I. Christianity & Politics in the 2/3 world

A. Preliminary western assumptions based on Enlightenment thought & the vestiges of colonialism:

1. Western assumptions - Religion belongs to private sphere, inward matter, separation of church and state, sacred & secular (J 161)

2. By contrast, global South lives in world closer to medieval Christendom where politics influenced by religious allegiances. Global south Christians view political activism as a religious obligation like the ancient prophetic traditions of Israel (J 162)

3. During colonialism, Christian churches in global south had state support and reciprocated with conservative political views that supported the existing power structures (J 162).

4. Integralism was pervasive in Latin America in the early 20th c. suggesting that Catholic social doctrine should pervade all aspects of society. However, its greater negative effect was that it allowed the industries of former colonial powers to pillage the natural resources of Latin American countries at the expense of the poor. Prior to the rise of liberation theology and the base ecclesial communities, Latin American Catholicism sided with the ruling orders (J 163).

5. In 20th c. 1/3 world churches began to be associated with reform or revolution, but in the earliest stages, usual radical Christians also espoused radical politics, but after 1950s, radical politics infiltrated mainstream churches (J 163).

B. The rise of Latin American liberation theology and its connection to politics.

1. After Vatican II (1963-65), liberation theology spread in Latin America with papal support (J 164).

2. Important themes of liberation theology: Exodus story, OT prophets who emphasized justice (such as Amos), NT Magnificat of Virgin Mary proclaiming exaltation of the humble, Epistle of James' judgment of the proud and wealthy; the Kairos (hour) of God's judgment against injustice (J 164).

3. Roman Catholic clergy became spokespersons for opposition movements with the church serving as system for mobilization and communication.
4. Historical setting for rise of liberation theology in Latin America – began at conference of Latin American bishops at Medellin, Colombia in 1968. Borrowing from Marxist terminology, the bishops condemned neocolonialism, exploitation, and institutionalized violence and demanded economic and social reform (J 165-6).

5. Preferential option for the poor and revolutionary agenda were key elements in Latin American liberation theology but its connection to Marxism was opposed by Pope John Paul II leading to return to conservatism in 1980sff (J 167).

6. Catholic churches in Latin America aligned with governments against Marxism and focus on urban became the focus of Pentecostals (J 167)

C. Churches of global south reinvented medieval concept of sanctuary in some countries (J 165) (a safe zone to protect the persecuted from repressive govts).

D. Connection of Christianity and politics in African nations:
   1. First generations of political leadership were often Christian, sometimes product of mission schools (J 169).
   3. The second African revolution – protest against the corrupt African regimes which had originally risen in the 1960s (e.g. Uganda in 1970s & 80s) (J 171).
   4. In Africa, Catholic activism didn’t run against the Vatican since they sought democratic reforms (J 171), in fact Catholic church was an important tool for progress in Africa.
   5. Much martyrdom in Africa in recent decades. Response of African leaders at odds with church – to align with other churches to validate his/her authority (J 172).

E. Clerical activism in Asia has increased prestige of church. Church in Korea mixed support of democratic rights and nationalism (J 174). When Japanese tried to destroy Korean cultural identity, Christians were viewed as patriotic martyrs. Later, in response to military regimes in So. Korea, Korean churches developed Minjung theology. Since rise of President Kim in Republic of Korea, Christian church has gained prestige through their suffering.

F. Some effects of Christian political activism:
   1. When church helps to establish govt., religious leaders expect share in govt or authority (J 175)
2. Churches can move from exercise of political power to demand a theocratic Christian state.

G. Greater religious nature of Southern nations which can be divisive (J 176)

1. Adoption of Islamic law (shari’ah) or assertion of Christian religious beliefs by law upon all. Tendency to follow models of previous colonial powers. No separation of church and state (J 176)

2. Church state relations of some nations defined by doctrines of Christian acquiescence (Rom 13), views held most often by independents and Pentecostals.

3. Integralism – neomedieval view that Catholic social doctrine should pervade all aspects of social, economic, and political life with clergy exercising influence in secular matters (J 163). Integralism held by many, not just Catholics (J 176). Churches attempt to create a Christian society with moral legislation.

4. Oppressive rulers sometimes use their religious affiliation as tool to gain support. (e.g. Chiluba in Zambia J 176-7).

H. Christian millenarianism or messianic movements grew out of civil wars or social collapse (e.g. Lord’s Resistance Army in Uganda came from anti-witchcraft movement of prophet Alice Lakwena. They believed they could use magic oil to protect them from bullets J 178).

