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### Secularization and Challenges Which Confront Contemporary Brazilian Lutheranism: Some Insights in the Light of Boaventura Kloppenburg and Some Lutheran Theologians

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SECULARIZATION AND CHALLENGES WHICH CONFRONT CONTEMPORARY  
BRAZILIAN LUTHERANISM: SOME INSIGHTS IN THE LIGHT OF  
BOAVENTURA KLOPPENBURG AND SOME LUTHERAN THEOLOGIANS

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Practical Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Masters of Sacred Theology

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by

Gerhard Grasel

May 1983

Approved by Martin Haendschke  
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Reader

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. SECULARIZATION - A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON. . . . .	12
Defining the Notion . . . . .	12
Secularization as an Historical Process . . . . .	17
Evaluation. . . . .	20
The Christian View of Secularization. . . . .	22
Secularization and the Problem of Plausibility - Pluralism. . . . .	29
Secularism. . . . .	32
Humanism. . . . .	36
The Secular Man . . . . .	39
Religion in a Secularized World . . . . .	44
Science and Secularization. . . . .	56
The Sacred-Magic in a Secular World . . . . .	63
Myth and Secularization . . . . .	69
The Question of God in the Secular World. . . . .	71
III. BRAZIL - A LAND OF CONTRASTS . . . . .	81
Brazil - A Land of Contrasts. . . . .	81
What is Meant by "Culture?" . . . . .	82
Brazilian Culture . . . . .	84
The Unique Mixture of Races . . . . .	92
The Brazilian . . . . .	97
Industrialization/Urbanization. . . . .	103
Religion in Brazil. . . . .	106
Roman Catholicism in Brazil . . . . .	111
The Roman Catholicism After Vatican II. . . . .	114
Umbanda . . . . .	119
Spiritism . . . . .	122
Brazilian Protestantism . . . . .	125
Pentecostalism in Brazil. . . . .	132
New Cults . . . . .	136
IV. KLOPPENBURG'S ANALYSIS OF BRAZILIAN	
Kloppenburg as a Theologian . . . . .	140
Secularization . . . . .	141
Before God Yesterday and Today. . . . .	157
The Temptation of Secularism or Atheism . . . . .	165

The Spiritual and Social Responsibilities of the Secularized Christian . . . . .	172
An Evaluation on Kloppenburg's Analysis. . . . .	176

V. A LUTHERAN RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE IN BRAZIL

Martin Luther: The Freedom of a Christian . . . . .	181
Luther in Paul Althaus' View: Man's Relationship with God and His Neighbor . . . . .	187
Helmuth Thielicke: The Freedom of the Christian . . .	201
Martin H. Scharlemann: The Church's Social Responsibilities. . . . .	206
Richard R. Caemmerer: The Church in the World . . . .	223
Messianism . . . . .	230
The World. . . . .	234
The Christian Church . . . . .	236
Clergy and Laity . . . . .	243
Forms of Church Life . . . . .	244
Vast Cultural Changes. . . . .	247
The Demonic Elements . . . . .	251
The Church in the City . . . . .	252
The Moral in the City. . . . .	256
Christian Apologetics. . . . .	259
The Congregation: A Worshiping, Fellowshiping, Healing, Witnessing Community . . . . .	274

VI. CONCLUSION. . . . . 280

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 301

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

To be baptized and believe in Jesus Christ means to be called into God's 'Heilsgeschichte' (salvation - history) and therefore signifies being called out of the old aeon. This matter of being called out can, however, be understood only in the sense of our being taken out of the grasps of the powers which determine this aeon and being placed under the lordship of another and new master.

It means for instance, that in this fact of being called out I come to have a new relationship to the god Mammon, that is, to the powers of property and possession (Matt. 6:24; Luke 16:13; Luke 12:16-20; Mark 10:21, 24-30. It further signifies that I have to revise my relationship to my body (1 Cor. 6:19) and its passions (Phil. 3:19; 1 Cor. 6-16), to the things of this world (1 Cor. 7:29-35) and to care about them (Matt. 6:25-34); also to my neighbor as a "thou" and to the communities of which I am a member. Indeed it means the wholesale reassessment of my existence in all its dimensions as surely as Christ is the kosmokrater (world ruler, ruler of the universe), and not just the lord of my inward being.

The way in which my existence is determined (which, concretely, means the way in which my mind is determined in the fulness of its relations) is entirely reevaluated because I have come attached to another history and another aeon.

Not few reject God and his message because it would mess up the way of their lives. Alleged intellectual problems with the Gospel are often a smoke screen covering moral rebellion. The real issue is not so much intellectual but moral. Those who reject don't want to believe.

Wilhelm Knevels, in his book Gottesglaube in der säkularen Welt differentiates the so-called 'Atheisten' from the 'Antitheisten'. "Die 'Atheisten'," he says, "können nicht an Gott glauben; die Antitheisten wollen nicht an Gott glauben. Der Atheist denkt: Es ist kein Gott, deshalb muss ich mein eigener Herr sein. Der Antitheist sagt: Ich will nicht, dass ein Herr über uns sei, also darf kein Gott sein."<sup>1</sup>

Christianity is rational; but it also goes beyond reason, but not against it.

But returning to our first idea, we have to consider that as Christians we still remain on account of a mysterious "simul" a member of the old aeon too, for Christ does not ask His Father to take His own out of the world, but asks him that he should keep them out of the power of the evil one (see John 17:15) even though in the sense of their origin or destiny they are as little of the world as Jesus himself is, despite the fact he walks in it (John 17:16).

The Christian existence is in the tension between the two aeons. In these circumstances, those who believe in Christ stand in a relationship both of continuity and discontinuity to the aeon; in one of the continuity in so far as they eat and drink, marry and are given in marriage, laugh and weep, are in some kind of relationship to authorities and to the

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<sup>1</sup> Wilhelm Knevels, Gottesglaube in der säkularen Welt (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1968), p. 40.

ordinances and so on; and they stand in a relationship of discontinuity to this age because they are no longer determined by it because--in Kierkegaard's terms--they no longer have an absolute relationship to something which is relative, because in fact they may well be in flesh but are no longer "after the flesh." For H. Thieliicke a reflection of this relationship to both aeons is to be found in Luther's well-known formula simul justus et peccator, especially when we see it as a connection of res and spes, of present and future, of this aeon and the future aeon: peccator in re, justus in spe (sinner actuality, righteous in anticipation, hope). In this "simul" is concealed the ethical problem, says Thieliicke.

In every age Christians attempt to find a concrete workable balance between the two aeons, just because he is a citizen of God's kingdom and of this world. The Christian's existence is one in tension between the Kingdom and the world.

The Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms gave a theological legitimation to the autonomy of the secular. "The Protestant Reformation," states Peter Berger, "may be understood as a powerful re-emergence of precisely those secularizing forces that had been 'contained' by Catholicism."<sup>2</sup> For Berger the impact of Protestantism with that of Renaissance is an historical coincidence.

The swinging pendulum is among the most hackneyed of clichés. But it is hard to find a better. Our Lord's "Come unto me" followed by His "Go ye into all the world" is a swinging pendulum.

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<sup>2</sup>Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1967), p. 124.

It is part of human condition to live in a state of tension--our individual wishes and our family responsibilities, our private interests and our public lives, our earning our livings, and our pursuing our hobbies; the list is endless.

Should the pendulum swing too high in one direction and be held fast as a result, great responsibility rests on those who seek to release it, that they do it as tenderly as possible, and not brusquely or roughly--above all not arrogantly.

We always stand in an inescapable relationship to God and to our fellowmen. "Man stands ontologically inseparable from God and ethically inseparable from mankind," writes Thorwald Bender, quoted by David Schuler. We are part of the church that lives between the times--between God and man, between Creation and Judgment, between heaven and earth.

Secularization points to one of the most evident characteristics of the nascent world culture. As a result of modern education, press, radio and television, film, paperback books, and modern world literature a growing number of people fall under the influence of world culture cast in a totally new framework, and is still in the process of becoming. Fastly age-old religious notions and practices, views of world and life, human relations, and social forms are disappearing to make place for a culture based on technology.

Man's thinking and striving are becoming world-centered. Modern man finds it most difficult to conceive of a world outside this one, of an existence after death in another world.

It could happen that members of the clergy might try to avoid the question of religion's relationship to the secular style of existence.

It is possible that clerical bureaucrats and local officiants may have their lives so fully integrated into their institutions that they ignore or simply do not see what is moving in general society.

For Johannes B. Metz theology must not make things easy for itself by neglecting the process of the concrete history of the world--having, as it were, a monophysite understanding of salvation history.

Secularization is a problem which confronts every Christian, since he has to live out his faith in a secular world. It is necessary to understand this phenomenon so that we can witness better to those who are non-Christians.

Congar's following statement should make us think. He says: "The preaching of a 'God' without the world had as result a world without God."<sup>3</sup>

In the study of the world sociology plays an important role. Of course sociology is not properly employed to buttress a particular theological position, although it can provide illustrative materials for it. Equally, of course, sociology cannot reasonably be ignored by theologians wishing to speak about 'modern society,' and modern man.

A sociologist, however, may describe the secular but it is hardly his business to celebrate it.

For a long time we have been trying to understand our age. Over the last one hundred years the term "modernity" has been something of an obsession with philosophers, historians, preachers, reformers, essayists, and a host of others. It has been many things to many men. For Karl Marx it was the millennial age of the proletariat; for Nietzsche it

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<sup>3</sup>Cited in Leonardo Boff, Experimentar Deus Hoje (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1974), p. 129.

was the decadent and yet the door to new possibilities; for Dostoyevsky it was dangerously demonic; for Ortega, the upward rise of the barbarian; for Auden, the age of anxiety; for scientists, of space travel and unprecedented power.

As God's people looking for the best way to communicate with this modern man, we must be aware that in every new form (since we don't want to change the essence) we run the risk of false judgment and of doing generalizations. We can't forget that we are dealing with human problems, and those are complex.

Charles Péguy wrote in 1913 that "the world has seen greater changes in the last thirty years than in the two thousand that preceded them."<sup>4</sup>

Change is the word. In the face of this reality the Church is concerned to speak about God in the language of this new changing world. She has to be careful, however, so that in throwing the bath away, she does not throw with it the baby (message).

Rudolf Bultmann's biblical interpretation with his "demythologizing" (Entmythologisierung) is an honest but unfortunate reaction or response to this problem of communication with man of the twentieth-century. Unfortunately he lost the 'baby,' the authentic God's kerygma.

The psychological reason that compelled Bultmann to undertake his task of demythologizing the Bible is undoubtedly apologetic. For him modern man could not accept the form in which the salvation message of the Bible was being served. Robinson's starting point has the same

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<sup>4</sup>Hans Jürgen Schultz, Conversion to the World (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 35.

apologetic motivation that urged Bultmann to his radical proposal of demythologization.

According to Ronald Johnstone, Western religion has produced in essentially chronological order: pietism, social gospel, neo-orthodoxy, religionless-death of God-existential Christianity in efforts to adjust, communicate, and be relevant to changing conditions in society.

One thing is true: as churchmen today we have to learn to listen and be open to learn from the world before we speak and judge. To remove all judgment from the ministry would be another mistake. There are Biblical limits beyond which we may not go in recasting changing forms.

For Schuler "the Gospel must be rightly preached, the sacraments properly administered." Within these wide limits there is liberty. Self-criticism must exist. Ongoing self-examination with concomitant change for better is the church's counterpart of the individual's ongoing repentance. The Holy Spirit works through forms, but forms are not His master, rather His channels and His servants. John Ph. Koehler said, "The Gospel creates its own forms."

Has historic Christianity--the Christianity of the New Testament anything to say to the modern world? In the age of existentialism, anti-philosophy and the new theology, many people have assumed that a religion based on revealed truth is totally irrelevant. Francis Schaeffer contends that only historic Christianity, rightly understood and fearlessly applied, can solve the dilemmas of modern man. Modern philosophers, artists, writers and musicians show their dilemma in their "products."

Our answers as Christians to man's dilemma may not be the ones modern man expects, or even welcomes, but they cannot be ignored when clearly exposed.

Human life is really an open-ended question, a question which does not contain its answer. There are, of course, many attempts to define human existence, to define man. They are all self-definitions which try to say what we are. All say in one way or another that man is a problem to himself. This is a basic feature about us which we cannot avoid, and which makes us, whether we want it or not, more than just living creature. Life, human life, comes to us as a self-conscious life, a life that knows about itself. Man is the 'animal' that asks questions about himself. Wilhelm Knevels writing on man's dilemma says: "Selbst der dezidierte Atheist Camus lässt Caligula, der sich selbst auf den Götzenthrone setzt, sagen: 'So wie diese Welt beschaffen ist, ist sie nicht zu ertragen. Ich brauche daher den Mond oder das Glück oder die Unsterblichkeit oder etwas, was vielleicht wahnsinnig aber jedenfalls nicht von dieser Welt ist.'"<sup>5</sup>

In Kenneth Scott Latourette's view the intellectual were despairing of the ability of the unaided human mind to arrive at truth. Francis Schaeffer and the secular political scientist Zbigniew Brzezinski have spoken of modern man's "escape from reason." Experiencing is the thing (whether through political radicalism, drugs, communal living or Oriental mysticism); one has to look at the mess we're in today, it is said, to see where rationalism leads. So, a kind of return to romanticism has set in.

Christians can be sure that they, and not the non-Christian, experience in their lives the total dimensions of the human being. Christians live an integral life, a full life.

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<sup>5</sup>Knevels, p. 43.

The social catastrophes of recent years have not given much empirical validation to the humanist thesis of the infinite perfectibility and self-sufficiency of man.

"What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul." "May the Word of God guide us as we sharpen our definitions and refresh our insights. May the Spirit of God, we pray, help us to gain the will and the attitudes which we the people of the Church, shall have toward the world." We make Professor Caemmerer's words ours.

The present study was prompted by the following reasons: We live in an age of radical changes. They are taking place all over the world. Brazil takes part in this universal phenomenon. Among the many cultural changes, the secularization process has affected directly the life and role of the Christian Church in this new world. So, it seems to become a real challenge to the Church to proclaim an eternal message, an immutable message to a fast changing world.

In her attempt to announce God's text (Word), she has to understand the context. She has to be authentic (faithful to the Word) and relevant (faithful to the world in which she communicates).

Brazil is one of the most promising mission fields in the world. Brazilian Lutherans have been identified with rural Germanism for many years, but this has been changing in the last thirty years. Lutheranism in Brazil is becoming more and more Luso-Brazilian and urban. The internal immigration and rural exodus are the factors behind these changes united with a broader mission view.

To meet the need of Brazilian people we must understand better the Brazilian and the secular and magic environment of our cities, where umbanda, spiritism, and pentecostalism are growing rapidly, besides the arise of new cults.

It is our conviction that in this pagan magic, sacred, superstitions, and mysterious and also secularized and pluralistic context we Brazilian Lutherans have something extremely important to say and to share. But to be able to witness, we have to identify and understand the change processes that are going on in our culture so that we perceive the real spiritual need of this unique people.

The Church loses her vitality and reason to exist if she is not concerned with the world in which she is. Our secular age challenges us by its great need and hunger for the true God. Knowledge oriented modern man knows that he needs wisdom, the wisdom to cope and solve all his big problems and dilemmas.

As a healthy theologically conservative Church body, the Igreja Evangélica Luterana do Brasil also has to be aware of the dangerous systematic tolerance of non-Christian and non-biblical ideas which are threatening our religious context.

Also behind this study is the simple questions: What should and can we learn in order to do our service to this world better? What should Brazilian Lutherans improve in order to preach the Gospel to a majority of Brazilians who are not even truly Roman Catholic much less Christians?

In order to find out some answers to the issues, problems, challenges and questions, the writer of this study chose to study the universal phenomenon of secularization based on many different scholars; the

Brazilian culture; Boaventura Kloppenburg's view of secularization, and some responses based on Luther and some Lutheran theologians to the issues which appeared in this study.

In a concluding chapter the author summarizes findings and presents some ideas for further reflections.

The major sources used are Paul Althaus, Fernando de Azevedo, Richard R. Caemmerer, Boaventura Kloppenburg, Martin Luther, Martin H. Scharlemann, David S. Schuller, and Helmut Thielicke.

## CHAPTER II

### SECULARIZATION A UNIVERSAL PHENOMENON

A well known English philosopher when asked "Do you think life is worth while?" replied, "It all depends on what you mean by 'while.'" It is always well to pay careful attention to the definition of one's terms, especially when they have acquired emotional or evaluative overtones, and, as in this present study, this is true of the words secular, secularization, secularity, and secularism.

#### Defining the Notion

The term "secularization" has been attacked in some circles as "de-Christianization," "paganization," and the like. Some think that the term should be abandoned as confusing. But what is secularization? The most obvious definition is that secularization is "the historical process by which the world is de-divinized."<sup>1</sup> That, of course, does not really mean that God was at first present in the world and later withdrew from it. The term "de-divinized" refers to human consciousness. So, according to this definition, men are becoming less conscious of God in the cosmic order and His direct activity in this human history. But is this really happening?

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<sup>1</sup>Arnoldus Ewout Loen, Secularization: Science Without God? (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), p. 7.

For Peter Berger the term secularization refers to empirically available processes of great importance in modern Western history. But, "im Laufe der Kirchen und Kulturgeschichte seit der Reformationszeit sind verschiedene Deutungsversuche unternommen worden, um zu verstehen, was Säkularisation als geschichtlicher Prozess sei."<sup>2</sup>

The word, "secular," like the word "religious," is amongst the richest of all words in its range of meaning. It is also full of internal contradictions of which the conventional dictionary scarcely gives a hint.

The medieval Latin saeculum means "the generation" or "the age" and the usage most familiar to us is the conclusion to Gloria Patri: in saecula saeculorum. "Secularization" forms a group with secularity, secularism, and since all these words indicate a theory or process whereby things or persons are assigned to the realm of the world, they are often used indifferently. But it is useful and now becoming more common to distinguish them.

According to Jean Beyer, author of an essay on secularization written in the Roman Catholic encyclopedia Sacramentum Mundi, secularization has mostly been used for the confiscation of Church property for worldly ends, mostly by the State and against the will of the Church. It has happened again and again in the course of history, for various reasons. The secularization of the land in the sixteenth century was of peculiar economic importance.

In canon law secularization also means granting permission to a professed member of a religious order to live for the rest of his life

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<sup>2</sup>Heinrich Foerster, "Säkularisierung-Verhängnis oder Chance?" Lutherische Monatshefte, 5 (September 1966):448.

outside his monastery. Another ecclesiastical usage is found in the term "secular clergy," meaning those priests not subject to monastic vows.

Secularization is now also understood as the process whereby various elements of human life (such as opinions, customs, social forms and even things and persons) or the whole of human life cease to be determined by religion. In this sense secularization means that the world has assumed control of certain spheres of life which were formerly under the control of the Church. The institutions labelled "religious" (other worldliness) would experience a significant decline. Churches, chapels, synagogues, and temples would be playing a progressively less important role in social life. Therefore, secularization would signify the struggle to liberate the cultural life in all its forms from the church's domination. It is so the conscious opposition to the earlier attempts to subordinate man's cultural life to the church and is an attempt to subordinate the whole of man's cultural life to the world, instead.

The result, secularity, then means independence and adulthood with regard to religion, says Jean Beyer.

Secularization is also used to refer to the decline of the ecclesiastical institution, losing its wealth, its influence, its range of control and its prestige. In this sense the word is restricted to those cultures where the ecclesiastical institution stands in close relation with the wider society and its power structure, but nevertheless remains separate. The ecclesiastical institution can lose power and influence in its relationship with the State apparatus and the professions. To exemplify, we must consider the laicization of the professions, notably teaching.

David Martin, in his book The Religious and the Secular says that

"at the simplest level secularization means that there is a less frequent attendance at church services of all kinds and less religious observance in home. People pray less frequently, show no interest in appeals to the Deity, even when in danger, and make no reference to Him. In the performance of all rites there occurs greater conventionality and insincerity, and motivation is less religious than social, in the sense that religious values are less salient than public opinion. Conversion becomes less frequent and less lasting. Vocations are less valued in the specific form of call to the ministry or priesthood."<sup>3</sup>

But, is this secularization susceptible to measurement? Is religious emphasis an outward moral observance or an underlying attitude of faith and trust? Martin also points out that the word "secular" should not be used to describe an omnibus collection of notions.

Many see secularization as a process of replacement of religious faith with faith in scientific principles. This concept goes back to the beginnings of modern Western science, when scientists first dared to set aside religion's view of reality, at least temporarily, in order to consider and evaluate data objectively. Thus Copernicus and Galileo were secularists in that they repudiated the belief -- then a religious doctrine -- that the earth is the center of the universe.

When secularizing is taken as a programme, when secularity is the mainspring of a world-view, the term "secularism" is used. Secularism would then be secularizing which did not remain purely secular (as "secularity") but turned into a doctrine of salvation or an ideology.

As a category of the history of philosophy, of the diagnosis of culture and of the criticism of civilization, the concept of secularization

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<sup>3</sup>David Martin, The Religious and the Secular (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 50.

is a product of European cultural-political liberalism of the nineteenth century. It is based on an older historical legal concept of secularization.

The word "secularization" was first used as a legal term, defining certain political moves, such as had already been the object of negotiations before the Treaty of Westphalia at the end of the Thirty Years War, 1646. It was taken into canon law in the eighteenth century. When in the nineteenth century the effort was made to deprive the Church of its influence in cultural matters, especially education, as well as of its material goods, it was only natural that the term "secularization" should be extended to this programme. In France it became usual to speak of the secularization demanded for philosophy.

Secularization and secularism undoubtedly began as slogans of a movement mostly hostile to the Church, and were used in this sense by the adherents of Positivism, and Materialism. But they gradually developed a more neutral sense and were then used to describe without value-judgments the historical process of the emancipation of the world from religious tutelage -- a process which was increasingly regarded as ambivalent. To avoid ambiguity, or rather to underline the ambivalence of the terms, a distinction was made between secularization and secularism. Secularization is now understood as a more or less neutral term, while secularism is taken to be a false ideology. Behind secularism there are philosophical and ideological presuppositions, which lay the basis for action and words.

As theologians we have to ask whether these processes are to be deplored or welcomed. Part of the answer depends on the concept of the word secularization. And this language problem is not an easy one.

#### Secularization as a Historical Process

It is a phenomenon as old and as widespread as religion itself that individuals or groups or even a whole era should at times reject prevailing religious ties and seek to emancipate themselves from them. The phenomenon can take very different forms. One may recall, for instance, how the Egyptian Pharaoh Akh-en-Aton in the fourteenth century B.C. set out to abolish the traditional cults and divinities of his kingdom in favor of a more rationalistic system. Greek philosophers criticized the mythological notions of the gods in the world around them. The ethnology of religion also shows that there is no religion, even among the primitives, where the doctrines and prescriptions have not been sceptically questioned, at least at times or by individuals, and have only been retained as expedient, but not as unquestionably binding.

However, like atheism, secularism and secularization remained, till the beginning of the modern era, a rare and transient phenomenon. The explanation of the world and the interpretation of human existence was too strongly linked with mythologies. Social life was too firmly based on forms worked out under the influence of religion. It is only in the West in the modern era that secularization became widespread and persistent when as a result of a process which reaches back far into the past and is still not ended, one realm after another of human reality was taken more and more radically out of religion's sphere of influence.

And because Western culture developed from Christian roots, the process of secularization has taken the concrete form of a de-Christianization.

It is understandable that the religious elements tried to stem the process, since not only were worldly realms withdrawn from the religious sphere, but religion seemed threatened with the loss of all links with reality and hence with complete insignificance. The goal of the process seemed to be a secularism which would be the end of all religion.

The process of secularization in this conflict may be illustrated from three well-known contrasts which have been used as slogans to sum up and oppose certain worldly and religious spheres. They are faith and knowledge, Church and State, this world and the other world as the end of man. Obviously we say that faith does not eliminate knowledge or the Church does not make the State superfluous nor does the seeking of the kingdom of God absolve man from his earthly tasks. We are reminded, by the Gospel, however, that knowledge, and State are penultimate values and that the worldly sphere itself is shown to be provisional. The Gospel avoids challenging the worldly sphere on its own level and does not seek to exercise sovereignty within that sphere. This was the thought of the Christians of the first century.

In a second stage which runs from patristic to modern times the religious sphere predominated over the secular. At times religion even seemed to absorb the latter entirely. Philosophy, for instance, could at most be the ancilla theologiae. The Church, as Augustine said, was the pilgrim part of the civitas Dei, with an authority surpassing that of the State, which belongs to the civitas terrena. The State had merely to serve the Church in the role of the "secular army."

One of the consequences of this perspective was that the detachment from the world was of itself the direct and unquestionable way of realizing more perfectly the religious end of men. This attitude was challenged by objections which grew more and more widespread and finally led to the process of secularization.

In the relationship between Church and State the Church progressively lost political influence over the State, and lost it completely when it was deprived of its last remaining means of imposing strictly political pressure, the Papal States, and when the last links between "Throne" and "Altar" were shattered by the downfall of most of the royal houses. Thus this process also ended in secularity.

There was a corresponding shift in perspective as regard the end of man. Flight from the world, with its neglect of the worldly, bodily and material, and its special connotation of contempt for the sexual, ceased to be regarded as an ideal to be valued for its own sake. Instead, these realms were assigned real values of their own, secondary no doubt at first in comparison to the religious realm contrasted with them.

It became clear that neither the Church nor the orientation to an other-worldly goal were helping men to master the tasks which were incumbent on them in the worldly realm. When the Church ruled with secular power the world has not become better.

The historical process of secularization, described above summarily as the "progressive emancipation of the worldly from a religious sphere which was thus becoming meaningless, contains in fact a number of aspects which must be taken into consideration when a verdict is passed upon it."

Evaluation

Ultimately what secularization means is to be judged chiefly in the light of how religion is understood in the process, especially its relationship to the world. The conclusions about secularization are inevitably influenced by what one regards as the valuable features of religion and by their current status.

The relationship between religion and world can be polarized between two extremes. At one pole the whole world in all its functions subordinated to religion and governed by its rules and at the other religion totally orientated to the other world, with no interest or influence in the worldly realm. Of course, there are in between countless other possibilities for the relationship of religion to the world.

The intramundane or worldly task cannot be treated as secondary and as liable to come into conflict with the so called primary task of religion. The worldly task cannot come into rivalry with the religious one. The holy is realized in the profane, the religious task in the worldly one.

The rejection of religion, understood in this way, means for the world the denial of the one dimension of this world which can ground this world as a whole. A secularization of this type would not make the intramundane task easier. It would simply make it absurd, since the whole of life would be meaningless. If the true religious dimension is persistently excluded, some intramundane substitute will be looked for to give meaning to life. But then, to guarantee an ultimate meaningfulness, some worldly goal will be erected into an absolute. And this will then become

a new type of "sacred realm." Another "religion" is established and the just interests of secularization are thwarted -- unless a new process of secularization is begun, as may be seen to be happening in various atheistic systems.

T. S. Eliot in his book The Idea of a Christian Society affirms that a society that does not find its coherence in established religious norms cannot survive. A neutral society is not viable, for neutrality simply creates a vacuum into which conflicting ideologies will run, battling for supremacy. Society must be seen as a battlefield for the gods. Therefore, we must raise the important question: Does secularization create a vacuum?

For some secularization is the mark of the devil and for others it is a blessing. The controversy over the forces of secularization is a reality. The explanation for the origin and development of this process in the Christian West is not simple. Innumerable complex and multi-sided factors must be traced in any full analysis of the breakdown of the medieval synthesis of grace and nature, theology and philosophy, church and state. In varied ways the worldly emphases in the Renaissance and the Enlightenment coalesced with the industrial revolution and the rise of modern science to produce the secular spirit as it began to pervade the intellectual atmosphere in the nineteenth century: nationalism, democracy, liberalism, capitalism, socialism.

For Emil Brunner "the idea of an individual who stands on his own basis, grounded in the autonomy of one's own reason, this idea broke

first into the world of history with the Renaissance. Even the later rational Greece is unfamiliar with it."<sup>4</sup>

According to Regin Prenter, secularization's program was originally directed against the Middle Ages, and as secularization is a typical western European phenomenon, its object of attack was the western European "corpus Christianum" under the leadership of the pope. Franziskus Koenig, in his book Ateísmo e Secularização said that the rupture of the "corpus Christianum" which happened in the sixteenth century, with a consequent dilaceration of unity of the Christians, was one significant factor for the growth of religious indifferentism, opening the door to atheism.

The relation between church and world in the Middle Ages was governed by the conception of a universal theocracy, which had its most developed form in the politics of the papacy at the height of the Middle Ages. The whole reality was seen from above. God is the Lord of the universe, that is, of all reality. He rules the human sphere by two regimens, symbolized by the two swords which the disciples brought to Jesus. God rules man through the agencies of the temporal and spiritual regimens. In this system the temporal was subordinated to the eternal.

#### The Christian View of Secularization

Christians have to give their verdict on secularization from their standpoint. If Christians should applaud or reject the secularization process is debated in many circles. So, disagreement is widespread. One

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<sup>4</sup>Emil Brunner, "Secularism as a problem for the Church." International Review of Missions, 19 (October 1930):496.

says that the secular is Christianity's own progeny and that Christians should rejoice over its positive values. The second viewpoint argues that the technological revolution which has contributed so heavily to the secular Weltansicht has little to do with Christianity and is a deplorable though seemingly irreversable development. Quite pointedly an optimistic appraisal of modern society is pitted against a pessimistic understanding.

But, what does the reality of a rapidly changing world mean for the Christian? Does the new secular society offer more opportunities for finding God or does it hinder the quest? How does God and His grace enter into the secular life of modern man? Does a world that is increasingly more autonomous mean that Christ's dominion over it is coming to an end? Or is this new world in a way more receptive to Christ's gospel of love and grace and more able to live its precepts?

The increasing secularization of today's world is a fact that confronts faith with a choice. Faith can either ignore the situation, take refuge in familiar habits of theology and piety, or it can recognize that Pentecost has come and that it is necessary to understand history and to accept responsibility for it.

In the years between the two World Wars, when the phenomenon of secularization first became a matter of widespread interest and close investigation on the Christian side, it was mostly rejected out of hand as an anti-Christian movement. This was still the attitude of conservative circles after the Second World War, among circles who were concerned for the preservation of western culture. Today attitudes are more cautious and nuanced.

Protestants who tended to emphasize the negative element in secularization, acknowledged that it had a positive role to play on behalf of the Church. It was seen as helping the Church to understand itself and its task better, to see itself as homeless in the world and to avoid mistakes when translating the Gospel into the language of the profane world.

Friedrich Gogarten, also a Protestant theologian, regarded secularization as "a necessary and legitimate consequence of the Christian faith,"<sup>5</sup> though it is to be distinguished from the secularism which adopts in turn religious forms and claims. J. B. Metz, a Roman Catholic theologian, agrees with Gogarten and also points out that many modern types of atheism are based on the false assumption that Christianity implies a divinized, not a secular world. Metz concludes saying that "to Christianize the world means to secularize it."<sup>6</sup>

Herman Lubbe, Professor of Philosophy at the Ruhr University in Bochum, Germany, in his article entitled "The Theory of Secularized Society," published in Lutheran World, said that Gogarten's writings legitimized theologically the process of secularization. Gogarten shows, he says, that secularization is the "necessary and legitimate consequence of the Christian faith."<sup>7</sup> For example, Gogarten states that through faith one comprehends the world as creation, and therefore only faith makes possible a free relationship to the world without mystical fear.

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<sup>5</sup>Friedrich Gogarten quoted by Herman Lubbe in "The Theory of Secularized Society," Lutheran World, 13 (1966):375.

<sup>6</sup>Karl Rahner et al, eds., Sacramentum Mundi, Vol. 6 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 68.

<sup>7</sup>Lubbe, p. 375.

In faith the world is freed to be worldly and thus simultaneously subjected to man's intervention, for which man is responsible solely to God. In this liberation of the world to its worldliness, faith for its part is freed from the world. Thus Gogarten can say: "The relation between faith and secularization is accordingly such that faith does not exist without a secularization of the relationship of the believer to the world. (Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit, p. 141)."<sup>8</sup>

Otto Schnübbe writing on Gogarten says that for this German theologian "der christliche Glaube hat die Welt entgöttert. Der Mensch ist nicht ein Stück Welt, sondern steht zwischen Gott und die Welt. Und seine Aufgabe ist es, die Welt, die wirklich nur Welt ist und nicht Gott, zu gestalten in Verantwortung vor Gott."<sup>9</sup> According to Gogarten, secularization need not in any way be essentially a loosening of man from the Christian faith, and in the secular perspective the world is only the world.

Another positive attitude to the secularity of the modern era has become well-known under the slogan of "religionless Christianity." This position is based on the severe strictures on religion made by Karl Barth, who held that religion was "the concern of the godless." But the real launcher of the notion of a "religionless Christianity" was undoubtedly D. Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer raised many questions, some radical questions as the following: "How can we speak of God in "world" term -- or is it perhaps no longer possible to speak of him at all as hitherto?"

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<sup>8</sup>Gogarten quoted by Lubbe, p. 375.

<sup>9</sup>Otto Schnübbe, "Zukunft dieser Welt gewinnen," Lutherische Monatshefte, 9 (July 1970):365."

D. Bonhoeffer's expression "man has come of age" is very familiar to those who study secularization. In Bonhoeffer's thought mankind has passed successively from swaddling clothes, childhood, and adolescence to a stage when he can be independent and look after himself without the need to call upon his gods. In this "Mündigkeit und Freiheit" man is now in control of his own destiny. He has an adequate knowledge of his body (if not of his soul), of his private powers. He is at home with nature at last for he knows many of its secrets, physical, chemical, and electronic. In fact, the "god of the gaps," the deus ex machina, has increasingly few gaps to fill, thinks D. Bonhoeffer.

According to Samuel Miller in his book The Dilemma of Modern Belief, Bonhoeffer's basic demand is that there is no way to conceive of God or Christ without the world. "So long as Christ and the world are conceived as two opposing and mutually repellent spheres, man will be left in the following dilemma: Christ without the world or the world without Christ." "There are not two spheres," says Bonhoeffer, "but only the one sphere of the realization of Christ. And yet what is Christian is not identical with what is of the world. The natural is not identical with the supernatural or the revelational with the rational."<sup>10</sup> There is, however, a unity between the two which derives from the reality of Christ. For Bonhoeffer, "wie Gott Schöpfer ist, so soll auch der Mensch schöpferisch tätig sein. Zum Schöpferischen gehören Mündigkeit und Freiheit. Aber

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Howard Miller, The Dilemma of Modern Belief (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 15.

erst der von Christus Befreite wird wahrhaftig mundig und frei."<sup>11</sup> Jesus Christ is the center of existence. "In Him man finds his genuine manhood.

Bonhoeffer's principles were used in the "death-of-God" theology, and also misunderstood and were in danger of being made into an ideology, that of a non-secular secularism. J. A. T. Robinson's book Honest to God has many ideas from Bonhoeffer.

Among Catholic theologians, more than among Lutherans, a positive verdict on secularization is gaining ground and influence, which showed itself at Vatican II, due chiefly to the representatives of this view among the theologians attached to the Council, like Y. Congar and K. Rahner. An example is the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

Some welcome a correct secularity because it presents itself as the one remaining way of bringing the Christian message to the world of today. According to Bonhoeffer, the "religious" approach will be successful only with a few survivors from the age of chivalry or some intellectuals of doubtful sincerity. The effort to be all things to all men is not the only or the decisive motive for the acceptability of secularization. It is welcomed on its own merits, since "it results directly and authentically from the kernel of Christian revelation itself."<sup>12</sup>

Here again it should be noted that the secularization in question is to be clearly distinguished from a secularism which is an atheistic ideology, offering an answer without resource to God when asked about

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<sup>11</sup>Cited in Schnübbe, p. 365.

<sup>12</sup>H. Zahrnt quoted by Jean Beyer in "Secularization," Sacramentum Mundi, Vol. 6, p. 69.

the meaning of the whole, the purpose of life, or rejecting the question totally, by declaring it to be absurd or repressing it in silence.

A justification for secularization in the light of the Christian message is that the Old Testament already contains, as has often been pointed out, a clear orientation to secularization. Faith in creation with the claim of God to be Lord of the whole world, the doctrine that the world and all that is in it is created for man, the prohibition of making an image of God to localize his presence in this world, the extension of the promise of salvation to all nations, and so forth, paved the way for "breaching the pale of the sacral" in secularization."<sup>13</sup> This tendency came out fully in the New Testament. In the message of Christ, all the sacral realms within the world were treated as provisional or unimportant, as mere means, or even as impediments to salvation when erected into absolute values. The holy place (temple) and the holy times (sabbath) were openly relativized. Sacred customs like fasting, the rules for pure and impure, circumcision are abolished by Christ. Even the sacrificial worship and priesthood, in the sense of the Old Testament is abolished. The New Testament recognizes nothing sacred about persons, realms, things or structures. The Christian enjoys the freedom of the children of God through Christ and is lord of the world, where every thing is holy and unholy at the same time, according to how truly it is in Christ.

For H. Cox secularization emancipates man from the domination of closed world views and the control of religious rituals and values. In fact, Cox gives the 'secular believer' a good conscience by interpreting secularization as in some sense an authentic consequence of biblical faith.

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<sup>13</sup>T. Sartori quoted by Jean Beyer, p. 69.

Viewed from inside Western civilization, the original "carrier" of secularization is the modern economic process, that is, the dynamic of industrial capitalism. Modern mass media, modern mass transportation with its mobility, and modern mass literacy are vehicles or mediators of secularization. Peter Berger adds that it seems that it is industrial society in itself that is secularizing.

#### Secularization and the Problem of Plausibility - Pluralism

Peter Berger, in his book The Sacred Canopy wrote that one of the most obvious ways in which secularization has affected the man in the street is a "crisis of credibility" in religion. Secularization has resulted in a widespread collapse of the plausibility of traditional religious definitions of reality. This manifestations of secularization on the level of consciousness (subjective secularization) has its correlate on the social-structure level. Subjectively, the man in the street tends to be uncertain about religious matter. Objectively, the man in the street is confronted with a wide variety of religions and other reality-defining agencies that compete for his allegiance or at least attention, none of which is in a position to coerce him into allegiance. In other words, the phenomenon called "pluralism" is a social-structure correlate of the secularization of consciousness. Peter Berger adds saying that "it is just as possible to say that pluralism produces secularization as it is to say that secularization produces pluralism."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1967), p. 155.

"Secularization," affirms Berger, "leads to a pluralistic situation. It brings about a demonopolization of religious traditions and thus, ipso facto, leads to a pluralistic situation." For Peter Berger, through most of human history religious establishments have existed as monopolies in society - monopolies, that is, in the ultimate legitimation of individual and collective life. Religious institutions were institutions for thought and action. The religious institution defined the world. Today, says Berger, different religious groups all with the same legal status, compete with each other. Therefore it becomes increasingly difficult for the "inhabitants" of any particular religious world to remain entre nous in contemporary society. There are always "all those others."

In Peter Berger's most recent book entitled The Heretical Imperative, he reaffirms the close connection between secularization and the pluralization of plausibility structures. He says that the premodern individual was linked to his gods in the same inexorable destiny that dominated most of the rest of his existence; modern man is faced with the necessity of choosing between gods, a plurality of which are socially available to him. The transition, therefore, was from fate to choice. "If the typical condition of premodern man is one of religious certainty, it follows that of modern man is one of religious doubt."<sup>15</sup>

This difference, of course, is not absolute. There were premodern individuals who struggled with religious doubt, as there are people today with unshaken religious convictions. The difference is one of, so

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<sup>15</sup> Peter Berger, The Heretical Imperative (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1979), p. 24.

to speak, frequency distributions. The frequency of religious uncertainty in the modern situation, however, is so drastically greater that it is valid to embody it within a notion of typicality. Whatever other causes there may be for modern secularization, it should be clear that the pluralizing process has had secularizing effects in and of itself.

Burger summarizes his main ideas saying:

"In premodern situations there is a world of religious certainty, occasionally ruptured by heretical deviations. By contrast, the modern situation is a world of religious uncertainty, occasionally staved off by more or less precarious constructions of religious affirmation. Indeed, one could put this change even more sharply: For premodern man, heresy typically becomes a necessity. Or again, modernity creates a new situation in which picking and choosing becomes an imperative."<sup>16</sup>

This plurality of religious legitimations is internalized in consciousness as a plurality of possibilities between which one may choose. Ipsa facto, any particular choice is relativized and less than certain. Certainty must be dredged up from within the subjective consciousness of the individual, since it can no longer be derived from the external, socially shared and taken-for-granted world.

In this pluralistic and even competitive context religious contents become susceptible to "fashion," and, in consequence, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain them as unchangeable verities.

According to Peter Berger, the pluralistic situation introduces a novel form of mundane influences: the dynamics of consumer preference. "The crucial sociological and social-psychological characteristic of the pluralistic situation," says Berger, "is that religion can no longer be

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

imposed but must be marketed."<sup>17</sup> It is impossible, almost a priority, to market a commodity to a population of uncoerced consumers without taking their wishes concerning the commodity into consideration. This means that a dynamic element is introduced: the principle of change ability. Religious contents become subjects to "fashion." The world of consumers will prefer religious products that can be made consonant with secularized consciousness over those that cannot.

The impact of modernity on religion is commonly seen in terms of the process of secularization. In this process the spirit of self-assertion, of this worldliness, of scientific study of nature, and the assertion of human autonomy is very much stressed, and an ethical relativism normally follows. There are only truths. There are no absolute values, but only values; no absolute standard of culture, only standards of culture each of which springs from a definite historical situation. Emil Brunner says that when this relativism is taken seriously, scepticism follows very soon.

#### Secularism

David L. Edwards made a note-worthy question in his book Religion and Change: "Is this distinction between the process of secularization and the doctrine of secularism more than a clever theologian's play with words?"

We answer yes, it is more than a theologian's play. Gogartan differentiated secularism from secularization, regarding secularism as modern man's immanent understanding of being which absolutizes itself and is

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<sup>17</sup> Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy, p. 145.

in radical opposition to the Christian faith. Secularism is centered upon a radical principle of immanence, although, as W. J. Sullivan remarks, the very meaning of the term "immanent" is ambiguous in the context of secular theology.

Heinrich Foerster is correct when he states that "Säkularisation kann zum Säkularismus führen."<sup>18</sup> Daniel Martensen says that secularism cannot be classified as a school of thought, but rather, secularism is more of a parasite. We would add that it is a germ in secularization.

For Gogarten secularism describes the make-up of that world which does not allow any room for faith, and which, to say it in a concrete political way, does not protect the intellectual and religious liberties of the pluralistic order. It certainly does not positively support the church as one of the basic elements of this order, but on the contrary gives room to political ideologies whose total claim to dominion, which embraces the whole of existence, proves them to be substitutes for faith, which has been secularistically suppressed. If secularization should attempt to claim for itself that which belongs to faith, it would no longer remain secularity, but would become secularism.

Secularism appears in Gogarten's analysis to be the result of the inability of men of little faith to bear the secularity of the world. Not willing to regard the claims and requirements of this world and the principles and rules of political and social action as penultimate, they grant to them the honor of the absolute, sacralizing them, and thus

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<sup>18</sup> Foerster, p. 449.

secularistically falsifying the secularity of the world. The ideologization of political and social orders is always the indication of secularism.

The presupposition of secularism, as a main characteristic of the modern age, is that man is wholly a creature of this world, and that it is within his power to fulfil his nature and his destiny within the temporal framework of life.

It thus denies the fact, or the claim, of any transcendent moral standard of ultimate authority and given of God, and represents a conscious revolt against the Christian tradition in which Europe grew to maturity.

Secularism was also taken to mean an explicit form of scientific naturalism that expressed full allegiance to the truth of the sciences and the demands of industry, and commitment to those procedures in education and other institutions of society which would implement these scientific findings and serve these technical demands.

In fact, secularism refuses to grant credence to any assertion about man, the world, or the universe that cannot be empirically verified. Paul Van Buren, in his The Secular Meaning of the Gospel says that "unless or until a theological statement can be submitted in some way to verification, it cannot be said to have meaning."<sup>19</sup>

Reinhold Niebuhr defines the marks of secularism as a regarding of values of life and the various purposes of human activity as self-contained and self-explanatory and self-sufficing. It allows nations to

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Van Buren quoted by Gordon R. Lewis in Testing Christianity's Truth Claims (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), p. 15.

express themselves without reference to a law beyond themselves and, if it discerns laws and purposes in history, it regards them as 'natural' laws which have their beginnings and their ends in the natural process itself.

A pluralistic society is secular, but it is not secularistic, for a secularistic society is one in which secularism has become the official world view. Secularism has its own distinctive dogmas which its adherents seek to impose upon society as a whole through the public institution. Hence, a secularistic society would be just as much opposed to authentic pluralism as any other form of establishment.

Secularism appears actually mainly in two forms. Either it sets up some earthly factor, an idea, a nation, a race or a social order as the highest value to which it subordinates everything else, if necessary by force. This ends in totalitarianism. Or it sees the relativity of all earthly things, but fails to see that they are held in stewardship for God. Then it ends in nihilism. So, secularism is in fact an ideology with a 'soteriology' for the whole world.

"The autonomy announced by secularism is the world's misunderstanding of itself. The heteronomy which clericalism would like to exercise is the Church's misunderstanding of the world. In clericalism the Church usurps the place of the world: in secularism the world usurps the place of the Church. The new understanding of secularization draws a distinction between Church and world, but without divorcing them completely. They are rather bound together in a ceaseless process in which the world is constantly renewed by the experience of faith, and in which the experiences of the world are taken up and assimilated into the faith of the church."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> H. H. Walz, "Christendom in a Secularized World," Ecumenical Review, 10 (April 1958):282.

### Humanism

Humanism is a tricky word. It has many meanings. Claude Geffre remarks that like all words ending in "ism," humanism is a late coinage whose meaning has remained vague. In literature it denotes the Renaissance movement which took from the Greek and Latin writers an image of man as learned and moral, capable of regenerating a civilization and purging it of its "barbarism." Philosophically, the word denotes those doctrines which stress the dignity of the human person: "Humanism," wrote Sartre at the end of the Second World War, "may be understood to mean a theory which takes man as its end and highest value. There is a difference between these two senses, but perhaps also an important connection."<sup>21</sup> Man is the measure of all things.

Christians are humanists in the sense that they also recognize the value of man. Man is so much worthy for God that He send His only Son to die on the cross for this man. No other religion gives such value to man as Christianity. Thus, we can speak of a Christian humanism, and all Christians are humanists because they see man as God does. The biblical message supplies the necessary foundations for our confidence in the worth of human life.

We also are humanists as Christians by defending and promoting all moral and ethical values that preserve human race from destruction.

