

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: THE CHURCH FACES A CHANGING WORLD (1920-1960)

For about forty years after the First World War, the United Church of Christ passed through a critical time in its history: a process of church unions through which four denominations became two, then one. Significant changes in the world influenced the church, and the church, while in the process of union, participated in the events of a changing world. The process of church union will be described in Chapter Eighteen. Other events in this period are the subject of this chapter.

The United States passed over a roller coaster of prosperity, depression, war, and cold war. Life changed dramatically for Americans as they acquired electricity, indoor plumbing, hard surfaced roads, and automobiles. Values not necessarily religious influenced Americans through the cinema, radio and television. Cities grew through suburban expansion as rural communities declined.

The “Great War” of 1917-1918 shocked Christians, who reacted in several ways.

1. The Church had failed. All its pronouncements for peace and world community were for naught. The War demonstrated the impotence of the church to influence the course of nations. A desire to wield greater influence motivated church unions efforts, and increased international contacts.
2. The power of evil was greater than liberal Protestants had thought. Those who experienced the horror of the trenches could never again believe in *progress* or in the goodness of humanity. Theology was reformulated, giving the doctrine of sin a larger place, human effort a smaller place.
3. Many church leaders and church bodies felt guilt over being swept along in idealistic enthusiasm for a war that accomplished nothing. One by one, they repented, and renounced war forever.
4. The superiority of Western civilization was shown to be a sham. Some searched for a Christianity not corrupted by culture. Many had a new openness to the discovery of value in other civilizations and other religions.

It is difficult to say which was changing more, the world, or the attitude of American Christians toward that world. Post-World-War I disillusionment led to rethinking missions. Reaction to war was followed by reaction to fascism and reflection on building a lasting peace. In the midst of chaos, Christians protested, accommodated, suffered, and ministered to human need.

PART A:
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN A CHANGING WORLD

Neo-Orthodoxy

In Europe, the generation that fought the “Great War” felt a revulsion against the older generation’s ideas and institutions that led to the disaster and were impotent to prevent it. The reaction against liberal Protestant theology found its spokesperson in Karl Barth (1886-1968). Pastor of a Reformed congregation in Switzerland during the War, he felt compelled to leave behind his liberal theology and religious socialism, and to reconstruct theology on a totally different foundation. His commentary, *Epistle to the Romans*, in its second edition in 1921, gave his generation something they could believe in. This new theology became known as “neo-orthodoxy.”

Barth rejected liberal Protestantism’s over-emphasis on God’s immanence by insisting on the *discontinuity* between God and humanity, and how that discontinuity was bridged not by human effort but by God’s grace. The doctrine of original sin - more profoundly understood through the experience of the war - made this *discontinuity* unavoidable. Barth condemned all religion as corrupt human attempts to bridge the gap. The heart of the Christian message was the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, through which God bridged the gap.

Word of this new theology began to drift across the Atlantic. The Evangelical Synod - still doing theology in German - encountered Barth first. Hugo Kamphausen reviewed *Epistle to the Romans* in the Synod’s theological journal in 1924. Kamphausen found much to admire in the new voice from Switzerland, but criticized Barth’s excessive use of paradox, devaluation of religious experience, and discounting of the social gospel.

Congregational pastor Douglas Horton (1891-1968) translated Barth’s *The Word of God and the Word of Man* into English in 1928. Soon after, George W. Richards (1869-1955) and other Reformed Church scholars translated Barth’s *Come, Holy Spirit*, into English. Another neo-orthodox theologian, Swiss Reformed H. Emil Brunner (1889-1966), delivered lectures at Lancaster Seminary in 1929, published as *The Theology of Crisis*. This new theology gained in

influence as liberalism lost credibility in a world that had profoundly encountered evil in the War. Congregational and Reformed translators led the way in introducing neo-orthodoxy to America. George Richards, president of Lancaster Theological Seminary, who had previously expressed liberal theology, made his conversion to neo-orthodoxy clear in *Beyond Fundamentalism and Liberalism* in 1934. Neo-orthodoxy prevailed in the denominations that were becoming the United Church of Christ. Barth's first translators were elected to denominational leadership: George Richards became President of the Evangelical and Reformed Church and Douglas Horton became General Secretary of the Congregational Christian Churches.

