

Stones for Bread



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HARRY ANTONIDES

**Stones
for Bread**

**THE SOCIAL GOSPEL
AND ITS CONTEMPORARY LEGACY**

PAIDEIA PRESS
Jordan Station, Ontario, Canada

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Antonides, Harry, 1931-
Stones for bread

Bibliography: p.
Includes index.
ISBN 0-88815-061-X

1. Social gospel - History. 2. Church and
social problems. 3. Sociology, Christian.

I. Title.

BT738.A57 1985 261.1 C85-099059-9

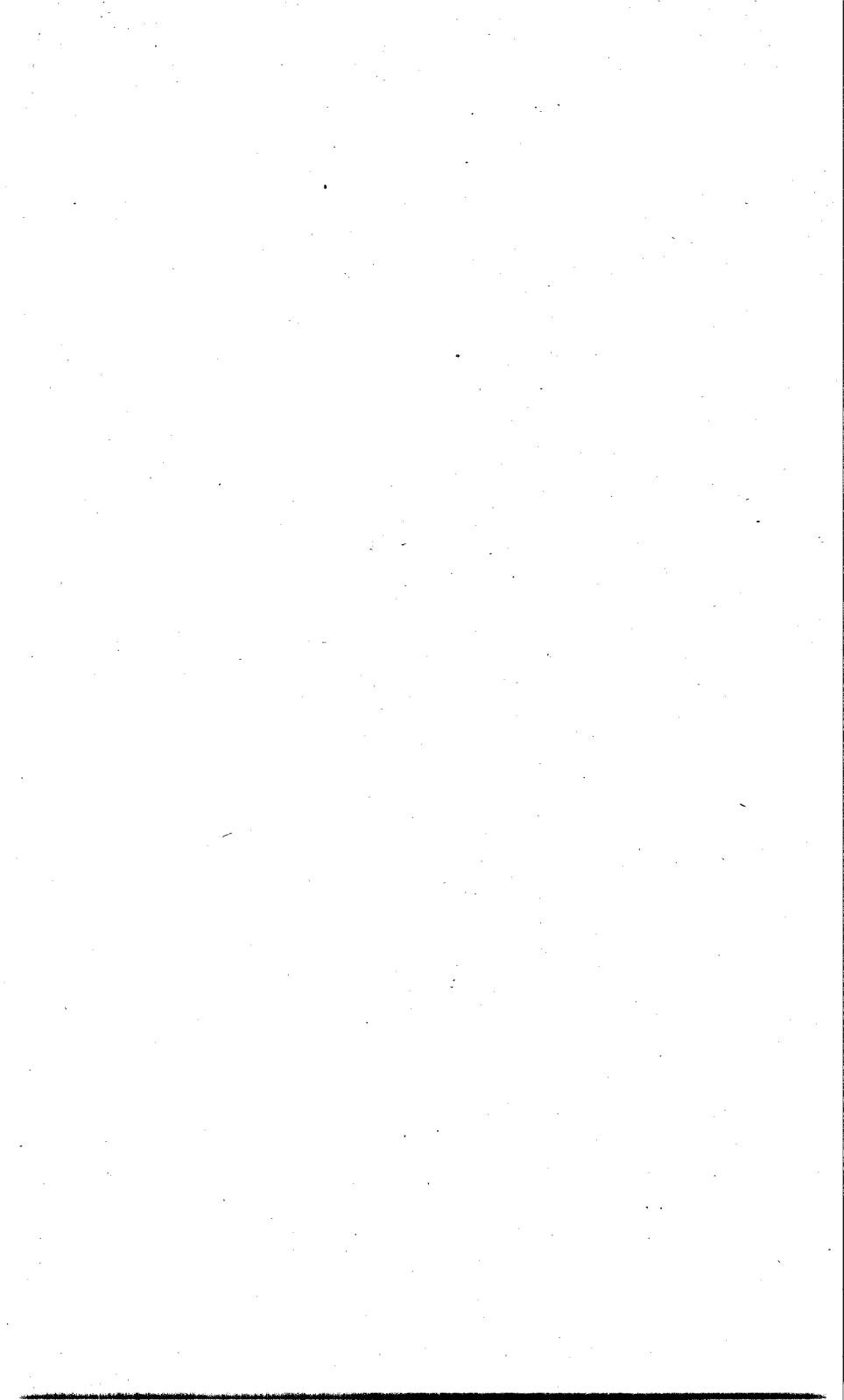
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Part of Chapter 7 of the present work appeared in a slightly different version in *The Guide*, March 1985, pp. 12ff.

ISBN 0-88815-061-X
Printed in Canada.

*To my mother
and the memory of my father*



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Foreword

Quite often we face in the Christian community the dilemma of having to choose between the privatism of those who do not see why they should apply their faith to social and political questions and the radical views of others who are certain they ought to apply faith to society in socialistic ways. Harry Antonides finds fault with both these perspectives.

The main thrust of his fine book is to examine the roots of the liberal social gospel and expose the current fruit of it in the radical politics of the Catholic bishops and assorted mainline Protestant churchmen. He shows, I think successfully, that the social gospel is really a secularizing of the Christian church rather than a christianizing of Canadian society.

Not wanting to retreat into privatized religion, and opposed to the ideologically entangled liberation theology approach, Harry Antonides gives us a good sketch of what a proper social theology would look like if it were scripturally sound and intelligently informed. The book ends by opening us up to an orthodox social gospel which really holds some promise.

I believe this book may mark the beginning of a sound and effective stage in Canadian political theology. A wide range of Christian people ought to be able to endorse what Antonides is saying and get on with the task of exercising a godly influence in their beloved land.

CLARK H. PINNOCK
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Preface

Christians have failed to address the issues of our age clearly and effectively. Why this failure? Because many of them are confused about the content and meaning of their own faith.

Modern Christianity's ambiguity and ineffectiveness contrast starkly with the straightforward power of Jesus' teachings. Matthew tells us that Jesus' words amazed the multitudes because he spoke to them as one who had authority, so unlike their scribes. Not only did Christ speak the Word, he *was* the Word of God sent to proclaim the will of the sovereign Creator-Redeemer. Much of what today passes for Christian insight is empty and unconvincing because it is based on contemporary ideological fashion rather than on the authoritative Word of God.

Those who wish to understand the contemporary situation in Canada and what can be done about it must pay special attention to the way Christians and churches in Canada have understood the relationship between Christianity and culture. There have been important European (especially German) and American influences. But if we wish to understand the predicament of modernist or liberal Christianity, we must first of all consider how Christians have responded to the Bible.

Christianity stands or falls with its source, which is the written, inspired Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Everything depends on what we think of Scripture and how we listen to it. If we consider the Bible to be no more than an accumulation of human insight and experience, even if we accord it a very special status, the foundation of Christianity is destroyed. Then we are left to pick and choose as best we can among a host of different opinions. I believe that this is the predicament in which liberal Christianity finds itself.

To believe that the Bible is God's authoritative, trustworthy revelation through which we may know the truth about God,

ourselves and the world does not mean that we know everything there is to be known. We are finite and our knowledge about reality is always imperfect. We must be careful to avoid equating our own insights with the absolute norms of the Word of God. At the same time, our faith in Scripture gives us sufficient foundation to be confident about those things that matter most. As Paul reminds us in his letter to Timothy, "For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline."

The Christian faith is more than personal—it also concerns our relationship to our fellow human beings. We must develop insight into the biblical norms for human behaviour in the world and thus for the way society ought to be structured. Such insight will help us to appreciate the significance of societal institutions and the indispensable place of both authority and freedom within such institutions. Although there is no Christian blueprint for society, there is a Christian way of understanding life.

For this reason, I have strongly emphasized the need for Christians to promote the concept and practice of an open and pluralistic society and a limited state. In the face of powerful egalitarian and collectivistic tendencies, Christians should be vigorous in their defence of freedom with justice.

The traditional beliefs and methods of liberalism are inadequate for preserving and strengthening a free society. Although liberalism, as its name signifies, is founded on the idea of human freedom, this idea has become secularized (both in its Left as well as in its Right streams). Consequently, the West is confused and unprepared to meet the totalitarian forces arrayed against it.

The West's predicament is complicated by the fact that it is weak in two ways. Internally, it is weak and divided against itself. Consequently, it has lost the conviction and courage to withstand the blackmailing tactics and actual conquests of a spiritually and morally decrepit but militarily and technically powerful enemy. Many Christians and church leaders in the West are among the confused; think, for example, of their role in the present "peace" movement, and witness their shameful silence concerning the plight of Christians in Communist-controlled nations.

Christians are therefore confronted with both of Western society's enemies at the same time. They are to discern and counteract the spiritual poverty and moral bankruptcy of their own society; at the same time they must oppose vigorously the threat of external

totalitarian forces. Christians attempting this dual task will at times appear to be schizophrenic, but that is a risk they must accept. Insofar as the West is still a bastion of freedom and justice and a haven for the oppressed, it is worth defending. Insofar as the West is severing its ties with its Judeo-Christian roots (a process that is visible in many distressing ways), it needs to be called to a change of heart and direction.

Stones for Bread originated in my work as the director of research and education for the Christian Labour Association of Canada (an independent labour union) and the Work Research Foundation (an organization dedicated to research in economics and industrial relations from a Christian perspective). Part of this book was adapted from a series of lectures presented to a gathering of Christian Reformed ministers in the province of Alberta.

The Christian Reformed Church, of which I am a member, is a church that traditionally has placed a strong emphasis on the sovereignty of God, the authority of the Scriptures, and the calling of Christians to serve their Lord in every arena of human endeavour. At the present time, this church is doing a great deal of rethinking about the Christian's witness in society and the church's relationship to the world. I hope that the reflection in these pages on the meaning of the Christian faith for our age will benefit Christians in my own church, as well as those in all other churches.

In order to counter the powerful forces of secularism in our time, it is urgent that evangelical Christians (that is, those whose faith is in the risen Lord as revealed in the Scriptures) stand together to witness to the grace and power of their Lord. We should do our utmost to avoid a narrow kind of churchism (or denominationalism) and instead channel our efforts toward building a vigorous evangelical ecumenicity through which the Christian witness in Canada can become more effective and more consistent.

This book is polemic in places, and some will dislike it for that reason. However, I am convinced that the situation is urgent and that it requires a firm and explicit response. The warning must be sounded clearly that liberal Christianity is a distortion of the gospel, and that those who embrace it will be left spiritually destitute.

Stones for Bread was written especially for those Christians who are troubled and confused by the contradictory messages they receive from many of their own leaders. It is my hope that in some small way this book will encourage those who wish to be faithful witnesses of

him who came to make all things new. If it also provides some clarity to others who do not consider themselves to be Christians, for that, too, I would be thankful.

Acknowledgments

This book is, at least in part, the product of my research and education work for the Christian Labour Association of Canada and the Work Research Foundation. I am grateful to the boards of these organizations and to my colleagues for their trust and support. Others have critically reviewed parts of the manuscript and I thank them for their encouragement and valuable suggestions.

Sharon Hartholt typed numerous drafts at surprising speed and with unfailing cheerfulness. Suzanne Duiker Kroon's competent assistance in editing and overseeing all the details of this project was indispensable. To both of them my special thanks.

The shortcomings of this book and the opinions expressed are, of course, entirely the author's responsibility.

The tempter came to him and said,
"If you are the Son of God,
tell these stones to become bread."

Jesus answered,
"It is written:
'Man does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "

—*Matthew 4:3-4*

"Which of you, if his son asks for bread,
will give him a stone?"

—*Matthew 7:9*

Introduction

We live in an age that has been called post-Christian. A century ago Friedrich Nietzsche pronounced God to be dead. This was no shout of victory, but of despair. In its wake, all the old certainties have crumbled, and man is left facing a terrible void. When God does not exist, there are no limits or meaning in this world. And that is the core of our present predicament.

To say that our society suffers from profound spiritual malaise may sound like a cliché—however, it's true. Once our source of hope, our scientific knowledge and technical mastery over nature now threaten our existence. Individuals feel helpless in the face of massive bureaucracies and sophisticated technical systems. Sociologists speak of widespread anomie—a lack of purpose, a sense of rootlessness. More disconcerting still, with the push of a button, our technical know-how can destroy the entire world. The most we can hope for, it seems, is that the precarious balance of world power be maintained.

In such a world, the Word of God continues to speak of peace, love and justice in terms that are at once authoritative and filled with comfort. But how must we understand the meaning of God's Word for our time—a time of great confusion and serious divisions, also among Christians? This book is written out of the conviction that the most urgent task before Christians is to reaffirm their faith and to articulate the meaning of the good news for our age. The good news is that God's Word of reconciliation and power is addressed to the people of this troubled world.

In general, Western Christendom speaks weakly and seems irrelevant to the truly crucial issues of our time. In one camp Christians are busy "saving souls" while neglecting the "world"; in another Christianity is identified, or at least allied, with contemporary Marxist revolutions which seek a radical restructuring of society. Between these camps, Christians are struggling to maintain their ties with the "spiritual" as well as the "worldly" realm; they arrive at an uncertain

equilibrium that lacks direction and focus. Christians all too often adapt their faith to non-biblical views of man and society, and this is what keeps them from constructing an internally consistent and biblically directed view of man and the world. They have not developed a "Christian mind";¹ yet without such a biblically attuned framework, there will arise no vigorous, culturally and historically relevant Christian way of life.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, a new movement emerged within the Christian churches in Canada. Proclaiming the gradual establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, this "social gospel" took powerful hold on the churches. After World War I, however, its grip was loosened by a renewed awareness of human sinfulness and the wholly-otherness of God. Still later, the idea of a "secular Christianity," which was at times allied with various revolutionary movements, became popular. Common to all these variations of Christianity is their denial of a specifically and radically Christian way of understanding matters of culture such as politics, economics and philosophy. Typical of this viewpoint is the statement made in a 1964 report of the United Church of Canada that "insofar as economics is a *factual* matter, we cannot compare Communist convictions concerning economics with Christian convictions concerning economics, for there is no distinctively 'Christian' economics to consider."²

Karl Barth, perhaps Protestantism's most influential twentieth century spokesman, categorically denied the legitimacy of a distinctively Christian understanding and organization of political and other cultural activities. He criticized the formation of Christian political parties as a dangerous form of hypocrisy and separatism. He wrote that "the Christian community has no exclusive theory of its own to advocate in face of the various forms and realities of political life. It is not in a position to establish one particular doctrine as *the* Christian doctrine of the just State."³ That warning found a large and grateful audience in Europe and North America. (Barth's position, unfortunately, was reinforced by the failures and compromises of certain organizations that called themselves Christian.)

The assumption that one cannot and should not attempt to construct a distinctively Christian (that is, biblical) world-view left Christians defenceless against the powerful forces of secularism. The surrender to the spirit of secularism—the belief in human autonomy—within an increasingly de-Christianized West gained

momentum. More and more Christians found themselves ineffective spectators of or contributors to programs and purposes that had nothing to do with biblical religion. They had forfeited their claims to unique or absolute biblical standards in favour of a radical relativism in which human solidarity and ecumenicity became the paramount virtues.

The social gospel movement, which rose to prominence in Canada during the first two decades of this century, represented one way in which Canadian churches and their members, and especially a vocal segment of their leaders, attempted to relate the Christian faith to the problems of a modern society. Although this branch of Canadian Christianity has changed over time, certain of its key ideas and underlying assumptions have been adopted by contemporary liberal Christianity. Such ideas turn up in the numerous church-sponsored taskforces concerned with social, economic and political issues.

The notion that there is a direct line from the earlier social gospel movement to the present social activism of the mainline Canadian churches is not without its critics. Some believe that between the early developments and the present time, Canadian churches have returned to a more biblical orientation. But there is much evidence to suggest that the process of "liberalization" in many Canadian churches has not been checked. And this process will continue unless a radical turnaround takes place. H. Richard Niebuhr observed:

As time went on liberalism began to outweigh Evangelicalism more and more. At the same time the former tended to become increasingly secular or, to speak more accurately, to lose the sense of the broken relation between God and man, between the present and the coming kingdom. In the course of succeeding generations the heritage of faith with which liberalism had started was used up. The liberal children of liberal fathers needed to operate with ever diminishing capital.⁴

The social gospel movement of the early part of this century and the social action movement current in the mainline Canadian churches share a key characteristic, that is, the endorsement of a radical subjectivism. Subjectivism locates the centre of religion in man, not in God. Liberal Christianity has thus moved from focusing on service and praise to God to concentrating on the needs of man, and therefore on the *usefulness of religion*.

The implication here is not that one must choose either for a "social" or for an "individual" gospel. The gospel is both for the individual and for society; the meaning and authority of the Word of God is for all of life. There is no neutral territory; God lays claim to it all. It is precisely this claim of absolute sovereignty, a claim from the heart of biblical revelation, that liberal Christianity denies. This denial is the outcome of a long process in which the core ideas of the Enlightenment have been particularly influential.

The Great Turnabout

One can hardly overestimate the impact of eighteenth and nineteenth century thought on Christianity and on theology. Christianity was redefined in terms of reason and experience rather than in terms of biblical authority. The new ideas about religion and philosophy were most concerned with man and his happiness on earth. In the seventeenth century, John Tillotson (1630-94) expressed it as follows: "The ultimate end of all God's laws and consequently of all religion is human happiness."⁵ More than two centuries later Henry Nelson Wieman (1884-1975) stated that God is "that behavior of the universe which preserves and increases to the maximum the total good of all human living," or, alternatively, "What saves man from evil, as he cannot save himself, is properly called 'God', no matter how different it may be from traditional conceptions of God. The operative reality is more important than any cherished belief about it."⁶

This revolution in man's understanding of himself and his world amounted to a radical secularization of thought and life. A. C. McGiffert has described the change in these words:

The whole world of thought and culture was transformed. . . . the dependence upon supernatural powers, the submission to external authority, the subordination of time to eternity, and of fact to symbol . . . the somber sense of the sin of man and the evil of the world, the static interpretation of reality, . . . the belief that amelioration can come only in another world beyond the grave—all of which characterize the Middle Ages—were widely overcome and men faced life with a new confidence in themselves, with a new recognition of human power and achievement, with a new appreciation of present values.⁷

The eighteenth century Enlightenment set the stage for a confrontation for which Christianity was ill prepared. Many of the leading nineteenth century Protestant thinkers were very receptive to the new ideas. They joined in the effort to revise Christianity to make it compatible with science, reason and experience. In a chapter titled "The Enlightenment and Modern Christianity," James C. Livingston argues that the spiritual heritage of the Enlightenment is a vital part of our contemporary experience and he identifies the following Enlightenment themes.⁸

Autonomy. The traditional belief that authority has its origin outside of man, particularly in revelation, was put aside for the belief that individual reason and conscience are the guides to truth and right action. Only rational evidence was acceptable. In this context, autonomy does not necessarily mean rejection of all law or authority, but it does mean that true autonomy (freedom) can be achieved by conforming the individual will and reason to the universal law of reason. Thus divine law or ecclesiastical authority holds only if it is in harmony with universal and rational axioms of behaviour.

Reason. The rationalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was different from classical rationalism. Not the speculative and abstract reasoning of a Descartes, but rather the empirical, experimental reasoning of Francis Bacon and John Locke began to dominate. The difference is important, since empiricism turned to using reason for the immediate task of eliminating ignorance—thought to be the cause of misfortune and unhappiness—thus paving the way for the ascent of man. *Practical* reason that would lead to action and change became of paramount importance. The significance of the change is captured in these words of Voltaire: "We must never make hypotheses; we must never say: Let us begin by inventing principles according to which we attempt to explain everything. We should say rather: Let us make an exact analysis of things."⁹

Nature. Rousseau coined the famous phrase: "Man was born free, but everywhere he is in chains." Behind this saying lay a belief in the nobility of an earlier and simpler stage of life. Accordingly, man's estrangement and suffering were thought to be caused by his separation from nature and by the artificiality of his life. Man's loss of freedom could be overcome only by a return to the purity and simplicity of an earlier stage—"the state of nature."

The natural sciences had discovered that the laws of nature were orderly and uniform; in human affairs, then, reasonableness should be natural too. Therefore, all beliefs and practices related to things unnatural were to be eliminated.

Melioristic optimism. Belief in the affinity of the natural and the rational provided a powerful stimulus for social and political reform. This emerging confidence in the possibility for improvement constituted a drastic change from an earlier time in which people had simply resigned themselves to their lot. Alexander Pope had said: "Whatever is, is right." But Voltaire, contemplating the terrible Lisbon earthquake of 1755, had written:

All may be well; that hope can man sustain,
All *now* is well; 'tis an illusion vain.

Progress. An optimistic view of the future provided a foundation for an emerging belief in *progress*. Now that the shackles of superstition had been broken and the authority of religion and the church had been thrown off, man could concentrate on life in this world. No longer would he have to wait for happiness in the next life; happiness was within his temporal grasp. He gazed longingly toward a new age in which the demons of the past would be driven out by the application of scientific methods to political and social problems. Many agreed with Condorcet (1743-94) when he wrote:

The result of my work will be to show by reasoning and by facts that there is no limit to the perfecting of man's powers; that the progress of this perfecting, from now on cannot be stopped by any power and will go on as long as the earth endures. No doubt the pace of progress will vary from time to time but it will never go backward.¹⁰

Toleration. The Enlightenment fashioned a new view of truth and toleration, inspired in part by weariness with the wars of religion and sincere desire to establish civil liberties. Other factors contributed to this new view, including the dogmatic claims of religion and the contradictory assumption that truth is not established by revelation but only by results.

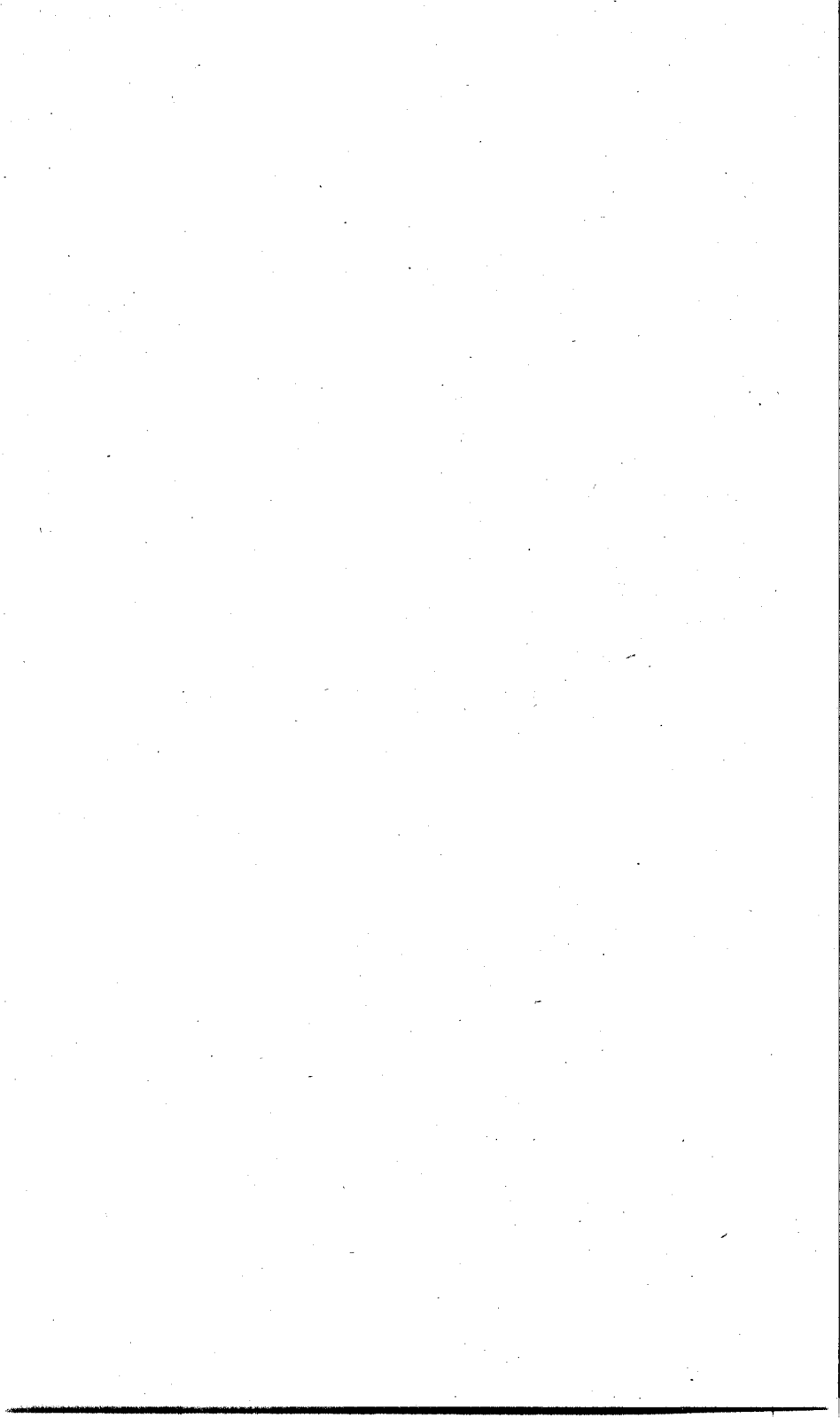
These, then, were the key ideas of the Enlightenment, and all of them were of secular origin. Livingston summarizes:

The appeal to autonomous reason and conscience, the melioristic optimism with its attendant discontent with existing

conditions of political and economic injustice, and the undogmatic temper with its appeal to what is natural and universal and to tolerance in matters of belief, all of this reflects a break with both Medieval civilization and Protestant orthodoxy.¹¹

The subject of this study is that branch of Christianity most influenced by the Enlightenment belief in rational, autonomous man. Special attention will be paid to the theological and philosophical sources of liberal Christianity's departure from biblical religion and the way in which this departure has shaped Christians' views of the problems of modern culture.

This effort takes as its starting point God's sovereignty as revealed in his work of creation and in the Scriptures. The central message of the Scriptures is that God has redeemed his creation through Christ's death and resurrection. This is what gives meaning and direction to our lives. Man has a task in the world as God's image bearer and steward of the creation. We therefore do not have the option of pietistic withdrawal; we are called to live *in* the world without being *of* the world. It's a task that we can begin to do only by prayerfully listening to the Scriptures and by depending entirely on God's grace and on the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



1. A New View of Man and History

As the Enlightenment reshaped Western thought, a radical change occurred in people's understanding of God, Christ, the Atonement, man, sin, redemption, the Kingdom of God and the entire content of biblical revelation. The purpose of human life was no longer defined in terms of service to God. Purpose came to be located in man himself and in *history*. Principal A. M. Fairbairn of Oxford described this revolution within Christianity in these words:

The most distinctive and determinative element in modern theology is what we may term a new feeling for Christ. . . . But we feel Him more in our theology because we know Him better in history. . . . The old theology came to history through doctrine, but the new comes to doctrine through history; to the one all historical questions were really dogmatic, but to the other all dogmatic questions are formally historical.¹

Sydney Ahlstrom, a historian of religion, cites five ways in which the new revolutionary understanding of history altered Christianity.

1. Past events, including the history of the Jews, the life of Jesus and the rise of Christianity were interpreted in the same "uniformitarian" way as secular events. Divine providence and miracles were excluded from this interpretation.
2. The Bible was interpreted in the same way as all other historical documents—a method which undermined the doctrine of inspiration and scriptural infallibility.
3. This reductionistic method gave rise to historical theology in which questions of doctrine were resolved by a study of that doctrine in history. Many believed that the content of faith could be reduced to a few simple tenets that had stood the test of time. This view is very well illustrated by Adolph von Harnack's famous

lectures on the nature of Christianity, given in 1900, which drew their support from a few central precepts about Jesus.

4. The comparative study of religions paved the way for a new relativism. The examination of the "higher" religions of the Orient, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism, found an appreciative audience in an age already imbued with idealistic philosophy and pantheistic theology.
5. The culmination of these new ideas was "historicism," which holds that all human activities, thoughts and concerns—hence everything human—are inescapably historical. All certainty and authority were thus swept away and replaced by pervasive relativism. Despite important differences between such leading thinkers as Hegel, Marx and Troeltsch, all insisted on the historicity of all things. ("Historicism" also connotes a kind of fatalism or determinism, a position in which there is little scope for human freedom. Although this camp included optimists and pessimists, there was agreement among them that human freedom and spontaneity are very limited or entirely imaginary.)²

In light of these five tendencies, Ahlstrom describes the intellectual challenge faced by theologians as "awe-inspiring in its magnitude": the Enlightenment confidence in science; the romantic heresy that religion was feeling, that nature was a cathedral and communing in it a sacrament; the rejection of the Genesis account of creation and of the notion that the orderliness of the world was a sure sign of God's benevolence; historical criticism of the Bible; the relativizing of the church; the denial of human freedom and responsibility, and the denial even of the eternal standards of right and wrong. All of these ideas had to be faced, writes Ahlstrom, "in the new urban jungles of the Gilded Age, where Americans seemed to be chiefly bent on getting and spending and laying waste their powers. Never in the history of Christianity, it would seem, was a weak and disunited Christian regiment drawn into battle against so formidable an alliance, under such unfavourable conditions of climate and weather, and with so little information on the position and intent of the opposition."³

Romantic Reinterpretation of Religion

The American historian John Herman Randall, Jr. has written about the influence of romanticism on religion, and in this context

has reviewed the thought of several nineteenth century German philosophers whose ideas played a key role in the development of modern Christianity's liberal wing.⁴ Randall's analysis is closely followed here.

Romanticism was primarily a religious interpretation of the universe that viewed man's interest as central. It held that there is some reality, not improperly symbolized as "God," or "Providence," or some "Friend who cares," behind phenomena. The romanticists believed that the "Power behind Nature" was also devoted to man's ideals. Nineteenth century science later challenged this religious world-view, but it has been defended by philosophical idealism up to the present time.

In their search for a new interpretation of religion—in reaction to "Rational religion"—many were influenced by the urging of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) to warm up "cold reason" and to be guided by intuition instead. Rousseau elevated subjectivity and introspection, individualism and creativity as ways to become oneself, to live out one's own desires and wants. He also stimulated interest in history and the past by his admiration for the "primitive."

The revolt against rationalism and authority came to expression in a variety of ways among Protestants and Roman Catholics. For example, some religious romanticists switched from Protestantism to Roman Catholicism because they found it to be less rational. The French traditionalists are probably the best example of a group that defended authoritarian faith, yet remained very much romanticists. In England, evangelicals both within and without the Church of England set the tone for Protestant fundamentalism. Their important leaders were John Wesley (1703-91) and Charles Wesley (1707-88). A growing emphasis in this branch of Protestantism was searching for the reality of religion in man's immediate experience and activities. It was assumed, however, that reality can be *understood* only by intellectual methods and reflective experience.

Initially the romanticists tried to discredit the growing influence of modern science. But as science gained in stature and influence, philosophical interpretations of religion became less hostile to science and even began to be attracted to the new, scientific studies of human culture and experience. The emergence of evolutionary psychology, anthropology and sociology helped to blend philosophical idealism with the developing social sciences, especially in Germany.⁵

These ideas, incubated in German intellectual soil, soon took root in the minds of religious thinkers in England and America. The leading figures in England included Coleridge, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and the Broad Churchmen, and later the English idealists T. H. Green, Benjamin Jowett, John and Edward Caird, and Bernard Bosanquet. In New England, Unitarians, notably Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker, introduced German "transcendentalism." In America outside of New England, religious liberalism and philosophical idealism arrived in the 1880s and 1890s, much later than on the Continent and in Britain, and by this time mostly third hand. The important names here include Lyman Abbott, Washington Gladden, Henry Churchill King, Borden P. Bowne of Boston University, and Josiah Royce. These latter two were directly acquainted with the German sources. Royce, writes Randall, "taught scores of Harvard students how to sublimate Calvinism into what Santayana called 'the genteel tradition' of religious Idealism."

Randall accepts the view (also held by Paul Tillich) that the British and American romanticists were much indebted to the Germans because the latter had been first to come to grips with a secular culture in which the sway of orthodoxy had been broken. To defend themselves against the new scientific philosophies, the British and Americans constructed a philosophy of religion that incorporated the very methods used by philosophies they were opposing. Randall writes:

There is a direct development from the great Romantic religious philosophies to present-day naturalistic and humanistic interpretations of religion. Those German thinkers showed the way to the present insistence on the reality of the religious life without literal belief in its myths, whose symbolic wisdom must still be taken seriously. They are hence fundamentally important for the present-day "reconciliation" of religion with knowledge. There has been a direct growth from their thought to the present views, that religion is a poetic and imaginative celebration of life, or a consecration to a prophetic clarification of the values of social idealism.⁶

Romantic idealism offers three major interpretations of religion. First, religion is a form of *knowledge*, a philosophical interpretation, using *symbols* instead of concepts. G. W. F. Hegel is the important figure here; he insisted that religion and philosophy are the same in content and aim.

Second, religion is a form of *aesthetic experience*, a matter of feelings and emotions, not of explanations and understanding. J. G. Herder, and especially Friedrich Schleiermacher, worked out this view more completely.

Third, religion is neither a form of knowledge nor of aesthetic feelings, but a form of action and of human behaviour. Religious life is dedicated to moral striving and to the realization of human and social goals. In the words of Matthew Arnold, the religious life is "morality touched with emotion" and consists in making the "will of God" predominate and in building the "kingdom of Heaven" on earth. From this *ethical* interpretation emerged the social gospel movement. Albrecht Ritschl is the most important nineteenth century representative of this Protestant school.

These three interpretations of religion so profoundly influenced Protestant thinking that by the beginning of the twentieth century most British and American Protestant theologians were either Hegelians, Schleiermacherians or Ritschlians.

Religion as knowledge. The first interpretation—religion as a form of knowledge expressed in symbols—dominated the nineteenth century after the death of G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831). Its underlying assumption is that religion is primarily intellectual and theological. This laced theology into a philosophical strait jacket. Hegel taught (in Randall's words) that the Absolute is the subject matter of philosophy attainable not by "intuition" but by sustained logical thinking. The Absolute, said Hegel, "is Spirit both as Self and not-Self"; it is therefore always acting, becoming, changing and dynamic. God, or the Absolute, expresses itself in Nature and in humanity by the development of "self-consciousness." Unlike Schleiermacher, whose starting point is experience, Hegel begins with God as the concrete and ever-acting God, whose activity is in creating and revealing himself. Randall explains Hegel's position on God and religion:

God is subject, and object, and their reunion. The world is God as object. God sets himself as an object to come to self-consciousness through the world. God can thus become and truly *be* God only through manifesting himself in the finite, in the world and in man.

Religion is the intellectual relation between the finite spirit of man and the Infinite Spirit of God or the Absolute. Men, who

are God in finitude, are related to the Infinite God through knowledge. At its highest, therefore, religion means to *know* God, not merely to feel him, or to do his will—though these two are included in the “knowing.” Hence theology is philosophic knowledge.⁷

Hegel considered Christianity to be the absolute religion, that is, the perfect revelation of the Absolute. The Father is the thesis, the Son the antithesis, and the Holy Spirit “is the returning of Spirit upon itself.” Christianity is fundamentally a reconciliation of man and God. The Incarnation, therefore, is the central Christian doctrine, for it means the complete union between human reason and Divine Reason:

Man's reason is the Divine element in human nature, it is God coming to self-consciousness in man's knowledge. In other terms, it is Intelligence that is Divine: the rational structure of the universe, realizing itself in human institutions, first becomes “conscious” of itself in man. Hegel's monism sweeps away all the old difficulties about the union of Divine and human natures in the person of Christ. The death of the Christ again is a revelation of the oneness of God and man. The Church is the realm of the spirit, in which the reconciliation of man and God is made practical; its worship, the sacraments, and the rest, are the means of this reconciliation through developing man's consciousness of God.⁸

Against this background, the “Incarnation of Reason” in Christ is seen as a symbol of the fact that human reason is “a manifestation of the rational structure of the universe.” The structure of the world-process becomes God through achieving self-consciousness in man's knowledge. There can thus be no God without man—without a “rationally ordered human society.” For Hegel, self-consciousness requires a divine, that is, a rational social order. The Christian church must establish the Christian society. Salvation is not the salvation of individual souls but salvation of society from irrationality; in other words, the establishment of the Kingdom of God (Reason) on earth. Hegelianism, obviously, was a significant source of inspiration for the social gospel.

Hegelianism became firmly established at Oxford University. John Caird (1820-98) and Edward Caird (1835-1908) were the most able and influential advocates of this school of thought. During the 1870s, Hegelianism was introduced to the colleges in order to save

the students' faith and it became entrenched in the more intellectual seminaries. Ironically, the problem with Hegelianism was, as Randall points out, that its own logic deprived it of all religious content. It slipped easily into a purely intellectual ideal of knowledge in which the Absolute is not God but is beyond good and evil, beyond truth and error. (This "idealistic atheism" is evident, Randall points out, in the work of F. H. Bradley and J. M. E. McTaggart.)

Religion as feeling. The second romantic interpretation of religion saw theology and religious beliefs as symbols of feelings, attitudes or values. This shift in interpretation placed religion beyond the reach of philosophy since religion was no longer a matter of reason. Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) most fully represents this branch of thought. His influence both in Europe and North America can scarcely be exaggerated. He held that religion is the seat of feelings and is another name for a romantic, aesthetic openness to the universe, a form of "cosmic consciousness." Truth and falsity are therefore quite irrelevant to the religious life.

According to Schleiermacher, when man is conscious of the Absolute, he is religious and thus has a sense of oneness with the world. Man transcends himself in his religious consciousness and in the service of his neighbour. Without religious experience a man cannot be moral. Religion is not supernatural, for the Divine is wholly immanent in the world. The awareness of the Divine is "revelation." In his famous work, *The Christian Faith* (1817), Schleiermacher was the first to make religious experience, rather than God, central. Theology is the descriptive account of Christian experience; it is an empirical science, and its data are the phenomena of man's feelings. The Bible and the creeds are records of Christian experience; they are not authoritative, although they are valuable.

Schleiermacher distinguished between general religious experience and specifically Christian experience. Religious experience is a feeling of "absolute dependence" on the Whole. Christian religious experience is the awareness of the power of Christian love, of the living Christ. The conclusion is that Christ is divine because humans experience his work.

Schleiermacher believed that Christianity is the best religion because it has led to the highest religious consciousness. God is love and we gain our fellowship with God through Christ and through men who share in God's love. The church is needed to foster man's

experience of oneness with nature and with mankind, and to stimulate God-consciousness (the sense of the "Kingdom of God"). In sharing Christ's sense of oneness with the universe, we share in eternal life, which can be attained in this life and does not require continued existence after death.

Religion as ethical activity. The third branch of romantic religion claimed that religion is neither a form of knowledge, nor of aesthetic feeling, but a form of ethical activity. Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) represents this school of thought. Indeed, by 1900 he had become the dominant Protestant liberal theologian in Germany, Britain and North America. For Ritschl, theology was not to be concerned with the nature of the world, nor of "reality," but with values. Strongly influenced by Kant's view of knowledge, Ritschl believed that although we cannot know the "Ding an sich" (thing in itself), we can know phenomena. In religion, too, we can know only phenomena, that is, things acting on us.

Ritschl's theory of religion began with an acknowledgement that religion has its origin in man's relation to the world, not to God. The religious problem is to achieve victory over the world by asserting oneself as a free and spiritual being. One needs a higher spiritual principle to set over against the world. For this reason, man needs God. Such "personalizing" of a higher religious principle leads to religion. Not all people are religious; those who are not need to enlarge themselves and their purposes. A person is consciously religious if he is committed to a moral purpose. "God" is a hypothesis that can be verified if we use faith in it as the means of spiritual growth, and make the hypothesis serve our moral ends.

Ritschl's theology is "Christocentric." We believe in God because Christ's teachings work. The Kingdom of God is, for Ritschl, the reign of the divine purpose, righteousness and goodness. The victory is accomplished by the "Kingdom," that is, the reign of righteousness in the world. Ethics is living out God's will, the highest human purpose. Christianity is valid because its love can establish the Kingdom, and experience confirms the faith of the Christian. Thus Christian theology is thoroughly "empirical."

Eternal life, according to Ritschl, is perfect freedom, not necessarily personal survival after death. Christ is "Divine" because he mediates the divine purpose. The Virgin Birth, the Trinity and all the other doctrines of Christ's substance are irrelevant. Christ's death

was simply a natural event without special purpose. Religious authority is not to be found in a book, creed or institution but only in the purpose of God. Religious truth is what advances the divine purpose. Ritschl's theory of knowledge is pragmatic.

These three main streams of religion (or philosophical thought) —the intellectualistic, the aesthetic and the ethical—dominated German theology until the time of Karl Barth. All three rejected the traditional views of human depravity. They shared a focus on the social—Hegel and Schleiermacher because of their monism, and Ritschl because of his notion of divine purpose. Hegel's religious rationalism was popular while people believed in philosophical idealism. With the rise of scientific naturalism and the study of different religions, the views of Schleiermacher and Ritschl became more prominent. Randall writes:

Ethical naturalism appeals to Protestants and to Jews as they grow doubtful of God, and fall back on the moral will and the stern drive for social justice. Aesthetic naturalism appeals rather to Catholics and Anglo-Catholics, who fall back on the poetic and artistic symbolism of religious language.⁹

The difference between aesthetic and ethical naturalism is reflected in the old antithesis between the priest and the prophet, between ritualized worship and making the world new. In both perspectives, the traditional elements of religion were downplayed to make way for a generally naturalistic faith. Theology, both sides claimed, furnishes symbols, be they for aesthetic feelings or for moral ideals. By 1900, the question of the intellectual reconciliation between religion and science had come to seem irrelevant. Randall summarizes this development as follows:

It became fashionable to be impatient of all theology: religion is life, men said, not idle speculation. What was important was the moral teaching of Christ, not the curious theology of his atonement. Let men believe as they please, said the liberals and modernists, but let them unite in terms of symbolic worship, to make effective social and moral ideals rooted in the Christian tradition. What men think about God is of very little import, it was held, so long as they practice their religion.¹⁰

The new religion of humanity. In the chapter titled "Religious and Social Philosophies of the German Forty-Eighters," Randall stresses the profound influence of Hegel on the development of religious and

social thought. Some of the influential young Hegelians were David Friedrich Strauss (1808-74), Bruno Bauer (1809-82) and Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72). Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity*, written in 1841, made a deep impression.

Strauss opened the debate about Christianity with the publication in 1835 of his *Life of Christ*, in which he defended this thesis: "The true criticism of dogmas lies in their history." The Gospels, according to Strauss, are merely the product of myths emerging from the naive beliefs of the early Christians. These myths then crystallized into religious beliefs, clustered around traditional symbols.

According to Strauss, we begin with Genesis and end with an immanent process in which a supreme idea comes to self-consciousness; we move from myth to Hegel. The Incarnation is universal in the sense that the duality between the divine and the human is united in the person of Christ. Strauss asked the question: "Is not the idea of unity of the divine and human natures a real one in a far higher sense, when I regard the whole race of mankind as its realization, than when I single out one man as such a realization?" He was aware of his humanistic emphasis and the social challenge he posed:

The earth is no longer a vale of tears through which we journey towards a goal existing in a future heaven. The treasures of divine life are to be realized here and now, for every moment of our earthly life pulses within the womb of the divine.¹¹

Bruno Bauer surpassed Strauss in his attack on Christianity. He denied the actual existence of Jesus, seeing in him only an ideal product of religious consciousness. After the overthrow of religion, Bauer predicted, art, science and the state would blossom to the greater good of humanity.

Max Stirner (1806-56) criticized all moral traditions and advocated anarchism. His was a radical kind of individualism: "As long as you believe in the truth, you do not believe in yourself, and you are a—slave, a—religious man. You alone are the truth, or rather you are more than the truth."¹²

Ludwig Feuerbach was the one who pushed secularism and naturalistic humanism the furthest. He wrote that all his work had only one end and one theme, namely, religion and theology. Religion for Feuerbach was nothing but the projection of some element in human experience into an object of worship. Although he agreed

with Schleiermacher's definition of religion as a product of man's emotional experience, he advocated a new kind of humanism—not a mere atheism but a new religion of man. He relegated to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the question about the existence or non-existence of God. Said Feuerbach:

In place of the illusory, fantastic, heavenly position of Man which in actual life necessarily leads to the degradation of Man, I substitute the tangible, actual, and consequently also the political and social position of mankind. The question concerning the existence or non-existence of God is for me nothing but the question concerning the existence or non-existence of Man.¹³

Feuerbach sought to develop a new religion, the "religion of humanity." He based his philosophy on natural science: his method was psychological; that is, he tried to discover man's nature by whatever man does. Religion is the alienation of man from himself. "The true statement is this: Man's knowledge of God is Man's knowledge of himself, of his own nature."¹⁴ Once awakened from his religious nightmare, man will be truly free. Salvation is achieved through the renunciation of religion. Only by destroying the self-alienation inherent in religion—man's egotistic, individualistic mode of living—can man realize his true vocation, his true being as Man. In his preface to the 1843 edition of *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach summarized his work as follows:

In these works I have sketched, with a few sharp touches, the historical solution of Christianity, and have shown that Christianity has in fact long vanished, not only from the reason but from the life of mankind, that it is nothing more than a *fixed idea*, in flagrant contradiction with our fire and life assurance companies, our railroads and steam-carriages, our picture and sculpture galleries, our military and industrial schools, our theatres and scientific museums.¹⁵

It is obvious that there is nothing original in the so-called death of God theology that would proclaim its preposterous theories some one hundred years after the death of Feuerbach.

Randall provides a helpful summary of the foregoing arguments in another of his books, *The Making of the Modern Mind*. In a chapter titled "Religion in the Growing World," Randall focuses on the naturalistic, the monistic, and the evolutionary ideals that

shaped nineteenth century liberal Protestant theology. He writes that all the romanticist and idealist philosophers rejected the traditional dualism of the natural and the supernatural; they also all replaced it with the monistic belief that the world is the expression of one great principle. Man and nature are one with God; thus in man himself is to be found the divine spark. The highest manifestation of God can therefore be found in the scientist's search for truth, in the yearning of the artist for beauty, and in the love of man for man.¹⁶

If God, man and nature are thus identified, then God's power and will are evident in the natural forces and in the processes of nature. Faith in God then means that man will go forward, "will attain the unutterable blessedness of creating the Kingdom, of seeing God at last face to face."¹⁷ Randall writes: "Religion, with its striving and its worship and its conviction of an unseen reality, in adjustment to which lies man's highest blessedness, is thus an entirely natural thing, rooted in the deepest and most enduring experiences of human nature."¹⁸

But the modernists did not want to start afresh. Instead, they took the fundamental concepts and doctrines of traditional Christianity and gave them new meaning. Retaining the old words, they sought to capture the enduring experience itself behind the symbols of the past and to reinterpret them in terms of the modern world.¹⁹ The idea of revelation, accordingly, was reinterpreted to mean that all noble words and lofty messages are revelations of the divine nature. If there are differences between the Bible and other sacred books, they lie in the value of the insights contained in them, not in their origin. "Isaiah, the Sermon on the Mount, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Carlyle, Goethe—all have been alike vehicles of the divine revelation."²⁰

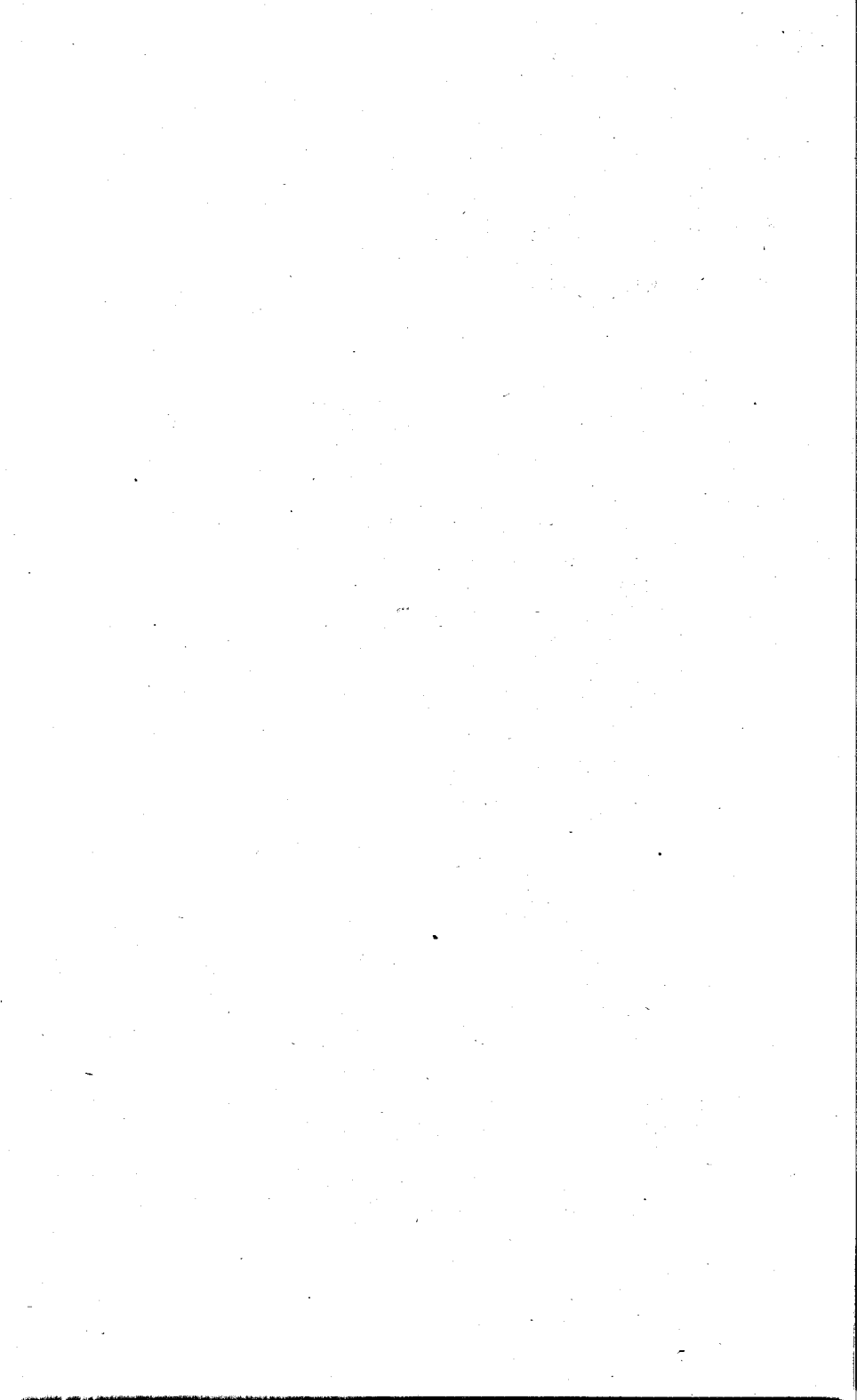
Whereas the old theology considered man to be fallen, corrupt and in need of radically transforming supernatural grace, the new conception of divine immanence changed all that. Not regeneration of substance, but an awakening to man's potential divinity was required. Man needs no magical or sacramental grace, but simply the determination to live as a child of God should. Obviously, this new view of man meant an abandonment of the orthodox confession regarding the uniquely divine person of Christ and his work of atonement.

Modern liberal Christianity gives evidence of two main trends. One is an aesthetic naturalism in which religion is a poetic expression

of man's relationship to the universe, and God is the symbol for the human ideal. The second tendency consists of a search for a righteous social order. The one trend stresses worship; the other moral inspiration. "The one finds satisfaction in the beautiful symbolism of ritual and religious services, the other in the moral striving to make all things new."²¹

Reflection on Randall's perceptive analysis reveals that these ideas have not disappeared with the passage of time, but are still very influential among those committed to a liberal interpretation of Christianity. Of special interest is what Randall describes as ethical theism, or religion as a form of moral striving for a better world, and the immanentism at the core of this type of Christianity. These concepts are the links between the old and the new social gospel.

There should be no doubt or disagreement on one crucial point. Christianity which is filtered through the sieve of modern thought constitutes a radical departure from biblical religion. It has become an ideology that finds its point of departure in man and human aspirations rather than in the Sovereign God who has revealed himself in the written and incarnate Word.



2. The Social Gospel in America

The social gospel movement in America gained momentum during the latter half of the nineteenth century and reached its zenith in the early part of the twentieth century.

A Time of Upheaval

The term "social gospel" came into general usage around 1910.¹ C. Howard Hopkins traces its origin to an obscure colony in Georgia where, in 1895, some three to four hundred people began to live and work on one thousand acres, inspired by "a curious mixture of ideas drawn from Karl Marx, St. Francis and Jesus." Their expressed goal was to "organize an educational and religious society whose purpose is to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ in all matters of life, and labor, and in the use of property."² Begun with utopian fervour and faith in co-operation, this undertaking ended in disillusionment and failure just five years later.

The latter half of the nineteenth century was a period of far-reaching changes brought about by urbanization, immigration, the growing influence of science, and the rapid industrialization of the country. This "Gilded Age" was marked by unprecedented growth and optimism, but also by the exploitation of workers, political corruption, and financial abuse wreaked by a powerful few.

As a result, confrontation between workers and their employers became heated, drawing attention to the deplorable working conditions and wages of the time. A few of these labour-management clashes stand out as especially violent. In 1877, railway workers struck in protest against a sudden ten per cent wage cut. In some key centres, including Baltimore, Pittsburgh and Chicago, militia were called out for riot control. In Pittsburgh, twenty people were killed. Almost a decade later, on May 4, 1886, a bomb was thrown at police during a workers' protest meeting in Chicago's Haymarket Square,

killing seven policemen and four workers. The entire nation reacted with outrage, and seven anarchist leaders were condemned to death. In 1892, strikers protesting a wage reduction at the Carnegie Steel Corporation in Homestead engaged in pitched battle with company-hired Pinkerton detectives and the militia. The union was eventually defeated and the mill reopened with non-union labour.³

Spokesmen for "social Christianity" condemned the barons of industry for their disregard of the workers' rights and welfare and called for a radically different relationship between labour and management. Washington Gladden, probably the most influential of the social gospel leaders, devoted considerable attention to the low wages and dismal working conditions on the railways and in the mines and factories of the country. In 1886, Gladden took the following stand:

The Christian moralist is . . . bound to admonish the Christian employer that the wage-system, when it rests on competition as its sole basis, is anti-social and anti-Christian.

The doctrine which bases all the relations of employer and employed upon self-interest is a doctrine of the pit; it has been bringing hell to earth in large instalments for a good many years.⁴

The "applied Christianity" advocated by Gladden and other social gospel representatives had a great deal in common with the message of Christian socialism. This message was seen as the Christian alternative to capitalism and the *laissez-faire* doctrine of the state, since its advocates found in it what they assumed to be a Christian emphasis on love for one's neighbour, co-operation and the principle of community. From this point it was only a short step to identifying the coming of the Kingdom of God with the coming of a new socialist commonwealth in which the labourer would be restored to a place of dignity and equality.

The vast changes taking place in American society were paralleled by changes within American Protestantism. The conviction emerged among a number of important religious leaders that the traditional emphasis on personal salvation was insufficient and must be expanded to include the "whole social system." In the words of one spokesman, the new gospel involved "the application of the teaching of Jesus and the total message of the Christian salvation to society, the economic life and social institutions such as the state, the family, as well as to individuals."⁵ The social gospel represented more

than a newly discovered dimension; it expressed a significant and far-reaching change in the way its proponents understood the nature of Christianity itself. In this development, at least two streams of thought can be discerned.

The first group, the Unitarians, were at the extreme edge of the movement. They stressed the dignity and perfectibility of man, the immanence of God and the possibilities for social reform. Unitarianism reduced Christianity to ethical religion and concentrated on life in this world and therefore on the reform of society. Its logical outcome was a "religion of humanity" in which man himself became the centre of religion.

A second, more moderate stream within the social gospel movement insisted on retaining the old symbols of Christianity, such as the church, worship, prayer and the other ingredients of orthodoxy. Although they retained the symbols of traditional religion, the adherents of moderation poured a quite different meaning into the traditional symbols. They wanted to be faithful to what the Unitarians were anxious to discard; however, by working from the inside of established Protestantism, this second branch may very well have instigated a more dangerous form of secularization. All of Christianity's historic doctrines saw fundamental alterations, including the doctrines of God, Christ, the Incarnation, man, sin, Atonement, the Kingdom of God, the church and eschatology.

The essential ideas and aspirations of the social gospel can be summarized as follows:

1. The social teachings of Jesus are reliable guides for individual and social life.
2. God is immanent in history.
3. Man is basically good and perfectible.
4. Men of good will can establish the Kingdom of God.
5. Sin is primarily selfishness, to be overcome by an improvement in the social setting and especially by education.
6. The Bible is a human product to be studied like other books.
7. Reason and science are reliable sources of truth.

