

## **CHRISTIANITY’S DANGEROUS IDEA**

**An America-Focused Synopsis of Alister McGrath’s 2007 Book.**

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### **FOREWORD.**

Christianity’s dangerous idea was not Protestantism itself, but the core idea that lay behind it. And, that idea was that the individual Christian, not the institutional Church, had the right to interpret the Bible for himself. Embedded in this idea was Martin Luther’s radical doctrine of the priesthood of each believer. That is, Luther’s doctrine held that there was no intermediary between an individual Christian and God. Each man could minister to God as a priest, and to his own family, too. It was an idea so powerful that it would change the world.

At the time of Luther, the Christian West, being Europe, was comprised of countries which were each members of the Holy Roman Empire. This had superseded the failed original Roman Empire, late in the first Millennium. Each country was ruled by a monarch and each country subscribed to the Roman Catholic religion, through its ruler. The religious activities of each individual were ruled by the Church and the secular activities by the monarch. And, the monarch had certain oversight of the Church in each country.

Luther’s (and Calvin’s) dangerous idea had implications for both Church and State. Where Protestantism was accepted, the relationship between believer and Church would be vitally changed. And, the relationship between believer and State would also change. And, one of these changes would eventually be the relationship between Church and State, some 250 years later, in America.

Alister E. McGrath is a Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford University in England. His book on Protestantism, entitled Christianity's Dangerous Idea<sup>1</sup>, is surprising to me, in that it devotes a considerable amount of coverage to the 380 years of Protestantism in America and the subsequent nation of the United States.

Perhaps the reason that McGrath pays so much attention to American Protestantism, is that it continued developing, following its arrival in America. Also, cultural and political events in America have been greatly influenced by two extended happenings that a Christian would only describe as sovereign moves of God. These were the two so-called Great Awakenings (in Protestantism), which occurred only in America.

McGrath's book fills in much of the Christian detail previously described in prior books synopsized in this series. And, since my interest is in Protestantism in the United States, I have not synopsized all of the book, just selected chapters. But, those chapters have considerably clarified my developing view of the history of these United States. As I have said in a slide presentation based on this research, the United States is all about Christianity, and it always was.

## **INTRODUCTION.**

This is the seventh in a series of synopses of current books being used to formulate a Christian basis for interpreting the 'signs of our times'. The previous six books, five of which were secular, when taken together, showed inarguably, but surprisingly, that America was founded on Christianity. They showed that Christianity was, and remains, the context within which to interpret the United States' continuing change, from the time of its founding.

Originally, America's settlers were British Protestants. Their Protestantism continued developing in this country, although it withered in Western Europe, which is now characterized as the Post-Christian West. And, American Protestantism influenced the Roman Catholicism that also came to this land. So, today, American Protestantism and Catholicism are unique in the world, as is the United States, itself. The U.S. was always exceptional, and continues to be, in every way, including its Christianity.

Only one of the previous six books was written from the Christian standpoint, that being Barna's<sup>2</sup>. But, surprisingly, two of the others, which were written from secular standpoints, discovered that Christianity was the key to the results they documented about the government of these United States. These were the books by Huntington<sup>3</sup> and Steyn<sup>4</sup>.

It became obvious to me, from reading Huntington and Steyn, that I needed to know more about what the American settlers and national founders believed, in terms of their Protestantism. I needed to know what Christian beliefs were built into this country. Alister McGrath's Christianity's Dangerous Idea<sup>1</sup> fulfills my need.

## **MCGRATH'S BOOK CONTENT & ORGANIZATION.**

### **Motivation.**

McGrath's book is analytical, as were the first four in this series of synopses (including Weiss<sup>5</sup>). He analyses the entire Protestant Reformation, including its continuing transformation and effects, today. His analysis is based on historically documented facts about events. His work comes in three parts, being

1. The Origination of the Reformation, 2. The Manifestation of the Reformation, and
3. The Transformation of the Reformation.

Since my present interests are in the United States, I will devote more attention to the effects and beliefs of the Protestant Reformation that apply here, and less to those that apply elsewhere in the world, particularly in what McGrath calls the Global South (Africa, etc.). However, since the settlement of this country started with British Protestants, I must pay attention to what contributed to their beliefs in their mother country.

