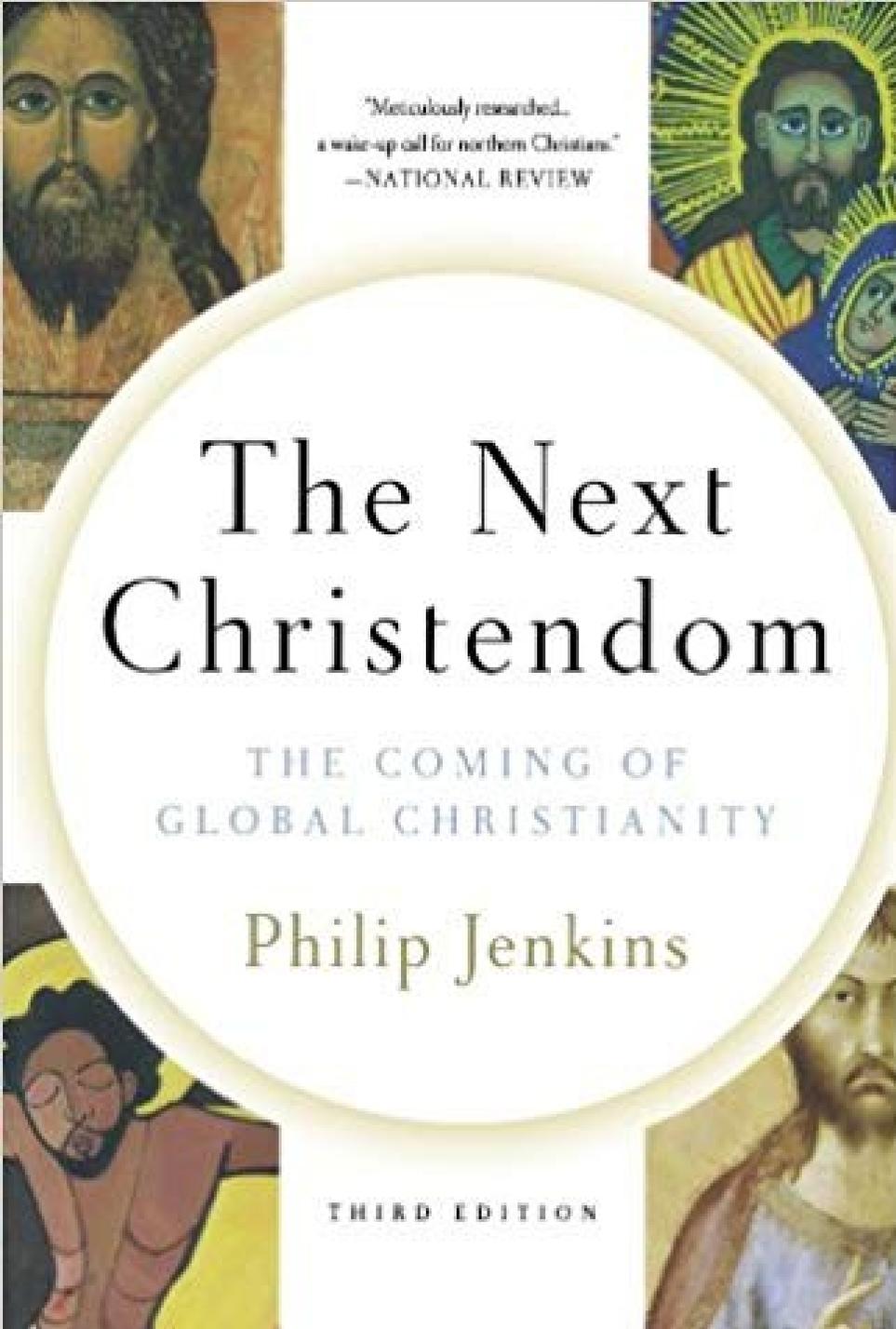


The Next Christendom?

The Thesis of Philip Jenkins



Christendom

- Uses this term somewhat ambiguously
- First edition written in 2002 – in the wake of 9/11
- The future of Christianity will be a new synthesis – with elements (including the political?) of cultures from Southern hemisphere



Meanings of "Christendom"

- “undesirable connotations”; archaic, refers to a “bygone era in which the Christian religion represented the central justification and organizing force of society”
- Where “the Christian world should also be a political order” (empire);
- “supra-national ... antinational”: “Christendom collapsed in the face of the overwhelming power of secular nationalism”
- Implies:
 - Alliance between church and state
 - Use of secular mechanisms (state) to implement church policies
 - Institutionalization of religious tolerance
- J. claims to use the word “in a more neutral sense”

Clash of Civilizations – inevitable?

- Christianity and Islam
 - Both religions experiencing epochal demographic change
 - Taking root in contexts where state infrastructure is weak or has collapsed
 - Southern societies – with aspirations to global unity; “loyalties to the nation as such are being replaced by newer forms of adherence into larger entities (Europe itself) or to smaller (regions or ethnic groups)
 - “centers of gravest state weakness are often the regions in which political loyalties are secondary to religious beliefs” (Muslim or Christian)
 - “clash” is a “worst case scenario” – “new age of ... Christian crusades and Muslim jihads”
 - “anything but inevitable” ; still, political leaders and diplomats take heed!

A “new” Christendom?

