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Introduction

AS THE TWENTIETH CENTURY DAWNED, many Christians anticipated that the coming decades would witness the birth of a new era. Their expectation was that the accelerating global diffusion of Christianity from its Western heartlands to the rest of the globe would usher in the final phase of human history—the climactic millennial age of international peace and harmony. Protestants in Europe and North America confidently predicted the universal triumph of the Western civilizing creed of technological and scientific progress, democratic and liberal political values, and broadly evangelical versions of the Christian religion. In the United States, this optimistic mood was symbolized by the revival in 1900 of *The Christian Oracle*, originally a house magazine of the Disciples of Christ, with the new and extravagantly aspirational title *The Christian Century*. From its new base in Chicago and under new ownership from 1908, the reconstituted magazine rapidly established itself as the principal interdenominational organ of mainline American Protestantism. The magazine retains that status, and its hubristic title, to this day, long after the "mainline" has lost its preeminent status in American religion.

Protestants were not alone in anticipating that the new century held out bright hopes for the triumph of Christian faith and values. Roman Catholics disseminated their own distinctive vision of a coming global transformation based on the spread of Christian revelation. "The civilization of the world is Christian," confidently pronounced Pope Pius X in his encyclical *Il Fermo Proposito* in June 1905: "The more completely Christian it is, the more true, more lasting and more productive of genuine fruit it is."[1] Pius was asserting, not that the task of civilizing the world had been completed, but that only in dutiful submission to the authority of the Catholic Church and to the Holy See could any efforts at civilization achieve permanence. In particular, he was referring to a movement of Italian lay Catholics known as Catholic Action that sought to irradiate secular society through the

agency of distinctively Catholic confraternities and youth organizations. While Pius commended such aspirations, he was concerned to make it abundantly clear that no lay association could be allowed to usurp priestly authority. The Catholic hierarchy, in contrast to Protestant organs of opinion, saw no prospect for global transformation through a host of voluntary Christian mission and reform organizations. Only the formation of exclusive partnerships between the Roman Catholic Church and the State could ensure what *Il Fermo Proposito* termed "the subordination of all the laws of the State to the Divine laws of the Gospel." Nevertheless, Pius's encyclical exuded its own more qualified brand of Christian optimism. It anticipated that, if only such happy marriages between Church and State could be concluded, "what prosperity and well-being, what peace and harmony, what respectful subjection to authority and what excellent government would be obtained and maintained in the world if one could see in practice the perfect ideal of Christian civilization."[2]

With the cheap benefit of hindsight, these contrasting strands of Christian expectation that under the leadership of either the Western Protestant nations or the Holy See the globe was about to enter a golden age of universal Christian charity and international harmony display a pitiable cultural hubris. Even at the time, there were aggressively secular voices in Europe, the United States, and China who with equal confidence of faith predicted precisely the opposite—namely, that the coming century would be one in which scientific rationalism and modernization would finally dispatch the superstition of religious belief to the garbage heap of history. Observers from the twenty-first century are better able to see the fragility of both sets of confident predictions. They are also only too aware that the twentieth century turned out to be, not simply one marked by the two world wars, but also a period in which the perennial narrative of human beings' apparently ineradicable propensity for inhumanity entered a new and peculiarly ugly phase. From a Christian theological perspective, such renewed evidence of human perversity is neither surprising nor problematic. As the neo-orthodox and realist theologians of the middle decades of the century correctly discerned, the fond hopes of human improvement espoused by liberal Protestants in the early years of the century represented a gross distortion of Christian eschatology, whose central narrative is not in fact the steady upward progress of human civilization but the intervention of divine grace as the only solution to human sin. The problem that the twentieth century poses to the Christian mind is not the apparent resurgence of human propensity for atrocity but rather the seeming theological inadequacy of much of the Christian response.

In April–May 1939, as the world lurched for a second time in three decades toward the precipice of global conflict, the American realist theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892–1971) delivered the Gifford lectures in the University of Edinburgh on the theme of "The Nature and Destiny of Man." The first volume of the lectures, published by Scribner's in March 1941, appropriately expounded the somber theme of "human nature" in all its fallen state. However, Niebuhr struggled to complete the second volume with its more optimistic subject matter of "human destiny" in Christ, and it did not appear until January 1943. Niebuhr's difficulty in wartime conditions in making the paradoxical case that human history both "fulfils and negates the Kingdom of God" symbolizes the challenge that the century poses to much Christian theology.[3] Whereas evidence of the negation has been plentiful, convincing evidence of the tangible fulfillment of the values of the Kingdom of God in actual human societies characterized by a majority Christian presence has been decidedly patchy. When subjected to intense pressure from rampant nationalism and ethnic hostility, the European varieties of Christendom that supplied the foundations for the hopes of world transformation expressed at the opening of the century frequently turned out to be less authentically Christian than their advocates had supposed. Furthermore, while the century did indeed witness the unprecedented and extensive global diffusion of the Christian faith that they had anticipated, the theological and cultural contours that world Christianity had thereby assumed by the close of the century were very different in character from what they had imagined.