However, the humanism described by Sartre is an atheistic humanism, a "Weltanschauung" in opposition to Christianity's truth-claims. Here the human is stressed in opposition to the divine, and becomes an

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<sup>21</sup>Jean Paul Sartre quoted by Claude Geffre in Concilium, Humanism and Christianity (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), p. 17.

ideology, with presuppositions and conclusions. This humanism is also called secular or scientific humanism.

In secular humanism man is by himself. Jacques Maritain differentiates this antropocentric humanism from the teocentric humanism of Christianity. The use of reason and scientific method are two important aspects of this way of life.

The antropology in secular humanism is the central issue of its evaluation from a Christian perspective. Christianity sees man as being dependent on God for his existence; responsible before God; made for a unique relationship with God; a fallen, sinful, and rebel creature, and a being that depends on God not only for his existence, but also for his natural moral sense, for his moral inadequacies. For the humanist this Christian view of man is an affront to human dignity. For him man not only is the center but the ultimate value. Man is endowed with autonomy, maturity, adulthood, interiority, and enormous evolutionary possibilities. He denies any appeal to the transcendent or the sacred and regards these as enemies of human freedom.

This 'faith' in man reached a crest in the nineteenth century. This was the age of optimism. Man was content. He had taken the measure of his own stature and powers. He was within sight of the goal of full control of himself, his world, and his destiny. History, however, refused man's pretensions. This 'faith' was rudely, deeply, profoundly shaken by the experience of World War I. And this was followed by the experience of the economic depression, of World War II, and, in particular of the Nazi atrocities. History refused to allow Western man to go on.

with his work of self-apotheosis. Western man could no longer see himself as he had in the nineteenth century or project his future as he then did.

Secularism or that atheistic humanism in many ways represents a reappearance of the nineteenth-century understanding of man. It offers the myth of noble innocence, the promise of fulfillment, the prophecy of a secular and serene future with a strong emphasis on self-reliance and a scientific mode of thought. This secular humanism (also called scientific humanism) has an antipathy for the idea of the supernatural. Humanists say that men have grown and there is no more room for a belief in miracles in this world.

Talking about man's sense of worth and significance, David Schuller mentions in his book Emerging Shapes of the Church that

"Sigmund Freud once delineated the three deathblows delivered to man's sense of worth and significance. The first blow was the cosmological one, struck by Copernicus, when man was forced to acknowledge that the earth, far from the center of the universe, was little more than a bit of a cosmic dust. The second blow was biological, struck by Charles Darwin by showing that man was nothing more than a higher kind of animal. The final blow was psychoanalytical, struck by Freud himself when he showed man to be basically an irrational creature, the pathetic result of storming inner impulses and conflicts."<sup>22</sup>

The biblical view of man contrasts sharply with the atheistic humanist view. But, the point is not if the Christian view affronts human dignity or not, but the question is what is the truth about man. Who is he truly? It does not matter if we like the truth or not. If Christian diagnosis about man is correct, it is an affront to truth to deny or ignore it. It may not be comfortable to know the truth, but that does not change the truth in a lie. The option is not between a humanism that

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<sup>22</sup>David S. Schuller, Emerging Shapes of the Church (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 20.

respects man and a Christian religion that insults man. The question is which view of man, which diagnosis, is true?

### The Secular Man

We live in an era characterized by some new important cultural aspects. Western world, particularly the developed or in development countries are influenced by a "knowledge explosion." Books and books are being written on the most different areas. Man has a lot of information available through readings. In the bookstores and libraries we can see the most interesting titles, and also the most strange titles.

Another new aspect of our modern life is the "communication explosion," specifically the new electronic communication, which collectivizes those who come under its influence. Millions of people simultaneously are under the influence of one man. People are now more exposed to people, and this has its effects on people's living and even on theology.

In the last years there has also been a radical view of man himself. The psychological dimensions of man are becoming more and more important in our days. The psychic awareness is now recognized generally. Psychology has become an important subject and we are learning that man is not always rational in his behavior. Human being acts and reacts below the threshold of conscious motivation. The subconscious often determines what we do, and man may not always be able to identify the reasons for his actions. Mass communication manipulates these subconscious dimensions of man for non-human purposes sometimes.

Modern man, undoubtedly, remains man, but he has a "new" interpretation of the world. He lives in a world where the only certainty is that there is no uncertainty.

Peter Berger's comments on secularization and modern man are that probably for the first time in history, the religious legitimations of the world have lost their plausibility not only for a few intellectuals and other marginal individuals but for broad masses of entire societies, and thereby the way was opened for a variety of secularized soteriologies.

Karl Jaspers said that our world has lost its naivete. In his book Faith in a Secular Age, Colin Williams considers that man now desires and is determined to think from below, through the wisdom that he himself can acquire through observation and exploration. "Man," he says, "has increasingly thrown off the swaddling clothes of metaphysics and religious control. We live in a secular society. It has been on the way for centuries, but in our days that its hour has struck. The ferment has been in the minds of few, but now it is spreading to the masses throughout the world."<sup>23</sup>

Modern man, thinks George B. Murray, does not live at the boundaries. He is not always worried about death, the other world, personal misfortunes, suffering, guilt, evil, and ultimate questions. He feels that there are more important things than bothering about individual salvation and a global metaphysical explanation. So he is "non-religious," Not that individual salvation is not important or that metaphysics is ultimately foolish but that modern man just does not have a psychological need to keep these features in the forefront of his consciousness anymore. Men are self-dependent today, modern knowledge and technology have given him a security that he never had before.

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<sup>23</sup> Colin Wilbur Williams, Faith in Secular Society (London: C. A. Watts & Co., 1966), p. 21.

Autonomy is the key term for secular man. He is really determined to be a man for himself, to find his own way, to come to his own conclusions, to be self-sufficient. Secularism, as we already mentioned, is a logical systematization of the ideology that explains man and the world by reference of themselves alone. The principle of secularism implies the self-sufficiency of reason and the possibility of indefinite progress within the world. With the aid of reason and technique man has no limits. Sartre once said the "human existence has no fixed nature. Man is what he chooses to be. He is free to choose his own being. Every person is completely free to make of himself what he wills without reference to God or His will."<sup>24</sup>

H. N. Hart in his notes on the secular mind writes: "From the unicellular organism to jelly fish, to reptile, to animals, to man. After many more mutations or accidents, finally emerged the secular thinker, the highest type, conscious, intelligent and the measure of all things."<sup>25</sup> Much of his superstitious nonsense stems from his acceptance of the doctrine of original goodness of the prophet Rousseau. He does not believe in the validity of logic either. He may say, "Oh logic. What's logic?" Modern man hates a definition of terms. For Hart

"secular mind is dogmatic, credulous, submissive to unknown authority, agnostic only in the one realm where faith is rational. Despiser of freedom and always relativist. He thinks he will bring brotherhood of man without the fatherhood of God. His thinking, or lack of it, paves the way for nihilism, for Satan himself."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Lewis, p. 16.

<sup>25</sup>H. N. Hart, "Notes on the Secular Mind," Catholic World, 159 (July 1949):269.

<sup>26</sup>Hart, p. 271

"He reeks with social-mindedness," continues Hart. "That disinterested love called charity is not for him. His mind is so full of suffering humanity all over the map that he never knows his neighbor's child is ill and dying. He is so full of statistics on the number of Negroes with tuberculosis that he does not know that the wife of his elevator man has the disease and that her three children need help."<sup>27</sup>

He actually believes he can love Humanity without loving human beings, remarks Hart. Chances are that one of those who passed by on the other side in the story of the Good Samaritan was on his way to deliver a moving homily on intercultural relations and how to love one's neighbor.

Modern man wants to interpret himself. The authority most highly regarded by him is the authority of conscience. According to Brunner, this inward emancipation began with Renaissance and reached its climax in the Enlightenment.

In David Martin's thought modern man exists only "de fide," that is, only in the mind of modern theologians strongly influenced by sociology. His statement makes us conscious that the word "secular man" can mean many things to different people.

It is true that modern urbanized and secularized man is lacking traditional religious sense. He has relatively little reaction to what was formerly sacred time and sacred space. He has a different mentality. But, it is also true that what modern man sometimes rejects is a caricature of the Biblical picture of revelation. "The statement that the Gospel no longer speaks to modern man," says Arnold Loen, "seems highly generalized."<sup>28</sup> The Gospel must be so presented that modern man can understand it, but the Gospel's categories cannot be adjusted to those in

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<sup>27</sup>Hart, p. 270.

<sup>28</sup>Loen, p. 161.

which modern autonomous man does think. Why have the categories of the Gospel to conform to the categories of modern self-sufficient man? Why not the categories of "modern man" conform to the categories of the Gospel? Modern man's presuppositions and categories are held as inviolable, dogmatically true. So secularization becomes secularism.

Emil Brunner found it necessary first to develop the basic point that modern man is first and foremost man. We must face the fixed qualities of man, his creatureliness, his dependence on God -- whether recognized or not -- his ultimate responsibility as a creature. He is not autonomous; he is not a god; he can be understood only in relationship.

The real depth of his problem eludes crass over-simplification which reduced him to animal existence, a stomach, a brain, or a set of sex organs. And although psychiatry, sociology, and biology are highly helpful, they remain partial disciplines that can describe but one segment of the whole reality of man.

When man reached the highest point in his scientific exploration and projected a future in which his science and technology would dwarf even the new frontiers of tomorrow, he felt less God-like than ever in his history. From the lips of his poets and dramatists there issues the anguished cry of nothingness. He can feel himself a nonentity in the vastness of the cosmos (contingent). He despairs to find meaning in his life. "A soldier with no zest for fighting, a poet with no zeal for writing, an architect without plan; the prototype of modern man." So has John Cooper described his condition.

Even in the secular atheists we can discover the human passion to transcend oneself and the deep sense of cosmic contingency. Jean Paul

Sartre, says Clark Pinnock in his book Reason Enough, "finds it distressing that God does not exist because it leaves us stranded in space without a home or a goal to strive for." Sartre once stated that "God is silent and that I cannot possibly deny -- everything in me calls for God and that I cannot forget." Even in those who set their face against God the awareness of Who is missing, as Sartre has noted, is discernible.

Modern man, so as all men in the world, in the light of the Scripture, was created in the image of God. Man is the loving and special creation from the hand of God. But this creature is not independent. While dependent on God, he is given a degree of freedom no other creature has. He is to respond to God freely. He is a son. He has freedom, but his self-determination has limits set by God, the C R E A T O R. Man is free to make decisions -- to live responsibly before God.

Also, according to Scripture, man is a sinner, a rebellious and idolatrous creature, who did not let God be God. So, the life of man now bears an inner contradiction, and the perversion of faith and love shows in all of man's relationships. His gentility is a thin veneer over a harsh nature which seeks the good primarily for self. Sin in fact means that man is cut off from God, but he must worship some god. He creates gods in own image. Human history is a cemetery of gods created by man.

#### Religion in a Secularized World

Rubem Alves, a Brazilian Protestant theologian, says in his book Enigma da Religião that "religion is not a thing, nor an object that can be submitted to the most rigorous analysis. The essence of religion is

not an object, but a relationship."<sup>29</sup> "Religion and faith," affirms Friedrich Herr in his The Intellectual History of Europe, "are the strongest forces of change in the world."<sup>30</sup> No man ever lived without faith. Even the skeptic believes in the reality of his own existence and of his doubt.

Man is incurably religious. He has an inerradicable sense of deity. He will worship something, and believe in something. All primitive societies have a religious system. Even the so-called modern atheists system have their idolatry, like the idolatry of Stalin, and Mao-Tse-tung. Paul Tillich holds that all men were religious (though most were idolatrous), insofar as some ultimate presided in their lives.

In fact, people are more than genes and cells. The world is more than black earth, blue sky, turquoise water, and green foliage. There is a "religious" element in the world or universe that man senses and tries to apprehend. The objective reality can't satisfy the deepest aspirations of human heart. Man's infinite anxiety, the most infinite it may be, only finds finites and only creates, in its transforming praxis, finites. Man is always again motivated to create, dreaming with worlds which are more and more human and brotherly. He projects utopias of total happiness and fulfillment. But only the Infinite satisfies an infinite anxiety.

The word 'religion,' according to Cantwell Smith, in its modern sense, is a product of modern West. The Latin 'religio' did not have full meaning of the modern 'religio,' although it is the origin of our word.

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<sup>29</sup> Rubem Alves, O Enigma da Religião (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Cited in Martin, p. 5.

Many of the names like Buddhism, Hinduism, and so forth were developed by Westerners in the nineteenth century.

Secularization and religion are very close related, since secularization is, according to Eugene Meland, "a condition of life that steadily invades the process of society and family life, feeding upon the apathy and indifference of people to historic sensibilities and religious principles." Secularization is a trend in which people evidence less and less interest in sacred and supernatural phenomena, as religious doctrines and institutions lose prestige and influence, with the possible ultimate result of a religionless society emerging. It is also a process of increasing differentiation between the religious and the secular (nonreligious) spheres of life, resulting from increasing specialization within society as it grows and becomes more urbanized and industrialized.

David Martin, however, thinks that "it is not true that secularization has been shown empirically to be a master trend of social development." What is true, he says, is that given careful definitions of "secular" notoriously an omnibus word - some shifts can be discerned away from the "religious" over particular periods of time in given cultures under specified circumstances. For instance, if religion is identified as stressing the limits on human achievement then men in advanced industrial societies have become less religious. Or if it is defined as regular institutional participation then in specified societies undergoing particular types of social change a decline in "religion" can be documented. Or again, if secular is defined as the making autonomous decisions and exclusive reliance on the empirical mode as a basis for decision, then one can inquire to what extent this is true.

Secularization means essentially that religion is less important today than it was in the past. In other words, a decline of religion in general. But a recent decline of interest in the institutional form of religion in the beginning of a trend, and that does not necessarily imply that religion, that is, the phenomena itself -- is fast becoming a relic. In fact, the contrary may be the case.

The distinction between religion and the institutional forms of religion is important when trying to assess the secularization question. For much rests on how religion is defined -- whether in terms of its "essence," or as a particular traditional package of beliefs and principles (such as "our Judeo-Christian heritage"), or in terms of the vitality of its institutional forms (membership, attendance, new construction, and so forth). Ronald Johnstone remarks that no consensus so far as a definition of religion is concerned has been achieved.

Edward Schillebeeckx, in his book World and Church says that he does not believe in the absence of religion from the working-class world, although he did believe in its falling away from the church as an institution.

In his book Ateísmo e Secularização, Karl Rahner mentions C. G. Jung's statement that all human conflicts which appear in a man over his 35 years, has, conscious or unconsciously, a religious cause.<sup>31</sup> So, if we agree or not with this statement, there is no doubt, however, that religion plays an important role in human life.

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<sup>31</sup>Karl Rahner, Ateísmo e Secularização (Caxias do Sul: Edições Paulinas, 1970), p. 72.

Like other words we already discussed, the word religion has the most different meaning for many different people. Karl Barth, for instance, in his critique of religion interprets religion as "man's reaching out towards God; as man's projection of his thoughts about God together with the cultic forms that inevitably build up around this religious up-reach." This religiosity Barth sees as one of man's greatest temptations, for men are tempted to trust in this work of their own hands and to confer eternal significance upon it.

D. Bonhoeffer was greatly influenced by Karl Barth. He saw a paradox in religion and Christianity. He also regarded religions a perversion of true faith, and eschewed a God that one prays to in time of need, a deus-ex-machina substitute for one's own involvement in the world. He affirmed that mankind was heading for a religionless age.

For Friedrich Schleiermacher religion was essentially a quality of human consciousness and not a doctrine matter. He emphasized "religious experience," understood as a "feeling" for the infinite, or a feeling of absolute dependence. All dogmatic formulations are relativized on this basis. Schleiermacher was not much concerned about a definite content of the religion. He proposed a natural religion, in which reason and the emotions will be satisfied. Schleiermacher is the forerunner of protestant liberalism.

Psychologism, be it of a Freudian, new-Freudian, or Jungian variety, allows the interpretation of religion as a "symbol system" that "really" refers to psychological phenomena. Freud, for example, saw religion as the greatest illusion which tyrannizes men because of their neuroses. Freud's thought is that religion arises from an immature wish

fulfillment. Faith in God has its roots in a cosmic childish, neurosis. God is mere wish-fulfillment.

Clark Pinnock in his book called Reason Enough reacts to this kind of statements. He says:

"It is still quite common to hear the charge that religious beliefs and experience are little more than a projection of the human psyche conditioned by wishful thinking. But this objection cuts both ways. If belief in God can be a wish projection, the denial of God can be the product of wishful thinking too. Unbelief may also favor certain of our wishes, particularly the desire to be our own boss and run the whole show. The non-existence of God can seem quite attractive to those who wish to live without regard to divine sovereignty. The fact that God meets certain human needs and wishes does not prove that he does not exist."<sup>32</sup>

Historical materialism is inextricably interwoven with secularization. Karl Marx, influenced by Feuerbach's view of religion, called upon the toiling masses to forget the vain promises of religious illusions and construct a new secular order without God. Religion in Marx's view had to be unmasked as a projection of man and his social relationship. For Marx religion was not an opium for the people, but the opium of the people, Das Opium des Volks. He does not believe that religion was created by a class of profiteers and clergy, but that it is the narcotic of the people. People themselves, take this sedative in order to bear their misery. Religion, segregated by misfortune, carries hope, and men need hope. But this hope is false. And this religious evasion hinders human development in such a way that, according to Lenin, it is impossible to understand an effective struggle in favor of a higher order without first destroying religious sentiment.

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<sup>32</sup>Clark H. Pinnock, Reason Enough (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1980), p. 52.

It was not Karl Marx who first compared religion with opium. In 1838 Feuerbach, influenced by Hegel, had already used this comparison and had transformed religion in anthropology, in which God is a projection of human heart. For Marxism religion is a kind of a "spiritual vodka." Essentially, Marxism affirms its "faith" in man, and considers religion an opiate in the sense of offering compensation for man's failure to attain his full potential not only materially, but also intellectually and emotionally. Religion makes a person satisfied with the phantasy of eventually becoming an "Ueberschensch," with the result that he becomes an "Ummensch," when what he should do is to engage in the struggle to become a Mensch. Man has to overcome his alienation and act through his own initiative to change the adverse circumstances which inhibit and frustrate the realization of his genuine self. There must be Selbsttätigkeit.

Once Emperor Wilhelm I said that "people must be held to religion." He was saying that he had not any regard for religion personally, but the masses need something like this, since, after all, religion makes good subjects. This is an ideological abuse of religion. Affirm religion to use its pragmatic by-products is definitely an abuse, a degeneration.

In face of this misunderstanding and misuse of religion, Helmut Thielicke is correct in questioning if the adjective "Christian" is not in many cases nothing more than a covering for the wolf's paws. Didn't many phenomena of secularism appear because men perceived the ultimate intentions of some "religious defenders" or their religious institutions? Certainly this "ideologized religion" could be used as opium for the people. And it was and still is being used.

In sociologist's perspective religion has an important function in society. It expresses the unity of society, but it also helps to create that unity. It is for this reason that the anthropologist or sociologist may state that the major function of religion is the integration of social action, with varying phraseology according to his particular school. E. Durkheim summarized his by saying that religion is really social.

One of Peter Berger's fundamental points is that society by virtue of its order and predictability protects the individual from the terror of chaos and meaninglessness. The ultimate authentication for the societal reality derives "from more powerful sources than the historical effects of human beings. . . . Religion is the human enterprise by which a sacred cosmos is established." He concludes: man has a universal need for religion.

Bertrand Russel expressed his view of religion saying that "the person who needs religion to bolster up his own purpose is a timorous person, and I cannot think as well of him as of the man who takes his chances, while admitting that defeat is not impossible."<sup>33</sup>

Is religion truly on the way out? Are churches, chapels, synagogues and temples playing a progressively less important role in social life? It looks like that is not the case of the most developed and technologized country of the world, the United States of America. Churches are flourishing institutions in this country. David L. Edwards made a remark:

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<sup>33</sup> Cited in John Cogley, Religion in a Secular Age (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968), p. 116.

"most people, for most of the time, have preferred to concentrate not on unseen powers but on the everyday powers of earth and flesh and mind. Religion, like music, has been a bond of unity for human societies, and a basic religious sense, like a simple pleasure in tunes, is human; but a deeply religious sense, like a deep appreciation of music, has been for the few. Most history, including most religious history, was secular."<sup>34</sup>

The nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was marked by an evolutionary optimism. Occupied with the thought mold of evolution, analysts of religion in the latter half of the nineteenth century sought to determine the origin of religion. Some of them looked for its origin in the spectacular phenomena of nature, such as storms, the sun, the sea, or powerful animals. Others dealt with the dreams of men, in which the dead reappeared. Still others decided that tricks of language were important in the development of religion. Most of these analysts tried to find the origins of religion in individual experiences. Some thought that religion could also be looked upon as a tool for manipulating superstitious people. Edward B. Tylor recognized that every primitive society seemed to have a religious system. William Robertson Smith, Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Lucien Levy-Bruhl began to see religious action as a social phenomenon. Cautious anthropologists and sociologists moved away from any considerations of ultimate origins of religion and seem to look for an answer to the question of the importance of religion in modern societies.

Fifty years ago, Teilhard de Chardin was fearful about the real decomposition of humanity that comes with the disappearance of religious feeling. Total secularization, he complained, is all too likely to

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<sup>34</sup>David Lawrence Edwards, Religion and Change (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p. 19.

cause an outcropping of selfishness and human pettiness. Emil Brunner saw modern "Immanentism," the exclusive rational approach toward all things, as causing the loss of the concept of human dignity and responsibility, which ultimately must lead to a totalitarian structure of society.

Some affirm that secularization is an increasing "privatization" of faith -- the process of compartmentalizing the religious and the secular, of regarding religion as a mystical, personal, experiential phenomenon that one does not share with others. Berger agrees with those who say that religion is becoming more and more a privatized matter. It is also a matter of the "choice" or "preference" of the individual or the nuclear family. Says Peter Berger:

"The values pertaining to private religiosity," are typically, irrelevant to institutional context other than the private sphere. For example, a businessman or politician may faithfully adhere to the religiously legitimated norms of family life, while at the same time conducting his activities in the public sphere without any reference to religious values of any kind."<sup>35</sup>

The world-building potency of religion is restricted to nuclear family. Since the modern family is notoriously fragile as an institution, this means that religion resting on this kind of plausibility structure is of necessity a tenuous construction. A religious preference can be abandoned as readily as it was first adopted.

Ronald Johnstone maintains that privatization of religion need not mean that religion is not in evidence in people's action, attitudes, and decisions. Many former public manifestations of religion may have been ritualistic, pro forma actions that signified little and influenced

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy, p. 134.

people even less. Johnstone quotes Thomas Luckmann who affirms that in the literal sense, the process of secularization begins when religion becomes a specialized function along with education, economics, and politics.

In our secular pragmatism, says Berger, religion can more easily be marketed if it can be shown to be "relevant" to the private life, than if it is advertised as entailing specific applications to the large public institutions.

For the medieval man, religion was not an isolated theological system to which he subscribed but, as William Barret said, "a solid psychological matrix surrounding the individual's life from birth to death."

While admitting this fundamental change, the most recent sociological investigations describe our culture as still heavily under the influence of religion. Religious organizations, especially in North American society, remain vigorous and influential. There are, of course, statistics which document certain forms of institutional decline, but the central point is that the secularizing theologian often just doesn't like institutions. Like most of us most of the time -- indeed like the typical 'modern man' -- he decides what he likes and then rustles up the evidence. Show him any evidence on the other side and he flatly tells you the polls must be wrong, people must be lying, or it just doesn't conform to his experience. He knows all before he studies. He knows the churches are dying, so . . . they are dying, in his opinion and understanding.

Religious institutions are very often tempted to exercise tutelage over people, although the tension between religious authority and the modern man's acceptance of personal freedom have long been evident.

In his book The varieties of Religious Experience William James says that "the fact that we can die, that we can be ill at all, is what perplexes us; the fact that we now for a moment live and are well is irrelevant to that perplexity. We need a life not correlated with death, a health not liable to illness, a kind of good that will not perish, a good in fact that flies beyond the goods of nature."<sup>36</sup>

Religion will persist into the future because it speaks to our need of worship. We finish this discussion on religion and secularization with Peter Schaffer's play entitled Equus, used by Clark H. Pinnock in his comments about the unsecular man.

A teen-aged boy who had become attached to the symbol of Jesus in a picture on the wall had an atheistic father who was determined to put an end to such nonsense. In place of the picture of Jesus, the father hangs the picture of a horse, hoping to divert his son's attention away from the one and onto the other. He is so successful that the boy begins to worship horses.

Whereupon the father sends him off to the psychiatrist to help the boy get rid of the horse fixation. But this does not happen because the psychiatrist turns out to be jealous of the religious experience the boy enjoys in relation to it. He can see what joy it gave him and what a positive influence it was in his life. The boy had something to live for. How could he rob the patient of the worship which made him a more complete human being? The message that comes across is that worship

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<sup>36</sup>Cited in Cogley, p. 117.

defines a man, and the one who does not worship something greater than himself begins to shrink.

### Science and Secularization

Does scientific knowledge make all religion useless? This question could have been answered easily by the heralds of the new era in the late nineteenth century. It was an epoch which, except for a disgruntled few, believed man was moving forward in all important ways. Men no longer looked back to a Golden Age. Forward lay Utopia. Science was coming into its own. Man's problems were to be solved by the magic of experimentation. This stage would not come about immediately, but progress was inevitable. Disease, poverty, crime, illiteracy, and ugliness would disappear along with the jungle and désert, unexploited ores and primitive men, the ox and the manual laborer.

Man believed that superstition could not withstand the attacks of scientific truth as it had stubbornly resisted the arguments of reason. Magic, too, would weaken and die. Then religion, that last, great edifice of systematic irrationality, would crumble. The scientific forces would certainly destroy the religious forces. Science was pointing to the future.

In contrast to this optimism and "scientific faith," Albert Einstein once humbly confessed that science does not know, and never can know, what matter is. Science in his understanding is solely concerned with how matter behaves.

For Clark Pinnock "the history of science is the history of disagreements far more than is the history of religion."<sup>37</sup> He remembers also how much scientists disagree about their theories, and how quickly books in science become out-of-date.

For Colin Williams science brought a progressive freedom from ecclesiastical control. As science gained its autonomy and broadened its scope to more and more facets of life, it brought with it the gradual removal of more and more institutions from the control of the Church. Economic institutions (market prices, interest rates), schools and hospitals were gradually removed from the power of the clergy and the institutional control of the church.

No doubt that a person growing up in this nuclear age received and receives different input at the cultural level than his fellow religious of 1925. This input helps shape his fundamental attitude, his stance toward things and situations.

Reinhold Niebuhr making some comments on the relationship between science, religion, and secularization says that "the most basic characteristic of the last two centuries of cultural history is that the advance of science has destroyed the religious matrix of all culture which existed in the middle ages and has thus led to an all-pervading secularization of life."

Leslie Dewart, a Canadian Roman Catholic philosopher affirms that the persistent religion-science tension in contemporary life is not based on the content of either modern science or theology, but that it is

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<sup>37</sup> Pinnock, p. 51.

basically founded on the scientific mindset culture of the day, as medieval men were shaped by the theological culture of their day. Orrin E. Klapp remarks that "the thought-modes of modern man have become so mechanical that he is frequently insisting that even social systems and human beings act like machines."<sup>38</sup>

About this mechanical thinking, Brunner thinks that the man who is perpetually occupied with machines comes to think mechanically. He whose life flows along as a domination over things can think in no other category except that of object.

Consequences of our scientific thinking are in the words of Emerson W. Shideler in The Meaning of the Death of God, when he says that "our lives are no longer in the hands of God but in the hands of medical technologists and the research specialists who are seeking cures of the fatal diseases which still take us off."<sup>39</sup> Science, according to Rubem Alves, began to destroy. Where men saw before the miraculous powers in action, science only verifies the presence of exact and immutable laws. All things are now explained in terms of immanent laws of nature itself. "Science," says Alves, "created an habitation problem for God."<sup>40</sup>

The man of today and tomorrow is the man of technology, of automation and cybernetics, who in some way fashions his own environment.

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<sup>38</sup> Orrin E. Klapp, Ritual and Cult (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1956), p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Emerson W. Shideler quoted by Martin Cyril D'Arcy in Humanism and Christianity (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1969), p. 84.

<sup>40</sup> Alves, p. 9.

Jacques Ellul, a French Calvinist theologian appears to sense elements of the demonic in contemporary technology. Other theologians held that as cultures have become technologized, they have lost their souls.

It is clear that science does not answer all life's questions. In his book Experimentar Deus Hoje, Frei Betto, a Brazilian Roman Catholic theologian quotes L. Wittgstein in his Tractatus logico-philosophicus where he affirms that "even when we will have answered all possible scientific questions, we will perceive that our vital problems have not even been touched."<sup>41</sup>

Science is an important tool in man's hand, but man also has to be aware that "the very structure of the technological order possesses a logical strictness and a rational self-evidence which seem to sterilize the tender seeds of freedom," says A. T. Leeuwen.<sup>42</sup>

Early man's ignorance of the structure of physical reality did not really serve his faith. It only confused and eventually endangered it. The "God of (physical) explanation" so popular in former ages was not as He actually is. God is not a substitute for physics nor physics for God.

Science can only measure or describe empirical phenomena. It cannot demonstrate now or in the future if such religion is correct or false. Science also cannot measure the height of a Divine Being. "It cannot," says William Goode, "even challenge its existence, for there are no empirical techniques to prove the nonexistence of nonempirical

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<sup>41</sup>Frei Betto e outros, Experimentar Deus Hoje (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1974), p. 139.

<sup>42</sup>Arend Theodoor van Leeuwen, Prophécy in a Technocratic Era (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. 14.

phenomena. It must, rather consider it scientifically irrelevant and maintain an agnostic attitude toward such phenomena, and admit the irrelevance of its techniques to such an investigation."<sup>43</sup> Science, continues Goode, can present facts and structures of facts; it cannot, however, answer the moral question if religion is good or not. Science cannot play prophet and claim empirical truth for its domain. There is a complex relationship, according to Goode, between values and scientific action. There is a fundamental distinction between scientific judgments and value judgments. The former tells us what is, and can be proved or disapproved empirically. The value judgment tells us what ought to be, and cannot be proved or disapproved empirically.

Christians have to be reminded of a significant truth that God is not against science. On the contrary, we should be the ones who understand correctly the role and importance of science. Otto Schnübbe, in an interesting article wrote:

"Carl Friedrich von Weizsäcker's These über die moderne Naturwissenschaft sagt uns dass nur durch einen christlichen Glauben konnte die Naturwissenschaft entstehen, weil der christliche Glaube die Natur entgottet hat. Dadurch ist die Natur nicht mehr tabu, sondern kann erforscht werden im Sinne des biblischen Satzes: "Machet die Erde euch untertan."<sup>44</sup>

The Christian faith helped man to look to his world as an it that he could manipulate. Post-Christian thought, however, considers the world devoid of divinity, without one mark of the Creator.

Thomas F. O'Dea states that

"paganism in its deepest intuitions regarded the world with religious reverence. Even when philosophy replaced the cruder polytheism, a

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<sup>43</sup>William J. Goode, Religion Among the Primitives (Glencoe: The Free Press, Publishers, 1951), p. 23.

<sup>44</sup>Schnübbe, p. 365.

soul immanent within the world, although beyond appearances, characterized a cosmos seen as essentially divine. Aristotle, regarding biological data with an awe not unlike that which Rudolf Otto attributed to the experience of the Holy, exclaimed: 'Even here gods are present.' Nor does Plato clearly abandon this view for the idea of a transcendent Creator who creates ex-nihilo. It may even be doubted that materialists like Epicurus were atheists in the modern sense. As Erich Frank said: 'Atheism, as we understand it today, was unknown in Greek philosophy; for such radical negation of God is possible only when the world has lost its divine character, when God is comprehended as a Being beyond this world--as He was comprehended for the first time in the Jewish-Christian religion. Only where God is essentially apart from the world does restriction to this world mean a denial of everything divine.'<sup>45</sup>

According to O'Dea, the divinization of the world, so basic to paganism, is precisely what is abhorred in the Old Testament. The Jewish consciousness of the "radical otherness" of God in relation to His creation, together with the Jewish affirmation of the direct intervention of the Transcendent Other in the affairs of men, introduces a new religious perspective. Hebrew horror of idolatry was at bottom an acute awareness of the blasphemy of attributing divinity in any form to creation (Deut. 4:19).

Judaism insisted, according to O'Dea, upon an "essential" relation to God, but the world remained chiefly as something to be used and mastered, the object of a "technical" relation.

Christianity continued this Judaic attitude, regarding God and one's fellow men as "Thou" and the world fundamentally as "it." For Christians and Jews, the creation remained essentially good, but it was, in Augustine's terms, something to be used. Therefore, we can say that Judaism and Christianity de-divinized the world. They reduced it to a prosaic object, to an "it."

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<sup>45</sup>Thomas F. O'Dea, "Secularization of Culture," Commonweal, 44 (April 1956), pp. 67-68.

No doubt that Old Testament's message is for the destruction of all the idols, all the images of false gods and it also gave the world to man to subdue. From these facts, the American theologian Altizer concludes that "the Christianity that we know is the product of almost two thousand years of secularization, for secularization began with Christianity's acceptance of the world, with Christianity's submission to the very reality of the world."<sup>46</sup>

Colin Williams says that modern man is "thinking from below" in contrast to the previous attitude of "thinking from above." In his understanding, a change from magical, mythical, metaphysical or ontocratic ways of thinking to empirical, open, functional or technocratic ways of thinking is taking place.

These are, however, the ultimate points of life -- the source of meaning, the place of guilt and the frontier of death -- points which science could not provide the answers from below.

In Brunner's view we need a Christian philosophy, Christian psychology, sociology, historian, natural scientist and so forth, so that the Christian "Weltanschauung" can come through in his analysis of the human phenomena. We need scientists who see reality of man's life or the phenomena of the world with the eyes of faith. We need scientists and scholars who operate with Christian presuppositions and witness to the world that to be a believer is not a denial of the use of reason and science. For instance, a Christian sociologist knows why the natural

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<sup>46</sup>Thomas Altizer quoted by J. Schall in "The Secular City and God," Catholic World 204 (October 1966):22.

man is essentially unsocial or falsely socialized. The Creator's understanding of man and the world is the only reliable basis for truth.

If on one hand it is true that science is behind the "disenchantment" of the world, the desacralizing and demythologizing process that characterizes secularization, on the other hand it is also true and paradoxal that a "re-sacralizing" process is taking place in modern society. Peter Berger notes that although traditional Western institutional religion has been undergoing a serious "plausibility crisis" for some time, and although we can observe serious crumbling of its walls, superstition and interest in astrology abound -- to which we might add the significant upsurge of interest in the occult and, of course, all manner of flirtations with cults.

That is, despite rationality, empiricism, relativism, and conclusions about the implausibility of traditional religious answers and formulations, many people presume the supernatural and participate in quests to find and explore it.

Industrial civilizations, thinks Hans Jürgen Schultz, are by their nature atheist in character as agricultural civilizations were heathen. Faith in the true God is quite unaffected by this. As they become increasingly profane, modern civilizations do face us with the danger of "losing God." Yet maybe they will give us the opportunity to help them to discover Him in a greater depth.

#### The Sacred-Magic in a Secular World

As we have already seen, the "disenchantment," die "Entzauberung" of the world begins in the Old Testament. The "desacralizing" and

"demythologizing" tendencies of the Old Testament are very clear, particularly if we compare Israel with the surrounding Near Eastern religions. So, we also may say that for Judaism no less than for pagan religions the sacred was something isolated, enclosed within a given space outside whose boundaries all else was profane or "common." The liturgy consisted in the priests' entering the sacred temple to bring out some sacred particles and with them to sprinkle the profane world thereby consecrating it up to a point. "Religion" was the "ghetto" of the sacred, and in order to join it the profane area -- the world had to be abandoned and one had to seek sanctuary in the "sancta sanctorum," the only place where God issued his oracles. Christianity destroys completely the barricades which made "religion" a heaven in the world. It embraces everything profane, worldly, and "common," and by so doing makes it sacred. This is the sacralization of the profane. According to Christianity, man need not abandon the world to go to God. God is found -- and must be found -- in the world.

Daniel Martensen's book entitled Christian Hope and the Secular tells us that there are various ideas concerning the secular and that in the Bible the sacred and the secular are so involved with one another that to separate them would deprive the biblical idea of its substance. The distinction between sacred and secular, maintained especially by the Roman Catholic Church is biblically untenable and responsible for the church's being viewed by so many these days as at best an obsolescent institution which gives respectability to society but has little or nothing pertinent to say to it.

Lyman Lundeen in his article written in the Lutheran World said that "one can distinguish the sacred from the secular, but whether the two can be separated and made alternatives for human decision is another matter."<sup>47</sup>

The contemporary resurgence of astrology is well known and has been amply reported in the popular press. All kinds of faith-healing and black magic is happening in our modern industrialized secular societies. In the last decade demonism was on the top. Witchcraft has not been abandoned by twentieth century man. Magic, which developed along with other techniques as an expression of man's will to obtain certain results of a spiritual order, although all scientific developments, is still occupying man's mind.

A wave of fascination with the occult was noticeable in the seventies in the United States, and maybe this continues until our days. A voodoo doll with steel pins stuck into it in a determined effort to harass a rival at the office into resigning, ancient witchcraft and ceremonial magic, the astrology boom, which continues, satanism and witchcraft to the edges of science are also realities of this secular world.

If at one side parapsychology is an increasing science, it is also true that occult bookshops are making a good deal in our days. Reincarnation workshops, and classes in astral projections, numerology and the esoteric Hebrew mystical system, the cabala are taking place.

Movies like The Exorcist, William Blatty's novel, and Rosemary's Baby were successes.

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<sup>47</sup>E. L. Mascall, review of The Secularization of Christianity, by Lundeen Lyman in Lutheran World, 14 (1967):114.

Other developed, industrialized, urbanized, and secular countries are experiencing a resurgence of witchcraft and other occult dabbling.

Popular "Madames" give advice on radio and T.V. According to a German journalist, in 1972, 7,000,000 West Germans sympathized with the secret sciences.

An unknown writer of Time magazine, writing about the occult, quotes Owen Rachleff who affirmed that "most occultniks are either frauds of the intellectual and or financial variety, or disturbed individuals who frequently mistake psychosis for psychic phenomena."<sup>48</sup> Yet for all its trivial manifestations in tea-leaf reading and ritual gewgaws, for all the outright nuts and charlatans it attracts, occultism cannot be dismissed as mere fakery or faddishness. Clearly, it is born of a religious impulse and in many cases it becomes in effect a substitute faith.

Much of the occult, after all, is man's feeble attempt to become god-like, to master the world around him. It is, in short, magic, the earliest of man's religious responses as a sinner.

The astrology so many millions follow today is a direct legacy from the astronomer priests of Babylonia.

The word "pagan" stems from the Latin "paganus" meaning "country dweller" and "heathen" from "dweller on the heath." For centuries, magical arts and Christianity lived in uneasy coexistence, as they still do in Latin American countries.

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<sup>48</sup>Owen Rachleff quoted by unknown author in "The Occult: A Substitute Faith," Time (June 1972):65.

Just as ancient Romans flocked to mystery cults in the days of religious and political decay, "so do more modern men seek out the occult in times of stress or excessive pragmatism."<sup>49</sup>

An occult revival has come to the space age: satanism, witchcraft, prophecy, and spiritualism.

In Christianity the Gospel message is submission to God; in the occult the ruling motive is control. Occultists are very interested in the future. Many of them believe they can know it. Astrology has long been the favorite method for divining the future. Spiritualists as "mediums" contact the "other side" and generally offer healing and counseling. These spiritualist healers and counselors receive information from "spirit guides," friendly sources on the "spirit side" who offer secret information to the "earth plane."

There is a residue of the unexplained in these claimed psychic events, some occurrences that seem to defy the laws of chance or mere incidence. Those phenomena are currently being investigated by parapsychologists under the general heading of ESP, extrasensory perception: telepathy, communication from one mind to another without normal means; precognition, the prediction of future events; clairvoyance, the power to discern objects not present to the senses; the psychokinesis, the movement of material objects with the mind. While investigations go on, though, such gifts pose some problems for Christians and occultism is a phenomenon with which a growing number of churchmen realize that they must come to terms.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Perhaps there is a need in the western modern societies for something on which you can lean in this complicated life. There is a profound disappointment in the things that people put their trust in. Whatever his material welfare, man is threatened with non-being.

Philosopher Houston Smith of Massachusetts Institute of Technology is one of many authorities who see the occult revival as a response to the failure of science and reason, a movement spurred by the conviction that technology has failed to make the world better.

Some even suggest that today's young people cannot live without the depth of myth and symbol and the richness of mysticism that existed before the rise of the empirical scientific attitude. There is a desire for a mystical element in life, and the traditional church hasn't been able to offer this to many. They see the church acting in the same way as the system in which they don't feel comfortable. The church as an institution has had some difficulties in coming close to the needs of people.

Sociologist Truzzi however argues that "if we full believed in demons, we certainly would not want to call them up." "For most occultists," he says, "the occult arts and practices are just a form of 'pop religion,' more healthy than dangerous."<sup>50</sup> Mass interest in the occult indicates for Truzzi a "kind of victory over the supernatural, a demystification of what were once fearful and threatening cultural elements. What was once dark secrets known only through initiation into arcane orders are now exposed to everyman."

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

Recent history, however, has shown terrifyingly enough that the demonic lies barely beneath the surface, ready to catch men unawares with new and more horrible manifestations.

No doubt that beyond all charlatanism, there are many things between heaven and earth that man does not know, understand and master. Besides all scientific knowledge, man's life is still involved in mystery.

### Myth and Secularization

Mystery involves human life. Man's history is full expressions in which man is dealing with the mysteries around him.

Myths were human sensorial representations in space and time of mysteries. Myth is sensorialized mystery according to the Roman Catholic theologian Johannes Baptist Lotz.

It is true that there is little agreement in the use of the term myth. According to G. S. Kirk, Ernst Cassirer devoted more time and thought to the philosophy of myth than anyone else. For Cassirer myth is not intellectual, but tautegorical. The mythic mind never perceives passively, never merely contemplates things: all its observations spring from some act of participation.

Modern students of mythology disagree radically in their view of nature, scope, and significance of the ancient myths. Although there is great disagreement about the definition of the term myth, we should at least give one.

"Myth means originally (Greek muthos) word, news, language, message, but could also mean an event and history. The word and message of myth are concerned with life, the world and things as a totality, describing their origins, relationships and meaning. More precisely, myth

is characterized by the fact that it sees the empirical world and its happenings, and above all man and his action, in the light of a reality which constitutes them, makes them a unity and at the same time transcends them. This reality is that of the gods. The message which comes in the words of the myth deals with the action and influence of the gods."<sup>51</sup>

Mythologies of the Ancient World is a book written by Samuel N. Kramer in which he says that there are psychologists who see in the ancient myths depositories of primordial archetype motifs which reveal and illuminate man's collective subconscious. On the other hand, there are linguists and philologists who are convinced that myth is a 'disease of language,' the product of man's vain, futile, and misguided attempts to express the inexpressible and to verbalize that which is ineffable.

Cassirer said that

"in the development of human culture we cannot fix a point where myth ends or religion begins. In the whole course of its history religion remains indissolubly connected and penetrated with mythical elements. On the other hand, myth, even in its crudest and most rudimentary forms, contains some motives that in a sense anticipate the higher and later religious ideals. Myth is from its very beginning potential religion."<sup>52</sup>

For the Greeks muthos meant a tale, or something one uttered, in a wide range of senses: a statement, a story, the plot of a play.

Paradoxically ours is a era of disintegration of symbolism, of desacralizing and demythologizing and also an era of new created myths

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<sup>51</sup> Sacramentum Mundi, Vol. 4, p. 153.

<sup>52</sup> Ernst Cassirer quoted by G. S. Kirk in Myth, Its Meaning and Functions in Ancient and Others Cultures (Cambridge: University Press, 1970), p. 30.

and new religious forms. Rudolf Bultmann's interpretation of the Scripture is an attempt to demythologise the Gospel's message.

Some Christian doctrines once taught as literal accounts of divine things are conceived as myths, or symbolic statements of truth about God and man. Liberal theologians, for instance, see Christ's resurrection as a mythological expression of the first Christian community.

On the other hand, even unbelief itself can take religious mythological forms and some modern secular scientists have produced their own myths, as the myth of objectivity, the myth of "freedom."

Since the attention of man is being increasingly directed to the natural and physical world, the mysterious and non-rational aspects of human life have been forgotten, but not eliminated. The one-dimensional man is unhappy, unsatisfied with himself, because life is involved in mystery. Man needs answers, purpose and meaning for his being.

The Bible's message is not a myth in the sense that it is not a human product, but the revelation of the great Mystery-Christ, who entered into the saeculum, the world to save it. Christ is God's secularization. God is among men on the streets, at the parties. God's incarnation is the true secularization. Christ reveals the mysteries of God to men. And all men of all races are invited to participate in this mysterious Love.

The Gospel is God's word, God's message. This good news in Christ gives meaning to life, to human history and to all things as a whole.

#### The Question of God in the Secular World

Although Thomas Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God are very logical, they do not prove the existence of God to someone whose

presuppositions are against the existence of God. Neither would excellent rational arguments lead us to faith in the true God revealed in the Scriptures. God reveals himself to man in Christ and in the propositional revelation in the Bible. "So," says Van Til, "no proof for this God and for the truth of his revelation in Scripture can be offered by an appeal to anything in human experience that has not itself received its light from the God whose existence and whose revelation it is supposed to prove."<sup>53</sup>

The question of God, however, has been and will be a basic issue in Christian apologetic, because men always raise the old question: "Does God really exist?" and "How is He? Does He communicate? How?."

The question of God did not disappear in our days. On the contrary, consciously and unconsciously, openly and under camouflage, mankind today is moved by the question of God as it never was before.

Who is God? Where is God? How and where can we find him? Do we really have to do with God in our human existence? Does God concern himself with men? Is he not a silent God? Has he really revealed himself to men? How do we know this with certainty? These are certainly basic questions for which Christianity has a lot to say.

Why should man believe in God? What in his life induces him to accept the existence of something or someone beyond the reality of his life and this world, which or who would have an influence on his life and on his way of life, bind him morally, be his ultimate concern? Why should not he just accept the reality of human life as it comes, try to

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<sup>53</sup>Cornelius Van Til cited in Lewis, p. 139.

enjoy it, and accept the fact that it is a transitory thing? Why should man try to reach beyond himself, and seek a reality more stable than his own, and center his life around a reality other than his own? Why, in fact should he look away from the joys and pleasures of his life and from the fulfillment he can find on this earth, and sacrifice them to a kind of life and happiness and fulfillment that he can never be sure will come? Why should not man be content with what life has to offer?

