CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN HISTORY

Owen O'Sullivan OFM Cap.

Published by Fr. Owen O'Sullivan
for the Tertiary Christian Studies Programme
of the Combined Chaplaincies
at Victoria University of Wellington,
Ramsey House, 36 Kelburn Parade,
Wellington 5, New Zealand

CONTENTS

PREFACE

This book is based on a series of lectures given at Victoria University of Wellington as part of the 1977 Tertiary Christian Studies Programme. That programme is arranged by the chaplains at the University to provide teaching at tertiary level on matters relating to the Christian faith.

These lectures offer a broad view of how the Christian community has responded to the challenges of living according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in very different societies and different ages of history. They may, in addition, help to stimulate thinking about the future of the Church, both internationally and in New Zealand.

The lectures do not presuppose a substantial knowledge of history, but rather an active interest in seeing the interaction of the Christian community and the society of which it is a part.

In preparing the lectures I have drawn heavily on two books of Charles Dawson's, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture* and *Religion and World History*, both published by Image Books, New York, in 1958 and 1975 respectively. Bishop Stephen Neill's, *The Christian Society*, published by Fontana in 1964, has also been very useful. I recommend them for further reading to

anyone who wishes to pursue more fully some of the issues raised in the lectures.

I owe a particular word of thanks to my fellow chaplains, Revv. Jim Pether and Rob Yule, for their encouragement and support.

Owen O'Sullivan
Capuchin Friary
186 Glenmore St.
Wellington 5
New Zealand
August 1977

INTRODUCTION

It may be helpful in beginning this study to look at some of the terms used. The term "church" probably means many different things to different people. Whatever differences exist in our understanding of the Church, we cannot simply ignore the Church if we are to take seriously the continued presence of Christ in the world. Without going too deeply into a theology of the Church, I will simply say that I use the term in this study to refer to the community of those who have faith in Jesus Christ. In later stages of the course I will make it clear, where necessary, when I am referring to specific churches, such as the Anglican or Roman Catholic.

By "society" I mean simple the human community, although, because of the particular circumstances of history, our attention will focus for the greater part of this study on European society. That, in itself, suggests some ideas for thought.

To define, or even describe, what we mean by the term "history" is a more difficult task. The subject can be taken in different ways. It can be: -

- a chronicle of events
- a review of key documents and personalities in human affairs

- an interpretation of the how and the why that lie behind events.

There is room for other approaches. This study will attempt to integrate these three approaches.

It's legitimate to ask the question, ‘Why study history anyway?’ The answer may perhaps be found in the saying of Cicero that ‘History is a teacher of life.’ A good teacher creates opportunities which the student may or may not take up - likewise with history. The knowledge of historical fact, by itself, doesn't solve any problems. It depends on what you do with it. The American philosopher Santayana put it this way, ‘Those who don't learn from history are condemned to repeat it.’

History can set up free from a bondage to tradition. It opens up a wider range of options and enables choices to be made on the basis of the experience of the human community. It helps us to understand our present, to appreciate why we have the kind of society that we do have. It can give us the humility to realise that ours is not the norm by which all others should be measured.

Talking of norms raises another question. On what basis do you evaluate the evidence presented by the chronicler? After all, the victors write the histories of the wars, but how did the vanquished see them? In the last century, the study of history led to an unquestioned

conviction of the inevitability of human progress - an assumption which would not be accepted with such readiness today. Likewise, the greatest historians in Europe for the last century have been the Germans, but the history of Germany in this century might lead us to ask what use Germany made of this knowledge.

Having raised the question of norms I feel under an obligation to at least attempt an answer. One is suggested to us by the Old Testament, which is probably the first theology of history, that is, an attempt to interpret human affairs from the perspective of God's intervention in the life of man. For example, the writers of the Old Testament looked at the event of the escape of the slaves from Egypt and their journey into the Promised Land. They saw this, not merely as a slave revolt against a tyrant obsessed by population control (the first such, surely not the last; cf. Ex.1.18-22), but as a sign of God's choice of them, his shaping them into his own chosen people and marking them out for a special destiny. It may be objected that it is very easy to make such grandiose interpretations when all is going well, but what about the opposite situation? The Jewish nation had such experiences as, for instances, when they were taken into captivity in Babylon, or overrun by the Assyrians. Significantly, this did not lead them to lose faith in God, because he was not a national God. They saw these events as the hand of God (the left

hand, perhaps?) leading them to realise that his kingdom was spiritual rather than political, supranational rather than national. The point of what I've been saying about the Old Testament is that their way of interpreting events was one which freed them from a purely secular approach to the subject. These interpretations tend to range from a blind optimism that if all's not well, then all will be well, through a numbing stoicism that there's nothing new as we've seen it all before, to the deep pessimism of an apocalypse without the Lamb. I think that a Christian approach to history avoids these pitfalls and attempts to read the signs of the times so as to see, even though dimly, the workings of God, whose ways are not our ways, and whose thoughts are not our thoughts, but who is providentially leading his people to the Kingdom, the time and place of which He alone knows.

It may be objected to the above that because it involves an act of faith (and it does) it cannot claim to be scientific. I would reply to this that all science, whether it is history, chemistry or sociology, involves an act of faith. Is it less scientific to believe in God than to believe that the world is intelligible without an intelligent source? Yet without this faith in the intelligibility of the world science could not even begin.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

Jesus and his Disciples

Jesus of Nazareth lived. The record of some of his teachings and actions are found in the Gospels. A reading of these records shows us that Jesus called to him a group of disciples and entrusted them with the task of continuing his work, the proclaiming of the Kingdom of God. They were to be a community whose focus was faith in Jesus, and who expressed and strengthened this in worship, witness and service. As time passed, the community grew, older members with a personal recollection of Jesus died, and the need was felt to leave a written record of the traditions of the community about Jesus and about its own life. These were written down by many and the community decided which were to regarded as canonical, that is, a definitive record which could legitimately be regarded as the teaching which the Holy Spirit wished to be communicated to succeeding generations. The community has, historically, changed and developed, as any living body does. At present it includes an institutional element although it would be inaccurate to describe it for that reason simply as an institution.

This community was to be very different from others. A secular society, by its very nature, has limited and finite ends. It is based on calculation,

on a balance of authorities, on coercive power; the aims it consecrates are success, security and prosperity. The society which Jesus called abandons all these bases of social living. (1) It is to find its security in faith in Christ and in nothing else. The Church has always found itself caught in the tension between the call of Christ and the temptation to be seduced into a way that is not his. The scholastics of the middle ages had a tag for it: the Church has been reformed and is always in need of reform. (*Ecclesia reformata sed semper reformanda*).

THE CHURCH AND THE JEWISH WORLD

The admission of the Gentiles

The early Christians were Jews. When they came to believe in Christ, they did not think of themselves as "ex-Jews" but as true Jews. Since the whole purpose of the Law was to prepare for Christ, those who believed in him saw their faith as the fulfilment, not the renunciation, of the old Law. So the early Christians continued to go to the synagogue and to observe the law of Moses. But if Christ fulfilled the Law, if its purpose was achieved by his coming, did it still have the same force as before? This important question came to have a very practical significance in the matter of the admission of gentiles to the community of faith. No one disputed that gentiles should be

admitted; the question was one of the terms of admission, namely, whether they should be bound to become Jews and to observe the Law of Moses. This was a matter of fundamental importance; it involved the basis of salvation itself.

Acts, chapter 15, gives us the decision. The gentiles were to be admitted without the observance of the Law of Moses; faith in Christ was the basis of salvation. To the observer on the outside this might seem a matter of little importance, a wrangle about subtleties of doctrine, but it was of immense practical significance. It is not an exaggeration to say that if the decision had gone the other way, Christianity would have remained a mere sect within Judaism. Instead, the decision meant that Christianity was a faith for all nations, cultures and languages. This was a radical departure in a time which thought for the most part in terms of national gods.

The faith spreads under the shelter of Judaism

It was not until about the year 100 that the Jewish and Christian communities began to go separate ways, but, before that came about, it must be remembered that the early Christian community spread throughout the eastern part of the Roman empire under the protection of laws which had been enacted for the Jews. The

Empire, for political reasons, had always taken an open attitude to local religious beliefs, but the Jewish faith was different from the others. The God of the Jews was not a national God; he made universal claims and he would not co-exist along with the many other gods of the Empire. For its part, the Empire, faced by the refusal of the Jews to compromise on this point, made special provision for them in its laws. This special provision did not threaten the unity of the Empire because the Jews were small in number. To the Roman authorities, the Christians were difficult to distinguish from the Jews. It was only later on that these differences became more apparent. In the difficult early years of the Church, it was the 'Jewishness' of the Christians which saved them from the wrath of the Empire which later hit them with full force.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the Diaspora

The revolt of the Jews against the Roman Empire led, in the war of 69-70, to the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Jewish nation in the homeland of Israel. In an extraordinary act of vindictiveness the Roman general Titus destroyed the city, levelled the Temple and buried it under a mound of earth, spread salt on the ground so that nothing would grow there, and, to add a final insult, built a pagan shrine on the site of the Temple. By doing

so, he forgot that he was marking the spot for posterity so that it was not lost.

The effect of this was that the Jewish community, many of whom were Christians, was dispersed throughout the Middle East. The left hand of God was at work in Titus because this gave impetus to the missionary growth of the Church. During the persecution of the Jews in the first century B.C. by Antiochus Epiphanes the Jews had already suffered an earlier dispersal. They had settled in the Greek-speaking cities of the eastern Mediterranean, they had learned Greek, and had translated the scriptures into Greek, the Septuagint. When the new wave of refugees arrived, they brought the faith with them, and introduced it into these settled communities. These events had two important practical consequences: the Christian faith began to be spread in close communities throughout the heart of the Roman Empire, and an opening was provided for contact with the Greeks, the cultural leaders of the day. The tiny Christian community was facing the religious power of Judaism, the intellectual power of Greek culture, and the political power of the Roman Empire.

The Cultural Crossing

It has been said that Europe owes its political existence to the Roman Empire, its spiritual unity to Christianity, and its intellectual culture to the Greek classics. (2) If there is any one person in whom the challenges to the early Christian Church are exemplified, that man is Paul of Tarsus, the apostle of the gentiles. It was Paul who came face to face with the challenge of Greek culture when he spoke to the scholars in the *Areopagus* about Christ. They listened intently until he spoke of the resurrection. At this point, they burst out laughing. (Acts 17.16-33) To the gentiles, Christ was foolishness. The intellectuals of Athens were confident and self-sufficient. They were cultural leaders in a sea of ignorance and they knew it. They saw humanity as composed of two categories, Greeks and barbarians. It was the task of Saint Paul, a man brought up in an entirely different tradition, totally immersed in a Jewish frame of thought, to present the Christian faith in a Hellenistic cultural environment.

The importance of his task was great since the language and culture of the Empire was Greek. If he failed to communicate the Christian message, then Christians would remain a fringe group on the edge of society, and Christianity would lose

its claim to universality. It would be a religion of one culture.

Saint Paul's problem was one which has faced missionaries ever since. Should Christians, in approaching a culture that is new to them, attempt what might be called a clean sweep? There are some who would say 'Yes' on the grounds that any attempt to achieve a form of harmony between Christianity and a non-Christian culture involves a betrayal of the uniqueness of the Gospel. It compromises it, and merely prolongs the life of a pagan culture that would otherwise crumble away to be replaced by the total freshness of the Christian faith. An extreme form of the clean sweep is simply to exterminate the indigenous population. It has been done, as, for instance, with the Aborigines in Tasmania in the last century, though the missionaries there resisted that campaign. However, a policy of extermination is only an extreme form of the clean sweep attitude, which is one of a rigorous intolerance.

It is probably not possible to have a complete replacement of one culture by another without such drastic measures. However, even if it were possible, I believe that it is not desirable anyway. Christianity is not a culture. One of its great strengths is that it has been able to merge with many different cultures, drawing strength from them and imparting it to them. This has made it

the most universal of religions in terms of geographical distribution. By contrast to religions like Islam or Buddhism it is not tied to one view of the world, with an endless cycle of repetition. It has a creative, dynamic character which responds positively to the challenge of cultural diversity. Nonetheless there are risks involved in trying to establish links between the faith and a given culture. They are risks which have to be taken. The best example we have of this is that the second Person of the Trinity took the risk of becoming like us in all things except sin, and being born in a distinct culture and locality. St. Paul took this risk in attempting to make the cultural crossing from thinking of the faith in Hebrew terms to thinking of it in Hellenistic terms.

The Church and the Classical Tradition

The classical tradition was primarily literary. (By contrast, radio and TV, which are, for better or worse, the media of the illiterate are in the ascendancy today while literary communication is in decline.) The early Christian Church produced great thinkers and writers who were able to enter into the Hellenistic tradition on their own terms. Men like Origen, Tertullian, Jerome, Augustine and Ambrose developed a synthesis of classical and Christian learning. Indeed they saw the classical tradition as being what they called a '*praeparatio evangelica*', a preparation for the

Gospel, disposing the human mind for the reception of the Christian faith. For example, Plato in the *Timaeus* (37), had come to believe in a personal God. Surely then the tradition which had led him to this belief should not be cast aside as merely pagan, but should be acknowledged as being perhaps 'not far from the kingdom of God'?

The importance of this movement is that it enabled the survival of the humanist ideal. This ideal has been a formative element in the development of Western scientific method and its logical approach to reality. The humanist tradition is an autonomous (though not necessarily secular) culture which has been preserved by the Church for humanity. The Church itself was a beneficiary of its own action in preserving the classical culture. It meant that the Church had an intellectual vehicle for the expression and communication of the Christian message to the western world in a way that it could understand. It was this, too, which, over a period of eight centuries, enabled the Church to hammer out its fundamental theological and Christological teachings.

THE CHURCH AND THE ROMAN WORLD

The old order changes

The Roman world ‘was more of an international unity that any society that has existed down to our own day’. (3) It was a society of relatively independent cities loosely federated under Rome, with a common official language, stable coinage, good roads, without customs or national barriers, and without the large-scale brigandage or piracy of the non-Roman world. It had an efficient central administration and fast communications. It achieved its greatest geographical expansion about the year 90 A.D.

Behind the appearance of stability and security there were serious weaknesses. Rome was a society based on the exploitation of the country by the town, of the slave by the free, of the poor by the rich. It had become a fat parasite which was draining the resources of the provinces. It was filled with hangers-on dependent on the state for bread and circuses (an early version of welfare and telly?). The idealism of the early republic which had provided the moral base for the unity of society was gone, and with it went belief in the old Roman gods. Among young people there was a turning to eastern religions, while among the political leadership there was the promotion of the cult of the emperor as the

focus of unity in a very diverse empire. This effort can now be seen as the clutching at straws that precedes death. When Emperor Caligula, whose name means “little boots”, declared his horse consul about the year 40, and Nero (54-68) had his wife murdered and kicked his mother to death, it was hard to take the claim to divinity seriously.

The new order begins

The empire was both the source and the result of a universalist frame of mind. It was ready for a universalist religion. There was a spiritual vacuum waiting to be filled.