The Niebuhrs

The most influential American Protestant theologian of the Twentieth Century, Karl Paul Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) came from a close-knit Evangelical Synod parsonage family. His father, Gustav Niebuhr (1863-1913), served the Synod as a home missionary and vigorously promoted its *Innere-Mission*. He and wife Lydia (Hosto) Niebuhr (1869-1961) raised four children, three of whom became seminary professors. After graduating from Elmhurst and Eden, and ordination in 1913, Reinhold attended Yale Divinity School. As the Synod schools were not accredited, he attended Yale as a special student, receiving a Master's Degree in 1915. Reinhold served Bethel Evangelical Church in Detroit from 1915 to 1928. His mother, Lydia, joined him and became unofficial assistant pastor.

Reinhold's brother, Helmut Richard Niebuhr (1894-1962) had also graduated from Elmhurst and Eden and was ordained in 1916 as pastor of Walnut Park Evangelical Church in Saint Louis. Young Reinhold and Helmut were "Americanizers" in the Evangelical Synod. Americanization to them meant (1) use of the English language, (2) patriotic support of the War, (3) support of such "English" causes as prohibition and the social gospel, (4) upgrading Elmhurst and Eden to meet American accreditation standards, and (5) greater fellowship and cooperation with "English" denominations.

Reinhold directed the Synod's War Welfare Commission 1917-1920. His sister Clara Augusta Hulda Niebuhr (1889-1959) joined him and their mother in Detroit, assisting with parish work and with secretarial work for the commission.

Helmut Niebuhr taught at Eden, 1919-22, then attended Yale Divinity School, receiving the B.D. and Ph.D. in 1924. He then served as President of Elmhurst College, 1924-27, and dean of Eden Seminary, 1927-31. He moved both schools toward the goals of English and accreditation. From 1931 until his

death in 1962 he taught ethics at Yale Divinity School.¹ Helmut Richard expressed some of his frustration with his ethnically-defined denomination in *Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) and chaired the Synod's Committee on Relations with Other Churches when it initiated union discussions with the Reformed Church.

Reinhold Niebuhr had acquired a national reputation, writing articles and speaking on social ethical issues. In spite of his lack of the normal degrees, he was called to teach ethics at Union Theological Seminary in New York in 1928, and remained until his retirement in 1960. Mother Lydia moved to New York with Reinhold. When he married in 1931, Lydia moved in with Hulda, who was then in New York doing graduate study. Hulda and Lydia moved to Chicago in 1946, where Hulda taught at a Presbyterian College of Christian Education, then became the first female faculty member at McCormick (Presbyterian) Seminary.

Like Barth and the neo-orthodox, Niebuhr criticized the old liberalism with its optimistic view of progress, naive confidence in human nature, and over-emphasis on God's immanence. From his Evangelical Synod background Niebuhr carried into the Twentieth Century Biblical rootedness, and a missionary concern for the less fortunate in society. Unlike the Neo-orthodox, Niebuhr felt compelled to live his faith in the social and political world. Niebuhr called his ethics "Christian Realism." He continued the activism of the Social Gospel, but without the post-millennial vision of the Realm of God and without the moral absolutes. In the real world we often make decisions, not between good and evil, but between a greater and lesser evil.

Reinhold Niebuhr, a member of the Socialist Party from 1929 to 1940, condemned the evils of modern industrial society in *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (1932). Advocate for the rights of labor and racial justice, and a vigorous opponent of fascism, Niebuhr served as an officer of the Fellowship of Reconciliation 1929-33, organized a Fellowship of Socialist Christians (1931), and took an active role in organizing anti-communist liberals in the Americans for Democratic Action (1947). He explored the implications of original sin and creation in God's image in *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1941, 1943). Niebuhr pushed American Protestantism politically to the left and theologically to the right.