These, and similar questions, thinks Michael Taylor, sound very reasonable and perhaps we should take them more seriously than we usually do.

Man has always developed some sort of belief in a world other than his own and found life in this world lacking in wholeness and meaning.

Sartre, a traditional atheist, concluded very logically that "we live in an absurd universe." "The total," he says, "is ridiculous."<sup>54</sup> Not few have given up the hope of a rational circle to give an answer to life, and are left with only the anti-rational.

A great deal of emphasis has been given on the need to wait for a non-rational final experience, which would give meaning to life. Being honestly rational and logical they become pessimist, after the optimism of the nineteenth century in Europe and beginning of twentieth century in North America.

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<sup>54</sup> Sartre quoted by Francis A. Schaeffer, The God Who is There (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1968), p. 24.

For Francis Schaeffer, people are putting their hope on non-rational, non-logical, non-communicable experiences. They have given up all hope of achieving a rational unified answer to knowledge and life.

Modern man searches desperately to find a universal that would give him back reality, something more than just particulars. In fact, according to the new methodology, the new way we approach truth and knowing today, there are no absolutes in the area of Being (or knowledge) and in the area of morals. Though men might have disagreed in the past as to what these absolutes were, nevertheless they could reason together on the classical basis of antithesis, with the classic formula "If you have A it is not non-A." Absolutes imply antithesis, but this basic presupposition in approaching truth and knowledge is disappearing, and no doubt that this is a crucial problem that Christianity has to face. We live in a world where people operate with completely different presuppositions. So we even have come to the position where we cannot communicate. The problem of modern man's loss of communication and his alienation did not have to wait for the computers and cybernetics. Picasso, the modern man, exhibited this in his art. Modern man has a different concept of truth. And to this man we want to communicate the good news, the kerygma that the God who exists is Love in Jesus Christ.

Modern man, who believes all is relative, nothing is sure, nothing is fixed, all is in flux, needs to know that God is personal and that he, man, is also personal.

If for some twentieth century atheists God is intellectually superfluous, that is, no longer used to fill the gaps in our knowledge in the fields of science, art or technology, emotionally dispensable (religion

is but a symptom of emotional immaturity), and morally intolerable (the problem of suffering and evil), Julian Huxley, though being an atheist, acknowledged that "man functions better if he acts as though God is there."<sup>55</sup> Ibsen, the Norwegian said if you take away a man's lie you take away his hope.

About this Schaeffer makes the following comments:

"These thinkers are saying in effect that man can only function as man for an extended period of time if he acts on the assumption that a lie (that the personal God of Christianity is there) is true. You cannot find any deeper despair than this for a sensitive person. This is not an optimistic, happy, reasonable or brilliant answer. It is darkness and death."<sup>56</sup>

Also, according to Schaeffer's accurate argumentation,

"if man is the result of the impersonal plus time, plus chance, then those things that make him a man--hope of purpose and significance, love, notions of morality and rationality, beauty and verbal communication--are ultimately unfulfillable and are thus meaningless. In this case he would be the lowest creature on the scale. The green moss on the rock is higher than he, for it can be fulfilled in the universe which exists. In this situation man should not walk on the grass, but respect it--for it is higher than he."<sup>57</sup>

Logically one may come to nihilistic conclusions about life. If everything is ultimately absurd, if all of life is meaningless, why bother to march straight forward, why stand in the queue as though life as a whole makes sense?

E. Levinas is quoted by Albert Dondeyne as saying that "it is certainly a great glory for the Creator to have created a being able to

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<sup>55</sup> Cited in Schaeffer, p. 88.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

be an atheist, a being who, without being his own cause, has, however, his eyes and words independently, and feels himself as he were in his own home."<sup>58</sup>

Temptation, says Helmut Thielicke, means constantly to be on the point of freeing ourselves from God. The hour of temptation is the hour in which we believe in ourselves, in which we cease to doubt ourselves, and therefore doubt God.

The religion of the man who makes himself god (secular humanism) always challenges the religion of the God who made man. "Men," affirms Schaeffer, "turn away from God not because what is said makes no sense, but because they do not want to bow before the God who is there. This is the 'scandal of the cross.'"

Certainly some atheists or many who do ignore God operate with childish or juvenile conceptions of God, with primitive notions of a large-size man who exists to be pleased, like an old-style father. Existentialists rightly point out that the "God of the gaps," the "deus ex machina," has increasingly few gaps to fill. The true God is not the God of the limiting experiences of man, like death and suffering.

The autonomous man who lives in a world no longer regarded as the creation of God or as receiving its existence and laws from the Creator, but as containing in itself its own truth and its own justification, needs to know the God revealed in Christ. This "secular" God came into human history, entered the arena of human life to reestablish a relationship with rebellious mankind. In His Son, God effects the

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<sup>58</sup> E. Levinas quoted by Albert Dondeyne in "Secularization and Faith," Lumen 23 (December 1968):55.

change which makes possible a new creation. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Christ took the sin of humanity upon Himself and in the fires of Golgotha purified a new humanity. Because of God's redemption the power of sin is broken; death is defeated; sin is forgiven and life has hope.

The God who is there according to the Scripture is the personal-infinite God. There is no other god like this God. It is ridiculous, says Schaeffer, to say that all religions teach the same things when they disagree at the fundamental point as to what God is like. The gods of the East are infinite by definition -- the definition being 'god is all that is.' This is the pan-everything-ism god. The gods of the West have tended to be personal but limited; such were the gods of the Greeks, Romans and Germans. But the God of the Bible, Old and New Testament alike, is the infinite-personal God.

The communication which this God has made to man is true, but that does not mean it is exhaustive. To know everything exhaustively we should need to be infinite, as God. Even in heaven we shall not be so.

God has communicated to man, not only about the cosmos and history, but also about Himself. The God who has created man in His own image communicates true truth about Himself. This need not to be thought of as only an existential experience.

When God wrote the Ten Commandments, or when Jesus spoke to Paul on the Damascus road in the Hebrew language, they used a real language subject to grammars and lexicons, a language to be understood and communicated. Although God is infinite, we finite can understand him truly, because man is made in God's image.

Christianity teaches that man as sinner is separated from his Creator. As a result man is also separated from his fellow men, from nature and from himself.

Man is truly guilty before the personal God, but God planned a solution. He so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into history to die on a cross, in space and time, for the justification of all men. So, there is hope for man's dilemma. There is a sufficient basis for morals. Nobody has ever discovered a way of having real 'moral,' without a moral absolute. If there is no moral absolute we are left with hedonism (doing what I like) or some form of the social contract theory (what is best for society as a whole is right).

Man makes himself the question: Who am I? The theory that the impersonal plus time plus chance have produced a personal man is against all experience, is in fact unaffirmable.

Another reaction to the dilemma of life is to wait till some solution is found in the future, and try to live alienated from these vital existence questions.

Christianity, beginning with the existence of the infinite-personal God, man's creation in His image and a space-time Fall, constitutes a non-self-contradictory answer that does explain the phenomena and which can be lived with. The solution given in the Bible, affirms Schaeffer, answers the problem of the universe and man and nothing else does.

It is difficult today for a Christian, who wants to use a word like "God" or "guilt" in a strictly defined sense rather than as a

connotation word, because the concepts of these words have universally been changed, to communicate with the non-believer.

So, when we say that Jesus Christ is God, we are not talking of the word or idea of God, but of the infinite-personal God who is there. We also must never forget that the first part of the Gospel is not "Accept Christ as Savior," but "God is there." Only then we are ready to hear God's solution for man's moral dilemma in the substitutionary work of Christ in history. The new theology, says Schaeffer, denies that God is there in the historical biblical sense.

Schaeffer's understanding is that there is no word so meaningless as the word 'god' until it is defined. No word has been used to teach absolutely opposite concepts as much as the word 'god.' Biblical truth is not a relationship to the word god, or to the idea god, but to the one who is there, first in the once-for-all act of justification, secondly by being in that correct relationship as a continuing moment by moment reality. It is a continuing moment by moment proper relationship to the God who exists.

Who is the God who is there? Who am I? Two fundamental questions to which answers must be given if one wants a meaningful relationship between God and man.

A third difficult question is often raised. If there is a God, then He could destroy the evil in the world. If this God were good, many argue, He would destroy evil, pain, suffering, but evil is still here, so some conclude that God is impotent or malevolent, or both, or there is no God.

Scripture tells us that the God who is there is love and can be loved, affirms Schaeffer. Man can love God and serve Him as his basic purpose in his life. There is real meaning for human life.

If twentieth century man comes to know and believe in this true God, he will understand what the 'revolt against heaven' really means.

## CHAPTER III

### BRAZIL-A LAND OF CONTRASTS

#### Brazil-A Land of Contrasts

Brazil is an immense land with immense contrasts, enjoying immense growth with immense problems. This fifth-largest nation in the world, also called the land of tomorrow, is an agricultural giant, with more land under cultivation than Europe has, which raises a lot of cattle, has mineral reserves and great hydroelectric resources available for its great future.

Although having already a very highly developed industry, this country of coffee, soccer and Carnival has to struggle very hard against immense problems of illiteracy, malnourishment, slums, poverty, inflation, and social injustice. "There are many Brazils in one," some use to say about this country discovered in April 1500 by Pedro Alvares Cabral, a Portuguese officer of Portugal's navy.

This tropical nation is also very unique by its magic religiosity. Thousands of voodoo worshippers are at Rio de Janeiro's beaches on New Year's Eve, carrying candles and gifts for Iemanja, goddess of the sea--a pagan act in the world's largest Catholic country. That is why Erich Fülling came to the conclusion that "Brasilien sei zwar äußerlich katholisches, aber in Wirklichkeit ein weitgehend neuheidnisches Land."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Fülling, "Neue Religionen in Brasilien heute," "Lutherische Monatshefte," 8 (November 1969):616.

He also says that "Kenner der Landes, auch gerade Katholiken, meinen, die unteren Volksschichten seien einer magischen Religiosität verfallen."

Involved in nuclear power research, and with a highly developed and sophisticated industry, with an extensive educational program all over the country, Brazil has still an unknown magic belief in spirits and voodoo powers.

About this fact, Filling says that "heute kein Land in der zivilisierten Welt dem Geisterglauben so verfallen ist wie gerade Brasilien."<sup>2</sup>

If so, how does the process of secularization confront this Brazilian culture?

#### What is Meant by "Culture?"

Culture, according to Fernando Azevedo, a Brazilian scholar in social sciences, "designates the ensemble of characteristics which the collective life of a human group presents to the eye of the observer, whether that group be primitive or civilized."<sup>3</sup> Clark Wissler, quoted by Azevedo in his book Brazilian Culture, said that "culture is the mode of social life, that part of human behavior which, coming from the external environment, material, intellectual, and historical, makes of individuals what they become." So, if we study the Brazilian culture, we focus on a complex which includes the knowledge, beliefs and arts, the morality, laws, customs and other aspects of life. We will concentrate on those

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<sup>2</sup>Filling, p. 619.

<sup>3</sup>Fernando de Azevedo, Brazilian Culture (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 2.

aspects which interest us Church members who want to understand better this culture in order to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we will look to Brazilian culture with a theological, and not with a sociological or anthropological interest, although we will be using some sociological information.

To study a culture is to study society and its major influences that have been at work affecting the production of cultural phenomena, physical environment and ethnic composition, the economic, social and political environment, and urban environment.

Oversimple conclusions in the study of social phenomena are always a temptation. Geographic and economic determinatism has to be avoided.

Azevedo understands that "among the factors which contribute most powerfully toward the production of cultural phenomena, the development of cities is one of the most important."<sup>4</sup> There collective energy is intensified. The cities also raise to the highest possible level of development the capacities that lie latent and dispersed in the population. They are powerful instruments of social selection. They attract the best elements of the country, and, as Max Weber said, "cities have the power of giving reality to qualities which would otherwise be only virtual, calling into existence forces which without that stimulant would remain inactive and dormant, and producing this effect of excitation by the mere

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<sup>4</sup>Azevedo, p. 9.

fact of concentration."<sup>5</sup> Cities become suction pumps applied to the rural population, especially the young people who look for pleasure.

In the last decades some very radical cultural changes have taken place in Brazil. These changes affect directly and indirectly the work of the Church, and so we look to them with interest.

#### Brazilian Culture

The first society in this land grew among the Indians who were a forest people with a forest culture.

Today, 482 years after Brazil's discovery, Indian elements in the Brazilian population still have a significant importance in the Amazon Basin. Throughout the states of Pará and Amazonas, the territory of Acre, the northern part of Goiás, and the western portion of Maranhão, the Indian strain is predominant in a considerable share of the population. These Indian racial characteristics are most pronounced in the population of the great interior sertões.

The Brazilian Indians had some noisy feasts, that besides being tumultuous, lasted days or even weeks. They were almost taciturn, but not sad. They lived joyfully.

But, the important aspect for our purpose, is to know that the Indian page and the African fetisheer play significant roles in Brazil's religious activities. In the north, especially the Amazon area, it is the Indian medicine man who is most influential, and in Pernambuco and south to São Paulo, particularly in Bahia, the African influences are most pronounced.

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<sup>5</sup>Cited by Azevedo, p. 10.

The Indian and African elements syncretized with the orthodox symbolism, belief, and practices of Catholicism. As a result, a large share of Brazil's people are conditioned by a religious system which represents a blending of the already heterogeneous European heritage, the rather highly developed religious systems of Africa, and the innumerable traits derived from native sources.

The Portuguese, the second ingredient in the Brazilian mixture, "was not what one could call a race, in the biological sense, but was itself the result of the mixture of the primitive inhabitants of the peninsula -- the early Iberians -- and races and peoples which mingled in constant migrations across that peninsula, such as the Celts, the Greeks, the Phoenicians, the Romans, the Visigoths, and the Arabs, not to mention the Jews, of whom at a single time it received fifty thousand families moved thither by order of Hadrian."<sup>6</sup>

For Azevedo, the Portuguese people are the product of a long process of miscigenation, which maintained its position as the solid, primitive, dominant nucleus of the Brazilian people! They mixed their blood in the colony with those of the two subject races -- the American Indian, of Asiatic origin, and the Negro imported from Africa -- and gave to both of them a new tongue and a new civilization.

Gilberto Freyre, commenting on the historical background of Spain and Portugal said that "Spain and Portugal, though conventionally European states, are not orthodox in all their European and Christian qualities, experiences, and conditions of life, but are in many important respects

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

a mixture of Europe and Africa, of Christianity and Mohammedanism."<sup>7</sup>

"According to geographers the Hispanic peninsula is a transition zone between two continents," says Freyre. For eight centuries the Hispanic or Iberian, peninsula was dominated by Africans. Arabs and Moors left their trace there. So, the European background of Brazilian history, was partially European and also African and Asiatic. It was a complex of racial influentials.

Sergio Buarque de Hollanda affirms that Brazil is the only successful effort in large scale of a transplantation of a European culture to a tropical and sub-tropical area.

From Portugal, therefore, came the present form of Brazilian culture: the rest was plastic material which subjected, for good or ill, to this form. Evidently, maintains Azevedo, the Portuguese clay, thrown on the mold of the American world which was being in the process of colonization, came out transformed.

The third element in Brazilian race mixture was the African slave, who brought the whole treasure of his folklore, his body of superstitions and demonology, and the rites of his jungle cults.

The Portuguese, as entrepreneurs in a system of large-scale plantation agriculture, had to find a cheap and numerous labor supply. Early convinced of the unsuitability of the forest Indians for their purpose, they gradually turned to the Negro slave, with whom they were already familiar in Portugal.

Some of the millions of Negroes imported to Brazilian plantations were obtained from areas of the most advanced Negro culture. This explains

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<sup>7</sup> Gilberto Freyre, Brazil - An Interpretation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), p. 1.

why there were African slaves in Brazil -- men of Mohammendan faith and intellectual training -- who were culturally superior to some of their European, white, Catholic masters.

The Negro influenced profoundly Brazilian culture, especially in northern Brazil. This was due not only to the weight of his numbers, but to the receptivity of his Portuguese masters. "The Portuguese, affirmed William Lytle Schurz, "are socially one of the most plastic people."<sup>8</sup> In fact the colonists were exposed to the influence of the Negroes and that of the Indian cultures. This influence over the colonist grew in proportion to the ignorance of the mass which facilitated the assaults of primitive mysticism.

Azevedo in his comments about the African slave quotes Nina Rodrigues and Gilberto Freyre, who in their studies of the African slave trade, have demonstrated the variety of 'nations' and of culture areas from which the Negro slaves transported, ranging from the most savage tribes of the Kaffirs to the Sudanese Negroes of advanced culture who predominated in the development of Bahia.

The African of Brazil -- authentic Negroes like the Hottentots and the Bushmen, and Fulahs, who are sometimes called 'white Negroes,' and mixtures like the slaves drawn from Senegambia or Portuguese Guinea, who are considered by some to be superior to the rest from the anthropological point of view -- settled in diverse regions of the country, but in proportions which it is now impossible to determine.

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<sup>8</sup> William Lytle Schurz, This New World. The Civilization of Latin America (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1954), p. 166.

When the Negro slave came to Brazil from Africa, he brought over the worship of his tribal gods. He found a way to keep his African gods in the Roman Catholic Church. Umbanda was the syncretistic result after Roman Catholic saints were given to African deities. The Umbanda ritual is animistic, consisting in the manifestation of the African spirits for healing, ritual practices, and ecstatic experiences of different natures.

An important aspect is the influence of the African woman. In the major house many African female slaves took care of the house. There was even an hierarchy of ages, skills, and responsibilities, with the cook and the personal maid. Often they were in charge of taking care of the basic education of the children. For Azevedo, the superiority of the Negro culture to that of the Indians, the intimacy of the contact which the slave regime was not slow in establishing between the two races, and the utilization of Negroes for domestic services opened a large field to this new form of race mixture, favoring everywhere, in the expression of Gilberto Freyre, "those loves of the master and the slave which the patriarchal colonial system permitted itself."<sup>9</sup>

The African contribution was greater than the Indian. It has been estimated that 3,000,000 African immigrants came to Brazil, collected from a great number of different nations. They were imported on a large scale, almost without interruption, until the source was dried out in 1850 with the abolition of the traffic in slaves.

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<sup>9</sup> Gilberto Freyre is quoted by Azevedo, p. 32.

The African psychology is the very opposite of the Portuguese. The African, for example, used to sing at his work, expressing his joy at the compensations. This was opposed to the sentimental melancholy of the Portuguese. The Negro often took the Portuguese out of his dark moods by his laughter and his song. Negro's influence still permeates the popular music of Brazil, so different from the fados of Portuguese folk music. The Negro set the pattern of festivity for Brazil. The famous Carnival at Rio, that supreme fete of the world, is his barbaric saturnalia. Africans communicated to Brazilian domestic life a note of joy, and their extraordinary reserves of happiness and of robustness permitted them to endure well, writes Gilberto Freyre, "the sad drudgery of the work of the sugar cane which was too much for the Indian."

J. H. Rodrigues in his book Brazil and Africa expresses the idea that the Negro's major contribution to Brazil is contained in the nation's demographic composition, which is what distinguishes our populace from those of most Latin American countries, the number of aborigines being lower here than in some countries, the number of Negroes higher than in others, and Negro-white miscegenation representing a very high percentage of the total.

Brazil is neither so aboriginized as some countries nor so Africanized as others; its population is more balanced and homogeneous.

The influence of the Negro was decisive in music and folklore. For example, the well known "samba" is an African beat. Through music and dance he expressed his mythological-religious beliefs. In the festivals and ceremonies of Afro-Brazilian fetichistic cults, music and dance gave him the opportunity to pour out his unconscious. So, the

Negro accepted Christianity as readily as did the Indian, but accepted it in his way, with his own understanding, without a clear authentic comprehension of the truth-claims of Christianity.

The preservation of the fetichistic religion in forms syncretized with Catholic beliefs and rituals was, as Octavio da Costa writes, the most important element of African culture in its resistance, under all the disadvantages of slavery. It also shows that we have always followed the path of tolerance and coexistence and that our culture, as Gilberto Freyre writes, is a complex that soon freed us "from a strictly colonial and sub-European status."

According to Gilberto Freyre, the Negro gave us a "revelation of a kindness greater than that of the whites, of a tenderness such as Christians (?) do not know, of a warm voluptuous mysticism which has enriched our sensibility, our imagination."<sup>10</sup> Although we may disagree with this insight, we have to affirm that the Negro gave his contribution to Brazilian culture, and, as Azevedo says, "what was pernicious about the influence of the Negro in the life and formation of the society of the Brazilian people, was due less to race than to the conditions of slavery." The Negro race reduced to slavery brought some problems for Brazilian culture, but we cannot analyze them in this study.

In Freyre's analysis "Negroes are now rapidly disappearing in Brazil, merging into the white stock; in some areas the tendency seem to be towards the stabilization of mixed-bloods in a new ethnic type, similar to the Polynesian."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Azevedo, p. 122.

<sup>11</sup>Freyre, p. 96.

By 1850, when the slave trade ended, an estimated three million Africans had been imported mainly to the sugar plantations north Brazil.

The end of the slave trade in 1850 and the abolition of slavery in 1888 caused a labor problem to Brazil. Who would work at the sugar plantations and the coffee plantations? Who would take the place of the slave? The European immigrant, although with completely different characteristics, was an answer to some labor problems.

In 1824 the first German settlement was established in São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul. Many others followed. In 1875 a large group of Italians started their "colônia" in Brazil. Many came to this new land to work for themselves and others worked in the large plantations for a while. The city of São Paulo attracted many immigrants to start their own life in this developing area.

The German immigrants brought with them Lutheranism to this Roman Catholic land, and it was among these immigrants that Missouri Synod began its work in Brazil.

It is important to consider that these immigrants didn't come to Brazil for religious problems with their authorities, but motivated by the economic and political situation in their homeland. Excellent promises were made by some immigration agents in the name of the Brazilian government, and most of them never were fulfilled. In general, the immigrants were left on their own, with a little help from the authorities.

The flow of European immigrants, rising to a tide after the abolition of slavery in 1888, exceeded five million by 1960.

Brazil and its inhabitants comprise one of the richest and largest combinations of natural contrasts, human types and cultural forms to be

found in the world, says Ernest Bachmann, a visiting professor at the Faculdade de Teologia de São Leopoldo, on leave from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley, in the sixties.

In fact, the original Portuguese, African and Indian ways of life have been interacted fully on each other, and have been further compounded and changed by the less influential Italian, Spanish, German, French, English, Lebanese, Japanese and other later additions. In 1960, sixty percent of the population was white, twenty-six percent mixed, eleven percent black, two percent Indians and one percent Asian.

#### The Unique Mixture of Races

The presuppositions that races are born unequal and remain unequal in intelligence, worth, and capacity for creating and absorbing culture, independent of the conditions of climate, physical environment, social background, and historical period, defended by Comte de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain have to be rejected. The doctrine of racial superiority is false, and especially to those who adopt a Christian anthropological point of view.

The three races, white, red and black mingled especially in the first centuries on a large scale, and a notable variety of types resulted from the crossing of the white with Indians and Negroes, and on a smaller scale of the Brazilian indigenous inhabitant with the African Negro.

The scarcity of white women contributed to encourage relations with the women of the country and to stimulate the mixture of whites and Indians. The offspring were called 'mamelucos.' To those, a great number of families of the north central plateau owe their origin, and the vitality

and the expansive force of the adventurous nomadism of the bandeirantes can be traced.

For Azevedo, the bandeirantes prepared Brazilian society to assimilate the immigration that started in the early part of the nineteenth century. A little before the abolition of slavery, an intensified immigration of Mediterranean and Teutonic origin began, but the national nucleus was already formed and was sufficiently solid to digest and assimilate the mass of immigrants who came in annual, successive floods. Thus, the immigrants were gradually and progressively absorbed by the original national nucleus. Distributed in different parts of this land, their bounds were more easily broken and were melt in the world of the Brazilian.

The number of foreigners, however, remained relatively small in proportion to the original nucleus, during the first three centuries of Brazilian history.

Small groups of French, Dutch, and English made early contributions to the white blood in Brazilian veins. Of most importance among these extraneous elements were the Dutch, whose seventeenth-century occupation of north-eastern Brazil has left important racial traces. This is particularly true in Pernambuco.

So, the origins of the Brazilian people are clearly tied up with the mixture of the three races or with the progressive assimilation, in the early centuries, of the red and black races by the European whites in a great blood transfusion.

It is due to this crossing -- the biological process of natural selection facilitated in part by movements of population and by the

absence of racial prejudice -- that in Brazil there was a fusion of the races, and that progressively the Brazilian people was formed from various ethnic elements, indigenous and foreign, assimilated by the whites.

"That this people is an amalgam of various races, themselves crossed and recrossed like the Portuguese which through its reproductive activity, its mobility, and its adaptability to the tropical climate became the very center of the national formation, and that this incessant melting process made the country," in the expression of Mendes Correia, "one of the major fields of ethnic and social assimilation which ever existed -- of neither of these facts is there the shadow of a doubt."<sup>12</sup>

In an environment like ours that from the beginning was made up of elements of varied origins, native especially during the first century, African for three centuries, and European, besides Semite, Arab, Syrian, and Japanese, the mixing or fusing of heterogeneous races not antagonistic to one another, is a normal fact, not only useful but indispensable to the ethnic evolution of the Brazilian people. The crossing of various races and nationalities was a natural solution which entered into the ethnic composition of the people. "Etwa die Hälfte aller Brasilianer haben Blut von Menschen nicht weiser Völker," says Erich Fülling.

Richard P. Momsen writes in his book Brazil: A Giant Stirs that Brazilians claim that Brazil is the only European civilization in the tropics, in which American and African qualities have been blended into the basic Portuguese culture, itself an amalgam of Celtic, Roman, Hispanic, Germanic, and North African traits. Other races have been added

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<sup>12</sup>Cited in Azevedo, p. 37.

gradually, to produce a culture which is neither European nor "tropical," but distinctively and exuberantly Brazilian.

For T. Lynn Smith, "if the United States is to be thought of as a 'melting pot,' Brazil must be considered a caldron. No other country has had for four hundred years such large numbers of white, red, and black people thrown into so close physical and social contact with one another."<sup>13</sup> To this already extremely heterogeneous population, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought millions of Europeans, and the twentieth century has added large contingents of Syrians and Japanese.

The conditions for the mixing and blending were there since the beginning, and it happened on a large scale.

José Honório Rodrigues raises the question of why the same miscegenation did not happen in Portugal's African colonies? Why did they have so small success in their territories in Asia? He concludes that the miscegenation was and is a more Brazilian and American than a Portuguese process. It occurred only in Brazil on this scale. So, he says, the Portuguese colonist per se was not the decisive factor in the process. The Brazilian miscegenation was unique and it must have been facilitated by local conditions. Brazil is a "Mestizo Republic, neither European nor Latin American, the synthesis of Tupi, African, Occidental, and Oriental anthitheses, a unique and original creation."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Thomas Lynn Smith, Brazil - People and Institutions (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1946), p. 160.

<sup>14</sup>José Honório Rodrigues, Brazil and Africa (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. xv.

The numerous crossings between the racial elements that make up our population, conveyed to the Brazilian soul some of the characteristics of these peoples.

A variation in the racial mixture, however, has to be mentioned. The transformation of racial origins varied from one region of the land to another, depending on the greater or smaller percentage of Indian or African blood which was mixed with the white blood.

The expeditions have an important role in Brazilian history, because it was through them that the nomadism of the bandeirantes, for the most part mestizos of white and Indian blood, expanded and thus expanded this new society in formation. Also the movement of the cattle and the cattle-raising population play an important role in the mixture of our races.

A new civilization is flourishing in Brazil, with the proportion of mestizos and Negroes coming down. The Negro and the Indian races are disappearing, absorbed by the white.

There is little racial discrimination where the man of color is concerned. The basis of the color discrimination is economic, since the Negro or the dark-skinned mulatto is liable to have a lower living standard than the average white Brazilian or light-complexioned end product of the miscegenetic process. "There is no country on earth where the relationship between white men and black men is generally so civilized," says W. L. Schurz.<sup>15</sup> "Probably," says Freyre, "in no other complex modern community are problems of race relations being solved in a more democratic or Christian way than in Portuguese America."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Schurz, p. 172.

<sup>16</sup>Freyre, p. 99.

C. Wagley is correct when he sees a mild form of racial prejudice on all levels of society in rural Brazil. This prejudice is latent, becoming active only when competition for the upper positions of the local social hierarchy is involved. So, racial prejudices never reached the point of creating conflicts and opposition, but existed as principles of social classification. Donald Pierson in his Negroes in Brazil agrees with the ideas already mentioned, saying that "prejudice exists in Brazil; but it is class rather than race prejudices."<sup>17</sup>

Some are afraid that Brazil, by being exposed to the ideology of the more industrialized and technologically developed nations will "buy" the Western racism.

Although Brazil is renowned in the world for its racial democracy, there are, however, no equal rights and advantages for all Brazilians. There are large social problems, like the poor being exploited by the few rich. The people of colour are in the lower rungs of Brazilian society. "Lack of education, a low income, absence of family backing and racial type are all at work together to keep the people of colour in the lower rungs of society," says Charles Wagley.<sup>18</sup>

#### The Brazilian

In Azevedo's thought it is not easy to set down a certain number of traits, collected in observation and studies from which one can gain the impression of the whole, because of the complexity of a collective character, the variety of influences which join to shape it, and this

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<sup>17</sup> Donald Pierson, Negroes in Brazil (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 349.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Wagley, Race and Class in Rural Brazil (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952)

fact that it also is susceptible of change. Thus, it is very difficult to achieve precision on the study of the collective ethos and the collective character.

A psychological study of the Brazilian people would reveal that it is a people of joy and celebration.

To predict the future of a human group on the basis of its ethnic composition is impossible, because there are social phenomena taking place that are more decisive.

But, who is the Brazilian? Which are his dominant traits? Says Azevedo,

"Among the dominant traits, one of the strongest, sometimes considered as the very key of Brazilian character, is the domination in his structure of the emotional, the irrational, and the mystical, which penetrates every spiritual being, either softening or arousing his will, depending upon the situation, and giving his intelligence an aspect that is essentially emotional and freighted with imagination."<sup>19</sup>

According to William Schurz,

"What the Brazilians call sensibilidade is the key to their national character. It is neither 'sensibility' nor 'sensibleness,' but rather it is sentimentalism, and in motivation implies the predominance of feeling over intelligence. In other words, where the prospect of some action is concerned, the Brazilian tends to think with his heart, more than with his head."<sup>20</sup>

In the Brazilian, says Azevedo, "sensibility, imagination, and religiosity have such intensity and force that culture rarely covers them over, only contributing to raise the effective and the mystical from their primitive gross forms to higher and more delicate forms."

The Brazilian has a vital religious sentiment. Comments Azevedo,

"This religion so domestic, lyrical, and festive, with saints who are friends of men, with an Our Lady who was the godmother of little

<sup>19</sup> Azevedo, p. 120

<sup>20</sup> Schurz, p. 397.

children, this fraternization in values and sentiments of the land and heaven, would not have occurred here if, as Gilberto Freyre says, there had dominated over our social formation another type of Christianity, a 'type more clerical, more ascetic, more orthodox, Calvinist or rigidly Catholic.' The tendency of the Brazilian to dissolve all social hierarchies touched his religious feelings too, modifying and enriching them with ingenuity and spontaneity, with the closeness of living, almost living together with the gods who appeared, as in the Greek age, walking over the earth, humanized, taking part in the domestic intimacies of believers."<sup>21</sup>

Gilberto Freyre also sees this mild domestic religion of relations between saints and men in Brazilian culture.

The Brazilian has the disposition to see in the existing order something which he has to accept. "Whether by the force of this religious sentiment, with its rich spontaneity and human sympathy, or through the action of tropical nature, depressing and crushing man, the Brazilian is not a man in revolt, for he is resigned, docile, and submissive to physical and moral fatalities which he has learned to endure with courage and to subordinate himself to them without bitterness, when he recognizes that they are superior to his resources of defense and action. His attitude in the face of life -- a mixture of indulgence, piety, and irony -- is a kind of resigned capitulation to the assault of the forces of a hostile nature, difficult to dominate, the violence of which he knows by his own experience, and which he has learned to confront, almost always without support, counting only upon himself, in his adventurous entries into the country, in his expeditions to tame the land, and in his incursions through the interior."<sup>22</sup>

Kindness is one of the most general and constant traits of the Brazilian. He has sensitivity to the suffering of others. He easily

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<sup>21</sup>Azevedo, p. 121

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

forgets and forgives offenses. He is not proud of his race. He also has a lot of tolerance for other people, offers his hospitality with generosity. His delicacy is one without calculation and disinterest, frank, ingenuous and of a primitive simplicity, at times rustic, but frequently penetrated with tenderness and held back by timidity and discretion.

Strangers feel at home in Brazil very quickly and very easily are assimilated to the original nucleus of the nation. "Brazil," says Azevedo, "is a maternal, sweet, receptive, human land, capable of exerting the soft pressure of its arm around the waist of all races and of all peoples."<sup>23</sup> One of the important qualities in the Brazilian character, says Schurz, is 'bondade' or goodness of heart. There is a deep humanity in these people.

Brazilians have a repugnance to radical solutions. They are easy to be led when you appeal to his reason and above all to his sentiment. It is very difficult to move them by force.

Tristão de Ataíde, a Brazilian writer, is quoted by Azevedo as one who said that the Brazilian do not open themselves easily or totally. "The recesses of their consciousness as of their homes remain closed for a long time to the man who does not slowly win the confidence of the son of the land." This distrust and reserve, according to Azevedo, can be recognized as one of the most notable defense reactions. Exposed in his solitude to the extortions of the treasury, to the encirclement of adventurers and the gain of merchants, the Brazilian had to live alert. So, even when he opened his house, he would close those gates of his intimacy and of his heart.

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

The Brazilian can be easily satisfied with little. It is easy to content in his material necessities. The avidity for gain, money, the preoccupation with the future, is not certainly characteristic of the Brazilian. Calculation is not the essence of this people. What is beyond the present hardly exists for any of them. When opulence comes, frequently he does not know how to use it, passing abruptly from lack to exhibitionism and disintegration. What is beyond the present hardly interests him. The present is what counts. He does not work too hard. By American standards Brazilians are improvident people.

Another trait of the Brazilian is the indifferentism which may prevent him from taking anything too seriously, so long as it does not immediately menace the satisfying rhythms of his life. It is a 'devil-may-care' attitude that nothing matters very much provided one can go on enjoying the things that make for his happiness. A kind of variation of this easy-going fatalism or resignation is expressed in the words 'Deixa como está para ver como fica' (Leave it as it is, so that one can see how it turns out).

There is a lack of depth and persistence and feeling for exactness and precision. Brazilians are more concerned about form than with intellectual content.

The people of Brazil have a strong inclination toward the things of the spirit. They also have a great adaptability, an inventive flair, humor and a great forbearance toward each other's differences and foibles, as well as those of strangers in their midst. Their unquenchable optimism is summed up by the national belief that 'God is a Brazilian.'

For Azevedo,

"what characterizes the Brazilian is not the penetration, not vigor, not profundity, but facility, grace, and brilliancy: it is rapidity in assimilating, a total absence of exactitude and precision. . . . In this mobile and dispersed world, dominated by immediate material necessity, philosophy and science have no time to put down roots."<sup>24</sup>

From the Portuguese we inherited a verbalistic, scholastic, and dogmatic culture which penetrated deeply in the teaching of all grades.

"Brazilians," said Azevedo, "have perhaps a badly educated intelligence and not a weak intelligence."<sup>25</sup>

There is a marked preponderance of sensibility over intelligence in the Brazilian. He is more impuls~~e~~ and instincts than brain with its capacity to compare, to judge and to conclude. The activity of the Brazilian, in a general way, has nothing in it that is premeditated or reflective. It is made up of impulses, at times violent, but passing and without continuity.

The Brazilian is also an individualist in the sense that he fights against those restrictions which tend to make society prevail over the individual, but his individualism is not so creative as the Anglo-Saxon in solving social problems. Our individualism can be very destructive and lead to anarchy.

"The contact of different races, the miscegenation practiced on a large scale, varying according to latitude and social class, internal migrations, the nomadism of pastorallife, the freedom of life in the sertões and in general in the interior of the country, the spirit of

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 126

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

independence which distance and isolation had generated, all contributed to developing to a high degree democratic feeling and equalitarian tendencies."<sup>26</sup>

Jorge Amado, a famous Brazilian writer said that the man of the north Brazil "seems to be more lyrical and mysterious; the man in the south, more rapidly changeable and progressive." These regional differences, however, have been broken and transformed by the easier contact which is now possible through better channels of communication, like roads and the modern mass media as radio, and television. The industrial civilization has been very active in this process of transformation of the psychology of the Brazilian people.

#### Industrialization/Urbanization

The world's largest hydroelectricpower complex is being built in Brazil as a result of the tremendous increase of our industry in the last years. Brazilian automobiles and trucks factories are among the largest of the world in production. Today's Brazilian economy is considered the world's tenth-largest.

Obviously these economic and social changes have their impact on the culture as a whole, and in this sense we want to understand these processes of industrialization and urbanization related to the secularization process.

If we study the causes of Brazilian industrialization, we will see that "it occurred because of changes in its relations with other countries. For this reason the history of the industrialization in Brazil

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

is at the same time a history of the foreign relations of Brazil with the leading world powers."<sup>27</sup>

In the whole nineteenth century the role of industry was secondary. It was commerce that made the cities, and it was, above all, for commerce that our greatest urban centers grew up. The powerful influence of coffee, of immigration, and of industry transformed radically some small cities in great metropolis.

Up to 1930 the economic life of Brazil was organized after the export model -- coffee. The crises and the up and down in the coffee market, however, opened many opportunities in the Brazilian economy that created incentives for craftsmanship and the production of manufactured goods. During the great depression period in which the coffee market was in crisis, the import capacity of the Brazilians was reduced. The interest in industrializing the country was an obvious reaction. Therefore, directly and indirectly coffee raising nurtured the initial stage of industrialization.

For Octavio Ianni,

"the process of urbanization and industrialization are not unique causes for the migratory movement to the cities. Despite the fact that they were the most important reasons for the exodus, parallel to them were modifications operating in the rural environment. Little by little capitalistic technology in the rural areas expanded, producing unemployment and the expulsion of a portion of the labor force."<sup>28</sup>

The rapid growth of town and cities, notably in São Paulo and other southern states, in recent decades is ample evidence that migration

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<sup>27</sup> Octavio Ianni, Crisis in Brazil (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 17.

<sup>28</sup> Ianni, p. 52.

from the farms has been of considerable size. But, the flight to the cities was, according to T. Lynn Smith, especially pronounced on the part of the former slaves when they received their freedom during the closing years of the nineteenth century. Many of the elite also took up residence in the cities at that time.

According to Harvey Cox's definition of urbanization, it "means a structure of common life in which diversity and the disintegration of tradition are paramount, in which high mobility, economic concentration, and mass communications have drawn even rural villages into the web of urbanization."<sup>29</sup> Cox understands that this is a strictly twentieth century phenomenon.

In all civilization, cities exercise as centers of concentration a role of major importance in the formation of the culture in its intellectual sense. They are powerful instruments of social selection. They intensify the collective energy by raising the latent and scattered capacities of the population to the highest point of possible achievements.

There is a great difference between social conditions in modern industrial São Paulo and those in the backward frontier regions of the west and north of Brazil. So, there are sharp contrasts between Brazilian society and culture in the large metropolitan cities of the coast and in the small frontier communities of the interior.

If on one hand it is true that improved communications and the modern scientific approach to resource utilization and regional integration represent the first steps toward as yet unrealized possibilities,

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<sup>29</sup> Harvey Cox, "The Secular City" Commonweal 83 (November 1965): 181-90.

it is also true that despite all progress and industrialization, Brazil has great social problems as poverty, misery, and hunger. In the most developed and industrialized cities the slum population is growing in frightening numbers.

The goal of Brazilian social-economic revolution shouldn't be a mere reproduction of the affluent technological advanced societies, but to use technology to eliminate poverty, which many developed societies have not been able to do. The fact that poverty is evil does not mean that wealth is always good.

This industrialized, urbanized, and secularized Brazil is also a nation in which fetichistic religions, superstitions and new cults grow very fast. Are the secular cities becoming re-enchanted? What is the relationship between secularization and religion in Brazilian cities and areas of development?

#### Religion in Brazil

Intimate and constant are the relations between the development of religion in Brazil and that of intellectual life in our first three centuries. Religion had an influence in the colonial period that was without doubt preponderant and practically exclusive in the organization of the system of culture. For a better understanding of the history of religion in Brazil we have to focus first on the Brazilian political history.

The first moment in Brazilian history is the colonial era which starts in April 1500 when Pedro Alvares Cabral discovered this land, and is concluded with the arrival in Rio de Janeiro of D. João VI and his royal court in 1808 which also meant the Brazil's opening to the world.

The second moment in Brazil's history is the imperial era started in September 7, 1822 until November 15, 1889, when the third important moment of our history took place, that is, the creation of the Republic of Brazil, a period that endures until today with different experiences in ruling the nation, as democracy, dictatorship and a present revolutionary stage, with a military government preparing the way for a democracy.

For a long time Latin America was considered as a Christian continent, because thirty-four percent of all Roman Catholics lived there. Today, few who study religion in Latin America would call it a Christian continent. This is also true of Brazil which has long been known as the world's biggest Roman Catholic country. Today Brazil is the country in Latin America with the largest Protestant population. However, it is also the place where the modern pagan Spiritism, a French Spiritualism combined with folklore catholicism and African animism, is spreading fast.

Emilio Willems studied the religion in Brazil and he thinks that

"throughout the centuries of colonial history Portugal was greatly concerned with the establishment of religious homogeneity in its American empire. To accomplish this it endeavored to stamp out the autochthonous religion and hermetically to seal off the colony against the effects of the Protestant Reformation. Roman Catholicism became so closely identified with the Brazilian way of life that, for a period it tended to develop into a symbol of nationality and emerging nationalism. With the secularization of Brazilian culture, religion in Brazil ceased to be a point of convergence of political consensus."<sup>30</sup>

The unity of language, religion and territory were of fundamental value for the Portuguese.

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<sup>30</sup> Emilio Willems in Religiöser Pluralismus und Gesellschaftsstruktur, vol. 1, ed. by Joachim Matthes (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1965), p. 210.

During the first centuries an external Christianization took place in Brazil. Although colonized and civilized in the shade of the cross, with its influences in religious, moral, intellectual and even political life, there wasn't an authentic proclamation of the Gospel, and so the belief in the power of the spirit developed and never was really confronted with a solid Christian education of the people.

In part the lack of priest was responsible for that, but also the confused theology of the Roman Catholic Church and the problem of illiteracy.

The fact that a large number of Brazilian population still live in illiteracy and ignorance, also makes it possible for many to continue to live in superstition and spiritual misery covered with a superficial catholicism. That educational vacuum opens the door for the most magic and superstitious world-views.

The Brazilian people are religious, but in their own way. It is difficult, according to T. Lynn Smith, to find examples of the pure religious elements in the Brazil of today. The Indian, African and Catholic elements have been blended, modified, and mixed. The gods of the Africans and the Indians were identified with the saints of the Catholics; the ceremonials of the pagans sometimes openly, sometimes surreptitiously, were reoriented about the chapel or the cathedral; the Negro found in the symbols of Christianity a wealth of new objects to add to his pegi; and the cultural heritage of the unlettered Brazilian embraced all the elements from all the sources. It was impossible to deter the avalanche of syncretism. At first the African cults tended to amalgamate one with the other. Later the process of acculturation widened to the Indian,

and finally to the religions introduced by the whites, Catholicism and Spiritualism. Protestantism was not influenced by this process of blending and mixing as far as we know.

During Brazil's imperial period, Freemasonry divided the Roman Catholic Church as it enlisted the favor of the Emperor and won the allegiance of many lay brotherhoods. In effect this was part of the process leading to freedom of religious expression and to secularization. The anti-clerical positivists played a very important role in this process of liberation from the Roman Catholic dominion. The decades of the empire also saw the beginnings of Protestantism and of an ecclesiastical pluralism.

Catholicism was the official religion in Brazil while it was a colony and continued to be so all during the period of Empire. Nevertheless, there was a freedom of religion and worship in Brazil that contrasted sharply with the severe restraints imposed in Spanish America. With the declaration of the Republic in 1889 and the adoption of the Constitution of 1890 there was a separation of church and state and the official establishment of full freedom of religion. Then it was that Brazil came to be juridically secular.

Positivism rapidly influenced our culture, especially with its emphasis of the ideal of the individual liberty. "Im 19 Jahrhundert," writes Günter Linnenbrink, "ist durch Liberalismus und Positivismus, der besonders in den Kreisen der Politiker und Intellektuellen Eingang fand, der Säkularisierungsprozess eingeleitet worden."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Günter Linnenbrink, "Evangelische Kirchen und Missionen in Lateinamerika," Lutherische Monatshefte, 4 (December 1965):583.

Although there are individual cases which speak in contrary, we think E. Willems is correct when he says "es gäbe kein römischkatholisches Land in der Welt, in dem eine grössere Toleranz oder Freisinnigkeit den Protestanten gegenüber herrsche."<sup>32</sup>

In William P. Read's analysis the Brazilian has a strong uncomplicated religious inheritance with a propensity for religious feeling, sentiment, and experience. He has proved to be very receptive to the Gospel.

But, more receptive than to the Gospel, Brazilians are very much attracted by the miraculous, especially by those who offer 'divine healing.' Wrote Read,

"Miraculous and mystic elements have been a cultural inheritance for many Brazilians who have grown up within the Roman Catholic framework where remarkable cures have been attributed to favorite saints. Also they are well acquainted with the local curandeiro who mixes up a miraculous 'potent' from different sources to break the spell of the 'evil eye' or some similiar curse. Fear and superstition have given birth to a tremendous number of psychosomatic illness which are taken to special saints, curandeiros, quacks, or witch doctors to deal with."<sup>33</sup>

The Portuguese-Brazilian Catholicism has some unique characteristics which allows to treat or relate to the saints with intimacy, almost losing the respect for their 'high position.' Angels and saints during the great religious festivals are almost invited to come down from the altar and to celebrate with the people. Gilberto Freyre studied this more social than religious 'liturgy.' It seems that the Brazilian can't tolerate the distance between individuals. On the religious level he needs a

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<sup>32</sup>Willems, p. 205.

