - cult of Goddess Reason officially sanctioned
   - new republican calendar eliminated Sunday and Christian festivals
   - priests pressured to renounce faith
   - program of church closures begun
French Revolution

Nov 1792: French revolutionary armies began campaign of conquest
- six “satellite” republics established by 1799 in Netherlands, Switzerland, parts of Northern Italy, Germany
- 1798: Papal States occupied; Pope Pius VI deported to France (died in prison there 6 months later)
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Christianity in America

Christianity was brought to America largely by refugees seeking to escape religious persecution. First settlers generally deeply committed to Christian beliefs. Most were English speaking Protestants. - Exception: Maryland a Catholic enclave - Large number of Catholics would not arrive until emigrations in 1800’s from Ireland and Italy.
by 1700, lack of interest in religion widespread in America
    - religion reduced to morality
    - large proportion of church membership
      “nominal” or “half-way”
1720: “Great Awakening” began
1734: blossomed in response to preaching of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)
Spread under preaching of George Whitefield (1714-70)
Christianity in America: The Great Awakening.
Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

one of the most significant religious thinkers in the history of United States
father local pastor in Connecticut
studied theology and tutor at Yale College
1726: became asst. pastor at church in Northampton, Mass (his grandfather was pastor); sole pastor after 1729
1734-5: great number of conversions described in A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God
Christianity in America: The Great Awakening.
Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)

Other works: sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”, Freedom of Will
1757: became president of the College of New Jersey (now called Princeton University)
Christianity in America: The Great Awakening.
George Whitefield (1714-1770)

educated at Oxford
member of the Wesley brother’s Holy Club
1736: ordained Anglican deacon; later became priest
1738: asked by John Wesley to go to Georgia as missionary; made first of seven voyages to America
traveled from Georgia to Maine
crowds of up to 8,000 came to hear him preach everyday for weeks
Christianity in America: The Great Awakening.
George Whitefield (1714-1770)

- Benjamin Franklin wrote of his amazement of the size of the crowd, quality of his voice
- detractors called him “Dr. Squintum” because of his cross-eyes
- established clergy refused to allow him to preach in their congregations because of Wesley association and his evangelical fervor
made a major contribution to growth of Methodism in America
Christianity in America: The Great Awakening. The American Revolution

Church of England the established church by law in southern colonies
- after 1760, became increasingly viewed as religious dimension of English colonialism
- suspicions increased Quebec Act of 1774: Britain established Catholicism in French speaking Quebec

first Amendment “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or restricting the free exercise thereof”
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The Development of Catholicism since 1800

State of Catholicism at the end of the Napoleonic era 1814:
- Catholicism largely a European religion
- most European Catholics lived in the Habsburg Empire, Italy, France
- few missions in South America, Japan, India

Pope Pius VII returned to Rome May 1814 after 5 years in prison under Napoleon I and began renewal of the church
- 1814: Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs. Goal: rebuild Catholicism throughout Europe
The Development of Catholicism since 1800

Romanticism powerful effect on reawakening of interest in Catholicism
- Christianity felt to be major source of artistic inspiration and culture excellence

1850: Catholic hierarchy reestablished in Protestant England

Increased Influence of Catholicism in America
- Revolutionary America largely Protestant
- immigrants from Ireland and Italy altered America's religious landscape
- major Catholic educational institutions founded (Notre Dame 1842)
The Development of Catholicism since 1800

Increased respect for and influence of the Pope
Ultramontanism “beyond the mountains”
- extent to which pope had authority “beyond the Alps” (i.e. beyond Italy)
- decades prior to French revolution, pope largely ignored by Catholic faithful as isolated and distant
- Napolean's vicious treatment of pope caused him to regain prestige
The Development of Catholicism since 1800: Pope Pius IX and the First Vatican Council

Pius IX: pope from 1846-1878
1869: called First Vatican Council
  - 700 delegates and visitors
  - liberal Catholics versus Ultramontanism
  - where was the location of supreme authority in the church. Pope? Great Councils of the church?
The Development of Catholicism since 1800: Pope Pius IX and the First Vatican Council