Fundamentalists and Evangelicals

The Fundamentalist-Modernist conflict troubled many American denominations through this period. Fundamentalists opposed the teaching of the

¹At Yale he used his middle name, Richard, rather than the Germanic "Helmut."

theory of evolution and opposed the influence of liberal theology, called “modernism,” in denominational institutions. The denominations that became the United Church of Christ were not as deeply troubled by this conflict as were the Baptists and Presbyterians.

In 1940 a middle group developed between the main-line Protestants and fundamentalism. These “new Evangelicals” criticized the old fundamentalism for its separatism, negativism, contentiousness, anti-intellectualism, and lack of social responsibility. Harold John Ockenga (1905-85), pastor of Park Street Congregational Church in Boston, 1936-69, gave leadership to this movement. Ockenga co-founded the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942-3, served as founding President of Fuller Theological Seminary in California in absentia, and founding President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Massachusetts, 1969-79.

Piety and Worship

The denominations that formed the United Church of Christ experienced liturgical renewal during this period. The Constitution of the Evangelical and Reformed Church stated:

Congregations are allowed freedom of worship. The forms and order of worship that are set forth in *The Book of Worship* and in the hymnal approved by the General Synod shall be followed as accepted norms.

The apparent contradiction of these two sentences did not trouble the members of this liturgical denomination, that expected the denomination to provide worship forms, but accepted that not all would follow them. A committee began work on the hymnal and *Book of Worship* before a Constitution was adopted. *The Hymnal* became available in 1941, *The Book of Worship* in 1942.

Surveys of Evangelical and Reformed pastors indicated increasing use of liturgical forms, as follows:

	1946	1957
wear vestments	81%	98% ²
altar centered church (as opposed to pulpit centered)	70%	85%
altar communion all or part time (as opposed to pew communion)	80%	64%
Pastor faces altar when praying	31%	49%
Cross on altar	85%	92%
Candles on altar	80%	90%

The only “low church” trend was increased pew communion, perhaps a sign of Americanization. By 1957, 88% of the pastors reported using *The Hymnal*, and 89% *The Book of Worship*.

For Congregationalists liturgical renewal was a more radical innovation. The National Council created a Commission on Evangelism and Devotional Life in 1917. In 1919 the Commission began publishing *The Fellowship of Prayer*, a daily devotional guide for Lent. This was the first acknowledgment by Congregationalists of the Church Year. The Commission introduced Congregational Christians to Advent in 1935 with *A Devotional Guide for Advent*.

Congregational Christians published *The Pilgrim Hymnal* in 1931 and *A Book of Worship for Free Churches* in 1948. The *Book of Worship* for the first time provided Congregational Christians with denominational resources for the Church Year, a lectionary, and a Confirmation service. The *Book of Worship* also contained an essay on symbolism, describing arrangement of an altar, with linens, cross, candle, flowers, and colors for the church year. Although Congregational Christians did not look upon denominational resources as “accepted norms” quite the way the Evangelical and Reformed did, these resources gradually led to changing attitudes among many Congregational Christians. Liturgical renewal was reshaping the piety of the denominations.

²Of the total, 4% wore cassock and surplice, the remainder wore some form of black robe.

The Congregational Commission on Evangelism and Devotional Life, finding through a survey that their churches gave very little instruction for church membership, prepared material for a “Pastor’s Class,” usually conducted in Lent, leading to the reception of new members on Palm Sunday. Evangelical and Reformed churches had a long tradition of Confirmation classes lasting two or three years, in which students studied and memorized catechisms. As that educational methodology came under increased criticism, the Evangelical and Reformed Church developed a new resource for Confirmation classes, *My Confirmation*, edited by Nevin C. Harner, published in 1942.

Howard Chandler Robbins asked Reinhold Niebuhr for permission to put a prayer written by Niebuhr in a prayer book for American servicemen in World War II. Niebuhr had used the prayer in a worship service in the summer of 1934. Niebuhr gave permission, and the prayer appeared in *A Book of Prayers and Services for the Armed Forces*.

Give me the serenity to accept what cannot be changed.
Give me the courage to change what can be changed—
The wisdom to know one from the other.³

Alcoholics Anonymous began using the prayer, slightly reworded, in the post-war period. Today, millions of persons recite the prayer every week at twelve-step group meetings around the world. It expressed in simple words Niebuhr’s theology of “Christian Realism” and a piety of both faith and works, and of constant reliance on God.