### **The Origin and History of the Protestant Reformation.**

In the first eight chapters of McGrath's Part-1, he looks first at the overall cultural context of Western Europe during the early 1500's. This was the time that the Reformation started. He next looks at Germany's Martin Luther, and the subsequent movement based on his idea of Justification by Faith. Then, he looks at the simultaneous development of other approaches to Protestantism, such as Calvin's in Switzerland, or the Anabaptists, and the shifts in the centers of Protestantism.

McGrath's attention then shifts to England and the creation of Anglicanism. He examines the intertwining of English religion and government, via the actions of five monarchs. He examines the English Civil War of 1640. That was a war between the Anglicans and the Puritans. This war would have a critical effect on the early Christian development of New England. So, McGrath next turns his attention to Protestantism in America, from the 1600s to the 1800s.

### **How Protestantism Has Manifested.**

In the next five chapters of McGrath's Part-2, he examines the intellectual beliefs and practices of Protestants, and how they shaped Western culture. He looks, in particular, at the role the Bible plays in Protestantism. He follows up on the implications of one fundamental of Protestant belief, which is the right of any Protestant to interpret the Bible. (This right, by the way, lies behind my current Christian writings.) Consequently, he examines the problem of heresy in Protestantism, and who it is that may be looked to as possessing Biblical authority.

Again, McGrath's analytical examination of Protestantism is historically based. It is his interpretation of documented Protestant history that is presented as analytical conclusions. After looking at the authority issue, he goes on to characterize how Protestants view the structures they have put together to enable their group worship. This includes denominationalism, tradition, music, and the visual. He then turns to a detailed examination of how Protestantism has shaped and is still shaping Western culture, the arts, and natural sciences. In the cultural vein, he details the development of Protestant views on social engagement, church and state, economics, the Protestant work ethic, education, and the Christian role of women. All of these topics are of current critical concern in the United States, and have been since 1964.

### **Ongoing Transformation and the Future of Protestantism.**

In McGrath's final four chapters, he looks at how American Protestantism has changed over the years. He particularly examines Pentecostalism, which was originally held to be a distinctly American development. On further historical examination, however, McGrath finds that Pentecostalism actually developed more or less simultaneously in a number of worldly locations, including the U.S., Korea, India,

Africa, Norway, China, Venezuela, and elsewhere. (It therefore looks to me like yet another sovereign act of God.)

McGrath's concluding two chapters then grapple with the frontiers for Protestantism, being mostly in the Global South, and with the future of Protestantism. In the Global South, McGrath concludes that their religious future is Protestant and it is Pentecostal. And, that includes Latin America.

It is in his conclusion to the book that McGrath grapples with a key to Protestantism's future. And, that is the Church's conception of its identity and tasks. For, what it believes about its identity determines what it does. I have underlined this, because that was also Huntington's<sup>3</sup> conception about the United States of America. What it believes about its identity determines what it does. And, Huntington concluded that the keystone to the U.S.'s identity was "*The continuing centrality of Anglo-Protestant culture to American national identity.*" Thus, we have a convergence between Huntington and McGrath that says the following. Not only is Anglo-Protestant culture the key to what the U.S. does, but also what that Anglo-Protestant culture thinks its identity and tasks are. Therefore, the key to what happens in the U.S. seems to be the education of American Christianity as to who they are historically, and their cultural role in the U.S..

## **AMERICA'S ANGLO-PROTESTANT FOUNDATION.**

### **Protestantism in America – McGrath's Chapter 7.**

#### **Early New England Protestantism.**

There were two early Protestant colonies established in America, which subsequently disappeared. They were in Florida in 1562 and in Virginia in 1585. Following in 1607 was the Jamestown colony in Virginia. It was Anglican Protestant. But, says McGrath, the history of Protestantism in America is traditionally traced to New England, in 1620. And, these were Puritan in belief. They were also known as The Pilgrims. They initially settled at Plymouth, Massachusetts.

These Pilgrims left England for two reasons. First, there was English persecution by James I (and later Charles I) of the Puritan Protestant faith (in contrast to Anglicanism). Second, the Pilgrims felt that God had put a calling on their lives. They saw themselves to be the Biblical 'salt' and 'light' of the New World [Mat. 5:13-14]. Between 1627 and 1640, says McGrath, some four thousand of these Puritan Protestants would make the ocean crossing, seeking religious freedom. They would relate to [Ex. 3:8] their exodus to a promised land, flowing with milk and honey.

