

Church Growth and Decline in Historical Perspective: Protestant Quest for Identity, Leadership, and Meaning

by James H. Smylie

“NO CHRISTIAN MARSHALL PLAN,” KARL Barth warned Americans in *The Christian Century* of December 8, 1948. Barth was commenting on the papers prepared for the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam of that year. At one point he raised a question that he would certainly put to those who are currently discussing the growth and decline of the churches.

What objection could we really make if it should please God to carry his work onward and reach his goal, not through a further numerical increase but through a drastic numerical decrease of so-called Christendom? It seems to me the only question in this matter is: How can we free ourselves from all quantitative thinking, all statistics, all calculation of observable consequences, all efforts to achieve a Christian world order, and then shape our witness into a witness to the sovereignty of God’s mercy, by which alone we can live—a witness to which the Holy Ghost will surely not refuse his confirmation?¹

Some observers, unable to relieve themselves of “all quantitative thinking,” might observe that Barthians in Europe have succeeded in lowering membership and participation without necessarily lifting the quality of life of the body of Christ.

After World War II and into the 1950s there was an upsurge of church membership and interest in religion. George Sweazey, a Presbyterian pastor and evangelist, told of the upsurge in a pamphlet, *Evangelism in the United States*, in 1958. He suggested reasons for the phenomenon: (1) the “higher regard for religion,” symbolized by the simple faith of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and piety along the Potomac; (2) the “national situation,” in which religion was considered essential for the country’s survival and triumph in the struggle against Communism; (3) the “personal situation,” in a turn from materialism as a rival religion because it had ceased to satisfy; (4) the “cultural factors,” since membership in a church was, to a degree, still a sign of upward movement on the social scale; and (5) because of simpler personal factors, more conscious than the zeitgeist of the period. Sweazey was not uncritical of this growth of interest and affiliation. He warned of an American Shinto and the “cult of the comfortable” as well as shallowness, recalling Marilyn Monroe’s testimony to a reporter about her religious views: “I just believe in everything—a little bit.” Sweazey also maintained that the interest was a great opportunity for the denominations to increase the quality of Christian faith and life.²

Since the 1960s, however, several mainline denominations have suffered serious drops in participation and losses in membership. Denominational governing bodies and agencies

have not been able to free themselves of all thought of statistics. Dean M. Kelley, Methodist minister and executive of the National Council of Churches—a mainline insider—heightened anxiety in a provocative volume, *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing*.³ To simplify a complex case, Kelley suggested that liberal churches had declined in membership because of a loss of ability to respond to the basic human search for meaning. Conservative churches have been better able to do so. Moreover, controversy has broken out over the work of the department of church growth of the nondenominational Fuller Theological Seminary, which makes church growth the very essence of faithfulness to the gospel of the Great Commandment: In response to positive thinking volumes from the Fuller writers—*How Churches Grow*, *Ten Steps for Church Growth*, and *Your Church Can Grow*—Robert K. Hudnut wrote a challenge, *Church Growth Is Not the Point!* He called for a smaller, “grace-filled, spirit-charged” membership and participation in the body of Christ.⁴ The controversy over church growth has reached beyond particular denominations and beyond the National Council of Churches. Donald A. McGavran carried the debate to the World Council in a discussion of the meaning of mission for Christians today. He presented his church-growth approaches, it not over against, then in such a way as to question the value of international Christian mission not primarily concerned for numerical growth.⁵

In the meantime, denominations losing membership have mounted studies of why churches grow and decline, with the help of staff sociologists and statisticians. Among these studies *Membership Trends: A Study of Decline and Growth in the United Methodist Church, 1949-1975* and *Membership Trends in the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.* are the most massive and impressive.⁶ Jackson W. Carroll has summarized the findings in “Understanding Church Growth and Decline,” *Theology Today* of April 1978.⁷ These studies and Carroll’s summary tell us much about church growth and decline. Relying upon these findings, denominations—statistically self-conscious—have not only begun to plan strategy for growth, but they have the confidence that with proper leadership and in the planting of new churches, the denominations will once again grow. Martin E. Marty supports this judgement.⁸ In his view, denominations will survive. But while there is currently an expanding religious interest throughout the country, it does not appear that denominations which have experienced the greatest decline will be the chief benefactors of the widespread concern about spiritual matters. People are not translating this concern into denominational affiliation. Thus, churches continue to face problems having to do with growth and decline.

The following remarks attempt to place the problem of church growth and decline in historical perspective. They are intended to ascertain how some of the larger currents flowing in our history have affected those denominations that have lost membership in recent years, and they form a supplement to the thorough studies that have already been made of this subject. After dealing with what has been called the “decline of the Wasp,” we move on to discuss how the basic problems of mainline Protestant denominations, associated with the National Council of Churches, have been related to factors that seem to affect church growth and decline. These are the quest for identity and the social action factor, the quest for leadership and the success factor, and the quest for meaning and the ecumenical factor.

The Decline of the Wasp

In 1972 Sydney E. Ahlstrom published *A Religious History of the American People*, in which he described judiciously and at length America's spiritual heritage. Ahlstrom placed what was happening to American Protestantism in a larger historical perspective. In writing about the decade of the sixties, he stated that

It may even have ended a distinct quadricentennium—a unified four-hundred-year period—in the Anglo-American experience. A Great Puritan Epoch can be seen as beginning in 1558 with the death of Mary Tudor, the last monarch to rule over an officially Roman Catholic England, and ending in 1960 with the election of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the first Roman Catholic president of the United States....Histories of the rise of organized Puritanism begin their accounts with the decisive first decade in the reign of Queen Elizabeth; and the terms “post-Puritan” and “post Protestant” are first popularly applied to America in the 1960s⁹

The age of the Wasp—the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant—was drawing to a close. Ahlstrom's suggestion is certainly open to question. There are, of course, still a good many Wasps around, if Protestant is defined in the broadest terms. But we should look closer at Ahlstrom's overarching generalization in discussing the condition of mainline Protestantism today.

