FOUR STRATEGIES FOR RESISTING SECULARISATION

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In mid-nineteenth-century Europe the fact, or at least the impending danger of secularisation was an ever-present reality. The complaints were loudest in France. Unless radical changes were made soon, a Parisian priest wrote in 1849, "religion is lost in Paris and in the neighbouring dioceses. In the present situation it is not a matter of conserving, but of reviving, but we are not even able to conserve".[1] As the priest indicated, the problems were not confined to the capital: Paris was surrounded by a substantially "de-Christianised" rural region.[2] Similar complaints were also frequently heard in German cities. In 1843 a Berlin preacher called his city a "second Sodom and Gomorrah".[3] And in England the national Religious Census of 1851, which suggested that about 40% of adults had attended church on the census day, caused considerable alarm among churchmen. The statistician, Horace Mann, in his famous commentary on the census, referred to an "alarming number of non-attendants", and claimed that they were drawn mainly from the working class: "it is sadly certain that this vast, intelligent and increasingly important section of our countrymen is thoroughly estranged from our religious institutions".[4] In many parts of Europe it was apparent that considerable numbers of people were failing to attend church or receive the sacraments. Moreover, already in the middle years of the century, and increasingly in the subsequent decades, it appeared that the church and even the Christian faith itself were under widespread attack.

1 Yvan **Daniel**, *La religion est perdue à Paris...* (Paris: Cana, 1978), 32.

2 Gérard **Cholvy** and Yves-Marie **Hilaire**, *Histoire religieuse de la France contemporaine, 1800–1880* (Toulouse: Privat, 1990), 274.

3 Jürgen **Boeckh**, "Predigt in Berlin" – *Seelsorge und Diakonie in Berlin*. Eds. Kaspar Elm and Hans-Dietrich Loock (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 317; see also Hugh **McLeod**, *Piety and Poverty: Working Class Religion in Berlin, London and New York, 1870–1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), 6–8.

4 E. R. **Wickham**, *Church and People in an Industrial City* (London: Lutterworth, 1957), 109–110.

The threats came from at least four directions.[5] *Governments* were confiscating church property (Spain), secularising education (France), restricting the activities of the clergy and expelling religious orders (Prussia), or simply intervening in church affairs in ways that some clergy thought unwarranted (the reform of the Church of Ireland). *Intellectuals* were reinterpreting the Bible in the light of new research (the Tübingen School) and proposing new scientific theories that threatened existing religious orthodoxies (Darwinism), while a range of new philosophies directly challenged Christianity, including Comte's Positivism and the materialism of Feuerbach and of Büchner. Many of the most powerful *popular movements* of the time, including French radicalism, British Owenism and the Marxist Socialism which spread from Germany to most other parts of Europe, were strongly anti-clerical, and some were militantly secular. In some ways, movements of this kind posed the biggest threat, both because of their mass appeal, and because they effectively offered a new faith, which could take the place of the old. Meanwhile massive *social changes*, including industrialisation, urbanisation and growing social segregation within the cities, presented the churches with huge logistical challenges, as well as more subtle problems, such as the difficulties of bridging social classes at a time of acute social conflict. Established churches were organised through a parochial system dating back to medieval times, which often reflected the distribution of population in that period. Now they were obliged to find the resources for a huge programme of church-building in fast-growing cities and industrial regions, and to recruit and pay the clergy who would staff the new parishes.

Church authorities, clergy, lay activists, religious intellectuals, all had answers to these challenges, and some new religious movements arose in explicit response thereto. In the1840s, for example, politically and theologically conservative German Protestants established an "Inner Mission" which, as the name suggested, would be directed not at the "heathen" in distant continents, but at the "heathen" in Hamburg, Berlin and other German cities. This mission would combine preaching with a large network of charitable institutions, and a recognition that the Christian