Christianity spread rapidly through the work of soldiers and merchants. It had an appeal because in an age which was tired of attempts at continuity it was radically different; it demanded moral reform; its disciples were convinced; it appealed to the poor and the slaves; it had an intellectual basis; it had a forward-looking character; it held out hope for the individual in the face of an authoritarian state; most of all it confronted people with the evidence of a new power in the person of Jesus who could and did change people for the better. Christianity's belief in a loving, personal God, its belief in the resurrection, its sense of purpose deriving, among other things, from a linear instead of a cyclical view of time all had an impact. The status of

women was enhanced by its teaching on sexual matters.

Persecution….

The emperors were correct when they saw Christianity as a threat to the empire. The empire demanded undivided loyalty. To acknowledge anyone as its superior was to introduce an element of division into society. This became a serious problem in the case of military service, to cite one instance. Christianity was not a national religion, it was universal in intent. It would not co-exist with other beliefs on a basis of equality. Neither would it accept that the emperor was the *summus pontifex*, the high priest. The Christians did not see themselves as a state within the state - in fact, their lifestyle and occupations were quite ordinary - but they did see a distinction between church and state. This itself was an element of division which the state was not prepared to tolerate.

The ancient world did not know the church-state differentiation which we have today. Israel was a theocracy - at least such was the ideal. The king was there to execute God's will. He was a constitutional monarch with the Law of God as the constitution. To speak of a separation of church and state would have been incomprehensible, if not blasphemous, to a Jew. In Greece, the reverse position prevailed. The

state fulfilled all functions, civil and religious. The *polis* was all-inclusive, and individual differences of action were sharply subordinated to the good of the community. The Roman attitude was one of official indifference to religion belief as religious. For example, Pilate was interested in whether Jesus was a rebel, not in his religious teaching. But where a religion made the kind of claims that Christianity did, then, whether anyone liked it or not, it had a political character. This is illustrated in the statement of Pope Gelasius I to the Emperor Anastasius I in 494: 'Two there are, august emperor, by which this world is ruled on title of original and sovereign right - the consecrated authority of the priesthood and the royal power.' (4)

Persecution came in three waves, roughly from 64 to 96, under Nero and Domitian; local persecutions from 100 to 250; and from 304 to 312 under Decius. It has been estimated (with what accuracy I don't know) that perhaps as many as half the Christians of the empire apostatized during these persecutions. However, the Church survived these attacks and continued to grow in numbers and influence. Persecution ceased when it was realised that they - the persecutions - were in fact a greater threat to political unity than the Christians were, since they, for their part, wished to be good citizens, and when it became apparent that persecution

was not achieving its purpose. It's probably not inaccurate to say that the conclusion was ‘If you can't beat, join them.’

…. to Establishment

In 313, Emperor Constantine decreed, in the Edict of Milan, ‘To each man's judgment and will the right should be given to care for sacred things according to each man's free choice… to no one whatsoever should we deny liberty to follow either the religion of the Christians or any other cult which of his own free choice he has thought to be best adapted for himself.’ (5) This gave the Church a breathing space. When Emperor Theodosius (379-395) came to power, Christianity became the official religion of the Empire with all attendant privileges. What might well have seemed to be a great blessing was, in fact, by no means free from ambiguity. A hint had been given earlier by Emperor Constantius II (350-361) who had remarked, ‘My will is a canon.’ If the pagan emperor was *summus pontifex* of a pagan empire, was it not logical to expect that a Christian emperor would be the *summus pontifex* of a Christian empire? On the part of the Christian community, too, the new regime created new problems. An example is that while the persecuted Church held the view that all property belonged to the whole community, the now established church came to the opinion

that privately held property should be regarded as the norm.

The Church had shown that it could survive the persecution of the pagan empire. Whether it could survive the patronage of the Christian empire remained to be seen.

THE DARK AGES or WHO IS IN THE DARK?

SAINT AUGUSTINE - A MAN FOR HIS TIMES

Saint Augustine stands out in history by any reckoning as a unique man. He was unique in many ways. As a young man he had fallen into Manichaeism and the moral corruption that goes with it. He had searched in the schools of philosophy for a perennial wisdom; he had studied the classics of Greece; he had lived at the heart of the empire then situated in Milan; he had found faith through his mother's prayers and the teaching of Saint Ambrose, the bishop of Milan. He is best remembered perhaps for his *Confessions*, the story of his spiritual pilgrimage, in which he reveals his deep regret at having come so late to faith, 'Too late have I loved you, o beauty so ancient and so new,' (1) and, at the same time, his very deep love for God, 'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts will know no rest until they rest in You.' (2)

His special interest for us is that he lived at a time when the Roman Empire in the West was crumbling because of the loss of its inner dynamism and the military weight of its enemies. His life span, from 354 to 430, saw, at its end,

Augustine's own episcopal city of Hippo, in North Africa, besieged by Vandals from the north. To many of his contemporaries the collapse of the empire was to be explained by the triumph of Christianity and the consequent neglect of the old Roman gods. They proposed a return to the old ways. Saint Augustine, though now an old man, took up the challenge and wrote *The City of God*, a theology of history which looked beyond the overwhelming sense of defeat to a hope in a Christian civilization that would rise from the ashes of the empire. To anyone not animated by faith such a hope must have seemed fanciful, as the Empire never recovered from this invasion. (It is not by accident that we use the term 'vandal' today of someone who destroys for the sake of destruction.) *The City of God* is an attempt to provide a bridge between the old Roman world, which was then clearly beyond recovery, and the new order founded on justice. Augustine had asked, 'Without justice, what are kingdoms but great piracies?' (3) His own answer to the problem of reconstruction was a spiritually renewed Christianity.

The Monastery as the cell of Reconstruction

The monastic life began in Egypt when Christian laymen fled into the desert to escape what they regarded, with at least a measure of truth, as the worldliness of a Church which had settled a little too comfortably for a people called

to be pilgrims and strangers on earth. For the most part they lived an eremitical life of contemplation. Their life was a challenge to the perennial danger of the Church's being seduced into secularism. The monks were to the established Church what the martyrs were to the persecuted Church. In the West, this idea was taken up by Benedict of Norcia and given a Western character which shows the influence of Roman ideas of government. Benedict gathered communities of men and of women to live a life of contemplation, but, in the form which he gave it, this life was one which created a haven of learning and culture and culture in a decaying civilization. It is not only the study of the classics which was kept alive in the monasteries but also the study of agriculture, medicine, music, and, of course, theology. St. Benedict did not set out to create a social reform though he did, in fact, achieve one. When the cities of the empire were destroyed in the invasions, and the population reverted to a primitive rural existence, it was the monasteries which were the islands of civilization which kept hope alight in the darkness. The evidence of this can be seen in Europe today where the older towns and cities have grown up around monastic settlements. It can be seen even in our language where the term “clerical work” derives from the fact that, for centuries, it was the clerics who kept learning alive. This latter development was a later one as Benedict's communities were almost entirely

made up of laypeople; they became clerical later through the influence of the clerical communities set up by Saint Augustine.

The East – a different picture

Towards the end of the third century, the Roman Empire had divided into the Eastern and a Western Empire at either end of the Mediterranean. The differences between east and west which continued to develop over the centuries are exemplified in the fact that the western empire was all but dead by the middle of the fifth century, while the eastern empire lived on for another thousand years. One important point needs to be made here. When we use the term "East" we use it as being relative to Western Europe, not in the sense in which Europeans today speak of the East while thinking of Asia. The people of Byzantium thought of themselves as Western in their culture in relation to the Persians to the East of them.

The very great difference in the histories of the two empires prompts us to ask why they fared so differently. The answer seems to lie in the fact that the Eastern Empire was solidly united by common cultural bonds. Its three great traditions were: -

Basileia: the empire, formed substantially on Roman lines;

Ecclesia: the church, seen as being fully integrated with the empire in a unitary society;
Paideia: learning, the synthesis of Christian faith and Greek language, philosophy and culture.

To the people of Byzantium, the emperor and the patriarch were two officials of the same society, differing only in their functions. This different view of things gave the east a cohesion which the west lacked. It was this inner strength which enabled the church in the east to engage in extensive missionary work in the Balkans through the brother bishops, Cyril and Methodius. It was these men who gave not only the Christian faith but also the written word as a vehicle of tradition to the people among whom they worked. To this day, the alphabet used in Eastern Europe is the Cyrillic alphabet. It was this same inner unity which enabled the Eastern Empire to successfully resist the invasions of the Persians from the East.

To a Western observer, it is very easy to say that this unity was achieved by the Church being under the thumb of the state, and there is, undoubtedly, ample evidence to support this. But, as the iconoclast controversy showed, the Church both could and did resist the Emperor successfully when he attempted to impose a doctrinal formula which the Christian faithful were not prepared to accept as orthodox.

However, if the unitary character of the Eastern Empire was its strength, it was also its weakness. When the Mohammedans swept through the greater part of the Eastern Empire in the sixth and seventh centuries, they did so with relative ease because the empire was exhausted by its wars with the Persians. When the old patriarchates of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem came under Moslem control, and Byzantium alone remained under the empire then the close identification of eastern Christianity with a particular cultural tradition became a millstone around its neck. The Church now found itself without an adequate base of moral support; it lost much of its missionary drive; it lost something of its universal character in its identification with the nation. This trend has been particularly accentuated in the Orthodox churches, particularly since the Crusades and the fall of Constantinople in 1453, so that, to this day, the Orthodox churches engage in relatively little missionary work and have a national rather than a universal character.

Despite the very severe setbacks to the Church in the east as a result of the Moslem invasions, that Church nevertheless made two very significant contributions to the life of the whole Christian community. The first of these is less important, and, for that reason, less well known. In the period 678 to 741, at a time of intense Moslem pressure, the Church in the East

continued to infuse life into the West. Of thirteen popes in this period, five were Greek and five Syrian. The other contribution is of much greater significance. It is in regard to that most essential element of Christian life - the worship of the Christian community. The Byzantines had developed a liturgy which expressed their faith that all of reality was imbued with the divine. As a consequence, the expression of that faith in ritual reflected the high cultural level of their life. At the time that we are considering, the early developments of the Russian empire were taking place around Kiev under two leaders, Svyatoslav, and his son, Vladimir. They consciously chose to ally their development with the West rather than with the nomadic East in Siberia. They sent ambassadors to Byzantium to enter into contact with this great centre of culture. The ambassadors reported back: 'The Greeks led us to their edifices where they worship their God, and we knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth, there is no such splendour or such beauty, and we were at a loss how to describe it. We only know that God dwells here among men, and that their worship is more beautiful than the ceremonies of other nations. We cannot forget that beauty.' (4) The lasting effect of this experience was that Russia became Christian rather than Moslem. The consequences of that fact for Europe cannot be measured. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the liturgy in the Byzantine church was its greatest asset in

maintaining a sense of unity which sustained it for a further seven centuries in the face of Moslem pressure. Had Constantinople fallen to the Moslems a few centuries earlier, the history of the Christian church might well be totally different today.

Contrasting the East and the West

Just as the Roman Empire had broken into two camps we find that the Church also divided. It was more a matter of growing apart than of a decisive break at any one point. We may usefully note some of the differences that grew up between them. Speaking in very broad terms, we could say that in the East the emperor remained supreme; he and the patriarch lived in one city; there was a unity of language, of culture and, to a lesser extent, of race among the eastern Christians; there was considerable local autonomy among the various churches; the liturgy was in the vernacular; the laity were as well educated as the clergy and as prominent in the life of the church; but the framework of thought was substantially static and inward-looking. In the West, the popes had come to assume the political vacuum left by the departure of the emperors; there was no unity of race, language or culture on a par with that in the east; local autonomy among the churches was giving way to a centralizing tendency built around the papacy; the liturgy was in Latin; the church was

increasingly becoming clericalized. But the West, by contrast to the East, was dynamic and outward-looking. One example which illustrates this difference may be found in the different kinds of monastic life: in the east, it was the life in the desert; in the west, it was the life of the Benedictine monastery.

The Church struggles to its feet

The decay and final collapse of the Roman Empire in the west left Europe weak and leaderless. The Church was the only body which had the resources, or indeed the vision, to fill the gap thus created. When the Church emerged from the time of persecution it was able to set about organizing its life in a more cohesive way. It looked for a model to choose from in its pattern of government. It was, therefore, not surprising that the form of government left by the empire was the one which suggested itself. The Church substantially took over the pattern of imperial government with provinces run by metropolitans, subdivided into dioceses led by bishops, and presided over the pope in Rome, who fulfilled the role formerly exercised by the emperor. He had a primacy over the bishops, though it was not by any means an absolute one. We see in the pattern of the Church's life at this time, many local councils of bishops presided over by a papal legate. The dangers inherent in the adoption of the Roman system of government were obvious.

It was especially the danger that the Church would become secularized and see its mission in political terms. Yet it was obvious that the Church could not simply opt out of the situation and take no part in holding together and reconstituting a framework of civilization. It recognized that its mission was not simply that of converting individuals and hope that, if this were successful on a sufficiently large scale, it would somehow add up to a Christian society. It realized that the work of mission had to be approached on the social level as well as by creating, as far as possible, those conditions in society which would prepare for the Gospel. Some basic element of order and peace was a requisite for this. Someone had to make straight the paths and make the rough ways smooth if the culture itself was to be catechized.

Spreading the Seed

The monasteries were not only the vital cells of reconstruction, they were the cells of mission as well. The missionary expansion of the Church in the four centuries after the Edict of Milan is almost entirely a monastic exercise. St. Boniface in Germany, St. Willibrord in the Netherlands, the Irish monks across Europe were the mainspring of the drive to bring the nations of central Europe into the fold. Two different strands were at work here. There was the Roman monastic pattern, which followed Saints Benedict

and Augustine, and the Celtic pattern which was free of Roman influence, since Ireland had not been part of the empire. These two strands united at the Synod of Whitby in 663. Wherever the monks went, they founded settled communities which provided the environment for the growth of faith. These communities came to take the place of the towns, which had fallen into decay since the collapse of the Roman Empire. Language illustrates the point for us: the Latin word *paganus* (a pagan) means a countryman.

Building Christian Community

Christianity, as it advanced into the pagan kingdoms of Europe, entered into a "cultural marriage" with them. The king was a symbol of national unity, so, if he became Christian, the tribe followed. The missionaries knew this, so they directed their efforts to the kings. When the king became Christian, he lost the semi-divine status which he had hitherto held. He was no longer a high priest, but he gained the support of the Church. The character of the kingship was changed. A Christian king could not command allegiance by reference to the gods or to some supposedly "sacred" character of royal blood. Even success in battle was no longer the criterion. Loyalty had to be won in a different way.

The Church supported the king by the rite of anointing taken from the Old Testament precedent of Samuel's anointing of David in place of Saul. (1 Samuel chapters 8-16) This was the beginning of what subsequently became known as the alliance of throne and altar, the benefits of which were much greater for the throne than for the altar. The Frankish kingdom is an example of this, where the Church was firmly under the king's control. He saw Christianity as a bond of political unity in a divided kingdom. Nonetheless there was some element of religious motivation in the policy of the Frankish kings, especially in Charles Martel and Louis the Pious.