As this brief list of characteristics indicates, the eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophies and theologies had left an unmistakable mark. In one respect, the social gospel was a reaction to a pietistic view of salvation which concentrated on the individual's *inner* life. However, rather than turning toward the biblical meaning of

redemption, the social gospel embraced a view no more biblical than the narrow pietism it rejected.

To achieve a clear understanding of the core tenets of the social gospel it is helpful to examine briefly the lives and ideas of two of its most important American representatives: Washington Gladden, who has been called the "Father of the American Social Gospel," and Walter Rauschenbusch, who is hailed as the outstanding American theologian of this movement. Gaius Glenn Atkins, in his study of American religion between 1892 and 1932, claims that Gladden and Rauschenbusch "did more between them to direct the mind of the churches toward the social problem than any of their contemporaries."⁶

Washington Gladden (1836-1918)

Washington Gladden was born on February 11, 1836 in Pottsgrove, Pennsylvania. At age 16, Gladden became an apprentice printer for the local newspaper. In 1855 he began his study for the ministry, graduating from Williams College in 1859, after which he taught school for a short while. In 1860, he was ordained as a minister in the Congregational Church of Brooklyn, New York. The following year he moved to another church in Morrisania, where he remained until 1866. During his stay in Morrisania he pursued further studies at Union Theological Seminary and was much impressed by the writings of Frederick W. Robertson (1816-53) and Horace Bushnell (1802-76).

From 1866 until 1871, Gladden served as pastor of the Congregational Church in the factory town of North Adams, Massachusetts, where he became directly acquainted with various labour disputes and deplorable working conditions. For four years Gladden worked as religious editor of the *New York Independent*. He used this forum to fight political corruption and through it became involved in controversies about church doctrine. In 1875, Gladden resigned his position on the *Independent* staff in protest against the paper's advertising ethics, and accepted a new pastorate in Springfield, Massachusetts. During this time of economic depression, Springfield was filled with angry unemployed. Gladden spoke to numerous meetings of workers and employers on the topic of labour problems, a topic about which he continued to speak and write throughout his lengthy career. In 1882, Gladden moved to a

pastorate in the First Congregational Church of Columbus, Ohio. Through his close involvement with labour strife at the nearby Hocking Valley coal mine, Gladden became even more convinced of the new Christianity's significance for social problems.

During his long ministry in Columbus, in fact, until his death in 1918, Gladden preached and spoke about many issues related to the "new theology." He published more than thirty books and dealt with all the controversial issues of his time, including the relationship between science and faith, the person of Christ, the Incarnation, the Kingdom of God, and the Bible.

Gladden, raised in a pietistic tradition, understood conversion to require a realization of one's sinful nature and a dedication of oneself to God. Despite repeated attempts at such a conversion, Gladden remained agonizingly unassured of his acceptance by God. Rather than joy and peace, young Gladden experienced a feeling of rejection, and in later years wondered that he did not become an atheist. Of his early religious struggles, he wrote: "That little unplastered room under the rafters in the old farmhouse, where I lay so many nights, when the house was still, looking out through the casement upon the unpitying stars, has a story to tell of a soul in great perplexity and trouble because it could not find God."⁷

Gladden was determined to discredit the kind of Christianity that had caused him such agony in his youth. Though not an original thinker, he became the great popularizer of the new "social Christianity." A review of some of Gladden's main ideas will show how he set out to accomplish his objective.

In *How Much Is Left of the Old Doctrines?*, published in 1899, Gladden discussed all the major doctrines of historic Christianity. In the chapter titled "Belief in God," he argued that just as a living thing (such as a tree) changes and grows, so Christian doctrines must change in order to remain in tune with "God's progressive revelation of himself." In the views of some (cf. Strauss, Carlyle), the universe is a mighty aggregate of forces which evokes a sense of wonder and worship. But such an impersonal force does not inspire worship, according to Gladden. Instead, belief in God must be based on man's abiding sense of kinship to the ever-living God. To be sure, man's idea of God has changed too. It has become more attuned to scientific thought, but this only increases the probability of God's existence. Gladden reasoned:

Surely if God is in his world, He must be revealing himself to us in all its laws and forces, and therefore all ordered knowledge of the world must be bringing Him nearer to our thought, and every science must be tributary to that great unifying revelation wherein faith and knowledge are no longer twain, but one.⁸

Gladden clearly accepted the concept of divine immanence, and it is in this light that the following statement about property must be understood: "Property is communion with God through the material world."⁹ Gladden called the idea of the Fatherhood of God the fundamental idea of the new theology.¹⁰ Since God is good and man is a child of God, goodness is natural to man; redemption therefore means that man is brought back to himself, something that must be accomplished even for the most degraded outcast. Gladden described sin as "temporary insanity," the result of a wandering mind. The beginning of the better life, wrote Gladden, lies in the restoration of clear thinking and the power to comprehend one's own identity.¹¹

This conception of Christianity is higher and truer than the traditional understanding, according to Gladden, and far more inspiring and alluring. When this truth is accepted by the church, then the Kingdom of Heaven will come with increasing power.

Likewise, when the doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is better understood, the doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man will flourish. In his speech to the Divinity School of Yale University in 1902, Gladden insisted on the unity of religion and social action. He described religion as the heart and soul of social teaching, and social service as the "divine ideal descending upon human society and transforming it from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." Thus religion must be less concerned about "getting men to heaven than about fitting them for their proper work on the earth. . . . For any other kind of religion than this I do not think that the world has any longer very much use."¹² Gladden warned against the religion of individualism, and considered the goal of Christianity to be "a perfect man in a perfect society."¹³ He believed that evidence of the truth of Christianity can be found in the social movements of the world, because he saw a direct line between Christ's kingdom of truth and man's happiness, prosperity and freedom.¹⁴

Gladden's position on the Bible was shaped by his desire to abandon the traditional stance while salvaging what he considered to be the essentials of the biblical teachings. He therefore took issue

with those who argue that unless we have an infallible Bible, we have no Bible at all. Disputing the notion that the Bible is "scientifically-infallible," he reminded his audience that a mixture of divine and human elements are to be found in its pages. As Paul said, we have our treasure in earthen vessels. The truth of God is expressed in the words of men. Yet, maintained Gladden, despite its errors and contradictions, the Bible is not like any other book. Of more than mere scientific or historical interest, it tells us all we need to know about this Jesus of Nazareth, his teachings and his death.

The Bible also tells us what we must know about ourselves and our needs. Those needs include the need for forgiveness, strength, wisdom, hope, courage and comfort. All of these needs can be supplied "in this Book more fully, more perfectly, more convincingly, than anywhere else in the world. . . . And if you and I go to the Book with these questions uppermost in our thought, not to cavil, nor to criticise, but wishing for peace and power and wisdom and courage and comfort and promise of the life to come, with open mind receiving the influences it is fitted to impart,—we shall find, what countless millions have found, that it is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."¹⁵

Gladden rejected both the doctrine of original sin and the belief in a personal devil. He ascribed the former to the "rudimentary and unclear ethical conceptions prevailing in men's minds. The moral sense must be imperfectly developed which cannot see, on the least reflection, that guilt cannot be inherited."¹⁶ To hold the view that people are under the wrath and curse of God because of the misdoings of their parents or ancestors is to say "a horrible thing" that comes "perilously near to blasphemy."¹⁷

The powerful influence of the new theology is apparent in these examples of Gladden's thought, particularly in his concept of divine immanence, his belief in the centrality of experience, and his view that religion must serve a pragmatic end. At the same time, there is a pietistic strain and frequent use of Bible passages in Gladden's writings. Even the few quotations selected here give evidence of a kind of personal piety. Gladden was not a radical iconoclast but a thoughtful, careful teacher who strove to show that by abandoning much of traditional Christianity, the essential message of the Bible would remain to shine all the brighter. We should, however, be clear on this point: Gladden's writings and teachings were no defence of biblical religion, but of a radically secularized interpretation thereof.

This is perhaps most clearly evident in his views concerning the Incarnation and the Atonement.

Gladden acknowledged the exceptional place of Jesus because of his importance in history. So much has been written about him, and more people have been touched by him than by any other person. His importance is indisputable. But to the question of Jesus' divinity, Gladden answered that the essential core of humanity must be identical with "the moral and spiritual essence of Deity." Man is not another kind of being than God. If Jesus "possessed the divine nature he possessed the human nature, for the two are essentially one."¹⁸

According to Gladden, Jesus was more divine than human beings because he was far more human than they. The natural and the supernatural are merely two different sides of the same thing: "God resides in and manifests himself through every existence and every force of nature . . . nature itself, in the depths of its being, is all supernatural." This accords, said Gladden, with the findings of science that all things were made by the "Eternal Reason." Gladden settled the question of Jesus' true nature on the basis of this essential unity of the natural and supernatural. Having accepted the immanent starting point, the remaining question was merely one concerning the *quantity* of the divine in man and in nature. Gladden argued that the question of quantity must be seen in the context of an evolutionary process in which the "Christly elements" of love and self-sacrifice continue to develop.

Obviously, Gladden's belief in Christ's immanence had significant consequences for his view of the Atonement. In the chapter titled "How Christ Saves Men," the evolutionary process of the doctrine of Atonement is described. The outcome of this process, Gladden said, is that what survives among competing and conflicting beliefs are those beliefs "which are most in harmony with their environment."¹⁹ It is "stupid conservatism" which vainly tries to arrest this process because every century drops those parts of doctrine which have become "repugnant to the moral sense of the people, or incredible to their wider intellectual vision."

Gladden rejected the view that the Atonement, accomplished by the suffering and death of Christ, is a "ransom" for sins. He explained that this doctrine originally implied that Satan's claim on sinners had to be paid off. But this would have involved deception, for Jesus hid his divinity from Satan. Gladden also rejected the so-

called commercial theory of the Atonement as a "dismal travesty" because moral obligations cannot be transferred from one to another. As to the "legal conception"—the theory of a legal or penal substitution—Gladden wrote that this transfer of penalty is unjust and immoral, that it is a "horrible doctrine" against which Christians will revolt. The governmental theory—the idea that the sufferings of Christ were not penal but were meant to illustrate God's hatred of sin—was also discounted because Gladden believed it did not comport with "the dignity and the directness of the divine administration." He therefore agreed with George Harris, Andover Professor of Theology, who maintained that it was immoral and unethical to claim that Christ's death was a form of substitutionary atonement.

What then was Gladden's interpretation of Christ's suffering and death? He affirmed that although not much was left of the old theories, the essential truth of the doctrine of Atonement did remain. He explained that in our ordinary speech we often describe changes outside of ourselves as if they occurred within ourselves. Thus the change from an angry God to a loving one is in our *perception* of God. This is where Christ is of central importance.

Jesus has revealed God to us. He represents the divine thoughts and feelings by identifying with man *and* God. Through self-sacrifice and love, Jesus showed that there is no chasm between divinity and humanity. His suffering also revealed God's hatred for sin. Love of good and hatred of evil are essential to salvation; with Christ, we are called to abhor evil. In Gethsemane, more than anywhere, Jesus felt the force of the world's selfishness and madness overwhelming him, for he was "unselfish and sane." He loathed the terrible outbreak of sin, but he loved the men who were seeking his life. It was the struggle between "the suffering of a pure spirit on account of sin and the love that cannot let the sinner go which wrung from him the bloody sweat of the garden. This was the true divine propitiation—the reconciliation through suffering of holiness with love. And it is by bringing us into the same mind with himself; by filling us with his own abhorrence of sin; by bringing us to look upon the selfishness and animalism of our own lives with his eyes, and to recoil from them as he recoiled from them, that he saves us."²⁰

In a chapter dealing with the doctrine of predestination, Gladden rejected Augustine's view of grace and insisted that "it [grace] is rather the helper of our infirmities, the prompter of our better thoughts, the quickening influence that reinforces all that is best in

us and makes us strong to achieve and overcome. We are saved by grace, and grace is help."²¹

The foregoing, though merely a selection from Gladden's extensive writings, nevertheless provides an overview of his position on the central doctrines of Christianity, and clearly shows him to be a leading figure in the social gospel movement.

Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918)

Walter Rauschenbusch, described by Reinhold Niebuhr as the "most brilliant and generally satisfying exponent" of social Christianity, is recognized as the most important theologian of the social gospel. His life's work, including the publication of seven books, bears the imprint of theological liberalism as expounded by Schleiermacher, von Harnack, and especially Ritschl.

Walter Rauschenbusch was born to pious Lutheran parents in Rochester, New York in 1861. His father, who had immigrated to the United States in 1846 as a Lutheran missionary, later became a member of the Baptist church and taught in the German department of Rochester Theological Seminary. He specialized in the study of the Anabaptist movement.

Young Walter was sent to Germany at the age of four to receive his primary education, and he returned at the age of eight. In the summer of 1879 he had a deeply moving religious experience, which he, years later, would recount as one of "everlasting value to me. It turned me permanently, and I thank God with all my heart for it. It was a tender, mysterious experience. It influenced my soul down to its depths."²²

That same year, Rauschenbusch returned to Germany for another four years of study at the Gütersloh Gymnasium, from which he graduated with honours in classical studies. He subsequently travelled in Germany, studied briefly at the University of Berlin, and then continued his studies at the University of Rochester and the Rochester Theological Seminary. His application for a foreign missionary position was refused by denominational conservatives who objected to his liberal views. In 1886 he accepted the pastorate of the Second German Baptist Church in New York City, located at the edge of a depressed area known as Hell's Kitchen. Here the youthful pastor came face to face with the hardships and squalor of working people beset by unemployment, poverty and illness. He began to

read widely about social problems and was especially attracted to the works of Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty*.

Rauschenbusch's pastorate in New York City took place during a time of great social ferment and much debate about the merits of socialism. In 1889 the Society of Christian Socialists was established. Rauschenbusch became an active member of this society, which published *The Dawn*, the first American magazine devoted to social Christianity. That same year he joined with other Baptist ministers and founded *For the Right*, a paper devoted to the interests of working people. Rauschenbusch returned to Europe in 1891 to pursue further studies, and later recalled that it was during this time that "Christ's conception of the Kingdom of God came to me as a new revelation."²³

Whereas he originally had intended to "save souls in the ordinarily accepted religious sense," Rauschenbusch soon discovered that his previous religious ideas did not fit the circumstances of his time. This compelled him to find in the Bible "a basis for the Christian teaching of a social gospel."²⁴ After his return from Europe in 1892, his theology became more and more liberal; he adopted a critical view of the Bible and of history, and identified himself with the outstanding liberal theologians. He joined the Brotherhood of the Kingdom, which for some twenty years was an important fellowship of debate and reflection on the relationship between Christianity and the social, economic and political issues of the time. Many of the ideas he later put into writing were launched and refined at the meetings of this fellowship.

In 1897, Rauschenbusch returned to the Rochester Theological Seminary, first as a teacher in the German department, and then, from 1902 until his death in 1918, as a professor of church history. His first book, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, appeared in 1907 during his sabbatical year of study in Germany. He had expected an outpouring of criticism but was pleasantly surprised by its widespread favourable reception. Almost overnight the author became nationally famous as the leading spokesman for social Christianity. He wrote two other major books, *Christianizing the Social Order* (1912) and *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917). This last book is recognized as the authoritative statement of liberal theology. Rauschenbusch's most widely circulated book was *The Social Principles of Jesus*, first published in 1916. Twenty thousand copies of this book were distributed by the YMCA during the first year of its publication.

This brief biographical sketch shows how eminently suited Rauschenbusch was to act as the bridge between the nineteenth century philosophical and theological thought of Germany and that of the United States. Educated in both countries and at home in both languages, he became the recognized prophet of the new theology in America and helped school generations of students in its teachings.

Rauschenbusch's final book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, represents his most mature work, and the remainder of this chapter will review the main ideas presented therein. Rauschenbusch wrote the book to establish the need for a readjustment of theology and to furnish an intellectual basis for the social gospel. In it, he described the social gospel as "the religious reaction on the historic advent of democracy."²⁵ According to Rauschenbusch, theology needed rejuvenation, and the social gospel, with its consciousness of sin and suffering and its longing for righteousness and new life, could bring about this renewal. But, he wrote, every forward step in the evolution of religion requires a close union of religion and ethics as well as the elimination of non-ethical religious performances. This union was most perfectly accomplished in Jesus. Christianity is most Christian when religion and ethics are united in the single-minded life "in which the consciousness of God and the consciousness of humanity blend completely."²⁶ The social gospel restored the doctrine of the Kingdom of God because it stressed the solidaristic, instead of the individualistic view of the gospel. This was no novel idea; it had been introduced by the German theologians Friedrich Schleiermacher, Richard Rothe and Albrecht Ritschl.

Rauschenbusch believed that since we sense our own sinfulness in the presence of God, our consciousness of sin is a sign of moral maturity and part of a religious view of life. The social gospel understood the power and guilt of sin; in fact, it increased the church's awareness of sin because it exposed the hypocrisy of a past which had overlooked injustice and oppression while pharisaically fulfilling the requirements of an orthodox tradition. And thus "it is possible to hold the orthodox doctrine on the devil and not recognize him when we meet him in a real estate office or at the stock exchange."²⁷

The traditional doctrine of sin begins with the Fall of man. According to Rauschenbusch, however, the Fall is of only speculative importance. Jesus and the prophets paid little attention to the Fall. Instead, they concentrated on the evils immediately visible in oppres-

sion and injustice. The social gospel concentrates on the present sources of evil, leaving the question of the origin of evil to God. Rauschenbusch distinguished three forms of sin—sensuousness, selfishness, and godlessness—as ascending stages in which we sin against our higher self, against the good of man, and against the universal good. He wrote that “in the higher forms of sin it assumes the aspect of a conflict between the selfish Ego and the common good of humanity; or, expressing it in religious terms, it becomes a conflict between self and God.”²⁸

Sin, as viewed by Rauschenbusch, is not a private act between man and God. The distinction between the first and second table of the law loses its significance. We must “democratize” our view of God, that is, we must recognize that God is identified with humanity.

He works through humanity to realize his purposes, and our sins block and destroy the Reign of God in which he might fully reveal and realize himself. Therefore our sins against the least of our fellow-men in the last resort concern God. Therefore when we retard the progress of mankind, we retard the revelation of the glory of God. Our universe is not a despotic monarchy, with God above the starry canopy and ourselves down here; it is a spiritual commonwealth with God in the midst of us.²⁹

Sin is essentially selfishness, wrote Rauschenbusch. Therefore, any attempt to understand sin in Adam is not very helpful, “because Adam’s situation gave very limited opportunities for selfishness, which is the essence of sin.” Conversely, we love and serve God when we love and serve our fellow man. A clear understanding of sin depends on our understanding of the “positive ideals of social righteousness contained in the person of Christ and in the Kingdom of God.”³⁰

A true understanding of sin requires an awareness of what Rauschenbusch called the “super-personal forces of evil”; the love of gain or of power constitutes a powerful temptation for social groups to oppress and exploit. Theology must understand the power and value of the super-personal forces—including the government and the church—otherwise, it cannot deal adequately with the problem of sin. The existence of satan and his angels cannot be disproven, but few people believe that they are the source of evil. The social gospel, since it stresses the solidaristic and organic view of evil, acknowledges the idea of the Kingdom of Evil, but it does not believe in the existence of a demonic kingdom (satan and his angels).

The salvation of super-personal beings comes by submission to the love of Christ, that is, by giving up monopoly power and gains derived from exploitation, by coming under the law of service and by being content with a fair income. "The corresponding step in the case of governments and political oligarchies, both in monarchies and in capitalistic semi-democracies, is to submit to real democracy. Therewith they step out of the Kingdom of Evil into the Kingdom of God."³¹

As sin is solidaristic, so is salvation. Salvation consists of an attitude of love in which men coordinate their lives with those of others, in harmony with the loving impulses of the spirit of God. "God is the all-embracing source and exponent of the common life and good of mankind. When we submit to God, we submit to the supremacy of the common good. Salvation is the voluntary socializing of the soul."³² The social gospel views sanctification in ethical terms; it takes place through fellowship with God and man. But fellowship involves an exchange of services; that is why the Kingdom of God is the commonwealth of co-operative service. The most common form of sinful selfishness is to escape from labour. The only way to gain virtue is through useful labour. "Parasitism blinds, work reveals."

Mysticism is a short cut to communion with God, Rauschenbusch maintained. It isolates, whereas the experiences evoked by the social gospel stimulate concern for humanity. The saint of the future will need "an anthropocentric mysticism. . . . The more we approach pure Christianity, the more will the Christian signify a man who loves mankind with a religious passion and excludes none. The feeling which Jesus had when he said, 'I am the hungry, the naked, the lonely,' will be in the emotional consciousness of all holy men in the coming days. The sense of solidarity is one of the distinctive marks of the true followers of Jesus."³³

Because of its emphasis on solidarity, the social gospel accords a central place to the doctrine of the Kingdom of God. In Rauschenbusch's view, the loss or neglect of this doctrine, until its rediscovery by the social gospel, caused theology to lose contact with the thought of Jesus and particularly with his ethical emphasis. This neglect also gave rise to an overemphasis on worship at the expense of righteousness, and an elevation of the church to a place of supremacy. Without the Kingdom idea, autocracy could exist unchecked; conversely, this idea provides the religious backing for

democracy and social justice. "The Kingdom of God breeds prophets; the Church breeds priests and theologians."³⁴

A social gospel theology, claimed Rauschenbusch, must include the recognition that the Kingdom of God is of divine origin and initiated by Jesus Christ. It is miraculous, and it is absolutely necessary for establishing the union between religion and morality. The Kingdom of God is realized through redemption but also through the education of mankind. It is both present and future; it is a task and a gift. Every idealistic interpretation of the world needs something like the concept of the Kingdom of God and of the great end to which all divine guidance is leading.

When we have the consciousness of Jesus we know that the Kingdom of God "at every stage of human development, tends toward a social order which will best guarantee to all personalities their freest and highest development." Since love is the supreme law of Christ, wrote Rauschenbusch, the Kingdom of God implies "a progressive reign of love in human affairs." Love leads to the surrender of that which is our own; society is redeemed "from private property in the natural resources of the earth, and from any condition in industry which makes monopoly profits possible."³⁵ Thus, the Kingdom of God embraces the whole of life and involves the Christian transfiguration of the social order.

The church, Rauschenbusch argued, must be tested by its effectiveness in creating the Kingdom of God; the church is indispensable to the religious education of humanity, but religion awaits its greatest future in the public life of humanity. Theologians have fitted their conception of salvation to a certain set of corresponding doctrines. But the social gospel is interested in history, not in metaphysical problems. "The social gospel is concerned about a progressive social incarnation of God."³⁶

Questions about Jesus' nature, the Incarnation and Atonement are of secondary importance. What is primary, according to Rauschenbusch, is Christ's life, both his interests and his accomplishments. The social gospel's Christological interest is in a real personality who "could set a great historical process in motion." Jesus became the initiator of the Kingdom by virtue of his personality—which was an achievement, not an inheritance. The personality which he achieved was a new type of humanity, the "primal cell of a new social organism." This represented an epoch in the evolution of the race, since it involved the consciousness of the

absolute unity of the human and the divine life. Jesus was the first to have had this insight. He was a "perfect religious personality," filled completely by the realization of a God who is love.

By virtue of Jesus' consciousness of God, he overcame the temptations of mysticism, pessimism, and otherworldliness. Jesus was fearless, but also tender to the poor and the sick. He was a "proud spirit" who also knew a thirst for friendship. His personality is a call to the "emancipation of our own personalities." Anyone in whom the "Jesus-strain" reappears is a "kind of superman." For example, Tolstoy would have been merely a brilliant Russian novelist, but because he received "something of the mind of Jesus into his mind," he became a prophetic figure.

The concepts of sin and salvation are a vital part of the social gospel, but its understanding of God is obviously of central importance. Rauschenbusch wrote that any group's concept of God could be described as a "social product"; therefore a high view of God—such as that offered in the Christian faith—is a social achievement and endowment. When we learn from the Bible that God is on the side of the poor, such a revelation of solidarity and humanity comes with a regenerating shock. The notions of God in history, said Rauschenbusch, have always been directly dependent on the organization of society and especially on the way in which authority was exercised in society and church.

The gospel of Christ is one and immutable, but the comprehension of the gospel has undergone many changes in history. To assume that any one generation could fully comprehend the scope of God's purposes in Jesus Christ betrays a lack of Christian humility, Rauschenbusch claimed. Our gospel and *the gospel* are not identical. Just as each individual modifies his understanding of his life and duties as he moves through various stages in his development, so humanity must reconstruct "its moral and religious synthesis whenever it passes from one era to another. . . . The gospel, to have power over an age, must be the highest expression of the moral and religious truths held by that age."³⁷

Many people living in earlier times thought of God as the "great Terror." Rauschenbusch believed this view of God to be the outcome of cultural conditions. Despotism led to a despotic conception of God, he thought. Jesus' conflict with an autocratic understanding of God was therefore part of humanity's struggle against autocratic conditions. The highest redemptive service of Jesus to the

human race was to take God by the hand and call him "Our Father," thus democratizing the idea of God. In so doing, Rauschenbusch wrote, Jesus "saved God" by giving him "his first chance of being loved and of escaping from the worst misunderstandings conceivable," namely, to be considered a despot.³⁸

The Reformation broke with many false conceptions of sin and salvation, but the restoration of the Christian understanding of God was not complete, according to Rauschenbusch. Luther and Calvin did not sympathize with democracy. The forensic terminology of theology remained. The social gospel is God's agent to continue what the Reformation began; its goal is to complete the democratization process.

The worst thing that could happen to God would be to remain an autocrat while the world is moving toward democracy. He would be dethroned with the rest. . . . A theological God who has no interest in the conquest of justice and fraternity is not a Christian. It is not enough for theology to eliminate this or that autocratic trait. Its God must join the social movement. The real God has been in it long ago. The development of a Christian social order would be the highest proof of God's saving power. The failure of the social movement would impugn his existence.³⁹

According to Rauschenbusch, the Bible's doctrine of inspiration has undergone many changes in the course of history; it has moved from an individual to a social understanding of religion. Applying the historical method is helpful here as well. Traditional views of inspiration have stifled the prophetic spirit of living men. The social gospel feels the need for ongoing inspiration. "Genuine prophecy springs up where fervent religious experience combines with a democratic spirit, strong social feeling, and free utterance."⁴⁰

Rauschenbusch's eschatology was determined by his immanenism and his evolutionism. After speculating at length about life after death, Rauschenbusch admitted that his ideas were "simply the play of personal fancy about a fascinating subject."

Rauschenbusch concluded *A Theology for the Social Gospel* with a discussion of the Atonement. He wrote that this doctrine has been the marrow of theology, and that like all of us, it has undergone significant transformation. He rejected the "substitutionary atonement" view of Christ's death because it raised unanswerable questions and conflicted with the love and mercy of God. And the "com-

mercial and governmental theories" of later Protestantism, Rauschenbusch suggested, were "the natural social product of the age of capitalistic merchants and of limited monarchies."⁴¹

The dominant ideas of the social gospel, according to Rauschenbusch, are personality and social solidarity. Since the historical and social sciences have taught us the solidaristic facts, we understand the Atonement better than any previous generation could have. Rauschenbusch wrote that Jesus did not bear our sins by imputation, for that would be tampering with moral truth. Nor was it by sympathy. In order to understand how Jesus bore our sins we must reject an individualistic, and adopt a solidaristic interpretation of the Atonement. Jesus' life was completely bound up with the life of humanity. He had "an unparalleled sense of solidarity," which enabled him to "generalize his personal experiences and make them significant of the common life." Jesus did not "bear the sin of some ancient Briton who beat up his wife in B.C. 56. . . . But he did in a very real sense bear the weight of the public sins of organized society, and they in turn are causally connected with all private sins."⁴²

A few great, permanent evils have blighted the human race. These evils converged on Jesus, and thus he came "into collision with the totality of evil in mankind." This, Rauschenbusch wrote, is what is meant by the statement: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities." Six such sins—religious bigotry, the combination of graft and political power, the corruption of justice, mob spirit and mob action, militarism, and class contempt—constitute the Kingdom of Evil.

Christ's own theology tells us that we are linked by evil and guilt to all who have done the same before us. This is not a legal theory of imputation but a conception of spiritual solidarity.

How did the death of Christ change humanity's relationship to God? Christ's death had no "merit" in the medieval sense. Jesus lived out and achieved his own personality. He accepted his suffering as part of a life of love and service. His death was the culmination of his life, a dramatic expression of his personality by which he came into a full understanding of the "divine attitude toward malignant sin." Jesus had to live out the Father's mind and spirit with steadfastness and patience. But he also fought, even on the cross.

How did Jesus' obedience unto death affect God? Of course, it is difficult for humans to understand God fully. The only way in which a Christian may begin to do so is through the guidance of the mind of

Christ. If we think of God in a human way, said Rauschenbusch, the death of Jesus must have been a great experience for God. If we believe God is immanent in the life of humanity, then it does not seem too daring to think that "our little sorrows and sins might be great sorrows to him." But then what would the suffering and death of Jesus have meant to God? "If the principle of forgiving love had not been in the heart of God before, this experience would fix it there. If he had ever thought and felt like the Jewish Jehovah, he would henceforth think and feel as the Father of Jesus Christ. If Christ was the divine Logos—God himself expressing himself—then the experience of the cross reacted directly on the mind of God."⁴³

Because Christ was the first to live with the full consciousness of God, he set in motion the beginnings of spiritual life that would henceforth pervade the common life. Thus the relationship between God and humanity would change from "antagonism to co-operative unity of will. . . . When men would learn to understand and love God; and when God could by anticipation see his own life appropriated by men, God and men would enter into spiritual solidarity, and this would be the only effective reconciliation."⁴⁴ (Here Rauschenbusch added a note saying that, in substance, this line of thought follows Schleiermacher.)

What about the effect of the Atonement on people? Jesus has influenced human thoughts and feelings in many ways. Rauschenbusch mentions three.

In the first place, Christ's death was a conclusive demonstration of the power of sin in humanity, and thus it underscored the solidaristic interpretation of the killing power of sin.

Second, his death was the supreme revelation of love. We live in a realm of grace as friends and sons of God. With our eyes on the cross we know that the "merit system" is to be rejected. Love is "the only true working principle of human society."

Third, his death reinforced prophetic religion. The historical antagonism between priest and prophet in the Old Testament has been cleared away by historical criticism. The priest is the religious professional, whereas the prophet becomes a prophet by some personal experience of God. This creates inward convictions and a discovery of the way of access to God. Such a prophet usually becomes an enemy of priestly religion. He is the advance agent of the Kingdom of God who finds himself in conflict with the Kingdom of Evil. He identifies with the oppressed social classes and bears their

risks and contempt. He finds himself in a position of the heretical free thinker because he clashes with institutional religion.

Rauschenbusch concluded *A Theology for the Social Gospel* with these words: "The rise of free religion and political democracy has given him [the prophet] a field and a task. The era of prophetic and democratic Christianity has just begun. This concerns the social gospel, for the social gospel is the voice of prophecy in modern life."⁴⁵

This review of Rauschenbusch's theology amply demonstrates his commitment to a radical reinterpretation of Christianity. His work and that of the other social gospel leaders was clearly of a "mediating" character, that is, they attempted to bring about a merger between humanism and Christianity. Henry P. Van Dusen has described liberalism as "bridge theology," with "one foot firmly planted in Modern Thought, the other deeply rooted within Christian experience."⁴⁶

A study of the writings of Gladden and Rauschenbusch reveals that these thinkers were reacting to a dead orthodoxy and especially to their fellow Christians' ignorance of the world-wide sweep of the gospel. Their critique of prevailing social, economic and political conditions was presented with honesty, great personal courage, and genuine compassion for the poor and needy, and in that regard was indeed praiseworthy. But these virtues should not blind us to the fact that their attempt to adapt Christianity to secular humanism served to misrepresent and undermine biblical religion. The social gospel and liberalism must be seen for what they are: a tragic surrender to the spirit of secularism, which contributed significantly to the further spiritual impoverishment of the people. And this is the worst evil that can befall any nation.

The foregoing discussion of liberalism and social gospel in America has been presented as a foundation for a description and evaluation of the social gospel in Canada and of its contemporary legacy.

3. A New Nation and New Ideas

Following Confederation in 1867, Canada was to witness an influx of ideas from Europe, particularly from Germany and Britain, and from the United States. This chapter will deal with the individuals and movements responsible for channelling new religious ideas to Canada, the resulting developments here, and the significant roles played by certain church leaders, teachers and church colleges in these developments.

Religion and Social Reform

Richard Allen is a Canadian historian who has devoted much attention to the social gospel movement in Canada. Allen is the author of *The Social Passion: Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928*, published in 1971, and the editor of *The Social Gospel in Canada*, a collection of papers presented at a conference on this topic held at the University of Regina in 1973. The collection includes an article by Allen which focuses on the roots of the social gospel.

In this article, "The Background of the Social Gospel in Canada," Allen discusses the transition from earlier forms of Christian social outlook to those which constituted the social gospel in Canada. Broadly speaking, the social gospel can be described as "any and all efforts of Christians to express their faith in the social context," but Allen prefers to define it as "that movement of Christian social thought and action which arose in the last decades of the nineteenth century in the context of a society becoming increasingly collectivized under the impulses of industrialism and urbanism."¹

In *The Social Passion*, Allen writes that the "social gospel rested on the premise that Christianity was a social religion concerned, when the misunderstanding of the ages was stripped away, with the quality of human relations on this earth. Put in more dramatic

terms, it was a call for men to find the meaning of their lives in seeking to realize the Kingdom of God in the very fabric of society."² It is clear that the social gospel intended to address not only problems of individuals, but also the problems of "institutions and institutional relationships in society."³

Many observers have interpreted the social gospel as a stimulus-response phenomenon, meaning that the social gospel was the church's method of dealing with the new problems and conflicts presented by industrialization and urbanization. Others have argued that the social gospel movement sprang from changes taking place within the churches' views of the central doctrines of Christianity. Allen adopts the latter view without denying the influences of the former; in this context he discusses the following influences: revivalism; the concept of the churches as agents of nation building; the belief in education as a means to social improvement; and the emerging new ideas, including reform Darwinism, biblical criticism, and a positive view of the state as propagated by Hegel.⁴ We must examine these factors briefly in order to understand the mood prevalent in Canada at the turn of the century. The opening paragraph of *The Social Passion* describes that time:

From the 1890s through the 1930s the spirit of reform was abroad in the land. In church and in secular society, in rural and in urban life, in municipality and province, and progressively in federal politics, reformers were attempting the awesome task of reshaping Canadian society. When their work was done, both the structures and social outlook of Canada were remarkably altered. Underlying and accompanying the reform movement, and providing an avenue into its many parts, was the social gospel.⁵

Nation Building

Up until the final decades of the nineteenth century, the Canadian churches generally accepted and promulgated the "Protestant ethic," which advocated the salvation of the soul, individual morality and responsibility, hard work and the economics of *laissez-faire* capitalism. They were much occupied with the evils of alcoholism and the protection of the Lord's Day as a day of rest. The emerging trade union movement was viewed with suspicion, and when the printers at George Brown's newspaper in Toronto struck in 1872 to

enforce their demand for a nine-hour day, the major church papers (those of the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Anglican churches) were either unsympathetic or frankly critical of the strikers. The *Montreal Witness* (Presbyterian) wrote:

No man ever rose above a lowly condition who thought more of his class than his individuality. In this new country, where every man who strives may advance in social power and rank, to teach men subordination to class movements, is to deprive them of those noble opportunities for personal advancement which are the peculiar glory and advantage of this continent.⁶

In 1884, the editor of the *Christian Guardian* (Methodist) wrote that different classes of people exist because of the differences in thrift, intellect and religious education in society. The antagonism toward the rich found among "the lower classes" was attributed to "a communistic feeling of the poor and suffering against the rich and respectable." A few years later, in 1887, an editorial in the same paper supplied the following answer to the question, "Why are some people rich and others poor?":

As a general rule, because some people, or their parents, were more intelligent, energetic and industrious than others. There may be cases where men have become rich by wrong doing, or a stroke of good fortune, and cases where persons have been reduced to poverty by some inevitable causes; but these are the exceptions to the general rule.⁷

According to Canadian church historian H. H. Walsh, "loyalism," that is, a rejection of rebellion and a recognition of law and order, was one of Canada's early distinguishing marks; hence Canada's repudiation of the American and French revolutions. Walsh also claims that Canadianism involved a rejection of the Enlightenment, although he considers the two rebellions of 1837 to have been inspired by the Enlightenment. "The failure of these two rebellions meant that Canada was destined to follow the way of moderation, rather than to make any radical departure in political or social structure."⁸

Initially, writes Walsh, the political concerns of the churches and sects were directed more toward the nation's constitutional and ecclesiastical structures than toward its economic and social developments, although they did address certain social evils, such as intemperance and slavery. In his view, the churches lacked a political and social philosophy.⁹

The Canadian sociologist S.D. Clark also believes that religion exercised a restraining influence in Canada and thereby checked the spread of liberal influences from the United States and England. Clark points out that hardly any of the "hundreds of rationalist, free-thinking societies" in England and the United States appeared in Canada. Instead, the Church of England, the Methodist and the Presbyterian churches became strong moderating forces in Canada because of their close ties to the state.¹⁰

The above-mentioned claims of Walsh and Clark—that Canada rejected the ideas of the American and French revolutions and of the Enlightenment, and that religion played a moderating role in Canada—seem to be borne out by the events of Canadian history. However, if revolution is understood first of all as a rejection of the historic Christian confession regarding the sovereignty of God and the normativity of his creation order, then it must be acknowledged that Canada too was profoundly influenced by the revolutionary ideas of the modern age. Indeed, as Maarten Vrieze pointed out in his study of the community idea in Canada, "rejection of the American and of the French Revolution does not necessarily imply the rejection of the ideology, which expressed itself in both revolutions and of the fundamental religious motives that form the essence of this ideology."¹¹ When human reason is accorded priority over divine revelation, and when religion is judged in terms of its utility, then a change of revolutionary significance has occurred. As the development of Canadian church life and politics has amply demonstrated, such a change has indeed taken place in Canada.

Around the turn of the century, the growing complexity of life resulting from industrialization, immigration and urbanization confronted the churches with challenges for which their traditional answers were obviously inadequate. The Canadian population, numbering a little over three million in 1861, had grown to 4.8 million by 1891, and to 7.2 million by 1911. Between 1905 and 1914, Canada received over 2.5 million immigrants. Cities grew rapidly: between 1901 and 1911, Toronto almost doubled in size; Winnipeg tripled; Vancouver grew fourfold, and Regina tenfold.¹² Following the construction of the transcontinental railway in 1885, immigration to western Canada increased tremendously. But the recurrence of periodic and serious recessions, especially during the 1870s and the 1890s, and the lack of adequate social services caused immense hardship for many, both in rural and urban Canada. Working conditions

and wages were often appalling. The first systematic investigation of employment and wages undertaken in 1889 exposed shocking conditions.¹³

In the face of pressing, immediate needs, churches began to engage in philanthropic and educational activities to help the working people, many of whom were recent immigrants. Churches established, often through co-operative ventures, "missions" or "houses" for the needy, such as the Fred Victor Mission in Toronto. George Munro Grant and D.J. Macdonnell, both Presbyterians, provided leadership in the churches' expanding role in society. Two other pioneers in the movement toward greater social involvement of the churches were James Robertson and James Woodsworth (father of James Shaver Woodsworth).¹⁴

Although this particular type of social involvement was new to the churches, it should be noted that the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches had long been sending missionaries and teachers to the frontier of the growing colony.¹⁵ In fact, the churches played a significant role in nation building:

The vast geographic scale on which all the churches planned their activities—both in the missionary outposts and in the pockets of colonial settlement from Halifax to Victoria—inevitably led them to thinking on a national and continental scale. The churches in this respect were years ahead of most of the politicians and people in the isolated British North American colonies. More than any other organized body, their very structure and their goals moved them towards preparing the way for the joining together of the colonies and the old Hudson's Bay Company territories which took place between 1867 and 1873, and to fostering that colonial Confederation as it grew to nationhood.¹⁶

James Robertson (1839-1902), who served as a Presbyterian minister, an itinerant preacher and a missionary superintendent of Canada's Northwest, became well acquainted with the difficulties and needs of the people. He described the role of a Presbyterian minister of that time as follows:

For all Scotch folk, and for all folk of Presbyterian extraction, connection or leaning, the Presbyterian minister was the natural resort for all in need of advice, of guidance, of cheer, of aid financial and other, and the minister's home became a kind of

Immigration Office, a General Information Bureau, an Employment Agency, an Institution for Universal aid.¹⁷

James Woodsworth (1843-1917) was a Methodist minister who, like Robertson, served as a superintendent of the Northwest and became a veteran of the frontier life. In 1882 he moved to Portage la Prairie and then to Brandon. These were the heady days of railway building and of the Riel Rebellion (1885). In his biography of J. S. Woodsworth, the historian Kenneth McNaught provides the following description of the elder Woodsworth:

If the principle of British order remained the keynote in his political thought, it was always qualified by insistence on high standards of morality and responsibility in both private and public life. Certainly he regarded his own mission in the West as the carrying forward, side by side with the advance of commerce and agriculture, of the moral precepts of Methodist Christianity. In him the missionary spirit drew strong breath, and as a result of his zeal he was appointed, in 1886, first Superintendent of Methodist Missions in the North-West, his territory extending at one time from the Head of the Lakes to the Pacific coast.

This frail man, slightly stooped, with an aristocratic air suggested by his neat Vandyke beard, became a familiar figure to all who frequented the prairie trails. His tours to Indian missions and struggling Methodist churches took him by buckboard, canoe, and stern-wheeler to all parts of the West.¹⁸

Stewart Crysdale points out that the theory of the "middle wall of separation" between church and state, as adopted in the United States, was absent in Canada and in its stead was a close co-operation between the crown and the cross. Canada was officially a Christian nation; both Parliament and the courts owed allegiance to God. When crowned, the monarch promised to defend the Christian faith. Crysdale concludes that the compromise established between free enterprise and state control in Canada "bore the strong imprint of the Church. The vision of this young country growing into a Christian nation where the Lord would have 'dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth' had assumed for many in the churches the dimensions of a crusade."¹⁹

A remarkable example of the close alliance between church and nation is provided by the Reverend R. G. MacBeth in his book, *Our Task in Canada*, prepared for the Home Mission Board of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1912. In the opening chapter,

"Value and Use of the Church," the author listed the following community-building values provided by the church:

1. It has an economic value because it makes business and human life safer.
2. By keeping alive the idea of God, it promotes law and order and opposes anarchy.
3. It keeps the "reality and greatness of the unseen" before the people.
4. It has been entrusted with the "custody of the Word of God, and keeps that book as a current factor in human life."
5. It protects the Sabbath.
6. It is God's way to protect people against temptation.
7. It provides a field of investment. Men have discovered in all ages that it is more enjoyable to give money to God than to do anything else with it.

MacBeth concluded this chapter with the assertion that the church is needed as a "place of salvation. . . . It [the church] furnishes the ideal character in Jesus Christ, its founder, and it supplies the means by which can be produced that supermanhood which the world so deeply requires."²⁰

This explanation of the role of the church carries strong overtones of idealism and utilitarianism. MacBeth's definitions betray the influences that had been preparing a way for the social gospel in the Canadian churches. Although it is undeniable that the massive changes taking place in society had a significant effect on the churches, the social gospel should not be seen in the first place as a stimulus-response phenomenon. The movement was primarily a result of new views about the nature of Christianity. For this reason it is necessary to take a careful look at how the ideas were changing within the churches and among the church leaders.

A New Intellectual Climate

Two major sources of the social gospel in Canada, claims Richard Allen, are the writings of Walter Rauschenbusch and the theology of Albrecht Ritschl. Many Methodists were prominent in the social gospel movement in Canada; Allen attributes this to the fact that the evangelicalism (here understood in its Wesleyan sense) of the nineteenth century English-speaking world helped prepare the way for Ritschl's theology.

This evangelicalism was less concerned with theological debate on the nature of God than with man's need for forgiveness. It affirmed that God's love was available to all who heartily desired it and that "masterful living," if not personal perfection, was attainable. Temptation, therefore, did not hold any real danger for the soul. The Calvinism of the Presbyterian church, Allen points out, conflicted with this optimistic concept of man. Nevertheless, the Presbyterian tradition did stress the social mandate of the gospel. Thus the Presbyterian and Methodist churches found common ground for the positive task of reshaping society.²¹

Revivalism, wrote Allen, contributed the following concepts to the church's perception of its role in society: first, radical change in life is possible and therefore man can take initiatives, also in approaching God; second, God is "immanent" and available to man in "the process of reformation"; and third, the revivalist is a mediator who is able to bring about personal repentance and God's grace for restoration. This combination of ideas, given the right circumstances, could easily bring about a shift from an urgent call for individual salvation to a call for the salvation of society. The revivalist could readily be transferred into a crusader for social reform.²²

Revivalism rejuvenated some old organizations and created some new ones, which were concerned mainly with the position of the poor and of women. During a revival in Toronto in 1884, a book, *The Gospel to the Poor*, appeared in which the author, B. C. Austin, denounced the rental of church pews as a form of discrimination against the poor. This book also attacked the structure of society that gave rise to poverty.

Organizations formed by women, men and young people, including the Women's Missionary Society and the Women's Christian Temperance Union, began to form part of the church's structure. These groups soon involved themselves in non-traditional activities. The Epworth League, Christian Endeavour, and other organizations came alive by turning their attention to social problems. For example, Sunday schools were used to teach and help the street urchins of the cities.

The sense that the churches had a culture-building purpose was reinforced by new views on children and how they ought to be educated. The idea that children were born in original sin had inhibited interest in social reform, but this belief was now being challenged. In 1875 Henry Fletcher Bland preached a sermon sug-

gesting that the Bible did not teach the doctrine of original sin, but rather, the original goodness of children. Given the proper nurturing, children are able to remain in that condition of goodness. In the United States Horace Bushnell had made a powerful impact by promoting similar ideas in his widely read book, *Christian Nurture*. By the 1890s, writes Allen, Henry Bland's ideas had become widely accepted among his fellow pastors. The work begun by the elder Bland was continued by his son, Salem Bland, who was a popular speaker at Sunday school conferences and other educational gatherings.

This same period witnessed changing attitudes in a number of areas. The old revival camp meeting, with its heavy agenda of preaching and conversions, made way for an easy-going summer camp atmosphere in which relaxation and fun were the dominant themes. There was a growing interest in literature and science. Church leaders took note of the developments in other countries, especially in Britain and the United States. William Booth's book, *In Darkest England and the Way Out*, found many readers here, as did Henry George's *Progress and Poverty*. Tolstoy's religious writings were very popular. Evolutionary theories in vogue at the time were applied to religion and helped to foster new confidence in the possibilities for reform and progress. Most important, the influence of higher criticism began to grow in Canada and became a powerful stimulus for the social gospel.²³

The role of the biblical prophets of the eighth century B.C. was an area of special interest to those Canadian church leaders involved in the study of higher criticism. These prophets, traditionally understood to be the announcers of the coming Messiah, were now interpreted to be the giants of insight and the heart of the Old Testament. The prophets had grasped the meaning of the signs of their times and had publicly proclaimed God's judgment on Israel's evil practices. They had become politically active in public life, and were at times persecuted for their courage in resisting the ruling powers. God's manner of revelation in Old Testament times, it was believed, was also applicable for the present, and so churches and ministers should hold the plumb line to the political, commercial and industrial practices of the day. People began to view the pulpit as a "prophetic" witness *against* the social ills of that time and *for* the social hopes and schemes that were part of the new critical approach to theology.²⁴ In this context, the influential church leaders and the church colleges deserve separate mention.

Reason or Revelation

George Munro Grant (1835-1902) was an influential church leader and teacher who was hailed as an outstanding representative of Presbyterian intellectual life. Born in Nova Scotia, Grant received his theological education in Glasgow, where he was deeply impressed by the teachings of John Caird. Grant became the minister of the historic St. Matthew's Church in Halifax and there formed a close friendship with Archbishop Connolly of the Roman Catholic church. With a strong distaste for theological disputes, Grant became a powerful force for church union. He helped bring about the merger in 1875 of the four separate Presbyterian denominations into the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

Grant also lent his considerable talents to the promotion of Confederation. After making a five thousand-mile trip across Canada in 1872 (mostly by canoe and wagon) Grant wrote a book, *Ocean to Ocean*, in which he extolled the beauty and potential of the young country. He emphasized, though, that it was not the natural bounty by itself, but the character of the people that would assure a great future for the new nation. It was said that this book helped to shake off a national pessimism and to foster in its stead a sense of national destiny, despite the presence of racial and religious discord.²⁵

Grant believed that no contradiction exists between science and religion. In an 1862 sermon he defended the harmony of Scripture and science by arguing that both come from the same author. "I would be an infidel if I refused to believe what is shown unto me by the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."²⁶ He held that the main test of a person's belief is in his works, not his doctrine.

After serving for some time as principal of Dalhousie University, Grant became principal of Queen's University in Kingston in 1877—an appointment seen as a victory for the liberal wing of the church. Under his leadership Queen's University became what historian John Webster Grant describes as "the liveliest academic centre of the period."²⁷ Grant continued the program of attracting a staff of very able teachers, including Professor John Watson (1847-1930), a leading Kantian scholar and an outstanding teacher. "Queen's in the late 19th century combined religious and moral earnestness with a spirit of free inquiry, emphasizing philosophical idealism in its undergraduate course and introducing Presbyterian

theological students to the latest developments in German biblical criticism. Its period of eminence represented not so much an indigenous development as a transplantation to Canada of Scottish intellectual vigour. It had an immense influence, however, in awakening students to questions that had seldom interested Canadians before."²⁸

George Paxton Young (1819-89) was another important source of new philosophical and theological ideas in Canadian churches and church colleges. Canadian historian D. C. Masters describes him as "the most distinguished" of the early teachers at Knox College but also as the "shakiest in his theology." Born and educated in Scotland, Young immigrated to Canada in 1847 and served as minister of Knox Church in Hamilton from 1850 to 1853. He was appointed professor of mental and moral philosophy at Knox College in Toronto, where he lectured in almost every department of the college. In 1864 he could no longer give assent to the Westminster Confession and resigned from the ministry in the Presbyterian church as well as from his teaching position at Knox College. In 1869 he returned to Knox with the understanding that he would not teach theology. In 1871 he was appointed to the chair of logic, metaphysics and ethics at University College. He devoted his impressive abilities as a scholar and teacher to the promotion of ethical idealism.²⁹

Two other representatives of British idealism were John Watson at Queen's and John Clark Murray at McGill. They attempted to construct a rational defence of the ethical values of Christianity. Masters writes: "In seeking to replace orthodox Christian thought with ethical idealism, Young, Watson, and Murray had a powerful impact on a whole generation of Canadian university students, including the Protestant clergy. Early Wycliffe students took courses from Young at Toronto; Watson was particularly important in his influence upon the Presbyterian clergy."³⁰

John Watson's career as a very popular and brilliant teacher of philosophy spanned a half century, from 1872 to 1922, and deserves closer scrutiny. A. B. McKillop, author of a study of Canada during the Victorian era, writes that in 1872, at the age of twenty-five, Watson brought to Canada something that was then in short supply: "a certainty of conviction derived from a philosophy of life that appeared to contain the solutions to the major intellectual problems of his day."³¹

Watson attended the University of Glasgow where he was profoundly influenced by the teachings of John Caird, Professor of Divinity and of his younger brother, Edward Caird, Professor of Moral Philosophy. Disenchanted with orthodox Presbyterianism, Watson found in Edward Caird a guide in the construction of a new basis for religion—one that would jettison the old unnecessary dogmas while it retained the essentials of Christianity. In his *Outline of Philosophy* (1898), which became a widely read textbook in most Canadian universities, Watson summarized his system: "The philosophical creed which commends itself to my mind is what in the text I have called Speculative Idealism, by which I mean the doctrine that we are capable of knowing Reality as it actually is, and that Reality when so known is absolutely rational."³² Watson had become a convert to Hegelianism as interpreted by Edward Caird. He believed that the historical process is nothing but the unfolding of a single, *spiritual* principle, which "manifests itself fully only in the life of man, with his self-conscious intelligence. Hegel's doctrine thus seemed . . . to be the philosophic rendering of the essential principle of Christianity, the union or identity of the human and the divine."³³ In *The Interpretation of Religious Experience* (1912) Watson spelled out this idea as follows:

The religious interests of man can be preserved only by a theology which affirms that all forms of being are manifestations of a single spiritual principle in identification with which the true life of man consists. Living in this faith the future of the race is assured. Religion is the spirit which must more and more subdue all things to itself, informing science and art, and realizing itself in the higher organization of the family, the civic community, the state, and ultimately the world, and gradually filling the mind and heart of every individual with the love of God and the enthusiasm of humanity.³⁴

This statement shows clearly why Watson and his followers paid so much attention to human experience and the development of society. As he wrote in 1909, "We gradually learn to seek for truth in the interpretation of experience, conceived in the widest way as the experience of the race, and as comprehending the vast, slow, never hastening, never resting, movement of humanity." Philosophy is not merely academic theory, but a special investigation of social and political life and institutions of art and religion. Reason is that which connects man with the divine. Because man is "made in the image of God," he is able to comprehend the nature of God.³⁵

Watson taught that the purpose of ethics is to resolve the contradiction between freedom and necessity. This requires moving from the individual position to a universal point of view. In rendering obedience to those in authority, man learns to free himself from his own individual desires and to seek his freedom "in the subordination of his own will to the good of others." Thus he is liberated from the restriction of the family, and is now incorporated into a larger entity as a member of the state. Human reason has the capacity to universalize the life of man and create a moral community. Man must learn that "to set aside his individual inclinations and make himself an organ of the community is to be moral, and the only way to be moral. He may criticize, and seek to improve the community, but his criticism must rest upon a recognition of the principle that the individual has no right to oppose himself to the community on the ground of inclination, but only on the ground that the community as it actually is in some ways contradicts the principle of the community, the principle that it is the medium in which the complete realization of man is to be found."³⁶

It should be noted that this philosophy of man and society could very easily become an ideology of oppression, especially when man's reason is accepted as the ultimate criterion. Such a philosophy paves the way for a totalitarian society. The twentieth century has witnessed numerous attempts to establish a society controlled by a single, communitarian ideology, and the result has always been oppression and suffering.

Although Watson's teachings represented a massive shift in thought, they provoked very little reaction from the defenders of biblical religion. Some questions, nevertheless, were raised. Between 1914 and 1918, Watson corresponded with a certain Mr. Grant, a Presbyterian from Toronto, who was troubled by the new ideas being taught in universities and making their way into the churches. Grant asked questions about the central doctrines of the Scriptures, and Watson patiently explained his position in a series of letters. It was obvious that for him not much was left of the old doctrines: forgiveness of sin, atonement for sin, eternal life, the true nature of Jesus, immortality, and eternal damnation were all repudiated by Watson.³⁷

The impact of this reinterpretation of Christianity was felt both within and outside the churches. The new confidence that human reason—rather than divine revelation—would provide insight as to what constitutes a moral society caused a shift in interest from

theology to the social sciences.³⁸ This shift is evident today in a common identification of the Christian religion with political, social and economic reform.

A Modern Theology

In his chapter dealing with the history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada between 1850 and 1925, H. Keith Markell comments on the effects of biblical criticism on the Presbyterian church. He quotes from a 1910 editorial in the *Presbyterian* which stated that the critical approach to Scripture "is held, so far as we know, by all the men who teach the Bible in the theological colleges of the Presbyterian Church in Canada." Markell ascribes this change to a prevailing lack of interest in theological issues, a preoccupation with the current social problems, and the strong winds of change sweeping across the Christian world. By the late nineteenth century, Presbyterianism had experienced a steady erosion of Calvinistic orthodoxy. Markell attributes this in part to the influence of a Methodist type of pietism which emphasized feeling and experience at the expense of doctrine. Also responsible for this erosion was theological liberalism, with its confidence in progress, its optimistic view of human nature, and its belief that enlightened human effort would usher in the Kingdom of God on earth.³⁹

Much the same thing was happening in the other church colleges, although there were exceptions. For example, D. H. MacVicar, a respected professor of divinity and principal of Presbyterian College in Montreal, defended the orthodox gospel of salvation by grace.⁴⁰ There were a few other voices raised in protest against the new theology, but they did not alter the general drift of the church colleges toward theological liberalism. According to D. C. Masters, this was especially true of Victoria College in Toronto, where most of the faculty, by the 1890s, had been trained in Germany.