I. Religious loyalties often coincide with national or tribal loyalties, so that religion becomes incentive for tribal violence (Hutus & Tutsis of Rwanda in 1994 J 178)

J. Latin-American Catholic & Protestant conflicts:

1. Latin-American Catholic characterization of their religious rivals as sects, meaning a dangerous fringe movement J 179)

2. Appeal of Protestantism to native/indigenous groups causes threat to cultural identity as protestants emphasize individualism (J 180)

3. Protestants characterize older traditional beliefs as pagan or witchcraft or see protestant evangelism as a weapon of globalization designed to destroy local spiritual traditions (J 180).

4. Some Pentecostals work for social improvement and focus on local needs, giving rise to popularity and to Protestant or pentecostal voting blocks (J 181)
5. Religious conflicts between Protestants and Catholics has given rise to vigilantism, expulsion, imprisonment, beatings and denial of medical and educational services in areas of southern Mexico (J 182).

6. Sectarian violence sometimes arises from symbolic acts or insults to religious figures (IURD in Brazil kicking religious image on TV J 182).

K. Religious issues form political loyalties

1. Revival of concept of Gondwanaland – ancient southern supercontinent made up of Africa, Latin America, South Asia (J 183). Concept is used to suggest South-South partnership.

2. Imbalance between populations and location of wealth so that North-South economic divide may be defined in religious terms (J 184).

3. Issues viewed morally as well as politically – genetic manipulation, women’s rights, income gap between rich and poor (J 185).

4. Secularized north fails to understand religious conflicts of south, though affected by them. Tendency of north to interpret Southern Christianity through racial and cultural stereotypes:
   a) Orientalism – term used by post-colonialists such as Edward Said to describe stereotypical ways west portrayed Muslims. This is way Southern Christians (and fundamentalists) are portrayed by northern media (J 186).
   b) Third world primitivism – another stereotypical way that northern media portray Southern Christians as reactionary, superstitious, fanatical (e.g. recent clips of Sarah Palin being prayed for by an African pastor for protection from witches). (J 186). Christianity treated as alien or a jungle religion (J 187)

5. Political frontiers decided by rival concepts of God (J189)

L. Conflicts between Christians and Muslims


2. Christian-Muslim conflicts – cycle of intolerance: persecution, minority community reduced, uneasy peace until cycle begins again (J197)
3. Incidents of Islamic fanaticism, more often against Christians:
   a) Armenian genocide of 1915 by Turks
   b) Lebanese and Syrian Christians by Muslim and Druzes in 1860.
   c) Famine induced against Lebanese Maronite Christians by Turks.
   d) Killing of Jacobites, Nestorians, and Chaldeans by Turks in 1915 which continued with expulsion of Greek Christians through 1925 (J 197-8).
   e) 1955 – Istanbul Christians victims of race riot.
   f) Emphasis on healing
   g) Spiritual warfare
   h) Catechumenate revived in many African and Asian societies (J 198).


5. Why extremism is occurring:
   a) Muslim world in religious revival expressing itself in calls for religiously pure states with Islamic law.
      (1) This idea appeals to people afraid of losing cultural identity (J 198)
      (2) Offers solution for poor
   b) Challenges of modernity and globalization causing them to fall behind in technology, commercial development, and scientific research (J 199)

6. Christian missionaries use media to make inroads into Muslim areas, interpreted by Muslims as aggression. (J 199).

M. Conflicts between mixed populations of Muslims and Christians – Sudan, Nigeria, Egypt, Indonesia – has racial, tribal, and gender implications.

1. Sudan – northern Muslims vs. southern Black Christians (J200)
2. Nigeria – Muslim Hausas connect their religious and tribal identity and challenges to Shari'a law seen as attack. Result has been attempts by Muslim authorities to assert views on gender roles and family structures. So westernization viewed as symbol of religious and sexual upheaval (J202).
3. Accusations of adultery or prostitution in Indonesia states due to public conversations between males/females based on shari'a (J 203).

4. Sources of anti-Christian violence in Indonesia:
   a) Religious – rise of fundamentalist Islam
b) Nationalism – in areas where Christianity is strong, there were also secessionist movements, so Christians seen as traitors destroying national unity (J 207)

c) Economic component – (racial bigotry) urban Christianity associated with Chinese mercantile community, so ethnic Chinese portrayed as symbol of foreign exploiters keeping nation in poverty.

For Further Reading: