

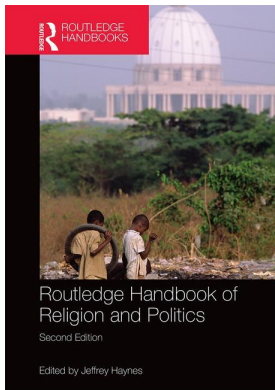
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CHRISTIANITY

Protestantism

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Why study global Protestant politics?

I was once invited to the United States to observe a meeting of scholars who studied Christianity and politics in that country. I soon realised that scholars of Catholicism perceived the comparative dimension of their work, that Catholicism and American politics had to be studied in the light of Catholicism and politics elsewhere. But scholars of Protestantism showed no such awareness; it was as if an important contemporary relationship between Protestantism and politics existed only in the USA. This belief is probably shared by most people in the developed West. But it misunderstands the reality of Protestantism globally.

By a widely accepted estimate,¹ Protestants represent 11 per cent of the world population. Two factors enhance their importance. They are heavily practising, nominal adherence being low in areas of recent Protestantisation. And their truly global spread is due to conversion rather than migration.

Protestantism has done especially well in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Chinese and Korean worlds. After the USA, the countries with most practising Protestants are now Brazil, China and Nigeria. Many of these are not connected with institutions founded in Europe or North America, but with pentecostal denominations founded in Latin America, or 'African Independent Churches', or 'unregistered' Chinese groups. They are the grassroots Protestants of the global South, and often more numerous than those linked with the old mission churches. This expansion (mainly post-colonial) has been largely due to indigenous initiatives. Global Protestantism is predominantly non-white and distant from power and wealth.

These characteristics give it political importance, and invite us to re-examine the historical correlation between Protestantism and democracy. Is that a spurious correlation, dependent on factors in the West which might not exist elsewhere? What is the weight of religious traditions versus circumstances? Religions are always diverse and mutable. Yet social contexts do not explain everything. Each religious tradition has a unique approach to law, territory, religious organisation and religion–state relations, and this may influence how believers behave in particular circumstances.

Protestantism as heir to the Western Christian tradition

Protestantism's spread into economically and culturally distinct societies has increased the variability of its relationship to politics which stems from Christianity's origin as a persecuted sect, the lack of 'law' in its scriptures and its emphasis on cultural and linguistic adaptation. Christ gave no 'law', and early Christianity was distant from political responsibilities. Its politics has generally been less sure of itself. While many Christians speak of a worldview and political *principles*, few find in the Bible a fully fledged political *programme*.

Protestantism is a 'purer' Christian monotheism (rejecting Catholic dilution of the sacred in the saints). Perceptions of its relationship to politics are therefore coloured by perceptions of monotheism in general. For some scholars, monotheistic religions tend to arrogance and intolerance, unless constrained by extraneous factors.² But distinctions must be made. Monotheism does not necessarily imply belief that only our group holds the truth. And mass voluntarist monotheism has different implications from elite or state monotheism.

Many scholars also argue for differences *between* monotheisms which transcend their current contexts. While Christianity started on the margins of an empire, Islam became the centre of a new empire and is not carried by a 'church'. Its monist ideal differs from the normative dualism of church–state relations in Christianity, the notion of two 'cities' to which Christians belong and between which critical distance should be maintained. Islam also emphasises religiously sanctioned laws and stresses territoriality, whereas Christianity lacks an original connection with power, law and territory. But no religion is frozen in time; Christianity later acquired territoriality and became Christendom.

Protestantism, born largely within the Christendom model, nevertheless accentuates these characteristics. Especially in its evangelical form, it sees itself as a return to the early church, seeking justification for its stances in the New Testament. However, early Christianity was a discriminated sect which soon became a cross-cultural voluntary community. It spoke of a law 'written on the heart' and a 'kingdom not of this world', which at once enabled believers to belong to any earthly kingdom ('render unto Caesar') but also relativised all of them. Lacking a definite political recipe, a variety of postures towards the state could be adopted, from eschatological indifference through prophetic critique to conformist legitimisation. But this voluntarist, non-legalist and non-territorial model faced enormous resistances which partially distorted it. The marginalised faith later became the official cult and partly reverted to the Old Testament programme. But from early modern times, differentiation reactivated its original status as a voluntary group.³

Thus, Protestant politics is born two-pronged. Firstly, it 'protests' against accretions to scriptural faith. Thus, Christianity's circumstances when its scriptures were written are vital. Luke's 'Acts' describing the expansion of the politically powerless faith becomes authoritative scripture, whereas Eusebius' fourth-century works lionising the newly converted emperor Constantine do not. But secondly, Protestantism also inherits the Western Christian tradition.

A key part of that tradition is 'dualism'. This stems from prophetic Old Testament religion's rejection of the state-cult and tendency to eschatological relativisation. But 'dualism' also refers to the development of the West, where the church acquired institutional importance after the collapse of the Western empire. Later, dualism was sharpened by the struggle between pope and emperor, laying the groundwork of institutional pluralism for the gradual development of civil society and democracy.⁴ In contrast to Byzantine 'caesaropapism' (subordination

of clerical to secular power), the normative doctrine of the West became the ‘two swords’, recognising secular authority but denying it jurisdiction over the church, and asserting the right of the church to challenge the secular power.

However, both Western and Eastern Christianity were heirs of the fourth-century shift from a popular movement supported by its members to an elite organisation supported by the state. This will also influence Protestantism.

The politics of early Protestantism

The Western tradition did not bequeath a uniform approach. Its variety was accentuated by the early modern world, as well as by Protestantism’s own organisational and doctrinal diversity. Protestantism reflects primitive Christianity’s political disadvantages. Primitive Christian thought, said Tocqueville, lacked the idea of moral citizenship and created a dangerous political void.⁵ This void has continued in (increasingly evangelical) Protestantism with its ‘primitivist’ return to origins. Since Christianity’s origins were distant from the state, the abiding ‘temptation’ for evangelicalism is not theocracy but apoliticism.

Protestantism has become the natural home of the *sect* tendency, one of the possible sociological outworkings of primitive Christianity. The *church*, in Troeltsch’s conception, is an institution endowed with grace, able to receive the masses and adjust to the world. The *sect*, however, is a voluntary association, usually connected with the lower classes or those opposed to the state. It usually renounces the idea of dominating the world (though it may oscillate between indifference, hostility and tolerance).⁶

The Reformation was ‘immediately confronted by this fateful question: church or sect? It has deliberately held firmly to the church-type’.⁷ Writing in the early twentieth century, Troeltsch sees *sectarian* influence as limited mainly to ascetic Calvinism’s ‘attempts to restore holy community’ within the world. But that scarcely did justice to Anglophone Protestantism; and since then its global expansion has increased influence of the ‘sect-type’ and of the *denominational model* in which universalism is ‘spiritualised’ by explicit acceptance of organisational pluralism.

The sixteenth-century Reformation was divided into Lutheran, Calvinist and Anglican branches, plus the Anabaptist ‘radical Reformation’ (and later voluntarist offshoots of Anglicanism such as Baptists and Quakers). Their political consequences are very diverse. But one emphasis in common is the sovereignty of God (as distinct from pope or emperor), understanding sovereignty as not only a royal metaphor which can legitimate tyranny, but also a prophetic metaphor which debunks claims to absolute power. Another is the notion of some degree of consent in theories of government, stressing the priesthood of all believers. The right to read the scriptures prepared for discovery of the person as subject and the right to freedom of conscience.⁸ But Protestantism’s lack of a magisterium or canonical sanctions meant a secularisation of politics, linked to its weaker communal dimension (compared to Catholicism and Orthodoxy). The more a religion sees God relating to individuals, the more difficult it becomes to sustain notions of a ‘holy commonwealth’.

Lutheranism attempts to retain universalism by Christianising the Decalogue and equating it with Natural Law. It transforms Catholicism’s ‘two stage’ ethics into the contrast between ‘person’ and ‘office’. The ‘two swords’ theory is replaced with ‘two kingdoms’. All political authority is left to the prince, to whom the ageing Luther increasingly turns to oversee the church.⁹ In effect, the universal church is replaced by the territorial church, in line with the rise of the nation-state. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555 strengthened this ‘Erastian’ subordination of church to secular ruler by decreeing that ‘the ruler’s religion prevails in his territory’

(*cuius regio, eius religio*). Conformity or exile were the individual's only options. Not surprisingly, the stereotypical Lutheran came to be characterised by obedience towards officialdom. Lutheran orthodoxy insisted religion and politics not be mixed. With its conviction of the incorrigibility of the world and autonomy of the state from gospel norms, Lutheranism is historically weak in generating political activism or rational reformism.¹⁰

Calvinism is very different: it adopted the sect-ideal of 'holy community' and applied it to a national church. The Anabaptists deemed this impracticable, but Calvin believed the spiritual 'elect' were a majority. In the end, though, the attempt made a breach in the state–church system. As 'the second great Christian social ideal [of] comprehensive historical significance', the other being medieval Catholicism, Calvinism penetrated political movements. Making an ethic of sanctification the basis of the state, using Old Testament principles rather than the love ethic of the Sermon on the Mount, Calvinism everywhere attempted 'a systematic endeavour to mould the life of society'. The result was 'this-worldly asceticism', whose connection with modern capitalism has been exhaustively debated.¹¹

Calvin's concept of government is variously described as authoritarian,¹² aristocratic¹³ or 'essentially positive' rather than merely repressive.¹⁴ His view of religion–state relations hovered between a 'two swords' doctrine and a subjection of temporal authority to spiritual.¹⁵ It desired ecclesiastical independence but appealed to civil coercion in religion. The church, meanwhile, reminds governments of their God-given tasks. Through the idea of 'covenant', this led to justification for violent rebellion as a last resort. On an analogy with Israel, Scots and Dutch Calvinists and English Puritans understood their world in covenantal terms and defended international interventionism. Covenant theology and contract theories of politics show clear parallels.¹⁶

Calvinism's attempt to combine *sectarian* 'holy community' with *churchly* religious unity did not survive the seventeenth century. Thereafter, the ideal of conformity was set aside. But radical Protestants had abandoned it long before. Mystical groups stressed religious experience and freedom of conscience. And the sects wanted voluntary communities divorced from the state; in fact, the Anabaptists ('rebaptisers', rejecting infant baptism and church membership as ascribed identity) regarded governmental functions as off-limits. Despite occasional revolutionary violence (as in Münster, 1534), they were generally pacifist and held it impossible to implement Christian ethics in the world.

Theocracy, nationalism, religious freedom and pacifism in early Protestantism

In the early seventeenth century, the first English-speaking Baptists pioneered a new approach to religion–state relations which would transcend their direct influence. Rejecting the Anabaptist refusal to participate in the state, they retained the demand for separation of church and state. This contrasted with the theocratic experiments of early Calvinism (Geneva and Massachusetts), and with ideas of 'rule of the saints' which gained prominence in the English Revolution of the mid-seventeenth century, often accompanied by the idea that morality must be enforced to avoid divine punishment upon the whole community. Notwithstanding their harshness, such concepts contained democratic possibilities in their negating of social rank.¹⁷

But Protestantism's dalliance with theocracy was easy to abandon; a religion that 'requires individual conscience cannot serve as justification for theocracy'.¹⁸ However, it did seem to justify nationalism. Hastings traces nationalism to the impact of the Bible and vernacular literature in creating a politically stable ethnicity. Biblical Israel is a mirror for national self-imagining; as a religion of translation, Christianity has been a shaper of nations. But

Christianity remained ambivalent between nation-state and world empire.¹⁹ In Protestantism, this tension seemed resolved in favour of the former. Yet it was established churches subordinate to the state (Anglican, Lutheran) that were most nationalist. Non-state churches frequently combined a universalist spiritual loyalty with a particularist political loyalty; yet it was from them (Mennonites, Quakers) that the main efforts to free Protestantism from nationalist bondage came. Early Protestantism's link with rising nation-states fed 'wars of religion'. The Treaty of Westphalia (1648) introduced the bases of modern international society, including increasing privatisation of religion and the right of each ruler to dictate the religion of his realm.