<sup>33</sup>William Read, New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 211.

very personal and close divine being. He has an aversion to ritualism, although his religiosity is superficial, more concerned with the exterior than with the real meaning. Sergio Buarque de Holanda says that Brazilians are almost carnal in their incomprehension of the whole spirituality. He is more used to services or worship moments with appeal to the feelings and to the senses, and not so much to reason and will. Frequently his going to the church had and has a social meaning. He also feels uncomfortable with too much formalism and ritualism. Religion in Brazil represents a cross between the pagan and the Christian elements resulting in a more soft paganism.

#### Roman Catholicism in Brazil

The religious syncretism in Brazil is responsible for a very superficial conversion of the natives. Besides the shortage of priests, the 'evangelization' *manu militari* also provoked hostile feelings and the Christian faith was considered by many natives as the enemy religion, which was only accepted by the necessity to hide barely traditional pagan rites. This, according to Leopoldo Nilus, resulted in formalism and religious 'externalization.'

Viriato Correia writes in a quotation made by Fernando Azevedo that "perhaps there is no other country which has had its life so closely connected with cassocks and monk's robes as Brazil."<sup>34</sup> He continues writing "that there is also not one of our revolutions which has not had a Father or a friar fighting for the ideal of liberty."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Azevedo, p. 154

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

Brazil was born Catholic. The first mass on land was the official act of taking possession of the land. The first name given to this new land was Island of the True Cross (Ilha de Vera Cruz) given by the first historian, Pero Vaz de Caminha. As a new land Brazil was open to the propagation of the Catholic faith and for the colonizing.

Azevedo makes interesting remarks about the activities of the Jesuits in Brazil. Their activity was mainly directed towards the defense and conversion of the heathen (Indian), but these missionaries surpassed the mere field of the spiritual. They attacked despotism and the abuses of the colonies and also led an offensive against dissoluteness in the customs. They opened schools for reading and writing and therefore became one of the most powerful agents of colonization. There is a debate about the Jesuits' political activities, but no doubt their role was very important in Brazilian social and political history. It is undeniable that they contributed more than all others to make Catholicism really the cement of Brazilian unity. Azevedo, as seen here, thinks that if another religion, like Protestantism, would have been introduced in Brazil during the first centuries, the political unity of the colony would have been broken. His thesis may be contested.

So, for almost three centuries the history of culture in Brazil became ultimately tied up with the history of missions. Church and school appeared close together.

The Jesuits' emphasis on education made it possible to influence the first educated Brazilians who later shaped the history of our culture.

During the first three centuries teaching was given over entirely to the clergy. In the first century the Jesuits were the only ones

in charge, but in the later centuries teaching was given by the religious leaders of the company of the Jesuits and of the Benedictines, Capuchins, Carmelites, and in a general way the priests, either regular or secular, in their colleges, convents, and seminaries.

The Jesuits, who were a great power in the colony, were more concerned with the salvation of the Indian, and the religious ministrations of the Negro were largely left in the hands of the priest who served as chaplain of the 'big house,' and who was liable to be neither very learned nor very exigent in matters of dogma. This kind of 'gentle and tolerant Catholicism' the Negro paganized in his own way. The religiosity of the colonist was preserved from outside against the indigenous fetishism and the animism of the African, but in reality the Catholic belief and doctrine was corrupted. Until today there are many pagan elements in the Brazilian Roman Catholicism, as a product of the Indian and African influence.

In the patriarchal families the first son succeeded the lord of the manor, according to the law which gave to the first-born the entire succession, and the second son went to study in Europe. The third entered the church, taking his vows at fifteen years, hearing that his vocation would come later with the habit, the tonsure, and the vow.

Churches, writes Azevedo, were multiplied everywhere, and beginning with the seventeenth century Brazil was a country of churches and of convents. These churches exercised charm over the multitudes. For Azevedo the Roman Catholic Church had an important role in the national unity, especially in establishing the unity of language.

Convents and seminaries also became true nests of liberals and revolutionaries against the insolent despotism of the lords, the usurpations of the public power, and the assault of the foreign invader.

The role of the Roman Catholic Church in the last decades has changed significantly. The secularization process started at the end of the nineteenth century, the immigration which brought Protestantism, the influence of the positivists and freemasons, and their emphasis on religion's freedom, the organization of French Kardecism (Spiritualism), the historical and social process of industrialization and urbanization changed the Brazilian culture very deeply. Vatican II was a reaction against this old style Church in this new context. And Vatican II opened the Roman Catholic Church to this new reality, but today, as Miguez Bonino, President of the Theological-Evangelical Seminary in Buenos Aires says,

"Lateinamerika ist im wesentlichen ein säkularisierter Kontinent, in dem weniger als 15% der Bevölkerung ein bewusstes und wirkliches christliches Leben führen. Der Mythos vom Katholischen Kontinent wird im wachsenden Masse gerade auch in katholischen Publikationen bestritten."<sup>36</sup>

The same words would be said about Brazil. Emilio Willems wrote that "die Zahl der praktizierenden Katholiken (im Sinne der Kirche) kaum 15% der Gesamtbevölkerung übersteigt."<sup>37</sup>

#### The Roman Catholicism After Vatican II

Since 1965, an impressive change has taken place among Roman Catholics in their relationship with other churches and the world. Brazilians also felt this new mood in their "old church."

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<sup>36</sup>Quoted by Linnenbrink, p. 583.

<sup>37</sup>Willems, p. 190.

In 1968 the second general conference of Latin American Episcopate at Bogota -- Medellin (Colombia) took place, and from there Vatican II came to Latin America. Medellin spoke of the "dawn of a new era in the history of our continent."

For Michael Taylor, Vatican II was the Council in which the Church inaugurated the age of Christian secularity.<sup>38</sup>

Among the many expressions of this secularity, is the theology of liberation with its strong emphasis on changing social-economic-political structures.

Rubem Alves, a well known Brazilian liberal Protestant theologian once wrote that in his personal opinion

"the Roman Catholic church is the community which has the greatest possibilities to do something about social change in Latin America. The Catholic church, combines its identification with the Latin America culture with new prophetic consciousness plus the means for political action. Indeed, it has been the only power able to speak out against the status quo and withstand reaction."<sup>39</sup>

Theodore Bachmann writing about Lutherans in Brazil says that "in many parts of Latin America, and in Brazil particularly, the Roman Catholic Church is becoming one of the most powerful engines of change."<sup>40</sup> Some, he says, in favor of radical change, a non-violent, non-Communist, but going to the root of the injustice under which hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and exploitation, persist. Some protesting priests involve the church prophetically, using for this sometimes marxism as their framework,

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<sup>38</sup> Michael Taylor, S. J., editor, The Sacred and the Secular. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 6.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted by Leopoldo J. Nilus, "The Role of the Church in Latin American Society," Lutheran World, 15 (1968):285.

<sup>40</sup> Ernest Theodore Bachmann, Lutherans in Brazil (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1970), p. 66.

being therefore in danger to 'buy' the non-Christian presuppositions behind this theory of social analysis and criticism.

The "incarnation theologies," social issues and the concern for humanity amid rapid change are dividing the churches, Protestant as well as Roman Catholic, often with great bitterness and tragic loss.

No doubt the Roman Catholic church has a renewed awareness of herself as the Christian community involved in the world, but her present involvement has been criticized even by some of their head leaders. The direction of this 'new theology' seems to be merely horizontal. Some theologians speak of a "political theology," very much concerned with the future of the earth and almost forgetting the eschatological hope in heaven. "Redemption," they say, "will come in seeking creative solutions to concrete human problems like poverty, hunger, injustice, economic discrimination, sickness and war." They encourage people to seek the marks of grace in the world.

In the last decades of the twentieth century a growing historical consciousness is developing all over the world, through which men and women are trying to make their own societies and cultures.

There is a general thought that what human beings have created they can change, and to be fully human is to be involved actively as a subject and not as object in the process of making history.

After 1965, part of the way of doing theology in Latin America is the "liberation theology," the "political theology," and this especially among the Roman Catholics.

Not few Roman Catholic priests and bishops not only want to understand history, but they also want to reshape it. They want to be, besides their prophetic role, involved actively in the change process.

In this effort Roman Catholic priests are committed in the struggle for the oppressed, and very closely identified with those suffering people. This commitment to 'liberalism' results in an act of solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

These theologians and activist priests think that when you see reality from below, from the perspective of those who suffer, you have a new perspective of reality. So, the starting point is the poor, and social science is the main tool to approach reality and come to praxis.

No doubt that this typical South-American theology which has mainly developed in the Roman Catholic Church, breaks with the traditional theology of the West. But is 'liberation theology' still a theology? Is the Roman Catholic Church losing her Christian identity in Latin America?

If Roman Catholicism in Brazil, a country of economic oppression and large social problems, will proclaim mainly political statements, then our people will not hear the proclamation of the message of God from the main church body. If this is a consequence of Vatican II, it certainly is a sad consequence.

If the Roman Catholic Church has its great problems with the liberal theologies inside herself, she also has some big challenges with the other religious groups growing rapidly in Brazil. While she condemns in some sense the Pentecostal movements, Spiritualism (Kardecism) and Umbanda, many Spiritualists and Umbandistas consider themselves as still

good Catholics. They thus maintain a religious continuity characteristic of traditional folk religion.

In spite of all the change in Brazilian culture and in the Roman church, the number of those who practice voodoo is going up. "Die katholische Kirche," writes Erich Fülling, "ist tatsächlich in Gefahr, von Umbanda und Ähnlichen Gruppen unterwandert zu werden. Man kann geradezu von einer stillschweigenden Auswanderung grosser Teile im brasilianischen Volk aus der römischen Kirche sprechen."<sup>41</sup>

The process of secularization changed some aspects of the Roman church, but some essential and fundamental modifications did not take place as expected. For instance, Brazil is still doted with shrines, some of them extremely favored, to which the annual quota of pilgrimages reaches astounding proportions. As examples we mention Nossa Senhora Aparecida, the chapel of Bonfim, and so forth. In many places the sacred and even the magic-superstitious elements have not been eliminated as a result of this new era in the Roman Church. The number of human mediators between God and men is still the same, and may perhaps even increase, in sharp contrast with those who are only concerned with changing the social-political structures in this land of injustice, exploitation and poverty.

It is true that some theologians speak of a gradual elimination of the many idols in Roman Catholic religiosity, but many bishops are pleased with these idolatrous and sacred beliefs. Even Pope John II didn't say one word against the cults and idolotrous attitudes in Brazil when he visited it a few years ago.

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<sup>41</sup>Fülling, p. 619.

Does not secularization mean the liberation from the magic, from the sacred and superstitious elements in human life? Isn't Vatican II called the Council of secularity? Where are the significant results of this process in Brazilian Catholicism? The Roman Catholicism in Brazil has great challenges as a church body in this 'catholic' country.

### Umbanda

Many see the Umbanda as the authentic Brazilian religion. Popular artists, wanting to go back to the Brazilian roots, promote Umbanda's beliefs in their music and other arts. This is also done as a patriotic affirmation of the national cultural values in reaction against the cultural values that we import from other countries, mainly from the United States. So, this religion is more and more being identified with Brazilian culture. "Viele sind schon sogar stolz auf die Mischreligion," wrote Günter Linnenbrink. "Sie wird als das religiöse Äquivalent zum rassistisch gemischten brasilianischen Volk, als die brasilianische Volks-religion verstanden."<sup>42</sup> Linnenbrink also says that Umbanda "ist etwas wie der Idealtypus einer syncretistischen Religion." Then he mentions a classical definition of the Umbanda in the words of Armando C. Rondeira: "Der Bantuneger baute das Haus mit Hilfe des Nago-Kultes (Kult der Sudan-neger) auf dem Grundstück des Indianers, setzte das Dach des weissen Kolonisators darauf, erbat die Türen und Fenster bei den Spiritisten und übergab die Vollendung den Okkultisten. Dadurch kam ein funktionierendes Haus zustande: die Umbanda."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Linnenbrink, p. 583.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. See also Armando C. Rondeira Umbanda (Rio de Janeiro: n.p., 1961), p. 123.

Linnebrink concludes:

"So afrikanische Götter und Ahnenkulte, indianische Geisterbeschwörungen, Elemente des Katholizismus, Reinkarnationsvorstellungen des Hinduismus und Spiritismus sowie okkultische Vorstellungen sind hier eine Ehe eingegangen. In der Hauptsache gehören dieser neuen Religion Mischlinge und schwarze Brazilianer an, aber man findet auch schon einige Weisse unter ihnen. Besonders in den grossen Städten, in Rio und in São Paulo, hat sie viele Anhänger."<sup>44</sup>

This magic fundamental form of religion -- incarnations of totemic, animistic, and magical beliefs -- survives in spite of the most advanced religious and philosophical conceptions of the superior strata of the Brazilian society. In spite of all scientific, rational and technological advances, it seems that a large part of our population still lives under the full dominion of a magical worldview.

In T. Lynn Smith's book Brazil: People and Institutions it is said that Brazil lives impregnated by magic. The medicine man, the fetishist, has among our population a prestige considerably greater than the directors of our destinies. In the silence of the night there are elegant ladies and gentlemen of the high rank who go to the macumbas to consult the invisible power of Pai Joaquim. Any prophet with cabalistic formulas or medicine man (healer) with magical potions attracts a large clientele. People live in the ingenuity of common religious ignorance.

Nina Rodrigues, a great Brazilian scholar writes:

"The number of whites, mulattoes, and individuals of all colors and color graduations who, in their afflictions, in their troubles, go to consult the Negro fetisheers, of those who publicly profess the power of the talismen and fetishes, of those who, in much larger number, laugh at them in public, but secretly hear them, consult them -- this number would be incalculable."

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Smith, p. 706.

"Primitive religion and magic are almost inseparable from music and the dance," says Smith. And music and dance shape very strongly the ceremonies of the Afro-Brazilians, particularly in exciting this feeling-oriented population. The Brazilian is of a lively disposition. Singing and dancing are very important elements in his life style, and in the Afro-Brazilian religious ceremonies the drums are the essential instruments of the cult. The contact with the divinities happens through the music rhythm.

About the success of the Umbanda, Emilio Willems wrote:

"Der überraschende Erfolg der Umbanda beruht zum grossen Teil auf den spontanen Bemühungen der unteren Schichten, das indianische und afrikanische Kulturerbe des brasilianischen Volkes aufzuwerfen und es von der historischen Ambivalenz der oberen Schichten zu befreien."<sup>46</sup>

Umbanda is this weird amalgam which is the second biggest religion after Roman Catholicism. The spirits invoked in the cult centers of the Umbanda are those of "lowly" Indians and "old Negroes" that are believed to have reached higher levels of perfection than the spirits of their former masters. For Willems this seems to be a symbolic subversion of the traditional class structure.

The Umbandistas also want to be Christians. According to their 'theology,' "der Mensch soll das Gute tun, und dieses geschieht mit Hilfe der guten Geister."

Brazil's established medicine is also severely overspecialized and depersonalized, making room, therefore, for healers who offer to people what "cold and rational" professionals are not giving.

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<sup>46</sup>Willems, p. 204.

The number of healing centers of the Umbandism, Spiritualism or Pentecostalism is growing fast, although medicine has been largely socialized in Brazil. The problem consists in the fact that there are more "sick people" than sicknesses.

### Spiritism

In his book New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil, William R. Read says the following about Spiritism:

"The doctrinal writings on Spiritism by the Frenchman Allan Kardec have been accepted in Brazil as a rich system of science, philosophy, and religion. His writings have become the doctrinal standard for 'high' Spiritism or what is commonly known as Kardecismo in Brazil. Kardecismo became popular through the prodigious writings of Chico Xavier who adapted Spiritism to the ethical-sentimentalistic side of Brazilian personality, emphasizing works of benevolence and charity."<sup>47</sup>

"In São Paulo," remarks Read, "there are many Spiritist centers combining elements of 'low' (Umbanda) and 'high' (Kardecismo) Spiritism. The result has been a Spiritism that functions as a vehicle to adapt human personality to the needs of urban life, especially that of the masses who are in the midst of this rapid social change."<sup>48</sup>

Candido P. F. de Camargo, in his sociological interpretation of Kardecismo and Umbanda, affirms that Spiritism of all types is growing rapidly in Brazil (since the era of urbanization in 1930) especially in urban areas among the lower classes. He estimated that in the state of São Paulo, twenty percent of the population is connected with Spiritism in some way.

Undoubtedly Spiritism made and is still making enormous inroads on Roman Catholicism. Boaventura Kloppenburg, a Brazilian theologian,

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<sup>47</sup>Read, p. 209.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 210

who was encharged by his church to inform Brazilian Catholics about these non-Christian religions, wrote two famous books in which he reveals his knowledge of the Umbanda and the Kardecist Spiritism.

What upsets Kloppenburg at most is the tremendous spiritual confusion among our people. He sees in many individuals the coexistence of self-exclusive religious, philosophical and doctrinaire conceptions. So, for instance, you see a Roman Catholic-Kardecist or a Roman Catholic-Umbandist. These individuals do not see the contradiction in their beliefs. The ignorance, says Kloppenburg, is the main reason for that confusion. This religious ignorance estimulates the growth of superstition. There is a need for a basic Christian education, maintains Kloppenburg. People do not have criteria by which they can separate the truth from error, the superstitious from the faith, the pagan from the Christian.

Kardecism comes to many with the overcoat of 'science.' Their selling of their many books is growing. Kloppenburg agrees that Spiritism has found here in Brazil a very fertile land. Our people are pre-disposed to the ideas and 'truths' of Kardecism.

Spiritists have shown a real missionary zeal, and they know the best moments to bring their invitation to be in contact with the spirits of famous or beloved departed. The yearning of loved ones is used as the moment in their mission attack to bring one more to this great spiritual brotherhood.

Most people go to the centers seeking healing for their body and also for their soul. Kardecists say that their doctrine is the third and last revelation. So, they are not anti-Christian, but even the fulfillment of God's truth.

What is confusing in this context, is that they use sometimes the Bible, speak about Jesus, and use Christian words but with an entirely different meaning. There is no emphasis on the main Christian truths, but some of their teaching sounds good to "religious" ears.

Spiritism is universalist, and has no defined system of doctrines. Its principles are not rigid. People are more free to think in their own ways, and in some sense 'make their own theology.'

Kardecist Spiritism is divided, therefore the adjective 'Spiritist' can be put at the side of many nouns.

Spiritualism's main doctrine is the "Orient und Indien stammende Lehre von der Wiederverkörperung der Seele nach dem Tode."<sup>49</sup>

Both Umbanda and Kardecism teach that man is 'saved' through his own works (Selbsterlösung). He has to make his salvation, his own purification, his own cleaning of his failures and shortcomings in this earthly life. Both are extremely tolerant in matters of doctrine and life (ethics). Umbandists and Spiritists use to say: "Religionen sind Wege, die zur Gott führen. Alle Religionen sind gut, sofern sie den Weg des Guten lehren."<sup>50</sup>

The Spiritualists prefer to invoke the spirits of famous departed that are believed to have reached superior levels of perfection. Contact with such reputable spirits seems to imply a symbolic denial of the class structure, according to Emilio Willems.

A Christian alternative to Spiritism is the Pentecostal movement, says Theodore Bachmann, which grew very much after 1960.

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<sup>49</sup> Filling, p. 619

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

### Brazilian Protestantism

In the republican context Roman Catholicism experienced the jolt of formal separation of the church and state. The change of condition from being smothered under the Empire to ignored under the Republic was healthy for the Roman Church, because she got a new sense of mission.

The German immigrants who came to São Leopoldo in 1824 brought Lutheranism with them. These Protestants of German origin, having formed their first permanent synod in 1886 in Rio Grande do Sul, organized three more prior to 1912. By 1900 Lutherans of Missouri Synod began what soon became their Brazilian District.

World War I effected seriously Lutheranism in Brazil and not so much Protestants of Anglo-Saxon missions, like Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, Episcopalians, Congregationalists. These Protestant churches addressed the Luso-Brazilians in the language of the land and by that time they had already become more recognized in this country with their significant contribution through education.

In contrast to the immigrant Protestantism that came from Germany, missionary Protestantism came largely from North America.

Today Brazil has not only the biggest Roman Catholic population of any country of the world, but also the largest Protestant constituency of any country in Latin America.

Portuguese-speaking Protestantism has its roots in the work of agents of the British and American Bible Societies, who first distributed Bibles in Brazil in the 1820's.

The first Protestant missionaries to found permanent work in Brazil were Congregational and Presbyterian, and they came in the late 1850's.

By the 1890's the outlines of a new religious pluralism had become evident. What the Empire had tolerated, the Republic sanctioned.

The interest demonstrated by Protestants in education gave thousands of Brazilians a new upward social mobility. Yet it did not propose to alter the structure of society. According to Theodore Bachmann, Protestants held a dual rather than a dialectical view of the Church and the world; the Church is here, the world is there. On this basis Brazilian Protestantism was also consciously anti-Roman Catholic.

Although a minority group in this Roman Catholic nation, Protestants played an important role in our society. Emilio Willems summarizes their influence in the following words:

Die protestantischen Gemeinden entwickelten Formen der sozialen Kontrolle, die das Verhalten des individuellen Gläubigen - als Familienmitglied, Arbeitgeber, Arbeitnehmer, Kunde, Geschäftsteilhaber usw.-unter den wirksamen und direkten Einfluss einer puritanischen Moral brachten. Nach und nach begann man, die protestantischen Gemeinde angehören als gewissenhafte Geschäftsleute, nüchterne und fleissige Arbeiter, pünktlich zahlende Schuldner zu achten und die materiellen Vorteile wirtschaftlicher und beruflicher Beziehungen mit ihnen zu schätzen.<sup>51</sup>

The Protestant schools were of an unique importance in the history of Protestantism in Brazil. Willem's analysis is this:

Ursprünglich waren die protestantischen Schulen, vor allem die Gymnasien, in erster Linie als Werkzeuge des religiösen Proselytismus gedacht. Nicht protestantische Familien der mittleren und oberen Schichten begannen, ihre Kinder in die presbyterianischen, baptistischen und methodistischen Schulen zu schicken.

Dieser Zustrom von Nichtprotestanten brachte eine wachsende Säkularisierung der Unterrichtspläne mit sich. Die proselytischen Tendenzen traten immer mehr in den Hintergrund, aber gleichzeitig gewannen die protestantischen Schulen unter den Tausenden von ehemaligen Schülern zahlreiche einflussreiche Freunde und Verteidiger, die, ohne Protestanten zu sein, die Verdienste der protestantischen Verbände anerkannten und für ihre Rechte eintraten.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup>Willems, p. 206.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

The large number of the German Lutherans immigrants lived in the 'colonia' (hinterland) and were forgotten by the Brazilian authorities. They also lived under ecclesiastical neglect, which made it easy for more primitive forces to take over. The colonist worked hard and was always confronted by a vast unknown. He lived isolated and without spiritual assistance.

It is true that in many homes there was the Bible, a hymnal, Luther's catechism, and possibly a book of devotions and prayers, but in many others these were lacking. The use of these helps presupposed some sort of community of faith and spiritual nurture. When this was lacking, folk religion and superstition moved in.

This folk religion had its roots back in the village life of medieval Europe. So, there and here, they made use of the 'magical spirit art,' especially as set forth in the carefully guarded and spurious Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses. In lieu of pastoral or medical care, pow-wow care was the answer. The people made use of magical means to effect cures, dispel evil, or set human relations aright.

To this context Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LC-MS) sent its first missionary to Brazil in 1900. The motive for this step was a "feeling of responsibility towards fellow Lutherans in distress," as Professor Mario Rehfeldt writes. The Rev. C. Broders, the first Missouri Synod missionary that went to Brazil, came to help the missionary work carried out among Lutherans of German origin, living in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, because a direct call for help had come from a pastor of that state. So the missionary work of LC-MS in Brazil "did not have the character of missions among heathens, but among Lutherans and people who

called themselves Lutherans, but who, after years of very deficient, if any at all, pastoral care, were Lutherans in name only."<sup>53</sup>

Lutheran parochial schools also played an important role in Brazilian culture. Through them the children of the isolated immigrants received at least a basic education, since the state could not provide. But Lutheran schools were also mission agencies, because they opened many doors for the Missouri Synod among the German settlements. They contributed to the fast growth of Missouri Synod's work in Brazil.

In order to form an indigenous church a seminary was founded in 1903. This was a decisive step in the history of Missouri Synod in Brazil. This was the first big step for a Brazilian church.

Religion was not only the most important element in the preservation of the culture of the members of the Lutheran churches, but represented up to a certain point an obstacle to the process of cultural integration. "The obstacle," says Manfredo Berger, "was not their religion itself--which in reality constituted a new element in Brazilian culture--but rather the idea of the impossibility of separating their church from their ethnic origins."<sup>54</sup>

The religious affiliation is an important factor in the process of assimilation or not assimilation. Catholics, for instance, practiced their religion together with the Brazilians, having, therefore, been largely assimilated with Brazilian culture.

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<sup>53</sup> Mario L. Rehfeldt, "Missouri Synod in Brazil: First 50 Years," (STM Thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1962), p. 207.

<sup>54</sup> Manfredo Berger, "An Immigrant Church in Transition--A Sociological Study," Lutheran World, 15 (1968):294.

The purity of faith was often, among these German Lutherans, confused with the preservation of the cultural patterns of the home country (Volkstum). Many German leaders worked hard to emphasize in the immigrants the awareness of their origin and destiny. People received encouragement to work for the cause of religion and Volkstum in their church. Undoubtedly, the union between the church and Volkstum was one of the principal, if not the principal, factor responsible for the alienation of the Protestant church from everyday Brazilian life.

The past of these immigrants was immortalized in their German language which became the definitive language of Lutheran Protestant communities.

As Manfredo Berger says,

"there is a very widespread theory among anthropologists that religion is always the greatest center of resistance to cultural change. Religion represents an ultimate bulwark and all values which wish to stay alive crystallize themselves around it. In this specific case the question raised is not of the assimilation of the Protestant German-Brazilians with the religion of the majority of the Brazilian population but rather that of the possibility of the existence of a Protestantism disconnected from Volkstum. For what made the German Protestant group impervious to Brazilian culture was the ideology of the inseparability of the Protestant church and Volkstum, which dominated broad sectors of the Protestant church up to the recent war and was still firmly rooted in some sectors in the postwar period. The Second World War and everything connected with it opened up new perspectives."<sup>55</sup>

It is true that "life without tradition is so shaky as the fiddler on the roof," but when tradition becomes legalistic and self-sufficient, it brings death, like the situation found in the New Testament.

Tradition is not something that is inherited and passed on, like an heirloom. It is something to possess through understanding gained by

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<sup>55</sup> Manfredo Berger, p. 301.

way of doubt, decision and conflict, something which may be damaged by our indifference and infidelity or enhanced by our care and devotion. It lives 'by faith and for faith. And, in the last resort, it is never ours,' says K. Hamilton.<sup>56</sup>

The Protestant German-Brazilians, almost without exception, imported their whole ecclesiastic luggage from the country of their origin, without feeling the necessity to translate the imported liturgies and ethical concepts into the situation. This tendency to adore the tradition and to maintain a kind of ghetto, and resist the process of nationalization also existed among other immigrant churches.

Profound alterations in the internal lives of the congregations took place with the process of industrialization and urbanization of the country, facilitating thus communications and horizontal mobility. As a natural result of this phenomenon, these isolated congregations came and are still coming in close contact with the world, and deep changes are taking place.

In Manufredo Berger's view, censuses show that as industrialization and urbanization in an area increase, there is a decline in religious activities. The concentration of the population, the mobility of the inhabitants and the distance between their homes and places of work make local conditions diffuse and disrupt social interaction. The change in co-existence from the development of a socially closed and integrated community to an urban district also changes the relationship with the church: the church loses its importance as an institution closely

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<sup>56</sup>K. Hamilton, "Essentiality or Tradition," Christian Century 83 (January 1, 1966):707.

linked to the community which brings the members of the neighborhood together in common worship. The church also loses its social control over its individual members. Individuals no longer depend on the church organization but are free from its educational influence in their cultural, economic, professional life and in their interests. This is the authentic secularization going on in our culture. And this challenge we have to face today as Church.

Making some comments about the role of the church in Brazilian culture, Lindolfo Weingaertner, a Brazilian-German Lutheran theologian writes:

"We must clearly realize that the compromise between the church and the world, which to a large extent still characterizes congregations which are partially linked to the typical inherited structure of the Volkskirche and partially dependent on a system of associations and clubs, is not the solution which we desire, the solution which implies that the church should come into the world." Weingaertner concludes saying that "the Lutheran Church will only survive if it opens its door to all Brazilians and completely adapts itself to the historical epoch in which Brazilian life now finds itself."<sup>57</sup>

It is our opinion that in the last ten years both Lutheran Church bodies in Brazil (IELB and IECLB) have made some deep changes in their approach to Brazilian reality.

Other Protestant church bodies in Brazil have different kinds of problems in relating to our context, but they will not be examined in this study.

If it is correct to say that "Umbanda and Spiritismus stellen ein grosses Missionsgebiet für die Christliche Kirche in Brasillien," as Filling said, it is also correct to look to Pentecostalism as a popular

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<sup>57</sup> Lindolfo Weingaertner, "The Church in the World," Estudos Teológicos 3(1965):109-22.

response to problems that the traditional Protestant and Roman Catholic did not handle very well.

Lutherans are learning and have much to learn to be able to deal with Brazilian people in the right way and so proclaim to them the message of God revealed in Jesus Christ and in the Scripture.

#### Pentecostalism in Brazil

For E. T. Bachmann Pentecostalism and Spiritism are Spiritual Counter-Cultures, in the sense that they are popular responses to the church establishment. When he uses the term Spiritism he is including the Umbanda also.

Among the adherents of Spiritism are growing numbers of Protestants and Lutherans, especially those who have moved from the country to the city and find themselves overlooked by the church. Then they discover that the old self-helps of superstition (pow-wow) provide a springboard into spiritism. Although pastors know about this, it is difficult to do something about it.

A Christian alternative to Spiritism arose in the Pentecostal movement. It is a newer phenomenon, and it is growing rapidly.

Imported early in this country (1910) from North America, Pentecostalism has become the fastest growing form of Christianity in several Latin American countries, especially in Chile as well in Brazil.

Today the "Christian Congregation of Brazil," the oldest Pentecostal group; the "Assemblies of God," the largest group; and the Free Pentecostals, headed by the dynamic preacher Manuel de Melo, are the most important contingents in Brazilian Pentecostalism.

The Pentecostals, as a whole, adhere firmly to the Bible, but their approach is biblicist and legalist. Their structure is characterized by principles completely different and opposed to the structures of the traditional agrarian society in Latin America and even modern industrialized societies and their traditional churches. "By asserting their organizational spontaneity and capacity for concerted action," says Willems, "the sects reject the paternalistic tutelage of the upper strata. They strongly emphasize social equality and thus negate the traditional class structure. They chose a theology which dispenses with the salvation monopoly of the Catholic Church and its priestly hierarchy which is perceived as a rampart of the existing social order."<sup>58</sup>

Willems, as a social scientist sees the Pentecostal phenomena through sociological and anthropological glasses, and so for him the bestowal of the "powers of the Spirit" upon the members of the Pentecostal sects acts as a compensatory mechanism for the frustrations inflicted by being deprived of actual power within the existing society. In a similar way, thinks Willems, the mediumistic abilities of the Spiritualists and the Umbanistas confer a sense of power to both the medium and those who are allowed to enter in personal communication with the spirit world through their mediums. "Die betonte soziale Gleichheit innerhalb der Sekten negiert das herkömmliche Klassensystem."<sup>59</sup> And the same is true of the Umbanda: "Der festliche Charakter der Umbanda bedeutet Verbrüderung. In ihrer Mitte gibt es weder Klassen noch Kasten."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Willems, p. 210

<sup>59</sup> Willems, p. 202

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

How can we explain that in this secular world the Pentecostal churches grow so fast?

Relevant is the fact that Pentecostal growth and urbanization seem to go together from 1935 to the present. Pentecostal churches are found in the 'high potential area' of Brazil. The family organization suffers in the modern socio-economic situation. Especially in the urban areas, the family unit is breaking down. The Pentecostals and the Spiritistic groups have stepped into this vacuum. Especially the Pentecostals have helped to restore the stability to family life. Membership in a Pentecostal church fulfills the need to belong to a vital social unit, a need often felt by people in rapid social change.

The Pentecostals are predominately urban-centured. They offer security and brotherhood in an impersonal environment, to those who have moved from the country to the city and find themselves overlooked by their traditional church.

As a matter of fact, the traditional historical churches are in the eyes of some mystics and emotion oriented people "dead" or "cold" religions.

Pentecostals emphasize the experience with God, and often these experiences they talk about can only be experienced, not expressed or communicated. For many "the experience" can become the final court of appeal, their test for truth. More pragmatistic Pentecostals think that since this kind of experience and religion works in life by solving many problems in this complex life, it must be truth. For many, it is true that since the "Spirit had worked in my life" I changed and I am O.K. Just because many of the healings and blessings help and really work and

show results in life, does not mean, however that it is good or that all is true.

The experiences of the mystics according to F. R. Tennant are not extra-ordinary religious experiences but psychologically ordinary experiences with a religious interpretation.

But, nobody can deny that the Pentecostals have found the secret of giving expression to the basic emotional nature of the Brazilian people in their church services. The emotional factor is more used in Pentecostal worship services, which also allow a more free expression of anyone who is present. So, there is more participation of the individual in the activities of the church, and this satisfies certain social and emotional needs of people. This is seen especially in group praying, singing and other dramatic expressions of group participation.

As already has been said, in the last decades, Pentecostal groups snowballed into mass movements. They also compete with Spiritualism and Umbanda for the same lower class following, having this competition produced tension and antagonism.

Pentecostalism shares with Spiritualism and Umbanda the belief in spirit possession and the therapeutical assistance obtainable from Spirits.

The Pentecostal's supernaturalism is too 'naive' for people with more intellectual education and so they are mostly guided by leaders who have had only the fundamental education or none. They are even afraid of intellectualism.

Somebody called the Pentecostals as "the most autochthonous evangelical groups in Latin America." Although being the most Brazilian of

the Protestants in Brazil, the Pentecostals have little interest in social issues. They can speak to the heart of the people of the lower classes and give them an identity and a feeling of being someone, but are not involved and conscious of the political context in Latin America and also in Brazil. They refuse to get involved in a struggle for more social justice and human dignity. We don't know until when?

In the last years a charismatic or neo-Pentecostal movement has emerged within both Catholic and some Protestant denominations. The quest for special experiences with the Holy Spirit and his special gifts in the form of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), trances, miraculous healing and bodily expression in dancing and 'fits' is not at all new. Tension and split have been the result of these phenomena among the Protestants and Catholics.

Man really never abandons religion; he changes his religion. He may reject his traditional religion but he will adopt another one. In times of crisis of the historical and traditional religions, there is a vacuum for strange cults.

#### New Cults

Strange religions, new and old, seek converts in several parts of our world. Brazil is also a mission field for these new cults.

In an article written by Howard A. Snyder in Christianity Today, he traces parallels between the first and the twentieth century, and affirms that the religious ferment was characterized by the rise of new, intensely emotional religions and the resurgence of some of the other Oriental faiths. In the Roman Empire the cults of Cybele, Isis, and Mithras (the last imported from Persia) were particularly popular. "By the

first century A.D. the Graeco-Roman world was inundated with mystery cults of this sort," notes Michael Green in his Evangelism in the Early Church, and "the enthusiasm engendered by these cults was great."<sup>61</sup>

This development finds many present-day parallels -- the resurgence of some Buddhist sects, the popularity in the West of Indian guru Krishnamurti, the phenomenal spread of spiritism, in various forms in Brazil, and the new religions of Japan, of which Sokka Gakkai is the best known.

The major non-Christian Religions of the East, the major pseudo-Christian Religions of the West, the occult religions and systems, and the new religions and cults are having significant success in spreading their ideas in the Brazilian land.

Although living in a secularizing culture, man is incurably religious. Besides all advances of science, of all new understanding of this world and even of man's behavior and nature, almost everyday we can hear of a new religion -- or rediscover an old one.

And what is new in this religious phenomenon is that in the past some used to be spoken of only by missionaries. Now followers are living across the street from us and in the next apartment, separated only by a thin wall.

The book Cults, World Religions, and You<sup>62</sup> written by Kenneth Boa presents an excellent introduction to this issue. This is his focus on the problem:

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<sup>61</sup>Michael Green is quoted by Howard A. Snyder in "World Come Full Circle," Christianity Today 14 (January 1972):11.

<sup>62</sup>Kenneth Boa, Cults, World Religions, and You (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1982), pp. 4-5.

This is the day of new religious cults and occult groups. Strange concepts that till recently were known only to a few in the West are now proliferating. Eastern mysticism and occult practices are gaining more adherents, especially among teenagers and young adults. More than ever, ours is a pluralistic society in which Christianity is no longer a consensus but just another option in a whole cafeteria of religious choices. There are several reasons for this dramatic growth of non-Christian religions, cults, and the occult. One is the bankruptcy of the materialistic values of our society has promoted. Materialism and empty humanism do not satisfy the spiritual needs that are a part of every human being and many people are searching for some kind of personal and spiritual fulfillment. Along with this is an increasing experiential rather than factual orientation. People are trying to find meaning through emotional and mystical experiences, which are precisely the kinds of experiences offered by many religious and occult movements today. Others turn to these movements because of loneliness, lack of personal identity, and alienation. By submitting to the teachings and requirements of the cult, they hope to find the love, acceptance, and fellowship they long for. Still others are attracted by the charisma of the authority figures in these religions or by the promise of power over one's circumstances and destiny. Some are drawn in by the exotic ideas and life-styles represented by the various religions and cults. While it is unfortunate that so many have turned to non-Christian sources for the fulfillment of their spiritual needs, this should not be so surprising if we remember that a large number of Christian churches have lost their spiritual vitality. They have exchanged a life-giving relationship for an external religiosity. Thus, instead of attracting those who are on a spiritual quest, some Christian churches and enterprises repel them. The current religious alternatives should be seen as a challenge to the Christian community to get serious about the progress of the Gospel, the good news of new life in Christ.<sup>62</sup>

"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15).

## CHAPTER IV

### KLOPPENBURG'S ANALYSIS OF BRAZILIAN REALITY

In chapter three we looked very closely at the Umbanda, a kind of syncretism combining African, Indian, Roman Catholic and Spiritualist elements, and to Spiritism, or Spiritualism or also called Kardecism, two religious movements that in the last decades won the hearts of millions of Brazilians.

A natural question that comes up after this statement is: But what was the reaction of the 'official Roman Catholic Church?' Dr. Lindolfo Weingärtner, a Brazilian Lutheran theologian, in his book Umbanda, describes that reaction in the person of the apologist Boaventura Kloppenburg in these terms:

Ein Versuch, dem Umbandismus sowie dem Kardecismus in breiter Front und in der Öffentlichkeit entgegenzutreten, wird seit einigen Jahren von Dr. Boaventura Kloppenburg (O.F.M.) unternommen. Der versierte und wortgewandte Volksreder bereits die wichtigsten Zentren des Landes, um das katholische Kirchenvolk in öffentlichen Vorträgen über die ihm vom Syncretismus und Spiritismus der drohenden Gefahren aufzuklären. Er hat im Laufe der Jahre eine Fülle von Material gesammelt, das er in zwei weitverbreiteten Publikationen der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich gemacht hat. (O Espiritismo no Brasil; A Umbanda no Brasil) Mehr und mehr wird in den letzten Jahren seine theologisch-apologetische Grundhaltung von grossen Teilen des katholischen Klerus übernommen. Kloppenburg verlässt bewusst die zögernd-defensive Haltung, die bisher von dem Überwiegenden Teil der katholischen Priesterschaft eingenommen wurde und versucht, den Angriff in das gegnerische Lager selbst vorzutragen. Er hat unzählige Umbandakultstätten und spiritistische Zentren besucht, Kulthandlungen photographiert und überall im Lande mit Leitern von Kultstätten kämpferischen Kontakt aufgenommen. Er scheut nicht davor zurück, Personen aus seinem Mitarbeiterkreis mit fingierten Anliegen in die Sprechstunden der Babalorixas zu senden, um verlässliche Angaben über die consulta= praxis der Kultstätten

zu erhalten. . . . Es wird an dieser Stelle deutlich, dass Kloppenburg in den alten Fehler eifernder Apologetik (manche Kapitel erinnern tatsächlich an Tertullians "Apologeticum) verfällt, dass er seine "gegner" grüßlich unterschätzt und alle die Züge hervorkehrt, die zu ihren Ungunsten sprechen. Dadurch entsteht notwendigerweise ein verzerrtes Bild, weniger durch das, was gesagt, als durch das, was nicht gesagt wird. Ob mit der der von Kloppenburg angewandten Methode dem wirklichen Anliegen christlicher Apologetik gedient ist, muss zumindest in Zweifel gezogen werden.<sup>1</sup>

#### Kloppenburg as a Theologian

In 1960 this Brazilian Roman Catholic apologist was designated by Pope John XXIII to be a consultant of the pontifical Theological Commission in preparation of the twenty-first Ecumenical Council. He tried to identify himself as much as possible with Vatican II, and he really did. What he learned at this Ecumenical Council he shared with his church in his book O Cristo Secularizado and in many articles in a Roman Catholic theological magazine.

Being a serious man and respectable theologian, he participated in the tension of this new era of the Roman Catholic Church, but, as he by himself explains, he never gave up the motto which oriented his life since 1940, the year in which he entered in the Major Seminary in São Leopoldo, R.S., Brazil. "Without subversion and without subservience" were the words which expressed his goals and life's values. Making some comments on this he said that he does not know what is easier: work without subversion or act without subservience. He confesses that both temptations, especially the second one, knocked at his door. Overcoming them was very difficult and sometimes it caused disgusts.

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<sup>1</sup>Lindolfo Weingärtner, Umbanda (Erlangen: Verlag der Ev. Luth. Mission, 1969), pp. 163-166.

For some Vatican II may well live in history as the Council in which the Church inaugurated the age of Christian secularity.

Among the many documents of this Ecumenical Council, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, also known as Gaudium et Spes, Joy and Hope (E.S.) is Kloppenburg's primary source in his book O Cristão Secularizado, in which he discusses the problem of secularization and the Christian role in this modern world.

Radical cultural changes are taking place in Brazil which reflect on the religious level. Kloppenburg wants to help his readers to be faithful to God and to men in this secular context.

#### Secularization

Secularization is an important issue in our days. Every Christian is confronted with the challenge to live out his faith in this secular world without diminishing the Gospel and without escaping from the world. Christians should be able to recognize and accept the good things that come with all this changing, and not only the bad ones.

The process of secularization, however, understands Kloppenburg, by bringing change can also be an invitation to secularism and to an immanent humanism, just the very opposite of a transcendental and open to God humanism.

Freedom is perhaps the most important word related to secularization. It seems also that one of the major dangers which threaten men is the misuse of this freedom. It is a great misunderstanding when somebody thinks that his rights are only completely guaranteed when he has no more links with the rules of the Divine Law.

The significant growth of the natural, human and social sciences, the development of technic, the progress in the area of communication, prepared these new ways of life. Man lives a new moment in his history.

The industrialization is the cause of urbanization with its new cultural forms, the mass-culture and different ways of thinking, acting and living. (GS 54) Heightened media of exchange between nations and different branches of society open up the riches of different cultures to each and every individual, with the result that a more universal form of culture is gradually taking shape. (GS 54)

"In each nation and social group there is a growing number of men and women who are conscious that they themselves are the craftsmen and molders of their community's culture. All over the world the sense of autonomy and responsibility increases with effects of the greatest importance for the spiritual and moral maturity of mankind."<sup>2</sup>

The word secularization can be a start of a big discussion. In fact the word is ambiguous. For some it means the beginning of the end "when there will be no more faith on the earth" and for others it is the only way to save the faith in a world in which religion is definitively breaking down and experiencing its collapse.

In the juridical-canonical sense the word "secularization" is used to designate the indult when a special permission was granted to a religious to leave his order or Institute and go back to the "saeculum" (used in this sense since the eighteenth century). The second meaning was a juridical-political one to designate the separation and the

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<sup>2</sup>Cited in Frei Boaventura Kloppenburg, O.F.M., O Cristão Secularizado (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes Limitada, 1970), p. 15.

subtraction of some goods, territories or institutions from the sphere and domain of the ecclesiastical authority; so, after the French Revolution, it was common to talk about the secularization of the church properties, like schools, hospitals, and cemeteries, and so forth.

In the philosophical-historical and cultural sense, secularization designated the forming process of the culture and ethics of the bourgeois society, emphasizing its autonomy and emancipation in relation to Christianity. The fourth meaning mentioned by Kloppenburg is the historical-sociological and genealogical, designating on one hand the Christian origin of the modern occidental cultural and on the other, its actual opposition or exclusion from Christianity.

The process of secularization is not a new one. The Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, the Enlightenment movement, the rationalistic Materialism, the Marxism, the positive sciences, the technique, the politics, the economy, the art, that is, all this long historical process of the so-called Modern Age conducted mankind to more autonomy of the temporal order, specially in science, art and in the structures of society. In this process, thinks our Roman Catholic theologian, the church won, but the churchmen, especially those of the hierarchy, were the great defeated.

As already mentioned, there are some difficulties in defining secularization. Kloppenburg defines secularization as "a historical process through which the world becomes conscious of its consistency and its autonomy; it would be, therefore, a general process of libertation, through which man, society and culture would be released from the tutelage and control of the myth, religion and metaphysics or from the rules

or institutions which depend from the sacred or religious."<sup>3</sup> In his book Kloppenburg quotes many other definitions given by theologians like Harvey Cox, Robert Adolfs, Walter Altmann, R. Marle., S.J., and others. One point is clear however: secularization is a process that frees men from tutelage and control of religious institutions and beliefs. The secular state is the result of this autonomy in the political sphere of life. Undoubtedly technology frees man socially speaking. Intellectually man has been able to think and to use his reason in a very independent way. Science more and more explains and understands the nature, which in the past was feared and misinterpreted. Summarizing, human life is becoming more autonomous in relationship to the rules from the religious or sacred environment.

A controversial point in the discussion on this theme on secularization is the following question: is there any difference between the term secularization and the term secularism?

Friedrich Gogarten in his book Verhängnis und Hoffnung der Neuzeit. Die Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem makes a distinction between these two words. Kloppenburg accepts and agrees with this position, saying with Gogarten while secularization is only a verification of a historical process which is open to the transcendent, secularism is a new closed world view that excludes the transcendence, not recognizing other values outside the world, becoming, therefore, an ideology. Secularization, therefore, affirms Kloppenburg, isn't a thought

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<sup>3</sup>Kloppenburg, p. 17.

process, but a historical process that occurs, not having as a goal the total dependence from God. On this issue he disagrees with Pope Paul VI, and openly criticizes the definition given by his Summa Pontiff.

