

# THE NEW TIMES

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*"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" - John 8:31*

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## CHRISTIANITY AND THE COMING MILLENNIUM

*by Jeremy Lee*

**We are now within days of the last Christmas of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and only a few more from the start of the new millennium. The predominant faith, which changed the world, spanning history and geography in its scope, creating new visions for nations and societies, giving us enhanced constitutional and legal systems and changing the lives of countless millions of individuals appears at a low ebb as the millennium closes.**

The 'church triumphant' has been 'balkanised' into diverse denominations and neutralised by a combination of apocalyptic fatalism and an attempt to be all things to all men. Gone are the days when it raised any sort of banner on the battlefield of the social order.

True, there are a few strongholds still standing; but, as it were, under siege. The perception of the church from outside is usually portrayed as the outdated remnants of spiritual eccentricity in such inspired satires as *"The Vicar of Dibley"* and *"Father Ted"*. Few within the church care, it seems, and fewer complain. Its sacred music is taken, syncopated to the rock-beat and made the medium to sell computers and lingerie. Even Christmas - the nativity of Christ the King - is giving way to "the festive season". Few Christmas cards feature the stable, the three wise kings and the Bethlehem star. Instead, we have stylised materialism, gilt-edged and in rhyme which, if it refers to Christmas at all does so in good-natured nostalgia.

By contrast the two other major faiths seem to know what they're about. Islam is expanding, and deeply concerned with the nature of its own society. In some areas it is way ahead of Christianity. Islamic banking, with its firm restraints on usury apparently has no counterpart within the Christian church. It has not, until very recently, even featured within the ambit of Christian thinking.

### LAMBETH AND JUBILEE 2000

This issue contains two very significant articles, for which we are indebted to Bishop Bob Crawley's excellent quarterly magazine THE ROCK. Bob Crawley, a former guest at our *New Times* dinner, has built a formidable publication which is a sea of sanity in these troubled times. Its wisdom and scope easily spans the denominational scene without ever trespassing near the compromises of syncretic ecumenism.

One article starkly portrays the retreat of the church in Canada, horribly like Australia. The other provides a

thought-provoking picture of the rise and fall of faith, so closely followed by the rise and fall of civilisations.

Lest you should think this the description of an inevitable and axiomatic cycle in the affairs of mankind, it asks at the end whether societies thus threatened with extinction have ever drawn back from the precipice, answering 'yes'. Sieges don't last forever and can, by their nature, enforce those disciplines, which result in a resurgence of faith. As we have stressed more than once this year, regeneration does not start at the top,

**This issue of *The New Times* is the 767<sup>th</sup>. The first issue appeared in 1936. It has featured distinguished authors from all over the world. It has maintained intact true Social Credit, as distinct from all the monetary reform schemes and political parties that have discounted or perverted what C.H. Douglas had to say.**

**With the arrival of 2000 *The New Times* will enlarge its scope, merging with its sister, *Intelligence Survey*, in a publication to be called THE NEW TIMES SURVEY. It will start its new life under the editorship of Jeremy Lee. It will be slightly larger, and will incorporate a wider span without, we hope, losing its fundamental social credit focus.**

but in small communities committed to each other who staunchly entrench and maintain a system of values and culture.

This year, for the first time in a long while, Christian eyes have been fastened on to the world's debt-crisis; firstly through the commencement of the Jubilee 200 programme, in which Australia's Evangelical Alliance has played a part; and secondly, through the Anglican gathering of Bishops at Lambeth Palace.

Of the latter there is not much to be said. Eight hundred bishops, we gather, unanimously endorsed the programme for eliminating Third World debt. It is absolutely certain that if those gathered had meant what they said and, on returning to their respective nations, had launched a resolute campaign with even moral and spiritual weapon at their disposal, the very foundations of the global money system would have been shaken.

But of course, they discovered that committal meant more than mouthing platitudes; it meant engaging an enemy. The call to battle, if it was ever there at all soon died away.

### **THE 'BATTLE OF SEATTLE'**

How many church-members realise the reality of what happened in Seattle in the first week of December? This was the new world order millennium round designed to put the icing on the global cake. Every form of sanction was to be stripped from the governments of nations. The world was to be made a borderless arena for Mammon. The faintest spark of resistance was to be quenched in a global court.

Instead, it met with strong, consistent resistance in which the huge protests in Seattle itself were only a small, visible part. The Third World is resisting strongly. The conflicting interests of those who imagined they had the super-powers under control burst into the open. Even if an imposed consensus results at the World Trade Organisation conference, it is safe to say it will not be kept. The politicians supposed to comply have to face elections, and constituencies increasingly well informed about the real nature of the global programme.