But eventually the Protestant emphasis on freedom to interpret the Bible undermined religious uniformity. Even mainstream Protestantism promoted tolerance because it weakened all human instances for resolving religious disputes. In addition, radical Protestantism by the 1640s was breaking the 'Augustinian consensus' on religious coercion. And it was doing so from religious conviction, not scepticism. Even sectarians who were intolerant in polemical or ecclesiastical contexts were often supporters of civil tolerance. The 'principled pluralist' position of early Baptists and Levellers was possible because their understanding of the relationship between Old and New Testaments allowed them to overcome any godly/ungodly division of the political world.

Religious freedom is connected to broader human rights. Historically, Protestantism had a closer relationship to human rights than other major religions. Jellinek's classic study argued that human rights had historically centred on the demand for religious freedom by dissident English-speaking Protestants.²⁰ Recent authors reaffirm this. Johnson says 'a principled position of toleration and freedom happened more quickly in the Protestant camp', but eventually more systematically in Catholicism.²¹ For Witte, the right to choose religion was 'patristic, pragmatic and Protestant in initial inspiration'.²²

Early seventeenth-century Protestant radicals made a principled defence of pluralism on theological grounds. An English Baptist wrote in 1614: 'Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews or whatsoever it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them'. Rhode Island implemented this; its founder Roger Williams stated it was God's will that (since the coming of Jesus) 'a permission of the most Paganish, Jewish, Turkish or Antichristian consciences and worships be granted to all men in all nations'. For Williams, the state is not Christian but merely 'natural, human and civil'. These early tolerationists 'envisaged a multi-faith society governed by an impartial secular state'.²³ And three seventeenth-century New World colonies established by Protestant dissenters passed the 'power test'.

Some Protestants were also principled pacifists. Pacifism was probably predominant in the early church, but by medieval times the 'just war' tradition was dominant. But the proto-Protestant Waldenses of the twelfth century and some Anabaptists returned to pacifism, and in 1661 the Quakers became 'the first organised body to proclaim pacifism as a principle'.²⁴ They and Mennonites (of Anabaptist origin) have since become renowned for their 'peace testimony'.

This has never been the mainstream Protestant position. Lutheran and Anglican state churches have generally striven to adjust *raison d'état* to 'just war' doctrine. Calvinism in besieged cultures (early North America, South Africa, Northern Ireland), replete with myths of promised land and ethnic chosenness, at times resurrected the link between territory, ethnicity and 'holy war'. Later Calvinism, however, besides reverting to Calvin's 'just war' stance, sometimes even led the 'ethical movement against war'.²⁵ One interpretation of this trajectory is in terms of the recovery of Christianity's original peaceableness as a cross-cultural voluntary movement, thus distancing the clergy from the agencies of violence.²⁶

Protestantism and democracy

Of major religions, Protestantism has the longest historical links with democratisation. Even today, predominantly Protestant countries are more likely to be democratic.²⁷

The question is how to characterise the link. For Anderson, it is ‘at the very least a particularly “suitable” religion for democracy’.²⁸ Berger goes further, talking of an ‘inherent affinity’.²⁹ Hastings specifies that ‘countries where democracy, even if limited in scope, first flourished are almost all Calvinist’.³⁰ And in the 1830s Tocqueville emphasised the Calvinist heritage of Anglo-America and its capacity to combine religion with freedom, thanks to its internalisation of authority. In addition, popular Protestantism democratised through its associational life and ability to combat the democratic temptations of envy and short-termism.³¹

Yet ‘none of the leading Reformers were democrats’, which leads Anderson to doubt whether the connection ‘goes beyond simple correlation’.³² On the contrary, for Hill, Calvinist doctrines of human depravity led ‘logically’ to authoritarian theories.³³ One can point to the ‘enlightened absolutism’ of Lutheran Germany and Scandinavia, the dictatorship of Cromwell, and more recent Protestant backing for apartheid and Third World authoritarianisms.

There is a middle course between portraying democratisation as intended or as merely the result of stalemate in the wars of religion. There were other contributions (intended and unintended) besides organisational pluralism. Elements of Protestant teaching and organisational life also assisted democratisation: the de-sacralisation of religious authority, which aided de-sacralisation of political power and the autonomy of the political; the ‘priesthood of all believers’, with implied right to individual dissent; the emphasis on sinfulness and its implied notions of accountability and distribution of powers; congregational governance (in some churches) as prototype for political democracy; Protestant organisational forms as templates for trades unions, pressure groups and political parties; congregational life as training in leadership, organisation and public speaking; and encouragement of economic development through general approval of market relations and incentive to literacy.³⁴ And ‘principled pluralism’ was one of the early Protestant postures towards the state. Old Testament Israel was exceptional; today, the state should be non-confessional. The Levellers went further, as ‘the first modern political movement organised around the idea of popular sovereignty’, universal male suffrage and inalienable rights. Such ideas came partly from the Leveller leaders’ location on the lower fringes of the social and educational elite and in London, where anonymous market relations made independent expression easier; but also from their experience in ‘gathered’ churches where they had ‘witnessed democracy or something close to it in action’.³⁵

History does not support Bruce’s opinion that ‘religion taken seriously is incompatible with democracy’ because the godly/ungodly dichotomy denies that all people are of equal worth.³⁶ Not only through bitter experience, but also through theological principle and practical contributions, Protestantism became the first major religion to demonstrate its ‘compatibility’ (and more) with democracy. Nevertheless, early Protestantism included also the ‘Christian nation’ idea of the state promoting true religion and morals, and the apolitical ‘rejection’ of the state. In addition, Protestantism has often been undemocratic in its internal life, attitudes towards other religions, and association with undemocratic regimes or undemocratic political actors.