The Church can do a lot for modern man and for modern society by putting faith and love in vital practice. "The impact which the Church can have on modern society amounts to an effective living of faith and love, not to any external power exercised by purely human means."<sup>4</sup>

Gaudium et Spes remembers that "in virtue and nature, she is bound to no particular form of human culture, not to any political, economical, or social system."<sup>5</sup>

Maybe we could summarize and say that secularization is a challenge for the Christian and a temptation for the non-Christian.

After temptatives to clarify the meaning of the word secularization and its important role in modern world, Kloppenburg puts in focus the sacred in this secularizing world. He points to an etymological problem: what is really meant by sacred? In the phenomenology of religion the concept of sacred is admitted to be a very complex one. A sacredness has many different manifestations. Mircea Eliade, an expert on this subject, helped Kloppenburg in his study of the sacred. "The sacred," he says, "is the opposite of the profane, and means energy that would exist in certain things." So, we would have for instance, sacred stones, sacred mountains, sacred trees, sacred birds, sacred men, sacred

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<sup>4</sup> Austin P. Flannery, O.P., editor, Vatican Council II (Dublin: Dominican Publications St. Saviour's, 1975), p. 942.

<sup>5</sup> Walter M. Abbott, S.J., The Documents of Vatican II (New York: Herder and Herder Association Press, 1966), p. 242.

times and sacred places. The sacredness is a power put in the sacred object. This power can be used for good or for the evil. That is why the sacred is ambiguous. Some sacred objects are "tabu," forbidden, can't be touched. The man with sacred mentality lives surrounded by forces which influence good or bad over him. In many religions these various manifestations of the sacred-magic are present.

In Brazil, specially the Umbanda and also the Spiritualism are impregnated with sacred and magical elements. And, very honestly, our Catholic theologian admits that the Catholic popular religiosity is also very much influenced by these pagan elements. In order to verify this, the best place to go is to the Catholic sanctuaries and churches.

Brazilian people have a tremendous thirst for miracles. Kloppenburg quotes Father Emile Pin, S.J., who in his book "As Etapas pré-Christãs da descoberta de Deus" says that

"all the people - rich and poor- are immediately open to the miraculous. They always are ready to see the miracle. People expect the miracle. Therefore they "see" many miracles. The crowd is hungry for miracles, and the priest is always the man with a little bit of miraculous power, the sacred person able to do miracles. In all ways, the priest is always equipped with the power of blessing, that is, the power to transmit the divine blessing. The notion of blessing, that is, the power to transmit the divine blessing. The notion of blessing is fundamental. All that is expected from Christ, from God, from the Church is the blessing, then it protects from adversities, dangers, leads to fortune and prosperity, heals the sick or at least mitigates the pain, exorcizes devils, and keeps evil spirits away. The blessing represents in fact a general protection of life. . . . These are the expectations of a poor people, always threatened, always living in insecurity. The priest possesses the power of blessing. The father is a powerful being who is asked to bless the house, the sick, the children, the companies, the objects of piety, the belongings, all things. . . . The most popular saints are always the old Portuguese saints, specially those from June: Santo Antonio, São João and São Pedro."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Kloppenburger, p. 23.

This sacred world, affirms Kloppenburg, entered irreversibly in crisis. And that is good, he continues. Modern man with his critical spirit, lost his ingenuity. The world is in the process of desacralization. Things aren't so mysterious any more. The laboratory explains what exists. As science makes its progress in the knowledge and control over nature, the spirits and demons will disappear and the kosmos becomes more and more profane, secular, that is, becomes what it really is, and nothing more. The sacred-magic was in fact an illusion, a phantasy, an human projection.

Modern man knows that the world and things were made to be manipulated and transformed. Man does not anymore fear the things in itself. The number of the exorcists decreases in the proportion of the advance of sciences. The magic "healers" act only where the doctors have not yet come. This process of desacralization can mean a purification of the religious faith. However, it is also true that in this rational scientific and technical world the resacralization is taking place. Where people abandon their faith, a vacuum is there that has to be filled. In our days people in Brazil and all over the world are taking a hard look at all magical world-views and prevailing superstitions. Nobody doubts that the modern occultist and spiritualists cults are growing very much. It seems that mankind is going back to primitive mentality, seeking orientation with the stars or with the dead.

But is the world really being desacralized? Looking to Brazilian reality, the tremendous growth of the Umbanda, the answer may be no. When man departs from God he has to create something to fill his emptiness.

Kloppenburg differentiates desacralization from desanctification. God created all things and also created the first man holy. Although he became a sinner, God declared him holy in Jesus Christ. In baptism he is made holy by the power of the Holy Spirit and is now called to live (Eph. 5:3) this holiness out in his daily life.

After distinguishing the sacred from the holy, Kloppenburg warns against the danger of throwing away the holy in the process of desacralization. "Secularization," he says, "should not become a profanization of man and of the world.

Gogarten, Cox and others say that there is a Biblical basis for desacralization. They affirm that Genesis is a relate of a radical process of demystification, demythification and desacralization. Yahweh is the Creator, and now a god born from the world. In Genesis all things are presented as creation of God. This was affirmed by the prophets and the psalmists very clearly in contrast to the gods of other nations around Israel. With Christ, they say, this process continues: the temple, Jerusalem aren't anymore so important as place, as "sacred place." Now Jesus Himself, says Congar, is the place to find salvation and the presence of God. And even more: Christians also are the temple of God (see 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; Eph. 2:20-22).

The primitive Christian community was typically a non-sacred group. The epistle to the Hebrews is a document that was radically against sacralization, by affirming that all sacrifices, all tentatives of reconciliation with God through sacrifices, cults and rites were empty human tentatives and without value, and that Christ with His Sacrifice, substituted and completed all these sacrifices forever. Quoting Hebrews

7:13-14, Kloppenburg calls attention that Christ was not a priest, but a layman, from the juridical and sociological point of view. His own death was a very secular event in itself, and not a moment of worship at a sacred place. The death on the cross event didn't happen in the temple, but on a profane hill. In the New Testament era, continues Kloppenburg, all Christians are priests of the King (1 Peter 2:9). Now the church is present in the society as leaven, which mixed with the mass, works inside and transforms this mass from inside.

The first Christians had a very much desacralized life. They didn't have temples, shrines. The pagans even called them "atheists." Justin, in his Apology I, c 6 answered: "We are the atheists of your assumed gods."<sup>7</sup>

But, the church began to compromise herself with the emperors, kings, states, cultures, philosophies and theologies. An absolutist and monolithic hierarchy was structured, more and more far away and separated from the people. The State began to be "Christian" in a "sacred" way. And the process of resacralization started. The French Revolution has an important role in the process of desacralization taking, however, the form of anticlericalism and antiecclesiasticism, especially against the powerful influence of the church in the state affairs, in the questions of science and in the culture problems. Kloppenburg concludes his thought by saying that we have to be vigilant in order to avoid resacralizations in the future.

The sacred, the magic, the superstitious is mixed in Brazilian culture. They have a bad influence on the mentality and attitudes of our

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

people. These sacred elements in Brazilian culture are alienating people and making them live surrounded with fear and insecurity.

For Kloppenburg a very sharp distinction between the word "sacred" and the word "profane" has to be made. He says that when the profane becomes sacred, it is not anymore profane; but when the secular becomes holy, it continues to be secular. The sanctification action must be completed by the process of secularization. The desacralized world would be designated with the adjective "profane," as the opposite of the sacred. However, this profane world can have two meanings: one closed, immanent, with an end in itself and another open, transcendent, with reference to the Creator as its ultimate goal. The first would be the secularism. The second, the secularization.

A profane secularist world would be atheistic; a profane secular or secularized world could perfectly be Christian.

It could also be that the expression "profane world" should be reserved to a desacralized, immanent, secularist and atheistic world and the expression "secular world" to designate a desacralized, open to the transcendent world. In this case, it could be said that Christianity secularizes the world, that it desires the secularization or the state of secularity and that the Atheism profanes the world. In this case, the expression "secularize the world" would be the opposite of "sacralization of the world," and not of sanctification of the world. A secular world can and must be sanctified, that is, put in relation with the Holy God. In this case, there would be no contradiction in the expression "holy secular man," but there would be a contradiction in the terms

"sacred secular man, profane holy man, profane sanctified world." The secular and the holy would be the ideal.

We need to be careful and wise in accelerating desacralization, remembers Kloppenburg. Human reality is complex and does allow radical and simplistic solutions. It is easy to say that the mythical aspects of faith and religion have to be thrown away, but it is not easy to determine which are exactly these mythical elements that are self-exclusive in confrontation with the real revelation of God. And where do I find the criteria to make this distinction? Demystification, demythification can also be only words without clear and exact meaning. Here we must be careful, and not throw away pearls in this attempt of cleaning the faith.

The desacralization should not become a desanctification. In throwing away the sacred we have to keep the holy. Christians, as the ones made holy, should not allow that secularization be transformed in the profanization of man and his world. They are the representatives of the Holy God and holy agents in this secular world.

Analysing the mythical in the process of secularization, Kloppenburg says that the myth is an universal phenomenon, particularly present in primitive ways of life. Philosophers, psychologists, ethnologists and anthropologists are studying this universal phenomenon.

C. G. Jung gave his contribution on this subject and briefly we could say that for him myth is a symbolic form of expression, an arcaic, imperfect, inadequate, complex, full of images and pre-scientific way. The contents on the myths were mainly their intuitions on how was life after death, the origin and meaning of life, love, and death.

Many theologians were involved in the enterprise of demythologizing the Gospel. Bultmann and his followers were concerned in taking the mythical aspects from the Gospel and so proclaim only the "real message" to modern man.

As a Brazilian Catholic theologian Kloppenburg is more concerned with the mystification in his church. To mystify is to play on the credulity of people, to abuse of their credulity. The non-voluntary or unconscious mystification is the most dangerous form. Some relics, images, "sacred waters," and some blessings are mystification phenomena. There is much voluntary and involuntary mystification in popular Catholicism, in the Umbanda and in Spiritism than one can imagine.

In the nineteenth century, Feuerbach, Max, Comte, Nietzsche and others attacked religion. They caricaturized religion in order to make it an easy target. We also have to question Bonhoeffer's concept of religion in his assault against it. He believes that men are becoming radically against religion. But, with which definition of religion is he operating?

Karl Barth thinks that "the Christian Revelation is the abolition of religion, and that there is an irreducible opposition between Revelation and religion."<sup>8</sup> He rejects a religion that we also condemn as superstition or magic, says Kloppenburg.

H. Richard Niebuhr, in his book Christ and Culture also differentiates faith from religion. However, he is very confused in his definition of concept of religion. There is, of course, a need for a

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 43.

positive definition of religion. Possible or real abuses made in the name of religion have been denounced, and we all reject these abuses. But, to take some crucial conclusions on this basis is a negative and superficial method, that ignores fundamentally that reality is more complex.

It is true that religion is very often mixed with superstitious and magic elements, and that it takes alienated forms, especially in Brazil, where we find a unique religious syncretism, a popular religiosity full of superstitious, magic and sacred elements and a conception of God that fits in the abuse described very well, by D. Bonhoeffer with his "deus-ex-machina."

Modern man, with his domain over nature, has a more purified concept of religion. At least, we must say, he should have with all his scientific understanding. The word "religion" has been used for centuries in a positive way and it seems it still can be used as a concrete, visible and social form of personal and communitarian relationship of man with God.

Man is by nature religious, affirms Vatican II in its "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," also called "Gaudium et Spes!"

"Atheism, taken as a whole, is not present in the mind of man from the start (atheismus, integre consideratus, non est quid originarium). It springs from various causes, among which must be included a critical reaction against religions and, in some places, against the Christian religion in particular."<sup>9</sup>

Man is a being who transcends himself by his own nature. Man is not his

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<sup>9</sup> Flannery, p. 919.

ultimate value. Pascal said that "the man surpasses infinitely the man."<sup>10</sup> Man can only realize himself going beyond himself.

The Roman Catholic Church, according to Kloppenburg, knows perfectly that only God can answer the most deep desires of human heart. Earthly food does not satisfy fully. Therefore, man will never be totally indifferent towards religion. He always wants to know, at least in a confused way, the meaning of his life, his activity and of his death. Only God, his Creator, can in a satisfactory way, answer these questions. The enigmas of life and death, of guilt and suffering continue to be without solution, and that leads many people to despair. Every man remains an insoluble problem for himself. The church has a message that illuminates man's life. Nothing, besides this, can satisfy human hearts. Augustine's famous words: "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rest in thee,"<sup>11</sup> are very true words, saying that without a Creator there can be no creature. ONCE God is forgotten, the creature is lost sight of as well. (GS 36 c)

Some theoreticals of a non-religious Christianity and of a Christian atheism (radical theology) are very pessimistic in their description of today's religious situation. Kloppenburg is full of enthusiasm with the spiritual renovation after Vatican II. He is perhaps too much optimistic in relation to the future of his Roman Church. But he argues that the systematic propaganda of atheism in the last 50 years didn't have so much success. He also points to the U.S.A., the country of

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<sup>10</sup> Kloppenburg, op. cit., p. 47

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

modern science and technology where the faith, according to expectation, should decrease or even disappear, and there, people are becoming even more interested in religion. The Jesus Movement in the last two decades among the young, who are by nature more open to secularization and are also more influenced by scientificism and the atheistic humanism, is a sign of religiousness in man. We have to face, therefore, the following question: "Does the secular man really exist?" Does this "secular man" described by Bonhoeffer, Robinson, Cox and others exist?

Maybe we can put this question in a different form: Can faith and science live together in one person? Max Plank, Nobel Price, stated once in a conference on "Religion and Natural Science" that

"where ever we look, as far as possible, we will not find one contradiction between religion and natural science; on the contrary, however, we find a perfect agreement in the decisive points. Religion and natural science are not self-exclusive as some fear in our days, but they complete and condition themselves."<sup>12</sup>

Kloppenbunrg mentions men as Armstrong, Edwin Aldrin and Werner von Braun who were men of science and confessed their religious belief. Hasn't it been dramatized that modern and secular man can't anymore believe? And can't we be in danger of forgetting that faith is a gift from God? God alone, and not our apologetic, neither our modern way of talk, neither our arguments, or our institution, neither our renewed methods can bring somebody to the true faith. It is true, however, that we must use the best language we can to be relevant as church in our days. As Christians we must be conscious what the world is all about, and with the experience of sons of God, redeemed by Christ, we must integrate in the life of our "saeculum," being, salt, leaven and light.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

Summarizing Kloppenburg's main ideas on secularization he accepts secularization as an actual historic process which is a general process of liberation of man and his human institutions. As mankind advances with science and technology, it will be more away from the sacred, from myth, from magic, from metaphysics and from religion. A world like that, secularized and made autonomous, will be a profane, rational, exorcized, objective, materialized and atheist. It will be the unidimensional world denounced by Marcuse and contested by the hippies; it will be a world incapable of satisfying man of making him truly joyful and happy. The "pure secular" man, living in an immanent and closed world, will stop being human. The "secular state" is not an end in itself, and in this context man is tempted to secularism or to an humanism without God.

As secularized Christians we can't stop the process of desacralization, thinks Kloppenburg. We should even help in the process of secularization, but not be conformed with the profane, but make it holy. The Christian can't agree with a all rational, exorcized, objective, atheist world view, but instead of stopping at this point, he recognizes the relative value and need for symbols in life. We also don't want a total objective world. We need a lot of Wisdom to handle all this information and knowledge we have today. The Christian is not a defender of religion as a traditional institution, but if man, because of the abuses and misunderstandings of the religion, wants to be atheist, let the Christian witness the meaningfulness of a life of faith in Jesus Christ. The holy secularized Christian is and will be the apostle in the Secular City.

Before God Yesterday and Today

God is always the same, according Hebrews 1:12, but we, our hearts, our conditions, our ways of seeing, our methods, our perspectives, our dimensions, our feelings, our concepts and vocabulary, all this changes. It is provisional, transitory. What yesterday was accepted - today is doubted and rejected. We can, by being faithful to principles or even by trying to make things easier, remain in our old way of communicating but only under the risk of not even being heard.

The God of Jesus Christ is always the same. He cared, looked for the man who was lost in his sin. . . . He also knows that no man can find Him by himself. He takes the initiative, and goes in the direction of man. There are many examples of this truth in the Bible. For example, the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the two debtors, the prodigal son, the pharisee and the publican. God surprises in his way of love, goodness and mercy.

After affirming this contrast between the changing world and the Unchanging God, Kloppenburg presents an analysis of these changes in attitudes, perspectives, methods, world views, feelings and concepts.

First of all, he says, we moved from an interest in God to a concentrated attention toward man. Yesterday our civilization was theocentric and sacred. Today it is anthropocentric, profane and secular. Yesterday all problems were studied under the light of God. Today they are studied under the light of man. Graudium et Spes refers to that saying that

"growing numbers of people are abandoning religion in practice. Unlike former days, the denial of God or of religion, or the abandonment of them, are no longer unusual and individual occurrences. For today

it is not rare for such decisions to be presented as requirements of scientific progress or of a certain new humanism. In numerous places these views are voiced not only in the teachings of philosophers, but on every side they influence literature, the arts, the interpretation of the humanities and of history, and civil laws themselves."<sup>13</sup>

Modern atheism stretches the desire for human independence to such a point that it finds difficulties with any kind of dependence on God. Many are atheists not so much to deny a God, but more to affirm man. They are more concerned in affirming man than in denying God. Man is more concerned with earth than with heaven. Today, forgetting God has become natural. Kloppenburg's response to this problem is to help man find God in man. Here he proposes a Christian humanism centered in God.

The second difference he perceives consists in that we moved from a static order into a universe in evolution. Human race has "passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one."<sup>14</sup> In consequence, there has arisen a new series of problems, calling for new efforts of analysis and synthesis. (G.S. 5c)

The third change is seen as a move from a Christian supernatural conception of the universe to a Christian natural vision of the universe.

The old spirituality and mentality has been accused of having been alienating one in many circumstances. God's providence and the hope in the other world made him sometimes indifferent in his responsibilities in the temporal order. Yesterday man was inclined to see nature and all human and earthly values as opposed to God, and therefore, evil in themselves. God, however, sees man's realization as such, with good eyes when related to HIM. Perhaps God was too much more present in the

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<sup>13</sup>Abbott, p. 205.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

true that very often what the atheist rejects, we do too. Kloppenburg goes further, affirming that the atheist who rejects God's caricature is closer to God than the "believer who has only the caricature of God. Roland de Pury once said that "it is not the number of unbelievers that is disturbing, but the number of those who think to believe in God without having once asked what God could have to say to them."<sup>15</sup> This kind of "faith" in a God who never spoke, a deaf idol built to give them tranquility, "faith" that is nothing more than a mere illusion in which the atheists have the right to reject. It is necessary to lose this "faith" in order to know the God who created and saved us.

The fourth change or difference is that we moved from a monolithic context to an open minded and pluralistic attitude. (*Dignitatis Humanae* 22) Yesterday people used to live in small isolated groups, where religion was transmitted in a natural way. The intellectual life of the Christians was oriented and protected. There were formulated, defined, clear, exact truths. We had anathemas, excommunication, fires, accusation without defense. Today we have autonomy for the sciences, arts, economy, politics and freedom in religious belief. Modern man is a citizen of the whole world. Technic threw down the physical and geographical barriers. Our world is a large neighborhood. The destiny of human community is only one. Mass media puts us in contact with the whole world. We see cultural pluralism going on. People are more open to other values which come from outside. People with a different scale of values live together. Modern man doesn't accept authority without

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<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Kloppenburg, p. 71.

discussion. Man wants to discuss the problems before accepting them. This process of socialization also makes life more impersonal.

The fifth change consists in the fact that we are moving from a quiet to a stressing way of life. Our life style is changing. The village life was monotone. The church was the place where people met. Today, modern urban man lives a "crazy" life. Here he can experience that modern world is at the same time powerful and weak, capable of realizing the best and the worst. It is his responsibility to guide aright the forces which he has unleashed and which can enslave him or minister to him. (GS 9d) The struggle for life has been hard for many. Economy and technic have no meaning if they do not exist for the service of man. Work and leisure play an important role in this new life style.

The divorce between "faith" and daily life has been one of the major problems of our time. There is also not enough time for the aspirations of the soul. Other values are seen as more important than the spiritual values.

The sixth difference is that we moved from a naive and not questioning age into an era in which people think personally and freely. Yesterday the existence of God, His action in the world and His presence between men was evident, undiscussable. K. Jaspers said that "we live in an era that lost ingenuity and became critical."<sup>16</sup> J. Green stated that "we live in a world where the doubt is now the general opinion."<sup>17</sup> The scientific and critic spirit already begins in the school. Religion is only one subject among many other important subject matters in school.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

Modern man has a secular view of his world. He has natural explanations for many things that in the past were attributed to supernatural forces acting in the unknown world. Is God losing His space in this world of scientific explanation?

With the increase of intellectual formation man has now "more critical ability to distinguish religion from a magical view of the world and from the superstitions which still circulate purifies religion and exacts day by day a more personal and explicit adherence to faith."<sup>18</sup>

The seventh change mentioned by Kloppenburg expresses itself in methodology. We moved from a deductive to an inductive way of thinking.

Yesterday the starting point were the universals, the great metaphysical principles, the essence of things, the being as such. The method was a priori, deductive, from the universal to the particular. Today man starts with the particular, the existing, the verifiable, the empirical, the observable, the phenomenon. The word metaphysical is today unrelated to objective reality. Positive science starts with the real, the concrete, with empirical data, the real is what really counts. The modern scientist has to fight against his "bias." He must be objective. It is a new epistemology, a new theory of knowledge. Some even think that experimental sciences will solve all human problems and questions. Here we are faced with the "myth of objectivity." Objectivity is not synonymous with truth. You cannot put all reality in this scheme. Not all reality is measurable, and therefore, capable of being studied and known in an objective way. Love, persons, anguish, death, joy, art, poetry, and especially God and all that is related

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<sup>18</sup>Abbott, p. 205.

with Him, are realities which can't be analyzed in laboratories, but that exist and can be known. This is not subjectivism, sentimentalism, relativism, neither irrationalism. The fact is that the non-objective dimensions of reality have their own measure, their own category and language. The objective method is incapable of grasping the immeasurable non-objective dimensions of reality. And, how can you absolutize one type of knowledge? Pascal once said that "the heart has its reasons that reason doesn't know."<sup>19</sup> The intellect must be completed by wisdom, which leads and enables to new dimensions. They are rational or intelligible, but aren't the rationalistic type.

Wisdom is what we need today for the use of the new discoveries. Our era needs wisdom so that the new discoveries will be used in a correct way and for the welfare of man. The future of the world stands in peril, unless wiser men are forthcoming. The specialization of our scientific-technic society produces men without the vision of the whole, of the truth, of the good. The unidimensional man is losing his humanity. Man can be the victim of his science and technique. The hippy movement is a reaction against this cold, impersonal, rational, competitive and numeric world. In fact, we need wisdom to handle all this progress. And if somebody needs wisdom, according to James 1:5-6, he may ask God, "who gives to all men generously and without reproach." Wisdom involves knowing to be silent, having respect and being open to God, as a humble little one (Matt. 11:25-26).

The eighth move consists of a change from a vertical search for the intelligibility of the Infinite to its horizontal intelligibility.

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<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Kloppenburg, p. 81.

Yesterday we had a contemplative mentality with an ideal of vertical intelligibility. God was the explanation of the cosmos. The being was seen as finite, contingent, and as such, he only did find his reason of being in the Infinite. He understood himself related to the Infinite. Today men doubt seriously as God being the explanation of the cosmos and the mentality is changing to a horizontal one, which puts the meaning of the finite in man himself. All things have their meaning in man and for man.

This world can't be seen as a springboard anymore. The world belongs to man and he is responsible for the meaning and direction of many things. "All things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown."<sup>20</sup> "All things belong to you," said Paul to the Corinthians, "and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God" (1 Cor. 3:22-23). This we can only know by faith, not by reason.

The ninth difference consists in the move from an ontological-metaphysical or conceptualist and systematic way of thinking to a historical-salvific or functional way. Yesterday theology was mostly understood in ontological terms. Today we understand that the Old and the New Testaments are a history of what God has done with His creatures, in order to execute His salvation plan. Yesterday the emphasis was on the "I am who I am." Today the emphasis is on the "I am the One who is always with you." Yesterday the main question was the essence of God. Today's concern is the meaning of God for man. Y. Congar accused modern Catholicism of having spoken too much about the per se of God, without adding the importance of this for man. Kloppenburg thinks that today

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<sup>20</sup>Abbott, p. 210.

the Christian faith can be more conscious, more free and personal. He recognizes that people don't trust the god of metaphysic and philosophy. He mentions Pascal as a man who didn't want to meet the god of the philosophers and wise men, but the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

The last difference is that we moved from a sacred to a secular world. This aspect has already been discussed.

Man, culture, and the world change. God, however, is the Unchangeable. The revealed God in Jesus Christ, the Yahveh, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is the eternal and powerful "I AM WHO I AM" (Ex. 3:14; Rom. 1:18-23; Gen. 18:1; Ex. 6:3; Ex. 33:11).

#### The Temptation of Secularism or Atheism

Vatican II was very much concerned with today's atheism and so is Kloppenburg. Atheism must be accounted among the most serious problems of this age, and is deserving of closer examination, says the document Gaudium et Spes.

There are different types of atheism. The humanistic atheism has been accepted mostly by the intellectual classes and by some labor leaders. This also called atheistic humanism exalts man to a degree to which God disappears. Some of these have also a marxist world view, a position that has been well accepted among college students and labor leaders, who are disappointed with the solution of the Church to the Latin America's problems.

Kloppenbug also mentions the agnostic atheism, the indifferent atheism, the emotional atheism, and the marxist atheism.

Gaudium et Spes talks about the forms and roots of atheism. Klop-  
penburg talks about roots or causes of today's atheism. He gives seven  
causes he thinks explain this phenomenon.

For him atheism isn't per se a natural human phenomenon. Man is  
by nature inclined to God. Atheism, he says, has its causes. We need to  
know more about the real and deep aspiration, demands, critics and accu-  
sations of the atheists. We need to be acquainted with their problems as  
they arise, the solutions they have and honestly see what they have to  
offer to our reflection about important issues. This is also a good op-  
portunity for Christians to "check" their position and learn that the  
problems that atheists raise are not insignificant. The Church wants to  
know and wants to grow with the "opposition" of her "adversaries." "Sim-  
ilarly she is convinced that there is a considerable and varied help  
that she can receive from the world in preparing the ground for the  
Gospel, both from individuals and from society as a whole."<sup>21</sup> In this  
mood we want to listen to the preoccupations and inquietations of the  
atheists and try to identify the causes of their attitude.

The first cause presented is the exclusive preoccupation with man.  
Man wants to be by himself. Modern atheism affirms the man as the last  
value. This atheistic humanism even pretends to offer him freedom from  
many alienations. Feuerbach already criticized Christian religion for  
being unfaithful to earth, to men. This humanism without God is present  
in marxism. Faith is for them an escape from a hard world to an ideal-  
istic ideology. "Religion," said Karl Marx, "is the opium of the people."

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<sup>21</sup>Flannery, p. 940.

Lenin said that religion oppresses the human spirit, and hinders man's liberation, and, because of his eternal hope, he is not involved in earthly affairs as he should.

The atheism inspired by psychoanalysis is concerned with the alienation that religion causes. Those atheists agree that religion can even help some people, but they affirm that religion is at the roots of many psychological disturbances. God is only an idealized projection of the need of protection that the child feels in relationship to her true father. Religion is a morbid form of irrationalism. It is a childish way to cope with reality, with the world.

Nietzsche, in his "So sprach Zarathustra," says that people should be more faithful to the earth and forget the supra-earthly hopes. So God is accused of alienating people. Not few in our days want their autonomy and their liberation from religious alienations.

The second cause mentioned is the critical reaction against the religions, particularly against Christianity. Christians aren't always the living example of what they confess. Their witness is not so good. Not a few separate their "faith" from their daily life. For them religion is a "Sunday cloth." Kloppenburg says that this dichotomy is one of the most serious errors of our days. Others, however, keep religion as their tradition which keeps the status quo in which they are satisfied and happy with their privileges. There are those who invoke the name of God untruly, because in their lives there is no sign of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. Frequently the atheists become scandalized with some types of "Christianities" that are more interested in earthly

securities that something else. The egoism of some "Christians" causes atheism in others.

Jesus admonishes us against the scandal to the "small ones." The omission and the irresponsibility of the Christians is related to modern atheism. According to Kloppenburg, the Church has made some serious mistakes in the past with her relationship with science, for example Galileo Galilei. The Church went into a field that didn't belong to her. She "also scandalized and scandalizes with her structure and her organizational form."<sup>22</sup> The clergy and laymen are responsible for many mistakes. The leaders of the Church in some official attitudes taken in the past and even in our days, gave occasion to scandal. "The Church has to ask forgiveness to God and to the separated brothers."

The third root or cause stated is the violent protest against the evil in this world. (G.S. 19b) The presence of natural and moral evil in the world continues to be one of the great reasons why people deny the existence of God. Many deny to accept this creation in which so much suffering, pain and injustice is going on. This protest leads many to atheism. Jeremiah once talked with God in prayer this way: "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, that I would plead my case with Thee; Indeed I would discuss matters of justice with Thee: Why has the way of the wicked prospered? Why are all those who deal in treachery at ease?" (Jer. 12:1). Man has his "why?", and even the believers.

Many have been questioning: "Why doesn't God do anything?" In fact, the apparent silence of God to this tragic human history is a

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<sup>22</sup>Kloppenburg, p. 115.

difficult problem. Camus, in his book La Peste, is upset with the suffering in the world and the silence of heaven. Sartre makes a personage say in his book The Devil and the Good God that even heaven ignores his name.<sup>23</sup>

The fourth cause is a basic and fundamental mistake in methodology. "Many, unduly, transgressing the limits of the positive sciences, contend that everything can be explained by this kind of scientific reasoning alone." (G.S. 19c), 216) The scientific method doesn't reach the deepness of reality. Positive science doesn't explain all things (everything), and even becomes a threat when it pretends to be an absolute norm in seeking the truth.

The fifth root of atheism is that modern civilization itself is too much compromised with the earthly realities. The Vatican II Council says that modern civilization as such doesn't lead necessarily to atheism, but it can many times put some obstacles in the way to God. The phenomenon of secularization can be a very easy temptation to secularism.

The sixth aspect of this analysis is that atheism can also be a result from purely subjective behaviors and attitudes, more than a consequence of thinking and arguing. Frequently personal deceptions in life can cause atheistic "believing." Here the roots are very subjective. Going further we have to recognize that sometimes there is a lack of authentic religious education that didn't follow the intellectual development. Many never grew beyond their childish religious stage, and from this stage became agnostic.

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<sup>23</sup>Cited by Kloppenburg, p. 118.

The last root is man's sinful condition with all his selfishness, injustice, love of Mammon, and his pride. These are the ultimate reasons of the atheism. By nature man wants to be god! Only by faith can he let God be God. Unbelief and its consequences is well explained by Paul in Rom. 1:18.

Now, how does the Church answer to modern atheism? First of all the Church recognizes the contribution received from the atheists in the construction of a better world, and also by pushing the Christians to speak in an authentic way of their faith. Secondly it has to give an adequate exposition of its own doctrine. It must present the true teaching in a fitting manner. Kloppenburg says at this point that his Church has to review and purify some concepts of God, eliminate some caricatures and false images about God. The concept of religion has to be studied. The alienating elements in the religious life of the Catholic Church have to be identified, studied and separated from the true faith. It is also necessary that the Church elaborates a spirituality concerned with the construction of the world. It is necessary to accept the seriousness of the whole problem about secularization, desacralization, demystification and demythologization.

Thirdly the church has to recognize its duty of faithfulness to men. It has to be faithful to God and to men. We can't talk much about God and simply forget men.

Fourthly the Church has to affirm that negation of God "cast man down from the noble state to which he is born." (G.C. 20a; 21a; 21c) Men must know that a true relationship with God doesn't hinder the right humanism, but is in fact, the condition to the realization of this concern

for men. There can be an humanism open to the absolute, to God. Man can organize the earth without God, but without God he will organize it against himself. Man only finds meaning for his life on earth if he transcends himself, if he walks his way with his Creator, because only God can fulfill the deepest desires of the human heart.

"The Church is entrusted with the task of opening up to man the mystery of God, who is the last end of man; in doing so it opens up to him the meaning of his own existence, the innermost truth about himself. The Church knows well that God alone, whom it serves, can satisfy the deepest cravings of the human heart, for the world and what it has to offer can never fully content it."<sup>24</sup> (G.S. 41a)

Atheists humanists are ingenuously optimistic with their solutions and hopes. Human reality is much more complex. It is true that a certain kind of "religion" and some concepts of God alienate people, but it is also true that the negation of God and the lack of religion can also, and has done so, lead man to despair and alienation. The narrow minded man of science and technic can alienate himself from the divine things. To acknowledge God is in no way to oppose the dignity of man.

Fifthly the Church teaches that the hope of an eternal life does not take away the importance of the duties of this life on earth, but rather adds to it by giving new motives for fulfilling those duties. (G.S. 21c) The negligent Christian towards his earthly duties puts his eternal salvation in danger. A Christian humanism cannot lose to the atheist humanism. Kloppenburg recognizes that some got too much excited with the humanism of the council that they reduced Christianity to a simple and pure humanism, or, to a mere horizontalism, immanentism, or worldly humanism. (G.S. 56f)

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<sup>24</sup> Flannery, p. 940.

As the sixth point he says that the church has to insist that the true teaching must be lived by the Church and its member. They have to be witnesses of a living and mature faith. The Church has the mission to present God to the world. In order to do that, it has to learn to read the signs of our times, recognize its failure, mistakes and limitations, and humbly but consistently and coherently proclaim the message of God.

The seventh point in his answers is the need to establish a sincere and prudent dialogue between believers and unbelievers. We live in the same world, and Christians and non-Christians should help each other in the construction of a better world. The Church, says Kloppenburg, wants all men involved in the conquest of the universal brotherhood. (G.S. 21c)

Finally, the Church invites courteously the atheists to weigh the merits of the Gospel of Christ with an open mind. (G.S. 21c) Apart from the message of God, there is nothing able to satisfy the heart of man. "Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rest in thee,"<sup>25</sup> said Augustine.

"Atheism," says Kloppenburg, "contradicts reason and common human experience. Only God can satisfy man's heart."<sup>26</sup> And he concludes his thinking affirming that the atheists have to think about this all, if they want, as Robinson would say, to be honest to God.

#### The Spiritual and Social Responsibilities of the Secularized Christian

The Vatican II document Gaudium et Spes stresses the important role of the Church in the modern world. Alienated Christians and atheistic humanists should listen to the message of the Church.

<sup>25</sup>Cited in Flannery, p. 922.

<sup>26</sup>Kloppenburg, p. 133.

Kloppenburg emphasizes here more the social and the worldly dimensions of this responsibility. Man is not the measure of all things, but "all things on earth should be ordained to man as to their center and summit."<sup>27</sup> Man is the legitimate "lord of the world" (See Gen. 1:26). He is not the ultimate value, but what he does and is has some value. Man is not the end of all, but the mediator between God and the rest of creation. This idea is well expressed in 1 Cor. 3:22-23, he says.

The temporal order has its autonomy and is, after the fall, ambivalent. It can realize the best and the worst.

Sin has brought corruption and disharmony in human life. Sin changed, and marked the whole human history. And while man makes history, he will be fighting against the evil. "That the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate one another is a fact open only to the eyes of faith."<sup>28</sup> Human history will be harassed by sin until the perfect revelation of the splendor of the sons of God.

In this sinful history the Christian has his responsibilities. He cannot be concerned only about himself, his own personal satisfaction, with his family, his race, his group, his small Church, his congregation. He has to be engaged in the fight for social justice, for the human rights. He can't despise the effort of the scientists, or ignore the rest of the world. He has a responsibility towards his brothers and history.

Definitely, the world is not a springboard to heaven. The world has its own value, and was created by God. And, "far from considering the conquests of man's genius and courage as opposed to God's power as if

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<sup>27</sup>Flannery, p. 913

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 940.

he set himself up as a rival to the creator, Christians ought to be convinced that the achievements of the human race are a sign of God's greatness and the fulfillment of his mysterious design." (G.S. 34c) The Christian message doesn't inhibit men from building up the world, but on the contrary, dedicating himself to this world, man executes God's plan.

As we live in the spirit of the advent, in the eschatological hope, we know that our definite home is not here on earth, since we are only pilgrims who live in the expectation of a new heaven and a new earth which has been promised to us, where justice and happiness fulfil all human desires for peace. But, Kloppenburg warns, this eschatological hope can have undesirable results, such as alienation, indifference and indolence in the work of building a more human society on earth. The temptation consists in thinking that since we don't have our permanent home here, why build it to make it better, since we are only pilgrims on this earth? Why so much strength to make the world better and more human? Gaudium et Spes says on this point that "a hope related to the end of time does not diminish the importance of intervening duties, but rather undergrids the acquittal of them with fresh incentives."<sup>29</sup> The Gospel can be transformed or reduced to an "opium of the people."

The unfaithfulness to the world puts in danger the eternal salvation of the Christian, says Kloppenburg. He also sees many good Christians afraid from the earthly city, and good citizens being afraid to go to the heavenly city.

Augustine divided the human race in two categories: at one side are those who live according to men; on the other those who live according

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<sup>29</sup>Abbott, p. 218.

to God. They mystically constitute two cities: one predestinated to reign with God; the other to be condemned with the devil. An important question is made at this point: Can the men from the city of God cooperate with those of the city of man? Augustine, according to Kloppenburg, couldn't give an adequate or satisfactory answer to this problem.

The Church has rightly warned that it "profits man nothing if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself" (Luke 9:25), but it hasn't spoken clearly about the role of the Christian in this world. Had the Church spoken and acted as it did in the Vatican II Council two centuries ago, then Ludwig Feuerbach, the patriarch of the modern atheistic Enlightenment, which so decisively influenced Engels and Marx, would have no reason to say: "The purpose of my works is to make men more anthropologists than theologians; lead them from the love of God to the love of men; from the otherworldly hopes to the study of the things of this world."<sup>30</sup> Neither could Nietzsche have had reasons to invite men to be faithful to the earth, "then the Christians abandon it."<sup>31</sup>

The secularized Christian has something to say to the Christians, and help them to go to the world without losing the contact with God. He has the task to show that it is possible to build up the city of man without forgetting the city of God. He knows that it is possible to have human ideals and not succumb to the marxist ideology. To those identified with the dynamic construction of the world, the secularized Christian can witness the meaning of being related with the true God in a desacralized

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<sup>30</sup> Kloppenburg, p. 58.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

rational and objective world. The secularized Christian is in fact, the humanist par excellence.

#### An Evaluation on Kloppenburg's Analysis

It is not difficult to perceive theological differences between Boaventura Kloppenburg's view and ours as Lutheran. The understanding of sin and human nature in the Roman Catholic theology is quite different from the Lutheran! Roman Catholicism is more optimistic with human nature and human reason. Kloppenburg writes as a good Catholic theologian.

His book is sometimes confused and he repeats some ideas several times.

Before Vatican II Kloppenburg's activity as an apologist was known as a violent attack against the growth of Spiritism and Umbanda in Brazil. After Vatican II, Kloppenburg goes to the extreme of recognizing divine elements in the pagan religions. Now he is too much tolerant with the opposite elements to the Christian faith. His witness has lost its strength. A disfarced universalism is sometimes coming out of his book, although he also declares that without Christ there is no salvation. The ecumenical emphasis of Vatican II made him too tolerant toward pagan religions.

The mood of Vatican II in relationship to the atheist was to establish dialogue, to listen and to understand. Kloppenburg is right in some sense. The Church has to learn to listen to the man of the world, but she never can forget to speak, confess, witness, teach, and also reject, condemn, and refute those ideas contrary to the Scripture. Kloppenburg used to condemn very easily in his ministry as apologist, but after

Vatican II he uses soft language even to those who clearly contradict the basic truths of the Gospel.

He and his Church are making a better relationship with Brazilian people, but a very weak proclamation in terms of Scripture and its primary interest in the Gospel.

Often Kloppenburg approaches Brazilian reality with the superficiality of an optimistic and unrealistic humanism, instead of a humble biblical realism. Christian truth does not "encourage illusions about human nature, but Christian realism should not be directed into defeatism and despair." As God's people, Christians know the real hope. It takes a "measure of courage to speak and write contra mundum but that is precisely the business of the church as it works in this world but does not become part of it." Maybe Kloppenburg has lost his strength as an apologist in the strong ecumenical emphasis in Vatican II.

Kloppenburg is right when he says that the Christian is the humanist par excellence in this world. The Christian sees man and the world as God's creation. The Scripture tells us how much God loved the world in John 3:16. The Christian must be an humanist in the sense that he gives a high value to the human being and to all creation.

Lutheran theology, however, has some differences with Roman Catholic theology in the understanding of this teocentric humanism. Sometimes the Roman Catholic understanding of this kind of humanism sounds too anthropocentric for Lutherans, because our view of man and his nature is quite different.

Kloppenburg analyses very well the secular, scientific and atheistic humanism in his book, but does not substantiate the Christian

humanism with a Biblical theology of faith and works, of justification and sanctification.

Lutherans can offer a lot in this problem of secularization, and humanism, by their correct understanding of the doctrine of justification-sanctification and the use of Law and Gospel. The Lutheran understanding of a Christian humanism offers the best motivation for a real construction of a better world, but always as the penultimate. Faith is the most powerful source for love, and love is the basis of this concern for man.

Boaventura Kloppenburg is right when he questions the concept of faith that Marx, Lenin, Freud, and Nietzsche criticized. Certainly they operated with a very simplistic concept of faith and religion and with very different presuppositions.

If Christians very openly do not demonstrate their "faith" in their works and if there is so much ignorance in spiritual matters, the Church has to think seriously about that. She has to admit that the lives of many "believers" have been a scandal for the world that does not see neither the witness nor the love of those that called themselves "Christians," members of the Church.

The Church has to proclaim the authentic Word in this world. She has to give an adequate exposition of the Christian truth so that modern man can have a clear vision of the truths taught by the Church, but never forget the dangers in compromising Scriptural truth in this effort to communicate with our contemporaries.

With a clear doctrine of justification, with the right use and distinction between Law and Gospel, each Christian will be a social and

spiritual minister to his brother and a social action will be taking place with a sound and healthy theological basis. This we call sanctification, and it is a natural outcome of the justified heart of the God's man. The Christian has the most solid basis for love and compassion, and that is Christ - the incarnate love of God, who had more than subjective human feelings toward mankind. Christian humanism is based on the unique model of Jesus Christ. Christians can love because they have been loved. Their motivation is divine, because the Holy Spirit had changed their will and decision center. This kind of love can even love the enemies and those who we naturally dislike. Yes, the ideal of neighborliness which Christ sets before His servants is much more radical than the ideals of anthropocentric humanism. At this point we have to confess the shortness of our love, and as Christians we can honestly recognize it, be sure of God's forgiveness in Christ and start again every day in our loving, and serving our brother.

Not few famous secular humanists, the great lovers of humanity have been unable to love "the particular specimen of humanity they see everyday." Many well known humanists failed deeply in their personal love relationship, although their ideas and words encourage many to construct a more human life based on a mere natural human feeling. Christ, on the other hand, demonstrated His neighborliness, His love in the most radical way of all. He brought to those "furtherest from Him -- separated by sin and disobedience and rebellion - the aid man needed." And "in His cross became not only neighbor, but brother." A life in this God-Man person is a life of fruits. These works will act as leaven, salt and light in this world.

The real meaning and fulfillment of life is a result of a correct relationship with the true God. A true humanism only exists where this true relationship exists. Christian's faithfulness to men and to the world is the natural result of a healthy understanding of justification and sanctification. Kloppenburg is right when he says that this true relationship with God is the condition, and not a hindrance, to the right humanism. Faith is active in love.

To the optimistic or to the desperate atheistic humanists, Christians should witness the Biblical diagnosis and the Biblical answers to human existence which is a problem for man.

Living in this world as God's men, we cannot diminish the power of sin in human life and neither can we ignore the demonic elements in human history. The battle of faith continues.

The Church in the world has a task; that is, to bring people back to God. In this effort in our modern world we have to tell people that "if there is no point of appeal beyond our 'scientific constructs, the flame of liberty itself will soon be extinguished. As a French proverb puts it, Deprive man of his divinity and humanity will soon descend to bestiality."<sup>32</sup>

Can there be a better man to serve this modern world than the faithful servant of Jesus Christ, the truly Christian man?

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<sup>32</sup>Martin H. Scharlemann, "Along the Horizon," Concordia Journal, 8 (May 1982):85.

## CHAPTER V

### A LUTHERAN RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE IN BRAZIL

Boaventura Kloppenburg's study of secularization brought up some important themes, as faith, works, freedom, the nature of man, the ultimate and the penultimate, autonomy, church, Christian irresponsibility, sin, God, sanctification, humanism, optimism, pessimism, and many others.

We will try to present some reflections on these issues, based mainly on Martin Luther, Paul Althaus, Helmut Thielecke, Martin Scharlemann, and Richard Caemmerer.

#### Martin Luther: The Freedom of a Christian

In his Treatise on Christian Liberty (The Freedom of a Christian), Luther says that Christian faith is not an easy thing among the virtues, but that there is a great strength in faith. Faith gives courage, says he, especially in moments in difficulties. Faith is a "living spring of water welling up to eternal life," as Christ calls it in John 4:14.

Assailed by great and various temptations in this world we need faith, the true faith. But, how do we relate to this world, to men, in this faith? Luther set down two propositions:

- A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none
- A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

"These two theses," he says, "seem to contradict each other." Both are Paul's own statements (1 Cor. 9:19; Rom. 13:8). Love is by its

very nature ready to serve and be subject to him who is loved. Christ was at the same time a free man and a servant (Gal. 4:4; Phil. 2:6-7).

According to the Scriptures, man has a twofold nature, a spiritual and a bodily one. The spiritual nature is called the new man, and the bodily the carnal or old man. These two men in the same man contradict each other (Gal. 5:17). What, then, is necessary to have a righteous, free and pious life? Luther answers that, "one thing, and only one thing is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live;" and John 8:36, "So if the Son makes you free, you will be freed indeed;" and Matt. 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but the every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."<sup>1</sup>

Without the Word of God there is no help at all for the soul, says Luther. The Word of God is "the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing." The Word is the "gospel of God concerning his Son, who was made flesh, suffered, rose from the dead, and was glorified through the Spirit who sanctifies." And Paul says in Tim. 1:17 that "He who through faith is righteous shall live." The Word of God cannot be received by any works whatever but only by faith. The soul is justified by faith alone and not any works. In faith we learn that all

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, Luther's Work, vol. 31, edited by Harold J. Grimm (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957), p. 345.

things in us are altogether blameworthy, sinful, and damnable, as the Apostle says in Rom. 3:23; Rom. 3:10-12.