While taking due note of the relevant perceptions of outstanding thinkers such as Reinhold Niebuhr, this one-volume world history of Christianity in the twentieth century makes no claim to be an intellectual history of either theology or biblical scholarship. Theology and biblical interpretation of an applied kind will properly be the object of attention in those chapters where the focus is on the ways in which Christian thinkers have reflected on how the churches should frame their missionary strategies in response to the challenges posed by the modern world, including that of systemic economic or racial injustice. Theologies of mission, liberation, and Christian engagement with human rights ideologies will thus occupy a prominent place (chapters 9, 10, 11, and 12). But a comprehensive history of Christian doctrine in the twentieth century is a wholly different enterprise that must await the attention of a theologian with historical interests. Rather, this book provides a historian's perspective on the multiple and complex ways in which the Christian religion and its institutional embodiment in the Christian churches have interacted with the changing

social, political, and cultural environment of the twentieth century. For Christian readers the approach taken may at times be disturbing in its insistence on the disconcerting extent to which Christians have allowed their theology and even their ethics to be fashioned by the prevalent ideologies of the day. For readers who are not Christians, the challenge may rather be to take more seriously than they previously have the continuing force of the impact of Christian belief and communal practice on culture, society, and politics in the modern world. My primary concern as author is simply stated. In 1990 the Canadian church historian Gavin White (1927–2016) published a short introductory book with the engaging title *How the Churches Got to Be the Way They Are*.[4] The primary focus of White's book was on the churches in Britain, though he made brief forays into the ecclesiastical history of North America, Australasia, and the Soviet Union. In contrast, this current volume aims in principle to cover the globe, with particular attention given to the transformative growth of Christianity beyond Europe and North America. Its central question, however, is much the same as the one White posed in 1990. This book is an attempt to enable serious readers—whether or not they consider themselves to be Christians—to understand how the churches of the world got to be the way they were in specific geographical locations at crucial turning points in the course of the century.

The twentieth century has suffered comparative neglect at the hands of modern Western historians of Christianity, who have, on the whole, remained more interested in the intellectual and social challenges posed to the European churches in the nineteenth century. Yet it was the twentieth century that shaped the contours of the Christian faith as it is now, a culturally plural and geographically polycentric religion clustered around a number of new metropolitan loci in the non-European world, from Seoul to São Paulo. The majority of its rapidly growing number of adherents found the post-Enlightenment questions that preoccupied the churches of the North and West to be remote from their pressing everyday concerns of life and death, sickness and healing, justice and poverty. In Islamic regions of Africa and in almost all of Asia they were also intimately concerned with the implications of living as religious minorities in a context dominated by the majority religious tradition, as chapter 8 expounds with reference to Egypt and Indonesia. Their theological priorities and ethical perspectives differed accordingly from those of Christians in the North. The twentieth century thus set the agenda for the theological and ethical issues that now constitute the fault lines dividing Christians and churches from each other—fault lines that are significantly different from those inherited from

the European religious past and that still determined the denominational geography of Christianity in 1900. The twentieth century has thus made it necessary for students of ecumenism to redraw the map of Christian unity and disunity, as chapter 6 explains. This history therefore has a contemporary purpose as well a more strictly historical one. It is concerned with enabling us to understand how the churches got to be the way they are *now*. For that reason, while its formal chronological endpoint is the close of the twentieth century rather than the present day, it will from time to time take brief note of events and developments that have occurred since the turn of the twenty-first century.