Protestantism and revolution

Protestantism ran straight into a revolutionary situation: the Peasants’ Revolt in 1520s Germany. Luther rejected the peasants’ political appeal to his theology, but Lutheran pastor

Thomas Müntzer embraced it, leading Engels to conclude that Protestantism, although generally bourgeois, could at times be revolutionary, albeit unrealistically. But Calvinism is often mentioned as contributing to modern revolutionary politics. For Walzer, it did so by shifting the focus of political thought from the prince to the 'saint'.³⁷ It also encouraged Bible reading, which Hill sees as the main cause of the English Revolution.³⁸

Much sectarian revolutionary impulse came from millennialism, the belief in a future divine utopia on earth. The Fifth Monarchists' revolt of 1661 was 'the last attempt to prepare the way for the Kingdom of God by means of the sword',³⁹ at least in the West. Elsewhere, Protestant millennialism still inspired revolts, as in the nineteenth-century Taiping Rebellion in China. But in Western revolutionary thought, secular and even anti-Christian themes replaced biblical ones, and Protestantism (especially evangelicalism) came to be seen as adversarial to revolution, contributing to Britain's 'extraordinary stability' (in Halévy's view) or crushing the spirit of the new proletariat (for Thompson).⁴⁰

Protestantism and imperialism

Although Protestantism initially neglected worldwide mission, that changed from the late eighteenth century with the invention of the 'voluntary society'. Missions henceforth would be done by civil society, without state support. This distanced missionaries from soldiers and traders; only partially, of course, but enough to ensure the British Empire did not become Anglican as the Spanish had become Catholic.⁴¹ In post-colonial times, declining European involvement has been replaced by Asians, Africans and Latin Americans.

The relationship between Protestant missions and imperialism dates at least from the English colonies in North America. Yet religious motivations did not mean a uniform position regarding the natives. Richard Baxter believed a Christian nation might be obliged to rule some nations and compel them to admit missionaries; but Joseph Hall considered force unlawful. John Eliot felt conversion involved introducing European civilisation; but Roger Williams railed against 'monstrous and inhumane conversions', comparing religious compulsion to rape and questioning colonists' right to take Indian land.⁴²

The Dutch and British empires were long run by chartered companies concerned with profitability. Until the 1830s, British missions struggled to gain entrance. When Company rule was abolished, Victoria's coronation speech as Empress of India disclaimed the 'desire to impose our [religious] convictions on . . . our subjects'. Political control was paramount, even if it meant favouring, for example, Muslim interests in northern Nigeria. And administrators' and settlers' opposition to missionaries might be based not on respect for natives but on disdain; Christianisation gave them 'ideas above their station'.

But imperial governments did generally encourage missions for their educational and health work. Sometimes, missions depended on imperialism to gain entrance; but often missions preceded empire. How they regarded empire's subsequent advance varied. Mid-nineteenth-century evangelical missions were generally interventionist (against slavery) but not annexationist, envisaging internal transformation of African societies through legitimate trade and local Christian leadership.⁴³ Later, however, some lobbied for pre-emptive British annexation, as in the missionary vision of Nyasaland as protected from white (Rhodesian or Portuguese) settlement.

In the heyday of imperialism, most missionaries accepted conventional wisdom regarding European superiority. Colonialism expanded their territorial scope, but made them less 'embedded' in local populations. Colonial-era missionaries were less ready than their predecessors to put Africans in charge. Many Christians escaped mission control by joining African Independent Churches.

Most missionaries were ambivalent about imperialism, accepting it as a historical process but often criticising actual policies (as harmful to native interests or to missions). In general, missionaries were weak agents of cultural imperialism. They had limited resources, depended on indigenous cooperation and their message was constantly turned to local advantage.⁴⁴ Most Sub-Saharan nationalist leaders were educated in mission schools, finding in mission education (and sometimes in Christianity itself) the resources for their anti-colonial struggle.

Protestantism and human rights

Despite Calvin's condemnation of slavery, Protestantism was largely indifferent to the phenomenon in Protestant colonies. The first abolitionist tract in the British colonies was from a Puritan in 1700 and Quaker John Woolman pressed for abolition from the 1750s, but only in 1776 did Philadelphia Quakers prohibit slave-owning. Other denominations were even slower, but activists and clergy eventually became the spine of the American Anti-Slavery Society. This led in most denominations to a North-South schism. In Britain's evangelical revival, Whitefield viewed slavery as a necessity whereas Wesley campaigned for abolition. From the 1780s, the group of elite (Anglican and non-conformist) evangelicals known as the Clapham Sect led abolitionism in the British Empire.

The mid-nineteenth century marked the high point of evangelical social reform, connecting traditional humanitarian concern with a rights frame focused on the individual.⁴⁵ But it was hard to transfer abolitionist enthusiasm to the ills of industrial capitalism, since evangelical individualism obscured the structural dimensions.

Regarding the twentieth-century human rights movement, the Protestant connection is well-documented.⁴⁶ The emerging ecumenical movement affirmed religious freedom and human rights, leading to the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs campaigning for the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since the 1960s, mainline denominations and ecumenical bodies have included human rights promotion in their ministry.⁴⁷ And by the late twentieth century, there was a growing Christian consensus (including evangelicals) on the importance of human rights advocacy.

Nevertheless, an irony of the contemporary human rights movement is the relative silence of Protestants.⁴⁸ Having pioneered the way, Protestantism now lags behind post-conciliar Catholicism's sophisticated theological statements and global articulation. Protestantism's divisions, which once helped it be in the vanguard, are now a disadvantage. And Protestantism is now concentrated in poorer and less educated sectors in Third World countries. Thus, in Latin America for example, burgeoning Protestantism has taken a back seat in human rights to the Catholic Church. This is partly because of insufficient cultural resources and vulnerability to repression; and also because pentecostalism is largely alienated by a human rights movement which struggles to relate to a lower-class religion successful at proselytising and which has a discourse of individual empowerment through discovery of personal agency. The exceptions have been mostly historical Protestants with ecumenical affiliations. Another option has been to work with international Protestant organisations such as the Mennonite Central Committee or World Vision. An outlier to this pattern is from Peru, where an unusually representative National Evangelical Council spawned a Peace and Hope Commission.⁴⁹

Protestantism in advanced societies in the age of mass politics

Tocqueville saw denominational Protestantism as peculiarly suited to maintaining freedom in a democratic age. By separating church and state and voluntarily keeping clergy out of

partisan politics, it represented a presence in civil rather than political society. However, one branch of Protestantism led the way in forming Christian parties based on broad suffrage: nineteenth-century Dutch neo-Calvinism. Talking of 'sphere sovereignty' and 'common grace', neo-Calvinism rejected Christendom's churchly supervision of societal spheres. The world was thus free from the church but not from God. This paved the way for Protestant parties based on acceptance of multiparty competition, religious freedom and a non-confessional state.⁵⁰

In the Netherlands a variety of Protestant parties developed from the 1870s. The first one can even be considered the first 'Christian Democratic' party in the world. Scandinavian Protestant parties were founded from the 1930s. Subsequently, the model has extended to the former communist world and the 'global South'. Most such parties are small, but the Scandinavian ones have been in coalition governments, and the Norwegian has been in power. The Dutch ARP formed numerous governments between 1888 and its merger with another Protestant party and a Catholic one in 1980, after which the new CDA headed many governments.