PART B: MISSION TO THE WORLD

The missionary movement, rolling into the inter-war years with its massive inertia of motion, began to slow down as a result of the intellectual questioning of the time.

The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) after starting a mission to the Philippines in 1902, initiated no new missions. The Evangelical Synod, relatively new to mission work, initiated its second mission in

³Federal Council of Churches in America, Commission on Worship, *A Book of Prayers and Services for the Armed Forces* (New York: Christian Commission for Camp and Defense Communities, 1944), 64.

1921, to Honduras.⁴ In 1947 the E&R Board responded to a request for help from Africa. The Bremen Mission had initiated a mission among the Ewe⁵ people of West Africa in 1847. When the mission was isolated from its German supporters in the war years, the Church of Scotland Mission stepped in to help. As neither society could adequately support the mission after the Second World War, they approached the E&R Church for help.⁶

American mission boards had a big investment in China. The Reformed Church reported in 1909 that one third of the assessed value of its mission property was in China. The ABCFM reported in 1920 that 29% of its missionaries and 34% of its expenditures on missions went to China. As that great nation passed through Civil War and Japanese occupation, the missionaries did what they could to continue operations and to minister to human need. When the Communists came to power in 1949, and sent the missionaries home, the missionary movement received a major setback.

Pioneer missionary work appeared to be a thing of the past. Every mission field had a native church which by the Twentieth Century became an autonomous denomination. Mission and Church cooperated in negotiating with other denominations to form united churches.⁷ The native churches took responsibility for most evangelistic work, and moved toward self-support, while the mission

⁴The Reformed Church in the United States joined other American Presbyterian and Reformed churches in initiating a small mission to Iraq in 1924. The General Council of Congregational Christian Churches initiated "Missions of Fellowship" with European churches in 1942. In 1946 the Evangelical and Reformed Church (E&R) Board of International Missions joined with Evangelical United Brethren and northern and southern Presbyterians in initiating the United Andean Mission to Indians in Ecuador. Armenian Evangelicals, German Congregationalists and Magyar Reformed churches in America developed their own channels for sending aid to refugees of their group in other lands. The Evangelical Synod assisted German Unionists of the La Plata Synod (Argentina) but did not consider it a foreign mission.

⁵pronounced Eh-vey

⁶The Ewe church is now two denominations, divided by a political border but working closely together: The Evangelical Church of Togo and the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

⁷Former mission churches initiated by the predecessor denominations of the United Church of Christ have entered into the following united churches: South India United Church (1908) followed by the Church of South India (1947) (includes Sri Lanka); United Church of Northern India (1924), followed by Church of North India (1970); Church of Christ in China (1927) continuing as Hong Kong Council; United Evangelical Church of the Philippines (1929) followed by United Church of Christ in the Philippines (1948); United Church of Christ in Japan (1941); United Evangelical Church of Ecuador (1964); United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (1967).

boards funded and provided leadership for medical, educational, and other humanitarian institutions.

Re-Thinking Missions⁸

In the decades prior to World War I, missionaries saw themselves not simply as proclaimers of a message of grace, but as emissaries of the West's "Christian civilization." After "Christian civilization" had committed unprecedented carnage and mayhem between the trenches of northern France, critics questioned the validity of the missionary movement. Theologians, including Karl Barth and H. Richard Niebuhr, re-examined the relationship between Christ and culture. While Barth tried to divorce grace from "religion," many within and outside the church saw the missionaries as the promoters of a religion that could no longer claim superiority. Fewer young people offered themselves for missionary service, and many who did were compelled by humanitarian motives rather than by evangelistic motives. Declining contributions made it difficult for the boards to send out even these candidates.

The continuation committee of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference (1910) (See Chapter 18, introductory material) organized the International Missionary Council, which met in Jerusalem in 1928. The ABCFM was well represented. The Jerusalem statement on "The Christian Message" outlined new attitudes in missions. The Message:

- called on the missionary to proclaim Christ, making every effort to distinguish the person of Christ from the now discredited "Christian civilization;"
- urged the church to approach other religions as allies in a common struggle against materialism, secularism and nationalism;
- viewed every land as a mission field, and every church could both send and receive missionaries on a basis of equality;
- recognized mission activities other than evangelism as legitimate in their own right.

