OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

LECTURE 35 – ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT; WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES; VATICAN II; OTHER TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

Prayer from the years explored in this Lecture:

> Eternal God, Creator of the universe, great and wonderful are your works, wondrous are your ways. Thank you for the many splendoured variety of your creation. Thank you for the many ways we affirm your presence and purpose, and the freedom to do so. Forgive our violation of your creation. We stand in awe and gratitude for your persistent love for each and all of your children. Grant to all and to our leaders attributes of strong: mutual respect in word and deed: restraint in the exercise of power; and the will for peace with justice for all. Amen.
>
> An ecumenical prayer written at the Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, and intended to be used and adapted for Christian prayer services around the world.

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In preparation, read Cairns, 468-76, 534; Vos 151-2, 154-5; Lion, 657-9, 667-8 (Ecumenical Movement); Cairns 497-500; Vos, 153-4; Lion, 658 (Vatican II); Cairns, 478, 486-8; Olson, 592-6 (Evangelical Christians); Lane, 242 (World Council of Churches), 249 (Liberation Theology).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Definition of the modern Ecumenical Movement

We're looking in this Lecture at several twentieth-century movements within the Christian Church; first the Ecumenical Movement.

The English word 'ecumenical' comes from the Greek word *oikoumene*, which translates: 'the whole inhabited world' or 'world-wide' or 'universal'. Applied to Christianity, it means 'Christian oneness in the faith'.

Greek word OIKOUMENE crowns outline of cross and ship in symbol of World Council of Churches.

The word was originally used for Empire-wide Councils of the early Church (C4, C5 - Lecture 10) As soon as the Roman Empire was united under Constantine, he called bishops from all over the Empire - hence 'world-wide' or 'universal' Councils - to reach agreement on disputed beliefs; the first was at Nicaea in 325 (Lecture 10, pages 4 to 6), to debate whether Christ was fully God). Another was at Chalcedon in 451 (Lecture 10, pages 11 to 12), to decide the relationship between the divine and the human natures of Christ. The Creeds they produced were meant to be universally binding throughout the whole Church, as opposed to local synods and any local creeds. If you didn't accept them, you were excommunicated from the Church,

The modern use of the word 'ecumenical' is different. It first appeared in 1937 (Cairns 468 and page 4, below); it is applied to all sorts of efforts to reunite denominations, and to movements for cooperation among churches; there have been more such initiatives in the last ninety years than at any other time since the C5 Ecumenical Councils.

So: 'ecumenical' is an adjective, describing people or events involved in cooperation among churches. The phrase 'the Ecumenical Movement' describes Protestant efforts, during the C20, to do one of two things - (1) to unite denominations, ideally to create one visible Church of all existing churches, or (2) failing that (which hasn't happened), to get denominations to cooperate more with each other.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the best-known agency for promoting the Ecumenical Movement, and it now has 349 churches in membership, in more than 110 countries. Its symbol is the cross and the ship in the badge at the top of this page.

1.2 Three other areas of inter-church life, not described as 'ecumenical'

(a) One is the spiritual unity that all believers have in Christ, in the invisible church, the body of Christ. Evangelicals stress this - they take seriously that Jesus prayed for his disciples to be one (John 17:20-23), but they question whether membership of a federation, with an inadequate basis of faith and with no interest in evangelism (which is how they see the World Council of Churches) is 'to be one' as the Lord prayed. As the flag which flies over the tent at the annual Convention at Keswick in Cumbria proclaims, they are 'All One in Christ Jesus'. That's important, as was touched on in earlier lectures, but it's not the Ecumenical Movement as the WCC defines it.

(b) A second area of Christian life, which some books describe as 'ecumenical', is the huge number of interdenominational Societies, like Bible Societies or Missionary Societies, where people work together, within the umbrella of the Society. Such co-operation is excellent, but it's not covered by the word 'ecumenical'.

(c) Third, Federations for co-operation among like-minded denominations - e.g., 'World Methodist', 'Pan Anglican'- that's co-operation, but it's not 'ecumenical' as the word is usually understood. So:

1.3 The modern Ecumenical Movement comes in three forms:

(a) Local churches working together, across denominational boundaries; this is not unduly difficult at local level, around specific projects - for example, Christmas Carol services, Holy Week Joint Services, Christian Aid fundraising events.

(b) Mergers of Churches or Denominations, to form an organic union. Churches with similar backgrounds began to merge after World War I. The United Church of Canada was formed in 1925 from Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. The Reformed Church of France was created in 1938 by the union of four denominations - the Evangelical Methodist Church of France, the Reformed Evangelical Church of France, the Reformed Church of France and Evangelical Free Churches. The Church of South India resulted in 1947 from union of four denominations. Twenty-seven independent regional churches joined in 1948 to form the Evangelical Church in Germany. The United Church of Christ in the United States of America was formed in 1961 by the amalgamation of the Congregational Christian Churches with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, both of which were the products of prior mergers. In 1972 in Great Britain, Congregationalists joined Presbyterians to form the United Reformed Church, and they added the Churches of Christ to their union in 1982.

(c) The World Council of Churches is the best-known expression of the modern Ecumenical Movement. Its whose aim, at its creation in 1948, was the visible, federal union of all Christian denominations; however, two major groups have at all times had reservations about that aim - many evangelicals in many denominations, and the Roman Catholic Church, as we'll see at 2.3 and 2.4 below.

The problem which evangelicals have is two-fold; first, the original WCC and its local bodies were based on the lowest common denominator in order to get as many churches as possible on board. The problem with the lowest common denominator is: What do you do if, as an evangelical, you find yourself on the platform at an public ecumenical meeting with, say, Richard Holloway, formerly the Episcopal Bishop of Edinburgh; you are on the platform because you are both believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have that much in common, but then someone asks a question about the Bible; Richard Holloway replies that it is simply a human book, written by fallible human authors who got some of their ideas wrong, and that we now know better; he says that regularly and very publicly, at meetings and on the radio. You're asked to put the evangelical understanding of the Bible - that's why you're there - and you affirm its inspiration and authority, but then the chairman says, 'oh, no, you mustn't be so dogmatic, Christians must put aside their distinctive positions and state only what everyone agrees on' – in other words, you may take a stand only on the lowest common denominator.

Now here's the point. It's one thing to attend a meeting organized by others, and to make your contribution, but it's entirely different to invite Richard Holloway to preach in your local church; that's the problem which evangelicals have with the Ecumenical Movement - you are permitted to be 'distinctive' only on the lowest common denominator.