The precedent for their policy in law, literature and liturgy was neither Roman nor Germanic, but Old Testament. They did not think of Church and State as separate but thought of a distinct, unified Christian community with the king as the undisputed leader in spiritual and temporal affairs. The people were bound to obey the king, but he could claim obedience only if he obeyed God. King and bishop were regarded as functionaries of the same society, not of two different ones. One consequence of this was the general acceptance that if one of these failed in his role, he could be deposed and replaced by the other. The king could and did depose bishops, as could the bishops in return. In 834, the bishops deposed Louis the Pious, son of Charlemagne.

The divine right of kings was conditional and revocable in theory and in practice. It was conditional on the king's loyalty to God, a constitutional monarchy of which the law of God was the constitution.

The Church is dead… Long live the Church!

After the death of Charlemagne in 814, the Frankish kingdom gradually disintegrated under the pressure of attacks by the Magyars in the east, the Saracens in the south, and the Vikings in the north. The Danes captured Hamburg and Paris, the Saracens attacked Rome, the Vikings captured Germany, the north of France, Britain and the east of Ireland. The monasteries were the especial victims of attack. Because of their social importance, the consequences for Europe were very serious. Celtic monastic life, which had played such an important part in the Christianization of Europe, was devastated, never to recover fully. The last half of the ninth century saw the destruction of what had been slowly built up over a period of about two and a half centuries. It has been said that 'There has never been a war which so directly threatened the existence of Western Christendom as a whole.' (5) The Carolingian experiment of the rule of law was at an end and the comment could rightly have been made that political power grew out of the point of a sword.

One outcome of all this was the growth of national kingdoms based on local military control in areas where the Vikings had been driven back because of overextending themselves. Despite this, the ideal of a united Christian kingdom remained. Otto the Great, crowned by the pope in 963, revived the attempt at creating a Christian kingdom which would transcend national boundaries. In this he relied even more heavily than Charlemagne on the Church as an instrument of unity. The prince-bishops came into being, remaining powerful figures in Germany for nine centuries. Nonetheless there were many bishops, like Saint Boniface earlier, who refused all political offices on the grounds of incompatibility with their spiritual mission.

However, the response of the Christian community to the Viking invasions was by no means limited to the military or political levels. It found its greatest expression in a spiritual renewal and a revival of learning, as, for example, under King Alfred in England. The effect of this response can be seen most clearly in the period after the second wave of Viking invasions about the year 1000. The pagan Viking, King Canute, ruled England in 1016. However, England remained Christian and the net effect was that the Vikings who settled in the conquered territories became Christians themselves and subsequently carried the faith back to their Scandinavian homeland. The motives of the

Nordic kings in accepting Christianity were probably political as much as religious. It gave them access to a wider culture and a basis of power which made them independent of their original tribal limitations.

It is very easy to say that the Vikings were converted, but, obviously, it wasn't so easy to do it. The way in which it was done is a good example of the way in which Christianity can adapt its presentation of itself to a given culture, and, without losing its own integrity, enable people to adopt the new faith without losing a sense of continuity in culture and tradition. Christopher Dawson describes it, 'On the one side we have the chieftain and his warriors who are bound to follow him to the death; on the other, we have the abbot and his community which is sworn to obedience to eternal life. On the one hand, there is the *ethos* of honour and fidelity and the cult of the hero; and the cult of the saint and the martyr. Again, on the one side, there is the oral tradition of heroic poetry, and, on the other, the literary tradition of the Sacred Scriptures and the legends of the saints. This correspondence between the patterns of pagan and monastic culture made it possible for men to pass from one to the other by a profound change in their beliefs and in their system of moral values without losing vital contact with their old social tradition, which was sublimated and transformed, but not destroyed or lost.' (6)

Nordic culture became part of the West's cultural heritage. This became a powerful instrument in the later conversion of Iceland and in establishing contacts with Christianity in Russia with which the Vikings had had extensive contacts over a long time. It had an influence also in the conversion of the Magyars which followed soon after - an effect which can be seen today in the profound similarities between the Finnish and Hungarian languages. The cutting edge of the Viking sword had been transformed into the plough-share for the sowing of the Gospel seed.

Why a European Church?

It was no small achievement that, despite all the setbacks it had encountered, the Church, at the start of the new millennium, had substantially completed the conversion of western, southern and northern Europe, and was beginning to undertake missionary work in Poland, Hungary and Bohemia. Despite this encouraging growth, it is obvious that the Church we are talking about was very largely a European Church. It is true that in the early centuries, there were Christian communities in North Africa and in Asia Minor. These communities were limited to the Mediterranean basin. We might well ask ourselves why it was that expansion took place into Europe rather than into Africa or Asia. The answer to these questions involves several elements. The early Christian communities in

north Africa, although they had been significant, as, for example, by providing three popes to the Church, did not expand southward into the heart of Africa for the reason that sea transport had not developed to the point which would have made such voyages feasible and the Sahara was an insuperable impediment to overland travel. By the time that sea transport developed the Church in North Africa had long been swept aside in the Moslem invasions.

In the east, the early centuries were the period of greatest growth. We have seen a little of the work of Saints Cyril and Methodius among the peoples of the Balkans. Strong Christian communities grew up there with a sense of national cultural identity built around their commitment to the Christian faith. Georgia and Armenia are particularly good examples of this. Small groups of Christians had made contact with the Mongols and Tartars of Siberia and the far east of Asiatic Russia. They had joined in trade with them even to the extent of going with them on the trade routes to China, where groups of Nestorian Christians lived as early as the sixth century. However, this venture came to an end, as it did in North Africa, with the Moslem invasions which cut off the trade routes from the eastern Mediterranean to Siberia. Sporadic efforts were made at re-opening these routes as, for instance, when the popes attempted to form alliances with the Tartars against the Moslems.

It must be acknowledged, however, that the impediments to missionary growth were not just those of geography and politics. They were the impediments of a limited theological vision also. One example of this can be found in the fact that although a Christian church had been founded in Ethiopia from Egypt as early as the fourth century, it never developed beyond Ethiopia. From the viewpoint of geographical factors, Ethiopia was ideally situated as a base for missionary growth. It provided an entry into Africa south of the Sahara, into Arabia and across into India. Its people, being of mixed African-Arab blood, were culturally well situated to be the focal point of a new venture. A somewhat similar situation existed in India where the small Christian communities, claiming descent from the apostle Thomas, remained in isolation for centuries without making any attempts at conversion. Why was it that nothing came of these ventures? A number of reasons must be given. One was the identification of the faith with a particular culture and the refusal to interpret it for one which was different. Another was the fact that these communities became cut off from contact with the main stream of Christian life elsewhere, and succumbed to the temptation to introversion. A third reason was the hyper-intellectualism of the Eastern Church which was the founder of the Coptic church in Ethiopia. An amusing example of this is given by Saint Gregory of Nyssa, ‘If you ask the price of a

loaf, you are told that the Son is subject to the Father; if you ask whether a bath is ready, the answer is that the Son was made out of nothing.' (7) The attempt to embody the faith in a theological system is a sure sign of insecurity and a sure precursor of intellectual sterility. These two elements will clip the wings of any missionary development before it even gets off the ground.

The dark ages were indeed dark, but the Church operated on the principle that it is better to light a candle than to curse the dark. Its response to the challenge of barbarism was the spiritual re-vitalization of the Christian community.

CHRISTIANITY IN TRIUMPH… OR WAS IT?

A student of Church history can hardly fail to become aware of two distinct and conflicting elements in the life of the Christian community. One is its remarkable capacity for spiritual re-vitalization in those times when the odds are stacked heavily against it. The other is the opposite - it is the way in which some of the most hopeful movements for food go off the rails and pervert their original purpose. Good sometimes springs surprises by producing a harvest on rocky ground, while evil shows an intelligence and persistence not ordinarily found in the human species. Could it be a rumour of angels? This essay gives examples of both of these situations.

Cluny

In the year 910, a monastery was founded at Cluny in the region of Burgundy in France. This apparently ordinary event did, in fact, lead to extraordinary developments. The monastery of Cluny differed from other monasteries in that it was free of the authority of local lords, being directly subject to the pope, and in that it founded new houses as branches of the original foundation. Its life was characterized by a liturgical revival, a strong sense of social justice and the development of new methods of agriculture. With the passage of time much of the

initial drive was lost and the monasteries came to be havens of comfort rather than powerhouses of spiritual life. But, in 1098, Bernard of Clairvaux founded a reformed monastery of the movement at Citeaux. His rigorous insistence on the primacy of the spiritual brought about a pace of reform which led, by the time of his death in 1153, to the establishment of more than three hundred monasteries of the reformed tradition. These monasteries of the Cluniac reform came to have immense influence on the life of Europe in the centuries which followed.

To understand the impact of the Cluniac reform we need to understand the background of the scene we are looking at. Europe was recovering from two waves of barbarian invasions. The Church was bound up with the struggle to resist these. We cannot expect it to have been otherwise, since the Church is a community of people situated in place and time. Inevitably the Church did not emerge unscathed. It was deeply corroded by the inroads of secularism and by the intermingling of spiritual and political authority. One example of this is what is known as lay investiture, in which the local ruler appointed some ally of his to be bishop or head of the monastery. The political advantages to the ruler were real although the religious qualities of the nominee might not be. It isn't surprising that abuses grew up in this situation. In Rome, for instance, the papacy came under the control of

the Roman nobility who used it without scruple for commercial advantage.

It was into this spiritual wilderness that the reform movement spread. It was the abbot more than the bishop who was the real influence in the local church. As the reform grew the bishops came to be chosen from among the monks. With the support of a reform-minded German emperor the popes were chosen from their ranks also. The missionary awareness and social conscience of the monks gave the movement an effect which was much wider than that of the clerical circle alone. One of the first abbots of Cluny, Saint Odo, preached that ‘the banquets of the rich are cooked in the sweat of the poor.’ (1) The thrust of the reform movement within the Christian community was not to structural change but to the release of a spiritual dynamism, expressed in the re-vitalization of the sacramental life of the people, and in the attempt to incarnate the Gospel in the culture of the time. There was a re-vitalization of learning with the setting up of the cathedral and monastic schools. New religious orders were founded to care for the sick and the mentally ill. Holy days became holidays - that's what the word comes from. Latin became the language of law, of learning and of government and, as such, served as a powerful unifying force. The reform movement challenged some of the most serious abuses in the Church's life, especially that of lay investiture, from which

most of the others, such as simony, stemmed. (Cf. Acts 8.4-25)

The strong grassroots movement for reform came, in time, to have an effect at all levels of the Church's life. In the period of time we are considering (mainly the 12th century) there were four general councils of the Church, all substantially concerned with reform. These councils were built on a series of regional councils which had consolidated reform at local level. They were aided by the codification of the Church's law under Gratian; law was seen as a powerful instrument of reform. It was inevitable that, at some point, the root problem of lay investiture would have to be grappled with. The challenge to this came first from Pope Leo IX, and then from his successor, Victor II, who was the last imperial appointee. Although the German emperors had been solidly behind the movement they wanted to control it. The pope would not be an independent head of the Church; the emperor would be that, with the pope as a kind of chaplain to the empire. So the challenge to investiture could not but take the form of a challenge to the emperor. It was taken up in a powerful form by Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV.

Conflict came when Henry began to buy and sell offices in the Church. Pope Gregory excommunicated him and released his subjects from their oath of allegiance to him. A synod of

German bishops supported the pope. Henry came to Canossa for repentance in 1077 and was left waiting in the snow for three days. The pope lifted the sentence of excommunication when Henry agreed to leave the Church free to make its own appointments. The controversy was not over, and, some twenty years later, another pope, Paschal II, lost nearly all the ground that Gregory had gained. Only a refusal by the bishops to agree to an arrangement he had made brought about the maintenance of some real freedom of action for the Church. It was in the Concordat of Worms (1122), ratified by the first Lateran Council in 1123, that the matter was settled for some substantial time. This gave the Church a free hand in the empire to make its own appointments.

All of the above suggests a different attitude from what prevails today. It was either hot or cold, depending on how you look at it, but it was certainly not lukewarm.

Councils

The first eight general councils of the Church were held in the East, the last one being in 869. Now, five succeed one another in rapid succession. They were all in the West, and were attended by more abbots than bishops. A study of them reveals a good deal of repetition in their provisions, suggesting, perhaps, that the problem

facing the Church was not so much the intellectual one of knowing what to do as a problem of will, that is, of having a sufficiently firm resolve to carry out what had been decided. Other factors may have been involved. There was not in the Church what could be termed a sense of public opinion. Leadership was in the hands of the clergy and the layman's place was largely a passive one. The "pray, pay, obey" role of laypeople was evident at this time. Although a substantial number of laypeople attended the fourth Lateran Council in 1215 as representatives of their towns, this was not so much a matter of consulting the faithful in matters of doctrine as making sure that everyone knew that Innocent III, who had called the council, was boss!

It is possible that the reason why the Church did not achieve all that it set out to in this period was because the objective in view may not have been the right one. In the mind of Pope Innocent III, a key figure at the time, the task of the Church was to build Christendom, a unitary society based on the Gospel. It would be on the style of Israel of the Old Testament, where the law of God was the foundation of society. The temporal would be subordinated to the spiritual, the king would be the servant of the Gospel, and society as such would be Christian. That objective can hardly be criticised, but we can begin to have doubts when we see that what was also in his mind was that he and his successors

would have the power to depose kings, who would hold authority from him, and in his name. In the circumstances of the time such a development might have seemed to be a natural development but it was a dangerous over-reaching. It suggests a failure to appreciate fully that the kingdom of God is not of this world, that the Church is a pilgrim and stranger in this world, that it is simply not the function of the Church to totally absorb society but rather to be a leaven in it. It may be nearer to the spirit of the Gospel for the Church to be a minority struggling to make an impact on a larger mass than to be the settled, established institution in full control of all affairs.

Learning the hard way

Experience is the best of teachers, though not the easiest. The Church at this time learned a lesson the hard way. This developed when Pope Boniface VIII, in 1302, in the Bull *Unam Sanctam* claimed supreme authority for himself in all matters, civil or ecclesiastical. This brought him into conflict with King Philip the Fair (IV) of France. The conflict was long and extraordinarily bitter, leading in the end to the pope's death at the hands of Philip's soldiers. Philip's victory, short-lived though it was, taught the Church not to overreach itself, to define its own role more clearly, and, without separating religion and politics, to separate the Church from the State. For better or worse, Philip's victory was

a victory for nationalism over the internationalist concept of Christendom, and was, to some degree, linked to the beginning of the breakdown in European unity which reached a climax in the Reformation. *Unam Sanctam* has been seen as a genuine but misguided attempt to translate St. Augustine's *City of God* into a practical reality but it is debatable whether that is the Church's function or not. Is it perhaps rather the Church's function to be a sign of contradiction in a world where the secular is autonomous? Is it a common social structure or is it a common spiritual vision which is the unifying force in society? That is a question of relevance to the present no less than to the past.