Seen from a longer historical perspective, the bodies that have lost membership in recent years have become, over the centuries, a smaller portion of the population that claims to have some formal religious affiliation. The Reformation churches that gave to colonists the great controlling metaphor about God's design and American destiny, especially with the help of such formative documents as *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Westminster Confession of Faith, actually lost numerical dominance in the early years of the nineteenth century. William Warren Sweet, of the University of Chicago, traced this growth and decline in American religious bodies. In an overview of “The Protestant Churches” in 1948, Sweet pointed out that the Anglicans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Dutch and German Reformed, and Lutherans—the right-wing, established churches of the Reformation—constituted the largest and most powerful religious bodies in America during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. They soon lost out numerically to Baptists, Methodists, and other left-wing sectarian bodies in the latter part of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. These denominations adapted to American conditions, Sweet wrote, as Americans swarmed westward, and they adopted more vigorous strategies of enlisting members than did the older ecclesiastical bodies. Later, he points out, Roman Catholicism, Judaism, and Orthodoxy began to catch up numerically with particular Protestant denominations. This was due largely to immigration of Catholics, Jews, and Orthodox from Europe.¹⁰ In 1960 Benson Y. Landis summarized “Trends in Church Membership in the United States” for the preceding decade.¹¹ In this period of growth, expansion in some mainline bodies—the United Church of Christ, the United Presbyterian Church, and the United Methodist Church—had taken place, in part, because of ecumenical efforts and mergers. Edwin Scott Gaustad dramatically illustrated the position of American mainline bodies in his *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (1962).¹² What Sweet wrote about in 1948 shows

up clearly on Gaustad's map of religion in 1950. Only Southern Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, Mormons, and Roman Catholics show up as representing 50 percent of the reported membership in various areas of the United States. In a later edition of the *Atlas* (1976), Gaustad indicated the membership decline of the mainline Wasp of recent years. The demographic portrait illustrates vividly how these bodies have lost space and place in American life.¹³

With the growth of a non-Protestant religious pluralism, the power and prestige of mainline Protestant bodies have been challenged. There has been a considerable amount of Wasp-swatting in recent years, along with some disconcerting self-criticism and self-examination by Wasps themselves about the role of Protestantism in the modern world. In the same year in which Sweet took the Protestant pulse, Liston Pope, religious sociologist of Yale University, observed that churches illustrated the social stratification of American life. Social, economic, and political mobility led some people to move from Roman Catholicism into Protestantism. Within Protestantism the drive for status led from Pentecostalism through the Baptist and the Methodist churches, and then into the upper-class churches of the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the Congregationalists.¹⁴ As late as 1958, Vance Packard suggested that it was still a long road from Pentecostalism to Episcopalianism.¹⁵ In status-seeking in the United States it has been up from Anabaptism, up from Methodism, up from Pentecostalism, up from Catholicism.

Perhaps there still is a Wasp Establishment in some areas of American life, for example, in economic power, but now status-seeking by religious affiliation may be limited to those wanting one kind of status in a religiously pluralistic society. E. Digby Baltzell, writing from within Waspdom, issued a warning in *The Protestant Establishment, Aristocracy and Caste in America*. "A crisis in moral authority has developed in modern America largely because of the White-Anglo-Saxon-Protestant establishment's unwillingness, or inability, to share and improve its upper-class traditions by continuously absorbing talented and distinguished members of minority groups into its privileged ranks."¹⁶ In this same time frame, a rise in self-esteem and in the status of lower-class and non-Wasp groups indicates that an American did not have to be part of mainline Protestantism to be "in" in America. For example, the formation of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International helped to change the image of the once-deprived Holy Rollers. Indeed, the FGBMFL encouraged the charismatic movement even among established Protestants. The emphasis on the value of different racial, ethnic, and religious characteristics and backgrounds has been a serious challenge.

Will Herberg celebrated the existence of a non-Wasp pluralism in the *United States in Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1955).¹⁷ Since then, Moynihan and Glazer in *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1963), Michael Novak in *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (1972), and Andrew Greeley in his various studies have shown that non-Wasps have survived and prosper.¹⁸ They are gaining on and sometimes surpassing Wasps in both prestige and power in some areas of American society. At the same time we have been celebrating racial, ethnic, and religious differences, there has been a serious depreciation and debunking of the Wasp and of Wasp contributions to America. Peter Schrag's *The*

Decline of the Wasp (1973) is a sample of this view.¹⁹ Schrag maintained that the once-great Wasp defaulted on a birthright and brought into existence all our present wasteland. The Wasp is thus deservedly in decline. In this open season on Wasps someone has suggested that the appropriate term should be Asp. The use of white and Anglo-Saxon in the designation represents a redundancy. Such social, racial, ethnic, and religious-upping may have made it unnecessary for social status to be associated with the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, the United Church of Christ, the Dutch Reformed, and the Lutherans.

Something else should be noted about this period. Protestants themselves have been engaged in a process of self-criticism and self-evaluation in order to determine the nature and the role of the Christian in contemporary life. Paul Tittich called for a reformation within Protestantism in *The Protestant Era* as early as 1948. The most important contribution of Protestantism to the world in the past, present, and future is, Tillich maintained, “the principle of prophetic protest against every power which claims divine character for itself—whether it be church or state, party or leader.” In Tillich’s eyes, this included any tendency within Protestantism itself to absolutize any particular manifestation of Christian faith and life. Tillich called upon Protestants to shape new communities on the basis of what he called “an active expression of a Gestalt of grace.”²⁰ Following Tillich’s lead, Protestant writers—Hugh T. Kerr, *Positive Protestantism*(1950); George W. Forell, *The Protestant Faith*(1960); Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism*(1961); Charles W. Kegley, *Protestantism in Transition*(1965), to mention a few—defined Protestantism as a life of faith, a process, and continual pilgrimage and pioneering.²¹ The church reformed must ever be reformed—*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*. Kerr ended his volume with this comment in calling Protestantism to be the “evangelical conscience of Christendom”.

If Protestantism will commit itself in an act of self-dedication to the consummation of this divine commission, the tomorrow of Protestantism will involve not only self-renunciation but also self-realization. To this end Protestantism must apply to itself the repeated warning of the Lord to his disciples: “Whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.”²²

Looked at from the perspective of Tillich’s Protestant principle, this self-criticism and self-evaluation may be read as a sign of the rejuvenating spirit within Protestantism. Obituaries may be premature. Yet, looked at from the perspective of the discussion about church growth and decline, the diminished position of Protestantism, the direct attack upon Wasps, and the discussion within Protestantism of the dangers of Waspishness to Wasps themselves may not have been conducive to quantitative growth. Many mainline American Protestants have believed that God not only brought ancestors to this continent, but that the United States has been the Promised Land of milk and honey for vast multitudes of people. Moreover, in this most recent period God has transformed the country into a place of peace and prosperity, which, despite our problems, has exceeded the wildest visions of earliest pioneers. Many Protestants have felt a proprietary role in this achievement, and to have this called into questions has been unsettling, to say the least. To do so at a time when other social, racial, ethnic, and religious groups have been celebrating themselves—their own traditions and their own achievements—at the expense of the Wasp may have been too much to bear, even with some honest recognition

that the Wasp has not always been easy to live with in this environment. Other members of mainline denominations have been impressed with the Ahlstrom warning and have been on a quest for fresh identity, leadership, and meaning in a pluralistic society come of age.