One example. When I was student at Edinburgh University, I was initially a member of the Christian Union, a large body with an evangelical Doctrinal Basis - the Basis was the predecessor of the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship Basis that we looked in

Lecture 34, page 6. The University Student Christian Movement, which was theologically liberal (and proud of it) asked the Christian Union to join them in publicising some joint activities. The difference between the two societies was that the CU invited speakers who subscribed to and promoted its Doctrinal Basis, while the SCM invited anyone and everyone to come and discuss whatever they thought about some subject - on the basis that one person's ideas on that topic were as valid as the next person's ideas. The Christian Union committee recognized the right of the SCM to publicize meetings on whatever subject they wished, but declined to host joint events where (some of) the speakers and others on the platform would not only not accept the *raison d'être* of the Christian Union - to promote and teach the evangel as set out in the Union's Constitution (Doctrinal Basis) - but would decry its beliefs to young people, many of whom where also very young Christians.

The SCM stirred up some bad publicity, which wasn't very Christian - there is no one more intolerant than tolerant people who don't get their own way. The CU stood firm. There is now no SCM at the University and the CU is one of the largest and most flourishing societies in the University. Unity on the basis of the lowest common denominator is not true unity.

The second problem is no longer a problem. Originally, in 1948, the WCC and its local bodies, such as the British Council of Churches and the Scottish Council of Churches, sought visible, organic union of all the world's churches by 1980 - one Church and one Church only, world-wide. That didn't happen and it is no longer the stated aim of the WCC.

2 THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

2.1 Background, growth and development

The WCC grew out of the enthusiasm generated by a World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 - top left entry on the next page. It's purpose was 'to plant an undivided church of Christ in every non-Christian nation'. It was, following the pattern of C19 overseas mission, 'Christian countries' sending missionaries to 'non-Christian countries' – there was no though at that time of encouraging local overseas churches to grow themselves, as we saw in our look at C19 missions. From Edinburgh in 1910, the movement developed in three strands, illustrated on the chart on the next page. (It's awkward to have the narrative on this page and the chart on the next page, but because it is a full page chart, there is no alternative. The first (left column) was MISSIONARY, which was the *raison d'etre* of the Edinburgh Conference. It led to more united action as missionaries, more than any others, working as they do in missionary situations, see the need to work together.

The second strand (middle column) was known as FAITH AND ORDER, involving the theology and policy of churches. Their first World Conference was held at Lausanne in 1927. Over four hundred delegates representing 108 denominations were so conscious of their unity in one church under the headship of Christ that they arranged another meeting, held in Edinburgh in 1937. This time there were over five hundred delegates from 123 churches and 43 countries conferred on theological issues. The idea of unity in diversity was uppermost in their minds as they discussed the common faith, the sacraments, and the nature of the church - they were the first to apply the word 'ecumenical' to C20 efforts for unity.

Meantime, the third strand, known as LIFE AND WORK, tried to get Christians to apply their faith in politics, industry, education, international relations, etc. Their first meeting

was in 1925 in Stockholm, with six hundred delegates, representing over ninety churches from thirty-seven countries. They were the ones who pushed for the creation of a permanent council at Geneva, and their meeting at Oxford in 1937 called for an international council of churches to unite the Faith-and-Order and Life-and-Work movements. In consequence, 80 leaders met at Utrecht in Holland in 1938, as on the chart, to work out a constitution for a World Council of Churches.

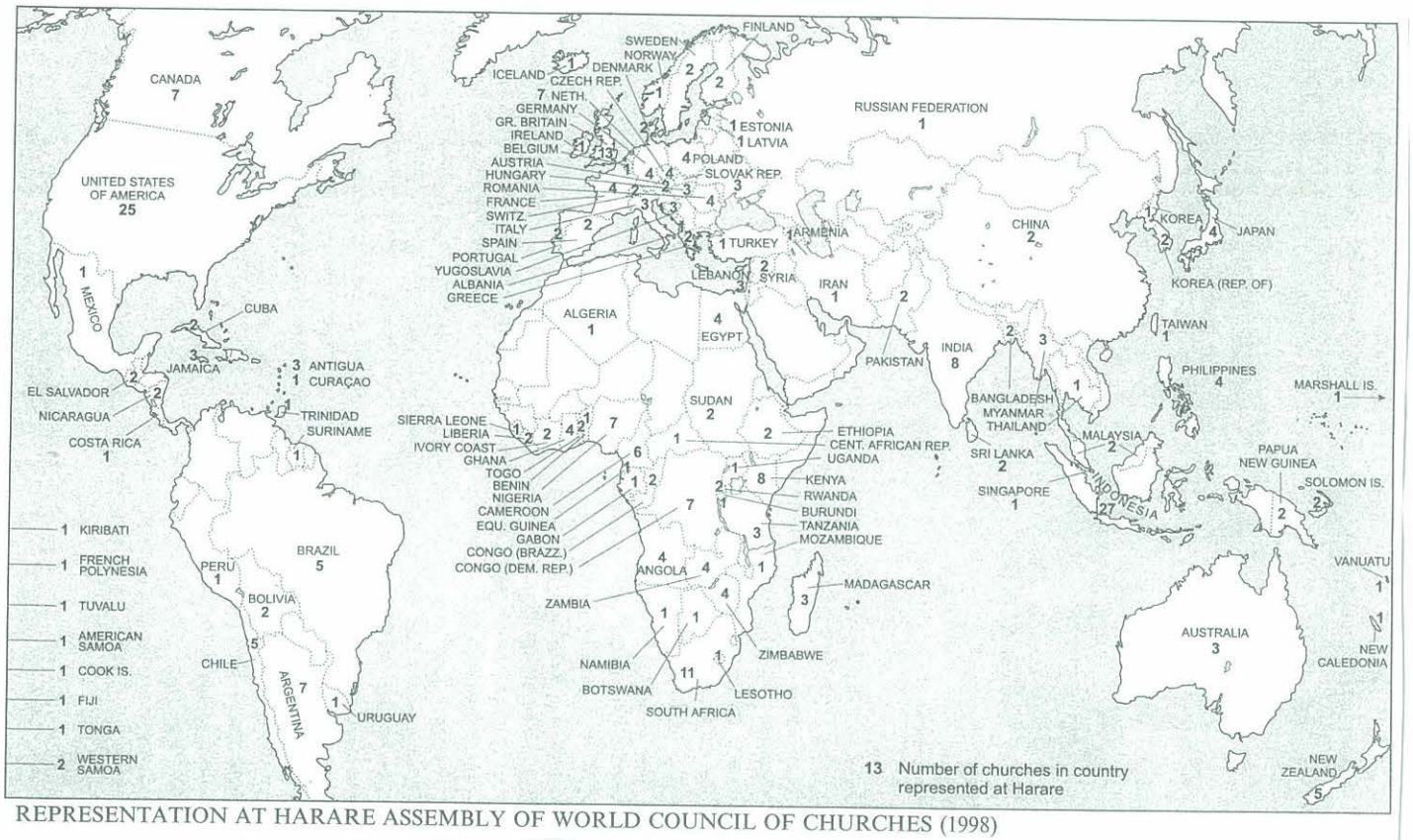
Background, growth and development of the World Council of Churches