The central concerns of this book have dictated its shape. It is neither a comprehensive region-by-region survey nor a straightforward chronological narrative. Rather it selects fifteen themes that are of preeminent importance for understanding the global dimensions of contemporary Christianity and analyzing the various ways in which Christians have responded to some of the most important social, cultural, and political trends of the twentieth century. Each theme is introduced and then illustrated by two geographical case studies, mostly taken from different continents. The comparatively unusual juxtaposition of some of these case studies may raise the eyebrows of regional or subject specialists. Scholars of Catholic nationalism in Poland, for example, will not be accustomed to viewing their subject alongside the phenomenon of Protestant nationalism in Korea, as chapter 2 does, and the converse will be true of scholars of Korean nationalism. Such unconventional juxtapositions are designed to illuminate by comparison and contrast, as well as to identify transnational connections that have often been overlooked. The case studies have also been selected with an eye to ensuring a reasonable measure of geographical comprehensiveness across the volume as a whole: they are intended to broaden horizons and to rescue from implied marginality some regions, such as Melanesia (chapter 3), Scandinavia (chapter 5), or the Caribbean (which receives some, albeit inadequate, attention in chapter 15), that are too often neglected by broad-brush treatments. Academic history tends to be populated by regional or national specialists, and the history of Christianity perhaps more so than some other fields of study. Although the recent growth of transnational history has stimulated a welcome broadening of scholarly horizons, and has begun to shape approaches to the modern history of popular religious movements,[5] its impact on the writing of ecclesiastical history of a more conventional kind has so far been quite limited. Nevertheless, historians working in the still emerging interdisciplinary field of "world Christianity" have begun to point the way by uncovering

the transnational linkages between regional Christian movements and the polycentric nature of the structures created or facilitated by Catholic and Protestant missions from the sixteenth century onwards.[6] If this book succeeds in placing key episodes and narratives of national Christian history in the twentieth century in an illuminating transnational perspective, it will have achieved one of its goals.

The thematic approach adopted by the book may prove challenging to those readers who prefer to follow a single story from beginning to end, and it is hoped that such readers will be patient with the amount of chronological switching that this approach inevitably involves. It has also necessitated some hard choices of inclusion and correspondingly of omission. The case studies drill quite deeply into the hidden strata of the Christian movements that have been selected, and of necessity leave others that are of undoubted importance relatively untouched. In the same way, the case study approach gives prominence to some individual Christian men and women who might not find their way into a more conventionally structured world history. For example, Amir Sjarifoeddin, the Indonesian Lutheran layman and nationalist politician who appears in chapter 8, or Patricia Brennan, the Sydney evangelical Anglican who features in chapter 12 as the unlikely architect of the Australian branch of the Movement for the Ordination of Women, are unlikely to gain a mention in any other published survey of modern Christian history. Conversely, some high-profile ecclesiastical statesmen who might normally be expected to occupy center stage have only bit parts in the narrative or may not even feature at all. If popes and archbishops find themselves playing second fiddle to comparatively unknown laywomen and laymen, that is no bad thing, for this is a history of Christianity in its myriad popular embodiments, not a narrow institutional history of denominations and their higher echelons of leadership. Named Christian women feature less often in the text than they should in view of the consistent predominance of women in the membership of almost all churches in the twentieth century. Those who write global histories can do a certain amount to redress the balance of a century during most of which women were seen but not allowed to be heard in the churches of almost all Christian traditions. Thus chapter 1 highlights the somewhat surprising role of the suffragette Christabel Pankhust in promoting Adventist teaching in Britain between 1918 and 1958, while chapter 9 singles out Pilar Bellosillo, Spanish president of the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations, who almost—but not quite—succeeded in addressing the Second Vatican Council. Chapter 13 records the leadership exercised in the early Pentecostal movement by such remarkable

women as "Pandita" Ramabai Dongre, Minnie Abrams, and Aimee Semple McPherson, while chapter 15 directs attention to the extraordinary Chicago pastorate of the African American Pentecostal Elder Lucy Smith. Noteworthy though such individual examples undoubtedly are, what may be even more significant in the long term is the distinctive appeal exercised by Pentecostal forms of Christianity to millions of women whose names are not generally preserved in the historical records but who found Pentecostal teaching and practice to be a source of personal fulfillment and emancipation. More often than not the role of female Christians in the narrative remains inescapably veiled in such historical anonymity, but it must be stressed that anonymity need not imply marginality.

