

# ***The Stormy Present***

## *Sources*

- J. S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* (1968)  
Hans Brandenburg, *The Meek and the Mighty* (1976)  
Owen Chadwick, *The Christian Church in the Cold War* (1993)  
George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 2nd ed. (2006)  
William Hordern, *A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology* (2004)  
Ed L. Miller and Stanley J. Grenz, *Fortress Introduction to Contemporary Theologies* (1998)  
Ted Miller, *Into His Rest: Refuting Liberation Theology's Use of the Exodus* (2009)

## I. Challenge of Totalitarianism

### A. Nature

1. Dictatorial governments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century
2. Demanded complete loyalty of its citizens

### B. Varieties

1. Fascism (including Nazism)
  - a. Intensely nationalistic: state *control* of everything
  - b. Fascists & churches sometimes accommodated each other—e.g., Mussolini and Lateran Treaty (1929)
2. Communism
  - a. International, totally materialistic
  - b. State *ownership* of everything
  - c. Communism by nature excludes religion

## II. Hitler and the Nazis

### A. Challenge of Hitler

1. Viewed Nazism virtually as a religion
2. Hitler viewed as a messiah figure

### B. German Christians

1. Wanted an Aryan Christianity stripped of all Jewish elements (such as the OT)
2. Motto: “The Swastika on our breasts, and the Cross in our hearts.”

### C. *Kirchenkampf* (“Church Struggle”)

1. Idea: Unite regional churches into a single *reichskirche*
  - a. Supported by Nazis as a means of controlling the church
  - b. A moderate “German Christian” elected as bishop
2. New bishop sparked struggle in trying to exclude “non-Aryans”
  - a. Protestors formed the “Confessing Church”
  - b. Leaders: Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer
  - c. Protest set forth in Barmen Declaration by Barth (1934)
3. Frustrated the Nazis but movement faded w/ World War II

## III. Communism

### A. Character

1. Antireligious worldview (unlike fascists)
2. Marx: Religion an “opiate of the people”
3. Strong persecution of all religions

### B. Cold War

1. “Christian” West vs. “Godless Communism”

- a. International tension after World War II to 1991
- b. American response seen in religious symbols
- 2. Communist takeover of China (1949)
  - a. Led to expelling/arresting missionaries & national Christians
  - b. Cultural Revolution (1960s)
    - 1) Crush all “enemies” of the Revolution—including Christianity
    - 2) Yet resulted in a Chinese “house church” movement
- 3. Key Figure: Pope John Paul II
  - a. Pope from Poland
  - b. Symbol of resistance to Communism
  - c. Also reaffirmed Catholic tradition
- C. Post–Cold War Ideologies
  - 1. New World Order
    - a. New level of international peace & cooperation
    - b. Reflects shared universal values
    - c. Example: First Gulf War (1991)
  - 2. “Clash of civilizations”
    - a. Political/ideological conflict replaced by cultural/religious
    - b. Reflects segmented regional values
    - c. Example: Militant Islam

#### IV. Theological Storms

- A. Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy
  - 1. Conflict in USA (early 20<sup>th</sup> century)
  - 2. Issue: Christianity vs. Liberalism
  - 3. Strategy: Battle for control of denominations
    - a. Schools, publications, missions
    - b. Debate: Exclusive vs. Inclusive policies
  - 4. Aftermath for Fundamentalists
    - a. Lost most denominational battles
    - b. Building of separate Fundamentalist institutions
    - c. New Evangelicalism: A “reform” movement (post–WW II)
      - 1) Repudiated Fundamentalist separatism—not just ecclesiastical but also cultural
      - 2) Symbol: Billy Graham & inclusive evangelism
- B. Neo-Orthodoxy (González, 458-62)
  - 1. Definition
    - a. Alleged reaffirmation of orthodox, Reformation theology adapted for the modern world
    - b. “Theology of crisis,” existential
    - c. Reaction to crash of liberal optimism in World War I
    - d. Subjective view of Scripture: A *means* of revelation
  - 2. Forerunner: Søren Kierkegaard (González, 393-95)
    - a. Foreshadowed Existentialism
      - 1) Existence precedes essence (meaning & structure in life)
      - 2) One creates essence by choices & decisions
      - 3) Christianity → Essence precedes existence

- b. Spiritual advance not through knowledge but a “leap of faith”
  - 3. Leaders: Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr
  - 4. “Neo-Orthodox Consensus”
    - a. Theology broad enough to embrace a wide theological range
    - b. Dominant until 1960s
- C. Theologies of Liberation (since 1960s)
  - 1. God is on the side of the oppressed (González, 520-21)
  - 2. Flavored by Marxism & other leftist ideologies
  - 3. Varieties
    - a. Catholic
    - b. Black Theology (Martin Luther King Jr.)
    - c. Feminist Theology
- D. Secularism
  - 1. Greatest modern theological threat
  - 2. Seen in declining church attendance
  - 3. Seeks to move religion out of “the public square”
  - 4. A threat of *no* religion