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL	FAITH AND ORDER	LIFE AND WORK
1910 - World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation"		
1921 - International Missionary Council formed at Lake Mohonk, New York,		1925 - Life and Work, Stockholm, Sweden
	1927 - Faith and Order, Lausanne, Switzerland	
1928 - International Missionary Council, Jerusalem, Palestine		
	1937 - Faith and Order, Edinburgh	1937 - Life and Work, Oxford
	1938-Joint Committee, Utrecht, Netherlands	
1947 - International Missionary Council, Whitby, Canada		
	1948 – First World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, "Man's Disorder and God's Design"	
1952 - International Missionary Council, Willingen, Netherlands: "The Missionary Obligation of the Church"	1952 - Commission on Faith and Order, Lund, Sweden	
	1954 - World Council of Churches, Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.:	
1958 - International Missionary Council, Ghana		
1961 - International Missionary Council joins World Council of Churches, New Delhi, India: "Jesus Christ, the Light of the World"		
1963 - Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Mexico City, Mexico: "Witness in Six Continents"	1963 - Commission on Faith and Order, Montreal, Canada	
		1966 - Department of Church and Society, Geneva, Switzerland: "Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time"
1968 - World Council of Churches, Uppsala, Sweden: "Behold, I Make All Things New"		
1972 - Commission on World Missions and Evangelism, Bangkok, Thailand: "Salvation Today"		
1975 - World Council of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya 1983 - World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada 1992 - World Council of Churches, Canberra, Australia 1998 - World Council of Churches, Harare, Zimbabwe 2006 - World Council of Churches, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil		
2013 - Korea		

World War Two (1939-45) intervened, but the WCC was inaugurated at Amsterdam in 1948. 350 delegates from 147 Churches were present, from 44 different countries. Putting aside differences of ordination, sacraments, church government, baptism, etc, looking for the lowest common denominator, they set up a headquarters in Geneva, arranged for an Assembly to meet every 7 years, with smaller bodies in between.

Its most visible face is a huge gathering, every seven years, called an Assembly - see the dates and place names at the foot of the chart on the previous page,

2,2 World Council of Churches in 1998



REPRESENTATION AT HARARE ASSEMBLY OF WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES (1998)

However, it has not been plain sailing, so we'll go quickly through its major stages of its development.

First, problems with its Doctrinal Basis

2.3 Doctrinal Basis

The original basis of WCC membership was: 'A fellowship of churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.' The Russians complained that this made no mention of the Trinitarian basis of Christianity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and evangelicals had reservations about the vagueness of it, particularly the absence of any mention of Scripture, which evangelicals saw as the key to Christians working together.

Then, in 1961, the WCC adopted a new basis:

'The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God our Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'

This brought 30 million Russian Orthodox Christians within the Council and changed the face of the Ecumenical Movement. It also persuaded the Roman Catholic Church to sent official observers – it has never joined, for reasons we'll see in the middle of page 9, it now sent Observers.

The next problem arose at the next Assembly in Uppsala in Sweden in 1968 - remember that the Assembly meets every seven years.

2.4 Problems following the Assembly in Uppsala in Sweden in 1968

Earlier World Council documents had stressed the importance of bringing non-Christians to faith in Christ, but this was barely mentioned at this Assembly. The 'vertical' dimension of reconciliation with God was virtually abandoned. All the emphasis lay on the 'horizontal' dimension of reconciliation within humanity. The Social Gospel again.

It took a Roman Catholic observer at the Assembly - not a member, just an observer - to protest: `I haven't heard anyone speak on justification by faith. I've heard no one speak of everlasting life.'

To remedy this, a Congress of Evangelicals was formed - Lecture 36 - to bring the vertical and the horizontal together into a healthy balance.

Also at Uppsala, the Assembly supported revolutionary liberation movements with financial support, glorifying their achievements, adopting revolutionary rhetoric and criticizing the West, particularly the United States, while glossing over the faults in revolutionary movements. The Council thus became overly political for many, even for many who supported its basic aims, and very overly political for its critics.

It was not until the Sixth Assembly in Vancouver in 1983, fifteen years later, that there was renewed attention to Trinitarian theology and evangelistic proclamation.

2.5 Subsequent developments

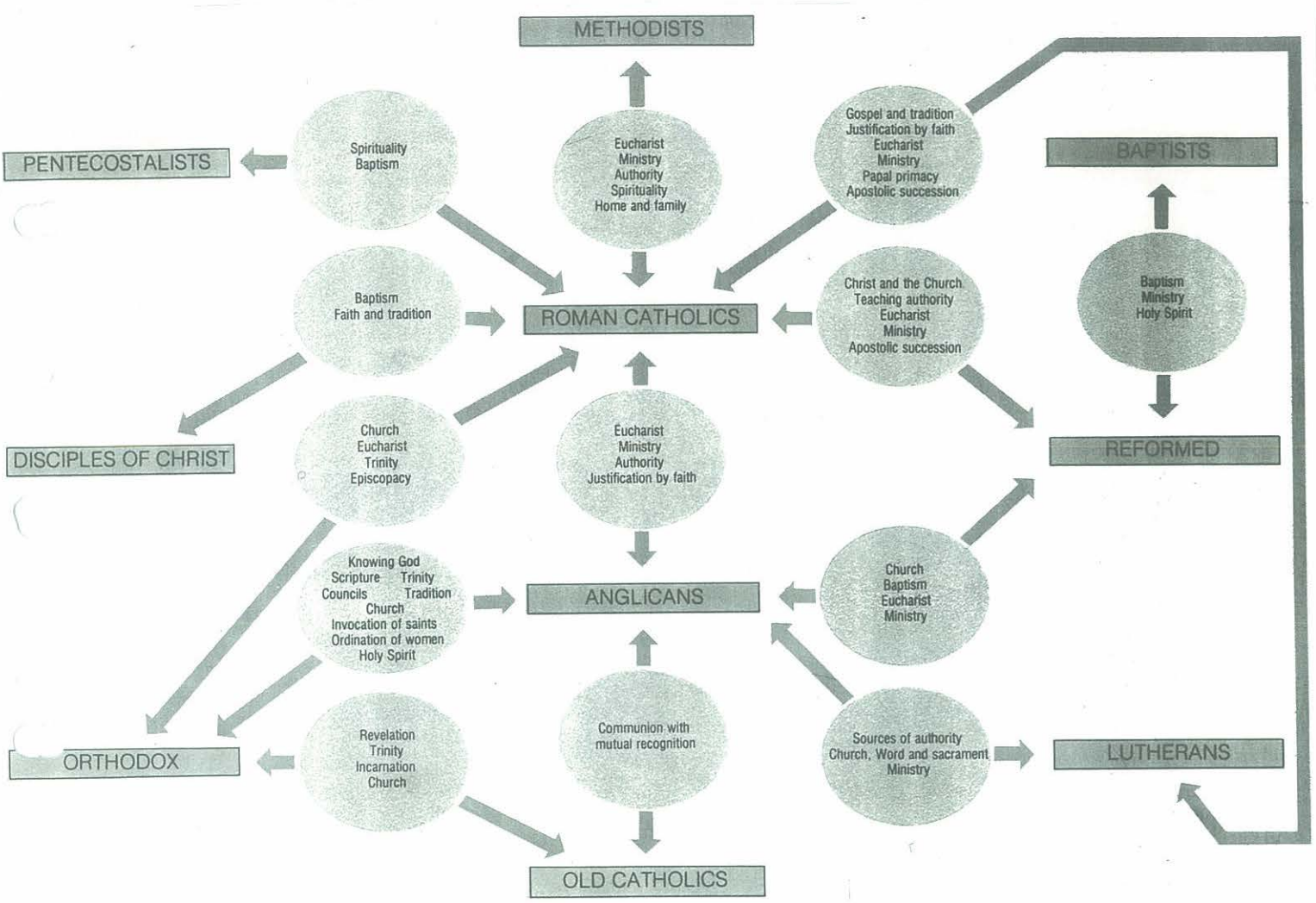
1982 saw a remarkable document called *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, remarkable because a statement was agreed by delegates representing almost every tradition - Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal and others, including the Observers from the Roman Catholic Church. There was not total agreement, but there was significant common ground, and the document also recognized, and listed, their differences, and urged mutual understanding. For example:

'In order to overcome their differences, believer Baptists and those who practise infant baptism should reconsider certain aspects of their practices. The first may seek to express more visibly the fact that children are placed under the protection of God's grace. The latter must guard against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptised children to mature commitment to Christ.' BAPTISM 16

The next development was a new focus on the Holy Spirit. The Seventh Assembly, in Canberra, Australia in 1991, was meant to focus on the Holy Spirit, but when the Koreans linked the Christian faith with traditional Korean spirituality and invoked the spirits of `earth, air, water and sea', the Eastern Orthodox delegates said the time had come to review their relations with the WCC - but they did stay. However, it illustrates the difficulty of trying to bring together diverse bodies, which don't have a high view of Scripture.

This diagram is a reminder that lots of churches speak to lots of other churches about lots of different subjects; that may be Ecumenism in the broadest sense of the word, but its not what we mean by The Ecumenical Movement.

Who is talking to whom, and what are they talking about?



2.6 Three major changes in attitudes.

(1) a radical change in the attitudes of different churches to one another. Increasingly there is a spirit of co-operation and friendship. Most churches recognize that they do not possess the whole truth and are open to learn from others. Even the Roman Catholic Church has significantly modified its earlier claims to possess the whole truth. Evangelicals are divided in their attitudes to the Ecumenical Movement, but the majority are ready to acknowledge that they can learn from others.

(2) The social dimension of the gospel has been explored by all Christians, The influence of non-Western churches has helped to keep social needs at the top of the agenda. All traditions, Roman Catholic and Evangelical as well as Ecumenical, have, in the last forty years made serious attempts to develop a fully-rounded concept of mission and salvation.

(3) Expectations have been considerably watered down

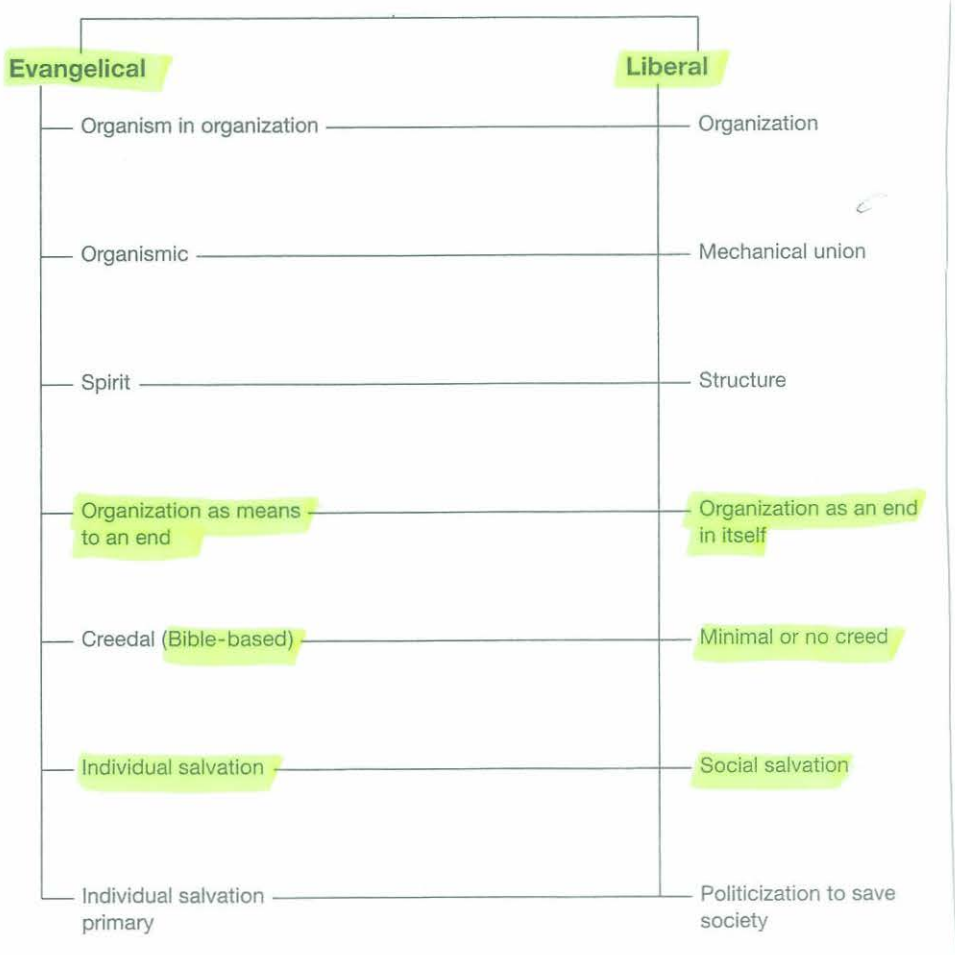
Christian unity was seen by the WCC in 1948 as the visible, organic union of all Christians; by 1961, it was hoped to achieve this by 1980. When 1980 came and went and it hadn't happened, they replaced the goal of visible unity with the goal (to quote the General Secretary) of 'a fellowship of those who are different from one another', that is a unity like a symphony orchestra, with every musician and instrument adding its own sound to a multifaceted composition. But evangelicals ask, how diverse can parts be and still produce a symphony? The present situation sounds (is it unkind to put it this way?) like an orchestra warming up before it begins the concert.