Whereas the old theology insisted that sinful man can be saved only by divine grace, the new theology assumed that man is essentially good and able to follow the example set by Christ. The Bible was no longer accepted as God's revelation to man, but it was understood to be the product of man's search for God, in which man progressed from animism to polytheism to monotheism. Such an evolutionary concept of religion meant that the old norms were merely stages in the development of man and his understanding.⁴¹ Masters describes

the relationship between the church colleges and Protestant thought in Canada as follows:

The Christian liberals exercised a tremendous influence upon Protestant thinking in Canada, both inside and outside the churches. Their ideas constituted the new orthodoxy of the generation which went to College in the nineteen-twenties. Their distinguishing characteristic was faith in the goodness and perfectability of man. They did not believe in the sinfulness of man and consequently there was no need of redemption in their scheme of things. They did not believe in the Atonement, the New Birth, or Justification by Faith, all concepts which had meant much to the founders of church colleges in the nineteenth century. Practically they were concerned with such good works as the redistribution of the material comforts of life, the abandonment of racial prejudice, and the extension of political liberty.

The Christian liberals pushed to greater lengths the view expounded in 1877 by Principal Grant that action and not thought, is the principal object of man. For them Christianity was a code of action rather than a system of beliefs. If a person's actions appeared to be consistent with the Christian ethic, they regarded him as a "Christian" whether he was a believer in Christ or not.⁴²

A brief review of several of the attempts made to stem the tide of modernism in the church colleges will indicate the popularity and strength of the new ideas.

The Last Heresy Trials

In 1876, the Reverend D. J. Macdonnell, who had studied under John Watson at Queen's and who was the minister of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Toronto, publicly expressed his doubts about the confessional teaching regarding everlasting punishment. Above and beyond this particular doctrine lay the larger issue of creedal subscription. The charge against Macdonnell—that his teachings conflicted with the church doctrine—was heard by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and resolved via a compromise in which doubt about a part of the Westminster Confession was distinguished from a denial of it. Macdonnell's hearing is often described as the last "heresy trial" of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

In 1893, John Campbell, a professor at the Presbyterian College in Montreal, was charged by two of his colleagues with disloyalty to the confession on the same point. This controversy was also resolved via compromise and a statement by Campbell that, in effect, retracted nothing.⁴³

In 1899, George Workman of Victoria University (also called Victoria College) was forced to retire from his teaching position because of his rejection of the doctrine of biblical inspiration. He then joined the teaching staff of the Wesleyan College at Montreal, but in 1907 was forced to resign from that position, too, because of his views. In *A History of Victoria University*, C. B. Sissons explains that the reason for Workman's dismissal from Victoria University was more due to his "fussiness and desire to impress" than to his views.⁴⁴ The correctness of this judgment is borne out by the fact that Workman's successor at Victoria University, John F. McLaughlin, taught with distinction and "without doctrinal dispute through forty years, although his theology was as modern as that of Workman."⁴⁵

One of the most noteworthy controversies involved Professor George Jackson in 1909-10. Jackson had enjoyed the reputation of an outstanding Methodist preacher in Edinburgh. In 1905 he arrived in Toronto to take up the pastorate of the Sherbourne Street Methodist Church. In 1909 Jackson was invited to occupy the chair of English Bible at Victoria University. During a lecture at the YMCA, Jackson expressed his doubts about the reliability of certain parts of Scripture, particularly the first chapters of Genesis. He said that new truth could be found in the "myths" and "legends" contained in the stories of creation, the Fall, the flood, and the tower of Babel by means of "the science of literary and historical criticism which is one of God's best gifts to the intellectual life of our generation."⁴⁶

The attack on Jackson was led by Albert Carman, general superintendent of the Methodist church and chairman of the Board of Regents of Victoria University. Again, the controversy was settled by means of compromise, which was actually a victory for the liberal forces. Sissons writes that McLaughlin and other members of the faculty did not hesitate to proclaim the same views Jackson held. Since that time no group has tried to interfere with the theological teachings at Victoria University. Sissons lauds this outcome as "the strong blow that was struck for academic freedom in the realm of theology at the General Conference of 1910."⁴⁷ However, the dispute was not really about academic freedom but rather about loyalty to

the historic Christian faith. Closely related to this was the right, and even duty, of a church-sponsored educational institution to require that professors teach in accord with certain confessional and doctrinal standards. To shift the argument to one about academic freedom is misleading, but it is a practice that has become accepted today by those who are busy destroying the church from within.

It is also of interest to note that the financial backers of the university, of whom Chester Massey was an influential spokesman, let it be known that they would not continue to support the building project then underway there if Professor Jackson's position was not upheld by Victoria's board of regents. Massey compared the modern methods used by successful businessmen with the up-to-date methods to be used by scholars.⁴⁸ Margaret Prang, in her description of the effects of higher criticism on Canadian church life, explains that the settlement of the Jackson case was also a commentary on John Wesley's statement that Methodists "do not insist on your holding this or that opinion; but they think and let think." She continues, "Since the faith of devout Methodists was based on personal experience and only confirmed by the Bible and the teaching of the church, it was relatively invulnerable to destruction by changing theories about the Bible."⁴⁹

The Jackson controversy was discussed all across the country, giving focus for the efforts to reconcile evangelical Christianity with scientific thought and the complexities of history. This evaluation by Prang is instructive:

It was the misfortune of the Protestant churches in Canada that they were called upon to face the full impact of natural science on religious faith at the very moment when they were trying to hold or win the thousands of settlers in the west. The acceptance of the new critical approach to the Bible was a less effective bulwark of faith than churchmen like Burwash and Bowles, Rowell and Fudger [supporters of Jackson], believed. Even with greater intellectual resources and more personnel it is doubtful that Canadian Protestantism could have survived its dual challenge in undiminished strength, for the drift to secularism continued throughout the Christian world and was given new impetus everywhere by world war.⁵⁰

Effectively, the battle for liberal theology had been won in all the major church colleges. The churches were poorly equipped to deal with the immense pressures of modernization in a young coun-

try. They had been nurtured on a meagre diet of modernist theology and philosophy, in which reason and experience, not scriptural authority, were considered paramount.

Not that there were no lingering misgivings, even among those who had decided in favour of the new interpretation of Christianity. In his review of *The Study of Nature and the Vision of God* (1907) by George Blewett, Chancellor Nathanael Burwash of Victoria University issued a feeble warning to his fellow Methodists. Although he was a defender of higher criticism, Burwash felt that philosophers had gone too far in trying to harmonize philosophy and religion. He admitted that the idealistic (spiritual) philosophy had helped to stave off materialism, but now, he wrote, spiritual philosophy "brings a new form of conflict more subtle and not less dangerous than the cruder materialism which it has displaced."⁵¹ This hesitant warning by the aged Burwash (he retired in 1912) went unheeded and did nothing to stem the apparently irreversible tide of liberalism in the major Canadian churches.

4. The Churches and Social Reform in Canada

The first two decades of this century were the heyday of the social gospel in Canada, and it was then that the churches began to move into various areas of social service work, sometimes in alliance with non-church organizations. A mood of optimistic expectation prevailed, although it was severely tested by recurrent recessions and especially by World War I. The Winnipeg General Strike in the early summer of 1919 served as a rallying point for the forces of the social gospel and helped produce the strange phenomenon of the Labour church.

From Individual to Social Salvation

In the early 1900s, writes John Webster Grant, Canadian social thought was especially stimulated by developments in Britain and the United States. Publications such as *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907), by Rauschenbusch, and *The Social Creed of the Churches*, adopted in 1908 by the Federal Council of Churches in America, were influential on both sides of the border. Certain characteristics, however, were peculiar to social thought in Canada, including a strong emphasis on moral reform and a determination to develop a national community. The latter theme was prominent in the churches' extensive work with immigrants. All Peoples' Missions began doing careful research into social problems, and a strong interest emerged in developing sophisticated methods to deal with society's ills.¹

By the turn of the century, the churches had moved a long way from counselling workers to be satisfied with their lot or to try to improve it through hard work and frugality. Conflicts between labour and management in Canada did not reach the same level of violence as in the United States, although the militant and syndicalistic Industrial Workers of the World and the equally militant Federation of

Western Miners did obtain a foothold in western Canada. Nevertheless, Canadian labour relations did see its share of violence, and there were some dramatic clashes between strikers, police and the military.²

The "labour question," more than any other, drew the attention of the social gospel adherents. But as numerous other social problems became obvious, the churches responded by converting their departments for temperance and moral reform into departments for social service and evangelism. In 1907 the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada was organized by several churches in order to cope more effectively with the problems of urbanization, immigration, poverty and unemployment. In 1913, the name was changed to the Social Service Council of Canada (SSCC). By 1917 support for the SSCC came from the Church of England, the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Congregational churches, the Evangelical Association, the Dominion Grange and Farmers' Association, the Salvation Army, the Canadian Purity-Education Association, the Christian Men's Federation, the National Council of the YMCA, the Dominion Council of the YWCA, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Canadian Council of Agriculture, and the National Council of Provincial Sunday School Associations.³

Dr. J. G. Shearer served as the first full-time secretary of the SSCC, and its magazine, *Social Welfare*, was launched in 1918. The council's statement of principles (1917) professed belief in:

The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man;

The Kingdom of God, and therefore in universal righteousness and social justice through the evangel of Christ;

The saving of not only men but man, not only of the individual but society; . . .

The highest good of all people as the ideal and test of social legislation and institutions.⁴

In addition to their involvement in the SSCC, various churches initiated social programs of their own. For example, in 1911 the Methodist and Presbyterian boards of social service and evangelism jointly established a program to study urban problems and appoint field workers to deal with them in centres such as Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. (The Salvation Army initiated its rescue work in 1886, which expanded into the building and operation of hospitals in a number of major cities after 1906.)

The churches began to pay more attention to the workings of the economic system, and particularly to the question of wealth versus poverty. In 1911, the Presbyterian church warned against the "undue desire for wealth." Declaring that wealth carries obligations, it advocated the application of Christian principles to the conduct of labour and capital, and called for a more equitable distribution of wealth and for the abolition of poverty.⁵ In 1914, the report of the Board of Social Service and Evangelism to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada made the following observation:

Unemployment has stricken thousands of homes in our cities with poverty and serious suffering, driving some to despair and death. Surely society must find a solution for this uncertainty of our opportunity to work for a living. Is it not the Church's duty to stir the heart and conscience of society to face this question and at any cost solve it? Does not the spirit of Him who would not send the multitude adrift hungry lay upon His followers to-day this imperative responsibility?⁶

The war years evoked strong feelings of patriotism and idealism, as evidenced by documents like the 1915 report of the Presbyterian Board of Social Service and Evangelism:

This is the day of democracy—Christian democracy! There has been, and there is, *a great social awakening!* Perhaps no agencies have done more under God to bring this about than the church departments of Social Service.⁷

The Congregational churches were somewhat slower in responding to the call for social action. At the annual meeting of the Congregational Union of Canada in 1913, the Reverend G. Ellery Read complained about the church's slow response to social needs, and in particular to the division between the economically successful few and the many victims of the "awful and appalling poverty" of the time.⁸

The Church of England, too, became increasingly aware of social problems. In 1911, it appointed a standing Committee on Moral and Social Reform, and in 1915 this committee recommended to the General Synod in Toronto that it take seriously its responsibility to present a Christian witness in a changing society. The synod responded by creating a Council for Social Service. At its General Synod in 1918, the church wrestled with the ethical problems of industrialization, and heard from its Council for Social Service that the

social ills of industrialized Canada could be traced to the false basis for modern civilization: "individualism, competition and material." The council's report stated:

The individualistic ideal of life is in open conflict with the laws of God and of society . . . The divine ideal is not a nature red in tooth and claw . . . and the Church must . . . give a new emphasis to the old teaching of sacrifice and of service, of mutual helpfulness and abounding love . . . man is a son of God; Heaven, not this world, is his true home, and he cannot live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.⁹

The pronouncements of the General Conference of the Methodist church were the most radical. For example, the following statement was adopted by the Methodists in 1906:

We hold that the work of the Church is to set up the Kingdom of God among men, which we understand to be a social order founded on the principles of the Gospel—the Golden Rule, and the Sermon on the Mount—and made possible through the regeneration of men's lives.

We acknowledge with regret that the present social order is far from being an ideal expression of Christian brotherhood, and that the spirit of much of our commercial life is alien to that of the Gospel. We deplore the great evils which have their source in the commercial greed of our times, the money madness which leads men to oppress the unfortunate and to forget their obligations to the higher interests of society . . . While we admit the right of both labour and capital to guard their interests by combination we condemn the disregard of the rights of the public and the individual which has been shown now by combinations of capital and now by combinations of labour.¹⁰

The conference also went on record as deploring the existing inequalities of opportunity and of wealth. It decried the payment of wages which confronted young women with "the awful choice between hunger and dishonour" and the employment of young children who became stunted in body and mind through excessive labour.

At its General Conference in Hamilton in 1918, the Methodist church adopted a "radical" report from the Committee on the Church in Relation to War and Patriotism. This is one of the most remarkable church documents of this era because of the clarity with

which it shows how the social gospel ideas were shaping the Canadian churches. Although it inspired extensive debate, the report was adopted with merely four dissenting votes. Salem Bland described this report as "perhaps the boldest and most outspoken deliverance on the social question which any great Christian body up to that time had made."¹¹ Of particular interest is a section dealing with the church's role in the nation's post-war reconstruction program. The following is a brief summary of that section.

According to the Committee on the Church in Relation to War and Patriotism, the immense changes brought about by the war called for the prophetic gifts of the church to discern the hand of God and "to breathe into the hearts of men the faith, the courage, the patience, the brotherliness, by which alone the happy harbour can be won." In its report, the committee explained that Methodism, which was born out of a yearning for holiness and out of revolt against sin, is committed to the Christian life as "simply love made perfect." Methodism, claimed the report, had saved England from the excesses of a French revolution. Although the committee stated that it did not wish to commit the church to definite economic policies, it nevertheless made a number of observations about what it considered to be the causes of the war, and supplied several recommendations as to what steps it felt the church should take.

The report identified the economic system as one cause of the war. Germany's "passion for world domination found an occasion in the demand for colonies as markets and sources of raw materials—the imperative need of competing groups of industries carried on for profit." The war therefore clearly demonstrated "the moral perils inherent in the system of production for profits." It was evident that not just the individual but the system must be changed. Democracy must be introduced in the control of industry. In this sense the war and Jesus taught the same lesson, that is, the need for a new unity consisting of "a nation of comrade fighters":

The triumph of democracy, the demand of the educated workers for human conditions of life, the deep condemnation this war has passed on the competitive struggle, the revelation of the superior efficiency of national organization and co-operation, combine with the unfulfilled, the often forgotten, but the undying ethics of Jesus, to demand nothing less than a transference of the whole economic life from a basis of competition and profits to one of co-operation and service.

The committee advocated the establishment of a joint board of employers and workers, and suggested that the government enlist the help of successful business leaders. To accept this report, they said, would mean that the church was committed to "nothing less than a complete social reconstruction." The high idealism with which the armies fought to defend democracy would be preserved by the efforts of ordinary citizens at large. The report concluded with this statement:

Your Committee outlines this programme in the profound conviction that it can be carried out only by men quickened and inspired by the spirit of Christ, and that for that Divine Spirit, working in the hearts of men, nothing that is good is too high or too hard.¹²

The Committee on Social Service and Evangelism of the Methodist church reported to the same General Conference of 1918. It condemned all special privilege not based on "useful service to the community," and echoed the call of the Committee on the Church in Relation to War and Patriotism for labour's share in management and in the profits and risks of business. The report denounced the payment of low wages, the disproportionate returns on capital, speculation and the acquiring of unearned wealth through over-capitalization. It recommended the enactment of a national old age insurance program, and of legislation to ensure labour's receipt of a fair income for a "proper standard of living" and management's receipt of a fair profit. The report also proposed the nationalization of Canada's natural resources, including mines, water power, fisheries, forests, communications, transportation, and public utilities. "As followers of the Carpenter of Nazareth, we sympathetically seek to understand the problems of life as they confront the claims of labour in Canada, and thus rightly estimate the pleas they make for justice, and find in them allies in the struggle, to realize the ends of fair play, humanity and brotherhood."¹³

The Social Service Congress of 1914

The Social Service Congress held in Ottawa in March of 1914 was the first large-scale, co-operative, national congress to deal with a broad range of social problems. The response far exceeded expectations and the meeting was hailed as a great success. Not only were the provincial units of the SSCC well represented, but many in-

terested individuals came to listen and discuss. Forty-six addresses were given on topics in the following categories: "weekly rest day, the Canadian Indian, the church and industrial life, the labour problem, child welfare, the challenge to the church, the problem of the city, the problem of the country, social service as a life work, commercialized vice and the white slave traffic, immigration, political purity, temperance, prison reform, humanising religion."¹⁴

This historic meeting was chaired by the Reverend Albert Carman, a general superintendent of the Methodist church, who provided a link with traditional Methodism. Guests at the head table included Robert L. Borden, the prime minister, and Wilfrid Laurier, leader of the opposition and former prime minister. Half of the speakers were clergymen, and the other half included city politicians, labour leaders, doctors, professors and social workers. There were no representatives of business and management in attendance. Most speakers displayed a social gospel commitment. The Reverend A. E. Smith, a Methodist minister from Brandon, Manitoba, declared that all the enemies of society were located on the economic plane. He called for a revolutionary, rather than a reformist attitude, which he equated with "a revival of Christianity."

It was during the Social Service Congress session dealing with the city and industrial life that the influence of the social gospel was most clearly demonstrated. A number of speakers had obviously absorbed lessons from Rauschenbusch. One declared that "it is evident that God intends to use industrial life to bring in His Kingdom on earth."¹⁵ J. O. McCarthy, Toronto city controller, was full of hope for the future; he predicted the dawning of a new day of social welfare, "of social Christianity," which he saw as a new vision of the old gospel and of a new birth into "the kingdom of service established by the Lord and Saviour of mankind . . . Because of this new dawn," he claimed, "municipal governments and departments are able to take up the new responsibilities."¹⁶

Charles Stelzle, a prominent social gospel figure in the United States, gave three "dazzling" addresses on the first day which set the tone of the congress. Known as the "Apostle of the American Labourer," Stelzle had started work as a machinist and still carried a union card. He later entered the ministry and served as head of the Department of Church and Labor of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. His extensive writings included a very popular syndicated column. Stelzle's commitment to a radical reinterpretation

of the gospel is outlined in the thirty-two brief chapters of his booklet, *The Gospel of Labor*, published in 1912.¹⁷

In his address to the congress, Stelzle urged his listeners to take part in the struggle between capital and labour. He exhorted the church to identify itself with the cause of the workers in order to ensure that they remain in the fold. Stelzle called for the fearless application of the principles of Jesus Christ to economic and social conditions, and for the church to be "broad enough to include all those whose lives are dominated by the spirit of Jesus Christ, and who are seeking to bring in the Kingdom of God, no matter what their economic feelings may be," whether they be socialist, communist, or anarchist. Quoting Jesus' words, "He that saveth his life shall lose it," Stelzle advocated a religion of "Social Service."¹⁸

C. W. Gordon, a prominent Presbyterian minister from Winnipeg (and popular novelist under the pen name Ralph Connor), sounded a similar note. In his speech entitled, "The New State and the New Church," Gordon emphasized the "primacy of community, the objective of human development, the spirit of brotherhood, a conception of a God vitally united with humanity," and a church pulsating with a "passion for men" while emphasizing action and utility rather than creedal orthodoxy. His address likewise left the audience and the press deeply impressed. In his introductory article to the congress proceedings, Gordon wrote:

The Congress means that a new day has dawned for Canada. The thoughtful men and women of the country are realizing that both civilization and Christianity are challenged by the economic, industrial and social conditions on which the fabric of our state is erected. It is an immense gain . . . for there is in our nation so deep seated a sense of righteousness and brotherhood that it needs only that the light fall clear and white upon the evil to have it finally removed.¹⁹

The *Ottawa Citizen* called the congress "one of the greatest assemblages ever held in Canada to grapple with the social and economical problems confronting all nations of the civilized world." Allen stated that the Social Service Congress was to be remembered as the occasion "that marked the beginning of a crest of influence for the social gospel in Canada."²⁰

The enthusiasm generated by the Social Service Congress of 1914 was severely tried by the events of the First World War.

Nonetheless, the majority of social gospel proponents were willing participants in the wave of wartime patriotism. The churches, for the most part, enthusiastically aided the war effort and the recruitment programs. The "Message from the Chaplains" proclaimed at the end of the war clearly took its inspiration from the social gospel:

It is of the utmost importance that there should be no doubt about the religious value of the service that the soldiers have rendered . . . And it is incumbent upon the whole Canadian Church to realize that her citizen soldiers have been, consciously or unconsciously, moral crusaders . . . They have in the last analysis . . . been active in the extension of God's Kingdom on earth.²¹

The war, however, also forced a painful return to questions about evil and sin. In its 1917 report, the Presbyterian Commission on the War spoke of its members' inability to adequately interpret "the appalling catastrophe" of the war. The war was said to have exhibited the "hollowness of conventional religion." The church stood accused and was found guilty of having failed to prevent "this ghastly thing." Not only was the faith of the church judged and its moral feebleness displayed, but the war was a reminder of the guilt of the entire western civilization. The report called for repentance and the realization that the power of sin had been overcome. The new society would not be brought in by secular beliefs in human perfectibility, but by following "in full realism that one whose sacrifice on a cross went beyond all requirements of justice."²²

Although most proponents of the social gospel supported the war effort, there were a number of notable exceptions. Foremost among them were J. S. Woodsworth and William Ivens, who were pacifists, and William Irvine and Salem Bland. All four men had once been or were at the time leading preachers or teachers in either the Methodist or Presbyterian church, and all of them encountered difficulties because of their attitude toward the war effort.

The Winnipeg General Strike and the Labour Churches

The Winnipeg General Strike, which lasted from May 15 until June 26, 1919, brought to the fore the most militant leaders of the social gospel movement. The post-war period had been a time of adjustment and relocation. Economic and social tensions were intensifying. Labour unrest was high, and there was considerable tension

within the labour movement itself—between its eastern and western wings and between its radical and moderate sectors.

Winnipeg had experienced strikes in previous years among the construction workers and civic employees. In early May of 1919, simmering tension came to a boil, and members of the Winnipeg Metro Trades Council called a strike against three of the main metal-contracting shops for their refusal to recognize the Council of Unions. The building trades unions joined the strike. The striking workers then asked all other unions in the city to support them by means of a general strike. Nearly all of the unions, including the telephone and electric power workers, co-operated, and the city was brought to a near standstill. In a compromise arrangement, the delivery of bread and ice was resumed. Hostility mounted on both sides of the conflict, but the unions' strike committee consistently advised against violence. A citizen's committee was established to perform voluntary services. Many commentators and most government authorities described the strike as a revolutionary effort to overthrow legitimate government and to introduce a form of Bolshevik rule. During a mass demonstration on June 21, violence erupted between strikers and police. At the end of "Bloody Saturday," one person was dead and many were wounded. The strike collapsed soon after, and was officially ended on June 26.

A number of the strike leaders, including J. S. Woodsworth and William Ivens, were arrested on charges of conspiracy and sedition, and six were sentenced to prison terms despite a glaring lack of evidence. Ironically, three of the jailed strike leaders—William Ivens, John Queen and W. A. Armstrong—were elected to the provincial legislature while serving jail terms. Woodsworth's case never came to trial.

Both Woodsworth and Bland had strongly counselled the strikers against revolutionary and violent action. However, other prominent figures, particularly the Methodist ministers Ivens and Smith, had made statements that were eagerly used by those who believed the General Strike to be a Bolshevik plot. Until his arrest on June 17, Ivens served as editor of the *Western Labour News* and of the *Special Strike Edition* published during the strike. He had strongly advocated a complete social reconstruction and had even recommended Soviet rule in Winnipeg. (Woodsworth filled Ivens's position as editor until his own arrest on a charge of seditious libel.)

Ivens also played a leading role in the Labour church. This

church evolved out of a socialist Sunday school, and out of Woodsworth's work with the so-called People's Forum (or "People's Churches"). The Labour church became the channel for the "religion" of labour,²³ and served as a rallying point during the Winnipeg General Strike. For its supporters, convinced that the strike demonstrated the power of the working people, the strike became a religious experience. By the end of the strike there were eight separate congregations of the Labour church in Winnipeg, and similar churches were being organized in other locations, such as Brandon, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Calgary, Vancouver and Toronto. A. E. Smith, who later joined the Communist Party, was for some time the pastor of the thriving Brandon congregation.

The message of the Labour church was proclaimed with great fervour, even though it was obvious that it was not the message of the Scriptures. For example, in 1921, a disagreement broke out in the Edmonton Labour church between those members who believed in God and those who declared themselves to be atheists.²⁴ Preaching in the Labour church consisted mostly of talks and discussions about political and economic topics. Instead of preaching the redemption of sinners through Christ's sacrifice, Smith (and many others) proclaimed salvation through economic reorganization and a just distribution of goods. In an address given in the fall of 1919, Ivens declared: "In religion we are stepping from a night of superstition into the full blaze of a religion for life, and for men instead of a religion for death and angels. The Labor Church must be the beacon that flashes the glad message from city to city until the whole earth is aflame."²⁵

According to William Irvine, the established churches were merely reactionary institutions catering to those with financial power. For that reason, he claimed, a new kind of church (the Labour church) had sprung up that would truly serve humanity and usher in a better day for "the common people."²⁶

Woodsworth presented the history and ideas of the Labour church in an address given on April 5, 1920, in Winnipeg.⁷ He recalled that Ivens had established the first Labour church after leaving the ministry of the McDougall Methodist Church in Winnipeg. Woodsworth described the "spirit of a great religious revival" he had felt while attending a service there together with ten thousand others. He spoke about the controversy that had arisen within the Labour church between those who wished to teach Marx-

ist doctrine and those who wished to teach the Bible. A solution had been found, he explained, by combining the two approaches. He defined religion as "simply the utmost reach of man—his highest thinking about the deepest things in life; his response to the wireless messages that come to him out of the infinite; his planting the flag of justice and brotherhood on a new and higher level of human attainment and purpose."²⁸

As man travels through different phases of history and experience, said Woodsworth, his view of religion changes. Various stages can be discerned: the hunting age, the pastoral age, the patriarchal age, the agricultural age, the handwork age, and the machine age. Each of these ages has produced its own idea of religion and even its own idea of God. For that reason the shepherd David wrote "Jehovah is my shepherd." In the machine age, the world is viewed as a vast machine, and man becomes conscious of forces that can control the machine. "This great new Life Force that is pulsating in his own veins and through society—is this not his idea of God?" Thus, said Woodsworth, man's idea of worship is adjusted to his conception of God. If God is understood in terms of an oriental despot, worship consists of sacrifices and so on; if man recognizes that he lives and moves and has his being in God, then "worship of an external Deity will be replaced by Spiritual Communion and co-operation."²⁹

Although the precise nature of future religion is uncertain, said Woodsworth, it is possible to know something of its direction:

The religion of the future will be (1) PROGRESSIVE—dynamic not static. It will lay no claim to finality but rather be "going on towards perfection." (2) It will be SCIENTIFIC in its spirit and methods. The universe will be perceived as one and indivisible, each part in relation to the whole. We shall not be afraid of truth, rather welcoming it remembering that the truth only can make us free. (3) It will be PRACTICAL. Our immediate concern is with this present world rather than with some future life. Right relationships with our fellow men are more important than speculative Orthodoxy or ceremonial conventionality. (4) It will be essentially SOCIAL in character. No man liveth unto himself. The highest individual development can be realized only in a social organization. The emphasis is on social salvation. This involves fraternity and democracy. (5) It will be UNIVERSAL. When we evolve a religion that is big enough and broad enough and loving, it will make a universal appeal.³⁰

A prayer in this same address condemned past pride and included this plea:

May our faces be toward the future. May we be children of the brighter and better day which even now is beginning to dawn. May we not impede, but rather co-operate with, the great spiritual forces which, we believe, are impelling the world onward and upward.³¹

Woodsworth explained the faith of the Labour church as follows:

The Labour Church believes in

1. A spiritual interpretation of life.
2. A continually developing humanity and religion.
3. The establishment on the earth of an era of justice, truth and love.

The Labour Church stands for

1. FELLOWSHIP. We welcome all men and women irrespective of creed, class, or race.
2. EDUCATION. We seek to know and spread the truth. We believe that knowledge only can make men free.
3. INSPIRATION. By association we stimulate one another to truer thoughts, higher aspirations and nobler living.³²

The phenomenon of the Labour church in Canada was short-lived—began in 1918, the last closed in 1927. Ivens reported that at one time there were sixteen Labour churches in Canada, and half were located in Winnipeg. These churches so clearly departed from Christian teachings that even the liberal church leaders had difficulty with them. Without exception, the leaders in the Labour church were either at odds with their former denomination or had already left the church. Allen explained that the Labour church was “their last formal religious expression.”³³ Fred Tipping, a veteran labour leader, teacher and former minister, admitted that it was a misnomer to call them churches:

They held to no religious dogma. The Lord's Prayer and many of the old hymns sung at the meetings were in many cases about the only claim they had to meeting a religious need. Many, if not most of the sermons were economic in character rather than religious. The decline of the Labor Church did, I think, indicate that a large number of people needed more than economic and intellectual stimulus. They missed the prayers

and the hymns and the mystique of the old churches and gradually they went back to them.³⁴

Indeed, the Labour church was not a "church" in the true sense of the word. It was, rather, the predictable result of an attempt to bring about political and economic change through the use of selected religious themes. Despite the loftiest of objectives, such projects are doomed to failure. The Labour church was both a symptom and a cause of people's estrangement from the truth of the gospel. This estrangement was also evident in the lives of those who were the most prominent spokesmen of the social gospel movement in Canada. The remainder of this chapter will deal with the views and accomplishments of three leading figures in this movement: William Irvine, Salem Bland and James S. Woodsworth.

William Irvine (1885-1962)

On the invitation of Dr. James Woodsworth, William Irvine left his native Shetland in 1907 with the intention of serving in the Methodist ministry in Canada. He enrolled in Wesley College in Winnipeg, where he came under the influence of a number of professors, including Salem Bland, who were committed to the new theology. Irvine described the effect of what he was learning from his teachers: "All the doubts which had been growing in my mind about religious doctrine brought me at last to question everything and to realize that the test of truth was to be found in fact and natural law."³⁵

Irvine served as pastor of the Union Church at Emo, Ontario for three years. By 1916 his social activism and social gospel views had aroused considerable controversy, and Irvine resigned from his post. He subsequently became pastor of the Unitarian Church in Calgary, but was dismissed the following year for his disloyalty to the war effort. Irvine became involved in the Alberta Non-Partisan League and remained active in socialist politics for the rest of his life. He served in the House of Commons for a total of seventeen years and participated in the founding (in 1932) and subsequent activities of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Irvine was also a founding member of the New Democratic Party (successor to the CCF) in 1961. He first served as Labour member in the House of Commons, then as a member of the United Farmers of Alberta, and his last term as member of Parliament was as a representative of the CCF (from 1945-49).

Throughout his life Irvine preached and lived a gospel of faith in man and in man's ability to replace the current economic order, based on "competition," with an order based on "co-operation." Irvine's doubts about the Christian faith began early in his life. With regard to his ministry in Emo he wrote: "I was preaching sheer humanism. The supernatural had vanished. There were no miracles, no virgin birth, no atonement and no resurrection. Of course I did not put it to my congregation in that way. I used everything in the Bible which could in any way support the Social Gospel."³⁶

In 1920, Irvine published *The Farmers in Politics* in which he expounded his faith in co-operation and "group politics." He had absorbed enough Marxism to believe that economic relations are determinative for the rest of society. Governments, he wrote, "take their forms from the economic basis upon which they rest, and for which they function."³⁷ According to Irvine, religion is dependent upon the interpretation which people give to life and so the new social appeal "indicates a reinterpretation of that deeper spiritual truth for which religion stands. . . . The new religious spirit is the very soul of the world movement for justice."³⁸

As a journalist and one-time editor of the *Western Independent* and of the radical newspaper *The Nutcracker* (renamed the *Alberta Non-Partisan*), Irvine wrote extensively. His social theories were very eclectic. In the introduction to the Carleton library edition of *The Farmers in Politics*, Reginald Whitaker wrote that Irvine's socialism was an "indefinable blend of British Labourite thought, North American populism, agrarian radicalism, anarcho-syndicalism, and quasi-Marxist concepts."³⁹

Like his close friend J. S. Woodsworth, Irvine served with utter selflessness and dedication. Prior to his final re-election to the House of Commons in 1945, he was trying to cope with serious financial difficulties, but his zeal for the cause continued unabated.

During a trip to the Soviet Union in 1956, Irvine spoke favourably of the economic democracy he claimed to have discovered there. The CCF's leadership did not agree with his views and Irvine narrowly escaped expulsion from the party. He wrote a book about his trip to Russia, as well as about a subsequent trip to Mao's China. Both books appealed for understanding and détente between the world powers.

It is clear that Irvine, without any apparent regret, moved away from both the church and from an understanding of, and appreciation for, the historic Christian faith.

Salem Goldworth Bland (1859-1950)

Salem Bland led a long, active life and was a very influential leader of the social gospel movement in Canada. A tireless and able teacher and preacher, Bland introduced many eager students to liberal theology and the social gospel, and influenced many others in the congregations and audiences he addressed. He held several pastorates in the Methodist and United churches, and served as a faculty member of Wesley College (Methodist) in Winnipeg from 1903 to 1917. Bland was also much in demand as a public speaker. From 1930 until 1950 he served on the staff of the *Toronto Star*. Bland spelled out his version of religion in his book, *The New Christianity*, published in 1920. His views both reflected and furthered the social gospel's reinterpretation of the Christian faith and the role of the church.

In *A Disciplined Intelligence*, a study of Canadian thought during the Victorian era, Professor A. B. McKillop describes the influences that shaped Bland's life.⁴⁰ McKillop suggests that Bland's "road to Damascus" experience took place at Queen's University in Kingston, where, though not formally enrolled in any courses, he was a regular participant in university-sponsored events. Bland read widely, especially in the writings of Kant and Hegel, and was deeply impressed by the teachings of Principal George Grant and Professor John Watson.

During the earlier years of his ministry, Bland preached that individual salvation was of primary importance to the coming of the Kingdom of God. He recognized that such items as wages, ownership, and taxation were matters related to the gospel, but insisted that they did not constitute the Kingdom of God. At the age of forty, Bland still distinguished between the Christian faith and economic reforms. "K[nowledge] of God is not . . . minimum wage of \$1.50 a day, not free schools & free rides . . . not meat & drink, but *righteousness* & peace & joy in the Holy Ghost."⁴¹ Following his "Kingston experience," however, Bland preached a very different message.

Bland's new perspective was reinforced by his move to Wesley College in Winnipeg where he served from 1903 until 1917 as a professor of church history and New Testament exegesis. He no longer believed the Kingdom of God to be the Kingdom of Heaven, but rather, the Kingdom of God on earth. For Bland, the division

between the spiritual and the material had been eliminated. Christianity, he wrote in 1919, is life itself, to be realized in concrete experience. True religious fellowship, said he, could "be found in the processes of industry and commerce. Co-operation in commerce and industry is the real Holy Communion."⁴²

According to McKillop, Bland's thought betrays an idealist's understanding of Christianity, in which religion must meet the test of reason and is subordinated to ethics.⁴³ An examination of Bland's work, particularly of *The New Christianity*, confirms McKillop's evaluation.

In *The New Christianity*, Bland asserted that the recent world war and the social and political tensions of the day were part of "a divine movement." The turmoil existed, first of all, because of an "overflow of the two Christian principles of democracy and brotherhood" and, secondly, in order to point the way to the kind of Christianity needed to meet the challenge of the new age. The prime characteristic of this age was democracy. The culmination of centuries of development, democracy had invaded the areas of education, religion, and politics, and was beginning to invade the industrial world. Capitalistic control must therefore pass away so that the workers could share in the control of industry.

This onward march of democracy, wrote Bland, could not and should not be stopped because it expressed the Christian doctrine of the worth of the human soul. Before the truth of this doctrine was accepted, democracies were severely restricted. Christianity had proved itself able to overcome the flaws of previous democracies. "Heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ—how is it possible to reconcile such august titles with servitude or subjection? A share in the control of church, community, industry is the Divine right of every normal man and woman."⁴⁴

Bland rejected the traditional individualistic view of salvation (as expressed in many hymns) and argued that Christianity really means socialism—but also "infinitely more than Socialism"—because it abhors inequality. In support of this position, he referred to Luke 1:46-52 and James 1:9-11. Competition, since it is a denial of brotherhood, is incompatible with Christianity. On this premise, Bland argued for the development of public ownership:

To discredit and attack the principle of public ownership is to discredit and attack Christianity. It would seem to be the special sin against the Holy Ghost of our age. He who doubts the prac-

ticability of public ownership is really doubting human nature and Christianity and God.⁴⁵

Christianity, Bland believed, had developed through various stages: from an autocratic or feudal phase (700-1500), to a capitalist or bourgeois phase (1500-1914) and, since 1914, to what he called "Labour Christianity." The rise of labour unions was the most significant element of the latter type of Christianity. Because Protestantism had been too individualistic and sectarian, and therefore out of touch with a collectivist age, it had to pass away, and, according to Bland, was doing so before his eyes. Having stressed the need to develop the labour-type Christianity, Bland explained that it was not a matter of labour becoming Christian. By its insistence on the rights of the humblest man or woman to human conditions of life, labour *is* Christian. "Labor and Christianity, then, are bound up together. Together they stand or fall. They come into their kingdom together or not at all."⁴⁶

Bland also distinguished various cultural forms of Christianity, namely, the Jewish, the Greek, the Latin, the Teutonic and the American forms. The last, he wrote, is the highest form of development since its dominating principle is brotherhood, and it has little patience with the past and with doctrine. Bland approvingly quoted this description of American Christianity:

The American religion may be called a Christian positivism or a positive Christianity. It has received from the past the traditional and the evangelical spirit. Traditional, it preserves the names and the forms of the Churches even when it changes their customs; it develops them from the interior. Evangelical, it keeps the figure of Jesus Christ before all, even when it does not recognize his divinity.⁴⁷

American Christianity was, however, not the final stage, predicted Bland. That distinction was reserved for the "Great Christianity." That Christianity must shake off its masculinity and its disregard for the poor and the oppressed, and must cultivate a spirit of adoration, taking on humility and tenderness as inspired by Jesus. Bland called for a leader to guide the common person: "The need is for the leader who can show this ordinary man how to bring the truest love and the deepest piety into the ordinary, commonplace, work-a-day life, revealing the glory of God, not alone as gilding the cold snows of Alpine peaks or bathing the distant desert with

unearthly beauty, but transfiguring the city street, the cozy home, the quiet fields where lovers walk at even."⁴⁸

In his comments on the operation of "the great law"—the process that moves from thesis to antithesis to synthesis—Bland stated that the various forms and phases of Christianity have illustrated this movement through conflict to unity. In this connection, he suggested that the Christianity of the future might be a blend of Latin, Teutonic, American and Russian Christianity. "Perhaps in the part Russia is destined to play in the next fifty years will be found the most striking example in all history of how it is God's way to choose the foolish things of the world that He may put to shame them that are wise; and the weak things of the world that He may put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world and the things that are despised that He may bring to nought the things that are."⁴⁹

As this brief summary of *The New Christianity* indicates, Bland had become totally committed to a version of religion shaped by Hegel and his followers. Ironically, many people embraced the "spiritualism" of ethical idealism in the hope of defending themselves against materialism.

James Shaver Woodsworth (1874-1942)

James Shaver Woodsworth is a singular figure in the history of Canadian political life. At the time of Woodsworth's death in 1942, Bruce Hutchinson described him as "the most Christlike man ever seen in Parliament" and as "the saint in our politics." In the fall of 1939, after Woodsworth resigned from the leadership of the CCF on the grounds of pacifist opposition to the war effort, Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King paid his political opponent this remarkable compliment:

There are few men in this Parliament for whom, in some particulars, I have greater respect than the leader of the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. I admire him, in my heart, because time and again he has had the courage to say what lay on his conscience, regardless of what the world might think of him. A man of that calibre is an ornament to any Parliament.⁵⁰

This was the same man who some twenty years earlier had been jailed as a common criminal and charged with seditious conspiracy against the state.

Woodsworth was born into a pious Methodist family. Both his grandfather, Richard Woodsworth, and his father, James Woodsworth, had been ministers, and his father had served as missionary superintendent of the entire Northwest. It was natural that James Junior would follow in their footsteps; at age sixteen he enrolled at Wesley College in Winnipeg. After graduation in 1896, James spent two years in the southwestern Ontario mission field, faithfully serving his far-flung and often indifferent flock. He took his work very seriously and prayed that God would use him as "an instrument through which the Holy Spirit may speak to the people."⁵¹

In the fall of 1898, Woodsworth enrolled in a theology course at Victoria University in Toronto, and was exposed to the modernist theology generally endorsed there. The following year he attended Oxford University in England and was introduced to more of the new ideas, especially as taught by professors Fairbairn and Caird. In a letter to his mother, Woodsworth described Dr. Caird as "the best man in the philosophical world in England."⁵² In addition, Woodsworth took a keen interest in the social work of Mansfield House and there became acquainted with the shocking conditions of London's slums.

Upon his return from England, Woodsworth served a small church at Carievale in Assiniboia, and then a small church in Keewatin, Ontario. He found the work difficult and discouraging, and was often beset by doubts about the truth of the doctrines he had promised to preach. Consequently, he prepared a letter of resignation in June 1902, but before delivering it he was appointed assistant pastor at Grace Church in Winnipeg. This was an opportunity to expand his interests and activities, and Woodsworth gratefully accepted the new post. As he grew more and more interested in the social gospel, he also felt increasingly critical of the church and its traditional doctrines.

At the General Conference of the Methodist church in June 1907, Woodsworth submitted his resignation and explained that he could no longer in good faith uphold his ministerial obligations to the church. Much to his surprise, the committee appointed to speak with him found that there was nothing in his doctrinal beliefs or his adherence to church discipline that would warrant his resignation.

For the next six years he headed a church mission in an immigrant working class neighbourhood in Winnipeg. He lectured widely, wrote numerous articles and authored two books: *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909) and *My Neighbour* (1911). His writings clearly demonstrate his concern about the problems of the city and his commitment to the social gospel.

In 1913 Woodsworth became secretary of the Social Welfare League, an organization devoted to the advancement and coordination of social work. Three years later he was appointed to head the Bureau of Social Research of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, but was dismissed one year later for his opposition to conscription. He then served as pastor of the Methodist mission at Gibson's Landing north of Vancouver. In 1918, Woodsworth resigned from the Methodist ministry, and went to work as a longshoreman on the Vancouver docks. In the spring of 1919 he embarked on a lecture tour which brought him to Winnipeg during the General Strike. He ran unsuccessfully in the British Columbia election of 1920 as candidate for the Federated Labour Party. The following year he moved back to Winnipeg to serve as general secretary of the Labour church. In 1921, the constituency of Winnipeg Centre elected him to Parliament on the Independent Labour Party ticket and he served in the House of Commons until his final illness in 1941. Woodsworth played a major role in the founding of the CCF, and served as its leader until 1939.

A tireless defender of the cause of the poor and the unemployed, Woodsworth called for reforms to relieve their plight and spoke out strongly against the powers of the entrenched economic structures. He has been called the father of the welfare state in Canada. For example, in 1925 Woodsworth and his socialist colleagues persuaded the Liberal government to introduce old age pensions. Although suspect in the eyes of many of his contemporaries, the social security measures advocated by Woodsworth are now taken for granted by Canadians.

A man of unquestionable integrity, Woodsworth devoted his life to fighting injustice and striving for a new social order. He was scrupulously honest and selfless. Although he travelled a great deal on his many speaking and teaching engagements across the country, he steadfastly refused to travel in anything but a day coach or a tourist class berth on trains. Even in his 1940 election campaign he overruled his party colleagues and refused to travel first class, always saying: "It's poor people's money we're spending."⁵³

Toward the end of his life, Woodsworth became isolated because of his pacifist position on the war effort. Although their respect for him remained undiminished, his CCF colleagues disagreed with his stand. Never a man to compromise on principle, Woodsworth maintained his position and was compelled to submit his resignation as leader of the CCF party. In the summer of 1940, he suffered a stroke from which he did not recover. He died on March 21, 1942. The funeral oration was given by a disciple of Gandhi, and his ashes were scattered across the waters of Spanish Banks near Vancouver.

Woodsworth was once asked by one of the Winnipeg dailies to write an article entitled: "My Religion." A condensed version of this article is included in the biography written by Grace MacInnis, Woodsworth's daughter. His religion, wrote Woodsworth, was not that of the church, since many of the dogmas seemed to him to be "entirely incompatible with scientific thought; much of the medieval ritual quite inadequate to express modern needs; and the institution itself too largely dominated by the commercial ideals of our age."⁵⁴

For him the demarcation between philosophy and theology had disappeared. " 'One impulse from a vernal wood' is as religious as a sermon; . . . Indeed, if any one test is sufficient, he is most religious who loves most."⁵⁵ Woodsworth no longer believed that religion meant the worship of a Supreme Being, who is separate and above the world. Rather than hymns of adoration, his children were taught lines of Coleridge:

So then believe that every bird that sings,
And every flower that stars the fresh green sod,
And every thought the happy summer brings
To the pure spirit is a word of God.⁵⁶

How do we, children of a scientific age, conceive of God? Modern man's answer, said Woodsworth, is to be willing to co-operate with the forces of progress. As to a future life? From a strictly scientific point of view, we simply do not know. Woodsworth wrote that he himself was never very keen on being an angel with a "crown upon my forehead" and a "harp within my hand." "But the inner urge toward higher things is as strong as ever—yes, much stronger. No one who knows anything of the fierce joy of the conflict will worry very much about his 'reward in heaven.'"⁵⁷

Religion is for me not so much a personal relation between "me" and "God" as rather the identifying of myself with or perhaps the losing myself in some larger whole . . .

The very heart of the teaching of Jesus was the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth . . . Some of us whose study of history and economics and social conditions has driven us to the socialist position find it easy to associate the ideal Kingdom of Jesus with the Co-operative Commonwealth of socialism.

Religion has been regarded as conformity with certain practices and dogmas handed down from the past. Religion for me is rather a reaching out to the future—a pressing toward a mark not clearly discerned. Is not the fear of breaking with old beliefs the most insidious kind of unbelief? Faith is a confident adventuring into the unknown:

Haul out; cast off; shake out every sail
Steer for the deep waters only,
For we are bound where mariner hath not yet dared to go,
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.
O daring joy—but safe!
Are they not all the seas of God?
O farther, farther, farther sail!⁵⁸

This short description of Woodsworth's ideas shows a radical break with the faith of the Scriptures. One cannot deny that Woodsworth was a very dedicated and, in many ways, admirable person. He did much to help the weak and the poor. Nevertheless, it is tragic that Woodsworth, as well as Irvine and Bland, turned their backs to God and the Christ as revealed in Scripture. Although they made some valid complaints about the church of their time, they did not use their considerable talents and energies to remind the church of its source of life. Their assumption that Christianity has everything to do with social justice and concern for the needy was indeed correct, but they erred when they equated true religion with political and economic restructuring according to the socialist blueprint. These men succumbed to the heresy of modernity, in which man, not God, is the object of worship. Thus they contributed to the erosion of Christianity and to the weakening of the church's witness in Canada. They furthered the process of secularization that is fundamentally at odds with the good news of the Bible—the good news that begins with reconciliation between a holy God and sinful people.

Ideas Have Consequences

To be critical of the social gospel is not to belittle the concern of the church for those who are needy and unjustly treated. The church must always be compassionate to those in need, and no one should underestimate the value of any work of mercy. But it matters a great deal how such work is done, and it is above all important how the church presents itself as the proclaimer of the good news of the Bible. "Good works" are no substitute for being a truthful witness to the Word of God. Truthful witness is indispensable to good works. And it is precisely on this score that the social gospel must be faulted.

The churches that embraced the social gospel failed to see politics, economics and other areas of public life from a biblical perspective. Instead, they uncritically adopted non-Christian ideas which sounded virtuous but which helped to lead them astray. In short, the churches were not sufficiently convinced that biblical religion is distinctive and unique. This lack of conviction has impoverished modern Christianity, rendering Christians helpless against the powerful forces of modern secularism.

An important evaluation of the social gospel was written in 1928 by Willem Visser 't Hooft. He centred his criticism of the social gospel on its immanentism, that is, its attempt to "humanize" God, which he attributed to the influences of Puritanism, Revivalism, the Enlightenment and modern science. He wrote that a more prophetic way would have meant "the choice of a more difficult road, one of less immediate result, of less popularity, of less attractiveness, but also one of more abiding outcome, of more radically transforming social power." He could sympathize, he wrote, with the social indignation of the social gospel adherents, but he argued that their social passion led them astray. "For instead of accepting the tension between the real and the ideal, between the existing social order and the Kingdom of God, they anticipated the ideal by concluding that it was already potentially given in the real."⁵⁹

Since the 1920s, many critics, especially those of the neo-orthodox school, have faulted the social gospel for its misplaced optimism about man and its disregard for the transcendence of God. H. Richard Niebuhr provides this summary and critique:

* A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.

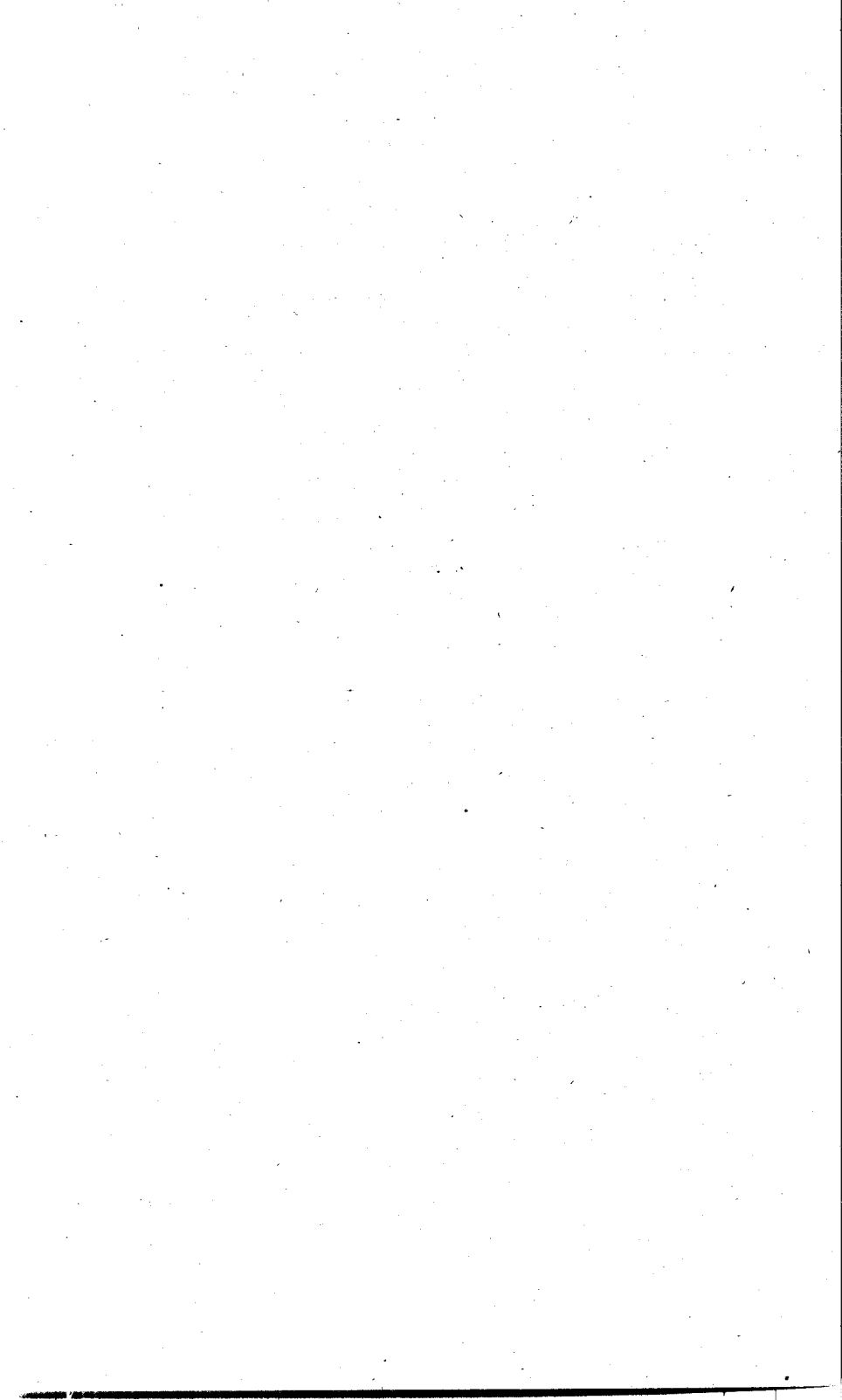
. . . Whatever sense of divine sovereignty the earlier generations had retained, their successors defined God as the object of religion and made this function of the human spiritual life the only executive arm of God's government. It was not God who ruled, but religion ruled a little, and religion needed God for its support. Whatever memory of the gospel of rebirth had been conserved by early romanticism, the later liberalism increasingly identified human values with the divine, proclaimed the glad tidings of progress and hallowed man's moral efforts though they led to civil, international and class war.⁶⁰

In his biography of George C. Pidgeon, the first moderator of the United Church, John Webster Grant makes an important point about how the United church has channelled its social activism:

. . . One of the weaknesses of United Church practice has been its tendency to give undue prominence to committee reports and to expressions of opinion by church courts. Committees of Evangelism and Social Service tend to be composed largely of people recruited for their special interests in a few causes, and resolutions are too often addressed to no one in particular. Reformers of the thirties would have been wiser if they had paid more attention to the education of members of the church, and less to zealous attempts to get resolutions passed. Their success in church courts affected the attitude of the business community to the United Church more than it did that of most United Churchmen to social issues. Thus it had a somewhat fraudulent aspect.⁶¹

Although these comments were made in regard to an earlier time, they apply just as well to the activities of the liberal churches today, especially as those activities are channelled through a variety of church taskforces.

Ideas have practical consequences; this reality was confirmed in the lives of the leaders of the social gospel movement. The stage for the development of the social gospel was set in an earlier age when the teachers and leaders of Canada's churches had tried to adjust the contents of the Christian faith to the reigning philosophies of their day. They did not realize that in so doing they were busy destroying the very foundations of the church. In that sense the Woodsworths of the twentieth century were victims of the decisions made in the previous century. Ideas have consequences, and wrong ideas produce bad fruit.



5. Church Union and Ongoing Secularization

The social gospel, as a clearly defined movement, went into decline soon after 1920. Its key ideas, however, particularly theological liberalism, continued to hold sway in certain churches. The social gospel was at least partially responsible for the founding in 1925 of the United Church of Canada, and for a number of other significant developments that took place in Canada during the years between the wars. Biblical teachings became more and more blurred by the "wisdom" of the world, and this secularization process continued both in society *and in the churches*.

Church Union

The movement toward church union began before the turn of the century and facilitated the union of 1925. In 1875, four Presbyterian denominations merged to form the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and in 1884 an amalgamation of the Methodist churches took place.

As early as 1874, George Munro Grant had sounded the call for a church of the future to arise "with no sound of hammer heard upon it, comprehensive of all the good and beauty that He has ever evolved in history." It was to be a church that would bring together the order and conservatism of Anglicanism, the enthusiasm and adaptiveness of Methodism, the Baptist defence of individual rights, the Congregationalist insistence on the independence of congregations, and Presbyterianism's high regard for the Bible. This unity, Grant suggested, might even some day include the Roman Catholic church.¹

The actual beginnings of the 1925 church merger can be traced back to the 1886 Synod of the Church of England in Canada, which invited the Presbyterians and the Methodists to discuss church union. A meeting took place in 1889, at which all participants expressed their interest in the subject. Eventually, and ironically, the Church of

England's insistence on the episcopate proved to be too great a barrier for union. Discussions among various churches continued during the 1890s. At the 1902 meeting of the General Conference of the Methodist church, the Presbyterian delegate, Principal William Patrick of Manitoba College, suggested that the possibility of church union between the two denominations be explored. The Methodist church responded positively, and a committee was appointed consisting of representatives from the Presbyterian, the Congregational and the Methodist churches. The Joint Committee on Union met five times between 1904 and 1908 and the Basis of Union was prepared. It proved to be relatively easy to reach a consensus on this document.