And Jubilee 2000 was there, joined with the hugely diverse throng which packed the streets of Seattle and pinned delegates to the conference in their hotel-rooms - paid for by their taxpayers, of course - for hours at a time.

It may not have been much; but for the first time a resolute Christian voice, unrestrained by any denominational fetters, had something important to say and an awful lot of people took notice.

The world situation is now so bad that even the Christian world is waking up; and as usual, the real awakening is not starting at the top. It's the laity, which is going to seize the moment by the scruff of the neck and launch regeneration as the new millennium dawns.

What is the missing ingredient, which has held Christianity back so long?

### **THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM**

There is now a dawning realisation that the gospel has been fractured, and part buried. The gospel of individual salvation has been sanitised and quarantined from any application of Christianity to the social order. In other words, many have arrived at a position where Christianity has nothing to do with the legal, constitutional, economic and financial systems on

earth. They will have to take care of themselves until some future direct intervention of God Himself.

In the introduction to his book "*Christ and Present World Issues*" (Hodder and Stoughton, 1937) Stanley Jones says of the modern believer:

"..... He specialises in the spiritual. But he finds the spiritual cannot be enclosed and encased. All life runs into it and it runs into all of life.... Moreover, he finds that the spiritual is deeply and fundamentally affected by the economic basis of life. The economic presses upon and invades the spiritual at every point. More, it actually changes the spiritual. Russia has taught us that the individual can be changed by the changing of the economic order. We may not like the lesson, but it is there. The other truth is also there - namely, that the spiritual and the moral affect the economic.... This actually means one of two things: either we cannot be spiritual at all - the material and the economic must rule the whole of life - or we must be spiritual in larger terms - the spiritual must use the material and the economic and direct them towards spiritual ends. The smug world of the isolated spiritual is now a thing of the past

After looking at some of the "isms" which have mutated humanity in the past - Communism. Fascism *et al*- Jones argued that the concept of the Kingdom of God on earth launched by God incarnate as the message to be taken to all nations, was the only hope:

"... His spirit has been betrayed by His followers.... This universal principle of unity - the Kingdom of God - has been smothered in a mass of irrelevancies and localisms, and it has seemed that He and His Kingdom were done for, an outworn relic."

### **"FEED MY SHEEP...."**

"But a strange thing is happening", (Jones went on). "This Man and His Kingdom are coming back again. As the demand for an all-encompassing principle and power for unity is now pressing upon the world soul, this buried idea of the Kingdom of God is becoming a new, living issue. It is experiencing nothing less than a resurrection, and is becoming the question of questions. The world is hungry for something, for something so universal that it takes in every human relationship and gives purpose and meaning to the whole, and something so intimate that it takes in one's own personal need and meets it with redemption and power by which to live. Is the Kingdom of God that conception? We think it is. And we therefore present it as the alternative to both Fascism and Communism....."

.... To the interpretation of what that Kingdom is, and to the facing of the question of whether it is big enough in every sense to meet the world demand laid upon it, we must now turn. But as we do so we do it with the sense that the world is desperately sick - sick nigh unto death - that this is no moment for attempts at being interesting or novel, but a moment to give a believed-in prescription for a patient who may die if we Christians bungle at this hour..."

Stanley Jones wrote those words during the Great Depression of the thirties. The sickness of which he spoke is even more malignant.

But the seed he planted may be on the verge of breaking through.

What of Social Credit? True Social Credit, unshackled from

party politics and in its right spiritual context, is a very big part of the jig-saw.

Through the stench of the closing millennium there is the faint scent of something new. Spring is in the air!

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A Merry and Holy Christmas to all. We meet again in the Year 2000.

# Oh! Canada

From The Calgary Herald August 14

*Christianity's once strong influences in danger of being plowed under*

*By Joseph Woodard*

This spring, the home of Vancouver's Rath family was invaded by armed men and four-year-old Anna Rath was grabbed and taken from her parents. For more than a month, her abductors exposed her to pornographic drawings and suggestions of sexual intercourse with her father. Her trauma and her parents' ordeal were not lessened by the fact that her tormentors were officers of the law.

Anna had been apprehended by the RCMP on the unsubstantiated complaint of a one-time drug-addict, apparently seeking some private vengeance against Jurgen Rath, an evangelical minister. A series of doctors certified that Anna showed no evidence whatsoever of sexual abuse. No other accusers came forward and the Raths' friends and colleagues testified to their decency.

But the social workers were suspicious of Rath's standing as a Christian minister. For almost five weeks, Anna's parents were denied any access to her. It took the mobilisation of Christian activists throughout the Lower Mainland to force the issue into a courtroom, where Anna was eventually returned to her family.