The first concern of every Christian is to lay aside all confidence in works and increasingly to strengthen faith alone and through faith to grow in the knowledge, not of works, but of Christ Jesus, who suffered and rose for him.

The entire Scripture of God is divided in two parts: commandments and promises. The commandments show us what we ought to do but do not give us the power to do it. "They are intended to teach man to know himself, through them he may recognize his inability to good and may despair of his own ability."<sup>2</sup>

Now when a man has learned through the commandments to recognize his helplessness and is truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, the second part of Scripture comes to our aid, namely, the promises of God, saying, "If you wish to fulfil the law and not covet, as the law demands, come, believe in Christ in whom grace, righteousness, peace, liberty, and all things are promised you." Thus the promises of God give what the commandments of God demand and fulfil what the law prescribes to that all things may be God's alone, both the commandments and the fulfilling of the commandments." To all who believed in his name, He gave power to become children of God" (John 1:12). Therefore, from God's source faith derives a great power. The Christian has all he needs in faith and needs no works to justify himself. Law and works are unnecessary for any man's righteousness and salvation. Faith is God's powerful gift given to man. Trusting firmly in God's promises, man is righteous before God.

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<sup>2</sup>Luther, p. 348.

Faith alone is the righteousness of a Christian and the fulfilling of all the commandments, for he who fulfils the First Commandment has no difficulty in fulfilling all the rest. Works only glorify God if faith is present and they are done to the glory of God.

Every Christian is by faith so exalted above all things that, he is lord of all things without exception. All things are made subject to him and are compelled to serve him in obtaining salvation. Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:21-23 that "all things are yours whether . . . life or death . . . ; and you are Christ's . . ." This doesn't mean that every Christian has a control over all things by physical power. The power of which we speak is spiritual.

Luther emphasizes the theology of the cross in Christian life, saying that "as a matter of fact, the more Christian a man is, the more evils, sufferings, and deaths he must endure, as we see in Christ the first-born prince himself." We share Christ's kingship, and so we are lord of all things.

A Christian is free from all things and over all things so that he needs no works to make him righteous and save him, since faith alone abundantly confers all these things. Insofar as he is free he does no works, but insofar as he is a servant he does all kinds of works. He serves God joyfully and without thought of gain.

However, while doing this, he meets a contrary will in his own flesh which strives to serve the world and seek its own advantage. Paul says in Rom. 7:22-23 "For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive in the law of sin," and in another place, "But I

pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor. 9:27), and in Gal. 5:24, "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

So the Christian who is consecrated by his faith does good works, but the works do not make him holier or more Christian, for that is the work of faith alone. The works of the unbeliever amount to nothing and are truly wicked and damnable sins. Luther summarizes his teaching of faith and works saying that the following statements are true: "Good words do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works."<sup>3</sup> As the man is, whether believer or unbeliever, so also is his work -- good if it was done in faith, wicked if it was done in unbelief. As works do not make man a believer, so also they do not make him righteous. But as faith makes a man a believer and righteous, so faith does good works. Man must be righteous before he does a good work.

Sin is basically man's falling away from God, which happens when he does not believe. So, "nothing makes a man good except faith, or evil except unbelief."

Man needs nothing of his own for his righteousness and salvation. But his Christian life, his faith is truly active through love (Gal. 5:6). Faith finds its expression in works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, without hope of reward.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 361

Paul, after teaching the Philippians how rich they were made through faith in Christ, says, "So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:1-4). The Christian can devote all his works to the welfare of others, since he has abundant riches in his faith that all his other works and his whole life are a surplus with which he can voluntarily serve and do good to his neighbor. The Christian gives because he has received. He in fact has much to give. Following his Servant Christ, he is a servant in serving, helping and in dealing with his neighbor. He can be so because he sees God through Christ dealing with him in love and service. And he does it freely. I give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me. "From faith," says Luther, "thus flow forth love and joy in the Lord, and from love a joyful, willing, and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss."<sup>4</sup> If we recognize the great things which are given to us, our hearts will be filled by the Holy Spirit with the love which makes us free, joyful, almighty workers, servants of our neighbors, and yet lords of all. Can there be a better man, better motivated, better equipped and oriented than the faithful Christian servant of the Lord

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

Jesus Christ? Each Christian should become, as Luther says, a "Christ to the other."

Frequently Christians do not comprehend the riches and the glory of the Christian life. "The Christian can do all things, has all things and lacks nothing." He is lord over sin, death, and hell, and yet at the same time he serves, ministers to, and benefits all men. This powerful life, unfortunately is so unknown in our weak world. Justified by faith, we are free and able to serve freely and joyfully our neighbor. Love is true and genuine where there is true and genuine faith. "Our faith in Christ does not free us from works but from false opinions concerning works, that is, from foolish presumption that justification is acquired by works."<sup>5</sup>

The Christian responsibility is here very clear. And this action happens in this world. When Jesus said "my kingship is not of this world" (John 18:36), he didn't say that His kingship was not here in this world.

So, Christians who understand and know what they really are, will manifest their faith in their love. "To be or not to be," that is the problem. Maybe this western culture hasn't been so much Christian at all.

Luther in Paul Althaus' view: Man's Relationship  
With God and His Neighbor

Theology has to speak both the grace and the wrath of God with radical seriousness. Are Lutherans so limited by conservative presuppositions that they cannot play a significant role in social reorganization?

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 372-373.

Paul Althaus, a Lutheran German theologian, in his book The Ethics of Martin Luther, reiterates what Luther has to say about the ground of the Christian life. Christian's activity is described in terms of justification, the foundation of the Christian ethos. To the above question, Althaus responds that "faith is realized only as it finds concrete expression in the midst of this worldly life."<sup>6</sup>

The "Foundation of the Christian Ethos" is the first chapter of this important book written by Althaus, and he starts saying that "Luther's Ethics is determined in its entirety, in its starting point and all its main features, by the heart and center of his theology, namely, by the justification of the sinner through the grace that is shown in Jesus Christ and received through faith alone. Justification by faith determines Christian ethics because, for the Christian, justification is both the presupposition and the source of the ethical life."<sup>7</sup>

So, justification is the presupposition of all Christian activity. "Everything the Christian does presupposes that he is justified. Justification determines the Christian ethos because it governs the Christian's understanding of what the Christian life is. It does this in two ways: negatively, by what it rules out, and positively, by what it affirms."<sup>8</sup>

The negative significance of justification for the Christian ethos consists in that salvation, fellowship with God, is grounded entirely in

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Althaus, The Ethics of Martin Luther (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), p. xix.

<sup>7</sup> Althaus, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

God's gracious acceptance of the sinner. This means that "neither the Christian ethos nor human activity can ever be construed as a way of attaining God's approval and winning salvation." Salvation is granted only to faith. It always precedes all human action. We can relate to God only through faith, never through our own accomplishments. The Christian activity, therefore, can only be understood in terms of gratitude to God for the salvation freely given before we do anything. "No one can ever attain a good conscience before God through his works." "A good conscience is not the product but the source of the Christian ethos."

"What we do for God," states Althaus, "can be described only in terms of obedience, and of thanks and praise to God. Understood teleologically, however -- that is, in terms of their purpose -- our deeds are done not for God but for our neighbor and for him alone. Whatever we do, we are to concern ourselves only with our neighbor's needs and not worry about our own salvation." God has already provided for our needs, therefore we do not need to be concerned about ourselves. Beyond his grace and favor nothing more is needed.

The positive significance of justification for the Christian ethos is that God, besides accepting me, also accepts and approves my works. What the Christian does is never so good as to be right and acceptable in the sight of God, but God accepts them because in His grace he approves them. God's act of justification, His word of forgiveness, gives man a good in his life. Thus Christian activity is good, despite all the sinfulness that remains within us.

Faith is for Luther the "first, highest, and most precious of all good works," the "chief work." Without it all other works are nothing and are dead. Faith alone is true service of God.

Luther says that works must be done "in faith" and that "all works remain within the sphere of the first commandment and of faith." "Faith," he says, "is the fulfilling of the first commandment."

The Christian's justifying faith and his certainty that he is saved gives him very great freedom of action. He is free to do joyfully every work required by the situation in which he lives. Certain that he is

"justified and that God is graciously pleased with his person and his work, then disappears every distinction between ordinary and special, profane and holy, insignificant and significant, small and great works. Such distinctions are made only by the moralist who must give meaning and value to his life through what he does. Since the Christian has received the meaning and value of his life through God's gracious act of justification, all tasks and works of life are equally important and holy because they have been assigned to him by God's direction of his life. There are no particularly holy works. Everything that we do is secular. However, it all becomes holy when it is done in obedience to God's command and in the certainty that he will be pleased, that is, when it is done in faith. This gives value and hidden glory to everything we do."<sup>9</sup>

Thus faith sets the Christian free. "He is free to do his work with joy, in contrast to the slavish worry, insecurity, and unhappiness of the man who has no faith."

The justification is the source of all Christian activity. It is received in faith. When a man comes to faith Christ enters into him and God's Holy Spirit is given to him. And "the great miracle of transformation happens, when God's Spirit works in man's heart. God's Spirit

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

creates a new desire, a new will, greater than any natural desire. The good tree now produces good fruit. He is filled with energy and acts in such a way that he pleases God. "As the Holy Spirit himself burns with love, so he makes the Christian's heart burn with love and desire for God. He makes the dead heart live." Surely, faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God.

The justifying love of God towards the sinner also creates love in him. So, for Luther, "our love of God and our love of our neighbor cannot be separated." God's love flows into us and then flows out again to our neighbor. God wants his people acting freely and voluntarily, happily and eagerly. "This spontaneity changes the 'thou shalt' to an inner 'must.' Here the imperative is set aside through the indicative worked by God's Holy Spirit: Christians spontaneously do the good works which they ought to do."

Luther describes faith as the source of life in obedience to God's commands by beginning the explanation of all the commandments in his Small Catechism with an abbreviated form of the first commandment: "We should fear and love God, and as a result . . ." He also says that people who keep the first commandment will also keep all the others by virtue of keeping the first.

For Luther faith, like human life itself, never stands still but is always energetically active in the present world. Faith cannot be separated from the activity of life. He thinks of it only in terms of the concrete acts of life. Luther does not imagine that any moment of life could be lived without faith or in neutrality toward faith. "Every situation and every hour of life is lived either in faith or in unfaith."

And "works are nothing but the concrete realization of faith itself." So faith always "needs secular life -- just as secular life in turn always needs faith." Therefore, "believing is not something I do alongside my life in this world but rather in it -- in each and every act of living. Faith expresses itself in the form of works. Faith lives in works, just as works are done in faith."

Only by exercising our faith can we begin to recognize what faith is and what it means to believe. "Nobody knows what a great thing it is to trust God alone except him who begins to trust and tries to do faith's works." Besides this, works test and also train the faith. "Alongside works stands suffering -- and both of these together are necessary for the full exercise of faith."

The life of the Christian is a struggle with himself. Justified by God he is a new man, but faith does not transform the whole person all at once. The old nature with its desires is not yet completely put to death. This is the conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. "The Christian lives in faith but he also still lives in the flesh."

In his struggle against his old man, the Christian needs the cross, God's therapeutic action against pride and ambition that are so common among pious people. This battle is never finished in this earthly life.

For Luther the Scripture rejects all autonomous human activity in matters relating to salvation.

In the third chapter of Paul Althaus' The Ethics of Martin Luther, Luther's main ideas of the "Stations and Vocations" or "The Orders are discussed. Says Althaus,

"The Decalogue and the commandment of love do not give very definite or detailed instructions about what we as individuals ought to do here and now in living together with one another. This commandment of love, valid everywhere and for all people, becomes specific for us as individuals in the context of the station of life in which God has placed us. Through our station in life we are placed into a definite and particular relationship to one another. And our duty to serve one another thereby takes on very specific form."<sup>10</sup>

Luther sometimes summarizes these stations in three basic ones; ministry, marriage (or the family, including everything related to business and the economy), and secular authority. "All these stations or orders have a useful and necessary function in the life of the world. They serve as the means by which God creates and preserves humanity. They establish order, justice, and peace in the world." These stations must remain if the world is to stand. The preservation of mankind depends on these stations, says Luther. That does not mean that Luther adopts an uncritically conservative attitude toward the entire existing order of society or that he glorifies its present form and declares it holy for religious reasons.

Our station, says Luther, is the place - although not the only place - where we are to obey God. He rejects "any piety that tries to find especially 'holy' works. Let each 'fulfill his duties in his vocation' -- then he will have enough and more than enough to do." And there is no limit to what our station and vocation require of us. "If we take that requirement seriously, we have neither time, nor space, nor energy to seek out special works for ourselves."

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

Luther however reminds us that we cannot fulfill any vocation without being involved in sin. Fortunately, all Christian ethos is ethos under justification. We have God's forgiveness.

Franz Lau in his book entitled Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen writes: "We live in a world in which Christ has not yet established his lordship but which is still controlled by other powers. Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms remains the best available help to live a Christian life in such a world. A more adequate or clearer interpretation of the biblical understanding of Christian existence in a world which must guarantee its own existence by means of force has not yet been given us."<sup>11</sup>

"The Two kingdoms and The Two Governments" is the subject of the fourth chapter Althaus' book.

Bound by the Scripture and not by his political context, Luther says that God rules the world in a twofold way. He, God, has established two governments, the spiritual and the secular, or earthly, temporal, physical. The secular government serves to preserve external secular righteousness, and the spiritual government helps men to achieve true Christian righteousness and therewith eternal life.

The spiritual government brings the kingdom of God into being. This is the 'kingdom of grace.'" In this divine grace men receive the forgiveness of sins and become free children of God. Through word and sacrament Christ's government comes to men, by the work of the Holy

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., n., p. 82.

Spirit. "Christ's government is the lordship which He exercises in a man's heart through his Spirit." This kingdom of God is powerful in man.

"However, the same God who administers the kingdom of grace in Christ has also instituted the secular kingdom." Secular government in Luther's thought includes much more than political authorities and governments; it includes everything that contributes to the preservation of this earthly life. This secular or temporal government is necessary alongside the kingdom of Christ. "For without it this life could not endure."

Luther uses the concepts world and secular in the same broad sense that the New Testament does. In this sense the Christian is a "citizen of this world." According to Althaus, "Luther explicitly says that this secular life and the stations that constitute it are given and instituted by God."

"On the other hand, Luther, like the New Testament, frequently uses the word world to designate those men who have closed their hearts to God's word and live in enmity with him or to describe that area in which sin, Satan, and 'the children of Satan' have power."<sup>12</sup>

As long as mankind belongs to the kingdom of this world, it stands under the law. "If all were Christians, there would be no need of secular government. The relationship between the two governments is thus the relationship between the law and the gospel. It corresponds to the division of mankind into Christians and non-Christians." In this usage, kingdom and government are distinguished: "the kingdom of this world is determined by sin; secular government is instituted by God

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

against sin, even though secular government itself may participate in sin." This doctrine of the two governments is closely related to Augustine's doctrine of the city of God and the city of this world. The Christian lives in both governments. He is also a citizen of this world.

The difference between the two governments is that the secular government serves only this earthly life and passes away together with this life; spiritual government, however stands in the service of eternal life. Another difference is that in the kingdom of Christ everything is voluntary and done in love, motivated by love. In the secular government, however, at least in the state, justice rules -- and rules with force. The authorities compel people to obey, and also exercise retribution and punishment. The kingdom of Christ consists in forgiveness. "The secular government rules with the sword; the spiritual government rules with the word." The secular government has no need of Christ, his gospel, or the Spirit. It rules with reason. The law of the land and not Christ gives the orientation in the fulfilling of one's office in the secular government.

Even though both governments are so distinct from and independent of each other, however, they still belong together, they still need each other. Christendom does not have the resources to establish this peace that the secular government does. It has only the gospel. We cannot rule the world according to the gospel in such a way that we could do without secular government and the state.

The secular government on the other side needs the spiritual government for no society properly maintains law and order and continues to

be blessed if it lacks that knowledge of God and this truth which the spiritual government provides. "The office of preaching helps the authorities to preserve peace and order by instructing all stations concerning God's will for them and by teaching obedience, morals, discipline, and honor." Where secular government works by itself, therefore, it produces only hypocrisy and outward obedience without the proper attitude of the heart to God.

But, just as one may not separate these two governments from each other and try to have one without the other, so they also may not be mixed. "They are and remain two different entities -- and precisely for this reason they need each other." For Luther the Roman papacy has been especially guilty of mixing the two governments. It is not the function of the church's ministry to make laws concerning secular matters and to exercise secular government; the ministry is concerned with secular matters only insofar as they "touch upon conscience." "The peasants," says Luther, "were making social demands in the name of the gospel and thus confusing the two kingdoms." "The devil," affirms Luther, "never stops cooking and brewing these two kingdoms into each other."

So the Christian stands under both governments. He has two lords: one in the earthly kingdom and one in the spiritual kingdom. He is obligated to the emperor and to Christ at the same time; to the emperor for his outward life, to Christ inwardly with his conscience and in faith.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus calls his disciples to freedom and to love. They are to be free in their relationship to the world and to its goods and in their relationship to people they live purely and

exclusively out of love. This love gives and forgives without limits. This love is completely opposed to the style of life typical of this world, in which those who are mighty rule. Love knows no other lordship than in service. But how it is possible to live in this lovely way in this world characterized by property, by profit, by law, by economics, by the state and by politics?

When Luther wrote on this issue he was confronted by two opposing opinions: the Roman Catholic interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount and the interpretation given by the Enthusiasts.

According to the Roman Catholic interpretation, no one can fulfill the Sermon on the Mount while living in the midst of this world. Its strictest requirements can only be fulfilled by small groups who withdraw from life as much as possible and form a Christian elite -- for example, a monastic community. The secular Christian follows the commandments and those who wish to achieve perfection, follow also the counsels formulated by Jesus. Consequently, there are two stages of discipleship. The ascetic ideal is valid only for a select group.

The Enthusiasts, on the other hand assert the Sermon on the Mount and life in this world as it now is are in irresolvable contradiction to each other.

"If Christians really want to obey their Master, then they must leave this world. They neither may nor can participate in the institutions of this world, such as property, law, oath-taking, the exercise of authority, affairs of state, police work, the penal system, any kind of use of power, and war. Tolstoi asserted that true disciples of Jesus may not even participate in marriage, and similar opinions were current at the time of Luther."<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

But another form of Enthusiasm concluded from Jesus' statements that the world must be basically reformed through a Christian revolution and made to conform to the "evangelical law." In this way, they thought, the world would become thoroughly Christian and take on the shape of the kingdom of God on earth. This is the activist form of Enthusiasm.

Luther opposes both the Roman Catholic and the Enthusiast viewpoint. He rejects their common presupposition that the statements of Jesus cannot be fulfilled by living in this world as it is. He says that Jesus' statements are "precepts binding on all Christians alike" and not mere counsels for the perfect.

"At the same time, Luther asserts that the Christian may not leave this world. He ought to use the world and not refuse to accept the offices and responsibilities that are necessary for the life of this world." In every situation, he is to act as a Christian in obedience to Jesus, and there is no interruption in such obedience. At the same time he normally is a citizen of this world, which may include possessing property and occupying a secular position in the social structure. But how can the Christian preserve the Christian freedom and love in this world? Luther says that this freedom is a matter of the heart and of our inner attitude. The important thing is that even when we have possessions our soul remains free of them. "Luther recognized that Jesus never speaks of a restructuring or reordering of this world but rather only of the personal attitude of his disciples toward the goods of this world."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

For Luther property can become theft when the excess which we do not need for our own person is not used for the welfare of our neighbor.

According to Luther, we are never without a relationship to others; we are continually bound to our neighbors. Our life as Christian is a serving life. We serve in direct personal encounters and also through the structures and orders which support the life of society. The personal and the official activities are ministries, in the sense that they are readiness to serve and to help. Luther encourages Christians to be available whenever they have the opportunity to serve others, no matter what form such service may actually take.

Thus the two governments do not exclude each other -- presupposing that each remains within the limits of its own area. According to Luther one can serve both God and the emperor, for God himself has instituted the emperor and the imperial office and is hidden behind the earthly lord.

Luther's doctrine of the Two Governments has been criticized as not describing the task and responsibility of the Christian in the renewal of the world and in the transformation of its orders to conform with the kingdom of Christ.

Althaus' response to this objection is that "Luther, too, intends to view secular life, insofar as Christians participate in it, as being under the lordship of Christ. In fact he does not claim that Christ is lord within these orders as such but only in the men who act within these orders." The lordship of Christ is lordship in persons, that is, in their faith. "Christians will, in fact, work in the world so that the orders and relationships which God has established to serve human life

may be re-established and set free from misuse and distortion." According to the New Testament there will continue to be two governments of God as long as this endures. The lordship of Christ is to be understood in the context of the theology of the cross. It is still hidden under the "form of this world."

God and Satan struggle with each other in both governments, and "Satan is a far greater danger in the spiritual government. For this reason an office in the spiritual government is far more dangerous and difficult than an office in the secular government, and the failure of people who hold spiritual offices is far more dangerous for the people they are intended to serve."<sup>15</sup>

Althaus concludes this chapter saying that although we live in a new situation in our days, the basic structure of Luther's theology continues to demonstrate its truth.

Helmuth Thielicke: The Freedom of the Christian

For Thielicke the message of the freedom of the children of God is the crucial message that must be carried into all areas. The opposite of slavery is not freedom from all restraint (this soon leads, as the parable of the prodigal son shows, to new chains and entanglements). "The opposite of slavery, as Paul shows us, is sonship, according to Thielicke. Freedom is not the opposite of restraint and submission; it is a special kind of bondage. Bondage to powers, institutions, and men enslaves. Bondage to God liberates. For freedom does not mean that one may do what one wills, but rather that one may become what one should. In God we become what He, as our Creator, intended us to be. For the

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

Christian, therefore, ethics does not, strictly speaking, teach us what we should do, but rather what we may do.

The free, mature son has immediate access to his Father. He possesses the standard and the criteria by which he will judge and make decisions in life. He has an immediate relationship to the Father, and that makes him free from all things. That is what Luther meant when he said that the Christian man is lord of all things and subject to none. "He who is close to the norma normans can no longer be subject to the normae normatae."<sup>16</sup>

The problem of freedom, says Thielicke, is dealt in an ultimate sense in the parable of the prodigal son. In this parable the prodigal son is not merely a scamp or an unruly child. This son, who strove to get away from his father into the far country, was fundamentally seeking only himself and his own free development. He may have wished to liberate himself from dependence upon the parental home and its authority, and assume responsibility for shaping his own life on the free paths of the far country. He is afraid that if he remains within the confining tradition and value-structure of the parental home, he will not be able to find himself in freedom, but will go on doing what others do, or to use the modern phrase, that he will remain an unfree function of his milieu. The motive of the "lost" son is freedom. Freedom is not realized he thinks, when one simply continues to be the function of a superior will, say the will of the parental home. A person must have elbow-room, he must have the opportunity to go his own way. So he separates himself

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<sup>16</sup> Helmut Thielicke, The Freedom of the Christian Man: A Christian Confrontation with the Secular Gods (New York: Harper-Row, 1963), p. 28.

from his father in the hope that he will find himself on the free paths of the far country and able to develop himself in freedom. He hopes, as it were, to become autonomous. But, instead of finding freedom, he falls under the dictatorship of his homesickness, his ambition, his urges. This will to freedom leads fundamentally to unfreedom. The son who wanted to be free fell under the dictatorship of his instincts, his passion, his sexuality, the dictatorship of ambition, the will to power, and homesickness, and finally wound up in the pigsty, the symbol of utter lack of freedom. The freedom to do what he wills subjects him to the tyranny of the law of least resistance. The very lack of binding restraints that he willed leads him to the pigsty. Now it is clear that he has not exchanged his bondage to the father for freedom (which is what he really wanted), but rather for bondage to inferior powers.

Thielicke concludes saying: "This is his catastrophe. It is our catastrophe." When the son found the father anew by the roundabout way of wandering in the far country he realized that he had also found himself in this bond, and therefore had arrived at real freedom. Because he turned back, he became, for the first time, really free. In finding the father, he found himself.

This means that mere self-expression and self-development of the individual does not bring freedom, but only slavery, the final threat to freedom.

"Freedom, the parable is saying, is possible only in being bound to the Father... Only so does man realize his nature. For his true nature

consists in being a child of this Father. Human nature realizes itself in being a free, mature child."<sup>17</sup>

We have only to choose between bondage to the Father, which makes us free, and bondage to the powers of this world, which enslaves us. Only he who finds God finds himself. This happened to the prodigal son in Jesus' parable in Luke 15:11. He wanted to be free to his heart's content and do what he pleased. But in place of the fatherly lord came other lords, who made him slave, whereas before he was the child in the house.

So man has his freedom only in being bound. He has no freedom in binding himself to men or groups. This is precisely where he loses it, by degenerating into a functionary. "He has his freedom only in binding himself to the Ultimate, by being directly subject to the final court of appeal."<sup>18</sup> Man is immediately subject to God and that permits him to take all the authorities that lay claim upon him, including the state, parents and superiors, and see them all under the light of the Ultimate Authority and so be free in an ultimate sense from all secondary and creaturely authorities. In fact, it is God that makes us free over against men and their power. When we are mature children of God, we are really free.

Thielicke states that it is an axiom of the Christian doctrine of freedom that only he who finds God finds himself. He says that only from this vantage point can we understand Luther's statement that "a Christian man is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; and Christian man is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."

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<sup>17</sup>Thielicke, p. 81

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

For Thieliicke, "he who wants the freedom of man must seek for that which is more than man."<sup>19</sup>

In the opinion of this German Lutheran theologian the healing and helping power which we need for our generation cannot begin with a

"reordering of a threatened world, an organized attempt to restore a world one out of joint, nor with an organized attempt of the welfare state to provide new securities for men and bring socialized perfection to society. Healing and helping power cannot do its work in us by these means, but only by our first being reordered ourselves, by becoming what we were intended to be."<sup>20</sup>

Modern world needs a sharp Socratic interrogation, for only he who is called in question can become a mature adult. The Church is God's vehicle of questioning and answering.

In his book The Freedom of the Christian Man, Thieliicke also talks about the freedom of science.

"Christ frees man to be objective. Surely it is a remarkable thing that science and technology have, besides the root that lives in the native soil of Greek culture, another root in the Christian West . . . . Through Christ the world was stripped of its demonic character, (entdämonisiert), so that men lost their fear of it, gained the ability to be calm and objective, and thus were able to look at it from the observer's point of view. A Hindu, for example, could never study the anatomy of the cow, since the cow is holy and he would necessarily fear it. It is true that this benefit of objectivity gained through the redemption continues to survive for a time after secularized man has long since cut himself off from the source of this freedom. But when the ultimate consequences of this secularism are drawn he again abolished freedom of investigation, and for the very simple reason that the unredeemed man is afraid of the truth."<sup>21</sup>

In conclusion Thieliicke says that the dread of boundless loneliness of the unredeemed man, which Jean Paul Sartre once described so vividly in *Siebenkäs*,

"compels him to surround himself only with creatures of his own making, not only with men who are his submissive functionaries and have

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p. 29

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 125

given up their freedom, but also with truths which are his creations, that is to say, with truths and principles which are not allowed to call him in question, but only to corroborate him."<sup>22</sup>

For the unredeemed freedom is something that demands too much of him and therefore causes him to flee. For the redeemed person, however, freedom is a gift which enables him to be himself and allows him to be what God meant him to be.

Martin H. Scharlemann: The Church's Social Responsibilities

Social Ministry

The church's social ministry is "faith active in love," according to Scharlemann's book The Church's Social Responsibilities.

In the introduction of his book, Dr. Scharlemann says that "a spirit of optimism prevailed in the world at the opening of the twentieth century. Men were sure that science and technology would soon accomplish the liberation of mankind from superstition, poverty and war." A few years later, however, World War I broke out "to release some of the demons that constantly lurk under the surface of life, ready to rise and destroy. There has been endless turmoil since." World War II accelerated the disintegration of accepted values, beliefs and practices. Confusion, distress, and fear reign almost universally. In this context Christians inquire about the responsibilities and the relationship the church has toward what is happening in the social order. Can the church go beyond witness and proclamation? To what extent ought the church as an institution get involved in the upheavals of our days? "Our fathers," affirms Scharlemann, "often left matters of social, economic, and political import

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

to other people, on the principle that the Gospel addresses itself to individuals in their lost estate, and that the church's sole task was to minister to the 'spiritual' needs of man." In our world of technology in which destruction, depersonalization, and dehumanization threaten God's creature, what do we do?

A great number of apostles of violence propose the destruction of what they call "the System." Others still dream hoping that man will be able to find full freedom in the secular environment created by the scientific advances of our century. Not a few hope that in the future mankind will reach the social and political perfection.

Some "theologians" have even been working on their theology of revolution, mixing some religious thoughts with marxists principles. It is, therefore, urgent that a general guidance be given to those thinking and acting in this area and to all Christians.

Dr. Scharlemann makes it clear that what his book presents is rooted in the distinctive Lutheran understanding of life in the church and in the world. He uses, for example, the distinction between Law and Gospel, the two-kingdom view of existence, the doctrines of creation and redemption as they relate to each other.

One of the major accents of his book is that God created this world as a place where righteousness might have continued to dwell had not man in his rebellion chosen to defy his Creator. Man's will is in revolt: only as it is brought into obedience by the power of the Spirit is there the kind of radical solution which exhibits what God has in mind of reconstituting the world. This approach is neither optimistic nor

pessimistic but the kind of realistic view about man and his situation which is an essential element of the Biblical revelation.

### Social Ministry

For Scharlemann the Holy Spirit is God's special gift to the church. "He has the task of leading the people of God into all truth (John 16:13). Hence the church is that living community in which men are brought to a new understanding of the ways of God. As its members confront new problems, they are given more profound insights into what God expects of them in the light of His Word." <sup>23</sup>

According to Dr. Scharlemann, a rediscovery of the significance of the Biblical doctrine of creation is happening. In the last years it has become increasingly clear that the Scriptures addresses to man in his totality.

### A Community of Witnesses

Scharlemann begins his analysis with a description of the church as the people of God. "Unless we do so," he says, "we shall miss one of the major sources of motivation for our work of service." The church is not only a company of witnesses but a witnessing community. So what we do as Christians, has unknown dimensions to a mere secular concern for rendering assistance.

The unifying theme of Scripture is that of God's dealings with His people - with Israel under the terms of the Old Covenant and with the church under those of the New Covenant.

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<sup>23</sup> Martin H. Scharlemann, The Church's Social Responsibilities (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1971), p. 17.

The Old Testament tells us how God created Israel as His holy community on the basis of grace alone. Israel had nothing to offer to justify its existence as a separate nation. It was a slave people when God with great power led it out of Egypt. This despised race of slaves, kept busy with the job of making bricks for a Pharaoh who was not their king, God chose as His people. The prophets kept reminding Israel of its insignificant origins.

God acted in the same way when the moment came for Him to choose a mother for His own Son. And He chose a little known girl, Mary, living in a village of little significance.

God arranged to have Moses erect the tabernacle of His presence in Israel. It was also called the "tent of meeting," because it was the place where God met His people.

Unhappily, Israel failed to see that God's grace can be kept only when it is shared. It also perverted the sacrificial system established by God into little more than a cultic ritual.

The prophets began to speak of another age, a time when God would establish some other kind of covenant, a new relationship consisting of forgiveness. This promise was fulfilled when Jesus came to make proclamation that God's reign had come. In saying so, Jesus made it clear that He had come to create a community; for He began at once to gather the true remnant out of Israel. From it He chose twelve to be His apostles. These were to be the patriarchs of a new Israel. As the old Israel was baptized by water in the sea, so John came baptizing at the Jordan. A voice from Sinai in the desert had made the first Israel God's own;

so John was, on his own confession, a voice in the wilderness, exhorting people to make ready a royal highway for their God.

On the day of Pentecost God's voice was heard. This was the day when the remnant which Jesus had chosen out of Israel became the church, a new community of grace, whose task it was to transcend all barriers of race, nation, and tongue, to gather into one people all those whom God had chosen to serve Him.

The salutation of the First Letter of Peter calls the Christians as the chosen pilgrims. Jesus once said to His disciples: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). We are His because He decided that we should be.

For forty years Israel wandered in the desert on its way to the Promised Land. Likewise the church can never be viewed in static terms. The church is always on the move, as the pilgrim nation of the Lord.

God's salvation plan was carried out by the "sanctifying activity of the Spirit." Luther explains this very well in his explanation of the Third Article.

The old covenant was sealed by Moses as he took the blood of animals and sprinkled some on the altar and some on the people (Exodus 24; compare Heb. 9:19-20).

"We live under a new covenant, sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ, which we individuals receive every time we partake of His Supper and are assured: 'This is the blood of the New Covenant, shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins.'"

All this has been said to present a theological basis for the work of social ministry, so that we may appreciate our status as members of the church and see ourselves in terms of continuity in God's work of redemption.

The church is a community of redeemed persons; not a perfect society, but a new kind of community. And "it is by the new quality of inner life that the church exhibits herself as God's witnessing community."

The Christian community has a new style of life. Paul describes the inner life of this new community in Col. 3:12-14. All of these qualities of life mentioned by Paul in this text are relational virtues. They cannot be practiced in isolation. The text of 1 Peter 3:8 also describes this new way of life of the Christian family, where all different interests, all social, racial, and economic differences are subsumed under the common lordship of Jesus Christ.

#### The Model

Our Lord is His conversation with the Twelve after the foot washing on the evening of the first Holy Trinity told the disciples that He had given them a pattern, "that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:12, 15). He was teaching the disciples that their work as His followers would be marked by service. He was the living example of that sacrificial service.

Jesus combines the figure of the Suffering Servant, as set forth particularly in Isaiah 53, with the Danielic description of a royal personage. He is the Servant-King.

The Paradox of Ministry

Jesus was both king and servant at the same time. He was all king, because He was all servant, and he established the kingdom of God by becoming a servant to men.

For Dr. Scharlemann Jesus was totally different from the "religious man" of other theologies. Buddah, for instance, is lost in the contemplation of his navel. That is his way of serving the divine. The holy man of India must not be disturbed in his acts of devotion even though men are perishing around him. His piety leaves him no time for service. Jesus, however, in a sharp distinction with these men, said, "I am among you as one who serves." He came very close to men, assuming a solidarity with us, poor sinners. He came to partake of our flesh and blood. He identified Himself with our rebellion against God in order to reconcile us to God.

To work out our salvation He did not retire to some lonely mountain top. He did it in our midst, right where we live. H. G. Wells once wrote, "Is it any wonder that to this day the Galilean is too much for our small hearts?"<sup>24</sup>

So, no doubt that loyalty to our Lord necessarily implies service to men. We are not called to enjoy His presence in splendid isolation but in helping those who are in need. "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs!," said Jesus to Peter. And He had shown Himself to be the Good Shepherd.

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<sup>24</sup>Scharlemann, p. 38.

The Kingdom of God

Jesus emphasized the fact that God's kingdom had come in His person. His coming represented an invasion of man's existence. The world had been occupied by a foreign power. This order of things needed to be changed.

According to the accounts of the evangelists, Jesus looked on need, poverty, and illness as signs of Satan's dominion. "He did not," says Scharlemann, "come as a wonder-worker who proposed to heal all the sick by a wave of His hand or a word of His power. Our Lord saw suffering as a characteristic feature of a world alienated from God. Only God's rule could once more, by redemption, show the finished creation, untouched by pain. In His miracles of healing we therefore see the splendor of God's rule shining through in anticipation of the final restoration."

Jesus always connected the forgiveness of sin with the healing of disease. "His forgiving Word and His healings acts are really one."

Jesus' helping acts according to the evangelist John were "signs." They provided

"the visible evidence for the dawning of a new age. At the same time they revealed the truth that our Lord was interested in the redemption of the whole man. He did not distinguish body and soul in the way of Greek thought and practice. He came to establish the full rule of God over the complete man. For that reason Jesus took physical suffering very seriously. He never even remotely suggested that human illness was an illusion which could be cured by some abacadabra. His healing words never degenerated into magical formula. He took each case and treated it according to its own particular needs."<sup>25</sup>

The persons he cured represented a pledge of final and complete restoration at the end of time.

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<sup>25</sup>Scharlemann, p. 42.

As Jesus' ministry must be interpreted in the light of his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension our ministry as Christians is only a sign of that total redemption which God's people will fully experience when He returns.

In His solidarity with us Jesus was brought to the point of saying, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We are to have solidarity with our fellowmen.

For Scharlemann in this life "the lines of trust in Him and of service to our fellowman may seem to run parallel. But they meet at the great judgment, when the King will say to those on His right. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me'" (Matt. 25:40).

The apostle Paul in Phil. 2:3-11 says that "He emptied Himself and took on the nature of a servant . . . and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." This kind of humility leads to glory.

The new community in the time of the apostles had worship, witness, and welfare. "For worship without the other two tends to become dead form, and witnessing unattended by worship and welfare often turns the church of the Word into a church of words. Again, welfare without worship and witness is tempted to become mere social service." For that community and for us Jesus is the Example. His life is our pattern.

## SOCIAL ACTION

In this complex issue we need to guard against giving Gospel answers to Law questions, as well as the reverse error of formulating Law solutions to Gospel issues. Therefore, we will study some premises for the church's social action.

Theology of the cross

The theology of the cross reminds us that matters of justice, civic order, and freedom are important concerns of the church, but "are always penultimate in their significance." The church must be aware and proclaim that no society every succeeds in eliminating all problems. Knowing this, she will continue to proclaim that suffering is part of life and may be used as an instrument of refinement. Social welfare is always penultimate. The ultimates of the Gospel are the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

The church must recall that no social order is devoid of injustice, and that it is impossible to create a society where everyone enjoys full justice. And if we ourselves are the victims of wrong, we have our Lord as an example of one who endures suffering and in that situation commended His cause to Him who judges righteously. In faith we may also look to our suffering as an opportunity to share in the sufferings of our Lord.

An analogy from our Lord's own ministry has at times been useful, according to Dr. Scharlemann's thought in clarifying the penultimates and ultimates in the church. He says,

"Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead as a sign of the presence of God's gracious rule among men (John 11:31). Lazarus came back to life but he died again to await the resurrection. That resurrection is the ultimate step; the raising of Lazarus was penultimate in its meaning. The church's interest in man's well-being, whether it be in the area

of health or in the matter of social issues as order, justice, and freedom, constitutes her awareness that she has the task of raising signs among men to point them to the redemptive presence of God."<sup>26</sup>

These signs are penultimates. The only sure signs we have of Christ's final victory are Word and Sacrament. They offer forgiveness of sins, and that is an ultimate matter.

Our Lord did not promise that some day, as part of our present existence, men would or will enjoy an age of universal peace and justice. On the contrary, the Scriptures suggest that, as time goes on, evil will become stronger and stronger (Mark 13:20; Matthew 24).

The biblical understanding of man is realistic and it keeps us from living with the illusion that we will ever see full and complete righteousness and peace on the earth. This does not mean that we have no more interest in the world as church people. On the contrary, it means that with this double citizenship we work hard at justice, order, freedom, and peace, because their presence is a sign of God's rule among men. However, we keep in mind that man's history will end by the parousia.

In man's history there is a conflict raging between the real of darkness and the kingdom of God. With this view we will be able to talk about the dimension of the demonic in mankind's history. Forces of anarchy, confusion, injustice, and tyranny always lie just below the surface of any civic order, and they are ready at any moment to break through and engage in violence and destruction.

#### A God of Order and Justice

Our God is a God of Order and Justice. But by wanting to be like God, man introduced chaos, disorder, injustice. So, in order to restrain

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

the forces of anarchy between the fall and the parousia, God created orders of preservation (imperium, matrimonium and oeconomia). These orders of creation and preservation belong to the distinction between Law and Gospel.

In Luther's language, these orders belong to God's kingdom of the left hand. Structures and forms of these orders differ from age to age, but until the end of history they have an important function in God's plans.

For Scharlemann there is a fourth instrument of order called verbum, and refers to the church's life as an institution. To this aspect of God's rule we apply the term redemption and call it the kingdom of His right hand.

#### The Kingdom of the Right Hand

Among the nations of the world, God raised up a community designed to be the place of His presence among men. For centuries the center of God's acts in grace and judgment remained in Israel. Then, like Israel, the church came into being by God's grace. The new Israel had a covenant with God - sealed with blood from the cross. And from then on these living persons constitute the sanctuary of the living God (See 2 Cor. 6:16b). At the Pentecost day the Holy Spirit came to prepare the church for her bruising contest with the kingdom of darkness. In fact, there is a "degree of ambivalence in the work of the church, for she still belongs also to the old aeon, yet her life in the new aeon brought a new hope into the lives of men."

The church with her good news of freedom very soon had to face a serious problem. The economy of the Roman Empire depended heavily on

slave labor. Slavery prevailed as a means of providing an income and leisure for full citizens.

Spartacus was the leader of a rebellion movement that ended in disaster. "The church," says Scharlemann, "by way of contrast, taught a quality of life referred as 'subjection,' an act of faith by which the needs of others, including those of masters, were rated higher than the desires and inclinations of the individual himself."

Christian masters were reminded that they, too, had a Lord to whom they must give account. "The Lord's table was open to master and slave alike. All distinctions of this kind were eliminated in filling church offices. Where ever there was unjust suffering, men were reminded of their Lord's example." Certainly in this way a leaven was released in a declining social order. The new Lord made His entry in history. The demonic powers were being dethroned. The world was being desacralized, de-deified.

In our days we are confronted with the "devils of depersonalization, anonymity, irresponsibility, oppression, exploitation, brutality, transiency, frustration, and delinquency." Can the church just stand and watch how secularism, nihilism, and totalitarianism move in to dehumanize human life?

Scharlemann agrees with Harvey Cox in distinguishing secularization from secularism. He says,

"The process of secularization may have the effect of 'defatalizing' history, producing the twin practices of pluralism and tolerance. Yet a totally secularized order of life is one that has no center. While it may create a certain tolerable equilibrium, this balance is extremely tenuous. The scales can quickly tip toward secularism, which is for all practical purposes, a new religion, comprising a faith of a single dimension that tends to close our universe by

destroying an awareness of and interest in what is transcendental. When this happens, life may even be reduced to the level of nihilism, whose basis is a disbelief in any and all powers and whose only product can be a spiritual desert of unending void."<sup>27</sup>

Man always looks for a greater purposefulness, a faith in some inspiring and unifying idea. Man needs a direction in his life. So, where other powers have been expelled, totalitarianism with its demons moves in to fill the vacuum and in this situation this is worse than it was before.

H. Berkhof in his book Christ and the Powers reminds us of the demonic powers acting in our social life. As Christians we have to reject these demonic ideologies that lead men to chaos.

#### The Church's Weapons

The church is an institution, an association before the law, but basically she is a redemptive and redeeming community. Paul used very much the synagog as an institution that provided help in his work. Like the synagog, the church is in the world, although she is not part of it. This means that to reach her goals in any culture she has to be an institution of some kind.

In her responsibility in this world, the church, according to Dr. Scharlemann "may in fact serve as a symbol of the kind of intrusion which keeps men reminded of the fact that ultimate meaning for life and lasting solutions to the problems of existence come from outside the historic process." It is her task to neutralize the demons which threaten to enclose the world in the tight circle of secularism. In this function she serves as a symbol of intrusion if and when the principles of justice

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 59-60.

and order are practiced within the churchly establishment itself. "Her business is to witness to values beyond the here and now."

This redemptive and redeeming community may also serve as a symbol of continuity, by carrying on from generation to generation the substance of her institutional life. In fact, the church has also become a symbol of an authority that transcends the secular.

She also serves as a symbol of justice, representing an awareness of that Archimedean point above society to which reference may be made in combating the injustice.

It is true, however, that the "story of the church as an institution has its tragic chapters. Although the church did not apply always the prophetic principles to her own life, somehow the voice of prophecy never remained silent for very long. Prophetic and critical review always happened. "Ecclesia semper reformanda est."

This redeemed community is also called as "the sanctuary of the living God" (2 Cor. 6:16). There is a story behind this title. God wanted David to build Him a temple. David's sin changed this story. He was not permitted to do it, and the prophet told him that the Lord would make David a house. Jesus is the great son of David. In the temple He announced that this temple would be replaced by another, His body. That body, the final sanctuary of God, is the church. Christ is the Head.

The church consists of men and women who assemble around Word and Sacrament. She is an open society

"offering its understanding of life and history to men groping for meaning and providing them an altar to which they may bring their broken and fragmented lives in order to become whole. The church's role in social action therefore is derived from something more

profound than the insight that she is the most universal form of neighborhood-based institution in our society. She is in fact the bearer of God's revelation in the matter of providing meaning for existence."<sup>28</sup>

The church is in a unique strategic position in making the conscience of individuals sensitive to order and justice, and this by teaching the Ten Commandments and all that these imply.

Quoting Rom. 13:3, Scharlemann also makes the remarks that this apostle's observation does not encourage quietism, but that the prophetic criticism and judgment still belongs to the church's resources: and the exercise of this responsibility on the part of the church can and often must go beyond words.

Social reality is very complex. Issues of life rarely confront men as clean choices between black and white. We need to be careful to not oversimplify complex problems. Sometimes Christians are quite naive in the social, political, and economic areas.

Each individual is the product of the choices he has made. And those who have seriously thought about freedom will have to agree that it is not an easy thing to be or to exercise. The church, with its verbum, the fourth order of preservation, can teach men the relationship between responsibility and freedom. With the law of God men can use the opportunity of choice.

No doubt the church has to proclaim the Gospel in a meaningful way. The matter of relevance, however, says Scharlemann, has been discussed ad nauseam. It almost suggests that "it is man, the creature, who has the right somehow to determine what he should like to hear."

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

Frequently the church ignores the weapons that lie close at hand. Sometimes she is tempted to seek in other disciplines and professions the power that she has in her own theology. Law and Gospel were revealed to provide answers to basic issues. Jesus as a Man and His words offer answer to the dilemmas of this tragic, troubled time. Christ's witnesses have a message for this modern world.

The broken lives of modern days can be brought to God's altar. By assembling around God's Word for instruction and worship people are strengthened and motivated to move out into the world of men's need for service.

According to Scharlemann Lutherans have at times practiced a kind of "sanctified irresponsibility in social questions because they were content to limit themselves to an individualistic approach to such issues and because they remained unaware of the dimensions of the incarnation of our Lord as it is functionally extended through all of history by the church as Christ's body."

When Christians are engaged in helping people they do it with a quite different motivation from the other men and institutions. There is no doubt that the church has much to do in this world, but the question before us concerns the methods to be used in creating desirable social change. And this is a very difficult issue.