These Pilgrims to America were not typical of English Puritanism of the time. McGrath says that they were separatists with beliefs more akin to those of the Anabaptists. Most English Puritans were Presbyterians. The American Pilgrims were convinced that each congregation had the right to determine its own beliefs and to choose its own ministers. In fact, the Anabaptists held many beliefs common to today's Baptists. Among these were keeping the State out of the Church. It was for just that reason that these American Pilgrims had fled England. There, Anglicanism was the State-sponsored Church.

Within months of their arrival, McGrath says, most American Puritan communities abandoned the Presbyterian view of church government and adopted what came to be known as congregationalism. They developed a highly decentralized,

democratic method of church governance. One hundred years later, this would reflect in the method of governance the United States' Founding Fathers chose.

Whereas Congregationalism took root and spread throughout New England, Anglicanism thrived from Delaware down to Georgia. It became the religion of those engaged in plantational agriculture.

### **The Great Awakening.**

The so-called American Great Awakening began in 1734. By that time, American Protestantism appeared to have become stagnant, according to McGrath. New England congregations had generally required of a prospective member a personal testimony of conversion. Toward the end of the 1600s fewer and fewer could provide such a narrative of a conversion experience. Thus, church attendance declined. To counteract this, McGrath says, New England churches established a sort of "halfway membership", which did not require the conversion testimony. As a result, Protestantism moved toward more of a civil religion, with functions that were primarily social and moral.

The Great Awakening changed all that. Commencing with Massachusetts' Jonathan Edwards, religious renewal spread throughout New England from 1735 to 1745. Mass outdoor meetings of up to 20,000 occurred. The Wesley brothers and George Whitefield, all from England, preached mightily, up and down the eastern seaboard, and the Awakening broadened and deepened. By 1760, it was apparent that it was changing the nature of American Protestantism. According to McGrath, the Awakening was changing the people's perception of the relationship between the individual, the congregation, and the state. Although John Wesley did not want to split the Anglican Church, the new converts eventually established Methodism in 1810.

McGrath stated that one of the most significant characteristics of the Awakening was the capacity of then contemporary Puritanism to forge links between the Church's theology and the individual's personal experience (the conversion event). It tended to democratize religion, since conversion became a very personal experience, not necessarily requiring the participation of the institutional Church in the event. A radical alternative was being established to the European model of Protestantism, as a regional or national religion. The American model provided an understanding of religious "establishment" that did not involve preferential state support for any one specific ecclesiastical body. According to McGrath, the most important outcome of the Puritan commonwealth was going to be political.

### **Protestantism and the American Revolution.**

According to McGrath, religion was not the primary root of the American Revolution, but it was one of four. The other three were taxation, lack of due representation in the government, and the desire for freedom (liberty). The religious issue was a sense of injustice about the privileged status in the Colonies of the Church of England (Anglicanism). Anglicanism was established by law in Virginia, Maryland, the Carolinas, and Georgia, which rankled Baptists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians. And, so, opposition began to grow in the early 1770s. The renewed sense of vision, from the Great Awakening, among Lutherans, and Baptists, widened and diversified the theological base of the Revolution. It wasn't just the South against England, but New England, too. Religiously, these soon to be states were united.

To many Protestants, the Revolution would provide religious purification, in which the excesses and privileges of the state church would be eliminated. It was not a matter of eliminating Anglicanism or Anglicans, but of its state sponsorship. In fact, the Protestant Episcopal Church was created in Philadelphia in 1789, as the successor to the Church of England, according to McGrath. And, no Protestant denomination was designated as the “established church.” To prevent such an eventuality, the “establishment” clause of the First Amendment to the Constitution would be written. It would be based on Thomas Jefferson’s 1786 “Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom,” which set out that state’s separation of church and state, which was to end legal oversight or enforcement of religious belief. That’s what separation of church and state was, and remains, in historical fact, if not in current political propaganda.