[5] For overviews, see Owen **Chadwick**, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1975); Hugh **McLeod**, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848–1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

community had a responsibility for the material as well as spiritual condition of its members.[6] A second example is that of the Oxford Movement in the Church of England, which was initiated by a group of High Church academics in response to the dual threat to their church posed by government and by liberal intellectuals. The immediate occasion was the Whig government's imposition of a package of reforms on the Church of Ireland, including the abolition of ten episcopal sees. In his famous Assize Sermon (1833), John Keble dubbed this "National Apostasy" and the prelude to a despoliation of the church of the kind seen in France in the 1790s. The wider challenge was that of contemporary rationalism and the Protestant cult of private judgement, which in the view of the movement's leading thinker, John Henry Newman, would lead ultimately to complete unbelief. The Movement's answer to these threats was to make Anglicans aware of their true identity as the English branch of the universal Catholic Church, and heirs to a tradition going far beyond the Reformation and back to the Church Fathers.[7]

Here I will look at four characteristic responses to the threat of secularisation, taking examples both from the nineteenth century and from more recent times. These contrasting strategies stem from different diagnoses of the causes of secularisation, as well as differing traditions within particular churches, and the political and religious differences within countries.[8]

Strategy 1: re-Christianisation from above

This strategy involves working closely with governments and social elites to re-Christianise society from above. The premise of this strategy is that the threat of secularisation comes mainly from un-Christian govern-

[6] W. O. **Shanahan**, *German Protestants face the Social Question* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1954), 81–92.

[7] Owen **Chadwick**, *The Victorian Church, Part I, 1829–1859* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 56–79; Peter **Nockles**, "The Oxford Movement and the Legacy of Anglican Evangelicalism" – *The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Northern Europe: The Churches.* Eds. Joris van Eijnatten and Paula Yates (Leuven University Press, 2010), 53–67.

[8] A good case-study of Protestant responses to secularisation in one country is Ondrej **Matejka**, *Religious Construction of the 20th Century in a "Non-Believing" Country: The Protestant Milieu in Czech Society, 1900s to 1960s* (PhD thesis, Université de Genève, 2012).

ments and anti-Christian popular movements. The danger can be averted if the church is adequately financed and is given a major role in education and welfare; if the laws reflect the nation's Christianity; if those at the top of society are regarded as good Christians; and if, at the local level, landowners and employers set a good Christian example, as well as encouraging their dependents to attend church, take part in workplace prayers, observe Christian moral principles, and so on.

Strategy 1 was at a high point of influence on the leaders of established churches in the 1850s. The revolutions of 1848–1849 had been a traumatic experience for conservative churchmen. Catholics were shocked by the flight from Rome of Pope Pius IX in November 1848 and the establishment of the Roman Republic. French troops overthrew the Republic after only six months, and Pius was able to enjoy another twenty years as ruler of the papal states before the arrival of the Italian army in 1870, but he became for the rest of his life an unwavering opponent of all forms of liberalism. The revolutions and their aftermath led both the Catholic Church in France and the Protestant Church in Prussia to form conservative alliances with government and with social elites.

For French Catholics the turning-point was the working-class uprising in the June Days of 1848, during which the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr Affre, was shot dead at the barricades while trying to act as a mediator. Most of the clergy supported Louis Napoleon as the most conservative candidate in the presidential election in December of that year, and went on to support his coup d'état in 1851 and his subsequent self-designation as 'emperor'. The same period saw a "return to the church" by a large part of the upper bourgeoisie, and in these years the business elite was more generous than ever before in giving money to the church. The church was also rewarded with a modest increase in state funding, the dispatch of French troops to Rome to protect the pope, and most importantly a new education law facilitating the establishment of private schools. This was followed by the establishment of numerous primary and secondary schools staffed by religious orders. The period also saw increasing numbers of priests and nuns and the building of many new churches. The civil and military authorities gave their support to the church – sometimes in ways that were more revealing than they perhaps intended: the Mayor of Rouen, laying the foundation stone of a new church in 1857, compared it

to a new prison recently built nearby, stating that both were institutions "for the moralisation of the people". The support given by the emperor to the pope was much appreciated by Catholics. Admittedly relations cooled in the years 1859 to 1863, as Napoleon threw his weight behind the establishment of the new Kingdom of Italy, but they improved again in the later years of the Second Empire.[9]

This strategy has indeed been especially attractive at times when the church was recovering from periods of traumatic revolutionary change, persecution or threats of persecution. The most obvious examples would be Franco's Spain[10] and post-Soviet Russia. But another example is especially interesting, namely the enthusiasm of large numbers of Protestants for German's "National Revolution" in 1933. Alienated from the Weimar Republic with its alliance of Socialists and Catholics, and understandably terrified by the rise of the Communist Party – at a time when Stalin was pursuing a bloody repression of all forms of religion – many pastors hoped that the new regime would be respectful of the church and of traditional moral values. This alliance took its most extreme form in the movement of *Deutsche Christen*, who tried to synthesise Protestantism and National Socialism. But many Protestants whose theology remained more conventional and who distrusted attempts to impose a political agenda on the church nonetheless accepted Hitler's claims to piety and believed that friendly co-operation between church and state would be possible in the new Germany.[11] During his early months as Chancellor, Hitler still recognised the benefits of the church's support.[12] He was prepared to give his supporters in the *Deutsche Christen* movement a helping hand in the church elections, and of course he dealt effectively with the church's Communist and Social Democratic critics. The Protestant church benefited from the return of several hundred thousand former members who had left in the Weimar years when anti-clericalism had been à la mode and

[9] McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe*, 31, 40–43; Hugh **McLeod**, *Religion and the People of Western Europe, 1789–1989* (Oxford University Press, 1997), 104–105.

[10] Frances **Lannon**, *Privilege, Persecution, and Prophecy: The Catholic Church in Spain, 1875–1975* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 198–223.

[11] Manfred **Gailus**, *Protestantismus und Nationalsozialismus* (Köln: Böhlau, 2001), 639–644 and passim.

[12] Richard **Steigmann-Gall**, *The Holy Reich: Nazi Conceptions of Christianity, 1919–1945* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 115–117.

even from the conversion of tens of thousands of former Catholics. Yet by 1937, if not before, it was clear that Hitler was no longer interested in working with the church, and in the years 1937–39 record numbers left.[13]

In the context of democracy, however, some of the same hopes influenced many church leaders in the aftermath of World War II, when hopes for the 're-Christianisation' of Western societies were high.[14] The examples of Nazi Germany and then – as World War turned to Cold War – of the Soviet Union, offered striking examples of the dangers of secularism. Thus in England and Wales the 1944 Education Act first made Religious Education a compulsory school subject and required schools to begin the day with an 'act of worship', while also increasing state funding for (and control of) church schools. Archbishop William Temple, who worked closely with the Education Minister, R. A. Butler, a committed Anglican, in the preparation of these measures, was hopeful that the schools could play a key role in what an Anglican report prepared the following year would call "The Conversion of England". According to Simon Green:

> Temple's ambition was to extend the influence of the Church of England over the whole of English society, more generally conceived. He regarded education as a vital instrument with which to do this. Yet he understood well enough that the kind of religious education he believed in – "education that is … itself religious" – made sense only if every child received its blessings. Accordingly for him the task lay partially in preventing "a wholesale transfer of Church schools to the state"; no less, in extending for the first time and to real effect distinct Christian principles to the organisation and ethos of state schools.[15]

Temple died prematurely in 1944. Butler lived much longer, and went on to hold many leading government offices. According to Green, however, it was only in the early 1970s that he came to recognise that the project of Christianising the nation through the schools had failed.[16]

[13] See statistics for each *Landeskirche* in Lucian **Hölscher**, *Datenatlas zur religiösen Geographie im protestantischen Deutschland*, 4 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2001).

[14] Martin **Greschat**, *Die evangelische Christenheit und die deutsche Geschichte nach 1945* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2002), 310–314.

[15] S. J. D. **Green**, *The Passing of Protestant England: Secularisation and Social Change, c. 1920–1960* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 230.

[16] *Ibid*., 240.