The circumstances most favouring such parties are proportional representation and perceived marginalisation in society and existing parties. Church hierarchs are usually cautious, since they represent rival power structures. Parties can represent a range of 'projects': defence of ecclesiastical interests; divine right to rule; identity politics; ethnic defence; broad political and economic concerns. Some are neoliberal, others preach a 'social market' and a few are anti-capitalist. The newer parties are sometimes fundamentalist, whereas the maturer parties of Northern Europe talk of justice, solidarity and stewardship, and support foreign aid and environmental protection.

In inter-war Europe, churches faced the challenge of fascism. Catholic-majority countries (with the Vatican's suspicion of democracy and support for corporatist ideologies) were more susceptible to fascism than Protestant ones, except in religiously mixed Germany.⁵¹ Hitler at first encouraged the 'German Christians' (an Aryanised version of Christianity); in protest, the 'Confessing Church' broke away. However, the Lutheran doctrine of state autonomy reduced the opposition.

The other great challenge was communism. There had been socialist currents in Protestantism since the nineteenth century, but this counted for little with Marxist-inspired post-war regimes. The only Protestant-majority areas in the Soviet bloc were East Germany, Latvia and Estonia. The East German church (weakened by secularisation and Lutheran deference to state power) developed an accommodationist stance called 'the church in socialism'. But the 'church from below' gave space to opposition tendencies, and churches became refuges for gestating the regime's peaceful overthrow. Protestant ethnic Hungarians in Romania also played a catalysing role; while in Latvia, sectors of Lutheranism were important in the independence movement.

Post-war Western Europe experienced growing marginalisation of public religion, due to individual secularisation and churches' loss of functions under the welfare state. Nevertheless, from the 1980s churches once more voiced concerns as neoliberal policies accentuated social divisions and lifestyle and identity issues achieved political prominence.

Although Protestants and Catholics have come closer religiously, old divisions still colour even secular views on European integration. There are no Protestant equivalents of the role of socially minded Catholics in integration since the 1950s. This is partly due to the link between Protestant ecclesiologies and sovereign states. Protestant Norway and Iceland remain outside the EU, while Denmark, Sweden and Britain have sought to limit aspects of integration. Although the Conference of European Churches supports integration, individual Protestants are less supportive than Catholics or secular people. Sectarian Protestants (often influenced by interpretations of biblical prophecy) are the most opposed.⁵²

The United States: civil rights and the religious right

The United States was founded on ‘no establishment’ and ‘free exercise’, resulting in denominationalism and civil religion. While democracy became secularised in Europe, it became tied to revivalist Christianity in America. Separation meant churches did not compete with the state and religious people could enter politics with abandon. And, not having to compete politically with churches, politicians felt free to draw their imagery from religion.⁵³

The major recent cases of Protestant involvement have been the civil rights movement and the religious right. In the civil rights campaign of the 1950s and 1960s, black clergy provided leadership and churches furnished networks and an ethos for non-violent mobilisation. The religious right of the 1980s onwards, however, has appealed essentially to the evangelical community.

Various factors favoured such involvement: the federal polity, which allows strong sub-cultures and multiple entry points to the system; low turnouts in most elections; and parties which are coalitions of interest groups. But why did the religious right emerge when it did? As Marsden stresses, fundamentalist militancy typically arises when a once-dominant religious culture feels threatened by cultural trends. These included greater federal intervention; judicial decisions affecting gender, family and sexual behaviour; and perceived secularist attempts to eliminate religion from public life. Involvement was encouraged by conservative politicians, and facilitated by church growth and increased regional affluence.⁵⁴

Verdicts on the movement’s achievements are mixed. It has been key in the shift to the Republican Party. In 2004, 78 per cent of white evangelicals favoured Bush; the religious right had more space in his administration than in previous ones. Many respected evangelicals pressed for the invasion of Iraq. Evangelical influence on foreign policy is strongest in support for Israel, due to Christian Zionism, which believes much of the Middle East belongs in perpetuity to the Jewish people.

Yet in other ways the religious right has achieved little. It has failed to end abortion, curtail the participation of mothers in the workforce, prevent the advance of gay rights or impose the teaching of ‘creation science’. It has not expanded much beyond its religious-ethnic base (83 per cent of black evangelicals voted for Kerry in 2004). And its religio-political zealotry has disadvantages: it resists politics as the ‘art of the possible’; it has difficulty tolerating internal differences; and it quickly becomes disillusioned.⁵⁵

Protestantism was the original home of the term ‘fundamentalism’, which today is heavily determined by Islamic phenomena. Nevertheless, Protestant and Islamic fundamentalisms are different. The latter is communal whereas the former is individual. American fundamentalism reacts to local change, whereas Islamic fundamentalism also reacts to ‘Westernising’ forces. Almost all American fundamentalists accept democratic rules, shaped by the ideals of the American Revolution, the Baptist heritage of church–state separation and the American Enlightenment heritage of individual choice. This combination means they are wary of governmental coercion nationally, but often uncritical of coercive use of American power internationally.⁵⁶

Protestantism, violence and peacemaking

A leading contemporary case of militant Protestantism in the developed world is Northern Ireland, where the Rev. Ian Paisley rose to power. How did his anti-Catholic evangelicalism relate to violence there? Some accused him of links with Protestant paramilitaries; for others, he incited terrorism or at least created an atmosphere in which violence could flourish. Bruce

feels the latter charge is more compelling, although Paisley explicitly rejected violence.⁵⁷ But Juergensmeyer judges that ‘paramilitaries have received spiritual sustenance and moral encouragement’ from Paisley.⁵⁸

Protestantism, like many religions, offers images of cosmic war which can absolutise conflicts such as the ‘war on terror’. But Bruce insists American Protestants have eschewed violence; the few attackers of abortion clinics have been marginal to their own faith communities.