In 1930 philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr., funded a Laymen's Commission on Foreign Missions. Congregationalist William E. Hocking (1873-1966), professor of philosophy at Harvard University, chaired this commission which investigated the work of seven major American mission boards, including

⁸For earlier development of mission policy see Chapter 7, Part C, and Chapter 16, Part A, Evolving Mission Policy of the ABCFM.

the ABCFM, in India, Burma, China and Japan.

On 18 November 1932 Hocking released the commission's report, *Re-Thinking Missions*,⁹ which generated controversy from that day onward. *Re-Thinking Missions* reflected the ideas of the Jerusalem Conference. However the greatest controversy revolved around a philosophical statement of "General Principles" by Hocking which presented Christianity as an intellectual system with a contribution to make alongside other religions.

Hocking had made *Re-Thinking Missions* a major publicity event to which all mission boards had to respond, releasing the report at a press conference in the crowded ballroom of the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. Most mission executives welcomed the practical suggestions, but could not accept the "General Principles." The ABCFM, Evangelical Synod Board of Missions, and Reformed Church Foreign Mission Board all studied the report, used it to promote practical reforms in their missions, but rejected the Report's philosophy.

Frank Laubach

Remembered as the most effective literacy crusader of the Twentieth Century, Frank Charles Laubach (1884-1970) was a multi-faceted ABCFM missionary. Raised a Methodist in Benton, Pennsylvania, Laubach was ordained Congregational in 1913. He seriously cultivated the spiritual life, trying to think of God every minute, and conducting a spiritual inventory at the close of each day.¹⁰

The ABCFM sent Laubach to Cagayan, on Mindanao, in the Philippines, in 1915. From 1924 to 1926 he served Union Theological Seminary in Manila as dean. In 1929 Laubach returned from advanced studies in the United States to begin a mission at Dansalan, Lanao Province, on Mindanao. Laubach was an effective evangelist and church builder. He organized the Cagayan Presbytery and actively participated in all church union discussions while he was in the Philippines. His *The People of the Philippines: Their Religious Progress and Preparation for Spiritual Leadership in the Far East* (1925) affirmed the Filipino role in the history of the church in the Philippines, and advocated independence.

Laubach called on missionaries to advocate for social justice from a Filipino perspective. He wrote in 1926,

⁹William Ernest Hocking, chair, Committee of Appraisal, *Re-Thinking Missions: A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1932).

¹⁰Laubach first expressed his spirituality in *Letters By a Modern Mystic* in 1937.

The question in this country for missionaries is whether Christianity is chloroform poured on a feather with which missionaries tickle the chins of the Filipinos, while America, big business, persuades Congress to pour upon the Philippines the same curse of landlordism that has paralyzed Ireland for a thousand years.

He called on American missionaries to attack, “war, militarism, usury, economic imperialism, exploitation of poor by rich, abominable working conditions, etc.”¹¹

Not meeting with success in Lanao in 1929, Laubach climbed nearby Signal Hill to pray. In prayer, God spoke to him,

My child, you have failed because you do not really love these Moros. You feel superior to them because you are white. If you can forget you are an American and think only how I love them, they will respond.

Laubach called this his reconversion.

Concerned that his neighbors were handicapped by illiteracy, Laubach devised a method by which he could teach a person to read in an hour. Literacy became his major ministry. When Depression in America cut missionary funding, and Laubach laid off his native literacy teachers, his new readers insisted that they could do the teaching. “Each one teach one” became the slogan of his literacy crusade. Laubach was soon traveling across Mindanao, the Philippines, and the world, promoting literacy education.

Following World War II Laubach spoke across the United States and wrote his thoughts on world peace. The real issue of the Cold War, Laubach wrote, was not between the United States and the Soviet Union. In Laubach’s eyes the great divide in the world separated rich from poor. He advocated efforts by both church and state to address the problems of hunger, racism, and lack of economic opportunity around the world.