Crusading for Peace

To our way of thinking it seems anomalous, to say the least, that it was the reform-minded popes who were the initiators and leaders of the Crusades. To understand why this was so we must view the situation in the light of its own time. Europe was recovering from a series of invasions which had left it devastated. There was a weariness with war which created a widespread longing for peace. This longing did not express itself in a formally organized movement but it was a longing which was real and tangible nevertheless. The troubadours, with their songs of chivalry and courtly love, were one expression of a desire to remove from war some of its

cruelty and to portray the knight as someone who was the servant of the defenceless and the weak. Theirs was an effort at removing some of the hard edge from the ruthlessness of war. The institution of knighthood was given a religious character in which, after a period of spiritual preparation, the knight was commissioned to be the protector of widows, orphans and the Church. Doubtless there were many cases where the gap between performance and ideal was large, but the knight could hardly have become the hero of folklore unless there were many who were faithful to their commission. In a world where the rule of law had broken down in long periods of conflict they served as a kind of police force operating from a religious motive. St. Bernard, the great reforming abbot of Citeaux, was one of the founders of a military religious order, the Templars. The ideal which motivated this movement was that if it was necessary to have what we would call an army and a police force it was better to have them operate from religious motives and, as far as possible, by religious methods. The Templars were a blend of three elements - the monastic ideal of service to God, the Nordic warrior-hero, and the new international outlook of the Church. 'Accordingly', says Christopher Dawson, 'the rise and fall of the great Military Orders, particularly the Templars, is an index of the progress and the decline of the unitary tendencies in medieval Christendom.' (2) Elsewhere he

states, ‘The significant thing about the crusading movement is that it was an attempt to Christianise medieval society in its most vital but least Christian aspect’. (3)

Further evidence of the strength of the peace movement may be seen from the initiation by the first Lateran Council in 1123 of the Truce of God, which limited warfare to the Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays between Trinity Sunday and Advent. Those who violated it were excommunicated. The Truce has been described by one historian as ‘not wholly unsuccessful’. (4) Anyone disposed to ridicule the attempt might well ask whether we have been as successful in this century, or should all efforts be taken with a grain of SALT? A further measure aimed at limiting violence was enacted by the second Lateran Council which proscribed the use of bows and arrows, and military catapults. These were the long-range weapons and ballistic missiles of the day. The bishops who enacted these decrees were realistic enough to know that they could not be enforced by the power of law. They appealed to a moral consensus in society and whatever effect the decree had was due to that consensus rather than to the binding force of law. Looking at our contemporary situation where a moral consensus has virtually disappeared we might well ask whether the flood of legislation pouring from the Parliaments of the Western democracies is not a belated and

inadequate effort to hold together the framework of a civilization that has lost its moral dynamism. As an instrument of social cohesion, law has its limitations. We may be reaching those limits. It is tragic that the destruction of a Christian moral consensus in our own time has been substantially abetted by Christians who are blind to the social implications of their faith. It is not uncommon to meet Christians of sincere personal piety whose attitudes to social questions are no different from those of their secular counterparts.

It was directly to the peace movement that Pope Urban II appealed at the regional council of Clermont in 1093 for support for the first crusade. The Church was conscious both of the increasing Mohammedan pressure in the Eastern Mediterranean with its threat to Western Europe, and also of the fact that the Church itself was the only international body capable of organizing any effective resistance to this new danger. It recognised that the threat had to be faced. The crusade was an idealistic attempt to direct the latent aggressiveness of Europe outside of itself and against a real external enemy. The crusaders, accompanied by their families, carrying crosses and singing hymns, went off on what appeared to them to be a venture of self-sacrifice for Christ.

‘He who lives by the Sword shall perish by the Sword’

However much we may admire the idealism that lay behind the crusading movement we must be realistic in assessing its achievements. The net effect of the Crusades cannot be described as anything other than disastrous. To say anything less would not be true to the reality of the situation.

The Crusades were a spiritual victory for Islam because the Christian community abandoned its own spiritual weapons and adopted those of Islam - the holy war. They created a spiral of violence within the Church which began with the legitimization of violence against Moslems, then extended it to those within the Church who had fallen into heresy or schism, such as the Albigensians in the south of France, and then extending it further with the founding of the Inquisition and the approval, indeed the prescription, of the use of torture in criminal cases. With the passage of time the Crusades lost their original idealism and became as savage and mindless as every other war, bringing with them a trail of disorder which left its mark on Europe for centuries. Two acts of monumental stupidity in the operation of the Crusades constituted a decisive factor in the break between the Church in the East and that in the West. The first of these was that when the Crusaders captured Jerusalem from the Moslems they set up a Latin, that is, a

Western, kingdom there. It would be hard to imagine anything more likely to arouse the anger of the eastern Christians. To have a Moslem army of occupation in one's country was endurable, though hardly pleasant, but to find that the Christians from the West who came as liberators were determined to impose their own ways and their government, without regard to the sensibilities of Eastern Christians seemed like an act of betrayal. However, as bad as that was, it was nothing compared to what happened later when, in 1203, the Crusading army captured Constantinople, the capital of the Eastern Christian empire. To the Eastern Christians, who had struggled for centuries to resist the Moslem, to be attacked and brought into subjection by their fellow Christians was an unforgivable crime. The attack on Constantinople was brought about by the Venetians who saw the Eastern capital as their commercial rival and managed to divert the Crusade into an attack on it. The bitterness engendered by this episode has marred relations between the Church in the East and the West ever since. This event was the destruction of whatever idealism remained in the crusading movement. All that was left was the rubble and the dead.

The Christian City

The cities which grew up around the monastic settlements in the years after the last of the northern invasions were different in character from those of Greece, Rome or the present day. They grew not so much as places of trade and commerce as places of security and peace in a world hovering on the verge of anarchy. The city had not yet developed its capitalistic character as society was then pre-capitalist; its economy was a barter economy, and money was not in general use. The city was the place where people found an alternative style of life from that of the position of serfdom in rural areas. It was a time of rapid population growth, and people looked to the cities as places of opportunity.

Within the city the guilds developed. These were religious associations of people who shared a common trade or profession. Beginning from a functional base, the guilds developed a sense of corporate unity expressed in their having a church of their own, their patron saint and special liturgical chants for some feasts of the Church associated with their trade. The association of the guilds with one another created the commune, a linking together of the people of the town who pledged themselves by oath to live in peace. Within the cities there were usually three classes, the nobility, the merchants and the common people, who, between them worked out a system of checks and balances which kept a sense of

unity between them. In France and England, the cities remained subject to the king and peace was maintained. In Italy, the cities often fought with one another, though on the rare occasions when they combined they were powerful forces as when the League of Lombard cities defeated Frederick Barbarossa, the German emperor, at Legnano.

This federation of the guilds with one another in the city gave expression to Saint Paul's teaching about many members with different functions making up one body. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12) The city was bound physically by its walls and was centred on the cathedral. It was a hierarchical society in which each person had the opportunity of having a sense of his participation in the commune through his membership of the guild. It was a community of communities which began to exercise significant influence through a system of mutual social welfare, the development of schools and patronage of the arts, and becoming one element in the growth of a system of representative government in which it formed the third estate, along with the clergy and the nobility. In some countries today, the second house of Parliament (the Senate) is chosen on this basis with representatives from trade unions, professional groups, farmers' bodies, universities etc. Erasmus gave us this description of Strasbourg, ‘I saw monarchy without tyranny,

aristocracy without factions, democracy without tumult, wealth without luxury.' (5)

The overall effect of this development was an intense sense of corporate unity in society with God as its source. This was in contrast to the Greek and Roman cities where the *polis* was the ultimate *raison d'être* of the citizen. One expression of this sense of unity in God is the great wave of cathedral building which accompanied the growth of the city. In the space of a century about a hundred cathedrals were built in Europe, an enormous achievement when we realize the building methods involved and the detail of workmanship involved. One small feature of these is worth noting, namely, that the detailed work is there not only where people can see it but also in the out-of-the-way corners where nobody but God can see it. The cathedral was not built for people to admire but to be a place of worship, a monument to faith in God.

The attempt to build a Christian Economy

It would be inaccurate to identify the growth of the city with the growth of capitalism. As we have seen the city began in pre-capitalist times and only later developed a mercantile orientation. The change from a barter economy to a money economy was not long in following the city's growth. The use of money as a means of exchange at first brought with it a measure of

freedom from the constraints of the barter system. It gave flexibility to methods of doing business as well as to the individual. However, it was clear to Christians of that time that this change brought problems with it. It began to give rise to the accumulation of money, the growth of a primitive banking system and the exploitation of the weak. The Church reacted to this in different ways. It prohibited usury, that is, the lending of money for interest, as being contrary to the Gospel teaching that Christians constitute a community bound by an obligation of mutual support. It was regarded as inherently exploitative, in which one took advantage of the weakness of another to make profit for oneself. This prohibition was very largely ineffective, one result being that Jews, not being bound by the laws of the Christian Church, became the leaders in economic affairs. Another reaction to this change was found in the Franciscan movement which spread the ideal of evangelical poverty, of surrendering all things for the sake of Christ and his Gospel. When the Franciscan movement became widespread, especially through its lay counterpart, the Third Order, it expressed a radical challenge to the growth of usury. That challenge revealed itself in the foundation of what were called the *montes pietatis*, a type of credit union, which loaned its members money without interest. Tawney, in *Religion and the Rise of Western Capitalism*, regarded this organization as a significant factor in resistance

to the growth of capitalism in Europe, with its accompanying fragmentation of society into conflicting classes.

Building a Christian framework of Thought

The reforming movement in the Church and the growth of the cities brought changes in the field of education also. The monasteries and the cathedral schools were the centres of learning. In them there was taking place a ferment of ideas centring around the re-discovery of the Greek classics and their distribution in Europe through the Spanish Moorish scholars, Averroes and Avicenna, and the Jewish Rabbi, Moses Maimonides. One of the great achievements of the synthesis of Christian faith and Greek ways of thinking was to show the rationality of the universe and the power of reason to investigate nature. In the universities which sprang up at this time, especially, Paris, Bologna, Oxford and Toledo, we see a great upsurge of intellectual enquiry which is cast in the matrix of Christian theology. (6) So, for example, it was said that the task of the scientist was to think God's thoughts after him. There was a revival of the study of mathematics, especially in Spain, through the influence of scholars from Egypt and Asia. Music, especially Gregorian chant, came to life. The process of codification of the Church's law proceeded under Gratian, taking Roman law as its working model. Roger Bacon and Grosseteste

began their enquiries into the positive sciences. But it was most of all in the fields of philosophy and theology that a new flowering took place, especially in the writings of Saints Albert, Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure. Theirs was an attempt to provide a Christian worldview within the framework of a union of Christian faith and Greek philosophy. Far from being the triumph of dogmatism that it is often presented to be, it was a triumph of reason illuminated by faith, and established the pattern of scientific method which is still largely followed today.

In the universities, the students formed a guild as the traders and craftsmen did in the towns. To the minds of people of that time this was important as a sign of one's status in society. Lecturers were employed by the students who, *de facto*, fired their lecturers by voting with their feet. They simply didn't come to those they didn't like and the lecturer ran out of an income. The universities, especially those in southern Europe, were cosmopolitan institutions where Jews, Arabs and Greeks as well as Christians attended and lectured.

The Church quite consciously set out to reshape Western culture and to create a society which was Christian as a society, as well as in the individuals who composed it. The university was one instrument of such change; the other principal instrument was the orders of friars.

These were men whose basic commitment was to live the Gospel life to the full. By the profession of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience they endeavoured to become more free for total service to the Gospel. As an international body directly subject to the pope they were a powerful instrument in shaping the society of that time. They were close to the people, living with them in the new towns; they attended the universities and became leaders of the intellectual revival of the day; most of all, they were holy men who gave the Church what it most needed - an example of Gospel living. Their wandering way of life, by contrast to the settled life of the monastery, was an appropriate adaptation to the social conditions of the day. One example of their influence can be seen in the change in attitudes towards the world of nature. It was divinized by the pagans, spurned by the desert fathers, and now welcomed by Saint Francis as a partner in God's creation. The friars in their time were at once the expression and the vehicle of social change.

What gave Europe its unity at that time was less a common social structure than a common spiritual vision. At the present time when unity is a concern not only in Europe but in the rest of the world that lesson needs to be remembered. The Christian community made an immense effort to create a Christian society in the period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was certainly

not wholly successful but at least it had the vision and the courage to try.

THE SPIRAL OF DIVISION

Cracks appear

In general terms, it could be said that it was the assumption in Europe from 500 to 1500 A.D. that the Christian community should form a unitary society presided over by pope and emperor. The nearest that it came to achieving this was in the period of the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries. Already, though, some signs of disintegration had begun to make themselves felt. They were present at many levels. The reform movement which began in Cluny and achieved its peak in the four Lateran Councils lost its impetus as the monasteries became places of wealth and worldliness. Clergy and laity began to drift apart with the clergy forming a kind of caste accountable to themselves alone and increasingly reserving to themselves the control and direction of the life of the Church. This led to an attitude of passivity on the part of the laity. Theology became repetitive as the scholastics came to identify their system of theology with the faith itself; if all questions had been answered there was nothing left for the others but to repeat. Philosophy was weakened by what has come to be called nominalism, and linked particularly to William of Ockham. Its lasting influence was to introduce an element of skepticism into philosophy, an element which has developed ever since so that today's philosophical questions are

primarily epistemological. The conflict between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip IV of France had as its legacy a spirit of nationalism which asserted the power of the local king, or even the prince-bishop, at the expense of the international authority of pope or emperor. The conciliar movement which began as a reforming movement broke down into a long-standing conflict between the pope and the bishops.

There were other factors too which had seriously weakened the Church. Its involvement in banking, in politics and in the warfare which accompanied it had compromised its role as a force of unity. In later years, the discovery of new continents created a need for new theological and philosophical horizons. The groundwork for this had not been laid. Preaching was very largely on moral matters to the neglect of basic doctrines. Peoples' devotional life came to be separated from theology with a consequent decline in the reception of the sacraments and the development of semi- or actually superstitious practices to fill the gap.

The re-discovery of the Classics, and the invention of printing led to a new spirit of questioning with an accompanying challenge to established authority. That authority was primarily the authority of the pope as the emperor's position had been seriously weakened by the rise of a nationalist spirit. The popes were

not in a good position to resist a challenge to their authority as their position had been weakened by the fact that for seventy years they had been held in Avignon in France virtually as chaplains to the French king, and also by the fact that for a long period there had been a series of rival claimants to the papacy. The Church had been divided between these claimants, each of whom excommunicated the other and his followers. The reform movement had failed to leave a lasting mark on the Church, not so much because of a lack of ideas as because of a lack of will to implement them.

The period we are considering was also one of a rapid rise in population with increasing urbanisation and the early stages of the development of a middle class of merchants and traders. It was this group especially that Calvin would later use as the base of his support, just as it was largely to the German nobility that Luther looked.

The picture of decline presented above is not universally true. Indeed the principal reason why the Reformation, when it came, did not take root significantly in either Spain or Italy was that in those countries a great deal of reform had already been accomplished. Cardinal Ximenes in Spain had been the architect of reform, while in Italy it was the work of saints such as Jerome Emiliani, Philip Neri and, particularly, Catherine of Genoa.