Historians strive to deal with the available written or oral evidence with rigor and fairness, but that does not mean that neutrality on their part is possible or even desirable. Chapter 7 devotes the most attention to historiography. It shows how historians have struggled to interpret and explain the apparent widespread failure of the Church to act Christianly in two of the greatest moral crises of the century. The chapter examines the part the churches may have played, whether wittingly or unwittingly, in supplying a sinister ideological apparatus for the implementation of genocide in Nazi Germany and Rwanda in 1994. No historian can or should write about such grave matters from a position of "neutrality." Historians of religion write about questions of ultimate concern, and their own religious commitment or lack of it will inevitably affect what they choose to write about, and the way in which they do it. This history of world Christianity is written by a British evangelical Protestant. A history of the same subject written by a Brazilian Pentecostal or one by a Lebanese Maronite Catholic would be strikingly different in both content and perspective. Good history writing should nevertheless seek to transcend the limitations of the historian's own background and ideological inclinations, even though the historian will never be wholly successful in achieving such transcendence. If this book is judged by its reviewers to be weaker in its treatment of Catholicism than of Protestantism, and weaker still in its coverage of the Orthodox churches (confined to chapters 8 and 14) and its substantial neglect of the Oriental Orthodox churches, that is precisely what one would expect, and indeed is what the author himself feels. Books of this wide range stretch authors well beyond their specialist expertise, and the stretch marks are sometimes disconcertingly obvious. The author's primary expertise lies in the modern history of Protestant missions and their varying reception by indigenous peoples, resulting in the growth of what has become known as "world Christianity." That academic background has

nevertheless supplied a very useful foundation for understanding a century in which Christianity took root in the indigenous cultures of Africa, Latin America, and parts of Asia to a greater extent than in any other century.

Scholars of world Christianity, in their commendable enthusiasm to redress the Eurocentric bias of so much historical and theological writing, sometimes give the impression that the declining Christianity of Europe and North America is no longer worthy of attention, for that represents the past, whereas the booming Christianity of the Global South represents the future. That is both an overreaction to previous scholarly imbalance and a potential fallacy of overconfident prediction. World Christianity means world Christianity, and not simply the Christianity of the southern hemisphere. For that reason, this book pays more attention to the churches in Europe and North America than some colleagues who work on southern Christianity may deem to be either necessary or appropriate.

The churches of Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Latin America continue to be deeply impacted by Christian teaching that originated in the North and West—above all, but not wholly, in the United States—and the nature of that impact can be traced in some of the chapters that follow, notably in chapter 13 on Pentecostal Christianities. Furthermore, the North also has its indigenous peoples who have had their own encounters, for good or ill, with mission Christianity: chapter 11 accordingly includes a case study of the often problematic experience by the First Nations peoples of Canada of white "civilizing" Christianity communicated through the medium of Catholic and Protestant residential schools. Two chapters—4 and 5—are devoted to surveys of the classically "European" theme of secularization. Chapter 4 considers the aggressively secular anticlerical campaign conducted by the State in France and the still more explicit attack on religion itself by the Soviet State in Russia and the Ukraine. Chapter 5 engages more directly with sociological debates over secularization, specifically by examining the markedly contrasting patterns of believing and belonging exhibited in the twentieth century by the Scandinavian countries (especially Sweden) on the one hand and by the United States on the other. These two chapters do not accept the supposed inevitability of secularization as the metanarrative that integrates the entire sweep of modern global history, yet neither do they accept the converse implication beloved of some students of world Christianity that the southern hemisphere is somehow immune to the supposedly northern disease of secularization and destined for unending church growth until the eschaton. Any idea of a simple polarity between the diametrically opposite religious trajectories

of North and South is becoming less and less tenable, not least because of the extent of southern and East Asian migration to Europe and North America, a theme discussed in chapter 15.

The Bible is the fountainhead of all Christian traditions, and a colorful array of characters and images drawn from both the Old and the New Testaments adorn the walls of the long corridors of Christian history, providing inspiration and models for Christian living. Yet the twentieth century may have a better claim than any other to be labeled as the century of the Bible. In the course of the century more peoples received the Scriptures in their own language than in any preceding century. As they did so, biblical narratives and the stories of their own history—in the case of African peoples, frequently painful ones of enslavement and colonization—began to interact with one another in ways that had profound implications both for their understanding of the Christian faith and for their own developing sense of nationhood. As chapter 3 notes, the acceleration of conversion to Christianity in tropical Africa in the years after the First World War is often explained by reference to the full impact of the colonial state and the opportunities for self-advancement that mission education offered in that context. Such explanations are not without their merit, although they struggle to account for the further acceleration of church growth that took place after the end of European colonial rule. In addition, they too easily miss the fact that the same period was the one in which for the first time most peoples in sub-Saharan Africa received either large portions or the whole of Christian Scripture in their own language, and consequently began to frame their own responses to the Christian message in ways that often circumvented or even contradicted missionary interpretation.[7]

Unmediated popular engagement with the biblical message may appear to be a distinctively Protestant theme, but it is worth remembering that the British and Foreign Bible Society was happy to cooperate with Orthodox and Catholic as well as Protestant churches, and that even some Catholic bishops supported modern Bible translations. Modern vernacular translations of the Bible contributed to the formation of ethnolinguistic identity and hence national consciousness, not simply in areas of Protestant predominance such as Korea or parts of tropical Africa, but also in Orthodox Serbia or Catholic Croatia, where the first vernacular bibles had been published in 1868 and 1895 respectively.[8] Furthermore, the Second Vatican Council lifted many of the traditional restraints on lay Catholic engagement with the biblical text, opening the door to new styles of popular Catholicism such as those fashioned by the Base Ecclesial Communities in Latin America. To a greater extent than any other single ecclesiastical

event in the course of the century, the Council provoked an upheaval in the tectonics of Christian confessionalism that had remained more or less stable since the sixteenth century, narrowing the old fault lines between Catholic and Protestant, while pushing up new ones between contrasting styles of Roman Catholic. In so doing, the Council, for all of its hesitations and deep fissures of internal division, began to reconfigure the global topography of the Christian religion. As chapter 9 will show, it began the transformation of the Catholic Church from its inherited role as the theological cement binding together the established political order in Europe to a genuinely missionary force, rivaling evangelical Protestantism in its subversive potential to make the Christian gospel a source of liberation for the poor and marginalized in the non-European world.

The twentieth century did not quite turn out to be the century of Christian missionary triumph that the founders of the *Christian Century* fondly imagined. Statistical estimates suggest that in percentage terms Christians accounted for a slightly lower percentage of the world population in 2000 than they had at the beginning of the century: the World Christian Database compiled by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Seminary computes that the percentage of the world population that was Christian fell from 34.46 percent in 1900 to 32.65 percent in 2005.[9] There was, of course, an unprecedented and sustained growth of conversion to Christianity in Africa and other parts of the non-Western world, as chapter 3 in particular narrates, but over the course of the century it failed to keep pace with the explosion of the world population. But neither did the twentieth century prove to be one in which the clinically rational armies of science and the secular state decisively routed the forces of supposedly obsolete religious "superstition," as was so confidently anticipated by progressive modernizers in Europe, the United States, and China during the first three decades of the century. On the contrary, the hundred years that followed the First World War have been marked by the obstinate survival, and indeed widespread resurgence, of religion as a resource motivating obdurate human resistance to absolute state power and action in pursuit of a range of visions of social transformation. The central role of Christianity in issuing a bold challenge to the serene faith of secular self-belief is perhaps the most important integrating narrative of this book. Where new nation-states came into being—as in sub-Saharan Africa—their geographical contours may have been the frequently illogical outcome of colonial politics, but their emerging sense of collective identity more often than not owed a great deal to the narratives and motifs of Christian Scripture. Where other states of anti-Christian

inclination huffed and puffed in their frantic determination to blow the Christian house down, they ultimately failed, even in cases such as China between 1949 and 1976, where in the short term a repressive state apparatus proved able to drive the institutional Church out of sight.

The inception of the modern Protestant missionary movement in the eighteenth century and its rapid expansion during the nineteenth century, at a time when Catholic expansion was stymied by the prolonged institutional paralysis induced by the traumas of the Napoleonic era, roughly coincided with the emergence of a new and more aggressive phase of Western colonialism. Much historiography takes it for granted that the relationship between the two was more than coincidental and was a relatively simple one of cause and effect. More recent work on the nineteenth century suggests that in fact the relationship between the missionary movement and European colonialism was considerably more complex and indeed often conflicted in nature.[10] What the twentieth-century history of Christianity indicates is a growing independence of the churches in the non-Western world from their European or North American missionary origins and hence a progressive distancing of Christianity from its apparent original status as the religion of the white colonizers. By the close of the century Europe had reverted to what it had been in the first century of the Christian era—a continent that sat uneasily at the margins of Christian demography and identity, even though Europeans or those of European ancestry still retained their centuries-old hold on the production of the majority of written Christian theology. The twentieth century may not have been the Christian century that missionary strategists hoped for in 1900, but it was indeed the century in which Christianity became more truly a world religion than ever before.

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