But not committing or condoning violence is not the same as peacemaking. Notwithstanding exceptions, it is often felt churches in Northern Ireland fell short in this. Nevertheless, peace-building by religious NGOs has grown worldwide, including Protestant examples such as the Mennonite International Conciliation Service and its Christian Peacemaker Teams, exemplifying the evolution of this Anabaptist denomination from quietism to active peacemaking.⁵⁹

Protestantism in the global South

Global southern Protestantism is more evangelical and pentecostal than in the West. It appeals to those caught in the trauma of globalisation, both to the disappointed and to those who need moral reinforcement and new skills to seize opportunities. Conversion often has economic effects, helping adherents achieve greater control over personal circumstances and to see themselves as agents rather than victims. It combines individual experience of the divine with participation in a moral community. Evangelicals are disproportionately city-dwellers in contexts of migration and violence.

Global Protestantism is usually over-represented among the poor (though South Korea is different). It is not a state religion; in a few countries it is discriminated against. It usually lacks strong institutions and has limited cultural and educational resources. Transplanted foreign denominations are now usually nationally run; but many denominations are locally founded.

Autonomous appropriation has enabled Protestantism to transcend associations with colonialism. However, one interpretation of globalised Protestantism is that it is American fundamentalist neo-imperialism, ‘contributing mightily to the Americanization of global culture’ and promoting acceptance of American global hegemony.⁶⁰ But although American missions are numerous and well resourced, most growth comes from indigenous initiatives. This ‘globalisation-from-below’ is largely conversionist rather than diasporic, providing new dimensions to existing conflicts (Nigeria and North-east India) or sparking transitions to new religion–state relationships (Latin America).

Positions adopted by Protestants have been diverse and the record mixed.⁶¹ Active Protestants have become presidents of several southern countries, or achieved significant presence in legislative or lower executive levels. Protestants have been hegemonic in ethnic separatist rebellions (Burma, India, Sudan). Church leaders have been key in pro-democracy movements (Kenya). While concern for human rights and democracy predominates among some actors, others merely seek state resources for church aggrandisement. Some talk of a divine right of evangelicals to govern; but fragmentation means their political impact is always smaller than hoped or feared.

Brouwer *et al.* allege that most global southern pentecostal churches form part of an exported American fundamentalism, supportive of capitalism, authoritarianism and intolerance, and identifying God’s interests with those of the United States.⁶² It is true many pentecostals are unreflective fundamentalists, but they are more interested in spiritual experience. Unlike Islamists, they do not seek an organic relationship between law and faith. Instead, they are part of religion’s transformation towards an achieved identity. For pentecostalism as a conversionist faith, pluralism is advantageous, whereas fundamentalisms constitute its most

serious barrier. Most accounts of American fundamentalism emphasise peculiarly American factors; as a reinvention of white Bible-belt religion, there is little reason for it to characterise evangelicalism the world over.

Fundamentalism is often associated nowadays with violent politics. What is global Protestantism's record on this? Despite many contexts of poverty and humiliation, there is so far no Protestant version of religiously justified geopolitical violence. There has, however, been violence (in self-defence, they would allege) against Muslims in Nigeria, Indonesia and Central African Republic, where the state is weak or conniving. Elsewhere, Protestantism has fused with ethnic separatist rebellions in post-colonial states. There was some Protestant involvement in the Rwandan genocide; and a few pentecostal vigilante groups in Central America, where such groups are proliferating. However, a book on religious terrorists mentions only three evangelical phenomena. Two are in the US: racist 'Identity Christians' (not exportable to the Third World); and extreme anti-abortionists (potentially exportable). The third are Christian militias in eastern Indonesia, which emerged as transmigration of Javanese and the activity of Muslim militias upset the local religious and ethnic balance.⁶³

What about state violence? Guatemala had the ferocious anti-insurgency strategy of the pentecostal general Ríos Montt, president in 1982–83. Ríos Montt was not repressive because he was pentecostal (there have been many similar Central American regimes); but pentecostalism did not *prevent* him being repressive, since he was highly regarded by his church. And the tendency of many pentecostals to demonise religious rivals is worrying in regions where democratic norms are shaky. Nevertheless, a survey of pentecostals in nine global southern countries paints a more encouraging portrait. To the question whether it is important to have freedom for religions other than one's own, pentecostals everywhere were at least as affirmative as the general population of their countries.⁶⁴

Thus, popular global southern Protestantism has some connection with violence, but nearly always related to self-defence in the absence of the state, or to ethno-regional separatism. These Protestants do not have Islamic concepts of honour of a sacred community and defence of sacred territory, nor the geopolitical influence of American evangelicals. And pentecostalism's insistence on a discourse of 'winning' is opposed to the discourse of victimhood that generally undergirds political violence.

In fact, pentecostalism is perceived as a bulwark against violence in the peripheries of megacities. In the absence of the state, pentecostalism provides escape routes from criminality and addiction. But its capacity for personal transformation is not replicated in the complex task of societal transformation.

Does the globalisation of evangelicalism mean similar politics to that of American evangelicals? So far, American-style 'culture wars' have not really been repeated. In addition, most Protestants are on the edge of survival. As they reconstruct the family amidst unemployment, violence and anomie, they are little attracted to occasional efforts by church leaders to involve them in single-issue 'values' politics.

The Pew survey asked whether abortion is ever morally justified. A high percentage of pentecostals in all southern countries surveyed answered no. That usually reflects or slightly reinforces the national average. When asked whether government should interfere with ability to have an abortion, pentecostals again mostly reflect national opinion, but in four countries are below the average.

Pentecostals generally reflect national opinion regarding a market economy (from 89 per cent favourable in Nigeria to 47 per cent in Chile). However, on welfare (whether government should guarantee food and shelter to every citizen) pentecostals everywhere are slightly more favourable than their populations.