In her task the church can never forget her theology of the cross, in which she reminds the suffering men that suffering is part of life and that it may be used as an instrument of refinement. She also will always affirm that the ultimates of the Gospel are the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Faith is "a power which must touch life seven days a week." In this faith Christians serve the world in its needs.

The church is involved in a battle. She is the symbol of God's order and justice. But more. She is "the redeemed and redeeming community of the Lord. In the secular city of our days the church has a very special opportunity to help set and keep men free, provided, of course, she is ready to bring the sacrifices which this task entails."<sup>29</sup>

Richard R. Caemmerer: The Church in the World

The great challenge for the church in our days is not to lose her identity as a church. She has to speak to the world as a church, as men of God in Christ, and not just as another institution. God's man looks at men with God's own concern and desire that they should have God. God's man is entrusted and commissioned to bring God to other men through the Word of redemption. That is even the one major reason of the Christian being in this world. The Spirit of God worked love in his heart for the world's man.

Although the Christian receives spiritual food for his spiritual life and growth from Word and Sacrament, his relationship with God is threatened from inside, then he still bears the flesh, which is not under the direction of the Spirit of God, but of self.

The Church is the fellowship of the men in Christ. They are the body of Christ. In them Christ dwells. Over them He is Lord. He is the Head of the one body, the Church.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 81.

The members of the body of Christ attached to their Head have a task. When this task is misunderstood, the Church deteriorates. So, the Church must be aware

"that she is commissioned to invade the world and capture members of the world for membership in the body of Christ. The goal of the people of God and of the Church of Christ in the world is to make the world God's again (Rev. 11:15). The members of the Church of Christ are to move into all the world with the power to change its people from unbelief to faith and from the death of the world to the life in Christ."<sup>30</sup>

The tool and power of the Church in this activity is the Gospel, God's Word, God's powerful good news of redemption through Jesus Christ.

The great program of the Church is the strengthening of the spiritual life of its members, so that they can engage in a strategy of advance upon the world. For that program of advance and attack the Christian and the Church remain in the world.

For Dr. Caemmerer, the Church's strategy requires investigation. Christians need to recognize more completely, in terms of our own times, the nature of the forces of world and Church in conflict. The individual Christian and the Christian group needs to be strengthened, so that they can make their impact on the world. Edification and advance are two important words in the Church's vocabulary. The history of the Church shows that the balance in these two preoccupations is vital in her life.

The world is a power in opposition to God. Here the word "world" means people subject to the forces of man and devil, hostile to God and even to themselves. But, studying the world we are concerned about the heart of people and not other aspects of human life. As Christians we

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<sup>30</sup> Richard R. Caemmerer, The Church in the World (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1949), p. 8.

study the world in order to "discover what it is about the world that makes it so much the opposite of the Church and that makes it so much in need of rescue by the Church." Jesus defines the nature of the Gentiles saying that they are only concerned with food, drink, and, cloth (Matt. 6:31-32), contrasting with the Christian who seeks "first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). The impulse and direction of the Christian life is different. And for Caemmerer materialism is "flesh in action." The basic presumption of materialism is that man is happy in his heart only when he possesses things.

According to Caemmerer, the Industrial Revolution, the scientific discoveries, the methods of communication gave men many opportunities for education, enjoyment, comfort. This affected the value system of modern men. The materialism of our civilization expressed itself in economy, in politics, philosophy, and art, in family life, in working and, in all aspects of human life.

In this hostile context, God's men and women proclaim the message of the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of the world develops a hostility to Christ and to the Church by viewing the Gospel as foolishness. No doubt, the Gospel produces irritation and aversion from the world. But, Christians have to recognize the problem in order to make the impact upon the world. They have to know how the world sees the Church; they have to know why and how does the world resist to the church.

In his third chapter, Caemmerer talks about the resistance of the world to the Church, and he mentions that some people have an antagonism

for the Church because they see it as a parasitical, hypocritical or an outworn institution.

However, the world does not only exist outside the Church, as we have seen until now, but it also exists inside the Church. Materialism, ritualism, self-righteousness and lovelessness work inside the body of Christ.

Much of the Church has succumbed to the world. Much of the witness of the Church has been defaced by human ambition. Human and not divine techniques have been used.

In her strategy in the world, the church prepares the world for the Gospel. "The help which the Church wishes to bring the world is a help which is conveyed in a message, the kerygma. This message contains information about historical facts of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." However, the bearer of the kerygma must ready his hearers. He can do this witnessing and loving. The Christian love will respond to social and personal needs.

The Christian has resources that the man of the world does not have and he should come to make the following question: "What is it that you have that I need?" After that the Christian can bring the Gospel to this man, because he at least will listen. Now he can say or tell the story of Christ. And he has to do it in a way that men understand.

Christian witness always involves agape and kerygma, the love and the message.

The man in Christ will prove his life of love in his family, in his occupation, in his recreation, in his community. The agape of the

Christian is a conditioning factor for the kerygma. Jesus did miracles of healing, but "He did them so that men might come into the sphere of His message."

Dr. Caemmerer says that the Church is also encharged to provide love to people in special needs. After mentioning the Christian Charity Institutions, he says that "the prime test and the most potent witness of the love of the individual will be that which he himself brings, person to person."

An interesting aspect of Christian witness is focused by Caemmerer when he affirms that "the non-Christian intelligentsia remain one of the greatest challenges for the Christian Church." The Church, he thinks, has proved her decadence most unhappily to the thinking groups.

The love strategy helps the non-Christian to put his defenses and hostilities aside and recognize the resources for life which the Christian has.

The Christian individual -- his love, his message -- is the crucial factor in the attack on the Church upon the world. For the Church, in its attack, seeks not to herd the people of the world into concentration camps labeled "church," but to change the hearts of people, one by one. God Himself makes this change through the Word proclaimed by his children and servants.

The Christian individual gains from the church in his house and in his parish the life and power to love and to witness. And, again, Caemmerer stresses that it is the individual who makes the true impact of the Church upon the world. The parish or a church body does its impact in a secondary way. The Church is a resource for witness for the individual

as he lives his faith in his daily life. The public activities of a congregation are "but the means for creating the impulses and facilitating the techniques by which Christians in their daily living make this contact with the world and achieve this communication." The church is an agency which vitalizes the impact and witness of the Christian upon the world. But the Church also builds and protects its members against the world.

The fellowship of Christ, the Church, is a living and powerful organism, a grouping of people who mutually build up reserves and achieve protection against sin and flesh in the members of the Church, against the infiltration and deterioration of the world reaching into this flesh. Through his membership each individual is equipped to resist the world and the flesh.

The distinction between Church and world lies in the heart. The Church lives close to the world; that is why it is here, but she can never make peace with the secularism and atheism. The Church is in the world in order to be for the world. It accomplishes its purpose by being different from the world and by reaching out to the world in love and witness.

The church is a training ground for witness. Every member should take up the responsibility of edifying every other. The one-man ministry in a parish is a contradiction in terms.

The Church should be thought of as the filling station or the restaurant where people go to get fuel for the main task, and the main task is done not in the filling station or restaurant, but in the homes and factories, in the moments of daily living. The Church is in the

business of training people to become aware of this fact. Unfortunately it has made its services and support the end instead of the means.

The people of the Church need to be trained to handle this supernatural power, the Gospel, since, as already has been said, the front on which the actual collision of church and world takes place is always where the individual member of the Church is.

Hence the home becomes the first and basic unit to be trained and the unit for training. The Church needs to train its parents for their responsibility of being witnesses. Trained parents will be able to take up their responsibilities for equipping their families with Christ.

The training in the parish can never come to an end. People need to be trained and retrained again and again to lay aside preoccupations and apathy and to drink of the Word as the water of life.

A confused picture of what the Church is we can see in many denominations that isolate themselves from the world. The Scriptures, however, describe the men of God in the world, but not belonging to it. The Church is a living body in the world. The world, too, is not static. It is dynamic and active in seeking to win the Church away from the Kingdom of God.

The days of the Church in the world are numbered. It needs to do its task with dispatch. Yet the Church has no guarantee from its Lord that its task will become any easier.

As Church we must study and restudy our mission. The mission is to win the world and to preserve its own membership intact. The devices by which the Church invades the world are the two gifts of God to His

people; their love, agape, and their message, the kerygma, the story of the Redeemer.

### Messianism

The mark of the nineteenth century was the intellectual and moral optimism. Karl Marx, one of the great representatives of this time, in his eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, exclaimed: "the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point, however, is to change it."<sup>31</sup> Indeed, at bottom, a philosophy of optimism is an historic attitude toward the future. For Marxist philosopher Karl Kosik the meaning of history is to be found in history itself. In history, man explains himself, and this historical explanation is the only meaning of history.

History, however, showed too much in the last past years, and the nineteenth century optimism collapsed with World War I. World War II made it even more clear what this human progress was all about. "Diejenigen, die das Himmelreich auf Erden schaffen wollen, haben im allgemeinen nur die Hölle geschaffen," said once a German statesman. There are, however, in our days those who tend to be basically optimistic about man and human progress and recognize that the future is always radically open not only to man's creativity and imagination but also to his perversity and pride.

Cornelius van Perusen divides history as follows:

Period 1 - The period of myth -- "that something is!"

Period 2 - The ontological period - developing a rational understanding of the world -- "what something is!"

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<sup>31</sup>Martin Marty, The Modern Schism (New York: Harper & Row, 1969) p. 16.

Period 3 - The functional period - man's increasing confidence in his ability to understand and control the forces of life from below -- "how something is."<sup>32</sup>

Using philosophical categories, Van Peursen describes our days as a period in which man has confidence in his ability to make his own world. He has the "know-how" to do it.

But there are others who are not so optimistic about the future, just reminding us that we are the first generation that knows that it can be the last. Man lives in fear of man and of his own creation. Despair is their dominant mood. And they despair because they have lost some of the bold, naive confidence in the idols of science, money, power, and progress.

Is there a solid ground for a hope that man can through his own efforts solve all the remaining problems which stand between him and a secular paradise on earth? Could it be that instead of temples man would have all answers in his laboratories, factories, and libraries? Can he shape this world after the desire of his heart?

Scientific messianism represented by Saint Simon and August Comte and marxist messianism (Engels, Marx) were building a new humanity, a new and better human society.

Marx maintained that he "did not want to avert a head on clash with Christianity. Hitherto philosophers have made the mistake of treating the subject with soft gloves. A choice must be made. If the state

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<sup>32</sup> Cornelius van Peursen quoted by Colin Williams in Faith in a Secular Age (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1966), pp. 21-22.

is not to be theocratic, but constructed according to rational plan, then there must be no interference whatsoever from religion."<sup>33</sup>

Marxists have accused Christians as escapists who take refuge in some future realm of glory rather than enter the arena of struggle and conflict with evil by which human conditions can be improved.

Teilhard de Chardin and Harvey Cox are radically optimistic, remarks Martin C. D'Arcy, when they look at the future; but so differently do they regard it that the success of Cox's secular city would mean the end and destruction of all Teilhard stands for.

According to David Martin, Cox is an apostle of technocratic Messianism, influenced by Saint-Simon, Comte and the Ecole Polytechnique. One needs only to prod beneath the surface of Harvey Cox's *Secular City* to find the three Comtean stages of history: the theological, the metaphysical and the stage of positive science.

Christianity looks into the future. It is an eschatological religion, so, it makes binding pronouncements about what is to come both by explaining what will come and by looking on these future events. It also understands itself as the religion of the new and eternal man.

Christianity has no predictions to make, no program and no clear-cut prescriptions for the future of man in this world; it knows from the very start that man does not have them either and that he must (and hence also Christianity itself) therefore go "unprotected" into the dark venture of his intramundane future. The eschatology of Christianity is no intramundane utopia; it is, sadly perhaps, possible to show that the Christians

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<sup>33</sup>Quoted in Christian Hope and the Secular, Daniel F. Martensen, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969), p. 90.

of this day and age occupy themselves far too little with the programming of man's future in this world as if this did not present any problems or could safely be left to the non-Christians. Christians are not so involved with love in this planning of the future. Perhaps that is why Nietzsche described the Christianity of his days as "Platonism for the people."

One of the major differences between the non-Christian and the Christians is that the non-Christian operates with the presupposition that man's present condition is normal, when Christians consider it abnormal because of sin.

For Michael Taylor, "Christianity has already surpassed all ideologies about the future and all utopias by its teaching on the incarnation of the eternal Word of God and the universal salvation already ushered in by this event."<sup>34</sup> And how "pale and shallow everything becomes when those who believe in an intramundane future are asked to explain what this future they are striving for will really look like."

To the Christian Christ is life. The life of faith in the Son of God "is not a mere dream of pie in the sky by and by." Christians have peace that comes from forgiveness, love from God who is Love, security, and the assurance of the indwelling of the Lord of Life Himself and also the true hope of heaven. This is a real and realistic hope. Christianity is poles apart from any form of optimistic humanism, but it also differs from nihilism, for nihilism, though it is correctly realistic, nevertheless can give neither a proper diagnosis nor the proper treatment

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<sup>34</sup> Michael J. Taylor, S.J., The Sacred and the Secular (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 95.

for its own ills. Christianity has a diagnosis and then a solid foundation for an answer.

### The World

Since man is a creature who is intrinsically interpersonal and intersubjective, a culture-building creature, the world is chiefly constituted by his works and institutions. The world is a social world, a network of social interrelationships, within the church plays its role and lives its life.

This world of ours is becoming autonomous and gradually the worldly arenas have been shaken themselves loose from the guardianship of the church. The lords with their politics were the first to break away; then followed the common welfare and city life, scientific thought and morality, and finally the conscience of the people and their daily experience of pleasure and pain.

The Renaissance reaffirmed the significance of nature, and the ideals of humanism. It undoubtedly exercised, in the long run, potent secularizing influence because men's minds had become too largely overworldly and had lost sufficient interest in this world. We cannot forget, however, that this world has been correctly loved by Christians since the first century. Christians have understood and still understand that they have a serious responsibility for the world, but the way in which the Christian man is responsible for the world is basically different from that in which modern man assumes such responsibility. The difference, to put it as briefly as possible, is that the former is responsible to God the Creator, but the latter considers he is answerable to himself.

The Christian knows that "das Wort ward Fleisch" and that is "die Solidarität Christi mit der Welt."<sup>35</sup> Unlike John the Baptist with his asceticism of the desert, Jesus seemed as one who came eating and drinking . . . a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber (Matt. 11:19) according to some critic observers. Jesus accepted the world with his leisurely perception of flower, tree, bird, sheep, fox, sky, field, and lake.

Indeed, there can be an otherworldliness which belittles the duties of charity and reason in the supposed interests of religion and misses the divine meaning of nature. To enjoy this worldly life is good, but the Christian must be free from the dominance of these enjoyments.

The non-Christian fears the world or idolizes it. The Christian knows that this world is God's world. Not the world of a god, but that it was made by the Triune God through Christ (1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16; John 1; Heb. 1:2; Rom. 11:36). In this God "we live and move and exist" (Acts 17:28), and this includes the non-believer also. "Gottes Wirken steht nicht unter kirchlicher Regie," affirms Gottfried Voigt.

Martin Marty understands that in our time much Christian anti-humanism comes from forms of "Second Coming" theology, millennisms that urge the worthlessness of the world because it will end. They give up on the world, says Marty, before God does, and act as if Jesus did not mean it when he sent people into that world.

Some theologians have remarked that the 'center of the gospel,' God's eschatological saving act in the cross and resurrection of Jesus is not an event inside the church, but rather takes place in the midst of

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<sup>35</sup> Gottfried Voigt, "Kirche und Welt," Lutherische Monatshefte, 6 (November 1967):541.

the world. Likewise it is not the church but rather all humanity, the world, which is the goal of the gospel. The goal of the gospel is the world because what constitutes the center of the gospel is a saving act of God in the world, with the world, and for the world.

The fact that the world must be understood as the goal of the gospel has direct consequence for the understanding of the church. The church must first and foremost serve the world and must not be primarily concerned about its self-preservation.

Fundamental shifts are happening in our world. As church we have to be aware of that in order to ask modern man the right question, and so help him to meet the answer for his life. The Christian Church is the only one who can offer help to man in his life and identity crisis.

As the non-Christian needs to be converted to God, every Christian must undergo a second conversion to the world, said the German theologian, Hendrik Kraemer.

One of the discussion points of this problem is which of these thought schemes is correct; God-Church-World or God-World-Church? Many things depend on this answer. In the way we understand it, the first scheme is the correct one.

#### The Christian Church

Somebody said that the Church is the only institution that exists for those who do not belong to her. The kingdom of God is not of this world, but nothing is more needed in this world than a faithful living Christian church living out its faith.

Our world does not need the kind of Christendom Søren Kierkegaard is talking about when he says that "all that was needed to remain a

Christian was a little water at baptism, a little rice at marriage and a little earth at death."<sup>36</sup>

David Schuller rejects the concept of church given by a German missionary from South Africa, who speaking to the Zulus about the church, used the illustration of their kraal, the thorny hedge enclosure used to fence in their cattle. He pictured the kraal as providing protection. One day a calf smelled the fresh grass on the outside and, not knowing about outside dangers, pushed through the protective thicket and got out. Eventually the entire herd followed. As they scattered they fell prey to wild animals one by one. "The protected place within the kraal is the Church, the Christian congregation. Remain there!" pleaded the missionary. "Don't be tempted by the green grass on the outside. If you stay within the closely knit circle of the congregation, you will be safe in God's keeping."

For Schuller many preachers have urged their people to remain within the kraal. Perhaps even more say this to congregations through the non-verbal language of church progress. We have made the fenced-in area the center of our concern, and most clerical and lay efforts are expended in maintaining the fence.

He understands the church as a pilgrim band, as the dispersed church, as the church apostolically sent to the world. In the Epistle to Diognetus we find a classic statement of this view that Christians are not distinguished by their withdrawal from society: "For Christians are distinguished from the rest of mankind neither by country nor by

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<sup>36</sup> Colin Wilber Williams, Faith in Secular Society (London: C. A. Watts & Co., 1966), p. 115.

language nor by customs. For nowhere do they dwell in cities of their own; they do not use some different language nor practice an extraordinary kind of life. They live in cities with other men and follow local customs in the usual arrangements of life."

Analysing the many different concepts of church, Schuller suggests asking a group to draw a mental image of the word "church." For the vast majority, affirms Schuller, the image includes a cathedral-like building. If the picture includes any human beings, there will be a clergyman, probably vested and performing a liturgical act. The falseness of the image to which we profess theologically is obvious. Here we are picturing what amounts to less than one percent of the total church, separated by a special building from any mission to the world, carrying out particular acts of worship which comprise one percent of the hours of any week.

The pietistic traditional view of the church which sees the implications of the faith only within the sphere of the person and family is dualistic, separating life into two spheres, the sacred and the secular.

In contrast to the kraal mentality, Schuller understands that we have to seek to learn what it means to live as a Christian in the world. The past emphasized the escape of the Christian from the wickedness of the world into the sanctity of the church. Today we seek to emphasize his conscious mission in the world. The past stressed separation; we face the necessary involvement. The past "played it safe;" we feel compelled to act, even when the situation is ambiguous. The past sought peace and the quick reconciliation of differences; we understand the dynamics of conflict and recognize it as an alternative to action where

consensus is impossible. The past feared power and shied away from politics; we see the political arena as a sphere where decisions are made and therefore of great significance to the Christian. Here, however, the Christian Church has to be very careful to keep her identity and be what she really is.

The church is the ekklesia, those whom God is calling out of the world through faith in Jesus Christ. It is the community of those who are simul justii et peccatores, a community of sinners who daily receive the forgiving Word. This community is her true self only when she exists for humanity, with the task of bringing men and women from darkness and the shadow of death into the glorious liberty of the children of God. "The Christian attitude toward the contemporary world," says E. L. Maeal, "must be one neither of hostility nor of acquiescence but of discrimination and understanding."<sup>37</sup>

Johannes B. Metz in his Theology of the World maintains that

"our world has become secular, and it appears that the process is by no means over yet. In his understanding this universal secularity challenges faith to say what its attitude to it is. Faith can try, of course, to ignore the acuteness of the situation and simply hammer away behind locked doors at its customary practices in theology and piety, as though there had been no day of Pentecost and therefore no need to understand and answer for the ever changing times. A faith that is so unhistorical is not likely to feel itself threatened."<sup>38</sup>

According to Arthur Michael Ramsey, Christianity has always presented the paradox of a concern for this world, and a will to renounce it

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<sup>37</sup> Quoted in The Great Ideas Today, Robert M. Hutchins and Mortimer J. Adler, eds., (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1967), p. 33.

<sup>38</sup> Johannes Baptist Metz, Theology of the World, trans. by Willian Glen-Doepel (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 13.

for the sake of something beyond. He calls these the 'this-worldly' and the 'other worldly' aspects of the Christian faith.

For Schuller, it is important to remember that God loves the world, not only the church. The church exists in the world as that community which testifies to the presence of God in our age. In faithfulness to this task the church struggles for forms by which it can raise this witness.

Colin Williams divides the history of the Christian Church in the following periods:

1. primitive church - flexible form. For three centuries the homes of its few affluent members were the only buildings "house-churches."
2. time of Constantine - the first big change in the structure of the church. The state decided to adopt the church and give it the task of christianizing the whole of the culture.
3. the rise of the feudal period - The rise of feudalism brought about the development of the settled village system. Men were pinned down to the soil and ordered into villages. The parish system developed. Because the whole of life now centered in the village, the church which was erected at the heart of each community became the centre from which Christian 'control' radiated out to all parts of life.

During this third period the church ran education, health institutions, markets, and established the values by which life was controlled. Because the whole life centered on residence, the resident congregation now became the basic institution of the church's life. And so it has been for many years. For the last hundred and fifty years -- slowly at first, but now fast -- the world has been going through another revolution. This revolution is the rise of urban-technological society. The static

life based on residence is giving way to a highly mobile world in which residence is separated from more and more areas of life - business, commerce, higher education, the world of health, leisure, mass communications. The church has to adjust to this new situation, in order to be a salvific, seed in the midst of human society, although being a minority group.

The church cannot conform herself to the standards of this world, but she exists in the world and for the world. She, the community of believers in Christ can not try to find an extraterritorial oasis where they could set up for themselves their own culture, their own history, their own language. On the contrary, the Christians are to be found immersed in and dispersed among the people and society. Christians are not to create their own world but insert themselves into the world in their kerygmatic, koinoniac, and diaconic functions.

In his book False Presence of the Kingdom, Jacques Ellul affirms that Christians in our day have become aware of a great truth; that the Church cannot live turned in upon herself and for herself. She is only the church when she is set into the world on behalf of mankind. "The entire Bible," says Ellul, "tells us that Christians are called to be involved in the world, and that means that we have to give testimony about a justification which washes away sin but which never makes it legitimate."<sup>39</sup> As Church we exist for people, and people exist in the world.

Joost de Blank made a significant remark about the Church's mission saying that her mission is not to gather a segregated community

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<sup>39</sup> Jacques Ellul, False Presence of the Kingdom (New York: The Seabury Press, 1963), p. 1.

which seeks to cultivate its own garden while leaving the rest of the world unsown, by the Word of God.

The question of the Church always involves the question of the world. If it is true that the world needs the church, it is also true that the church needs the world to fulfill its task. A church that does not listen to the world will soon discover that the world is not listening to her either.

The greatest part of the Christian life is lived out in the world. The true Christian raises signs to God in the neighborhood, in work, and in leisure. The role of genuine servant is so rare that when the world sees it in an authentic form, it creates a situation for witness by raising the question of the source of goal and motivation. Discipleship precedes apostleship. Disciples are glimpsed as the salt and light of the world, as leaven in the lump.

The Church has to be among men, and the best way she is described is as the salt of the earth. The food we eat is improved by salt. The salt is lost in that food. It is never restored to its original condition. It becomes part of other substances. It is scattered and dispersed beyond recognition. And yet it is essential. The Church will go its way unknown, a stranger.

The Church is Christ's mission to the whole man. Man must be viewed in his totality because God is concerned with all of man. God created and loves his body as much as his mind or soul.

Clergy and Laity

Clergyman have become the central figure in church's activities. Virtually everything that happened in the congregation involved and still involves him. He is responsible. If the church becomes successful, he is known as a skilled organizer, builder, or preacher. The interest of the congregation reflects the pastor's personal predilections. "This congregational pattern has made the church dependent on the minister in this last century and a half," says David Schuller, "to a degree previously unknown in the history of the church."

According to Schuler,

"Dependence was certainly not the pattern in the three hundred years of church history before Constantine. Our dependence on a professional clergy would have been incomprehensible to them. During the Middle Ages the layman was relegated to a second-class position. During the Reformation time the father of the family was to assume the immediate spiritual care of his family. The pastor was not to assume the role of the former cleric. To the ordained was given the special ministry of the Word and Sacrament. To the laity was given the ministry of carrying out the task of witness and service in each calling of life where God had placed them."<sup>40</sup>

To reestablish a working pattern of church life in which all of God's people are chosen to work in the Kingdom and that His Spirit endows all of them with gifts is of the major goals for the church today.

The function of the clergy is to nourish, equip and sustain the laity in their ministries in the world. Part of the layman's task will be carried out within the setting of the congregation, but not forgetting that the congregation is not an end in itself. Unfortunately most of the energies of congregations are directed toward kraal keeping.

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<sup>40</sup> Schuler, p. 40.

Unfortunately most people who join a church fail to appreciate the corporate nature of the church. They see themselves basically as "consumers" of religion, of which the clergyman is the chief purveyor.

Living in the world, Christians are called to serve and not to rule. The Son of God was the Servant of God. The church's business is to serve the world with the gifts that God gave her to share with people.

The church on mission in the world can be compared to an army. The believers are trained men and women who are sent with a mission into an enemy territory. In order to do their job these soldiers need training, and so they are gathered and assembled at certain times and equipped for their task. But the task is performed as they finally land in enemy territory.

#### Forms of Church Life

Forms of Church life is one of the major questions faced by Western Christendom within the last decade. Elton Trueblood remarked that "it is hard to exaggerate the degree to which the modern church seems irrelevant to modern man."<sup>41</sup> Is the Church really failing in communicating the gospel within the world to the world? Philip Hefner affirms that "communication and reformation go hand in hand. Only when we understand ecclesia semper reformanda can we embark fruitfully upon the task of communicating the gospel to the world."<sup>42</sup> Schuller understands that "pastor's language, his thought structures, and the quality of his

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<sup>41</sup>Quoted in Schuller, p. 55.

<sup>42</sup>Philip Hefner, "Ecological Perspectives on Communicating the Gospel to the World," Lutheran World, 16 (1968):330.

theology often showed little genuine understanding of the lives of those worshiping with him."<sup>43</sup>

Daniel Martensen thinks that "one of the reasons so many intelligent people find worship uninteresting is that in many churches the sermons and hymns and prayers are almost exactly as they were a century ago, while enormous human problems loom up which were unforeseen a century ago."<sup>44</sup>

The secularization process, according to Max Thurian, forces the Church to renew its language so that she can communicate the eternal and immutable Word of God today and tomorrow in a relevant way.

The Church must never lose her identity in her service to the world, but she is free to look for new forms of serving people in this new world of the twentieth century. And so, special ministries have been developed in some places where the church has unique opportunities to help people with God's message and love.

But again, in fashioning new shapes the church must make sure that it remains church with the message of justification close to its heart and the Gospel as its motivation. This is the more crucial problem, and the major question.

In Jacques Ellul's understanding, being present to the world cannot imply that this should happen at the risk of losing oneself. We cannot risk all of our joining with the world. An involvement in the world at the risk of losing oneself means not only that one is lost, but that neither the world nor the people in it have gained anything in the process.

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<sup>43</sup>Schuller, p. 43.

<sup>44</sup>Christian Hope and the Secular, p. 101.

To accept perdition for oneself in advance with a view to saving the world involves a combination of theological and spiritual errors. It is once again to put oneself in the place of God in Jesus Christ. Only God could love the world which is the enemy of God. To submit to losing the salvation obtained in Jesus is to scorn the entire work of Jesus Christ.

In the Church's long history, reminds Mascall, there have always been demands for change in the formulation and practice of Christianity, and the task of the Church has been to maintain the essential content of the faith while standing ready to change anything which is only a question of form.

Mascall sees the contemporary movement towards the secularization of Christianity as the capitulation to the cultural demands of the movement. Rather than reinterpretations of the Gospel, he sees them as reductionist attempts to make the faith palatable by eliminating all supernatural and cognitive content. They reduce, he says, "the traditional faith to an existential style of life where God is not necessary and where the miraculous aspects of the Scripture express only psychological dimensions."

Emil Brunner admits that in the past the Christian message has been mixed up with obsolete metaphysics, cosmology and chronology. This moved quite a few to lose their trust in the Church, but now, he says, the Church is in danger of adopting the "Zeitgeist" and being involved by it.

The church with an awareness of "costly grace" works with a sense of integrity. It makes clear that it is calling people to a life of

discipleship. It does not enlist people with false appeals to their sense of comfort or their desire for happiness. Aware of the "costly grace" the church moves out into the structures of the world to serve and to transform, but it does so with an awareness of its unique contribution. Christians are sent by Jesus Christ, with a different motivation, different goal and different resource. They are concerned with bringing Christ's redemptive love to bear on all secular activities on every phase of human life. In doing this, however, they seek to sanctify the secular, not to sacralize it.

#### Vast Cultural Changes

The vast changes in our culture have greatly affected the world of work. For many today the sole purpose of work lies in the consumption which their wages make possible. The goal becomes, remarks Schuller, one of getting as much money as possible for as few hours as possible spent in the least boring and tiring way possible. That is why the world of leisure becomes a challenge to the church.

For many leisure has become a desperate escape from work which they find relatively meaningless.

Sebastian de Grazia reminds the modern reader of the ancient's view of leisure - in Aristotle's words, the state of "freedom from the necessity of labor," in his book Of Time, Work and Leisure.

David Schuller summarizes the problem in the following words:

For the ancient world leisure was primary; work was that which took one way. Post-Reformation thinking recovered the values inherent in work. But in recovering the meaning of work the values of leisure were slighted. Perhaps a false puritanism causes moderns still to feel a bit guilty when they are not at work. Primarily the confusion

for most Americans is to equate "free time" -- time not spent in gaining the necessities of life -- with leisure. Free time opens the opportunity for leisure; it does not automatically produce it. The church is crucially placed to deal with this challenge: it affects people; it deals with the question of values; the church has been involved in creating the present set of values and attitudes; the church already is dealing with people during their free time; the church has the unique opportunity of linking people with free time to situations for intellectual growth and genuine service.<sup>45</sup>

Professor Arnold Toynbee has speculated that the American zest for religion will be one of the few possible solutions to the materially rich world's coming problem of profound boredom. The church, understands Toynbee, offers chance for a constructive activity.

For Toynbee, in this age of mechanization, atomic power, affluence and leisure, religion will surely come into its own as the one boundless field for freedom and for creativity that is open to the unlimited aspirations of human nature.<sup>46</sup>

Because of mechanization man is having more and more leisure time which can be used and also misused. In our days as in the past, demonic forces are active in many different ways inviting man to misuse his free time. These erosive forces are active especially through the modern mass media in which man is stimulated to enjoy, to have pleasure, and to consume. Besides that, the over-communication is hindering the modern Christian to have his meditation and prayer time.

It seems that we can reject the pietistic idea that Christian life has to be always difficult and painful to really be Christian. "There is fun in holiness," says Clark Pinnock. Though it is true that following Christ in this world the way it is will involve tension and pain, it is

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<sup>45</sup>Schuller, p. 49.

<sup>46</sup>Quoted by David Lawrence in Religion and Change (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) p. 157.

also true that following him guarantees us infinite joy and fullness of life. Jesus himself said, "I have come in order that you might have life, life in all its fullness" (John 10:10). The Christian way is not hedonism in the ordinary sense, but it involves enjoying God and his gifts, pleasure deeper than all others (Ps. 37:4-5).

The true Church of Jesus Christ will endure until the end. Institutionalized religion may decline, absolutes may be in crisis, but we have God's promise that the true Church will endure to the end.

Wilhelm Pol understands that the process of secularization is taking place all over the world and in all world religions. It takes place in the hidden, unconscious life of man. "The Christian Church," writes H. Chaigne, "recognizes that a substantial autonomy must be granted to the sphere of human affairs."<sup>47</sup> Secularization understood as "the substitution of a totality within the limits of worldly life for the Christian totality and the construction of a purely human spirituality is rejected by the Church.

The voice of the Church seems to be more and more rejected as that a foreign intruder. She is losing her influence after she lost the control of many areas of cultural life. The number of those who look upon the world and their lives without the benefit of religious interpretation is growing. Especially science gave men a secular perspective of his world.

But equally crucial is the fact that the religious institution of necessity finds itself involved in "secular" activities: it becomes

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<sup>47</sup>H. Chaigne, "History and the Cross: Towards a Secularized Theology," Cross Currents, 21 (September 1971):213.

bureaucratically organized; it becomes a part of the larger economic system of the society; it engages in internal and external political activity. In a sense, religion becomes contaminated.

Peter Berger sees a progressive bureaucratization of the religious institutions going on. He affirms,

"Religious institutions are compelled to seek 'results' by methods that are, of necessity, very similar to those employed by other bureaucratic structures with similar problems. The social-psychological type emerging in the leadership of bureaucratized religious institutions is pragmatically oriented, skilled in interpersonal relations."<sup>48</sup>

Some religious institutions, says Michael Taylor, which exist to love the neighbor, have come to the point that they plan every act of love in such detail that they leave no room for the real neighbor, who by definition transcends all calculations and provisions.<sup>49</sup>

For Schuller, like other organizations, churches appear to be primarily interested in institutional success - number of members, image in the community, size and quality of plant, and increase in budget.

In the past the Church held two swords in its hands: one spiritual, the other temporal. It wielded the spiritual sword in the sacerdotium; it lent the temporal sword to the imperium, on the stipulation that it be used in the interest of the Church. Secularization caused the separation between the state and the Church. The state no longer serves as an enforcement agency on behalf of the previously dominant religious institution. There is religious toleration and liberty. The state role is now of an impartial guardian of order between independent

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<sup>48</sup>Berger, p. 292-305.

<sup>49</sup>Taylor, p. 198.

and uncoerced competitors. The churches are "on their own" and there is a religious 'free enterprise.'

Secularization, according to Berger, has affected different groups differently. It has been found that its impact has tended to be stronger on men than on women, on people in the cities than in the country, on classes directly connected with modern industrial production than on those of more traditional occupations. These secularizing forces have also now become worldwide in the course of westernization and modernization.

#### The Demonic Elements

Any facet of life may rise up in the secularized society and claim sacred prerogatives for itself; science and technology have this tendency. We must insist that the secular remain secular. A secular society can lose its secularity, remarks Daniel Martensen, when social and political institutions begin to be sacred.

In this secular context man is tempted to worship money or power or sexual or intellectual prowess, and this also becomes a 'religion' with a god who calls for whole-hearted sacrifice and allegiance.

Joost de Blank in his book The Return of the Sacred analyzes the growth of superstition and concludes saying that we shall be making a great mistake if we think that the world as a whole is becoming increasingly secular, if by secular we mean exclusively what man can understand and control for himself. Very few irreligious people in his opinion do not have a superstitious quirk of some kind. The sense of the sacred cannot easily be expelled. Man is by nature a worshipping animal.

The powers of evil work within the hearts of men, more than in the created, external world, and they can be driven out only by the righteousness of God which is received by faith.

Wherever the message of the Church is given it encounters people who are "in bondage under the elements of the world" (Gal. 4:3). These people are set free not by being removed from the world, but by being in a true relationship with the Creator, and therefore being able to look to the world without fear of the elements of the world.

#### The Church in the City

The whole world is today moving with fantastic speed into a global urban culture. Beyond metropolis and megalopolis there looms what not churchmen but city planners are already calling "ecumenopolis" - the whole world become one vast independent city.

The Church of Jesus Christ must learn to encounter, cope with, and proclaim the Gospel to urban man. In order to do that, we must first of all have a basic understanding of the urban phenomenon.

Harvey Cox, using sociological categories in his study, maintains that mankind passed through three distinctive periods. The first period was the period of the tribe (myth); the second of the town (rational world of the ontological age), and the period of the city or technopolis.

In the third period man reached a form of society in which the basis on which he is brought together is functional rather than traditional. In principle the modern city is an open community which disregards tribal, or racial, or class or caste boundaries, and allows people to associate freely and openly on the basis of the functions they perform.

The city, asserts Martin Marty, has become the great magnet for men, for all kinds of men, in the modern world. Modern urban life attracts the people who have no alternatives and those who want to make a living with better opportunities and more education. Marty affirms that there is a dual nature in this urban magnet: it is the home of the beast but on the otherhand it attracts the "infant."

Bernard Murchland in his critique of Cox's position in relation to the city, says that Cox's analysis is accurate but it is too glib, too uncritical. Cox is accused of overlooking the alienating effects of the secular city, its great power to victimize.

Placide Gaboury describes some aspects of the life of the city in these characteristics:

1. It is continually mobile, demanding a high capacity of adaptation.
2. City life is neutral, impersonal, competitive, anonymous, inviting and even presupposing tolerance.
3. The city offers a great variety of choices and lets these rest on each person's shoulders; it is not the family that gives value to the individual as in a rural milieu, but his personal worth, his effectiveness, training, even his looks.
4. Everything is submitted to the law and reason of man; the clock, not the nature cycles, organizes everything -- which tends to be efficient, productive, and coordinated.
5. There is a greater freedom in the city, but also a greater number of laws, controls, and obligations; the discipline is all-pervading.
6. The groups are secondary, not primary. There is more impersonal, functional relationship.
7. The impersonality of most relationships permits a free choice of more personal friendships.
8. There is a greater amount of leisure, which is a direct product of the efficient organization.
9. A greater number of specialities are found in the urban community. Religious problems are no longer at the center. He is not against religion, he is simply non-religious. He is content with the multiplicity that he encounters, not being anxious to unify or reduce everything to one whole. He does not oversimplify, placing everything in an either-or relation. He is relativistic and skeptical of all too-beautiful ideals or solutions. He can be secular and religious at the same time, in the sense that he is

a believer, but not necessarily a demonstrative one or one who "acts like a believer should" all the time: he is not a pious person -- but he is thoughtful of others (other-directed) and helpful to them.<sup>50</sup>

For Paul Löffler industrialization and urbanization have both combined to desintegrate community based on primary, face-to-face relationships. Specialization of work and scientific organization of society lead to a pluralistic complexity in which each man lives in many divided worlds. In the past people received their notions about the real world from people who were directly around them. Parents, pastors, and teachers, the friendly couple who ran the general store, suggested what community life, religion, education and commerce was about. That was a world where people knew each other in face-to-face relations.

But frequently the pious have been equated with the rural. We cannot forget that the environment is neutral: it can be a creative, beneficial setting, or it can be the means of releasing destructive influences.

The life of the city is quite different from the rural life, but that does not mean that rural Christian life is better than urban Christian life. It is true that in the city people may have little personal relationship with other persons and interact segmentally in prescribed roles, but that does not mean that the rural life is better in all senses or even more Christian.

What is important, however, is that the Church has a work to do with this lonely man living in the city, and she must recognize that this

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<sup>50</sup> Placide Gaboury, S.J., "The Secular Religious and Pluralism," Review for Religious, 28 (July 1969):604.

is a mission in a new environment. The fact that the world is becoming a city has imposed to the Church a consciousness of a variety in her mission.

The global urban culture has put some challenges for the Church. The city is not only open "sociologically," it is also, in principle, open ideologically with man's thinking and understanding of life rising from within his experience of the world.

This new life style delivers man an increasing self-responsibility. The relativization of values, the desacralization of life by the removal of the authority of those who were assumed to be the arbiters of the pre-established system of values put man on his own.

The Dutch theologian J. C. Hoekendijk has said that "when the first stone of the modern industrial cities was laid, the Church was absent from the ceremony."<sup>51</sup> The bewildering city is the environment for Christian mission today and for tomorrow, and we have to be there.

Marty states that "Babylon" has always meant complexity and confusion, rebellion and waywardness, faithfulness and finitude, wealth and the misuse of wealth. But the Christian is to carry on a sort of lover's quarrel with the earthly city. Therefore he moves in Babylon "by choice." He is born in it and it remains his home. He has a mission in it and to it. Babylon, says historian Wolf Schneider, was the dominant center of science, craftsmanship, and technical skills, a banking and trading center, a cosmopolitan city, "the birth place" of justice. Babylon has fallen

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<sup>51</sup>Quoted in The Great Ideas Today, p. 62.

and it will fall, says the prophet, but while it stands the Christian goes there because he must and because he wants to go to do his mission.

The new environment for the Christian mission is urban. The Christian message will ordinarily be presented to people who live in the city or in a culture that is shaped by the city because we live in an essentially urban world with cities playing the major cultural role.

#### The Moral in the City

Somebody correctly affirms that secularization is a dangerous liberation process. And, as already seen, secularization is closely related to industrialization and urbanization.

In fact the city life liberates some energies in a dangerous way. The city produces forms of entertainment where people in anonymity can deviate from norms of behavior that they would otherwise be expected to follow. It provides convenient darkness and welcomes crowds for skull-duggery. It removes the social pressure and discipline that are created in towns where everyone knows everyone else or where people still do run into each other by chance.

The concept of pre-established morality however, has come under attack today from many sides, especially from existentialist humanism. "Man makes himself," says Sartre; "he is not something already made; he makes himself by choosing his morality and pressure of circumstances is such that he has no choice but to choose one."

According to modern "situation ethics" moral norms change in place and time, and in persons. There is no code or standard, neither a firm basis for any judgment. There are no absolutes. The right and wrong is

a function of the circumstances. "The most loving thing is always the right thing to do," say adherents of this new morality.

This new morality is clearly opposed to the absolute Christian moral values. In this morality the crowd becomes the moral arbiter.

Analyzing the weakness of the old morality, David Schuller says that each law becomes obsolete the moment it is effected because a new circumstance has risen not yet covered in the code. Furthermore, he adds, it becomes easy to keep the letter of the law while doing violence to its spirit. The new morality, concludes Schuller, has risen precisely because of these weakness.

The general scientific and academic spirit today is to question everything. Schuller understands that anthropology contributed to this questioning of the old morality as it demonstrated the relativity of moral codes across the world. Moral, according to some anthropologists, is a geographical problem.

Educationally the philosophy of John Dewey, which emphasized self-determination and self-expression, questioned the judgment of transmitting the content of set moral codes to children. Because of these factors a new moral climate began to develop which approached precisely from the opposite side of the old morality.

New knowledge and changed social or technological conditions affected and changed the moral context. The new morality disclaimed absolute authority and proceeds empirically.

Schuller describes the old morality as unchanging, authoritative, and stressing the law. Unchanging because the old morality was viewed as an eternally unchanging code. Laws that regulated sex, divorce, or

conduct of war were seen as divinely given. Indeed each generation had to make application of the law to its age, but the content was given. "Right" and "wrong" were clearly defined categories which did not change with circumstances. The church was seen as the chief moral agent of society, whose task it was to teach the moral code based on God's divine laws and to guide children and adults into internalizing the code.

The old morality was, as said, authoritative. Minimally it had the support and sanction of the culture; maximally it possessed the authority of God himself. The emphasis was on content: specific principles had been articulated which held sway in every culture. Morality proceeds from a clear set of absolute standards that serve as the touchstone for all time.

The old morality also stressed law. It proceeded from a highly realistic view of human sin. Tolerating no sentimentality about human perfectability, it was concerned with erecting a dike around human existence which kept under careful control the animal and demonic forces within man. Morality needed the power of law to regulate human behavior. Even the Christian who saw himself as part of God's new creation recognized that he, too, lived under law.

No doubt, the old morality provided a sure anchor. Regardless of change, it provided a fixed point of reference.

Acts were seen in this perspective to have social consequences; the individual was responsible to the group. Since its principles were absolute, it avoided the pitfall of relativism. The old morality withstood the onslaughts of hedonism and the tendency of persons to make the pursuit of their own happiness of chief goal in life.

Schuller concludes his analysis of morality saying that it needs both its unchanging quality and its freedom to respond to changed circumstances; it needs authority but must be conscious of the world to which it is addressed; it needs the dikes of law to restrain sin but its motivation moves beyond into the area of responsible love.

### Christian Apologetics

Eduardo Paysse Gonzales made the following observations about Christianity in Latin America: "Thus Christianity is mixed with the conservation of the established order and the religious spirit of the people with the consecration of a specific political line which has nothing to do with the expression of an authentic Christian faith. In that frivolous oratory of governments and politicians, everything gets confused: Christianity with capitalism; Christianity with conservatism; Christianity with the 'defense of freedom' Christianity with 'defense of order;' Christianity with liberalism; Christianity with anti-communism . . ."<sup>52</sup> Now, who, besides Christians have the responsibility to say what true Christianity is all about? Who is going to react to this misinterpretation and give a clear exposition of the truth about the Gospel? Who is going to tell the world what the true church really is?

The world in which we live demands Christian apologetics. The question of truth and knowledge is very important. "Truth and relevance are not mutually exclusive. Nothing is more relevant to human need than truth spoken in love. "If Christian faith is so important to us, we have to know what we believe in order to proclaim it to those who do not. So,

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<sup>52</sup>Quoted by Leopoldo J. Nilus, "The Role of the Church in Latin American Society," Lutheran World 15 (1968): 288.

apologetics is primarily directed toward the non-believer community, not forgetting, however, that the moment of truth is always a moment of acceptance, never a moment of mastery. There has to be an attitude of humility before the evidence of revelation.

But what is truth? "Just as everyone knows what a liar is," said Mortimer J. Adler, "but not as readily whether someone is telling a lie, so the philosophers seem able to agree on what truth is, but not as readily on what is true."<sup>53</sup> "Truth," says Samuel M. Thompson, "is the realization in being of what ought to be."<sup>54</sup>

In these days of doubt, confusion and relativism, there is a need for an organized and structured way of defending Christianity's truth claims. Christians have the responsibility to identify misinterpretations of the Christian truth and give a clear exposition of that divine truth.

Therefore, Christians apologetics aim to take away the obstacles that are in the way of faith in our days. It is not a fighting per se in a given culture, because Christians finally know that it is the Holy Spirit who converts people and not our good arguments in apologetics.

For Bernard Ramm Christian apologetics is "the strategy of setting forth the truthfulness of the Christian faith and its right to the claim of the knowledge of God." Gordon R. Lewis defines apologetics as "the science and art of defending Christianity's basic truth-claims," In Lewis' understanding apologetics examines Christianity's most basic pre-suppositions. Apologetic argument, affirms Lewis, may not create belief,

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<sup>53</sup> Quoted by Gordon R. Lewis, Testing Christianity's Truth Claims (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), p. 19.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

but creates the atmosphere in which belief can come to life. So, in apologetics we come to know the "inadequacies" of the other side. We have to shake their confidence in their thinking so that they listen more.