In McGrath’s view, it would be a mistaken perception to view the Constitution of the United States as marginalizing religion in public life. Rather, many at the time, including ministers, viewed it as guaranteeing that the U.S. would be a Christian nation (as subsequently repeatedly held by the Supreme Court), whose churches would be free from governmental interference and manipulation. And, since the predominant form of religion at the time was Christian Protestantism, it seemed self-evident that the U.S. Republic would be a Protestant bastion in the New World. It would be like Calvin’s Geneva in the Old World.

### **The Second Great Awakening of the 1800s.**

Under the religious freedom provided by the First Amendment to the Constitution, Christian competitors to Protestantism were free to become established in the United States. The chief one of these was Catholicism. Maryland had originally been settled as a Catholic colony, starting in 1634. Although Catholicism could have been seen as an enemy to Protestantism, under Maryland’s Archbishop, Catholicism became increasingly accepted into American culture, according to McGrath.

However, a great wave of European Catholic immigrants came into the country in the 1800s. And, the German, Irish and Italian Catholics, immigrating to the cities of the U.S., tended to not integrate into American society. They had brought their social and religious habits of Europe with them. This led to social and religious tensions in the urban areas of Catholic immigration. It might be argued that these events tended to unify the country’s previously diverse Protestant movement. But, it would be a different, positive cultural influence that would unify American Protestantism. And, that would be a Second Great Awakening of the American people, seen again as a sovereign act of God.

Protestant church attendance rose by a factor of ten, over the period from 1800 to 1860, outstripping population growth, says McGrath. And, he ties this to the Second Great Awakening of 1800-1830. This awakening saw the birth of revivalism, first on the Kentucky frontier, in the form of large rural camp meetings. These camp meetings swept eastward, through antebellum America and produced what is called the “Bible Belt.” (And, as we have seen elsewhere, camp meetings produced the Christianization of the slaves.)

In the North, under the leadership of Charles Finney, revival techniques were invented and perfected, for use in city-type church revivals. These techniques survive today. McGrath holds that the impact of revivalism on modern American Protestantism was immense. He saw the emergence of the holiness movement as a

response to the ideas and values of revivalism. Its emphasis on holy living came to be linked with support of abolition of slavery.

The Second Great Awakening profoundly affected the Civil War. Abolitionism grew in the North, where Finney had developed revivalism. But, camp meetings in the South Christianized the slaves. McGrath does not go into this dichotomy, with respect to its effect on the Civil War. So, we will pass, now, from his Chapter 7, to look at other elements of his book, which deal with the cultural aspects of modern American Protestantism.

## **THE EFFECTS ON CULTURE OF MODERN AMERICAN PROTESTANTISM.**

### **Protestantism and Shaping Western Culture – McGrath’s Chapter 12.**

#### **Religion and Culture: Protestant Models of Interaction.**

McGrath looks at five models of historic Protestant interaction with different elements of society and culture, originally attributed to Richard Niebuhr<sup>6</sup>. It turns out that Protestantism added no new model, although it prefers certain models over others. And, it modified and further developed them to meet its concerns.

#### **Christ Against Culture.**

According to McGrath, this model holds that there is a fundamental opposition between Christianity and its enveloping culture (The World – We’re in it, but not of it. John 15:19). A historic American example is the Amish. This attitude toward culture is also prevalent in modern American Protestant Fundamentalism. Its rise was due to the social and political circumstances in the United States of the 1920s.

#### **The Christ of Culture.**

This model holds that Christian faith represents what the world values most dearly. Unfortunately, worldly values change over time. So, this model concludes that Christian belief must change over time. According to McGrath, the best example of this model is “liberal Protestantism,” which originally emerged in Germany in the early 1800s. The model’s critics observe that this model dilutes the essence of Protestantism and reduces it to a mere endorsement of prevailing cultural norms.

#### **Christ Above Culture.**

This model attempts to subordinate worldly cultural norms to Christian concerns, say McGrath. That is, it does not accommodate Christianity to the culture. Rather, it attempts to apply to the culture the answers provided by Christianity (the Bible). This application is obtained by using the judgment of the Church to interpret the culture. It is observed that a risk here is turning the Church into a mere institution. (I use the word, “Church,” to denote the Christian people, not their corporate institutional forms, such as churches and denominations.)