To what extent does global Protestantism conflate American interests with those of God? Attitudes towards the wars ‘on terror’ and in Iraq suggest not much. A World Evangelical Alliance statement shortly before the invasion of Iraq merely said war ‘is almost always the worst solution’.⁶⁵ But the Baptist World Alliance called the invasion ‘a great sin’.⁶⁶

The leading Brazilian interdenominational magazine *Ultimato* strongly opposed the war, seeing it as a pretext for a new world order and denouncing American evangelicals’ defence of huge military spending and exacerbated nationalism. Similarly, on a special television programme, Brazilian evangelical congressmen were unanimous in condemning the imminent invasion. For Spanish-speaking Latin America, Padilla and Scott discovered not a single denomination in favour, even in countries whose governments supported President Bush.⁶⁷ A South African political party based mostly among charismatic churches, the African Christian Democratic Party, condemned ‘American civil religion that says America is predestined by God to save the world’.⁶⁸ In the Philippines, however, many leading evangelicals were pro-Bush, albeit less strongly than before.⁶⁹

The Pew survey asked whether respondents favoured ‘the US-led efforts to fight terrorism’. In all countries surveyed, pentecostals were similar to the national average, except in religiously divided Nigeria. Only there (71 per cent) and the Philippines (76 per cent) do pentecostals support the ‘war on terror’ as much as in the USA (72 per cent); both these countries suffer tension between Muslims and non-Muslims. But in Latin America and South Africa, only around one-third of pentecostals support the war on terror, and in South Korea only 16 per cent. In all Latin American countries surveyed, pentecostals are less favourable than their general populations; so much for the idea of pentecostalism as ‘global American fundamentalism’.

Does the globalisation of evangelicalism mean more support for Christian Zionism? Only up to a point. Intensity of prophetic interest depends on other priorities; for poor people, survival takes precedence. They feel no post-Holocaust guilt and feel less threatened by terrorism. Some denominations cultivate links with the ‘Holy Land’, but usually emphasise ‘where Jesus walked’ rather than current issues.

The Pew survey asked whether respondents sympathised more with Israel or the Palestinians. Everywhere, pentecostals are above national average in sympathy for Israel. But the sum of the replies which preclude a Christian Zionist position (sympathy for the Palestinians, both or neither) is telling. Only 18 per cent of American pentecostals come in those categories, versus 56 per cent in Chile, followed by five countries between 46 and 52 per cent.

One prediction regarding global Christianity is of a new wave of Christian states.⁷⁰ Is this likely?

African anti-colonial nationalism did not stress Christianity. But by the 1990s hopes of rapid development had evaporated, while Christianity had become central to civil society. At this point ‘Christian nationalism’ emerges. Zambia was declared a ‘Christian nation’ in 1991 and Madagascar in 2007. But, partly due to denominational pluralism, this means exalting Christianity in general rather than creating a state church or legally discriminating against non-Christians.

When asked (by Pew) whether there should be a ‘Christian country’ or separation of church and state, pentecostals prefer a ‘Christian country’ in Nigeria (58–35) and South Africa (45–37). Elsewhere, they reject the idea, notably in Chile (23–62) and Brazil (32–50). However, everywhere except Chile pentecostals are more favourable to it than other believers.

Global southern Protestantism is not yet solidly in the democratic camp, and it often operates in contexts where few other political actors are wholehearted democrats. Woodberry and Shah, however, say the historical correlation between democracy and Protestantism does hold in the global South. However, the effect may be smaller than before, as other religions adopt its

characteristics; and some strains of pentecostalism may be less useful (for their lesser emphasis on education).⁷¹

Different types of Protestantism are better at different things. For opposing dictatorships, hierarchical transnational churches with elite connections are better than local lower-class pentecostal churches, deprived of intellectual resources and vulnerable to repression. However, in democratic consolidation, pentecostals might be more useful because they are anti-fatalistic and instill skills of leadership and public speaking. But there is no guarantee either type of church will in fact perform these functions. Some pentecostals say believers should govern in the name of God. Others use electoral democracy merely to strengthen their own institutions. In some countries the churches' public image has worsened through association with corruption and hunger for power.

However, pentecostals surveyed by Pew are everywhere affirming of the importance of honest multiparty elections, similar to or above national averages. When asked whether, to solve the country's problems, it would be better to have a more participatory government or a strong leader, pentecostals always prefer participation. In seven countries, they are less favourable to a strong leader than their populations, so in this respect pentecostal attitudes strengthen democracy.

Evangelicalism's pluralist emphasis on individual freedom means paradoxical results for democracy. Totalitarian regimes and non-Christian religious nationalisms are resisted, but authoritarianisms which do not impinge on evangelicals may not be. Evangelicalism is too fissured to undergird movements advocating major political change in whatever direction.

The future of Protestant politics

Protestantism is advantaged and disadvantaged in contemporary politics. It was the first major religion to accept (and even encourage) a secular state and an independent civil society. Its variety of ecclesiastical forms and its individualism accentuate its political diversity and innovativeness. But the complexity of modern politics is a challenge to Protestants, since they cannot achieve economies of scale necessary to develop coherent political philosophies and practices. Paucity of dialogue between pentecostal and mainline churches impoverishes both. Growth in the global South places market pressures on church leaders which are unfavourable to ethical reflection. And, since Christian origins were times of powerlessness, the search for scriptural purity does not produce clear-cut political proposals or consensus for effective action.

When Protestantism was largely Western, its diversity was already evidenced in classical sociologists' evaluations: a domesticating ideology serving the bourgeoisie or an unrealistic popular revolutionary movement (Engels); an unwitting vanguard of capitalist rationality (Weber); a buzzing hive of democratic associational life (Tocqueville). Its shift to the global South has brought further diversification.

Evangelical political effervescence in the global South is reminiscent of mid-seventeenth-century England, when restraints on Protestant pluralism weakened, leading to diverse manifestations at all social levels. But the result was that no new agreed political philosophy could emerge from popular readings of the Bible, which ultimately ceased to guide political action.⁷² Similarly, the current phase of much African politics, in which Christianity provides a commonly accepted idiom, may not last.