To defend is to act, speak, or write in favor of something. Both the verb (apologesthai) and the noun (apologia) occur in the New Testament. Apologetical activity is also described in the New Testament.

The apologetical activity of Christ may be seen in Matthew 22 where our Lord made reply (apologia) and gave a most judicious answer.

The apostle Paul's apologetical activity may be observed in the closing chapter of the book of Acts. But Paul many times had to make the defense of his gospel and his apostleship. He never abandoned philosophical reasoning. In 1 Corinthians, he opposes naturalistic philosophies. In Athens he uses his philosophical background to speak in the Aeropagus. Col. 2:8 exemplifies apologetics per excellence.

Peter wrote: But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). Here the apostle is speaking of an informal defense, a little bit different from a formal defense as registered in 2 Tim. 4:16. Anyone who aspires to Christian service must be a defender of the Christian faith, or he fails to meet a fundamental scriptural condition for the ministry (Titus 1:9; Acts 17:2; 1 Cor. 9:21-22).

The apologetic activity of Christ and his apostles was continued in the early church. It too was subject to a variety of accusations, and to these accusations its great leaders gave their defense (apologia). In fact the earliest theologians of the church were called apologists and

the greatest treatise of the pre-Augustinian era was Origen's famous work, Against Celsus.

It gradually became evident, however, that any defense of the faith must be built upon the positive affirmation of the faith.

Biblical teaching does not oppose the use of apologetic, it commands it (1 Peter 3:15). There is a clear exhortation to give an account or reason (logon) in defense of one's faith. That reasoned defense, Lewis reminds us, is not to be motivated by self-glory, but a heart committed to Christ's glory. We have to be aware that apologetic can be an intellectual game, which feeds egoism.

Apologetic reasoning is not minimized in Scripture; it is vividly exemplified by prophets and apostles. That does not mean that our faith does need reason, but that in dialogue we need to reason our faith as we witness.

Apology differs in each generation, so it is fundamental for the apologist to be in contact with reality to know the thoughts of each generation. This is especially true to those who witness the Gospel in a special ministry in the Church as the pastor.

For Francis Schaeffer Christian apologetics

"is not like living in a castle with the drawbridge up and occasionally tossing a stone over the walls. It is not to be based on a citadel mentality -- sitting inside and saying, 'You cannot reach me here.' If the Christian adopts this attitude either in theory or in practice, his contacts with those who have accepted twentieth-century thought will stop. Apologetics should not be merely an academic subject, a new kind of scholasticism. It should be thought out and practiced in the rough and tumble of living contact with the present generation."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, The God Who is There (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1968), p.140.

Undoubtedly, the Christian Church must be in constant contact with reality, with the reality of the questions being asked by her own generation.

The anti-apologists sustain that the Bible needs no defense. "The Bible, like a lion, is quite capable of defending itself. Just lose it and let it go," some say. The king of the jungle may need no defense in his proper habitat, but it would stand little chance on a busy superhighway or in the face of modern weapons.

If the Bible expresses God's eternal truth, of course that needs no support from men. The question has to do with the image of the Bible in the minds of young people who for twelve to sixteen years of public school education have heard the Bible's authority questioned and its teaching challenged.

A Christianity which can be joyfully propagated without defense, J. Gresham Machen noted, must be so diluted as to be completely in accord with the age. True Christianity, on the other hand, "now, as always, is radically contrary to the natural man, and it cannot possibly be maintained without a constant struggle."

Certainly a Christianity that avoids argument is not the Christianity of the New Testament. But you cannot reason anyone into the kingdom of heaven. No apologist purports to do that. Because reasoning is insufficient, however, it is not therefore unnecessary.

Those who oppose the Christian faith, Pascal argues, should first learn what they oppose. Often people reject childish notions of Christianity rather than Christianity itself.

So, there are two purposes of Christian apologetics. The first is defense, and the second is to communicate the authentic message of God in a way that any given generation can understand.

Defense is proper and necessary, remarks Schaeffer, because in every age historic Christianity will be under attack, Defense does not mean being on the defensive. Here defense is used in a positive sense, because, in any conversation, in any communication which is really dialogue, answers must be given to objections raised.

According to Schaeffer we must prepare Christian young people to face the monolithic twentieth-century cultures by teaching them what the particular attack in our generation is, in contrast to the attack of previous generations. So, the positive side of apologetics is the communication of the Gospel to the present generation in terms that they can understand. To understand and speak to sincere but utterly confused twentieth-century people is costly. It is tiring; it will open us to temptations and pressures. Genuine love, in the last analysis, means a willingness to be entirely exposed to the person to whom we are talking.

At this point it is vital for our correct understanding of the important role of apologetics to be reminded that we cannot separate true apologetics from the work of the Holy Spirit, nor from a living relationship in prayer to the Lord on the part of the Christian.

Men do not think in a vacuum; all thought begins with presuppositions, which are convictions, conclusions, at which we have arrived, conclusions of the utmost importance.

Like Karl Barth, Gordon H. Clark thinks "that any theologian who employs presuppositions common to non-Christian systems is descending the

road to atheistic humanism. The apologist's first task is not to find common ground with unbelievers, but to expose the fallacies in their thought."<sup>56</sup>

Cornelius Van Til sustains that the ultimate authority is neither science nor logic, but God, even when speaking to those who do not believe in God. "The best possible proof of God's actual existence," he says, "is the 'indispensable character of the presupposition of God's existence.'"<sup>57</sup> "If God does not exist, we know nothing."<sup>58</sup> Every man in quest of truth chooses the system within which he sees the significance of life. Christian apologetics invite men to start all their thinking with Christian presuppositions. They alone give meaning to all our experiences.

Van Til is noted for rejecting beliefs common to Christians and non-Christians which could form a point of contact from which to begin an apologetic. According to Van Til all men share morally and spiritually a common rebellion against God. The experience of violating God's law is common to us all. So we have common ground metaphysically, psychologically, morally, and spiritually.

In the realm of knowledge, Van Til emphatically denies common ground between the believer and the non-believer. For him there is no single territory of dimension in which believers and non-believers have all things wholly in common.

The natural man, understands Van Til, will seek to reduce the contents of Scripture to a natural level. His own ultimacy is the basic

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<sup>56</sup>Quoted by Lesis, p. 113.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

presupposition of his entire philosophy. So, to ask natural man to judge the credibility of revelation is to ask him at the same time to believe and disbelieve in his own ultimacy. Until a sinner is regenerated he makes himself, rather than God, the principle of interpreting all things. The natural man's view of himself (anthropology) is totally different from the Christian view of him.

Christians do not have different laws of chemistry or logic. He simply gives them different ultimate significance, says Van Til. In the ultimate sense Christians and non-Christians have nothing in common but in the proximate sense they have "all things in common."

Thomas Aquinas has a different view on this problem. He admits and even explores the common ground between the believer and the non-believer.

Aquinas affirms that only the false can contradict the true, therefore, he says, reason and revelation can never contradict each other. If there is a contradiction there must be a mistake somewhere. Only a false theology can contradict true philosophy, and only false philosophy can contradict true theology.

Although we might not be able to formally harmonize one with the other at all points we can rest assured that at whatever points they do approach each other only harmony will prevail.

One of the main thesis in Thomistic apologetic is that "gratia non tollit naturam sed perficit." Nature is not contradicted by grace but is perfected by grace. For Thomas Aquinas reason does not do violence to faith and faith does not do violence to reason. Reason used in support of faith in Aquinas' understanding does not lessen the merit of faith.

So reason may be used in theology for purpose of clarification. Philosophy serves revelation.

But what is man? Only some form of mystical jump, says Schaeffer, will allow us to accept that personality comes from impersonality. Most twentieth-century thinking sees man as determined either by chemical factors or by psychological factors. In this case man is considered to be programmed, and then man is not a personality made in the image of God who could make a free first choice.

For Schaeffer the non-Christian lives in a non-consistent way to his presuppositions. No non-Christian can be consistent to the logic of his presuppositions. The reason is that man must live in reality. This being so, every man is in a place of tension. He cannot make his own universe and live in it. Thus twentieth-century man, brilliant or ordinary man of the street, is a man in tension. Somewhere in his life there is a point of inconsistency. He has an inadequacy in his system.

Every man has built a roof over his head, affirms Schaeffer, to shield himself at the point of tension. At the point of tension the person is not in a place of consistency in his system and the roof is built as a protection against the blows of the real world, both internal and external. It is like the great shelters built upon some mountain passes to protect vehicles from avalanches of rock and stone which periodically tumble down the mountain. The avalanche, in the case of the non-Christian, is the real and the abnormal fallen world which surrounds him. The Christian, sustains Schaeffer, lovingly and with true tears, must remove the shelter and allow the truth of the external world and of what man is to

beat upon him. When the roof is off, each man must stand naked and wounded before the truth of what is.

The truth that we let in first, adds Schaeffer, is not a dogmatic statement of the truth of the Scripture but the truth of the external world and the truth of what man himself is. This is what shows him his need. The Scripture then show him the nature of his lostness and the answer of it. This is for Schaeffer the true order of our apologetics in the second half of the twentieth century for man living under the line of despair.

The person must realize that his system has no answer to the crucial questions of life. He must come to know that his roof is a false protection from the storm of what is, and then we can talk to him of the storm of the judgment of God.

The roof has to be removed, maintains Schaeffer, "because in the thinking of the twentieth-century man the concept of judgment and of hell is nonsense, and therefore to begin to talk here is to mumble in a language which has no contact with him. Hell or any such concept is unthinkable to modern man because he has been brain-washed into accepting the monolithic belief of naturalism which surrounds him."<sup>59</sup> We of the West are brain-washed by our anti-supernatural culture.

The non-Christian has some dilemmas before himself, especially if he reasons in a logical way, and tries to come to some conclusions. Schaeffer exemplifies it mentioning that if man has always been fallen man, then there is no moral answer to the problem of evil and cruelty.

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<sup>59</sup> Schaeffer, p. 129.

Man has always been in this dilemma. And if this is what man intrinsically is, and he has always been like this, then the French art historian and poet Baudelaire, is right when he says, 'If there is a God, he is the devil.'

As apologists we have to know the tension points of the other side. In dialogue with atheist humanists we could raise the question of why protect the value of man, if man is just an animal, a little bit better than others, and a mere accidental animal? There is no objective basis for value, like man, in atheistic humanism. Or is there? Where? What? Thus, those who live with non-Christian presuppositions have to come to a conclusion of a tension point. To put it in a popular way, to the non-Christian to commit suicide would be a very logical and consistent decision in his life. Atheists do not commit suicide because they do not go all the road of logics. This tension helps the proclamation of the Gospel. Non-Christian conclusion leads to disaster, to no-meaning, to despair.

Pascal perceived this tension in man and defined it as a tension between nobility and bestiality. The Gospel, said Pascal, sees the low and high aspects in man in the most correct way. For him Christianity offers the best diagnosis to human situation. Pascal's apology can be summarized in his own words: "None is so happy as a true Christian nor so reasonable, virtuous, or amiable."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Quoted by Bernard Ramm, Varieties of Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 46.

Today's concept of knowledge and truth leads to despair. In this context Christians must speak of absolute truths, of absolutes that form the basis of our lives.

What is the purpose of man? In fact, modern autonomous man has not come up with a satisfactory answer to this question, in any of his fields of thinking. For Christians God's first commandment expresses the purpose of man. Natural man who tries to find a meaning in facts apart from Christianity virtually ascribes to himself the attributes the Christian ascribes to God alone.

In fact the Christian is the real radical of our generation, for he stands against the monolithic modern concept of truth as relative; we believe in the unity of truth. We stand against the shifting sands of relativism.

Gordon R. Lewis writes in his book Testing Christianity's Truth Claims that

"because all knowledge is relative to individual knowers, some think we can never tell which religious claims are true. They think we can only tell which are true for us. If that were the case then the statement, 'All religious knowledge is relative,' would be true only for one who made it. Then it need not be considered true for all men everywhere. Relativism simply cannot be the truth. But the element of truth in relativism is that many factors from our cultural backgrounds condition our knowing processes."<sup>61</sup>

"All knowledge is interpretative, but some interpretations are better informed than others," affirms Lewis.

In a world without absolutes, what is ethical? If one lives in a world of non-absolutes and would fight social injustice on the mood of the moment, how may one establish what social justice is? What criterion

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<sup>61</sup>Lewis, p. 18.

do I have to distinguish between right and wrong so that I may know what I should be fighting? May it not be that I could acquiesce in evil and stamp out good? Are our own judgments always correct? Are they sufficiently clear? Is it not risky to base ethics on a mere human instinct? Without absolutes, morals as morals cease to exist, and humanistic man starting from himself has failed to find the absolute. For Schaeffer, because the God of the Bible is there, real morals exist.

As apologists and God's witnesses we face some language problems in talking with God. It is a challenge to communicate, to conceptualize an accurate information about the nature of God. There are those, however, who reject what we as Christians have to say because they consider it meaningless, nonsense. Logical positivism, for instance, sustains that if a statement is not empirically verifiable it is nonsense, meaningless. There is only sense in language, they say, if you can come up with experience. But, how can we verify empirically that God loves us?

Logical positivism, however, with its presuppositions violates the principle of existential meaning. So, some statements are meaningful for me, although they do not fit into scientific criteria. Who really doubts that there are things that shape our lives that are beyond scientific criteria?

What we learn from logical Positivism is that language is very important in our mission task. It always sets the rule of the game. As Christians we must know that our language may not be scientific, but it has existential value, then it communicates to many lives.

Only Christianity gives meaning to life, says Van Til. All other systems lead to irrationality and chaos. On the Christian presupposition

life is no longer "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing." Life is meaningful. And that meaning is attested internally by the witness of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible does not separate the work of the Holy Spirit from knowledge. Only the faith which believes God on the basis of knowledge is true faith. "Some evangelism," says Schaeffer, "has been Platonic in the sense that too much emphasis has been put on the soul in contrast to the whole man including the body and the intellect."<sup>62</sup>

The biblical based experience rests firmly on truth. It is not only an emotional experience, nor is it contentless.

It is true that Scripture cannot be subjected to the scrutiny of reason "because it is reason itself that learns of its proper function from Scripture." The Bible presents itself as being the only light in terms of which the truth about facts and their relations can be discovered. The Bible is self-authenticating, affirms Van Til.

But although the Christian is not a rationalist, he is rational. The rationalist begins from himself autonomously and works out a system from there on. The Christian thinks and acts on the basis that A is not non-A.

Expressing his concern with modern thinking, Schaeffer says that much can be added to the rational, but if we give up the rational everything will be lost. Twentieth century, remarks Schaeffer, is going away from the true-false knowledge. Pascal noted two extremes on this issue: to exclude reason, and to admit reason only.

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<sup>62</sup>Schaeffer, p. 144.

Christians have something important to share with the non-Christians. They have the mission given by their Lord to proclaim the message of God's love in Jesus Christ to all people. This is a serious task. And in order to fulfill this order the Church has to communicate with men living in this world. If she uses many technical words without sufficient explanation, it may happen that the outsiders really do not hear the Christian message at all and that we ourselves, in our churches and missions, have become an introverted and isolated language group.

God's love is the message which Christians want to proclaim in our days to modern man, who tries to hand everything on the word love, but who really does not understand it, because he has no adequate universal for love. His conception of love cannot be more than mere human feeling. Humanists lack standards behind their experience as human beings. The Christian has Christ as the real model for compassion and love. He has a wise basis for judgment. He has the personal revelation of God in Christ and the propositional revelation of God in the Bible, which tells him what love really is.

Schaeffer once affirmed that "there is nothing more ugly than an orthodoxy without understanding or without compassion."<sup>63</sup> God wants us to understand and show our love to those who live without God's grace in their lives. God loved the world. The Church has her mission in this world. It is her task to tell people who stress human fulfillment that the highest fulfillment is to live in God, and his love, and that human fulfillment will never eliminate human frustration.

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

Secondly, to this age of emphasis of human compassion, Christians must proclaim the truth that Christ is the only perfect model of love and compassion compared to all human imperfect feelings.

To modern man who wants to build his own destiny, Christians must say that in God they can experience a great freedom in a lovely relationship with the Father, Creator of all things!

To those who believe that science will build a new perfect world, we must remind what man is, and what he has been in the course of his history, and courageously affirm the realistic biblical view of man and the true hope that we have in Jesus Christ.

The Congregation: a Worshiping, Fellowship,  
Healing, Witnessing Community

David S. Schuller in his book Emerging Shapes of the Church remarked that the parish is weakest in dealing with the new society with its new authorities, its mass media approaches, and with the whole arena of life described as the "public sphere." The parish, Schuller says, seems to be tied to the private sphere. He also criticizes it by becoming an institution that absorbs so many of the energies of its members for the perpetuation and enlargement of itself that it is ill-suited to a servant ministry in a world of need. Fair or not, Schuller's criticism reminds us of the importance and potential of a Christian congregation. And what do men need more in the desert than an oasis?

In this secular environment it is more than evident that the Christian must rediscover the reality of the Christian community. We need to rediscover the meaning of the congregation as the best and most complete community in this world.

William E. Hulme in his excellent book Pastoral Care and Counseling offers a good view of the role of the congregation in our days.

Hulme understands that there is too much emphasis in the congregation on the pastor's ministering to the people of the congregation and for them -- and too little on with them. Without the congregation's ministry with the pastor, the pastor's ministry is hampered, he says.

For Hulme the congregation as a community of faith is a resource for all kinds of help to men.

The congregation is first of all a worshiping community. The people of God gather together to affirm their identity as the people of God. The gathering times, understands Hulme, are characterized by traditions, remembrances, and reenactments. For sure, we are a people with a history; we are also a people with expectations. Worship is the expression of devotion to the God in whom these roots and hopes reside. "Praising God is one of the healthiest of all human activities."<sup>64</sup>

The Lord's Supper is a family meal. Jesus instituted it in the circle of his own intimates, his disciples, at the family-oriented Passover celebration. The family meal is traditionally a time of intimate communion, a time of sharing of experiences. So the worshiping community is concomitant with the fellowshiping community.

Secondly, then, the congregation is the fellowship community which provides a sense of belonging -- a support group in time of stress.

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<sup>64</sup>William E. Hulme, Pastoral Care and Counseling (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1981), p. 156.

In days where the nuclear family is having its problems, the congregation provides an extended family.

Families in isolation, says Hulme, cannot be for their members what each of them needs for their healthy development.

"The nuclear family of mother, father, and children is subjected to too many overpowering cultural and societal influences to function autonomously, particularly in our day of rapid social change in values and priorities. Parents need the congregation -- the parish -- to assist in the nurture of their children. They also are needed by the congregation, where they can relate to children other than their own, as well as to other parents, as they contribute to the support system of the larger family."<sup>65</sup>

Marriages also need the extended family of the congregation for their support and development. Like individuals, married couples need to belong to a larger fellowship for their own growth, as well as that of the marriage. "The church," says Henri Nouwen in Reaching Out, "is perhaps one of the few places left where we can meet people who are different than we are, but with whom we can form a larger family."<sup>66</sup> The single and the married, says Hulme, those living alone and those living with others, all need the larger community to satisfy what Abraham Maslow calls "the belonginness need."

As a community of faith the congregation offers more than human togetherness and effective support systems. This fellowship centers around a transcendent dimension. In fact, the fellowship community cannot be separated from the worshipping community.

This community not only receives those who enter into its midst, but also takes the initiative to reach out to those who need encouragement to enter.

<sup>65</sup>Hulme, p. 158.

<sup>66</sup>Quoted by Hulme, p. 159.

The fellowshiping community is also a healing community. Every congregation has a great potential for healing, since the pastorhood of each believer becomes a reality. No doubt that this is a challenge to every congregation to have its lay pastorate. Hulme offers some good ideas in his book about these experiences.

There are people in every congregation who have endured suffering. These men and women trained can be the best helpers to those now in similar straits. The Alcoholics Anonymous have shown that this can work very well.

But compassionate and understanding people, affirms Hulme, are helpful as care-givers regardless of what they have or have not experienced. These people have to be used in the healing community. And the believer who receives from God also needs to give.

The other side of this healing community is that sometimes some destructive activities happen in a congregation. As extended families, argues Hulme, congregations often act like other families. Those who love each other may at times also hate each other. Those who speak with affection may at other times speak with contempt. Such seems to be the nature of intimate relationships.

Division within congregations continues to be an embarrassment. Yet congregations exist in a fallen world and are composed of sinners. Yet despite the unpleasant realities, the potential is still inherent in every congregation to move in the direction of a healing community. This potential centers in the resources for healing that belong to the congregation -- the faith we have in Christ, the reconciling love of God,

the Scripture, the sacraments, prayer and meditation, and the mission of God's people.

Even imperfect and small groups can be healing. Perfection is only a goal -- not an attainment -- for both pastor and congregation. The congregation, like the individual believer, imperfect and sinful, is justified by grace through faith.

The community of faith is a community with a calling -- a mission. It is the function of the community of faith to witness to its faith. This may sometimes involve a risk. The mission of the community of witnesses is to reach out as a leaven in society with the gospel of reconciliation. "This may mean," affirms Hulme, "ministering in a priestly way to individuals, as has been described in the healing ministry: and it may also mean witnessing in a prophetic way in regard to the social structure of society.

The Christian's calling, his vocation to witness is closely related with his occupation. He is called to witness where he is, with the gifts he has received.

While, as we said, there may be a risk in our witnessing, it is also true that it is the witness that gives meaning and purpose to our lives. The congregation helps people to discover the purpose of their lives by giving them opportunities to be true witnesses. And people need meaning for their lives if they are to function as human beings, remarked Frankl. Paul Tillich once said that "people are sick not only because they have not received love but because they are not allowed to give love."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 166.

The witnessing community has a mission that involves all of its members, and, as seen, those who have received also need to give. The grace of God moves us to live for more than ourselves (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Congregations can misunderstand their purpose and be more concerned with their organization and institution than with their unique calling. The activities to which people in the congregation are devoting their energies has to be related to this calling and mission.

The uniqueness of the Christian community has to be rediscovered and used as the best agency of help in this secular context. Who can help more and love his neighbor than the Christian?

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Shakespeare in his Hamlet says: "What a piece of work is man! How noble is reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how like an angel! In apprehension how like god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust?"<sup>1</sup> These contrasts suggest the continuing tension within man and his abiding limitations. It would deny any attempt to attribute what has been predicted of God to man.

If we want to understand this unique creature called man and his world we first have to know the Creator. If man tries by himself using his reason, to have an explanation of the whole he will find out that his reason can deceive him and also has its limitations. If he follows sense that deceives him also. Man without grace is therefore full of error. He is caught in such strong and conflicting cross-currents that he is rendered helpless. To this man Pascal says: "Know, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Humble yourself, weak reason; be silent, foolish nature . . . Hear God."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted by David Martin, The Religious and the Secular (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), p. 47.

<sup>2</sup>Cited in Bernard Ramm, Varieties of Christian Apologetics (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), p. 40.

Finite man cannot stand to 'let God be God.' Luther said that sin at its deepest is always religious. "God descended in order to prevent our ascending."

Man's basic problem is that he does not let God be his God. As Luther pointed out, sin is not as much that man is "turned-down" as that he is turned in upon himself. From this point all the rest of human beings' problems follow. This desire to be by his own, not dependent and responsible before somebody else, was and is his main temptation. Autonomy is self-deification. Man in all ages wants to be god.

So, this desire to be free, to be autonomous, to be independent, to build his own world with his own tools (reason, experience) is not new on this world. It is as old as man himself, although we know that he was perfect for a period of time.

The author of this study understands that the historical process of secularization understood as a certain liberation from the church's tutelage is an ambiguous phenomenon, which can offer even new possibilities for the Church but that also constitutes a serious danger and risk. The risk exists because secularization brings with it its perversion germs. Secularization as such is a neutral historical process which can stimulate us as Church to renew our language and forms of proclaiming the Gospel but which also can lead men to secularism, an ideology with a closed world-view, and so be closed to God's message.

Secularization is an ongoing historic event which we cannot as yet fully understand or define. As such it is neither bad nor good, and cannot be comprehended through either an optimistic or a pessimistic attitude.

One thing, however, is certain, that we Christians and churches are ourselves part of the process of secularization, because we are part of the modern world and affected by it.

The phenomenon of secularization has different aspects and different dimensions from one place to another because it is related to the historical and cultural development. But there are some changes that are universal. Some common attitudes can be seen in every nation. Through secularization man has achieved a greater control over nature, over his social environment and his own life. Through science and technology our world is being forged into one history with a common destiny. Communications have made the world a neighborhood. All these events are finally under God's judgment.

The possibility of getting away from the pressure of a society controlled by religion brought by secularization, in the opinion of the author of this study, is not bad in itself. There is no theological basis in the New Testament to affirm that the church has to have the control she had in the past in Western or Eastern world. In some aspects the secularization process impels a break with the past on many issues in a correct way, so that we can accept the emancipation of the profane world from the institutional and intellectual control of churches and dogmas in various spheres of human life.

Secularization, however, isn't per se a de-Christianization process, although frequently it looks like it. Secularization, as many other phenomena, is ambivalent, presenting positive and negative aspects.

It seems correct that the state and others institutions of society should be secular, that is, in the sense of neutral, giving room for all

kinds of different cultural expressions. In this neutral society the church also can express herself as she wants to.

Of course, this free environment also presents some problems, but this is part of man's nature. But the neutral or secular context is an achievement of the last centuries which can be welcomed. As Lutherans, perhaps, we can see this freedom from the control of an ecclesiastical institution from a better perspective. Luther, no doubt, played an important role in the history of the secularization process, and his statements about the left and the right hand of God and the doctrine of the two kingdoms are still a solid basis for a correct understanding of the role of God's people in this world.

But, what does this process of secularization mean for the Christian mission? Paul Löffler thinks that religion almost everywhere has lost the sole power that it once possessed to provide the cement of the social fabric and that a whole new way of life created for millions of people by technology, industry, communications and a dozen other forces of change is taking place.

It seems that what Clark Pinnock affirms does not contradict what Löffler affirmed. Pinnock stated:

"Ten years ago predictions were being made about the decline of religion in secular society. Modern man was depicted as one who had come of age and could easily dispense with images of the sacred. The ensuing years have not borne out these projections. Instead we have seen a revolt against one-dimensional man, the product of machine and computer, and a continuing of the age-old quest for transcendence. The older materialism does not satisfy, and people are seeking God again."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Clark H. Pinnock, Reason Enough (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), p. 42.

So both phenomena, in our understanding, are taking place and look sometimes as being contradicting each other.

An interesting debate would be to answer this following question: Where is it easier to present the Gospel?: in a religious or in a secular culture?

"Is it easier to present the Gospel in a culture where the church is protected and revered, where new churches are being built, where religion is acknowledged even by the irreligious to be a technique for maintaining values, and where in crisis situations people find themselves superstitiously seeking divine reassurance? Or will the Gospel stand out with greater clarity precisely when the old respectabilities and traditions are thrown over, when people reject concepts of God that are so heavily compounded with folk superstitions that Biblical affirmations are hardly recognizable, where culture and faith are sharply and decisively separated?"<sup>4</sup>

The culture atmosphere of our age is becoming secular or neutral, and this has become a healthy challenge for the Christian Church. To survive spiritually in these "new waters" one must know personally how to 'swim!' Faith has to be personal and deep in this context.

As certainly as the Christian message is called into the saeculum and its ideologies, thinks Helmuth Thielicke, the saeculum also has something to say to its messengers. What it has to say may well be a protest. But whoever hears this protest correctly learns to understand himself and his own way better and is enabled to repeat the call he gives with new power. As a matter of fact, we have to ask how far modern times have contributed not to 'changing the Christian message,' but to 'bringing it to itself' and so empowering its messengers to enter on a dialogue with their contemporaries. We can't forget that theology's entire responsibility

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<sup>4</sup>David S. Schuller, Emerging Shapes of the Church (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967), p. 28.

is to its own age, although we have to be constantly warned of the dangers in compromising Scriptural truth in the effort to communicate with our contemporaries. When we face obstacles we discover our potentiality and also are stimulated to go back to our resources.

The Church had always had some nervous moments in dealing with the new. It is natural that this happened and still happens, but what frequently has occurred in the Church is that a period of rejection of heresy is quickly followed by the gradual assimilation of the truth embedded in the error. May we not interpret the warnings against secularism of earlier years as a necessary preparation for the eventual endorsement of Christian secularity?

But what kind of mission style will the Church perform in this secular world? It has to enter into the structures of this secularized society and work through them, just as the messengers of the Gospel worked along the lines of communication of the Roman world. In this context she must constantly encounter the real needs of our age. She has to be in dialogue using contemporary language, not a foreign language to a disinterested world, learning from all other sciences without losing her identity and meeting people in their own situations. The Kingdom is not of this world and nothing is more needed in this world than a faithful living Christian church living out its faith. For J. Pelikan, so long as the Christian Church is interested in relating itself positively to the problem of civilization and culture, so long theology will need philosophy. The Church must know the implications of what it believes and the moving mind of the world. She can't be the victim of intellectual obscurantism.

The Christian Church has a responsibility in and for this secularized world. In the world means that the Christian Church and the individual Christian have a work to do here and now. They must witness in thought, word, and deed to the judgment and love of God. The church is not taken out of the world. "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have sent them into the world." (John 17:18) We are not at home in the world, but 'in the meantime' we are leaven, light, and salt. Freed from a religion of works we have work to do in love and joy. Called out of the world unto life in Christ we also return to the world of men as a man with a full-time vocation whatever our job might be.

In a negative sense the Christian church and Christians have a responsibility for our secularized world. Said Ernst Benz,

"The nihilism of the nineteenth century is not simply to be understood as an anti-Christian movement which is directed from the outside against the church; rather it is the characteristic answer of the European spirit to a specific failure of the church. . . . Western and Eastern nihilism are necessary answer and reaction to a specific guilt on the part of Christianity in east and west, precisely that guilt which Nietzsche characterized when he speaks of the 'Euthanasia of Christendom.' In the west this euthanasia consisted in the development of an externalized church which sanctioned and Christianly embellished all forms of national and social life and which left over merely a halo morality of external bourgeois respectability; in the east it consisted in the development of a politicized state church which sanctioned social injustice, political oppression, and spiritual slavery."<sup>5</sup>

Insofar as the Christian Church by faithless retreat from life or by accommodation to life denied the relevance of transcendent Christian faith to men's thinking and acting, it has left the world without the witness the Church ought to bring and at times has helped create the illusion that Christendom and Christianity are identical.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted by Howard Hong in This World and the Church: Studies in Secularism (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1955), p. 134.

The recognition of this responsibility for the secularization of our world should make us aware of the world's need for Christian witness.

Definitely the illusion of a Christian Church at home in Christendom and contemporary culture has been shattered. The Christian Church must recognize that it is a minority movement which is not entirely at home in human culture and which at the same time has no other place than human culture in which to work and live out its faith. Christians are citizens of two worlds, and they have a task in that very world which rejects them, their indifferent and hostile world.

The Christian martyrs of the first centuries and of our days are a testimony to the vitality of the Christian faith. The vitalized Christian concept of vocation, not as a job, but as "life in the meanwhile" under the lordship of Christ can help us to be salt, light and leaven in the middle of the lives of secular men.

Brazil is definitively a land of contrasts with great ideals and potentialities and also a land of deep social tensions. Having a population uniquely mixed between Asian, European and African groups, this country is open for everybody and receives warmly those who come.

The Brazilian is an emotional being, with high sentimentalism and with a great kindness. With the predominance of feeling over intelligence he is easily caught by Umbanda, Spiritism (kardecism) and Pentecostalism, the three fastest growing religious movements in Brazil.

The Gospel's message is radical when correctly explained, and one of the dominant traits of the Brazilian is that he does not like radical solutions. He always wants to "dar um jeitinho" (find a intermediary

solution). He also is not too much concerned about the contents, but more with the forms of things, and even of the religions. He needs a god that is very close to him, a kind of friend with whom he has some intimacy. Spiritism, Umbanda and Pentecostalism come closer to his character in the human sense, but Lutherans in Brazil have a serious theological responsibility in this context.

Brazilian Lutherans have something to learn from these growing religious movements, especially in terms of understanding the need of the Brazilian people in the urban areas or in the small towns. Lutheran congregations can become more vitalized social units in the environment where there is a great need for brotherhood.

Besides this, we have to be aware that Lutherans in Brazil are also proclaiming the Gospel to people without German background, and that induces us to understand better "the authentic Brazilian soul." Yesterday Lutherans were identified with Germanism. Today we have to adjust to the new reality that is coming up in this industrializing and urbanizing country.

Although the magic religions as Umbanda and Spiritism are growing so fast, the process of secularization is also changing Brazilian life. This is another strong contrast in this land of scientific progress and technological development. Paradoxically science and magic are growing in Brazil. If it is true that the scientific spirit is growing and having deeper roots in the new generation because of the educational reforms, it also is true that superstitious beliefs and magic practices are popular among them and their parents. We have to find the right or best way to

communicate with this people which seeks so intensively the irrational and the magic.

The highly sacred Roman Catholic Church has changed very much her attitude towards non-Catholics and in relation to the state. This radical change took place with Vatican II, the so-called council of secularity. Since then, even the sincere and honest atheist has a chance of salvation according to some known Roman Catholic theologians.

Boaventura Kloppenburg is a conservative Roman Catholic theologian who is also open to the new era but aware of the dangers of this radical openness to the world. He himself is concerned about the future of Roman Catholic theology in Latin America and in Brazil, especially in its new understanding of the role of theology in this country of social problems and tensions. The Church of Rome may lose very fast her partial Christian identity.

Strange religions, new and old, are seeking converts in Brazil, known as an excellent field to sow religious ideas. If it is true that the single stream of history into which the peoples of the world are being drawn is a single stream of questions, not of answers, we can understand why religions are being so important for modern secular man. It is because they offer "answers." The problem, however, is that many offer wrong answers to serious questions and problems, and therefore, deceive people who have no basis to decide what is the truth and what is the error.

Thus secularizing Brazil is also becoming the mission field of new religious movements from the East and from the West. But how can we harmonize all this religious growth with secularization? As a matter of

fact the Roman Catholic church is losing its influence over Brazilian people, and the Protestant churches may be losing also especially in the big cities where people live more isolated from their religious community, but with the exception of the Pentecostals, with their legalistic emphasis, the other religious groups are not so much concerned with the ethical life of its members, so they can feel very free in their way of living. They don't exercise control over their daily lives.

In this complex cultural environment, Kloppenburg offers a significant contribution with his books entitled O Espiritismo no Brasil and A Umbanda no Brasil, for our understanding of these religious phenomena. As an expert in this area of magic and sacred phenomena he could understand very well the very opposite phenomenon of secularization, so much discussed at Vatican II.

So in his book O Cristão Secularizado he analyzes the Christian life in this new secular world. He identifies correctly the deviation of secularism and presents the idea that the Christian can be the humanist par excellence in this world.

Lutheran theology, however, understands and interprets differently the theocentric humanism proposed by Kloppenburg. Our understanding of the doctrine of justification-sanctification and the use of Law and Gospel offers us the chance to present to this secular world a very unique contribution on the theological reflection about this relevant subject of secularization and the Christian.

During these days when the great emphasis is on man, the Christian Church has something very important to say about man to our modern man. In fact, those whose horizons are bounded by the material universe are

often haunted by emptiness and a lack of direction. What is there to believe in and to hope for? The Christian Church has to know this secular man in order to be able to communicate to him the good news from God about meaning and direction in our human lives. She must know the context to proclaim God's text, but she cannot allow that the world shows her the way to go. That is her function in the world.

The Christian Church has to proclaim the authentic Word in this world and also in a relevant way, never forgetting, however, the dangers in compromising Scriptural truth in this effort to communicate with our contemporaries.

Rightly motivated each Christian will be a spiritual and social minister to his brother and a social action will take place with a sound and healthy theological basis. This natural outcome of the justified heart of the man of God we call sanctification.

When we study this process whereby religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance (especially the loss of that influence on the part of Christianity) we are stimulated to bring up some Biblical and relevant reflections on topics like freedom, the key word in the secularization process, the nature of man, love, autonomy, humanism, works, church, Christian responsibility, sin, God, optimism, pessimism, future, the ultimate and the penultimate.

First of all the "justification by faith alone" is precisely what in Luther's view frees one from oneself to a true meeting with the neighbor and an openness to the "otherness" of this need. For Luther faith and love constitutes the whole character of the Christian. Faith receives; love gives. Faith brings man to God. Love brings man to his

brother man. For Luther only faith and love are necessary; everything else is at your liberty, to do or to leave undone.

Modern man needs to know that the true Biblical understanding of freedom and also that the Christian is in fact the only free man in this world. He needs to know that faith excludes all other securities besides the simple and naked promise of God. Faith learns to say: "I do not need to rely upon my conscience, my senses, my doing, but I rely upon the divine promise and truth which never deceive." Faith is a relationship offered by God through which flows the most correctly motivated love in the neighbor. From God's source this faith derives a great power. Good works, therefore, do not make a good man, but a good man does good works. "Nothing makes a man good except faith, or evil except unbelief. The Christian is the only one who can devote all his works to the welfare of others, since he has abundant riches in his faith. The Christian can give because he has received. He can be the humanist par excellence. His motivation is not selfish but divine because God abides in him. His life has a goal, meaning and real hope. This faith is realized only as it finds concrete expression in the midst of this worldly life. For the Christian justification is both the presupposition and the source of the ethical life. Justification is in fact the presupposition of all Christian activity.

This faith never stands still, says Luther, but is always energetically active in the present world. Faith cannot be separated from the activity of life.

Luther's understanding of the "stations and vocations" or "the orders" help us in our serving God in the world. Our service to our

brother takes on very specific forms. The three basic orders, ministry, marriage and secular authority have a necessary function in the life of the world. They serve as means by which God creates and preserves humanity. In these orders the Christian will fulfill his duties in his vocation.

Franz Lau correctly stated that Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms remains the best available help to live a Christian life in such a world. This treasure, this Biblical heritage must be communicated to our secular man who has a great lack of theological knowledge. And this is not a "homemade theology," but an authentic Biblical teaching. This is good "food" for the undernourished secular man, who knows so much about the how but so little about the why. That clear explanation would certainly take away many misunderstandings about Christian life and the Christian Church.

Christ being the Lord of the men who act in these orders certainly will transform them for better. Christ is not the Lord within these orders but in the persons who work and serve in these orders of creation. So, the true revolution starts in the heart of man. Christians will work in the world so that the orders and relationships which God has established to serve human life may be reestablished and set free from misuse and distortion.

The key word of the modern secular man is freedom. Freedom, however, can be realized only within the confines of certain limitations. An unrestricted freedom which would allow us to do anything we pleased would obviously only disguise a worse form of tyranny. For if we were permitted to do exactly as we pleased, we would be subjected to the law

of least resistance and therefore to a law which again would deprive us of our freedom. So we would be driven by whatever urges were strongest with us, for example, by the desire for power or the sex instinct, and would thus be subjected to an anonymous form of bondage.

The road into the far country described in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son ends in an extremity of bondage. It ends therefore in the opposite of freedom. In fact it is the antithesis of freedom. The real freedom, the freedom "to become what one should" must be defined as a definite form of bondage or obligation, in a word, as what one should do. Real freedom is a bondage and nothing else. It is not a liberation from bonds, but rather an entering into a genuine commitment to, and acceptance of, obligations that sustain one's very existence. Therefore the difference between unfreedom and freedom is not the difference between being bound and unbound, but rather between false and true bondage.

Twentieth-century man must hear God's counsel that the opposite of slavery is sonship, and that only by finding the Father, he, the son, will find himself.

The parable of the prodigal son tells us very clearly that freedom is possible only in being bound to the Father. Only so does man realize his nature. If the secular autonomous man wants freedom, real freedom, he must seek for that which is more than man. If he wants to change, to reorganize this complex and confusing world, he should first change and reorganize his being. Can he do that by himself?

Helmut Thielicke and Francis Schaeffer agree in that modern man needs to be questioned, interrogated, so that he can come to the truth of his being, although being afraid of it.

For the unredeemed secular man freedom is something that demands too much of him and therefore causes him to flee. For the redeemed person, however, freedom is a gift which enables him to be himself and allows him to be what God meant him to be.

The Christian Church is God's vehicle of questioning and answering modern man in his dilemmas. She is the community of witnesses who proclaim God's kerygma to the world. She is the community of love from where the true love reaches out to people who are in spiritual, emotional and material need.

As an army, the Church has the right weapons to fight in this world against the demonic forces and powers which dehumanize our world. She has the Word and Sacrament to strengthen people for the advance into the world to save those who are in slavery of these satanic powers through the proclamation of the message of salvation through Jesus Christ.

This redeemed community exists for people. Although she is composed of sinners, she helps with a unique motivation and her help touches the man as a whole being. She is not a fellowship of righteous persons but a fellowship of pardoned sinners who in obedience go back into the world to serve.

The great program of the Church is the strengthening the spiritual life of its members, so that they can engage in a strategy of advance upon the world. This strategy requires investigation. Christians need to recognize more completely the nature of the forces of this world in conflict with the Church. Her role, however, is to be a servant in the world and not a strong and powerful institution that controls the culture.

Edification and advance are two very important words in the Church's vocabulary. Not only edification and not only advance. Therefore, as Church we have to get out of our community of believers and share God's Love revealed in Christ with our neighbors whom we can love because we have been loved so much.

The Christian individual -- his love, his message -- is the crucial factor in the attack of the Church upon the world. And for this task, the Christian congregation plays an important role.

In this secular context Christians are responsible for the proclamation of the basic truth of God, man, and the world in which we live. Nothing is more relevant to human need than the truth spoken in love. Frequently in order to do that we have to first take away the obstacles of misunderstandings and misinterpretations that make our mission so difficult. That is why it seems important in our days to be more familiar with the science and art of defending Christianity's basic truth-claims - the Christian apologetics. We have to be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls us to account for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15). Defense does not mean being on the defensive. It could even be that the Christian Church has to be more offensive in these days of so much irrationality and despair.

As individual Christians and as a fellowship group we have to speak out, confess, witness and teach the true exposition of the Scripture and therefore sometimes reject, disagree, refute and condemn those teachings, doctrines, ideologies and presuppositions that are contrary to the Word of God. We have to oppose the dogmatism expressed by some secular or atheist humanists. We have to state and affirm clearly our

interpretations, our presuppositions and our "Weltanschauung." We can't afford to lose our identity in this pluralistic, relativistic secular culture of ours. Among so many voices, men need to listen to the voice of their Creator and Savior.

Doubt and questioning are normal to any thinking person. Modern man, with his strong emphasis on reason, must know that faith in the Christian sense goes beyond reason but not against it. He must be informed that Christians don't believe in the irrational, but in the supernatural, and also that reason which is uncontrolled by existence can itself become a dictatorship; it can become the object of rationalized superstition and thus a means by which a person loses the mature independence of sonship.

Undoubtedly the metaphysical context of mission has changed to a secular one. In saying that we are of course aware that words like "secular," "metaphysical" or "religious" are fraught with confusion. From an ontocratic order we moved to a technocratic era. To what degree today's man is a new type is a discussable matter.

For Howard A. Snyder,

"our world, rather than coming of age, has come full circle, returning several key aspects to the spirit of the first-century Roman world. . . . this age to which we have come may be the best possible one for the effective proclamation of the biblical message. This parallel between today and the new first century has also been suggested by (no less) futurologists Herman Kahn and Anthony J. Wiener of the Hudson Institute."<sup>6</sup>

Every age, however, is ultimately an age of unbelief. Intensification of difficulties and new shapes of unbelief, it is true, take place,

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<sup>6</sup>H. A. Snyder, "World Come Full Circle," Christianity Today, 16 (January 1972):9.

but ultimately each generation stands offended before the Gospel itself. So where the true Church is found there is always scandal simply because men are afraid of the truth and its demands, and want to be autonomous, self-understanding and responsible for himself.

It happens that the Christian Church also provokes scandals by her failures and shortcomings, her hypocrisy, inconsistency and sometimes her empty ritualism, but the true scandal men find in the cross and its message of God's grace and love. This scandal can't and shouldn't be removed, because this is in fact the essence of the Gospel, of the kerygma.

God's kerygma truly contradicts all that human being can dream, think, desire, or invent. The Gospel cannot be a product of man's mind. Nobody would invent something which clearly contradicts all that man desires and wants. Man couldn't create a message that puts him down completely, and tells him that what he does gives him no credit before his Creator.

If Paul would have been a liar, he wouldn't have presented such a message to the Greeks, a message that even irritated them to the point that they decided to close their meeting with this apostle. Paul could have brought to them a human-made message that would have been very comfortable for their ears. The Greek's reaction, however, was that what he was saying was foolish.

The apostle couldn't have invented this 'foolish' Gospel, and he really didn't. He himself calls his message, his preaching of the cross a "foolishness" to those who perish, but also the power of God to those who are saved (1 Cor. 1:18).

With this foolish message the apostle Paul wants to conquer the world. He wants to conquer the world with a message that states clearly to man that he can't do anything for himself in terms of eternity. This biblical truth hurts deeply all human feeling. This goes against human pride. It represents a complete humiliation for man who always wants to know what will be his own contribution (opinio leges).

Interestingly humility cannot be found in non-Christian writings, remarks Edward Schillebeeckx, a modern Roman Catholic theologian, in the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Manichees or the Platonists. "Even though excellent moral and disciplinary guidance may be found in the writings of these schools and elsewhere, humility will not be found there. The way of humility has a different starting point -- it comes from Christ."<sup>7</sup> With him man can learn it.

Modern man needs to hear this message which goes against all that man can create and produce. Man couldn't have created a message that repulses him as man, as human being.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ do not depend nor base their lives on what man wants or desire, but on God's grace. That is why we can say that in HIS WILL IS OUR PEACE.

Israel was set free to move away, like Abraham from Ur of the Chalees, from all past human securities. They were free to move out where God led them.

The twentieth-century Christian Church is also free to move into uncharted territory - this secular age, knowing always that she is

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<sup>7</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, World and Church (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1971), p. 19.

guided by God and that in His plans she will exist until the end of the saeculum.

Kierkegaard once reminded us that "our greatest comfort is in knowing that before God we are always in the wrong."<sup>8</sup>

With these words Kierkegaard was reminding us that

"in our attempts to express the faith, as well as in our attempts to live it, we are justified by grace alone. We know that our best efforts will always fall short; but our comfort is in knowing that God uses our stumbling efforts, for they are all we have to offer and all he asks. We are no better than pots of earthenware to contain this treasure, and this proves that such transcendent power does not come from us, but is God's alone."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Quoted by Colin Wilbur Williams, in Faith in Secular Society (London: C. A. Watts & Co., 1966), p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

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