#### **Christ and Culture in Paradox.**

According to McGrath, this model holds that individual Christians and the Church exist in a tension with the world, as a result of its fallenness. Christians live in two distinct arenas, the temporal and the spiritual. And, Christians cannot evade the resulting tension. McGrath suggests that this model, due to Luther, manifests an inadequate social ethic.

### **Christ, the Transformer of Culture.**

The theme of this model is conversion. It holds that the entire culture stands under God's judgment, and therefore needs to be converted. The model calls for the rediscovery of a missionary perspective aimed at the conversion of culture by the Church. So says, McGrath.

### **Protestant Interaction with Culture – Continuing Chapter 12.**

#### **Modern U.S. Protestantism and Social Engagement.**

Given the five tactically different models for Protestant interaction with its enveloping culture, McGrath next looks at the interactions with particular elements of that culture. The first is a look at Protestantism's engagement with society, in general. And, he focuses on the United States.

McGrath starts by quoting Jesus, on being the "salt of the earth", and not losing the required saltiness [Mat. 5:13]. He then asks the obvious question about how Protestantism can remain in the world and not become of the world. That is, how to engage with society without becoming like it (assuming its values are less than Christian, or even anti-Christian). He says there are two Protestant strategies for coping with this problem.

The first, which McGrath attributes originally to the Anabaptists, is to form a counterculture, an alternative godly society within the enveloping culture. This was found in some forms of Pietism. The danger, of course, is privatizing religion, confining it to just spiritual matters. This, he says, was exemplified by U.S. Protestant fundamentalism in the early twentieth century. Its perceived failings are what led to the emergence of neo-evangelicalism in the 1940s. He says that fundamentalism's otherworldliness held back from exploring how Christianity related to modern U.S. culture and social life (including government).

The second, modern, U.S. Protestant strategy was neo-evangelicalism, commencing in the 1940s. Their watchword would be "engagement", says McGrath. By the 1980s it had led to the emergence of the "Religious Right," which emulated the political engagement of left-leaning political activists of the 1960s. The election of President George W. Bush was widely interpreted by political commentators as a concrete result of the political activism of neo-evangelicals. McGrath comments that this new (to Protestantism) political activism, commencing in 1947, was actually a return to mainline Protestant activities of the 1540s and 1550s, as developed by Geneva's John Calvin.

McGrath next visits the development of U.S. Protestantism's views of several social issues, such as slavery, capitalism, and the poor. He treats several examples to illustrate both the possibilities and the tensions that continue to accompany U.S. Protestant attempts to engage society.

#### **The U.S. Protestant View of Relations Between Church and State.**

The United States was set up by the Founding Fathers to be a Christian nation for both Protestants and Catholics. The First Amendment proscribed any "establishment" of a state-preferred religion. Europe's Christendom had set Christianity as the state religion. Specifically, it was the Roman Catholic version of Christianity. That lasted from 300 A.D. until the Protestant Reformation. But, when

England embraced Protestantism, it kept Anglicanism as the state church, governed by England's Monarchy. It was to preclude any similar thing happening in the United States, that the First Amendment was made. It was to keep government out of the Church, but not vice-versa. That is, it was expected that Protestantism would influence the governments of states and nation in their actions. But, that influence was not politicized, ... until the 1960s.

McGrath relates that the Religious Right is often seen as a pact between faith and politics. It arose as a result of a series of major Supreme Court decisions that were perceived as threats to the traditional American patterns of social life. Most notably was the decision banning prayer in public schools in 1962.

To its critics, the Religious Right represents the kind of alliance that Christians ought to avoid, says McGrath. The Religious Right's response is that many mainline denominations have already fallen into precisely the same kind of alliance with the Democratic Party, institutionalizing political liberalism in those denominations. McGrath gives the Episcopal Church in the northeast states as an example. (We should remember that the U.S.'s Episcopal Church is the Americanization of the British Anglican Church, England's state church.)

McGrath observes that the U.S. seems to embrace a variety of "culture Protestantisms", each comfortably attached to a political and social agenda. ( I will observe here that Barna's<sup>2</sup> "Revolutionary Christian Movement" may just be the future of many Christians who embrace the Religious Right.)

### **Protestantism and Economics – The Development of Capitalism.**

McGrath relates that capitalism originated with the writings of John Calvin in the 1500s. Under Catholicism, the accumulation of capital was held to be a sin. By the 1700s, Calvinist writers such as Benjamin Franklin, held that accumulation of capital by engaging with the world was good, while criticizing its consumption. Thus, capitalism had Protestant origins, specifically in Calvinism (the Reformed Church).

According to McGrath, Calvinists had a heightened sense of a moral obligation to work. They believed that a person's election by God (salvation) was authenticated by a Christian's activism and an ethos of living thriftily off the proceeds from work, with the remainder being saved, invested, or given away. Calvinism made commercial success respectable by declaring that the virtues behind it were themselves acceptable in God's sight.

Calvin biblically justified his views by utilizing the explicit Protestant freedom to interpret the Bible at variance with those Roman Catholic interpretations that had previously held social sway. This reinterpretation explicitly allowed the loaning of money at interest, which became one of the founding blocks of capitalism. This economic activism subsequently came to be associated with Puritanism in England, Scotland, and America in the 1500s and 1600s, according to McGrath. By the 1700s, it was well embedded in the American Protestantism that founded the United States.

### **The Protestant Work Ethic.**

It was no accident that those regions of Europe that adopted Protestantism soon found themselves prospering economically, says McGrath. And, that prosperity was due to what has come to be called the Protestant work ethic. That ethic is based on the belief that work has intrinsic value in its own right and for its own sake. It is

now a secularized version of the original Protestant work ethic, which was based on a Protestant rigorous theological reevaluation of the place of work in human life and culture.

This work ethic was not originally part of Christian belief and practice. McGrath references the view of Eusebius of Caesarea (circa 300 A.D.) that the perfect Christian life was one devoted to serving God, untainted by physical labor. This view was carried by the Roman Catholic Church until the Protestant Reformation. But, from its outset, Protestantism rejected the medieval distinction between the “sacred” and “secular” orders of Christian society. Luther laid the conceptual foundation for creating sacred space within the secular, with his doctrine of the “priesthood of all believers,” says McGrath.

The Christian idea of a personal “calling” thus moved from a ministry within the formal, institutional Church, to an expression of faith, and a praise of God, in the working world. And, there was no limit to this notion of calling. Calvin’s theology also supported this same idea of praising God through work. In our modern times, the Protestant work ethic has been refined, to emphasize the importance of individual giftings (such as those of [Rom. 12:6-8] - JP) and their potential actualization in many spheres of life, according to McGrath.

### **Protestantism and Education.**

Following its founding, Protestantism quickly discovered the importance of education. Populations had to be persuaded of the folly of their older religious ways. They must gain a grasp of the principles of the new form of Christianity. And, it was Luther who first recognized the importance of the public school system for educating children in the ways and ideas of Protestantism. So says McGrath.

Next, the home began to emerge as the primary focus of intergenerational transmission of faith. Family Bible reading and prayer became an important daily routine. This cemented the family’s unity, as well as its religious devotions. And, it saw the emergence of the family Bible, by the late 1700s. (The Painter family bible was published by the American Bible Society in 1867.)

In rural areas, family Bible study was the norm. However, in the cities the Sunday School was created. And, they developed into an important agency of Protestant education, there. They taught reading and writing, to support their teaching of religion.

The most significant way Protestantism shaped education, says McGrath, was by founding colleges, universities, and seminaries. There was recognition that pastors and other church leaders needed to be well educated. So, Protestant investment in education was a matter of survival of the faith.

Harvard was founded in 1636, establishing Calvinist intellectual hegemony in New England. Following Harvard, came a series of colleges and seminaries dedicated to propagation of Protestantism in church and society. These various schools emphasized denominational distinctions in their general desire to deepen personal faith and piety. However, by the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many of the early universities were drawing back from their original Protestant foundations, fearing loss of student applicants and consequential funding.

### **Protestantism and Women.**

Luther's doctrine of the 'priesthood of all believers', if pursued consistently, leads to women exercising the same ministerial functions as men. But, Luther seemed to be hesitant to follow through at the time. Likewise, Calvin didn't think the times were right, either, although it's clear he was open to such major changes in the future.