Council decisive victory for Ultramontanism
- July 13, 1869: dogma of papal infallibility approved after heated debate and much opposition
- pope *ex cathedra* (in his formal capacity as teacher and defender of the faith) is infallible
The Development of Catholicism since 1800: The Rise of Catholic Modernism

modernist: school of Catholic theologians operating late 1800's who adopted a critical and skeptical attitude towards traditional Christian doctrines
- radical biblical criticism
- stressed ethical rather than theological dimensions of faith
- wanted to integrate Christian thought with the spirit of the Enlightenment
The Development of Catholicism since 1800: The Second Vatican Council

John XXIII: pope from 1958-63
summoned second Vatican Council
- Oct 1962 to 1965
- 2,450 bishops

after Vatican II:
- church a community of believers (vs. a divinely ordained and hierarchically ordered society)
- importance of laity
- importance of ecumenism
- social justice, human rights, race relations
- “collegiality:” authority also in bishops
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The Development of Protestantism since 1800

Liberal Protestantism
Neo-Orthodoxy
The Rise of Fundamentalism
The Emergence of Evangelicalism
The Rise of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Liberal Protestantism

begin Early 1800's, associated with German writer F.D.E. Schleiermacher

desired to:

- relate Christian faith to the human experience and modern culture
- relate Christian faith to modern science. Darwin's theory made the seven days of creation untenable
- reconstruct Christian beliefs
- restate Christian faith in forms acceptable within contemporary culture
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Liberal Protestantism

had vision of humanity as ascending upward into new realms of progress and prosperity

purpose of religion:
- spiritual needs of modern humanity
- ethical guidance to society

Liberalism reached zenith in North America late 1970's and early 1980's
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Liberal Protestantism

Albrecht Benjamin Ritschl (1822-1889)

“kingdom of God” a static realm of ethical values
history in process of being divinely guided towards perfection
had enormous and unbounded optimism in human ability and potential

Criticism:
- hopelessly optimistic view of human nature
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Liberal Protestantism
Paul Tillich (1886-1965)

most developed and influential presentation of Protestant liberalism; widely regarded as most influential US theologian since Jonathan Edwards

task of modern theology is to establish “conversation” between modern human culture and Christian faith
- existential questions = “ultimate questions” are revealed by human culture
- gospel must speak to the culture
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Neo-Orthodoxy

disillusionment with liberal theology after World War I
- human nature had produced an atrocity
- liberalism had reduced Christianity to religious experience, hence was "human" centered
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Neo-Orthodoxy

Karl Barth (1886-1968)

Swiss theologian

_Chiton Dogmatics_ (1936-1969)

theology not a response to human situation/questions; it is a response to the word of God
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Rise of Fundamentalism

“fundamentalism"
- 1910: series of 12 books by small American publishing house entitled "The Fundamentals"
arose as a religious reaction with American Protestantism to the secular culture 1920 to 1940
counter-cultural movement, with separatist attitude to culture
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Rise of Fundamentalism

believed in:
- absolute literal authority of Scripture
- premillennial return of Christ

siege mentality “oppositionalism,” “walled cities,”
demand to separate from "corrupt" mainstream denominations

1922: caused painful schism in Presbyterian Church in US: “unbelieving liberals” vs. “reactionary fundamentalism”

lost credibility in mainline churches with Scopes Trial 1925
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: The Emergence of Evangelicalism

evangelical
- original usage: 1500's: Catholic writers wishing to revert to more biblical beliefs and practices than those associated with late medieval church
- now: transdenominational trend laying particular emphasis place of scripture in Christian life
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: The Emergence of Evangelicalism

Characteristics of Evangelicals
- Scripture ultimate authority
- death of Jesus Christ the source of redemption and hope
- emphasis on conversion or "new birth" as a life-changing religious experience
- concern on sharing faith

Billy Graham
- most publicly visible member of new evangelical style
The Development of Protestantism since 1800: Rise of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements

strongly experiential type of Christianity
emphasis on the presence and power and the Holy Spirit
three “waves” of charismatic movements:
1. classic Pentecostalism: emphasis on speaking in tongues
2. 1960’s and 1970’s: spiritual healing and other charismatic practices
3. “signs and wonders” -- supernatural power unleashed on churches