The WCC's lowest common denominator approach means that two major groups do not find it acceptable:

(a) many evangelicals have reservations about the absence, in the Basis, of doctrines that they see as key to Biblical belief; and

(b) Roman Catholics still claim that they are the one and only true Church - as they put it on their official website: 'The Catholic Church has never been a member of the World Council of Churches, but is actively participating to the Ecumenical Movement in different ways. To join would recognize that there were other legitimate Churches, while Rome still insists that she is the only true one.

So where are we? This chart may help, although it would be wrong to substitute 'WCC' for 'Liberal', so the chart has limitations. To be positive, evangelicals will continue to point to interdenominational activities, too numerous to mention, which don't require organizational unity.



TOPIC - LIBERATION THEOLOGY - was taken at this point in the Lecture; here, it is printed at the end of the Notes for this Lecture.

3 SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL (1962-65)

The Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican (popularly called Vatican II)

3.1 Some of the 'innovations' that came out of it:

If you asked a group of Christians from different backgrounds and different ages, 'Do you know that:

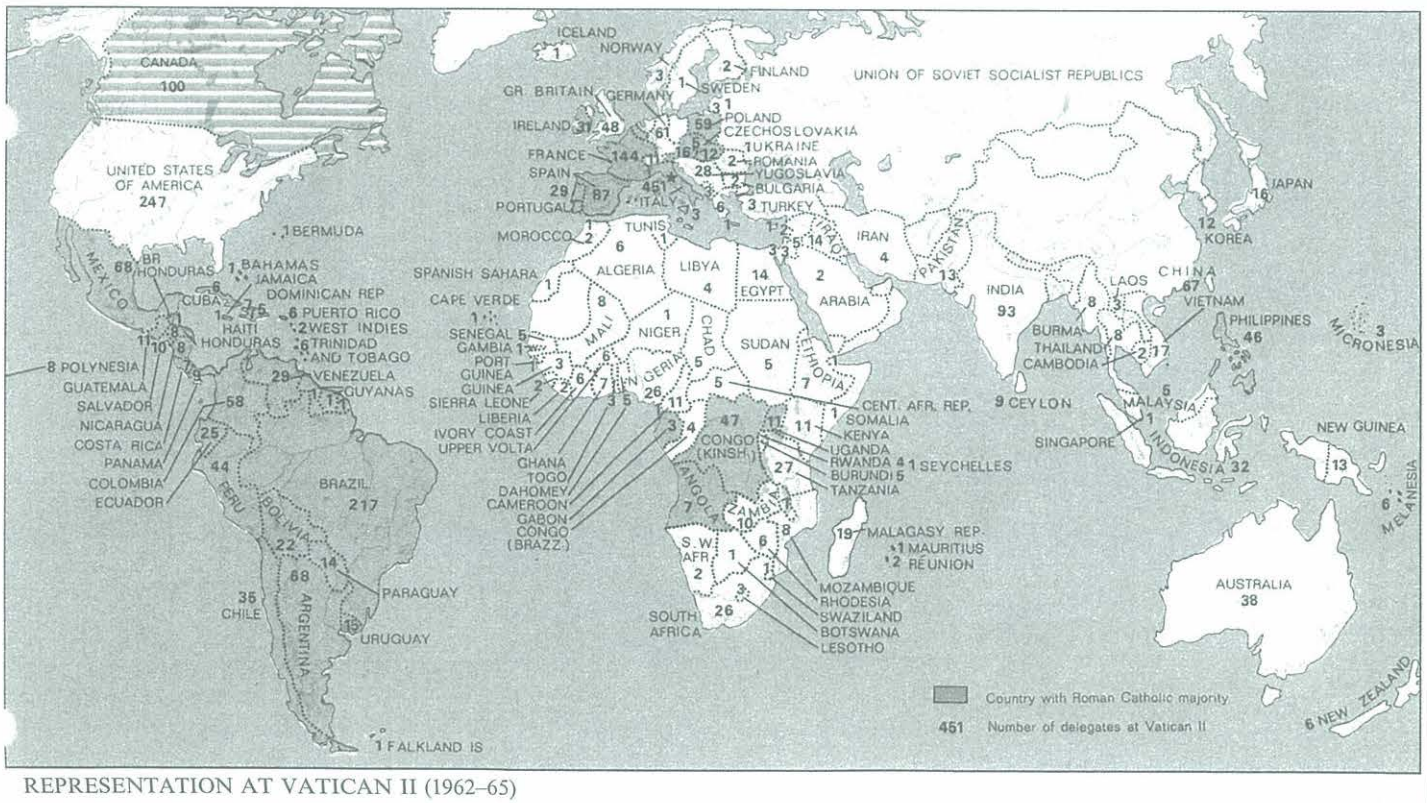
Lay Roman Catholics are encouraged to study the Bible – it's not the preserve of priests.
The Mass should be said in the local language, not in Latin, and the priest should face the people, not stand with his back to them.
The congregation should join in the hymns.
Lay Catholics should receive both the bread and the wine at Mass,

younger people in the group would probably say: 'yes, that's the way it is, we've known nothing else', but older folk in the group might say, 'we remember how revolutionary these ideas were, when they were first announced in 1965.

These changes, and much else, came out of Vatican II.

In Lecture 13, page 17, we saw that at one time in the C14 there were three rival Popes, all at the same time, and none of them would give way, so the Church held a General Council, to sort out the mess. It deposed all three and appointed a new one. From then on, some Catholics maintained that the Pope had the final word, and that Councils of the Church had to do as he said. Others believed that Councils were superior to the Pope, so in 1869-70, they had a conference, called the First Vatican Council (Vatican I). It decreed that the Pope was the supreme ruler of the Church, and that there was no place for General Councils.

This map shows the representation at Vatican II – details about it on the next page:



REPRESENTATION AT VATICAN II (1962–65)

When John XXIII (Pope from 1958-63) was elected in 1958, an elderly man, it was assumed he would simply keep things ticking over, so there was astonishment - and some opposition – when he announced, three months after his election, that he was summoning a General Council in St Peter's in 1962, whose purpose was *aggiornamento*, an Italian word for 'bringing up to date'. He had no agenda except to listen to God and to each other and to hope that regeneration would come.

There were 2,540 delegates from 136 countries, plus 'observers' from Protestant and Orthodox churches - see the map at the foot of the previous page.

Pope John died shortly after the Council opened, and his successor, Paul VI (Pope 1963-78), took the it forward and to its conclusion in December 1965.

While Vatican II modernized many aspects of Roman Catholicism, evangelicals have reservations about claims made for it. These are set out on page 13 - the next page (12) is a chart about the Theological Issues, generally, between Protestants and Roman Catholics. These are still basic Issues, despite Vatican II.

A meeting of Pope John XXIII's ecumenical council in St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. This meeting in 1962 of worldwide Catholic clergy was popularly known as the Second Vatican Council.

Theological Issues—Protestant vs. Catholic

AREA	ISSUE	PROTESTANT POSITION	CATHOLIC POSITION
SCRIPTURE	SUFFICIENCY	*Sola Scriptura*	tradition of equal authority with Scripture
	APOCRYPHA	rejected	accepted
ANTHROPOLOGY	ORIGINAL SIN	total depravity and guilt inherited from Adam	corruption and predisposition to evil inherited from Adam
	HUMAN WILL	in bondage to sin	free to do spiritual good
SOTERIOLOGY	PREDESTINATION	rooted in God's decrees	rooted in God's foreknowledge
	ATONEMENT	Christ's death a substitutionary penal sacrifice	Christ's death the merit for blessings of salvation—blessings passed on to sinners through sacraments
	GRACE OF GOD	common grace given to all; saving grace given to elect	prevenient grace, given at baptism, enabling one to believe; efficacious grace cooperating with the will, enabling one to obey
	GOOD WORKS	produced by the grace of God, unworthy of merit of any kind	meritorious
	REGENERATION	work of the Holy Spirit in the elect	grace infused at baptism
	JUSTIFICATION	objective, final, judicial act of God	forgiveness of sins received at baptism, may be lost by committing mortal sin, regained by penance
ECCLESIOLOGY	CHURCH AND SALVATION	distinction between visible and invisible church	outside the (visible) church there is no salvation
	SACRAMENTS	means of grace only as received by faith	convey justifying and sanctifying grace *ex opere operato*
	PRIESTHOOD	all believers priests	mediators between God and man
	TRANSUBSTANTIATION	rejected	affirmed
ESCHATOLOGY	PURGATORY	denied	affirmed

3.2 Evangelical reservations about claims made for Vatican II.

(a) Vatican II changed the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church in many practical matters, such as the liturgy, discipline, administration and attitudes to others, and surprised the rest of the world by its openness to change, but it did not alter one single doctrine that the Roman Catholic Church had previously taught.

Great care was taken to emphasize this, so as not to upset traditional Catholics. All that the Church taught when Vatican II began is still Catholic teaching. The changes were in practical matters, leaving the doctrines of the Church unchanged; the priesthood is still male and celibate.

Protestants point out that although the Mass is no longer required to be in Latin, it doesn't matter to Protestants whether the Mass is said in Latin, English or French, our problem is not with the language but with content of the Mass, in which it is still claimed that the bread and the wine become the very body of Christ.

(b) Some Protestants say that the biggest change brought about by Vatican II was the attitude of Protestants to the Roman Catholic Church. For example, Protestants now look more favourably at the Roman Catholic Church because the Catholics no longer describe Protestants as 'heretics', but as 'separated brethren', which is meant to woo the Protestants - but there is no way that the Catholics would join the World Council of Churches, because Vatican II repeated that the Roman Catholic Church is the only true Church.

4. CHANGES IN BRITISH CHURCH LIFE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

4.1 Public perception

In 1900, most people presumed that Britain was a Christian nation. It appeared to be leading the world economically, morally and religiously, exporting Christianity throughout its Empire and, through missionaries, to 'heathen people' in other countries as well. Churches were at the centre of British society, shaping its worldview, influencing its legislation, and dominating its institutions.

In 2000, most people presumed that Britain was secular and had lost its Christian faith, practice and culture. (There were, and still are, regional variations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and in parts of England.) The State had taken over many of the welfare functions previously provided by evangelical churches. The social and sporting activities which churches had laid on were now provided elsewhere, often at times which clashed with church services. Evangelicals were marginalized, their worldview seen as deviant by the secularised majority, their influence on legislation now minimal and their institutional status declining.

4.2 Secularisation of British culture

Until what has been called 'the long 1960's' - the years 1958-1974 - Britain continued to be regarded as a Christian country. This was partly because a wide range of laws reflected Christian morality, based on Biblical principles. The change began in 1959, with the passing of the Obscene Publications Act, which exempted 'literary works' from prosecution for obscenity. The publishers of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* successfully invoked that Act at their 1960 trial for obscenity. It was followed by the 1960 Betting and Gaming Act, which legalized off-course betting, and in 1961 by relaxing the

restrictions on the sale of alcohol. 1967-8 saw a frenzy of legislation rushed through, with amazing ease, decriminalizing Britain's Christian-based laws on homosexuality, abortion, attempted suicide, breach of promise of marriage and blasphemy. Other Acts of Parliament abolished theatre and film censorship and made divorce, available until then only on 'fault' (adultery, cruelty or desertion) by the 'guilty' partner, available to either party after two years of separation with consent or five years of separation without consent.[1]

Until about 1960, the majority of British children were educated, either explicitly or impliedly, on the assumption that they were being prepared for membership of a (nominally) Christian society. Many were christened in infancy and 'confirmed' as adolescents, receiving a (nominal) Christian upbringing; most schools started the day with an Assembly, where the Bible was read, prayers were said and (until older pupils wouldn't join in) hymns were sung. The de-Christianisation of British culture was not part of a century-long gradual decline, but took place during 'the long 1960's'.

4.3 Moves away from structured Church life

In 1900, 30% of British people attended a church service weekly (only 10% in London). By 1950, the weekly figures were down by one-third, but thirty to forty percent of people still attended at least once a month. From 1960, 'monthly' became 'Christmas and Easter', unless it was for a christening, wedding or funeral.

From 1970, many women, who had made up 70% of most Christian congregations in Britain, began to drift away, especially younger women. Weekly church attendance in 1980 was 17% in Scotland, 13% in Wales and 11% in England, but in Northern Island weekly attendance was still 58% in 1990, by which time the percentages in Scotland and England had dropped to 15% and 10%. Gradually they continue to drop and in the year 2000 it was 11% in Scotland and 7% in England.