¹¹quoted in T. Valentino Sitoy, Jr., *Several Springs, One Stream: The United Church of Christ in the Philippines* (Quezon City: UCC in the Philippines, 1992), 1:418.

PART C:
THE CHURCH AND WORLD WAR II

War, Peace, and International Reconstruction¹²

When the First World War ended, American Christians opened their wallets to aid the people of war-torn Europe. The Evangelical Synod sent aid to Germany for six years. Although Congregationalists had special ties to Near East Relief, other denominations, including the Reformed Church, officially endorsed it and gave generously. Assistance also flowed to France and Belgium from American churches.

Christian leaders, many of whom had enthusiastically supported the War, soon became disillusioned. Reinhold Niebuhr, who had directed the Evangelical Synod's War Welfare Commission, saw the desperation and bitterness of Germans in the French-occupied Ruhr Valley in 1923, and declared in disgust, "I am done with this war business." Many others joined the chorus of revulsion.

Evangelical Synod's General Conference declared in 1925, "international warfare and the Gospel of Love and Brotherhood which we profess are incompatible. . . . We will not as a Christian Church ever bless or sanction war."

Congregationalists declared at National Council that same year,

We record our conviction that War is contrary to the mind of Christ; that the continuance of civilization demands its entire elimination and that it is the duty of all Christians and all Churches to find a Christian way to meet international situations which threaten war.

The Reformed Church declared in 1926, "The Church of Christ as an institution should not be used as an instrument or an agency in support of war."

With an overwhelming feeling of revulsion against war, the churches supported every scheme to build peace - League of Nations, World Court, movement to Outlaw War, Kellog-Briand Pact, arms limitations talks. Congregationalist Henry A. Atkinson (b. 1877) became general secretary of the World Alliance for International Friendship Through the Churches in 1918.

Reinhold Niebuhr joined the executive council of the Fellowship of

¹²For earlier discussion of Peace Movements see Chapter 8, Part C, and Chapter 16, Part C, The Peace Movement 1861-1917.

Reconciliation (FoR) in 1929, and became its chair in 1931, although he never became an absolute pacifist. FoR advocated for economic and racial justice as well as world peace. The organization became divided in 1933, when their executive secretary advocated violence in resisting capitalism. Niebuhr agreed with the executive and resigned from FoR leadership when the executive was fired. Niebuhr's "Christian Realism" led him to advocate violence in opposition to fascism.

When war came to the United States in 1941, the churches gave their support, but with a very different spirit from 1917. The churches did not preaching hatred of the enemy as propagandists for the state. They were more respectful of minority opinions, and carefully defended the rights of their conscientious objectors. The church did not nurture unrealistic expectations about the result of war.

Both the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian Churches registered conscientious objectors and supported them in their decision while the vast majority of young men willingly served in the armed forces when drafted.

After World War II the churches again conducted massive campaigns of relief for those suffering in the former theaters of war. The War Emergency Relief Commission of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in 20 years beginning in 1940 raised and distributed twelve million dollars worth of aid. The Congregational Christian Committee for War Victims and Reconstruction at its peak in 1946 raised one and a quarter million dollars in one year. The committee later became the Congregational Christian Service Committee, providing humanitarian aid wherever needed.

Japanese Christians in Japan, Hawaii, and the Mainland¹³

The Christian church in Japan continued to grow with strong indigenous leadership. Efforts to unite Japanese Christians failed until they were reinforced by governmental pressure. The militaristic government wanted to control all aspect of society through centralized organizations. The United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan), organized in 1941 included all legal Protestants in a centralized organization under a Director named by the government. During World War II this "official" church supported the government's war aims, while local churches and pastors concerned themselves with the abundant human

¹³For earlier material on the Japanese see Chapter 15, Part F, Mission to Japan and Japanese in America, also Chapter 16, Part B, Hawaii's Ethnic Mosaic.

needs. After the war, several denominations withdrew from the Kyodan. However Congregationalists, Disciples, Evangelical United Brethren, Methodists, and most of the Presbyterian-Reformed group remained.

