

CHAPTER 64 : NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA POST-1776

In previous chapters we have noted how the United States was the model of a secularist state. Because of the residual effect of America's Protestant heritage, the logical consequences of secularism have taken many years to manifest themselves. So although America was secularist in political constitution, it did not descend into the moral anarchy of France during its French Revolution. Instead, America became a compelling model for other nations to follow. It enjoyed the benefits of a Protestant populace and social structure, without the costs associated with suppressing false religion. And it attained the political, economic and cultural clout to influence other nations, especially the nations in North and South America, which it "protected" in accordance with its Munroe Doctrine. The United States promoted its political and cultural system with an almost religious zeal. And the various sects which were born in America- whether dispensational, Pentecostalist, Seventh Day Adventist, Mormon, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. – also promoted themselves worldwide. And Hollywood – the movie production capital of the world – inspired many nations to imitate the American model. Even Roman Catholicism had to adapt to and accommodate the American model, which it did quite well. It has been Reformed Protestantism in the US which has suffered gradual decline, and so America has increasingly been the source of false religions and ideologies.

Much of the story of the nations of North and South America in the modern era involves how they have adopted many aspects of the American model, although coming from very different circumstances. And much of the story of the Protestant church in North and South America during this time has been its steady doctrinal and moral declension.

Canada

From early in Canada's history the Protestant churches have faced the strong opposition of the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholic France competed with Protestant Britain for domination of Canada. While France's surrender of its North American colony of New France to Britain at the end of the Seven Years' War removed France from the picture, it in no wise removed the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, in the Quebec Act, Britain wrongly recognized the Roman Catholic Church as the established church of Quebec. While this lessened the possibility that Quebec would overtly support the American Revolutionaries to their south, it meant that Romanism was left to undermine the Protestant integrity of the Canadian territory under British dominion.

Protestantism arrived in Canada in many different streams, but primarily from the United Kingdom. French Huguenots, escaping persecution following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, brought the Reformed faith to Canada, but they were relatively few in number. Even in the New World their growth and development was restricted.

After the ceding of Nova Scotia to England in 1713, subsequent immigration of Presbyterians from Scotland and Ireland completely overwhelmed the small French Protestant contingent in Canada. Anglicans came from England as well and settled in the Canadian territory.

Congregationalism in Canada originated with the acceptance of the offer made by the British government which promised free land to New Englanders who would relocate in Nova Scotia. In 1759 several hundred immigrants founded new towns and gathered churches; the first was at Chester, and in 1761 the church at Liverpool was formed. In 1760 a colony began at Mungerville, New Brunswick; the first church was organized six years later. The first church in Newfoundland was organized in 1846. In 1801 the British Congregationalists sent a missionary to organize a church in Quebec. That beginning led to the formation of the Congregational Union of Ontario and Quebec, which merged with the older group in 1906.

After the American Revolution, many British Loyalists from America settled in Canada. Many of these Protestants were Anglican. They settled mainly in Ontario.

Other Protestants from the United Kingdom joined those which had come in earlier migrations. The first Presbyterian ministers from Scotland were Daniel Cook, David Smith, and Hugh Graham, who organized the Presbytery of Truro in 1786. In 1795 this presbytery was joined by a second, the Presbytery of Pictou. In 1817 these two groups, joined by a few ministers from the Established Church of Scotland, were able to come together and form the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia.

Concurrent with the events that led to the formation of the Synod of Nova Scotia, Presbyterians were moving into central and western Canada, as were Anglicans from England. As in eastern Canada, many of the Scottish Presbyterians joined and established several presbyteries and then synods, the first being the Presbytery of the Canadas in 1818. The establishment of new synodical structures continued through the first half of the nineteenth century. At this time too some non-English-speaking Dutch Reformed immigrants came to Canada, and founded Dutch Reformed churches.