Open Division

Europe, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, had gone through a period of great change. It was experiencing a culture shock, and awaited a cultural revolution. The revolution was sparked off by Luther. He did not create it; he simply set off the gunpowder that was already there. He was a man of his times and for his times. An outstanding speaker and writer (he is considered the father of modern German as Dante is of modern Italian) he appealed to the local princes against the emperor and to German nationalism against papal internationalism. It has also been said that 'the Renaissance of Northern Europe is the Reformation.' (1) Culturally, the Reformation was a return to earlier Teutonic tradition. It was a revolt of the romantic against the intellectual, emotion against reason, action against contemplation, the simple against the complicated. Its lasting impact was social as much as religious. In northern Europe, faith and culture separated, while in the south they remained linked. The Reformation led to a fragmentation of Europe into a Protestant northern Europe and a Catholic southern Europe. It is unlikely that the Reformation would have survived the Catholic counter-reformation had it not been for two significant factors. The first of these was the influence of Calvin, who took Luther's state church, organized on loose doctrinal principles, and systematized it in doctrine and discipline. The Calvinist church was

an educated, middle-class church which assumed the previous Catholic conception of a church not subject to the state, but rather vice versa. It was Calvin's church rather than Luther's which was the *fest Burg*. The second factor was the desire of Cardinal Richelieu to promote France's power at the expense of the empire. He saw the internal divisions of the empire as his opportunity, so he entered into an alliance with the Turks for a joint attack on the empire. It was the empire's effort to overcome these attacks which diminished its resistance to the revolt of Luther's princes within the country.

The effects begin to be felt

The effects of the Reformation were serious not only for Europe but also for the world, and those effects are with us today. It led to the large differences between the north and the south of Europe and its colonies, which still persist. Europe has been, since then, permanently divided and the seat and source of the great world conflicts. It meant, too, that religion came to be seen as a source of disunity rather than unity in society, with a secular base being proposed as the alternative. It meant that the churches, individually and collectively, failed to meet the challenge of secularism, in part because so much of their energy was spent in mutual conflict. It meant that missionary efforts were plagued by the scandal of division with its consequent

weakening effect. The effect of the Reformation became international when England became Protestant (using that word in a broad sense). It was England's colonial expansion which made Protestantism world-wide. Otherwise, it would have been a local affair in central Europe, scarcely extending outside the borders of the Empire. The Peace of Augsburg in 1555, accepting the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio*, that the people should follow the religious belief of their own local ruler, was a *de facto* victory neither for Protestantism nor Catholicism but for secularism. The Church in the East had no influence as a force of unity since Constantinople had been captured by the Turks in 1453.

Viewed from one aspect, the Reformation may be seen as a time of added impetus rather than as a starting point to a process of secularization in Christianity in Europe. This process is still working itself out today not only in Europe but in the rest of the Christian world as well.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Catholic and Protestant countries of Europe were countries of strong religious faith. Yet within about a hundred and fifty years that faith was reduced to the status of a private matter with little impact on society. How did such a radical change come about? The spiritual revolution in this change preceded the political revolutions in

Britain, France and America by a long period of time. The spiritual revolution is nearer to being a cause than an effect of these revolutions. Neither was it the result of a victory of the Baroque culture of southern Europe over the Teutonic culture of northern Europe since there was no victory on either side as these became autonomous. It was rather the result of the bitterness and weariness of a century of warfare which followed the Reformation as each side struggled for supremacy. The Edict of Nantes recognized a Huguenot state within a state, while the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 stabilized the religious boundaries in Germany. The effect of these two settlements was to imply that since religion was a source of conflict and since peace was a universal desire then society should have no basis other than a secular one. The assumption implied in this, accepted unthinkingly by Christians ever since, is that a secular approach to reality is one which is ideologically neutral rather than an alternative, and competing, ideology itself. The acceptance of this assumption by Christians has led historically to a moral as well as a juridical separation of Church and State, in other words to a separation of religion and politics. The Christian who welcomes such a separation as liberation from worldly influences is, probably unwittingly, signing in chorus with the secular ideologist who says that religion has nothing to do with life.

This separation of religion from social and political life had its counterpart in the fields of science and philosophy. In science, the mood was one of a radical empiricism while philosophy varied from materialism to idealism. Descartes was determined ‘never to accept anything for true which I did not clearly know to be such’. A measure of the extent to which philosophy has degenerated is that such a statement would be regarded as meaningless today because it presupposes that it is possible for a person to come to know the truth.

The philosophers of the Enlightenment attempted to provide a civil religion on a secular base, so as to serve as a framework of ideas on which to base society. The result was a weakening of religious faith and a greater measure of spiritual disintegration than before. These philosophers drew on Christian ideals and reduced them to secular objectives. The Christian belief in a future life was secularized into faith in the inevitability of progress. Salvation was neither by faith nor good works, but by good government. Today, salvation by education is the fashion. The community of faith was dethroned to be replaced by worship of the all-powerful state.

Three Revolutions

The nature of the relationship between philosophy and political institutions is difficult to discern exactly. It is flattering for philosophers to think that they work out the theories of how society ought to be and the politicians implement them. However, it is unlikely that the matter is as simple as all that. Politicians have their influence on the men of thought as well, as Soviet dissidents know to their cost. Bertrand Russell said that ideas and institutions are mutually educational. That much is true and it may not be possible to say much more.

The first of the three revolutions, that of 1688 in Britain, is one of which it has been said that it substituted for the divine right of kings the divine right of property. It was a revolt by men of property against the arbitrary financial exactions of the king. John Locke, in his *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, written in 1681, but wisely unpublished until 1690, is credited with providing the intellectual base for this revolt. He constructed a natural law theory which had the intention of establishing that the king was acting beyond his rights in demanding property which was privately held. Which came first: the idea, or the revolution in the balance of power between king and Parliament? In this instance it seems more likely that the ideas as formulated in Locke's work were systematizing the mood of the

time rather than leading an actual change in public attitudes.

The second revolution was in the United States. This, even more clearly than in Britain, was a revolt of a newly emerging middle class against royal demands. The records of the Federal Convention which drew up the United States Constitution, show the mark of strong influence by Locke's writings (probably circulated through Anglican ministers in New England). By contrast the members of the Convention were horrified at the ideas of Rousseau, whom they considered far too radical. Thomas Jefferson, later President of the U.S., described his fellow-planters as 'a species of property annexed to certain mercantile houses in London'. (2) The originators of the American Revolution were no liberal democrats; they were slave-owning planters who wanted a no-nonsense capitalism free of royal or other interference. The secretary of the convention wrote to Washington, 'Private rage for property surpasses public considerations, and personal rather than national interests have become the great objects of attention.' (3)

It is extraordinary in view of the bluntly commercial motivation behind the American Revolution that the leading lights of the Enlightenment in France supported it so wholeheartedly. They were caught up in the ideas of Rousseau, who had displaced Voltaire at the

head of the ferment of ideas. Voltaire, the rationalist, had appealed to the head, not the heart, to the intellect rather than to the emotions and the imagination. His ideas did not command any mass following. It was Rousseau who took those ideas and gave flesh to them. His romantic idea of the noble savage, of the inherent perfectibility of liberated man, created a kind of secular religion with powerful emotional appeal. His ideas were taken up by the French aristocracy who seemed oblivious to the fact that Rousseau's ideas on property and government were erecting a guillotine for them. Their support of the American Revolution was due to their own romantic idealization of it. The credit for hoodwinking the sophisticated French must go to Benjamin Franklin, the American ambassador in France, who, paradoxically, had been appointed to that office to get him out of the way because his radical ideas were too much for the emerging establishment figures at home!

In France, we can see on the social level an expression of the thought of Rousseau as an individual. Before the Revolution, France was an absolute monarchy. Rousseau's ideas of freedom and equality captured the imagination of people, especially those in the aristocracy who liked his idea of man as perfectible. (It is worth noting in passing the implicit rejection of original sin in this idea.) However, Rousseau's thought went through a great change. From being the ultra-

liberal he swung round to being the champion of state control. From making the individual everything he reduced him to nothing. The *General Will* became the battering ram that brought down the walls of the Bastille and with it the old order in France. The Revolution of 1798 was a spiritual revolt with political and economic consequences. It was motivated by a romantic unrealism about the nature of man, by a blind faith in reason alone. It had failed to resolve the problem of the use and limitation of human freedom. The consequence of such seemingly innocuous philosophical abstractions was the Reign of Terror which killed off most of the creators of the revolution. It was not a good advertisement for the perfectibility of the noble savage by reason alone. Within a period of about twenty years France had turned a full circle from absolute monarchy to an attempt at democracy, to anarchy, to military dictatorship, to empire, and then to constitutional monarchy. The liberal experiment of Rousseau had degenerated into a new fascism.

What has all this to do with the Church?

A great deal. Out of these three revolutions emerge three different patterns for church-state relations. It is very significant that we, now, at this stage, begin to talk of church and state rather than church and society. In medieval times, when we spoke of church and society, we were

speaking about the same people looked at from different angles. Now the church is no longer synonymous with society. It is a part of society and is in a certain sense apart from it. There is an increasing tendency for the church to withdraw, or indeed be pushed, into the church building while the business of the world, whether it is in matters of politics, or economics, or education, or of currents of thought move further away from the Christian ambit. The secular begins to emerge as autonomous.

In Britain, the church did not incur any serious upset in the revolution of 1688 as church leaders were themselves, for the most part, middle-class men who supported the revolution. They gained rather than lost by it. In the United States, a completely new pattern emerged in which the separation of church and state was written into the Constitution. This pattern, which opts for a secular base for society, has been adopted in one form or another by most western societies today. In France, the church suffered severely because of its association with the monarchy and aristocracy. This is paradoxical because the church had, as in the conflict between Pope Boniface VIII and King Philip IV, been in conflict with the French monarchy. It was the victory of Philip over Boniface which gave impetus to the attempt to create a French national church under royal control. The Revolution scuttled that for good, although, because of its

anti-clerical character, many of the clergy of France, even in this century, saw the restoration of the monarchy as the best hope for the Church to regain its influence.

A further point needs to be noted. Whereas we spoke before of "the church", much of what we now say has swung round to speaking of "the clergy". This is the case for several reasons. One is the increasing clericalization of all the churches, a trend which was accelerated when the Eastern Church, with its strong lay tradition, was overwhelmed by the Moslems. Another is simply the fact that it is difficult to have a clear idea of what the life of the Church meant for the ordinary Christian at these times. Ordinary people very rarely give us a glimpse of what their inner feelings and attitudes are in a way that can be recorded for history. However, we are not left completely in the dark. One very useful barometer for measuring the vitality of any church or Christian community is to look at its missionary character.

Bearing Witness

The Church is called upon to be a community that gives witness to Jesus Christ. This witness is exercised in many ways, for example, by the simple living of the Christian life, by endeavouring to penetrate the *milieu* and create conditions appropriate for the growth of a

Christian society, by prayer, and by the direct proclamation of the Gospel. These factors, and related ones, taken collectively, constitute what I call the Church's missionary character. It is not simply the specialized work of the missionary in foreign lands, although it includes that. A sense of mission is not only the expression of a living Christianity but it is a creator of such as well. It is a sign and a source of the commitment of the whole Christian community to the proclamation of the Gospel. It is interesting to speculate on what the history of Christianity might have been if the New World had been "discovered" three centuries earlier when the reforming monastic movement was achieving some of its real successes, and before so much of the driving force of the Christian community was dissipated in the internal dissensions of crusades, heretic-hunting, and the divisions of the Reformation.

Significant attempts had been made to carry the Gospel outside Europe to countries accessible by land. The early Franciscan friars were working with nomadic tribes in Siberia and Mongolia by the year 1300. In 1305, the Franciscan, John of Monte Corvino, was made archbishop of Peking where he continued to work for thirty-five years. These distant missions were very vulnerable because of the great distances involved in those days of primitive travel, and because of the vast differences in language and culture which they encountered. By 1400, the Franciscans had

extended their work to the Crimea and to the Tartars. However, all of this was swept away by Tamerlane, and by the triumph of Islam in the Eastern Mediterranean with its disruption of the land routes from Europe to Asia. The effort to reach the peoples of central Asia was continued by the Orthodox Church based in Russia - with some limited success. Dominican friars had entered Tibet in the fourteenth century but that venture was broken off for the same reason.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a period of very great missionary expansion with efforts made on a large scale in North, Central and South America, the Philippines (named after King Philip II of Spain), Japan, and the areas of Africa which are today called Angola, Zaire and Mozambique, and further up along both coasts of Africa to Ethiopia on the east and the Cameroons on the west. In India, also, contact was made with the so-called "Thomas Christians" who had a tradition of being founded by the Apostle Thomas. This work was carried out entirely by Catholic missionaries. It was not until about three centuries after the Reformation that Protestant missionary work came to be operative on a comparative level. There were three basic reasons for this:

(i) a radical predestination theology which undermined the spiritual basis for mission;

(ii) the Protestant churches were small and struggling for survival;

(iii) colonial expansion by England, the main Protestant power, came much later than that of Spain and Portugal. As we have seen the Church's missionary work was not inseparable from colonial expansion, as some have suggested, but in this period, the two are now beginning to be linked together.

There are two very large problems in missionary work at this stage, although they could be considered as two aspects of one problem. These are the relations between the missionaries and the colonial powers, and the problem of relating a faith with a European tradition to non-European cultures. The relationship between the missionaries and the colonial power is a difficult one. From the viewpoint of the indigenous peoples, they appeared as part of the same team. They spoke the same language, had the same customs, country of origin and, to some extent, the same objective… the extension of their control over the country. The missionaries, for their part, found themselves, whether they knew it or not, and whether they liked it or not, drawn into a relationship which was unlikely to promote their work. It is not surprising that they came to see their work in terms of control more than of

service. From the colonialists' viewpoint the missionaries were sometimes seen as useful trail-blazers who would open up contacts for traders and government officials. For example, Sir George Grey, speaking in England in 1854, stated, ‘I feel confident that, regarded as a mere money investment, the very best investment this country can make is to send out in advance… missionaries who may prepare the way for those who are to follow them.’ (4) The danger to the Church in such a situation is that it will come to be seen as an instrument of colonial power rather than as a servant of the Gospel. Although that challenge is not with us today in precisely the same form it is with us essentially in the constant choice between using the methods of Christ to present the Christian message or using those of power and prestige. The very powerlessness of the Church in secular terms today (recall Stalin's' query: ‘How many divisions has the Pope?’) particularly by contrast to former times is an opportunity for showing the power of Christ at work in human weakness.

An even greater and more persistent problem for the Christian community is that of making the cultural crossing so as to be able to present the Christian faith to non-European peoples without passing on those cultural elements which are European rather than specifically Christian. One could find an abundance of examples from all the Churches of failures and mistakes in this matter

in recent centuries. For example, many of the early missionaries in New Zealand seemed to regard the wearing of clothes, especially Europeans ones, almost as if it were an essential of the Gospel. This problem is by no means a problem of the past. None of the Christian churches today has had any great success in presenting the faith in a compelling way to the many people brought up in the secular environment of many Western countries. It is something of a paradox that the Churches in Eastern Europe find that they can cope with Communist pressure with less difficulty than they can cope with the secular materialism coming from the west under the banner of détente. Indeed, in Poland, the Communist Party has welcomed some forms of contact with the West for precisely this reason - that it is more effective in drawing the young away from the Church than the official atheistic propaganda.