At this time the Church of England in Canada declined to participate further in the discussion, as did the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec. The Baptists' refusal to join was based on their conflicting position on infant baptism and on their views of God's "self-communication to human souls," accompanied by a strong emphasis on the right and duty of the interpretation of the Scriptures "by each man for himself."²

In 1912, the Congregational and Methodist denominations declared themselves very much in favour of union. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian church approved a proposed basis for church union and submitted the proposal to its presbyteries in 1910. The outcome of the vote was fifty in favour, twenty against. Soon, however, strong opposition to union began to emerge among Presbyterians, which forced the delay of the merger and resulted in a great deal of antagonism between the two contending Presbyterian sides.³

Although the disagreement within the Presbyterian Church in Canada slowed down the merger, it did not stop it. The conflict moved into the political arena since the merger required the passing of legislation, particularly with respect to the regulation of property and funds. The government did enact the necessary legislation, to which royal assent was given on July 19, 1924. The effective date for the founding of the new church was June 10, 1925. Congregations who wished to remain outside of the union could do so by vote. Approximately one-third of the Presbyterian churches, representing one hundred and fifty thousand members, voted against the union and decided to continue as an independent Presbyterian Church in Canada. The continuing church received about thirty per cent of the church's general assets and retained two theological colleges: Knox

College in Toronto and the Presbyterian College in Montreal.

The union was consummated at a massive service held in the Mutual Street Arena in Toronto on June 10, 1925, and attended by seven thousand worshippers. The new church had a membership of 600 thousand. Dr. George C. Pidgeon, formerly moderator of the Presbyterian church, became the first moderator of the United church by a unanimous vote.

Formulating a common confession for the United church did not prove to be very difficult. The twenty articles of faith of the Basis of Union represented a compromise between "mild Calvinism and mild Arminianism."⁴ The three main points of contention concerned differing approaches to church creeds, the ordination of ministers, and the assignment of ministers to churches. Compromise solutions were found to all three problems, as well as to the Congregationalist opposition to testing the faith of members or ministers by conformity to certain confessions or standards. It was agreed that candidates to the ministry should not be required to adhere to a written statement, but they would have to provide evidence to the examining committee that they were "in essential agreement" with the Basis of Union.

Several developments in the years prior to 1925 had facilitated this relatively smooth move toward church union.

One important factor was the declining interest in church creeds and theological issues in general. The new biblical criticism and German idealism influenced Christians across denominational lines. The widespread dissemination of the new theology proved to be a tremendous force toward church union. The critical question was not, "What is the church?" but rather, "What is the church for?" "The crucial issue was not the reconstitution of the Church's fragmented being, but its more effective deployment for its immediate tasks. . . . If one thinks primarily in terms of what a united Church is to be, one naturally proceeds through repentance to radical renewal. If one thinks rather of what it is to do, one seeks to retain for it all the effective resources of the uniting partners."⁵

In addition, the church union of 1925 was the logical result of the social gospel movement. Through its emphasis on building the Kingdom of God here and now, the social gospel had helped to create an image of the church as a channel for social reform. The churchmen of that time were more interested in the application than in the definition of the gospel, and they "thought of the Church more

readily as an instrument for the realization of the Kingdom than as in any sense itself a realization of it."⁶

Salem Bland stated that if the church's mission was simply to pluck brands from the burning, then small denominations would be adequate, but "when we think of the enthronement of Christ in the commercial and industrial and political life of Canada, not in some indefinite, far-off time, but in our generation, we can only think in terms of the United Church, or of that still grander union of Churches which this union will make at once more easy and more imperative."⁷

A third factor concerned the geography and population of Canada. The vast size of the new nation, the influx of people from many different countries, and the difficulty of maintaining small churches to service a large area—all this together provided a powerful incentive toward amalgamation. The initial attempt by the various church denominations to reach into every community resulted in what one observer described as follows: "Everywhere in the North-West can be found little match-box churches, built by the English-speaking, all poorly equipped, poorly heated, lighted, and ventilated, and the congregations small and struggling and the minister inadequately paid."⁸

George C. Pidgeon demonstrated the need for co-operation by relating the story of a traveller who was delayed at a divisional point north of Lake Superior. It was a Sunday, and the traveller inquired about various churches. He discovered that there was a Presbyterian congregation with three men at the church service. Nearby was an Anglican church where two men attended. There were two men at the Methodist church, while the Baptist church had only one man that morning. The traveller continued his story:

I took the trouble to call on the Secretary of the Railroad Y.M.C.A. and was told that each of those four ministers received a salary less than I paid my chauffeur. He wrote me later of the accidental death of a young brakeman in that section. His friends took the body to the Y.M.C.A. and themselves conducted the burial service. They said that if there had been one parson in the town they would have had him, but with four—"we will run it ourselves." That lad was buried without the service of the Church because the Churches were playing the fool.⁹

This type of situation produced the Community or Union churches which emerged, especially in the West, well before the establishment of the United church.

The ideal of national unity lent support to the church union movement, and vice versa. How could a vast dominion like Canada become a united country without a united church? "Missionary zeal and patriotism alike called for a Church that would be larger, more comprehensive and more Canadian than any denomination then in existence."¹⁰ The preamble to the Basis of Union even refers to this ambition: "It shall be the policy of The United Church to foster the spirit of unity in the hope that this sentiment of unity may in due time, so far as Canada is concerned, take shape in a Church which may fittingly be described as national."¹¹

One consequence of the foundation of the United Church of Canada was the disappearance of the Methodist magazine, the *Christian Guardian*. It was replaced by a new magazine called the *New Outlook* (now the *Observer*). Professor McKillop makes the following thought-provoking observation: "Its [the *Christian Guardian's*] place was taken by another journal whose very title reflected the profound reorientation of Anglo-Canadian social thought in the century just ended. . . . Whereas the *Guardian* had been a kind of sentry in its protection of inherited tradition, accepted wisdom, and a closed Anglo-Canadian community, the *New Outlook* was more an advance scout in its orientation towards the contingencies made necessary by social change, shifts in thought, and communities in flux. A critical balance had been tipped."¹²

In summary, then, the church union of 1925 can be viewed as the culminating achievement of the social gospel in Canada. It incorporated a host of aspects that in one way or another can all be traced back to the social gospel's optimism about man's ability to reform society and build the Kingdom of God. Ironically, this accomplishment came at a time when the social gospel was already in decline. A new mood was emerging, one of pessimism and greater "realism" about human imperfection and the pervasiveness of evil in the world. Soon the Depression would severely test the churches. The breakdown of economic life would cause many to doubt the viability of free enterprise and democracy. Stewart Crysdale wrote of this period: "In these hard times, Marxist principles were widely studied. Many labour leaders and not a few churchmen openly accepted Marxist doctrine, but most of them drew the line at the dogma of

class warfare. Nevertheless, Communism as it was being introduced in Russia at this time was widely acclaimed as the deliverer of the common man."¹³

The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)

Through the combined efforts of labour, farmers and socialist organizations, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation was established in Calgary in 1932. In his biography of James S. Woodsworth, Kenneth McNaught writes that the CCF's "ideological background had clear socialist elements; and it sprang from the urban labour movement, from the social gospel of the churches, and from radical intellectuals, as well as from the soil of the wheat belt." And, adds McNaught, it would be no exaggeration to speak of Woodsworth as the "real founder of the CCF."¹⁴

In 1933, the CCF adopted the radical "Regina Manifesto," which was aimed at eradicating capitalism and replacing it with a new social order based on planning and socialization. In *The Anatomy of a Party*, Walter Young describes the CCF's socialism as follows:

The socialism in the Regina Manifesto is a mixture of Christian, Fabian, and Marxian socialism, shot through with progressive reformism. There was in the CCF, if not explicitly in the Manifesto, a strong underlying belief that man is both a rational and social creature, capable of creating a perfect society by abolishing the corrupt social order.¹⁵

This definition helps to explain why so many liberal churchmen were attracted to the CCF and to its successor, the New Democratic Party (NDP). Tommy Douglas, former leader of the NDP and former premier of the province of Saskatchewan, is a well-known figure in Canadian politics. He became attracted to Woodsworth's brand of socialism while a young Baptist preacher in Weyburn, Saskatchewan. In an article he wrote in 1962, Douglas singles out the following beliefs as the basis of the New Democratic Party: "the essential moral nature of the human person," "the radical and still revolutionary concept of human equality," and "a continuing faith in the power of human reason and common sense."¹⁶

The League for Social Reconstruction (LSR)

The League for Social Reconstruction was organized in 1932 by a group of university professors at McGill and at the University of Toronto. Prominent in the League were F. R. Scott, Frank Underhill, Eugene Forsey, J. King Gordon, Eric Havelock and J. S. Woodsworth. Woodsworth was the first honorary president. The League served as a kind of Fabian Society in Canada and provided the CCF with intellectual leadership. Underhill provided the first draft of the CCF Regina Manifesto. Its speakers and writers engaged in vigorous educational programs.

In addition to a number of pamphlets, the LSR published a major work, *Social Planning for Canada*, in 1935. This publication strongly attacked the prevailing economic order and advocated a new one in which there would be genuine democracy and equality. The League's Manifesto of 1932 stated that the "present capitalist system has shown itself unjust and inhuman, economically wasteful, and a standing threat to peace and democratic government." Further, this system had led to an unjust concentration of wealth at the expense of farmers and workers. The Manifesto proclaimed: "We therefore look to the establishment in Canada of a new social order which will substitute a planned and socialized economy for the existing chaotic individualism and which, by achieving an approximate economic equality among all men in place of the present glaring inequalities, will eliminate the domination of one class by another."¹⁷

Although there were links between the social gospel and the LSR, *Social Planning* represented a significant shift away from the terminology and methods of the earlier social gospel movement. The emphasis in the LSR was placed on careful, scientific analysis and detailed prescription, rather than on the pronouncements of the Old Testament prophets.

Social Planning contained a brief section on religion and capitalism in which Christianity, especially its Protestant branch, was accused of having succumbed to "the spirit of an acquisitive society." The church had found a way to serve both God and Mammon, it claimed. Nevertheless, in the name of ethical religion, some prophetic voices had been raised against prevailing social injustices. This was due to the presence of the liberal clergy whose imagination had been awakened by the present crisis, and to the insecurity of the

church's middle class constituency which was becoming aware of its affinity with the working classes.¹⁸

The Student Christian Movement (SCM)

The Student Christian Movement, organized in 1920, has had a powerful influence on generations of university students. The SCM has been active on university campuses and has sponsored numerous conferences dealing with social, political and economic issues. Many prominent church leaders have risen through its ranks. It began because of dissatisfaction with the YMCA, the YWCA and the Student Volunteer Movement. The SCM adopted this "Basis and Aim":

The Student Christian Movement of Canada is a fellowship of students based on the conviction that in Jesus Christ are found the supreme revelation of God and the means to the full realization of life.

The Movement seeks through study, prayer, and practice to know and follow Jesus Christ and to unite in its fellowship all students in the colleges of Canada who share the above conviction together with all students who are willing to test the truth of the conviction upon which the Movement is founded.¹⁹

As the optimism of the social gospel waned in the years following 1920, disillusionment and Christian "realism" filled the gap. This transition was clearly evident in the SCM, which adopted the stance of "radical Christianity."²⁰ Such an outlook led the SCM to a complete rejection of existing political and economic conditions, and its statements about Christianity demonstrated great uncertainty and confusion about the nature of the Christian religion. Allen describes the SCM's theology of "radical reform" as "a modernist compound of Christianity, Bergson's creative evolution, and a touch of prometheanism which seemed to derive from Nietzsche. It was a theology which obviously contributed much to the birth of the secularism which attended the decline of social service."²¹

Popular SCM conference speakers included Salem Bland, Ernest Thomas, Gregory Vlastos, Davidson Ketchum, and S. H. Hooke. Dr. H. B. Sharman was a favourite discussion leader and a chief mentor of the SCM during the 1920s. Sharman had developed a "non-directive" style in teaching students about Jesus. Rather than a code of morals, Sharman's teaching was intended to instil "a principle for my relation to my fellow man, — valid, workable, possible,

always easy to apply, marked by the highest idealism, yet practicable. A principle for my relation to God,—all-comprehensive, even though all-exacting."²²

In the February 1924 issue of SCM's magazine, *The Canadian Student*, Davidson Ketchum wrote that man stands alone in a "God-forsaken" world and that even Christ had been betrayed. He continued:

And yet not alone, for when we lost God we found Christ. Now for the first time ours wholly and completely, sharer in our pain, our disappointments, our very illusions, he became to us once and for all the way, the truth and the life. For on the same dark foundation of despair on which we stood, and on no other, he had built, through faith and love of men, a divine and immortal fabric, fairer than the stars of heaven. Where God had failed a man had conquered; where he had conquered we might conquer too. And in the strength of that vision we have travelled thus far along the shadowy road of life.²³

The SCM thought of itself as "open" and "progressive"—open in the sense of being inclusive. It portrayed Christianity as a continuing search for humanity: "As individuals and as a Movement we must confront and struggle with, in an attitude of openness, the major themes and claims of Christianity. Such a confrontation will be the basis of our radicalism and our hope."²⁴

Christianity that is no more than a continuing search for humanity is a misnomer. Having surrendered completely to secularism, it has become a religion devoid of truth and therefore bereft of power.

The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order (FCSO)

The Fellowship for a Christian Social Order, established in 1934, grew out of dissatisfaction with the shallowness of liberalism and a conviction that radical, not gradual change in society was demanded.²⁵ Although relatively short-lived, the FCSO's history and its publications tell us a great deal about the rise of "radical Christianity."

In 1930, a group of ministers declared that the greatest barrier to responsible Christian social action was the "failure of Christians to realize the social implications of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God."²⁶ Professor John Line, addressing the Toronto Ministerial

Convention in 1931, faulted the economic system for its drift toward the combative and divisive, and argued for the unity of social action and Christian faith. The immanentistic orientation was evident in Line's statement that "an economic world different from the present, one made humane and just, ruled by friendliness and providing amply the means of life for all . . . would be revelatory of God himself."²⁷

The Movement for a Christian Social Order was established in April of 1931 and was the forerunner of the Fellowship. In 1932, this organization was re-established as a Christian socialist movement obedient to "the teachings of Jesus Christ" and committed to the abolition of the exploitation of human beings, the elimination of competition through social ownership of the means of production, and "nation-wide and world-wide planning."²⁸

The Basis of Agreement (1934) of the FCSO stated:

The Fellowship for a Christian Social order is an association of Christians whose religious convictions have led them to the belief that the capitalism economic system is fundamentally at variance with Christian principles; and who regard the creation of a new social order to be essential to the realization of the Kingdom of God.²⁹

A new paragraph added in 1935 called on Christians "to recognize the fact of the class struggle, and to interpret the mind of Christ to their day and generation by identifying themselves actively with the exploited and dispossessed in the effort to attain a truly classless society."³⁰

The FCSO took a strong anti-war position, but when war broke out, most of its members accepted the proposition that for the sake of justice, power had to be met with power.³¹ By 1940 the Fellowship had lost much of its earlier momentum and badly needed new life. The question was whether the FCSO should devote its efforts to leadership and education or to specific social action.³² One point of tension was the FCSO's relationship to pro-communist groups and to the Communist Party of Canada. Some felt that the Fellowship was cutting itself off "from the source of spiritual power mediated through the church," whereas others wanted a shift toward greater co-operation with other groups.³³ The stage was set for an internal struggle that would end in the disbanding of the Fellowship in 1945.

Towards the Christian Revolution

In 1936 the Fellowship published a collection of essays entitled *Towards the Christian Revolution*, edited by R. B. Y. Scott and Gregory Vlastos. This book is important because it crystallized what prominent leaders in the Canadian churches believed about Christianity and its relevance for society.

The editors explained in the book's preface that Christianity has revolutionary resources for the crisis of the Western world. Although religion often functions as an opiate, it has within itself, they said, "the same dialectic of reaction and revolution that marks other phases of the social process."³⁴

Such a concept of religion, evident throughout this collection of essays, clearly reflects the influence of Hegel and other thinkers who believed that the historical process itself is an expression of the transcendent. It is a concept that obviously contradicts biblical revelation. With this humanistic (i.e., secular) belief as the starting point, a number of related themes logically follow, including:

1. Christ is the defender of the common people and our supreme example.
2. Socialism and central planning are the way to a better society.
3. The church is a fellowship of people who want to build a better world.
4. The economic aspect is fundamental to everything else.
5. The gospel must be verified by the effectiveness of Christianity.
6. The application of science will ensure the progressive development of society.

One of the most persistent assumptions found in this book is that socialism and "community" (or "mutuality") are identical to Christianity. For example, John Line wrote that Christianity is the "*via media*" between individualism and totalitarianism because Christianity creates a common spirit among men. He summarized this concept as follows: "The will toward mutuality which it [Christianity] inspired and enjoins is at once the law of an inner social cohesion and the expression of the highest attributes of personal nature. Socialist Christianity rests upon the conviction that because of the natural unity of life this law of mutuality must be applied to outer relations as well as inward."³⁵

Gregory Vlastos wrote that the gospel is revolutionary in that it announces a new way of life undergirded by love. The way to life is to

"love, to discover the fact of mutuality and dedicate yourself completely to its service."³⁶ Vlastos believed that our society is based on inequality and that it must be replaced by a community based on equality. He concluded that the ethic of love is the ethic of the cooperative community.³⁷

The same theme of mutuality and community was developed by J. W. Nicholson in his chapter dealing with the church. He described the church not as the community of believers in Christ and in his Word, but as those who have a sense of community with all men. He wrote that the church is a voluntary association of men and women who have a sense of kinship with their fellows in God and of a "partnership with God in the larger social enterprise which progressively embodies his ultimate purpose." Nicholson further explained that intimacy with God is known "through conscious membership in the larger family of which he is the head."³⁸

This view of the church and mutuality is a long way removed from biblical teachings. In this view, salvation is not a gift of God's grace in Christ, but is the progressive march of humanity struggling to build a new society based on "mutuality." Thus salvation is identified with the process itself and the church with a collectivity of men. This view of salvation and of the church is also clearly expressed in a chapter on the Kingdom of God in which R. Edis Fairbairn made this claim: "We are called upon to capitalize our faith in the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit by believing that as we grapple with the human impossibilities of a campaign for a Christian social order we shall find God with us, behind us, before us, present in our world and active."³⁹

Eugene Forsey made a vigorous case for socialism, claiming that the achievement of class consciousness and the capturing of political power are necessary to bring in the new economic order. But he warned that there are no cheap solutions: "This generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given it but the sign of the prophet Marx. Until Christians learn to understand and apply the lessons of Marxism they cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven — nor, probably, can any one else."⁴⁰

Forsey wrote that as long as the struggle for bread is uppermost, all other things will be pushed into the background, even "everything for which Christianity stands." In this context he expressed his agreement with Marx who had taught that as long as man has not mastered his environment, "the economic factor conditions everything else."⁴¹

Eric Havelock joined this attempt to turn the gospel on its head. In his essay, Havelock argued that man turns to religion for dignity and that he therefore turned to God "and created him in his own image but also in his sublimer image."⁴² According to Havelock, science would produce an age of abundance and thus lay the material foundation necessary for the Sermon on the Mount. Public ownership and central planning would create time for more leisure and the pursuit of knowledge, which would in turn produce better qualities in man. As man gained more faith in his own capacity, said Havelock, his faith in God would be revived. "Without faith in man's soul there would never be lasting faith in God, who created it that it might know him. And faith in either will not be easy again until we live in a better form of society."⁴³

Some of the authors' glowing references to the Soviet Union are particularly embarrassing. *Towards the Christian Revolution* was published nineteen years after the Bolsheviks established their regime. During that period they had ruthlessly eliminated all freedom and systematically murdered millions of their own people, especially in the Ukraine. In 1936 there was no excuse for ignorance about the facts of the Soviet "Workers' Paradise." Nonetheless, the believers in socialism and central planning closed their eyes to the reality of communism. Their minds were made up: socialism *had* to be right, and the Soviet experiment *had* to be a success.

And so Eugene Forsey wrote that "the Soviet Union is succeeding in building a new society, where the whole produce of labour belongs to the workers collectively, where unemployment and restriction of production are unknown, and where the standard of living is rising."⁴⁴ Similarly, J. King Gordon claimed that socialism was the desirable alternative to existing society. He was hopeful about Russian communism and held that Stalin was not a dictator but a servant of the party, which was dedicated to social reorganization. He confidently announced: "There is no place in the Soviet Union for the arbitrary whims of a dictator."⁴⁵

Forsey and Gordon may have since repudiated these naive and mistaken sentiments about the Soviet Union. (To his credit, Forsey quit the FCSO in 1940 in protest against too much communist influence.) Nonetheless, the carelessness and confidence with which such views were expressed are typical of what has become an entrenched habit among those who identify Christianity with socialism. In their determination to establish a new egalitarian order of

economic security, they lose sight of the central importance of freedom —and even of truth—and thus become blind to the evils of communism. Even today, despite overwhelming evidence that communism has failed, many Christians whose theology is liberal and whose politics are socialist continue to ignore or soft-pedal the true nature of communist regimes. There is something within the very nature of liberal Christianity that not only blinds its adherents to the true message of the Scriptures but also to the plain facts of history. Ideas have consequences; it is therefore crucial that we adhere to *truthful* ideas.

The United Church and Christianizing the Social Order

In 1932 the General Council of the United Church of Canada appointed a commission to determine which Christian standards and principles should govern the social order, to see how they were accepted in practice and to define which measures would “form the first steps toward a social order in keeping with the mind of Christ.” In 1934 the Commission on Christianizing the Social Order, headed by Sir Robert Falconer, reported to the General Council. Although the ideals of the social gospel were being severely tested at the time the Commission undertook its study, their report shows the strong influence of the social gospel’s liberal theology. In the section titled, “Christian Standards and Teaching,” the commission made the following points (summarized):

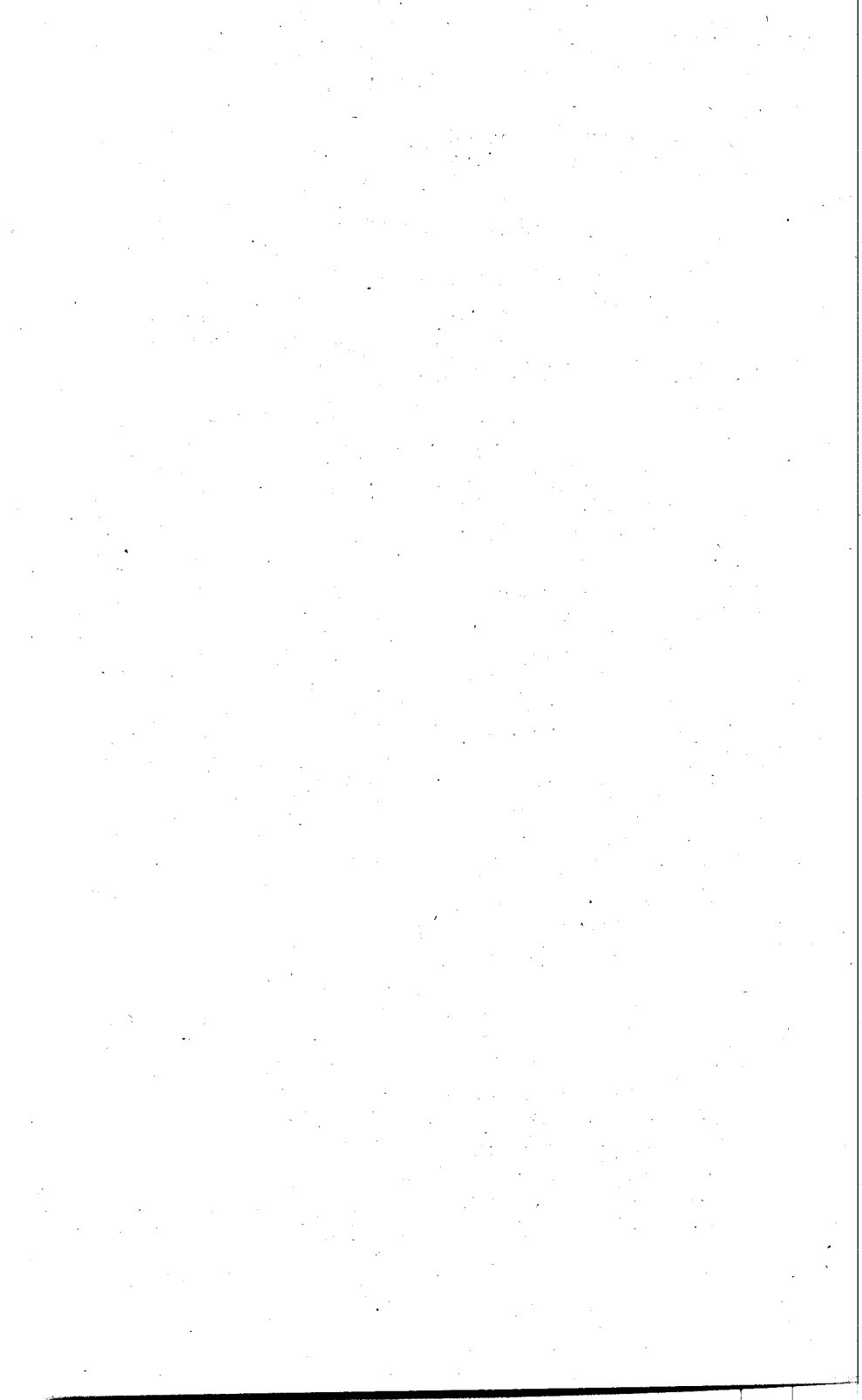
1. Religion is the way to a righteous moral order.
2. Jesus created “by His very presence a sense of the Divine forgiveness and the need for repentance.”
3. Jesus taught “the supreme worth of human personality which is never to be treated merely as a means.”
4. Jesus represented man as members of one family and taught the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.
5. Jesus opposed the established order and sided with the oppressed and needy.
6. Jesus taught that faith and practical kindness to the least of his brethren constituted the passport to the Kingdom.
7. Faithful to these principles, Jesus gave his life as a “ransom for many.”
8. Jesus’ followers, after his resurrection, “became increasingly aware of the creative energy of the Divine Spirit active in their midst.”
9. Paul continued Jesus’ teaching, especially with respect to the

church in which a new moral order is fostered.

10. When the church achieved a more prominent position, it reached beyond its borders and strove to "discover the mind of the Spirit and interpret that mind in relation to human need."
11. The Christian church unfolded the principles and standards of Jesus—it became concerned with the redemption of society and worked for the development of a Christian civilization.
12. The aim of the United church is "to help to interpenetrate our civilization with the Spirit of Christ, and to transform those agencies and institutions of society which are foreign to that spirit, to the end that Christian people may have the fullest opportunity for realizing the fullness of the Christian life and that others may come to the same."⁴⁶

The report continued with a critical analysis of the prevailing social order, paying special attention to the effects of the Depression, to unemployment, poverty, income redistribution and a mistaken view of wealth. It urged repentance from materialism and selfishness. The commission did not consider itself qualified to provide a detailed answer to the question of implementing Christian principles, but did suggest that there must be greater economic security and more public service.

This report was written during the Great Depression, and there is no doubt that it was a time of much poverty, high unemployment and hardship. However, the report of the Commission on Christianizing the Social Order did not succeed in applying biblical principles to those pressing problems of the day. Instead, the religion we find in this key document of the United church is sorely lacking in scriptural content. For example, Christ is described as one who creates a sense of forgiveness, not as the Redeemer who by his life and death atoned for man's sins and brought about reconciliation between God and man. In modernist fashion, Jesus' death is seen as a result of his siding with the oppressed and the needy, and the Kingdom of God is seen in terms of kindness and faith in man. One has to read the Scriptures through the glasses of a liberal theologian to draw such conclusions. Because the commission's report lacked a biblical and prophetic framework, it failed to help Christians discern the issues of their time. It furthered the secularization of the gospel and the adaptation of the church's witness to the spirit of the age. There is ample evidence to show that this process has not only continued but has gained momentum in recent decades.



6. From Social Gospel to Political Theology

Following World War II, the churches were challenged by a host of new developments, including an unprecedented surge in prosperity (which lasted until the early 1980s), the cold war between the Soviet Union and the West, the influence of Karl Barth's neo-orthodoxy, the ecumenical movement, and the further secularization of society. The distinguishing characteristics of liberal Christianity did not change, however, as its adherents continued to adapt theology, religion and the role of the church to the dominant, secular world-view. This adaptation has been evident in various ecclesiastical pronouncements issued during the past four decades on political, economic and social issues. This chapter will begin by discussing a United church document issued in 1944, and will then consider several contemporary expressions of liberal Christian thought in Canada.

A Theology of Nation

In 1940, the United Church of Canada established a commission to shape "certain Basic Religious Principles in the light of which might be considered the responsibility of the Church to the Nation and the World Order."¹ The Commission on Church, Nation and World Order issued its Report in 1944. In 1980, Professor Roger Hutchinson, a prominent United Church spokesman, wrote an article titled "Church, Nation and World Order: A Changing Context," in which he linked the position taken in the 1944 Report with the views and activities of the contemporary church. Hutchinson considers the Report to be an important resource for the church today. Both Hutchinson's article and the commission's report are useful to this study, for they spell out the views of contemporary Canadian churchmen on the relationship of the church to society.

The 1944 Report explained why the church should speak out on

public issues: "Since any civilization is in large measure the product of its prevailing religious inheritance, and since the war in which we are engaged has often been described as a war in defence of our Christian civilization, it is incumbent upon the Church to restate the basic principles of a truly Christian civilization. Thus, it can best offer guidance to the nation and to the world."² To assist in this task, the authors set forth what they called "A Christian Charter for Society," in which they dealt with such issues as labour, agriculture, child care, social security, finances, family life, crime, race, art and culture, religious freedom, and the ecumenical movement.

The Charter elaborated on the nature, duties and rights of man, the religious principles of social order, and the primacy of the spiritual. Man was described as a spiritual, social and physical being called to live in a social order which conforms to his true nature. The duties and rights of man are rooted in his nature as a child of God, and the social order is grounded in "the moral character of God." The Charter lists various duties and corresponding rights, for example, the duty to seek freedom and the right to personal freedom; the duty to act justly and the right to expect justice and mercy for one's self. The Report claimed that "the distinctive Christian law of moral obligation is complete self-giving for the highest good of others, and finding one's self through giving one's self."³

While the perfect Kingdom of God is beyond our reach, said the Report, it is among us when it shows its power. "In our struggle to realize God's will in the structure of an actual society, the Kingdom is ever 'at hand' as the pattern which has been shown us in the mount."⁴

One important characteristic of the Report is its ambiguity. Although it refers to certain biblical themes, the influence of contemporary secular ideas about the nature of man are very evident. There are no clear, biblically inspired statements about man as God's image bearer, about God's law (as revealed in the Scriptures and in creation) as the foundation for human life, about sin and rebellion against God, nor about God's gift of grace in Christ as atonement for the sins of mankind. "The Christian Charter for society," summarized the Report, "is based upon the Christian doctrine of Man, who is conceived as a spiritual, social and physical being, finding eternal life as he lives in a social order which conforms to his true nature and under a sense of responsibility to God and his fellow-men. Fundamental human rights are not absolute, but conditioned upon

man's acceptance of corresponding responsibilities as a child of God and as a brother to his fellow-men."⁵

This type of formulation blurs, if it does not erase entirely, the fundamental difference between the gospel of Christ and secular humanism. Christianity is reduced to an attitude of love, moral behaviour and good will toward others, and man becomes the central focus of religion. The subjectivistic tone of the Report made it an inadequate and weak antidote to the man-centred theories so prevalent in 1944—theories that have become even more firmly entrenched in and outside of the church since that time.

Uncertainty as to what the church's message ought to be is also discernible in the Report. Its authors were uneasy about what they perceived to be a weakening of the church's conviction regarding the truth of Christianity. "Behind the message of some of our pulpits is a not too strong conviction," they observed. This was attributed, to some extent, to the fact that ministers had been schooled in the fields of exegetical criticism, psychology, comparative religions, philosophy of religion and philosophy in general "in such a way as to blunt the startling revelations which come to us in the Gospel." Although such studies are of great value, the Report stated, Christianity centres around "a life that was lived and a deed that was done." It is a concrete and positive religion that comes to us primarily by way of revelation and not out of the recesses of man's inner life or out of the field of religion in general. Christianity deals with events in history which teach us the character of God and his purpose for his children. This is the foundation of the church's message, and this is what enables the church to stand over against any form of society, criticizing and appraising it in light of the Christian revelation. If the preacher ignores this truth in preaching and ministering "he is not a Christian minister in the true sense of the word and he is robbing his people of their rightful heritage." But then, as if fearing that this critical comment might be resented, the Report soothingly concluded: "There are encouraging signs in our Church of a re-emphasis by both ministers and laity on the fundamentals of the Christian faith."⁶

Professor Hutchinson's recent discussion of the 1944 Report demonstrates how modern Christianity has continued to adjust to prevailing secular ideas. Hutchinson faults the Report for emphasizing the traditional appeal to come to God through Christ. He states that, from the standpoint of social justice, "these *contentless* pleas to

turn to Jesus need to be complemented by the *Report's* earlier comments about the Kingdom⁷⁷ (emphasis added). Those earlier comments about the coming of the Kingdom, suggests Hutchinson, may have been inserted at the insistence of the social gospellers on the commission, R. B. Y. Scott and John Line, who were also members of the Fellowship for a Christian Social Order. Developments since the 1940s, Hutchinson claims, have made the stance of that group look very prophetic. According to the radical wing of the FCSO, the struggle for justice was the setting in which God's presence would be experienced and his will discovered. In support of this statement, Hutchinson quotes from a letter he received from J. Morton Freeman, FCSO's national staff member from 1940-44. Freeman wrote that "wherever men and women stood up against their oppressors, there was Jesus in the midst of them, that the actual expression of the intention of Jesus in real life was often very rough whether we liked it or not, and that if, for example, we could not see the prophets marching with the revolutionary movement in China, then we could not claim to be expressing the prophetic voice of Christianity in our time."

Hutchinson agrees: "Thirty years later it became fashionable to see the spirit of Jesus at work in Mao's China. Perhaps thirty years from now we will wonder why all persons with 'a desire for mutual betterment' did not see the hand of God in the social justice movements of the 1970's."⁷⁸ But Hutchinson is begging the question. Thinking that the spirit of Jesus was at work in Mao's China does not make it so. On the contrary, those who take biblical revelation seriously *know* that Maoism and biblical religion are fundamentally incompatible.

There is a double irony here. First, supposedly Christianity is present in (and confirmed in) revolutionary *action*—as opposed to seeing faith as a gift of God and as the outcome of obedient response to *revelation*; thus, human action takes precedence over revelation. This is a belief that cannot possibly be squared with what the Bible teaches about truth and the source of truth.

Second, one can choose Mao's China as the locus of the spirit of Jesus only by closing one's eyes to the truly oppressive character of Maoism. Thus what is seen as liberation from oppression amounts to its very opposite. The confusion is thorough.

How can such a grotesque misunderstanding of the reality of Christianity *and of historical reality* be explained? The American theologian Richard John Neuhaus has provided an explanation:

Washington Gladden and other leaders of the social gospel movement declared that the worth of Christianity—indeed the *truth* of Christianity—is proved by its ability to advance societal reform. But such a Christianity could no longer shape culture because it had been thoroughly assimilated into the culture's vision of its own happy and inevitable future. With the social gospel movement, establishment Protestantism assumed an ancillary and supportive posture toward the culture; the direction of the culture could not be brought under divine judgment because the culture itself *is* the working out of God's purposes in history. To borrow Pauline terminology (Romans 12), the church's mission is no longer to transform the culture, but to be conformed to a culture that is transforming itself into the heavenly kingdom. (A later variant of this view appeared in the World Council of Churches' pronouncement that "the world sets the agenda for the church.")⁹

Christianity as Solidarity

Liberal Christianity has continued to espouse the view that the Christian religion is primarily a means by which one can strive for a better world and express solidarity with others. Statements from leading churchmen and various church publications provide ample evidence of this modernist position, as illustrated by the following examples.

Archbishop Edward W. Scott, primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, and a former moderator of the Central Council of the World Council of Churches, is recognized as an outstanding representative of contemporary Christianity. In 1977, at the National Energy Board hearings into the desirability and feasibility of building the Mackenzie Valley gas pipeline, Scott made these comments:

Man has many needs, his need for acceptance, his need for purpose and his need for security. Tragically, our society focuses on security in terms of economic need rather than personal security. Jesus was right when he said, "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Man's real need is an inner kind of security. When he seeks and finds a response beyond himself and it helps him to wrestle with these needs, he is a religious person.¹⁰

In a Christmas message that appeared in the *Toronto Star* on Christmas Eve, 1977, Scott wrote that Christmas affirms that God, or

"Being," "wills good" for human beings. He explained that "willing good" provides a creative influence and implies a transcendence of the limited biases of any human grouping. (For this reason "goodness" needs to be kept related to God.) The willing of good furthermore means that we must treat others as persons and not as things, wrote Scott, and that it must be a conscious desire "to other people and groups, to the created order, and so to God."¹¹

In a similar vein, the Reverend Clarke MacDonald, former moderator of the United Church of Canada, wrote that the central meaning of Christmas consists in the love human beings hold for others. Recalling the heroic action of a passenger on a crashed airplane who helped others while he himself perished, MacDonald wrote:

Was he a Democrat or a Republican? We don't know. Was he a capitalist or a Communist? A Christian, a Jew, a Muslim or an atheist? We don't know. Was he a heterosexual or a homosexual? We don't know.

But I believe this—at that moment the voice of our heavenly Father said: "Inasmuch as you passed the grappling hook to someone else, you passed it to me." At least if that isn't so, then I should cut the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew out of my New Testament, because that's what it's all about.¹²

A third Christmas message, this one a radio speech delivered on December 17, 1975 by Tommy Douglas, echoes the views expressed by Scott and MacDonald. At that time a member of Parliament, Douglas had served previously as a Baptist minister, as the premier of Saskatchewan, and as leader of the (socialist) New Democratic Party. According to Douglas, Christmas means that we should not be satisfied with things as they are, but catch "a vision of what they might be if men could learn to live together in a spirit of mutual goodwill and better understanding. . . . This is the season when we should renew our determination to do what we can, each in our own way, to build a world founded on human brotherhood and concern for the needs of others."¹³

It is right and necessary to remind Christians that they are called to perform deeds of mercy. Note, however, that all three of the preceding statements about the meaning of Christmas and Christianity completely miss the heart of the biblical message. What we hear in these "Christmas messages" is the call to build a better world

based on humanitarian principles; it is even suggested that men are able to save themselves by means of their own good works. In so doing, the central message of the gospel vanishes; the significance of Christ's work of atonement is denied. This is not the religion of the Scriptures, but the new religion of humanity.

A recent editorial in the *Canadian Churchman*, the official publication of the Anglican Church of Canada, discussed the morality of test tube babies and genetic experimentation. These issues, wrote the editor, raise difficult moral questions, and there are "no absolute answers" since certain societal values may not stand up to the test of new experience. The writer concluded: "Only by bringing all the strands of human experience together can the first hesitant steps be taken towards working out a new morality. And the time to start is now."¹⁴ It is remarkable that, in the search for guidelines and answers, this editorial included no reference to God-given norms as revealed in the Scriptures, but turned instead to research and experience.

The same issue of *Canadian Churchman* carried an article titled "Politicians Must Have a Moral Code and Stand Firmly on It," excerpted from the book, *Voice from the Mountain: New Life from the Old Law*, published by the Anglican Book Centre. The author, Gordon Fairweather, has served as a member of the New Brunswick Legislature and of the House of Commons. He stated that we live in a time of uncertainty which might lead to cynicism, and called for a kind of scepticism which is "an ongoing search for truth." To make the right kind of moral decisions in politics, we need certain principles. We must also show that religious beliefs and compassionate social action are not antithetical. Fairweather described religion as one source of good morals, even a powerful one, but not the only one. He wrote: "An essential quality of the Christian religion is that it be able to respond deeply to human need and not affront humanity. A fair test of people in high office is not how they respond to a particular issue, but rather whether or not they realize the force of moral conviction."¹⁵

The type of Christianity represented by the foregoing statement is characterized by a profound relativism. When religion is reduced to an ideology for social reform, all other beliefs are judged in terms of their "practical" value. The Scriptures are no longer accepted as the authoritative revelation of the sovereign God, but are taken to be an account of the experience of people in search of God. This view is

also evident in the following statement of the 1966 General Council of the United Church: "The church should recognize that God is creatively and redemptively at work in the religious life of all mankind. Christians have much to learn, as well as to contribute, through dialogue with people of other faiths. Their special responsibility is to present the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ in humble and sincere dialogue in ways which will respect each other's integrity."¹⁶

The Reverend Clifford Elliott, minister at Bloor Street United Church in Toronto, presents a similar view of Christianity in his regular *Toronto Star* column. A good illustration of Elliott's position is found in his column of September 16, 1983, in which he discussed the proceedings at the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Vancouver. Elliott was delighted with the open-mindedness displayed in Vancouver, and he advised Christians to share freely the truths of other religions in the hope of finding a larger truth. This need not lead to a loss of Christianity's uniqueness, he explained, because Christians "do not worship Jesus—they worship God. Jesus came to point the way to God, not to himself. The Christ whom Christians came to believe in is larger than Jesus of Nazareth." When Hindus claim that they have found Christ in their own tradition and experience, Christians have no right to dispute that. According to Elliott, the claim that Christ belongs exclusively to the Christian church makes Jesus Christ a tribal god of the Christians over against the gods of other faiths.

Since the World Council of Churches began to "dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies" in 1971, meetings have been held with Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and adherents of various tribal and native religions. These meetings have not dealt with differences and similarities, but rather have focused on the crisis of modernity and, for example, on how religious resources might be used for building a just society. In a world in which many die of starvation and all of us are threatened with death by nuclear war, said Elliott, "Christianity may never become the religion of the world, but if it contributes its Christ to the life of the world, Jesus Christ will not have lived and died and risen again in vain."¹⁷

The foregoing selection of statements by leading proponents of modern Christianity—and many more could be cited—are indicative of a view of Christianity that has been emptied of the prophetic, biblical message concerning divine judgment and grace. It is precise-

ly this interpretation of Christianity that is influential in the various taskforces that have been established by the mainline churches, mostly during the past decade. These taskforces, such as the Taskforce on Churches and Corporate Responsibility, Ten Days for World Development, -GATT-Fly, Project North, Project Ploughshares, and the Inter-Church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America, are intended to apply the churches' teachings to social, political and economic policies. Their statements and recommendations reflect a strong bias that is, broadly speaking, anti-American, pro-socialist, pacifist and "soft" on the evils of communist regimes.

Ten Days for World Development

The 1981 publication of *Ten Days for World Development, Making a Living, Year Two*, is representative of the perspective described above and is therefore singled out here for a brief summary and evaluation.

The introduction to this document states that the issue of work "radicalizes" because it forces us to deal with matters at the *roots* of our institutions, and it "politicizes" because it forces us back into common action. The work issue "makes us realize once again that we cannot go it alone. To bring about any change in the direction of a more compassionate and just world, men and women of good will must act in solidarity."¹⁸

The document goes on to describe the working life of a number of people: a fisherman from Prince Edward Island, a Mexican electronic assembly plant worker, a prairie meatpacking plant worker, a doctor, a Jamaican rubbish dump scavenger, an Egyptian working class woman, a steelworker, and a number of others. Each description pinpoints the problems and injustices of that situation, and in some cases they are very serious indeed, particularly in Third World countries. The object of the exercise is to expose the unhappiness and frustration of the workers and the insensitivity of their employers. These descriptions undoubtedly reflect the experience of many people. At the same time, especially with respect to the situation in Canada, *Making a Living* provides an extremely one-sided picture. It is obviously intended to create the impression that our entire "system" can be described in terms of oppression. Although this publication vividly conveys the anger, bitterness and frustration of

workers in oppressive situations, it does little to provide a sound and positive basis for either preventative or restorative programs.

In a section titled "God's Footprints," the authors of the document attempt to make a connection between Christianity and their own social analysis and recommendations for action. Christians, they say, must choose the side of the poor and, since we live in a post-Christian society, Christians will have to work closely with non-Christians "in the struggle for a compassionate and humane world society. . . . The church exists for those outside it."¹⁹

We cannot be serious about the work issue and the *Making a Living* theme without having a cooperative relationship with Canadian organized labour at all levels. Canadian middle class churchmen are as often as not suspicious, thanks to slanted media coverage, of the role of unions in our society. Of course organized labour has limitations and deficiencies;—so does organized law, organized education, organized government and organized religion. What the churches and the unions have in common are roots in idealistic and altruistic principles and sizable popular constituencies. Both union members and church members address one another as brother and sister. We need to recapture the great Canadian traditions of mutual respect and cross-fertilization. (Read Richard Allen's *The Social Passion, Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28*.) The two institutions need to learn to work together without the one trying to coerce and coopt the other.²⁰

"God's Footprints" concludes by stating that those who are for us in the fight for justice are more than those who are against us. The victory has been assured, and the Christian hope has been carved in history.

In another section of *Making a Living*, titled "How to 'Do' Social Justice," the theme of identification with the poor is put in these words: "The source of hope, of wisdom, of analysis, and of specific action is discovered in the context of working with the poor."²¹ The reader is urged to shed his false consciousness through action and to adopt a transforming ideology to aid in building the Kingdom and fighting against oppression and poverty. Individualism is the source of evil, which must be overcome by a new awareness of community—the "we" experience. The structure of power in this country must be changed so that Canadians can make a major contribution to international justice.

A final section, "The Lonely Pastor," examines the plight of the isolated and frustrated pastor. This is the pastor who is vaguely aware that something should be done about global justice, yet who is preoccupied with the problems in his own parish. Fortunately, Christ has brought "the hope that resides with the poor." Still, the pastor must not remain alone and serve only individuals; he should encourage his people to become involved in social justice projects which will at the same time serve a therapeutic purpose for them. The tasks of the priest and of the prophet are contradictory; our objective should be to "kill the priest by turning the power of the group over to the group." Liturgy and gospel must be used to empower the group; the great Christian symbols should be appropriated by the people to help them understand their "social struggles in terms of lived experiences of death and resurrection. A vast number of Christians living in our culture do not understand death and resurrection as cyclical personal experiences but only as an historical event that happened to someone else. Without that lived, interpreted experience where can we find the courage to love and to dare justice? The pastoring can occur in the very heart of the prophetic."²²

There is no doubt that *Making a Living* focuses on real problems which deserve our understanding and energy, but as a *biblical* description of problems and prescription for solutions, it fails totally. The authors have adopted a simplistic scheme in which the problems and tensions of life are understood to be basically economic. This document, prepared on behalf of a number of Canadian churches, owes more to Marx than it does to the Bible. In its arguments, there is no trace whatsoever of the biblical insight about the fundamental cause of evil and injustice nor of the biblical message of redemption and hope in Christ.

Political Theology

A conference held in Saskatoon in 1977 focused on the proposition "that theology is at its best when it is political, and politics is saved from a secular ideology when it listens to a theological critique." The proceedings of this conference, published under the title, *Political Theology in the Canadian Context*,* provide another

* In the remainder of this chapter, any reference to or quotation from this book will be followed by the page number, in parentheses, on which it appears.

valuable source of information about the nature of modern Christianity in Canada. Benjamin G. Smillie, professor of church and society at St. Andrew's College in Saskatoon, served as chairman of the conference and as editor of the published proceedings. Aside from the German political theologian, Dorothee Sölle, contributors came from the departments of theology, philosophy and political science of various Canadian universities. Abraham Rotstein, professor of economics at the University of Toronto, presented a scholarly paper on the apocalyptic tradition in Luther and Marx. This discussion will not deal with Rotstein's contribution but will focus on those lectures that dealt directly with the topic of Christianity and its relevance to society today.

Without exception, these speakers were critical of Canadian (and generally Western) society because they believed it to be capitalistic and therefore oppressive. They agreed that traditional Christianity was individualistic and reactionary. All favoured a socialist reorganization of society in which egalitarianism would replace inequality and oppression would make way for true democracy. They considered Marxism to be a superior ideology, especially helpful as a tool of analysis. Two main themes, then, dominated this conference: critique of the West (capitalism), and praise of socialism.

In Critique of Capitalism

The speakers described our society in dismal terms, attributing its condition entirely to the effects of an unholy alliance between capitalism and traditional Christianity.

In his introductory speech, Professor Smillie likened Canada to the people of Israel in bondage to Egypt. There is of course a difference, said Smillie, but it is one of violent versus subtle bondage. "Canada cannot have any moral integrity as long as it lives in economic and political servitude to the neo-colonial imperial power of the United States, but to a great extent Canada's bondage is self-imposed" (3). Our prosperity is obtained at the expense of the poor among us, especially the poor in the Third World. We in turn are "ripped off" by the United States which, through its multinational corporations and its trade policies, seeks to enrich itself at the expense of the rest of the world. Smillie summarized the Canadian situation in these words: "Canada is a country of well-to-do slaves

who live with the stunted imagination of a closed future; her captive condition has been maintained by churches which emphasize the righteousness of conformity to the law, by an economic elite who live off the fat of the land while acting as agents of foreign predators, and by political leadership that serves as waterboy" (27).

Kai Nielsen, professor of philosophy at the University of Calgary and an avowed atheist, argued that socialism and atheism go hand in hand. Men need not believe in God to be moral, said he. Capitalism is immoral, according to Nielsen, because in it the means of production are owned privately by a minority class, and because it is based on greed and individualism. Furthermore, said Nielsen, capitalism makes of selfishness a virtue, ignores the real needs of human beings, and results in exploitation, alienation, and gross inequality (83-84).

The well-known German theologian, Dorothee Sölle, argued that Western society is dominated by an alienating and oppressive ideology. Even when people are alerted to the need for change and try to be compassionate, she said, they will eventually hit "granite"—the structure of property and society which constitutes the "injustice inherent in the class system" (122). When asked whether socialists are perhaps in danger of ignoring Christ's call to do acts of kindness as individuals, Sölle answered that the society in which we live "is not unjust in doing certain unjust actions; it is *basically* unjust; it is built on injustice, built on exploitation of other people. That is the case with the whole first world, the industrial west. It is a basically unjust society" (143). Not only does capitalism exploit people, it also destroys "the silent exploiters which we are. It destroys our compassion, our capacity of seeing and hearing the cry of others. It destroys really our roots, and so many people are in search of their roots, because in a society like this our roots will be destroyed more and more under the dictatorship of capitalism" (144).

Gregory Baum, professor of theology at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, described what he perceived to be a shift in the Roman Catholic church from a privatized to a social Christianity, and claimed that the Canadian bishops are advocating a "democratization of the economic system." According to Baum, this shift has occurred because the Roman Catholic church leadership realizes that the "monster of power which frightens people everywhere" is no longer necessarily the centralizing of national government, but rather the transnational corporations. The Cana-

dian bishops consider the present economic system unjust because it expands the gap between the rich and the poor, and it leaves the control of resources in the hands of the few. These two problems are the inevitable systematic effects of capitalism. "They occur whether the men who run these institutions be saints or sinners: the ill effects are built into the system" (134-36).

William Hordern, president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon, argued that by the mere act of living in our society we are participants in the sins of that society. Sin is therefore not just a matter of individual choice. Said Hordern: "We may have the best will in the world towards the Indians and yet our economic purchases are helping to inflict mercury poisoning on the Indians of the Kenora region" (57).

The speakers all agreed that traditional Christianity and the churches have willingly served as apologists for the capitalist system. Two main charges were laid against Christianity: first, that religion is individualistic (selfish), and second, that it is oriented to the vertical dimension (and so neglects the concerns of this world). According to Smillie, the church has traditionally supported the political establishment; those church representatives who have assumed a "prophetic" function have been in the minority. To fulfil the role of official religion in cultural Christendom, the Canadian church has limited God's activity to the spiritual realm, "making only occasional sorties into the terrestrial realm in prayers of intercession to bless 'all those who are set in authority over us.' Through this political quiescence, the church reinforces the dominant class in the Canadian economic and political establishment" (18).

Professor Nielsen described those Christians who stress the need for personal salvation as "Neanderthal Evangelicals," and said it is difficult not to feel very disheartened when one realizes that they are the overwhelming mass of the people. Furthermore, he said, "it is both important and sobering to remember that men such as Carter, Nixon, Ford, and Reagan, men who are (or were) key members of a class who will have important effects on the lives of vast numbers of human beings, are or at least pretend to be just such primitive, tribalized christians" (64). The dominant religion of North America, according to Nielsen, is a fundamentalist Christianity "which in effect, if not always in intention, is through and through reactionary, which massively supports the basic structures of economic and political power, and which not infrequently supports the most reac-

tionary elements in the power elite of the capitalist system" (68).

Dorothee Sölle expressed her agreement with Paul Tillich's statement that the seriousness of religious socialism may be judged by the place it gives to the class struggle. She believes that many Christians have privatized and individualized their religion and have thus closed their eyes to the needs and injustices of this world.

Sölle prefaced her speech with a theological political autobiography, in which she referred to Rudolph Bultmann, who "was the personification of the theology of the enlightenment," as her "theological father." Drawing consequences from Bultmann's approach led Sölle close to the death of God theology and so to difficulty with the concept of "a heavenly master who rules history from up there. Consequently," said she, "I have no need for an after-life" (115).

Yves Vaillancourt, professor of political science at the University of Quebec, explained that churches, like other ideological institutions, are in bondage to the capitalist system through compromises with organizational power. The capitalist state uses obvious agencies of oppression, like the government, justice and police, but "the forces of bourgeois and imperialist interests are served by a more subtle stooge when they are cloaked in religion" (226).

And so it goes. The entire history of the "reactionary," that is, non-socialist or non-revolutionary church is written off as a history of compromise, betrayal and servitude to the dominant class. Marx's teachings about religion and the church are accepted as truth. There are serious shortcomings in this way of understanding our situation, a few of which will be considered here.

First of all, because of the contributors' ideological assumptions, their description and critique of Western society tend toward gross exaggerations. It is true that many things are wrong in Western society, that injustice, inequality, suffering and poverty exist. But anyone who depicts our society solely in such terms ignores the many good things that are present, including the protection of fundamental rights, a system of democracy, and the rule of law. In all Western countries, a basic social welfare system redistributes wealth so that essential services can be provided to those who require them. This system goes a long way toward alleviating the plight of the economically disadvantaged. To completely overlook the many positive features of Western society is a conscious, ideologically motivated act that produces very distorted pictures of reality.

The conference speakers defined capitalism in exclusively negative terms, and described the West as uniformly capitalistic. Western society, however, cannot be described so simplistically. Many beliefs and cultural forces, including Christianity, humanism, capitalism, and socialism, have combined to form Western society. Both good and bad elements exist in it. While we must strive to overcome that which is wrong, it is an illusion to think that we must tear down the entire structure and rebuild from the ground up. Acting on the idea that society is perfectible—if only the right people motivated by the right political ideology were in control—will invariably result in the destruction of freedom. On the one hand, the conference speakers condemned our entire present society as oppressive and corrupt. On the other hand, they painted the future possibilities in utopian and unrealistic colours. Their evaluation of the present and their hopes for the future spring not from insight about reality but rather from an essentially utopian and totalitarian ideology.

To accept Marx's view that the economic area of life is life's most important aspect is to accept a form of determinism. According to Marx, since the profit motive is given primacy in our capitalist system, the system is inherently evil and unjust. People in the system, then, have no control over their behaviour. This is why, for example, Professor Baum said that the personal beliefs of people who work in corporations are immaterial. The people may not be evil, but they are forced into evil behaviour because of the "system" or "the structures." Apart from the irony that these statements were made with respect to life in one of the most open and democratic societies that has ever existed, this position provides a ready-made excuse for the indifferent and irresponsible. Every sort of misbehaviour and even crime can be blamed on "the system." One conference speaker suggested that those who resort to drugs are justified in so doing because of the circumstances of their lives. Although such an attitude seems compassionate, it is in fact cruel and totally unhelpful to tell those who destroy their lives through drug abuse or crime that they can't help what they're doing. That's why Christians must protest strongly against the determinism which undergirds socialist class analysis.

We must also object to the wholesale denunciation of traditional Christianity. It is true that in the course of history God's name has been used many times to justify all kinds of atrocities. And today, many of us may have reservations about the way some prominent American politicians or evangelists like Billy Graham interpret

Christianity. But to depict such people as primitive, tribalized Christians intent on keeping an evil, oppressive system in place is not simply uncharitable and outside the bounds of good taste, it is also irresponsible and untruthful. When this wholesale condemnation is applied to all Christians of the evangelical tradition, we must object to such crude oversimplifications. To so dismiss traditional Christianity ignores the many nuances and rich variety within Christianity. Furthermore, the conference speakers passed judgment on Western Christians after having adopted standards and a view of man inspired by a non-Christian ideology. No wonder Christianity earned low marks.