Is the Rath story merely an isolated aberration? The decline of the Christian churches in Canada is now an old story; less than a fifth of the population is in church on any given Sunday. So when the decision of Saskatchewan's Human Rights Commission came down last month, banning the Lord's Prayer from its public schools, most Canadians apparently saw it as the passing of a quaint custom of a bygone age - if they thought of it at all. Yet, the ploughing under of the culture's Christian influences may be harbinger of things to come.

## HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

Throughout history, Christianity has rarely been tolerated within non-Christian cultures. More commonly, pagan regimes have persecuted, suppressed and occasionally eradicated the church. So, for example, in the 1930s, Spain's Republican government - still much celebrated by the modern western intelligentsia - routinely slaughtered almost 7,000 Spanish priests, monks and nuns. These days, the enslavement of Christians in Africa and Asia is entirely ignored by the once-Christian West.

Michael Horowitz, a Jewish religious freedom expert with Washington's Hudson Institute, says that Canadian Christians already suffer the most quasi-official bigotry of any religion in the developed world. Last month, as a symptom of this, Canadian representatives at the International Criminal Court negotiations proposed that ministers be stripped of the centuries-

old legal confidentiality of pastoral relationships. So, for example, a priest might be required to either reveal things heard in the confessional or be jailed.

"Canada is entering an entirely new and unprecedented historical situation," says Thomas Langan, president of the Catholic Civil Rights League (CCRL) and founder of the University of Toronto's Christianity and Culture Program. "For the first time, Christians are becoming a minority in a once-Christian country. The secularised culture may be 'immunised' against any appeal to truth or toleration. And it's already pilfered and perverted all of the church's most attractive notions." So paradoxically, he concludes, any persecution of Christians will come - if it comes - in the name of "charity," primarily the protection of children from their parents' "cult" affiliations.

According to University of Lethbridge sociologist Reg Bibby, roughly 80% of Canadians still identify themselves as Christian (with 9% agnostic, 9% atheist and 2% "other").

However, if "Christian" means, "being a contradiction to the age," biblically and traditionally, most are only nominal members of the Church Militant. Last Easter, for example, a Toronto radio station held a Jesus look-alike contest, offering prizes of "little Jesus chocolates," French bread, frozen salmon and sandals. And there was virtually no public reaction.

## LUKEWARM

"I'm to the point where I hold all the lukewarm Christians responsible for the growing threat to the church in Canada," says Vancouver lawyer Iain Benson, a research fellow with the Ottawa-based Centre for Renewal in Public Policy (CRPP). "Things aren't too bad yet, but most nominal church-goers are in it for the private satisfaction, the spiritual high, he says, pointing to broad apathy concerning abortion, euthanasia, promiscuity and public blasphemy. "If the faith becomes costly, publicly, most of them will just go with the public flow and just drift away."

A more realistic assessment of the political influence of Canadian Christians lies in the proportion of "weekly attenders" - those committed just that much to their faith. Overall, less than 20% attend services weekly, Catholics scoring in the 25% range and mainstream Protestants around 10%. (Roughly 50% of conservative evangelicals attend weekly, but they tally less than 10% of the population.) So roughly 10 to 15% of Canadians can be considered committed Christians, simply to the extent of getting out of bed every Sunday. And there are grounds for thinking that the representation of this "remnant" within the

political, cultural and media elite - the arbiters of public life - is much, much less.

The church's banishment from public life can be seen in the lack of attention paid to Revenue Canada's assault on Christian charities. Within the past year, two anti-abortion groups, Human Life International and Alliance for Life, have been stripped of their charitable status for not presenting a "balanced" account of abortion, pro and con. And a national teen-outreach group, promoting "*Just say no*" chastity, has been denied its charitable status, because it does not include contracepted promiscuity in the message it preaches to youth. Is it accidental that the targeted groups preach Christian virtues? Whenever was the feminist LEAF (Legal Education and Action Fund) required to preach the joys of housewifery? Or the gay EGALÉ (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) obliged to mention the health benefits of monogamy?

Last year, the Canadian Council of Christian Charities (CCCC) in Elmira, Ont., warned its members of Revenue Canada's new aggressiveness toward Christianity. The taxman is now applying a novel criterion of "disinterested generosity" to invalidate church-centred charitable donations. A parent with a child in a religious school was denied a deduction for a donation to its student aid fund, on the grounds that any benefit to the school might benefit the donor. And a Bible college was denied charitable status for its missions program, because the young missionaries helped to raise the funds, thus "benefiting" themselves. Yet diabetics supporting the Diabetes Association and symphony-goers helping their local orchestras are not being challenged.