Identity and the Social Action Factor

During the period of growth in the 1950s there was considerable awareness of the displacement of Protestants, of a non-Protestant pluralism, and a discussion of a “second chance” for Protestants in a new religious situation. In 1951 H. Richard Niebuhr published *Christ and Culture*, widely read and influential in mainline religious circles. He analyzed different ways in which Christians might relate to culture. With the imaginative use of prepositions, Niebuhr wrote about the “Christ of Culture,” “Christ Above Culture,” and “Christ Against Culture.” He also argued that Christ may be confessed as the transformer of culture. The Christian may believe that human nature is fallen and perverted and that this perversion appears in culture and is transmitted by it. Hence, Christ may be seen in opposition to all human institutions and customs. Yet Niebuhr continued,

The antithesis does not lead either to Christian separation from the world...or to mere endurance in the expectation of a transhistorical salvation...Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society, not apart from these, for there is no nature without culture and no turning of men from self and idols to God save in society.²³

With this typology in mind, mainline Protestant bodies have been seeking to free themselves from “quantitative thinking.” They have been trying to shape a witness to God’s mercy in a fresh way. In the discussion of church growth and decline, important aspects of identity are often reduced to the social action factor. Church growth movement experts suggest that it is axiomatic that those denominations which engage in social action will not grow, although Carroll points out that there is no clear correlation in the studies done by denominations.²⁴ This matter should be discussed in terms of a Protestant quest for identity, not simply as social activism.

First, it should be noted that the mainline Protestant bodies which are our chief concern here have taken up an identity as transformers of culture. They have done this in a natural evolutionary process from earlier traditions and in light of new conditions. All these bodies—the Episcopalians, the Congregationalists, the Presbyterians, the Dutch and the German Reformed, the Lutherans, and even the Methodists with the Anglican connection—belong to what Ernst Troeltsch called the churchly rather than the sectarian tradition. They were part of the magisterial Reformation. Each, except for the Methodists, enjoyed an established position in the nation-states in which they were dominant at the time of the Reformation. They held a monopoly of ecclesiastical prestige and power, and they felt responsibility for the total life of the culture. Sectarian bodies, or groups in the left wing of the Reformation, were not established and were more concerned about the individual and interior life of the Christian. As Niebuhr pointed out in his study of *Christ and Culture*, the relationship between the churches and culture was based upon theological convictions about God’s concern for the public affairs of human

beings and their institutions and not merely for their private lives. In the American colonies and in the nineteenth century, these churches evolved into denominations. While churches gave up a monopoly of prestige and power, they did not give up concern for corporate problems. Indeed, in the recent attacks upon Waspdom we have seen how Protestants are perceived as enjoying, despite the celebration of religious liberty, a Protestant Establishment. While not governmentally supported, we created a cultural Protestantism to which all peoples had to more or less conform. It is this cultural Protestantism and Waspishness that has been under attack in recent years, even by Protestants.

In connection with this development, Martin E. Marty called attention in *Righteous Empire* (1970) to the emergence of a two-party system in American Protestantism. The first is the party of public Protestantism, members of which are interested in social order and in social destiny; the second, a private party, is concerned about personal salvation out of the world, a personal fulfillment of rewards and punishments in another world, and a personal moral life congruent with these ideas of the saved.²⁵ Marty sees these parties emerging at the beginning of this century. These tensions began to show much earlier in American Protestantism, as denominations wrestled with such societal problems as slavery, economic injustices, and war throughout the nineteenth century. These parties cut across denominational lines and expose division not only within Protestantism generally, but within each denominational body. It may be, of course, that public Protestantism is more concerned about the personal life of men and women than Marty's definition suggests, and that private Protestantism is more concerned about culture. Indeed, it has been argued that the party of private Protestantism, because of its uncritical acceptance of the culture as it is, is now more acculturated and supportive of the American Way than is the party of public Protestantism.

Public Protestantism was organized ecumenically in the Federal Council of Churches (1908) and later the National Council of Churches (1950). Henry J. Pratt has described in *The Liberalization of American Protestantism* how the churches associated with the NCC have been more aggressive in urging a transformation of the society than denominations have been in the past, thus sowing seeds of modern Protestant discontent.²⁶ Church growth advocates suggest that public Protestantism has forgotten the nature of a denomination as the American form of the church, responsible for preaching God's mercy, administering the sacraments, and exercising discipline within Christ's body. Denominations have evolved into voluntary societies, according to this argument, run by social activists who speak and do for the denominations when they have no such mandate. This suggestion ignores the fact that denominations have always been voluntary societies since the founding of the Republic, and throughout history most of them have been deeply involved in debates over public policy and practice. To be sure, the media have given much attention to activists. But the basic method denominations have adopted to deal with public affairs has been educational—the discussion of “cases of conscience,” to use a time-honored Protestant phrase, and the development of policy statements for issue clarification. Denominations have an obligation, according to these voices, to help Christians deal with public matters—local, national, and global—from the

perspective of Christian faith and to show to the non-Christian the concern of the Christian community for human welfare.

Engagement in the transformation of culture has been, second, stimulated by mainline Protestant concern over the nature and the character of the church, the body of Christ, as well as its role in modern society. For those in the party of private Protestantism, the church does not seem to be a primary concern. Deep involvement in the civil rights, antiwar, and antipoverty movements of the fifties, sixties, and early seventies has been cited as illustrative of how social activists have taken over the churches. To be sure, each of these movements has involved social activism. However, each one illustrates the struggle of the mainline denominations to gain a new identity and a new expression of faithfulness, to transcend the culture as well as to transform it. This cannot be reduced to a mere matter of social action. Prior to the period we have just mentioned, mainline Protestants had been engaged in serious discussion of the faces of modern idolatry. People seek salvation through identification with a particular race, nation, or economic system, either of the capitalist or communist type. The church has often fed these idols covertly and overtly—racism, nationalism, and economic absolutism.