Such negative views about traditional Christianity ignore the reality that, despite decline and even decadence, our society is not bereft of true Christian faith and genuine love. There are still wholesome families, sound marriages, bonds of community, and friendships that make our society what it is at best. Many people do care for others and engage in quiet acts of compassion. To dismiss all of that is to weaken an already fragile and vulnerable society. Above all, God's grace is still present in the lives of people who, with Job, know that their Redeemer lives. No one has the right to make the harsh and sweeping judgments pronounced at this conference.

In Praise of Socialism

The speakers at the Saskatoon conference on political theology agreed that socialism is the solution to the problems of our time and that Marxism, at least as a tool of analysis, is the way to true insight.

According to Professor Smillie, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels explained well why the majority of Canadians remain, generation after generation, dominated by a privileged class. This happens because "in a capitalist society people are conditioned to accept the ideology of the status quo which produces a type of blindness" (32). Religious and political criticism of Canadian society is culturally conditioned, said Smillie, and so is unable to unmask such ideological blindness. However, "Marxist socialism in its analysis of society reflects the tradition of the biblical prophets." Canadian Marxists, Smillie concluded, have provided a great contribution to our society by fearlessly naming "the principalities and powers that have subjugated Canadians. . . . Like Cyrus the Persian king, unconscious of his role in the plan of salvation, Marxists show from their support of

the cause of liberation that they are the 'Lord's anointed' " (33-34).

Professor Nielsen contrasted the "oppressive" characteristics of capitalism with the "liberating" character of socialism. He defined socialism as "a socio-economic order distinguished by the social ownership and control of the means of production and exchange, initially by the working class (the vast mass of people) and eventually by (in a classless society) humankind as a whole; by a genuine workers' control of their own productive activities; and by social relations in which there is extensive political freedom and decentralization of control of production" (83). Whereas under capitalism the purpose of production is profit, under socialism, said Nielsen, its purpose would be to satisfy real human needs. If socialism were to come to a society (such as ours) with a long tradition of democracy and an advanced level of cultural and economic development, there is no reason to believe it would follow the Russian or Chinese model, claimed Nielsen. In his view, democracy is built into the very concept of socialism, and in such a system basic liberties would be protected (89).

Professor Sölle argued strongly in favour of both socialism and a new understanding of theology. She wished to present a new identity "born of the experience of class struggle and of a faith that has been lived" (117). To understand the reasons for the injustice inherent in our society, Sölle said, one must read Karl Marx (122). Many confuse Christianity with bourgeois ideology, but in fact, socialism is much more compatible with the Christian faith. "Faith itself requires that one take a position in the class struggle on the side of those who are exploited." Consequently, Sölle expressed her agreement with the 1973 statement by the Christians for Socialism that "the Resurrection of Jesus Christ can be understood and accepted in its full sense only if each form of the exploitation of people has been eliminated. It is here that Marxism has taught us, with a greater and more scientific depth, our historic task in the process of liberation. Thus we have learned to rediscover and to realize, in all the intention of our life, the subversive and radically new character of the Gospel" (129).

One problem faced by those who advocate socialism is that they are unable to point to any one society in which the socialist revolution has fulfilled its promises of abundance, equality and freedom. On the contrary, in such countries as the Soviet Union, China and Cuba, the socialist revolution has accomplished little good and much harm. Neither do the speakers approve of the democratic socialist or social democratic countries such as Sweden. Because the means of produc-

tion are not socially owned, Sweden is still considered to be capitalistic. The problem, then, is where to look for models for the "new society."

Professor Smillie's response to this problem was to refer to an outline by the Canadian political scientist, C. B. MacPherson, of a type of national populist socialism emerging in the Third World countries, particularly in Africa. Here the principle of democratic freedom is retained, but possessive individualism is rejected, and the Marxist emphasis on the dictatorship of the urban proletariat is replaced by a tribal populism and a charismatic tribal leader. Tanzania is mentioned as a country where such a development is taking place. This populism retains freedom and accountability, yet "keeps the people united in a common socialist political ideology," Smillie explained (103-4).

Tanzania? Yes, Tanzania, where a ruthless dictatorship under Julius Nyerere has destroyed the economy and imposed a regime of political oppression. Those who proclaim the arrival of genuine socialist societies are always disappointed, and they must move from country to country as the hypocrisy and failure of the socialist revolutions become overwhelmingly evident. Yet hope springs eternal.

Another significant feature of most of the speeches given at this conference was the identification of socialism with Christianity. Christianity, it was stressed, is a religion that, like socialism, sides with the poor. Hordern stated that traditional theology comes from the perspective of the white, male, middle class, but political theology, or liberation theology, is rooted in the experiences of the poor. All theology is conditioned by the socio-political perspective and situation of its proponents. That's why theology must be rescued from tradition and firmly placed in the service of political liberation, said Hordern (51-52).

Professor Baum forthrightly rejected what he called old-fashioned Christian theology which divides people into believers and atheists. He said that those of us who live after the Holocaust realize that this distinction is inadequate. Rather, the distinction "should be between people who are with the little ones, who identify with the people to whom we do the dreadful things, and those who shrug their shoulders, and therefore to introduce God or theology as a kind of dividing principle between people who identify with the little ones is, I think, a terrible strategy that leads to the perpetuation of the cruelty for which this world is at fault" (112).

Why Remain a Christian?

Such a line of argument leaves a fundamental question unanswered, a question brought to the fore by Kai Nielsen. As an atheist, he pointed out to his fellow conferees that to do social justice and to be a socialist does not require that one be a Christian. "In terms of its fundamental rationale, morality is utterly independent of belief in God" (77). If Christianity is indeed guilty of all the sins heaped upon it at the conference, and if it is primarily concerned with human relations anyway, why bother being a Christian?

There was general agreement among the participants at this conference that a religion that stresses the need for salvation in Christ is old-fashioned, individualistic, and oppressive. No objection was voiced to Nielsen's sweeping rejection of orthodox Christianity nor to his branding of all Christians in that tradition as "Neanderthal Evangelicals." In fact, Smillie, while arguing that Christianity was still defensible, expressed his appreciation for Nielsen's exposition of "the way in which Christian evangelical pietism has become the cultural religion of the powerful who become the agents of plundering the poor" (105-6).

So the question remains: what is specifically Christian about the kind of Christianity that at this conference was said to be compatible with socialism? According to Professor Sölle, what matters is tradition. The victory stories of the Christian tradition can be told even in defeat, she said, and to abandon these visions of hope would be an impoverishment. In the same vein, Sölle deplored the retreat from the vision of utopian socialism in favour of the barren self-assurance of scientific socialism (as, for example, in East Germany). Faith, she said, is the mediating factor "between vision and precise analysis, in other words between the Bible and Marx," and experience confirms that this indeed is faith's role (121). When asked how to become a Christian for socialism, Sölle said: "Love your neighbour in this society." Love means to be concerned about the misery of your neighbour and about the cause of that misery, that is, the structures of property and society, or the class system, or capitalism.

According to Sölle, classical Protestantism and bourgeois Christianity separate love for God (vertical) from love for man (horizontal). As a result, man is separated from God and doesn't know what to do about evil and injustice. Christ, however, has shown the unity of love for God and love for man (124-27).

Professor Baum, stressing that the vertical and horizontal dimensions are fused, stated that "the God whom we seek is present in us and in others as a source of new life and the remaking of society. And conversely, action on behalf of justice is not a self-willed effort but surrender and obedience to the divine Word. Social commitment is, therefore, 'constitutive' of the gospel life. The promised salvation includes 'liberation from all the oppressive conditions of human life.' The gospel has a political *élan*" (133-34).

In his summary statement on the conference, Professor Hutchinson dealt with the question, "Why remain a Christian?" Why retain a label that, as Kai Nielsen had pointed out, "seemed so dominated by Billy Graham piety and middle class complacency?" (246). One reason, said Hutchinson, is that many find prayer and the Christian heritage meaningful, and even the singing of hymns "fun"; furthermore, Christian stories and rituals create and deepen bonds of community.

But there is another reason to remain Christian: through the stories and rituals, one is able to move beyond rationality and so ground one's social ethic in some absolute truth. Christian symbols, in addition to revealing the true nature of reality, also help to maintain the vision of an open future, that is, that the social structure can be changed. The vision that the future might be organized around the values of co-operation and sharing, rather than competition and greed, can be sustained only by the revealed knowledge that "these values are also facts, that the demand for increased mutuality in our social structures as well as in our personal relationships is not mere wishful thinking but the law of life. In so far as the Christian story continues to evoke that awareness, our concern for justice will continue to be rooted in our religious heritage, and our religious faith in turn will be rooted in reality" (247-48).

Remaining a Christian, according to Hutchinson, is also a way of dealing with the question of evil—brokenness in our relationships to ourselves, to our neighbours and to the cosmos. The symbols of sin and reconciliation reveal dimensions of reality necessary to achieving wholeness. Hutchinson concluded, "Why remain a Christian? I do not see alternative doctrines or rituals emerging in so-called secular settings which indicate to me that the fundamental level of our estrangement is being dealt with. I certainly do not see it being dealt with more adequately than in the Judaeo-Christian tradition or in the other major religious traditions" (248).

That's it. All that is left of Christianity are a few memories and feelings. The authority of the Scriptures and the uniqueness of the person of Christ have been eliminated. The sovereign God of the universe has been dethroned. The conferees agreed that Christianity—at least if it is prepared to incorporate the class struggle principle—is an ideology useful for remodelling society according to the socialist blueprint. Their reasons for remaining Christian are unconvincing because their understanding of Christianity is unconvincing.

The Socialist Illusion

The conferees' grounds for being socialist are equally shaky. Everywhere, whether one looks at the democratic or the non-democratic versions of socialism, one sees disillusionment, failed promises and unfulfilled predictions. For a long time it was hoped that the revolutions of the Left were genuine movements of liberation. But anyone who wants to believe that today must substitute ideology and a "false consciousness" for the reality of history. Many people persist in doing so, but their rhetoric becomes more and more utopian and frantic. As Irving Kristol explains:

Today we live in a world with an ever-increasing number of people who call themselves socialists, an ever-increasing number of political regimes that call themselves socialist, but where the socialist ideal itself has been voided of all meaning and frequently of all humane substance as well. . . .

. . . People who persist in calling themselves socialist, while decrying the three quarters of the world that has proclaimed itself socialist, and who can find a socialist country nowhere but in their imaginings—such people are anachronisms. . . .

The absolute contradiction between the socialist reality today and the original socialist ideal is most perfectly revealed by the utter refusal of socialist collectivities even to think seriously about that ideal. Perhaps the most extraordinary fact of twentieth-century intellectual history is that all thinking about socialism takes place in nonsocialist countries.²³

The Polish philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski, speaks about the reality of Marxism with the authority of bitter experience. Although at one time sympathetic to Marxist ideology, Kolakowski has become critical of the practice of Marxist regimes. Marxism, he claims, has

failed to interpret the world correctly and to change the way it functions. Although it intends to provide immediate answers to all problems and misfortunes, it is "merely a repertoire of slogans serving to organize various interests, most of them completely remote from those with which Marxism originally identified itself."²⁴ That's why Kolakowski calls Marxism "the greatest fantasy of our century. . . . a dream offering the prospect of a society of perfect unity, in which all human aspirations would be fulfilled and all values reconciled."²⁵ Kolakowski attributes these characteristics of Marxism to its underlying attempt to construct a new religion.²⁶ He concludes: "The self-deification of mankind, to which Marxism gave philosophical expression, has ended in the same way as all such attempts, whether individual or collective: it has revealed itself as the farcical aspect of human bondage."²⁷

Marxism speaks of false consciousness and promises deliverance from the blindness such a consciousness effects. But that is a promise that can never be fulfilled. True recovery from blindness can happen only when we are enlightened by the truth of God's Word. That's why the insights about political theology offered at the 1977 conference in Saskatoon will not help us to understand either biblical revelation or the confused and spiritually exhausted world we inhabit. Christianity repackaged according to the Saskatoon speakers has lost its savour. And that is tragic both for Christians and for the world at large.



7. The Shift to the Left in the Roman Catholic Church

The modernist view of Christianity now dominant in the mainline Protestant churches in Canada has also made significant inroads into the Roman Catholic church.

It is said that Vatican II, the deliberations conducted by the Roman Catholic church from 1962 to 1965, opened the windows of the church to the world. In dioceses around the world, priests and nuns responded to Vatican II by establishing commissions for peace and justice and engaging in social action. Their primary objective was to aid the oppressed, and their programs generally displayed a pro-socialist, anti-capitalist bias.

In Latin America the post-Vatican II movement blossomed into full-fledged action as Roman Catholic clergy and laity formed a group called Christians for Socialism, and pledged to work for liberation from "oppressive" capitalist structures. At a convention held in Santiago, Chile in 1972, more than four hundred Christians for Socialism declared:

The economic and social structures of our Latin American countries are grounded on oppression and injustice, which in turn is a result of our capitalist dependence on the great power centers. . . .

. . . Only by gaining economic and political power will the exploited class be able to construct a society that is qualitatively different from the existing one: i.e., a socialist society, without oppressors or oppressed, in which everyone will have the same possibilities for human fulfillment. . . .

There is a growing awareness that revolutionary Christians must form a strategic alliance with Marxists within the liberation process on this continent. Such a strategic alliance goes beyond the tactical alliances of a temporary or short-run nature. It signifies a common journey towards liberation in history through joint political action. This identification with Marxists in political ac-

tion within history does not mean that Christians are abandoning their faith. To them it represents revitalized faith in the future of Christ.¹

In the course of the past decade, a number of Roman Catholic bishops in Canada have criticized publicly what they perceive to be injustices and distortions in society and the economy. These statements "can only be understood," claims theologian Gregory Baum, "if they are related to the remarkable shift to the left found in the Catholic Church's social teaching since the end of the 1960's." According to Baum, "the Church's social teaching has accepted the neo-Marxist theory of dependency which argues that corporate capitalism enriches the center of the system at the expense of the periphery."²

A "Moral" Crisis

On New Year's Day 1983, the Social Affairs Commission of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops released a commentary on the Canadian economy titled *Ethical Reflections on the Economic Crisis* (hereafter referred to as *Reflections*). Although some expressed surprise at the tone and substance of this publication, *Reflections* is consistent with the changes that have taken place in recent years both within the Catholic church and Western Christianity in general.

In his recently published commentary on *Reflections*, Professor Baum observes that the Canadian bishops have moved away from the "reformist" position in Roman Catholic social thought in favour of a "radical" or "conflictual" approach.³ Since the late 1960s, says Baum, Canadian churches have set up various inter-church committees to examine social and economic issues from a "Christian liberationist perspective." For Protestants, Baum explains, this type of cooperative effort in the area of social justice

has represented the return to an earlier tradition, the social gospel, the religion of social involvement in the earlier part of this century. For Catholics, it has meant the emergence of new, prophetic Catholicism closely linked to the world-wide social justice movement in the Church. Church leaders have taken this movement seriously. It was out of dialogue with this movement and in reliance on the development in the World Church that the Canadian Catholic bishops produced their important social justice statements in the Seventies and early Eighties.⁴

It would be incorrect to assume that the "shift to the left" in the Roman Catholic church has received the unanimous support of its members. This fact became obvious following the release of the Canadian bishops' statement about the Canadian economy. Emmett Cardinal Carter, archbishop of Toronto, was quick to point out that its authors—one committee of eight bishops—did not speak for the entire church, and made clear his annoyance at not having been consulted about this statement before it was published.⁵ Despite constant reminders by Christian social activists of the value of dialogue, the bishops' failure to "dialogue" with even their own colleagues on the formulation and publication of an important church document is, to say the least, inconsistent.

Reflections provides us with a firsthand look at the application of the so-called radical or liberationist approach to political and economic issues in Canada. A careful analysis of its contents will help us to better understand this branch of modern Christianity.

The bishops explain that their statement was prepared in response to the critical issues facing the Canadian economy. The high level of unemployment in Canada has produced a moral crisis, they claim, and the reason unemployment is so high is because capital has been accorded a dominant place at the expense of labour. The value, meaning, and dignity of human labour have been violated by a pattern of considering the accumulation of profit and machines more important than the people who work in a given economy. According to the bishops, the current economic policies in Canada promote a "survival of the fittest" situation in which the poor become poorer and the rich become richer.

The bishops call for alternative economic visions and strategies in which the needs of all people and the dignity of human labour are given priority. A "real public debate" is necessary so that people will have a chance to choose their own economic future and thus forge a "true community" out of the present crisis. The bishops are spurred on by their belief that the "cries of the poor and the powerless are the voice of Christ, the Lord of History, in our midst."

An evaluation of *Reflections* must first of all acknowledge that the bishops correctly identify several important issues. Everyone should share their concern for the poor and unemployed, and should take seriously their warning against being motivated by economic interests to the exclusion of all else. It is true that we must search for new ways to increase the challenges and rewards of work. There are

indeed contrasts and inequalities in our society that must be moderated and there is no doubt that we must formulate policies that will result in greater equity. Most important, we must make every effort to eliminate the scourge of unemployment. The powerful and the wealthy ought to be reminded of their responsibility, and it is appropriate that the church leaders remind them.

On such points one can agree wholeheartedly with the authors of *Reflections*. At a more basic level, however, with regard to the bishops' key assumptions and overall perspective, their statement requires a fundamental critique. In this critique, the following main points will be considered: (1) the bishops' view of the gospel and gospel principles; (2) their critique of the Canadian economy and suggested alternatives; and (3) their basic perspective on the Canadian economy.

Gospel Principles

The bishops claim to be guided by the gospel message of Jesus Christ and in particular by the two fundamental gospel principles, namely, "the preferential option for the poor, the afflicted and the oppressed," and "the special value and dignity of human work in God's plan for Creation."

The preferential option for the poor. Referring to the famous passages in Luke 4 and Matthew 11, the bishops claim that Jesus dedicated his ministry to bringing "good news to the poor" and "liberty to the oppressed." "As Christians, we are called to follow Jesus by identifying with the victims of injustice, by analyzing the dominant attitudes and structures that cause human suffering, and by actively supporting the poor and oppressed in their struggles to transform society." Although this statement has the ring of truth, it nevertheless needs to be examined critically.

It is true that the Bible repeatedly admonishes us to do justice to all people and especially to have regard for the needy and the oppressed. But the Bible always speaks of the human condition in terms of the contrast between faith and unbelief. In other words, all people and all human structures are to be measured constantly by their response to God's Word. Justice and virtue do not necessarily lie on only one side of the dividing line between rich and poor. A popular interpretation of Luke 4, Matthew 11 and similar Bible passages is that the poor are by definition on the side of the right; they are God's

people because they are poor. But this conclusion involves a fundamental misreading of Scripture.⁶

Such an interpretation of biblical references to the poor undermines the Bible's central message which comes to both rich and poor alike, that is, the urgent call to turn to God and place one's trust in him alone. If this interpretation is abandoned, then the church's proclamations about the poor and the oppressed merely echo what is being said by those who have embraced a purely man-centred, or secular perspective. Then the distinctive message of the Scriptures is lost, and the biblical antithesis between faith and unbelief is replaced by a new antithesis at the economic level. That makes it logical and easy to adopt what is essentially a class conflict model of human society.

The bishops state that we are called to support the poor and the oppressed in their struggles to transform society. But what if the poor and oppressed are misled into striving for an alternative that is just as oppressive or even worse than the present society? We have often witnessed just such a development when, in the name of one revolution or another, a new regime was installed, and yet all that really happened was that one set of oppressors was exchanged for another.

The bishops refer to Luke 4, specifically verses 18 and 19, as though it were a program for social, economic and political reform. In these verses, Jesus quotes the following words from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." According to theologian Richard John Neuhaus, the bishops have completely misinterpreted Jesus' meaning in this text.

Neuhaus points out that in the verses immediately preceding the text, Jesus rejects Satan's temptation to earthly power. And after quoting from Isaiah, Jesus states, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." In the sense of social transformations, Neuhaus observes, that scripture had not been fulfilled. After Jesus had spoken further, all the people in the synagogue—rather than setting out to establish a "true community" in pursuit of justice—became furious, "drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill . . . in order to throw him down the cliff." Having escaped, Jesus did not begin changing political and economic structures, but began teaching, healing the sick and casting out demons.

All this just in that one chapter, which is so often quoted contrary to its manifest meaning. And, of course, we know Jesus did not spend his life "analyzing the dominant attitudes and structures that cause human sufferings, and by actively supporting the poor and the oppressed in their struggles to transform society." Rather he, most literally, spent his life in dying and rising again in order to give eternal meaning to our existence as human beings. Those of us who seek to be obedient to him walk diverse paths of discipleship. For some of us, those paths call us to engagement in political and social change. But to reduce the Christian message to a program for such change—especially a program so hackneyed and cliché-ridden as this—is a dismal trivialization of the gospel.⁷

The value and dignity of work. A second gospel principle, claim the bishops, is "the special value and dignity of work in God's plan for Creation."

The bishops elaborate on this second principle as follows: "By interacting with fellow workers in a common task, men and women have an opportunity to further develop their personalities and sense of self-worth. In so doing, people participate in the development of their society and give meaning to their existence as human beings."

A discussion of this topic must begin by noting that in the Bible, work as such is always related to man's heart commitment to God. The Bible does not teach that work and human interaction in themselves give meaning and a sense of self-worth. In fact, much work and interaction today take place in defiance of God's will for our lives. Here, too, vital distinctions between faith and unbelief must be made. To understand the meaning of life and to possess a sense of self-worth are gifts of God that come to all who believe and place their trust in him, whether they are employed, unemployed, old, young, sick or healthy. To overlook this fundamental truth of the Scriptures is to lend credence to what is essentially a secularized version of personality and of work.

This criticism is not meant to deny the real importance of work and social interaction. Work is indeed an important part of our lives and we can express ourselves in our work in ways that are genuinely rewarding and fulfilling. But we must issue a strong warning against the attempt to locate the source of human fulfillment in anything that *we* do, especially at a time when too much emphasis is being placed on people's productive, functional capacities. In this context, these words from Ecclesiastes come to mind:

What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on men. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That every man may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God (Ecclesiastes 3:9-13).

In their statement on the economy, the bishops fail to present the central message of the gospel: that sin, the source of all evil in the world, has been overcome by an act of God's grace. This act of grace, concentrated in the life, death and resurrection of Christ, confronts women and men with the call to turn away from themselves—or any other source of security—to the living God who has revealed himself in the Scriptures. In an age of scepticism and secularism, the call to faith and repentance is extremely unpopular and even offensive. Being popular, however, has never been a requirement for the church; the church's primary task has always been to proclaim God's call to all mankind.

Reducing the church's witness to a prescription for political and economic transformation removes the offence of the cross. But it also thereby deprives people of what they most need to hear. Some argue that to emphasize the transcendent and the call to repentance and faith is to ignore the injustices in the world. This assertion, however, relies more heavily on Karl Marx than on the Scriptures. No matter how the gospel has been and often still is distorted for self-serving ends, the church never can presume to eliminate the heart of the gospel message and replace it with a prescription for political and economic reform. This is not an argument against political and economic reforms; it is an argument for seeing such reforms in their proper relationship to the gospel. When people truly believe in what the Scriptures say and so turn to God, the result will be far-reaching changes in the political and economic structures of our society. Renewed hearts always result in new deeds of mercy and justice. This order cannot be reversed: political and economic reforms will not create the "new man."

The confusion about this important issue is deepened by Professor Gregory Baum's lengthy explanation of the bishops' *Reflections*. One problem Baum addresses is whether a specific religious commitment (that is, the option for the poor) is acceptable to a socie-

ty of people who define themselves largely in secular terms. Baum explains that this can be accomplished because natural reason and Christian values are intertwined. He relates this to the fact that God's grace is operative among those who wrestle with issues of justice and truth. God is said to be in and through history, empowering and enlightening people in their quest for justice and truth. In this perspective, writes Baum, the social principles derived from the Scriptures are in keeping with the aspirations of humanity. "The biblical imperatives are a scandal to a human reason that is distorted by the dominant ideology, but they are in accord with the deepest level of practical reason, reaching out towards the emancipation of human life."⁸

This is not what the Scriptures teach. They say very clearly that God's way of salvation (or liberation) is a "scandal" to those who consider human reason to be their source of guidance. (See, for example, 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16.) Professor Baum is here rewriting the gospel to say that salvation is accomplished by identifying with a certain class on the basis of human "practical" reason. The careful reader will notice that Baum is not merely pointing out something with which all of us agree, namely, that the Scriptures condemn injustice and call us to strive for a society in which the well-being of all people is promoted. He is replacing the biblical message of salvation with a secular ideology. Following Baum a little further along in his arguments will make that even more evident.

Baum writes that the principle of practical reason was first formulated in Hegel's *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, which shows that oppression damages the oppressor as well as the oppressed. Hegel believed that only through solidarity with the victims can we gain a truthful understanding of society and thus transcend the distortion of culture as a whole. This theory leads Baum to conclude that "the option for the poor is a critical principle of transcendent dimension."⁹ Baum's philosophical formulation may be elusive, but it certainly differs from what the Scriptures teach about the fundamental difference between God and man. Baum attempts to erase that difference and to declare the struggle for justice in society itself to be the means of salvation and the way to participate in the divine. Such an immanentism results from a secular philosophy that is completely contrary to the Scriptures and to the historic confessions of the Christian church.

This notion of the transcendent (or immanentism) allows one to

identify the Kingdom of God with social, political and economic reforms. But the Bible clearly teaches the opposite, and historic Christianity has always distinguished between the Kingdom of God and whatever humans have accomplished on this earth. This distinction is clearly set out in Pope John Paul II's speeches at Puebla in 1979. The Pope reiterated the uniqueness of Christ as the Son of God and the Messiah, that is, the Redeemer of the world. He rejected the notion that Christ was merely a prophet or an activist or someone involved in the class struggle.¹⁰ Consequently, the Pope also rejected the secular reinterpretation of the church and the Kingdom which says that the Kingdom is already present where certain structural changes or social-political involvements occur. This view, he stated, ignores the fact that "the Church . . . receives the mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the initial budding forth of that kingdom," and in the same context, "It is a mistake to state that political, economic, and social liberation coincide with salvation in Jesus Christ; that the *regnum Dei* is identified with the *regnum hominis*."¹¹ Pope John Paul II did not thereby dismiss the plight of man. On the contrary, he underscored the fact that human beings are image bearers of God and cannot be reduced to a mere fragment of nature. Furthermore, said the Pope, "human beings are not the pawns of economic or political processes . . . instead these processes are geared toward human beings and subject to them."¹²

The bishops' statement on the Canadian economy, especially as it has been interpreted by Professor Baum and others committed to the "liberationist perspective," confuses the Kingdom of God with political and economic reform. This same confusion constitutes the crisis of modern Christianity, the evidence of which is all around us. The poverty of *Reflections'* theological perspective does not bode well for its analysis of our economic problems, nor for its suggested alternatives.

A Capitalist Conspiracy?

In *Reflections*, the bishops take the position that our economic crisis—which they call a "moral crisis"—is the inevitable outcome of a world-wide capitalist system in which the interests of "capital" are systematically promoted at the expense of "labour." The perpetrators of this scheme are governments and large corporations,

who deliberately adopt policies harmful to labour. The bishops write that companies are cutting back on production, laying off workers, and selling off their inventories in order to restore profit margins. And, they predict, "even if companies recover and increase their profit margins, the additional revenues are likely to be reinvested in some labour-saving technology, exported to other countries, or spent on market speculation or luxury goods." Inflation, write the bishops, is not caused by workers' wages, government spending and low productivity, but by monopoly control of prices. They warn that "an industrial future is already planned by governments and corporations." This future is one in which high technology and capital-intensive investment will further undermine the well-being of society.¹⁹

Such an evaluation suggests a rather sinister and deliberate plan by governments and corporations to profit at the expense of workers and the poor. However, an honest examination will show that our society, as part of a highly developed Western civilization, also offers a generally unprecedented standard of living and level of social security. Why do the bishops speak solely in negative terms? Admittedly, one and a half million unemployed people is a cause for profound concern and an indication of serious economic problems. Poverty is real and must be combatted. But to present our economic problems as if they were the result of a premeditated scheme within the "international system of capitalism" is not only unfair but dangerously mistaken. The bishops' sweeping indictment results from their failure to note the mixed character of our society—the fact that, although there are many evil elements in our society, there are also many good things for which God deserves our gratitude. Just ask the refugees of the truly oppressive regimes of our time. Christians must always be concerned about injustice, but they should reject the grossly simplified and therefore untruthful analysis which the bishops have uncritically borrowed from the ideology of class conflict.

The bishops join the chorus of those who condemn what they describe as extensive inequalities in income and wealth in Canada. They remind us that according to 1980 figures the top twenty per cent of the Canadian population received 42.5 per cent of total personal income, while the bottom twenty per cent received 4.1 per cent. They mention that three-quarters of the world's population is expected to survive on less than one-fifth the world's income. They then describe these conditions as "patterns of domination and ine-

quality" that will likely further intensify as the "survival of the fittest" doctrine is applied more rigorously to the economic order.

To lump together the poor of the world (referred to by the bishops as "the South") and the poor of Canada (where the poverty line for a family of four in large urban centres was set at \$19,176 in 1983)¹⁴ is misleading. One must also distinguish between the conditions in a society run by a one-party or one-person dictatorship and those in an open, democratic society which has an extensive welfare system. It certainly seems as though the bishops have been strongly influenced by a view of the world economy that is derived from Marxist ideology rather than from careful analysis of reality. It was Lenin who proclaimed the doctrine of "capitalist" and colonial imperialism, but the facts of history do not support such an analysis. They certainly do not allow us to ignore the fundamental differences between one kind of society and another and to view both of them in terms of what the bishops call "patterns of domination." As Thomas Sowell has reminded us, "to be an effective partisan of the poor, one must first be a partisan of the truth."¹⁵

It is true that there is real poverty and hardship in Canada and that everything possible must be done to overcome that. But the bishops' analysis completely overlooks the tremendous strides that have been made here, and in all other Western democratic societies, toward providing for those in need. In our society checks and balances have been instituted to prevent the accumulation of inordinate economic power, and a significant portion of Canada's national income is transferred from the higher to the lower income levels in order to provide a basic level of security for all. Between 1962 and 1976, government expenditures for social programs increased from \$3.9 billion to \$29 billion while total government expenditures increased from \$13.2 billion to \$77 billion. Thus during these years the cost of social programs as a percentage of government expenditures increased from 29.78 to 37.74.¹⁶

This trend has continued, with the result that in the 1984-85 fiscal year, the federal government will spend roughly \$40 billion on the "social safety net." This figure represents over forty per cent of total federal expenditures.

Our current system of social security will continue to require improvements, but to describe the poor in Canada in terms of worldwide "patterns of domination" does not match reality. The author of the *Canadian Fact Book on Poverty* writes that the non-measured

benefits in the poverty line calculations (for example, health, social services and education) are very significant to those below the poverty line. Social program expenditures play an important role in preventing poverty. Education programs enable individuals to look forward to a better standard of living in the future, and universal health care prevents the poverty that can result from high health care costs. The author concludes that the existing programs have been helpful in holding the line on poverty in Canada.¹⁷

A comparison of present income levels, life expectancy, and standards of living with similar figures from previous generations should convince us that great strides have been made in combatting poverty. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the general standard of living has improved at an unprecedented rate in all Western societies, including Canada.

By comparing the top and bottom income receivers, the bishops depict Canadian society as one of gross economic inequality. However, this approach fails to mention that most of the money earned goes to those between these two extremes. For example, the 1980 income figures for families and unattached individuals in Canada show that seventeen per cent of the population earned more than \$35 thousand, nineteen per cent received between \$25 and \$35 thousand, twenty-five per cent earned between \$15 and \$25 thousand, twenty-eight per cent earned in the range of \$5 to \$15 thousand, and eleven per cent earned less than \$5 thousand. These figures show that marked disparities exist, but they do not portray a society composed of a few wealthy people and a mass of poor people.¹⁸

These comments are not meant to justify all existing inequalities. For example, the moral authority of highly paid business executives (of whom the top thirty receive annual salaries ranging from \$350,592 to \$3,457,175)¹⁹ is seriously undermined when they exhort their employees to restrain their wage demands in order to improve the competitiveness of Canadian business and to fight inflation. Labour costs are the largest single cost factor in the economy, and the matter of productivity (which implies restraint of labour costs) is of great importance to the health of our economy. Executive salaries are part of the labour cost, and executives should be the first to show restraint if they wish their employees to follow suit.

Economic inequality is an inevitable fact of life in a free and open society. The manner in which the bishops wish to overcome the

wage disparity in Canada leaves many large questions unanswered. Do they intend to promote a society in which there is complete equality, or at least much more equality of income and wealth distribution? Do they mean to suggest that all riches are necessarily the result of "domination" and of injustice? Are they implying that radical changes should be brought about in legislation and in taxation in order to achieve economic equality? Although no specific answers are spelled out, the tenor of the bishops' analysis and proposals seems to favour radical changes that would be possible only by means of far-reaching central control of our society. We can hope that, despite all the imperfections and flaws within the present system, most people would not choose such a cure.

The bishops' view of the role of business and profits, as they now function, is entirely negative. Our economic system is portrayed as a monolithic entity in which everyone involved in business either acts only in selfish and oppressive ways, or else becomes the victim of such behaviour. But the economy is much more varied and complex than what the bishops would have us believe. And at a time of economic stagnation, such as is now the case in all Western countries, business people must make decisions with an eye to preserving the economic viability of their enterprises. Losses may be sustainable for some companies in the short-term, but to survive, any company must be able to make profits.

Although they would likely deny such an allegation, the bishops' description of the economy and corporations implies that profit in itself is something bad. They can allow themselves the luxury of describing our economy in abstract models and global terms, but business people living in the real world must concern themselves with efficiency, production, competitiveness and, yes, profits. The same applies to the country as a whole. We cannot spend any more than we produce. The situation in which a country's annual increase in productivity is a mere fraction of the increase in income—and this is what happened in Canada during the 1970s—is a sure prescription for economic disaster.²⁰

The bishops do not discuss the variety and complexity of the Canadian economy and society, but speak rather of "a much larger structural crisis in the international system of capitalism." They accuse transnational corporations of disregarding the value of human labour, and single out their policies as the major cause of our current economic crisis. It is now fashionable to speak only in negative terms

about multinational corporations, and they undoubtedly deserve much criticism. But it is incorrect to describe them, as do the bishops, in solely negative terms. Corporations, too, are a mixture of good and bad. And, as powerful as some corporations are, the bulk of the Canadian workforce is still employed in small and medium-sized businesses. What we therefore need is insight into the way in which the varied and relatively open Canadian economy can overcome its problems and regain its health. In *Reflections*, the bishops opt instead for broad and general descriptions that have more in common with economic determinism than with a Christian sense of human responsibility *and freedom*.

For example, the bishops write that structural changes begin to dominate in such a way that "there is a tendency for people to be treated as an impersonal force having little or no significance beyond their economic purpose in the system." To treat people as insignificant is indeed wrong. But it is incorrect to say that such treatment is inherent in the "system." The "system" is to a large extent *what people do*, and people must always be urged to act responsibly. The irony is that by placing all the emphasis on the way the system functions to the detriment of people, the bishops in effect undermine people's sense of responsibility. People can simply blame the system for their conduct.²¹

In this way, personal responsibility (and therefore personal guilt) is replaced by collective responsibility (and collective guilt). The bishops write that they have seen firsthand the consequences of a troubled economy, among which they list personal tragedies, emotional strain, loss of human dignity, family breakdown, and even suicide. It is clear that unemployment and poverty cause serious problems in the lives of many people. But surely churchmen should be the last to simply draw a straight line from economic hardships to the troubles they mention, including family breakdown and even suicide.

Of course, family breakdown also occurs among the rich. And it also *contributes* to poverty. Single-parent families, mostly headed by women, are far more prone to be poor than two-parent families. Consequently, it is both surprising and disappointing to hear the bishops address the difficulties of our time by simply echoing secular wisdom which says that economic circumstances determine the shape of human life.

The Bible was written to tell us about a merciful, sovereign God

who calls all people to turn from serving other gods, and who sustains his people even amidst the most difficult circumstances. If those who are to proclaim the message of God's Word no longer remind us of the power and comfort of God's presence, especially in times of hardship, who will? In an age of massive estrangement from the truth of God's Word, churches are called to proclaim to needy people, whether rich or poor, God's Word of judgment, repentance, hope and faith.

The bishops criticize the efforts of governments to restrain wage increases and their own expenditures, and claim that "to enforce such economic policies some countries have introduced repressive measures for restraining civil liberties and controlling social unrest." This condemnation of hard-pressed governments does not further our understanding of the real problems and ignores the fact that all of us—not just one small group of villains—bear responsibility for the things that have gone wrong. The bishops' critical attitude lends credence to an adversarial mentality that is easily used to excuse oneself or one's own group. Such a mentality is, however, very destructive. Many labour union leaders have loudly applauded the bishops' *Reflections* because it supports their attempt to pin all the blame for our economic problems on a conspiracy of business and government. Their attitude is exemplified in this statement by Dennis McDermott, president of the Canadian Labour Congress: "Never before have we been faced with the incredible spectacle of a government in power establishing, as a public policy, economic programs designed to destabilize the economy, to create unemployment, to force small and medium size enterprise into bankruptcies, to undermine the farming community, to put home ownership beyond the reach of ordinary citizens."²²

Mr. McDermott's evaluation of the current economic situation is wrong on three counts. First, it is a grotesque distortion of a complex reality. Second, it provides the unions with an excuse to deny any responsibility on their part. And third, it erodes the shield of civility and respect without which our society will not remain free. Insofar as the bishops' *Reflections* provides any legitimacy for the simplistic views of Mr. McDermott, it contributes to forces that would destroy our society *and the church* for which the bishops claim to speak.

Any comment on wages, prices, and income division must include a consideration of the role of unions. The bishops state that they are aware of "the limited perspectives and excessive demands of

some labour unions." No more is said, however, and the bishops go on to endorse an analysis and program no different from that of the New Democratic Party and of the Canadian Labour Congress. But the Bible impartially calls workers and employers, rich and poor, to self-examination and repentance. Rather than challenge the NDP and the CLC on this basis, *Reflections* provides support for their adversarial and shortsighted views. No wonder both organizations enthusiastically endorsed the bishops' statement.

The Bishops' Alternatives

The bishops outline alternative approaches to the present economic policies, and call for a basic shift in values: from concern about the maximization of profits and growth to a consideration of the needs of all people. This will involve stimulating production and permanent job creation in basic industries, developing a more balanced and equitable program for curbing inflation, and maintaining health care, social insurance and special assistance programs. Economic strategies should not be based on megaprojects, state the bishops, and should avoid industries which are capital-, energy- or technology-intensive, foreign-controlled or export-oriented. Rather, Canada should work at increasing the self-sufficiency of its industries, strengthening its manufacturing and construction sectors, creating job-producing industries in local communities, and redistributing capital for industrial development.

"The people of this country," write the bishops, "have seldom been challenged to envision and develop alternatives to the dominant economic model that governs our society." Communities of working and non-working people have a creative and dynamic contribution to make in shaping the economic future of our society. Serious attention must be given to their concerns and proposals if the seeds of trust are to be sown for the development of a true community and a new economic order. Also needed, according to the bishops, is an economic model that would place the emphasis on "socially-useful forms of production; labour-intensive industries; the use of appropriate forms of technology; self-reliant models of economic development; community ownership and control of industries; new forms of worker management and ownership; and greater use of the renewable energy sources in industrial production."

According to the bishops, the Canadian government's five

priorities ought to be (1) to recognize unemployment, and not inflation, as the number one problem; (2) to aim industrial strategy at creating permanent and meaningful jobs for people in local communities; (3) to fight inflation by shifting the burden of wage controls to upper income earners, controlling prices and taxing investment income; (4) to stress social responsibility in the current recession so that there is no curtailment of social services and assistance; and (5) to ask unions to play a more decisive and responsible role in the economy.

All can agree with some of the goals the bishops have suggested. Who would argue against creating more permanent employment, respecting the role of workers and unions, and paying more attention to the needs of people, especially those facing economic hardship? However, when mapping out alternative strategies, the bishops frequently lose themselves either in generalities that provide no clue as to how they might be applied or in specific suggestions that display very little insight about the reality of economic life. It is easy to call for labour-intensive production that provides permanent and meaningful jobs. But how are such jobs to be produced in light of the need to maintain a degree of international competitiveness and in light of the far-reaching effects of the so-called computer revolution? It is one thing to say that unemployment rather than inflation is the number one problem, but quite another to in fact lower the unemployment rate without paying a great deal of attention to the problem of inflation.

The bishops are critical of policies that would provide a favourable climate for private investment, and this at a time when many businesses are experiencing grave difficulties maintaining economic viability. For example, *Reflections* suggests that the roots of our economic problems are private ownership and the free market, in which profits are an important criteria for business success. The language becomes very ambiguous at this point. On the one hand, the bishops stress the importance of local and community control; on the other hand, they call for wage controls on upper income earners *and on prices*. A system of price controls, in particular, implies far-reaching government control over the economy. The bishops do not tell us how they plan to reconcile these two opposing strategies of centralization and decentralization.

In *Reflections*, the authors state that they wish to stimulate public dialogue. Their own style of dialogue, however, does not con-

tribute to a better understanding and certainly not to greater trust among the various people and groups within society. In summary, this document does a less than adequate job in providing more insight and in stimulating real dialogue because: (1) it presents our economic problems in terms of the conflict between capital and labour; (2) it resorts to sweeping ethical exhortations; and (3) its specific suggestions are either ambiguous or inconsistent.

The issue at the heart of the entire discussion is the norm for the organization of society. The authors of *Reflections* perceive our society to be a monolithic entity in which one or two power centres are in control, and believe that this system must be replaced by an alternative, socialist one. In reality, however, our society is comprised of a great variety of associations, each with its own area of responsibility and authority. One of the most significant contributions that Christians can make is to safeguard the integrity and freedom of the many different kinds of institutions and associations. The bishops' failure to appreciate the significance of societal variety (or differentiation)—especially in view of the current drift toward uniformity and egalitarianism—is therefore all the more disappointing.

The Bishops' Model for Society

The bishops' arguments in *Reflections* certainly seem to endorse a socialist perspective. This impression is reinforced not only by such notable commentators as Gregory Baum but also by the fact that various left-wing groups wholeheartedly endorsed this document. For example, an editorial in the May 1983 issue of *Canadian Dimension*, which is the mouthpiece of a group of Marxists in Canada, jubilantly proclaimed *Reflections* to be "a brilliant political statement and a concise and insightful economic analysis." Although the bishops do not attach a label to their economic vision, the editor of *Canadian Dimension* knows socialism when he sees it, and he wrote that "many people will recognize in it some basic ingredients of the new socialist society." Furthermore, wrote the editor, "the radical vision of the bishops can only be instituted when the agents of capital have been removed from the citadels of power and replaced by representatives of working people intent on constructing a new society."²³

However, the bishops might argue that the Marxist editor of

Canadian Dimension has misunderstood their message. Therefore let us further consider the evaluation of *Reflections* by Gregory Baum and Duncan Cameron, who are much more closely allied with the bishops.²⁴ In *Ethics and Economics*, co-authors Baum and Cameron agree that the alternative society envisioned by the bishops is one that is in accordance with the socialist vision and is thus marked by a high degree of central control. For example, Baum writes that the bishops' vision of the economy is within reach of our society, "if only the use of capital could be democratically controlled."²⁵ The word "democratically" is a tricky one. Generally it stands for decision making on the basis of the authority of or accountability to the people. But what does Professor Baum mean here? How can capital be democratically controlled? Elsewhere he writes that he favours central planning of the economy.²⁶ But what happens in such a society to the freedom of business, not to mention the other non-public structures? Baum provides no answers.

Duncan Cameron, professor of political economy at the University of Ottawa, devotes one chapter in *Ethics and Economics* to proving that the authors of *Reflections* make economic sense. He supports the bishops' claim that present economic policies in Canada amount to a "made-by-government-recession" that victimizes workers and furthers the interests of capital.²⁷ Cameron suggests that wage controls are a form of protectionism, and so present a barrier to economic prosperity.²⁸ In our society, writes Cameron, people are assigned social roles through their jobs; therefore, we should not be surprised to discover links between suicide and unemployment.²⁹ Cameron agrees that the present economic disorder is symptomatic of a much larger structural crisis in international capitalism.

In short, Cameron joins the bishops in rejecting the free market (defined as the "business view of the economy") in favour of the public ("community") control of the economy. He writes that the envisioned economic future requires "an alternative form of economic power." This alternative is described as "a political task and not a religious or scientific matter."³⁰

On one level it is very difficult to argue with Cameron and others like him. They claim to care for the dispossessed and the unemployed, and who would want to question their sincerity? At the same time, their simplistic division of society into two groups, one for and one against the poor and the unemployed, begs a host of unanswered questions. Their prescription for the alternative

economic order amounts to nothing less than a revolution based on a collectivistic, statist view of society. Those who take this position can, of course, point to many foolish and selfish decisions made by business and government policy makers, but they have no proof, not in terms of Christian principles nor in terms of historical evidence, that state regulation will bring about the desired improvement.

Although these suggestions for an alternative economic order come wrapped in a Christian vocabulary, they should not blind us to the bishops' faulty analysis of our present situation nor to the true nature of the future they propose.

The views of the bishops and their advocates should be challenged both on the basis of their view of man and human society and on the basis of historical evidence. It is ironic that the bishops should proffer what is essentially a statist solution at a time when the failure of that solution has been so amply demonstrated. For example, it is becoming increasingly obvious that a significant part of the problem faced by the "mature" European welfare states is the extensive involvement of the state in the economy. Even the socialist government of France has had to face up to the hard realities of economic life and sanction the layoff of thousands of workers in the steel and automobile industries. The French President François Mitterand recently gave this advice: "In order to invest, one needs capital, one must make profits, and earn money. We can no longer bury under taxes and social premiums those who take care of the French prosperity."³¹ The bishops and their apologists should ponder the significance of these words for the Canadian economy rather than clamour for more government intervention in the name of a hazy concept of the "community."

There is another curious feature of the bishops' statement which should not escape us. The bishops depict the current economic crisis as one that can be attributed to the failure of capitalism, to greed and to a concentration of power in the hands of a few. They make no mention of the small but growing movement toward new forms of worker ownership, co-determination, and labour-management cooperation. For example, some companies have become partly or entirely employee-owned, some have adopted profit-sharing schemes, and there is a growing interest in "quality of working life" programs.³² A small labour union, the Christian Labour Association of Canada, has consistently recommended new approaches to collective bargaining, more challenge and variety for workers, and a more

equitable approach to wages and salaries. The bishops make no reference to any of the above. On the contrary, they claim that "the people of this country have seldom been challenged to envision and develop alternatives to the dominant economic model that governs our society." They speak solely in negative terms about the contemporary situation, presumably in order to strengthen the case for their alternatives.

An examination of some of the sources recommended by the bishops in their Notes/References confirms the impression that they have a strong socialist bias. For example, in support of their statement that "profound changes are taking place in the structure of both capital and technology which are bound to have serious social impacts on labour," the bishops refer to books by two well-known Marxists. These are *Crisis in the World Economy* by A. G. Frank, and *Inflation or Depression: An Analysis of the Continuing Crisis in the Canadian Economy* by Cy Gonick. The bishops then advise their readers to take a closer look at the industrial vision and economic model that govern our society, and recommend reading *The Great Economic Debate: An Ethical Analysis* by J. Philip Wogaman, a professor of Christian ethics. The fact that these three books are listed as supporting material tells us a great deal about the basic perspective permeating the bishops' *Reflections*. We will mention a few highlights of Gonick's and Wogaman's books.

Cy Gonick's Socialist Utopia

Cy Gonick's evaluation of the Canadian economy is a reiteration of the basic Marxist critique of capitalism. Briefly stated, this is the theory that monopoly capitalism dominates Western society and that this domination is wasteful and oppressive because it is based on wage labour. All wage labour is exploitative because labour is used to create surplus value, which is appropriated not by the workers themselves but by the capitalists. Therefore "class collaboration" between capitalists and workers is ineffective and inappropriate. Gonick believes that "the very existence of a trade union asserts the unbridgable conflict between capital and labour."³³

What is required, according to Gonick, is a "revolution" in the form of "the mass mobilization of workers as a class that is ready and able to occupy and manage the instruments of production and distribution of both things and ideas."³⁴ We can learn much, says

Gonick, from the writings of Marx, Lenin, Mao, Rosa Luxemburg, and many other authors in that tradition. For Gonick, revolutionary action means the right of workers to strike at any time, self-management of strikes through debate and open assemblies, opposition to job classification as a basis for wage payment, worker control of health and safety, and veto power over management. Unions must not be satisfied with simply receiving wage increases; rather, unions must demand total worker control of society.

In Gonick's vision of the new society, the elimination of inequality would be a primary goal, certain essentials like food would be made free, housing would be distributed according to need, and rents set according to income. The entire system of distribution through wage labour would be completely eliminated. The socialist society would be structured on workplace and neighbourhood councils, merging into larger bodies for broader functions, and would be thoroughly democratic and anti-hierarchical. "Every effort would be made to break down the dichotomy of mental and physical labour and the separation of town and countryside."³⁵

It is ironic that Gonick talks about the worth and integrity of individuals yet advocates a utopian socialist future in which all power is concentrated in the state. That such a society must be systematically totalitarian and therefore oppressive is a foregone conclusion—as the outcome of every utopian, revolutionary scheme has demonstrated.

But why would the Canadian bishops advocate this prescription for revolutionary change as one that can help Christians gain a better understanding of our current crisis and what must be done about it? Rather than recommend this kind of reading as in any way helpful to understanding our times, those who wish to exercise Christian leadership are duty-bound to warn their followers against any acceptance of the radically un-Christian and utterly destructive ideas proclaimed in Gonick's book. It is incomprehensible that the bishops fail to unambiguously reject Marxist ideology.

J. Philip Wogaman's Option

The Great Economic Debate, written by Wogaman and recommended by the bishops as "an example of thinking about alternative directions," is also very much influenced by Marxist ideology. Wogaman discusses five ideologies (Marxism, laissez-faire capitalism, social market capitalism [mixed economy], democratic

socialism, and economic conservatism) in the light of several Christian themes. He prefers the option of democratic socialism. He writes, "We must not be surprised if we find ourselves being influenced by Marxism at many points of specific analysis or judgment, just as a surprising number of fair-thinking people have begun to be."³⁶

Since the key to understanding this book is Wogaman's perception of Marxism, the chapter on Marxism deserves special attention. Wogaman believes that important ideas in Marxism are consistent with those held by Christians. He does not believe that Marx's rejection of religion (as the "opium of the people") presents an obstacle for Christians because Marx did not deny the spiritual reality of human life but rather attacked the oppressive conditions that made religion a necessary escape. This is Marx's famous statement on religion: "The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is required for their *real* happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about its condition is the *demand to give up a condition which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore *in embryo the criticism of the vale of woe, the halo of which is religion*."³⁷

Despite Marx's clear rejection, as a principled atheist, of all religion, Wogaman believes that Marxist atheism is not the essence of Marxism. This, he claims, is demonstrated by the fact that there are Christians who are also Marxists and by the many points of contact between Christianity and Marxism. For example, he believes that the Marxist concept of alienation and its concept of the human family correspond to the Christian one. Furthermore, Wogaman finds similarity in the Marxist and Christian ideas of the human spirit and human freedom. Although Marx clearly held that religion was a hindrance to true humanity, Wogaman still asserts that Marx's rejection of religion is not really of the essence of Marxism. "The whole concept of alienation, the doctrine of exploitation, the analysis of class conflict, the doctrine of the state, and the other strictly economic themes [in Marxism] are all logically consistent with the idea of God. Like the other economic ideologies we are about to examine, the development of the ideology can be considered with or without belief in God."³⁸

Such a statement can only be explained by Wogaman's "modern" or liberal view of Christianity, which amounts to a denial of biblical religion. The heart of liberalism is the attempt to make the Christian faith acceptable to human reason by emptying the

biblical teachings of their transcendent significance. This not only entails a fundamental misunderstanding of true religion as revealed in the Scriptures, but also leads to a complete misunderstanding of the human condition. This becomes even more obvious in Wogaman's discussion of the eschatological expectations of socialism.

Wogaman speaks of the "truly liberating possibilities of socialism" in the Cuban revolution, in Vietnam, and in the cultural revolutions in China, and expresses the hope that these possibilities will still be realized. "Even in China (perhaps especially in China), where striking claims have been made about the emergence of a new humanity, one is impressed by how the people of the community are patiently led by their more enlightened revolutionary leadership to the abandonment of superstition and wrong ways of thinking."³⁹ He states that the Marxist economic vision of material progress desires the "further liberation of the human spirit"⁴⁰ and suggests that the socialist ideals of Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (who thought of society as a family) are promising.⁴¹ Wogaman writes that China and Cuba "have given much attention to the encouragement of a new human type to emerge on a foundation of Marxist socialism," although he admits that the evidence from these situations remains "contradictory."⁴²

Some may wish to excuse Wogaman's words about China, Cuba, Tanzania, and Vietnam because of the fact that *The Great Economic Debate* was written in 1977. However, the fundamental misreading of history in Wogaman's book has nothing to do with what could have been learned since 1977; it does have everything to do with adopting a non-Christian view of man and history. While Wogaman's statements may now sound embarrassingly wide of the mark, there are still many Christians who refuse to understand the real anti-Christian and anti-human character of Marxist revolutions. This is nothing short of a tragedy because it is paid for by the blood and dashed dreams of countless human beings. Any ideology that harbours hopes for the rise of a new type of man via the socialist revolution is nothing but a tragic error of judgment or a monumental fraud.

The Great Economic Debate mixes biblical themes with radically anti-Christian ideology. It is heavily influenced by liberation theology, which interprets religion as the servant of man in the process of emancipation. Thus religion becomes man-centred and Christ

is seen simply as a symbol or an example, not as the Redeemer and Son of God as revealed in the Scriptures. The crucifixion is understood as the murder of a good man who gave his life for the oppressed as an example to the rest of us. Here the biblical message of God's love and its meaning for human life is fundamentally undermined and distorted.

Why would the bishops recommend *The Great Economic Debate* as a helpful source of information about alternative directions in economic life? No doubt it is because this book corresponds with their own views about the failure of our "capitalist" society and with the alternatives suggested by Wogaman. But those who really wish to gain more understanding about our economic crisis will not find it in these sources recommended by the bishops.

Gregory Baum's Priorities

Because of Professor Gregory Baum's role as a spokesman for contemporary Catholic social thought, his ideas deserve more attention. We will discuss them on the basis of his book, *The Priority of Labor*.^{*} Professor Baum wrote this book as a commentary on Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work). In this encyclical, Baum explains, the Pope attempts to set out principles of social justice that are applicable to Eastern and Western societies and to the Third World. While the encyclical is consistent with the church's social teachings, writes Baum, "it introduces new ideas, derived from a critical and creative dialogue with Marxism, which allow the author to reread the Catholic tradition in a new light and raise the Church's social message to an unprecedented height" (3).

On the basis of this interpretation, Baum describes the focus of *Laborem Exercens* as follows: "Man is defined as worker. Man creates his own history through labor. Man is the subject of labor, and through his labor is meant to become more fully subject of his world. Man's self-constitution through labor is a moral task. The Christian recognizes that God is graciously present to this task" (7).

This focus suggests a number of moral principles, the central one being the principle of the priority of labour over capital. "The violation of this principle in Western capitalism and in Eastern col-

^{*} In the remainder of this chapter, any reference to or quotation from *The Priority of Labor* will be followed by the page number, in parentheses, on which it appears.

lectivism is the source of oppression and misery in society," Baum writes. "The workers' struggle for justice must aim at a social system in which the priority of labor over capital is observed. This happens only through the introduction of the co-ownership of labor on the one hand, and of a responsibly planned economy on the other. The struggle for justice, carried on by the exploited joined in solidarity, must be supported by those who love justice, which includes the entire Church" (7). According to Baum, the church is the "guardian of man's dignity," and as such, its task is "to examine the historical conditions of human life from the viewpoint of social justice" (8). We will briefly review and evaluate the following four major themes in *The Priority of Labor*: (1) man as labourer; (2) evil and injustice; (3) liberation; and (4) Marxism.