Adding it up

'European civilisation has been responsible for the Europeanisation (and now the Americanisation) of the entire world.' (5) The material organization of the world by European ideas and Western science is almost universal despite the loss of colonial power by Europe. Its political and economic power is only a shadow of what it was but its technology and its sense of mission (admittedly secularised to material gain)

have a virtual monopoly in the world of ideas. It was Christian Europe which brought together the four great cultures of man, the Chinese, in the last century, the Indian in the previous two, Islam through the Orthodox Church in eastern Europe and the fourth culture, which is Christianity itself.

It may be that, in the providence of God, this contact with Europe will be the preliminary groundwork for the Christianisation of these great cultures.

THE WINESKINS ARE NEW… WHAT ABOUT THE WINE?

Did the ground move?

Adam, so the story goes, said to Eve as they left the garden, 'We live in times of rapid social change'. We begin this period of our enquiry with the clear sense that the ground has shifted distinctly. Whereas, a few centuries earlier, when anyone spoke of the Church they were speaking of society considered from a particular viewpoint, now, at this time, when someone spoke of the Church, they spoke of a distinct group within society. Church and society were no longer coterminous; the danger in this was that the Church would come to think of itself as being merely a group within society without having a responsibility to and for society as a whole. If Christians ever come to think in these terms they have forgotten the Incarnation and Redemption.

A changing view of things

The concept of Christendom, that is, a unitary society bound together by a common faith in Christ and a common sharing in the one society presided over by pope and emperor, was shattered once and for all, for better or worse, by the division of Christianity in western Europe in the sixteenth century. A spirit of nationalism replaced the supra-nationalist view of

Christendom. The Churches became established Churches, endowed and controlled by the State. They became national Churches, though this trend was more evident in the Protestant churches than in the Catholic.

In the nineteenth century, the trend which began with the break-up of Christendom and the formation of national churches accelerated. Nationalism emerged as one of the great driving forces of society. This could not fail to affect the Church which is called upon to be universal in character. The Church could either flow with the tide and lose something of its own specific character while at the same time accentuating the differences between Catholic and Protestant, or else it could run the risk of incurring the wrath of the national powers by struggling to retain a universalist view of society. The Church largely threw in its lot with the nationalist view of society but still lost out anyway as it became expendable in the promotion of the national ideal.

The drift towards a separation of Church and State, first initiated in constitutional terms by the United States, developed during the nineteenth century. This trend was very largely resisted by the Churches for a variety of motives, some of which show a startling unrealism. For example, the Catholic Church at the beginning of the nineteenth century was in a position of great weakness. The Gallican Church had been

destroyed by the revolution, the Holy Roman Empire was at an end, the episcopal principalities were broken up, the religious orders were disbanded, Catholic schools and universities were closed, and the pope was in exile. The wineskins were well and truly torn to shreds, yet the reaction of a great many Catholics, especially in France, was to indulge in nostalgia for the *ancien régime*. If nothing else, a modicum of political realism would have shown that such an objective was totally beyond realization. It was a futile clutching at straws to think in terms of going back to the alliance of throne and altar, yet as late as the 1890's Pope Leo XIII wrote a letter to French Catholic urging them to work with the Republic and to drop their dreams of a restoration of the monarchy. He was ignored. In the Protestant churches, the move towards a separation was also resisted, but the blow was softened by a comfortable alliance of private piety and private property.

The Churches were very largely in opposition to the tendency to separate Church and State. The development of this tendency was seen as a threat rather than as an opportunity. There are good reasons as well as bad ones for this. A separation of Church and State in juridical terms can, without too much difficulty, come to be seen as a moral separation also, or, put in another way, a separation of religion and politics, and a separation of morality and politics. Particularly in

modern society, where the State has assumed a great many of the functions formerly exercised by the Church, in education, hospitals, social work etc. such a development can rapidly erode a Christian consciousness in society and lead to a point where religion comes to be separated from ordinary living, a mere weekend hobby which some people choose to amuse themselves with. A separation on the juridical level can give the Church a new freedom not only in regard to the appointment of personnel but in the proclamation of the Gospel itself. It can free it to be a leaven in the mass (at the risk of being the icing on the cake!) to be, if necessary, a sign of contradiction.

Two basic patterns of Church-State relations emerge from this time. The first is in those countries where the overwhelming majority practise one faith - for example, the Lutheran kingdoms of Scandinavia and the Catholic countries of the south, such as Spain and Portugal. In these countries, a close association remains though there is convincing evidence that it is the Church which is the loser in the alliance. The second pattern is in those countries where Church and State are dissociated because of a plurality of religious belief among the citizens. In these countries the Catholic Church attempted to create what might be called a Catholic alternative society, a kind of mini-Christendom, with Catholic schools, hospitals, social clubs, and even, in some cases, trade unions and political

parties. This approach has dominated Catholic thinking on Church and society for the last century; it was given a discreet Christian burial at Vatican II. A different approach was adopted in Protestant countries such as Germany and Britain. There the links between Church and State gradually weakened or broke apart. The Church saw its mission as being a leaven in the mass, attempting through the commitment of individuals to exercise a Christian influence through state institutions. These two patterns are today being challenged in different ways and are already subject to significant change. The outcome cannot be predicted but it need not be a cause for anxiety if Christians, of whatever church, retain a sense of the primacy of the spiritual.

A change of culture

Bertrand Russell once said that ideas and institutions are mutually educational. While the institutional changes described above were taking place there was also a change in ideas towards what might be called the autonomy of the secular. The arts and the sciences had been brought forth from the work of Christian theology by mother Church. It was the task of the scientist to think God's thoughts after him; art was very largely religious art. By the nineteenth century these movements had moved to what might be called an adolescent phase. They

became man-centred rather than God-centred. Faith in Jesus Christ came to be replaced by faith in the kingdom of earth of which science was the saviour. The scientists for their part came to reject religion because it depended on an act of faith which, by its very nature, was not amenable to empirical verification. (Nobody seemed to ask how the principle of empirical verification was itself empirically verified.) Church leaders on their side of the fence made themselves look ridiculous by charging zealously at windmills, whether they were those of Copernicus, Galileo or Darwin.

On the level of philosophy there was a development in the trend which moved from St. Anselm (who, in the *Proslogion*, argued that God must exist because man can conceive of him) through Descartes ('I think therefore I am') to Hegelian idealism for which only the mind is real. This separation of the mind and reality has moved at the present time from metaphysics to epistemology so that there is a scepticism, if not an outright denial of the possibility of being able to affirm anything as true or good, but to say only that a majority agrees that something seems to be true or good. As the French philosopher put it so succinctly, 'All is relative; that is the only absolute.' (Maurice Merleau-Ponty) What looks like a liberal, tolerant acceptance of cultural diversity is in fact a despair of reason. In the absence of faith in the rational (and I use the

word “faith” deliberately) man opts for the non-rational (the giddily romantic), the sub-rational (for which sense experience is dominant) or the irrational.

This irrational, anti-humanist trend is most clearly illustrated in contemporary art which seems to cultivate the absurd, the obscene and the mediocre. Compare, for example, the twisted human faces of a Picasso with the serenity of the face in an icon. This is pictorial evidence of a death-wish in a society which has exhausted its spiritual capital and has no longer even the residue of humanitarianism of a people who for centuries adored the divine humanity.

It is not surprising either to find that much of contemporary literature is taken up with the theme of alienation, with *angst* and *nausée*. Man could not be anything other than alienated from his true self when he abandons faith in reason, the faculty which pre-eminently distinguishes him from the animal world.

What has developed in the last century is not merely the separation of the two institutions of church and state but a separation of Christian faith and the culture of society. If an anthropologist were to examine such a process in a primitive society he would surely forecast far-reaching changes as the inevitable consequence.

To the western world it might be said, 'Physician, heal thyself'.

If, by the autonomy of the secular, we mean that human affairs have their own laws and values which are deciphered and regulated by people, then it is entirely right to insist on such autonomy. But if it means that man is his own master, complete and self-sufficient, then it cannot be regarded as compatible either with the Christian faith or with human experience. The statement of Sartre that 'man is responsible for what he is, and he is what he makes himself to be' is simply not factually correct. There is no single one of us who has brought himself into being or who can sustain his own being. Man is a *datum*, a given fact, not his own creation.

The Golden Rule: he who has the gold makes the rule

Closely allied to nationalism in the nineteenth century is the movement which has come to be called liberalism. It was the inheritor of some of the heady idealism of the French revolution with its slogan of *liberty, equality, fraternity*. (In very broad terms one could say that the liberals took up the theme of liberty, the Marxists equality, and fraternity was forgotten.) It expressed itself in a spirit of optimistic self-assertion, of a profound faith in the perfectibility of man and the inevitability of progress. But it was a seriously

short-sighted and exclusive liberalism. For anyone who was European and wealthy it was the expression of all that one hoped for. But to the newly colonized people of Africa and Asia there was nothing very liberal about it. To the workers drawn away from a trade in which they derived a sense of personal achievement and which they generally worked at in their own homes to the mindless mechanism of a distant factory it was not liberal either. The prosperity of the nineteenth century was built for a few on the suffering of the many. It subordinated the person to the product, or, more accurately, to profit. Capitalism, which is the economic theory of liberalism, is an international imperialism of money, a predator on the human species, an unfeeling and uncaring parasite.

It is not surprising that a challenge would come to this in the form of an economic theory. Christopher Dawson writes, ‘In Marx's view the whole structure of society is determined by economic production, and consequently it is justifiable to define a state of society by its economic character. But it may also be defined sociologically by its characteristic social type, and this is what Marx does when he speaks of bourgeois society… Marx himself did not regard ideologies as of prime importance since they were to him merely the theoretical reflection of social realities which are primarily economic and material’. (1) He saw clearly the link between

capitalism, bourgeois society, liberalism and nationalism.

Liberalism and Marxism have much in common. It is a great deal more than mutual hatred which sustains them. They are both spiritual parasites on the Christian faith. Liberalism is a threadbare remnant of Christian respect for the freedom of the individual because he is a child of God. Its god is money; its orientation towards the achievement of material goals is the reduction to a secular objective of the spiritual dynamism of Christianity. Marxism offers a classless society - an objective which has clear Christian parallels. Its way to this goal is not that of reconciliation but that of the violent confrontation of the class struggle. It offers a messianic hope of an earthly paradise but destroys this by using bitterness and hatred as necessary conditions for its attainment.

Marxism is a civil religion based on secularized Christianity. Its God, despite ideological disclaimers, is the omnipotent state; *Das Kapital* is its bible, the party is its church, the tomb of Lenin is its place of pilgrimage, the May day rally is its annual liturgical celebration, the "heroes of the revolution" are its saints and martyrs, the party purges are its reformation, and it even has its guardians of orthodoxy in the Kremlin (currently Mikhail Suslov). A question which suggests itself is whether this doctrine and

system is capable of being "baptised" in the way in which the Church was able to “baptise” Nordic culture, making it Christian while retaining a sense of continuity with the cultural past. It would be foolish to entertain any such illusion. Marxism subordinates the entire person to the state which alone is supreme. Its ethical system is based on the class struggle; right and wrong are words for the advancement or regression of this struggle. Christianity and communism are inherently incompatible. It is worth mentioning that this incompatibility is recognised by communists in Eastern Europe although the “Eurocommunists” of Western Europe profess to be able to establish a bridge between them. There cannot be a union of two systems of ideas, based one on the acceptance and the other of a rejection of God, unless we are to reduce God to a matter of insignificance for society.

Although Marxism and liberalism start from very different bases they arrive at some rather similar conclusions. It is remarkable how Western societies and the Soviet Union today offer examples of situations where the state has come to occupy an immense place in the life of the individual. Even in such a short space of history as fifty years the individual, in both these societies, has been diminished, controlled, standardized and conformed on a large scale, and usually in the name of economic growth. In this process, western liberals have shown a *naiveté*

which is not unlike that of the French aristocracy's support for the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. They tripped along a primrose path to their destruction. ‘Once society is launched on the path of secularisation, it cannot stop in the half-way house of liberalism’. (2) ‘European liberalism is a temporary phenomenon which belongs to the phase of transition between a Christian culture and one that is completely secularised.’ (3) It is not so much capitalism which is the arch-enemy of communism (they have too much in common for that), but rather Christianity. The differences between them can be put in this way: ‘The vital issue [of Communism] is the subordination of man, body and soul, to the economic machine of the secular state’ (4) while Christianity holds that the state and the economy must be subordinated to the promotion of the well-being and integrity of the person, who is, in turn, subordinated to God. The differences between Marxism and Christianity are not only in regard to belief in God but also about a radically different understanding of man and society.

The Church’s response

It would be false to give the impression that the Church in the nineteenth century entered into an unqualified alliance with the powers of politics, property and prestige. The English evangelical tradition had a very strong social consciousness

which worked effectively with others for reform in factory life, as, for example, by the legalisation of trade unions, the prohibition of child labour, and the reform of the electoral system. The Methodist Church in England won a large following among working class people alienated by the seeming indifference of the Anglican Church to their lot. On the Continent, the Catholic Bishop Ketteler of Mainz began working for social reform with a series of efforts which came to be incorporated in the encyclical letter *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII. This document was the basis of social action among Catholics on the continent, and had significant impact. Despite these positive measures, the last century will be remembered as the one in which the Church largely lost the working classes, not so much, I believe, for lack of ideas, as for lack of courage and leadership.

An Age of Revolution

The last and present centuries taken collectively could be given this title. Speaking in general terms, although with more specific reference to economically developed countries, it could be said that we have seen, or are seeing a series of revolutions, at various stages of transition: -

- an industrial and technological revolution;
- a change from mass illiteracy to mass literacy;

- change from minority to large-scale participation in government;

- social change from the privilege of a few to the rights of the many;

- economic change from prosperity for a few to prosperity for the many;

- a population explosion and also a population implosion;

- a revolution in the means of communication;

- a sexual revolution which is still going on;

- an acceleration in the pace of change itself;

- an expanded awareness by people of the potential that is open to them and of their capacity for achieving it.

A look at some of the problems

There are no right answers to wrong questions, so, before we begin to look at what the Church has to contribute to our world, it is necessary to begin by looking at some of the questions, challenges and problems that arise.

It is tempting to think of one's own period of history as being unique. It can sometimes arise from an extended sense of self-importance, but it can sometimes also be true. Our age is unique in at least one respect, and it is a disturbing one: for the first time in its history the human race has the capacity for total self-destruction. That has never before existed. It is one facet of a very large problem which underlies many others. It is the problem of a philosophy of science, or, put in simpler language, the use and abuse of knowledge. In the last century scientists looked at a situation and asked themselves ‘Can we do this or that?’ Now the question is not ‘Can we?’ but ‘Ought we to do all that we are able to do?’ ‘How do we use our knowledge?’ These are human and moral problems rather than scientific ones. They arise in a great diversity of situations.