At the local level, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the church often maintained close links with landlords and employers. In the early nineteenth century the French aristocracy were "returning to the church"[17] (a generation or two ahead of the grande bourgeoisie), and both in France and in many other countries pious aristocrats were working hand in hand with the parish clergy (often men whom they themselves had appointed) to provide 'fatherly' support for and control over the tenants and labourers on their estates. Often the close relationships with rural landowners were not so much a strategy as something that was taken for granted. According to Obelkevich in his study of Lincolnshire in the English midlands, "In their economic and social teachings the [Anglican] clergy encouraged paternalism in the rich and acceptance and resignation in the poor. It was the duty of the rich to be charitable to the poor and to give generously to the clergy the means with which to build churches and schools."[18] Meanwhile in the cities there were many "Christian employers", who combined "paternalist" welfare schemes with the encouraging, or even requiring, of religious practice by their workers. Herrlinger gives examples from St Petersburg and other Russian industrial centres in around 1900. More pious employers would provide a factory church: priests were officially part of the administrative staff; they conducted services weekly, or even daily; taught the workers' children in the factory school, and so on.[19]

These strategies of Christianisation from above have often had a polarising effect, however, alienating many from the church. The French church that had worked so closely with Napoleon III met its nemesis in the Paris Commune, when Archbishop Darboy, a strong supporter of the emperor, was among twenty-four priests executed by the Communards. Similarly, surveys in Berlin in the early twentieth century found many examples of migrants to the city from the rural eastern provinces, famous for their

[17] McLeod, *Religion and the People*, 14–15.

[18] James **Obelkevich**, *Religion and Rural Society: South Lindsey, 1825–1875* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 175; see also Robert **Lee**, *Rural Society and the Anglican Clergy, 1815–1914* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 197–198.

[19] Page **Herrlinger**, *Working Souls: Russian Orthodoxy and Factory Labour in St Petersburg, 1881–1917* (Bloomington, Indiana: Slavica, 2007), 81–82; see also Colin **Heywood**, "The Catholic Church and the Business Community in Nineteenth Century France" – *Religion, Society and Politics in France since 1789*. Eds. Frank Tallett and Nicholas Atkin (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 78–81.

pious landowners, who had effectively been forced to go to church in the countryside, and who had used the freedom offered by the metropolis to break away.[20] This strategy tied the church too closely to a particular political and social order, rendering it highly vulnerable when that order fell.

Strategy 2: a Christian sub-culture

This involves building a tight-knit sub-culture within which church members will be partly protected from hostile forces. If Strategy 1 is a programme for aggressive counter-attack, Strategy 2 is primarily defensive.

This strategy is usually associated with sectarian forms of Christianity, which were all too conscious of being small minorities with the task of surviving and defending the true faith in a hostile environment. In the later nineteenth century, however, the above strategy was frequently adopted by Catholics, and sometimes by Protestants. It was most often a response to the perceived hostility of governments and powerful elites, but it could also be used in defence against popular social movements. In this period the erection of a "Catholic ghetto" was the predominant response of the Catholic Church to the hegemony of Liberal ideology and attacks by Liberal governments and Liberal social elites. The classic example was the Prussian *Kulturkampf*, which peaked in the 1870s. In the period from about 1870 to 1960, however, aspects of a Catholic "ghetto" or, to use a more neutral term, a "Catholic milieu", were to be seen in many European countries as well as the United States and Australia, though this method of Catholic defence reached its fullest development in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands.[21]

In his account of "The Path of Swiss Catholics to the Ghetto", Urs Altermatt shows how many a Catholic "was born in a Catholic hospital, went to Catholic schools (from kindergarten to university), read Catholic periodicals and newspapers, later voted for candidates of the Catholic Party and took part as a member in numerous Catholic societies," also being "insured against accident and illness with a Catholic benefit organisation,

[20] McLeod, *Piety and Poverty*, 16.

[21] Hugh **McLeod**, "Building the 'Catholic Ghetto': Catholic Organisations, 1870–1914" – *Voluntary Religion*. Ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 411–444.