- “supra-national ... antinational”: “Christendom collapsed in the face of the overwhelming power of secular nationalism”
- The future: “that many Southern societies will develop a powerful Christian identity in culture and politics is beyond doubt. Less obvious is whether, and when, they will aspire to any kind of global unity.”
- “competing visions of Christianity”
 - Liberation Dream: social, political, economic justice; against racism; promotes cultural diversity
 - Conservative Dream: moral and sexual conservatism; fast-growing communities at odds with Western liberal orthodoxies
 - These characterizations fail to do justice to the whole picture; expect increasing North-South divergence



“Christian nations”

- “When a church helps establish a new government, religious leaders often expect some kind of recognition of their authority, perhaps even a share of government.”
- “Not a vast leap from churches exercising political power to demanding an exclusive right to that power, perhaps within the confines of a theocratic state.”
- E.g: Zambia, 1991: citizens to “have a Christian orientation in all fields, at all levels”



Ivory Coast

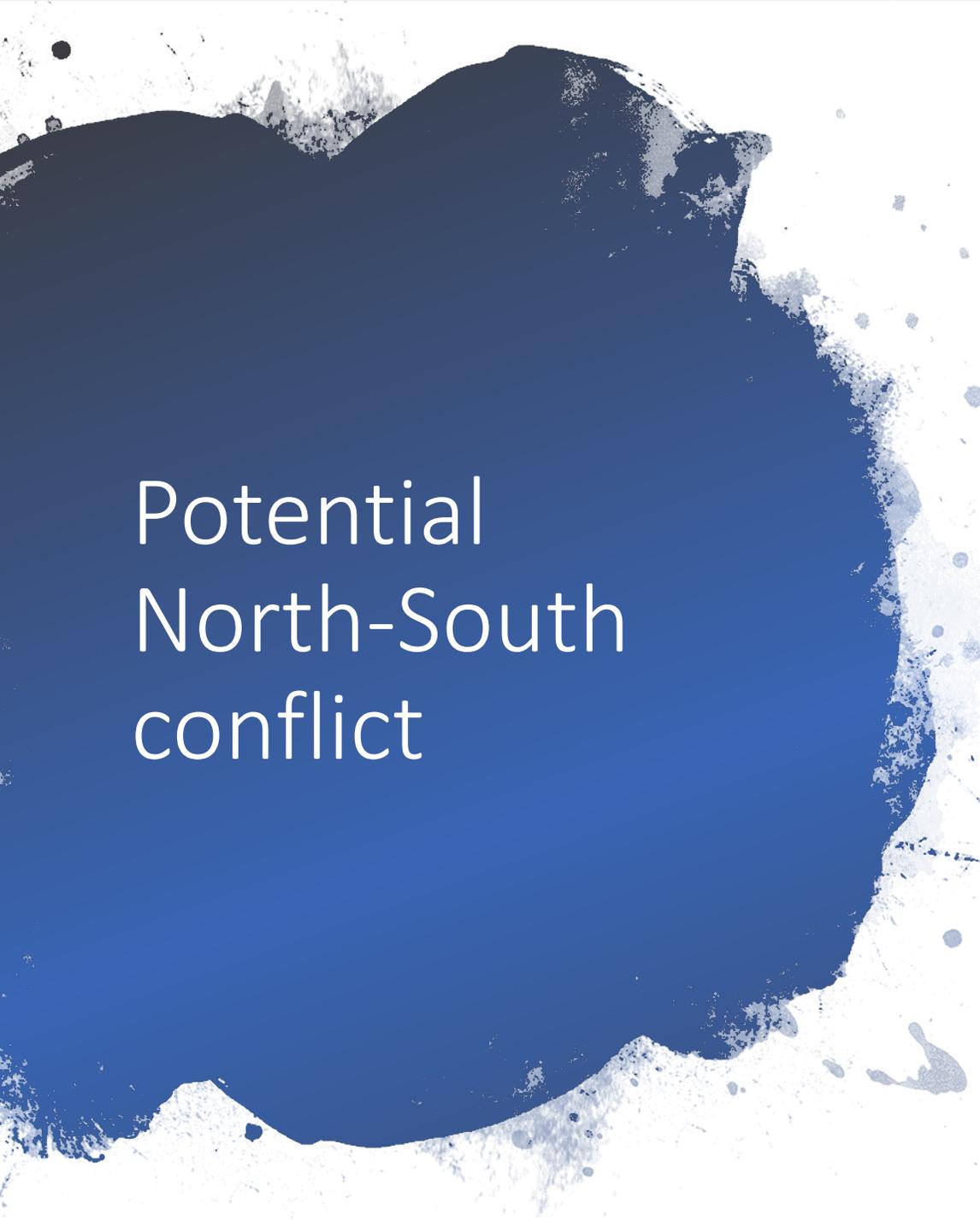
- Basilica of Our Lady of Peace, Yamassoukro
- President Félix Houphouët-Boigny
- \$300 million; the “world’s largest” Catholic Church



Jenkins predicts:

Religious issues will form political loyalties, and churches and clergy will form political loyalties, and churches and clergy will play a key role as political leaders [especially in the South]. (...) We may be entering a new age of Vatican diplomacy.”

Policymakers will have to understand relations between and among these faiths [Islam, Hinduism, Christianity].



Potential North-South conflict

- Secularized, rational tolerant North vs Southern world Christianity, perceived as “fanatical, superstitious, demagogic: ... politically reactive, sexually repressive”



“The Next Crusade”

- “rival concepts of God” (swallows Samuel Huntington’s thesis in *The Clash of Civilizations*)
- Sees growth of Islam outpacing Christianity
- Speaks of “competition for converts”, especially in Africa
- Minimizes history and contemporary examples of peaceful co-existence; argues that “the long-term prognosis for interfaith relations is not good.”

Future of the “North”

New divisions in world confessional families –
schisms?



An evangelization of the North by agents of the
south: clergy, immigrants, new missionaries.



Churches of the South will play an increasingly
important role.