Evangelicals have not long been politically active in the global South, and they are beginning a steep learning curve. Yet there are foreseeable problems. Each religion has political dilemmas that stem from its tradition and not just from its current context. Christianity's

problems include how to incorporate the Hebrew scriptures with their notion of ‘holy commonwealth’. Different approaches to relationship between the Testaments suggest different political postures. It is hard to develop Christian justifications using only the Old Testament. However, if Christian politics relies purely on the New Testament it falls under Tocqueville’s strictures about the lack of a civic ethic. Primitive Christianity alone is deficient for a democratic age which needs active citizens. The Reformed tradition (at times) has used a concept of ‘unfolding’, but many Protestants are bound to ‘primitivist’ concepts of return to original purity, which in Christianity was distant from the state, leading to the ‘default danger’ of apolitical conformism exploitable by authoritarian regimes.

Tocqueville stresses the importance of Christianity to democracy, but only in the right relationship (separate from the state and partisanship) and only if performing some necessary tasks, such as reducing envy and difference, and providing long-term thinking to balance the democratic impulse towards the short term.⁷³ But global pentecostalism, especially, has not done well in maintaining distance from the vicissitudes of democratic politics, or in averting people’s gaze from materialistic envy, or in balancing democratic impulsiveness with long-term thinking.

A key challenge for global Protestantism will be to combine institutional plurality with some means of achieving political impact at national and global levels. How much, for example, will it be able (as a faith which straddles global divides) to offer a different vision of our global future?

In Latin America, numerical growth will one day stop, leading to more stable membership and demands for different relations with public life. In Africa, will historic correlations between Protestantism, democracy and development still hold? China may be the next cultural powerhouse of Christianity if, as some believe, it becomes the new centre of numerical growth and eventually achieves greater freedom. This will have political implications. By the time China is a great power, how large and influential will its Christian community (which is mainly Protestant) be? In the United States there are signs, among younger evangelicals, of tiredness with the limited agenda of the religious right, or with overly politicised religion in general. But caution is necessary; the tiredness may also be contributing to sizeable desertion of young people from organised religion as such; and the demise of the religious right has been forecast for nearly thirty years! In Europe, Protestantism’s prospects may be tied to immigration. Muslim immigration may encourage (and open space for) a rebirth of public Christianity; all forms of Christian politics (not only reactive anti-Islamic ones) may benefit. Also, many immigrants are practising Protestants. The globalisation of Protestantism may yet play a part in renewing its political importance in the region of its birth.

Notes

- 1 Barrett and Johnson, *World Christian Encyclopedia*.
- 2 Bruce, *Politics and Religion*, 225.
- 3 Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?*, 106–7.
- 4 Berger, ‘The global picture’.
- 5 Siedentop, *Tocqueville*, 134.
- 6 Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 461.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 382.
- 8 De Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*, 72.
- 9 Berman and Witte, ‘Church and state’, 492; O’Donovan and O’Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 555.
- 10 Madeley, ‘The Antinomies’, 145.

- 11 Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 647.
- 12 Smith, 'Calvinism', 94.
- 13 O'Donovan and O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 665.
- 14 Biéler, *La Pensée*, 283.
- 15 O'Donovan and O'Donovan, *From Irenaeus to Grotius*, 556.
- 16 Hill, *English Bible*, 178.
- 17 Ibid., 274.
- 18 Bruce, *Fundamentalism*, 122.
- 19 Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*.
- 20 Jellinek, *Erklärung*.
- 21 Johnson, 'Religious rights', 69.
- 22 Witte, 'Dickensian era', 745.
- 23 Coffey, *Persecution*, 57.
- 24 Hill, *English Bible*, 422.
- 25 Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 652.
- 26 Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?*
- 27 Anderson, 'Does God matter', 205.
- 28 Ibid., 196.
- 29 Berger, 'The global picture', 78.
- 30 Hastings, 'Christianity', 140.
- 31 Siedentop, *Tocqueville*; Mitchell, *The Fragility of Freedom*.
- 32 Anderson, 'Does God matter'.
- 33 Hill, *English Bible*, 174.
- 34 De Gruchy, *Christianity and Democracy*; Anderson, 'Does God matter'; Bruce, 'Did Protestantism'; Witte, *Christianity*; Willaime, 'Contribution'; Berger, 'The global picture'.
- 35 Wootton, 'Leveller democracy', 413; 'The Levellers', 76.
- 36 Bruce, *Politics and Religion*, 245; 'Did Protestantism', 18.
- 37 Walzer, *Revolution*.
- 38 Hill, *English Bible*.
- 39 Troeltsch, *Social Teaching*, 709.
- 40 Halévy, *History*; Thompson, *Making*.
- 41 Martin, 'Evangelical expansion', 274.
- 42 Hill, *English Bible*, 137–8; Gaustad, *Liberty*, 32.
- 43 Walls, *Cross-Cultural*, 96.
- 44 Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*, 317–22.
- 45 Keck and Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders*, 76.
- 46 Stackhouse and Hainsworth, 'Deciding for God'; Nurser, *For All Peoples*.
- 47 Stackhouse and Hainsworth, 'Deciding for God', 227.
- 48 Witte, 'Dickensian era', 725.
- 49 Freston, *Evangelicals*, 238–41.
- 50 Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*.
- 51 Anderson, 'Does God matter', 194.
- 52 Hanson, *Religion*, 142.
- 53 Hammond, 'Conditions'.
- 54 Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.
- 55 Bruce, *Fundamentalism*, 88.
- 56 Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*.
- 57 Bruce, *Politics and religion*, 211.
- 58 Juergensmeyer, *Terror*, 41.
- 59 Appleby, *Ambivalence of the Sacred*, 145.
- 60 Brouwer, Gifford and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*, 270–1.
- 61 Freston, *Evangelicals*.

- 62 Brouwer, Gifford and Rose, *Exporting the American Gospel*.
 63 Stern, *Terror*.
 64 'Spirit and power', 2006.
 65 www.worldevangelical.org.
 66 <http://www.ethicsdaily.com/baptist-groups-respond-to-war-cms-2448>.
 67 Padilla and Scott, *Terrorism*.
 68 Freston, *Protestant Political Parties*, 96.
 69 Personal communication from David Lim.
 70 Jenkins, *The Next Christendom*, 12.
 71 Woodberry and Shah, 'The pioneering Protestants'.
 72 Hill, *English Bible*, 415.
 73 Mitchell, *The Fragility of Freedom*.

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