Awareness of these idols grew in the national and international turmoils of the 1930s and 1940s. Reinhold Niebuhr made a brilliant analysis of the false messiahs of the modern world in *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, while bombs fell on Britain at the beginning of World War II.²⁷ During these years discussion of the different nature and character of the Christian community, in the light of these idols, was carried on in the FCC, the NCC, and the World Council of Churches. In 1954 the World Council of Churches met in Evanston, Illinois, to discuss the theme “Christ, the Hope of the World.” Christians directed attention toward “rival hopes” and sent out a warning in one of the reports against finding safety in “the power of their race or class or nation.”²⁸ This warning followed the McCarthy hysteria in America, and enormous growth in American economic and military power.

The church of Jesus Christ, mainline Protestants decided, is a fellowship that transcends racial, national, and economic barriers. Insofar as it is shaped primarily by these factors and not by Christian imperatives, the church ceases to be the church. The way in which this fresh perception of the nature and character of the Christian community touched public affairs may best be seen in the mainline denominational reaction to the challenge of racism. Denominations associated with the FCC had already called for a desegregated church in a desegregated society in the 1940s. In the 1950s Martin Luther King Jr. incarnated that vision dramatically in his word and work and as he called upon the churches to help transform American society. George D. Kelsey discussed the matter in Christian perspective in *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (1965). He wrote of the problem not as a matter for social action, but in terms of Christian heresy. Christian faith, he confessed for himself and for others, “knows only one race: the human race,” and it declares that racism is a manifestation of the sin of pride which much be overcome by faith. “The racist self is transformed,” Kelsey suggested, “from the state of hostility, fear and anxiety for itself, because it lives in the security of the love of God, knowing for the first time the fullness of God’s covenant community and hoping for the

first time for the redemption of all creation.”²⁹ This was not the peculiar insight of public Protestantism alone, and many leaders in the private Protestant party came to this conclusion. Many public Protestants saw this matter as one of personal faith and the “desegregated heart” and then went on in a more decisive manner to help transform the church and culture in the light of a new identity.

Closely related to attempts to deal with racism have been attempts to deal with American nationalism and materialism, focused in the antiwar and the antipoverty movements. Our consciousness of these matters expanded as we began to shift our attention from the East-West World conflict to the North-South struggle between the industrial and developing nations, with dangers of the population explosion and massive starvation. Members of mainline denominations have differed over our approaches to these interrelated and complicated problems. What happened in the 1960s was that many began to realize more clearly than ever how we as Christians in the United States have tended to accept the American Way in getting and spending and in conducting foreign affairs as the Christian Way, quite unconscious and quite uncritical of ourselves and the way in which we were dealing with these matters. At the beginning of this period of time, Reinhold Niebuhr noted the “irony of American History,” that in our pursuit of happiness and of security in material success and military superiority, we were gaining neither. At the conclusion of the period, William Stringfellow, Episcopal layman and lawyer, wrote of becoming an alien in his own land.³⁰ America had turned out to be, not the Promised Land, but modern Babylon. These problems—racism, nationalism, materialism—may not be reduced to social action matters, regardless of how much social activism they have involved in recent years. They must be seen in terms of a deepened appreciation of the Christian church as a community that transcends race, nation, and class and of a commitment to transform the church and the society into more inclusive and just communities.

Another facet of this quest for a new identity has to do with the problem of discipline within mainline denominations. Dean Kelley has argued that mainline denominations have not grown because they do not impose a discipline upon their members, and they suffer from “the dynamics of diminishing demands.” Other bodies have grown because of stricter discipline—adherence to special beliefs, attendance at meetings, attachment to a code of behavior, a missionary commitment. Kelley seems to be right in that some religious bodies which expect more of their adherents seem to be growing, although not all these denominations that do so grow. Mainline Protestant bodies have had problems with discipline ever since disestablishment and the development of a genuine freedom of choice in religious affiliation. Kelley is right in suggesting that Protestants have grown lax in discipline over the past hundred years. Franklin H. Littell called our attention to this problem in *From State Church to Pluralism* (1962), especially in his description of American Methodism. It grew by leaps and bounds in the early years of the nineteenth century, but it has suffered from lack of discipline in the twentieth.³¹ Peter Berger summarized the ineffectiveness of Christians and of their institutions in *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (1961), a book widely influential among students and a perception that summarized the contempt in which many held the churches.³²

But Christian discipline must be seen in terms of the quest of mainline denominations for a new identity as institutions that transcend race, nation, and class and in terms of the Christian imperative to transform the society. Littell pointed this out in his study.³³ He suggested that the Christian community must deal with racial discrimination by reinvigorating discipline, by insisting that members exercise greater faithfulness in dealing with racial prejudices within the heart, the Christian community, and American society. In one way this perception of discipline is closely related to the problem of growth for mainline denominations. Church growth movement experts observe that churches and congregations grow if they follow a homogenous strategy—like attracts like, and we should make the most of it. Mainline denominations did not need church growth people to point this out. Gibson Winter noted it in *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (1962).³⁴ Growth in the 1950s was white growth among people leaving the cities and the blacks for the greener crabgrass of the suburbs and leaving behind many of their urban responsibilities. While the homogeneous model for growth seems sociologically obvious, it is not new. The strategy is troublesome biblically, theologically, and ethically, despite disclaimers by church growth movement writers, because it fails to deal seriously with the identity of the Christian community as a community that is inclusive and that transcends the prejudices of race. Debates over American patriotism and materialism are not so dramatically related to church growth. But the problem of discipline must be discussed in the light of the attempt of mainline denominations to get their members many of whom preside over American enterprise, to think more responsibly about the way in which our power and possessions are gotten and employed in relation to other people in the nation and throughout the world. This may be seen as an unwarranted meddling in political and economic affairs, a meddling unhealthy for the growth of the church, quantitatively thinking. Yet, mainline denominations have been calling members to pay the ‘cost of discipleship,’ commensurate with the influence we still may have, to transcend and transform the world.

Leadership and the Success Factor Leadership

Leadership seems to be an important aspect in the cultivation of participation and membership in denominational bodies. In connection with the matter, there has been much discussion about the nature and character of Protestant leadership and considerable concern about measuring the ministry by quantitative thinking and American success models. Sociologist Paul M Harrison put the matter poignantly:

The Dilemma of the clerical professional may be rooted in the nature of the Judeo-Christian tradition itself. Exemplified in the ministry and passion of Jesus as record in the synoptics, the pastoral and prophetic archetype is presented for every subsequent clergyman to attempt to emulate, however finite his efforts may be. Judged by any standards of the professional clerics, Jesus was in the end less successful than most ministers, but the “paradox of the crucifixion” presents all subsequently successful clergy with an insolvable problem; it is impossible, historically and sociologically, to actualize both living by and dying on the cross. This is the root ambiguity of the Christian ministry.³⁵

Harrison has put the dilemma of leadership in bold terms and has raised the question about what kind of leadership, given the current challenges, fills the need today.

In past decades mainline Protestants have lost their most prominent national figures. The great shapers of mainline public Protestantism have died, while those of private Protestantism have flourished and have gone from success to success. In 1955 *Life* printed a special issue on Christianity, celebrating the vitality of faith and life of the times. Toward the conclusion of the issue the editors featured dramatic portraits of H. Richard Niebuhr, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Pual Tillich, aging leaders who were helping Christians face contemporary challenges. These three were shakers and shapers of mainline Protestantism and of the national ethos 0 not parochial, but international figures. These men are now dead. Although they influence us through their numerous writings, we no longer live with the same confidence since their strong voices have been stilled. Some years after that edition of *Life*, Martin E. Marty called attention to our need of models as well as theologians. Marty mentioned several recent saints who were part of American protestant ecumenical hagiography: Dietrich Bonheffer, Albert Schweitzer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Pope John XXIII, and Adlai Stevenson, John F. Kennedy, and Dag Hammarskjold from the secular realm.³⁶ These persons were admired primarily in mainline Protestant circles – not by all, to be sure, but by many. They had charisma and provided inspiration. They were followed as transformers of the church and the world. They are now all gone.

Quite different has been the lot of other national religious leaders. In the *Life* issue of 1955 Norman Vincent Peale is pictured preaching to his large congregation in New York City. He is described in this way:

An outstanding phenomenon of the revival has been the success of mass communication media in reaching massive and interested audiences. Dr. Peale, through his cheery doctrine of positive thinking, has become a one-man religious industry. He has popular television show and a busy lecture schedule and still finds time to operate a publishing house which distributes some one million items monthly.³⁷

Not as cheery, but every bit as effective, youthful Billy Graham is pictured preaching repentance and calling for commitment to Christ at a crusade. The *Life* article on Graham shows him “Resting Up to Save Souls” at his mountaintop retreat in North Carolina praying as well as playing golf, to find strength at home for his evangelistic meetings. These men are older, but they are alive and well in America, still shaping our religious consciousness. They have been joined by other superstars. Robert Schuller, with his “Hour of Power,” carries on the Peale tradition of positive thinking, while Oral Roberts, Herbert W. and Garner Ted Armstrong, Pat Robertson, Jim Bakker, Rex Humbard, and Jerry Falwell seem more like Graham, with differing formats for their programs of salvation. Some, like Falwell, herald millenarian doom, made all the more eminent because of the ways and means of liberals. Paradoxically, Falwell, as well as other such leaders, seems to be overwhelmed with prosperity, much profit and not much loss, and is overflowing with patriotic nationalism, In the American ethos, these are the leaders by whom many members of protestant congregations measure ministerial effectiveness; at the same time others suspect them of being manipulative and panderers of “cheap grace.”

Over this same period of time, in the second place, there has been some confusions over just what clergy should be doing in the church and in the world. The confusion has been

reflected in what has been going on in theological education. Since 1950s, theological institutions in which mainline Protestant leadership is trained have passed into the hands of presidents and professors, many of whom found Peale “appalling” and were wary of supporting Graham-type evangelistic efforts. Moreover, they were influenced by the famous studies of H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams, and James Gustafson, who wrote and edited *The Ministry in Historical Perspective* (1956), *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (1956), and *The Advancement of Theological Education* (1957).

³⁸ The chief pattern for the Christian leader projected in these studies was that of the pastor-director. While clergy would continue to fulfill the ministry of the word and sacrament, they would actually focus on administering the affairs of the congregation and on enabling others to fulfill the witness of the body of Christ, in the love to God and to neighbor. While this model, descriptive of what many ministers were already doing, may be, theoretically a good one for encouraging participation and membership in the Church, it may also have the effect reducing the minister to an “organization man” – in gray flannel clerical garb. As Robert Lee has pointed out, training for the role of pastor-director may lead to the “depersonalization of charisma” and to the education of functionaries at the expense of personal inspiration, which leaders also need.³⁹

The Niebuhr studies called attention to two fields of importance in theological education that should be mentioned in connection with church growth and decline – religious education and pastoral counseling. Both these fields have grown at a time of uncertainty about the role of the ministry and out of some desire for the legitimation of the ministry as a profession. The Sunday school movement in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a major instrument for the recruitment of membership, and churches took advantage of this means as growth. But with the development of progressive education theory, graded lessons, and a variety of course offerings, the church school became less a means of conversion and more a means of nurture within the Christian community, already gathered. Pastoral counseling arose in the midtwentieth century. It has not been a major instrument for increasing the membership of the church. It has been, rather, a means of practicing the “cure of souls” within the body of Christ. It should be noted that professionals in these two fields are often suspicious of manipulation in religious affairs, especially among the champions of revivalism portrayed as Elmer Ganttrys and as Marjoes.

In addition to this concern for the nature and character of ministry, Protestants have been troubled about the lack of what has been called spiritual formation in theological education. There has been a growing realization that people will have no reason to respond to a pastor-director or, in terms of the broader perspective of this essay, to respond to the challenge to transcend and transform the culture if Protestant leaders are not perceived as spiritual leaders. Mainline Protestants have sung, in recent years, a “requiem for lost pity.” This loss has been a grave one in theological education. The American Association of Theological Schools mounted a study about spiritual formation, and the report expressed this desire:

We would wish that seminaries today accept as their task the spiritual formation of people who will be more than able scholars, or vital human people also, whom – with considerable risk – we may speak of as sacramental or holy people; that is people whose life strikes upon other people as lived from

God and unto God, people whose presence somehow both communicates and evokes the divine. Indeed, perhaps the term sanctity best conveys our meaning.⁴⁰

Some of this loss of spiritual vitality may be the result of the increasing intellectualization and professionalism of the ministry. Mainline Protestants are also having trouble shaping a new holistic piety, which, on the one hand, will embrace the personal yearning for God-centeredness, and yet one that will also embrace the social order and destiny of human beings in their corporate existence.