### **SECULAR BUREAUCRACY**

"The secular bureaucracy can't understand why a church should receive any greater public consideration than a private golf club." says CCCC director Frank Luellau. "What they don't see is that religion is a public good, providing a benefit for everyone, even those who don't believe. All the scientific surveys show that communities are well served by places of worship, by the moral education of kids, by increased civility among adults, by increased civic mindedness. ... Christians are by far the major supporters of all the non-religious charities."

Last January, a symposium on legal and religious issues at the University of Toronto Law School heard a Department of Finance official declare, "modern society has gone beyond the need to consider religion a charity." and the panel of legal experts unanimously agreed. Their obvious and possibly mistaken assumption was that the spiritual role once performed by the church can now be assumed by the secular state.

"The Canadian elite is completely befuddled about issues of faith and reason," says the CRPPs Benson. "They're committed to excluding faith from all aspects of public life. And they're completely oblivious of the fact that their worship of the secular state and political power is as much a matter of faith as the Christian worship of God. They're nihilists who don't know it because they think that their cynical, political pragmatism is identical to scientific truth and rationality."

The CCRL's Langan agrees. "Our rulers find the church a

personal affront," he says. "Like self-idolising rulers throughout history, they're offended by the thought that someone might worship truth or virtue, rather than administrative power. So it's not good enough for them if you keep your mouth shut; they insist that you think correctly."

The culture war between Canada's secular elite and its committed Christian minority is being fought largely over the fate of the next generation. Langan continues. That means the control of education. In the past two years, the constitutional guarantees granted religious schools in Newfoundland and Quebec have been stricken from the law books.

In Newfoundland, the issue was settled by the majority in a public referendum - itself a questionable way of handling minority rights. In Quebec, however, the National Assembly simply voted away a 250-year-old religious right. In both cases, the federal government quickly pushed through bills to amend the Constitution, leaping to co-operate in the suppression of church schools, even with the separatist Parti Québécois.

### **THOUGHT-CONTROL**

In like manner, this summer, the British Columbia Court of Appeals, at the instigation of the provincial Department of Education, denied Surrey School Board the right to remove homosexual propaganda from Grade 1 classrooms. The board's earlier decision to remove those books was deemed illegitimate, because it was "influenced" by the religious beliefs of the district's parents. So only atheists - and not parents - might influence the board's policies.

The secular elite may claim easy ownership of the public schools, but any thorough suppression of the church will depend upon its invasion of families and seizure of their children - with the best of motives. "Most people in government have no idea what moves people of faith," says Medicine Hat lawyer Dallas Miller, director of the national Home School Legal Defence Association. "Most home schoolers are evangelical Christians or conservative Catholics, with large families and a concern to protect their children from immoral social influences. But when the social workers see a Christian family swimming against the current and removing their kids from public school, all they see is people acting weird and abusing their kids."

In the past few months, says lawyer Miller, a Quebec Youth Protection worker apprehended a child because the family was Baptist "and might therefore have unusual beliefs regarding child rearing." An Ontario Children's Aid officer, acting on vague allegations of "psychological abuse," grilled some children about their family's church. And a Newfoundland family lost its three children for nine months, because a social worker felt that their "eccentric religious views" (Seventh Day Adventist) might possibly lead to abuse.

There are apprehensions or threats of apprehension of the children of Christian families in almost every province, Miller stresses; and these are just the cases that come to the attention of his small association. No one knows how many families quietly knuckle under to official bullying. The police shooting of a criminal in Toronto merits a public inquiry, but the seizure of children from a Christian family in Prince Albert attracts

virtually no media attention.

For now, the elite antagonism to the Christian church remains on the level of a collective prejudice; persecution has not yet taken the giant step into policy. In September 1998, a Prime Minister's Office policy apparently intervened in the conduct of the Peggy's Cove memorial service for last year's Swiss Air disaster. A protocol officer ordered that the Catholic and Protestant ministers could not mention Jesus Christ or quote the Bible, even while a Muslim spoke of Allah and a native medicine man invoked the Great Spirit. This incident aside, public policy remains at least formally tolerant of all religions - even Canada's founding religion.

### **AVOIDING 'REMNANT' MENTALITY**

"We must, at all costs, avoid sliding into a 'remnant' mentality and retreating to catacombs," says the CCRL's Langan.

"We must hope. We must see the present threats as an

opportunity to gather up the Christian fragments, re-evangelising the culture. Our rulers enjoy all the perks of high office, but they enforce their PC madness (political correctness) with such fanaticism, they stand revealed as deeply uncomfortable with who they are. The Gospel is a challenge to their mediocrity, but it remains an answer for them, as it has for all of mankind."