and placing his money in a Catholic savings bank".[22] The German Centre Party was the great prototype for separate Catholic political organisation, and Germany was also long the leader in religiously-based trade unions – though uniquely (and contrary to the wishes of some German bishops) they were "Christian", and thus non-confessional; in practice, most members were Catholics. The *Volksverein für das katholische Deutschland* (1891) provided an umbrella organisation for the growing numbers of Catholic associations. The initiative for these ventures came variously from bishops, parish priests, members of religious orders and Catholic laymen – there was no concerted plan, but rather a widespread recognition that in a society where most positions of power in politics, the economy and academic life were held by Protestants, many of whom were fervently anti-Catholic, and where the labour movement was dominated by anti-clerical and sometimes anti-religious Social Democrats, Catholics needed their own organisation that would fight for their interests and enable Catholic to spend their free hours in a Catholic environment. This strategy reached its extreme form in the housing associations that flourished in the Netherlands and Germany in the early twentieth century, enabling Catholics, Protestants and Social Democrats to live in an ideologically pure environment, where all of their neighbours attended the same church or voted for the same party.[23] It should be stressed here that 'ghettoisation' was not a uniquely Catholic phenomenon – though it was among Catholics that this process went furthest and was most widespread: it was also widely practised by Socialists and sometimes by Protestants when, as in the Netherlands, Calvinists too felt oppressed by the Liberal hegemony.[24]

The strength of this strategy lay in the powerful sense of shared identity and loyalty which flourished in the 'ghetto'. This was often reinforced by the high levels of endogamy that assisted in the socialisation of the younger generation. The high levels of Catholic practice from the later nineteenth century to the 1960s in such countries as Germany and the

[22] Urs **Altermatt**, *Der Weg der Schweizer Katholiken ins Ghetto* (Zürich: Benziger Verlag, 1972), 21.

[23] Manuela du **Bois Reymond** and Agnes E.M. **Jonker**, "The City's Public Space and Urban Childhood" – *Working Class and Popular Culture*. Eds. Lex Heerma van Voss and Frits van Holthoon (Amsterdam: IISG, 1988), 50; McLeod, *Piety and Poverty*, 13–15.

[24] McLeod, *Religion and the People*, 17–18, 36.

Netherlands attest to the effectiveness of this strategy. For example, 64% of Dutch Catholics were estimated to attend mass on an average Sunday in 1966. A series of surveys in the 1950s had shown that 95% of Dutch Catholics belonging to organisations for women, young people or farmers belonged to specifically Catholic organisations; 90% of Catholic primary school children attended a Catholic school; 84% of Catholic voters chose the Catholic People's Party at the 1959 election; 79% of newspaper-reading Catholics subscribed to a Catholic daily newspaper; and 61% of Catholics belonging to a sports club were members of the Catholic federation. Moreover, 91% of Catholics marrying in 1957 chose a Catholic partner; and a study of friendship networks showed that 85% of practising Catholics included fellow Catholics among their closest friends – a majority had no non-Catholics on their list.[25] Meanwhile, in Germany in 1960, in spite of some decline during and after the Nazi years, 56% of Catholics were Easter Communicants and 48% regular church-goers.[26]

Since the 1990s, the Internet has emerged as a new and increasingly important means of preserving and extending a community of fellow believers within what is perceived as a hostile environment. Moreover, this community need have no geographical limits. Brown and Lynch, noting that many British Christians see themselves as living in "a newly dominant and hostile secular culture", and use websites, often originating in the United States, and video or audio downloads to sustain their separate identity. This is especially important for those with relatively specialised interests such as Christian heavy metal. Of course the Internet has proved an important resource for various different minorities. Nash discusses its importance for American atheists, especially those living in rural areas. As one correspondent told him: "I am now much more open regarding my atheism. Two things brought me out of my apathy: (1) The arrogant conservative-Christian atmosphere in the US, and (2) The presence of activist atheists on the Internet."[27]

[25] J. A. **Coleman**, *The Evolution of Dutch Catholicism, 1958–74* (University of California Press, 1978), 69–71, 75–77.

[26] Antonius **Liedhegener**, "Säkularisierung als Entkirchlichung" – *Umstrittene Säkularisierung*. Eds. Karl Gabriel, Christel Gärtner and Detlef Pollack (Berlin University Press, 2012), 508.