In 1867 with the passing of the British North America Act, the British government granted local self-government to a confederation of three of its North American colonies as the Dominion of Canada. In later years, other British colonies and territories joined the confederation. Full control over its affairs came in 1931 with the Statute of Westminster, and in 1982 with the patriation of Canada's constitution. Canada became fully sovereign over its own affairs, though it has remained in the British Commonwealth under the Protestant British Crown.

In 1875 a series of mergers led to the union of most Presbyterians into the Presbyterian Church of Canada. Presbyterians were arguably the most influential denomination in Canada, especially Protestant Canada (i.e., not Quebec). This influence meant that Canada staunchly maintained its Christian Sabbath, by force of law, well into the twentieth century. And the Presbyterian and Reformed churches were generally more

sound than their North American counterparts. They were much more slow, for example, to amend the Westminster Confession. Protestant Canada was more law-abiding than their American counterparts, having rejected revolutionary methods. They were able to avoid the devastation of divine judgment which accompanied America's Civil War.

Sadly, however, the last decades of the 19th century saw the rise of theological liberalism in Canada's Presbyterian and Anglican churches. As the liberalism spread, doctrinal integrity was compromised. The doctrinal compromise became so great that in 1925 most of the Presbyterian churches in Canada were willing to merge into the United Church of Canada.

The United Church of Canada became Canada's second largest church (after the Roman Catholic Church) and its largest Protestant denomination. The merger was recognized by Act of Parliament in 1925. The United Church was inaugurated on June 10, 1925 in Toronto, Ontario, when the Methodist Church, Canada, the Congregational Union of Canada, and 70 per cent of the Presbyterian Church in Canada entered into an organic union. Joining as well was the small General Council of Union Churches, centered largely in Western Canada. It was the first union of churches in the world to cross historical denominational lines. They could cross denominational lines because they had embraced theological liberalism, and abandoned even fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, like the infallibility of scripture.

The United Church is one of the most socially and theologically liberal of the world's large Protestant denominations. It was quick to allow female ministers and has long shied away from a faithful interpretation of the Bible. The United Church is also very open to homosexuals. Corporately, the church allows homosexual ministers, celebrates homosexual unions, and fights for sodomite "rights" in the greater community. Church delegates presented evidence in favor of same-sex marriage to the House of Commons Justice Committee during its cross-country hearings in 2003 and welcomed court decisions that legalized same-sex marriage in certain provinces. In 1999 the limits of the Church's openness were tested when the Church's Moderator, the Rev. Bill Phipps, commented that he was not sure the resurrection of Jesus was a scientific fact.

The merger in 1925 had one major dissenting voice. Approximately thirty percent of the Presbyterians refused to enter the merger and continued as the Presbyterian Church of Canada. This was owing to the more conservative nature of Presbyterianism, in comparison to the other churches which merged. Sadly, over time, even this denomination became more liberal, albeit not as much as the United Church. The Anglican Church of Canada too did not join in the United Church. And some smaller more conservative Presbyterian denominations, like the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, have refused to diminish their historic reformed testimony through compromising merger also.

In order to satisfy the demands of the French-speaking province of Quebec, poor legislation has been passed. In 1969 French was made equal to English throughout the Canadian federal government. This started a process that led to Canada redefining itself

as a bilingual and multicultural nation, and rejecting its more Biblical heritage. In the second half of the 20th century, some citizens of the French-speaking province of Quebec have sought independence in two referendums held in 1980 and 1995. In both cases, the referendums were defeated with 60% and 50.6% opposed to independence, respectively.

Between the liberalizing tendencies within the Protestant churches, and the utter corruption of the Romish Churches, combined with secularist and materialist influences from the United States, Canada has descended into spiritual break-down. They have even passed legislation essentially classifying vocal opposition to sodomy as hate speech.

Like the other Western nations, God has judged Canada by giving it over to such crimes as abortion. This in turn has lowered its population growth rate. So Canada has opened itself up to immigration from regions of the world where Hindu and Islam dominate. Fully one-sixth of Canadians are foreign-born, a percentage second only to Australia. Nevertheless, most Canadians are still nominally Christians, with about 42% being nominal Roman Catholics, and 38% nominal Protestants. The largest Protestant denomination is the United Church of Canada. Various heretical denominations and sects have moved up to Canada from the United States. The change for the worse has been significant.

Mexico

Mexico, like the rest of Latin America, has been Roman Catholic since the beginning of Spanish and Portuguese exploration in the region. Protestantism was thoroughly suppressed during Mexico's colonial era.

Mexico followed the lead of the US, and revolted against European rule. Consequently, in 1810, independence from Spain was declared, causing a long war that eventually led to independence in 1821. After independence, Mexico's territory slowly decreased in size, with land lost and sold to the United States and the secession of Central America. In the 1860s the country suffered a military occupation by France, fought off by Mexican patriot Benito Juárez.

With no Protestant heritage, and continuing domination by the Roman Catholic Church, Mexico's revolution of independence made conditions only worse than they already were. It simply encouraged more lawlessness and revolution, and the secularist government did not improve the social plight of the populace.

The long, undemocratic regime of Porfirio Díaz, combined with a continuing belief in revolution as a way to effect positive change, led to the Mexican Revolution in 1910. Revolutionary forces defeated the federal army, but were left with internal struggles, leaving the country in conflict for two more decades. At the end of the revolution, the

corrupt Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) controlled the country until the end of the 20th century.

Today Mexico is the most populous Spanish-speaking country in the world and the second most populous country in Latin America after Portuguese-speaking Brazil. Some 60% of the population is of a mixed ethnicity known as mestizo, with 30% being Amerindian and 9% of European descent. The country is still predominantly Roman Catholic (89% of the population). Much of the remainder includes various sects and cults from the United States.

There has been significant American missionary activity in Mexico, of nearly every denominational stripe. Since Mexico, like most of the other nations in Latin America, have sought to follow the US model of secularist government, there has been the opportunity of Protestant missionaries to enter these nations. No longer is Protestantism overtly suppressed by law, like it was in the colonial era. Like in the US, the suppression of sound religion comes in more subtle forms. And due to various factors, Mexicans – and Latin Americans in general- have not been receptive to the Reformed faith. Most of the Presbyterian churches in Mexico are theologically corrupted, often by liberalism. For the most part Mexicans have not been receptive to American-based religions, due at least in part to resentment at what Mexicans consider American imperialism. The Mexican state has long been secularist, according to the American model, but the society and culture has remained dominantly Catholic.

Venezuela

Venezuela was the site of the first permanent Spanish settlement in South America in 1522, and it remained under Spanish control for centuries. The Roman Catholic Church was the established church of the land during these centuries, and Protestantism was effectively suppressed.

Like the other nations of Central and South America, Venezuela followed the example of the US in engaging in revolution to gain independence from European colonial rule and establishing a secularist government.

After several unsuccessful uprisings, the country achieved independence from Spain in 1821 under the leadership of its most famous son, Simón Bolívar. Venezuela, along with what are now Colombia, Panama, and Ecuador, was part of the Republic of Greater Colombia (*Gran Colombia*) until 1830, when Venezuela separated and became a sovereign republic, constitutionally patterned after the United States.

Much of Venezuela's 19th and 20th century history has been characterized by periods of political instability, dictatorial sometimes mixed with democratic rule, and revolutionary turbulence. Following the military's withdrawal from direct involvement in national

politics in 1958, Venezuela had a long period of civilian democratic rule without revolutionary violence, but much political corruption. However, in recent years, the presidency of Hugo Chávez (who is a protégé of the communist Cuban dictator Fidel Castro) saw a failed coup d'état after riots and protests shook the capital of the country. Although some Venezuelan government spokesmen claimed that it was orchestrated by the US administration, the US has denied these allegations as unfounded.

The Venezuelan people comprise a mixture of peoples. The historically present Amerindians, Spanish colonists and Africans were joined by Italians, Portuguese, Arabs, Germans, and others from neighboring countries in South America during waves of immigration in the 20th century. About 85% of the population live in urban areas in the northern portion of the country.

Protestant missions have had relatively small impact on Venezuelan religious affiliation. Nominally 96% of the population is Roman Catholic. Most of the remainder are various heretical sects as well as cults from the US.

Brazil

Brazil was first sighted by Europeans in 1500 and developed as a Portuguese commercial colony, based to a large extent on slavery. During the many centuries of Portuguese rule the Roman Catholic Church was the established church, and Protestantism was effectively suppressed.

The Portuguese royal family and government fled Portugal from Napoleon in 1808 and relocated to Brazil. Though they returned in 1821, the interlude led to a growing desire for independence amongst Brazilians, and in 1822 the then prince-regent Dom Pedro I established the independent Empire of Brazil. This lasted until the next emperor, Dom Pedro II was deposed in 1889 and a republican-based federation was adopted, consistent with the US model.

Brazil received an influx of over 5 million immigrants in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a period that also saw Brazil industrialise and further expand into its interior. Brazil became a dictatorship in 1937 under Getulio Vargas, returned to popular elections in 1945, but following a military coup d'état in 1964 saw a succession of generals as president, until 1985. Brazil has since returned to a popularly elected, secularist government. The current president is a socialist who has close ties to Chavez in Venezuela and the Cuban communist dictator Fidel Castro.

Four major groups make up the Brazilian population: the Portuguese, the original colonisers; Africans brought to Brazil as slaves; various other European, Middle Eastern, and Asian immigrant groups who have settled in Brazil since the mid- 19th century; and

indigenous people of Tupi and Guarani language stock. In Brazil's early years, a significant amount of Africans brought over as slaves populated the northern part of Brazil, where many worked on the sugar cane plantations, while the Portuguese tend to occupy southern Brazil in the industrialized part of the country. Today, there are signs of this population trend still existing. Intermarriage between the Portuguese and indigenous people or slaves was common. Although the major European ethnic stock of Brazil was once Portuguese, subsequent waves of immigration have contributed to a diverse ethnic and cultural heritage. The culture of Brazil is generally quite immoral and licentious.

Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking nation in the Americas. About 80% of all Brazilians belong to the Roman Catholic Church. There is also a significant following of African religious practices, both within and outside the Roman Catholic Church. As throughout Latin America, there has been significant American missionary activity in Brazil. Brazil, along with certain nations in Central America like Guatemala, have more openly embraced the religious faiths spread from the United States. Most of these are heretical sects like the Pentecostals and cults like Jehovah's Witnesses. But there has even been some limited openness to the reformed Protestant faith, relative to the otherwise miserable spiritual condition throughout Latin America.

A good example of reformed missions in Brazil is the Puritan Project. The Puritan Project in Brazil began in the 1990s. It has sought to encourage availability of Puritan and Reformed literature in Brazil, as well as to inform Christians in Brazil of the Puritan and Reformed faith. Much of the teaching is directed to the members of the Brazilian Presbyterian Church. Those who have helped the Project include seminary professors, pastors, office workers, members of Churches who give and solicit subscriptions to the Puritan Journal, writers who contribute articles, and translators who translate articles and books.

Argentina

Europeans first arrived in the region in the early 16th century. Subsequent Spanish colonisation of the area led to the colony of Buenos Aires in 1580. During the many centuries of colonial rule, the Roman Catholic Church was the established church, and Protestantism was effectively suppressed.

Independence from Spain was achieved in 1816, after which a conflict between centralists and federalists developed until a new constitution was proclaimed in 1853.