How can a shrinking minority hope to sway the course of the culture? North Vancouver United Church minister Don Faris says that the leaders of the mainline churches have spent the past 70 years selling out to the dominant culture, "pretending that cultural trends themselves are prophetic." That sell-out came from a fatal desire to join the elite, "to lead the parade, wherever it headed."

As a result, said Fans, daring to "contradict the age," is again becoming a qualification for the pastor's job. Only then, he says, will a despairing culture again listen.

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## **- St. Mark's Guidelines**

**This article appeared in the *British Medical Journal*, but could well have originated as a directive from the BC Ministry of Health**

Dear Chaplain. It has been brought to the attention of the trust committee that you are distributing a booklet entitled *The Gospel According to St. Mark*. The committee has obtained a copy and has requested comments from the relevant departments. Several concerns have been raised

(1) In the title, "gospel" should be changed to "guideline." "Gospel" implies inflexibility. With a guideline, however, adherence is closely monitored and persistent deviation results in this committee providing supportive counselling for the deviant.

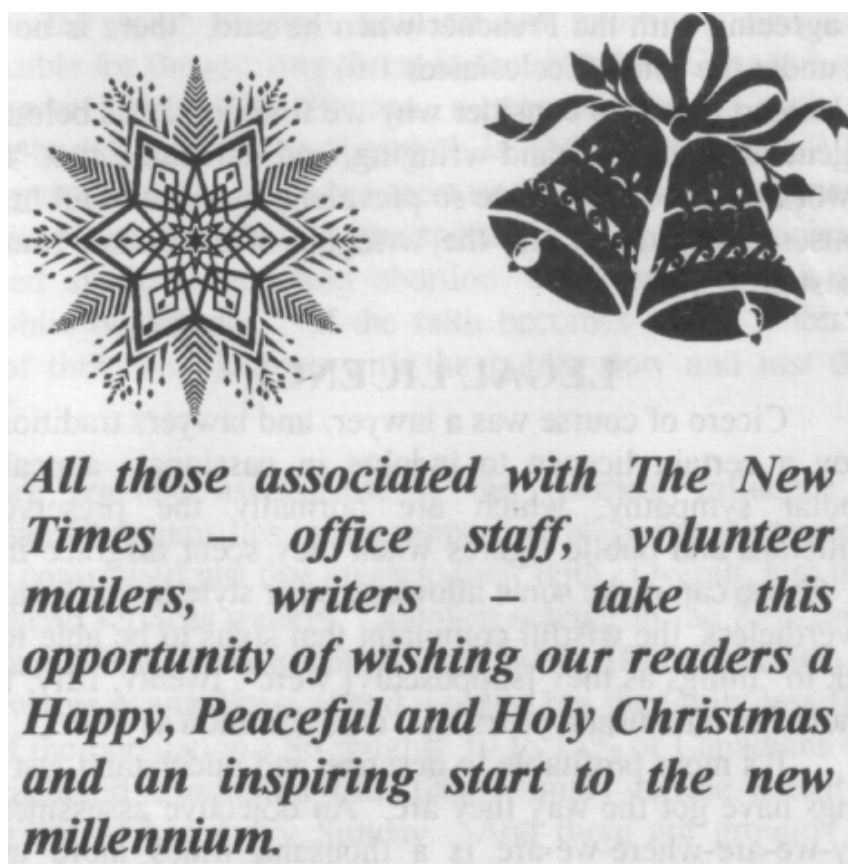
(2) In chapter 3 the selection criteria for disciples are unclear. The human resources director has pointed out that no person specification was available. This is likely to generate adverse comment in relation to the lack of gender and ethnic mix. Were these posts properly advertised and were structured interviews carried out?

(3) The feeding of the five thousand (chapter 6) produced a positive response from the contract caterers, but the research director raised several questions. He advises that the subjects should have been randomised using sealed envelopes into two groups of two and a half thousand, one of which could have received five loaves and the other two fishes.

(4) In chapter 2 a patient is instructed, "Arise, take up thy bed, and walk" This caused considerable concern to both the psychotherapy department and the trust equipment manager. The patient should have been advised to turn on his left side and put his feet to the floor before arising. The guideline should also say, "Even if thou feelest well, thou shouldst not arise unless accompanied by a nurse or health care assistant. Thy walking will be assessed by the occupational therapist. Thy bed should be left for the next patient."

(5) Finally, after a computerised literature search using the key word "gospel" the committee's research assistant identified three other publications not referenced in your guideline. Please check if any further gospels have been published as abstracts or conference proceedings. We would ask you to combine the four published gospels (plus any unpublished ones) by formal meta-analysis. We look forward to receiving a revised draft, which can be distributed with the full authority of this committee.

