

The Protestant Church in the Modern Age – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – The figures, events, and movements of the Protestant Church in the modern age
2. aim – To cause us to understand some of the ways the church moved throughout the 20th C.

b. outline

1. The Theological Movements of the Modern Age
2. The Evangelistic Movements of the Modern Age
3. The Ecclesiastical Movements of the Modern Age

c. overview

1. the church in the modern age
 - a. **i.e.** a *multi-part* series addressing the various figures, events, and movements in and around the Protestant Church in the 20th C. (Protestant = non-Catholic W “claimants” of Christianity)
 1. **(before)** the great *thinkers* of the age, in the various *theological* movements of the 20th C.
 2. **(now)** the great *preachers* of the age, in the various *evangelistic* movements of the 20th C.
 3. **(after)** the great *innovators* of the age, in the various *ecclesiastical* movements of the 20th C.
 - b. **note:** by “great” preachers of the age, I am *not* referring to the *greatest preachers*, per se – but, to those who are notable within the framework of the *evangelistic movement* (and the role of *evangelicalism* within the American W church)
 1. **i.e.** that *greatest* list would include: C.H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), Martin Lloyd-Jones, Iain Murray, James Boice, R.C. Sproul, John Piper, John MacArthur, Chuck Swindoll, Adrian Rogers, John Stott, W.A. Criswell, etc.

II. The Evangelistic Movements of the Modern Age

Content

a. the reality of evangelicalism

1. **evangelicalism** = the pietistic movement beginning in the mid-1730s in which an entirely different *religious focus* came into being, a focus on the *personal experience of the individual* as the “center” of the gospel proclamation (**i.e.** evangelical = from the “gospel”); a *gospel-centeredness* to every aspect of both *communal* and *personal* religious activity
 - a. **i.e.** *conversionism*, **activism**, *biblicism*, and *crucicentricism* that characterizes W Protestantism
2. it is this *activism* that came to deeply affect evangelicalism in the late 19th into the 20th C. ...

b. the rise of the evangelist

1. **Billy Sunday** (1862-1935) – a “pioneer” in the evangelistic campaign and full-time ministry
 - a. born near Ames, IA to a bricklayer, recently emigrated from Germany through Pennsylvania
 1. his father died four months after enlisting in the IA 23rd Volunteer Infantry in 1862, 5 weeks after William’s birth – his mother moved the family in with her parents thereafter
 2. at the age of 10, Billy was sent to an orphanage in Glenwood, and later to one in Davenport
 3. it was at the orphanage that Billy was properly educated, and his natural athleticism came out
 - b. in 1883, Sunday was signed to the Chicago White Stockings
 1. in 1888, Sunday was sold to the Pittsburgh Alleghenys, but in 1890 went to the Phillies
 2. Sunday was an *average* player, very popular with the fans, renowned for his speed
 - c. in either 1886 or 1887, Billy heard the gospel through a street-preaching group, and became a believer after attending Jefferson Park Presbyterian in Chicago
 1. in 1891, Sunday turned down a baseball contract, and joined the YMCA (at \$83/mo.)
 2. **remember:** the YMCA was established after the Industrial Revolution to address the rampant *biblical illiteracy* and lack of *discipleship* in the inner cities
 3. for 3 years, Billy visited the sick, prayed and counseled the troubled and suicidal, and visited saloons to invite people to evangelistic meetings
 - d. in 1893, Sunday became the full-time assistant to J. Wilbur Chapman, one of the best known evangelists in the US at the time – Billy was employed as the “advance man” for Chapman, going to the next city and organizing prayer meetings, choirs and other details
 1. in many ways, Chapman mentored and molded Sunday into an evangelist himself
 2. and, in 1896, when Chapman returned to the pastorate, Sunday struck out on his own ...