[27] Callum **Brown** and Gordon **Lynch**, "Cultural Perspectives" – *Religion and Change in Modern Britain*. Eds. Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (London: Routledge, 2012),

Nevertheless, this strategy does nothing to spread the influence of the church beyond the 'ghetto'. For many people too, the 'ghetto' came to appear claustrophobic, as a result of which there was a considerable amount of suppressed anti-clerical feeling. Moreover, the rationale for constructing a self-contained sub-culture depended on fears of a hostile outside world. By the 1950s and 1960s these fears no longer seemed so plausible, as, for example, the Dutch Labour party sought to reach out to Christian voters, and in their Bad Godesberg Programme (1959) the German Social Democrats presented Christianity (as well as Marxism) as a key source of inspiration for Socialist ideas. Furthermore, Pope John XXIII, motivated especially by the fear of a possible nuclear war, emphasised the need for Catholics to join with non-Catholics and non-Christians in the field of peace and social justice. More generally, in societies that were increasingly affluent and also coming to place an overriding emphasis on the importance of individual freedom, the 1960s saw a progressive weakening of collective identities of all kinds – what Peter van Dam has called a move from 'heavy society' to 'light society'.[28] During the 1960s the Dutch Catholic 'pillar' that had been so sturdy only a few years before, would begin to collapse.

Strategy 3: embracing the Zeitgeist

This strategy involves identifying Christianity partly or even wholly with the forces of progress. Strategies 1 and 2 proceeded from the assumption that the ideologies and movements that were driving secularisation were bad and essentially anti-Christian. Strategy 3 proceeded from the assumption that there were at least some important elements of truth in the new ideas or movements, and that it was self-defeating for Christians simply to condemn them. Christians were thus partly to blame for the

342–343; David **Nash**, "Religious Sensibilities in the Age of the Internet: Freethought Culture and the Historical Context of Communication Culture" – *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media*. Eds. Stewart M. Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark (Columbia University Press, 2002), 281. See also Heidi **Campbell**, *When Religion meets New Media* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[28] Hugh **McLeod**, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 73–79; Peter van **Dam**, *Religion und Zivilgesellschaft: Christliche Traditionen in der niederländischen und deutschen Arbweiterbewegung (1945–1980)* (Münster: Waxmann, 2010), 297–308.

problems they faced in contemporary society.

In 1848, for example, the English Christian Socialists were among the first of many Christian social reformers who complained that the church had not responded adequately to the "Social Question" or "The Condition of England", as they might have termed it, and that criticisms by social radicals, in this case Chartists and Owenite Socialists, were at least partly justified. Similarly, the French and Belgian Liberal Catholics who gathered in Malines in 1863 excoriated the political conservatism of their church and called on Catholics to adopt a Liberal political programme including freedom of the press and "a free church in a free state". Especially in Germany, but also in other countries such as England and the Netherlands, there were many Protestants in the second half of the nineteenth century who argued that Christian theology must evolve in the light of new knowledge. In England a significant turning-point came with the publication in 1860 of *Essays and Reviews*, by a group of "Broad Church" Anglican clergymen, and the failure of the prosecution of two of their number for heresy. Another member of the group, Frederick Temple (admittedly the author of a less controversial contribution) would be appointed to the episcopate in 1869, and he went on to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Meanwhile Dissenters, although relatively conservative in their theology, were often fervently committed to Liberal political goals. Edward Baines, Congregationalist, newspaper editor and Liberal Member of Parliament for Leeds from 1834 to 1841, was typical: in the words of his son and biographer he was "self-harnessed to the car of progress".[29]

The heyday of this strategy may have come in the 1960s. Liberal theologians like John Robinson or Harvey Cox proceeded from the premise that "modern man" had "come of age" and that Christianity had to modernise if it was to make any sense in the contemporary world. Robinson called for a "New Reformation" and a famous newspaper article in which he outlined his ideas was headlined "Our Image of God Must Go". In his best-selling *Honest to God* he made three main points. First, he wanted to update Christian language and imagery to make it more relevant to a scientific age. Second, he was very impressed by Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* and the concept of a "religionless Christianity". Robinson feared that instead of entering into every area of life, including

[29] Clyde **Binfield**, *So down to prayers* (London: Dent, 1977), 54.

those deemed "secular", Christianity had been separated off into a compartment labelled "religion", which had little relationship with the rest. Third, he advocated a "new morality" based on love and applied creatively to the needs of an actual situation, instead of being based on a legalistic moral code. He was fond of quoting St Augustine's injunction to "love, and then do as you will". At the same time, Christian student movements in particular were strongly attracted to the political radicalism of the later 1960s. For example, the French Catholic *Mission étudiante* defined itself in 1970 as an "association of believers and of communities of believers, situating itself within the revolutionary current". In the later 1960s and early 1970s the World Student Christian Federation was bitterly divided between radicals who saw themselves as part of a "global revolutionary movement" and moderates who believed that Christians must "join the struggle against economic injustice, neo-colonialism, racism, authoritarian systems and militarism", but insisted that this should be done through democratic socialist politics rather than armed insurrection.[30]