James Owen Drife, professor of obstetrics and gynaecology.  
Leeds British Medical Journal 1999



# In England Now

Fr. Francis Gardom

"O Tempora! O Mores!!"

Oh! the times! Oh the morals!! So lamented Cicero, the Kenneth Starr of his day, in these famous words as he tuned himself up to prosecute the infamous L. Sergius Catilina. I'd forgotten what Catilina had actually done; school Latin being a long, long time ago. So I looked it up in J. Lempriere, D.D.'s *A Classical Dictionary* ("...containing a Copious Account of all the Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors" as the subtitle informs the reader and which includes a Chronological Table from the Creation of the World to the Fall of the Roman Empire) [London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd]. It seemed worth quoting *in extenso* what Dr Lempriere has to say:

*Sergius Catilina, a celebrated Roman, descended of a noble family. When he had squandered away his fortune by his debaucheries and extravagance, and been refused the consulship, he secretly meditated the ruin of his country, and conspired with many of the most illustrious of the Romans, as dissolute as himself, to extirpate the senate, plunder the treasury and set Rome on fire. This conspiracy was timely discovered by the consul Cicero, whom he had resolved to murder, and Catiline, after he had declared his intentions in the full senate and attempted to vindicate himself, on seeing five of his accomplices arrested, retired to Gaul, where his partisans were assembling an army; while Cicero at Rome punished the condemned conspirators. Petreius, the other consul's lieutenant, attacked Catiline's ill-disciplined troops and routed them. Catiline was killed in the engagement, bravely fighting, about the middle of December BC63 His character has been deservedly branded with the foulest infamy: and to the violence he offered to a vestal, he added the more atrocious murder of his own brother, for which he would have suffered death, had not friends and bribes prevailed over justice. It has been reported that Catiline and the other conspirators drank human blood, to make their oaths more firm and inviolable...*

However, it's not my intention here to explore the similarities and differences between BC63 and AD1999, apart from agreeing with the Preacher when he said, "there is no new thing under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9)

Instead I want to consider why we find ourselves belonging to a generation where hand-wringing, and lamenting that "fings ain't wot they used to be", are so prevalent: because of all human responses, lamentation and the wringing of hands are some of the least profitable

## LEGAL LICENCE

Cicero of course was a lawyer: and lawyers traditionally enjoy a certain licence to indulge in passionate appeals to popular sympathy, which are normally the preserve of politicians and public figures when they scent disgrace in the air. So we can make some allowances for style in this instance. Nevertheless, the wistful complaint that sighs to be able to get back to "things as they [supposedly] were", twenty, fifty, three hundred or a thousand years ago is as common as ever.

It's more profitable to describe and understand just how things have got the way they are. An objective assessment of why we are where we are is a thousand times more useful than any amount of disapproval. For out of five hundred

disapprovers its rare to find fifty who really understand what they are disapproving of and perhaps five of these who possess the will and the ability to do anything about it.

So let's ask ourselves why have things reached their present state. At this point another book can offer us some enlightenment - Anne Glyn-Jones's  *Holding Up a Mirror, How Civilizations Decline* [1998. Century Press. London].

This is a book, which, in my view, was "waiting to be written". The author is meticulous about avoiding drawing conclusions from her material until the final chapter. Her conclusions were no doubt present in her mind from the moment that she started writing the Preface ("the End in the Beginning"); but her book, unlike so many other books which address moral questions, doesn't commit the tedious fault of blazoning, implicitly or explicitly, the words "so what did I tell you" after every paragraph. Glyn-Jones avoids this pitfall by drawing extensively on the work of Pitirim Sorokin.

In 1917 Sorokin had been a leading activist in the Socialist Revolutionary Party in Petrograd when the Winter Palace was stormed by the Bolsheviks. Like many of his fellow-revolutionaries he fell from grace, was arrested, condemned to death but managed to get his sentence commuted to exile - not before discovering that his life's scholarly writings had been burnt as fuel by the new occupant of his flat. Nothing daunted. Sorokin emigrated to the USA in 1922 where he spent the rest of his life till 1968 researching and working out his own interpretation of why societies change, and whether particular changes are for the better or the worse.

## UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SOCIETIES

In this respect Sorokin differed fundamentally from the founding fathers of sociology. Max Weber for instance urged that if it were to qualify as a science, sociology must strictly avoid value judgments. By contrast Sorokin considered that an understanding of human societies could not begin without an assessment of what people cared about and how that influenced their activities.