- e. for the next 12 years, Sunday preached in approximately 70 communities in IA and IL
 - 1. he used his reputation as a former baseball player to generate advertising for his meetings
 - 2. by 1905, he had developed a ministry with enough money to hire his own advance men, and began insisting that the locals build their own “tabernacles” (instead of tents) to host him
 - a. with the floors covered in **sawdust** to help dampen the noise and distractions
 - 3. by 1908, under his wife’s (Nell) leadership, the Sunday ministry had become a nationally renowned phenomenon – by 1917, they had a paid staff of 26
 - 4. included in this ministry was Homer Rodeheaver, a song leader and music director, who traveled with Billy for almost 20 years; along with Virginia Asher who led women’s ministries
- f. Sunday preached fire and brimstone sermons, focusing heavily on damnation and hell, doing so with great fervor, running and diving, smashing chairs, and generally trying to “drive sinners into the fold” through great emotionalism and descriptions of the kinds of sins he was condemning
 - 1. it was said by his “opponents” that his descriptions were often very raw and disgusting in describing sexual sin in particular, and similarly on amusements and the use of alcohol
 - 2. he was hardly a polished preacher, and used crude slang to get across his moralistic point
 - 3. Sunday was an evangelical with fundamentalist tendencies – he affirmed the basic points of Protestant theology, but went out of his way to *not* criticize Catholics or Unitarians
 - a. he was not a Calvinist, preaching a *synergistic* view of salvation between God and man
 - 4. he never went to seminary, but was well-versed in the Bible, and was also well-read otherwise
 - 5. it is estimated that Sunday preached to over 100,000,000 people face-to-face, with about 1.2 million accepting his “invitation” – he estimated that he preached about 20,000 sermons
 - a. Rodeheaver complained that by 1927, his invitations had become so “general” that they were meaningless
- g. Sunday’s popularity began to wane dramatically after World War I – his health declined and his family suffered a series of tragedies
 - 1. **e.g.** his three sons engaged in many of the sins he preached again, and he paid blackmail to several women to keep the scandals quiet; his only daughter died of MS; and his oldest son committed suicide after Billy rescued him from financial ruin in 1933
- h. in early 1935, Billy suffered a heart attack, but continued to preach – his last sermon, preached just 6 days before he died, was entitled “What must I do to be saved?”
 - 1. **LOW:** Billy Sunday was one of the first great “professional” evangelists, with a *paid* ministry, paving the way for a new understanding of evangelist within evangelicalism (**see below**)
- 2. **Billy Graham** (1918-2018) – the greatest professional evangelist of the 20th C.
 - a. born in the downstairs bedroom of a farm house near Charlotte, NC, the eldest of four children
 - 1. he was raised in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
 - 2. as a child, he loved to read, especially books about Tarzan – he would hang from a tree and make the famous Tarzan yell, something his father credited as leading him into the ministry
 - 3. Graham attended Bob Jones College, but left because he found it too “legalistic” – he transferred to Florida Bible Institute in Temple Terrace, FL
 - 4. it is at the 18th green of the Temple Terrace Golf and Country Club that Graham claims to have heard the call to preach – he had already preached his first sermon at Bostwick Baptist
 - 5. in 1939, he was ordained by a group of Southern Baptist ministers at Peniel Baptist in Palatka
 - b. it was at Wheaton College that Graham first wrestled with the *infallibility* of the Scriptures, which he resolved over the next few years, and became a staunch defender
 - 1. he was invited to preach at the United Gospel Tabernacle – he was asked repeatedly to return, and eventually became the pastor of the church
 - 2. he graduated from Wheaton in 1943, with a degree in anthropology
 - 3. later that year, Graham took over the radio ministry of Torrey Johnson, *Songs in the Night*, under the financial support of his congregation – he hired George Beverly Shea as his director of radio ministry – they would stay together for life
 - c. in 1948, Graham became the president of Northwestern Bible College in Minneapolis
 - 1. he remained in that post until 1952, looking to become a chaplain in the armed forces, but a case of mumps sidelined him after applying for a commission
 - 2. after recuperating, he was hired as a full-time evangelist for the new *Youth for Christ* – it is from this hire that Graham began to travel throughout the country preaching as an evangelist
 - d. his first great “crusade” was held in Sep 1947 in Grand Rapids, MI - ~6,000 people attended
 - 1. he began to refer to these revivals as “crusades” after this point – named after the medieval Christian forces who conquered Jerusalem (**i.e.** the church storming the gates of hell)