We see an increase in the means of communication, but perhaps less real human communication than before. We see enormous advances in medicine bringing great benefits, along with serious threats posed by advances in neurology and genetics. We see the vastness of human potential accompanied by glaring want and squandering of resources. We see an awareness of the unity of mankind and deep social divisions. We see a universal desire for peace mocked by the slaughter of more than one hundred million people in war in this century alone, and the development of war by proxy

among the great powers in South-East Asia, the Middle East and elsewhere. We see the last century's problem of production turned into this century's problem of distribution - a problem of will, not of technology or administration. We see the apparent advance of democracy strangled by the denial of human rights and the exclusion of the ordinary person from any real control over social, economic and, sometimes, cultural life. We see demands for freedom accompanied by new forms of psychological and social slavery. We see an awakening of literacy and the abuse of language into an instrument of propaganda and falsehood. We see the demand for specialization and the need for a comprehensive view of life. We see the clash between the demands of efficiency and those of conscience. We see the city with its potential for community become a place of isolation and anonymity. We see a widening gap between rich and poor, with its accompanying tensions. (Along with the "new rich", there is a "new poor" - those left behind by social change.) We see the demand for unity and fraternity prostituted by the pressure to uniformity, and a spirit of conformism. We see a retreat from ideologies become a relativistic emptiness. We see man lose contact with nature and become arrogant even towards his own flesh, a type of resurgent Manichaeism. We see the growth of a functional, utilitarian view of the person so that we charge towards goals that are not of our making and seem afraid to ask why for

fear that someone will pass us out if we stop to think.

These problems are widely recognised today. They need not be a cause of despair. They represent a spiritual challenge to all of us. The future lies in the hands of those who can offer humanity a sense of hope (not a naïve optimism) in the face of these problems. Christianity is, more than any other religion, a religion of hope. A glance at the New Testament, and particularly the Letters and Acts, indicate that. But hope is not wishful thinking, or mere whistling in the dark. It must have a basis. When, in the past, Christianity went through its dark nights of the soul, as it did, it looked in hope for a spiritual revival. That revival came in some unexpected ways and places. It is not outside the bounds of possibility that the source of such a revival may be in the purified and tempered faith of the Eastern Church strengthened in the fire of persecution. It may have a role, after a collapse of the Soviet Union in its present form, similar to that of the Church in Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire. Such a revitalised Christian community could fulfil a badly needed role in restoring a sense of spiritual purpose to a decadent Europe.

Why focus on Europe?

Europe not only was important; it is important. ‘European civilisation has been responsible for the Europeanisation (and now the Americanisation) of the entire world’. (5) Almost every country in Europe, even small ones like Belgium, Holland or Portugal, had extensive colonies. Those former colonies, now independent, while supposedly rebelling against the West, have very largely abandoned their own culture and accepted the West's - its technology, its pursuit of material gain, its preoccupation with money, and its secularism. ‘It is in European history that we find the key to the understanding of the ideologies which divide the modern world.’ (6) It has been said with considerable optimism that ‘The material organization of the world by European ideas and Western science is a necessary preparation for that spiritual unification of humanity which it is the mission of Christianity to accomplish’. (7) It is an inviting thesis but one which looks increasingly unlikely to be achieved.

Europe's commercial and political dominance of the world is ended, pounded to shreds in the slaughter of two world wars, the collective suicide of a civilisation. It is not only those influences which have ended. Its leadership of culture is also declining. European culture is inseparable from its religious origins. It is not a coincidence that the words *cult* and *culture* have

the same origin. With the advance of secularism the foundations of that culture are being undermined. Europe today is living on borrowed capital, culturally as well as financially. It is living on the diminishing spiritual riches of the past. What it lacks is not wealth of knowledge but spiritual vitality. T. S. Eliot gave a hint of this in *The Rock* : -

‘Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?’

The liberal movement in Europe has lost its drive because it directed its energies against Christianity which was the base from which it drew its support. It bites the hand that feeds it, and, if it succeeds in destroying Christianity in Western Europe, it will destroy itself in the process. The vacuum thus created will most likely be filled by a new totalitarianism, either in the form of communism from Eastern Europe (if it hasn’t become too geriatric by then), or in the form of what James K. Baxter called "fascism without the name" in the form of the idolatry of the all-powerful state. ‘The march of God in the world is what the state is.’ (8) We can find an analogy in the development of the Soviet Union. It was developed by intellectuals who spoke of the growth of a socialist society in which the state would fade away. What has actually happened is that the state has grown and the

intellectuals who created it have faded away. The *naiveté* which created that anomaly in Eastern Europe is evident in a different form in the West, and in those countries culturally linked with it. There, the liberal pursuit of personal freedom has, paradoxically, accelerated the power of the state in social affairs, as the only instrument of cohesion in a society whose spiritual and moral bonds are disappearing into a relativistic vacuum.

An example of the sterility and inherent totalitarianism of a secular approach to society can be seen in the transition from the concept of Christendom as a unitary society linked by common spiritual bonds while embracing a diversity of cultures (e.g., Spain, Ireland, and Poland) to that of the European Economic Community, a capitalist club without a soul, bound together by commercial interest and attempting to create unity by uniformity.

Why focus on Europe? Because, if Europe goes down the drain, then countries whose cultural heritage is European must either change radically and along very different lines or go down with it.

The wineskins are indeed new, and we may well ask, ‘What about the wine?’

NEW ZEALAND IS NOT NORTH…
BUT WHAT IS IT?

New Zealand is largely Western in its cultural heritage. It is situated in the South Pacific, or, if you prefer, in the far East. One thing we can say with certainty is that it is not North… but what is it? Is it a group of islands situated 13,000 miles off the coast of Britain? Is it a Britain of the South Seas, tending to be more mother than mother, looking to Home (with a capital 'H') for precedents? (e.g. the South British Insurance Company 100% New Zealand owned). It was probably all of those at one time, but that pattern has largely disappeared by now. Is it becoming an appendage of America or Australia? Their influences are increasing but are still by no means dominant. So what is New Zealand? Has it moved from a colonial background only to enter into a parochial one instead? Perhaps the better question is to ask 'What is a New Zealander?' Is he (and this is not to exclude women) a hardy, open-air no-nonsense, straight-talking pioneer? That image certainly would not be an accurate one since New Zealand society is at present 82% urban and only 18% rural. So much for rustic pioneering. The back garden is about as much of nature as most of us can cope with. Is he is the rugby, racing and beer addict whose intellectual and cultural interests are limited to *Truth*, *Best Bets* or a radio talk-back show? That image has

perhaps a greater measure of truth in it, although it is limited if only by describing activities which are largely male pursuits. The attempt to create a stereotype is likely to be no more accurate, or just, with New Zealanders than with any other group of people. With that reservation in mind, it is still possible, and valid, to look for certain character types. Since New Zealand is still a young country it is probably too early yet to be able to discern them clearly, if indeed, they are there to be discerned. What is a New Zealander? - I don't know. Ask me in another century.

Despite what has just been said there are some significant elements in New Zealand life that have had a large impact in giving us the kind of society we live in today. The country has inherited the use of English as its language. The use of English as an international language is probably the only lasting influence of the British Empire which has dissolved in less than half a century. New Zealand did not have to fight for freedom, and, with some qualifications relating to the Maori wars, it could be said that it achieved nationhood without civil war. That is virtually a unique achievement. But, paradoxically, it has had continuing involvement in overseas conflicts in the Crimea (1), the Boer war, the two World Wars, Korea and Vietnam. It has had a tradition of resolving problems peacefully, and of a sense of social justice deriving more from a pragmatic sense than from any ideological base. Indeed it

pioneered many social reforms. It has had the benefit of many revolutions, for example, the industrial and technological, without the accompanying problems. Its legal system and governmental system, is drawn almost entirely from the British model, thereby gaining the benefit of experience which had to be hammered out in the pages of history elsewhere.

Where do we go from here?

In very general terms it could be said that the political centre of gravity of the world has shifted in this century from Europe to America and now, more recently, to the Pacific. The Pacific is bounded by the four main power blocs - the U.S., the U.S.S.R., China and Japan - with the fifth bloc, the Arabs, hovering on the edge, and exercising not only petro-power but the power of an Islamic revival. It is clear that New Zealand's future is not in links either with Britain or Europe but in the Pacific. A century ago, very large segments of Asia were under European colonial control. That has now evaporated, the Americans being the last to come and the last to leave. Australia and New Zealand, in view of those changes, are, as they are presently constituted, anomalies. They are colonial remnants left behind in a European withdrawal from Asia. It is true that the situations here and in Asia are not identical as the indigenous populations here and in Australia are only a very small minority,

whereas the reverse is true on the Asian mainland. However, it seems unlikely to me that these two countries, *as they are presently constituted*, can continue in existence. When you consider that Bangladesh has 75 million people living on an area half that of New Zealand and that the population of India grows by that of Australia each year, when you consider that Japan, the Philippines and Indonesia have, between them, about 300 million people, how long are they going to allow 15 million Australians and New Zealanders live in comfortable isolation on vast mineral wealth and food producing potential? Not for long, I think. As New Zealand's trade links with the Pacific grow, and there has already been a striking change in this regard, I believe that the bargaining point for increased trade will be the admission by New Zealand of large-scale immigration from the countries and islands of S. E. Asia. Such a development would clearly mean radical changes in New Zealand. Asia has the largest population and the second fastest growing population of any continent. It is 2.5% Christian. Immigration from Asia would present the Church in New Zealand with a new mission on its doorstep.

Looked at from the viewpoint of expediency, if nothing else, I would like to see changes in New Zealand's attitudes. One is to think of ourselves not as the big brother of the island nations of the

Pacific but as the small brother of the nations of South East Asia. I'm not saying here that we should forget Tonga, Samoa etc. - I think New Zealand has done much good there and I hope it continues - but I think we should realize that they are not as necessary to us as we are to them. I repeat that I'm not suggesting we abandon them but rather realize that the future of New Zealand is in Asia rather than with them. A removal of paternalistic blinkers may be necessary to effect that change of thinking.

The second change I would like to see for the sake of New Zealand's peace is the development of very different patterns of food production. At present New Zealand is trying to sell food to an over-supplied market on the other side of the world. With the development and application of food advanced technology, New Zealand could become a major producer of the types of food, or at least the raw material for such food, as would be consumed in South East Asia. It is not an exaggeration to speak of protein power as being just as real a power for the future as petro-power is now. We all have to eat, but very few Asians eat lamb, cheese, butter and milk. If New Zealand became a major producer of such food products, it would not only have a vastly larger market than the EEC but it would have it on its doorstep. Even more important, its role as a food producer for Asia would give Asia an interest in securing its stability rather than an interest in

seeing it grabbed by any one country for its own use.

Preparing for change

If the development that I have spoken of has any element of likelihood about it, it follows that New Zealand should be readying itself for change on a very large scale. In general terms, I would say that what New Zealand is doing now in this regard are the wrong things rather than the right things. I would list three specific areas in this regard - agriculture, race relations and population.

Agriculture, although overwhelmingly the country's greatest money earner, has been neglected in two important ways. Not enough money has been invested in it having been diverted instead to an exploding bureaucracy, to non-productive urban growth and to social welfare schemes meant, with good intentions but inaccurate direction, to shore up the cracks in family life. The second area of neglect in agriculture is the lack of diversity in the range of products.

In the field of race relations, one of our prejudices, as Ritchie says, is that we have no prejudices. We interpret equality of opportunity as uniformity of treatment. Despite disclaimers, I think that we accept Polynesians on our terms

rather than on theirs. In effect we ask them to become *pakehas* in order to be accepted. (By way of illustration, ask yourself how many Maoris there are at Victoria University.) If Western influence has deprived Maoris, as I believe it has done, of land, language and culture, can we be surprised if the time comes when they are no longer willing to accept it passively but turn instead to the assertion of power? (Bastion Point, perhaps?) With the increasing proportion of Maoris and other Polynesians in the population, and especially with their concentration in specific areas, the potential for violence is there. Despite some good efforts on all sides to anticipate such problems there is still active discrimination by the subtlety of convention rather than by the directness of law (how many Maoris live in Karori?), and a great deal of ignorance. Is New Zealand ready for the possibility of racial conflict on a large scale?

The structure of our population as it is at present and as it is likely to be before the end of the century is also disquieting. There are nearly as many people in the Auckland area as there are in the whole of the South Island. More than fifty per cent of the country's population lives north of a line drawn across the country just south of Hamilton. Such a distribution creates a double stress, that of urbanization at one end of the country and rural depopulation at the other. These can reach a point where the trend becomes

irreversible. We see evidence of this from time to time with the closure of factories in Dunedin for the reason that the markets are largely at the other end of the country, and transport costs are high. There is at present an alarming increase in the breakdown of marriages with a corresponding increase in the social problems associated with that. Is our only answer an army of social workers and more social welfare benefits? I would suggest that we try to look at basic causes and start at that level. Fundamentally the problem is a moral one (and I'm not limiting that to sexual morality). I'm not optimistic about the possibility of a secular society summoning up the moral resources to be able to tackle such a problem. I fear that the Christian challenge of personal responsibility may be side-stepped and a way out sought by increasing state control under the appearance of social welfare and support. The challenge is to social as well as to personal responsibility. I believe that a great many of the stresses on marriage and family life are the result of society's preoccupation with the goals of money, status and pleasure. It is not only the commercial world which fosters these goals. They are fostered by our conventions, our education system and, at least by default, if not more than that, by our churches.

A further pattern in population trends is that we have smaller families, relatively declining immigration from Europe, and, by the end of the

century, an older population. I believe that one consequence of this is that which I have already mentioned, namely, that an under-populated New Zealand will be under increasing pressure from South East Asia either in the form of direct military threat, or more likely, in the form of pressure to allow immigration from those countries. This too would bring with it then possibility of racial conflict.

What has that to do with the Churches?

Everything. The Christian who says that these matters are none of his concern because he is interested in saving his soul is only saying in different language what the secular person is saying when he states that religion has nothing to do with life. One says that religion has nothing to do with life, and the other that life has nothing to do with religion. The Christian who is unconcerned with the affairs of the world has forgotten the meaning of the Incarnation. He has abandoned God's creation and separated what God has joined - the love of God and the love of neighbour.

That also explains why in this lecture I have spoken of New Zealand first, and of the churches in New Zealand second. Particularly where the churches are in a minority, as they are in real terms, it is not realistic to consider them and their mission apart from the society in which they are

situated. It may also remind us that the churches must be concerned for the whole of society. If they become preoccupied with the "internal affairs" of their own members then they have lost a sense of mission and do not truly reflect the face of Christ to the world. ‘If the salt loses its flavour it is fit only to be thrown out and trodden underfoot’. There is nothing deader than dead religion and a sure precursor of death in an institution is pomposity and pretentiousness without substance to back it up. Another sign is a great concern for the image than for the reality. A third sign is a preoccupation with internal affairs.