4.4 Ordination

While evangelical applicants for ministry increased, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, applications by non-evangelicals declined and continue to do so - e.g., Scottish Presbyterians (of all types) saw the number of their ministers decline from 3,600 in 1900 to 2,950 in 1950 and to 1,450 in 1990 and still dropping. Furthermore, ministers are older (not least because many enter the ministry after ten or twenty years in another career) and many who are now active will shortly retire, and are not being replaced. It may be that many who are concerned for the welfare of others, who traditionally saw this as a call to 'ministry', prefer now to pursue this through Social Work (although they are forbidden to speak about their faith to those whom they seek to help.)

4.5 New visibility for women

The social and economic roles that opened to women in Western societies during the twentieth century were followed by the emerging visibility of women's public Christian ministry. For example, in the Church of Scotland:

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[1] Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate legal systems and while most of the changes applied to the whole United Kingdom, some applied initially only to England and Wales.

- Women were appointed as deacons from 1935, and allowed to preach from 1949.
- Woman elders were introduced in 1966 and women ministers in 1968.
- The first female Moderator of the General Assembly, Dr Alison Elliot in 2004.

The Salvation Army had always had women officers, and encouraged husband and wife teams, and Elim Churches and Assemblies of God both had women pastors from their earliest days, but it was 1917 before the Congregationalists and Baptists first ordained women to ministry, then Methodists from 1945, Anglicans from 1989 (Ireland), 1992 (England), 1994 (Scotland), and 1996 (Wales).

4.6 Evangelical growth

The beginning and the growth of Pentecostalism was explored in Lecture 33, and mainstream Evangelical 'recovery' from 1950 and the Third Wave from 1980, were explored in Lecture 34. Many strongly committed English-speaking Christians came to Britain in the 1950s and early 1960s from Afro-Caribbean countries. They were more likely to be regular church-goers than the majority of British people and certainly more fervent in the expression of their faith. Their favoured destinations were London and Birmingham. Initially, the majority joined, or formed, Pentecostal or Apostolic churches, as they felt unwelcome in traditional mainstream British Church life. However, in the 1970s, many immigrants and their children found they were welcome in British Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches and by the end of the century many of the most flourishing congregations in London and Birmingham were those with a predominately black membership.

4.7 Sunday

The most visible change in lifestyle, affecting both evangelicals and non-church goers (but in different ways) has been in the use of Sunday.

Until after World War Two, particularly in Scotland but to a lesser extent everywhere in Britain, Sunday was 'the Lord's Day'. Almost no shops were open and no restaurants. In Scotland, hotels served meals for only *bona fide* travellers. There were no spectator sporting activities, no public houses or cinemas opened, and public transport was limited. In Edinburgh, park-keepers padlocked the swings and roundabouts to prevent those who walked in the parks from using them on 'Sabbath mornings'. In England there were moves in the 1950s toward what was called a 'Continental Sunday' - no public events other then church before lunch, but limited sporting and restaurant facilities from the afternoon onward.

For evangelicals, Sunday was not a 'day of rest', but probably the busiest day of the week. Many had classes for young people before the morning service, and every ward in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary had a service, conducted by a group of lay-people (singers, reader, speaker) before their own 11 am church service. Sunday School was either directly after the morning service or in the mid-afternoon, with Bible Classes for older young people. Crusader Classes and Covenanter Classes were fitted somewhere into the busy day. Many adults supported some form of open air evangelistic activity on Sunday afternoon, beach missions in the summer or tract distribution or visitation in the winter. Evening services were well attended - oncers' were the exception - and many had youth meetings after the evening service.

Most evangelicals did not watch television on Sunday. The first time it was on in our house was in 1965, when some visiting Americans, who had been with us to the church

evening service, asked to see Sunday Night at the Palladium – to the horror of friends whom we told about it. We never thought about using a restaurant on a Sunday until some visiting Canadians took us for lunch in 1983.

4.8 Cremation

Legalised in 1884, only a tiny minority were cremated in the first half of the twentieth century - 4% in 1939. Evangelicals disapproved, seeing it as a secular attempt to deny the Christian belief in the 'resurrection of the body' from the grave. After 1945, it became increasingly popular and by 1966 it was used in 50% of deaths, rising to 70% by the end of the century.

4.9 Church services

A questionnaire to Baptist churches in the Central Belt of Scotland in 1979 asked 64 questions about church life in the inter-war years from 1918 to 1939, concluding with 'Was anything taboo, which we now accept, or vice-versa?' It was, simply, a 'different world' from the one we know today. A full analysis is at:

http://www.ianbalfour.co.uk/congregational-life-in-twelve-central-belt-baptist-churches-1918-to-1939/

4.10 Prayer

Until the 1970s, Christians addressed God in prayer as 'Thou', 'Thee', 'Thy' and 'Thine'. For example, Graham Scroggie, the minister of Charlotte Chapel in Edinburgh, opened a BBC broadcast service: 'Our God and Father, to whom can we come but unto Thee? … often have we forgotten Thee, but Thou hast ever remembered us – often we have strayed far from Thee, but Thou has pursued us, and encouraged us, and made us ashamed of our sin, and drawn us to Thyself.' From 1970s, people increasingly used 'You' and 'Your', and by the 1980s almost everyone had adopted this.

4.11 Denominations

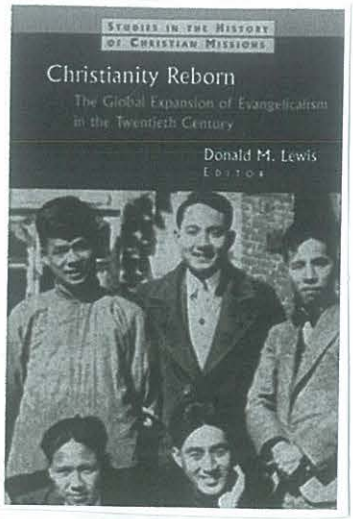
Until about 1980, Christians who visited another part of the country on holiday, or moved home for study or work, automatically looked for a church of their own denomination - even if that meant passing evangelical churches of other denominations. By the 1980s, evangelicals were more likely to look for the nearest 'Bible-based' church, and before long they were not only attending but joining such churches - church-government, modes of baptism and inter-church relations were less important to them than finding a spiritual home in which they felt comfortable.

5. EVANGELICISM AT THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

5.1 John Stott, formerly Rector of All Souls Church in Langham Place, London, and our Topic in our next Lecture, gave a talk in the year 2000 on 'Ten features of current evangelical life worldwide'. (These did not include other areas which we have covered, such as evangelical social involvement as looked at in our last Lecture.)

John Stott gave his 'ten features' the ten headings which follow. I have kept the headings as he gave them, but I have précised much of what he said and I have added some material taken from other places.