Man as labourer. A central dogma in Baum's commentary is the definition of man as a worker. He states: "Man is a laboring animal. Man differs from other animals because he labors" (9). Baum makes a distinction between the subjective and the objective sides of labour. The subjective emphasis involves what he calls a personalist position, and is concerned with how man himself experiences work, and whether he is diminished or enhanced by work. The idea of personhood, self-actualization, commitment, and fidelity are key themes in this approach. Baum writes: "Through labor man actualizes his as yet unfulfilled potentialities. In the pursuit of the divine call, man in a certain sense creates himself" (9-10). Elsewhere he argues that "labor creates society," and that "man creates his world, his history and therefore in a sense also himself. . . . Through laboring man becomes more truly human" (68).

This theme of self-creation through work is linked to man's rationality. Work presupposes "a certain kind of reason, one that is shared by the community and enters into its self-constitution through labor" (12). According to Baum, this rationality "is not simply a given; it grows and transforms itself precisely as people create new conditions for their communal existence, deal with new experiences, and rely on new forms of cooperation" (12).

Not only is labour constitutive of man's being and thus the key to self-realization, labour also has a redemptive quality. Baum claims that it is precisely as worker that man reaches for an interior life to enable him to cope with harsh conditions and the struggle for justice; it is as worker that he recognizes the need for co-operation,

selflessness and solidarity. If he is a Christian, he recognizes in the gospel message the good news that "God is present to the human struggle as the one who summons and enables men and women to leave selfishness behind and enter upon a cooperative existence, in which alone love and justice can be at home" (70). Baum's immanentist starting point (the idea that the divine is found within the human) is also evident in his assertion that "since freedom is a divine gift, the dynamic of history [the struggle for justice in society] is . . . the locus of God's presence" (30).

Although Baum believes that the papal encyclical on work rejects the practical and theoretical materialism of Marxism, he maintains that it does view man as a worker "who struggles to become the subject of his history." Baum claims that eternal life should not be understood as a realm that competes with earthly life, but as "the unfolding of the subject character of human life beyond death" (72).

Baum accepts Marx's definition of man as a labourer, but he attempts too much when he claims that the Pope adopts this definition as well. To be sure, Pope John Paul II states that the question of human work is "a *constant factor* both of social life and of the Church's teaching." The Pope even writes that "human work is a *key*, probably *the essential key*, to the whole social question, if we try to see that question really from the point of view of man's good." However, such statements about human work certainly do not *define* man as a worker, nor do they hold out a promise of self-creation through work (in the sense that Marx speaks of self-creation). In fact, the Pope states that "*work is one of the characteristics that distinguish* man from the rest of the creatures." The church, he explains, thinks of man "in the first place in the light of the revealed word of the living God. Relating herself to man, she seeks to *express* the eternal *designs* and transcendent *destiny* which the *living God*, the Creator and Redeemer, has linked with him."⁴³

While Pope John Paul II is very careful to uphold the biblical view of man, Baum attempts to give to the Pope's statement quite a different meaning by adopting the Marxist notion of man as "a laboring animal." But the careful reader should have no difficulty in detecting the difference between what the Pope says—in keeping with biblical revelation—and what Baum says the Pope means.

Evil and injustice. In *Laborem Exercens*, the Pope pays a great deal of attention to economic and social injustices. On this score, too,

Baum reads too much of his own view into this encyclical. Injustice, believes Baum, results not only from personal sin but also and primarily from social sin. His reasoning on this point goes as follows: Injustice is concentrated on what happens to workers in their work. Under capitalism, as well as under official Marxism in the Soviet bloc countries, workers are not recognized for what they really are. Instead, they are exploited in their labours, even when their wages and conditions of work have been upgraded, because they are not given room for self-actualization in their work. Those who control the capital and the means of production further their own interests at the expense of the workers. Capital dominates labour, not only by paying low wages but especially by excluding people from making the decisions that directly affect their lives.⁴⁴

Professor Baum suggests that there are a number of similarities between liberation theology and the perspective of *Laborem Exercens*. One point of contact, says Baum, is the

analysis of the principal cause of misery in the modern world; it is the domination of capital over labor. While they use a different vocabulary, papal teaching and liberationist theology agree that the principal source of evil in society is the master/servant relationship in the economic order, i.e., the violation of the priority of labor over capital, whether this be in the capitalist societies of the West, the communist societies of the East, or the less developed societies of the third world. . . . Both the encyclical and liberationist theology, turning their back on capitalism and communism, opt for a socialist vision of society, where the giant workbench at which men and women labor belongs to them and where the use of capital is determined by those who produce it (76-77).

Such a claim, however, is totally unfounded. Quite to the contrary, the Pope presents a thoroughly biblical view of the source of evil and the source of redemption. He writes that

the final word of the Gospel on this matter as on others is found in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. It is here that we must seek an answer to these problems so important for the spirituality of human work. *The Paschal Mystery* contains the Cross of Christ and His obedience unto death, which the Apostle contrasts with the disobedience which from the beginning has burdened man's history on earth.⁴⁵

In keeping with a tendency common to many critics of "capitalism," Baum glosses over the difference between the wrongs of Western democracies and the inherent evil of communist dictatorships. However, anyone who cannot see the contrast between these two types of society suffers from a severe case of intellectual myopia. The practical consequences of this position are indeed grave, for when people fail to appreciate the difference between democracy (despite its flaws) and totalitarianism, they are no longer prepared to defend their own society against the threat of the anti-democratic and totalitarian forces in the world.⁴⁶ It is ironic that some of the most urgent warnings about this very real and present danger have come from those who know firsthand the evil of Soviet and other forms of communism. For example, Milovan Djilas, a critic of communism in his native country of Yugoslavia, recently warned that "the West has lost belief in its values, and this will lead to its destruction."⁴⁷

Liberation. According to Baum, solidarity of the poor and with the poor is a radical Christian principle that is materialist and spiritual at the same time. Christians must turn their attention to those groups that remain on the margin of society and must identify themselves with liberation movements in the Third World. Universal solidarity can be based only on a faith in man's promised destiny (39-40).

Justice (that is, the priority of labour over capital) involves an effort to decentralize at the local level and to centralize at the national/communal level. Decentralization must take place locally and in the workplace itself via co-ownership and co-responsibility. While capitalism creates alienation, Baum believes that "cooperative ownership, on the other hand, delivers people from wage labor and from egotism. Here the daily labor for bread and life calls for cooperation, concern for the others, and joint responsibility, and hence initiates people into an altruistic consciousness" (43).

A planned economy is necessary because society as a whole must be involved in overcoming unemployment, writes Baum. In this connection he refers to Yugoslavia as a country in which both central planning and decentralized decision making by workers is taking place. Baum believes that "however imperfect the Yugoslav economic system may be, it does bear a certain resemblance to the socialism outlined in *Laborem exercens*" (56).⁴⁸ He also refers to the revolutionary democratic government of Nicaragua, which has undertaken the overall planning of the economy while, according to

Baum, leaving room for privately and collectively owned enterprises (56).⁴⁹

Baum concludes that *Laborem Exercens* advocates a form of socialism that is moral, liberationist, international, mostly reformist, integrates certain Marxist paradigms, and is non-ideological. "Non-ideological" in Baum's view signifies that kind of socialism which remains open to pluralism within the common struggle. Baum wants Christianity to be "pluralistic" too. He has obviously discarded any belief in the uniqueness of Christianity and wants us to believe that the Pope shares his position. Writes Baum, "It does not occur to Pope John Paul II that a Christian movement for justice could by itself become the historical force that transforms society" (86). But it is inconceivable that the Pope would agree with that statement, for it would mean that he does not believe in the unique life- and world-renewing power of the Christian religion. Baum is determined to redefine Christianity in terms of the secular faith of our time, but he loses all credibility when he tries to impute that same position to the present Pope. Everything Pope John Paul II has said and done in defence of historic Christianity belies Professor Baum's claim.

Marxism. Baum points out that although the papal teaching on labour is similar in several important ways to Marxist theory, there are also some significant differences. For one thing, to Marx labour meant primarily industrial labour, whereas the encyclical's concept of labour is much wider and includes all work connected with production. According to Baum, the encyclical is based on the premise that "modern society is a laboring society" (45). Secondly, he notes, the encyclical rejects the Marxist notion of the "surplus value of labor." And furthermore, writes Baum, Marxism regards itself as an interpretation of human history, while the encyclical does not present an interpretation of the whole of history.

Despite the fact that traditional papal teaching has condemned socialism, Baum assures his readers that Catholics may now cooperate with Marxists, provided that the joint project remain pluralistic and that there be room for different philosophies, including the Christian faith (81). *Laborem Exercens* favours a moral socialism, says Baum, for though its reasoning is radically at odds with the scientific socialism of official Marxism, it has an affinity with the original reasoning of Marx. "The essential difference of their conclusions is this: while for Marx the ownership of capital was

the great moral issue, for the encyclical . . . it is the use of capital that really counts in the practical order" (83).

Baum wonders whether it is possible to call the socialism of the encyclical an ideology, and concludes that *Laborem Exercens* may be said to present a "utopia"—a term derived from the revisionist Marxist philosopher, Ernst Bloch. "Utopia is here understood not as an unhistorical dream of a perfect society or a political never-never land, but as a concrete, historical social ideal, based on the potentialities of the present, that breaks with the present order, generates new social policies, and summons forth energies to struggle for the as yet unrealized possibilities of the present" (86).

According to Baum, Pope John Paul II shares with Marx an understanding of man as worker (45), but "expands Marx's notion of labor and . . . moves far beyond a Marxist anthropology" (13). Another way in which Marxism is modified by the Pope, says Baum, is by the "personalist" emphasis, that is, the emphasis "on man's entry into personhood through fidelity and other self-actualizing commitments" (15).

In classical philosophical and theological traditions, the world (including people) was understood to be a given, an object. Truth was viewed as conformity of the mind to objective reality, and morality as conformity to objective norms (17-18). However, the encyclical's stress on the subjective is interpreted by Baum as an intellectual tradition "closer to Hegel and Marx than to Aristotle and St. Thomas, even though not necessarily at odds with the latter" (18). In this new tradition the world is not a given but is being produced by human labour.

In his discussion of how the encyclical approaches the struggle for justice, Baum again deals with the concept of "truth." In *Laborem Exercens*, he argues, "truth does not confirm the existing order as object; rather truth is the manner in which the mind lays hold of the existing order and initiates its transformation" (41). And with this bold jump of logic (or illogic), Baum gives the Pope's words an interpretation that is dubious at best. Baum's definition of truth completely contradicts the definition given by the Scriptures. Baum repeats what Hegel and Marx said about the primacy and the ordering principle of the human mind and of work; the Scriptures reveal that the source of truth is God, not man's mind or his action. Man always and everywhere is called to respond to the truth, that is, the Word of God. With his claim that human reason and action con-

stitute the truth, Baum turns reality upside down. One must swallow whole the Hegelian philosophy of idealism before one can accept such a view of truth. The Bible says that the truth shall make us free. Conversely, the lie, no matter how soothingly proclaimed, enslaves.

Baum displays his acceptance of radical historicism (or relativism) in his notion of the primacy of labour and in his view of subjectivity. In contrast to the Pope's insistence on the permanence of Christian teaching, Baum argues that biblical teaching is "historically situated," has been in dialogue with culture, and is therefore still evolving. He claims that "Christian tradition is part of history and reveals its meaning and power only in this historical process" (75). This formulation, especially in the light of Baum's entire intellectual framework, is clearly historicistic. It is therefore a fundamental denial of the authority of biblical revelation and a dangerous attack on biblical religion.

The statement that labour must have priority over capital, as explained by Professor Baum, is of very little practical help in the formulation of just and responsible economic policies. Labour refers to living people (workers), whereas capital refers to things (resources, equipment, and goods). Marx's attempt to eliminate the fundamental difference between people and things by defining capital as "stored-up labour" violates the creational order (or creational differences) and attempts to squeeze living reality into the strait jacket of ideology. Granted, much evil has been done because certain people with power disregarded the rights and well-being of their fellow men. And the Scriptures very clearly call those who have power and control over resources to deal justly with others. But the "priority of labour over capital principle" as explained by Professor Baum—apart from stating the obvious, i.e., that people are more important than things—is of no practical value in determining appropriate economic policies because it lacks specific content. This "principle" is perhaps useful in debates among ideologues because it has a superficial ring of virtue, but upon closer examination it shows itself to be nothing but empty rhetoric.

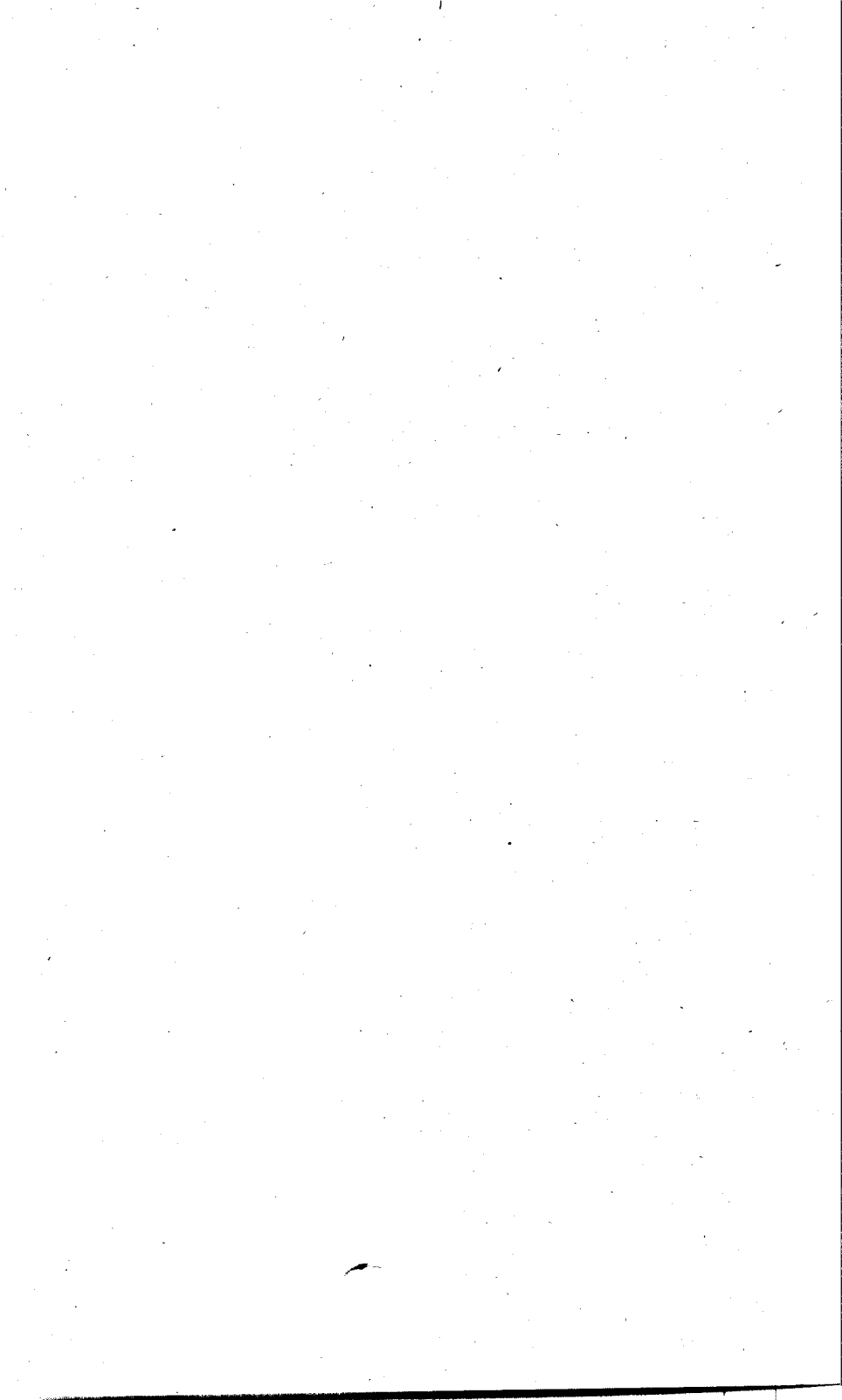
Baum's reinterpretation of Roman Catholic social thought, and in particular of Pope John Paul II's *Laborem Exercens*, has not gone unchallenged by other Catholics. For example, Thomas Langan, professor of ethics at St. Michael's College in Toronto, has written that *The Priority of Labor* "is much more a guide to Baum's own neo-liberation theology than a way into the Pope's nuanced position.

Indeed, the subjectivist, Pelagian theology which emerges in Baum's interpretation is something from which the Pope has taken care to distance himself."⁵⁰

The definitions of man and of truth and the ideas about injustice and liberation as propounded in *The Priority of Labor* are clearly at odds with biblical revelation and the historic Christian faith. Baum's concept of a just society is largely derived from the Marxist ideal of a planned society. In such a scheme, it is not sin (alienation from God) but class conflict that provides the key to understanding injustice. Similarly, it is not through God's gracious work of redemption and reconciliation in Christ but through a man-made program of "socialization" that injustice will be eliminated and a just society established.

Baum's exegesis of *Laborem Exercens* relies heavily on this secularized prescription for a just society. Ironically, Pope John Paul II has consistently warned against just such a misrepresentation of the Christian faith.⁵¹

Baum himself said it best: "Because ideologies are abstractions, they make people believe that they can analyze new historical situations without proper attention to what is taking place. Ideologies know what is taking place before they take a look. Ideologies blind people to reality, lead them to make false analyses, and result in policies that will be harmful to all" (85-86).



8. Liberation Theology: A Secular Program for Revolutionary Change

Liberation theology, which rose to prominence in Latin America in the 1970s, is a determined effort to make theology relevant in the midst of poverty and suffering. As its name suggests, the main theme in this branch of theology is the biblical notion of liberation, with particular emphasis on the exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt. In view of its influence both in the Protestant and in the Roman Catholic churches, it is worthwhile for us to elaborate at least the main tenets of this theology. Our discussion draws primarily on Gustavo Gutiérrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, which is generally accepted as a representative work on liberation theology.*

The following quotations from Gutiérrez's book represent three key themes of liberation theology:

- (1) Man fulfills himself only by transforming nature and thus entering into relationships with other men. Only in this way does he come to a full consciousness of himself as the subject of creative freedom which is realized through work (295).
- (2) The class struggle is the product of demented minds only for those who do not know, or who do not wish to know, what is produced by the system. . . .
. . . It [recognizing the class struggle as a fact] is a will to build a socialist society, more just, free, and human, and not a society of superficial and false reconciliation and equality. . . .
The class struggle is a fact and neutrality in this question is not possible (274-75).
- (3) The Kingdom is realized in a society of brotherhood and justice; and, in turn, this realization opens up the promise and hope of

* Throughout this chapter, each reference to or quotation from *A Theology of Liberation* will be followed by the page number, in parentheses, on which it appears.

complete communion of all men with God. The political is grafted into the eternal (232).

[Faith] teaches us that every human act which is oriented towards the construction of a more just society has value in terms of communion with God—in terms of salvation; inversely it teaches that all injustice is a breach with him (238).

Evident in the first quotation is the influence of the secular belief in man's self-creation through labour. The second quotation displays a Marxist concept of class and class conflict, while the third is a contemporary version of the social gospel's belief that the Kingdom of God is within man's grasp, if only man could bring about the right kind of political revolution.

Important Elements of Truth

Liberation theology, as presented by Gustavo Gutiérrez and other representatives of this modern school of theology, is a fundamental departure from biblical religion. Its appeal and strength lie in the good intentions of its advocates, their use of the Scriptures and scriptural themes, and their focus on real injustices and sufferings and on the need for economic and political reform. Despite these positive features, however, liberation theology deserves thoroughgoing criticism. To place such criticism in proper perspective, we begin by pointing out three important elements of truth in liberation theology.

First, like the early social gospel movement, liberation theology is a reaction to a formal Christianity in which the Christian faith becomes something unrelated to life in this world. Liberation theology rejects the belief that there are two separate worlds, one spiritual and eternal and the other physical and temporal. In such a world-view, true spirituality can only be achieved through flight from this world. This nature-grace dualism has been very influential in both the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions.

Over against this dualism, the Bible speaks of salvation as radical, that is, as going to the roots of our existence and affecting every dimension of our lives. Redemption is complete and all-inclusive because of God's sovereign rule over all creation. In Christ all things exist and have been reconciled to God.¹ In that sense salvation is not just for the "soul," but for the whole man, and so affects every aspect of human life in history. Liberation theology's emphasis

on the all-inclusiveness of redemption is therefore in keeping with the teaching of the Scriptures. However, its definition of sin and redemption is not.

Second, liberation theology is right to insist on the unity of our service to God and to our neighbour. Scripture is emphatic about this unity and thus we need not be confused about this point—even though our practice often leaves a great deal to be desired.

The Mosaic law includes many instructions regarding the just treatment of the poor and needy. The prophets again and again call the people back to justice, to help the poor, the fatherless, the widow, the stranger. A similar theme runs through the New Testament. Jesus quotes the prophetic pronouncements of the Old Testament and warns against practising mere lip service in place of doing the will of God. At one time Christ uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to drive home the hypocrisy of practising temple worship while ignoring people in need. James is unambiguous when he writes that there can be no true faith without works.²

The problem with liberation theology does not lie in its insistence on the unity of faith and action, of word and deed. That unity is in keeping with biblical teachings. The problem is located in the content of its faith and in its view of human action.

Third, liberation theology correctly claims that much injustice and inequality in this world results from the selfish use of power, money and privileged position. Liberation theology is also right to insist that sin is more than personal, that sin distorts the structures of society. At this point, liberation theology is in good company, for the Bible clearly condemns oppression and injustice and calls people to oppose evil. This call has special significance for Latin American and other countries in which there is a great deal of poverty and oppression. However, in its analysis of existing injustices and in its prescription for building the just society, liberation theology has turned to an ideology that is fundamentally un-Christian and therefore mistaken — with far-reaching and harmful consequences.

It is clear, then, that although liberation theology derives several important themes from the Bible, it is nonetheless a departure from biblical religion. The following critique of liberation theology will centre on these main themes: (1) secularization, (2) the self-creation of man, (3) a society of brotherhood and justice, (4) salvation mediated by the poor, (5) the convergence of church and world, and (6) Marxist ideology.

Secularization

An important characteristic of liberation theology, and one which it shares with theological liberalism generally, is its shift in focus from God to man. The emphasis in orthodox, biblical Christianity on worship, prayer, and the cultivation of the believer's spiritual life, is usually depicted by the proponents of liberation theology as a flight from this world and therefore as an attempt to escape social responsibility. But the Bible states clearly that man's relationship with God is of primary importance. God, who is infinite and sovereign, reaches down and establishes a covenant, or bond, with finite man. In this covenant man is called to stand in awe of, to revere, and to worship the eternal God. The life of faith is a life of trust and praise, as is so beautifully expressed in numerous psalms.

Liberation theology acclaims the modern era as a time when mankind, through self-awareness and revolutionary action, has come of age—in contrast to the immaturity and passivity of previous generations. But such a view underestimates the historical reality of Christianity and therefore downplays God's gracious work of redemption throughout the ages. It implies that God's power to save and redeem has been shortchanged all these centuries. We know from both the Scriptures and history that, despite the sins and shortcomings of his people, God has graciously nurtured and preserved his church throughout the centuries.

Gutiérrez describes three phases in the history of the church. The first two—i.e., the "Christendom mentality" and the "new Christendom," as, for example, articulated by Jacques Maritain—separate the profane from the sacred. The third, liberation theology, does away with these two categories, Gutiérrez claims. However, the desired integration is not accomplished by means of Christianizing society nor by reviving biblical religion, but by moving *away from* religion and toward secularization.

Secularization, explains Gutiérrez, is really "desacralization," or, in Harvey Cox's words, "the liberation of man from religious and metaphysical tutelage, the turning of his attention away from other worlds and toward this one" (66-67). Man's self-concept has been transformed, and he now views himself as a creative subject, the agent of history responsible for his own destiny. Therefore, writes Gutiérrez, religion should be redefined in relation to the profane instead of the world being defined in relation to religious phenomena.

Man's new self-understanding has changed his relationship with God. Secularization offers a more complete fulfilment of the Christian life because it affirms man's lordship in the world (67). "Secularization poses a serious challenge to the Christian community," writes Gutiérrez. "In the future it will have to live and celebrate its faith in a *nonreligious* world, which the faith itself has helped create" (68).

How can Gutiérrez and other proponents of theological liberalism describe secularization, a move away from a religious perception of life, as beneficial? Who would welcome the move away from the Christian religion except the enemies of the Christian faith? The following points must be kept in mind when attempting to answer these questions.

First, Gutiérrez's view of Christianity is dominated by an all-pervasive subjectivism. This means that priority is accorded to human *experience* and to the beliefs and opinions derived from that experience, instead of to the given order of creation or the revealed Word of the Creator. This subjectivism makes revelation (insofar as any kind of revelation is acknowledged) subject to the recipient of revelation (a process that turns upside down the relationship between the sovereign God who speaks and the finite creature who listens). Man, not God, decides what truth is and what man's task is.

Second, the secularization Gutiérrez advocates does more than break away from the "tutelage" of "religion" as embodied in the church. It also confirms the existence of this world "in its own right," the *worldliness* of the world. So man is not free merely from ecclesiastical tutelage, but also from the tutelage of the sovereign God as revealed in Scriptures and in Jesus Christ.

In this context, Gutiérrez suggests that a deeper study of the parallel between the new theology and the views of Feuerbach, Hegel and Marx "would illuminate our theological reflection" (219). Feuerbach contrasted love with faith: faith (in God) alienates; love (for fellow man) liberates. Have we not now arrived at the end of Christianity?

Third, secularization understood as the assertion of man's coming of age and his declaration of independence from God is destructive and contrary to biblical revelation. There is, however, a kind of "secularization" that is wholesome, namely, that development of Christian maturity in non-church forms of associations (the family, politics, education, business, etc.) by which the latter free

themselves of the direct tutelage of ecclesiastical authorities. This kind of "secularization" is the outcome of Christian maturity, and for that reason represents true growth. (It happens, for example, when parents establish Christian schools apart from the direct supervision of the church or when citizens establish a Christian political party or workers a Christian labour union.) It might be preferable to call that kind of movement not "secularization" but rather, "societal differentiation."

The Self-creation of Man

The notion of man's self-creation is closely related to the Renaissance and Enlightenment ideas of man and human dignity. These ideas gave birth to the belief that man is no longer dependent nor incapable of overcoming the constraints of nature; man can now, through reason and the methods of science, raise himself to God-like heights of power and freedom.

Gutiérrez links salvation with the expectation that man is capable of creating a new society, free from alienation and misery, through his own action. He writes: "By working, transforming the world, breaking out of servitude, building a just society, and assuming his destiny in history, man forges himself." This process of self-creation is at the same time perceived to have a redemptive quality, what Gutiérrez calls salvific. "To work, to transform this world, is to become a man and to build the human community; it is also to save" (159).

The self-creation of liberation theology is very different from what the Scriptures teach about salvation and the new man. According to the Scriptures, salvation consists of reconciliation between God and man, that is, the restoration of man's rightful place in creation. But this can occur only by means of God's grace. The Bible shows man to be totally incapable of overcoming his sinful condition. Only through Christ's work of atonement and man's total reliance on that redemption is it possible for sinners to become God's forgiven children.³ Nowhere do the Scriptures lend any credence to the notion that man is in any way able to contribute to his own salvation. It is entirely a free gift of God's grace. Gutiérrez's writing shows no biblical understanding of the radical and fundamentally destructive character of sin and of the radical nature of salvation.

The Bible does indeed speak about the "new man" and does call

all people to live new lives of obedience and love toward their neighbours. Through God's grace and the work of his Spirit in the hearts of believers, this new life is possible. Obedient works and deeds of mercy are the result of God's sovereign work of salvation; they are never the means to salvation. Liberation theology rightly holds that we must love our fellow man and strive for justice in society. But by completely severing from its biblical context the reality of man's salvation through the redeeming work of Christ, this theology has done no more than present us with another man-centred and man-made scheme for building a better world. Such a scheme will always end in failure and disillusionment because it is based on an underestimation of the power of sin and an overestimation of man's abilities. Instead of accepting salvation as a free gift of God in Christ, salvation is understood as the result of man's moral strivings. In other words, salvation is not by grace but by human works. This is a denial of the heart of biblical religion and leaves man, despite all his lofty intentions, with a shrunken understanding of salvation and *therefore* of Christ's work of redemption.

A Society of Brotherhood and Justice

Gutiérrez agrees with Edward Schillebeeckx, the well-known Dutch Roman Catholic theologian, that by making the world a better place we will be able to discover what the Kingdom of God means (13). Gutiérrez places development, especially in Latin America, in the context of a world in which the enrichment of a few has led to great poverty for many. Development, he writes, is now being understood not in terms of economic development, but as a *total social process* (24). The commitment to a new and just society presupposes confidence in the future. According to Gutiérrez, the emphasis on the principle of hope, as developed by Ernst Bloch, plays an important role here. Bloch views hope as active hope which subverts the existing order. Hope is a "daydream" projected into the future. When that daydream as the "yet not-conscious" becomes a conscious act, "it assumes a concrete utopic function, mobilizing human action in history." Hope is thus the key to human existence oriented toward the future, because it transforms the present. It is what presents us with "the possibilities of potential being" and "allows us to plan history in revolutionary terms" (216).

"The Kingdom," writes Gutiérrez, "is realized in a society of

brotherhood and justice; and, in turn, this realization opens up the promise and hope of complete communion of all men with God. The political is grafted into the eternal" (232). He also sees a direct link between work, or the transformation of nature, and entering into relationships with other men. In connection with the repudiation of poverty, Gutiérrez makes the point that man is a sacrament of God. To oppress the poor is to offend God. "We meet God in our encounter with men; what is done for others is done for the Lord" (295).

Gutiérrez's emphasis on the transformation of society is related to his revolutionary ideas about the modern era and the politicization of life. He claims that the political sphere is universal and that human reason has become political reason (47). Thus socialism is presented as the solution to inequality and oppression (90, 109-12). Socialism must be seen as more than simply overcoming dependence. It means, writes Gutiérrez, "the becoming of mankind as a process of the emancipation of man in history." This emancipation, or the building up of a new man, must be undertaken by the people themselves. They must become aware of their own situation ("conscientization") and of their power to transform society (91). According to Gutiérrez, the signs of the times must be read politically; this insight has created the awareness that the political arena is conflictual. Through participation in the class struggle, the new classless society will be established (136, 276).

Gutiérrez's understanding of the Kingdom is ambiguous. The historic teaching of the Roman Catholic church would have him maintain the essential difference between earthly progress and Christ's Kingdom. (The 1971 papal encyclical *Gaudium et spes* stated: "It is clear that the perfection of the social state is of an order completely different from that of the growth of the Kingdom of God, and they cannot be identified.") At the same time, Gutiérrez is drawn toward equating the two because of his reliance on contemporary socialist ideology, and particularly because of his understanding of human freedom and of history. Thus on the one hand, Gutiérrez writes that "the Kingdom must not be confused with the establishment of a just society" (231) and on the other, quotes Schillebeeckx's observation that the discovery of the meaning of the Kingdom of God depends on "making the world a better place" (13). Elsewhere, Gutiérrez identifies the struggle for a just world with the coming of the Kingdom of God (168). This identification, however,

does not depend on faith in the Christ who atoned for sinful mankind and thus reconciled God and man, but on the equation of salvation with *man's struggle for the just society itself*. According to Gutiérrez, "all struggle against exploitation and alienation . . . is a salvific work" (176-77). By ignoring the centrality of Christ's work of redemption, liberation theology has adopted a secularized understanding of the Kingdom of God.

Gutiérrez's view of the Kingdom of God is hampered by ambiguity in his understanding of salvation. Alongside of his emphasis on man's initiative and "assuming conscious responsibility for his own destiny," and on "a man who makes himself throughout his life and throughout history" (36), Gutiérrez also claims that salvation is a gift (x, 206). He wants to square the mystery of God's sovereignty with human freedom. "Without liberating historical events, there would be no growth of the Kingdom. But the process of liberation will not have conquered the very roots of oppression and the exploitation of man by man without the coming of the Kingdom, which is above all a gift" (177). As Dale Vree points out, such a statement truncates man's autonomy and compromises God's omnipotence. States Vree: "For Gutiérrez, salvation is obviously *contingent* on man's *prior* action. Gutiérrez *wants* to affirm that the coming Kingdom is above all a gift, but one must conclude from what he has said that the coming Kingdom (which he described as the 'complete encounter with the Lord,' which will 'mark an end to history'—p. 168) is first and foremost a product of human action. Enter Pelagius! Enter Thomas Muntzer and a whole host of heretical chiliasts whom Friedrich Engels correctly identified as forerunners of Marxism."⁴

Gutiérrez links the concept of the coming just society to the notion of universal salvation. The idea of universal salvation, he claims, "leads to the question of the intensity of the presence of the Lord and therefore of the religious significance of man's action in history. One looks then to *this world*, and now sees in the world beyond not the 'true life,' but rather the transformation and fulfillment of the present life" (emphasis added, 152). This approach to salvation, explains Gutiérrez, is an attempt to deal with the fact that the nonbeliever is not interested in other-worldly salvation.

In the same context, Gutiérrez refutes the idea that there are two histories, one sacred and one profane, and asserts that there is only *one* human destiny. Christ's redemptive work embraces all the dimensions of existence and brings them to their fullness. "The

historical destiny of humanity must be placed definitively in the salvific horizon" (153). This theme is further developed in light of the relationship between creation and salvation, which is in turn linked to the liberating experience of Israel's exodus. God reveals himself as a God who saves in history. Therefore the Bible presents creation as part of the salvific process, and not just as a stage prior to salvation, argues Gutiérrez. It is through the exodus from Egypt that social praxis is "desacralized" and thus becomes the work of man. The building of the temporal city becomes part of "a saving process which embraces the whole of man and all human history" (160).

Thus salvation, in Gutiérrez's view, is extended to all people. Furthermore, the radical separation between the historical present and the era that will follow the end of history is obscured, if not eliminated. However, there is absolutely no biblical basis for such interpretations. Gutiérrez correctly insists that the coming of the Kingdom of God relates directly to justice in this world. However, it will arrive not through human effort, as he implies, but only through God's sovereign intervention. At the end of history God will establish a new heaven and a new earth, will then wipe away every tear, and will bring about the complete victory over sin and evil. The peaceable kingdom of Isaiah 65 must be understood in the light of Revelation 21, which contains the promise that God will make all things new.

Salvation Mediated by the Poor

Gutiérrez assigns a redemptive, mediating role to the poor and oppressed, which is consistent with his belief that we meet God in our encounter with men, especially the disfigured and the alienated. In support of his assertions, Gutiérrez refers to the prophecy of the coming Messiah in Isaiah 53. The salvation of humanity passes through the poor and oppressed, he writes; "They are the bearers of the meaning of history and 'inherit the Kingdom' (James 2:5)" (203). Furthermore, claims Gutiérrez, "the future of history belongs to the poor and exploited. True liberation will be the work of the oppressed themselves; in them, the Lord saves history" (208). The only way people can know and reach God is to work for justice (272).

It is indeed true that God calls us to do justice to the poor and the needy, but Gutiérrez turns this task into the criterion for salvation. By insisting that our relationship to others is the key to salva-

tion, and by further proclaiming a certain category of people to be the channel of salvation in history, the scriptural teaching that salvation comes through Christ's mediating work is completely bypassed and subverted. In John 14:6 we read that Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." The entire Bible, both the Old Testament prophecy about the coming Messiah and the New Testament account of the fulfillment of that prophecy, teaches plainly the uniqueness of Christ's work of redemption. In Acts 4:10-12 we are told that salvation comes only through Jesus Christ of Nazareth. In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul writes, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified," and in Galatians 1:8-9 commands that anyone, even an angel from heaven, who preaches another gospel should "be eternally condemned!" Salvation is possible only through Christ's redeeming work and God's grace. To deny that is to deny the heart of biblical revelation.⁵ Any other gospel, despite good intentions and a professed love for the poor, is a false religion.

Behind liberation theology's denial of scriptural religion lies an altered view of sin. In orthodox Christianity, sin is rebellion against God and disobedience to his Word. In liberation theology, sin is understood to be selfishness, which is rooted in societal structures and which can be overcome only by changing these structures, in particular by replacing a capitalist society with a socialist one. This totally inadequate understanding of sin leads to an equally inadequate view of redemption. Especially at a time when ecumenicity and dialogue are often used to relativize the claims of the Scriptures, those who truly love the Lord and are committed to the faith of the Scriptures must without hesitation remain faithful to what they teach about the meaning of the cross of Christ.

The Convergence of Church and World

It is wrong, Gutiérrez argues, to separate nature and grace because such a separation invariably leads to world flight. He seems to believe that all men will be saved, for he asserts that "the universality of the salvific will of God, clearly enunciated by Paul in his letter to Timothy, has been established" (150). To remove any doubt about his position, Gutiérrez even goes so far as to suggest that the separation between Christians and non-Christians has disappeared.

"Man is saved if he opens himself to God and to others, even if he is not clearly aware that he is doing so. This is valid for Christians and non-Christians alike—for all people" (151).

Gutiérrez derives his concept of universal salvation from the *this-worldly* nature of salvation. Furthermore, universal salvation, as understood by Gutiérrez, implies that the boundary between church and world is eliminated. "The Church must cease considering itself as the exclusive place of salvation and orient itself towards a new and radical service of people" (256).

The task of the church must be expanded, guided by the awareness of the "comprehensiveness of the political sphere" (251), writes Gutiérrez. That's why a radical revision of the church is necessary, based on the conviction that the work of salvation gives to "the historical becoming of mankind, its profound unity and its deepest meaning" (255). Gutiérrez refers here to the church as a sacrament and sign of the salvation of the world. "The Church must be the visible sign of the presence of the Lord within the aspiration for liberation and the struggle for a more human and just society" (262). To be sure, Gutiérrez also writes that the saving action of God in humanity is accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ, and, as we have seen, he refers to salvation as a gift of God. But these statements are overwhelmed by the proclamations about the primacy of human action in history and about the possibilities for human self-creation.

A charitable interpretation of Gutiérrez would say that he is inconsistent and unclear. He is, indeed, pulled in two directions, but the weight of his argument tends toward a break with the biblical revelation about the church. This break is evident in his identification of the church, not with the believing community of Christ confessors, but with the new community of believers in a coming utopia, the perfect society to be established through human effort and will (232-39). To locate, as does Gutiérrez, the love of God in the "historical becoming of mankind" (268) is a surrender to Hegelian and Marxist theories which fundamentally deny scriptural revelation. The Scriptures teach that the church is the community of those who accept Christ as their Lord and Redeemer, and they clearly display the antithesis between the world—understood as those who do not know Christ—and the church.⁷ Liberation theology proclaims a different gospel—one in which salvation can be achieved through works. Rejecting that interpretation of salvation does not in

any way minimize the biblical teachings about serving and loving the neighbour. But such acts of loving service are acts of obedience to God and the result of God's grace working in people's lives; they are *not* a means to salvation.

Marxist Ideology

Liberation theology is an attempt to merge Christianity with Marxism. This presents serious problems since Marxism is atheistic, proclaims the class struggle, and leads to disastrous consequences wherever its prescriptions are put into practice. Gutiérrez and other liberation theologians attempt to overcome these problems by using the dialectical method and by speaking about Marxist praxis in utopian terms.

According to Gutiérrez, Marxism's emphasis on praxis and the transformation of the world has had a major influence on theology. He approvingly quotes Sartre's statement that "Marxism, as the formal framework of all contemporary philosophical thought, cannot be superseded" (9). He writes that close contact with those who see historical developments from a Marxist viewpoint has led Christianity to a revitalization of its eschatological values, "which stress not only the provisional nature of historical accomplishments, but above all their openness towards the total communion of all men with God" (137). He believes that the human aspiration for liberation holds the possibility for enjoying a truly human existence in which history is seen as a conquest. This conquest, aided by the emergence of science and the scientific method, has led to a new image of the world and of man himself (127-28).

Gutiérrez discusses the importance of Hegel's view of history, and claims that his philosophy is, to a great extent, a reflection on the French Revolution. He writes:

This historical event had vast repercussions, for it proclaimed the right of every man to participate in the direction of the society to which he belongs. For Hegel man is aware of himself "only by being acknowledged or 'recognized' " by another consciousness. But this being recognized by another presupposes an initial conflict, "a life-and-death struggle," because it is "solely by risking life that freedom is obtained."

... Through the dialectical process man constructs himself and attains a real awareness of his own being; he liberates himself in

the acquisition of genuine freedom which through work transforms the world and educates man. . . . Thus man gradually takes hold of the reins of his own destiny. He looks ahead and turns towards a society in which he will be free of all alienation and servitude. This focus will initiate a new dimension in philosophy: social criticism (28-29).

Gutiérrez believes that Marx deepened and renewed this line of thought by constructing a scientific understanding of historical reality and by creating the necessary categories for that understanding. Marx's contribution paves the way, writes Gutiérrez, "from the capitalistic mode of production to the socialistic mode, that is to say, to one oriented towards a society in which man can begin to live freely and humanly. He will have controlled nature, created the conditions for a socialized production of wealth, done away with private acquisition of excessive wealth, and established socialism" (30).

Gutiérrez tries very hard to link the thoroughly non-biblical and even atheistic ideas of Marx and other leading modern thinkers to the biblical theme of salvation in Christ. His attempt relies on the dialectical method, by which two opposites are blended into a new synthesis at a higher stage of development. But this philosophical (and speculative) approach is completely foreign to the clear teachings of Scripture which admonish us to make every thought obedient to Christ.⁸

According to Gutiérrez, the only way to have a "true encounter" with God is by expressing love for man himself (202). Presumably, then, Marxists and Christians find common ground in their shared love for mankind. Dale Vree points out the incongruity of Gutiérrez's theology in which Marxists (because they do God's work of political liberation) are better "Christians" than some Christians (because they refuse to espouse the revolutionary socialism he proclaims).

Marxists would do well to bear in mind that the good *padre*, despite his frequent genuflections at the altar of scientific socialism, is no scientific socialist himself. He has *his own—utopian*—reasons for blessing Marxism. For him, "utopian thought" is the basis of scientific knowledge; indeed, it is the source of political action and a "driving force of history" (pp. 232-34). Marxists will perhaps not be surprised that behind this socialist priest there lurks a visionary dreamer. Neither perhaps will more orthodox Catholics (not to mention Protestants and

Jews) be surprised that one who places Marxists at the head of God's Elect is nothing but a fanciful utopian.⁹

The so-called Christian-Marxist merger can be accomplished only if Christians surrender completely to an alien, fundamentally non-Christian ideology.

Aside from the atheism of Marxism (which Gutiérrez tries to make palatable by adding his notion of liberation), the principle of the class struggle should cause Christians to reject Marxism. After all, is not the Scriptures' call to love all men in direct opposition to the Marxist concept of class conflict? Is the one not clearly motivated by love and the other prompted by hatred? And can those two ever be reconciled?

Furthermore, how can church unity be reconciled with class struggle? Gutiérrez replies that the class struggle is an inescapable fact and that it is impossible to remain neutral in this matter. Indeed, he says, to deny the class struggle is to put oneself on the side of the "dominant sectors" (274-75). Such a statement not only condemns as an "oppressor" anyone who disagrees with Gutiérrez's formulation, it also precludes any discussion of the matter.

There is no biblical support for Gutiérrez's assertions. The Scriptures condemn injustice and oppression, but they do not divide mankind along economic lines. Rather than being based on scriptural teachings, the class struggle springs from a thoroughly atheistic ideology and is inspired by hatred and envy. Gutiérrez is therefore forced to look to a source other than the Bible to support the concept of the class struggle. The dialectics of Marxism provide him with the necessary rationalization. He reasons that the class struggle (also defined as "a will to build a socialist society") is a way to liberate both the oppressor and the oppressed. Gutiérrez writes: "Universal love is that which in solidarity with the oppressed seeks also to liberate the oppressors from their own power, from their ambition, and from their selfishness. . . . In the context of class struggle today, to love one's enemies presupposes recognizing and accepting that one has class enemies and that it is necessary to combat them. . . . In dialectical thinking, reconciliation is the overcoming of conflict. The communion of paschal joy passes through confrontation and the cross" (275-76).

In the same context, Gutiérrez agrees with Althusser's view that

the church must be converted to the service of the class struggle and that the myth of the unity of the church must disappear (277).

In liberation theology, any trace of biblical teaching regarding the church has completely disappeared. Anyone who accepts the class struggle as it is explained via the dialectical method has lost all sensitivity to what the Bible teaches. Liberation theology denies the antithesis between believers and nonbelievers and reintroduces this antithesis at the socio-economic level.

The Embarrassing Praxis

A major problem facing the advocates of Marxist ideology is the dreadful record of all Marxist regimes. Gutiérrez, and all who attempt to reconstruct Christianity along socialist lines, try to avoid any discussion of the actual practice of Marxist regimes and to focus instead on visions of a future utopia. He is indebted to Ernst Bloch's views on the "utopic function" of hope, which mobilizes human action in revolutionary ways (216). The outcome, they hope, will be a society of brotherhood and justice—"a classless society without owners and dispossessed, without oppressors and oppressed" (276). This vision is a radically secularized version of the biblical Kingdom of God; it is a utopian daydream—utopian here understood in the traditional sense of being a product of imagination and wishful thinking.

Marxists and liberation theologians are inconsistent in their emphasis on "praxis." On the one hand, they claim that praxis is of central importance, but on the other hand, they ignore the actual practice of all Marxist regimes. It is simply astounding to hear Gutiérrez refer to the Russian social revolution as an important milestone which wrested political decisions from the élite (46). According to Gutiérrez, the Cuban revolution is a catalyst of change that serves—with certain qualifications—as "a dividing point for the recent political history of Latin America. . . . Moreover, it is becoming more obvious that the revolutionary process ought to embrace the whole continent" (89).

Such an interpretation ignores the fact that Cuba, under the Soviet-backed regime of Fidel Castro, has become an oppressive and totalitarian one-party state. The fact that so many people can close their eyes to this reality indicates the powerful sway wielded by an ideology that proclaims liberation and justice. Yet countless people

who have escaped from Cuba have told horror stories about the actual praxis of oppression and injustice.¹⁰

Let us consider just one such witness. Armando Valladares is a forty-six-year-old Christian who has spent twenty-two years as a political prisoner in Cuba. He initially supported the revolution, but soon found himself out of favour with Castro when he objected to the totalitarianism of the new regime. He was imprisoned and brutally treated. Particularly painful for Valladares was the support Cuban authorities received from Christians in the West. Said Valladares:

During those years, with the purpose of forcing us to abandon our religious beliefs and to demoralize us, the Cuban communist indoctrinators repeatedly used the statements of support for Castro's revolution made by some representatives of American Christian churches. Everytime that a pamphlet was published in the United States, everytime a clergyman would write an article in support of Fidel Castro's dictatorship, a translation would reach us and that was worse for the Christian political prisoners than the beatings or the hunger. While we waited for the solidarity embrace from our brothers in Christ, incomprehensively [*sic*] to us, those who were embraced were our tormentors.¹¹

Insofar as liberation theology contributes to this distortion of reality, it must be recognized as a dangerous and shameful illusion that accomplishes the very opposite it purports to do. In this regard it should be remembered that what is believed and said in the West still has an impact on some totalitarian regimes. Valladares writes:

It is irrefutable proof that a worldwide campaign of public opinion can make a totalitarian regime release its political prisoners. I say that because communism is the political system that fears truth the most. It is a system built on lies. Only the constant, unyielding pressure of people in all parts of the world will save the lives of men who defend the values we hold so dear in our Western civilization.¹²

Michael Novak, a Roman Catholic social philosopher, also points out that although Marxism has been discredited as an intellectual theory, it still wields enormous power as an instrument of international mobilization. Novak writes:

Marxism has become embodied. It works like a stencil applied to every grievance in human affairs. Wherever there is resent-

ment, wherever there is injustice, wherever there is inequality, wherever there are expectations met too slowly, the Marxist stencil channels frustration and aggression. . . . The fault lies never in the victims, only in their oppressors. Too late does the victim realize that those who think of themselves as victims decline responsibility for their own condition and surrender their liberty to the absolute state.

. . . As a unifying spiritual force, Marxism is dead. As a mobilizing stencil for grievances—as a center for international training, funding, and logistical support—it continues to live as a “totalitarian political movement.”¹³

In view of the dismal failure of Marxist regimes *everywhere*, it is surely one of the great contradictions of our time that some Christians should turn to Marxism and consider it an ally in the struggle against injustice and oppression.

Development and Underdevelopment

Economic development is a complex historical phenomenon that requires, within a given culture, insight, expertise and a certain level of cultural and technological maturity. It cannot be imposed from the outside. A set of internal conditions, particularly attitudes and social-cultural arrangements conducive to change, are necessary for economic development to occur.

Adherents of liberation theology have their own theories about how development occurs and the reasons for its absence in certain countries. Their diagnosis is simple: underdevelopment in the Third World is the direct result of domination by the developed West. The reason poverty exists, writes Gutiérrez, is “because some people are victims of others” (293). The underdevelopment of the poor countries is the historical by-product of the development and expansion of the capitalist countries (84). “The dynamics of world economics leads simultaneously to the creation of greater wealth for the few and greater poverty for the many” (24-25). Not surprisingly, Gutiérrez believes that the views of Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and Bukharin on imperialism and colonialism provide important insights into the functioning of the world economy (86). To understand the relationship between oppressed countries and dominant peoples, writes Gutiérrez, one must place it “within the framework of the worldwide class struggle” (87). There are two major problems with this analysis; one is exegetical and the other is historical.

With regard to the exegetical problem, Gutiérrez's theology fails to consider a number of biblical directives. The Bible condemns immoral methods of acquiring riches as well as the selfish use of them. There are many well-known Scripture passages that leave no doubt about God's will for our economic lives. See, for example, the prophets Amos and Isaiah, the Mosaic law, and certain New Testament passages such as James 5:1-6. Think in this regard also of Jesus' parable, recorded in Luke 12:13-21, about the rich fool who delighted in his wealth but lost his life.

Gutiérrez and others are right to insist that the Bible demands a just and responsible use of wealth and resources. They are also justified in their condemnation of existing conditions in Latin America, insofar as these are the result of injustice and oppression, and in their call for economic and political reforms. However, an essentially non-Christian ideology provides the basis for their analysis of what is wrong, and their prescription of how the wrong must be righted.

While the Bible clearly condemns the immoral acquisition and use of wealth, it does not condemn wealth as such. On the contrary, riches are often depicted as the fruit of obedience and as signs of God's grace in the lives of his people. Scripture also draws a direct connection between diligence and prosperity and between sloth and poverty. Think, for example, of the promises God gave to Israel before they entered the promised land.¹⁴ In fact, God promises to give not only sufficiency but even abundance. Some of the Lord's special people were rich, including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Job, too, was a very wealthy man, and was described as "the greatest man among all the people of the East."¹⁵ This description referred, though not exclusively, to possessions. And we read that after Job was tested and restored, "the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before."¹⁶

It is wrong to assume that the Bible depicts riches as the outcome of injustice and unjust structures per se. For example, consider these statements from Proverbs: "The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it,"¹⁷ and "Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth."¹⁸

To be sure, the same writer teaches that to be righteous is to have regard for the poor,¹⁹ and that those who trust in riches and disregard the poor are disobedient and will come to grief.²⁰ The Scriptures clearly teach that riches and wealth are relative goods and

must therefore never become ends in themselves. The author of Proverbs advises: "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle."²¹ And also: "Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death."²² The relative value of riches is also clearly expressed in the prayer of Agur in which he asks to be given neither poverty nor riches.²³

A clear theme emerges from these Bible passages: riches pursued for their own sake lead to destruction, but God can choose to bless his people with wealth and to reward care and diligence with prosperity.

Although brief, this consideration of just a few texts should alert us to the fact that liberation theology's view of riches, namely, that they are always the cause of poverty elsewhere, is not in keeping with biblical teachings. And nowhere does the Bible lend any credence to the assumption that the outcome of the class struggle will be a socialist society which, according to Gutiérrez, will lead to the classless society "without owners and dispossessed, without oppressors and oppressed" (276). The juxtaposition of "owners" and "oppressors," though applicable in some historical situations, *does not hold as an absolute principle*. And the assumption that ownership and wealth necessarily produce oppression and injustice will surely block economic development, to the detriment of the poor.

Furthermore, there is no historical evidence to support the "rule" that development in the rich countries always occurs at the expense of the poor countries. Although it is undeniable that injustices have been perpetrated by the wealthy and powerful against the impoverished, particularly in Latin America, this is not the situation everywhere. Western democratic and so-called developed countries do not display this kind of internal division between two opposing classes, despite the fact that they have not overcome all injustices — and probably never will. But one should be reluctant to apply the class conflict principle even to the situation in Latin America. To do so is to accept the Marxist premise that the industrialized nations are imperialistic and that development of the "centre" occurs at the expense of the "periphery."

Those who wish to understand the Latin American situation must realize that significant variations exist in levels of economic, political and cultural development. Some countries are much poorer

than others. For example, in 1981 the per capita gross national product of Honduras was \$600 while that of Panama was \$1,910.²⁴ Uruguay, which in late 1984 showed promising signs of changing from a military dictatorship to democratic, civilian rule, is at a quite different level of cultural and political development than Venezuela and Argentina. There are vast differences between Nicaragua and Costa Rica.²⁵ It may at times be useful to speak of the Latin American countries as a group, but this certainly cannot be done in all cases. Use of the "centre-periphery" notion of development obscures significant differences and thus creates a false picture.

According to Gutiérrez, capitalist countries are stunting development in Latin America, and this can be resolved only in the framework of "the world-wide class struggle." However, the reasons for poverty and underdevelopment are much more complex than what Gutiérrez would have us believe. Important factors in development include climate, resources and geography as well as attitudes, skills, customs, religious beliefs and cultural patterns.²⁶ In many countries, change (and development invariably means change) meets heavy resistance from religious beliefs and traditions. For example, adherents of animistic religions usually oppose any interference with "nature." Such beliefs prevent the introduction of new technologies and new methods of creating wealth.

Many Third World countries are also plagued with the internal obstacles of government corruption and nepotism, which play a substantial role in preventing economic and cultural development.²⁷ Insofar as the West has introduced new attitudes conducive to development *and respect for human life* (think of the British attempt to stamp out the burning of widows in India), the Western influence has been beneficial. Blaming the "capitalist" world economy for all the wrongs in the Third World may help to excuse the mismanagement and even corruption that afflict many developing countries, but it will not help to formulate or implement the urgently needed reforms.

Michael Novak points out that the facts of investment and development in Latin America do not support the claims of liberation theology. More economic and technical development could have taken place in Latin America, writes Novak, had there been more intelligent and inventive use of God's creation.²⁸

Novak cites historical, economic and demographic data to disprove the theory that Latin American poverty is the result of

Western affluence. For three centuries now the Roman Catholic church has wielded enormous influence in Latin America. In 1969, the Catholic bishops of Peru stated: "Like other nations in the Third World, we are the victims of systems that exploit our natural resources, control our political decisions, and impose on us the cultural domination of their values and consumer civilization."²⁹ However, Novak reminds us that the Roman Catholic church, especially after the Counter Reformation, has propagated hostility toward trade, commerce and industry and thus bears at least part of the responsibility for the present situation.

Novak also takes issue with the view that multinational corporations have made inordinate profits at the expense of the Latin American people. These profit figures have been presented improperly, he argues, and when seen in their historical context, are not extravagant.³⁰ Novak argues that the dependency theory of liberation theology leads to incorrect conclusions. It ignores the fact that we live in an interdependent world in which each nation is in some ways dependent upon other nations. It also assumes that progress and riches in one place must be subtracted from what is available in another place—a zero-sum society. However, modern economics is dynamic, is able to produce new wealth, and therefore creates the possibility for improvements everywhere. It is misleading, Novak insists, to emphasize class conflict rather than mutual advantage.³¹

According to figures Novak provides, Latin American wages have grown in real terms at an average of two per cent per year since World War II. From 1945 to 1975, Latin America experienced an average annual growth rate of 5.2 per cent. Despite rapid population growth—from 140 million in 1945 to 324 million in 1975—Latin America's per capita income has grown substantially, and stood at \$1,000 in 1976. Vast improvements have also been made in the areas of education and health.³² Gary W. Wynia reports that the average annual growth rate in Latin America's gross domestic product was 6.7 in the period 1961-70; 6.6 in 1971-75; and 5.2 in 1978-80—which is a very significant rate of growth.³³ Such figures disprove the theory that the poor countries are becoming poorer.

Although the overall trends indicate substantial improvement, it is obvious that the fruits of economic growth are not reaching everyone. Many still experience dire poverty, and there are substantial economic differences within and between countries. The political

situation in many Latin American countries is marked by corruption and instability, which is in turn detrimental to a healthy economy. What can be done to improve these conditions?