In the third place, discussion of the nature and the character of Protestant leadership has been touched by a profound communications revolution. Walter J. Ong, S.J., has analyzed a seismic change in a seminal volume, *The Presence of the Word* (1970).⁴¹ Human history, according to Ong, may be periodized in three stages: the first that of oral-aural communication; the second, the invention of the alphabet and of movable type; the third, the development of electronic devices, revolutionized by mass market television beginning in the 1950s. Mainline Protestantism was born and spread during the end of the second period, with the invention of movable type. Now mainline denominations have been outmaneuvered by enterprising religious entrepreneurs, who have effectively exploited the mass market with printed materials and with radio and television. In the 1940s and 1950s Charles Fuller pioneered with the masterfully planned "Old Fashioned Revival Hour." Now Jerry Falwell exploits TV with "The Old Time Gospel Hour," and Robert Schuller, with the "Hour of Power." Electronic churches as they have been called, reach millions. Programs are conducted by leaders who have a certain charisma, and they mix nostalgia, informality, and intimacy with spiritual uplift. Religious personalities on radio and television no longer feel it necessary or beneficial to refer people to local congregations, as revivalists did in the past. The new radio and TV denominations appear to be on good terms with the divine and offer religious education and counseling in a variety of ways. Mass audiences join for prayer and praise, and they pay by mail for the support of these new churches, which now exceed in number some of the older Reformation bodies. Furthermore, they allow members to tune in or drop out at will.

Mainline Protestant leaders have recognized radio and television as important media for bearing witness to Christian faith and life. But the new means of communication have raised serious questions about how they may be used responsibly without manipulation contrary to Christian standards. Radio and television superstars present programs that are definitely lowbrow and offer oversimplistic approaches to spiritual problems and to social concerns and social destiny. Furthermore, their lavish success vividly raised the problem of the "paradox of crucifixion" in the new electronic age. Mainline Protestants have often used the electronic media in creative and in imaginative ways, but not in such a manner as to attract huge audiences, nor to stimulate dramatic denominational growth. Moreover, television especially may have complicated mainline Protestant life during the turbulent sixties and early seventies by identifying Protestant leadership with the social activism of the civil rights, antiwar, and antipoverty demonstrations, without, at the same time, clarifying the basic biblical, theological, ecclesiological, and ethnical rationale for such activity. Protestant leaders, in confrontation with public officials, appeared as social agitators, not as spiritual leaders.

The career of Eugene Carson Blake exemplifies both the mainline Protestant approach to the new electronic age and also the problems of leadership arising in the late 1950s. Blake was a successful pastor-director of a large Presbyterian congregation in California. He rose in ecclesiastical circles to be one of America's foremost church leaders—president of the National Council of Churches and, later, secretary of the World Council of Churches. He became a church executive, one who may have dressed in gray flannel, but one who carried a prophetic portfolio. Blake used the media and, in turn, was used by it. He was host to an NBC religious talk show for five years. The show was called "Frontiers of Faith," and Blake moderated highbrow discussions of such topics as "Ethics in a Business Society," "The Church and Labor," "National Security and Individual Liberty," "The Negro in Higher Education" among many others, which demonstrated the attempt of mainline Protestants to transcend and transform the culture. In 1963 he was arrested while trying to integrate an amusement park in Baltimore, Maryland. Through this arrest, widely broadcast throughout the nation and the world, Blake identified mainline Protestantism with the civil rights movement and with the struggle for racial justice. As a media event, Blake also associated mainline Protestantism with antiwar and antipoverty causes in later years. Blake was, in his way, endeavoring to live by, if not die on, the cross and to give a model of ministry for others. Blake's media image stands in stark contrast with that of successful media entrepreneurs. When Eugene Carson Blake speaks, people hear a clerical meddler. Yet, Billy Graham is seen by many to represent what Christian faith and life is all about. Despite his sermons on judgment, Graham still manages to pronounce a benediction upon our big, buzzing, booming, affluent culture, which mainline leaders have been trying to transcend and transform.⁴²

Meaning and the Ecumenical Factor

"The business of religion," Kelley wrote, "is meaning."⁴³ Mainline ecumenical denominations associated with the NCC and the WCC have been losing members, Kelley suggests, because they have not been addressing themselves to essentially religious questions. They have given themselves over to the tasks of administering churches after the pastor-director model and to the transformation of culture, but they have not been helping people to explain the "meaning of life in ultimate terms." This is an important aspect of the church growth and decline discussion.

The problem of meaning has been made urgent because of the cloud of nuclear terror under which we live on this spaceship Earth. At the same time Ahlstrom was reflecting on the end of the Protestant era, his Yale colleague, Robert Jay Lifton, was pondering the impact upon us of the use of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Lifton believes that we have entered into a new age in human history.⁴⁴ We live with the anxiety that we have the power to end the existence of the human species as we know it. Mainline Protestant denominations have been aware of the crisis of meaning in our time. What is it however, that Christians have to say and do in this foreboding present and for the future? It should be noted that the decline of the Wasp has taken place over a 400-year period in which there has also been a decline in a belief in hell and heaven, a belief that has to do with meaning—the ultimate resolution of life's problems. While

confessing hope in the resurrection and in the presence and coming of God's kingdom, many Protestants have not been willing to exploit anxiety of the nuclear age with anxiety about a future age of rewards and punishments, as do some religious bodies and leaders. While mainline Protestant bodies may not have been able to address the problem of ultimate meaning to satisfy the multitudes, they have been struggling with this matter in several ways.

Ecumenism has been a deterrent to growth, so Kelley's argument runs, because the denominations involved in the ecumenical movement have not been addressing themselves to the problem of ultimate meaning. The ecumenical denominations may not have been able to market ecumenism for the masses, but these denominations have truly been addressing themselves to the problem of meaning. The modern ecumenical movement came into being as Protestants began to discuss with one another common problems of "life and work" and "faith and order" in order to arrive at some common witness about God's love for the world in which we live. Among Protestants there has been an increasing awareness that problems which have divided generations past should not be allowed to keep Christians apart as we are called upon to meet new challenges. Ecumenism may be described as a new kind of discipline within the church and as an attempt to overcome those things that have divided us in the household of God in order to better serve the world with a common faith and love and hope.