(1) Rapid growth
From 1960 to 2000, the global growth of evangelical Christians grew three times more than the rate of the world's population, and twice the rate of Islam. Evangelical churches in Africa grew rapidly after their countries gained independence in the 1960s. The worldwide number of evangelicals in 2000 was 550 million.



Donald M. Lewis, *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century*, 2004, is an excellent analysis of the global expansion of evangelical Protestantism during the twentieth century.

(2) Non-Western
Although Christianity stagnated or declined in Europe and North America, its growth in Africa, Asia and South America had been spectacular. For example, South Korea had overtaken the United Kingdom as the second-largest missionary-sending country - the United States is still the largest.

(3) Growth without depth
Evaluating the immense growth of evangelicals worldwide, John Stott's third point was that much of the growth was without depth. There had not been sufficient growth in discipleship comparable to the growth in numbers.

(4) Disinterest in denominations
See 4.11 above.

(5) Bible Institutes and Colleges
From a handful of evangelical training centres in most countries in 1900, or even in 1950, there were now dozens, sometimes hundreds, in many countries - see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_evangelical_seminaries_and_theological_colleges

(6) 'Biblical illiteracy'
Many evangelical Christians could not name the books of the Bible or say how many apostles there were, and the vast majority had no clear understanding about the major teachings of Scripture, the Trinity, the atonement, the Church and other central doctrines of the Bible. Could this be partly because much of discipleship training amounted to a list of disciplines one is supposed to master?

(7) Mass communication
Evangelical broadcasting by television, radio and film was an effective way of reaching millions who were unable or unwilling to attend church. For example, the 'Jesus film', first shown in cinemas in 1979, was now used by 1,500 evangelicistic agencies worldwide, and had been seen by billions of people.

(8) Cross-cultural mission
This phrase was popularised by a key-note speech at the Lausanne Congress in 1974 (next Lecture, 3.2) entitled *The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism.* In evangelism in our own country (near-neighbour evangelism), we normally expect converts to join, and to feel at home in, existing Christian churches - 'to be like us'. Much overseas missionary activity in the earlier part of the twentieth century 'exported' the Christianity of the sending country. Cross-cultural mission recognizes that there is a great difference between the way most Western Christians think about evangelism and the way that people involved in cross-cultural mission think about it.

Cross-cultural missionaries make the unchangeable Gospel relevant to the people among whom they work, seeking to establish self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating communities of believers in that particular culture. This may mean setting up separate churches for different cultural groups within the same geographical area.

(9) Bible translation

This had an increasingly high priority throughout the twentieth century, both new translations in English and translations, for the first time, into new languages. At the end of the century, 457 languages had the whole Bible, 1,202 had the whole New Testament and 953 had part of the New Testament. Work was in progress on 1,363 languages but Bible Societies reckon that there are still 2,250 people-groups without any Scripture in their tongue.

(10) Increased persecution

Over 245 million Christians are today living in places where they experience high levels of persecution - among them, China, India, Sudan, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Iran, Myanmar and many more. A search on the Internet under 'Persecution of Christians today' gives details and lists the many Societies seeking to help.

5.2 Three challenges

Finally - and nothing to do with John Stott's talk - three contemporary views of religion of which we should be beware,

(a) Pluralism

A popular view is that 'All religions are saying the same thing' and 'We must respect all other religions'. These were insidious threats to the twentieth century Church (and still are, for the twenty-first century Church), because so-called 'respect for other religions' is tacit recognition that they are <u>not</u> 'saying the same thing'; it insults them, because it implies that their teaching is so vague that all interpretations of life are equally valid.

(b) New Age Movement

The New Age Movement has been a serious threat to Christianity since the 1960s and continuing. To define it is like trying to nail a jelly to the wall. It is not about knowing God – it's about knowing yourself. You 'shop around' for the beliefs that you feel most comfortable with; if you can understand your 'divinity', and your oneness with all creation, you can bring peace to yourself and contribute to the evolution of our planet. Christian teaching about a personal relationship with God, human sin and the unique divinity of Jesus, is completely absent. The New Age is closer to Eastern religions than to any other faith. Its first national periodical, in 1971, was called the *East-West Journal,* and that speaks volumes – Hinduism, Astrology, Spiritualism – it's all there.

(c) 'The Emerging, or Emergent, Church' movement

A response by various church leaders (e.g., McLaren, Chalke) to post-modernism is to say that as culture changes, a new church should emerge. This was well answered by Donald Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications*, 2005, Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

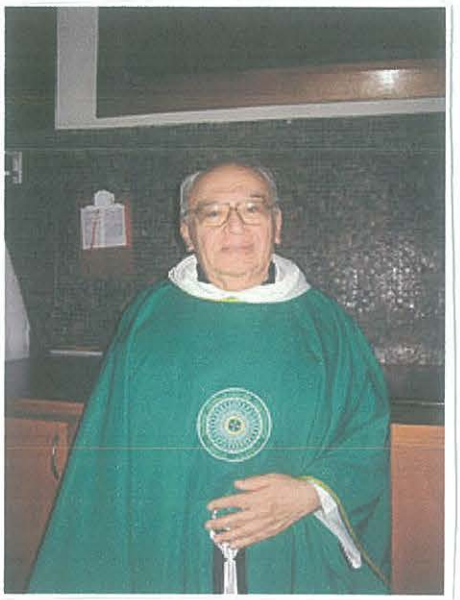
OVERVIEW OF CHURCH HISTORY IN 36 ILLUSTRATED LECTURES

TOPIC FOR LECTURE 35 - LIBERATION THEOLOGY

Please tell us about this movement, which began within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America in the 1950s-1960s, emphasizing social concern for the poor and political liberation for oppressed peoples. It grew into international and inter-denominational dimensions.

The term was coined by a Peruvian priests, Gustavo Gutierrex, in the title to his 1971 book, *A Theology of Liberation.*

Cairns mentions it briefly at pages 466-7
Vos has an excellent section on it at pages 200-202
Lion Handbook, at pages 669-70 and also see its index
Olsen has a long section on it at pages 602-6



Gustavo Gutierrex

Some suggested definitions:

… the belief that Christianity involves not only faith in the teachings of the Church but also a commitment to change social and political conditions from within, in societies in which it is considered exploitation and oppression exist.

… a school of theology, especially prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America, that finds in the Gospel a call to free people from political, social, and material oppression.

… a school of thought among Latin American Catholics according to which the Gospel of Christ demands that the church concentrate its efforts on liberating the people of the world from poverty and oppression.

… a form of Christian theology (developed by South American Roman Catholics) that emphasizes social and political liberation as the anticipation of ultimate salvation.