The liberation theologians recommend the socialist route, emphasizing economic independence and self-determination. They are critical of multinational corporations. Novak rejects their proposed solution, and argues that the three strongest institutions in Latin America—the clergy, the military and the landholding class—can be held in check only by the growth of a new middle class based in commerce and industry.³⁴

The main condition for economic health in Latin America, Novak believes, is the adoption of the ideals of democratic capitalism. This involves fostering the development of a variety of institutions, such as churches, businesses, a military respectful of legitimacy, and political leaders who can avoid the extremes of hierarchy and anarchy. "In this respect," writes Novak, "liberation theologians have yet to show intellectual mastery of the institutional requirements of a free political economy. Choosing the utopian road, they seem to imitate the Grand Inquisitor, who out of pity for the people promised bread, not liberty."³⁵

Novak insists that liberation theologians should develop insights into the specific nature of economic life and economic problems. He warns against the formation of a new alliance between church and state, this time on the Left. Theologians who wish to comment on economic development, says Novak, must understand the requirements of such development, and not simply echo the ideology of socialism. According to Novak, many theologians

seem trapped in pre-capitalist modes of thought. Few understand the laws of development, growth, and production. Many swiftly reduce all morality to the morality of distribution. They demand jobs without comprehending how jobs are created. They demand the distribution of the world's goods without insight into how the store of the world's goods may be expanded. They desire ends without critical knowledge about means. They claim to be leaders without having mastered the techniques of human progress. Their ignorance deprives them of authority. Their good intentions would be more easily honored if supported by evidence of diligent intelligence in economics.³⁶

Western Guilt

Those who have swallowed the view of colonialism and imperialism Lenin propounded in his 1916 tract, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," are much occupied with Western guilt. They tend to describe the West's relationship with the rest of the world in terms of systemic oppression and injustice. The late Prime Minister and President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, declared:

All the imperialists, without exception, evolved the means, their colonial policies, to satisfy the ends, the exploitation of the subject territories, for the aggrandizement of the metropolitan countries. They were all rapacious; they all subserved the needs of the subject lands to their own demands; they all circumscribed human rights and liberties; they all repressed and despoiled, degraded and oppressed.³⁷

It should be remembered that Nkrumah's rule is almost universally held responsible for Ghana's sad descent from relative prosperity to abject poverty.

Many spokesmen from developing countries have made the United Nations their forum, where they speak with unmitigated contempt and hatred about the West. Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, formerly an American representative to the UN, described the situation this way: "The United Nations has become a place where the democracies find themselves under a constant, unremitting, ideological and political attack designed to advance the interests of the totalitarians."³⁸ The Third World spokesmen demand that the West share its resources with the Third World, and many of them wish to see the West diminished, if not destroyed. In the Reith lectures of 1979, Ali Mazrui, an African-born and Western-educated professor of political science, expressed it this way:

The decline of Western civilisation might well be at hand. It is in the interest of humanity that such a decline should take place, allowing the different segments of the human race to enjoy a more equitable share not only of the resources of the planet but also of the capacity to control the march of history.³⁹

P. T. Bauer, emeritus professor of economics at the London School of Economics, presents a formidable case against such a blanket condemnation of the West and against the charge that it is solely or even mostly responsible for the poverty in the rest of the

world.⁴⁰ Bauer thoroughly analyzes the development that has taken place in Third World countries, and on that basis demonstrates that the West does not deserve the maligning it currently receives from many Third World leaders. Far from having caused the poverty of the Third World, Bauer argues, contact with the West is what has most benefited the Third World in terms of material progress. The poorest and most backward people are those who have had little or no contact with the West. Bauer's extensive writings on this topic constitute a convincing argument against those who wish to lay a burden of guilt on the West. It is patronizing, he points out, to view the Third World as a "uniform stagnant mass devoid of distinctive character."⁴¹ Such a stereotype denies identity, character, personality and responsibility to the societies and individuals of the Third World.

According to Bauer, Westerners display a curious mixture of guilt and condescension when they tolerate or even support the inhuman policies of many Third World governments. The brutalities of such governments are often excused by saying that they are simply following the example set by the West. Bauer warns that the idea of Western guilt is unfounded and constitutes a singularly inappropriate basis for aid.

Foreign aid also assists the politicization of life, that is, the tendency to make everything a matter of politics; and the politicization of life provokes and exacerbates political tension, which again arouses hostility to the market, especially in multiracial societies. Many recipient governments engaged in wholesale socialization have expelled ethnic minorities and other economically productive but politically ineffective groups. Altogether, official aid is, in practice, an important antimarket force.⁴²

James Burnham, author of *Suicide of the West*, maintains that guilt and the feeling of guilt are facts of the human situation.⁴³ Christianity resolves the problem of guilt because God himself has provided a way to achieve forgiveness and reconciliation. Modern liberalism is secular and many of its adherents have broken with Christianity. What are unbelievers going to do about the guilt which they nevertheless experience? Burnham believes that liberalism permits the translation of this guilt into principles that are egalitarian, anti-discriminatory, democratist, peace-seeking and liberal—that is, those principles generally compatible with socialism. Within this

perspective, Burnham interprets liberal reformist principles as projections of the liberal sense of guilt. For example, if I have enough to eat and enjoy a comfortable life, I feel guilty (or at least I should feel guilty) because others go hungry and do not have the privileges I enjoy.

Burnham explains that the liberal's guilt feeling forces him to try to do something about every social problem and to cure every social evil, even though his understanding of the problem may be limited. His feelings of guilt and moral vulnerability also nudge the liberal toward a disdain and contempt for Western civilization and for his own country.⁴⁴

In his book, *Political Pilgrims*, Paul Hollander examines the tendency of twentieth century Western intellectuals to be dissatisfied with their own society and to support uncritically such totalitarian regimes as the Soviet Union, China and Cuba. According to Hollander, the process of secularization has played a major role in alienating intellectuals from their own society. After discarding traditional values, including traditional religious beliefs, many intellectuals went in search of a new "home." When the belief in life after death was discarded, salvation in the here-and-now became all-important. With its promise to usher in a new order of equality and peace, socialism provided the religious comfort and assurance sought by the intellectuals. Peter Clecak, an American social historian, observed: "Socialism embodies a wish to return to a condition of wholeness that existed, or was assumed to exist . . . before the Fall, before the plunge into history. Though ultimately psychological and aesthetic in its concern with order, harmony and unity, the socialist dream was made visible most powerfully in theological terms, primarily through Judeo-Christian imagery."⁴⁵

Christians seem especially prone to feeling guilty about the suffering in the world. Ronald J. Sider, a well-known Christian author, has vigorously promoted this feeling in his writings and speeches. "It would be wrong to suggest that 210 million Americans bear sole responsibility for all the hunger and injustice in today's world. All the rich, developed countries are directly involved."⁴⁶ Intones Sider, "We are participants in a system that dooms even more people to agony and death than the slave system did."⁴⁷

At the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Nairobi in November, 1975, keynote speaker Robert McAfee Brown explained to his audience that what he symbolized might make many of them feel uneasy or even angry:

I am *white* in a world that is unjustly dominated by whites, speaking in a black country to an Assembly predominantly non-white. I am a *male* in a world that is male-dominated in ways that have been destructive for many, if not most, women. I am a member of a relatively affluent *class* in a world that is overwhelmingly poor and that is manipulated by a small affluent minority. And lastly I am a citizen of the *United States of America* in a world where both small and large nations are struggling to become free from the political, economic and military domination of the United States of America.

. . . I love my country, and I am deeply ashamed of it. I am ashamed of it particularly for what it has done, and continues to do, to so many of your countries. . . . If you are from Latin America, you may have friends and family who are starving because American businesses exploit them economically, or you may have friends and family who are political prisoners being tortured by techniques that your police learned from our police.⁴⁸

This type of confession may help to soothe McAfee Brown's conscience, but it does little to aid us in our understanding of the causes of and cures for injustice in the world. In fact, this kind of analysis further demoralizes and weakens the Western democracies and thus strengthens the truly oppressive regimes of our time—an outcome that hurts the very people McAfee Brown wishes to help.

A Gnostic Heresy

James Hitchcock, an American Catholic theologian, has pointed to similarities between the Gnostics, a heretical sect that was especially prominent in the second century A.D., and the contemporary believers in a political and secular utopia.⁴⁹

The Gnostics believed that the universe is divided into the realms of light and darkness, or spirit and flesh, and that human nature is caught in the struggle between these two opposing kingdoms. The chief task of human existence is to find a way to extricate one's true self from this struggle. The key to escaping worldly existence is a special, mysterious knowledge (Greek "gnosis") available only to the initiates of Gnostic discipline. At the core of Gnosticism was therefore the conviction that the world was an evil place, the domain of the god of darkness, who could not have been the good Father of whom Jesus testified. Consequently, the Gnostics

found existence to be meaningless, and stressed the symbolic rather than the literal significance of religious teaching.

According to Hitchcock, the modern "renewal" movement in the church and in society displays characteristics similar to Gnosticism which undermine the church's historic teachings. Because of the importance it places on symbolism and subjectivity, writes Hitchcock, modern Gnosticism has rejected the historical doctrines of Christianity, including the Incarnation and the resurrection of Christ. For example, it is no longer important whether the biblical account of the resurrection is accurate. What matters is the "encounter" with the risen Christ.⁵⁰ Hitchcock summarizes what such a development means for religion: "The rejection of an historical faith in favor of an eternal present is at the root of religious enthusiasm for a very important reason—the rejection of history turns religion into a wholly subjective phenomenon which exists largely at the will of the individual."⁵¹

Hitchcock agrees with the political philosopher, Eric Voegelin, that Gnosticism is a perennial Christian heresy which is manifested in attempts to create an earthly paradise.⁵² Social justice, Hitchcock believes, is an essential part of Christian teaching and conduct, yet when it is treated as an absolute or in a utopian manner, justice and charity soon become equated with "certain quasi-totalitarian political experiments."⁵³ Hitchcock suggests that the distortion of social justice among Christians lies in the cultic character it often dons, that is, the nearly totalitarian utopianism with which it is invested. He lists the following characteristics of modern Gnostics, or as he labels them, "the new enthusiasts": excessive piety, schism, charismatic authority, ultrasupernaturalism, global pessimism, anti-intellectualism, theocracy, millennarianism, mysticism, antinomianism, lust for martyrdom, invisible church, desire for results, and experimentalism.⁵⁴

Although this comparison between modern Catholic (and Protestant) leftists and the early Gnostic sects may seem far-fetched, Voegelin and Hitchcock made some valid points. Voegelin detected the following affinities between the ancient Gnostic heresy and modern utopian movements: a dualistic concept of the world, saving knowledge entrusted to an élite, the meaninglessness of ordinary existence, a quasi-anarchic concept of society (later often becoming totalitarian), and the promise of total deliverance from corrupt bon-

dage. These doctrines, politicized, have come to expression especially in the great totalitarian movements of the twentieth century, communism and fascism.⁵⁵

The original Gnostic heresy focused on the spiritual. Under the impact of the forces of secularism, the present manifestations of Gnosticism are different. Hitchcock writes: "Perhaps most important is the widespread belief that religion, in order to be valid, must prove its social usefulness. Certain very basic religious concepts, like that of worship, are now under a cloud because they do not appear to have measurable effect on the world. The principal purpose of human society is more and more understood as that of remaking the world, and whatever does not fit this purpose is ruthlessly cast aside."⁵⁶

Voegelin draws attention to the central characteristic of modernity, that is, the belief that God is dead and that man is god, and claims that it has immanentized the meaning of existence.⁵⁷ He describes the paradoxical significance of this development:

The more fervently all human energies are thrown into the great enterprise of salvation through world-immanent action, the farther the human beings who engage in this enterprise move away from the life of the spirit. And since the life of the spirit is the source of order in man and society, the very success of a Gnostic civilization is the cause of its decline.

A civilization can, indeed, advance and decline at the same time—but not forever. There is a limit toward which this ambiguous process moves; the limit is reached when an activist sect which represents the Gnostic truth organizes the civilization into an empire under its rule. Totalitarianism, defined as the existential rule of Gnostic activists, is the end form of progressive civilization.⁵⁸

Another critic of contemporary secularized Christianity is Jacques Ellul, the French social philosopher who has written extensively about the impact of technology and secularism on the modern world. In *Betrayal of the West*, Ellul argues that the Left, like the Right, has surrendered to the drive for domination and possession, which he labels "eros." When the gospel of the poor is preached today, the purpose is to rouse the poor to rebellion, violence and hatred. That is the way of eros. Of theologians who proclaim the gospel of the "horizontal relationship," Ellul writes: "It is nothing but a monstrous show of human pride to extend the humiliation that

God deliberately accepted and experienced in Jesus, to all suffering, unfortunate, humiliated, and exploited human beings."⁵⁹

According to Ellul, "the Left is 'interested' in the category of the poor only to the extent that the poor render service to the great plan and can be made part of it." Ellul believes that "the Left, like capitalism, identifies freedom with its own dictatorship" and that it "embodies all the conformisms."⁶⁰ Who really loves man? Is it not he who meets all man's needs? Therefore the raising of the standard of living is everything, and the rest is only words.⁶¹

Despite all its evils, Ellul is convinced that the history of the West is not one of unrelieved criminality. Yet, he writes, the West no longer believes in itself and Europe is "marching with giant steps to its end. . . . The Left has triumphantly joined the Right in this race toward death, while Christianity celebrates its marriage with Marxism and proceeds to slay the old, impotent flesh that was once the glory of the world."⁶²

Liberation theology is a modern phenomenon in the sense that it seeks to bridge the chasm between Christianity and secularism. But in another sense it stands in a long tradition of attempts to achieve self-redemption by means of erasing the differences between God and man (immanence). That attempt will always end in failure because it defies the God-ordained nature of reality. Over against the dialectical theories of Marxism and the age-old attempt to forge new theories of self-redemption, we must uphold the scriptural message that salvation is by grace alone. This does not mean that we should turn our faces away from the world nor that we should be indifferent to suffering and exploitation. On the contrary, it is precisely when we take our stand on the basis of the Scriptures and its message of the coming Kingdom, which will be established by the sovereign intervention of God, that we have hope for this world and that we are able to live in it day by day doing what our hands find to do.

9. In Defence of a Christian Mind

We have seen how, over the past century or so, the attempt to synthesize (secular) humanism and Christianity produced the social gospel in Canada and, more recently, the (political) theology of liberation. The British author Harry Blamires has described the effort to adapt Christianity to secularism as the loss of a "Christian mind." According to Blamires, "the Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history. It is difficult to do justice in words to the complete loss of intellectual morale in the twentieth-century Church."¹

Blamires does well to call our attention to what he terms the loss of a Christian mind. This book has focused on precisely that phenomenon. Its intention is not, however, merely to describe the surrender of Christians to the spirit of modernity, but rather to help us *understand* our predicament in order to *recover* and *strengthen* a "Christian mind" (or world-view). Following a brief review of the major themes presented in the preceding chapters, I will outline what I think are some key features of this Christian mind.

A Synopsis

The rationalistic philosophies of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment had a powerful influence on modern Christianity. During the nineteenth century, German theologians and philosophers played an important role in the movement to adapt the Christian religion to the modern, secular mindset.

This attempt to synthesize Christianity and modernity gave rise to higher criticism, which subjected scriptural revelation to the test of human reason and experience. As a result, all the teachings of the Scriptures underwent radical reinterpretation. While biblical terminology and symbolism were retained, understanding of the con-

tent of Scripture was drastically altered. All of the basic Christian doctrines, including Christ's divinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, revelation, redemption, the nature of man, and even the nature of God, were emptied of their biblical meaning.

This revision of Christianity contributed to the emergence of immanentism, which in turn gave rise to relativism. Immanentism is the belief that the divine is actually present within the human, and particularly within human action. This belief reshaped people's view of history and of social, economic and political change, because it located the norm for life (that is, truth) within man and within action itself. The refusal to respect the absolute difference between God and man led quite logically to the belief that there are no abiding, *given* norms for man to live by. "Right" thus became dependent on historical circumstances and on the practical consequences of human action. This relativism is a form of historicism that, ironically, destroys the very possibility of genuine history because it eliminates the sense of a moral order.

The institutions designed to safeguard the intellectual and theological health of the churches by and large proved to be no match for the onslaught of the modern spirit in Canada. In the churches and church colleges, accommodation became the order of the day. Although there were a few teachers and pastors who attempted to counter the forces of theological liberalism in the mainline churches in Canada, their defence was ineffective.

The social gospel movement in Canada must be seen against the intellectual and theological background just described. Although many proponents of the social gospel were sincerely concerned about the social, political and economic inequities of their time, the social gospel was in fact a surrender to the spirit of modernism. Because its theological basis was faulty, the social gospel's understanding of social, economic and political problems was inadequate and its prescription for alternatives untrustworthy. Therefore, it failed to meet the most profound challenges of our age and became simply another secular movement for change.

A direct line can be traced from the social gospel movement which flourished just after the turn of the century to the social and political activism in Protestant and Roman Catholic churches today. Both movements derive their main inspiration from liberal theology, that is, the adaptation of Christianity to the secular spirit of modernity.

In both the social gospel movement and its contemporary expression, the focus of religion is man, not God, and the purpose of religion is to build a new society and create a "new man" in the service of the new world community. Both reject the historic Christian belief in redemption through the atoning work of Christ.

At the same time, there are significant differences between the early social gospel movement and contemporary expressions of liberalism. Whereas the early social gospel aspired to "Christianize" society, its contemporary counterpart promotes the "secularization" of society. Similarly, the early social gospel proponents held a very positive, even idealistic, view of our society, despite its shortcomings. This contrasts sharply with the condemnation of Western society on the part of many Christian social activists today.

The conflict between modernism and the historic Christian faith is of paramount importance for the future of our civilization. The new "radical Christianity," though it promises freedom, self-expression and equality, will produce tyranny and despair. At the most fundamental, that is, the religious-spiritual level, the choice between historic Christianity and modernism is a choice between truth and falsehood. At the practical level of culture, it is a choice between freedom and slavery.

Three Challenges

The dominant theme of this book is the age-old question of the relationship between Christianity and culture. Does God's Word unambiguously and authoritatively tell us what we need to know to live in this world? It may be helpful to place this question in the context of three issues raised by several quite different authors.

Immanentism. The social gospel radicals, writes Richard Allen, claimed that God was immanent in their farm, labour and social work movements, and thus they attached religious meaning to these causes. However, Allen argues, eventually this claim contributed to erosion of belief in the transcendent God and to the secularization of Canadian society. Roger Hutchinson disputes Allen's contention, and suggests that such a negative assessment of social gospel theology reflects a one-sided, neo-orthodox emphasis on man's sinfulness and God's transcendence. Such an emphasis, he states, is no longer valid in our post-neo-orthodox period. Hutchinson believes that we will better understand the churches' renewed involvement in the struggle

for social justice if we consider both his and Allen's interpretations of the social gospel's significance.²

It is indeed crucial to know whether God is immanent or transcendent, and, as Hutchinson notes, insight on this point will help us to discover what role the Christian faith and the churches should play in society today.

Identity. The well-known evangelical theologian, Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, issues a bold challenge in his book, *Evangelicals in Search of Identity*. Henry faults his fellow evangelicals for failing to live out of the rich heritage of biblical religion. Evangelicals, writes Henry, tend to be extremely individualistic and superficial, and consequently have no effect on culture. He reminds his readers that

neither piety nor moralism alone can hope to prevail over the current ethical decline of our day, nor will a blurred presentation of beliefs seriously challenge today's radical secularism and existential subjectivity. Instead of feeling threatened by secular concepts with which they cannot agree, evangelical Christians need to raise up a rationally competent generation that is both literate in the humanities and articulate in its beliefs.³

Henry describes evangelical Christianity as "a lion on the loose that no one today seriously fears."⁴ Of particular interest is his challenge to evangelicals to avoid repeating the mistakes of an earlier generation of Christians as they respond to new situations:

Had late nineteenth-century evangelicals more dynamically asserted a truly biblical ecumenism and adequate socio-political interests, had they given exemplary guidance to the forces of discontent and been less resigned to a reactionary withdrawal from newly emerging centers of power, the early twentieth-century churches might have followed a sounder ecumenical and socio-political course. Now the critical question before establishment evangelicalism is whether in the late twentieth century it will duplicate the mistakes of a previous era.⁵

Idolatry. In prophetic fashion, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the famous Russian dissident, has challenged both the atheistic dictatorship of the East and the secular democracies of the West. Consequently, he is detested in the East and ignored by many in the West. Solzhenitsyn's compelling appeal nonetheless goes to the heart of the Christian faith and therefore to the very core of our existence in the world. Solzhenitsyn has spoken forcefully about the inhumanity of com-

munist despotism and has reminded Christians in the West that the Soviet regime has cruelly oppressed, imprisoned and killed large numbers of Christians. While many Western Christians are preoccupied with the bandwagons of ecumenicity and disarmament, Solzhenitsyn continues to speak up for those behind the Iron Curtain who have no voice. It is only on the basis of faith in God, says Solzhenitsyn, that Christians will be able to withstand the pressures of atheism and secularism.

In his famous 1978 address at Harvard University, Solzhenitsyn told his audience that, in spite of its immense technological ability and material wealth, the West has become spiritually impoverished. He attributed this to its widespread acceptance of the belief in human autonomy. Solzhenitsyn diagnosed this belief as an idolatry that will lead to the destruction of our civilization. He warned the West of its weakness against the ruthless forces of totalitarianism, and bluntly pointed to decline in courage as one of the West's most striking features today.⁶

In a speech delivered in London on May 10, 1983, on the occasion of his acceptance of the Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion, Solzhenitsyn again stressed the point that the West is in peril because it has forgotten God. Calling attention to the suffering of fellow Christians in the Soviet Union, Solzhenitsyn challenged his audience to courageously oppose the atheism of communism as well as the secularism of the West. He said: "All attempts to find a way out of the plight of today's world are fruitless unless we redirect our consciousness, in repentance, to the Creator of all: without this, no exit will be illumined, and we shall seek it in vain."⁷

Although Hutchinson, Henry and Solzhenitsyn hold widely varying—even contrasting—viewpoints, they direct us to the truly important issues facing Western society. Hutchinson correctly suggests that the matter of immanentism lies at the core of the controversy regarding the old as well as the new social gospel. Henry provides wise counsel when he reminds his fellow evangelicals that they must not shun self-examination and self-criticism if they are to become more culturally significant.⁸ Solzhenitsyn's exposure of the materialism and spiritual confusion of the West has significant implications for those who profess the Christian faith.

Against the background of the crucial issues discussed by these three authors, it is clear that Christians must develop a deeper and more coherent understanding of the nature of biblical religion and

its meaning for modern culture. This requires that we attempt, as Harry Blamires challenged Christians to do, to articulate and to live by a Christian world-view. With this in mind, I want to review three important elements of a Christian world-view and some of their implications for us today. These elements include an understanding of (1) man as God's image bearer, (2) history as the fulfilment of man's cultural mandate, and (3) the biblical idea of the Kingdom of God.

Man, the Image of God

From God's written revelation, the Bible, we learn that all creation finds its source and meaning in God. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth and all living creatures, and he continues to uphold and sustain them.

The New Testament depicts a close relationship between Christ and creation. The well-known opening verses of the gospel of John speak of this intimate relationship, and Paul writes that everything in heaven and on earth exist in Christ and are held together by him.⁹ Creation neither exists nor operates independently of God. Nor, the Bible shows, does man, God's image bearer.¹⁰ In Genesis 1 and 2 we read that God made man as his final act of creation. The first man was made out of the dust of the earth; thus, man is intimately connected with the created world and made of the same material as the earth. But then something else took place; we read that God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living being (or creature).¹¹

The relationship between man's earthly origin and his soul has been the subject of much debate in human history. Many have understood man to consist of two parts—a material, mortal *body* that became the temporary home of a spiritual and eternal *soul*. This body-soul dualism is always placed in the larger context of a lower, corruptible order and a higher, incorruptible order. However, there is no biblical evidence to support the idea that the soul and body were created as two separate entities and then united. Rather, we read that man *became a living soul*.

The history of Christianity has made it abundantly clear that this point is of fundamental importance to our understanding of the world and of our place in it. Generations of Christians have been shaped by the idea that the "image of God" in man means that God and man share certain characteristics. Because God is spirit, it was

reasoned, the "image" man bears must be spiritual too, and therefore not of this world. This view of spirituality, accompanied by the idea of a "lower" earthly body, fostered neglect of life in this world and one-sided preoccupation with the hereafter.

Having been steeped in such a tradition, many Christians have turned to non-Christian sources for inspiration and insight about political and social reform. Thus, while some Christians hold an other-worldly outlook on such matters, others endorse a totally secularized one. Nowhere does the Bible imply that we must choose between these two options of world flight and world conformity. Rather, the Bible consistently states that God, the sovereign Creator of all that exists, has established his law for every facet of creation. Obedience to that law results in justice, peace, and goodness.¹²

Christianity does have a prophetic message for our age, a message based on a biblical understanding of creation and the creation order. For many Christians it involves a fundamental reorientation of their world-view. But if Christians fail to proclaim this message, they doom themselves to cultural irrelevance.

In order to understand who man is, one must first understand the term "image of God" in its biblical context. God reveals himself as the one who has called man into being and has given him a task in the world. We read that God blessed the first man and woman saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."¹³ The Fall did not abrogate mankind's position and task, for the same mandate is given to Noah in Genesis 9:7.

From Genesis 2 we learn that God gave Eve and Adam the task of working in and taking care of the Garden of Eden. As their descendents, all humans are responsible to God for what they do with his creation. This is the meaning of the statement that life is religion; life is inescapably bound up with and sustained by the origin of life, namely, the Creator God who has revealed himself in his Word as the covenant God. It is instructive to recall that the root meaning of religion is to "bind" or "hold together." Man cannot escape the covenantal relationship with God; however, he can choose to disobey God and to turn away from him in unbelief.

While it is impossible to supply a precise definition of the image of God in man, the Bible does reveal that it is primarily in serving God that man images his Creator. In other words, this "image" con-

sists not in some quality shared by God and man, but rather in man's relationship to God. Harry Fernhout explains it this way:

When God's Word tells us that we are His image-bearers, it wants us to know not that we have certain qualities or abilities which remain vague and difficult to relate to the bread and butter of daily living, but that we, in the very way we are put together, in our whole way of living or acting, must give a reflection of the king whom we serve. We are by nature imaging creatures, the Scriptures tell us, either lighting up things around us by reflecting, imaging the glory of God, or masking our true identity, like the ghosts and goblins of Halloween, behind the image of a false god. And we who are renewed in Christ are called to tear off our masks and live up to what we ought to be: maturing brothers of Christ, the Son of *Man*, the Image of God.¹⁴

How must this image be understood or seen in those who do not believe? Is there not a common humanity in all men regardless of their attitude to God?¹⁵ And is it not true that many unbelievers are fair, loyal and just in their dealings with others? The rejection of God's Word does not change man into something else; man remains human. The *nature* of man does not change, but the *direction* of his life does; the unbeliever turns away from God. Unbelief entered the world through the wilful disobedience of the first man and woman and was an attempt on man's part to break with God. Sinful man no longer wants to be a child of God, but cannot ever escape his human, that is, creaturely condition. All of us have our humanity in common, but we can make different choices about what we believe regarding ourselves and the world.

The Bible depicts the relationship between God and man as a father-child relationship.¹⁶ Immediately related to this is man's calling or duty to obey and serve God. To be a child of the heavenly Father means to do his will and to reflect his mercy and goodness.¹⁷ Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."¹⁸ By contrast, the unbeliever refuses to do God's will. Jesus had these words for the unbelieving Pharisees: "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. . . . He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God."¹⁹

Sin involves a deliberate rejection of God's purpose for mankind and a decision to serve something other than the Creator.²⁰ Salvation

is the restoration and renewal of the image of God in man through the redeeming work of Christ. Christ is called the image of God,²¹ and Paul writes that those who love God become true images of Christ.²² Elsewhere he explains that the gods of this world have blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the glory of Christ *who is the image of God*.²³

Despite human unbelief and disobedience, God has not turned his back on this creation nor on his creatures.²⁴ Thus mankind is still subject to God's law for creation and called to responsibility. In his grace, God continues to deal with us, and he allows the sun to shine on both the righteous and the unrighteous.²⁵ It is not the residue of some divine substance in mankind that links unbelievers and believers, but the fact that we are all subject to God's law for creation. Indeed, unbelievers do conform to many of God's laws and can make impressive contributions to human culture, even though their efforts are not intended to honour God.

Scripture plainly states that those who seek to serve God and honour him in all they do tread the path of life; those who serve themselves or other gods follow the way of death. This has direct implications for our relationship to the rest of creation. In the first chapter of the first book of the Bible, mankind was given the task of working with nature—to “rule over” and “subdue” the creation. In this office of steward, man is accountable to God for his work. Life in its entirety consists in walking before the face of God.

The fact that mankind bears God's image also implies that in their interaction with one another, people are called to reflect the will of their heavenly Father. This is most clearly stated in Matthew 22:37-39 in which we are instructed to love God above all else and our neighbour as ourselves. This “love command” has often been presented as though it ought to be applied in an all-inclusive and non-differentiated manner. Certain distinctions must be made at this point, however, or one soon encounters insoluble problems. For example, some Christians maintain that Jesus' command to “turn the other cheek” means that the state that uses armaments, or the court that metes out punishment, does so in violation of God's law. Some “radical” Christians completely deny the state's legitimacy and consider it to be totally demonic. They advocate complete withdrawal from the state or at least a totally negative stance toward it. Other Christians concede that the state does have a *relative* kind of legitimacy and that it could not exist were it always to turn the other

cheek. Yet they relegate the state to a lower order and refer to justice as something inferior to love. The history of Christianity is fraught with conflicts of this nature, and as a result there is a great deal of confusion among Christians as to their task in the world. For no one can truly withdraw from the world, nor can one divide his life into higher and lower parts.

This brings us to the heart of an unresolved problem, namely, how to achieve a minimum social consensus as a foundation for a civilized society. The old certainties about a "natural" order or one based on the social contract are evaporating. Can we build a just society, or are we doomed to lapse into a new barbarism, that is, a totally controlled and brutalized society such as that of Nazi Germany or of a number of contemporary totalitarian regimes?

From Scripture we know that every human activity and every area of society is subject to the Word of God. God created the world and provided the structures in which human beings can relate to one another. In the first few chapters of Genesis, we read that God instituted marriage and the family and surrounded them with guidelines for functioning. The same can be said for the church, the state, employer-employee relations, business, education, the arts, and the sciences, some of which areas are specifically mentioned in the Bible. The fact that political parties or corporations as we know them today did not exist in Old Testament times or in the days of Jesus does not mean that such modern institutions are not subject to God's law. But how can we find clues about the intent of God's law for a modern society? How can we avoid bogging down in a simplistic biblicism or in secular humanism? The answers to these questions must be found in the light Scripture provides for our lives, and particularly in the light it sheds on who man is.

Let no one imagine that the Christian teachings about man as God's image bearer do not have immensely important practical repercussions. This becomes abundantly evident in the discussion about abortion. Those who favour abortion invariably ignore or attack the idea that man was made in the image of God. A striking example of this kind of reductionism is the argument used by Dr. Peter Singer to defend abortion. Singer attacked the idea that human life is sacrosanct: "We can no longer base our ethics on the idea that human beings are a special form of creation, made in the image of God, singled out from all other animals, and alone possessing an immortal soul."²⁶

The horrendous consequences of such a view are also obvious from Singer's comments. Once the religious "mumbo jumbo" surrounding the term "human" has been removed, he claims, we may continue to see normal members of our species as possessing greater capacities for rationality, but we will not consider sacrosanct the life of each and every member of our species. He writes:

If we compare a severely defective human infant with a nonhuman animal, a dog or a pig, for example, we will often find the nonhuman to have superior capacities, both actual and potential, for rationality, self-consciousness, communication, and anything else that can plausibly be considered morally significant. Only the fact that the defective infant is a member of the species *Homo sapiens* leads it to be treated differently from the dog or pig. Species membership alone, however, is not morally relevant.²⁷

From such a rationalization it is clear, as Singer also realizes, that the biblical notion of man has immense, even life-and-death consequences for the practice of human beings. It is scarcely possible to find a more compelling argument for the defence of biblical religion. God's honour and mankind's humanity and well-being are inextricably intertwined. That's why a defence of Christian culture is a defence of mankind. The opposite is also true—an attack on Christian culture is an attack on the human race.

History as Cultural Mandate

Historicism—the idea that the norm for human action lies in history itself and is therefore ever changing—is one of the most influential "-isms" of our day. It destroys all belief in a reliable, permanent order. According to historicism, what was considered to be truth in the past is probably not relevant today, and ideas and action considered suitable today may not be applicable in the future.

Historicism implies that we cannot really speak of any idea or practice as being right or wrong but only about its being more or less useful or appropriate. It means that there is no such thing as truth with which to counter falsehood, that all opinions are equally valid and that there really is no authority.²⁸ Historicism also signals the end of civilization. For this reason, the most important question is whether or not there is a *given* order by which we are called to live and by which we are able to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

Aware of the dangers of relativism, some Christians have sought refuge in traditionalism, that is, an attempt to declare existing structures and conditions sacred and inviolable. However, such a stance is reactionary and, in the long run, self-defeating. What is required, therefore, is biblical insight about the true norm for historical progress. The late Herman Dooyeweerd, a Dutch philosopher, wrote extensively about the meaning of biblical religion for philosophy and culture.²⁹ According to Dooyeweerd, cultural "differentiation"—the "disclosure" or "opening up" of society through the movement from an undifferentiated stage to one in which a great variety of societal relationships exist—is the key to genuine historical progress. Such societal development, he explains, closely parallels the growth of a human being from an infant to a mature adult.³⁰ A baby instinctively nurses at its mother's breast and continues until it is full. The infant knows pain and happiness and senses the love of its parents. With growth, the child normally learns to make logical distinctions, to speak, to value things, to appreciate works of art, to love nature and homeland, and to worship God (or idols).

Primitive society is characterized by a simple form of organization; institutions such as church, state, school, business, and voluntary associations do not exist. Instead, all the functions of governing, judging and training are centred in one authority figure, the familial (tribal) head.³¹ As various cultural relationships gradually form, civilization develops.

Historicism absolutizes and isolates the historical. To avoid this distortion, we need to know what is peculiar about the historical aspect of reality. Dooyeweerd defines the core of the historical as the cultural. "Cultural activity always consists in giving form to material in free control over the material. It consists in giving form according to a free design. Culturally formative activity is different from the activity by which lasting forms arise in nature."³² (Examples of natural forms are honeycombs, spiderwebs and birds' nests.) Dooyeweerd insists that the task of cultural form-giving was entrusted to man at the beginning and is therefore grounded in the creation order. The cultural command is given in the context of all the other creation ordinances. The cultural is therefore the manner in which reality reveals its historical aspect. Each cultural form, or "law sphere" (e.g., the political, the juridical, the aesthetic) "is grounded in God's creation order."

Since culturally formative activity means to have control over

material, it requires power, whether this be over things by means of a technical invention, or over people by means of competence or authority. Some Christians are suspicious of power because they identify it with brute force.³³ For this reason they hold a negative view of the state, as though it were partially or even completely demonic. Such a view does not take into account the fact that God is all-powerful and that the cultural mandate (given in Genesis 1:28) implies the human use of power. When Christ gave his disciples the task to preach the gospel to all nations, he reminded them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."³⁴ Absolute power belongs to God, but he entrusts it to his stewards to carry out his will—to rule over and develop his creation.

There are many different kinds of power. For example, the power of the gospel is different from the state's power of the sword, which is in turn different from that of science, of the arts, of capital or of unions. But in whatever societal structure historical formation takes place, the use of power is never by definition the exercise of brute force. Only *sin* places power in the service of evil, as could happen with any of God's gifts—such as feeling, thought, jurisprudence, beauty, and life itself. Power is part of the creational order and entails a historical calling and task for man. Power thus implies human responsibility, which in turn means that giving form and exercising power are subject not to *natural* laws but to *norms*, that is, the rule of what *ought* to be.³⁵ Government's exercise of power must never be reduced to mere power; it presupposes juridical competence. Otherwise, justice is reduced to power, which amounts to the negation of justice.³⁶

Throughout history we can see how mankind has been torn between retaining the traditional and changing to the new. To simply choose one or the other will always lead to distortions. But how do we know whether we are obeying the creation order for the historical aspect of life and thus being culturally responsible? How can we avoid the dilemma of reaction or revolution? Because of the controversy about the merit of Marxism in a changing society, these questions have assumed special urgency for Christians today. True historical unfolding (progress) is the differentiation of creation into distinctive cultural spheres in keeping with the creation ordinance that everything must unfold according to its own inner nature. Seen in the light of the creation principle, historical development occurs in order to reveal the riches and variety of creation in all aspects of

reality, including the cultural. Only cultural differentiation is able to reveal the specific nature of the various creation structures. This requires a lengthy historical process in which culture branches out into the distinctive (power) spheres of science, art, the state, the church, business enterprise, school, and voluntary associations.³⁷ Each sphere is limited to using the power that accords with its own nature, and therefore no sphere may claim for itself all cultural power.

It is obvious that the principle of societal differentiation is crucial to the maintenance of a free society. The Washington-based Institute for Religion and Democracy spelled out the significance of this principle in its manifesto "Christianity and Democracy":

Democratic government is limited government. It is limited in the claims it makes and in the power it seeks to exercise. Democratic government understands itself to be accountable to values and to truth which transcend any regime or party. Thus in the United States of America we declare ours to be a nation "under God," which means, first of all, a nation under judgment. In addition, limited government means that a clear distinction is made between the state and the society. The state is not the whole of the society, but is one important actor in the society. Other institutions—notably the family, the Church, educational, economic and cultural enterprises—are at least equally important actors in the society. They do not exist or act by sufferance of the state. Rather, these *spheres* have their own peculiar *sovereignty* which must be respected by the state³⁸ (emphasis added).

This principle of sphere sovereignty holds for the state, the church, and all other spheres. For example, the church has not received the historical calling extended to the state, or science, or business; thus, it may not usurp the power entrusted to those spheres.³⁹ In medieval times, the church tried to provide the leadership for all cultural life and, in keeping with its "nature-grace" concept of reality, attempted to divide all of life into "secular" and "sacred" components. By usurping power to which it had no right, the church stunted the development of other spheres—schools, commerce, the arts, science, etc.—and manifested totalitarian characteristics (think of Galileo).

Genuine historical development (or progress) takes place when distinctive life spheres begin to flourish. But the differentiation of such spheres does not mean their isolation, nor the creation of rigid

boundaries around them. In fact, sphere sovereignty must be complemented by "sphere universality," that is, the cultural aspect must be "opened up" or enriched by other aspects, such as the lingual, social, economic, aesthetic, juridical, moral, and pistical (faith). For example, Nazism was an unhistorical development because it violated the norm for cultural unfolding (or opening up). It was inspired by the myth of blood and earth, and a primitive "folk" idea which glorified a "vital" race and tribal community. Nazism was regressive, a modern form of barbarism.⁴⁰ Similarly, all contemporary totalitarian regimes are historically regressive in that they invariably seek to destroy the freedom and independence of every societal structure while the state assumes exclusive power.

Wherever a totalitarian image of culture is pictured as the ideal that erases the hard-won recognition of sphere sovereignty—whether the appeal is to ancient Germanic customs or to the medieval church—one can be certain that we are faced with a reactionary direction in history. We should not be deceived by the adjective "progressive," a label that any new spiritual movement gladly claims for itself. It will be known by its fruits!⁴¹

The entire process of cultural differentiation must take place in obedience to God who in Jesus Christ has entered into this world. This process is aided by the development of science and technology. Egbert Schuurman, a Dutch philosopher, has elaborated on the unfolding process in history in connection with the role of technology. He maintains that the idea of human autonomy threatens to derail technology so that it assumes an existence of its own, to the detriment of mankind. (The clearest example of this is the threat of destruction by nuclear war.) In this context he analyzes the two major contemporary views of technology, the positivistic and the transcendentalistic. The former places its hope in technology itself while the latter rejects technology entirely and seeks salvation in some form of "counter-culture." Schuurman argues for a Christian alternative which rejects every form of autonomous technology.

He believes that the command to be stewards of creation includes using technology as the disclosure of creation. This task, too, has as its final purpose the service and honour of God. While sin caused disruption and brokenness, it does not have the power to destroy creation. At a time when many Christians perceive only the

negative and destructive possibilities of technology, it is good to be reminded by this Christian scholar that "Jesus Christ saves creation from the curse and turns it again toward its original destination." Schuurman summarizes his view of technology as follows:

A liberated technology will then be able to ease the difficult circumstances in which people live "by nature." It will afford an enlargement of life's opportunities, relieve the aches and pains and difficulties of work, resist natural catastrophes, conquer disease, improve social security, expand communication, multiply information, augment responsibility, vastly increase material prosperity in harmony with spiritual well-being, and abolish alienation from self, nature and culture. . . . In all of this, humanity finds its share and portion of the *meaning of technology* in the disclosure of the meaning of the creation as a whole—a disclosure that must attain its final destination in the Kingdom of God, the re-created universe, and so come to rest in that Kingdom.⁴²

A Christian view of technology, as articulated by Schuurman, would have thoroughly practical consequences. For example, in planning a production process, engineers would have to consider how the technology and the organization of production would affect workers. Their approach would have to be based on respect for people who, as responsible human beings, must experience in their work the opportunity to interact with others and to experience a sense of achievement. In other words, their approach must acknowledge that there are *limits* to the way technology can and ought to be used.

One need not be a philosopher to realize that the principle of economy (restraint) must temper and limit the power and scope of technology. But philosophical reflection on reality is nonetheless very important since it, too, is part of man's task. Developing creation includes the development of our thoughts and ideas. Philosophy can help us to refine our insights about the complexity, variety and unity of created reality (for that is the philosopher's field of inquiry), and in so doing to discover more details about the law for creation. (All science is a search for the law, whether that be the law for mathematics, psychology or politics.)

Philosophy is therefore useful for gaining insight from which non-philosophers may also benefit. It is evident from history that the reflections of philosophers have influenced the pattern of everyday life. Though few people may realize it, the works of such thinkers as

Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Calvin, Rousseau, Kant, Marx, and Keynes have helped to shape our history. For this reason, the development of Christian philosophy is a matter of the greatest importance. To be sure, Christian philosophy is but human and incomplete work. Like all human work, it too must constantly be tested and corrected in the light of God's revelation. However, we must gratefully use scripturally inspired theoretical insights to know better our place and task as confessors of Christ's name.

For the purpose of this discussion, it may be helpful to distinguish between philosophy and world-view—with the understanding that the latter represents everyday (“common sense”) knowledge. Philosophy, as the science of knowledge, is a theoretical and specialized endeavour, pursued by relatively few people. A world-view, on the other hand, is a basic set of beliefs about reality, which is something everyone has. All philosophers begin their investigations with such a *prior* set of beliefs. At the same time, everyone—learned and unlearned alike—feel the effects of ideas “trickling down” from the philosophers. It is therefore obvious that Christians must develop a biblically attuned philosophy and world-view in order to engage in obedient cultural activity.⁴³

It must be noted that non-Christians, as well as Christians, are capable of discovering true knowledge about reality. The Bible and experience show this to be true. Non-Christian cultures have scored impressive achievements. This is so because even those who reject God's revelation in Christ are subject to the creation order and are able to learn things about it.⁴⁴

Not only are non-Christians capable of discovering God's laws, but Christians sometimes form false views. In the introduction to his book on Dooyeweerd's philosophy, L. Kalsbeek describes several instances in which Christian leaders constructed obviously wrong theories.⁴⁵ Dooyeweerd, who devoted his life and his considerable talents to defending a radically biblical view of reality—and thus a Christian understanding of and approach to all the sciences and the other areas of culture—warns against an easy division between Christians and non-Christians. He insists that the struggle between faith and unbelief also takes place within the lives of Christians. He furthermore emphasizes the tremendous advances made in cultures directed by a non-Christian faith. For example, Dooyeweerd criticizes the spirit of the Enlightenment because it rejected biblical revelation in favour of human autonomy, but he admits that it must

be credited with remarkable achievements in civil and criminal law, economic advancement, individual initiative, defence of individual rights, and the development of natural science and of technology. The Enlightenment produced historical development because it followed the line of "genuine cultural disclosure." Although Dooyeweerd rejects humanism and works within the Calvinist tradition, he pays humanism the following tribute: "We would be entirely amiss if we failed to recognize its great significance for the unfolding of western civilization. The Enlightenment was formative in history and active in opening culture beyond the scope of natural science and technology based on that science."⁴⁶

It is nevertheless evident that a Christian philosophy of history must insist on finding its starting point in biblical revelation and must acknowledge that all things are subject to God's law. Dooyeweerd also pointed out that "the dark side of the Enlightenment contribution to the disclosure of western culture consists in the dissolving impact of its individualism and rationalism which resulted in a severe *disharmony* of western society."⁴⁷ At the same time, Christian philosophy must also display humility—in the awareness of its own shortcomings and those of the Christian community in general—as well as respect for the elements of truth discovered by non-Christians. One may wonder whether such an approach implies that a Christian philosophy is only relatively different from any other position, and so does not really help us to find our way in the contemporary world. Here we must keep in mind the difference between the reality of God's law for creation and the way we (subjectively) respond to that law. Our understanding may be imperfect, but that in no way sets aside reality. Man is not self-sufficient in anything he does, and we always need the light of God's Word to show us even a part of the way. God asks for our worship and love, and in his grace he promises to give his spirit of understanding to those who depend on him. But understanding also entails work, struggle, and searching for insight and clues about the order of creation. That work of investigation must go on in every area of creation.

Though the task will never be completed, it is of utmost importance that the work to develop an integrated Christian world-view continue. If Christians keep on accepting the split between faith and knowledge, they will continue either to borrow from non-Christian theories or to withdraw from the "world."

The failure of Christians to develop a thoroughly biblical world-

view is painfully evident in the efforts to ally Christianity with Marxism. Such attempts invariably call for maintaining the so-called spiritual dimension of Christianity and augmenting it with the analytical tools of Marxism. The Christian Marxists claim that Christianity needs these tools in order to become relevant as a social and political force for change. But those who thus seek to "borrow" from Marxism shortchange the biblical creation principle; for they borrow a "tool" that can never be separated from its radically atheistic foundation.

Biblical revelation and knowledge of God's law for the entire creation provide us with insight into the nature of a just state, a stewardly economy, sound scholarship and harmonious social relations. The Bible says that seeking the righteousness of the Kingdom of God is the way to find *shalom*. By faith we know this to be true, even though the history of Christianity may not always seem to provide evidence of this reality. All our frantic searching for the good life, freedom, progress, abundance, and self-realization has made such goals more and more distant. We need to recover the biblical vision of creation as made good, fallen into sin, and redeemed for its original purpose. Redemption means that man has again been restored to a place of responsibility and freedom in God's creation. That redemption is all-inclusive and radical (going to the root), a reality which is captured by the biblical term "Kingdom of God," or "Kingdom of heaven."⁴⁸

The Kingdom of God

John the Baptist prepared the way for Christ's earthly ministry by telling the people, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near," and by warning them of the coming day of judgment.⁴⁹ Jesus also announced his own coming in this way.⁵⁰ Prior to the birth of the Messiah, the angel told Mary that the baby to be born would be great and would be called "the Son of the Most High," and that his kingdom would never end.⁵¹ Immediately after the angel's visit, Mary went to the home of Elizabeth, and there responded to the Lord's message with a song magnifying the Lord for his mighty deeds in humbling the proud, exalting the lowly, filling the hungry, and being faithful to his people.

Later, when John the Baptist was in prison and beginning to wonder whether Jesus really was the Christ, he was told about the

mighty works by which the sick were healed, the poor heard the gospel and even the dead were raised to life.⁵²

The main theme conveyed by the term "Kingdom of God" is that God has redeemed and is sovereign over creation, and that the power of sin—evident in sickness and injustice—has been defeated. We are confronted with a mystery to which we can only respond with gratitude. Christ not only assumed human form, he also took upon himself the sins of the world and gave his life as a ransom for sinners. He thereby reconciled the world to God and received all power in heaven and on earth.⁵³

Although God's redemption of creation was accomplished through Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection, God's sovereign rule over creation has continued, uninterrupted, *from the beginning*. Time and again the Old Testament tells of God's sovereign power. To mention only two such passages here, in Psalm 103:19 we read, "The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all," and in Daniel 4:3, "How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation."

In the opening verses of the gospel of John, we read that the Word (Christ) was with God in the beginning, and that all things were made through him. Throughout the New Testament, Christ is presented as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.⁵⁴ The last book of the Bible tells about the revelation given to John on the island of Patmos. John sees the course of history as a struggle between God and satan. Though satan is given some time to deceive and to capture, his power is limited.⁵⁵

The Bible reveals that the Kingdom of God is Christ's sovereign rule over all creation. This all-inclusive character of the Kingdom means that, even today, no part of creation lies outside of God's authority. Although sin produces estrangement, redemption reconciles all of creation to God. Many Christians understand salvation to have redeemed only believers, but not creation; however, the biblical idea of the Kingdom of God contradicts such a division. Instead, it proclaims that every part of creation, and thus every part of our creaturely existence, is an arena for obedient service to the God who through Christ has freed his people to take up that service once again.

Christians often have limited the Kingdom of God to either the institutional church, the private lives of individuals and the family,

or the future. They have cited Christ's statement to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world," to support this stance. This, however, is a misreading of Scripture, which consistently emphasizes the sovereignty of God. In the Bible, the term "world" has more than one meaning. Sometimes it denotes the entirety of creation, which God made and redeemed. At other times it describes the spirit of unbelief, which considers this world and the power exercised in it to be independent of God. Understanding this distinction is vital to a clear understanding of the biblical teaching about the world and its relationship to the Kingdom of God. When Christians do not see the biblical meaning of the Kingdom, they often lose their identity within the mainstream of secular humanism.

The Kingdom of God may not be reduced to a horizontal program of social and political reform (as in the social gospel). Such an approach assumes that faulty social relations and economic and political institutions are the source of evil in the world, and that once these institutions are changed, a new, perfect man will arise. This approach fails to understand the nature of sin. The Bible says that the sinful mind is hostile toward God and refuses to submit to his law.⁵⁶ Sin always involves the deification of something in creation and inevitably leads to distortion and death. Sin is not something external to man, but is located in his heart, the centre of his being. The sole cure for sin is radical change and renewal, which can be accomplished only through the Son of God who came to take away the sins of the world.⁵⁷

Although redemption does begin in the hearts of people and is deeply personal, it may not be understood in an individualistic manner. God's Kingdom rule is sovereign and inclusive. The power of the Kingdom can renew social, economic and political structures, accomplish justice according to God's will for life, and establish harmony. In order for this to happen, we must understand the biblical message that the redeeming Word of God has defeated satan and restored God's good creation.

Although the Bible stresses the here-and-now reality of the Kingdom of God, it does not deny that the Kingdom also has a future dimension. This two-sided reality is perhaps most clearly demonstrated in the prayer Jesus teaches his disciples, in which he prays for the coming of the Kingdom, and ends with the statement, "For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." Christ has overcome, death has been defeated and his people are

called more than conquerors because they have overcome the world by faith.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, we still experience the power of sin, the groaning of creation, only partial knowledge, and the reality of death.⁵⁹ The completion of the Kingdom of God lies in the future; we still await with expectation the day of the Lord.⁶⁰ This two-sided reality of the Kingdom of God caused Paul to lament the terrible tension in his life, a tension all Christians experience. We look *forward* to the coming of a new heaven and a new earth.⁶¹ Nonetheless, the Bible assures us that the Kingdom is real now. Someday our faith will be sight, and all nations will acknowledge God as the Almighty One.⁶²

Revelation 21 tells us that this heaven and earth will pass away and be replaced with a new heaven and a new earth. The new Jerusalem will descend from heaven and God will live with men. We read that the "kings of the earth will bring their splendor" into the Holy City and "the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it." This Kingdom has come, and the Kingdom is coming. That is why our lives in their entirety are redeemed, and all of creation has now been restored. This reality makes it possible for Christians to seek knowledge in God's Word and to do his will in their worship, play, art, industry, politics, family life and all the other dimensions of life. Although our works, limited and affected by sin, will not usher in that Kingdom, God will nevertheless bless the work of faith, and those who die in the Lord are promised that their deeds will follow them.⁶³ Scriptural revelation regarding creation and redemption demonstrates that the natural world and our earthly life are significant in God's eyes. At the same time, it reminds us that life in this world is still of relative significance, and that we may not imagine that we will be able to usher in an earthly paradise by means of political and economic reorganization. We need the wisdom of the Scriptures and the guidance of the Holy Spirit to find the right balance between doing and waiting, working and trusting.

10. First Things First

Modernist Christians tend to believe that evil is primarily structural; this definition is usually accompanied by a sweeping denunciation of existing economic and political “systems.” A radical change or revolution is required in order to establish a just society, or so we are told. These critics of the “world economic system” often make no distinction between the totalitarian countries of the East and the Western democracies. Such a wholesale condemnation of the system or the structure means surrender to the Marxist idea that the most significant problems and issues facing mankind are socio-economic in nature. Christians should never hesitate to reject that assumption. The Bible reveals that the decisive issue in life concerns man’s relationship to his Creator. No economic reinterpretation of life should shake us from this conviction.

Let the Church Be Church

In his book, *The Society of the Future*, Hendrik Van Riessen reminds us that “the whole social problem is of absolutely no importance when compared to the command to fear the Lord.”¹¹ This sentiment is not very popular today—even among Christians—but I am convinced that Van Riessen is right. He does not deny the importance of social and economic issues, but he insists that the world’s problems can be understood and resolved only in terms of the Word and the will of God for human life. Van Riessen’s advice is firmly rooted in the Scriptures. The Old Testament tells us: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”¹² The Bible abounds with this kind of instruction. In Matthew 6:25-33, Jesus advises us to seek God’s Kingdom and its righteousness, and promises that God will provide for all our needs. Though it be anathema to modern secular man, the proclamation of this message will always be the central task of the church.

The churches that have embraced the new (liberation) theology have not developed a truly biblical perspective of their own because they do not believe a biblical perspective to be possible. Modern Christianity, in trying to make the Christian faith relevant and palatable to the modern pragmatic mind, has fundamentally undermined belief in the Scriptures. As a result, the churches have contributed to their own irrelevance. Their pronouncements amount to nothing more than the presentation of certain opinions which should be given the same weight as opinions expressed by any other well-meaning people. Some church leaders have advised us that Christians should not "pull moral rank." Such a statement implies that a church pronouncement ought not to be understood as an expression of God's authoritative will. One suspects that the flurry of pronouncements issued by liberal churches on a variety of social, economic and political concerns is perhaps a last-ditch attempt to find a *raison d'être* for an institution that has been busy destroying its own foundations.

Richard John Neuhaus discusses the inclination of liberal churches to turn to political action (or to make pronouncements about political action), and observes that such churches have become to a great extent "a haven for fugitive ideas from liberalism's past." Instead of churches serving as "meaning movements," he writes, they assume the role of "change agents." But in so doing, churches forfeit their moral authority and their witness becomes no more than "a moralistic gloss on the deals struck by contending forces quite apart from moral considerations." In their role of "change agents," Neuhaus explains, churches become partisan and end up "aligning themselves with and becoming captive to one or another set of countervailing forces. That is demeaning enough, but what is disastrous is that they stop being agents of truth-telling."³

Ironically, the churches' emphasis on evil structures is related to their belief in the essential goodness of man. In this view of man, the source of evil has shifted from man's heart to the human environment. The solution to evil, then, is to change the environment by means of economic and political reforms or even revolutions. But such an approach is not really radical because it fails to confront man with the awful reality and power of sin. To avoid that reality is to abdicate responsibility.

Today we are told that the church and the pulpit must be "politicized" because that is how the Lord wants justice to be

established in the world. There is no doubt that the church and individual Christians must seek to do justice in society. However, the fundamental question is whether the church is called to become an *instrument* of social and political change. A few important points should be made in this context.

Those who favour the politicization of the church place heavy emphasis on what the church should be *doing*, and even speak of "doing theology." Orthodoxy has become orthopraxis. However, before the church begins to *act* it should know what it *is*. In a pragmatic, activist age, such a sentiment is unpopular; nevertheless, it is the truth of the Scriptures. Man is made in the image of God, and the church is redeemed in Christ. This is why the Scriptures and the orthodox confessions place a great deal of emphasis on what the church *is*.