The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941, led to the persecution of Japanese Americans on Hawaii. No effort was made to confine the entire Japanese population of 160,000, but anyone suspected of sympathy with Japan was interned. Anyone fluent in Japanese or who had corresponded with Japanese officials could be removed from their homes without due process of law by the War Department. Seven Congregational ministers were detained on 8 December 1941. At Camp Livingston, Louisiana, Lordsburg, New Mexico, and Topaz, Utah, they held services and ministered with fellow internees throughout the war.

On the mainland, Japanese Americans were interned en masse. Over 120,000 persons, most American citizens, were located in ten internment camps. The church continued to function in these camps. Japanese Congregational Pastors ministered at Rohwer, Arkansas, Manzanar, California, and Paston, Arizona.

The Congregational denomination protested, as it had against acts of exclusion and discrimination in the past. The General Council pointed out in 1942, "Every time a majority deprives a minority of its civil rights it undermines its own liberties, and the unity and world-wide influence of the nation." Most Christians, Japanese and White, accepted the internment as something beyond their control and tried to ease the suffering in whatever way they could. Following the war, some Japanese Americans returned to their communities and reorganized their churches.

The Church in the Philippines¹⁴

The United Evangelical Church in the Philippines, formed in 1929 by churches organized by the American Board, Presbyterians, and United Brethren, continued to grow. Other Protestant denominations worked each in their own area. In addition, Presbyterians and Methodists desiring churches free from foreign control had organized several independent Filipino denominations.

Japan attacked the Philippines on 8 December 1941 (7 December USA time). Within a month the Japanese entered Manila, and by May controlled the entire archipelago. Japan favored one united Protestant church under

¹⁴For earlier information on the church in the Philippines see Chapter 16, Part B, The Philippines.

government control, like they had in Japan. Many Filipino Protestants favored unity. They believed American missionaries - now sent home or in concentration camps - were the chief obstacles to union. Enrique C. Sobrepeña, a pastor of a United Evangelical church and chaplain in the United States Army with the rank of "Major," worked for a voluntary union, rather than one imposed by the Japanese. In April 1943 he organized the Evangelical Church of the Philippines, with the blessing of the Japanese, and was ordained its bishop. This new church, in theory, included the United Evangelical Church, the Disciples of Christ, and several independent Filipino groups.

Following the War, the Philippines began rebuilding. Major Sobrepeña faced a court martial for supporting the Japanese, but was found not guilty. Leonardo G. Dia, Moderator of the United Evangelical Church, had been in the south during the war, where the churches were not consulted and were not informed of the formation of the Evangelical Church in the Philippines. The former United Evangelical Church was now both united and divided. Dia led the southern continuing United Evangelical Church (Presbyterian and Congregational), and Sobrepeña led the northern Evangelical Church of the Philippines, a union of the United Evangelical Church (United Brethren section), Disciples of Christ, and independents. Lay people took the lead in promoting reconciliation. On 25-27 May 1948 the United Church of Christ in the Philippines came into being, uniting the United Evangelical Church, the Evangelical Church of the Philippines, and the Philippine Methodist church (an independent Filipino separation from the Methodists in 1933).

PART D: SOCIAL ISSUES¹⁵

The General Conference of the Evangelical Synod in 1921 resolved "that the Church must be the conscience of society in the social problems of our days." The social gospel had gained power in the churches in the Twentieth Century. Denominations embraced "social action" as a new mission, adopting statements, passing resolutions, and creating new agencies. Through numerous publications and addresses this controversial concern did begin to trickle down to persons in the local church.

The Federal Council of Churches (FCC), permeated by the social gospel, adopted a "social creed" at its first meeting in 1908. These fourteen short statements advocating rights for workers in industrial society were patterned after

¹⁵For earlier discussion of the social gospel see Chapter 12, Part A, Social Gospel.

a Methodist statement adopted six months earlier. Other denominations followed suit, adopting the FCC statement as their own or revising it. Congregationalists in 1910 adopted a Declaration of Principles based on the FCC statement. The Reformed Church in the United States in 1917 received from its Social Service Committee a Social Creed, which presented a theological justification for social action, and included the FCC social creed (as revised in 1912 with 16 points) (*LTH* 5:53). Evangelical Synod in 1925 adopted "The Social Ideals of the Churches" as revised by the FCC in 1919 (*LTH* 5:53).