Sorokin sought to analyse the dominant temper of the age across many different civilisations, from ancient Babylon to twentieth-century America - a process that required the amassing of a vast quantity of factual data, published in 1937 under the title *Social and Cultural Dynamics* that ran to some three thousand pages, "many of them", Glyn-Jones says, "packed with statistics and written in language which employs more sociological jargon than most non-specialists find palatable". Clearly if Sorokin was to become popular reading, something had to be done!

To Anne Glyn-Jones we owe this masterful distillation of some of Sorokin's work (which she quotes frequently, and with painstaking annotation). By limiting her own enquiry to particular aspects of only four civilisations, all of the European, namely ancient Greece, ancient Rome, medieval Christendom and England since the Reformation, she manages to condense the substance of Sorokin's three thousand pages into a mere seven-hundred eminently readable ones.

Her book traces four main strands in the development of

each of these four civilisations:

- 1 the process of change in philosophy and theology;
- 2 the impact of these changes on our ideas of right and wrong.
- 3 their impact on knowledge about the physical world (and hence our capacity to manipulate it, particularly in relation to economic and medical development);
- 4 how these developments interact with and are manifested in creative art as represented by the theatre.

These words too have a familiar ring at the present time. Many people have said them before now. But Glyn-Jones maintains her objectivity all the way through her book, making it, before all else, a factual essay.

This means that whilst the accuracy of particular facts which she states can be questioned, and if need be corrected there are no subjective, knee-jerk reactions in evidence.

Glyn-Jones's book, unlike many contemporary evaluations of moral and political problems, doesn't say to the reader "isn't this terrible": rather, "these are the facts, and this is the way they came about". Glyn-Jones follows Sorokin in his description of how each of these four civilisations passed through three stages: the ideational, the idealist, and the sensate - to the last of which both authors attribute the eventual decline and fall of the first three of those civilisations.

### THREE STAGES

In Sorokin and Glyn-Jones's paradigm the ideational society is one dominated by belief in a non-material world. This in turn generates the belief that the purpose of our life on earth is to be "reconciled with", or "on the right side of, or perhaps even "incorporated into", some non-material Unseen Power with a view to securing either our personal salvation in some afterlife, or at the very least that Power's grace and favour in this present one.

The idealist society develops from this as more importance becomes attached to the material world itself, and in particular to our ability to control and enjoy it. Nevertheless the material world is not seen by the idealist society as having any authority of its own in the realm of values. Such values as there are depend for their validity on some Absolute Being (or Beings) - "absolute" in the sense of "standing apart from", and not "being part of" the created world. This Being, whether He, She or They is the stand-alone authority against which all other standards are to be measured and judged.

Lastly, as the material begins to assume more and more importance in people's minds in the idealist society, attention comes to be focused more and more on self-fulfilment and the pursuit of happiness as ends in themselves. Hence there emerges the sensate society in which, to quote Sorokin, "true reality and true value is sensory... beyond the reality and value perceived by our sense organs there is no other reality and no value".

Of course no society of any size or complexity is a pure manifestation of any of these three worldviews; nor is the transition from one view to another a single clear-cut step. People don't suddenly wake up one morning to find that the whole world around them has passed over from the idealist to the sensate. In a given society there will always be some who are moving from one type of belief to another. That movement may be either forwards or backwards, and at any given moment there will be many who simply remain where they stand.

It is important for us to understand that such progressions are not invariably in the one direction, ideational giving way to idealist and eventually to sensate, although that will often be the pattern we observe.

Not always, however. For example, in our own day the sensate Persia of the Shah and the Peacock Throne has become the ideational Iran of the Ayatollahs in the course of a single generation. The Branch Davidian cultists of Waco, the suicides of the inhabitants of Jonestown in Guyana, and the Church of the Solar Temple are examples of movements whose members, in the course of their rebellion against the sensate societies in which they found themselves living, died premature and suicidal deaths for their essentially ideational beliefs.

### TWO OFTEN ASKED QUESTIONS

Understanding the two-way nature of this process provides the answer to two often-asked questions. It says, "Yes sometimes" to the question "Do societies ever draw back from the sensate precipice?": and to the more common question, "Have we reached the End of Civilisation?" it provides the answer "not necessarily"

For although the beliefs of the Davidians and Solar Templists may appear false and repugnant to us, those who hold them are a living witness that history knows numerous examples of withdrawals from the sensate precipice. The very existence of these cults and the fact that their adherents, however misguided their beliefs, are prepared to die for them, comprise, though it may seem perverse to say so, part of our grounds for hope in the future by demonstrating conclusively that the sensate society by no means always enjoys the last word.