Argentina was then marked by periods of internal political conflict between conservatives and liberals and between civilian and military factions. In the beginning of 20th century Argentina was one of the leading welfare states in the world.

Argentina's population has remained overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, and consequently the nation has known the same sort of political corruption and intrigue that marks other dominantly Catholic nations.

After World War II, the country saw the rise of the populist Peronist movement, which to a large extent polarised Argentina. Increasingly bloody military juntas alternated with proscribing democratic governments until 1983, following increasing economic problems, corruption, public revulsion and defeat in the Falklands War. There were democratic elections after this, but widespread corruption was present. Money loaned from foreign countries reached dangerous levels, and an unprecedented economic implosion occurred at the end of 2001. Street violence forced a change in government leadership.

Argentines are a fusion of diverse national and ethnic groups, with descendants of Italian and Spanish immigrants predominant. Waves of immigrants from many European countries arrived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Syrian, Lebanese, and other Middle Eastern immigrants number about 500,000, mainly in urban areas. The only official language is Spanish, though immigrants have to an extent retained their original languages.

Roman Catholicism is Argentina's official religion, but Argentina also has the largest Jewish population in Latin America, about 300,000 strong, and is home to one of the largest Islamic mosques in Latin America. Due to Argentina's basically secularist government, Protestant missionaries are allowed to evangelize in Argentina. But for the most part Argentines have not been receptive to true religion.

Chile

In 1531 the Spanish conquered Peru from the Incas. One of the Conquistadors in that voyage was Diego de Almagro. He left in 1535 to the South of Peru after territorial disputes. He is credited with being the first European to explore the coast of Chile. However, he did not leave any lasting marks on the territory. It wasn't until the voyage of Pedro de Valdivia 1540-1541 that a permanent Spanish presence was established. Valdivia founded a string of villages on his way south. Finally, on 12th of February, 1541, he founded Santiago. Throughout the region Roman Catholicism was established by force of arms, and it remained the religion protected by the state for centuries.

Although Protestant missionaries have been allowed into the country after the colonial era, Chile has remained overwhelmingly Roman Catholic. It is currently a secularist democratic state, modeled in many respects after the United States.

Conclusion

In the nations in the Americas where Protestantism was once vibrant, in the modern age it became weak and generally corrupted. In the nations in the Americas where Roman Catholicism was dominant, it is still dominant, although not monopolistically so. Most of the nominally Christian missions in the Americas has come from the US, and it has been generally carried on by heretical sects and cults. There yet remains some sound Reformed and Presbyterian churches in Canada, and to a lesser extent in the US, but their numbers are few. The US has tended to promote secularism, revolution, and materialism in the America's, which is a sad legacy from a once Protestant realm. Yet, there has been one notable effect of the United States which sets the stage for a Restoration of the Protestant Reformation, much like Gutenberg's printing press did for the original Protestant Reformation. The US has led the world in new tele-communications and transportation technologies, such as the internet and airplane, which makes dissemination of the truth much more easy. Access to the Bible and Reformed literature, both in the Americas and across the world, has thus never been so widespread. While humanity has for the most part not used this access wisely, there is yet the very real possibility humanity one day will, and that humanity by God's grace will repent of its current wicked course. But we shall consider that topic in a future chapter of our history.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CHAPTER 64 : NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA POST-1776

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Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Logos Research Systems, Inc.: Oak Harbor, WA, 1997). (see electronic version at <http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/About.htm>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Sabbath Bible Survey Tests and Assignments* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

J. Parnell McCarter, *Let My People Go* (PHSC: Grand Rapids, MI, 2003). (see electronic version at <http://www.puritans.net/curriculum/>)

The on-line resources of Historicism Research Foundation at <http://www.historicism.net/> also proved invaluable for my understanding of Biblical prophecy. Biblical prophecy concerning Christian church history, especially as revealed in the book of Revelation, serves as the foundation upon which all church histories should be based.

Other references especially consulted for this chapter include:

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