What Protestantism did do for women was extend the concept of Christian calling to women, for application within the family. This elevation of women was accompanied by Protestantism's rejection of male celibacy. It turned marriage into a covenant relationship. To illustrate this, both Martin Luther and Martin Bucer married former nuns. The family was to be the new unit of religious calling and nurture. What emerged was the characteristic Western notion of the 'nuclear family'. So says McGrath.

Although women's role was elevated by Protestantism in the family, individual women achieved significant prominence in the formal Church in the following centuries. And, Protestantism continued to elevate the role of women in what had previously been a man's society. Women finally got the right to vote in the West after World War I. And, following WW-2, Protestantism began to explore the place of women in ordained ministry. By 1997, it was becoming more common to see women ordained in Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, and other denominations. By 2005, over 50 percent of students in American Protestant seminaries were women. Some Protestant traditionalists are now being persuaded that this is the inevitable outcome of Luther's 'priesthood of every believer' doctrine.

### **Other Interesting Chapters in McGrath.**

Chapters 14 and 15 in McGrath's Part-III on Transformation are interesting, but will not be synopsized in detail, here, since the present synopsis is part of a series, focused on the history of Protestantism in the United States. The purpose of the series is to make clear the role of Protestantism, vis-à-vis the federal government of the United States, from its founding to date. This we have already done.

Chapter 14 examines Protestant Fundamentalism of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which was essentially a strategy of disengagement from the perceived culture war shaping up in the U.S. Fundamentalism failed to do any good in the bigger cultural picture, so a second strategy emerged, known as Neo-Evangelicalism. And this was a strategy of reengagement. McGrath holds that Billy Graham was probably the best known representative of the new strategy.

The culture war came into sharp focus in the 1960s, and it resulted in many radical religious writings. Essentially, the culture war got inside Protestantism. And, Protestant revisionist doctrine attempts received support from the U.S. culture's left-wing. But, God was not dead, as some had claimed in the 1960s. And, He had a plan to ward off the attack on American Protestantism.

It was yet another move of God, born in the U.S. in the early days of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It was Pentecostalism. And, it was Pentecostalism's child, the Charismatic Movement, born in the 1960s. Today, the Protestant revisionism of the '60s is gone. It died. And, today, 84% of the U.S. still professes Christianity.

McGrath pursues other topics in his Chapter 14, such as The Future of the Protestant Denomination, which he thinks is Pentecostal. But, that's not just U.S. Pentecostal, but global Pentecostalism. And, he has the proof of that view. He includes the Charismatics in with Pentecostalism. He also covers New Models of the Church, which is similar to what Barna<sup>2</sup> has to say. And, he covers Protestantism's Changing Attitude to Catholicism.

McGrath's Chapter 15 covers Pentecostalism in detail, including the Charismatics. And, it's very good.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The most important consequence of McGrath, in my America-focused application, is the convergence of his views about Protestantism with Huntington's<sup>3</sup> views about the United States. Those views were that for both the U.S. and for Protestantism, what they believe about their respective identifications determines what they do. Borrowing from my Introduction, above, let me repeat that Anglo-Protestant culture is the key to what the U.S. does. And, what that Anglo-Protestant culture does depends on what it thinks its identity is. Therefore, the key to what happens in the U.S. seems to be the education of American Christianity about its historical identity and role in the U.S..

It is the conclusion about that convergence that fuels my continuing efforts in this series of papers. As I have said elsewhere, the U.S. seems to be the last hope of Protestantism, ... and vice-versa. It was the first hope and now it is the last.

## **REFERENCES.**

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<sup>2</sup> Revolution, by George Barna, 2005, Tyndale House Publ., ISBN-13: 978-1-14143-0758-9.

<sup>3</sup> Who Are We?, by Samuel P. Huntington, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004, ISBN-13: 978-0-684-87053-3.

<sup>4</sup> America Alone, by Mark Steyn, 2006, Regnery Publ. Inc., ISBN 978-0-89526-078-9.

<sup>5</sup> The Ultimate Depression Survival Guide, by Martin D. Weiss, Wiley, 2009, ISBN-13: 978-0-470-39377-2.

<sup>6</sup> Christ and Culture, by H. Richard Niebuhr, Harper, 1951.