Yet before that hope can become a reality we have to recognise that our sensate society is walking along the edge of a moral precipice without being aware of it. What emerges time and time again from Glyn-Jones's pages is that ultimately there can be no moral principles at all without a belief in a transcendent authority: God, in other words.

Of course this is not to claim that the moral fabric of a society collapses the very day that the majority of that society says in its heart "There is no God" or "Even if there is a God we will ignore him". Life just does not work like that, or on such a timescale. The period between a civilisation ceasing for all practical purposes to believe in God, and the time when the citizens of that civilisation begin to countenance or encourage the killing of babies and other undesirables by abortion, infanticide or euthanasia may be quite a long one, perhaps as much as fifty years or more.

But it remains true that "where there is no vision the people perish". "Vision" in this context can apply equally to moral

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clear-sightedness as to prophecy; and the "people" who perish may be those such as babies and the mentally infirm whose views about their own elimination have never been canvassed in the first place.

Such is inevitably the vision (or the lack of it), which the sensate society around us generates within itself. Let us now turn to the question of what alternative vision we Christians have to offer the sensate society?

### 'WITHOUT A VISION...'

Far too often the vision, which the contemporary Church offers, the sensate society is one, which starts from the belief that it must be one which sits comfortably alongside the wishes and beliefs of the sensate society itself. "Self-fulfilment" and "if it feels good, do it" are the keynotes of much Christian writing and preaching today.

Remember what Sorokin said about the beliefs of the sensate society in the earlier quotation: "true reality and true value is sensory... beyond the reality and value perceived by our sense organs there is no other reality and no value"?

It hardly needs saying that such a vision is wholly unscriptural and in clear contradiction to the "faith once delivered to the saints" of which we are the trustees. That faith reaches its "idealist" perfection (to employ the Sorokin definition) in the person of Jesus Christ and its lesser apogee in the lives of his saints. Such a faith necessarily entails:

- 1 a belief in the absolute righteousness of God
- 2 the impossibility of anything whatever being unknown to him and therefore outside his judgment.
- 3 the very real possibility of eternal separation from him by the making of a series of wrong choices.

Any vision, which does not adequately reflect these three, must remain a non-starter. No amount of telling people that "everything will work out all right in the end" can substitute, for the stark necessity of facing up to what Scripture and experience tell us.

They tell us that we live in a binary creation in which, with very few exceptions, things are ultimately either true or false, good or evil. God-accepting or God-rejecting. They can be one or they can be the other, but they can never be both. God never rejects us: we reject him and for all eternity.

It is futile to imagine that a back-to-basics morality by itself will achieve anything at all. It is only a back to God vision, which stands any chance of success.

Why? Because at the end of the day the guiding principle for most human beings remains not "How good can I be?" Although that may hold sway for a short while it soon reverts to "how little good, and how much evil, can I get away with?" It is only the grace of God, mediated through our Lord Jesus Christ, that can make us even want to be reconciled with him in the first place. The doctrine of Original Sin has not been disproved by scientific enquiry. On the contrary...!

### DANGER IN COMPARISONS

Let me end with a quotation from Alasdair MacIntyre's masterly book *"After Virtue"* [London. Gerald Duckworth & Co. 1981)

*"It is always dangerous to draw too precise parallels between one historical period and another, and among the most misleading of such parallels are those which have been drawn between our own age in Europe and North America and the epoch in which the Roman empire declined into the Dark Ages. Nonetheless certain parallels there are. A crucial turning point in that earlier history occurred when men and women of good will [my emphasis] turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman Imperium and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that Imperium. What they set themselves to achieve instead - often not recognising fully what they were doing - was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained so that both morality and civility might survive the coming ages of barbarism and darkness. If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached the turning point. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages, which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another - doubtless very different - St Benedict."*

But where, and what, one asks, would St Benedict be without God and the beliefs of the Catholic Faith to sustain and inspire him?

## OUR POLICY

**To promote service to the Christian revelation of God, loyalty to the Australian Constitutional Monarchy, and maximum co-operation between subjects of the Crown Commonwealth of Nations.**

**To defend the free Society and its institutions • private property, consumer control of production through genuine competitive enterprise, and limited decentralised government.**

**To promote financial policies, which will reduce taxation, eliminate debt, and make possible material security for all with greater leisure time for cultural activities.**

**To oppose all forms of monopoly, either described as public or private.**

**To encourage all electors always to record a responsible vote in all elections.**

**To support all policies genuinely concerned with conserving and protecting natural resources, including the soil, and an environment reflecting natural (God's) laws, against policies of rape and waste.**

**To oppose all policies eroding national sovereignty, and to promote a closer relationship between the peoples of the Crown Commonwealth and those of the United States of America, who share a common heritage.**