The differences between strategies 2 and 3 were often illustrated in different Catholic and Protestant responses to Communist totalitarianism. The Catholic Church tended to prioritise defence of the institution whose continuing ability to provide Catholic teaching and administer the sacraments was, according to Catholic theology, necessary for the salvation of the faithful. Protestants were readier to enter into dialogue with the regime, arguing that Christians had a responsibility to society and could not detach themselves from the existing social and political order. The most famous example was the "the Church in Socialism", the slogan adopted by the Protestant Church in East Germany as a means of safeguarding the church's position, while also providing a base from which to criticise the policies of the Communist government.[31]

This strategy can be quite effective in the short term. For example, nineteenth-century Britain was less secularised than France or Germany, partly because of the appeal of the free churches to many middle-class Liberals and working-class labour activists, and of Broad Church Anglicanism to many of the well-educated. This approach does, however, hold the danger that Christians may become so completely identified with the

[30] McLeod, *1960s*, 83–92, 148, 156–157.

[31] Mary **Fulbrook**, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 87–125.

Zeitgeist that they have nothing to say specifically as Christians, or that their Christianity may become subordinated to their political or intellectual concerns. Of course many progressive Christians would say that this does not matter: Christianity is to be lived and practised in "the world", and this is more important than defence of the institution. The results of such thinking were illustrated in the late 1960s, when conservatives came increasingly to dominate the Christian student movement, as the liberals and radicals were so preoccupied with politics and with their political differences that they tended to become detached from the wider church.[32]

Strategy 4: evangelisation from below

This strategy focuses less on ideological enemies and more on the impact of social change in rendering obsolete the church's established methods and machinery, and on the consequent need to find new ways of bringing the Christian message to the people. Unlike Strategy 1, this is evangelism from "below" rather than from "above". Unlike Strategy 2 it is aggressive rather than defensive. Unlike Strategy 3 it seeks to modernise not the *content* of Christianity, but the *methods* by which it is propagated.

Early Methodism was a classic example of this approach. The Methodist movement arose in eighteenth-century England as a response to the apparent fact that significant sections of the population, especially those living in industrial and mining communities, had little contact with the existing churches. The Methodists addressed this problem in a variety of ways. Open-air preaching was used to reach people who had seldom entered a church (or maybe were attending church, but one whose theology the Methodists regarded as inadequate or even heretical). The new evangelical commitment of those converted through such preaching was confirmed through small and intense "class meetings" at which members could talk about their religious experience, discuss difficult biblical passages and confess their sins. Newly-written hymns made church services more attractive, and were also used to highlight key doctrines. The use of preachers from the working class made the gospel more accessible to the uneducated mass of the people, and ordinary people (including women)

[32] McLeod, *1960s*, 211–212.

were able to assume positions of responsibility within the Methodist community. For several generations Methodist chapels became a key element in many English communities, especially in those parts of the industrial north and midlands where the Church of England was relatively weak.[33]

Similar ideas played a role in the resurgence of American evangelicalism in the 1970s and 1980s. In order to propagate their blend of conservative theology and conservative politics, Evangelicals sought new ways of reaching their audience (for example television and films), new styles of preaching, with preachers using popular language and sometimes dressing informally, with modern music and an enthusiastic embrace of aspects of popular culture, especially rock music and sport.[34]

American Evangelicals showed impressive growth in the 1970s and 1980s, when other churches in the United States and most churches in Europe were losing members. They also became a force in politics. In focusing on methods of propagating Christianity, however, evangelists from below may be especially vulnerable to social changes which render these methods less relevant. For example, the Methodists were very effective in gathering support in isolated communities, but as these communities became less isolated, Methodism found itself in competition with a range of other organisations – including the Church of England. In their efforts to popularise Christianity, movements such as Methodism may also be vulnerable to the social mobility of their members. Methodist values of literacy and hard work led the children and grandchildren of the early converts into white-collar jobs, and in the course of time Methodism lost a lot of its original working-class base and became much like other mainly middle-class churches.[35] Furthermore, in using particular taboos as hallmarks of genuine Christianity, these movements may be vulnerable to changing moral values. For example, the Methodist taboo on alcohol was quite attractive in the nineteenth century, but gradually came to be seen as "puritanical" in the twentieth. In the United States, it seems that the Evangelicals may now have passed their peak, partly because of

[33] David **Hempton**, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (Yale University Press, 2005).