2. in 1949, Graham preached a series of revival meetings in LA, under parking lot circus tents
 - a. the crusade caught the attention of the national media, especially that of Randolph Hearst's chain of newspapers – it ran for eight (8) weeks – five longer than planned – and it was *this* event that rocketed Graham into the national spotlight, with the “conversion” of a number of show-business personalities
 - b. by the end of his life, Graham had preached more than 400 crusades in over 185 countries
 - c. his rhetoric and preaching style were mesmerizing to many – thousands would often stream down to respond to the “invitation” (e.g. in Moscow, 1992, ¼ of the 155,000)
 3. Graham's preaching style was modeled after Dwight L. Moody – he would preach *emphatic* sermons focusing *specifically* on the elements of a gospel call: the reality of sin, the need for change, the cross of Christ, and a call to respond to an “invitation”
 - a. although he had been introduced to reformed soteriology at an early age, it would appear from his ministry that he was no Calvinist – he *very much* preached the idea that Christ died for everyone, that personal *decision* was the basis of salvation, and that “conversion” was simply responding to the gospel call in the claim to “profess faith” in Christ
 - b. sometime in the mid-1950's, Graham began to shift toward a more *ecumenical* theology – a shift from separation from sin to an accommodation and cooperation with those who did not share the fundamentals of the faith
 1. e.g. Martin Lloyd-Jones refused to support his crusades in London – he said he would do so *only if* Graham would no longer have liberals or Catholics on stage with him
 - c. e.g. in an interview in 1997 with Robert Schuller (see below), Graham stated
“I think everybody that loves or knows Christ, whether they are conscious of it or not, they are members of the body of Christ ... they may not know the name of Jesus but they know in their hearts that they need something they do not have, and they turn to the only light they have, and I think they are saved and they are going to be with us in heaven”
 - d. **apocryphal:** it is rumored that Graham *himself* admitted in later life that only about 5% of those who “came down” to receive Christ were *actually* converted to faith
 - e. **note:** although Graham did urge those who came to Christ to join a local church, his ministry did *little* in the way of follow-up to see if any of them were *actually* being discipled
 - e. in 1950, Graham founded the *Billy Graham Evangelistic Association* in Minneapolis, which moved to Charlotte in 1999 – some of its ministries included:
 1. the *Hour of Decision*, a weekly radio broadcast from 1950-2016
 2. the *My Answer* newspaper column distributed by Tribune Content Agency around the US
 3. *Decision* magazine, the official publication of the Association
 4. *Christianity Today*, founded in 1956 with Carl F.H. Henry as its first editor
 5. **note:** c. 1981, the Association asked ACS to help recover a mailing list that had been lost from a harddrive of a computer similar to ones that we were using – I was able to recover it!
 - f. Graham (of course!) went on to become one of the most influential *evangelicals* in the late 20th C.
 1. he was had a number of roles: he was often referred to as America's Pastor, he met with presidents (12 from Harry Truman to Barak Obama), and popes
 - g. **LOW:** Billy Graham was the greatest “professional” evangelist of the church age, with a very large international ministry surrounding him
 1. Sunday and Graham paved the way for the church to “recognize” evangelist as an “office” (i.e. alongside elder and deacon) – the *full-time* ministry work of an *itinerate evangelist*, paid by the local church and “sent out” from the local body
 - a. e.g. COME International Baptist Ministries – a Fundamentalist ministry of itinerate preachers (evangelists) that go to churches and lead “revivals” or other training events
 - b. **note:** Dr. Cary Kimbrell argued in his doctoral thesis that there is *no such office* implied in the Bible (i.e. **Eph. 4:11**), that the term “evangelist” was used there as a *temporary function of the local church* under its direction, and that “popular” ministries are *never to be confused* (or overshadow) the work of the local preaching of the gospel unto salvation
- c. the rise of the televangelist**
1. Sunday and Graham, as *widely popular* evangelists, paved the way for a “new” form of evangelist to enter the picture with the age of television – the **televangelist**
 - a. specifically, someone who (like Graham) develops an evangelistic ministry outside the local church, *but uses the medium of television* as the means of building an audience
 - b. obviously, because TV was not ubiquitous in American households until the mid-1960s, the rise of the televangelists did not occur until the latter half of the 20th C.
 - c. and, due to *great scandal*, a rising tide against Christianity in the US, and the turn away from TV as a *primary* medium, the televangelist has *greatly diminished in influence* in the present

2. some examples:
 - a. Robert Schuller – one of the most “infamous” of the televangelists, with his *Hour of Power* preached from the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, CA – he avoided the idea of sin
 - b. Oral Roberts – one of the “fathers” of the Pentecostal movement during the 1950-80s, preaching a message of physical healing, establishing Oral Roberts University and Evangelistic Association
 - c. Jim Bakker (and Tammy Faye) – hosting *The PTL Club* in the 1970-80s – ultimately went to jail after a series of unethical and illegal financial dealings with the Club’s money
 - d. Jerry Falwell – a leading televangelist and political figure of the 1980s – established the *Moral Majority* and Liberty University, and overseeing *The PTL Club* after Bakker’s fall
 - e. Jimmy Swaggart – a hugely popular Pentecostal evangelist of the 1970s – his involvement in sex scandals in the late 1980s cost him his career
 - f. Joel Osteen – probably the most popular Pentecostal televangelist in the 21st C., with over 10 million viewers in the US alone – writer of the book *Your Best Life Now*
 - g. others include: TD Jakes, Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, Peter Popoff, Jack Van Impe, Creflo Dollar, Robert Tilton, Ernest Angley, Mike Murdoch, Hal Lindsey, James Robison