Professor Klaas Runia, a Reformed theologian in the Netherlands, writes about the biblical view of the church as taught in the "classical idea of theology." "Here," he explains, "the church is first of all seen as the people chosen by God to share in the redemption by Christ and to proclaim this good news to all the nations of the world. The very first task of theology therefore is to reflect upon the biblical message and to make its promises and demands explicit for the people of its own day."⁴

The Scriptures, especially the letters of Paul, stress the church's unity with Christ. Paul also admonishes his listeners to stir up the gifts of the Spirit, to build each other up and thus help one another to become more faithful servants of the Lord.⁵ But the Bible does not present an ecclesiasticized view of life. On the contrary, the Scriptures clearly distinguish between different tasks and a variety of human relationships and institutions. The church *as church* is not called to become an all-embracing entity within society. The statement adopted by the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in 1980 expressed it well:

Naturally the church has to show its responsibility in a manner which is *in accordance with its peculiar nature*. The church may never forget that it is the body of Christ. It may never allow itself to be turned into a social or cultural or political movement or party, nor should it ever identify itself with such a movement or party. Its task is not to develop all kinds of socio-political programs or to design blueprints for the world of the future. This is the mistake made by the adherents of the so-called political

theology, the theology of revolution, the theology of liberation and, to a large extent, also by the World Council of Churches.⁶

The task of the church *as church* is to teach and equip its members to fulfil their own responsibilities in all areas of life, including the non-ecclesiastical areas of society. In keeping with Paul's words in Ephesians 4 and elsewhere, the church is called to help its members achieve greater spiritual maturity so that they will be able to assume responsibility, not as under the direct tutelage of the church, but as directed by the Word of God.

Churches that insist on making pronouncements on all kinds of public issues not only undermine their own credibility (because they often do not speak in keeping with the Word of the Lord), but also fail to respect the maturity of their own members. The results of a survey carried out in 1982 by Reginald Bibby, a professor of sociology at the University of Lethbridge, show that only some forty per cent of church members in Canada believe in traditional Christian doctrines such as the existence of God, the divinity of Jesus, and life after death. Churches that speak out on issues ranging from the building of oil pipelines to capital punishment to investment in South Africa, but fail to teach their own members even the rudiments of biblical religion, have completely misunderstood their task.⁷

The theologian Herman Ridderbos reminds us that the credibility of the church and of its pronouncements lie in the authority of her Lord. He states that the church cannot exercise that kind of authority if it attempts to address all kinds of complex situations in politics, society, science, and so on. The Word of God, which has been entrusted to the church, is a precious source of light by which we may find our way in the darkness of life. However, the Bible is not meant to provide a complex of laws and prescriptions for each specific situation. Ridderbos concludes:

It does not belong to the proclamation of the Word to fulfil that task as often as there may be an occasion to do so by means of pronouncements and interventions which would then have to serve as the Word or as the expression of the church. The church is not called to do that nor is she equipped for that; and less so as—in our days—life becomes more complex and society's problematics more difficult. We have already seen that the apostolic instruction does not occur in this manner but rather seeks to sharpen the congregation's ability to discern in order to maturely and with a fine sense of discernment find the way and make the right decisions.⁸

The late S. U. Zuidema, Dutch theologian and philosopher, also commented on the churches' claim that they may speak out *as church* on all kinds of non-ecclesiastical matters. Zuidema called this practice "ecclesiastical colonization" and said it ignored the maturity of its own members. He wrote:

One can be sure that a Christian church which gives God's Word free reign over the whole of life and which refrains from binding and subjecting it to itself as church, thereby remaining true to its own limited calling—the service to the universal spiritual dominion of God's Word in the ecclesiastical office of preaching as a component of true worship—will exercise an influence in its times and surroundings which greatly exceeds the boundaries of the church's competence.⁹

One also detects in contemporary Christian activism a tendency to "ethicize" religion. Activists reduce the rule for moral life to an *absolutized love command*. Because God is love (and love seems to be the only attribute accorded him), we are to love all mankind. The Lord's Sermon on the Mount is frequently cited as the source of this new moralism. Here again we witness an attempt to make the Scriptures fit into a human scheme. The love command, which is indeed central to human life, must be expressed in a variety of ways in a diversity of cultural situations. It is obvious, for example, that we cannot expect to solve political and economic problems by means of purely ethical solutions. What is also required is insight about *political* and *economic* issues.

This absolutized version of ethics, or moral perfectionism, recurs repeatedly in church pronouncements, and particularly in those that concern modern warfare. Admittedly, the issue of world peace is a very difficult one, but neither Christians nor the political policy makers are helped in any way by simplistic opinions which ignore the present reality.¹⁰ Those who advocate Christian pacifism, claiming that we must trust in the Lord rather than in weapons, forget that the state is called by God to protect its citizens against the enemies of freedom and the destroyers of life (in our time, the Soviet empire has proved to be just such an enemy).¹¹ More than forty years ago Reinhold Niebuhr spoke forcefully against the tide of pacifism then sweeping the Western world. He understood the connection between pacifism and perfectionism, and the destructive results of both. His analysis is still relevant today.

Modern liberal perfectionism actually distills moral perversity out of moral absolutes. It is unable to make significant distinctions between tyranny and freedom because it can find no democracy pure enough to deserve its devotion; and in any case it can find none which is not involved in conflict, in its effort to defend itself against tyranny . . . It is unable to distinguish between the peace of capitulation to tyranny and the peace of the Kingdom of God.¹²

In a discussion about politics and particularly about the armament question, Professor Herman Ridderbos points out that we cannot escape this difficult issue by withdrawing to a purely ethical or "prophetic" position. He insists that as long as we wish to assume political responsibility we must seek *political* solutions to political questions. We cannot simply move over to the "logic" of the other Kingdom when we run stuck in our worldly politics. Ridderbos goes on to say that those who, on the basis of their conscience, are willing to accept all the consequences of disarmament deserve respect, but it does mean that "they leave the *political* struggle against the armament race and for international de-escalation to others."¹³

Churches that have made social activism the new focus of their concern and that are guided by an ethicized (or moralistic) understanding of religion thereby become merely a channel for one ideology or another. Although some of the things they say are true, such churches are not speaking with the authority of the Word of God, and thus they fail to provide moral clarity and spiritual direction. Whether they deal with labour relations, bank profits, or economic and political policies, their pronouncements are inspired more by contemporary ideologies than by biblical revelation, and serve only to add to the present confusion.¹⁴

Many churches and church members, particularly in the modern age, have struggled with what they consider the necessity of making a choice between creed and deed, between confession and action. The choice for confessions and creeds is sometimes portrayed as hypocritical and anti-social, and the choice for deed and action as noble and self-sacrificing. The social gospel movement, to its credit, was initiated in reaction to the church's dead orthodoxy and lack of awareness of the needs of the world. However, the social gospel in fact compounded the problem by secularizing the content of Christian faith. Both our confessions and our deeds—and works are the result and manifestation of faith—must be renewed by the Word

and Spirit of our Lord. It is nothing short of a tragedy when people like William Irvine and James S. Woodsworth, in turning against the sins of the churches, abandon the Christian faith.

The entire history of the social gospel movement should serve as a warning to us. It should remind us, as the Lord has taught us in his Word, to place first things first. The church is called to preach that Word and thus to call all people to repentance and to deeds of love and mercy. The Bible does not accept a division of creed and deed. If we truly love and serve the Lord, we will also serve our neighbour. These two sides of the Christian life cannot be separated. Our lives will always display the evidence of sin, yet that, too, underscores our need to trust in the power of God's grace.

It is very important to recognize that, as an *institution*, the church has a limited task. Lest anyone hear this emphasis as a form of world flight, we reiterate that church members are called to be witnesses to the redeeming power of Christ in *every area* of life. In this connection, the comments of G. Brillenburg Wurth are instructive. He stresses the specific, and therefore limited, character of the church's task, and at the same time emphasizes the vital relationship between the church and the world. The distress of the world, writes Brillenburg Wurth, is also the distress of the church. The church belongs to the Saviour who experienced the needs of human life and who was moved with a priestly compassion for the suffering. The church must initiate this concern.

It is especially important that the church remind the world of the deepest cause of its distress and thus seek to open its eyes to its guilt. The church should serve as the conscience of society, especially in our time when the sense of distress is very strong and the sense of guilt, due to a growing fatalism, is dwindling more and more. The church is also called, in a social sense, to seek to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgement (John 16:8). The church will have to do this in the spirit of Christian solidarity. She will have to experience the distress of the world as her distress, but also the guilt of the world as her guilt.

In addition to testifying of distress and guilt, the church will also have to testify . . . to the redemption which exists for our society in the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. . . .

. . . [The church] does not construct social economic programs, nor does she design a perfect society. But when she speaks in her

preaching, her catechetical instruction, her pastoral care, no one may accuse her of stammering mere generalities. She may not leave undone any effort to understand the reality of life in society today with its suffocating problematics, and thus to gain a keen insight into what is precisely at stake in the present socio-economic struggle.¹⁵

The heart of biblical religion is the all-inclusiveness of Christ's lordship. This starting point makes possible joyful living in the world and provides an entirely new perspective for service and true liberation. The church plays a central role in strengthening this perspective, but renewal in the gospel is not confined by the church walls nor can it be reduced to moralizing exhortations spoken to those outside the institutional church.

Christian Action in Society

In order to become meaningfully involved in culture, Christians must strive for a consensus on the meaning and power of the Word of God and its significance for our time. We must distinguish between that which is time- and culture-bound and that which is timeless and abiding. This requires a great deal of insight.

Insight, or wisdom, begins with a deep respect for the authority of Scriptures and for the sovereignty of God. The corollary of that starting point is a profound awareness of our dependence on the Spirit of God as the source of wisdom. Faith, too, is a gift of the Spirit; by faith we know that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, and that our life's meaning is located in our relationship to our Creator and Redeemer. It is also by faith that we acquire insight into the human condition in our time.

Cultural progress happens by a process of differentiation. The cultural mandate is to be carried out in many different areas. Each of these areas or structures has its own unique task and place within society. A truly free society is one which understands the various societal relationships to be coordinate rather than hierarchical. Thus it is not the task of the state, for example, to take responsibility for the family or for business; rather, the state, by means of fulfilling its own public-legal task, is called to provide an environment so that citizens are able to fulfil their own duties and responsibilities in all of the various cultural areas. An open and free society is possible only if it is constructed on the foundation of free, responsible communities

and societal structures. Conversely, wherever a society is ruled totally from one power centre, democracy and freedom are non-existent.

The Word of God provides reliable and trustworthy insight into the way we are to live. But biblical principles are not the same as theories or formal rules. They are life-giving and liberating since they assist us in understanding and doing our task before the face of God. In this connection Professor Van Riessen speaks about principles as mandates of creation which come to man through the redemption of Christ, bringing about the emancipation of life. He writes:

Such principles are links in the chain of redemption, and they will function properly only if the man who handles them is filled with a Christian mind. They can then become manifestations of love in compliance with the great commandment. They become manifestations of reverence, not so much for man but for the *calling* of man, and consequently for the *freedom* man needs to follow his calling and to answer for his life and work to God. Such manifestations spring from a respect of *life as religion*.¹⁶

The declining understanding of biblical norms has been accompanied by a loss of regard for authority and institutions. The family and marriage have become the most obvious victims of this development, and the breakdown of the family will have serious repercussions for our entire society. It is precisely for this reason that those who stress the importance of the family (as well as of all other institutions and structures) as a defence against atomization (on the Right) and collectivization (on the Left) are doing us all a service.¹⁷ In this context, American historian Allan C. Carlson discusses the source of poverty, and notably the relationship between family breakdown and poverty. Carlson focuses on the American situation, but his remarks apply equally to Canada:

Efforts at restoring such slighted principles as sexual restraint, marital fidelity, and the sanctity of the family could do far more to reduce poverty than any combination of state programs. More importantly, these are areas where churches *have* and *can* play a vital, influential role, while government must stand by helplessly.

... In their exhilarating turn toward political activism over the last two decades, many church leaders have neglected their tasks of spiritual sustenance and moral education. It is in resuming those roles—not in carving out reputedly “new” but in fact

discouragingly "old" policy agendas—that America's religious community can do its part in restoring economic health and social peace to this land.¹⁸

Furthermore, a good case can be made for channelling Christian action via distinctive, Christian organizations. This approach is also rooted in a specific understanding of the meaning of the Word of God for life. Nevertheless, some Christians look askance at organized Christian action in such areas as politics, labour relations, the media, the arts, and education. Many believe that proponents of Christian organizations wish to isolate themselves and find a secure haven from the world. Others believe that Christian organizations foster a "holier-than-thou" attitude. However, I am convinced that Christian organizations are legitimate and necessary tools for Christian action and witness in society.

In the first place, we should see Christian organizations as a logical consequence of our belief in God's sovereign claim over all of life. We are called to serve God in every area of life and in every part of our existence. The entire creation is subject to God's law, and there are biblical norms for life in its entirety. Christian organizations are the natural result of the desire some Christians have to do the Lord's will in a particular area of life.

By establishing a *Christian* organization, one rejects the idea that institutions are neutral, and affirms that God's redeeming power and grace are also relevant outside of the instituted church. Furthermore, Christian organizations express the communal character of the Christian life. Again, some Christians believe that the church is the primary, if not the only, expression of Christian community and that outside of the church Christians are simply individuals who must try to make the best of living in the "secular" world. Such an individualistic concept of the Christian life cannot be an adequate reflection of the true unity of Christ-confessors and the all-inclusive character of Christ's lordship.

Related to establishing Christian organizations is the attempt to build a pluralistic society in which various religious commitments and lifestyles are acknowledged and respected. The search for a unifying principle for our society has produced a great deal of tension, and this has come to expression in the conflict between individualism and collectivism—or capitalism and socialism. But the conflict between these two extremes can never be resolved because they are both rooted in a secular (i.e., non-biblical) view of man. They in-

variably produce distortions because they absolutize one aspect of reality or another. In contrast, biblical principles and a corresponding respect for the rich variety of creation, also reflected in the norm for societal differentiation (as the foundation of genuine freedom), hold tremendous promise for building an open and just society. We should welcome the freedom we enjoy in Canada as an opportunity to present a public and organized witness to the life-renewing power of the gospel. If we lived in the Soviet Union, China, Cuba or any of the other dictatorial regimes, we would not be able to live and witness as freely as we can here—if at all.

When Christians believe that the church or church-related agencies are the exclusive channels of Christian action in society, Christian action is restricted, and the non-ecclesiastical areas of life become further estranged from the gospel. The witness the church then brings to such areas of life as politics or economics simply amounts to an *admonition from the outside* without any effective, inner reformation. Christian organizations are intended to bring about reformation from the *inside* of political life, economic life, and so on. The difference is not merely a matter of strategy, but it involves a fundamentally different way of viewing the world and the meaning of God's Word for our lives.

In their action and witness in the non-ecclesiastical areas of society, Christian organizations also provide an opportunity for Christians of different denominations to work together on the basis of a shared commitment to the Christian faith. If Christian action is channelled through the church or through church-affiliated organizations exclusively, either this will result in an absolutization of church boundaries or in an equally undesirable indifference to church creeds. There are plenty of examples of both extremes. A strong emphasis on the importance of the church as institution and on its limited task can and should be accompanied by an equally strong emphasis on the true ecumenicity of all who take seriously the call to serve their Lord in every area of human culture. We can be certain that biblical principles for our lives are not time- or culture-bound, and an earnest desire and effort to obey them will *always* and *everywhere* bring about the *shalom* of God.

Conclusion

When we consider the condition of the church and society, there is much that discourages or at least deeply concerns us. And within the evangelical Christian community, we detect a great deal of confusion and division, of lethargy and smugness. How will we ever be able to survive as a distinctive community? How are we to meet the challenges before us with such limited resources and such massive obstacles?

In Canada—indeed in all of Western society—adherents of biblical religion are engaged in a struggle which concerns the fundamentals of the Christian faith. The enemy forces are both within and without the institutional church. *Within* the church, Christians must resist those who have poured new and revolutionary meaning into the old biblical terminology and who have thus abandoned the foundation of the faith. *Outside* the church, Christians wage an equally fierce battle for the soul of Western culture. Intellectual confusion and moral disorder surround us; the spiritual basis of Western society is being eroded, and the ideology of human self-creation and self-redemption is surreptitiously taking its place.

We face an urgent task. We must seek a truly evangelical ecumenicity through which to pose the life-giving truth of Scripture over against the destructive ideologies of our day. *All* those who are convinced of the truth of God's Word should be prepared to *speak and act* in defence of life, truth, justice and freedom.

Despite the malaise of our civilization, Christians need not despair. God's Word of truth is filled with power and comfort for us *here and now*. We can still choose the truth and so choose life; there is good news for modern man. And, thanks be to God, there is still true faith and there are still many faithful witnesses to the truth of God's Word for today. Notwithstanding the liberal teachings of preachers, theologians and church bureaucrats, many still seek the true bread of life. In these days of insidious heresy and widespread unbelief, we need not fear, for we know that through Christ we are more than conquerors.¹⁹ Even when the foundations are being destroyed, the psalmist reminds us that the Lord is in control, "For the Lord is righteous, he loves justice; the upright shall behold his face."²⁰

Notes

Introduction

1. See Blamires, *Christian Mind*.
2. Evans, *Communist Faith and Christian Faith*, 39.
3. Barth, *Community, State and Church*, 160.
4. Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God*, 194.
5. Quoted in Visser 't Hooft, *Background of the Social Gospel*, 123.
6. Quoted in MacQuarrie, *Twentieth Century Religious Thought*, 187.
7. Quoted in Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 2.
8. The following description of Enlightenment themes closely follows Livingston's in *ibid.*, 3-9.
9. Quoted in *ibid.*, 4.
10. Quoted in Yapp, *Enlightenment*, 32.
11. Livingston, *Modern Christian Thought*, 9.

1. A New View of Man and History

1. Quoted in Ahlstrom, *Religious History*, 2:237.
2. See *ibid.*, 234-36.
3. *Ibid.*, 237.
4. Randall, *Career of Philosophy*, 2:332-76. The author is grateful to Columbia University Press for permission to make extensive use of this section of Randall's *Career of Philosophy*, and, to a lesser extent, of "Religion in the Growing World," Chap. 20 of Randall's *Making of the Modern Mind*.
5. *Ibid.*, 335.
6. *Ibid.*, 338.
7. *Ibid.*, 340.
8. *Ibid.*, 341.
9. *Ibid.*, 356.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Quoted in *ibid.*, 362.
12. Quoted in *ibid.*, 364.
13. Quoted in *ibid.*, 367.

14. Quoted in *ibid.*, 371.
15. Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, xliv.
16. Randall, *Making of the Modern Mind*, 555.
17. *Ibid.*, 556.
18. *Ibid.*, 557.
19. *Ibid.*, 558.
20. *Ibid.*, 559.
21. *Ibid.*, 561.

2. The Social Gospel in America

1. See Hopkins, *Rise of the Social Gospel*, 196-97; and May, *Protestant Churches*, 170.
2. Hopkins, *Rise of the Social Gospel*, 196.
3. See May, *Protestant Churches*, 91-111.
4. Quoted in *ibid.*, 173.
5. Shailer Mathews, quoted in Visser 't Hooft, *Background of the Social Gospel*, 16.
6. Quoted in Handy, *Social Gospel*, 15.
7. Buckham, *Progressive Religious Thought*, 223-24.
8. Gladden, *How Much Is Left*, 27.
9. Gladden, *Ruling Ideas*, 147.
10. Quoted in Handy, *Social Gospel*, 26.
11. Gladden, *Ruling Ideas*, 25.
12. Gladden, *Social Salvation*, 30-31.
13. Buckham, *Progressive Religious Thought*, 233.
14. *Ibid.*, 237-38.
15. Gladden, *How Much Is Left*, 82-83. Also see *idem*, "How Much Is the Bible Worth?" in Handy, *Social Gospel*, 84-101.
16. Gladden, *How Much Is Left*, 115.
17. *Ibid.*, 124.
18. *Ibid.*, 162.
19. *Ibid.*, 174-75.
20. *Ibid.*, 194.
21. *Ibid.*, 217.
22. Handy, *Social Gospel*, 265.
23. Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, 93.
24. Quoted in Handy, *Social Gospel*, 255.
25. Rauschenbusch, *Theology for the Social Gospel*, 5.
26. *Ibid.*, 14.
27. *Ibid.*, 35.
28. *Ibid.*, 46-47.
29. *Ibid.*, 49.
30. *Ibid.*, 51.

31. Ibid., 117.
32. Ibid., 98-99.
33. Ibid., 108-9.
34. Ibid., 137.
35. Ibid., 142-43.
36. Ibid., 148.
37. Handy, *Social Gospel*, 324.
38. Rauschenbusch, *Theology for the Social Gospel*, 175.
39. Ibid., 178.
40. Ibid., 195.
41. Ibid., 243.
42. Ibid., 246-47.
43. Ibid., 264.
44. Ibid., 265.
45. Ibid., 279.
46. Quoted in Handy, *Social Gospel*, 8.

3. A New Nation and New Ideas

1. Allen, *Social Gospel*, 3.
2. Allen, *Social Passion*, 4.
3. Allen, *Social Gospel*, 4.
4. Ibid., 28.
5. Allen, *Social Passion*, 3.
6. Quoted in Crysdale, *Industrial Struggle*, 18.
7. Quoted in Clark, *Church and Sect*, 394.
8. Grant, *Churches and the Canadian Experience*, 147.
9. See Walsh, *Christian Church*, 327-29.
10. See Clark, *Developing Canadian Community*, 170-71, 181.
11. Vrieze, *Community Idea*, 70.
12. Crysdale, *Industrial Struggle*, 5; Allen, *Social Gospel*, 10. See also Handy, *History of the Churches*, 358.
13. See Kealey, *Canada Investigates Industrialism*.
14. Walsh, *Christian Church*, 329-30.
15. The work of William Carpenter Bompas (1834-1906) is just one example of the churches' influence in Canada's development. Bompas, an Anglican, spent forty years among Indians and Inuit in northern Canada as preacher, bishop, teacher and doctor. See Woodcock, *The Canadians*, 228; and Kilbourn, *Religion in Canada*, 32-33.
16. Kilbourn, *Religion in Canada*, 33.
17. Quoted in Handy, *History of the Churches*, 347.
18. McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 4-5.
19. Crysdale, *Industrial Struggle*, 35.
20. MacBeth, *Our Task in Canada*, 17-18.

21. Allen, *Social Passion*, 4, 5.
22. *Ibid.*, 6; *idem*, *Social Gospel*, 12-13.
23. Allen, *Social Gospel*, 23-30.
24. See *ibid.*, 30-31.
25. Walsh, *Christian Church*, 229.
26. Grant, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:60-61.
27. *Ibid.*, 61. See also Masters, *Protestant Church Colleges*, 91; Allen, *Social Passion*, 6; and McKillop, *Disciplined Intelligence*, 216-18.
28. Quoted in Masters, *Protestant Church Colleges*, 90.
29. *Ibid.*, 45-46. See also Grant, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:61; and Irving, "The Development of Philosophy," 259-64.
30. Masters, *Protestant Church Colleges*, 92.
31. McKillop, *Disciplined Intelligence*, 181.
32. Irving, "Philosophy," 247.
33. McKillop, *Disciplined Intelligence*, 185.
34. Quoted in Irving, "Philosophy," 248-49.
35. Quoted in McKillop, *Disciplined Intelligence*, 185-86.
36. *Ibid.*, 199.
37. *Ibid.*, 214-15.
38. *Ibid.*, 224-28.
39. See Smith, Farris, and Markell, *Short History of the Presbyterian Church*, 50-73.
40. Masters, *Protestant Church Colleges*, 119-21.
41. *Ibid.*, 172.
42. *Ibid.*, 178-79.
43. See Wilson, *The Church Grows*, 116; Grant, *Churches and the Canadian Experience*, 63; and Smith, Farris, and Markell, *Short History of the Presbyterian Church*, 67-68.
44. Sissons, *History of Victoria University*, 193.
45. *Ibid.*, 195.
46. Quoted in Prang, *N. W. Rowell*, 73.
47. Sissons, *History of Victoria University*, 240.
48. Prang, *N. W. Rowell*, 84.
49. Quoted in *ibid.*, 86. For a helpful description of Methodist social ethics see Warner, *The Wesleyan Movement*, esp. Chap. 3, "The Basis of Wesleyan Social Ethics."
50. Prang, *N. W. Rowell*, 88.
51. Quoted in McKillop, *Disciplined Intelligence*, 225.

4. The Churches and Social Reform in Canada

1. Grant, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:101-3.
2. See Jamieson, *Times of Trouble*.
3. Crysedale, *Industrial Struggle*, 21.

4. Ibid., 22.
5. Ibid., 23.
6. Ibid., 27-28.
7. Ibid., 28.
8. Ibid., 24-25.
9. Ibid., 31.
10. Ibid., 19-20.
11. Bland, *New Christianity*, 29.
12. Ibid., 29-33.
13. Crysdale, *Industrial Struggle*, 29.
14. Allen, *Social Passion*, 19.
15. Ibid., 24.
16. Quoted in *ibid.*, 25.
17. Stelzle, *Gospel of Labor*. In the section "I Believe . . ." "An Every-Day Creed" Stelzle discusses his belief in his job, fellow man, church, home, country, and in the present. In the chapter "Every Man a Soloist," he writes that man is the greatest thing in the world because he has been made master of creation. No system, principality, power, nor any other creature is strong enough to deprive man of his God-given rights. In a chapter titled "Christ and the Toiler," Stelzle writes that the toiler is "the man upon whom rests the prosperity and the happiness of the whole people" (95). All toil, writes Stelzle, may become as sacred as that of the preacher and of the priest, for to Jesus all work was sacred. Thus every worker may have "a part in the work of the world's redemption by being a co-laborer with Christ in whatever field He may send us" (96). Stelzle argues that people's views of Christianity change with life. He describes Christianity as "the possession and the manifestation of the life and the spirit of Christ. . . . It does not demand an absolute acceptance of the inspiration of the Bible. It asks merely that the man who wishes to become a Christian shall bring his life into conformity with the life and the purpose of Christ" (82).
18. Quoted in Allen, *Social Passion*, 29.
19. Ibid., 33-34.
20. Ibid., 30-31.
21. Ibid., 41.
22. Ibid., 43-45.
23. See *ibid.*, 97-103.
24. Ibid., 163.
25. Ibid., 99-100.
26. See Irvine, "Labor Church in Canada," 583.
27. See Woodsworth, "First Story of the Labor Church."
28. Ibid., 13.
29. Ibid., 14.

30. Ibid., 15.
31. Ibid., 3.
32. Ibid., 16.
33. Allen, *Social Passion*, 173.
34. Allen, *Social Gospel*, 80.
35. Mardiros, *William Irvine*, 19.
36. Ibid., 22.
37. Irvine, *Farmers in Politics*, 55.
38. Ibid., 51, 53.
39. Ibid., xxxi.
40. See McKillop, *Disciplined Intelligence*, 219-23.
41. Ibid., 220.
42. Ibid., 222.
43. Ibid., 221-22.
44. Bland, *New Christianity*, 18.
45. Ibid., 28.
46. Ibid., 55.
47. Ibid., 72 (here Bland is quoting from *La religion dans la société aux États-Unis*).
48. Ibid., 83.
49. Ibid., 87.
50. MacInnis, *J. S. Woodsworth*, 301.
51. Ibid., 25.
52. Ibid., 30.
53. See Fraser, "Saintly Failure."
54. MacInnis, *J. S. Woodsworth*, 326-27.
55. Ibid., 327.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid., 328.
58. Ibid., 328-29.
59. Visser 't Hooft, *Background of the Social Gospel*, 181.
60. Niebuhr, *Kingdom of God*, 193, 195.
61. Quoted in Allen, *Social Gospel*, 297.

5. Church Union and Ongoing Secularization

1. Silcox, *Church Union*, 465.
2. Tarr, *This Dominion His Dominion*, 85.
3. See Scott, "Truth and Freedom." For a detailed though unsympathetic account of the reasons for the opposition within the Presbyterian church, see Silcox, *Church Union*, 188-213; see also Smith, Farris, and Markell, *Short History of the Presbyterian Church*, 74-91; and Grant, *Canadian Experience of Church Union*, 43-56.
4. Handy, *History of the Churches*, 366-67.

5. Grant, *Canadian Experience of Church Union*, 34.
6. Ibid.
7. Quoted in Allen, *Social Passion*, 250.
8. Morrow, *Church Union in Canada*, 63.
9. Pidgeon, *United Church*, 30.
10. Grant, *Canadian Experience of Church Union*, 28.
11. Handy, *History of the Churches*, 368.
12. McKillop, *Disciplined Intelligence*, 228.
13. Crysedale, *Industrial Struggle*, 44.
14. McNaught, *Prophet in Politics*, 255.
15. Young, *Anatomy of a Party*, 45.
16. Douglas, "Case for the New Democratic Party."
17. League for Social Reconstruction, *Social Planning for Canada*, ix-x.
18. Ibid., 37-39. For a history of the League for Social Reconstruction, see Horn, *League for Social Reconstruction*.
19. Student Christian Movement, *SCM, A Brief History*, 8.
20. Ibid., 74.
21. Allen, *Social Passion*, 302-3.
22. Ibid., 221.
23. Ketchum, "A God-forsaken World," 149. Also see idem, "The Saving of God."
24. SCM, *SCM, A Brief History*, 118.
25. Scott and Vlastos, *Towards the Christian Revolution*, 40.
26. Hutchinson, *Fellowship for a Christian Social Order*, 27.
27. Quoted in *ibid.*, 28.
28. Ibid., 32.
29. Ibid., 42.
30. Ibid., 55.
31. Ibid., 157.
32. Ibid., 69.
33. Ibid., 194.
34. Scott and Vlastos, *Towards the Christian Revolution*, ix.
35. Ibid., 22.
36. Ibid., 56.
37. Ibid., 69.
38. Ibid., 175-76.
39. Ibid., 188.
40. Ibid., 139.
41. Ibid., 99.
42. Ibid., 229.
43. Ibid., 249.
44. Ibid., 125.
45. Ibid., 157.
46. United Church of Canada, "Christianizing the Social Order," 237-38.

6. From Social Gospel to Political Theology

1. United Church of Canada, "Church, Nation and World Order," 3.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 12.
4. *Ibid.*, 14.
5. *Ibid.*, 6.
6. *Ibid.*, 34-35.
7. Scott, *More Than Survival*, 31.
8. *Ibid.*, 32.
9. Neuhaus, "Meaning of America," 18.
10. Scott, "Prepared Evidence," 5-6.
11. E. W. Scott, "Christmas Message by Anglican Primate Calls People to 'Will Good' to Others," *Toronto Star*, 24 December 1977.
12. Clarke MacDonald, "We Need More Passion in the Church," *Toronto Star*, 18 December 1982.
13. Douglas, *Tommy Douglas Speaks*, 257.
14. "Research Cannot Wait," 4.
15. Fairweather, "Politicians," 5.
16. Chambers, *This Is Your Church*, 11.
17. Clifford Elliott, "Christianity Need Not Fear Working with Other Faiths," *Toronto Star*, 16 September 1983.
18. Gardner, *Making a Living*, 2.
19. *Ibid.*, 59.
20. *Ibid.*, 59-60.
21. *Ibid.*, 62.
22. *Ibid.*, 67.
23. Kristol, "Socialism: Obituary for an Idea," 187-89.
24. Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 3:530.
25. *Ibid.*, 523.
26. *Ibid.*, 526.
27. *Ibid.*, 530.

7. The Shift to the Left in the Roman Catholic Church

1. Eagleson, *Christians and Socialism*, 161-62, 168.
2. Baum, "Maritime Bishops," 35.
3. Baum and Cameron, *Ethics and Economics*, 21-39.
4. *Ibid.*, 28.
5. See "Carter Rejects Bishops' Blast on Economy," *Toronto Star*, 1 January 1983. More than a year later, Archbishop Carter wrote:

Like practically all of the bishops of Canada, the first I heard of the declaration by the Social Affairs Commission was on the evening news of December 29, 1982. . . .

When the U.S. bishops prepared their well-known letter on peace, all of the members of their conference were given three opportunities for input. The Canadian bishops were not only not consulted, they were not even informed.

To claim that this was not required because the statement was "in line" with previous declarations is nonsense. The first part of the declaration is on principles already accepted, but the practical applications on economic policy broke new ground. In any case, out of sheer respect we should have been consulted in an important statement. For Mr. Baum, apparently, the only important aspect was that the statement maintained "the shift to the left."

Many of us feel strongly that we have no intention of exchanging a new bureaucracy centred on CCCB headquarters in Ottawa in place of a much more sensitive and universal one in Rome. We have complained bitterly about not being properly informed before statements come from Rome. Is Ottawa farther? And Rome is for the universal church. The logistics are obvious. Why would we not hear from home? (*Globe and Mail*, 21 April 1984).

6. One example of a very different interpretation of these same references is provided by Herman Ridderbos:

These "poor" or "poor in spirit" (meek) occur again and again in the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms and in the prophets. They represent the socially oppressed, those who suffer from the power of injustice and are harassed by those who only consider their own advantage and influence. They are, however, at the same time those who remain faithful to God and expect their salvation from his kingdom alone. They do not answer evil with evil, nor oppose injustice with injustice. That is why in the midst of the ungodliness and world-mindedness of others, they form *the true people of God*. As such they are again and again comforted with the promise of the coming salvation of the Lord and the manifestation of his kingly redemption (cf. Ps. 22:27; 25:9; 34:3; 37:11; 72:12, 13; 147:6; Isaiah 11:4; 29:19, etc.) (*Coming of the Kingdom*, 188-89).

7. Neuhaus, "Economics and the Canadian Bishops," 138-39.
 8. Baum and Cameron, *Ethics and Economics*, 43.
 9. *Ibid.*, 44.
 10. Quade, *Pope and Revolution*, 52-55.
 11. Quoted in *ibid.*, 58.
 12. Quoted in *ibid.*, 60.
 13. The bishops make a connection between structural unemployment and the production of military armaments. Their brief comments on this matter imply that Canada's military defence should receive less attention and funds, when in fact Canada is one of the least militarily prepared countries of the Western alliance. Our army, air force and navy are understaffed, underequipped, and suffering from years of neglect. (See, e.g., Newman, *True North: Not Strong and Free*.)
 14. Statistics Canada, *Income distributions by size in Canada* (cat. no. 13-206), preliminary estimates for 1983 (Ottawa: 1984), 10.
 15. Sowell, *Economics and Politics of Race*, 229.

16. Caskie, *Fact Book on Poverty*, 54.
17. *Ibid.*, 57.
18. Statistics Canada, *Income distributions by size in Canada* (cat. no. 13-206), preliminary estimates for 1980 (Ottawa: 1981), 14.
19. Diane Francis, "How Much Executives Make at the Top," *Toronto Star*, 3 June 1984.
20. See, e.g., economist Lester C. Thurow's arguments in "An Immodest Proposal for Canada," *Canadian Business*, April 1983, 63-65.
21. See, e.g., Baum and Cameron, *Ethics and Economics*, 26; Baum, *Priority of Labor*, 50; and Baum in Smillie, *Political Theology*, 134.
22. "Government Cause of Current Recession," 3.
23. "With God on Our Side," 2.
24. In their submission to the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops recommended both *Ethics and Economics* and *Priority of Labor* as resource materials. See Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Ethical Choices and Political Challenges," 21.
25. Baum and Cameron, *Ethics and Economics*, 88.
26. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 47, 53-54, 80.
27. *Ibid.*, 100-1.
28. *Ibid.*, 104.
29. *Ibid.*, 118.
30. *Ibid.*, 147.
31. Quoted in van Rosmalen, "De dag van de waarheid," 53 (my translation).
32. See, e.g., Norm Halpern, "Sustaining change in the Shell Sarnia chemical plant," *QWL Focus*, May 1982, 5-11; Donald V. Nightingale and Richard J. Long, *Gain and Equity Sharing* (Ottawa: Labour Canada, 1984); Cunningham and White, *Quality of Working Life*; and Nightingale, *Workplace Democracy*.
33. Gonick, *Inflation or Depression*, 368.
34. *Ibid.*, 397.
35. *Ibid.*, 407.
36. Wogaman, *Great Economic Debate*, 26.
37. Quoted in *ibid.*, 63.
38. *Ibid.*, 64.
39. *Ibid.*, 69-70.
40. *Ibid.*, 75.
41. *Ibid.*, 128-29.
42. *Ibid.*, 161.
43. John Paul II, *On Human Work*, 5, 10-11.
44. See esp. the following pages in *Priority of Labor*: 10, 30, 36-37, 42-48, 56 and 60.

45. John Paul II, *On Human Work*, 62.
46. For an elaboration on the weakness of the Western democracies, especially in relation to communist imperialism, see Revel, *How Democracies Perish*.
47. Quoted in People, *World Press Review*, June 1984, 43.
48. For a critical analysis of Yugoslav communism, see the writings of Milovan Djilas, a former vice president of Yugoslavia, including *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957); *Tito: The Story from Inside* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1980); and *The Unperfect Society: Beyond the New Class* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969).
49. The following sources provide a critical analysis of the development in Nicaragua: Humberto Belli, *Nicaragua: Christians Under Fire* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Instituto Puebla, 1984); Mark Falcoff and Robert Royal, eds., *Crisis and Opportunity: U.S. Policy in Central America and the Caribbean* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics & Public Policy Center, 1984); Camilla Murray and Robert Barry, *The Barren Fig Tree: A Christian Reappraisal of the Sandinista Revolution* (Washington, D.C.: The Institute on Religion & Democracy, 1984); David Nolan, *The Ideology of the Sandinistas and the Nicaraguan Revolution* (Coral Gables, Fla.: Institute of Interamerican Studies, University of Miami, 1984); James R. Whelan and Patricia B. Bozell, *Catastrophe in the Caribbean: The Failure of America's Human Rights Policy in Central America* (Ottawa, Ill.: Jameson Books, 1984); Tom Bethel, Press Watch, *Catholicism in Crisis*, September 1983, 50-53; Luis Burstin, "A Few Home Truths about Latin America," *Commentary*, February 1985, 46-53; Arturo J. Cruz, "Nicaragua's Imperiled Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1983):1031-47; Lawrence E. Harrison, "Two Confessions from Managua," *Encounter*, December 1983, 74-78; Stephen Kinzer, "Nicaragua: The Beleaguered Revolution," *The New York Times Magazine*, 28 August 1984, 22ff.; and Robert S. Leiken, "Nicaragua's Untold Stories: Sandinista Corruption and Violence Breed Bitter Opposition," *The New Republic*, 8 October 1984, 16-22.
50. Langan, "Strained Theology," 72. For an analysis of the liberal trend in the Roman Catholic church, see Hitchcock, *Catholicism and Modernity*; and Roche, *Gates of Hell*.
51. See, e.g., the criticism of liberation theology in the statement issued by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of 'Theology of Liberation,'" *Origins* 14 (13 September 1984):193-204.

8. Liberation Theology: A Secular Program for Revolutionary Change

1. See, e.g., Col. 1 and Matt. 28:18-20.
2. See James 1:22-27 and 2:14-26.
3. See, e.g., the following Bible passages: Rom. 3; 4; 5; 8:1-3; 10:8-13; and Eph. 1:5-10.
4. Quade, *Pope and Revolution*, 43.
5. See, e.g., Gal. 2:15-21 and John 15:1-7.
6. See, e.g., John 10:27-30; Rom. 8:28-30; and Eph. 1:3-14.
7. See, e.g., John 1:10-11; 10:26; 1 John 2:15-29; and 4:1-6.
8. See 2 Cor. 10:5. For a profound critique of atheism in modern thought, especially of Descartes's notion of the rational self (*cogita*), see Fabro, *God in Exile*. See also Miceli, *Gods of Atheism*.
9. Quade, *Pope and Revolution*, 44-45.
10. For a critical evaluation of Fidel Castro and the Cuban revolution, see Franqui, *Family Portrait With Fidel*.
11. Valladares, "Remarks and Poems," 17.
12. Valladares, "Inside Cuba's Jails," 13.
13. Novak, *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 195. See also Wesson, *Why Marxism?*
14. Deut. 28.
15. Job 1:3.
16. Job 42:10.
17. Prov. 10:22.
18. Prov. 10:4. See also Prov. 3:1-2; 14:23-24; and 28:35.
19. As in Prov. 3:28; 11:25; 17:5; 19:17; 28:27a; 29:7a; and 31:20.
20. As in Prov. 11:28; 22:16; 28:8, 20, 22, 27b; and 29:7.
21. Prov. 23:4-5.
22. Prov. 11:4.
23. Prov. 30:7-9.
24. World Bank, *World Development Report, 1983*, 148-49.
25. For a helpful comparison of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, see Harrison, "Nicaraguan Anguish," 29-50.
26. See Sowell, *Economics and Politics of Race*.
27. See, e.g., Lamb, *The Africans*; and Maier, "Kingdom of Death." For an excellent exposition of the internal barriers to democracy and development in non-Western societies, see Kedourie, "Development Delusion."
28. Novak, *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 300.
29. Quoted in *ibid.*, 279.
30. *Ibid.*, 281-82. See also Griffiths, *Morality and the Marketplace*.
31. Novak, *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 299-307.
32. *Ibid.*, 308-10.

33. Wynia, "Roots."
34. Novak, *Spirit of Democratic Capitalism*, 313.
35. *Ibid.*, 314.
36. *Ibid.*, 336.
37. Quoted in Bauer, "Western Guilt," 31.
38. Quoted in Finn, "War of Ideas," 41.
39. Quoted in Bauer, "Ali Mazrui," 69.
40. See these writings of P. T. Bauer: *Economic Delusion; Dissent on Development; Reality or Rhetoric*; and "Western Guilt." Also see Sowell, *Economics and Politics of Race*.
41. Bauer, "Western Guilt," 37.
42. Bauer in Brunner, *First World and the Third World*, 183.
43. Burnham, *Suicide of the West*.
44. "Guilt of the Liberal," Chap. 10 in *ibid.* See also "The Great Liberal Death Wish" in Muggeridge, *Things Past*, 220-38.
45. Quoted in Hollander, *Political Pilgrims*, 418.
46. Sider, "Mischief by Statute," 16.
47. *Ibid.*, 19.
48. McAfee Brown, "Who Is This Jesus Christ," 11-12.
49. Hitchcock, *New Enthusiasts*.
50. *Ibid.*, 97.
51. *Ibid.*, 155.
52. See Voegelin, *New Science of Politics*.
53. Hitchcock, *New Enthusiasts*, 111.
54. *Ibid.*, 112-21.
55. *Ibid.*, 121.
56. *Ibid.*, 143.
57. Voegelin, *New Science*, 124.
58. *Ibid.*, 131-32.
59. Ellul, *Betrayal of the West*, 80.
60. *Ibid.*, 126-29.
61. *Ibid.*, 180.
62. *Ibid.*, 194-95.

9. In Defence of a Christian Mind

1. Blamires, *Christian Mind*, 3.
2. Hutchinson, "Social Gospel," 8.
3. Henry, *Evangelicals*, 77-78.
4. *Ibid.*, 96.
5. *Ibid.*, 66.
6. Solzhenitsyn, "Exhausted West," 21-26. For a perceptive analysis of the significance of Solzhenitsyn's work, see Podhoretz, "Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn."

7. Solzhenitsyn, "Men Have Forgotten God," 876.
8. In this regard, see also the extensive writings of Francis A. Schaeffer, particularly his most recent work, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*.
9. See Col. 1:15-17.
10. For an excellent source of insight about this topic, see G. C. Berkouwer's *Man, the Image of God*.
11. See Gen. 2:7.
12. See, e.g., Pss. 19:7-14; 119:97-112; and Deut. 10:12-13.
13. Gen. 1:28.
14. De Graaf and Olthuis, *Toward a Biblical View*, 12.
15. See Schaeffer, *Great Evangelical Disaster*, 158.
16. See, e.g., Deut. 32:6; Pss. 103:13; 68:5; 89:26; Isa. 9:6; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 31:9; Rom. 8:14-23; Eph. 4:6; and 1 John 3:1-3.
17. See, e.g., Luke 6:35-36; 1 John 3:1-10; and 5:3.
18. Matt. 5:48.
19. John 8:44a, 47.
20. See, e.g., Rom. 1:25.
21. Col. 1:15.
22. Rom. 8:29.
23. 2 Cor. 4:4; see also Col. 3:10 and Heb. 3:10.
24. See, e.g., Job 10:8-12; Isa. 54:5-10; and John 3:16-17.
25. See the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matt. 13:24-30.
26. Quoted in Schaeffer, *Great Evangelical Disaster*, 106-7.
27. *Ibid.*, 107.
28. For an excellent discussion of historicism, see Schlossberg, "Idols of History" in *Idols for Destruction*, 11-38.
29. See Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*; *idem*, *Twilight of Western Thought*; and *idem*, *Roots*. See also Kalsbeek, *Contours*; and Skillen, "Calvinistic Political Theory."
30. Dooyeweerd, *Roots*, 79-80. See also Kalsbeek, *Contours*, 126-31.
31. Dooyeweerd, *Roots*, 74-75.
32. *Ibid.*, 64.
33. *Ibid.*, 66-70.
34. Matt. 28:18.
35. Dooyeweerd, *Roots*, 67.
36. *Ibid.*, 70.
37. *Ibid.*, 79-80.
38. Quoted in Neuhaus, *Naked Public Square*, 90.
39. *Ibid.*, 80-81.
40. *Ibid.*, 78-79.
41. *Ibid.*, 81.
42. Schuurman, *Technology and the Future*, 375-76.
43. For an excellent discussion of the Christian world-view (and its relation-

- ship to philosophy), see Wolters, *Creation Regained*.
44. See, e.g., Rom. 1:19-20; and 2:14-15.
 45. Kalsbeek, *Contours*, 142-50.
 46. Dooyeweerd, *Roots*, 107.
 47. Ibid.
 48. In this section I have made grateful use of Herman Ridderbos's *The Coming of the Kingdom*.
 49. See Matt. 3:1-12.
 50. See Matt. 4:17 and Luke 4:43.
 51. Luke 1:32-33.
 52. Luke 7:22.
 53. See Col. 1:15-23 and Matt. 28:18.
 54. See Rom. 11:36; Eph. 1:10; Rev. 1:8; 21:6; and 22:13.
 55. Rev. 12:10-12.
 56. Rom. 8:7.
 57. John 3:16-17.
 58. 1 Cor. 15:26, 54-57; Rom. 8:37; and 1 John 5:4-5.
 59. Gal. 3:22; Rom. 8:22-25; 1 Cor. 13:12; and Heb. 9:27.
 60. Rev. 22:20.
 61. 2 Pet. 3:13.
 62. Rev. 15:4.
 63. Rev. 14:13.

10. First Things First

1. Van Riessen, *Society of the Future*, 102.
2. Prov. 3:5-6.
3. Neuhaus, *Naked Public Square*, 236.
4. Runia in *Nature of the Church*, 69.
5. See, e.g., Eph. 4.
6. Reformed Ecumenical Synod, *Church and its Social Calling*, 38.
7. Tarr, "Canada's Largest Protestant Denomination," 28-29; and Bibby, "Religionless Christianity."
8. Ridderbos, "De kerk 'als instituut,'" 59 (my translation).
9. Zuidema, *Communication and Confrontation*, 48.
10. For a critical evaluation of Project Ploughshares see Vanderkloet, "Armament or Disarmament"; and idem, "Project Ploughshares."
11. One of the most outspoken advocates of Christian pacifism is the Anabaptist movement of Sojourners based in Washington, D.C. For a critical discussion of the pacifist position, see Novak, "Moral Clarity"; and Barrs, *Who Are the Peacemakers?*
12. Quoted in Novak, "Not Pacifist," 32.
13. Ridderbos, "Geloof en politiek," 11 (my translation).
14. For a critical analysis of the political involvement of the American

liberal churches, see Isaac and Isaac, "Sanctifying Revolution," in *The Coercive Utopians*, 15-44; and Neuhaus, *Naked Public Square*, esp. Chap. 13, 14 and 15.

15. Brillenburg Wurth, *Christelijk Leven*, 292, 294 (my translation).
16. Van Riessen, *Society of the Future*, 230.
17. See Berger and Berger, *War Over the Family*; Berger and Neuhaus, *To Empower People*; and Berger, "Welfare State."
18. Carlson, "Old Collectivist Wine," 5.
19. See Rom. 8:37.
20. Ps. 11:7; vs. 7b from RSV.

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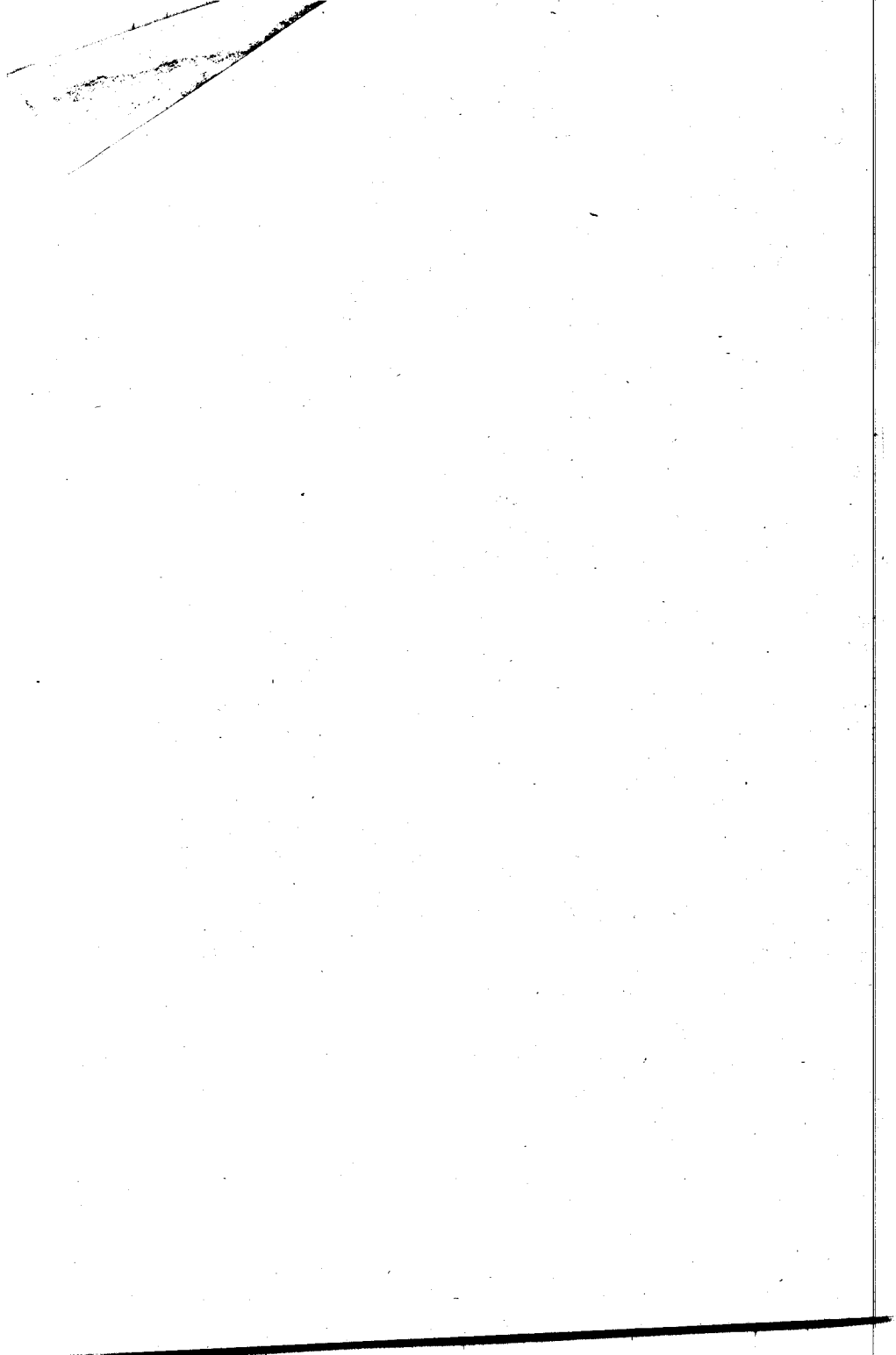
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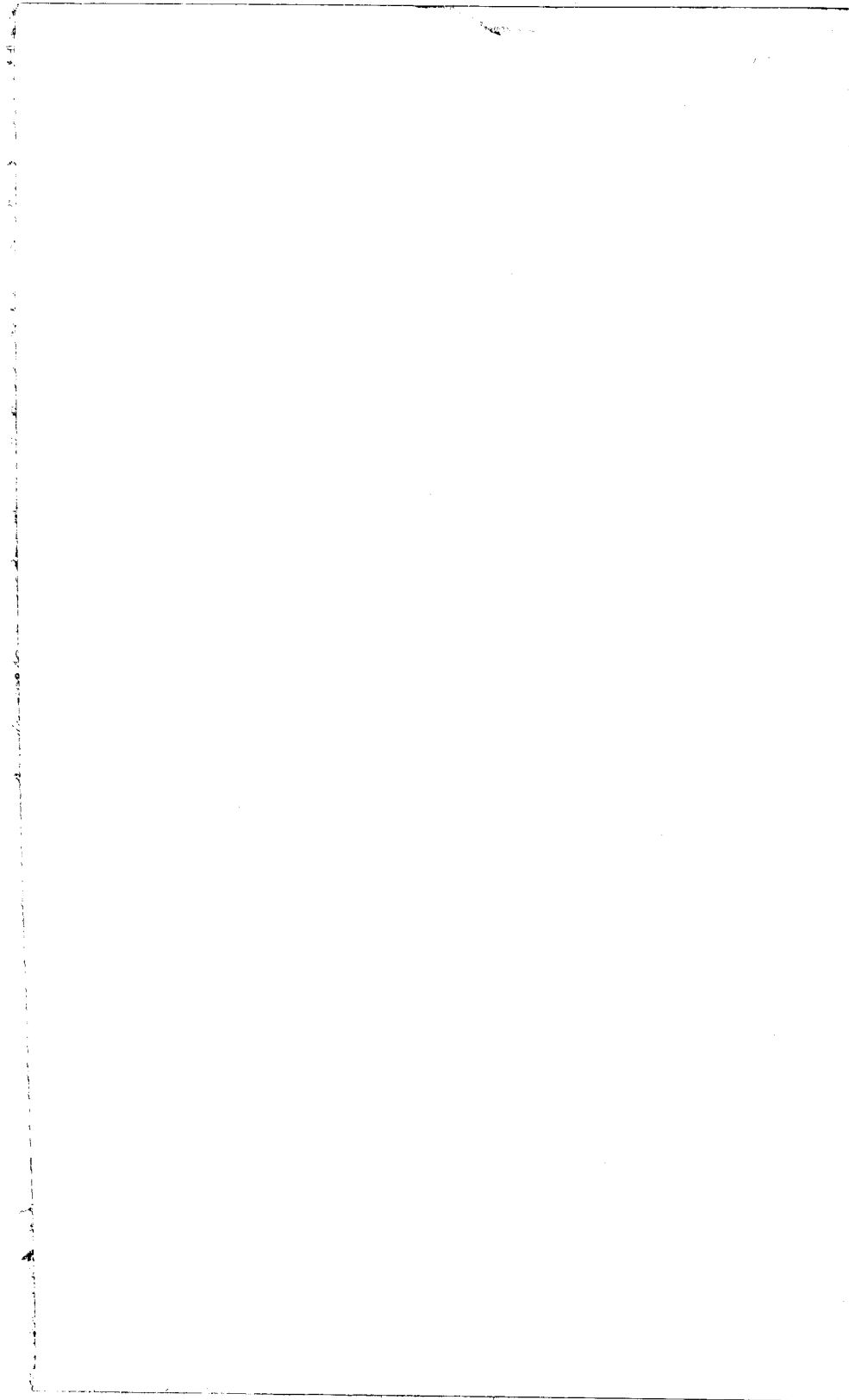
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by Harry Antonides

Stones for Bread

Harry Antonides presents a critical evaluation of the social gospel movement that flourished in Canada after the turn of the century. He examines its philosophical and theological roots and concludes that the social gospel was an effort to harmonize the Christian faith with the secular faith of modernity. The outcome, Antonides claims, was a misinterpretation of the gospel and an optimistic but shallow program for social and political reform. The author sees a clear connection between the ideas that inspired the social gospel and those prompting the political activism of the mainline churches today. Consequently, he argues, the analysis and policy recommendations of these churches are largely indistinguishable from those of the political Left. Antonides presents a biblical view of the role of the church and issues a strong call for genuine Christian social action.

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from the foreword by Clark H. Pinnock

Harry Antonides emigrated from The Netherlands in 1918. He began work as a farm and railway labourer, and later spent thirteen years employed at a chemical plant in Sarnia, Ontario. Since 1962 he has been a staff member of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, first as a general field representative and since 1970 as director of research and education.