The Churches

The missionaries were in the vanguard of European settlement in New Zealand. They came as Europeans to the savages of the South Seas with the task of civilising no less than that of evangelising. Looking back on those early days we get the impression that they did regard the Maoris as savages and that civilisation meant being as much as possible like a nineteenth century Englishman. The understanding of the Church which they brought with them was also a European one. This is fully understandable, and it would have been very surprising indeed if they had done anything else. Within a short period of time the European immigrants outnumbered the indigenous Maori population, and these immigrants still thought in European terms, and

could not be expected to have done otherwise. The Churches in New Zealand therefore grew as a replica of the church in Europe despite occasional attempts to take advantage of the fresh start to try and break new ground. They very soon settled into the familiar trenches and fired pot-shots at one another to the great confusion of the Maoris who had no idea what it was all about. There is the well-known story of a Maori chief who decided to stick with the old tribal beliefs because he simply did not know what to make of Christianity since he had been assured by Anglicans, Catholics and Wesleyans that theirs was the true faith. His village was shortly afterwards buried in the eruption of Mount Tarawera. (I'm not sure what the moral of the ending is!)

Can the Church be truly indigenous to New Zealand when there seems to be as yet no distinctively New Zealand character? I doubt it, and until such a development takes place the churches will continue to look to Europe for models for thought and action. Have the churches any role in forming a New Zealand character and culture? I would hope so. We have seen some glimpses in earlier lectures of how the Church exercised a formative influence in the development of European culture. Could it not do the same here? I believe it could though I don't see any signs of it at present. The Catholic Church is probably in the best position to

exercise an influence because of its involvement in schools. However, I believe that this potential is not being fully realized, partly because of the pressure from a variety of sources to conform to the prevailing educational models and methods. The schools are not fully masters in their own house. There are probably other reasons as well.

In the space of little more than a century the church in New Zealand has shrunken numerically from a majority to a minority. Although about 74% of people named themselves as Christian on the 1971 census form, the level of practice (about the only statistical criterion for which is church attendance) is much lower than that. In 1972, the National Council of Churches estimated that one in six New Zealanders is a practising member of any Christian church. The proportion is probably less now. I do not think that it would be valid to conclude from this that New Zealand is a pagan society because many social attitudes still derive from a Christian past. But, like Europe, we are living on the spiritual capital of the past, and society is rapidly becoming de-Christianized, not only in respect of the declining numbers of practising Christians but also in respect of the spiritual orientation and moral consensus of society. The Churches have become a fringe group with the appearance of being institutional relics claiming an authority they do not have. The churches are less of a leaven in the mass stimulating and transforming it from within than

they are an icing on the cake giving the image without the reality of spiritual richness. They do not seem to have a sense of mission. I believe that they have become too comfortable, too resigned to defeat, and too closely allied to the prevailing cult of money, status and pleasure. This is a perennial temptation; it is not unique to our time. We should neither be shocked at it with Pharisaical scandal, nor stand aloof in a spirit of condemnation, nor dissolve into defeatism or cynicism. The Church is in need of compassion. She is like a tired old lady who has had too many seducers and not enough lovers but who can be beautiful again through the regenerating power of the Spirit.

Regeneration and Unity

The beginnings of the modern ecumenical movement are normally traced to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910. I think it is significant for our understanding of the church and also for our understanding of ecumenism that it was through an awareness of mission that the movement began. A sense of mission is a sign and source of life in the Church. A second significant turning point came with the foundation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1947. That had been preceded by the founding of many National Council of Churches, the New Zealand foundation being in 1974. The foundation of the WCC was in part a response to

the scandal of seeing for the second time this century Christian countries tearing one another apart in a worldwide war while simultaneously praying to the one true God for victory. Its existence, if not its operation, made it easier for the Catholic Church to be able to enter into ecumenical contacts. In the world at present, about 1,000 million people are Christians, either in fact or in name. Of these about 700 million are Catholic, and 300 million Orthodox and Protestant combined. The existence of the WCC is a challenge to start thinking ecumenically. From the Catholic Church's point of view this was very difficult in view of the enormous number and continued multiplication of Protestant churches - there are 2,000 of them in South Africa alone. A third significant point is that the ecumenical initiative within the Catholic Church came from the top. There was virtually no grassroots ecumenical movement in the Catholic Church, until Pope John XXIII startled everyone by announcing, in 1959, that he was calling a general council of the Church to promote Christian unity. The significance of this is that the papacy, which is often seen as the primary bone of contention in Protestant-Catholic ecumenical contacts, was the initiator of the move towards unity.

What do we mean by "Unity"?

I think it operates on three distinct but related levels.

Unity of Charity. This includes learning to respect and accept one another despite differences. It means that we try to search for common ground rather than harp on differences. It includes joint prayer and study, and a joint sharing of involvement in social questions. It includes the situation in which ordinary Christian men and women come together to work out what it is to be a Christian in New Zealand today. Its importance should not be under-estimated. Charity is, after all, the bond of unity.

Unity of Doctrine This involves basic questions of truth which cannot be sidestepped. The Church is the trustee of truth, not its owner to dispose of as it sees fit. Truth is God's truth. To suggest therefore that we should all join up and sort out doctrinal problems afterwards is not only quite unrealistic but is an invitation to the unity of a common emptiness. What makes Christians one is faith in Christ. What that faith means in practical terms is not peripheral to unity, it is central to it. There must *be* unity in fact before it can be declared to exist, not *vice versa*. In some respects there has been growth in unity of doctrine through the removal of misunderstanding, the clarification of terms, and a sense of the hierarchy of doctrine. Examples of

this may be seen in the joint Anglican-Catholic statements on the Eucharist, ministry and authority. These good developments should not blind us to the fact that in other respects we are moving further apart on matters of doctrine. This is true in regard to teaching on abortion, where the Catholic and Orthodox churches stand together as against the Protestant churches.

Ecclesial Unity By this I mean the joining together of different churches in one. As yet this has not got very far despite some tentative steps in that direction, such as cooperating parishes. The failure of the five negotiating churches in New Zealand to adopt the *Plan for Union* suggests, I think, that such efforts need to be re-examined. History can teach us some useful lessons in this regard. Pope Gregory X convened a general council of the Church at Lyons in 1274 for the purpose of achieving union with the Greeks. The two main doctrinal problems were the position of the pope and the *Filioque*, a question of Trinitarian doctrine. The Greeks accepted both, and the Patriarch, Veccos, sincerely promoted the agreed doctrinal statement at home. Union was declared between the two churches with the pope as head and the *Filioque* in the Creed. The union disintegrated within a few years basically, I believe, because union did not exist *de facto* at the grass roots. It was assumed that union was a matter for the bishops and theologians and the people would

follow later. In this instance they didn't; they rejected the agreement. The other false assumption was that doctrinal unity itself was enough. I believe that is false also. All three kinds of unity are needed before we can truly call ourselves one.

A second attempt at re-union was made at a council called by Pope Eugene IV at Ferrara in 1438. The *Filioque* was again the main issue, and again agreement was reached. This time not only the Greeks, but the Copts from Ethiopia and Egypt, the Armenians, Syrians and Maronites were re-united. Isidore, the Russian Orthodox archbishop of Kiev, was personally reconciled but failed to bring the Church with him because of the opposition of Basilii, the Patriarch of Moscow. Despite all this, the re-union lasted only about fifteen years, being finally repudiated by the Greeks in 1484. Why? One reason was that it seems that the motives of the Greeks were very closely linked to getting military help from the West to face a coming Turkish invasion. The help was given but was not enough. The Turks captured Constantinople in 1453, and that was the definitive end of the re-union. I think it was T. S. Eliot who spoke of 'the greatest of all treason, to do the right thing for the wrong reason'. There is an analogy with the present in this situation. The churches are under pressure; their numbers are in decline; secularism seems triumphant. Some see this as a reason for unity at

virtually any cost. ‘The Turks are coming’, they say, ‘we can't afford to be divided’. The right thing must be done in the right way and for the right reasons. The motto of the ecumenical movement might be ‘Love carefully’! Since it is the work of the Holy Spirit we can look forward to its fruition with confidence, while being careful not to impede it in any way, nor to presume to push it in our own way on our own authority.

Fresh fields and pastures new

There are two other areas where we need to enter into an ecumenical dialogue. These are the relation to the non-Christian religions and with a secular world. In regard to the first we need a North-South dialogue in the Church. The focus of population has shifted; the Churches in the northern hemisphere are contracting; those in the South are expanding. The great areas of Christian growth in the near future are Africa and Latin America, and Asia to a lesser extent. It has been estimated that, by the year 2000, 70% of Christians will live in the southern hemisphere, compared to 48% in 1960. That will inevitably involve, among many things, great contact with non-Christians religions. The traditional Christian homeland of Europe is largely secularised, although still in a transitional way. By contrast, China has been secular for centuries through Confucius and Mao. Confucianism is a

philosophy of life; it does not involve belief in God. Mao, though secular, has succeeded in giving a sense of moral purpose to China and as sense of unity also. He has done that from an entirely secular base. The developing nations are looking for a model of development. In many cases they cannot find this within their own traditions, either because of their inadequacy in a technological world or because they have already been destroyed. The West is seen by them as corrupt and materialistic, the Soviet Union richly deserves the contempt it receives. Is it to China or to Christianity that the developing nations look? That seems to be the choice. The Christian quarter of the world is the wealthy quarter. Has it the spiritual resources to share with others in justice for the betterment of all?

What does the Church offer?

One thing is sure - what is asked of the Church is more, not less. I would focus on five particular areas.

If Europe continues to abandon its Christian heritage and moves into totalitarianism, whether communist or "Liberal", will the Christian community be strong enough to be a regenerating force in that society, and in others (like New Zealand) culturally linked to it, as the Christian community sustained Europe in the dark ages?

The challenge mentioned above - that of poverty. Is it to Christianity or to China that the Third World will look for leadership?

Will the Church be a peacemaker in racial conflict or in other social turmoil? It failed to be that in the racial conflicts of the United States in the 1960's and in Northern Ireland in the 1970's. It succeeded in Sri Lanka after the civil war in 1973, and was commended for its work by the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Bandaranaike.

Will the Church have the courage, the leadership and the will to stand in all situations for respect for the integrity of the person? The abortion question is a key issue in this regard. Will it be strong enough to be willing to be, if necessary, a sign of contradiction? Will it present society in a living way with a vision of man redeemed of which Christ is the pattern? Will it show an integral humanism, that is, of the person reaching fulfilment by being open to the transcendent? Will it give an example of holiness?

Will the Church recognise the mission on its doorstep in which five out of six New Zealanders either is not a Christian or is not practising it in any recognisable form?

A different type of Church?

There are different options of which these are a few: -

As you were, with more of the same. This is unlikely to be the case as change is likely to be forced on us if we don't plan it intelligently. However, with the normal ingrained human resistance to change it is probably what we would temperamentally opt for.

A re-shuffling of structures without a change in the inner reality. Most Churches have indulged in generous amounts of this. 'I was to learn late in life that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation.' (2)

We can retreat into the catacombs and create new Christian ghettos in the *diaspora*. I hope that the Christian community will never freely choose that path. The church is a church for others; it is not an exclusive club.

We can get down to the grassroots work of spiritual renewal. At the moment the best (and perhaps only) example of this is in the charismatic movement which combines grassroots ecumenism with a proper sense of priorities that puts contemplation above activism and inner renewal above structural shuffling.

We can work at the development of what have been called Basic Christian Communities, that is small Christian groups endeavouring at local level to create communities of faith, worship, service and mission. This last element is important as we spend 95% of our time with the converted at present.

I believe that the Church is flexible enough to change. Whether it changes in the right way depends on whether it is ready to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

I will close with a quotation which expresses what I hope for in the life of the Church: -

'Without the Holy Spirit, God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the Gospel is a dead letter,
the Church is simply an organisation,
authority a matter of domination,
mission a matter of propaganda,
the liturgy no more than an evocation,
Christian living no more than a slave morality.'

'But in the Holy Spirit,
the cosmos is resurrected and groans with the birth-pangs of the Kingdom,
the risen Christ is there,
the Gospel is the power of life,
the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,

authority is a liberating service,
mission is a Pentecost,
the liturgy is both memorial and anticipation,
human action is deified. (3)

REFERENCES

The Struggle for Survival

1. Cf. Bishop Stephen Neill, *The Christian Society*, (Fontana), 1964, p.29.
2. Cf. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and World History*, Image Books, Part II, Chapter 1.
3. Christopher Dawson, *ibid*., p.157.
4. Cited by John C. Murray, *We Hold These Truths*, London, 1962, p.202.
5. Cited by Bishop Stephen Neill, *op. cit*., p.52, n.1.

The Dark Ages or Who is in the Dark?

1. *Confessions*, 10.27.
2. *Ibid*., 1.1.
3. *The City of God*.
4. Bishop Stephen Neill, *The Christian Society*, Fontana, 1964, p.89, n.10.
5. Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, Image Books, 1958, p.87.
6. Cf. Dawson, *ibid*., p.50.
7. Cited by Bishop Stephen Neill, *op. cit*., p.88.

Christianity in Triumph… or was it?

1. Cited by Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, Image Books, 1958, p.123.
2. *Ibid*., p.151.
3. Christopher Dawson, Religion and World History, New York, 1975, pp.188-189.
4. E. I. Watkin, *The Church in Council*, London, 1960, p.100.
5. Cited by Christopher Dawson, *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture*, Image Books, New York, 1958, p.173, n.4.
6. Cf. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis", *Science*, 10 March 1967, pp.1203-1206.

The Spiral of Division

1. Christopher Dawson, *Progress and Religion*, Image Books, p.144.
2. Cited by Esmond Wright, *Fabric of Freedom, (1763-1800)*, London, 1965, p.18.
3. Cited by S. E. Morrison, *Sources and Documents illustrating the American Revolution (1764-1788) and the Formation of the Federal Constitution*, Oxford, 1923, p.214.
4. Cf. Rev. James Buller, *Forty Years in New Zealand*, London, 1878, p.334.
5. Christopher Dawson, Religion and World History, New York, 1975, p.9.

The Wineskins are new… what about the wine?

1. C. Dawson, *Religion and World History*, ed. by James Oliver and Christina Scott, Image Books, New York, 1975, pp.240-241.
2. *Ibid*., p.244.
3. *Ibid*., p.243-244.
4. *Ibid*., p.245.
5. *Ibid*., p.9.
6. *Ibid*., p.136.
7. *Ibid*., p.10.
8. *Ibid*., p.279, quoting from Hegel.

New Zealand is not North… but what is it?

1. Cf. Arthur H. Carman, *Tawa Flat and the Old Porirua Road*, p.52: A meeting of Wellington citizens on 22 April 1855 states its belief that "the present Russian war in which our soldiers are engaged is one in which they are securing the ultimate peace of the whole world."
2. Attributed to Petronius, *Arbiter Elegentiae* to Emperor Nero.
3. Metropolitan Ignatios of Latakia, *The Uppsala Report 1968*, 1969, Geneva, p.298; cited by Leon Joseph Cardinal Suenens, *A New Pentecost*? Darton, Longmans, Todd, London, 1976, pp.19-20.