Congregationalists in 1925 adopted their own Statement of Social Ideals, organized in five parts: (1) education, (2) industry and economic relationships, (3) agriculture, (4) race relations, and (5) international relations. The Evangelical and Reformed Church adopted "Objectives for Christian Social Action" in 1942. It began with a prayer of Confession, a "Declaration of Social Repentance." It outlined specific objectives under the headings of (1) the home, (2) social regulations, (3) the economic system, (4) justice for labor, (5) rural life, (6) civil liberties, (7) race relations, and (8) the political order.

The Congregational Council had created a Committee on Capital and Labor in 1892, chaired by Washington Gladden. This committee passed through a few name changes, was chaired by Henry A. Atkinson 1911-19, and in 1934 became the Council for Social Action. The 1934 action made it a church funded agency, with a status similar to a mission board. The Council for Social Action was directed to (1) conduct research, (2) educate the church, and (3) take action (*LTH* 5:55). The Evangelical Synod's Commission on Christianity and Social Problems began in the Missouri District in 1922, and gained recognition as a Synod commission in 1925. Julius Horstman gave consistent leadership. Its task was to (1) gather information regarding social conditions, (2) study it in the light of the teachings of Christ, (3) keep in touch with the FCC and other churches, and (4) keep the church informed.

The original FCC social creed focused on industrial labor issues: abolition of child labor, safe working conditions, a living wage, reasonable hours, a day of rest, the right of labor to organize, etc. Many other issues were addressed in succeeding years.

Prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages was advocated by every denomination in the FCC except the Evangelical Synod, which was deeply divided over the issue. An FCC study in 1925 demonstrated that Prohibition was not working - a fact the churches slowly accepted.

Congregationalists had a long history of advocacy for racial equality, but they were not alone. All of the groups that came into the United Church of Christ advocated for a federal anti-lynching law, an end to segregation, and full voting rights for all. The Congregational Christian (CC) General Council in 1946 declared,

We repent of our sin of segregation as practiced both within and outside our churches and respond to the mandate of the Christian Gospel to promote with uncompromising word and purpose the integration of our Congregational Christian Churches and our democratic society of all persons of whatever race, color, or ancestry on the basis of equality and mutual respect in an inclusive fellowship.

The Evangelical and Reformed Church in 1947 quoted this CC statement and said, "We affirm as our own these words." Both denominations designated race relations to be a priority of the church for the coming two years.

In the Depression years social gospel anti-capitalist views occasionally received acceptance from church bodies. The adoption of an "anti-profit motive" resolution by the Congregational Christian Council in 1934 generated considerable criticism. The General Council in 1952 declared that it no longer held that view, but that, "no economic system embodies the perfect will of God."¹⁶

Summary

The ship of the church passed through the storm-tossed seas of the early and mid Twentieth Century, forced to change in response to the crisis. Old theologies of progress were furled, replaced by the more modest sails of neo-orthodoxy and Christian Realism. The direction of the missionary movement was examined, and new courses plotted. After throwing overboard its patriotic embrace of war, the church had to later scale down its pacifist reaction in the face of fascism. The failure of the great experiment called Prohibition did not deter the church from advocating other social ideals. The church emerged from World War II, an even deeper encounter with evil, with a new sense of global solidarity, and reawakened to the horror of racism. The yearning for a fuller expression of the catholicity of the church – always part of the church – was reinforced by the need

¹⁶The churches addressed many other issues. When Hitler persecuted Jews in Germany, the Evangelical and Reformed Church strongly condemned anti-Semitism. The churches were concerned about sexually explicit cinema, penal reform, stability of the farm economy, and rights of farm workers. The concern for world order, disarmament and an end to War, and criticism of discrimination against the Japanese have been discussed in Part B of this chapter.

to cooperate in turbulent times. Four denominations committed to Christian unity became two, then one, as they passed through the storm of the Twentieth Century.