In this connection, ecumenical dialogue should be mentioned. The Consultation on Church Union, currently known as the Church of Christ Uniting, is especially significant for these years. In 1960 Eugene Carson Blake suggested that Protestants seize the opportunity to form a new Christian community that would be truly catholic, truly evangelical, truly prophetic. It was a call to resolve problems left over from the Reformation. This effort was not meaningless, nor simply an attempt to develop a superchurch, an image conjured by the opponents of the proposal. It represented a vision of Christian reunion in a religious community too long and too much divided. In recent years mainline Protestants have also engaged in dialogue with Roman Catholics, the Orthodox, and with non-Christian faiths, including Marxism, in order to reach great understanding. Thus, with attempts to de-escalate racial, national, and economic conflict, there has also been an attempt to curb religious conflict around the globe. This ecumenical spirit may appear to some to be void of ultimate meaning. Indeed, it has been interpreted as watering down and a sellout of Christian meaning. Yet, it has been motivated by a belief that God's ultimate purpose for the Christian family and for the human family is not division, hostility, and even mutual destruction, but a supportive global community.

In addition to the ecumenical quest, mainline denominations have been exploring fresh ways of celebrating and confessing the faith, while at the same time preserving the treasured traditions of the Christian and the Reformation past. In seeking new directions, churches have been touched by discussions about the nature of God, which to an unreflective public may appear frivolous, faddist, not to say confusing. God is dead! God is black! God is red! God is a woman! While these discussions may not appear to some people to have anything to do with ultimate meaning, they have been serious efforts

by participants to deal with questions about meaning from a captivity in which God appears to many as a Wasp, maybe a Blake, a Graham, or one or another of the present religious superstars. Mainline denominations have, in fact, been very responsible in dealing with the problem of religious meaning not only in their ecumenical endeavors, but in educational and in counseling programs that have helped widen horizons and provide the “cure of souls.” While these strategies have not netted large numbers, quantitatively thinking, they have helped thoughtful and anxious people with the question of meaning, while using the least amount of manipulation.

Some other things already alluded to in terms of the passing of the Protestant era should be mentioned here. *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopalians and the Westminster Standards of the Presbyterians were among the great formative documents of Protestant faith and life. These denominations have been exploring ways of continuing to use these treasures, while at the same time adapting celebration and confession to the twentieth century. Episcopalians, have revised *the Book of Common Prayer*, a process that has been aggravated by the debate over the ordination of women to the priesthood, but a process that has addressed the question of the ultimate meaning of Christian worship. Over the past two decades Presbyterians have been engaged in serious theological discussions. The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America adopted *A Book of Confessions* in 1967, which contained creeds shared in common with all Christians, confessions of the Reformed tradition of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, including the majestic Westminster Confession, the Barmen Declaration of the Confessing Church of Germany (an attack upon the neopaganism of Nazism), and a new statement entitled “The Confession of 1967.” The new confession was based upon the biblical testimony that God was in Christ reconciling the world to God. It carried a call to Christians that what is confessed about reconciliation with the lips must also be demonstrated in disciplined lives. The confession challenged Christians to deal with modern problems of race, nationalism, poverty, and human sexuality. Members of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, in the South also engaged in serious theological discussion in the 1970s, but efforts to alter the church’s sole dependence on the seventeenth-century Westminster Standards were not successful. If the problem of our time is anomic terror under a balance of nuclear terror, then Presbyterians and others were attempting to witness to that problem.

Despite mainline Protestant efforts to give expression to a new Christian community, to give new expression to ultimate meaning in the nuclear age, we have not found the vision in which to both challenge and comfort the multitudes. Mainline Protestants have not gotten their act together in this new age. It was Hal Lindsey, in *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970)—an apocalyptic scenario dramatized on television by Orson Welles—who spoke a word of ultimate meaning for numerous people, not the World Council of Churches at Evanston in 1954, or the Presbyterians in the sober but quietly confident Confession of 1967.⁴⁵ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints presents a message, cosmic in nature, that seems to appeal to others. In the Mormon visitors’ center in Salt Lake City well-groomed guides conduct guests on a tour that begins with God’s creation of the earth, depicted on murals, and climaxes under a rotunda in which stands a statue of Christ with out-stretched arms under a starry universe. Without apologies, a

guide reminds the listener that Christ visited America and called into being the community of the Latter-Day Saints. The visitor is invited to become part of this great cosmic drama. An observer, imbued with the Protestant principle and endeavoring to transcend the situation, might see in this an American Shinto, as George Sweazey put it—a new manifestation of cultural religion. The place of the declining Wasp has been taken by one of mainline American Protestantism’s embarrassing offspring. But this attempt to set the person in the middle of a clear and meaningful divine drama may suggest why Mormonism is one of America’s fastest growing bodies. It was not until 1978, however, that blacks were allowed into the Mormon priesthood.

Protestantism gave American Christians a sense of being part of an elect people and an elect nation. Jonathan Edwards, during the Great Awakening of the 1740s, preached highly effective sermons on the awesome sovereignty of God and on the justification by faith alone—the principal hinge of the Reformation. At the same time, he preached sermons on what was to be for him his magnum opus, which were finally published as *The History of the Work of Redemption*.⁴⁶ In these sermons he gave members of this congregation the sense of being part of the grand creative and redemptive purpose of god, the conclusion of which was about to occur in America, in New England, and perhaps even in Northampton. Since Edwards’ day mainline Protestants have become less confident in speaking in such terms about God’s purpose, especially in a complex nuclear age. In *The Search for America* Reinhold Niebuhr focused attention on our ambiguous situation. His essay was entitled “From Progress to Perplexity.” Challenging our illusions of bygone ages, he called us to Christian responsibility with caution about ultimate meaning.

Nothing worth doing is completed in our lifetime; therefore, we must be saved by hope. Nothing true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore, we must be saved by faith. Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore, we are saved by love. No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as from our standpoint. Therefore, we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness.”

Niebuhr called people to an uncertain life of faith and love and hope as a witness to God, who alone knows the ultimate meaning of life. The problem of mainline Protestantism is that it has not developed what has been called a “controlling metaphor,” which points to the one God and one world toward which we are moving.