[34] Erling **Jorstad**, *Popular Religion in America: The Evangelical Voice* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press 1993).

[35] Clive **Field**, "The Social Structure of English Methodism, Eighteenth-Twentieth Centuries" – *British Journal of Sociology*, 28 (1977), 199–225.

over-identification with the 'Religious Right' and their politics, but also because of specific moral stances, notably their emphatic anti-gay stance at a time when increasing numbers of Americans are seeing a variety of sexual orientations as legitimate.[36]

CONCLUSION

Strategy 1 was understandable in the context of the nineteenth century, but became increasingly less viable with the shift towards a more democratic society – and it is liable to brutal retribution when a regime changes. The other approaches have a degree of continuing relevance. Strategy 2 offered an effective line of defence in the very difficult circumstances created by the totalitarian regimes that played such a large part in the history of the twentieth century, and in the light of which survival was a major concern. In more open societies, however, a combination of strategies 3 and 4 is likely to be more effective – selectively adopting some aspects of contemporary culture, while rejecting others, and continually adapting the methods of preaching Christianity to the needs of a changing society.

Since the eighteenth century, Europe and North America have seen sweeping social changes that often presented the churches with major challenges. For example, the rapid urbanisation that took place in the nineteenth century opened up many new possibilities, which were sometimes very damaging to the church. Their consequences were not, however, inevitable or uniform. Comparative studies have shown that a variety of factors, ranging from the conscious response of church leaders or other activists to the differing political context, could lead to remarkably different outcomes in different places.[37] The same period has seen an intense religious contest not only between rival versions of Christianity or between Christianity and other world-views, but between religion and secularism. The threat of secularisation, whether at the level of individuals or of social institutions, has always been present. Christians have not

[36] Robert **Putnam** and David **Campbell**, *American Grace* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 120–132.

[37] For example see the essays in Hugh McLeod (ed.), *European Religion in the Age of Great Cities* (London: Routledge, 1995), especially Carl **Strikwerda**, "A Resurgent Religion", 61–88.

been passive victims, but have responded actively to the challenges this situation presents.

None of the strategies outline above has been completely successful. The simple explanation would be that there has been an inexorable process of secularisation, and that all attempts to stem the tide are doomed to failure.[38] When we look at the history of the past three hundred years, however, the picture is arguably much more complex. Rather than there being an ongoing process of secularisation, one can distinguish considerable differences between countries, as well as periods of religious revival and decline. During the last forty years the trend has indeed been towards greater secularisation. However, two of the greatest sins an historian can commit are either to interpret the past merely in terms of what it has contributed to the present or to extrapolate from the present a future which will be just like the present, but more so. Many of the strategies for resisting secularisation enjoyed success at least for a time, and in doing so shaped the lives of large numbers of people. As I have suggested, all of these contained inherent limitations. There is no strategy either for promoting or resisting secularisation that is free of all disadvantages. Moreover, one of the salient features of modern European and American societies has been a considerable degree of ideological pluralism. In a democratic society with freedom of religion, people will make a variety of religious and non-religious choices. Just as Christians have had to come to terms with secularity, political parties like the German Social Democrats and the Italian Communists, whose roots were militantly secular, found themselves having to come to terms with the continuing relevance of religion. Even Fascist and Communist states found that their power to coerce their people into a universal ideological conformity was limited. Most recently we have seen a remarkable example in a different region of the world, namely the revival both of Christianity and of other religions, such as Buddhism and Daoism, in China after the end of Mao's Cultural Revolution.

[38] For a lucid exposition of this argument, see Steve **Bruce**, *Secularization* (Oxford University Press, 2011).