Conclusion

These remarks about the decline of the Wasp and about the quest by Protestants for identity, leadership, and meaning in a new age in history have been made to put the current discussion of church growth and decline in a larger historical framework and to help evaluate data on growth and decline. Karl Barth ended his warning about freeing ourselves from all “quantitative thinking” with these further words about what is required of Christians:

What is required of us is that we should be watchful, willing and ready to make Christian decisions in the midst of an evil world. We are not the ones to change this evil world into a good world. God has not resigned his lordship over it into our hands. The salvation of the world, which has already been

accomplished, was not our work. And so also that which still remains to be done—the revealing of the world’s salvation in a new heaven and a new earth—will not be our work but his. All that is required of us is that in the midst of the political and social disorder of the world we should be his witnesses, disciples and servants of Jesus. We shall have plenty for all our hands to do, just being that!⁴⁸

Mainline Protestants need not return to Barthianism to join his confession of confidence in God’s power to realize a new heaven and a new earth and then answer the call to be faithful witnesses, disciples, and servants of Jesus. Apparently, God is intending to carry out divine will, as Barth suggested God might, by reducing Christians to a minority status in the world and indeed, at the present time, by decreasing the number of mainline Protestants in America. The church is not a no-growth institution, although true discipleship and servanthood may not be very popular, and may be very loney at times. What Protestants need to do continually is to try to live responsibly under Christ’s lordship, to bear witness to the sovereignty of God’s mercy, and to invite others to take part in this ministry. Perhaps, as Hugh T. Kerr wrote in 1950 *Positive Protestantism*, by losing its life for Christ’s sake and the gospel’s. Protestantism may find new life.

Notes

1. Karl Barth, “No Christian Marshall Plan,” *Christian Century* 8Dec 1948: 1322.
2. George Sweazey, *Evangelism in the United States* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958) 7-14.
3. Dean M. Kelley, *Why Conservative churches are Growing* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).
4. Donald A. McGarvan, *How Churches Grow* (New York: Friendship Press, 1959); Donald A. McGavran and Winfield C. Arn, *Ten Steps for Church Growth* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977); C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Signs of a Healthy Church* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1976); Robert K. Hudnut, *Church Growth Is Not the Point!* (New York: Harper & row, 1975) xi.
5. Donald A. McGavran, ed., *Eye of the Storm: The Great Debate in Mission* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1972).
6. Warren J. Hartman, *Membership Trends: A Study of Decline and Growth in the United Methodist Church 1949-1975* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1976); *Membership Trends* (New York: United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1976).
7. Jackson W. Carroll, “Understanding Church Growth and Decline,” *Theology Today* 35 (1978): 70-80.
8. Martin E. Marty, “Denominations: Surviving the ‘70s,” *Christian Century* 21 Dec. 1977: 1186-87.

9. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972) 1079.
10. William W. Sweet, "The Protestant Churches," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 256 (1948): 43-52.
11. Benson Y. Landis, "Trends in Church Membership in the United States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 332 (1960): 1-8.
12. Edwin Scott Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).
13. Gaustad, *Historical Atlas of Religion in America*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1976).
14. Liston Pope, "Religion and the Class Structure," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 256 (1948): 84-91.
15. Vance Packard, *The Status Seekers* (New York: David McKay, 1959) 194.
16. E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (Westminster, MD: Random House, 1964) x.
17. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955).
18. Daniel P. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer, *Beyond the Melting Pot* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1963); Michael Novak, *The Rise of the Unmeltable Ethnics* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); Andrew M. Greeley, *The Denominational Society* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1972).
19. Peter Schrag, *The Decline of the Wasp* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973).
20. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) 230.
21. Hugh T. Kerr, *Positive Protestantism* (Englewood Cliffs, N): Prentice-Hall, 1950); George W. Forell, *The Protestant Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960); Robert McAfee Brown, *The Spirit of Protestantism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961); Charles W. Kegley, *Protestantism in Transition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).
22. Kerr 107-08.
23. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Cluture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951) 43.
24. Carroll 70-80.

25. Martin E. Marty, *Righteous Empire: The Protestant Experience in America* (New York: Dial Press, 1970) 179.
26. Henry J. Pratt, *The Liberalization of American Protestantism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972).
27. Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Nature and Destiny of Man: A Christian Interpretation*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941-43).
28. World Council of Churches, Second Assembly, 1954, *The Evanston Report* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955) 152.
29. George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965) 176-77.
30. William Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land* (Waco: Word Books, 1973).
31. Franklin H. Littell, *From State Church to Pluralism* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).
32. Peter L. Berger, **The Noise of Solemn Assemblies** (Garden City, NY Doubleday, 1961)
33. Littell 118, 133.
34. Gibson, Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (New York; Macmillan, 1962).
35. Paul M. Harrison, "Religious Leadership in America," *The Religious Situation; 1969*, ed. Donald R. Cutler (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) 178.
36. Martin E Marty, "The Spirit's Holy Errand; The Search for a Spiritual Style in Secular America," *Religion in America*, ed. William G. McLoughlin and Robert N. Bellah (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1968) 178.
37. "Christianity," *Life* 26 Dec. 1955: 52-53
38. H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams, and James Gustafson, *The Ministry in Historical Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956); *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956); *The Advancement of Theological Education* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957).
39. Robert Lee, "The Organization Dilemma in American Protestantism," *Ethics and Bigness*, ed. Harlan Cleveland and Harold D. Lasswell (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 208.

40. American Association of Theological Schools, "Voyage: Vision: Venture. Report of the Task Force of Spiritual Development," *Theological Education* 8 (1972): 171.

41. Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970).

42. See R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake: Prophet with Portfolio* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978).

43. Kelley 38.

44. Robert Jay Lifton, "Notes on a New History," *New Journal* 3 (1969): 5-9.

45. Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Press, 1970).

46. Jonathan Edwards, *History of the Work of Redemption*, vol.1 of *The Works of President Edwards* (New York: Leavitt and Allen, 1955).

47. Reinhold Niebuhr, "From Progress to Perplexity," *The Search for America*, ed. Huston Smith (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1959) 146.

48. Barth 1332-33.

Reprinted with permission from the Presbyterian Historical Society (*Journal of Presbyterian History* 78:3, 2000).

Disclaimer: Rekeyed by staff in the Office of the General Assembly.